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Aspects of education in Scottish literature

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Abstract

The dissertation analyses various aspects of education in Scottish literature. The thesis attempts to answer the following key questions: If historically speaking the Scottish educational system is said to be one of the best, why then are there hardly any reflections of this ideal to be found in Scottish literature? Why are most teachers described as dysfunctional and the schoolchildren as frustrated with the system?

The dissertation examines literary examples taken from recent or contemporary Scottish literature. However, the opening chapter centres on kailyard literature and myth-making contained in the meritocratic lad of pairts imagery. The second chapter analyses how the schoolchild perceives education. Chapter three focuses particularly on dysfunctional representations of the teacher, whereas chapter four attempts conclusively to show that the representations of education in Scottish writings do not correspond to the ideals expressed in George Davie's *Democratic Intellect*.

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Preface

The first reason for writing this thesis stems from personal experience gained in the teaching profession in Luxembourg over a period of twenty-five years. The subject I teach is English, although I used to teach Ethics and Computing. My career includes working in various schools, both Lycées Techniques and Lycées Classiques, as well as teaching adults in the Luxembourg prison and at the language centre for adult tuition. In addition to classroom experience, I have worked in the field of social work with an emphasis on links between education and employment. I have also written three novels in Luxembourgish, containing literary elements of teaching.

Having had some experience with the Luxembourg education system, I am now interested in discovering the role education plays in another country. Between 1984 and 1987 I studied English, Spanish and Fine Arts at the University of Stirling. Coming from a rigid and selective school system, I especially enjoyed the professionalism and freedom of the Scottish system of education. I came to wonder about the interconnection between the Scottish school system and the representation of said system – or systems – in recent and modern literature.

The opening chapter shall consider some of the particularities of the Scottish structure of education. The development of school throughout the centuries, the part played by the Church and Calvinism, the influence of the Enlightenment, various modern political changes and their wider implications will be briefly considered. Certain myths like the lad of pairts, the rivalry between the “English” and the “Scottish”

educational agendas, and ideas contained in George Davie's *Democratic Intellect* will be explained and explored. This background will allow us to ask and partly answer the following central question.

A number of historians and critics have viewed the Scottish educational system as a source of national pride. Why then is there no reflection of this esteem in Scottish literature? Why are most of the protagonists of the novels to be discussed frustrated pedagogues who never seem to have embraced the ideals of the *Democratic Intellect*?

One should add that the fictional works to be analysed are not socio-historical documents. George Douglas Brown, Robin Jenkins and James Kelman provide an artistic rendering of aspects of education through their works but by no means can their venture be a substitute for statistical data and historic records of the school situation and educational discussions taking place during the authors' times of writing. This is a literary rather than historical investigation.

Chapter 1 – The Democratic Intellect and kailyard

1.1 – Historical background

The following survey on education in Scotland should mainly serve as a temporal reference point. As the scope of this work is literary analysis, what follows is by no means a complete history of Scottish education and must necessarily remain concise. For recent developments in Scottish education, the volume *Scottish Education*, by T.G.K. Bryce and W.M. Humes, has served as a valuable tool.¹ In their essay ‘The Distinctiveness of Scottish Education’, they state why Scottish education has the reputation for meritocracy and fostering social mobility: ‘Belief in the worth and purpose of education is linked to the sense of national identity which is regularly invoked to draw attention to the differences between Scottish and English society.’ According to Bryce and Humes, ‘This takes the form of a story or “myth”, shaped by history but not always supported by historic evidence, to the effect that Scottish society is relatively egalitarian and meritocratic’ (Bryce and Humes, p. 109).

We shall assess the implication of the quote in our discussion of George Davie’s interrelated concept of the democratic intellect at the end of this section. But for the time being we will consider the historical development of Scottish education.

The beginnings of the Scottish educational system can be traced back to monasteries like St Ninian’s Candida Casa at Whithorn or St Columba’s at Iona in the 4th and 6th century. For the next centuries the curriculum of these early teaching and learning centres depended on ‘religion and sacred literature, with some attention to ancient

¹ Bryce, Tom and Humes, Walter, editors, *Scottish Education, Second Edition, Post-Devolution*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2003.

language and astronomy' (Keay, p. 346). The marriage between Margaret of England and Malcolm III 'Canmore' and the accession of their learned son David to the throne (1084-1153) brought an English influence to Scottish education. Furthermore, the Celtic predominance was gradually replaced by the Roman form of an ecclesiastical structure. Abbey and cathedral schools appeared as forerunners of the grammar schools. The first three Scottish Universities were founded in St Andrews (1411), Glasgow (1451) and Aberdeen (1494), whereas Edinburgh was only established in 1586. In general these university structures were focused on Europe rather than England. Keay points out that they 'followed the student-led pattern of Bologna rather than the master-dominated pattern of Oxford' (Keay, p. 346).

In 1496, an Act of the Scots Parliament was to decree a first form of compulsory education, albeit aimed at a small section of the population. By 1560, however, the *First Book of Discipline* set out to establish a national system of education. Keay adds that the aim was to foster the moral of each individual and thereby serve the good of the community. In an important note, as it is the root of the myth of the lad of pairs, Keay stresses the fact that the act:

made no distinction between rich and poor; and that advancement from one stage to the next was to depend on ability – factors that lay at the root of the Scottish tradition of democratic meritocracy (Keay, p. 346).

This tradition of 'democratic meritocracy' becomes connected with the lad of pairs myth, which saw the local dominie providing additional instruction to the local prodigy. If we continue our historical journey, we will see that towards the end of the eighteenth

century there existed an expanding network of burgh and parish schools. Nevertheless, approaching the nineteenth century, the educational system was ill-equipped to meet the demands of the Industrial Age. One consequence of industrialism was the growing number of the population leaving the Highlands to seek jobs in big cities like Glasgow.² The provision of schooling was lagging behind this phenomenon. Whereas it was basically the state and the church which dealt with educational questions, industrialists like Robert Owen saw the merit of educating the children of his labourers at New Lanark mill.

All, however, was not well with schooling in Scotland. The Scottish Act of 1872, under the guidance of the so-called Argyll Commission, deplored 'high absenteeism, widely varying standards, especially between rural and urban areas, a shortage of finance, and a general lack of systematic control' (Keay, p. 348). Despite these inadequacies, progress was made. In this light the Act saw the provision of a 'Scotch' Education Department, albeit in London, as Keay ironically remarks. It eventually developed into the Scottish Education Department in 1918, before finally moving to Edinburgh in 1939. As we reach the twentieth century we should pause for a moment or at least reconsider our historical perspective. Since most of the novels to be discussed were written in the nineteenth and twentieth century, some of the educational reforms which may have influenced these novels should be considered in greater detail.

Some reforms which we take for granted today happened relatively late. Thus it was not until the Universities Act of 1892 that university courses were open to women. Once we come to discuss the treatment of female characters in Scottish literature, we have to bear in mind that an academic career for women was still an exception at the

² At the time of the Potato Famine the Glasgow area was also supposed to cater for additional school provision made by the Irish Roman Catholic community fleeing from famine in their native land.

turn of the twentieth century. Also, compared to the people on the Continent, the general level of education in Scotland was quite high. From 1919 onwards, the increasing number of adults, who so far had accomplished self-education in the public lending libraries so much lauded by James Kelman and Alasdair Gray, found intellectual stimuli through the expansion of university extra-mural departments. Studies like the Robbins Report (1963) or the Alexander Report (1970) have stressed the importance of further adult education, which remains faithful to the ideals of the Democratic Intellect.

George Davie's studies of the history of Scottish education are relevant in various ways. First of all, they illustrate the implications of philosophical ideas during the Enlightenment. These ideas are highlighted in *The Democratic Intellect, Scotland and her Universities in the Nineteenth Century* (1961). It is an optimistic account which clashes with Davie's scepticism over the evolution of Scottish education, as voiced throughout *The Crisis of the Democratic Intellect* (1986).

Writers like James Kelman rightly perceive Davie's merits. Educationalists equally discover or rediscover the philosopher's ideas. However, whereas some critics recognize Davie's work as a defence of ideals, other voices like George Kerevan denounce 'the concept of the Democratic Ideal as a mythologising of the Scottish dream – middle-class and working-class – that a good education was an infallible passport to the good life' (Kerevan, 'Beyond the Ivory Tower', in Bryce and Humes, opus cited, p. 685). Kerevan goes as far as calling Davie's analysis 'for the most part, an historical invention' (p. 676). Critics like Bryce and Humes, however, come to Davie's rescue. They maintain that 'to describe the democratic intellect as constituting a

“myth” is not to dismiss it as untrue ’ (Bryce and Humes, ‘The Distinctiveness of Scottish Education’, p. 109).

The term ‘myth’ becomes loaded with manifold associations. Against this, Davie always stressed the importance of the teaching of philosophy within the Scottish curriculum. The *Democratic Intellect* thus illustrates the various stages of a constant fight between Scottish educational values (influenced by German and French ideas) against dangers of over-anglicization. Davie stresses the point that the Industrial Revolution was central to this influence from England:

Power and machines were transforming Scotland overnight. England, with its tradition of great houses, absorbed the new stream of energy. In Scotland, its torrent burst its banks altogether and spread out in a submerging flood.³

Davie sees a direct link between anglicization – which more radical critics like Fanon or Beveridge and Turnbull would term colonization – and the diminishing part played by philosophy. The *Democratic Intellect*, according to Davie, always put the emphasis on a generalist, philosophical education, eschewing specialism and social compartmentalisation. To a certain extent, the literary treatments of teachers in chapters three and four of this thesis have mostly given up the ideals of the *Democratic Intellect*. The literary roots of the *Democratic Intellect*, with the signification of meritocracy or the lad of pairts, lie in kailyard literature, as will be analysed in the next section.

³ Davie, George, *The Democratic Intellect* (1961), Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1999, p. 287.

1,2 - Some definitions and criticism of kailyard literature

The focus of this thesis lies on twentieth-century Scottish literature. In order to put these texts within a historical and literary context, it is necessary to consider what took place in the decades before. We shall concentrate on the kailyard and ensuing myths. The lad of pairts myth in particular deserves closer analysis. The literary examples are all related to the theme of education within a certain tradition, which will be broken by George Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* in 1901.

The expression kailyard refers to cabbage-patch, with 'kail' standing as a synonym for kale, 'a humble and disparaged brassica but palatable if not overcooked' (Keay, p. 565). Within a literary context, the term was used in the opening poetic lines to Ian Maclaren's *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* published in 1894:

There grows a bonnie brier bush in our kailyard,
And white are the blossoms on't in our kailyard.⁴

The couplet is taken from a poem by Robert Burns. It depicts a rural idyll with the colour white suggesting innocence and purity, as opposed to the turmoil inherent to urban lifestyles. In a deadpan comment, Tom Nairn describes Kailyardism as:

the definition of Scotland as consisting wholly of small towns full of small-town 'characters' given to bucolic intrigue and wise sayings. At first the central

⁴ Maclaren, Ian, *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* (1894), The Project Gutenberg EBook, 2008, p. 1.

figures were usually Ministers of the Kirk (as were most of the authors) but later on schoolteachers and Doctors got into the act.⁵

The artistic value of kailyard writing is debatable and the critics are far from being unanimous. Beth Dickson points out that:

Until relatively recently Scottish literary critics have usually been embarrassed or outraged by Kailyard. Valuable attempts have been made by Ian Campbell and Roderick Watson to trace elements in Kailyard fiction back to older habits of Scottish writing or thinking.⁶

Views do differ indeed. Nairn describes the movement as ‘exploiting the sentimental aspects of Lowland during the period 1880-1914’ (Nairn, p. 146). Ian Campbell notes that:

The undemanding situation of these earlier rose-bushes in the kailyard, or the kitchen garden, emphasises the local nature of both setting and market, the intention for a mood of relaxation and lack of critical edge.⁷

A typical theme of the kailyard was indeed a longing for a pastoral past and an underlying criticism of industrial progression. The railways, after all a Scottish invention, remain – as Ian Campbell ironically remarks – ‘a prominent feature in our kailyard – prominent, that is, by its absence’ (Campbell, p. 13). Other characteristics of

⁵ Nairn, Tom, *The Break-up of Britain* (1977), Big Thinking, Edinburgh, 2003, p. 145.

⁶ Dickson, Beth, Annie S. Swan and O. Douglas: ‘Legacies of the Kailyard’, *A History of Scottish Women’s Writing*, eds. Gifford, Douglas and McMillan, Dorothy, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1997, p. 334.

⁷ Campbell, Ian, *Kailyard – A new Assessment*, Ramsay Press, Edinburgh, 1981, p. 85.

the kailyard include a representation of an often static village structure, with the minister, the dominie and the lad of pairts as the main protagonists, an insistence on Christian values and a sceptical attitude towards all kinds of changes. With respect to education, Campbell reveals a dilemma central to the set of values embodied by kailyard literature:

Education and self-help will lead to advancement in a way which social and religious authorities condone...An inner tension is visible here between a desire for a static Scotland, and an explosive need for trained administrators and businessmen (Campbell, p. 14).

Campbell's statement indicates that the often simple plots of kailyard literature nevertheless contain complexity at the core. However, this underlying complexity may not explain the popular success, not only in Scotland and England but also in the United States. After all this is 'literature of pleasure and relaxation, and its market is a highly-developed one which looks for the familiar' (Campbell, p. 85) and one can see how the subject-matter of an idealized rural past with familiar character types combined with the interspersed Scots expressions must have appealed to the Scottish diaspora.

Notwithstanding its huge popular success, literary historians have often derided kailyardism as a sentimental oversimplifying genre. Carol Anderson and Aileen Christianson speak of 'the oversimplified pictures presented by the Kailyard writing'⁸. Roderick Watson furthermore suggests that the low esteem of cabbage-patch literature

⁸ Anderson, Carol and Christianson, Aileen, editors, *Scottish Women's Fiction, 1920s to 1960s 'Journeys into Being'*, Tuckwell Press, East Linton, 2000, p. 10.

started with the critiques made by W.E. Henley and J.H. Millar in 1895 and 1903. More prominently, George Blake's opus *Barrie and the Kailyard School* contributed little to the status of kailyard. As Roderick Watson remarks, 'perhaps the most scathing comments over the years have been made by other modern authors, such as the novelist George Blake, who blasted Barrie and the Kailyard School in 1951' (Watson, p. 340).

While Blake lauds the achievements of Barrie, he discards the rest of Kailyard literature as 'small fry'⁹. According to Blake, the clue to the popularity of the small world of kailyard lies, in 'the popular taste of the nineties which tended towards the unusual, the quaint, the bizarre' (Blake, p. 32). While one can agree with Blake's assessment that kailyard touched readers' nerves at the time, other comments remain debatable and have been updated by recent critics like Moira Burgess, Roderick Watson, and Andrew Nash. They take a more positive viewpoint towards the kailyard genre. Moira Burgess points out that while 'kailyard' as a shorthand term still 'tends to imply a body of work characterised by sentimentality, narrowness of vision, and the acceptance of a code of unshakeable assumptions regarding conventional conduct and belief'¹⁰ there are 'recent studies (which) have begun to rehabilitate the kailyard' (Burgess, p. 68). Andrew Nash, for instance, sees the variety of themes as well as the complexity contained in some of the best of kailyard writing:

Even if Scottish Victorian culture did not wholly consist of Kailyard fiction, and was not wholly dependent upon its themes and values, the greater cultural authority of books ensured that it was this fiction that became representative and, as a result, impacted upon subsequent cultural patterns.¹¹

⁹ Blake, George, *Barrie and the Kailyard School*, Arthur Barker Limited, London, 1951, p. 32.

¹⁰ Burgess, Moira, *Imagine a City – Glasgow in Fiction*, Argyll Publishing, Glendaruel, 1998, p. 68.

¹¹ Nash, Andrew, *Kailyard and Scottish Literature*, Rodopi, New York, 2007, p. 244.

In a similarly positive vein, Roderick Watson points out that:

The recent cultural debate has begun to reassess the kailyard writers for all their failings – by finding a new interest in the wider context of their literary production and by recognising their place in the evolving history of Scottish writing (Watson, p. 339).

In a linguistic context, John Corbett has categorized the genre under attributes which include domesticity, rusticity, humour, humility, modesty, decency, piety, poverty, and canniness; with the crofter, the minister and the dominie as main representatives and Barrie's *A Window in Thrums* as key work¹². In this light, 'the Kailyard Scot amounts to a potential script, which might be based on "key works". By consuming these types of cultural product, certain structures of knowledge about the "typical Scot" will be established' (Corbett, p. 185).

Kailyardism has become part of the Scottish psyche, of the collective memory and longing for a nostalgic past long gone. As such it forms the part of a myth, with the lad of pairts at its centre. In relation to our topic of various representations of education, this narrative treatment deserves a closer analysis. The lad of pairts, like the minister or the school-teacher (the omniscient dominie), is indeed a familiar character of the kailyard. His role is 'centred round a country house or small farm with little relation to the outside world'¹³. The lad is often a young boy of poor or middle-class background, whose slumbering talents are awakened and developed by the local schoolmaster, the

¹² Corbett, John, *Language and Scottish Literature*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1997, p. 185.

¹³ Gardiner, Michael, *Modern Scottish Culture*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2005, p. 182.

kindly but authoritative dominie. And even if the educational boost benefited mostly the boys from middle ranks rather than the really poor, critics like Robert Anderson agree that 'the educational opportunities offered in the countryside made Scotland unusual' (Anderson, 'The History of Scottish Education, pre-1980', in Bryce and Humes, p. 220).

The accompanying lad of pairts model, which sought to chaperone the village prodigy became demystified by Blake when he adds that the rural school 'also produced scholars out of the lad of pairts', their culture was apt to be classical and mathematical, taking a poor view of cloud-capp'd towers and gorgeous palaces' (Blake, p. 10). The idea is again that, since the schooling is rooted in Calvinism and the ideals of the Enlightenment, traditional teaching of the classics or mathematics must rule over aesthetics and the imagination.

1.3 – Literary examples of education contained within the kailyard

Writing under the pen-name of Ian Maclaren, John Watson is the godfather of kailyard. His *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* (1894) epitomizes an essentially nostalgic writing, described by Marshall Walker as an ‘idealized projection of early Romantic views of the beneficent power of nature over people who were disposed to live simply and morally in an achievable, detached Arcadia.’¹⁴ *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* is split into seven sections containing seventeen chapters. The opening chapter titled ‘A lad o’parts’ introduces the inhabitants of this rural Arcadia as well as the theme of education.

Within our context of educational matters, it becomes clear right from the start that the pace in the imaginary village of Drumtochty is typically slow. The title ‘A lad o’parts’ contains the notion of meritocracy, and the opening pages not only insist on the importance of the dominie, they also present the contrast between an idyllic past based on traditions and the deplored modernism of a recent present. In a plain but clever move, Maclaren juxtaposes two paragraphs with differing time-scales to illustrate this contrast. The writer describes the present school-house as an uninviting place, the school yard is ‘treeless and comfortless’ (p. 3). The author quotes an excerpt from the local newspaper, which describes in ‘technical language’ (p. 3) how the inspectors scrutinize the workings of the ventilators and the thermometers, ‘to be kept at not less than 58 degrees and not more than 62 degrees’ (p. 3). After this ironic passage, the omniscient narrator admits that he finds it ‘difficult to live up to this kind of thing’, wherefore his thoughts ‘drift to the auld schule-house and Domsie’ (p. 3). Unlike

¹⁴ Walker, Marshall, *Scottish Literature since 1707*, Longman, London and New York, 1996, p. 167.

the modern school, the location was not treeless but set in the 'sweet pine-woods' (p. 3). Significantly for the idealized rural Arcadia, school work as such is not mentioned, but the harmless games played in the playground by innocent children, miles away from the drainpipes which Kelman's Kieron Smith would climb some centuries later. In the meantime, the Dominie is benevolently supervising the school affairs, showing an 'unerring scent for "pairs" in his laddies' (p. 4). Otherwise the discipline is maintained with the help of the 'tawse', a sadly prominent instrument which occurs, as we shall see, through much of Scottish literature about school: 'at times a boy got the tawse or his negligence, but never a girl' (p. 4).

