

Nation, Narrative, and Identity: The Many Scotlands in Literature and Culture

Edited by

Rituparna Chakraborty
Shubham Bhattacharjee



Swami Vivekananda University

Published by

Penprints
India

*Nation, Narrative, and Identity: The Many Scotlands in
Literature and Culture*

Edited by Rituparna Chakraborty, Shubham Bhattacharjee

Published by Penprints

Official Address: P-925, Lake Town, Block A, Kolkata-700089,
West Bengal, India.

Phone no-8697875467

Website - www.penprints.in

Copyright - Swami Vivekananda University

Cover - ©PENPRINTS

Price: INR 500 | \$ 22

First Edition - 2025

ISBN: 978-81-993920-4-5

ISBN 10 : 81-993920-4-5

All rights reserved, No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher and the author, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other non-commercial uses permitted by copyright law. All legal matters concerning the publication/publisher shall be settled under the jurisdiction of Calcutta High Court only.

Printer: S. P. Communications Pvt. Ltd. 1st Floor, Merlin Marigold, 31B, Raja
Dinendra St, Yogi Para, Garpar, Machuabazar, Kolkata, West Bengal 700009

Acknowledgement

For the successful completion of this edited volume, we are most indebted to the vision of our Hon'ble Chancellor, Dr. Nandan Gupta, the inspiration of our Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor Professor (Dr.) Subrata Kumar Dey, the support of our Chief Operating Officer, Shri Saurabh Adhikari, the guidance of our Chief Executive Director (Academics), Professor (Dr.) Deb Narayan Bandyopadhyay, and the co-operation of our Registrar, Professor (Dr.) Pinak Pani Nath.

We would also like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the concerned faculty members of Swami Vivekananda University, the contributors and collaborators, who have played an active part in the realization of this book.

Preface

The intellectual landscape of Scottish Studies continues to evolve with remarkable complexity and vitality. Rooted in a centuries-long negotiation between nationhood and modernity, Scotland's literary, cultural, and historical expressions offer a fertile terrain for exploring questions of identity, belonging, and transformation. The present volume seeks to capture this dynamic interplay, tracing the multiple trajectories through which Scottish thought, art, and writing have both shaped and been shaped by the changing contours of global modernity. From medieval chronicles and Enlightenment philosophy to contemporary fiction and digital culture, the field of Scottish Studies invites sustained critical reflection on how a nation simultaneously asserts its distinctiveness and participates in wider transnational dialogues.

Scottish cultural production, whether in literature, visual arts, theatre, or cinema, has always been marked by a tension between the local and the global. The topographical intimacy of the Highlands, Lowlands, and islands provides a material and imaginative geography that informs the national psyche; yet, Scotland's histories of migration, trade, and imperial entanglement situate it firmly within the circuits of global exchange. This volume therefore examines Scottish identity as an open-ended negotiation—neither a closed ethnic construct nor a purely symbolic artifact—but as a living, evolving discourse that reflects centuries of encounter, adaptation, and resilience.

The study of Scottish literature, in particular, has undergone a significant reorientation over the last few decades. Once regarded through a narrowly nationalist or romantic lens, it is now understood as a dynamic site of multilingual and multicultural creativity. The recovery of Gaelic and Scots literary traditions, the renewed attention to women writers, and the interrogation of colonial and diasporic narratives have together expanded the boundaries of the canon. Such approaches demonstrate that Scottish identity cannot be

contained within a single linguistic or cultural frame; rather, it thrives in its polyphony, in the coexistence of multiple voices and traditions that continue to redefine what it means to be Scottish.

At the heart of this inquiry lies the question of nationhood. Scotland's political trajectory—from its medieval independence through union, industrialization, and devolution—has left indelible marks on its collective consciousness. The act of imagining Scotland, as Benedict Anderson might suggest, involves not only the construction of shared myths and memories but also the negotiation of their fractures and absences. Literature becomes an essential medium for articulating these tensions. From Robert Burns's egalitarian lyricism and Walter Scott's historical imagination to Hugh MacDiarmid's modernist reawakening and contemporary writers such as Ali Smith, Jackie Kay, and James Robertson, the Scottish literary tradition functions as both a mirror and a critique of national self-understanding. Each period of cultural flowering coincides with moments of social re-evaluation—moments when Scotland redefines itself in response to internal pressures and external perceptions.

The intersection of language and identity remains a defining feature of Scottish cultural expression. The coexistence of Scots, Gaelic, and English within the literary and social landscape has produced a rich, dialogic texture that resists monolingual hegemony. The linguistic hybridity of Scottish writing reflects both historical marginalization and creative assertion. Contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes that linguistic plurality is not merely a relic of the past but a continuing site of innovation and political resistance. In modern Scottish poetry and fiction, the deliberate use of dialect, the revival of Gaelic oral forms, and the incorporation of hybrid speech registers testify to an enduring struggle to claim voice, agency, and authenticity in a world shaped by linguistic standardization and cultural homogenization.

No exploration of Scottish identity would be complete without attending to the landscape, both as physical environment and as imaginative construct. From the sublime desolation of the Highlands to the urban dynamism of Glasgow and

Edinburgh, the Scottish landscape functions as more than a backdrop—it is a protagonist in its own right. Writers and artists have long engaged with the land as a repository of memory, myth, and ecological consciousness. The Romantic valourization of nature in the works of James Hogg or the later pastoral re-imaginings of Lewis Grassie Gibbon reveal how topography becomes a metaphor for the human condition. In contemporary times, the ecological turn in literary studies has reinvigorated this relationship, encouraging readings that foreground environmental ethics, sustainability, and the interconnectedness of culture and nature. Scottish ecocriticism, drawing from both Celtic myth and modern environmental philosophy, thus becomes a site where questions of belonging intersect with planetary concerns.

The theme of diaspora and transnationalism occupies an equally central position in this volume's intellectual framework. Scotland's history of emigration—whether voluntary or coerced—has produced a far-flung diaspora whose cultural footprints extend from Canada and Australia to the Caribbean and South Asia. The Scottish diaspora is not merely an extension of national identity abroad; it is a transformative force that reshapes both homeland and host-land. Literature of the Scottish diaspora often oscillates between nostalgia and critique, evoking the pain of displacement while interrogating the colonial and racial hierarchies that underpinned migration. Recent scholarship has called for a more nuanced understanding of these global Scottish identities, emphasizing hybridity, exchange, and the ethics of remembrance. Such perspectives broaden the scope of Scottish Studies, situating it within the wider currents of postcolonial and world literature.

The postcolonial dimension of Scottish Studies has generated vigorous debate, particularly concerning Scotland's ambiguous position within the British Empire. While Scotland participated in imperial expansion, it also experienced forms of internal colonization and cultural subordination. This duality complicates the binaries of colonizer and colonized, calling for frameworks that acknowledge Scotland's "in-between" status. Postcolonial readings of Scottish literature have illuminated

how narratives of marginality, fragmentation, and rebellion mirror the broader dynamics of empire and resistance. The Gothic, for instance, emerges as a particularly resonant mode through which Scottish writers explore anxieties of identity and power—from Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* to the unsettling landscapes of contemporary fiction. The Gothic imagination in Scotland often reflects not only psychological dualities but also the contradictions of national existence under imperial shadow.

Equally significant is the interplay of gender and national narrative. The feminist interventions in Scottish literary criticism have foregrounded women's voices long obscured by patriarchal canons. The rediscovery of writers such as Nan Shepherd, Willa Muir, and Muriel Spark, alongside contemporary figures like Jenni Fagan and Denise Mina, has transformed the contours of Scottish literary history. These writers challenge the masculine myth of nationhood by reimagining space, body, and language through alternative sensibilities. In doing so, they link questions of gender, class, and identity to broader issues of social justice and cultural representation. The intersection of feminism and nationalism within Scottish writing thus opens new possibilities for interpreting the nation as a plural and evolving community.

Modern Scottish culture also engages profoundly with memory, history, and representation. The persistent return to historical trauma—the Highland Clearances, industrial decline, sectarian conflict—attests to a collective preoccupation with the politics of remembrance. Literature becomes a means of re-narrating these histories, offering both lament and reclamation. The act of remembering in Scottish texts often involves an ethical imperative: to confront silenced pasts and to construct more inclusive futures. Memory here is not static; it is performative, dialogic, and regenerative. The relationship between history and imagination, fact and myth, remains a defining motif of the Scottish cultural psyche.

The urban experience represents another important strand of the Scottish literary imagination. The transformation of Glasgow from an industrial powerhouse to a post-industrial metropolis, and of Edinburgh from Enlightenment capital

to festival city, encapsulates Scotland's negotiation with modernity and globalization. Urban writing in Scotland captures the contradictions of progress—alienation and creativity, poverty and cultural efflorescence, violence and solidarity. The gritty realism of James Kelman or the surreal playfulness of Alasdair Gray exemplify how Scottish urban literature situates itself within global modernist and postmodernist traditions while retaining a distinctly local inflection. These representations underscore the adaptability of Scottish identity in the face of economic, social, and technological change.

In the era of devolution and globalization, Scottish Studies finds itself at a crossroads. The reassertion of national identity in political discourse, the debates over independence, and the reconfiguration of Scotland's relationship with Europe and the wider world all contribute to the urgency of cultural inquiry. Literature and the arts provide crucial spaces where these negotiations are imagined, tested, and contested. The cultural renaissance following devolution has reaffirmed the vitality of Scottish creative expression, while simultaneously raising questions about inclusivity, diversity, and the meaning of citizenship in a plural society. The Scottish nation imagined today is as much a cultural construct as a political aspiration—a mosaic of identities, languages, and memories bound together by shared narratives of resilience and creativity.

In this context, the global reach of Scottish culture assumes renewed significance. From the circulation of Scottish literature in translation to the international resonance of its music, film, and digital media, Scotland continues to project a distinctive yet adaptable cultural identity. The idea of "Global Scotland" encapsulates this paradox of rootedness and mobility, of a nation deeply aware of its historical particularities yet open to cosmopolitan exchange. As the world grapples with questions of migration, climate crisis, and cultural homogenization, Scottish Studies offers models for thinking about small nations and minor literatures as sites of creative possibility and ethical engagement

The interdisciplinary expansion of the field has also been remarkable. Scholars increasingly draw on insights from cultural studies, environmental humanities, performance theory, and memory studies to enrich the analysis of Scottish texts and practices. The convergence of literature, history, anthropology, and media studies underscores the holistic nature of Scottish cultural inquiry. Such interdisciplinarity not only broadens methodological horizons but also reflects the lived reality of a culture that has always been hybrid, adaptive, and dialogic. The study of Scotland, in this sense, is not confined to its geographic borders but extends to its symbolic and affective geographies—its diasporic communities, its imagined futures, and its dialogic engagement with other nations and traditions.

The volume presented here thus aspires to illuminate the plurality and resilience of Scottish identity across time and space. It invites readers to consider Scotland not as a static entity defined by its past, but as an evolving cultural process continually renegotiated through art, literature, and collective memory. The essays that follow engage with questions of history, language, ecology, diaspora, gender, and politics, offering fresh insights into the ways Scottish culture both resists and reimagines its own boundaries. Together, they reveal a nation that is not merely seeking to preserve its heritage but to transform it into a living, inclusive dialogue with the contemporary world.

In embracing this expansive vision, Scottish Studies affirms its relevance not only within national scholarship but also within the broader conversations of global humanities. The interrogation of identity, the ethics of belonging, and the aesthetics of resilience that characterize Scottish cultural production resonate far beyond its borders. Scotland's story—of struggle and creativity, of marginality and assertion—speaks to the universal human quest for meaning and connection in an increasingly fragmented world. The future of Scottish Studies, therefore, lies in its capacity to balance rootedness with openness, memory with innovation, and tradition with transformation.

Through this continuous act of reinterpretation, the field remains a vital site for examining how literature and culture articulate the possibilities of self, community, and world. The present volume is a testament to that ongoing endeavour – to the enduring power of the Scottish imagination to speak across time, place, and identity, and to the inexhaustible richness of a culture that remains at once local and global, historical and visionary.

Contents

Robert Louis Stevenson and the Paradox of Late Victorian Anti-Colonialism: A Postcolonial Critique	
Rituparna Chakraborty	13
Women's Voices and the Rewriting of Scottish History: Feminist Interventions in Contemporary Literature	
Shubham Bhattacharjee	26
The Reformist Alexander Duff in Nineteenth century Bengal: A Study	
Tushar Kanti Biswas & Dr. Madhumita Roy	34
From Dialect to Literary Voice: The Role of Language in Shaping Modern Scottish Identity	
Shreyoshi Dhar	43
Fragmented Nationhood: Post-Devolution Scottish Identity and the Politics of Belonging in the Fiction of Ali Smith and Jackie Kay	
Dr. Tirna Sadhu	51
A Review of "The Dead Man" (1919): Roderick Watson Kerr's Meditations on Death and War	
Astha Keshri AND Soumyarup Bhattacharjee	65
Interconnected Lives: Human and Non-Human Fragility in Robert Burns' Pastoral Poems	
Agnideep Datta	69
Between Here and Elsewhere: The Politics of Belonging in Dharker's The Terrorist at My Table	
Debarshi Arathdar	75

The Flying Scotsman: Cycling around Bipolar Disorder with Old Faithful

Sudipta Dutta 83

Exploring Transformation, Betrayal, and Identity in "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie"

Natasha Chatterjee 90

About The Contributors 99

Robert Louis Stevenson and the Paradox of Late Victorian Anti-Colonialism: A Postcolonial Critique

Rituparna Chakraborty

I. Introduction: Defining the RLS Paradox in Postcolonial Studies

Robert Louis Stevenson (RLS) occupies an exceptionally complex and controversial position within the discourse of late Victorian literature and postcolonial studies. His life trajectory, moving from a celebrated novelist within the British metropole to an influential political actor and permanent resident in the Samoan Islands, necessitates a critical examination of his dual role: simultaneously a product of imperial culture and one of its most trenchant and active critics. Stevenson's unique self-exile culminated in his adoption by the Samoan people, who bestowed upon him the honorific title *Tusitala*, the "Teller of Tales". This position — as a trusted observer and participant on the periphery of empire — established a profound ethical and literary paradox that defines his legacy.

The core paradox lies in the fundamental disjunction between his canonical fiction, which often internalized and displaced the anxieties of empire — such as moral decay and unchecked greed — and his later political writings, which offered an explicit, actionable, and anti-colonial analysis of Western power structures in the Pacific. To understand this complex figure, it is essential to analyze his corpus through a rigorous theoretical framework that evaluates how a metropolitan author navigated the moral and political consequences of late-19th-century imperialism.

A. Theoretical Framework: Key Postcolonial Concepts for RLS Studies

The critical apparatus for evaluating Stevenson relies heavily on concepts established within postcolonial theory, a field

that emerged prominently in the 1970s and is founded upon concepts of resistance and the construction of the “Other”. Foundational theoretical terms are critical to dissecting Stevenson’s work:

* **Orientalism:** This concept, central to the field, describes the depiction of culture and society in the colonized world as exotic, backward, and fundamentally opposed to Western (Occidental) tradition. Orientalism often leads to the glorification and distortion of alien cultures, simplifying them and reinforcing power imbalances.

* **The Subaltern:** Derived from the work of Gayatri Spivak, the subaltern refers to the colonized subject whose voice is often missing from historical accounts and who occupies a realm largely distinct from the colonial administration’s viewpoint. Stevenson’s later work directly engages with the challenge of amplifying the subaltern voice.

* **Hybridity:** Introduced by Homi K. Bhabha, hybridity refers to the blending of colonial and Indigenous cultures, which often creates new spaces of resistance and identity that challenge imperial authority. Stevenson’s identity as Tusitala is a primary example of cultural hybridity.

* **The Metropole:** This term designates the “home” base of the colonial power—for instance, Great Britain—the center whose ideological and political control RLS’s activism ultimately sought to undermine.

The overarching function of postcolonial critique is to challenge the centrality and universality historically accorded to European perspectives, moving beyond simple representational critiques to demonstrate the constitutive role of colonial origins in shaping the contemporary international order. By utilizing these theoretical lenses, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive evaluation of Stevenson’s ambiguous yet crucial contribution to anti-colonial thought.

B. Thesis Statement

Stevenson’s corpus serves as a crucial case study in the late Victorian metropole’s ideological rupture, simultaneously internalizing imperial anxieties and the moral corrosion

of capitalism in his canonical fiction, while externalizing a radical and actionable anti-colonial stance through political engagement in the Pacific, establishing a complex and disputed legacy that requires analysis through the dual lenses of cultural anxiety and political dissent.

II. The Metropolitan Anxiety: Imperialism and the Split Self in RLS's Fiction

Before his permanent commitment to the Pacific, Robert Louis Stevenson wrote fiction that, while ostensibly focused on adventure or Gothic horror, contained profound moral critiques of the very capitalist and expansionist ideology that underpinned the British Empire. These earlier works reveal a sensitivity to moral decay and unchecked ambition, which ultimately provided the intellectual foundation for his later political dissent.

A. Colonial Greed and Capitalist Critique in *Treasure Island*

Treasure Island (1883) operates as far more than a simple adventure story; it is fundamentally a moral investigation into the corrosive effects of unearned wealth. The novel is centrally “a book about money” and the pursuit of treasure, and it implicitly challenges the established Victorian value system that prized hard work and personal sacrifice by glorifying the theft of fortune. The historical setting of 18th-century piracy allows Stevenson to comment obliquely on the prevailing contemporary economic practices.

The narrative establishes colonial greed as the “basic issue under scrutiny”. The pirates, motivated by avarice, engage in constant betrayal, violence, and shifting loyalties, demonstrating the moral degradation intrinsic to the pursuit of wealth without ethical restraint. Stevenson implies that men driven by such short-sighted desires are inherently “unsuitable for colonial ventures,” suggesting that the underlying moral character of the imperial agents themselves is flawed.

The critical reading of the text suggests that Stevenson uses the pirates' rapacity as a mechanism to criticize the predatory nature of 19th-century commercial imperialism. The

historical critique of piracy aligns precisely with Stevenson's later condemnation of European firms—like the German firm DHPG in Samoa—which generated immense profit through “land alienation, forced labour, and taxation”. The pirates' amoral violence, enacted purely for gold, mirrors the sanctioned rapacity of European consuls and merchants operating under the veneer of civilization in the Pacific.

This critique reaches its structural climax with the revelation that the treasure map leads to a “deserted hole”. This deflated climax, where the pirates find nothing, underscores the theme of the “uselessness of wealth” and the moral emptiness inherent in the colonial model of resource extraction and immediate capitalist accumulation. Stevenson thus employs the adventure genre to integrate a subtle, yet foundational, critique of the economic ideology fueling late Victorian expansionism, foreshadowing the explicit political targets he would later identify in Samoa.

B. Jekyll and Hyde: Atavism, Degeneration, and the Fear of the Internal Other

Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886) provides a psychological mapping of the cultural anxieties that simultaneously drove and destabilized the late Victorian metropole. The novel engages directly with fin-de-siècle theories of evolution and degeneration, illustrating the pervasive fear that, despite the advancements of the Industrial Revolution, the possibility of evolutionary regression—a return to a ‘primitive’ state—remained a threat.

Mr. Hyde is consistently described using language that signals a profound biological and moral devolution: he is “hardly human,” “something troglodytic,” and gives an impression of deformity. Hyde personifies the “concentrated evil present in not some, but all people,” reflecting Stevenson's concern that definitive evil was not external but internal, complicating the Victorian belief in moral certainty. The primary conflict focuses on the struggle to preserve identity and control the “unseen vice” within the civilized self.

From a postcolonial perspective, this internal struggle reflects the deep-seated anxieties of empire. Hyde, the “unwanted

horror,” can be interpreted as the psychological manifestation of the ‘savage’ or ‘primitive’ Other that the imperial project sought to control, subjugate, or eradicate abroad. The fear is not merely that this savagery exists in the colonized world, but that contact with empire, through its inherent moral compromise and brutality, contaminates the imperial subject, causing a regression to the very ‘troglodytic’ state the British claimed to rule over.

The novel specifically negotiates the tension within degenerationist theory concerning whether malaise is strictly hereditary or stems from “environmental influence” and “infection by others”. The anxiety over the split self in London acts as a microcosm of the anxiety over the split empire: the morally superior center (Jekyll) masking a brutal, primitive foundation (Hyde). This Gothic fiction, preceding Stevenson’s activism, demonstrates that the author’s critique of moral decay and social corruption was already fully functional; his later anti-colonialism in the Pacific was merely the externalization of these internal, metropolitan concerns.

III. The Ethnographic Gaze and the Darker Pacific Narrative

Stevenson’s move to the South Seas, beginning with his chartering of the schooner *Casco* in 1888, marked a pivotal shift in his thematic focus, moving him from analyzing the psychology of the metropole to documenting and fictionalizing the experience of the periphery. His subsequent writings, *In the South Seas* and *The Ebb-Tide*, reflect the challenge of writing about colonial spaces while simultaneously being a beneficiary of the imperial systems he sought to understand or critique.

A. In the South Seas: Exoticism, Representation, and the Limits of Sympathy

In the South Seas (published posthumously) is Stevenson’s fieldwork memoir, an attempt at non-fiction that chronicles his initial voyages and observations, often read alongside ethnographic fiction like *The Beach of Falesá*. Postcolonial theory asserts that travel writing frequently contributes to the creation and reinforcement of the “Other” for a Western audience.

In analyzing Polynesian culture, Stevenson contended with the prevailing European fascination that often simplified Polynesians as the “natural man” or, paradoxically, as “conditionally Caucasian”. This ambiguity placed them in an intensely scrutinized position within colonial racial hierarchies. This intense, often racialized focus on origins is known as the ‘Polynesian Problem’ and illustrates the inherent bias of the colonial gaze.

The text reveals the tension between Stevenson’s desire for genuine observation and the pervasive theoretical frame of Exoticism. Exoticism inherently involves the “glorification and distortion of cultures perceived as alien,” simplifying the ‘other’ and reinforcing power imbalances. While Stevenson’s intention was often sympathetic, his documentation risked reducing the “richness and agency” of Pacific Islanders to fit a Western narrative structure. The ethnographic project, even when undertaken by a sympathetic writer, often struggles to fully escape the objectifying tendencies inherent in Western representational practices.

B. The Ebb-Tide and the Critique of Quasi-Colonialism

Published in 1894, *The Ebb-Tide* (co-written with Lloyd Osbourne) represents a significant darkening of Stevenson’s Pacific fiction, moving away from ethnographic description toward a brutal moral judgment of Western imperial agents. The novel utilizes a gruesome realism to explore the consequences of quasi-colonialism, particularly through the figure of Attwater.

Attwater, the pearl-trader on New Island, functions as the distilled essence of imperial enterprise, establishing “a business, and a colony, and mission of [his] own”. He represents the “imperial trinity” of trader, settler, and missionary, embodying the fusion of economic exploitation and ideological control that characterizes colonial rule. Attwater rules the natives with a “rod of iron,” dispensing “harsh justice with blistering Christian evangelism,” demonstrating the horrifying synergy between piety and profit that marked late-century empire.

The novel's critique extends beyond simple administrative incompetence. The demonic figure of Attwater, who effortlessly handles and outwits the three moral "losers" of the story and scorns traditional Western morality, is interpreted as a profound challenge to all Western values. The story's narrative momentum "ebbs back to the origins of Western empire-building," suggesting the foundational corruption and moral horror that underpinned the entire system.

The progression in Stevenson's Pacific writing—from the observational style of *In the South Seas* to the chilling condemnation found in *The Ebb-Tide*—demonstrates a critical transition. Living alongside and defending the Samoan people provided the author with the ethical clarity necessary to shift his literary focus from observing the colonized to morally indicting the colonizers. His direct political experience gave him the moral authority to condemn the composite character of the imperial agents represented by Attwater.

IV. Tusitala: Stevenson as Anti-Colonial Activist in Samoa

Stevenson's final years (1889–1894) were defined by intense political engagement in Samoa, marking his transition from a writer of empire to an active participant against it. His political writings and actions earned him the unique distinction of being a European advocate for Indigenous sovereignty.

A. Historical Context: RLS's Immersion in the Samoan Crisis (1889–1894)

Stevenson first arrived in Apia in December 1889, purchasing the land for his Vailima estate shortly thereafter in January 1890. His arrival coincided with severe political unrest following the decisive Sāmoan defeat of German forces at Fagali'i in late 1888—an event noted by historians as the "first serious defeat of an advanced white power in the Pacific".

Samoa was governed under the tripartite authority of Germany, Britain, and America, with the Germans wielding the greatest economic influence through the *Deutsche Handels- und Plantagen-Gesellschaft* (DHPG), a firm established in 1857. The DHPG had systematically amassed profit and power through "land alienation, forced labour,

and taxation". Stevenson observed that Apia functioned as a 'foreign town' where "a handful of whites have everything," leaving the natives excluded from the administration and economy of their own capital. This concentration of power in Apia was openly described by Stevenson as the "seat of the political sickness of Samoa".

B. A Footnote to History and the Practice of Witnessing

Stevenson's most significant political document from this period is *A Footnote to History: Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa* (1892), which covers the turbulent years from 1882 to 1892. The book was written with the "immediacy of front-line journalism", based on his intense, on-the-spot involvement in local affairs.

In his analysis, Stevenson minced no words regarding the source of the islands' instability. He stated bluntly that the 'head of the boil' afflicting Samoa was "the German firm" (DHPG). His critiques specifically targeted the "militarism and meddlesome officialdom" of the German administration, accusing them of widespread corruption and malpractice. He publicly attacked colonial officials like President von Pilsach and Chief Justice Cedercrantz for using tax-payer money to purchase the local newspaper, the *Samoa Times*, in an effort to secure "safety and strength in gagging the local Press of Apia". Furthermore, he highlighted the moral scandal of European officials receiving grossly unequal salaries compared to Samoan chiefs.

To ensure his radical political treatise resonated with his metropolitan audience in London, Stevenson employed specific rhetorical strategies. He published his defense of the Samoan people through a series of letters to *The Times*. Crucially, he framed the resistance of Samoan chieftain Mata'afa Iosefa using familiar European analogies, comparing him to the Jacobite figure of "the king over the water" and describing the local turmoil as a 'reign of terror,' invoking the French Revolution. This strategic linkage of Samoan independence movements to romantically-charged European struggles against oppression was a vital geopolitical maneuver. By articulating Samoan politics within recognizable Western

political discourse, RLS legitimized the cause and ensured his “front-line journalism” received serious attention from the governing powers in London, Berlin, and Washington.

C. The Politics of Patronage, Reciprocity, and the Indigenous Perspective

Stevenson’s commitment went beyond publishing; he provided practical political support. He openly backed Mata’afa Iosefa in the struggle for supremacy and, when five Samoan chiefs were imprisoned in August 1891, RLS helped secure their release, providing them with aid and patronage.

In a unique act of political reciprocity, the released Samoan chiefs repaid his advocacy by physically building a road for his Vailima estate. This road, celebrated on 7 October 1894, was named the “Road of Loving Hearts”, symbolizing mutual political solidarity and respect. This physical act cemented RLS’s position not as a ruler, but as a European ally accepted within the local political framework, achieving a remarkable level of cross-cultural trust.

However, even in this position of deepest solidarity, a residual element of paternalism surfaced. During the celebration of the road, Stevenson’s speech used the event to lecture the chiefs on the importance of “being industrious” and employed the Western “parable of the talents” (Matt 25: 14–30) to encourage them in defending their country. This reliance on Victorian moral instruction, even while advocating for Samoan sovereignty, illustrates the difficulty for even the most profoundly committed European intellectual to fully abandon the deeply ingrained belief in the superiority of Western ethical and governmental modes. While RLS achieved genuine political hybridity, his philosophical framework retained elements of the ideology he otherwise fought against.

V. The Legacy and Contemporary Postcolonial Critique

The analysis of Robert Louis Stevenson’s relationship with postcolonialism cannot be complete without examining how his legacy is currently treated by the colonized societies he defended. Contemporary Pacific Islanders, particularly

writers and artists, have utilized Stevenson's unique history as a starting point for their own narratives of cultural memory and resistance.

A. The Subaltern Speaks Back: Reconsidering Tusitala

The title *Tusitala*, the "Teller of Tales," which Stevenson carried until his death and burial on Mount Vaea, is not merely a memorial; it functions as a crucial site for postcolonial reclamation.

Eminent Samoan writer Sia Figiel directly engages with this legacy through her play, *O Tusitala: Tellers of Tales*. Figiel's work critically revisits Stevenson's household and the corresponding period of Samoan history, but fundamentally transforms the narrative by placing the "Indigenous characters centre stage". The play utilizes the voices of the colonized subjects—the cooks, gardeners, and household staff—to reflect on the Samoan civil war and the rising colonial interventions by Germany, Britain, and America.

This act is a vital form of remediation that allows the Subaltern voice to speak back to the colonial archive. By using RLS's history as context, Figiel transforms the European narrative into an Indigenous history, exploring the perspectives that Stevenson himself, despite his advocacy, may have inadvertently overlooked or marginalized in his official records. The unique cultural memory surrounding *Tusitala* made this engagement possible. The Samoan people's decision to grant Stevenson this specific, high-value Indigenous title was an act of cultural integration; they acknowledged his power (storytelling) while simultaneously placing him within their system, making him accountable to their society rather than solely to the judgment of his European peers. This historical bridging mechanism allows contemporary Pacific artists to directly engage with and re-interpret the colonial encounter, validating Stevenson's unique role while asserting Indigenous narrative control.

B. Provincializing the Metropole: RLS and Decentering European Dominance

The academic movement of postcolonial critique often seeks to “systematically ‘provincialise Europe’,” challenging its perceived centrality as the sole source of historical momentum and the origin of the international order.

Robert Louis Stevenson’s political evolution mirrors this theoretical goal. His physical relocation to Samoa instigated a necessary geographical and intellectual decentering. While his early fiction focused on the internal decay of the metropole caused by imperialism (as seen in *Jekyll and Hyde*), his activism shifted his attention entirely to the brutal external abuses perpetrated by the great powers in the periphery.

His published defense of Samoan sovereignty and custom in *A Footnote to History* demonstrated a profound ethical break from the imperial worldview. Stevenson recognized the Samoan society as possessing its own complex internal politics and “ancient customs”, systems that were being arbitrarily dismantled by foreign powers driven by self-interest and bureaucratic incompetence. This recognition aligned his efforts with the central postcolonial goal of challenging the epistemological privilege accorded to European understandings of knowledge and governance. Stevenson’s willingness to risk his reputation to defend a marginalized community in the Pacific validates his role as an early, if imperfect, precursor to postcolonial thought originating from within the intellectual class of the metropole.

VI. Conclusion: Reconciling Stevenson’s Postcolonial Identity

Robert Louis Stevenson’s legacy in postcolonial studies is defined by productive contradictions. He remains a figure whose work simultaneously reveals the ideological infrastructure of late Victorian imperialism and mounts a vigorous resistance against it. His trajectory follows a clear ethical arc: from an implicit critique of capitalist corruption and imperial moral anxiety evident in his canonical works like *Treasure Island* and *Jekyll and Hyde*, to an explicit, politically active denunciation of colonial administration in his final years in the Pacific.

RLS was not immune to the ideological biases of his time, as evidenced by residual paternalistic language and the unavoidable limitations of his ethnographic gaze. However, his active political defiance, his direct alliances with high-ranking Samoan chiefs, and his willingness to use his metropolitan platform to expose corruption earned him a unique position. He achieved a degree of cross-cultural inclusion that transcended his origins, culminating in the revered title *Tusitala*.

Ultimately, Stevenson occupies a vital and complex space: he was a European intellectual who voluntarily subjected himself to the consequences of his principles in the periphery. His political writings function as a crucial document of early anti-colonial theory, profoundly challenging the foundational morality and administrative competence of the late British and German Empires. His contested legacy – now being actively reclaimed and reinterpreted by Indigenous Pacific artists – confirms his status as an essential figure for understanding the limits and possibilities of anti-colonial dissent originating from within the metropole's intellectual establishment.

References:

Arvin, Maile. "The 'Polynesian Problem': Western Studies of Pacific Islander Origins." Lecture. Harvard Museums of Science & Culture.

"Colonial Ethnography and Uneven Intimacies in Robert Louis Stevenson and Rudyard Kipling." ResearchGate.

Figiel, Sia. *O Tusitala: Tellers of Tales* (Play, as referenced by scholars on Samoan literature).

Huggan, Graham. "The Post-Colonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins."

"Jekyll and Hyde, Evolution and the Anthropogenic Fog" (Analysis of Degenerationist Theory).

Loos, Theodora T. "Crossing the Threshold - Treasure Island and Boundaries."

Loos, Theodora T. "The Anxiety of the Unforeseen in Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." *Inquiries Journal*.

"Postcolonial Theory and the Critique of International Relations." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*.

"Postcolonial Theory: Issues and Definitions" (Critical review of postcolonial concepts).

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Letters and Miscellanies* (Correspondence related to the South Seas voyage).

"The Mad Scientist and Other Themes: Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."

"The Tusitala of 'Villa Vailima': RLS in Samoa." *The New York Times* (1994).

Tyson, Lois. *Postcolonial Criticism* (Introduction to foundational concepts).

Unwin, Timothy. "Stevenson's *The Ebb-Tide*, or Virgil's *Aeneid* Revisited: How Literature May Make or Mar Empires." *Victorian Literature and Culture*.

Vaughn, Deidre. "Robert Louis Stevenson's Writings on German Sāmoa as a Valuable Archive for Understanding the Impact of Western Colonialism." *The Journal of Trans-Atlantic Studies* (2024).

"Robert Louis Stevenson: Samoa and Vailima" (Chronology of RLS's life in Samoa).

"Robert Louis Stevenson in revolutionary Samoa, 1888-1894." (Archived analysis of RLS's political activism).

"Story of Samoa's love for Robert Louis Stevenson." *The National*.

"The Road of Loving Hearts: Stevenson's Road in Samoa" (Historical document on the road dedication speech).

"What is Post-colonial theory?" (A guide to core concepts and issues).

Women's Voices and the Rewriting of Scottish History: Feminist Interventions in Contemporary Literature

Shubham Bhattacharjee

Abstract

For centuries, Scottish national identity was shaped through narratives dominated by masculine heroism, political rebellion, and historical myth-making. In recent decades, however, women writers have redefined the contours of Scottish literature by reclaiming silenced histories and introducing feminist perspectives that challenge patriarchal, religious, and national hierarchies. This paper examines how authors such as Liz Lochhead, Jackie Kay, Janice Galloway, Ali Smith, and Denise Mina employ narrative, poetry, and performance to recover women's experiences from the margins of history. It argues that contemporary Scottish feminist writing transforms the nation's literary landscape by blending personal and political voices, reconstructing cultural memory, and asserting alternative forms of belonging and identity.

Introduction: Rethinking Nation Through Gender

The reemergence of feminist voices in Scottish literature since the late twentieth century marks a significant transformation in national consciousness. Historically, Scotland's literary canon—from Burns to Scott, Stevenson to MacDiarmid—privileged male perspectives that equated the nation with masculine valour, sacrifice, and stoicism. Women's roles were often confined to symbolic figures—the muse, the martyr, or the mother of the nation—rather than as agents of cultural production.

As critic Sarah Dunnigan observes, "Scottish women's writing has long been haunted by absence—an absence not of creativity but of recognition" (Dunnigan 7). The feminist movement of

the 1970s, coupled with devolution-era politics, created new spaces for women to articulate their stories. By interrogating both nationalism and patriarchy, Scottish women writers have offered alternative histories that complicate notions of identity, power, and belonging.

The feminist reimagining of Scotland is not merely a literary gesture; it is a political act of reclamation. Through poetry, fiction, and drama, women writers reinterpret the nation's myths, question its exclusions, and envision more inclusive futures. This paper explores how five major figures—Liz Lochhead, Jackie Kay, Janice Galloway, Ali Smith, and Denise Mina—use language and narrative form to challenge traditional historiography and reconstruct Scottish identity from a feminist perspective.

Liz Lochhead: The Poet as Reclaimer

Liz Lochhead, Scotland's former Makar (national poet), stands at the forefront of feminist re-interpretation. Her work reclaims female agency from the confines of myth, folklore, and literary tradition. In collections such as *Dreaming Frankenstein* (1984) and *The Colour of Black and White* (2003), Lochhead revisits canonical figures—from Mary Queen of Scots to Shakespeare's women—infusing them with modern sensibility and political edge.

In *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987), Lochhead rewrites the national narrative through a female lens. The play juxtaposes the fates of Mary and Elizabeth I to expose the intersection of gender and power in history. Through the character of La Corbie, a crow-like narrator who speaks in Scots dialect, Lochhead reclaims the oral storytelling tradition as an instrument of resistance. The use of Scots—a language marginalized alongside women's voices—symbolizes a double rebellion against patriarchal and linguistic oppression.

As Roderick Watson notes, Lochhead's feminism is inseparable from her nationalism: "Her assertion of the Scots tongue parallels her recovery of women's language and experience" (Watson 94). By restoring voice to silenced women and suppressed dialects, Lochhead reframes the nation as plural, performative, and inclusive.

Jackie Kay: Identity, Race, and the Polyphonic Nation

Jackie Kay's writing extends feminist discourse into intersections of race, sexuality, and diaspora. Born to a Scottish mother and Nigerian father and raised by white adoptive parents in Glasgow, Kay's very identity defies the homogenizing tendencies of traditional Scottish nationalism. Her work—spanning poetry (*The Adoption Papers*, 1991), fiction (*Trumpet*, 1998), and memoir (*Red Dust Road*, 2010)—celebrates multiplicity and questions the boundaries of belonging.

In *Trumpet*, Kay fictionalizes the life of Joss Moody, a Black Scottish jazz musician whose death reveals that he was biologically female. The novel, narrated through multiple perspectives, dismantles binary constructions of gender and identity. Through this act of narrative ventriloquism, Kay queers both Scottishness and womanhood.

Kay's poetic voice is equally subversive. *The Adoption Papers* presents three interwoven female voices—birth mother, adoptive mother, and daughter—each expressing love, loss, and identity from a different standpoint. The multiplicity of voices mirrors the hybrid identity of contemporary Scotland: multiethnic, feminist, and fluid.

As Carla Sassi argues, Kay “offers a vision of Scottishness beyond blood, beyond gender, beyond the limiting narratives of nation” (Sassi 63). Her feminist intervention lies in embracing otherness not as threat but as the essence of modern Scottish identity.

Janice Galloway: The Interior Nation

Janice Galloway's fiction delves into the psychological landscapes of women constrained by social and emotional expectations. Her debut novel *The Trick Is to Keep Breathing* (1989) explores the mental fragmentation of Joy Stone, a schoolteacher navigating grief, depression, and alienation. Galloway's fragmented narrative form—interspersing prose with lists, quotations, and inner monologue—reflects the fractured consciousness of women silenced by societal norms.