No explanation is given as to why the female sex does not suffer from the belt. The difference is also shown by the absence of 'lassies' benefiting from the 'pairs' treatment. The educational emancipation will have to wait until the turn of the century, for the time being the dominie's focus lies on male prodigies. Thus young George Howe, of humble upbringing, is singled out and taken under the dominie's wings. Domsie's search for the best young scholar is described as an obsessive hunting for gold ('it was Latin Domsie hunted for as for fine gold, and when he found the smack of it in a lad he rejoiced openly' p. 4). The comparison to the precious metal gold points out the value which education has not only for the village of Drumtochty but for a wide segment of Scottish society in the nineteenth century. And yet while Ian Maclaren establishes – or reinforces – the myth of the lad of pairs and the dominie, he also seems to perceive the limits of a rural, unchallenged educational authority, when he states that 'Domsie was only a pedantic old parish schoolmaster, and he knew little beyond his craft' (p. 6).

Amidst the simplification and sentimentality that underlie much of Ian Maclaren's writing, there appear, however, themes like the cultural domination of England versus the Scottish complex of inferiorisation and feeling of colonization discussed by Fanon, Beveridge and Turnbull. The intellectual fight that the dominie leads together with his protégé is in fact a tug-of-war between the fostering of the Scottish democratic intellect and the overpowering exposure of Albion. While swaggering about George's feat of having obtained Firsts in all subjects, Domsie adds 'Eh, I was feared o'thae High School lads. They had terrible advantages. Maisters frae England, and tutors, and whatna' but Drumtochty carried aff the croon' (p. 9).

Domsie somewhat senses that this mix of fear and bragging is inappropriate and bears a dreamlike quality out of which 'the shame of boasting that shuts the mouth of self-respecting Scots descended upon him' (p. 9). Thus the traditional order becomes re-established. Set against the strongholds of meritocracy and the ensuing feeling of inferiority – or humility, to convey a more positive reading - the cultural gap with England will never be bridged.

Throughout the other parts of the kailyard novel, the importance of a good education is lurking in the background. Ironically enough, and one cannot be sure whether Maclaren intended this irony, the merits of Scottish university life are assessed at George Howe's funeral. The whole village attends the final farewell, which becomes highlighted by two of Geordie's college friends. The presence of the two scholars not only conveys an air of grace to the ceremony but reinforces and visualizes the very fact that the lad of pairts really achieved it. In a striking vignette Maclaren sets the items of a domestic lifestyle, motherly concern and idyllic pasture – the 'pieces of humble furniture', the roses brought by Geordie's 'peasant mother', 'the bleating of distant

sheep' – alongside the trophies and totems of university life: 'the choice treasures of Greece and Rome', 'the College prizes and medals'. Transposed from the metropolis to the countryside the reader discovers thus 'the idyll of Scottish University life' (all quotes, p. 14).

This uncanny transportation of a Scottish University life to the village reflects the myth-making of education. For the vast majority of the rural population knows life at a Scottish university only from hindsight. A deeper knowledge would have entailed for instance an interest in the philosophical ideas of the times, as well as the questioning of the old ways. But then these matters would have run counter to Maclaren's aim to present a highly idealized account of a Scottish community which appealed to a large readership. The latter may reject new technology ('The railway did not think it worth while to come to Drumtochty' p. 39) and secretly sympathize with the inhabitants of Drumtochty whose 'manners retained the fashion of the former age' (p. 39). For a demystification of these manners one will have to wait for George Douglas Brown. And yet, *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* remains ultimately not only a piece of escapism but amidst the insistence on sermons we find forebodings of Davie's Democratic Intellect when we hear that 'Drumtochty read widely—Soutar was soaked in Carlyle, and Margaret Howe knew her "In Memoriam" by heart' (p. 57). Maclaren lacked the courage to dwell on the ideas exposed in *Sartor Resartus* which would have confused a conservative readership anyway. The next line destroys indeed all hopes of an outpouring of revolutionary ideas, for 'our intellectual life centred on the weekly sermon' (p. 57). There are other hints and comments connected with the preoccupation with language and identity, for instance in the opening sentences of chapter two in the fifth section, where the reader is told how 'Carmichael used to lament bitterly that he

had lost his Gaelic, and laboured plans of compensation for our Celts, who were understood to worship English at an immense reduction of profit' (p. 57).

The modern readership, whether pro-George Blake/anti-kailyard or pro-Andrew Nash/pro-kailyard, may still be interested in questions of identity and enjoy the sheer humour contained in *Beside the Brier Bush*. The contrast between the masculinity of rural rusticity ('tears were denied Drumtochty men' p. 72) versus the 'effeminacy of towns' (p. 66) seems dated. On the other hand, for the scope of our research the opening passages with the treatment of the lad of pairts myth as personified by Geordie Howe, should serve as a fine example of representation of education in the kailyard novel. In the next chapter we shall explore a more complex rendering of education, as shown through J.M. Barrie.

A first look at Sir James Matthew Barrie's fiction confirms some of the worst aspects of kailyard writing. Thus in a devastating but superficial piece of criticism, Barrie's *Auld Licht Idylls* (1888) is described by Maurice Lindsay as combining the 'Kailyard practice of trite domestic Scots dialogue with the whimsy, the make-believe fantasy of evasion, that was to become Barrie's stock-in-trade' (Lindsay, p. 350). Lindsay's assessment is unfair, as what he terms 'trite domestic Scots dialogue' occupies barely 20 out of 108 pages. Most of the dialogue is restricted to chapter eight (pages 64 to 85). Titled 'The Courting of T'Knowhead's Bell' the centre-piece is a humorous exchange between young suitor Samuel Dickie and some Auld Licht young men.

Furthermore, Lindsay offers no example of what he calls 'fantasy of evasion' and *Auld Licht Idylls* is certainly no *Peter Pan*. Furthermore, as Roderick Watson remarks, 'only the initial stages of Barrie's career properly belong to the

kailyard' (Watson, p. 340). And even if *A Window in Thrums* (1889) can be regarded as a sequel to *Auld Licht Idylls*, we shall briefly focus on Barrie's first "Thrums" novel, as it is more relevant for our discussion about representations of education.

There are obvious parallels with *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*. Chapter one, entitled The School-House, deserves close attention because it unveils the function of the first person narrator. The first line informs the reader that the protagonist is a teacher ('I opened a window in my school-house'¹⁵) but he is what one could call an absent schoolmaster, as throughout the novella the narrative I prefers to be 'an unobserved spectator' (p. 3). The role of the teacher as a passive but well-informed observer is typical for most of Barrie's work. Whereas the characters inhabiting Maclaren's world may be flat (in the sense of E. M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*) but nevertheless made of flesh and bones, the teacher in *Auld Licht Idylls* remains a nameless shadow, that may well be Barrie himself. The first pages offer a description of the immediate surrounding of the school-house, similar to Maclaren, the actual physicality of the building and the nature round it matter more than what goes on inside the actual building. In fact, Barrie's love of nature becomes similar to the American transcendentalists' musings. Thus Barrie's description of a weasel chasing a water-hen could have been lifted out of Thoreau's *Walden* (Thoreau is in fact mentioned on page 5 in the book). The impression is of a stranded school-teacher, whose loneliness is stressed right at the beginning with 'I am alone in the school-house' (p. 3).

We never see the school-teacher in action, even his role in the village life is far from clear. The nameless teacher describes the function of the literary club (chapter 12, pages 100 to 108), which treat with Robert Burns' and David Hume's ideas in a

¹⁵ Barrie, John, *Auld Lycht Idylls* (1888), Dodo Press, 2010, p. 1.

similarly superficial way as the Drumtochty intelligentsia did with Carlyle, but he himself is absent. Barrie's protagonist shows a tradition in which he does not want to intervene:

Of the school-masters who were at times members of the club, Mr. Dickie was the ripest scholar, but my predecessor at the schoolhouse had a way of sneering at him that was as good as sarcasm (p. 105).

In the long line of schoolmasters, the narrative 'I' stands out as a passive observer. What the new schoolmaster should bring to the old, fossilized ways of the religious community, the Auld Licht Idylls, is difficult to ascertain. His scrutinizing view informs us of the changes about to come. Thus in the so-called 'bothy', the meeting-point of the village elders, the absent teacher discovers alongside the local newspaper a book by Charles Darwin (p. 21). In how far the ideas developed in the *Origin of Species* (1859) would have acted as a bombshell amidst the ancient peacefulness of the rural community, is not related. Instead Barrie describes the ceremonies of the Auld Licht kirk with an almost musicological and thinly veiled comic interest. By referring to Punch and Judy in connection with the travelling pulpit ('but no Auld Licht thought that it looked like a Punch and Judy puppet show' (pp. 30-31), Barrie seems to question the topicality and seriousness of a tradition doomed to disappear. This passage remains typical and depends on what Watson perceptively calls 'single moments of pathos or comic discomfiture, and Barrie's complex tone can be ambiguously and simultaneously patronising and ironic' (Watson, p. 341).

What gives *Auld Licht Idylls* its prominence, is the contrast between past and present. After all, the community which Barrie evokes had already passed away in the

preceding fifty years. This temporal detachment had its appeal for the kailyard readership, whereas the modern researcher can analyse for his purpose the changes which education underwent. We have related how modernity struck school-life in Maclaren's book, Barrie similarly explores these changes particularly in chapter six. 'The old dominie', who gives the name to said chapter, is used by Barrie as the literary means to voice the break with traditions. Whereas the dominie did his best work in a 'little thatched school,' (p. 53) he is now rejecting the new building, 'this red stone school, full of the modern improvements that he detested' (p. 53). The 'modern improvements' do not only apply to the maps and 'every other modern appliance for making teaching easy' (p. 57) they also refer to the new hierarchy within the educational field. As a result of the Education Act, the dominie becomes now supervised by the inspector. In the pedagogic power-play, however, the new weapon of the educational establishment ultimately loses out to the old-fashioned dominie. Barrie's description of the school-master may be picturesque at times but the fact that 'once a year the dominie added to his income by holding cock-fights in the old school' (p. 54) hints to the historical truth that teachers, while generally respected by the village community, lived on scarce wages. The reader is told that the dominie hardly 'made forty pounds a year' (p. 58). Still, Barrie respects the lad of pairts myth when he ironically gives the dominie his due as he points out that 'in his scholastic barn the dominie had thumped Latin grammar into the scholars till they became university scholars to escape him' (p. 57). The restricted life of the 'barn' clashes with the wider appeal of the university, and the verb 'escape' suggests a mild sort of criticism of the dominie's methods. These methods are condemned by the Inspector, who presents a shattering audit of the school: 'In the spring the inspector was sent to report on the

school, and, of course, he said, with a wave of his hand, that this would never do' (p. 57). What ensues is a comic tug-of-war, in which the inspector as a representative of an outside instrument of power is 'regarded as a natural enemy' (p. 57). Gradually the dominie does not correspond to the new educational ideas, even the conservative board of the school eyes him sceptically and diplomatically tries to get rid of him: 'The board would have liked to leave the dominie in his whitewashed dwelling house to enjoy his old age comfortably, and until he learned that he had to retire' (p. 56).

However, in some farcical moves – the dominie for instance cuts his beard to look 'ten years younger' (p. 56) – the old pedagogue battles against the inspector. Thus he provokes the 'admirable Oxford don', (p. 57) by having sent all the children – except two girls – away for the harvest. On another occasion, the dominie leads the 'unsuspecting inspector' (p. 57) astray on a field-trip into the glens, which excursion allows the dominie to laud Latin over the more fashionable school-subject of Geography.

We have said that Barrie's alter ego, the absent schoolmaster, remains strangely passive in this pedagogic debate. The schoolteacher we met at the beginning, dreamily overlooking the pond in winter, prefers to retell stories rather than getting actively involved. As Roderick Watson puts it, 'If these sketches have any wider scope, it comes from Barrie's awareness of change and mortality' (Watson, p. 341). Having somewhat foreseen some of these changes albeit within the kailyard mould, Barrie was to explore childhood fantasies and the world of the stage. A recently published study on Barrie gives credit to the various aspects of Barrie's work.¹⁶

¹⁶ Günnewig, Heinz, *Annäherung an James Matthew Barrie*, Université du Luxembourg, Luxembourg, 2009.

1,4 – Conclusion

The following conclusion can be drawn from this opening chapter. First of all, we have kept the historical background deliberately short, which is why we relied on Keay's knowledge. However, in order to obtain a wider and more detailed perspective a study of the history of Scottish education would have been necessary. In this vein, James Scotland's exhaustive analysis offers a range of statistical data. In addition to the statistics, fairly accurate pictures of the teachers' lives are given. The books offer no glamorization of the teaching job, and frequent references are made for instance to the low status and poor wages of the teaching profession as well as to the scarcity of the university budget, as the following quotes illustrate: 'money was never plentiful in Scotland, even after the Industrial Revolution'¹⁷ and 'despite their popularity, the universities were not rich' (Scotland, p. 336). On the other hand, Scotland's analysis includes a recognition that 'schools were the best place to attack poverty and disease which seemed endemic in British towns'¹⁸ as well as the fact that the chronically ill-paid teachers' job became upgraded: 'the teachers' status did improve in the late fifties and sixties' (Scotland, volume two, p. 233). Also, Scotland confirms Davie's notion of democratic education for the masses, when he claims that 'more poor boys got to the universities in Scotland than in any other country before the late 19th century developments in the United States' (Scotland, vol. two, p. 48).

Our section on kailyard literature has tried to provide a number of definitions and criticism. Generally speaking, contemporary critics have been more positive towards

¹⁷ Scotland, James, *The History of Scottish Education, Volume One*, University of London Press, London, 1969, pages 65-66

¹⁸ Scotland, James, *The History of Scottish Education, Volume Two*, University of London Press, London, 1969, p. 6

this strand of Scottish literature. George Davie's more philosophical notions of democratic ideals and meritocracy are embodied in the literary treatments of Ian MacLaren and James Barrie. Both authors have much in common – their popularity, the nostalgic longing for the past, the choice of kailyard as a genre – but the authorial tone of voice differs: MacLaren's prose and imagery is straightforward, whereas Barrie sometimes indulges in somnambulist set scenes. Finally, the literary examples of education contained within the kailyard cannot be exhaustive. Nevertheless, lesser-known authors like Samuel Rutherford Crockett (1859-1914), whose *Kit Kennedy* (1899) explores interesting facets of meritocracy, could have been included in our analysis.

The next chapter centres particularly on George Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters*, which was to announce a break with the kailyard and educational idealizations contained within. The second part of chapter two focuses on various female characters, as represented in the works of Nan Shepherd, Lewis Grassie Gibbon and Muriel Spark.

Chapter 2 – The schoolchild in Scottish literature

2.1 – The break with kailyard as illustrated through George Douglas

Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters*

Most critics agree to describe George Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* as a break with kailyard literature. If 'in sexual morality, in political challenge, in representation of rapid social change, the kailyard was safe ground' (Campbell, p. 117) then anti-kailyard will obviously tread more slippery ground vis-à-vis Scottish literature and identity. The significance of Douglas Brown's novel within a literary context is highlighted by Cairns Craig in the following manner:

The Scottish imagination's return to a pre-Christian world, dominated by fear, is underlined by the structure of the novel which, because of its date of publication – 1901 – and its self-conscious challenge to the traditions of Kailyard writing, is often taken as the foundation of modern Scottish fiction.¹⁹

The state of mind in the book is pre-lapsarian with the literary structure based on classical Greek tragedy rather than the determinism of an interventionist God. And even if *The House with the Green Shutters* 'inhabits the environment of the Kailyard novel

¹⁹ Craig, Cairns, *The Modern Scottish Novel – Narrative and the National Imagination*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1999, p. 48.

small Scottish towns full of pawky characters and local gossip – [it] inverts its mixture of comedy and pathos to focus on the community as malignant and repressive'.²⁰

As opposed to the pastoral idyll of Maclaren and Barrie's literary representations of the world, the atmosphere of *The House with the Green Shutters* remains oppressive. The fear mentioned by Craig derives from the main protagonist, John Gourlay; ' "Fear", "terror", "cowardice": these are the keywords in Douglas Brown's description of his characters' (Cairns, p. vii). The reader meets John Gourlay junior for the first time as he is looking out of the window of the parental home, pondering on the fact that his father has just told off workman Jock Gilmour in the following manner: 'The young boy was afraid of his father, but he liked to see him send other folk to the right about' (p. 12). This mix of fear and awkward respect is typical for the father-son relationship. Gourlay's wife, on the other hand, works as a foil which counterbalances the husband's macho musings. In an early debate about work and school, Mrs Gourlay defends her son by claiming that 'He's anything but strong, and the schooling's owre sore on him' (p. 12).

This protective maternal figure understands the son's rejection of school, as illustrated in the echo to the above quote: 'She was quite sure he was ainything but strong, poor boy, and that the schooling was bad for him' (p. 44). John's dislike of school is almost physical. He is often late for school and hates the 'stuffiness of school' (p. 44). Instead he prefers the harmony and motherly care found at home, in the absence of his father:

²⁰ Craig, Cairns, introduction to *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901), Canongate Classics, Edinburgh, 2005, p. vi.

John's dislike of school, and fear of his trampling bravos, attached him peculiarly to the House with the Green Shutters; there was his doting mother, and she gave him stories to read, and the place was so big that it was easy to avoid his father (p. 44).

As a young boy, John is unable to grasp the significance of a schooling he utterly rejects. Obliquely or subconsciously aware of his privileged social position within the village structure, he boasts to his schoolmates about his father's riches which he is one day to inherit: 'Mother says it'll all be mine some day. I'll have the fine times when I leave the schule, - and that winna be long now, for I'm clean sick o't; I'll no bide a day longer than I need!' (p. 46).

And yet, despite his social standing, young Gourley is often bullied and again motherly compassion seems the only harbour: 'I hate the school,' he said bitterly; 'I aye want to be at hame' (p. 49). Again, it is the mother who notices the cut lip produced by village bully Swikey Broon, what with the father singly minding village business.

The relationship between John Gourlay and his son, however, is central to our discussion about various representations of education in Scottish literature. The year which saw the publication of Brown's bleak book also saw the implementation of the Education (Scotland) Act of 1901, which included signs of progress such as the raise of the attendance rate from the normal age of twelve to the age of fifteen.²¹ But Brown's story was written prior to the year 1901, which means that educational reforms had not reached the imaginary village of Barbie yet.

²¹ Paterson, Lindsay, *Scottish Education in the Twentieth Century*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2003, p. 42.

What is different in *The House with the Green Shutters* as opposed to the kailyard literature we have been discussing before, is the fact that the lard of parts image seriously suffers. Or, to put it differently, the very myth-making bears negative connotations. First of all, in the previous literature the young man was chosen by the dominie or by the village elders, rather than by parents whose precarious, pastoral background would not have allowed for dreams about a university education. Here it is the father himself, John Gourlay, who decides to send his son to Edinburgh University. Secondly, the very motive for doing so differs for instance from the heartfelt innocence of the Drumsleugh community. Gourlay, as someone whose 'power over the rest of the community comes on the day of his son's birthday,' (Craig, p. vii) sees the sending off of his weak but imaginative son not only as a self-assertion and domination over the village structure, but also as an intellectual revenge over his commercial rival and antagonist James Wilson and his offspring. This tug-of-war is illustrated in the opening of chapter fourteen, which deserves to be quoted at length:

In those days it came to pass that Wilson sent his son to the High School of Skeighan ... Whereupon Gourlay sent *his* son to the High School of Skeighan, too, of course, to be upsides with Wilson. If Wilson could afford to send his boy to a distant school, then, by the Lord, so could he! (p. 110).

Thirdly, the very fact that young Gourlay, because of his incapacity to adapt, does not fit the mould of academic ideals, challenges the ideal that the only way for the elected

lad of pairs must be up. There may well be the traditional, kailyard mode of emphasizing the importance of a good Scottish education but the novelty here lies in the fact that young Gourlay refuses to play the lad of pairs part, thus entering – or deepening – the conflict with his father. Young Gourlay views the prospect of entering a new school with bitterness and awesome scepticism:

Was he to go out among strangers whom he feared? His imagination set to work on what he heard of the High School of Skeighan. They had to recite Shakespeare in public – how could *he* stand up and spout, before a whole jing-bang o’them? (p.110)

The passage contains Gourlay’s forte, his use of imagination (‘He was cursed with an imagination in excess of his brains,’ p. 124, ‘poor Gourlay was cursed with impressions which he couldn’t intellectualize’, p. 133) which will bring him a prize for essay writing at university, as well as his principal weakness, the lack of self-confidence Brown’s frequent usage of italics for personal pronouns creates a detachment between the omnipresent ‘I’ of the father figure as opposed to the otherness of the filial ‘you’. The dialogue is followed by an incident – a storm scene - which bears closer inspection, since it further describes the boy’s character. Fed up with school, young Gourlay simply skips it, as he does regularly: ‘Gourlay got a habit of stealing off at such times – it as easy to slip out – and playing truant in the bye-ways of Skeighan’ (p. 112). Gourlay is not a real ‘truant’ but only ‘playing’ the part. In this sense the representation of the schoolchild runs on a different scale to Robin Jenkins’ Tom Curdie in *The Changeling*

or the school populace as described by George Friel, literary examples which we shall meet in chapters three and four.