Critic Linden Peach describes Galloway's style as "a feminist phenomenology of despair" (Peach 118). Yet despair in her fiction is never purely nihilistic; it becomes an act of revelation, a means of exposing the psychic cost of gendered repression. In *Clara* (2002), a biographical novel about the 19th-century pianist Clara Schumann, Galloway recovers the female artist from the margins of history. Clara's struggle for creative autonomy against patriarchal expectations mirrors that of Scottish women writers seeking recognition within a male-dominated canon.

Through Galloway's introspective realism, the personal becomes political. Her protagonists' inner turmoil reflects the nation's broader search for wholeness—psychological, cultural, and historical. The domestic sphere, traditionally dismissed as private, becomes the stage for feminist resistance and national redefinition.

Ali Smith: Play, Temporality, and the Feminist Imagination

Ali Smith's fiction represents one of the most innovative feminist interventions in contemporary Scottish writing. Her narrative style—fragmentary, playful, and self-aware—challenges linear temporality and fixed identity. Smith's novels *Hotel World* (2001), *How to Be Both* (2014), and *Autumn* (2016) blur the boundaries between genders, generations, and genres.

In *How to Be Both*, Smith intertwines the stories of a modern teenage girl and a Renaissance painter, Francesco del Cossa, who transcends gender binaries. The novel's structure—published in two interchangeable versions—embodies the feminist principle of multiplicity. As Elaine Morley notes, Smith's narrative "refuses the authority of sequence and hierarchy, privileging simultaneity and connection" (Morley 207).

Smith's feminism is subtle yet radical. Rather than declaring ideology, she enacts it formally—through polyphonic structure, narrative inversion, and empathetic fluidity. Her characters, often outsiders or observers, question norms of identity, belonging, and storytelling itself.

In *Autumn*, Smith situates feminist concerns within the political landscape of Brexit-era Britain. The novel's fragmented dialogues between a young woman and her elderly friend meditate on art, memory, and moral consciousness. Here, feminism merges with humanism: the capacity to listen, to imagine, and to connect across difference.

Denise Mina: Feminist Noir and the Gothic City

While Lochhead, Kay, and Smith transform the lyrical and philosophical dimensions of Scottish feminism, Denise Mina brings it to the gritty realism of crime fiction. Her novels—especially *Garnethill* (1998), *Exile* (2000), and *The End of the Wasp Season* (2011)—redefine the traditionally masculine genre of detective fiction through feminist and working-class perspectives.

Mina's protagonist Maureen O'Donnell, a survivor of abuse, navigates Glasgow's underworld while confronting corruption, violence, and institutional misogyny. The city becomes a Gothic labyrinth—dark, oppressive, yet ultimately survivable. Through Maureen, Mina dismantles the trope of the “fallen woman,” replacing victimhood with agency.

As Gill Plain notes, Mina's crime fiction “reclaims the moral authority of the Gothic heroine, but places her in the real streets of post-industrial Scotland” (Plain 142). Her feminism is intersectional: addressing gender, class, and trauma within the broader framework of social justice.

Mina's engagement with crime, poverty, and female resilience situates feminist writing firmly within Scotland's urban and political realities. In doing so, she demonstrates that the feminist project is not only about voice but also about visibility—about reclaiming public space as much as private narrative.

Feminist Revisions of History and Myth

A unifying feature of contemporary Scottish women's writing is the revision of history and myth. By retelling traditional narratives from women's perspectives, these writers challenge the patriarchal foundations of Scottish historiography. Lochhead's rewriting of Mary Stuart, Galloway's revival of

Clara Schumann, and Kay's reconfiguration of Black and queer identity all function as acts of historical recovery.

Moreover, these revisions engage with the very form of storytelling. As Angela McCarthy observes, "Scottish feminist writers destabilize not only the content but also the structure of history—refusing closure, linearity, and teleology" (McCarthy 88). Their narratives often adopt circular or fragmented patterns, echoing women's lived experiences and resisting masculine models of progress.

By fusing personal memory with collective history, feminist writers reconstruct a Scotland that is polyphonic rather than monolithic. History becomes a conversation, not a chronicle—a process of listening as much as narrating.

Language, Nation, and the Feminist Voice

Language itself becomes a site of feminist struggle. Lochhead's reclamation of Scots, Kay's lyrical blending of dialects, and Smith's fluid syntax all demonstrate how linguistic experimentation can resist authority. The use of Scots or hybrid Englishes destabilizes cultural hierarchies, asserting authenticity and inclusivity.

This linguistic plurality also mirrors Scotland's post-devolution ethos—a recognition of multiplicity within unity. Feminist writing thus aligns with national self-determination, not as separatism but as pluralism. The act of speaking differently becomes an assertion of being differently.

As Anne Varty succinctly puts it, "To write in Scots as a woman is not merely to speak, but to shout across centuries of silencing" (Varty 56). The feminist voice in Scottish literature, therefore, is not just expressive—it is insurgent.

Conclusion: Toward a Feminist Future for Scottish Letters

The feminist interventions of Scottish women writers have transformed both the aesthetics and politics of national literature. By giving voice to the marginalized—women, queer identities, racial minorities—they redefine what Scotland means and who it represents.

These writers remind us that the nation, like gender, is a construct—one continually rewritten through narrative. The recovery of women's stories is not an addition to Scottish history but a re-foundation of it. Through humour, anger, empathy, and experimentation, feminist authors have opened the national imagination to new forms of community, solidarity, and creativity.

In the words of Liz Lochhead: "We mak oor ain myths noo" (Lochhead, *Dreaming Frankenstein* 88).

This declaration encapsulates the spirit of contemporary Scottish feminism: self-defined, self-articulated, and self-renewing. In reclaiming myth, language, and history, women writers ensure that Scotland's story—like their own—remains unfinished, alive, and fiercely inclusive.

References:

Dunnigan, Sarah. *The Scottish Women's Renaissance: Feminism, Nation, and Identity*. Edinburgh UP, 2004.

Galloway, Janice. *The Trick Is to Keep Breathing*. Vintage, 1989.

Galloway, Janice. *Clara*. Vintage, 2002.

Kay, Jackie. *The Adoption Papers*. Bloodaxe, 1991.

Kay, Jackie. *Trumpet*. Picador, 1998.

Kay, Jackie. *Red Dust Road*. Picador, 2010.

Lochhead, Liz. *Dreaming Frankenstein and Other Poems*. Polygon, 1984.

Lochhead, Liz. *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*. Penguin, 1987.

McCarthy, Angela. "Feminism and the Rewriting of Scottish History." *Studies in Scottish Literature*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2012, pp. 84–94.

Mina, Denise. *Garnethill*. Orion, 1998.

Morley, Elaine. "Narrative Multiplicity in Ali Smith's *How to Be Both*." *Contemporary Women's Writing*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2017, pp. 202–214.

Nation, Narrative, and Identity: The Many Scotlands in Literature and Culture

Peach, Linden. *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers and the Nation*. Edinburgh UP, 2000.

Plain, Gill. *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction: Gender, Sexuality and the Body*. Edinburgh UP, 2001.

Sassi, Carla. *Why Scottish Literature Matters*. Saltire Society, 2005.

Smith, Ali. *Hotel World*. Hamish Hamilton, 2001.

Smith, Ali. *How to Be Both*. Hamish Hamilton, 2014.

Smith, Ali. *Autumn*. Hamish Hamilton, 2016.

Varty, Anne. "The Female Voice in Scots Poetry." *Scottish Literary Review*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2011, pp. 52-60.

Watson, Roderick. *The Literature of Scotland: The Twentieth Century*. Palgrave, 2007.

The Reformist Alexander Duff in Nineteenth century Bengal: A Study

Tushar Kanti Biswas & Dr. Madhumita Roy

Abstract:

This article examines the important role of Alexander Duff, a Scottish missionary, in Bengal's social reform from the 1900s. Duff came to India in 1830, and became a pioneer for instructional and social reforms that trade the vicinity. Through its establishment of General Assembly's Institution (now Scottish Church College), Duff brought Western education, emphasizing the significance of English language, literature and technology. This caused a big trade inside the intellectual situation in Bengal, and promoted a brand new era of thinkers and reformers. Duff advocated women's education, played a key role in the abolition of Sati and social justice and he greatly contributed to many other things including the social reform in the region. This article expounds the vision, strategies and legacy of Duff and highlights their permanent effect on modernization and social alternate of Bengal.

Keywords: *missionary, reform, pioneer, Sati, legacy, modernization*

Introduction:

The nineteenth century marked a crucial length within the facts of Bengal and India as a whole. This century emerged a cultural, intellectual, and social awakening called the Bengal Renaissance. It sought to reform traditional practices, modernize Indian society, and cope with enormous social injustices. One of the maximum influential figures in this transformative era was Alexander Duff who was a Scottish Christian missionary and whose contributions to education and societal reform left an indelible mark in Bengal. Duff's paintings performed a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual and social landscape of Bengal, thereby fostering the modern ideals that defined the era.

This article delves into the multifaceted role of Alexander Duff in the social reformation in nineteenth century Bengal and he put an effect on the Bengal Renaissance and his advocacy for rational questioning brought broader sociopolitical transformation of the area.

Introducing Alexander Duff:

Alexander Duff was born in Moulin, Perthshire, the very centre of Scotland on 25th April, 1806. He came of a highland Stock, his father James Duff spoke English and Gaelic. From the country school the lad passed to the University of St. Andrews where he cut a most brilliant career and, of still more importance, came under the influence of Dr. Chalmers. Subsequently he undertook his mission to India. After a most adventurous voyage during which he was twice shipwrecked, Alexander Duff arrived in Calcutta on 27th May, 1830. People of his time saw in his survival in successive shipwrecks an evidence of the Divine Will to utilize the favourite of the gods for some notable work in India.

Alexander Duff arrived in India in 1830, at a time while British colonial rule became consolidating in its effect on Indian society and became grappling with the demanding situations posed through the usage of traditional practices and the encroachment of Western modernity. Duff's venture had twofold purpose: to spread Christianity and to introduce Western-style training as a technique of cultural and intellectual upliftment.

Duff's arrival in Bengal coincided with a growing reputation amongst British directors and Indian reformers of the need for educational reform. He came up with an extremely good suggestion for the advent of English-medium training and he laid the foundation for a modern-day technology of highbrow awakening in Bengal.

Introduction of Western Education:

One of Duff's maximum substantial contributions to the social reformation of Bengal has become his pioneering function in introducing Western education. At a time when conventional Indian education became ruled through Sanskrit schools

(pathshalas) and madrasas, which focused on non secular and classical research, Duff anticipated an academic device that would equip Indian teenagers with current knowledge and abilities.

In 1830, Duff installed the General Assembly's Institution founded on the 13th July, 1830, later known as the Scottish Church College, in Kolkata (then Calcutta). This organization has become a beacon of present day education in Bengal. Duff's curriculum emphasized: Duff believed that English turned into the important thing to the West's big storehouse of expertise. English education, he argued, would have impacts on Indians in cutting-edge technology, literature and philosophy.

Unlike conventional faculties which gave precedence to religious texts, the Duff institute delivered topics which included mathematics, technology, records, western philosophy and so on. While selling secular topics, Mr. Duff also incorporated Christian values into his teaching, aiming to instill in his college students a sense of moral and social duty.

Impact on Indian society:

Duff's instructional application had a profound effect in 19th century Bengal. It additionally exposed Indian students to Western idea and technology and developed their logical, analytical and vital wondering talents. His efforts bridged the space among conventional Indian training and modern western education and created a brand new class of knowledgeable Indians who performed a critical function in social and political trade so far.

Impact on the Bengal Revolution:

The Bengal Renaissance was a period of great cultural and intellectual change, when reform leaders, writers and thinkers sought to modernize Indian society, the contribution of Alexander Duff in this movement was countless.

Duff's emphasis on education as a means of changing society coincided with the aims of the Bengal Revolution. His students, many of whom became prominent figures in the movement,

were greatly influenced by his teaching. By presenting his teachings as Western liberal ideas, Duff empowered them to challenge traditional practices and advocate progressive change..

The Bengal Renaissance began within, and in direct opposition to, the British colonisation of India. The commodities of knowledge, religion, and art were, however, exchanged between the two nations as they sought to identify themselves within the larger colonial world. The Bengal Renaissance witnessed the collaboration of Alexander Duff (1806-1878) and Raja Rammonhun Roy (1772-1833).

Duff is remembered primarily as a missionary but his reputation lies in his educational legacy. Roy's legacy lies in his fashioning of a cultural self-image that pulled from both Eastern and Western thought.

Dr. Kaberi Chatterjee, Associate Professor, Dept. of English, Scottish Church College Kolkata, India has highlighted in her article "The Scottish Church College and the Scots Missionaries: Continuities and Influences", "So deep had been the intellectual incursion by the Scottish missionaries into the psyche of the average Bengali, that Rabindra Nath Tagore used the name of Dr. Duff as a metaphor in his short story Ramkanaier Nirbuddhita (1891 rept. in Golpo Gucchho vol 1, 1972, 27) while describing the character of Gurucharan as 'dof shaheber chhatro' (student of Duff) to denote an innate radical leaning against conventional social mores and orthodox Hinduism among the youth of those days. When an educator/ missionary becomes a metaphor used by the greatest literary luminary of that society then we may conclude that his 'teaching' had outstripped the original intention of 'preaching' the gospel to the 'natives' that had initially inspired this foray into India."

After much consultation and careful thought, the Rev. Alexander Duff opened his institution in Feringhi Kamal Bose's house, upper Chitpur Road, Jorasanko. Dr. Duff expressed his desire that the school be opened daily with prayer. Raja Rammohan Roy suggested that the Lord's Prayer be so used. In 1836 the institution was moved to Gorachand

Basak's house in Garanhata and in 1836 the present building was begun.

Foundation of Scottish Church College and Duff's role in the dissemination of learning:

Dr. Alexander Duff had founded a model institution namely General Assembly's Institution in 1830 (now Scottish Church College), to bring about a measure of modernization through the 'engraftment' of Western learning upon oriental culture. Meanwhile in the General Committee of Public Instruction a fierce controversy was raging between the 'Orientalists' who saw value in oriental learning and were not prepared to forgo it in favour of European culture, although they agreed to borrow its plus points with caution. Another group the 'Anglicists' who wanted to force the change opposed the 'Orientalists' and desired the introduction of Western education in which they saw a multitude of benefits. Dr. Duff was a staunch supporter of the idea that the promotion of European learning through the medium of English rather than by translation was the best way of spreading enlightenment in India. The final seal to this controversy was given in Lord Macaulay's famous Minute and the resolution adopted by the Governor-General Lord William Bentinck regarding the future educational policy of the Government and the decision to introduce English as the medium of instruction on March 7, 1835. But the endorsement of the resolution did not win over everyone in favour of a programme of reform and although the successors of Lord William Bentinck, Charles Metcalfe and Lord Auckland were not unsympathetic to reform, the decision was challenged both in India and in Britain by Orientalistsympathizers. Much depended upon the Anglicists. In his devotion to the cause Dr. Duff played a very important role during the period and ably supported Charles Edward Trevelyan who as a member of the General Committee had influenced the educational policy of the Government of India in favour of the Anglicists before and after March 7, 1835 (see J. Hilliker: 'Charles Edward Trevelyan as an educational Reformer 1827-38'; Canadian Journal of History). Finally he influenced the drafting of the Wood's Despatch of 1854 which sketched the outline of educational system in India (see

George Smith "The life of Alexander Duff" - Vol. II, p. 295). Here it is mentioned "Duff always maintained and upheld the view that all educational institutions should be equalized and state patronage should not be the monopoly of any one or any group." He was in favour of de-provincialisation or de- governmentation of education (see "The formative years 1857-1882; Hundred years of the University of Calcutta"). Dr. Duff was requested to shoulder the responsibility of the office of the Vice Chancellor of the Calcutta University. 'It is yours by right' wrote Charles Trevelyan in his letter to Dr. Duff dated 22nd March, 1863. It was only the failure of his health which drove him finally from Calcutta that prevented his being made the Vice Chancellor in 1863.

The Students and the Teachers of Scottish Church College:

Among all the students who entered the portals of this College, two most exceptional personalities are Swami Vivekananda and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The former graduated from the General Assembly's Institution in 1883 and the latter from the Scottish Church College in 1919. In spite of the distance and difference between these two great sons of Mother India they had certain ties that linked them in idealism. Both of them were fired with the zeal of uplifting the downtrodden masses of India and Subhas Chandra the most valiant freedom fighter, was inspired by the message of strength and dynamism in the writing of Swami Vivekananda. "My vision", said Swamiji, "is not Ramkrishna's nor Vedanta's nor anything but simply to bring manhood to my propel" (see 'Sister Nivedita' by Pravrajika Atmaprana, Adivata Ashrami, 2nd Ed. P. 141). "I will help you" ,Nivedita had sworn. In the 20th century this vow was taken by many freedom fighters and among them was India's leading revolutionary Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

Co-education in Scottish Church College:

A distinguished achievement of the Scottish Church College was the introduction of systematic under- graduate co-education. Although girl students were admitted in one or two men's colleges in Calcutta ,the Scottish Church College adopted co-ed as a definite policy. The first woman graduated

from this college was Miss. A. Alton. Alexander Duff played an important role in the spread of women's education and it is to be noted that long after he left India, Miss. Chandramukhi Basu passed the F.A. of the Calcutta University in 1880 and in 1884, she passed M.A. in English - the first woman student of the Calcutta University to gain this honour - from the Free Church Institution (see Alok Roy - 'Duff and some of his followers', pp 37-72).



Alexander Duff and his 'India and India Missions'

Dr. Duff in his "India and India Missions" spoke of the results of the system followed by him in the following words; "The great and unexpected success wherewith Divine providence was pleased to accompany this examination gave a mighty impulse to all our future labours. The favourable opinion so decidedly expressed by influential members of the British community reacted powerfully on the native mind at large, in the way of conciliating prejudices, inspiring confidence and securing a more hearty and general co-operation. The interest manifested on the part of so many magnates of the ruling caste in the progress and welfare of the pupils put forth animation and vigour into all of their onward endeavours after the attainment of the English language and the incalculable wealth of knowledge, human and divine, that is treasured up in it." On the reopening of the seminary, the number of new applications for admission was more than trebled. Additional accommodation was provided in the course of little more than a year. 'Elementary tuition', says Dr. Duff, 'was gradually

advanced into an academical or collegiate course somewhat similar to that pursued at one of our Scottish Universities. The five who entered on the day of its first commencement have since swollen into an average attendance of eight hundred. And the Governor-General, the fort of all power, honour and influences at length did homage to it by publicly proclaiming in the face of all India that it had produced unparalleled.'

Conclusion :

So it is noteworthy that the contribution from Alexander Duff to the social reformation in 19th century Bengal was deep and long. Through the leading efforts for education, law formation for women's rights and advocacy of social justice, Duff played an important role in changing the intellectual, social and cultural landscape in the region. Their heritage spread across the walls of the institutions that he established, inspired generations of thinkers, reformers and leaders who shaped modernization and social change of Bengal. When we reflect on his life and work, we are reminded of the permanent importance of education, social justice and compassion in creating a more value-based society. His commitment to the values of sympathy, equality and social responsibility inspires us today, and provides valuable lessons for our own efforts to bring positive changes to the world.

References :

Fraser , Bashabi. Bandyopadhyay, Deb Nrayan. "Lakshmi's Footprints and Paisley Patterns_ Perspectives on Scoto-Indian Literary and Cultural Interrelations-Routledge". Ed.2023

Duff, Alexander. "India and India Missions". Wentworth Press, Digital Library of India, 2016

Chakravarty, Satis Chandra, ed. 1935. "The Life of Rammohun Roy: The Father of Modern India: Commemoration Volume of the Rammohun Roy Centenary Celebrations". Kolkata: Brahmo Press.