In a significant dialogue with his father young Gourlay tries to react, but the germinating rebellion seems doomed to failure. Significantly and paradoxically, the harsh exchange both illustrates the failure of communication and the boy's ordeal of following in his father's footsteps:

I don't want to gang,' (to school) he whined. 'Want?' Flamed his father. 'What does it matter what *you* want? Go you shall.' 'I thocht I was to help in the business,' whimpered John. 'Business!' sneered his father, 'A fine help *you* would be in business (pp. 110-111).

The local baker questions his whereabouts and warns him against the upcoming storm. Gourlay then panics, having 'had a horror of lightning since the day of his birth' (p. 113). In a moment of self-analysis, the young boy explains his knack of perceiving sublime moments like blazing lightning in the following manner to the baker: 'I notice things too much. They give me pictures in my mind. I'm feared of them, but I like to think them over when they're bye' (p. 115). Unfortunately, young Gourlay gets trapped by his father, who has no sensitivity for his son's missing out on school or fear of the storm. The real storm is the father's outburst, which does not stop in front of the school authorities. Old Gourlay is acting out like a berserker, not only thrashing his son like a windmill but revealing at the same time what he thinks of Scottish education. In his mind it should function in a mechanically commercial way, in the sense that a proper

pedagogical outcome is expected for the financial input. Money matters, and this is another difference with the lad of pairts aspect contained in traditional kailyard literature. Gourlay equates education with an economic good, and his anger is not only directed towards the son ('Am I to throw away gude money on *you* for this to be the end o't?', p. 115), but also against the school authorities: 'I pay the High School of Skeighan to thrash him, and I'll take damned good care I get my money's worth' (p. 115). For John Gourlay education means recognition and discipline, and this is what he demands from MacCandlish, the local headmaster. Gourlay's total lack of respect when confronting – or confronted by – authorities is shown by the fact that he scornfully rectifies the anglicised 'Headmaster' into 'Heid-master, aye!' (p. 116). Gourlay views himself above and outside village laws and power structures, therefore he discards the typical representation of the dominie, a character mostly embodied with respect in previous literature, by telling MacCandlish off like a schoolchild:

Damn it, sir, am *I* to be *your* dominie? Am *I* to teach *you* your duty? Do! Flog him, flog him, flog him – if you don't send him hame wi'the welts on him as thick as that forefinger, I'll have a word to say to you-ou, Misterr MacCandlish! (p. 116).

The incursion of swearing, Brown's by now familiar usage of italicizing pronouns, the repetition of 'flog him', the threats expressed by the imperatives as well as the unusual double consonant in 'Misterr' are all stylistic means to suggest a power play which Gourlay is about to lose as his financial situation and standing decreases.

Nevertheless, the sending off of the difficult son to university means further financial sacrifice. The prospect is introduced somewhat brusquely, which reflects Gourlay's tempestuous character: "Get yourself ready for the college in October," he ordered his son that evening' (p. 124). Young Gourlay, who had been thinking of taking over his father's business, seems flabbergasted and the father's decision triggers off a familiar verbal fight. The son has matured in the sense that by now he knows his father's true colours. He describes the paternal command as 'not only tyrannical, but treacherous' (p. 124). The boy doesn't want to leave Barbie, because he is 'feared of Edinburgh' (p. 125). The leitmotif of fear comes up again, summed up by Cairns Craig as follows:

The fearless father, the fearful son, and the fearing community of the unmanned: Douglas Brown's image of Scotland provides a sense of characters engaged in some enormous archetypal conflict which has been reduced to triviality, a conflict which has no ramifications beyond its own parochial interest. (Craig, p. xi)

The centre of this conflict between father and son²² is about educational values. Unable to spot young Gourlay's real talents, his father wants him to become a minister. On the other hand, the original function of the dominie as shown in kailyard literature becomes reinstated as he utters his concern about the boy's fate: 'The fault of young Gourlay,' quoth he, 'is a sensory perceptiveness in gross excess of his intellectuality'

²² with daughter Janet playing a minor part in this anti-kailyard tragedy.

(p. 126). The sentence suggests that the dominie would not have sent Gourlay to university in the first place, which stresses the notion of the non-typical lad of pairts.

A closer look at how the Barbie boy fares in the metropolis shall close our discussion of Brown's treatment of education as viewed through his main characters. The move from the village - of which young Gourlay possesses an idealized opinion, subliminally existing to counterbalance the harshness of the father - to the capital city seems like a rite of passage. The various stages include the sadness of leave-taking ('leaving Barbie for good would be a cutting of his heart strings,' p. 129), the introduction to the educational rituals, the wonders and ecstasy inherent to the life of a student, as well as the frustrations and thundering end of the shattered young male's homecoming nightmare. Gourlay really has no pleasure in playing the part as "Young Gourlay off to the college", for his heart was in his boots' (p. 130). The constant feeling of depression lifts in a turning-point at the beginning of chapter seventeen, which relates Gourlay's taking part in a 'grand' dinner hosted by Jock Allen. The latter used to be a former lover of young Gourlay's mother, so his motives for chaperoning her son might not be entirely unselfish. In an interesting stylistic departure from the general structure of the novel, the inclusion of a letter sent by young Jimmy Wilson to his mother informs her about the initiation into Edinburgh's upper social circle. If *The House with the Green Shutters* is a departure from the kailyard it nevertheless contains kailyard elements, and the boasting and sentimental letter from the 'wee sma' Scoatchman' (p. 135) serves as an illustration. However, the writing with its swaggering tone not only suggests a break with the relative peacefulness found in Barbie, it also announces that young Gourlay will be unable to avoid the pitfalls of Scottish (or any...) education. Even if the letter was not written by Gourlay, it tells

about the dangers of a lewd lifestyle fashionable among some students. For Gourlay is going to imitate Allen, termed 'the worst of cronies for a weak swaggerer like Gourlay' (p. 137).

Drink is going to be Gourlay's downfall. His fragile nature becomes fuelled by the intake of spirits, which allows him to face his critics. Fuelled by spirits, Gourlay will eventually win the Raeburn. If George Douglas Brown seeks to destroy the kailyard myth, the element of meritocracy as emphasised by the lad of pairts will play a prominent part in this destruction. Ironically enough, Gourlay's winning of the Raeburn is both an apotheosis and the beginning of the young man's intellectual end. Brown is careful in writing that the Raeburn was 'a poor enough prize, a few books for an "essay in the picturesque"' (p. 147) but he is stressing the significance of the trophy for Barbie: 'It had a peculiar interest for the folk of Barbie. Twenty years ago it was won four years in succession by men from the valley; and the unusual run fixed it in their minds' (p. 148).

The discussions about the Raeburn shed light on university life at the turn of the century. Interestingly and ironically enough, the only time George Douglas Brown puts something between brackets in the whole novel is to pinpoint the rivalry between Glasgow and Edinburgh University. Thus a professor from Edinburgh University stresses the seriousness of the panel as opposed to Glasgow ('I don't judge essays by their weight, though I'm told they sometimes pursue that method in Glasgow!', p. 150) which provokes a tumult from his colleagues: '(Groans for the rival Universities, cries of 'Oh-oh-oh!' and a weary voice, 'Please sir, don't mention that place – it makes me feel quite ill') (p. 150). Back to young Gourlay, whose winning of the Raeburn comes as a surprise. Within the structure of the novel, however, it allows for a

justification of the prodigal son's triumphant return to his native village. And what the young man had been looking for all his life is finally bestowed on him. The reader knows by now that Gourlay senior is no great speaker but his reaction to the son's success ('Fine, man! Damn'd sir. I'm proud o'ye!', p. 154) provokes marvels: 'John went round the corner treading on air. For the first time in his life his father had praised him' (p. 154).

The reader senses that it will be a first and final praise, for young Gourlay's victory will not be repeated and his academic career is doomed to failure. Brown adapts a somewhat moralizing tone to describe young Gourlay's reaction at the aftermath of his prize-winning essay, which in psychological terms is a foil of his feeble, feverish inner state. The observation that 'finer natures often experience a keen depression and sense of littleness in the pause that follows a success,' (p. 157) sounds edifying and patronising. Here one should add that George Douglas Brown himself went to university and graduated successfully in 1891, however, unlike John Gourlay, he was not sponsored by a rich father but by the rector of Ayr Academy who had helped him to obtain a bursary for Glasgow University. In this light Brown, rather than Gourlay, may typify the classical lad of pairts.

Gourlay then would represent the *bourgeois parvenu*, whose poetic success is eyed mock-ironically by Brown when he describes him as 'the proud wearer now of the academic wreath, the conquering hero returned to his home' (p. 158). The tone of this line is bitter and shattering. It underlines young Gourlay's tragedy, which resides in the fact that he has no home, neither at university nor in Barbie, where the prodigal son soon turns into a laughing stock. Apart from ale-houses, the only refuge is the physicality of the parental home - House of the Green Shutters - which is still

dominated by a tyrannical yet financially ruined patriarch. Success at university would mean that old Gourlay's financial sacrifices would not have been in vain and function as a reinstatement of the businessman's former powerful position within the social structure of the village: 'For one thing, the son's success would justify the father's past and prevent it being useless; it would have produced a minister, a successful man, one of an esteemed profession' (p. 182).

The passage is wishful thinking. Not only does it show how little understanding exists between father and son, it also illustrates the hopes bestowed on a Scottish educational system, a sort of factory of learning producing the crème of society. The passage clashes with young Gourlay's closure of his academic adventures outlined in chapter twenty-three.

The reasons for Gourlay's intellectual failure are partly the results of drinking sprees – the 'delirium of drink' - (p. 188) followed by bouts of depression²³ and the refusal to play the game of the educational establishment. Brown ironically prepares the ground for the showdown between Gourlay and one of his lecturers when he states that 'A Scottish university class – which is many most moral individuals – has a similar eruptive tendency (the comparison is with a bear garden) when it gets into the hands of a weak professor' (p. 190). During a lecture the bored and drunken Gourlay shouts *Cock-a-doodle-do* which provokes outbursts of laughter and the lecturer's rage. The revenge is described as follows:

There is nothing on earth more vindictive than a weakling. When he gets a chance he takes revenge for everything his past cowardice forced him to endure.

The timid lecturer, angry at the poor figure he had cut out on the platform,

²³ The introduction informs us that Brown himself suffered from periods of depression.

was glad to take it out of young Gourlay for the wrong-doing of the class:

Gourlay was their scapegoat (p. 192).

Gourlay is going to be expelled from university and become not only the scapegoat but the black sheep of the family. The lecturer (who surprisingly remains unnamed in the story) may have overreacted. In the absence of the professor's personal authority, the mechanism of the institutionalized university hierarchy is set into motion and the wheels will ultimately crush young Gourlay. One should add that the image of the weak professor is typical for post-kailyard literature and the long line of such characters ranges from Robin Jenkins's Charles Forbes, over George Friel's Mr. Alfred M.A., James Kelman's Patrick Doyle to Alasdair Gray's Mad Hislop. Ultimately, our way of reading *The House with the Green Shutters* has been to analyse the relationship between son and father, the latter's motivation for providing his offspring with a university education and the shattered illusions of the outcome. The high stakes put on education brought not even meagre gains and the frustrated, finished father-figure has only time for a final, cynical roar which underlines the gap between expectations heaped on a mythologising Scottish education and its poor results: 'No!' cried his father. 'I thought ye learned everything at College! Your education's been neglected. But I'll teach ye a lesson ...' (p. 125).

Brown depicts some aspects – some of which may be autobiographical - of what education looked like at the end of the nineteenth century. Young Gourlay missed his chance, the story ends in tragedy with the killing of old Gourlay by John and the death and suicides of son, daughter and mother. The lad of pairts motif is undermined by Brown's novel. Davie's ideal of the democratic Intellect suffers a blow, for university education cannot save Gourlay. The writer's original motivation for writing may not

have been deliberately anti-kailyard. However, the heretofore alternative, bleak treatment of education and the lad of pairts as a drunken drop-out who chooses patricide and suicide as exit options, will pave the way for further pessimistic and realistic representations of various kinds of education in Scottish literature of the next century.

2.2-The schoolchild as represented in the works of Nan Shepherd,

Lewis Grassie Gibbon, and Muriel Spark

The chapter explores aspects of the child within the Scottish educational system. It includes the tentative steps performed at school, the attempts to acquire reading and writing skills at primary school, the efforts to develop these and other skills at secondary school to reach university level. Our discussion will follow the age-group between five and twenty years, between the young pupil at primary level to the adolescent student at secondary school and university stage.

Central to our discussion is the gender question. Girls and boys seem to be represented differently in Scottish literature. Girls at school seem - generally speaking - to have a more positive outlook on school than boys. Whether this reflects the traditional stereotype that the female sex outperforms the male counterpart, be it because of differences in the upbringing or because of sociopolitical considerations, is not our primary interest. From a literary viewpoint the female characters generally want to access and succeed in educational values. In this light, Nan Shepherd's Martha Ironside, the main protagonist of *The Quarry Wood* (1928), sides with Chris Guthrie, the memorable heroine of Lewis Grassie Gibbon's *A Scots Quair* (1932-4) or the girls who form Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961). One should add that this tradition of a positive attitude of girls towards school and teachers seems to persist in more recent fiction, as demonstrated in Ann Donovan's *Buddha Da* (2004). However, the image of female acceptance, kindness and recognition towards school becomes almost caricatured in Alan Warner's *The Sopranos* (1998) and its sequel *The Stars in the Bright Sky* (2010) where a group of female students go on the rampage.

The female protagonists can be juxtaposed with their male foils. If Chris Guthrie and Martha Ironside for instance stand out as 'lassies of pairts' sharing an optimistic outlook, the lad of pairts frequently adopt a negative view of education. Characters seemingly as diverse as Young John Gourlay in George Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901), Dunkie, the schoolboy-turned-farmboy in Gordon Williams' *From Scenes Like These* (1968) to William McIlvanney's *Docherty* (1978) fit this pattern. And if we can say that there is a tradition of a mostly negative outlook to school shared by male protagonists, we will also see that this tradition continues in recent works by Scottish writers, for instance A.L. Kennedy's short-story "A Bad Son" from the collection *Indelible Acts* (2002). However, the chapter will avoid a reductive contrast: In the same way as not all female characters are angels at school, one can say that not all the boys are devils inside or outside the Scottish education system.

According to the Scottish ethnologist Anthony P. Cohen, 'Scottish education has long boasted of being less elitist than its English counterpart. The notion of the 'lad of pairts' expressed the plausibility of a meritocracy long before it became a mid-century platitude'²⁴. Whereas the differences between the English and Scottish education system have often been stressed, Cohen's wording of a mid-century platitude may critically refer to George Davie's idea of meritocracy as contained in *The Democratic Intellect*. As it is, Cohen continues to describe the lad of pairts in the following manner:

The tradition of the lad of pairts was that the education (and the upward social mobility to which it gave access) should be accessible to all who had the proven ability to take advantage of it. Novels in the 'kailyard' tradition frequently

²⁴ Cohen, P. Anthony, 'Personal Nationalism: A Scottish View of some Rites, Rights, and Wrongs', in *American Ethnologist*, Volume 23, number 4, November 1996, pp. 802-815.

featured professional characters in villages or small towns who had risen from lowly origins through their academic and intellectual prowess (Cohen, p. 813).

The first part of the quote refers to the idea of providing education for the masses. The definition and phenomenon of the kailyard literature has been analysed before; what matters here is the mentioning of what Cohen calls 'professional characters.' A traditional representative of the latter is the dominie. A cross between village intellectual and spiritus rectus, he played a prominent part in detecting and promoting lads of pairts. Cohen's quote suggests that, having profited themselves from the support of the village intelligentsia, the ones who have now moved into higher social spheres through upward social mobility, will in turn chaperone young boys mostly and young girls rarely, to make use of their 'academic and intellectual prowess' to get into university.

Cohen's critical view of the lad of pairts echoes other perspectives which remind us that the lad of pairts formed a minority. Michael Gardiner stresses the point that those from a poor background who were able to go to university were mainly boys. However, he questions the generalization of the lucky boy for whom 'education was a gateway to a better life,'²⁵ in the following way: 'How common the story of the lad of pairts was - how many independent-minded working-class boys really made it to university during any one period - is an ongoing debate in Scottish Studies' (Gardiner, p. 84). In recent times critical voices seem to dominate the debate, dismissing the lad o' pairts ethos as naive and not representative. In her essay "Disaffection with Schooling", Jeannie MacKenzie relates social exclusion to social class:

²⁵ Gardiner, Michael, *Modern Scottish Culture*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2005, p. 84.

In spite of the traditional Scottish belief in the lad of pairts - the working-class lad who can achieve in spite of lowly origins - an analysis of educational outcomes against social class reveals social class as the single most important factor in academic success. The lad of pairts may exist, but he is an exception (in Bryce and Humes, opus cited, p. 880).

Leaving the aspect of myth-making aside for the moment, the scarcity - not to say the very absence - of reliable statistical material, makes an objective assessment of the lad of pairts appearance impossible; especially in regard to the boys-girls quota. To use educationalist Lindsay Paterson's words:

The ignoring of gender also had the unfortunate effect for historians of leaving few statistics relating to male and female differences for any sector of education: with important exceptions, such as in relation to university students and to school teaching, official statistics remained undifferentiated until well after World War II.²⁶

The very fact of a girl wanting to move into higher education was still a rarity even at the beginning of the twentieth century. Which brings us back to our discussion of the position of female characters in Scottish literature in relationship to school. We have already mentioned a cast of literary heroines in the opening paragraphs of this chapter and it is now time to explore more deeply.

Nan Shepherd published *The Quarry Wood* in 1928. Cairns Craig has noticed that the structure of the novel resembles that of *The House with the Green Shutters*:

²⁶ Paterson in Bryce and Humes, opus cited, p. 47.

Girl of peasant family succeeds in going to university - replicates in female form the experience of young John Gourlay in *The House with the Green Shutters*, itself an ironic version of one of the paradigmatic emplotments of Scottish experience in the late nineteenth century, that of 'the lad o' pairts' (Craig, p. 84).

John Gourlay's fate - or should we term it defeat? - as a lad of pairts was described at length previously. Craig briefly contrasts both novels and points out that, as opposed to the bleak anti-kailyard realism of Brown's novel, Shepherd's 'narrative is far from pessimistic in its emplotment and even less so in its style' (p. 84).

The Quarry Wood is a breath of fresh air. According to Roderick Watson it deserves 'a key place in that line which runs from *The House with the Green Shutters* to *A Scots Quair* and beyond'²⁷. The novel tells the story of Martha Ironside, who grows up happily in the North East countryside around Aberdeen. The girl possesses an inborn passion for learning, and she defends this passion fervently. This becomes apparent in the first paragraph of the novel, when Martha remembers her having 'kicked Aunt Josephine (at the age of nine) for taking her from the books'²⁸. So from an early age Martha physically defends her love of books and the term 'kicked' reoccurs towards the end of the first chapter ('She simply kicked out with all her strength of limb', p. 4). Prior to this physicality there is a mix of the present reality and the supernatural, for words contain a magic power for Martha: 'Words came slowly to her need; and her present need was the most unmanageable she had ever experienced; for school to Martha was escape into a magic world where people knew things (...) she knew very

²⁷ Watson, Roderick, intro. to Shepherd, Nan, *The Quarry Wood* (1928), Canongate Classics, Edinburgh, 1996, p. ix.