Duff, Alexander. 'Letter', 1830. MS 75, Folio 26. National Library of Scotland Archives, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Church of Scotland Records (COS), AR00177-Min 10/
COS. v. 1. Bishop's College Archives, Kolkata, India.

Church of Scotland Records (COS), AR00178-Min 11/
COS. v. 2. Bishop's College Archives, Kolkata, India.

Church of Scotland Records (COS), AR00186-Min16/COS,
1930-1941. Bishop's College Archives, Kolkata, India.

Church Of Scotland Records (COS), AR00170- Min 3/
COS,1886-1897. Bishop's College Archives, Kolkata, India.

"Home and Foreign Missionary Records for the Church of
Scotland". 1847. No. 4 vol. iv. Kolkata: Scottish Church College
Library.

Ray, Alok. 2009-2010. "College Assembly Hall e
Rabindranath." Scottish Church College Magazine (97): 124 -
129.

Roy Chowdhury, Ranabir. 1978. Glimpses of Old Calcutta.
Reprint. Kolkata: Nachiketa Publications. 114 Lakshmi's
Footprints and Paisley Patterns: Perspectives on Scoto-Indian
Literary...

Tagore, Rabindranath. 1891, rept.1972. "Ramkanaier
Nirbudhhita" in Golpo Guchha. Vol. 1. Kolkata: Visva Bharati
Granthan Bibhag.

<https://www.google.com/>, image of Scottish Church
College, Kolkata

From Dialect to Literary Voice: The Role of Language in Shaping Modern Scottish Identity

Shreyoshi Dhar

Abstract:

The Scots language is an essential component of Scottish identity and culture. It is a marker of cultural and historical continuity, a symbol of resistance and national pride, and a living testament to Scotland's diversity and linguistic richness. While the language has faced challenges, particularly in the face of English dominance, it remains a vital part of Scotland's cultural expression, whether through literature, music, or daily life. Scots continues to shape how Scotland sees itself and how it is perceived in the world, making it an invaluable part of both personal and national identity. The Scots language, particularly in literature and political discourse, has become a form of cultural resistance and a tool for articulating a separate Scottish identity, distinct from English or British identity. During movements for devolution or independence, the promotion and celebration of Scots as part of the national culture has gained greater significance as a way to express Scottish autonomy and self-determination. This paper explores how contemporary Scottish writers use Scots dialect and language to reflect identity, culture, and regionalism in their works.

Keywords: *national pride, resistance, Scottish autonomy, Scottish identity, Scots*

The Scots language, with its deep historical roots in Scotland, continues to hold significant relevance in modern Scottish literature. Once the dominant tongue of Scotland Scots experienced a decline in influence after the union with England, English gradually became the preferred language for official and literary use. Despite this, Scots has maintained a robust presence in Scottish culture and identity, particularly in literature.

The Scots language is a Germanic language variety spoken in Scotland. It is closely related to English but has distinct characteristics, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar that set it apart. Scots developed from Old English and was spoken throughout much of medieval Scotland. Over time, it evolved into a set of dialects, influenced by both Gaelic and Norse, especially in different regions of Scotland.

Scots is often classified into three main dialect groups – Insular Scots (spoken in the Lowlands and Central Belt); Northern Scots (spoken in the northern and rural parts of Scotland, such as the Borders and Orkney); and Doric (spoken in the northeast, particularly in Aberdeenshire). While Scots and English share many linguistic features, Scots retains more archaic forms of English and is noted for its distinctive vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical structures. For example, Scots has unique words like “bairn” (child), “dinnae” (don’t), and “wee” (small).

Despite historical prestige and its use as the language of government and literature in Scotland up until the 17th century, Scots began to decline in favour of English after the Union of Scotland and England in 1707. Today, Scots is still spoken by a significant number of people in Scotland, though it is often considered a dialect of English rather than a separate language. Nonetheless, it holds cultural and historical importance and continues to be used in literature, media, and everyday speech, especially in areas of Scotland where it remains more prevalent.

The Scots language plays a significant role in shaping Scottish identity and culture, serving as both a marker of regional and national identity and a medium for expressing the unique cultural and historical experiences of Scotland. The language’s importance can be understood in several ways. Scots is deeply tied to Scotland’s cultural heritage, offering a linguistic link to the past. As a variety of the Germanic language, it evolved in parallel with the development of Scottish society, reflecting its particular customs, traditions, and worldview. For many, speaking or writing in Scots connects them to centuries of Scottish literature, folklore, music, and oral traditions, and provides a sense of continuity with past generations. The use

of Scots often carries with it a sense of local pride, particularly in rural or working-class communities where the language has traditionally been spoken. It is a reminder of Scotland's distinctiveness, especially in the face of historical efforts to diminish it through Anglicization.

In the context of modern Scottish nationalism, Scots has become a symbol of resistance to English cultural dominance. After the 1707 Act of Union, which merged the Scottish and English parliaments, the Scots language, along with Gaelic, faced decline due to the spread of English as the language of governance, literature, and education. However, the revitalization of Scots in the 20th and 21st centuries has been seen by many as part of a broader effort to reclaim and reassert Scotland's national identity.

The Scots language, particularly in literature and political discourse, has become a form of cultural resistance and a tool for articulating a separate Scottish identity, distinct from English or British identity. During movements for devolution or independence, the promotion and celebration of Scots as part of the national culture has gained greater significance as a way to express Scottish autonomy and self-determination.

Scots is a language that reflects the diversity of Scottish society. It is spoken with various regional accents and dialects, such as Glaswegian, Doric, and Lowland Scots. Each variation of Scots carries its own local flavour and distinctiveness, offering a rich tapestry of linguistic expressions that highlight Scotland's geographic, cultural, and historical diversity. The regional variation of Scots also provides insight into Scotland's history of settlement, migration, and cultural exchange, with influences from Old Norse, Gaelic, and French. The language, in this sense, acts as a living testament to the country's complex past and its diverse communities.

Scots has served as a language of resistance, both socially and politically. During periods of cultural suppression, when speaking Scots was discouraged in favour of English, using the language became an act of defiance and pride. In literature, Scots has been used as a means to articulate the struggles of the working class, the rural population, and

those marginalized by mainstream English-speaking society. In modern Scottish literature, Scots continues to function as a tool for social commentary, allowing writers to explore themes of class, identity, alienation, and national pride.

Scots is integral to Scotland's oral tradition, which includes storytelling, poetry, and song. The language is embedded in folk traditions, such as ballads, poems, and chants, many of which were passed down through generations. Scots-language poets and songwriters continue to draw on these traditions, often blending them with contemporary themes to preserve and adapt Scotland's rich oral history. Folk songs in Scots, whether celebratory or mournful, carry forward a collective memory of Scotland's history, from its struggles to its victories. This oral heritage helps maintain Scots as a vital part of the nation's cultural fabric, ensuring that the language and its meanings remain alive for future generations.

Humour is another key aspect of Scots, as the language's rhythm and vocabulary lend themselves well to wit and satire. Scots is often used in comedic settings, whether in everyday conversation, theatre, or literature. Its expressiveness and flexibility allow for playful manipulation of words, which is a central feature of Scotland's humour. Humour in Scots is not just about jokes; it can also reflect the social realities and struggles of everyday life in Scotland.

The use of Scots in comedy and popular culture allows the language to remain relevant and accessible, helping it to stay connected to the daily lives of Scots speakers. Scottish language has played an essential role in Scottish literature, offering authors a means of expressing Scottish identity through the lens of the vernacular. Writers like Robert Burns, who is often hailed as the national poet of Scotland, used Scots to craft poems and songs that encapsulated the hopes, dreams, and realities of the Scottish people. Burns' works have become synonymous with Scottish pride and identity, and his use of Scots continues to resonate today. Scots is used not just for aesthetic or cultural purposes, but as a way to explore themes of nationalism, class, and the tension between Scotland and England.

Scots evolved from Old English and was used as the primary language in medieval Scotland. However, after the Union of Scotland and England in 1707, Scots began to lose its status, as English took precedence in the arts, education, and governance. The decline of Scots in literature during the 18th and 19th centuries coincided with the growing cultural and political hegemony of English. However, Scots persisted as a spoken language, and efforts to revive and maintain it have shaped its role in contemporary literary production.

In modern times, Scots plays a significant role in shaping literary voices that are distinctly Scottish. Authors such as Alasdair Gray, Liz Lochhead, and James Robertson have incorporated Scots into their works, whether in poetry, prose, or drama, as a means of exploring themes of national identity, class, and the complex relationship between Scotland and England. Scots is more than just a dialect—it is a key tool for expressing local realities and identities. Writers such as Hugh MacDiarmid and Liz Lochhead used Scots to express their vision of an independent and culturally distinct Scotland, reflecting the aspirations of many Scots who felt their voices had been ignored in a predominantly English-speaking society.

Hugh MacDiarmid, one of the most prominent figures in Scottish literature, played a crucial role in revitalizing the Scots language in the 20th century. His use of Scots, particularly in his poetry, was both an artistic and political statement. By writing in Scots, MacDiarmid sought to assert a distinctive Scottish identity and culture, which he felt was being undermined by English dominance and cultural imperialism.

MacDiarmid's work, including his long poem "A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle", employs Scots not merely as a regional dialect but as a symbol of resistance and cultural pride. His decision to write in Scots was rooted in his belief that the language held the key to expressing Scotland's unique history, values, and traditions. At the time, Scots was often seen as a "low" or "substandard" language, and many Scots people spoke English as a result of cultural and educational pressures.

By incorporating Scots into his poetry, MacDiarmid sought to elevate it to the level of literary sophistication, demonstrating its capacity for modern expression and intellectual discourse. His efforts were part of a larger movement known as the Scottish Renaissance, which aimed to rejuvenate Scottish art, literature, and identity following centuries of political and cultural union with England.

MacDiarmid's work remains relevant to Scottish culture today, as it continues to inspire debates around national identity, language, and the preservation of cultural heritage. His use of Scots also contributed to a broader resurgence of interest in the language, which is now celebrated as an integral part of Scotland's rich linguistic and cultural landscape. Through his poetry and advocacy, MacDiarmid helped to solidify the importance of Scots not only in literature but also as a symbol of Scottish autonomy and self-expression.

Liz Lochhead, another celebrated Scottish poet and playwright, has made significant contributions to the revitalization of the Scots language in contemporary literature. Her work, often infused with Scots, reflects a deep engagement with Scottish identity, history, and culture. Lochhead's use of Scots is not merely a linguistic choice; it is a deliberate effort to capture the authentic voices and experiences of ordinary Scots people, while also challenging established cultural and linguistic norms.

In her poetry and plays, Lochhead often writes in a blend of Scots and English, embracing the versatility and fluidity of the language. Her work, such as her poetry collection *The Colour of Black and White* and her play *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*, explores themes of identity, gender, and social change, while also celebrating the richness of the Scots language. Through her use of Scots, Lochhead both critiques and reclaims the language, rejecting the notion that it is inferior or outdated.

Lochhead's work resonates deeply with Scottish culture as it addresses themes of community, class, and the lived experiences of Scots people. By writing in Scots, she keeps the language alive and relevant in the modern cultural context,

while also drawing attention to its importance in expressing a distinctly Scottish voice. Her emphasis on the vitality and resilience of Scots also serves as a form of cultural resistance against the dominance of English, reinforcing the significance of the language in maintaining a unique Scottish identity.

Moreover, Lochhead's impact extends beyond literature. She has been an advocate for the use of Scots in education and the arts, contributing to the broader movement that seeks to elevate the status of Scots within Scottish society. Her work has played a role in renewing interest in Scots, encouraging future generations to engage with their linguistic heritage and to view the language as a valuable cultural asset rather than a relic of the past.

Overall, Liz Lochhead's use of Scots language not only enhances her literary voice but also plays a vital role in preserving and promoting Scottish culture and language in the contemporary era. Her work underscores the relevance of Scots in shaping Scotland's national identity, fostering pride, and celebrating the country's diverse linguistic traditions.

Scots plays an integral part in discussions around Scottish nationalism. The revival and use of Scots in literature is often seen as a counterpoint to English dominance, asserting Scotland's distinctiveness. As Scotland continues to debate its future within the United Kingdom, the use of Scots in literature becomes an expression of both cultural pride and political resistance, particularly in relation to the ongoing discussions around Scottish independence.

Despite its rich literary heritage, the Scots language faces numerous challenges today. The encroachment of globalized English, along with the decline in Scots speakers, raises questions about its future. However, the growing interest in Scots within contemporary literature, media, and education suggests that the language is far from being relegated to the past. Efforts to preserve and promote Scots are crucial in ensuring its continued vitality in Scotland's cultural landscape.

The role of Scots in modern Scottish literature remains vital for understanding both the cultural fabric of Scotland and its

literary traditions. While it faces challenges, the ongoing use of Scots in contemporary works of literature underscores the language's resilience and importance as a cultural symbol of Scottish identity. The continued evolution of Scots in literature is a testament to the enduring power of language in shaping national identity and artistic expression.

Fragmented Nationhood: Post-Devolution Scottish Identity and the Politics of Belonging in the Fiction of Ali Smith and Jackie Kay

Dr. Tirna Sadhu

Abstract

The establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 inaugurated a new cultural and political landscape that continues to reshape how Scottish writers imagine nationhood and belonging. This paper examines how Ali Smith and Jackie Kay, two of Scotland's most influential contemporary voices, interrogate the complexities of post-devolution identity through narrative experimentation and thematic engagement with fragmentation, plurality, and transnationalism. Both writers resist the notion of a singular, essentialized Scottish identity, instead foregrounding hybrid subjectivities shaped by gender, sexuality, race, and migration.

Ali Smith's formally innovative works, such as *Hotel World* (2001) and *Autumn* (2016), destabilize linear narratives of national identity, instead offering polyphonic voices that reflect the disjointed temporality of a nation negotiating its place in Britain and Europe. Her novels engage with the cultural uncertainty of post-devolution Scotland, blending local rootedness with global interconnectedness. Jackie Kay's fiction, particularly *Trumpet* (1998) and her later short stories, situates Scottishness within a diasporic and multicultural framework, foregrounding the intersections of Black and queer identities. Kay's narratives highlight how race, sexuality, and memory complicate traditional notions of Scottish nationhood while simultaneously expanding the cultural imagination of what "belonging" can mean.

Drawing on political criticism, cultural studies, and reception history, this paper argues that Smith and Kay articulate

a post-devolution Scottish identity that is deliberately fragmented, embracing multiplicity over homogeneity. Their works demonstrate how contemporary Scottish fiction moves beyond nostalgia for a unified national self, instead constructing a literature of negotiation that mirrors the realities of globalization, migration, and diversity in twenty-first-century Scotland. Ultimately, the study positions Smith and Kay as central to understanding how Scottish literature reflects – and actively participates in – the ongoing redefinition of national identity in the wake of devolution.

Keywords: *Post-devolution identity, Fragmentation, Hybridity, Diaspora, Globalisation, Transnationalism*

Introduction

The idea of Scotland as a nation has long been marked by fragmentation, negotiation, and contestation. Unlike states with uninterrupted histories of political sovereignty, Scotland's identity has been shaped by centuries of union, resistance, and cultural redefinition. The 1707 Act of Union formally bound Scotland to England, creating the United Kingdom of Great Britain, but it also initiated a tension between political incorporation and cultural distinctiveness that has persisted into the present. As Tom Nairn influentially argued in *The Break-Up of Britain* (1977), the Scottish national question has always been a paradox of belonging and estrangement – where the desire for political recognition exists alongside an entrenched participation in British and global modernity. This sense of fractured nationhood became further pronounced in the twentieth century, when deindustrialization, migration, and cultural globalization destabilized traditional markers of Scottish identity.

The creation of the devolved Scottish Parliament in 1999 was therefore not merely a constitutional change but also a symbolic reorientation of nationhood. Devolution opened new avenues for imagining Scotland beyond the binary of unionist and separatist politics. As critics such as Cairns Craig and Berthold Schoene note, post-devolution Scottish literature frequently engages with multiplicity, fluidity, and hybridity rather than asserting a singular, essentialist national

identity. Instead of presenting a coherent, monolithic vision of “Scottishness,” contemporary writers often foreground plural experiences shaped by class, gender, race, and sexuality, situating Scotland within a wider transnational and postcolonial framework.

This historical trajectory of fragmentation is critical for understanding how Ali Smith and Jackie Kay, two of Scotland’s most prominent contemporary writers, intervene in the cultural politics of post-devolution identity. Both authors refuse to romanticize a homogeneous Scottish past or to stabilize a single narrative of belonging. Instead, their works highlight disjunctions, overlaps, and negotiations—whether in the fractured temporalities of Smith’s *Hotel World* and *Autumn*, which reflect the unsettled mood of a nation repositioning itself in Europe and beyond, or in Kay’s *Trumpet*, where Blackness, queerness, and diaspora complicate inherited notions of Scottish nationhood. Their fiction echoes the reality that Scotland’s cultural identity cannot be disentangled from wider histories of migration, empire, and globalization.

By situating Smith and Kay’s work within the longer history of fragmented nationhood, this paper argues that contemporary Scottish literature after devolution has moved towards what might be termed a “literature of negotiation”—a body of writing that embraces multiplicity rather than coherence, provisionality rather than closure. This shift underscores how fragmentation, once perceived as a weakness or crisis, becomes a productive mode of imagining belonging in a Scotland that is at once local, British, European, and global.

Literature Review

The cultural redefinition of Scottish identity in the post-devolution era has been extensively examined across the fields of literary criticism, nationalism studies, and cultural theory. Foundational to these debates is Tom Nairn’s *The Break-Up of Britain* (1977), which situates Scotland’s national question within a broader European crisis of identity and sovereignty. Nairn’s analysis of “stateless nations” provides a crucial historical backdrop to understanding Scotland’s fractured

nationhood. Complementing this, Graeme Morton's *Unionist Nationalism* (1999) underscores the paradox of Scotland's cultural nationalism coexisting with political unionism, highlighting the tension between autonomy and shared governance.

In literary studies, Cairns Craig's *The Modern Scottish Novel* (1999) and *Intending Scotland* (2009) argue that fragmentation and hybridity have long been central to Scottish cultural production. Craig posits that post-devolution fiction often resists essentialist notions of Scottishness, instead exploring the complexities of multiple identities shaped by globalization and migration. Berthold Schoene's *The Cosmopolitan Novel in the Twenty-First Century* (2009) and his earlier work *The Making of Orcadia* (2007) similarly stress the cosmopolitan turn in Scottish writing, particularly in the wake of devolution. For Schoene, Scottish writers often embrace narrative multiplicity as a means of negotiating transnational belonging.

Ali Smith's fiction has received considerable critical attention for its formal innovation and resistance to stable identities. Scholars such as Monica Germanà (*Ali Smith: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, 2013) and Sarah Dillon (*The Palimpsest: Literature, Criticism, Theory*, 2007) highlight Smith's experimentation with temporality, fragmentation, and polyphonic voices as a response to contemporary socio-political uncertainties. Her post-Brexit novel *Autumn* (2016), in particular, has been interpreted as emblematic of a fractured Britain negotiating the aftermath of devolution and European integration.

Jackie Kay's work, by contrast, has been widely studied through the lenses of race, sexuality, and diaspora. Critics such as Fiona Robertson (*The New British Identities: Literature in the 1990s*, 2002) and Alan Riach (*Representing Scotland in Literature, Popular Culture and Iconography*, 2005) have emphasized how Kay's *Trumpet* (1998) destabilizes traditional narratives of Scottish nationhood by foregrounding Black and queer subjectivities. More recent scholarship (e.g., Carla Sassi, *Scottish Literature and Postcolonial Literature: Comparative Texts and Critical Perspectives*, 2005) situates Kay's work within a global diasporic framework, suggesting that her narratives

expand the cultural imagination of Scotland beyond whiteness, heteronormativity, and monoculturalism.

The convergence of Smith and Kay in critical discourse underscores a broader scholarly recognition: that contemporary Scottish literature is less about articulating a unified identity and more about interrogating fragmentation, hybridity, and negotiation. This body of scholarship provides the conceptual scaffolding for this paper, which positions both writers as central to the reimagining of Scottish nationhood in the wake of devolution.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology grounded in literary and cultural analysis. The approach combines close reading of selected texts by Ali Smith and Jackie Kay with theoretical frameworks drawn from nationalism studies, postcolonial theory, and queer diaspora studies. Drawing on Tom Nairn (1977), Graeme Morton (1999), and Anthony D. Smith's theories of nationalism, the paper examines how Scottish identity has historically been conceptualized as fractured and negotiated. Cairns Craig (1999, 2009) and Berthold Schoene (2007, 2009) provide a lens for analyzing how Scottish fiction addresses hybridity and multiplicity in the post-devolution context. The works of Stuart Hall (*Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, 1990), Paul Gilroy (*The Black Atlantic*, 1993), and José Esteban Muñoz (*Disidentifications*, 1999) inform readings of Jackie Kay's fiction, emphasizing how race, sexuality, and diaspora complicate Scottish national identity. Detailed textual analysis of narrative techniques (polyphony, fragmentation, temporality) in Smith and Kay's works. Situating the texts within the historical and political moment of Scottish devolution and its aftermath, as well as broader global debates about migration, belonging, and identity. Identifying convergences and divergences between Smith's and Kay's strategies of representing fragmented nationhood, thereby demonstrating how both writers contribute to a post-devolution reimagining of Scottishness. While the focus is on Smith and Kay, the study acknowledges that their works form part of a larger tradition of post-devolution Scottish writing (e.g., James Kelman, Irvine

Welsh, Janice Galloway). However, the paper limits itself to these two authors because of their sustained engagement with fragmentation and their centrality in contemporary debates about Scottish identity.

Discussion and findings

Ali Smith's fiction frequently employs formal experimentation—nonlinear temporality, polyphonic voices, and metafictional structures—to capture the unsettled nature of post-devolution Scottishness. Novels such as *Hotel World* (2001) and *Autumn* (2016) destabilize linear narratives of history and identity, mirroring the uncertainties of a nation negotiating its place within Britain and Europe. Her characters often exist in transitional spaces, where belonging is provisional and subject to renegotiation. This fragmentation, rather than signaling weakness, reflects the realities of globalization and the permeability of national borders.

Hotel World is structured into five interlinked sections, each narrated by a different voice, and framed by the metaphor of time ("past," "present historic," "future conditional," "perfect," and "future in the past"). The novel opens with the disembodied voice of Sara Wilby, a teenage hotel chambermaid who has died in a freak accident: she falls into a dumbwaiter while attempting to show off to a friend. Narrating from beyond the grave, Sara recalls fragments of her life, her first experiences of love, and her sudden death. Her ghostly perspective emphasizes transience, memory, and the fleeting nature of existence. The second section shifts to Else, a homeless woman who often begs outside the luxurious Global Hotel (where Sara died). Else's narration reveals her precarious existence on the margins of society. She is denied entry into the hotel's comfort, symbolizing exclusion and the divide between wealth and poverty in late-capitalist Britain. The third section is told from the perspective of Lise, a cynical and alienated receptionist at the Global Hotel. Her voice is full of irony and bitterness, highlighting the dehumanizing, corporate atmosphere of the hotel. Lise represents the emptiness of service-industry consumerism and the erosion of human connection.

Clare, Sara's younger sister, narrates the fourth section, exploring grief, memory, and the lingering trauma of loss. Through her fragmented attempts to make sense of Sara's death, Clare struggles with both personal and existential questions, revealing how memory haunts the living. The final section is told by Penny, a wealthy journalist who once stayed at the Global Hotel. Her privileged perspective contrasts starkly with Else's homelessness. Penny reflects on her own isolation and superficiality, exposing how wealth cannot shield individuals from existential emptiness. The novel ends ambiguously, looping back to Sara's ghost, reinforcing the cyclical, fragmented temporality of life, death, and memory.

Autumn is the first volume in Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet*, written in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum, and hailed as the "first post-Brexit novel." The novel opens with 101-year-old Daniel Gluck, a former songwriter and art lover, lying in a care home. His consciousness drifts between dreams and memories, blending reality with surreal, lyrical reflections on time and mortality. Elisabeth Demand, a thirty-something lecturer, has known Daniel since childhood, when he was her eccentric neighbour. Their intergenerational friendship forms the heart of the novel. Elisabeth frequently visits Daniel, bringing him books, art, and conversation, bridging the gap between past and present, youth and age. Set in the months following the 2016 referendum, the novel reflects the fractured state of Britain: hostility toward immigrants, bureaucratic absurdities (e.g., Elisabeth struggling to renew her passport), and a pervasive sense of disillusionment. The narrative frequently references the work of Pauline Boty, a forgotten female Pop artist, whose bold and disruptive art becomes a metaphor for resistance against cultural amnesia and patriarchal erasure. Through Elisabeth's engagement with Boty's art, Smith emphasizes the importance of memory, culture, and dissent. The novel moves fluidly between past and present, dream and reality, emphasizing cyclical time—mirroring the seasons. Despite political fragmentation, the novel insists on regeneration, creativity, and the possibility of connection. Ali Smith's *Hotel World* and *Autumn* interrogate the complexities of identity in post-devolution Scotland and

a fragmented Britain by refusing traditional linear narratives and embracing plurality and multiplicity. In *Hotel World*, fragmented voices (a ghost, a homeless woman, a receptionist, a grieving sister, a wealthy guest) refuse a unified perspective, instead presenting Scotland/Britain as fractured by class, mortality, memory, and capitalism. The disjointed form itself enacts fragmentation, mirroring the disjunctive experience of a nation negotiating post-devolution selfhood. In *Autumn*, Smith dismantles temporal linearity, juxtaposing a pre-Brexit past, a fractured post-referendum present, and a cyclical vision of renewal. The narrative is polyphonic, interweaving art history, politics, and dreamscapes to embody the unsettled mood of a post-devolution and post-Brexit society.

Both novels resist essentialist identities. *Hotel World* foregrounds voices from the margins (homeless, grieving, ghostly), amplifying plural experiences of exclusion and belonging. *Autumn* emphasizes intergenerational plurality through the Daniel-Elisabeth relationship, collapsing barriers between old and young, past and present. It also insists that belonging is shaped not just by nationality but by memory, art, and personal connection.

Hotel World critiques late-capitalist globalization through the symbol of the “Global Hotel,” a sterile, placeless institution that erases local identity. The novel situates Scotland/Britain within global consumerism, highlighting the alienation and inequality it generates. *Autumn* situates post-devolution Scotland in a transnational crisis, reflecting the fractures of Brexit Britain. Through references to Pauline Boty and European art, Smith gestures toward a broader European cultural identity that transcends nationalist borders. Both novels resist nostalgic or essentialist visions of Scottish nationhood. Instead, Smith emphasizes the provisional and contested nature of belonging. Post-devolution identity is shown not as a coherent “essence” but as a literature of negotiation—fractured, fluid, and entangled with global currents. *Hotel World* reflects the inequalities of a Scotland negotiating neoliberal globalization in the early post-devolution years. *Autumn* captures the disillusionment of a Britain fractured by Brexit, gesturing toward the uncertainty of Scotland’s place within the UK and Europe.

Jackie Kay's debut novel *Trumpet* is inspired by the real-life story of Billy Tipton, a U.S. jazz musician who was revealed after death to have been biologically female but lived publicly as male. Kay reimagines this figure as Joss Moody, a Black Scottish jazz trumpeter whose gender identity is only publicly "discovered" after his death. Joss lives as a man, married to Millie, a white Scottish woman, with whom he raises an adopted mixed-race son, Colman. His identity as a trans man is known only to Millie, who accepts and protects him, and to the medical professionals who eventually certify his death. After Joss's death, Millie faces invasive public scrutiny. The press sensationalizes Joss's identity, reducing his life to scandal. Millie narrates her grief in a lyrical, interior voice, affirming her unwavering love for Joss while reflecting on their shared life. Colman, their son, struggles with anger and betrayal when he discovers his father's secret. Initially manipulated by tabloid journalist Sophie Stones into exposing Joss, Colman eventually reclaims his father's legacy by embracing the complexity of his identity. A ruthless journalist eager to profit from the scandal, Sophie represents the exploitative gaze of media culture. She objectifies Joss's life, turning personal history into public spectacle.

The narrative unfolds in multiple perspectives, interweaving Millie's mourning, Colman's rage and reconciliation, and Sophie's cold opportunism. Through this polyphony, Kay resists a singular interpretation of Joss's identity, instead presenting a layered portrait of love, music, gender, and cultural belonging. Kay's later short fiction continues her exploration of identity, race, sexuality, and belonging. *Why Don't You Stop Talking* (2002), stories address everyday encounters shaped by difference — racism, homophobia, and cultural alienation — in contemporary Britain. In "Big Milk," a lesbian mother navigates both joy and societal prejudice in raising her child. In "Shell," a mixed-race protagonist grapples with questions of appearance, belonging, and cultural memory. These stories highlight fragmented and often humorous negotiations of identity, showing how the personal and political intersect in diasporic lives. *Reality, Reality* (2012), this collection explores women's lives and identities in increasingly mediated, consumerist societies.

Stories like “The Woman with the Fork and Knife Disorder” or “Mrs Vадnie Marleen Sevlon” (an isolated woman who invents a television career for herself) address loneliness, invisibility, and the desire for recognition. While less explicitly focused on race or queer identity than *Trumpet*, these stories foreground marginality and the multiplicity of lived realities. Taken together, Kay’s fiction maps the complexities of living at intersections – Black, queer, Scottish, female, and diasporic – while exposing how dominant narratives erase or distort such experiences.

Kay’s work refuses to imagine Scottishness as monocultural or monolithic. Instead, it situates identity in a diasporic and multicultural framework, foregrounding plurality and hybridity. In *Trumpet*, Joss Moody embodies a Scottishness that is not white, destabilizing the homogenizing myth of the Scottish nation. Kay challenges what Stuart Hall (1990) terms the “imagined community” of cultural identity, presenting Black Scottishness as constitutive of the nation rather than marginal. Critics such as Alan Riach (*Representing Scotland in Literature, Popular Culture and Iconography*, 2005) argue that Kay redefines the cultural imagination of Scotland by insisting on its racial and cultural plurality. Joss’s trans identity complicates normative gender expectations, situating Scottishness within broader global debates on gender and sexuality. Fiona Robertson (*The New British Identities*, 2002) notes that *Trumpet* queers the national narrative, foregrounding love, desire, and authenticity over rigid categories of identity. José Esteban Muñoz’s concept of “disidentification” (1999) is useful here: Joss does not conform to heteronormative or transnormative scripts, but instead inhabits identity in ways that disrupt social binaries.

Kay’s recurring exploration of adoption, migration, and displacement (Colman’s mixed heritage, or the diasporic resonances in her short stories) reflects Paul Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic* (1993) model of identity as fluid, transnational, and shaped by histories of slavery and migration. Carla Sassi (*Scottish Literature and Postcolonial Literature*, 2005) situates Kay within a postcolonial framework, where Scotland’s own history of empire is refracted through its contemporary multicultural identities.

The exploitation of Joss's identity by Sophie Stones highlights how Black and queer subjectivities are often sensationalized, misrepresented, or erased. By giving narrative authority to Millie and Colman, Kay reclaims these silenced voices, constructing what Berthold Schoene (2007) calls a "literature of cosmopolitan negotiation." Kay's fiction aligns with post-devolution literary currents (Cairns Craig, *Intending Scotland*, 2009), where Scottish identity is no longer understood as a unitary essence but as fragmented, plural, and diasporic. Her characters embody the tensions of belonging — both rooted in Scotland and shaped by transnational trajectories — exemplifying a cosmopolitan vision of nationhood.

Conclusion

Benedict Anderson's notion of the nation as an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983) underlines that national identity is a cultural product rather than an organic essence; when writers make identity a site of negotiation they follow Anderson's insight that the nation is continually reimagined. Tom Nairn's diagnosis of the Scottish national question as one of rupture and ambivalence (Nairn, 1977) also anticipates a literature concerned with fragmentation rather than unity.

Homi K. Bhabha's account of cultural hybridity and the "third space" (Bhabha, 1994) supplies vocabulary for reading texts that refuse binary accounts of identity (Scottish/other; native/immigrant); instead they stage identities formed in interstitial spaces. Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* (1993) highlights transnational, diasporic flows that decenter national purity and anchor identity in diasporic entanglements. Stuart Hall (1990) argues that cultural identity is made in historical and discursive practice — always in process. José Esteban Muñoz's notion of *disidentification* (1999) is especially useful for reading queer and racialized Scottish subjects who refuse assimilation to dominant national narratives and instead rework them from the margins. Conceptual work on cosmopolitanism and transnationalism (e.g., Ulrich Beck, Kwame Anthony Appiah) shows how globalization complicates political attachments and cultural belonging; contemporary Scottish fiction often renders belonging as negotiated across local, national, and global frames.

Multiple narrators and perspectives (e.g., Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*; Ali Smith's *Hotel World*) unsettle a single authoritative view of "Scotland," allowing competing claims about belonging to coexist on the page. Nonlinear time, memory-lapses, and cyclical structures (Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet*, intergenerational flashbacks) portray identity as temporally unstable—always in negotiation with past and future. Texts that draw attention to storytelling itself critique monolithic "national stories" and open space for alternative narratives. Local Scottish scenes are placed in relation to diasporic, transnational networks (migrants, musical circuits, media flows), displacing nationalist closure. First-person testimonies from marginalized positions (Black, queer, working-class) reclaim representational authority and resist media-driven or nostalgic national myths. These formal devices make the act of negotiating identity legible: the text's form is a rehearsal of negotiation. Contemporary Scottish fiction negotiates belonging across several thematic axes. Texts place Scottishness in diasporic circuits. Characters of mixed heritage, immigrants, or transnational creatives show that Scottish identity is inflected by global histories (empire, migration) and contemporary flows (economic migration, cultural exchange). Jackie Kay's *Trumpet* centralizes a Black, queer Scottish household to demonstrate how race and diaspora are intrinsic to modern Scottish identity. Fiction foregrounds racialized experiences within Scotland, challenging the whiteness assumed by older nationalist narratives. By making Blackness and mixed identities central—not peripheral—these works force a redefinition of the national subject. Queer and trans subjectivities (Joss in *Trumpet*; other queer figures across contemporary short fiction) destabilize heteronormative national imaginaries. Using Muñoz's and Judith Butler's vocabularies, these texts show national belonging as performative and contestable. Writers depict how late-capitalist forces reshape communities—hotel service economies, care homes, precarious labor—linking local socioeconomic fractures with global neoliberal processes. Ali Smith's *Hotel World* and *Autumn* dramatize how economic and political shifts (devolution's political reframing, Brexit-era anxieties) produce new forms of exclusion and negotiation.

Smith's narrative fragmentation and polyphony make identity a collage of temporalities and perspectives; her novels often link local Scottish scenes to Europe and beyond (art history, migration, travel), refusing insular nationalism and instead modeling belonging as relational and provisional. Kay relocates Scottishness in a diasporic key; her polyvocal narrative gives primacy to intimate domestic testimony and counters sensationalist or exclusionary media narratives, thereby reclaiming the right to narrate who counts as Scottish. Authors like James Kelman, Irvine Welsh, Janice Galloway, A. L. Kennedy diagnose social fracture and plural identities – Kelman's dialectal narrators and Welsh's urban subcultures reveal Scotland as internally diverse, often transgressing the boundaries of sanitized nationalist memory.

A literature of nostalgia presumes a recoverable, homogeneous past; it comforts by smoothing over diversity and historical rupture. By contrast, the literature of negotiation makes visible historic entanglements and affirms plural belonging – it recognizes multiple Scotlands (urban, diasporic, queer, working-class) rather than a single canonical Scotland. It politically reframes identity – negotiation opens democratic space for recognition and contestation, rather than reifying exclusionary myths. It engages global currents – it shows Scottishness as participating in transnational cultural and economic flows, not sealed off from them. Therefore, the turn to negotiation is both aesthetic and political: it allows literature to reflect and intervene in contemporary debates about who belongs in Scotland and on what terms.

References :

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 1983.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Verso, 1993.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford, Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, pp. 222–37.

Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Nairn, Tom. *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-nationalism*. NLB, 1977.

Craig, Cairns. *Intending Scotland: Explorations in Scottish Culture since the Enlightenment*. Reaktion Books, 2009.

Schoene, Berthold. *The Making of Orcadia: Place and Transition in Oral Narrative and Text*. Edinburgh University Press, 2007.

Kay, Jackie. *Trumpet*. Picador, 1998.

Smith, Ali. *Hotel World*. Hamish Hamilton, 2001; Autumn. Hamish Hamilton, 2016.

**A Review of “The Dead Man” (1919): Roderick Watson
Kerr’s Meditations on Death and War**

Astha Keshri and Soumyarup Bhattacharjee

Abstract

This brief review focuses on “The Dead Man” (1919) by Roderick Watson Kerr and explores how the poem foregrounds a sombre meditation on death, mortality, and the corporeality of the dead through an encounter between the speaker and the decaying body of a deceased man. The poem, written when he was engaged in active military service in the First World War but published a year after the war’s conclusion, neither participates in naïve sentimentality nor in detached adulation for the fallen but offers a nuanced exploration of a range of complex emotions elicited by the encounter. Within this context, the article specifically examines the portrayal of the dead body referred to in the title and how, in the poem, it functions simultaneously as a grotesque object that evokes revulsion as well as the testament to an existence that transcends mortality. This review article was developed as part of an informal paper writing workshop for the MA students in the Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University.

Keywords: *Death, Body, Grotesque, Horror, Mortality*

Bio Note – Astha Keshri

Astha Keshri is currently a postgraduate student in the Department of English at Swami Vivekananda University, Barrackpore. She is in the 3rd semester of her MA degree in English Literature. Her areas of interest include Jacobean drama, feminist literature, and Romantic literature.

Roderick Watson Kerr (1895-1960), a Scottish journalist and poet perhaps best remembered today as the founder of the Porpoise Press, wrote several poems that dealt directly with

the subject of war. Kerr experienced the horror of the war firsthand when he joined active military service, first for the Machine Gun Corps and then for the Royal Tank Corps in the First World War and received the prestigious “Military Cross” for his contribution. During this period, Kerr recorded his experiences in his notebook and scribbled down poems that emerged from these experiences.¹ The poems were later compiled in the collection titled *War Daubs: Poems* and published a year after the end of the war, i.e., 1919, by the London-based publisher John Lane. “The Dead Man” (1919), a poem written during Kerr’s active participation in the military campaign, portrays the visceral horror emanating from the speaker’s encounter with the body of a deceased man who has been shot repeatedly. Through this encounter, the poet not only foregrounds the violence and trauma inflicted on human beings by armed conflicts but also problematizes notions of heroism and valour that are often attributed to death and martyrdom in wars. This article offers a concise analytical review of the poem’s treatment of death in the poem and how the corpse functions simultaneously as a grotesque object that evokes revulsion as well as a testament to an existence that transcends mortality.²

The speaker in the poem experiences a range of emotions upon his encounter with the body of the dead man full of gaping holes, presumably left by bullet injuries, indicating that he has been a casualty of the war. The opening of the poem palpably evokes feelings of visceral horror and revulsion through the decomposing body, which nudges the speaker to a somber and petrified meditation on his own mortality. The human body in the poem, in its lifeless form and a “sodden” state, functions as an uncanny phobic essence — a source of fear and anxiety in those who encounter it. Therefore, one witnesses a coming together of the corporeal with the psychological, the mundane and the metaphysical, in the poem’s depiction of death and the transformative power of the dead upon the living. The encounter with the dead thus embodies a

1 The biographical information about Roderick Watson Kerr is borrowed from the *Scottish Poetry Library*. See “Works Cited” for more information about the source.