²⁸ Shepherd, Nan, *The Quarry Wood*, Canongate Classics, Edinburgh, 1996, p. 1.

fervently that she was in love with school' (pp. 3-4). One should notice that this love never interferes with Martha's love for her family and the village community. Her fidelity to Aunt Josephine for instance, the one person responsible for kindling her passion ('Martha knew that it was she [i.e. Aunt Josephine] who had taught her wisdom', p. 1) is unfaltering.

Martha is growing up and at the opening of chapter four she has to decide whether or not to go to university. One should point out that she is fully backed by her mother Emmeline and father Geordie, the latter a rustic, wise man who instills the book with a gentle, authentic sense of humour which never sinks into kailyard. Education for girls was still the exception. Furthermore, Shepherd marvellously succeeds in describing the family's poverty. Unlike Brown's young Gourley the spendthrift, Martha realizes that sacrifices have to be made if she wants to continue her education. On the one hand the bursary money helps her to get to the highest class at school and she relies on her bike for travelling, on the other hand she is grateful for the coppers her mother gives her for the return trip home by train, for 'Martha had never had money of her own' (p. 22).

This realization that education does not come free, this awareness that going to university is a luxury which must be solidly earned, is further emphasized in a literary tour-de-force of uncanny beauty. Martha wants to save money to buy candles - thus betraying her mother - because 'a candle meant peace to work at night in her own chill room' (p. 23). Therefore she drops the return journey by train and opts for a bike ride. Loaded with her schoolbooks, she is braving a rough wind which turns into hard rain. Before Martha sets off on her journey home she decides not to buy the candles in town, because she might be caught in the storm. At the same time as her eagerness to get to her house without getting wet mounts, the weather is changing rapidly: 'She intended to

dismount and buy her candles in the last shop on the outskirts of the city; but the wind, and her own anger, drove her at such a frantic speed that she was already past the shop before her mind snatched at the necessity for dismounting' (p. 23). The wind and the sleet almost physically attack her, 'It chilled her neck, soaked her hair, dribbled along her spine, smothered her ears; the backs of her legs were battered numb; the boots filled slowly with the down-drip from her skirt and stockings' (pp. 23-24). Martha will be soaking wet and after her ride in a torrential rain and 'the violence of the weather' (p. 24) will eventually have to face her mother's anger. However - and this is vital for the understanding of the novel - she is putting her books in the bosom of her coat, for 'her person might be soaked and not her precious books' (p. 24).

Throughout the novel Martha is fighting for her right to education. Interestingly, the female version of the lad o'parts motive is juxtaposed with the male counterpart in chapter four. Martha vigorously justifies her eagerness to study Latin (see 'Martha bent her energy upon it', e.g. picking up Latin). Her outcry again illustrates this palpable desire for knowledge: 'Martha gulped. She suddenly wanted to scream, to cry out at the pitch of her voice, "I haven't time, I haven't time, I haven't time. What's a kitchen table in comparison with my Latin, with knowing things, with catching up on the interminable past. There isn't *time*"' (p. 27). The kitchen table suggests the homely values of domesticity, values which Martha is going to trade for a library table at university quite soon.

In the meantime, Martha's enthusiasm contrasts with the stoicism of Stoddart Semple, who bears similarities to young Gourlay. Stoddart was also pushed by his father but soon lacked ambition to conquer academia. The scene prior to which Semple is introduced consists of a powerful dialogue between Martha and her mother, a

dialogue containing broad Scots as a clash with the Latin taught at school and the English written by Shepherd. On a similar scale, Shepherd employs the description of Stoddart's father and his trade, as a contrast to the professor's opinion. The dim-witted but proud father may have done his level best to send his son to university, but the dream is shattered: 'His [Stoddart's] father, who had jogged for a lifetime behind his *saltie* selling smokies and finan haddies to the country wives, and had jogged more pence into his pocket than wisdom into his head, satisfied the boy's ambition and sent him to college. Strangely, not a professor among them could be found to endorse young Stoddart's opinion of his brains' (p. 28). By using Stoddart as the failed child prodigy early on in the novel, Shepherd highlights Martha's function as the genuine lassie of pairts.

An important detail in the comparison between Martha and Stoddart is the difference between inclusion and exclusion. In this respect we have already mentioned that Martha both strives and suffers to obtain learning but without neglecting her duties for the family or disrupting the village structure. She never becomes an outsider. Stoddart, on the other hand, serves as a foil who gradually becomes an outsider ('He shunned society', p. 29) sinking into morosity as well as intellectual and physical decay: 'The neighbours saw the deterioration of face and figure, the hanging jaw, the rag-nailed thumbs, the sloven countenance; they saw refuse encumber his doors; the smell of his body *scunnered* them; they cackled at his clothing, sodden from exposure to every weather, matted and split' (p. 29). Shepherd's naturalistic description appeals to the reader's senses of sight and smell. Symbolically, Stoddart never managed to brave the weather, to fight the elements. Unlike his female counterpart Martha whom we saw fighting against the weather in the previous paragraph, both protecting her body

and books against nature and emerging as the winner in the unconsciously played village kids of parts game.

In order to win this game, Martha establishes a road map:

It was understood that she was to be a teacher, after a two year's course at a Training Centre; but Martha herself was secretly working for more. She had made her own plans for going, not to the Training Centre but to the University (pp. 31-32).

Her breathlessness to finally start university studies at King's is illustrated at the beginning of chapter six: 'Greedy, convulsive, in a jealous agony, she raced for knowledge, panting' (p. 50).

An element rarely discussed in Martha's intellectual development is the fact that all the merit is her own. In this sense she is not the typical lassie o'parts and *The Quarry Wood* becomes almost anti-kailyard. Martha's parents may well support their daughter's choice - albeit reluctantly, especially where mother Emmeline is concerned - but there is no dominie or village teacher to lend a helping hand. Martha's merit is all of her own making. The same endurance which guided her and her bicycle through the storm, continues at university where Martha wouldn't miss a lecture by Professor Gregory, for 'No ice, no battering winds, could hold her from that pursuit' (p. 60).

Gradually a change occurs in Martha's perception of things, even if she remains true to herself. The gap between the narrow domesticity of a rural frugal lifestyle and the excitement and openness of university is reflected in a passage from chapter nine.

Rejoicing in a break from her studies, Martha perceives how differently her parents view life at university:

Emmeline continued to talk of Martha's University classes as 'school' and of the hours she spent in study as her 'lessons'. So did Geordie, for the matter of that. 'But they will never understand,' Martha sighed to herself' (p. 72).

But Martha willfully plays the role of the devoted daughter. Thus when her mother falls ill, the diligent student turns into the helping nurse, leaving her books aside: 'In the morning it was plain that Martha must turn sick-nurse. It was hardly the contribution to history that she desired to make. Her examinations were coming on and Emmeline ill was a handful' (p. 82).

We have mentioned elsewhere that the themes of the democratic intellect, the kailyard and the lad of pairts are tightly interconnected. Martha's graduation ceremony, which Shepherd structurally puts in the middle of the novel, is an apt illustration of this. We are reminded that the passage is highly autobiographical. Shepherd studied at Aberdeen University and graduated from King's College in 1915²⁹. She came to work as a lecturer in English at Aberdeen University for the next forty-one years. The beginning of chapter eleven, titled "The Lustre Frock", shows Martha pondering on her study days and what to wear for the ceremony. The deadpan sentence 'The Graduation morning arrived', (p. 90) itself a single paragraph, suggests that for Martha, after all the frenzy and excitement of having passed the actual exams, the officialization of her success will be an anti-climax. Indeed, 'Martha discovered that graduation was after all

²⁹ Lumsden, Alison, *Scottish Women's Fiction*, eds. Anderson, Carol & Christianson, Aileen, Tuckwell Press, 2000, p. 46.

not very exciting. It was ordinary and inevitable, like stepping out of a train when you reach your destination' (p. 93). As a contrast, Martha's parents view the graduation as a different spectacle. They humbly bathe in their daughter's achievement and through this projection they become themselves part of the lass of pairs-myth. In this sense Geordie, although 'stiff and awkward to appearance in his Sunday suit' (p. 91) appears nevertheless self-confident and righteous about his participation at the graduation. Not only are his feelings the ones of a proud father congratulating his offspring's merits, they also reconcile the notion of humble, hard-working origins with the Democratic Intellect, as expressed in these lines:

Moreover he had the reassuring persuasion that he had the right to be where he was. He set foot in the precincts with the confidence of a man for whom a place is prepared. Had not his daughter won it for him? (p. 91).

The quote stresses the fact, already mentioned, that the characterization of Geordie is not plain, sentimental kailyard. Geordie recognizes the democratising process of education, which allows the physical and intellectual move from the rural abode of homely values to the city precincts and core of learning with Aberdeen as the cipher for educational progress. This notion is repeated when Geordie appears as 'part of this great spectacle, no spectator merely' (p. 92). Furthermore, in sharing the intellectual battlefield with his daughter, Geordie is highlighted as a positive father figure. In their introduction to *Scottish Women's Fiction*, Carol Anderson and Aileen Christianson observe that 'Geordie is one of the few positive father figures' (Anderson & Christianson, p. 14).

Martha's mother Emmeline is less self-confident than her husband. Throughout the novel she is treated less positively, even if humorously, than Geordie. We find her 'Waddling under her load of fat, smelling of perspiration' (p. 91). She regains assurance once she sees 'Some gey ordinary jiffs', because 'she had been very uncertain what she was to see in a concourse gathered under the roof of the great hall of the University, and was secretly reassured by seeing numbers of men and women not unlike herself' (p. 91). So in the end there is a reconciliation, a sense of celebration which the fathers and mothers who have come 'from the glens and farms, the fishing villages and country towns' (p. 92) share.

The progress of the novel concentrates a deal on Martha's infatuation with Luke, a proud intellectual and brother in thought. Martha's progress as a teacher is well-illustrated; she keeps 'her blue-paper-covered child-observation note-book, in which she had to write her observation on every lesson she saw taught in the schools', (p. 101) and is 'absorbed by the mysteries of School Hygiene and Child Psychology' (p. 103). What with all that learning, it comes as a surprise that the reader hardly sees interactions with other teachers. Martha is described as 'A gey quaet missy - terrible keep-yersel'-tae-yersel-kin' by the community and even if the other teachers try to 'draw her out', 'She was thankful to be left alone' (all references, p. 125). One should add that Martha's preference to be left alone does not fit into the Kelman, Gray or Friel category of frustrated and isolated teachers. She seems closer to the J.M. Barrie representation of the teacher as onlooker as shown in *Auld Licht Idylls*. We never see Martha at school, in daily confrontation with the pupils. The descriptions of her romantic longings or her care for ill family members cover more space than the teaching at school, which is mentioned at random, as the following sentence indicates:

'There would be an astringent quality in days that included an eight miles' cycle run night and morning through all weathers, the tending of an old woman stricken with cancer and the keeping of her house, in addition to the day's teaching in school' (pp. 129-130). Martha sets her priorities which remain the support for ill family members - her mother and her aunt Josephine - the dire household chores and teaching throughout the long day.

Could the above hierarchy signify that once you have attained the lad of pairts ideal, the very fact of teaching - for women at least - becomes underrated in its importance compared to domesticity and family values? Why is there no set piece presenting Martha in front of the class? Martha is unlike Muriel Spark's Jean Brodie, whose very teaching methods - or should one say indoctrination? - remain the center of the book. The function of household duties is not described in Spark's novella, instead, as we shall see, we get a dangerous flirtation with Italian fascism. The reader may regret that he never sees Martha in the act of teaching, something which was her goal after all. Equally, why does Martha never give in to the idea of marrying Luke or another suitor? There is the sense that, at the beginning of the twentieth century at least, the roles of teaching, being a devoted daughter, getting married and running a household can hardly be reconciled. The enthusiasm for learning which Martha was showing as a child gradually vanishes during the progress of the novel. One explanation rests on historical roots. Anderson and Christianson remind us of the fact that 'Women teachers who married were not permitted full-time employment, and it was not until the 1945 Education (Scotland) Act that they could marry and retain their jobs' (Anderson & Christianson, p. 12). Compared to their male colleagues, female teachers faced a

number of inequalities. Anderson and Christianson critically assess the lassie of pairts myth, when they point out that:

Education, often seen in Scottish novels as a means of 'getting on', is explored or implied as a means of escape or betterment but it is also often problematised, as in *The Quarry Wood*, and the difficulties faced by educated women are exposed (p. 12).

The Quarry Wood nevertheless stands out as an optimistic book with a powerful heroine and her author 'speaks positively and wholly on behalf of life,'³⁰ as Roderick Watson cites in the introduction to Nan Shepherd's novel. In the same introduction Watson adds that:

Reading *The Quarry Wood* is to read what might have happened to Chris Guthrie, had she decided to go to university after all, for Martha Ironside makes the same difficult journey towards intellectual and emotional maturity at a time when such space was seldom freely given to women (Watson, pp. ix-x).

Lewis Grassie Gibbon's (pseudonym of James Leslie Mitchell) trilogy *A Scots Quair*, which comprises *Sunset Song* (published in 1932, four years after *The Quarry Wood*), *Cloud Howe* (1933) and *Grey Granite* (1934) has always been popular with the Scottish people. David Kerr Cameron correctly points out in his introduction to Gibbon's

³⁰ Watson, Roderick, introduction to *Quarry Wood*, p. vii.

landmark work, that 'It would be impossible to overestimate Lewis Grassie Gibbon's importance'³¹.

At the center of *A Scots Quair* stands the young girl Chris Guthrie, whose intellectual development occupies a major part of the trilogy. Cameron sees Chris's odyssey as 'the thread of Gibbon's trilogy' (Cameron, p. 8). Similar to Martha, who also grew up in Aberdeenshire, she faces 'the eternal dilemma of the country child: to dull the mind to the wider cultural horizons or to turn one's back for ever on an ancestral landscape, aware of the betrayal in the blood?' (Cameron, p. 8).

We have seen how Martha struggled between learning Latin and keeping up the ideals of domesticity. With Gibbon the aspect of refining or betraying one's identity within an educational context becomes even more important. There is a clash between the cottage and the city, between the Scottish and the English Chris.

We will not attempt a lengthy summary of the three novels. Instead, as was the case with *The Quarry Wood*, we shall put the emphasis on the child's perception of education. The related themes are, as hinted at in the above paragraph, the ones of language and identity, the old values of the soil versus progress and ultimately politics. Progress (the motorist man) and politics (Chae's rage against capitalism) are mentioned in the first two pages of the first paragraph after the Prelude to *Sunset Song*. Rural, fictional Kinraddie is the place where Chris Guthrie grows up.

It is in this endangered community in which Chris develops. The road to progress means for her going to school. And at the beginning of her intellectual awakening at least three parallels can be drawn between Martha Ironside and Chris Guthrie. First of all, we have seen how words have a magic association for young Martha ('for school to

³¹ Cameron, Kerr David, introduction to *A Scots Quair* (1946), Penguin and Lomond Books, London, 1998, p. 7.

Martha was escape into a magic world', p. 4). Similarly, Chris experiences a sense of displacement when reading books: 'For she'd met with books, she went into them to a magic land far from Echt, out and away and south'³². A second parallel is that Chris's efforts at school are of her own making. She is not supported by a dominie but like Martha, she wins bursaries: 'They gave her prizes, four prizes in four years she had' (p. 36). Gibbon's treatment of the female character is untypical and breathtakingly new for the period, because it not only casts a strong heroine but also illustrates how her success at school is her own merit. In this sense, *A Scots Quair* is both anti-kailyard and anti-lad of pairts. Thirdly, as was the case for Martha's daddy Geordie, Chris's father John equally takes pride in and through his daughter's mental faculties:

And at school they wrote she was the clever one and John Guthrie said she might have the education she needed if she stuck to her lessons. In time she might come out as a teacher then, and do him credit, that was fine of father the Guthrie whispered in her (p. 36).

In the same way as Martha Ironside studied her Latin verse, Chris is conjugating both Latin and French verbs. And, similar to Geordie Ironside, Mr Guthrie has high hopes for his daughter. The difference between the two fathers resides in the fact that, during the course of the novel, John Guthrie comes across as a more developed character. Where Shepherd's treatment of benign Geordie seems one-sided, Gibbon's offers a multi-layered father-figure whose emotions range from the tyrannical patriarch to the hard-working family man fighting for justice. In this sense, Geordie comes closer to McIlvanney's Docherty than to Shepherd's Geordie.

³² Gibbon, Lewis Grassie, *A Scots Quair* (1946), Penguin and Lomond Books, London, 1998, p. 36.

Chris Guthrie has inherited her father's traits. In her struggle of identity between the two Chrisses, she eventually follows her father's path - after his death - by opposing the village community. This struggle is documented in the following, often quoted, passage:

That was Chris and her reading and schooling, two Chrisses there were that fought for her heart and tormented her. You hated the land and the coarse speak of the folk, you wanted the words they'd known and used, forgotten in the far-off youngness of their lives, Scots words to tell to your heart ... And the next minute that passed from you, you were English, back to the English words (p. 37).

The lines illustrate Lewis Grassie Gibbon's literary and political agenda, as set out in his Note to *A Scots Quair*, which warns against the colonialization of the Scottish language ('The courtesy that the hypothetical Dutchman might receive from German a Scot may invoke from the great English tongue', p. 14). The young schoolgirl's dilemma is not only part and parcel of the eternal debate between Scottish and English education, it also has repercussions on the work of Tom Leonard, who states that 'It's in the reification of linguistic codes and their possession by dominant and powerful classes wherein lies real danger'³³. Liz Lochhead (in her poem "Bairn's Song"³⁴) or James Kelman (see his essay on the boy who said *aye* instead of *yes* in front of the judges; or the following quote from his recent novel: 'It was say yes and not aye, down and not

³³ Leonard, Tom, *Reports from the Present, Selected Work 1982-94*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1995, p. 41.

³⁴ Lochhead, Liz, *The Colour of Black and White, Poems 1984-2003*, Polygon, Edinburgh, 2005.

doon, am not and no um nay, ye were just to speak nice'³⁵ for instance; even if the latter claims not to have read the classics: 'I haven't read his [ie Gibbon's] novels'³⁶). Cairns Craig has stressed the point that out of the 'two Chrisses' who fight for dominance in her it is ultimately the English Chris, 'the Chris of education and books, that loses. Unlike her creator - because of the advantage, or disadvantage, of being a woman - she remains in her community' (Craig, p. 66).

The relationship between Chris and the community remains, however, less harmonious than for Martha Ironside. This awkwardness becomes especially clear after the death of her father. Chris's lack of emotion and fearlessness at the aftermath of John Guthrie's burial is viewed conspicuously by the neighbours: 'It was fair a speak in Kinraddie, her coolness, she knew that well but she didn't care, she was free at last' (p. 90).

It is in a passage like this that Gibbon not only appears resolutely anti-sentimental, anti-kailyard but also existentialist. On the one hand Chris's reaction (or non-reaction) is shocking and a threat to the established village values, on the other hand her sense of freedom stands in the literary tradition of existentialism. Chris is rejoined in Albert Camus's Meursault, the anti-hero of *L'Etranger*. Meursault's lack of emotions at his mother's funeral similarly shows an existential acceptance of death and a refusal to act conventionally. This view is nevertheless deceptive. A key difference between the two works remains in the fact that Gibbon, despite what we have just said about anti-kailyard, lets his heroine become sentimental and - unlike Camus's protagonist - pray:

³⁵ Kelman, James, *Kieron Smith, boy*, Penguin, London, 2008, p. 34.

³⁶ Kelman interviewed by McLean, Duncan, *Edinburgh Review* 71, 1984, p. 2.

She found herself praying then, blind with tears in the rain, lowering the cord with the hand of the grave-digger over hers, the coffin dirling below the spears of the rain. Father, father, I didn't know! Oh father, I didn't KNOW ! (p. 95).

After this emotional outburst Chris realizes that she will never become a teacher. Like the standing stones in the countryside, Chris 'could never leave it, this life of toiling days and the needs of beasts and the smoke of wood fires and the air that stung your throat so acrid' (p. 97). The choice between countrygirl and schoolgirl has occurred after John's death. Unlike Martha Ironside, Chris is unable to reconcile the idea of teaching with the demands of the village community at large: 'Chris could no more teach a school than fly, night and day she'd want to be back, for all the fine clothes and gear she might get and hold, the books and the light and learning' (p. 98).