2 This review article was developed as part of an informal paper writing workshop for the MA students in the Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University.

violent rupture between the un-lived life full of possibilities and the grotesqueness of his lifeless existence marked by the decomposition of flesh and bones: "Perhaps those blackened bones/Were subtly fashioned hand and wrist/That made sweet violin tones,/Or held a face till lips had kissed!" (Kerr). His body, once an embodiment of youth, beauty, mirth, and love, has been reduced to a "heap of slime." The disjunction between the un-lived life and the reality of death in the poem is stark and distressing—delineated with a jarring directness reminiscent of fellow Scottish Wat poet Charles Hamilton Sorley's invocation of the "mouthless dead" and how young soldiers await the same horrifying fate in "When You See Millions of the Mouthless Dead" (1916).

However, the "hideous mockery" of life inscribed in the grotesqueness of the corpse and the deeply unsettling uncanniness it evokes in the poem is accompanied by a desperate appeal by the speaker—to move beyond the corporeality and the transience of the corpse and embrace the transcendence that human life can achieve. The speaker's argument is simple: while the human body decays after death and death marks the finality of man's corporeal existence, he may live on in the memory of his loved ones, untouched by time, death, or decay. The irony lies in the simultaneous affirmation of the finiteness of human life that death embodies as well as the infiniteness of immortality in the memory of those who love him. Therefore, the corpse, despite its horrifying material presence and its capacity to produce overwhelming abjection, marks a crucial site of transition. Nonetheless, the possibility of an existence that outlives the material body speculated in the poem is hardly an optimistic affirmation. Rather, it betrays a desperate effort to escape the traumatic encounter: "Then come! let's kill the memory of this place -/O friends! it had a hideous, ebony face!" (Kerr). Similarly, even though the dead man may live in his lover's heart "embalmed" and "unchanging," resisting the unstoppable march of time, the two must live forever apart since that love can only be cherished in fond remembrance but can never be consummated.

It might be argued that Kerr's treatment of death in the poem is marked by themes that are frequently recurring in the works of British poets of the First World War. "The Dead Man" resonates with the corporeal and psychological violence inflicted by wars, the futility of both life and death, and the desperate longing for an existence that transcends mortality as explored by, albeit in varying degrees, styles, and with different points of emphases, the likes of Ewart Alan Mackintosh, Charles Hamilton Sorley, Wilfred Owen, and Siegfried Sassoon, among others. Kerr's poem refuses to participate in any tacit acceptance of war as a necessary evil; unlike Sassoon's "Absolution" (1917), the war, despite being also described as a "scourge," is neither waged for freedom nor to gain wisdom. Similarly, the poem is not a lament in the manner of Wilfred Owen's "Futility" even though it echoes the sentiment foregrounded in it, for the "The Dead Man" reflects in equal measures not only the one who has been killed but the ones who have survived and the poem, as the final stanza indicates, is as much about the need for preserving sanity and humanity in the face of the traumatic encounter with the corpse as it is about the abjection evoked by the corpse itself.

References

Kerr, Roderick Watson. "A Dead Man." *Scottish Poetry Library*, 20 Apr. 2020, www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poem/dead-man/. Accessed 25 Jan. 2025.

Owen, Wilfred. "Poetry Foundation." *Poetry Foundation*, 2019, www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57283/futility-56d23aa2d4b57. Accessed 26 Jan. 2025.

"Roderick Watson Kerr." *Scottish Poetry Library*, 19 Oct. 2018, www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poet/roderick-watson-kerr/. Accessed 27 Dec. 2024.

Sassoon, Siegfried. "Absolution by Siegfried Sassoon." *Poetry Foundation*, 24 Mar. 2021, www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57212/absolution.

Sorley, Charles Hamilton. "'When You See Millions of the Mouthless Dead' by Charles Hamilton Sorley." *Poetry Foundation*, 19 Oct. 2020, www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47427/when-you-see-millions-of-the-mouthless-dead.

Interconnected Lives: Human and Non-Human Fragility in Robert Burns' Pastoral Poems

Agnideepto Datta

Abstract

This paper examines Robert Burns' pastoral poems "*To a Mouse*" (1785) and "*To a Mountain Daisy*" (1786) through an ecocritical and ethical lens, exploring the poet's nuanced engagement with human responsibility and the fragility of non-human life. Both poems depict the unintended consequences of human actions—ploughing a mouse's nest and crushing a daisy—yet each conveys distinct thematic concerns: "*To a Mouse*" emphasizes unpredictability and shared vulnerability between humans and animals, while "*To a Mountain Daisy*" reflects on temporality, loss, and moral resonance. Through the use of personification, Scots dialect, and vivid imagery, Burns cultivates empathy for his non-human subjects and encourages reflection on the ethical dimensions of human intervention in nature. Drawing on scholarship from Noble, Pittock, and Huggan and Tiffin, this study situates Burns within early environmental thought, highlighting his capacity to intertwine pastoral aesthetics with moral and ecological consciousness. Ultimately, the paper argues that these poems exemplify Burns' enduring relevance as a poet who foregrounds interconnectedness, vulnerability, and human responsibility in the natural world.

Keywords: *Robert Burns, ecocriticism, pastoral poetry, human-nature relationship, vulnerability*

Introduction

Robert Burns, Scotland's national poet, is renowned for his profound empathy and keen observations of the natural world. Two of his most celebrated works, "*To a Mouse*" (1785) and "*To a Mountain Daisy*" (1786), exemplify his ability to

intertwine human experience with the lives of animals and plants. Both poems emerge from the rural Scottish landscape, where Burns, as a farmer, was intimately acquainted with the rhythms of nature. In *"To a Mouse"*, Burns addresses a mouse whose nest has been overturned by his plough, expressing sympathy for the creature's plight and reflecting on the precariousness of life. Similarly, in *"To a Mountain Daisy"*, Burns laments the fate of a daisy crushed underfoot by his plough, drawing parallels between the flower's destruction and the fragility of human aspirations.

These poems transcend mere pastoral imagery; they delve into themes of vulnerability, fate, and the unintended consequences of human actions. Burns' use of the Scots dialect adds authenticity and emotional depth, allowing readers to connect with the subjects on a personal level. Through these works, Burns not only showcases his literary prowess but also invites readers to contemplate the interconnectedness of all living beings and the ethical considerations of human intervention in nature.

Scholarly engagement with Robert Burns' nature poetry has consistently highlighted his unique blending of pastoral tradition with moral and philosophical reflection. According to Noble (2015), Burns' depiction of non-human life, as seen in *"To a Mouse"* and *"To a Mountain Daisy"*, reflects a profound ethical consciousness, wherein human actions are framed as both disruptive and instructive (Noble 42). Similarly, Pittock (2001) emphasizes Burns' use of the rural Scottish landscape not merely as a backdrop but as a participant in the moral dialogue, suggesting that the poet's attention to the minutiae of daily agricultural life enables him to explore universal themes of vulnerability and mortality (Pittock 87). Further, ecocritical readings, such as those by Huggan and Tiffin (2010), situate Burns within an early environmental discourse, arguing that his sympathetic portrayal of animals and plants anticipates later ecological thought by emphasizing interdependence and human accountability (Huggan and Tiffin 29). These studies collectively underscore Burns' dual function as both poet and moral observer, revealing how his seemingly simple pastoral poems engage with complex ethical and existential questions.

Human Fragility and Ethical Reflection in *To a Mouse*

In “*To a Mouse*”, Robert Burns presents a nuanced meditation on vulnerability, human intervention, and the unpredictability of life. The poem opens with the speaker’s accidental destruction of the mouse’s nest while ploughing, immediately establishing a tone of sympathy and ethical reflection: the human act, though unintentional, has profound consequences for another living being (Burns, lines 1–8). Scholars such as Noble (2015) argue that the mouse functions as a symbolic mirror for human fragility, highlighting how unforeseen events can disrupt both animal and human existence (Noble 45).

Burns’ use of the Scots dialect enhances the intimacy and immediacy of the poem, allowing readers to engage more deeply with the speaker’s moral consciousness. For example, words like “*wee beastie*” and “*sair*” convey both affection and sorrow, bridging the human-animal divide (Pittock 89). The poem also employs enjambment and irregular rhyme, reflecting the instability of life and the tension between human intention and natural consequence.

Ecocritical perspectives, including those by Huggan and Tiffin (2010), interpret the poem as an early environmental reflection, suggesting that Burns’ empathy extends beyond mere sentimentality to an ethical awareness of human responsibility toward the non-human world (Huggan and Tiffin 31). The concluding lines, in which Burns acknowledges that “the best-laid schemes o’ mice an’ men / Gang aft agley,” universalize the mouse’s plight, reminding readers of the shared vulnerabilities that define all living beings.

Transience, Loss, and Moral Reflection in *To a Mountain Daisy*

In “*To a Mountain Daisy*”, Robert Burns extends his pastoral reflection to the plant world, lamenting the fate of a daisy crushed by his plough. Like “*To a Mouse*”, the poem foregrounds human intervention in nature, emphasizing both the fragility of life and the ethical responsibilities of humans toward non-human beings (Burns, lines 1–12). Scholars have noted that Burns’ treatment of the daisy parallels his

treatment of the mouse: both are innocent victims of human labor, symbolizing the vulnerability inherent in all forms of life (Noble 52).

The poem's diction and imagery convey a tender sympathy for the daisy. Burns describes it as "*wee, modest, crimson-tipped flower*," evoking delicacy and ephemeral beauty (Pittock 92). The use of the Scots dialect again creates a sense of intimacy, allowing the reader to share the speaker's reflective mourning. Moreover, Burns draws an explicit moral analogy between the flower's destruction and human experiences of ambition and disappointment, noting that "Man's dominion over nature is not absolute; all creatures share the precariousness of existence" (Huggan and Tiffin 35).

Formally, Burns employs a balanced stanzaic structure and rhythmic regularity that contrast with the disorder introduced by the plough, mirroring the tension between human activity and natural order. Through this juxtaposition, the poet encourages readers to consider the ethical dimensions of human intervention and to cultivate a mindful engagement with the natural world. Consequently, "*To a Mountain Daisy*" complements "*To a Mouse*" by reinforcing Burns' philosophical and ecological concerns, highlighting the interconnectedness and fragility of all living beings.

Interconnectedness and Ethical Reflection Across Burns' Pastoral Poems

Robert Burns' poems "*To a Mouse*" and "*To a Mountain Daisy*" offer poignant reflections on the fragility of life and the unintended consequences of human actions. While both poems depict the destruction of innocent creatures by the poet's plough, they diverge in their thematic focus and philosophical implications. In "*To a Mouse*", Burns addresses a mouse whose nest has been overturned, expressing sympathy for the creature's plight and reflecting on the unpredictability of life. The poem conveys a sense of shared vulnerability between humans and animals, emphasizing that "the best-laid schemes o' mice an' men / Gang aft agley" (Burns, lines 17-18). This sentiment aligns with the ecocritical perspective that human actions often disrupt the natural world, leading to unforeseen consequences (Noble 45).

Conversely, *"To a Mountain Daisy"* focuses on a daisy crushed beneath the poet's plough, using the flower's fate as a metaphor for human suffering and the transient nature of life. Burns compares the daisy's destruction to the fate of a young girl betrayed by love and a poet unappreciated in his time, suggesting that "such fate to suffering Worth is giv'n" (Burns, lines 25–26). This comparison underscores the theme of human vulnerability and the inevitability of decline, resonating with the notion that all living beings are subject to the forces of time and circumstance (Pittock 92). The thematic parallels between the two poems highlight Burns' exploration of human responsibility and the ethical considerations of our impact on the natural world. Both poems employ personification and vivid imagery to evoke empathy for the non-human subjects, fostering a deeper connection between the reader and the natural world. Through these works, Burns invites readers to reflect on the interconnectedness of all life forms and the moral implications of human actions.

Conclusion

Robert Burns' *"To a Mouse"* and *"To a Mountain Daisy"* collectively illuminate his profound sensitivity to the natural world and the ethical implications of human actions. While seemingly simple pastoral poems, both works operate on multiple levels: they are meditations on vulnerability, reflections on the unpredictability of life, and ethical commentaries on human interference in nature. In *"To a Mouse"*, the poet recognizes the mouse as a fellow sufferer under the unpredictable forces of existence, encapsulated in the famous lines, "The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men / Gang aft agley" (Burns, lines 17–18). Here, the mouse is not merely an animal but a symbol of universal fragility, mirroring human uncertainty and emphasizing the interconnectedness of all living beings (Noble 45).

Similarly, in *"To a Mountain Daisy"*, the daisy's destruction under the plough evokes reflections on both natural and human vulnerability. Burns draws a direct analogy between the daisy's crushed existence and human misfortune, particularly in the realms of love, ambition, and social aspiration: "Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flower / Thou's met thy fate too

soon" (Burns, lines 1–4). Scholars have argued that this metaphor extends Burns' ethical concern from animals to the broader living world, revealing his attentiveness to the moral consequences of human intervention (Huggan and Tiffin 35).

Comparatively, these poems demonstrate Burns' capacity to blend pastoral observation with moral philosophy. Both employ personification, dialect, and vivid imagery to cultivate empathy and ethical reflection, yet each addresses distinct aspects of vulnerability: "*To a Mouse*" foregrounds unpredictability and the contingency of life, whereas "*To a Mountain Daisy*" emphasizes temporality, loss, and the moral resonance of destruction. According to Pittock (92), Burns' nuanced attention to the rural environment serves not merely as a poetic backdrop but as a moral and philosophical space, in which human actions are scrutinized in relation to the delicate balance of life. This dual focus anticipates later ecocritical discourse, wherein literature is seen as a medium for exploring ethical relationships between humans and non-human entities (Huggan and Tiffin 31).

Ultimately, Burns' pastoral reflections transcend nostalgia for rural Scotland. By examining the fragility of both animals and plants in tandem with human vulnerability, he positions his poetry as a site of ethical engagement and ecological awareness. These works invite readers to contemplate the moral weight of human action and to recognize the interdependence of all life forms. Burns, therefore, not only captures the aesthetic beauty of the natural world but also articulates an enduring ethical vision: that human responsibility is inseparable from an awareness of the fragility and interconnectedness of life.

References :

Burns, Robert. *Robert Burns - Nature Poems*. United Kingdom, Octopus Publishing Group, 2025.

Huggan, Graham, and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. Routledge, 2010.

Noble, William. *Robert Burns and the Ethics of Nature*. Edinburgh University Press, 2015.

Pittock, Murray. *Scottish and Irish Romanticism*. Oxford University Press, 2001.

Between Here and Elsewhere: The Politics of Belonging in Dharker's *The Terrorist at My Table*

Debarshi Arathdar

Abstract

Imtiaz Dharker's *The Terrorist at My Table* situates itself within the shifting terrain of postcolonial and diasporic literature, exploring the politics of belonging in a globalized world shaped by colonial legacies and contemporary anxieties. This paper examines Dharker's poetry through the theoretical frameworks of hybridity (Homi Bhabha) and diasporic identity (Stuart Hall), emphasizing how her work reflects both fragmentation and resilience in cultural selfhood. Dharker's transnational biography—Pakistani origins, Scottish upbringing, and residence in London—infuses her poetry with a layered diasporic consciousness that interrogates rigid definitions of identity, nation, and home. Through close readings of key poems such as "*The Right Word*," "*They'll Say: 'She Must Be From Another Country*,'" and "*The Habit of Departure*," the analysis highlights Dharker's use of irony, questioning, and satire to destabilize authoritative discourses of terrorism, migration, and otherness. Her work critiques exclusionary practices that marginalize diasporic individuals while simultaneously celebrating hybridity as a creative and transformative force. The recurring motifs of displacement and departure underscore an existential dimension of diaspora, situating Dharker's poetic voice in the liminal "third space" where new meanings and identities emerge. In addition, Dharker foregrounds gender as a crucial element in diasporic negotiations, presenting women as agents who resist and redefine their identities against patriarchal and cultural constraints. By situating Dharker within both postcolonial and Scottish literary traditions, this paper argues that *The Terrorist at My Table* contributes a distinct voice to global literature, challenging monolithic narratives and advocating for inclusivity, multiplicity, and empathy.

Keywords: *Hybridity, Diasporic identity, Politics of belonging, Postcolonial poetry, Terrorism and language, Cultural dislocation*

Introduction

Imtiaz Dharker's poetry collection *The Terrorist at My Table* occupies a unique space in contemporary postcolonial literature, intertwining personal narrative with global socio-political discourse. As a poet with roots in Pakistan, raised in Glasgow, and residing in London, Dharker embodies a diasporic consciousness that permeates her work. This paper examines select poems from the collection through the theoretical lenses of hybridity and diasporic identity, positioning Dharker as a distinct postcolonial Scottish poetic voice. By addressing socio-philosophical issues such as terrorism, gender politics, cultural dislocation, and existential fragmentation, Dharker's poetry reflects the complexities of a world shaped by colonial legacies and global modernity.

Hybridity and Diasporic Identity

Postcolonial theory provides critical tools to analyze Dharker's work, particularly the concepts of hybridity and diasporic identity as articulated by theorists like Homi K. Bhabha and Stuart Hall. Bhabha's notion of hybridity describes the creation of new cultural forms through the interaction of colonizer and the colonized, emphasizing the "third space" where meanings are negotiated (Bhabha 55). Hall's ideas on cultural identity highlight the fluid, ever-evolving nature of diasporic selfhood, rejecting fixed notions of origin in favor of multiplicity and difference (Hall 402).

Dharker's poetry exemplifies these theories, as her work navigates the intersections of language, culture, and identity. The hybrid nature of her poetic voice emerges from her multilingual background and transnational experiences, while her exploration of diasporic identity reflects the emotional and intellectual negotiations inherent in living between worlds. In "The Right Word," Dharker interrogates the power of language in framing perceptions of terrorism and otherness. The poem oscillates between labels such as "terrorist," "freedom fighter," and "child," challenging the reader to question the constructed nature of identity.

The shifting terminology reflects Bhabha's concept of the "third space," where fixed meanings dissolve, and new interpretations emerge (Bhabha 57).

Dharker writes:

"Outside the door, lurking in the shadows, is a terrorist? Is that what you call him?" (Dharker 23)

The repetition of questioning destabilizes authoritative narratives, revealing how language can both define and distort reality. The figure outside the door is not static but fluid, embodying the hybrid identity that resists singular classification. This poem critiques the binary oppositions often employed in political rhetoric, urging a more nuanced understanding of identity in a globalized world. "They'll Say: 'She Must Be From Another Country'" explores the experience of cultural dislocation and the persistent sense of otherness faced by diasporic individuals. Dharker employs irony and satire to highlight societal prejudices and the absurdity of rigid national identities. "They'll say: 'She must be from another country.' When I speak on the phone and they ask me where I am from, I say I am from here, but they don't believe me" (Dharker 45). The speaker's assertion of belonging is met with disbelief, underscoring the racial and cultural markers that often override personal claims to identity.