Chris abandons the idea of teaching. In this passage it is interesting to note that she coquettishly associates teaching with materialism. The books, light and learning would bring her 'fine clothes and gear.' Intellectual values or freedom of choice are not mentioned here. Also, the inclusion of luxury items shows Chris's lack of realism, at a time when teachers' wages were low and the position of a female teacher hard to maintain. Somehow Chris thinks that she has opted for the hard, country ways; disregarding what would have been in store if she had chosen Martha's option. In which case she would not have married, which she does; fatalistically expressing 'that this marriage of hers was nothing' (p. 116).

What matters, however, is the continuing opposition between Scots and English. Chris may have given up her dreams of becoming a teacher and we may close our discussion of education midway through *Sunset Song*. But *A Scots Quair* is interspersed

with pertinent remarks on language and identity. There is a tug-of-war between both languages:

Every damned little narrow dowed rat that you met put on the English if he thought he'd impress you - as though Scotch wasn't good enough now, it had words in it that the thin bit scratches of the English could never come at (p. 123).

Chris's choice is an affirmation of her Scottish roots and the rich variety of the Scots language.

At the beginning of *Cloud Howe*, the second part of the trilogy, Chris - now called Colquohoun through her marriage to Reverend Robert Colquohoun, a First World War veteran - contemplates her life filled with losses, including her father and her first husband Ewan. The idea of education has been given up. Still, reading books remains something precious, a time to be treasured between watching her fragile husband's mood swings and considering household chores: 'Chris sitting and watching, a book in her hand or darning and knitting, but not often those' (p. 206).

However, even in the role of a clergyman's supposedly docile woman, the split identity of English versus Scottish Chris still lingers on, as shown in these lines:

Chris would say that they needn't fash, if she said it in Scots the woman would think, *Isn't that a common-like bitch at the Manse?* If she said it in English the speak would spread round the minister's wife was putting on airs (p. 209).

Chris strolls through a linguistic battlefield, in which Scots stands for rural, authentic and primal values and English for urban, artificial and mannered 'airs.' In our discussion of positive and negative images of education, one should briefly include the village schoolmaster and his wife. The latter can be seen as a foil to Chris. Unlike Chris, Mrs Geddes is putting on airs. We meet her at church:

Mrs Geddes, the schoolmaster's wife, there already, smiling and oozing with eau-de Cologne, whispered right low and right holy-like, *Morning. A grand day, isn't it, and such a pity so few have come up to hear the Lord's word* (p. 238).

The line in italics shows Mrs Geddes' hypocrisy, since she innermost rivals with Chris, the clergyman's wife. For Segget appears like a Scottish version of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-2). Mrs Geddes and her husband want to belong to the Segget bourgeoisie. The façade matters and not pedagogic concerns. Gibbon brilliantly unveils Geddes as a weak, disinterested teacher - one of many in a long gallery to be discussed in a later chapter - in just a few traits. We first meet him as 'Geddes, the Segget headmaster, sitting grim in a pew midway, his rimless specs set close on his nose, looking wearied to death, as he was' (p. 239). This mix of inertia and phlegm is prolonged to other scenes like the Segget Show with the bairns' races, with 'Geddes the schoolmaster in charge of the lot, disgusted as ever he looked with the job' (p. 246). That Chris would have acted less statically and more enthusiastically as a teacher, is more than a mere conjecture. More important, as an authority figure Geddes ultimately sides with English prejudice against the Scots. The context is the dawning of the

spinners' strike and its connection with the increasingly popular Labour movement. Set against this:

Geddes said bitter that the spinners had behaved as you would expect such cattle to do, neither better nor worse than other Scotch folk. All Scots were the same, the beastliest race ever let loose on the earth (p. 270).

The implication is that the village community turns more political, a fact which has been hinted at in the first pages with the mentioning of progress and capitalism.

It is in the village playground where Chris's son is preparing to spread his intellectual wings and to escape the narrow confines of Segget. And even if this section of the chapter focuses particularly on female characters, Ewan Tavendale more than deserves his place in the discussion of Scottish education in fiction. The lass of pairts is replaced by the lad of pairts. But as was the case with Martha Ironside and Chris Guthrie, Ewan's success at school is of his own merit, even if the village community expresses jealousy and doubts:

Folk said he fair was a nickum, that loon, young Ewan Tavendale that came from the Manse, and went to the college at Dundon each day. And what though they said he did well at college? No doubt his stepfather, the minister Colquhoun, did all his lessons and got the credit (p. 335).

Within a meritocratic society individual success achieved without outer help remains suspicious. Whereas towards the end of *Cloud Howe* Chris has given up any illusions

concerning education and state/nation politics ('Chris herself didn't bother to vote', p. 340), her offspring is occupying this territory in *Grey Granite*.

The opening pages - Gibbon calls them Epidote - of *Grey Granite* show Chris in dialogue, not to say confrontation, with her son. Like so many fictional characters in Scottish literature (most prominently George Douglas Brown's Gourlay, Gordon Williams' Duncan or Docherty's son in William McIlvanney's novel) the goal of a university degree, or even further studies, is either not going to be obtained or to be traded for a job. Chris's shock at the news of her son's dropping college for a low job in the steel factory Gowans and Gloag, to produce military equipment and ammunition for the setting is the upcoming Second World War, is resumed in the following exchange: '*But it's daft, Ewan, you haven't finished college yet, and then there's the university!* He shook the sleeked head: *Not for me. I'm tired of college and I'm not going to live off you*' (p. 359).

In the meantime, to make both ends meet, Chris is running a sort of bed and breakfast, with a schoolteacher as a regular guest. Bringing up the tea, she recognizes in the new schoolteacher a certain coolness, a character trait which she likes, so there is no regret from Chris's part for not having attained the same position as Miss Johns: 'Chris knew for certain then what was wrong, the English lass was shy as could be but carrying it off with a brassy front, the kind of cool courage Chris always had liked' (p. 381).

Chris sympathizes with the schoolteacher because she possesses a similar shyness and fatalism disguised as cool courage. Looking at a lighthouse in the distance, she has a 'feeling of terrible loneliness ... knowledge of how lonely every soul was, apart and alone as she had been surely even at the most crowded hours of her life' (p. 428). This

feeling of loneliness is shared by Ewan, who places his political commitment over romance. Having become communist leader he has, according to Cairns Craig, 'to deny the integration into the community offered by marriage' (Craig, p. 68). His rejection of his fiancée Ellen reveals the unbridgeable gap of class divisions. Ewan's final words to Ellen, who refuses to attend political meetings and has even left the Communist Party, are a mix of profound hatred and misogyny. It is the expression of laudable political ideals placed over humanity. In *Grey Granite* Ewan Tavendale's insult to schoolteacher Ellen: '*Go to them in your comfortable car - your Labour Party and your comfortable flat. But what are you doing out here with me? I can get a prostitute anywhere*' (p. 490).

The age of a political status quo is definitely gone. So is the language of the kailyard, with the niceties and superficial respect for women, dreaming about emancipation. If both Chris and Ewan are described as 'resolute and cool' (p. 495) at the term of the trilogy, we should add that Gibbon has presented literary figures who are, unlike Martha Ironside and her father, not always cast in a positive vein. Furthermore, as a representation or mirror-image of the Scottish psyche, it shows that ideals - be they educational or political - are hard to obtain or shattered from the start. Neither Chris nor her son wanted to achieve the Democratic Intellect. Intellectual democracy may not be compatible with individualism, of which category Chris and Ewan are memorable representatives. The ending of *A Scots Quair* may reflect Gibbon's own disillusionment with politics, a fate shared with contemporary writers like McIlvanney (see his frustration with socialism in *Surviving the Shipwreck*) or Kelman, who values 'party-free' activism more than party politics. The role of education in the lives of Chris and Ewan bears other connotations then, not the ones of

an academic lifestyle. Gibbon's protagonists and their sense of learning are rooted in the soil. They become part of the Scottish heritage through their desperate attempt to reconcile past and present, city and country, collectivity and individualism. Cairns Craig describes Ewan and Chris as:

Standing stones, gesturing towards what is permanent in human experience, gesturing towards a community from which fear will have been banished, and, in the present, fearful to others only because the community has forgotten what the Standing Stones represent, and is unable to recognise that its own warmth and vitality are centred on and revolve around their granite implacability (p. 69).

The Standing Stones represent static, solid Scottish values of the earth-bound village community, with its positive and negative aspects. We have seen how this system is under threat throughout the three parts of *A Scots Quair*. Gibbon's trilogy covers a long period of time, which includes the forebodings and aftermaths of the First and Second World Wars. Politically speaking, we have seen the various sidings of the narrative characters with socialist, communist, nationalistic or even fascist strands.

The latter form the background of Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, a novel which first came out in 1961 but which is set in the 1930s. The main character, schoolteacher Jean Brodie, openly admires Mussolini: 'Mussolini is one of the greatest men in the world'³⁷. She wouldn't mind the blackshirts roaming not only the streets of Rome but also the lanes of Edinburgh. For Edinburgh is the setting of Spark's book. Whereas with *Shepherd* the location was mostly rural, Gibbon combined rural and urban elements. The context of Spark's story, however, is the Scottish capital city.

³⁷ Spark, Muriel, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), Penguin Books, London, 2000, p. 44.

Muriel Spark herself was born in Edinburgh in 1918. She went to the James Gillespie's School for Girls and studied for a short spell at Heriot Watt College. It seems erroneous to classify her as a purely Scottish writer, since she spent most of her life abroad. Spark left Edinburgh in 1937 to live in Rhodesia, present-day Zimbabwe. The acclaimed writer of some twenty novels and volumes of short-stories and poetry returned to England in 1944, left London in 1962 to live first in New York, and then, from 1966 until her death, in Italy. As for nearly any novel, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* also contains autobiographical touches. The book has an element of intrigue, in the sense that Miss Brodie and her fascist leanings get exposed and betrayed by one of her protégées. This interest in political manoeuvrings may be explained by the fact that during the 1940s Spark had worked for the political intelligence department of the Foreign Office in England. The section focuses on the part played by students and her enigmatic teacher Miss Brodie, who has been termed the 'most monumental of schoolmistresses'³⁸ by Candia McWilliam.

In a discussion about the various roles played by schoolchildren – and their teachers - in Scottish literature, it is particularly difficult to separate Miss Jean Brodie from her prime. Whereas the next chapter will demonstrate that modern Scottish writers rarely draw teachers with a lot of sympathy, Bill Gatherer claims that 'The only great masterpiece is Muriel Spark's Miss Jean Brodie, a brilliant portrayal of the teacher's charismatic centrality in the lives of intelligent girls'³⁹. One may deplore Gatherer's lack of critical focus where Miss Brodie's detestable politics are concerned. But one has to recognize that her ideas and methods have such an impact on her students, her

³⁸ McWilliam, Candia, intro. to *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, opus cited, p. v.

³⁹ Gatherer, Bill, in *Scottish Education*, opus cited, p. 1022.

influence and charisma are so powerful, that the reader tends to forget that the girls gradually develop ideas of their own. As Scott Hames puts it in a perceptive essay:

Miss Brodie doesn't just put ideas into her girls' heads, effectively she *is* the directing "head" of the corporate "Brodie set": she does her pupils' thinking for them, and perfectly embodies the well - proportioned sensibilities she hopes to instil.⁴⁰

The opening of the book sets the tone:

The boys, as they talked to the girls from Marcia Blaine School, stood on the far side of their bicycles holding the handlebars, which established a protective fence of bicycle between *sexes*, and the impression that at any moment the boys were likely to go away (p. 6).

The boys may well talk to the opposite sex but there is still a gulf between the sexes, signified by the bicycles which form a protective fence. The latter expression is derived from military language and suggests that the war between the sexes is still raging. There is a lack of communication, instead of talking to the girls the boys are holding the handlebars of their bicycles. The image seems static, passive. However, the boys possess a kinetic advantage over the girls, because at any moment they can cycle off into their world of masculine values. The passage reminds us of the complexities of mixed education in Scotland in the nineteen-thirties.

As a period piece of what a Scottish education for girls looked like during that particular decade, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* abounds with seemingly picturesque

⁴⁰ Hames, Scott, 'Fighting Dominions and Form: Politics and Narrative in some Modern Scottish Novels of Education', *To the other Shore: Cross-currants in Irish and Scottish Studies*, Belfast, 2004, p. 59.

but always historically correct details. Thus Spark stresses the rigidity of the traditionalist, anglicized Scottish system as expressed through the dress code which proffers wearing a panama hat, since 'hatlessness was an offence' (p. 5).

It is a girl's world indeed, and as Spark tells the reader, Marcia Blaine was once endowed by the wealthy widow of of an Edinburgh bookbinder. The latter was an admirer of Garibaldi before she died. Within the political sub-plot of the novel, the reference to the Sicilian freedom-fighter is highly ironic, since Garibaldi contrasts with the fascist visions of Mussolini. At the beginning of the novel, the Brodie set senses nothing about the brooding fascism. The girls under Miss Brodie's wings are ingenuous and – even within the structure of a traditional school, eyed suspiciously by the school community:

They remained unmistakably Brodie, and were all famous in the school, which is to say they were hold in suspicion and not much liking. They had no team spirit and very little in common with each other outside their continuing friendship with Jean Brodie (p. 6).

The name Brodie stands for some sort of quality label. The 'Brodies' form a set apart at Marcia Blaine academy and are viewed suspiciously. Moreover, the group is formed by individual characters, the only characteristic the girls share is their bond – or should we not say bondage? - to Jean Brodie. Unlike Shepherd or Gibbons, Spark offers little information about the girls' sociocultural background, hence the term 'lassies of pairs' applies to a lesser extent. Nevertheless, the students view themselves as belonging to

the select, chosen few, not only lucky to enjoy high school education but to be under Miss Brodie's guidance. There is a fusion between vanity and the Calvinist notion of being elected, described by Marshall Walker as 'a cool satirical entertainment about early twentieth-century Edinburgh vanities and frustrations, with a special dig at the pretensions of Scottish education – ironically similar to those of the Calvinist doctrine of election.'⁴¹

Monica Douglas, Rose Stanley, Eunice Gardiner, Sandy Stranger and Mary MacGregor are the five students who form the Brodie set. We have said that they have little in common, and yet they form a clique. They define themselves through belonging to Miss Brodie and their unorthodox teaching methods. The latter run counter to the traditional teaching methods distilled at Marcia Blaine. The girls are both insiders and outsiders. As insiders they share their admiration for Miss Brodie, disregarding the fact that they are indoctrinated by her teaching style and personal viewpoints. As outsiders they are eyed critically by the rest of the school community. Also, the Brodie set with its middle-class background reacts strongly against anyone who would like to join the Brodies, be they from a lower or higher class. Most girls then do not fit the Brodie mould, most prominently a girl called Joyce Emily Hammond, 'a very rich girl, their delinquent, who had been recently sent to Blaine as a last hope, because no other school, no governess, could manage her' (p. 8). In the literary representations of female characters, Joyce appears as an exception, because delinquent, disruptive behaviour during classes is mostly confined to male protagonists. If we read *The Prime of Jean Brodie* as a criticism of class distinctions and divisions, we will discover how Joyce

⁴¹ Walker, Marshall, *Scottish Literature since 1707*, Longman, London, 1996, p. 322.

(despite or because of her upper-class upbringing) can never become a member of the Brodie clan:

This Joyce Emily was trying very hard to get into the famous set, and thought the two names might establish her as a something, but there was no chance of it and she could not see why (p. 8).

The famous set equals the intellectual 'crème de la crème', a term used by Miss Brodie ('I am putting old heads on your young shoulders and all my pupils are the crème de la crème', p. 8) as a variation on the keyword 'prime', widely used throughout the novella. Ironically enough, Miss Brodie not only befriends the supposedly delinquent Joyce towards the end of the book ('Miss Brodie, however, found time to take her [Joyce] in', p. 118) but fails to perceive that the girl's and her parents' political standpoints clash with her own right-wing obsessions: 'Everyone, including Joyce Emily, was anti-Franco if they were anything at all' (p. 118).

As was the case with *A Scots Quair*, politics and education can hardly be disentangled when reading Spark's writings. A pertinent example is the development of Sandy Stranger. Her name may suggest that she is gradually turning into a stranger to Brodie's microcosm. Whereas the Brodie girls follow her mentor blindly, the relationship between Miss Brodie and Sandy undergoes changes. The initial admiration for the teacher turns into a critical attitude as the story progresses. Significantly, Sandy is the girl most scrutinized and told off by Jean Brodie, as the following short interchanges illustrate:

‘Sandy, your attention is wandering. What have I been talking about?’

‘Your prime, Miss Brodie’ (p. 12).

‘Are you thinking, Sandy, of doing a day’s washing?’

‘No, Miss Brodie’ (p. 12).

‘Sandy, dear, don’t rush. Take my hand’ (p. 37).

‘What are you doing Sandy?’

‘Only playing,’ said Sandy (p. 53).

Even if the other girls get criticized as well, Sandy takes most of the blame. In return, Sandy unveils Miss Brodie’s machinations by turning them into mockery, as is apparent in a remark made during a party at Sandy’s house:

Both girls saved the cream to the last, then ate it in spoonfuls.

‘Little girls, you are going to be the crème de la crème,’ said Sandy,

and Jenny spluttered her cream into her handkerchief (p. 16).

The two girls relish eating pineapple cream cakes, and Sandy’s play on words is not lost on Jenny, who is puffing with laughter. Jenny’s intellectual horizon, however, differs from Sandy’s. Jenny views the remark as a harmless joke, whereas Sandy subconsciously questions Miss Brodie’s authority.

This subliminal feeling grows into an awareness during a stroll through Edinburgh's Middle Meadow Walk. On this occasion, Sandy is reflecting on the link between unemployment and fascism, realizing that she might become one of Jean Brodie's brainwashed puppets, void of any personality:

Mussolini had put an end to unemployment and there was no litter in the streets. It occurred to Sandy that the Brodie set was Miss Brodie's fascisti, not to the naked eye, marching along, but all knit together for her need, and in another way, marching along (p. 31).

The Italian fascists wear black shirts as a uniform, and even if Sandy cannot grasp the full implications of fascism, she fears being identified with Miss Brodie's extreme ideas. Miss Brodie functions as head, with her pupils forming the marching limbs, tightly knitted together. Sandy senses that this feeling of being knitted together is somewhat unhealthy and prevents her from developing her personality. Faced with the choice of marching in a group as opposed to keeping one's individuality, Sandy opts for dropping out of the Brodie set: 'Sandy had the feeling that the Brodie set, not to mention Miss Brodie herself, was getting out of hand. She thought it perhaps a good thing that the set might split up' (p. 102).

The group is in fact going to split up. Furthermore, Miss Brodie will be betrayed by Sandy. In an exchange with Miss Mackay, the headmistress of Marcia Blaine, Sandy states that she wants Miss Brodie to be removed: 'I'm not really interested in world

affairs,' said Sandy, 'only in putting a stop to Miss Brodie.' With her fascist leanings, Miss Brodie has transgressed the inner coda of Marcia Blaine and has to leave.

If we reconsider the lassie of pairts image, then Miss Brodie functions as a sort of female dominie. The reasons for Sandy's betrayal are manifold. One explanation may lie in Spark's interests in Calvinism and Roman-Catholicism. Sandy is looking for spiritual values, rather than world affairs. At the end of the book, she enters the convent and changes her worldly name into Sister Helena. Spark reminds us that Catholicism can well be the refuge of fascists, for Sandy enters the Catholic Church, 'in whose ranks she had found united a number of fascists much less agreeable than Miss Brodie' (p. 125).

This realization may come as a surprise. Despite their shortcomings, both pupil and teacher are extraordinary literary creations. Miss Brodie is a perverted example for the influence a single teacher can exert. In reply to whether the main influences at school were literary, personal, political, or Calvinist, Sandy finally confesses: 'There was a Miss Jean Brodie in her prime' (p. 128).

2,3 – Conclusion

The findings of this second chapter can be summed up as follows. First of all, George Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* is a radical departure with the examples of kailyard literature discussed in the first chapter. The democratic ideal becomes torn down. It is especially the lad o'parts ideal, as embodied through young John Gourlay, which undergoes a crisis.

Secondly, as female counterparts, Nan Shepherd's Martha Ironside as well as Lewis Grassie Gibbon's Chris Guthrie brave the educational system surprisingly well. However, both heroines give up the pursuits of university education to opt for primary school teaching and domesticity. The gender question would need closer examination. Also, what we have said in the conclusion to chapter one, remains true here as well. Every research work must make a selection and the inclusion of other literary examples, like Catherine Carswell's *Open the Door!* (1920) would have deepened the analysis of differences in gender.