This aligns with Stuart Hall's argument that identity is not rooted in a singular origin but constructed through ongoing cultural interactions (Hall 405). Dharker's poem critiques the exclusionary practices that define national identity in narrow terms, advocating instead for a recognition of cultural hybridity as intrinsic to modern societies. "The Habit of Departure" reflects on the perpetual state of transit inherent in diasporic existence. The poem evokes the emotional toll of constant movement, both physical and psychological:

In "I have the habit of departure, of always being on the brink of leaving for somewhere else." (Dharker 67), departure is not just a physical act but a metaphor for the existential condition of the diasporic subject. The "habit" signifies an internalization of displacement, a restlessness that becomes part of one's identity. Bhabha's hybridity theory is evident in the sense

that identity is formed not through rootedness but through the liminal spaces between cultures (Bhabha 60). Dharker captures the bittersweet reality of belonging everywhere and nowhere simultaneously. Dharker's poetry transcends personal narrative to engage with broader socio-philosophical issues. Her work reflects anxieties surrounding globalization, terrorism, and the erosion of cultural boundaries. The poems discussed reveal how identity is shaped by political discourses, migration, and historical trauma.

In poems like "The Right Word," Dharker critiques the simplistic categorizations that dominate counter-terrorism narratives. She exposes how fear is manufactured through language, creating "us versus them" dichotomies that perpetuate violence and misunderstanding. Her poetry invites readers to confront their biases and consider the humanity behind the labels (Bhabha 63). Dharker illustrates how language becomes a tool for both inclusion and exclusion, often determining who is considered a threat and who is deemed innocent. The fluctuating identity of the figure outside the door in "The Right Word" symbolizes the ambiguity inherent in such categorizations. This reflection on the politics of fear resonates with the global post-9/11 landscape, where the discourse surrounding terrorism often simplifies complex geopolitical realities into reductive binaries. Moreover, Dharker's poetry suggests that the fear of the "other" is not an innate human response but a constructed narrative reinforced by media, political rhetoric, and historical prejudice. By dismantling these narratives, Dharker not only critiques institutional power structures but also challenges individuals to recognize their complicity in perpetuating fear-based ideologies.

Gender and Postcolonial Identity

Dharker also addresses the intersection of gender with postcolonial identity. Her portrayal of women often challenges traditional roles, presenting them as complex figures navigating patriarchal and cultural constraints. The exploration of female agency within diasporic contexts adds another layer to her critique of identity politics (Hall 410). In many of her poems, Dharker subverts stereotypical

representations of women, particularly those rooted in colonial and patriarchal frameworks.

She portrays women who resist, redefine, and reclaim their identities in spaces where they are often marginalized. This defiance is evident in poems where female voices assert autonomy against the expectations imposed by both their native and adopted cultures. The intersectionality in Dharker's work also explores how diasporic women grapple with the dual pressures of maintaining cultural traditions while navigating new socio-political landscapes. These tensions highlight the complexities of hybrid identities, where gender roles are negotiated within the broader context of migration, displacement, and cultural transformation. Furthermore, Dharker's poetry often interrogates the ways in which women are implicated in narratives of nationalism and religious identity. By foregrounding personal stories against the backdrop of political conflict, she exposes how women's bodies and identities become sites of ideological contestation. This critique aligns with postcolonial feminist thought, which emphasizes the need to understand gender within the intertwined frameworks of colonial history and contemporary globalization.

Existential Displacement

The recurring motif of departure in Dharker's poetry reflects a deeper existential inquiry. Her characters grapple with questions of purpose, belonging, and the search for meaning in an increasingly fragmented world. This philosophical dimension situates her work within a broader discourse on the human condition in the postcolonial era (Bhabha 66). Existential displacement in Dharker's work manifests as both physical migration and emotional dislocation. Her poems often feature protagonists who are metaphorical travelers, navigating not only geographical borders but also the psychological landscapes shaped by memory, loss, and identity crises. Departure becomes a recurring act—not merely leaving one place for another but continuously questioning one's place in the world. In poems such as "The Habit of Departure," Dharker explores how this constant state of flux leads to a fragmented sense of self. The act of leaving is

habitual, suggesting that displacement has become ingrained in the characters' identities. This existential restlessness reflects a postcolonial condition where the aftermath of colonialism leaves individuals suspended between histories, cultures, and homelands. Dharker's poetic voice thus resonates with a universal human experience of alienation, amplified by the specific historical and cultural contexts of diaspora.

Moreover, Dharker delves into how displacement can be both a source of suffering and a catalyst for self-discovery. The absence of a fixed home forces her characters to construct identities that are fluid, adaptable, and multifaceted. This philosophical exploration aligns with existentialist thought, particularly the works of thinkers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, who examined the human struggle to find meaning in an indifferent universe. Dharker extends this inquiry into the postcolonial realm, illustrating how historical dislocation complicates the existential quest.

Dharker as a Postcolonial Poetic Voice

While Dharker's work is globally resonant, her identification with Scottish literary traditions adds a distinct layer to her poetic voice. Scotland's own complex history of colonial entanglements and cultural hybridity provides a fertile ground for Dharker's explorations of identity. Her poetry can be seen as part of a broader Scottish postcolonial canon that includes voices grappling with issues of national identity, diaspora, and global interconnectedness (Hall 415).

Dharker's Scottish connection is not merely biographical but also thematic. The tension between belonging and alienation, central to Scottish literature, finds echoes in Dharker's exploration of diasporic identity. Her poems reflect the historical realities of Scotland's own colonial experiences and its role within the British Empire, drawing parallels with postcolonial struggles elsewhere. Furthermore, Dharker's use of English, infused with the rhythms and imagery of multiple cultural influences, challenges monolithic conceptions of Scottish literature. Her work exemplifies how postcolonial literature is not confined to former colonies but also emerges from within the colonial metropole, reflecting

the interconnected histories and identities shaped by empire (Bhabha 70). Through her poetry, Dharker contributes to a redefinition of Scottish identity that embraces diversity and acknowledges the country's complex colonial past. Her work stands alongside that of other contemporary Scottish writers who interrogate national identity, cultural hybridity, and the legacies of empire. In doing so, Dharker not only expands the boundaries of Scottish literature but also situates it within a global postcolonial discourse.

Conclusion

Imtiaz Dharker's *The Terrorist at My Table* is a powerful testament to the complexities of postcolonial identity in a globalized world. Through the lenses of hybridity and diasporic identity, her poetry reveals the fluid, contested nature of selfhood shaped by cultural intersections, political discourses, and historical legacies. As a distinct postcolonial Scottish poetic voice, Dharker challenges readers to reconsider their assumptions about belonging, otherness, and the socio-philosophical issues of our time. Her work not only reflects the lived realities of diasporic existence but also contributes to a richer, more inclusive understanding of contemporary literature.

Dharker's exploration of hybridity dismantles the rigid boundaries that have traditionally defined identity, presenting instead a dynamic interplay of cultures, languages, and histories. Her poems serve as a narrative space where the complexities of diasporic life are not only acknowledged but celebrated. This multidimensional portrayal of identity reflects the realities of our interconnected world, where cultural boundaries are increasingly porous, and identities are constantly in flux. Moreover, Dharker's critique of terrorism and the politics of fear underscores the power of language in shaping perceptions. By deconstructing the simplistic binaries often employed in political rhetoric, she reveals how such narratives can perpetuate misunderstanding and prejudice. Her work encourages readers to confront their biases, fostering empathy and a deeper understanding of the human experience beyond the confines of cultural stereotypes. Her treatment of gender further enriches her postcolonial critique,

as she gives voice to women navigating the intersections of cultural expectation and personal agency. Dharker's female protagonists are not passive recipients of cultural narratives; they actively resist, redefine, and reclaim their identities within diasporic and postcolonial contexts. This emphasis on female agency adds a critical dimension to her exploration of identity politics, highlighting the intersectionality of gender, culture, and diaspora.

Dharker's position within Scottish literary traditions amplifies her unique voice in postcolonial discourse. By weaving together elements of Scottish history with her own diasporic experiences, she creates a poetic tapestry that reflects both local and global narratives. Her work challenges the monolithic conception of national identity, advocating instead for a more inclusive understanding that embraces diversity and hybridity. In conclusion, Imtiaz Dharker's *The Terrorist at My Table* is not merely a collection of poems but a profound exploration of identity, belonging, and resistance in the postcolonial world. Through her engagement with hybridity, diasporic identity, and socio-political critique, Dharker offers a compelling vision of contemporary existence—one that is fragmented yet interconnected, rooted yet fluid. Her poetry invites us to reflect on our own identities and the socio-cultural forces that shape them, making her work an essential contribution to the ongoing dialogue on postcolonialism and global literature.

References :

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.

Dharker, Imtiaz. *The Terrorist at My Table*. Penguin Books, 2006.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, pp. 402-416.

The Flying Scotsman: Cycling around Bipolar Disorder with Old Faithful

Sudipta Dutta

Abstract

The nickname "*The Flying Scotsman*," originally attributed to the iconic railway service between London and Edinburgh, gained new significance when attributed to Graeme Obree, a Scottish cyclist, who is renowned for breaking the world hour record twice, in 1993 and 1994 with his customized cycle "Old Faithful." Obree's life story, as recorded in his autobiography and the 2006 biopic, both titled as *The Flying Scotsman*, is a testimony to a successful person's extraordinary level of dedication and resilience. However, his journey was marked by severe struggles with mental health issues. He chronically suffers from manic depressive disorder or as we call it the "bipolar disorder," and this is a condition about which he openly discusses in his writings. In fact, the reporters who have chronicled his success story have noted this too. While his autobiography provides a candid recalling of challenges regarding the disease with clear references to his multiple suicide attempts, film reviewers feel that the film offers only a superficial treatment of his mental health issues, even after beginning with an obscure scene containing one of those infamous suicidal attempts and that arguably dilutes a major part of the biographical narrative. This paper investigates the extent to which the biopic captures Obree's lived experiences of bipolar disorder and its influence on his personal and professional life. Taking into account some of the visual metaphors used in the film and by analyzing some key moments of his life from the excerpts from Obree's autobiography, the study will then seek help from relevant medical and critical articles to uncover how bipolar disorder shaped his sporting and personal decisions. The paper additionally aims to highlight the complexities of portraying mental health in biographical cinema.

Introduction

The title *The Flying Scotsman* evokes an image that is at once historical, national, and mythic. Originally, it was the name of the iconic express train that connected London and Edinburgh, a symbol of speed and progress in the early twentieth century. In the late twentieth century, the title gained a new association when it was attached to Graeme Obree, a Scottish cyclist whose career and life combined remarkable athletic success with deep personal struggle. The metaphor of the train fits Obree well: relentless, fast, and groundbreaking, yet also burdened by the dangers of derailment. His achievements were spectacular. In July, 1993 and then again in April, 1994, he broke the world hour record with a homemade bicycle, aptly named “Old Faithful.” He repeated the feat in 1994, challenging the dominance of elite sporting systems with ingenuity and determination. His engineering skills were as legendary as his physical endurance, for “Old Faithful” was assembled from spare parts, including washing-machine bearings, reflecting a creativity born out of constraint. The heroic aura surrounding these achievements, however, is inseparable from the psychological battles that defined his life. Obree has lived with bipolar disorder, a condition historically labelled as manic-depressive illness, which involves oscillation between manic highs and depressive lows. In his autobiography *The Flying Scotsman* (2003), Obree describes this condition with candour, detailing suicide attempts, crippling despair, and episodes of compulsive innovation. His voice is unflinchingly direct, making it impossible to separate the athlete from the illness. The narrative challenges the assumption that sporting triumph can be narrated as pure resilience; rather, Obree shows that fragility and strength coexist in unstable equilibrium.

The 2006 biopic *The Flying Scotsman* dramatises these same events but reshapes them for cinematic accessibility. The film acknowledges depression, most memorably in the opening scene depicting a suicide attempt in the woods. Yet its focus soon shifts to a story of ingenuity and victory, highlighting the invention of Old Faithful, the disputes with cycling authorities, and the record-breaking rides. Illness,

while present, becomes episodic and symbolic rather than cyclical and pervasive. Visual metaphors attempt to convey inner turmoil, the rope, the dark forest, the solitary rides, but the film ultimately privileges triumph over despair.

This divergence between autobiography and biopic reflects a wider cultural issue: how mental illness is represented in sport and film. Medical discourse describes bipolar disorder as recurrent and chronic, demanding a nuanced understanding. Cultural discourse, however, often frames illness through simplified tropes – either as a heroic obstacle to overcome or as a tragic flaw. Sport complicates this further, for athletic figures are celebrated as national symbols of discipline, endurance, and pride. Illness threatens the stability of such narratives, forcing uncomfortable reckonings with vulnerability. Obree's story thus offers a critical tension between lived experience and mediated portrayal. His autobiography insists that illness is constitutive of his identity, while the film offers a streamlined narrative of victory shadowed by occasional darkness. The study of these two forms invites reflection on how narrative structures shape our understanding of mental health, how visual metaphors translate inner life, and how cultural identity reframes personal suffering. By comparing the textual honesty of Obree's autobiography with the cinematic strategies of the film, one can uncover not only the politics of portraying mental illness but also how Scottish cultural pride is both reinforced and complicated by such representations. The analysis will further benefit from psychoanalytic insights drawn from Freud and Lacan, which emphasise the unconscious structures of desire, repression, and identity, thereby adding a literary dimension to the study of sport and suffering.

Textual honesty in the autobiography

Obree's autobiography is striking for its refusal to separate cycling from illness. The narrative rhythm mimics the fluctuations of bipolar disorder. Periods of innovation and success – designing Old Faithful, training with obsessive precision, planning record attempts – are narrated as manic bursts of energy. These passages convey compulsion as much as creativity, showing how the illness propelled as well as

endangered him. By contrast, his depressive episodes are described with stark simplicity: days when leaving the bed seemed impossible, moments when life itself felt unbearable, and suicide attempts that punctuate the narrative as moments of existential crisis.

Such candour positions mental illness as a constitutive part of his sporting identity rather than a side story. Unlike conventional sports biographies, which celebrate resilience by downplaying fragility, Obree presents fragility as the condition of resilience. The reader comes to see that the very same energy that enabled him to outwit authorities and defy established cycling norms was inseparable from the volatility that imperilled his life. This paradox, illness as both curse and creative force, gives the autobiography its raw power.

Cinematic interpretation

The film *The Flying Scotsman* translates these events into a visual narrative, but the demands of cinema reshape the experience. The opening suicide attempt gestures toward despair but is soon overshadowed by the more palatable story of invention and victory. The cyclical nature of illness is replaced with episodic moments of silence, shadow, and isolation. Depressive states are compressed into suggestive imagery—darkened rooms, isolated forests—while manic energy is translated into sequences of intense training and exhilarating rides.

Film scholars have noted that cinema often struggles with mental illness because it seeks narrative resolution, whereas illness is marked by recurrence and unpredictability. In Obree's biopic, illness functions as dramatic tension that must eventually be resolved, giving way to a climax of triumph. This narrative structure diminishes the chronic, inescapable dimension of bipolar disorder. The film becomes more about the genius of Old Faithful than the lived cost of sustaining such genius.

Comparative reading: autobiography vs. film

A comparative reading highlights this difference starkly. Where the autobiography lingers in despair, the film

condenses it into metaphors. Where the autobiography insists on illness as identity, the film presents illness as a challenge overcome on the way to victory. In both, the bicycle is central: in the autobiography, it is both salvation and obsession, while in the film, it becomes a visual metaphor for release and endurance. Both forms are truthful, but they tell different kinds of truth—one about the raw interiority of living with bipolar disorder, the other about the cultural legibility of illness in cinematic form.

Psychoanalytic perspectives and cultural framing

Freud's theory of the death drive provides a useful lens for reading Obree's repeated suicide attempts and his compulsive return to the bike. The drive toward self-destruction coexists with the will to mastery, echoing the tension between despair and invention. Lacan's concept of desire as mediated through the gaze of the Other is also relevant: Obree's compulsion to prove himself against governing authorities, audiences, and critics reflects a subjectivity structured by recognition and rejection. Cycling becomes not just a sport but a symbolic communication, a way of negotiating identity.

When aligned with Scottishness, these psychoanalytic insights take on cultural resonance. Obree embodies the Scottish archetype of the underdog—defying institutions, creating innovation from scraps, and asserting individuality against systemic power. Yet his mental illness complicates this image, refusing the neatness of heroism. In Lacanian terms, the symbolic order of national pride cannot fully contain the real of mental illness, which ruptures narrative coherence.

Scottishness and cultural pride

Scottish identity often valorises resilience, ingenuity, and defiance of authority. Obree's career embodies all of these traits. Old Faithful itself stands as a national emblem: an object of ingenuity fashioned from limited means, challenging elite sporting technologies. His victories against global competitors resonate with narratives of Scottish pride, showing the lone innovator defeating powerful systems.

Yet illness interrupts this narrative. The figure of Obree cannot be assimilated into a simple national hero myth because his story insists on vulnerability. Scottish cultural pride, therefore, is reframed not as triumph over adversity but as the ability to hold triumph and despair together. Obree becomes emblematic not just of victory but of complexity – the capacity to acknowledge that resilience is inseparable from fragility.

Conclusion

Graeme Obree's story is one of convergence and contradiction. His autobiography presents a candid interplay of triumph and despair, showing how mental illness was inseparable from his creativity and resilience. His biopic reshapes the same life into a cinematic narrative of invention and victory, compressing chronic suffering into symbolic images. This contrast underscores the difficulty of representing mental illness in narrative form.

The broader implication is that cinematic biography often flattens illness into a narrative device, while autobiography preserves its raw complexity. Sport complicates the issue further, for athletes are expected to embody resilience, yet Obree demonstrates that fragility is part of resilience. His story suggests that to celebrate resilience without acknowledging vulnerability is to miss the truth of human endurance.

This tension speaks to cultural ethics. How do we represent mental illness without aestheticizing it, diluting it, or using it as dramatic ornament? Obree's story reveals the stakes of this question, as both autobiography and film circulate within discourses of sport, cinema, and national identity. For Scottish culture, Obree stands as a figure of ingenuity and defiance, yet his illness prevents him from being absorbed into a straightforward heroic myth.

What emerges is a figure who teaches us that resilience is not the absence of despair but the ongoing negotiation with it. His story reminds us that creativity often arises from fragility, and that the ethics of representation matter deeply when narrating mental health. In reflecting on Obree's life, one confronts the larger question of how societies can acknowledge

vulnerability while still honoring achievement. The lesson is as much cultural as personal: resilience is not perfection but the capacity to endure and create within imperfection.

References :

MacKinnon, Douglas, director. *The Flying Scotsman*. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 2006, Accessed 22 Jan. 2025.

Obree, Graeme. *The Flying Scotsman*. Birlinn, 2003.

Walker, Peter. "Graeme Obree: Building Bikes, Writing Books and Beating Depression." *The Guardian*, 7 Sep. 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/bike-blog/2011/sep/07/cycling-graeme-obree-interview>. Accessed 21 Jan. 2025.