Finally, our discussion of Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* illustrates how educational ideals can become perverted. Unlike Martha, we see Jean Brodie at work, but her teaching becomes racist indoctrination. Still, unlike her male colleagues portrayed in the next chapter, Miss Brodie never suffers from self-doubts. However, the work possesses a sense of ambiguity largely absent in the works of Shepherd or Gibbon, in the sense that Sandy's motivation for betraying her fascist mentor brings an unexpected twist to the novella.

Chapter 3 – The teacher and his various functions and dysfunctions in modern Scottish literature

3.1 - Sociopolitical background

In the opening chapter we discussed some particularities of the Scottish education system. We have discussed the history of education and the role played by the Church, explored the myth of the Democratic Intellect and illustrated the lad of pairts motif in the foregoing chapter. The literary examples in this chapter are mostly taken from the second part of the twentieth century. They include Robin Jenkins' *The Changeling* (1958), George Friel's *Mr Alfred M.A.* (1972), James Kelman's *Kieron Smith, boy* (2008) - which is set in the nineteen-fifties - and *A Disaffection* (1989), Alasdair Gray's *1982 Janine* (1984), Alan Warner's *The Sopranos* (1998) and Anne Donovan's *Buddha Da* (2004). Before considering the various representations of education presented in some of these novels, it is important to consider the sociopolitical background of this time.

Writing in the nineteen-eighties, the historian T.C. Smout states that 'It is in the history of the school more than in any other aspect of recent social history that the key lies to some of the more depressing aspects of modern Scotland'⁴². In their analysis of this quote, Humes and Bryce point out that these aspects are a 'resistance to change in working practices, reluctance to take on new challenges, unwillingness to accept leadership roles, reticence in the face of professional and bureaucratic authority' (Bryce & Humes, opus cited, p. 115). To a certain degree, this acceptance of solid values and

⁴² Smout, T. C., *A Century of the Scottish People 1830-1950*, quoted by T. G K. Bryce and W. M. Humes in *Scottish Education*, Edinburgh University Press, 2003, p. 115.

opposition to changes as well as the criticism of bureaucracy, is also positive.

Academia is traditionally an often static and traditional system. However, changes for the worse were brought about by the Conservative governments of the 1980s.

The socio-economics of Thatcherite politics meant budget cuts in the medical and educational field. The expenditures for the war efforts in the Falklands went up as pits were closed down, which led to the Miners' Strike, one of the longest-lasting industrial conflicts in British history. Radical changes were brought about by the Tory MP Michael Forsyth, who shook up the peaceful procedures described by Smout in the preceding paragraph. This series of reforms in the 1980s were 'based on market, consumerist principles such as choice, standards and accountability'⁴³.

The Conservative politics of the 1980s have been treated, albeit briefly, by A.L. Kennedy in her novel *Paradise* (2004). The book describes the relationship between Hannah, a woman in her early forties and on the edge mainly due to her addiction to alcohol and Robert, a frustrated dentist who equally likes his drink. During a lost weekend in London, Robert reminisces in an exchange with Hannah about the Eighties and the effects Thatcherism had on education and the medical profession: 'Oh, ahm... that when Thatcher wrecked our education system, she also messed up our beat. 'No need to bring *her* into this - we were having a nice day. Anything else?'⁴⁴

Robert's comment on right-wing politics contained in *Paradise* may stand out within the framework of the novel. Still, one should bear in mind that it reflects the thinking of the author. Kennedy's statement remains valid, in the light of a long line of modern Scottish writers. Writers like William McIlvanney, Liz Lochhead, Jeff Torrington, Agnes Owens, Alasdair Gray, Duncan McLean, Tom Leonard, Janice Galloway, Alan

⁴³ Nigel Grant and Walter Humes, 'Scottish Education 1700-2000 in *Scotland. A Concise Cultural History*, p. 369.

⁴⁴ A.L. Kennedy, *Paradise*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2004, p. 49.

Warner or Irvine Welsh may be stylistically diverse but politically speaking they were all openly critical of the conservative government and of the effect of Thatcher's politics in Scotland.⁴⁵ Perhaps James Kelman has been the most outspoken in this regard.

⁴⁵ There are, of course, politically conservative novelists, e.g. Allan Massie.

3.2 - James Kelman's *A Disaffection* and the philosophical framework

We had left James Kelman in chapter two, with our discussion of *Kieron Smith, boy*. The relationship between the young Glaswegian and school is aptly summarised by Simon Kövesi's criticism published in *The Independent*: 'This novel suggests that adult power structures collude to muffle a child's critical faculties, to stop a child rebelling, to force submission to adult rule, the rule of school and so the rule of state'.⁴⁶ The link between family values, school and the state is always present in Kelman's work. Kelman's characters seem to believe that rather than develop a child's character, the authorities repress or suppress the potential for being critical. Set in the 1950s in Glasgow and bearing strong autobiographical traits, *Kieron Smith, boy* remains faithful to Kelman's political and artistic commitment. Kelman cannot be classified easily. One must agree with Scott Hames' comment which ironically echoes Groucho Marx: 'There is a sense in which Kelman refuses to belong to any literary club which would accept him as a member'.⁴⁷ What thematically unites Kelman's novels is, according to H. Gustav Klaus, a 'strong anti-authoritarianism, and especially their (i.e. the novels') interrogation of the working of state agencies and apparatuses'⁴⁸.

In this sense Kelman's writings constantly describe and react against what the French philosopher Louis Althusser comes to call Repressive State Apparatus. It is one of Althusser's central ideas that the world is governed by systems of powers. On the top of this pyramidal system, there is the Repressive State Apparatus, which forms: 'an organized whole whose different parts are centralized beneath a commanding unity, that

⁴⁶ Kövesi, Simon, *The Independent*, April 25, 2008.

⁴⁷ Hames Scott, ed., *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman*, Edinburgh University Press, 2010, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Klaus, H. Gustav, 'Under Surveillance Resisting' in *James Kelman*, Northcote House Publishers, Devon, 2004, p. 76.

of the politics of class struggle applied by the political representatives of the ruling classes in possession of State power' (Althusser, p. 23).

Closely connected to the dictatorial and single Repressive State Apparatus, there exists a range of so-called Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), through which the extended power of the state is maintained. Althusser sees the ISAs as:

Multiple, distinct, "relatively autonomous" and capable of providing an objective field of contradictions which express in forms which may be limited or extreme, the effects of the clashes between the capitalist class struggle and the proletarian class struggle, as well as their subordinate forms (Althusser, p. 23).

The quotation underlines the fact that there are many manifestations of ISAs. The latter range from the political ISA (the political structure, including the corresponding parties), the religious ISA (the system of the various beliefs represented through the Churches) over the communications ISA (highlighted within the media) to the educational ISA (public and private schools). According to Althusser, the Church used to be the prime Ideological State Apparatus - and we have stressed the part played by the Kirk in our introduction - whereas nowadays the School occupies the dominant part since 'no other ideological State apparatus has the obligatory (and not least, free) audience of the totality of children in the capitalist social formation, eight hours a day for five or six days out of seven' (Althusser, p. 30):

Althusser's philosophical outlook remains rather bleak, even if he sympathises with and asks the pardon of 'those teachers who, in dreadful conditions, attempt to turn the few weapons they can find in the history and learning they 'teach' against the ideology,

the system and the practices in which they are trapped' (Althusser, p. 31). With reference to Kelman's work, Patrick Doyle is viewed, to quote H. Gustav Klaus, as 'a disciple (or should one say, a prisoner) of Althusser (not named in the book) and as such recognizes the limited reach of his efforts to instil rational argument onto the pupils' (Klaus, p. 79). One may maintain that there exists the occasional teacher - real or fictional - who may take up arms against the system or at least perceive and understand the workings of the Ideological State Apparatus. Althusser terms these educationalists as 'a kind of hero. But they are rare and how many (the majority) do not even suspect the "work" the system (which is bigger than they are and crushes them) forces them to do (Althusser, p. 97).

Althusser's pessimism and scepticism is also contained in the French philosopher Michel Foucault's descriptions of power structures. His key work *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison* (first published in 1975 by Gallimard) relates historical examples of punishment, including the vivid rendering of public hangings and other killing and torture methods. In our discussion about education, school is viewed as another power structure with a rigid scheme of discipline and punishment. Similar to Althusser and his terminology, the individual is exposed to 'apparatuses and institutions'⁴⁹. Foucault reminds us that, historically speaking, discipline 'was at work in secondary education at a very early date, later in primary school' (p. 138). Althusser spoke about having the pupils at the teachers' disposal for more than forty hours a week. Foucault similarly stresses the importance of time-keeping to obtain 'docile bodies' (the expression is also the title of one of the chapters in the book). Time-keeping is important for both Kelman's Busconductor Hines and for Patrick Doyle, the failed teacher. As Foucault comments, 'Power is articulated directly onto time; it assures

⁴⁹ Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish* (1957), Penguin, London, 2006, p. 26.

its control and guarantees its use' (p. 160). Teaching becomes a process of mechanization, void of creativity with a utilitarian purpose to churn out docile pupils: 'The school became a machine for learning, in which each pupil, each level and each moment, if correctly combined, were permanently utilized in the general process of teaching' (p. 165).

One should add that one of Patrick Doyle's problems is the realization of the dilemma between working for and inside a repressive government structure and trying to teach in a creative - if confusing - manner. This dilemma will be aptly illustrated in Kelman's work. What Foucault illustrates is not the ideal model of teaching, but a philosophical view of education as a tool of the state. It is one which Mr. Alfred, at odds with new teaching methods, would have favoured. He would have subscribed to a rigid system where 'the training of school-children was to be carried out in the same way: few words, no explanation, a total silence interrupted only by signals - bells, clapping of hands, gestures, a mere glance from the teacher' (Foucault, p. 166). Again, and while there are many similarities between Mr. Alfred and Doyle there are as many differences between the two protagonists. For instance, Doyle is certainly a man of many words as his vociferations in front of the class demonstrate. Also, Doyle is a schoolmaster who abhors the rituals inherent within traditional teaching methods. We never witness Doyle marking papers or organizing examinations, which always has been a characteristic of teaching, as Foucault notes down: 'School became a sort of apparatus of uninterrupted examinations that duplicated along its entire length the operation of teaching' (p. 187). And yet, there is an element within Foucault's theory which often seems to be forgotten. *Discipline and Punish* works as a psycho-historical account of examples of modes of punishment and traces the development from the

pains inflicted directly to the body to the more subtle punishments of a legal, administrative society. Foucault reorients a critique of power to emphasize its active and constructive function:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth (p. 194).

Foucault's affirmation holds that power is knowledge and knowledge is power. As such, this may not necessarily signify a bad relationship or a matter of sheer propaganda, but a reflection on how our intellectual economy, as well as the various state apparatuses and professional bodies like medicine or education, do operate. In his discussion of modern Scottish novels of education, which include Kelman's *A Disaffection* and Friel's *Mr Alfred M.A.*, Scott Hames has expressed the connection between Foucault's thoughts and educational matters in this manner:

These writers, and their teachers, seem guided by the form of educational reason whose procedures marry the techniques of government with the production of truth. Michel Foucault sees the school as a clear case of the "techniques of the self" being linked to techniques for the direction of others. "In educational institutions we realize that one is managing others and teaching them to manage themselves"⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ Hames, Scott, 'Politics and Narrative in Some Modern Scottish Novels of Education', *to the other shore*, Belfast, 2004, p. 58.

Furthermore, Foucault recognizes the merits of scientific research as a means of help when he claims that ‘educational psychology is supposed to correct the rigours of the school, just as the medical or psychiatric interview is supposed to rectify the effects of the discipline of work’ (p. 226). Educational psychology is a growing field which may or may not have helped to redress the balance of dysfunctional behaviour like Mr. Alfred’s or Doyle’s. In the line of Foucault, however, this policy can be seen as another manifestation of power and hence repression.

The Scots psychologist R.D. Laing (1927-89) fits the Foucaultian mould, in the sense that his views of seeing the state of psychology and psychiatry are similarly critical. Laing’s method put mental disorder in relation to the patient’s direct family as well as to the stresses of modern society, and he is set both within the broader and more philosophical contexts of existential crisis and personal alienation. In the chapter “Psychiatry Today” from his biography he vehemently condemns the common use of shock treatment: ‘Other people might beg to have electric shocks. The critical issue is the politics of the matter. Who has the power to do what to whom against whose will?’⁵¹

The issue of controlling other people’s will with force is similar to the cultural debate of the use of the tawse, a means of punishment traditionally misused in Scottish education and rejected – as we are going to illustrate – by pedagogues like A.S. Neill. Laing’s explanation for the exclusion of electric shocks runs like this: ‘I lost any sense of desire and duty to force on people treatment that I would not want forced on me. Whatever else it has to do with, the issue has to do with human relationships’ (Laing, p. 25).

The crux of Laing’s viewpoint is the dilemma between working in a traditional medical environment which reinforces the patients’ pain rather than seeking to cure it.

⁵¹ Laing, R.D., *Wisdom, Madness and Folly* (1985), Canongate Classics, Edinburgh, 1998, p. 25.

During his working spell at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, Laing gradually discovers ‘all this mass of unalleviated human misery, a large part of which, I was beginning to suspect, was being manufactured by psychiatry itself’ (p. 112). If we return to educational matters, we should add that Laing, similar to Alasdair Gray, reminisces positively about his childhood days at school: he ‘had virtually none of the bad experiences at school that mar so many people’s lives’ (p. 46).

Obviously enough, Laing’s autobiography may not always be self-critical and in later life Laing’s use of mind-expanding drugs may have clouded his ideas. However, in their investigation of Laing’s theories people like George Davie argue that ‘the Glasgow philosophical tradition survived in the work of psychiatrists such as Laing’. Critics like Beveridge and Turnbull have also placed Laing within this humanist Scottish tradition. In their analysis of Laing’s achievements they point out:

Knowledge is not exhausted in scientific cognition, hostility to the disestimation of important aspects of human experience which the triumphs of science have encouraged those parameters of the ideas of the Scottish personalist school largely define the nature of Laing’s intellectual career also⁵².

After the excursion into the philosophical framework to Kelman’s work, we will return to Kelman’s own viewpoints. The criticism becomes apparent in *A Disaffection* which brings us back to the Iron Lady. Margaret Thatcher is never mentioned by name in the novel. Nevertheless, as Simon Kövesi points out:

⁵² Beveridge, Craig, and Turnbull, Ronald, *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture*, Polygon, Edinburgh, 1989, p. 107.

Published in 1989, ten years after the rejection of a referendum to give Scotland more independence, *A Disaffection* must be read as part of the Scottish “libertarian, socialist, anarchist” Kelman to ten years of Margaret Thatcher’s unchallenged Conservative government. Thatcher is never mentioned in the novel, but her absence only serves to increase the distance between Tory Westminster and non-Tory Scotland⁵³.

It is important to note that, apart from the dire political climate either lurking in the background or shouted at as ‘fucking government’ once Doyle steps to the fore; the key element of Patrick Doyle is isolation. It is to Kövesi’s credit that he balances the part of the angry, committed Kelman and the existentialist crisis which his main protagonist faces. The latter may have occurred under any government, no matter if right or left. As Kövesi perceives:

Kelman’s device of not explicitly mentioning the proper nouns of late 1980s politics further estrange Doyle’s world from the contemporary political landscape, and just shows how irrelevant it is to him. Even if Doyle says he stands forever in ‘defiance of central authority,’⁵⁴ his rebelliousness is always at a remove, negotiated through the local, diminished by isolation (Kövesi, p. 91).

Kövesi points out the fact of Doyle’s isolation. The schoolteacher, even if reacting against school politics, does so out of an existential crisis. The latter is illustrated in the following outburst in the classroom, where philosophical ideas are set into literary

⁵³ Kövesi, Simon, *James Kelman*, Manchester University Press, 2007, p. 91.

⁵⁴ Kelman, James, *A Disaffection*, Picador, Edinburgh, 1990, p. 104.

motion:

You are being fenced in by us teachers at the behest of the government in explicit simulation of your parents viz. The suppressed poor. Repeat after me: We are being fenced in by the teachers. We are being fenced in by the teachers at the behest of a dictatorship government in explicit simulation of our fucking parents the silly bastards (p. 24).

Roderick Watson similarly perceives the link between Kelman's critique of Scottish education and the existential crisis of the main protagonist in the following words.

Watson compares Kelman to Robin Jenkins or George Friel, but points out that Kelman is more political:

Kelman's novel is more directly political in the challenge it makes to institutionalised education in the materialistic 1980s, and also more clearly political in Doyle's crippling sense of the absolute groundlessness of all things⁵⁵.

However, one should include some of Kelman's remarks concerning the educational system. He has done so frequently, mainly in his two collections of essays *Some Recent Attacks, Essays Cultural and Political* (1992) and in "*And the Judges Said...*" (2002).

James Kelman has amply illustrated Althusser's notion of the Repressive State Apparatus, be it in his literary work or his critical essays. The focus here will be on the educational target, even if - in the sense of the ISAs - the various power systems are

⁵⁵ Watson, Roderick, *The Literature of Scotland, the twentieth century*, Macmillan, London, 2007, p. 232.

intertwined. Thus in the essay "Some Recent Attacks on the Rights of the People" (April 1991) Kelman talks about the general way in which Scotland is ruled in the following manner:

Overtly this [i.e. the managing of Scotland] happens by means of the political and legal systems; by the forces of law and order, the police and the penal system, the military; by state immigration controls, the DSS, the education system and so on⁵⁶.

Those governmental forces seem to work in unison, sharing the common aim of controlling 'the vast majority of people who constitute society, the people (Kelman, p. 43).

With regard to education, one of James Kelman's points is not only that education as such bears a controlling function but also fails to fulfil its primary mission, which is the providing of the common man with the benefits of education. In his discussion given for Harry McShane's Centenary, Kelman refers to the latter's education and fatalistically puts the state of education on a low level. Because of the wider connections and links with the themes of reading or class, the passage deserves to be quoted in full:

The official educational system didn't provide people like Harry McShane with their education either. Not then and not now. That's not its purpose. Its purpose is of course the opposite; it's designed not to educate. The official educational system is part and parcel of the British state, a very crucial part of it. So we

⁵⁶ Kelman, James, *Some Recent Attacks*, AK Press, Stirling. 1992, p. 43.

shouldn't be surprised to discover that it always seems to fail in educating our young people properly. It's the first stage in a lifetime process of state propaganda and disinformation, the earliest battle in the psychological warfare the state wages against the people (p. 49).

Historically speaking, Kelman attacks the education system of the turn of the 20th century, the 'then' which denotes the time of McShane's schooling and the 'now' of the Thatcher years. The negation contained in the notion of 'not to educate' illustrates the dilemma in which Patrick Doyle sees himself. As a civil servant, he is constantly caught in between the roles of the oppressor and the idealistically motivated provider of knowledge. We are a far cry from the Democratic Intellect, even if one should add that Kelman seems to respect Davie's ideas (see for example the inclusion of Davie's ideas in a discussion on democracy, p. 57 *SRA*). The particularity of the Scottish education system has succumbed to the colonizing British state. And if *A Disaffection* reads as a political parable of this - with Doyle aware of being both the agent and the object of governmental propaganda and disinformation - , *Kieron Smith, boy* not only serves as a nostalgic rendering of a Glaswegian boyhood but also as an image of the fight between the state and the people.

The people, more precisely working class people, is the category which Kelman has in mind when he criticizes the educational establishment. It is the upper class against the lower class: 'When most working class people leave school they never want to see another book in their life. Reading 'seriously' is a form of punishment. Education itself is seen as punishment' (p. 49).

Whether Patrick Doyle takes education seriously is debatable. He internalises the

Foucault line of discipline and punishment. Even if he does not punish himself - and one should add that the children are remarkably quiet and understanding in front of Doyle's machinations and lamentations - he appears as the instrument of state control. That the kids will ever read Hölderlin is hardly likely.

Kelman continues to criticize the educational system in his second collection of essays called "*And the Judges said...*" (2002). One could assess that the criticisms and attacks of the Scottish educational system run thematically through a number of the compiled essays. An explicit exposure of this criticism is for instance contained in "Elitism and English Literature, Speaking as a Writer". In the opening page of this essay, Kelman talks about his literary choices as a child reader. Apart from his reading of Enid Blyton's adventure stories, a fascination still shared with today's young readership, Kelman mentions Frank Richard who indulged in the genre of school stories. Faithful to the notion of Althusser's ISA, Kelman denounces the fact that the Scottish school system is too much moulded in the English vein and represses any sort of expression which would give the ordinary man a voice: 'In our society being a servant pays a wage whereas creating literary art which attempts honesty in its portrayal of ordinary men and women pays almost nothing at all. Our schools and other institutions, including the media, encourage this actively'⁵⁷. The reference here is to proper, anglicized English as opposed to the urban demotic uttered by realistically portrayed protagonists. The wider implications bear on notions of language, identity and myth-making; factors which have been discussed in our introduction and will be focused upon more sharply in our penultimate chapter on Scottish language(s) and identity. Also, inherent to the essay on elitism and English language, are three related facts. First, the literary models taught at school were mainly English, with Scottish

⁵⁷ Kelman, James, '*And the Judges said...*', Secker & Warburg, London, 2002, p. 79.

literature either reduced to the classics like Walter Scott or deemed not to be on a par with the English. Secondly, censorship and repression of literature play a part in the curriculum. In this respect Kelman mentions the existence of a journal for English teachers called *Teaching English*. The latter was designed as a tool to help teachers make choices of cursory reading, thus being highly influential. Kelman quotes a review of a novel which concludes in saying that 'Its usefulness as a school text is unfortunately limited by the realistic inclusion in the dialogue of that element which (other writers have felt) necessary to suppress ... the parents of your average 'S' grade candidate would certainly be moved to protest' (*AJS*, p. 73). Thirdly, there is the implication that if school education does not provide realistic Scottish literary models, that then the reader has to gain access to censored books or books considered ill-reading elsewhere. These places would include bookshops and uppermost public libraries. Not only Kelman but also Alasdair Gray and other writers have lauded the existence of these places. They have a sense of recognition because part of their own schooling was done in public libraries and now deplore the fact of their disappearance. James Kelman relates the perverse politics of education to the 'peremptory closure of schools, not to mention the selling-off of books by our libraries' (*AJS*, p.137). Kelman's viewpoints contribute to our theory that education is not only provided by the State but that there is a parallel mode of education based on being self-taught.

Similarly, the idea that education rather than providing learning prevents the schoolchild from gaining knowledge is contained in an exchange with John La Rose, in which Kelman states that 'It is really weird but of course it is part of the education process anyway, a very essential part, kids being disinformed' (*AJS*, p. 244).

James Kelman's background is working-class, including, as he reminds the

audience of a talk given at Thanet College, some distant relatives who were ‘school teachers’ (*SRA*, p. 81). Kelman is at pains to stress his working-class roots, the fact that he puts the profession of teaching between inverted commas indicates his rejection of middle-class values. Doyle belongs to this class. As Kövesi reminds us, Doyle is ‘professionally qualified, which means his work as a secondary-school teacher is solidly-paid and we might even say his occupation, if not his troubled identity, is middle class’ (Kövesi, opus cited, p. 88). For Doyle, however, being middle-class is a stigma which he constantly rejects, as manifested for example in his talks with his brother Gavin, examples which will serve as illustrations in the next section.

In interviews, Kelman has continuously voiced his criticism of the Scottish education system. What emerges from most interviews is the notion – theoretically defended by critics like Fanon or Beveridge and Turnbull, that the Scottish educational system finds itself in a colonised position. In an interview with Fabio Vericat, Kelman answers the question whether the Scots’ cultural self-consciousness is a sort of self-preservation and linguistic resistance in the following manner:

Scottish culture is pluralistic, there is no ‘the Scot’. If there is a lack of confidence generally, a sense of inferiority, then the historical context is crucial. You have to remember that Scotland has existed as a sort of colony of England for the past three hundred years, its ruling class sold the country back in the early 18th century. Scottish children have been educated to recognise not only their own inferiority but the inferiority of their parents, community and wider culture, including language. It is a typical colonial position.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Vericat, Fabio, ‘An Interview with James Kelman’, *The Barcelona Review*, issue 28, January-February 2002, p. 1.

This position of colonisation brought about by the hegemony of the English educational elite brings about a sense of inferiority, of mediocrity. This sense is combined with a criticism of high school learning as such. James Kelman's criticism not only implies that the Scottish system suffers from Anglicization, he also assumes that the traditional educational system fails to provide students with insight into critical learning material. The traditional literary canon is under attack. This standpoint is contained in a reply to Ramona Koval, who refers to education as related to writing. Kelman describes the clash between the school curriculum and his literary aspirations in the following way:

I'm not a great believer in higher education straight from school. I think students who go straight from school have a difficulty, I think they get sickened by it. If you don't go through the higher education system then you've got less chance of being sickened by the whole thing about reading⁵⁹.

Apart from bearing strong autobiographical elements, the two quotations illustrate that there is a feeling of isolation in cultural and educational matters, which grows out of an inferiority complex. Kelman echoes Craig Beveridge's and Ronald Turnbull's analysis of Scotland's political and philosophical past, which they summed up as follows:

English culture, or to be more precise, the public-school Oxbridge, 'Home Counties' formation is steeped, to a singular degree, in the bizarre belief that its

⁵⁹ Koval, Ramona, interview with James Kelman for *Books and Writing*, Radio National, Edinburgh, 2004, p. 4.

own history, institutions and practices are paradigms for other less favourite peoples. This phenomenon can only be explained by means of the concept of inferiorisation, the loss of self-belief and acceptance of the superiority of metropolitan mores (p. 112) .

The phenomenon has found its literary representation with a number of Scottish writers. The tradition runs on in Kelman's work, with *A Disaffection* forming the bulwark of James Kelman's view on the mechanisms governing education.

The opening line of the first paragraph of *A Disaffection* could function as a summary of the whole book: 'Patrick Doyle was a teacher. Gradually he had become sickened by it'⁶⁰. Patrick Doyle seems the epitome of the teacher, in a similar way that Hines appears to be the emblematic, universal bus conductor ('The Teacher! The Great Man!', p. 6). The use of the past simple, however, may suggest that Doyle is not a teacher any more, that he has stopped functioning. The reader is told that step by step he has become 'sickened' by his job. The condition is mainly psychological but also physical. Later on in the novel Doyle is literally going to throw up in front of his pupils, and even if this state is due to too much drinking, it reinforces the image of disgust contained in the first sentence.

The closing line of the first chapter ends a reflection on the state of teaching, with Doyle being constantly introspective. Having considered the importance of a pair of old pipes discovered behind the local arts centre - the function is relevant since there are so many direct references to art in the book - Doyle reveals that his secret longing is to be - not a musician - but a painter. He imagines himself covering large murals with paintings (as Alasdair Gray has done at the Oran Mhor in Glasgow). As Kövesi

⁶⁰ Kelman, James, *A Disaffection*, (1989), Picador, London, 1990, p. 1.

interestingly enquires, 'Could this introductory aspect of Doyle's mostly frustrated artistic inspiration be Kelman's subtle homage to Gray?' (p. 104). The role-model, however, is the Spanish painter Goya. Doyle fancies covering buildings with 'evil shapes and sinister figures - different things: but always inclining toward Goya's work of the black period' (p. 1). Since Goya – like the German Romantic poet Hölderlin - reappears throughout the novel and seems to function as a projection of Doyle's inner state of mind, it is worth considering him further.

Francisco de Goya (1746-1828) was one of the greatest painters of his age. James Kelman, who has expressed his own interest in completely different painters like Camille Pissarro, Cézanne or Claude Monet, includes these references in his novel to indicate something about Doyle's aspirations. Goya found himself 'being drawn from a mockery of Spanish society into a world of inexplicable demons'⁶¹. In his study of Romantic art, Vaughan compares Goya to William Blake and states that the two artists occupied a position of remoteness from society, and notes that 'Goya is often thought of as an isolated phenomenon; a solitary genius (isolated still more in years by deafness) in an ailing society' (p. 85). One of Doyle's problems is that he seeks company and remains and suffers from isolation at the same time. His deafness is psychological and partly a result of a state of being burnt out. Although Goya was popular - he gained the title of First Painter to the King in 1779 and was Madrid's most fashionable portrait painter - he was isolated in his last years. The colourful brilliance of a group portrait like *Charles IV and the Royal Family* (1800) gave way to the more brooding, private rendering of the black period mentioned by Doyle. In between, Goya, as 'a reporter in the artistic field' (p. 94) had witnessed all the absurdities and atrocities of the war between Spain and France, which resulted in such master-pieces as *Third of May*

⁶¹ Vaughan, William, *Romantic Art*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1982, p. 85.

(1814).

Goya's last visions were called the Black Paintings because of 'their macabre subjects and their sombre colouring' (p. 97). Goya has moved away from the Rococo inspired conventions of paintings like *Blind Man's Buff* (1789), away from court-commissioned portraits and self-portraits like *Self-Portrait* (1815) to a more visionary quality. And even if the latter element was already present in works like the famous *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* (circa 1798), a hallucinatory highlight is obtained in *Satan Devouring One of his Children* (circa 1820-23). The painting shows an ogre-like devil biting into a mutilated corpse, eyes filled with horror. It forms part of Goya's Black Period, which is, as art critic Robert Hughes assesses, of 'surpassing pessimism'⁶².

Simon Kövesi has insisted on the significance of Goya and art in general for Doyle. In a critical chapter titled "The community of references and critical sympathy", Kövesi notes a key-problem which any analyst of *A Disaffection* must face. The list of famous proper-noun names is large, including fictional characters like Franz Kafka's Gregor Samsa (*Metamorphosis*) and Josef K. (*The Trial*) or James Hogg's Wringhim (*Confessions of a Justified Sinner*) classical authors like Cicero or Heraclitus, scientists and philosophers such as Copernicus, Descartes, Gödel, Kierkegaard or Schopenhauer, writers like Shakespeare, Goethe, Hölderlin or Kafka, and artists like Picasso and of course Goya. Kövesi points out that any closer investigation of the significance of these people for Doyle would necessitate a proper study: 'Each mention is worthy of individual examination (for which this study has neither the room nor the critical wherewithal to attempt)' (p. 109). Similarly, a close reading of each of the people mentioned would go beyond the scope of this thesis. Kövesi explores the question of

⁶² Hughes, Robert, quoted by Simon Kövesi in *James Kelman*, p. 108.

why there are so many allusions to artists in the book, especially since Kelman's previous work hardly ever refers to artists. In a slightly provocative manner, Kövesi asks: 'Does Kelman teasingly give an 'educated' readership what it wants, in bucket loads, but actually is able all the time to push away the "middle-class wankers" who would appropriate it?' (p. 114). One way of reading is to view the gallery of artists as a kind of counterbalance to Doyle's existential isolation. And artists like Goya help the schoolteacher to momentarily escape this solitude. Kövesi points out that 'Goya is referred to by Doyle more than any proper noun, from the first page of the novel onwards in fact' (p. 107).

For the record Goya is mentioned at pages one, eight, ten, 27, 42, 55, 61, 67, 82, 93, 169, 170, 198 and 258. Furthermore, pages 64 and 69 refer to Goya's birth-place Aragón. Generally speaking, in these passages Goya functions in a similar way as Doyle's other heroes, in the sense that they replace missing, real life friends. In Kövesi's words, 'Lacking close friends as he does, Doyle ruminates over the lives of intellectual heroes, as much as - if not more than - their ideas' (p. 109). Significantly, the sole painting from Goya's Black Period which Doyle ponders upon is the *Self-Portrait* from 1815. Doyle, the failed teacher, wonders what his life would be like as an artist. He identifies with Goya, turning into the painter and his life: 'Imagine looking into the mirror and seeing Goya's self-portrait, that one from the black period, and you had painted it of yourself. You were Goya in other words. You could see into your own soul with total honesty of vision' (p. 61).

Patrick Doyle lacks the sense of vision he seeks to obtain. The finding and the playing of the pipes behind the arts centre provides him momentarily with a sense of relief. He admires the lives and work of the artists quoted and imagines a similar

lifestyle. Probably Doyle's own education was never stimulated artistically, be it by teachers or parents. In an exchange with his colleague, the unattainable Alison, Doyle mentions having visited an art-gallery lately ('I was actually up a couple of weeks ago, seeing an exhibition', p. 131) and in his sexual longings for Alison he compares himself to an artist ('He can imagine for example cupping one of her breasts in his hands the way that maybe an artist would', p. 109). In this way Doyle romanticizes the lives of artists, whose lives were actually far from romantic. Thus the Romantic German poet Hölderlin, mentioned close to a dozen times (see pages 105, 109, 118, 150, 157, 181, 205, 226, 306) in the book, fell into oblivion and madness in the last thirty years of his life, helped by his Scottish benefactor Sinclair. As with Goya, Hölderlin works as an imaginary friend, and this is tragic for at least two reasons.

First of all, Patrick Doyle is brilliant enough to stand on his own feet. He could have been the embodiment of the Democratic Intellect, because he has knowledge and the will to share it with his pupils. Unlike Mr. Alfred, Doyle is not rejected by his fellow teachers, but viewed (perhaps ironically?) as 'the bloke who can show Gödel's theorem to the average first-year class in a sentence, remember?' (p. 14).

Doyle does not lack intellectual ability, nor does he encounter real difficulties with his workmates or classes. Yet the next page qualifies this capacity, Doyle thinks about times when there still was enthusiasm to teach, 'back when the spark still existed. Before it had been extinguished' (p. 15). Then, in a typical Kelman qualification, the anti-hero resurfaces in the next sentence, claiming that 'it hadn't been extinguished; it still existed, it was just fucking dormant' (p. 15). On the other hand, the person most likely to revive this flame is Alison, who cannot and does not want to enter into a relationship with Doyle, only partly because of her marital status.

Doyle's masculine confidence is shattered, and this aspect is not only typical for most of the teachers discussed in this thesis, but for male protagonists in a lot of Scottish literature. In front of female encounters, Doyle reveals his true fragile self, albeit with the cautionary use of the auxiliary 'might': 'Actually I might be a depressive, and I mean clinically, as an actual condition - not manic, but a depressive all the same' (p. 141). This is far from an image of the romantic artist in the mirror, and closer to life on the brink of a nervous breakdown. In this respect, Alison brings Doyle back to reality by her comment 'Sometimes your cynicism makes me feel physically sick' (p. 233). Doyle's sister-in-law is equally impatient with his attitude. In a revealing passage towards the end of the novel Doyle considers the general state of the profession and bitterly concludes that:

All teachers are bags of wind. They should stick us all into these black plastic bags and tie up the ends and then wait for a strong gale force wind to be blowing and fling us all off the top storey of the Red Road flats (p. 314).

When Doyle asks Nicola whether she has 'ever been at the top of the Red Road flats, beautiful, looking down the Clyde Valley and seeing Goat Fell across Arran?' (p. 314). Nicola brings him down to earth. She will have none of Doyle's would-be romantic angst. 'The Red Road flats is a terrible place to live' (p. 314). Nicola, together with Alison, knows Doyle best. Since Nicola genuinely likes her brother-in-law, she cannot openly attack him, but her comment remains perceptive enough:

I'm not criticising you Pat but I think you've got a glamourised view of women

which is wrong, it really is wrong. The Red Road flats is an awful place to live. When I was at school in Balornock I had a friend and she had a cousin living there and her mother killed herself (p. 315).

Doyle suffers from a lack of sexual satisfaction which would have soothed his existential sufferings. The act of teaching has long become an act of derision. Doyle experiences both a physical and psychological repulsion, and the following sentence sums up his condition: 'I'm sick of being alone and being a teacher in a society that I say I detest all the time' (p. 248). And there is yet another side to Doyle's maudlin self-pity. If it is true that he despises his state of isolation, the educational profession and society at large; he still never gives up on the children. He regrets leaving the teaching profession, mainly because he liked the kids and in a perverse manner he believed in conveying to them, if not knowledge, then warnings, guidance and protection within and against an oppressive society. Doyle's disaffection leads to a dismissal, and significantly enough, he can never envisage life in new scholarly surroundings. He claims that he will be missing the school-children: 'That is what he would miss, the weans, he would miss them. No really anything else' (p. 189). The latter statement is repeated on the last page of the book (page 337). In his paranoid and burnt-out state, Doyle rejects harmless forms of camaraderie. The one element he would not reject - his love for Alison - cannot be obtained.

The final pages show Doyle in a state which is not dissimilar, as we shall see, to Mr Alfred's ending. Where Mr. Alfred will commit a real act of vandalism, by putting graffiti on the walls, Doyle fantasises about what would happen if he got into trouble with the police. In a hyperbole he casts himself in the role of the 'disaffected teacher

(who) puts bricks through windows, embarks on property rampage down the streets of Possil' (p. 336). Unlike Mr. Alfred, Doyle does not end up in a mental institution, yet his wild mood swings at the end of the novel - and throughout the complete book one should add - more than indicate that this teacher is close to the edge. In particular, there is the disgust at himself, as expressed in the final paragraph: 'He is dangerous to himself and thus to the weans he teaches on that daily basis' (p. 337):

Again, it is the children who matter, and it would be wrong to judge the disaffected teacher as somebody who lacks commitment, even if his pedagogical methods are debatable. Doyle considers suicide, but as an existentialist idea in the style of Camus, perhaps, rather than as a real desire to commit the act itself ('That temptation is aye the same temptation and it is suicide, it is actually suicide', .p. 337). In the end the hated State takes over in the guise of the police forces. Or maybe not, for the possible questioning by the polis may be part of Doyle's heated imagination. As it is, the failed teacher-artist-lover's final outburst 'Ah fuck off, fuck off.' may reveal a condition every bit as desperate as that depicted in Edvard Munch's painting *The Scream*.

3.3 - George Friel's *Mr Alfred M.A.*, analysis of a burnt-out teacher

George Friel was born in Glasgow in 1910 where he spent most of his life until his death in 1975. After training as a teacher Friel served in the RAOC during the war. He returned to the teaching profession and became assistant head of a primary school until he retired in the 1970s. Friel produced five novels, of which *Mr Alfred M.A.* (1972) is arguably his best work. Friel is pertinent because, similar to Kelman's protagonist, Friel's teacher-character finds himself in a psychologically fragile state. In the books the ideals of the Democratic Intellect become seriously shattered. Gordon Jarvie recommends the novel in the following way:

If they read no other fiction in the course of their studies, all trainee teachers should read the novels of Friel. They tell us more about the Scottish school system of the 1950s and '60s than any history book could - and, by extension, offer us much to ponder regarding the kind of school system we have today.⁶³

There is little critical material available about Friel, and it is only due to the republishing of his work by Canongate Press, that Friel gained some sort of recognition in later days. More research by students is being done, as is for instance evident in the M.Res. by Aoife Máire Kernan. In our discussion of various representations of education, we shall concentrate on *Mr Alfred M. A.* The novel shares a preoccupation with the marginalised. According to Roderick Watson the latter engagement 'often takes place in the classroom, for it is here that the state and the individual meet, in a tiny

⁶³ Jarvie, Gordon, introduction to *George Friel - A Glasgow Trilogy*, Canongate Classics, Edinburgh, 1999, p. ix.

theatre that might have much to reveal about the general health of the nation'⁶⁴. First of all, we shall consider the ill-fated schoolteacher Mr Alfred.

Mr Alfred is a good-natured but naive schoolteacher. He is unable to cope with an urban reality whose outward manifestations - ill-boding graffiti, vandalism and gang warfare with ready-to-use blades - hardly stop at the school thresh-hold. The conditions of the modern Glaswegian wasteland gradually take their toll on Mr Alfred. In her thesis Kernan describes Mr Alfred as 'a social outsider, failed poet and disciple of Arnoldian culture, anaesthetised by boredom, sexual frustration and alcoholism'⁶⁵. Fittingly enough, Kernan quotes a poem written in 1971 by Friel. Entitled "His Handicap", it foreshadows Mr Alfred's creative crisis: 'He longed to be a storyteller, a novelist, or a romancer - like someone with a wooden leg, wanted to be a ballet dancer'⁶⁶.

Alfred seems out of touch with the brutal reality of day to day school life. The language he uses does not reach the children, who appear like foreigners: 'They didn't speak his language. They were on a different channel and he couldn't switch over'⁶⁷. According to the enigmatic, allegorical Tod he talks 'the slang of the thirties' (Friel, p. 162).