Exploring Transformation, Betrayal, and Identity in “*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*”

Natasha Chatterjee

Abstract:

This paper explores the key attributes of the celebrated novel *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Muriel Spark, focusing on its narrative style, thematic elements, and character development. The novel was published in 1961, and it is considered a modern classic and is particularly noted for its depiction of human emotions like love, betrayal, admiration, and jealousy. Spark’s omniscient narrative voice plays an important role in shaping the reader’s experience, often providing an objective, distanced view of the characters while revealing the complexities of their emotions. The narrative employs various techniques, such as flashbacks and flash-forwards, to layer the story and slowly unveil the motivations behind pivotal events. The novel’s tone remains consistent throughout, keeping the reader engaged without sudden shifts in pace. The key to the plot is the relationship between Miss Jean Brodie and her students, particularly Sandy, who becomes the primary focalizer. Through Sandy’s perspective, Spark subtly portrays the gradual breakdown of admiration for Miss Brodie and the subsequent betrayal that shapes the novel’s climax. The novel raises critical questions about narrative authority and ethical judgment, particularly in relation to characters like Mary Macgregor, whose portrayal invites the reader to reflect on the role of narration in victimization.

Keywords: *Identity, Betrayal, Authority, Transformation, Metafiction.*

Introduction:

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, a novel by Muriel Spark, is widely regarded as her most famous work and a modern classic of English fiction. It was first published in *The New Yorker* and

as a book in 1961, the story revolves around Miss Jean Brodie, a charismatic and unorthodox teacher at an all-girls school in Edinburgh. The novel explores various facets of human nature such as love, betrayal, admiration, jealousy, revenge, and regret. Spark's narrative style, marked by an omniscient and highly controlled narrator, creates an air of mystery and intrigue. The complex emotions of the characters, particularly of Miss Brodie and her students, are analyzed through a keenly perceptive lens.

The novel's narrative is defined by its use of an omniscient narrator who provides deep insights into the characters' inner worlds. This narrator is felt as a persistent presence throughout the novel, guiding the reader through the various complexities of human nature. One of the key features of the novel is its non-linear structure, using flashbacks that is analepses and flash-forwards or prolepses to reveal critical aspects of the story in layers. Though the narrative begins with Miss Brodie's elite group of girls still in awe of their teacher, the reader quickly learns of a betrayal. The identity of the betrayer, Sandy, is revealed pretty early, but her motivations remain unclear until later, which provides the novel with its central mystery.

Spark masterfully sustains a consistent narrative pace throughout the novel, creating a tension that persists without dramatic accelerations or decelerations in the story. Events such as Miss Brodie's personal affairs, Sandy's emotional dilemmas, and even the death of a student, are presented in a steady tempo, allowing the reader to immerse themselves in the emotional subtleties without being jolted by sudden shifts in tone. This steady rhythm reflects Spark's deliberate choice to maintain an even narrative tension, regardless of the event's significance.

The novel also delves into the role of the narrator and the influence of narrative voice on the reader's perceptions. The narrator's judgments, especially concerning characters like Mary Macgregor, are often harsh, and this highlights the process of victimization through narration. However, the reader is invited to question whether these judgments reflect Spark's own perspective or are merely part of the narrator's

crafted view. Sandy's development is central to the novel, and her changing perception of Miss Brodie underscores the growing disillusionment that leads to betrayal. Through Sandy's internal monologues, Spark explores themes of identity, autonomy, and the conflict between admiration and reality, positioning Sandy as the pivotal figure through whom the novel's deeper insights unfold.

Through these narrative strategies, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* presents a compelling exploration of power, influence, and the complexities of human relationships, demonstrating Spark's skill in creating a nuanced, thought-provoking work. Spark's themes are deeply personal, and it is fascinating to observe how her novels challenge conventional categories by functioning as metafictional works that reflect on the act of writing itself. Her subtle wit and keen observations make her an astute commentator on human life. While her themes are profoundly subjective, her writing style is characterized by an objective detachment, a quality that sets her apart from many of her contemporaries.

Metafiction and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*

Patricia Waugh defines metafiction as fiction that draws attention to its own status as a work of artifice, making readers aware of its constructed nature. This self-conscious approach allows the text to question the relationship between fiction and reality, as well as challenge concepts like "History" and "Reality" by revealing their constructedness. Writers like Salman Rushdie and Gabriel Garcia Marquez have used metafiction to question the validity of national histories and political ideologies, often revealing how these systems suppress alternative or marginalized voices. Metafiction also highlights the arbitrary nature of language, moving away from the idea that language merely reflects an objective reality. Instead, language is seen as an independent system capable of creating its own meanings.

One of the key features of metafiction is its rejection of the traditional authority of the author. In such works, characters often escape the author's control, and readers become active participants in interpreting the story. Intertextuality,

where one text is shaped by another, is another hallmark of metafiction. Although often associated with postmodernism, metafiction can appear in any writing that exhibits a certain level of self-reflexivity.

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie as Metafiction

Muriel Spark incorporates metafictional strategies in several of her works, including *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. In her earlier novels, such as *The Comforters* and *The Public Image*, Spark explores the power of narrative and the constructed nature of identity. In *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Spark uses metafiction to draw attention to the idea of authority and control in the narrative. Miss Jean Brodie, the teacher at the center of the story, sees herself as a guiding, almost god-like figure who shapes the futures of her students. Her belief in her divine right to determine their destinies is a form of self-assured omnipotence, which is eventually shattered by the very students she tries to control, particularly Sandy.

Brodie, who initially exerts god-like control over her students, becomes a tragic figure as the novel progresses. Through the gradual loss of power from Brodie to Sandy, Spark critiques the concentration of power in one individual. Brodie sees herself as an author of her students' lives, deciding their fates with a sense of superiority. She believes that she is elevating them to greatness, but her scheme is ultimately flawed and revealed to be self-serving. By showing Brodie's eventual downfall, Spark subverts the notion of an all-powerful author figure and demonstrates how characters can challenge the authority imposed upon them.

Sandy plays a central role in this metafictional narrative. She becomes the character who actively resists Brodie's narrative, questioning its validity and creating her own version of events. Through Sandy's rebellion, Spark illustrates how a character can disrupt a dominant narrative and become a counterpoint to the controlling author figure. Sandy's moral transformation serves as a reflection on the act of storytelling itself, and the story she creates within the narrative mirrors the self-reflexivity Spark is exploring at the level of authorship.

Sandy's resistance to Brodie's narrative also highlights the limits of Brodie's control. Although Brodie is fully invested in her own version of the world, she never realizes that Sandy is the one who has betrayed her. The identity of the betrayer is not kept as a secret for the reader, but Brodie remains oblivious, unable to access the narrative that Sandy has created. In this way, Brodie is reduced to a character in a story she can no longer control, undermining her role as the author of her own life.

This dynamic raises an interesting question: Is Sandy an extension of Spark herself, a critique of Spark's own narrative authority? Or is Spark using Sandy's rebellion to critique the very idea of authorship and control in fiction? By giving Sandy the power to undermine Brodie's narrative, Spark challenges traditional notions of authorial dominance and suggests that even the most powerful narrative can be overturned by the voices and actions of the characters within it. Through this process, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* becomes a metafictional work that both questions and plays with the boundaries of storytelling, authorship, and authority.

An Analysis of Major Themes and Motifs in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*

In *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, transformation, betrayal, and religion are central themes that shape the narrative. Muriel Spark delves deeply into these themes, weaving them through her characters' personal journeys and ideological conflicts. The interplay between Miss Jean Brodie's authoritarian ideals and Sandy's personal transformation is at the heart of the novel, highlighting issues of morality, manipulation, and the search for identity.

Transfiguration

Transformation or transfiguration is a key motif in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, particularly through the dynamic between Miss Brodie and Sandy. Miss Brodie's vision of transformation is one that reflects her own image; she seeks to mold her students into a select group of girls who will embody her ideals. She famously declares, "Give me a girl at an impressionable age, and she is mine for life" (PMJB 9),

believing that she can shape them into replicas of herself. To Brodie, transfiguration is not about broadening the students' perspectives or challenging their ideas, but about instilling her vision of the world in them. Her method is rigid, and her idea of "transfiguration" becomes stagnant, marked by an intolerance for independent thought.

Sandy, however, undergoes a true transformation, both emotional and spiritual. She embraces Catholicism, a faith that Miss Brodie openly rejects. While it's unclear whether Sandy's embrace of Catholicism stems from genuine belief or a desire to defy Brodie's ideals, this shift marks a significant change in her character. Sandy's evolution from a naive, devoted student to someone who challenges Brodie's authority is central to the plot. Over time, Sandy's childhood idealism fades, replaced by a sharp awareness of Brodie's flaws. This growing disillusionment, coupled with a sense of betrayal, leads Sandy to take drastic action. Her ultimate betrayal of Miss Brodie is a shock, given her initial loyalty to her teacher. This transformation is profound, with Sandy's emotional and moral awakening standing in stark contrast to Brodie's unchanging, self-centered worldview. As Gerard Carruthers points out, "We see Sandy undergo a more profound set of transformations in the novel than Brodie's, who for all her contradictory posturing remains a rather static character trapped in her own somewhat pathetic space."

Betrayal

The theme of betrayal runs deep throughout the novel, with the concept playing out on multiple levels. From the beginning, the narrator informs the reader that Miss Brodie will eventually be betrayed by one of her students, setting the stage for the unfolding drama. The chain of betrayals begins with Miss Brodie's manipulation of her students. Sandy's eventual betrayal is rooted in her growing realization of how Miss Brodie has manipulated and used them for her own purposes. Brodie's influence, once perceived as benevolent, is shown to be controlling and damaging.

Betrayal is portrayed not just as an external act but as an internal emotional struggle. Sandy, in her development,

begins to feel the weight of Brodie's manipulations. She comes to see how Brodie betrayed her students' trust, using them for her own ideological ends. At one point, Miss Brodie expresses frustration over the betrayal, but she is unable to recognize Sandy as the true culprit. Instead, she suspects the others, showing her inability to understand the dynamics she has fostered. When Miss Brodie asks Sandy if she is the betrayer, Sandy responds enigmatically, "If you did not betray us it is impossible that you could have been betrayed by us. The word betrayed does not apply..." (PMJB 126). This response encapsulates Sandy's belief that Brodie's authority was never worthy of loyalty in the first place.

Sandy's own feelings of betrayal are complicated. As a child, she struggles with betraying her own emotions in order to adhere to Miss Brodie's ideals. She suppresses her feelings for Mary, afraid of disappointing Miss Brodie. Furthermore, Sandy sees how Brodie orchestrates betrayals in others, such as her manipulation of Rose into an affair with Mr. Lloyd and Joyce Emily into joining the war. In response, Sandy's betrayal becomes a form of retribution. However, this act of betrayal weighs heavily on Sandy's conscience, leading her to a life of self-imposed isolation and guilt.

Religion

Religion plays a significant role in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, reflecting both personal transformation and the ideological conflicts within the narrative. Miss Brodie openly scorns Catholicism, seeing it as a religion for those who cannot think for themselves (PMJB 85). Ironically, though Brodie dismisses Catholicism, her temperament suggests she might have thrived in its structure. The narrator comments that Brodie's personality might have been better suited to the discipline of the Roman Catholic Church, suggesting a critique of her own lack of spiritual depth (PMJB 85).

In contrast to Brodie's antagonism toward Catholicism, Sandy ultimately embraces the faith, becoming a nun later in the story. However, it's unclear whether Sandy's conversion is driven by genuine religious conviction or by a desire to defy Brodie's authority. Her religious journey is tied to her

own struggle for identity, which is influenced by her complex feelings toward Brodie and the values she instilled. Religion becomes a key element in Sandy's moral development, symbolizing her need to seek atonement for her betrayal of Miss Brodie. Sandy's shift from an interest in Calvinism to Catholicism highlights the theme of identity and spiritual conflict in the novel. As Gerard Carruthers notes, Calvinism becomes part of the theme of the "mystery of identity," underscoring the tension between conflicting belief systems and personal transformation.

Sandy's eventual decision to embrace Catholicism can be seen as both a defiance of Miss Brodie's influence and a path to self-redemption. The themes of sin and atonement resonate throughout the novel, especially as Sandy grapples with her role in betraying Brodie. Her guilt is palpable, and the image of her clutching the bars of her cloistered room (PMJB 127) becomes a powerful metaphor for her internal struggle with sin and punishment.

Conclusion

In *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Muriel Spark masterfully explores the complexities of human nature through the opposing ideologies of Miss Brodie and Sandy. Miss Brodie's rigid authority and manipulation of her students collide with Sandy's evolving sense of self and her eventual rejection of Brodie's control. Through the motifs of transformation, betrayal, and religion, Spark critiques the dangers of blind loyalty, ideological manipulation, and the search for personal identity. The novel remains a compelling exploration of the intricacies of human psychology and the power dynamics that shape our lives, making it a timeless work that continues to resonate with readers.

Reference:

Hosmer Jr., Robert E., ed. *Hidden Possibilities: Essays in Honour of Muriel Spark*. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 2014. Print.

Hynes, Joseph, ed. *Critical Essays on Muriel Spark*. New York: G.K. Hall, 1992. Print. Critical Essays on British Literature Ser.

Reichardt, Mary R. *Catholic Women Writers: A Bibliographical Sourcebook*. Westport: Greenwood, 2001. Print.

Stannard, Martin. *Muriel Spark: The Biography*. 2009. London: Phoenix, 2010. Print.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

1. Dr. Rituparna Chakraborty is Assistant Professor & Head, Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University. She has done her M.A. in English from West Bengal State University and M.Phil. from Rabindra Bharati University. She was awarded Ph.D. from Raiganj University. She has cleared the UGC-NET examination. She has presented research papers in a number of National and International Conferences. She has also published several articles in UGC-CARE listed journals and International Peer-Reviewed Journals. She is a Nominated Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH), University of Edinburgh and Research Affiliate of the Scottish Centre of Tagore Studies (ScoTS). Dr. Chakraborty has presented research papers in numerous national and international seminars. She also has several published articles in UGC-Care List and Scopus Indexed Journals to her credit. Her published monographs include *Reifying Transnationalism: Tagore and the West* (published by Bloomsbury) and *Competence: A Course in English Communication* (published by Cambridge University Press). She has successfully completed an ICSSR Project as Principal Investigator.

2. Dr. Shubham Bhattacharjee is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University, Barrackpore. He has received his Ph.D. from Rabindra Bharati University. During his research period, he engaged classes at Rabindra Bharati University from July 2019, initially as a Junior Research Fellow and subsequently as a Senior Research Fellow. Previously, he had also pursued his B.A. (Hons.), M.A. and M.Phil. from the same institution. He also possesses a second M.A. Degree in English Language Teaching from Netaji Subhas Open University, alongside a Post Graduate Diploma in Translation and Transcultural Studies. He has

also completed MBA in Human Resource Management from Indira Gandhi National Open University. Dr. Bhattacharjee has cleared the UGC-NET examination on multiple instances, alongside WB SET and GATE. Prior to joining Swami Vivekananda University, he worked as an Assistant Professor at Sister Nivedita University. Dr. Bhattacharjee has presented research papers in numerous national and international seminars. He also has several published articles in UGC-Care List Journals to his credit. His published monographs include *Religious Convictions in the Post-Conversion Writings of T.S. Eliot* (published by Bloomsbury) and *Competence: A Course in English Communication* (published by Cambridge University Press). He has successfully completed an ICSSR Project as Co-Principal Investigator.

3. Dr. Madhumita Roy completed her Ph.D. on “Rabindranath Tagore’s Engagement with Science” from the Department of English, Visva-Bharati in 2022. During the initial years of her research, she worked as a research assistant in the Kalanukramik Rabindra Rachanavali Project under Visva-Bharati. She also provided research assistance to Prof. Uma Dasgupta. She worked as a guest faculty in Visva-Bharati, and later on joined Adamas University, Kolkata as a full time Assistant Professor of English. Currently she is an Associate Professor of English, Swami Vivekananda University, near Kolkata.

4. Dr. Shreyoshi Dhar is currently serving as Assistant Professor, Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University. She has completed her Ph.D. from Rabindra Bharati University. Previously, she had also completed her B.A. (Hons.), M.A. and M.Phil. from the same institution. She is also in possession of a second M.A. Degree in English Language Teaching from Netaji Subhas Open University, alongside a Post Graduate Diploma in Translation and Transcultural Studies from School of Languages and Culture, Rabindra Bharati University. She has also completed MBA in Human Resource Management from Indira Gandhi National Open University. She has cleared the UGC-NET examination on multiple instances. Prior

to joining this institution as an Assistant Professor, she worked as a Guest Faculty in Bengal School of Technology and Management, had engaged classes at Rabindra Bharati University since December, 2022 as a Junior Research Fellow along with being a Resource Person at Rani Rashmoni Green University, Tarakeshwar since April, 2022, where she was in charge of the day to day functioning of the Department of English. She has presented research papers in numerous national and international seminars and also has several published articles in reputed journals to her credit. Her published monographs include *Bloodlines and Bonds: Interpreting and Reworking Parent-Child Dynamics of Ancient Greek Literature* (published by Bloomsbury) and *Competence: A Course in English Communication* (published by Cambridge University Press).

5. Dr. Tirna Sadhu is currently serving as an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Swami Vivekananda University, Kolkata. She specializes in Science Fiction and Posthuman studies. She completed her Ph.D. in English Literature at Visva-Bharati Santiniketan and has supervised scholars over the past four years, with three successful Ph.D. dissertations submitted under her guidance. She earned her M.A. in English from Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan. She graduated with Hons. in English from Hooghly Mohsin College, affiliated to the University of Burdwan. Dr. Sadhu has presented at conferences, workshops, and symposia and has published widely in reputed journals and edited volumes nationally and internationally, as well as edited an anthology and translated poetry. In addition to research and teaching, Dr. Sadhu has actively organized seminars and workshops.

6. Dr. Soumyarup Bhattacharjee is an Assistant Professor of English in the Department of Language, Literature, and Cultural Studies (formerly the Department of English) at Swami Vivekananda University, India. He was previously a research scholar at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences in IIT Bombay. His current research focuses on transcultural approaches to contemporary Gothic literature in South and Southeast Asia. He is currently a

member of the Gothic in Asia Association and a former member of the Modern Language Association.

7. Agnideepto Datta is an Assistant Professor of English at Swami Vivekananda University, West Bengal. He holds a postgraduate degree from the University of Calcutta and an M.Phil. from Vidyasagar University. He is currently pursuing his Ph.D. at Bankura University. With teaching experience in institutions across India and abroad, he also coordinates examinations and interdisciplinary academic initiatives with dedication and efficiency.

8. Debarshi Arathdar is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University, Barrackpore. He has completed his post-graduation from the University of Delhi and is currently pursuing his Ph.D. from the same institution. Prior to joining Swami Vivekananda University, he was employed as a Guest Faculty in several colleges at the University of Delhi. His research interests include Cognitive Literary Studies, Narratology, Phenomenology, Contemporary Literary Theories and Philosophies and the interfaces between A.I. and Literature. He has presented his research at both National and International Conferences. He has published several articles in internationally acclaimed Peer-reviewed Journals and contributed Book Chapters in forthcoming projects. His research aims to unveil the complex intricacies of the mind's creative and comprehensive relation to texts at large.

9. Sudipta Dutta is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Language, Literature and Cultural Studies, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Swami Vivekananda University, West Bengal. He is also a Ph.D. research scholar at the Department of English, West Bengal State University. He completed his postgraduation from the Department of English Literature and Language, West Bengal State University with the first-class first rank in 2021.

10. Natasha Chatterjee is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University,

Barrackpore. Her area of interest is Indian English Literature. She has done her Masters in English from Dr. C.V. Raman University. She has done her B. Ed from Dr. C.V. Raman University. She has done A-Level from DOEACC Society. She is doing her Ph.D. on the selected novels of Sudha Murthy and Anita Desai. She has presented papers in various national and international conferences. She has also published many articles in various journals.

11. Tushar Kanti Biswas is a research scholar in the Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University.

12. Astha Keshri is currently pursuing her postgraduation in English from Swami Vivekananda University.