There exist some key-differences with Kelman's representation of the world of school here. First of all, the schoolchildren in *A Disaffection* are docile recipients of knowledge - unlike the protagonist of *Kieron Smith, boy* - and we hardly know anything about their background but at least no acts of vandalism or fighting are

⁶⁴ Watson, Roderick, 'Beyond the Renaissance', *The Literature of Scotland, the twentieth century*, p. 168.

⁶⁵ Kernan, Aoife Máire, *Escape from Glasgow, The narrative allusions of George Friel's The Boy Who Wanted Peace and Mr Alfred M.A.*, Master of Research, University of Strathclyde, 2004, p. 53.

⁶⁶ poem by George Friel, taken from a collection of his manuscripts lodged at the National Library in Edinburgh.

⁶⁷ Friel, George, *Mr Alfred M.A.* (1972), Canongate Classics, Edinburgh, 1987, p. 127.

mentioned. Secondly, the language which Doyle employs is powerful and reaches the children, not only because it is littered with expletives but also because his verbal intensity is an expression of taking them seriously. Doyle succeeds where Alfred fails. Even if both view themselves as failed teachers, Mr Alfred's aspiration has failed due to personal and outer circumstances: 'He wanted to teach. But nobody wanted to learn. He knew it was his job to make them. He tried. He failed' (p. 136). Mr Alfred is unable to handle the mostly insolent bunch of students and their excessive manifestations of verbal and physical violence. The educational career becomes gradually shattered, the ageing teacher is demoted from teaching boys to teaching girls. This change triggers off an infatuation with a young schoolgirl called Rose, which leads to a transfer to a new school with the worst possible reputation. Whereas with Kelman the reason for his protagonist's changing schools is the result of a disaffection - even if doubts exist whether Doyle actually applied for such a move - Mr Alfred is the victim of a disciplinary, internal school matter. As Kernan assesses, 'The youth culture of graffiti and gang violence increasingly confounds and fascinates Alfred' (Kernan, p. 53). After the encounter with Tod, who personifies an anarchic longing for destruction, Alfred is arrested by the police for having pencilled graffiti on the walls. He consequently suffers from a breakdown followed by a stay of possibly indefinite duration in a mental institution.

Like Patrick Doyle, Mr Alfred never manages to fulfil his aspirations. He believes in the power of poetry which he frequently quotes. There are for instance direct allusions to Milton (p. 7), Wordsworth (p. 158) and especially Yeats. The visionary poem "The Second Coming" is mentioned twice in different contexts. In an exchange with his aunt, nicknamed Granny Lyons, Alfred deplores the destructive forces of the

young thugs, whose hassling and intimidating of the aunt ends in a half-brick being thrown through her window. Alfred senses the upcoming threats of physical assault and reacts with fear ('But he was frightened' p. 16; 'He was pale with fright' p. 17). The reciting of poetry becomes a means to understand and escape the atmosphere of angry gang warfare: 'Anarchy', said Mr Alfred. 'Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. Things fall apart'(p. 17).

The second time the poem is quoted, its function is to create an intellectual bond with his fellow teacher Lindsay. Like Doyle, Alfred seeks to escape his sense of isolation. And after his analysis of the recent events of the young mob with Lindsay, Alfred seems to assume that he has found a brother-in-arms:

Surely the Second Coming is at hand, said Mr Alfred. 'That's Yeats, isn't it?', said Mr Lindsay. 'The Second Coming. It's a poem by Yeats. Am I right?' 'Yes, you're quite right,'said Mr Alfred. 'The blood-dimmed-tide is loosed. The ceremony of innocence is drowned' (p. 146).

In Doyle's reflections on Goya or Hölderlin, the lives of the artists were at least as important as their work. We have seen that they also worked as imaginary friends. Mr Alfred, however, secretly hopes that his use of proper language and quoting poetry will bring him friendship: 'Mr Alfred was surprised a fellow teacher in a primary school had read Yeats. He began to like Mr Lindsay'(p. 147).

At the outset, we are told that he is 'the author of a volume of unpublished poems' (p. 5). The fact that his poetry was rejected coincides with questions of language and identity. Working as a teacher in Scotland and speaking English on behalf of high

culture in an inner-city school symbolises questions of identity that are central to Scottish literature. Mr Alfred's love-hatred vis-à-vis his profession and his native country leads him to cast himself as 'an exile in his own land. Not that he had any love for his native land' (p. 59). Alfred feels like a non-entity in his homeland, while also feeling – absurdly – that England has also rejected him through not accepting his poetry:

Whereas England was where they spoke the language he taught, the language he once thought he knew. But he had been refused an immigrant's visa there many years ago when nine publishers rejected his thirty-nine poems (p. 59).

Language and culture are constant issues in *Mr Alfred M.A.* Alfred's dilemma consists in the fact that he teaches a concept of high culture that he is ill-equipped to deliver and that the educational system is out of sympathy with. Alfred's Arnoldian ideals do not fit the modern world of educational practice nor contemporary culture's prevailing values. The tragic irony lies in the fact that Alfred fails to see that the educational establishment does not require his type of teaching and that his aspirations to culture are educationally unfashionable. Unlike Doyle, Alfred lacks the insight into the Althusserian role he is playing within the educational system, just as he fails to see that the educational system no longer wants his kind of teaching. If Doyle is too radical, then Mr Alfred is too conservative for the standards of the day. To add insult to injury, we learn that Mr Alfred's manuscript was rejected a long time ago by nine - we can safely guess - English publishers. One should add that Friel himself encountered frustrations before getting his work published (see: 'Printed at last in 69, / so now it's yours as well as

mine'⁶⁸). This sense of frustration becomes amplified in the next lines: 'They had condemned him to stay where he was and go on waiting at the bus-stop till a hearse came along. He had silence and exile, but no cunning'.⁶⁹

The pluralized personal pronoun 'they' may both refer to the English literary establishment which rejected Alfred's poetic genius in the making and the Scottish educational forces which leave Alfred waiting at the bus-stop of his life. As an outpost of street-life, the bus-stop, with its association of humble public transport, clashes with the expectations Alfred might have had for his career. Instead, the static verb 'waiting' followed by the compound 'bus-stop' suggests inertia and a dead-end, not to mention the final end signalled by the hearse. Whereas Alfred's colleague Murdoch functions as the happy teacher ('He smiled. He wasn't bitter. He did what he could to teach some maths, went home, and put the school out of his mind', p. 126) his fellow teacher Lindsay is described as an old cynic (p. 136). One way or another, these two have the ability to survive within the hostile environment of a collapsing school system. In the last line of the above passage there is a direct reference to Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*:

I will not serve that in which I no longer believe,
whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my
church ... using for my defence the only arms I allow
myself to use - silence, exile, and cunning.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Friel, George, introduction to *A Glasgow Trilogy*, quoted by Gordon Jarvie, p. viii.

⁶⁹ Friel, George, *Mr Alfred M.A.*, p. 59.

⁷⁰ Joyce, James, *A Portrait of the Artist as a young Man* (1914-15), Penguin Classics, London, 1992, p. 269.

The difference consists in the fact that young Stephen Daedalus will succeed where old Alfred will fail. This failure is apparent in a moment when Alfred, back home from an extensive pub crawl which leaves the teacher in a nostalgic but unusually self-critical mind, reconsiders the merit of his poetry written a long time ago. He senses that his verse will never be worthy of Yeats or Arnold: 'He felt he was a failure, a lonely provincial hearing from afar rumours of the world of letters, the only world he cared about, a world he would never be allowed to enter' (Friel, p. 43). This feeling of artistic failure becomes connected with professional failure, for 'Mr Briggs saw him as a bit of a fool who had brought unnecessary publicity to the school by mishandling a difficult boy' (p. 43).

In our introduction we have mentioned that education is a recurring theme in George Friel's work. As with Kelman, these literary passages have to be considered within a wider socio-political context. In the case of Friel, the underlying subtext deals with changing values within the educational system. The traditional ways of teaching were challenged by new ideas of which Patrick Geddes (1854-1932), A.S. Neill (1883-1973) and R.F. Mackenzie (1910-1987) were the founding fathers. They shared a belief in changing a static school system through advocating active learning methods framed by a progressive educational theory. The innovative R.F. Mackenzie criticized the fact that 'conventional education lacked coherence in being too subject-centred and had no rationale that linked it in a grand design that would fire the imagination and free the children from the rigidity of a curriculum dominated by the need for exams'⁷¹. Nigel Grant and Walter Humes remind us that Geddes was very critical of Scottish schools,

⁷¹ Murphy, P.A, *The Life of R.F. Mackenzie, A Prophet Without Honour*, Edinburgh, 1998, quoted by John Donald, pp. 158-159.

which he described as ‘prison for body and mind’⁷². According to Geddes, rather than serving the needs of children, school would serve the needs of ‘textbook perpetrators and examination-machine-bureaucrats’ (Geddes, p. 336). The negative effects of schooling as an institutionalized control mechanism have of course been criticized by Kelman. However, whereas *A Disaffection* took place in the 1980s, with Thatcherite politics and budget cuts impacting on education, one could argue that the state of education in the 1970s, as described by Friel, should have been a tinge more optimistic.

Mr Alfred M.A. was published in 1972, the same year A.S. Neill’s biography "*Neill, Neill, Orange Peel!*" came out. Neill’s educational philosophy places the child in the centre of educational policies and puts the emphasis on an emotional response to and understanding of the school-child’s needs. Neill realized his educational vision with the setting up of the Summerhill School. Neill’s literary testament starts with considering the teacher’s role: ‘Teachers want to be little gods protected by dignity. They fear that if they act human, their authority will vanish and their classrooms will become bedlams’⁷³.

We have already discussed that the fear of losing control inside and outside the classroom is a feeling which Mr Alfred knows well. The little authority he has gradually disappears. In *Mr Alfred M.A.* the classrooms are described like bedlams, with mad pupils as vandals. Alfred imagines that the annexe of Winchgate Primary School where he last teaches, ‘was the prey of vandals because it was a neglected backwater lacking the amenities of the main building. It bred resentment, and resentment was expressed in destruction’ (p. 143).

Corporal punishment would be one way of restoring order, but here Neill and Alfred

⁷² Geddes, Patrick, quoted by Nigel Grant and Walter Humes in ‘Scottish Education, 1700-2000’, *Scotland, A Concise Cultural History*, Edinburgh, 2004, p. 366.

⁷³ Neill, A.S., “*Neill, Neill, Orange Peel!*”, Hart Publishing, New York City, 1972, p. 17.

plus the majority of his colleagues walk on different grounds. Neill rejects physical punishment and remarks upon a dark subject in Scottish education in this manner:

I taught in a system that depended on the *tawse*, as we called the belt in Scotland. My father used it and I followed suit, without ever thinking about the rights and wrongs of it until the day when I myself, as a headmaster, belted a boy for insolence. I put my tawse in the fire and never hit a child again (Neill, p. 19).

A.S. Neill describes a dilemma which many a teacher must have faced. As John Darling points out, the process was gradual and it was a long time before corporal punishment was finally given up : ‘The eventual abolition of corporal punishment is an achievement for which no-one in Scottish education can be congratulated’ (Darling, in Bryce & Humes, p. 32). The publication of the so-called Primary Memorandum in 1965, while representing ‘a reaction against the old ways’(p. 32) and professing child-centredness in the Neillian way, did not abolish the strap but merely recommended ‘that the use of the belt should be reviewed by the profession’ (pp. 35-36). Theoretically speaking then, schoolkids continued to be belted frequently throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Thus an investigation carried out by the Scottish Council for Research (titled *Pupil’s Attitudes to School Rules and Punishments*, 1977) showed that 84% of secondary school boys had been belted at school, with 34% claiming to have been belted quite often. For the girls the corresponding figures were lower, but still a considerable 57% and 13%. According to the study, ‘In the spring term of 1972 the belt was used 4,000 times in Edinburgh’s primary schools’ (p. 36). Figures for Glasgow must have been similar, if

not higher. One should add that the attitude towards the belt has always been ambivalent, and as we shall see, this ambiguity is also present in *Mr Alfred M.A.* Lindsay Paterson, referring to an inspectorate's document from the 1950s, describes the dual aspect of corporal punishment in the following way:

The document also managed both to endorse corporal punishment and to discourage its use: although the teacher 'should serve as a model in behaviour' and encourage 'self-respect and self-discipline', corporal punishment 'may be salutary in its effect'⁷⁴.

The teaching staff at Mr Alfred's school are no exception: 'The teachers in Collinsburn used corporal punishment' (Friel, p. 33). In the novel this practice provokes an avalanche of letters sent to the local newspapers, letters cynically commented upon by the teachers. In a perverse way they want to maintain the administration of the belt, if only to stress their difference from the hated English. In this conjecture 'An English immigrant's letter complaining about the place of the tawse in Scottish education set them off again' (p. 33). Mr Alfred, never lost for an odd thought, compares the use of the belt to 'the language of a country' (p. 34). In the lengthy discussion (pages 33 to 36) concerning the implications of using the belt, Alfred typically cites the literary example of Joyce: 'Not that the pandybat did Joyce any harm. It gave him material. It showed him what life is like. And even if a boy is strapped unjustly it isn't fatal. Life is full of minor injustices' (p. 35). The irony in these lines consists in the fact that the beginning of Mr Alfred's downfall occurs when one of his pupils refuses to take the strap. Gerald defies his teacher and thus undermines his authority, Alfred even gets blamed by the

⁷⁴ Paterson, Lindsay, *Scottish Education in the Twentieth Century*, Edinburgh University Press, 2003, p. 112.

headteacher Mr Briggs for having handled the situation badly: ‘If you had only sent him to me in the first place I could maybe have talked him into taking the strap’ (p. 39). As if the strap would render the ubiquitous acts of disobedience obsolete.

Historically speaking, the strap was made obsolete in the 1980s, as Paterson informs us. We are told that the legal ban resulted out ‘of a challenge to the practice by parents of children in Strathclyde Region, whose case was endorsed by the European Court of Human Rights in 1982’ (Paterson, opus cited, p. 122). The implementation of the law followed in 1986. It was the end of a malevolent and sadistic practice, described in Tom Leonard’s poem “Four of the Belt” in this manner:

Jenkins, all too clearly it is time
for some ritual physical humiliation;
and if you cry boy, you will prove
what I suspect - you are not a man.

As they say, Jenkins, this hurts me
more than it hurts you. But I show you
I am a man, by doing this, to you.

When *you* are a man, Jenkins, you may hear
that physical humiliation and ritual
are concerned with strange adult matters

- like rape, or masochist fantasies.

You will not accept such stories:
rather you will recall with pride,
perhaps even affection, that day when I,
Mr Johnstone, summoned you before me,
and gave you four of the belt

like this. And this. And this. And this.⁷⁵

We have stressed the fact that Alfred stands for old values and has trouble coming to terms with the new ways as propagated inside and outside the classroom. The teaching establishment associates Alfred with a pedagogic stagnation opposed to the school's new dynamic. The brutality and lack of respect for a teacher who is in professional difficulty are expressed by Mr Brown: 'He's falling apart, that fellow. I'll have to get rid of him' (Friel, p. 54). Alfred views himself as 'a creature of habit', (p. 147) unable to change his depressed lifestyle or adjust to new pedagogical methods. In his description of the Summerhill project, A.S. Neill notes that when pupils are told that lessons are optional, they will tend to drop traditional school subjects. On the other hand, they will stick to 'the creative ones like art and woodworking - (which) proves to me [ie. Neill] that lessons are forced on children against their wishes' (Neill, p. 215). The idea that children could choose their own school subjects rather than sticking to the official

⁷⁵ Leonard, Tom, 'Four of the Belt', *Outside the Narrative, Poems 1965-2009*, etruscan books and Word Power Books, Edinburgh, 2009, p. 24 (poem also quoted by Alasdair Gray in *1982 Janine* (1984), Penguin, London, p. 344).

curriculum is one that Alfred fears. However, he is at least willing to talk about the new methods with a new teacher colleague called Miss Seymour, who 'had been teaching for a year and a bit. He thought her youth and her zest for the job might help him if he discussed the new methods with her. Inadvertently she mentioned poetry' (Friel, p. 138). Suddenly Mr Alfred realizes that he is not cut out for the teaching job any more, but unlike Doyle, his introspection hardly goes very deep. In his naïve way he expects to learn something from Miss Seymour. However, the mentioning of the word 'poetry' brings the following reaction: 'Poetry? Oh, I never do poetry. I encourage the children to write their own poetry' (p. 138). After this rebuke, Mr Alfred perseveres and questions the value of pinning up the children's drawings rather than letting the kids see reproductions of the Old Masters. Second time round, Miss Seymour discards this idea, claiming that 'It's the children's own work that's important' (p. 139). Mr Alfred makes a final attempt when he refers to the amount of bad spelling and poor grammar used in the school magazine. Once again Alfred is laughed at by Miss Seymour. She calls him a 'right old fossil. What you see there is what the inspectors want. This is the day of the child-dominated classroom' (p. 139). Also, Miss Seymour acts opportunistically and hypocritically. Her teaching is mainly intended to impress the inspectorate. A.S. Neill's ideas have become perverted or interpreted wrongly, for his emphasis on a 'child-centred' education has been replaced by 'child-dominated', very far from what he intended.

Mr Alfred's problems with the new methods can be seen as a conflict between his conservative notions of high culture and the language of the street. In the novel this comes down to a confrontation between poetry and graffiti when Alfred meets the enigmatic Tod, who signifies anarchy, the perversion of symbols, and 'the end of the

printed word' (p. 161). It may also be the end of education itself. Many critics have focused on the fate of Mr Alfred in their discussion of this novel, but Friel's representation of teachers and teaching is a significant theme in the book and worth pursuing by taking a brief look at some of his other characters.

We have stated that Friel's view of the state of Scottish education, as shown through his protagonists, is very bleak. One might assume that the criticism is aimed at those schools in deprived areas frequented by the class of youngsters most likely to be found in street gangs. However, in an interesting departure from this stereotype George Friel presents other characters, equally doomed to failure. This can be seen in his treatment of Martha Weipers, a bricklayer's daughter and the eldest of seven children, and her well-off boyfriend, Graeme Roy. Martha and Graeme seem more mature and set apart from the mob. Graeme's aspirational parents regret the fact that their offspring does not attend a fee-paying school, but then he 'was so near his exams for university entrance it seemed best to leave him where he was' (p. 30).

Having chosen Engineering rather than an Arts subject, Graeme's university career is not successful. Even if his wealthy parents can afford to pay the tuition fees, he does not adjust; indeed 'he discovered that he was a country yokel in a mob of city slickers' (p. 77). The system fails him because it did not provide him with any counselling. Discussing Graeme's case, his teachers are shown to be arrogant and complacent. They recognize his talents in maths, science and French - after all, he translated Rimbaud's poem «Le Dormeur du Val», which Friel has them misreport as "Formeur" – perhaps on purpose. Nevertheless, wise after the fact, they agree that the boy should not have reached for a university degree in Engineering. Alfred's verdict on the boy is more appreciative and shows that - even if he remains naive in front of new methods - he can

take up arms against his colleagues when it comes to defending a hard-working student: 'He seemed quite intelligent, but I should never have thought there was a poet in him'(p. 79).

The university seems unable to cater for the young man's needs. As a result, Graeme's frustrated hopes turn into bitterness which threatens his relationship with Martha. The late-night dance in the University Union turns into a last night drama, for the couple will commit suicide in the garage of Graeme's parents. This vision of the young people's fate appears extremely pessimistic and Friel may be suggesting that, far from being child-centred, in the manner of A.S. Neill, the educational system is more like a Darwinian struggle for survival of the fittest, miles away from Davie's *Democratic Intellect*. The inclusion of the Martha-Graeme episode illustrates the fragility of hope and the vulnerability of young people. Success in education and education as a symbol of success in life are the very high stakes being played for. Ultimately, the couple's proposed suicide over this is an indictment of the power of this myth.

Ultimately George Friel's oeuvre has nothing positive in stock for those willing to enter the teaching profession. The final question remains whether Friel's rendering of Scottish education in the nineteen-fifties and nineteen-sixties is not too one-sided. Amongst all the mishaps resulting from a bureaucratic educational structure, which rather than seeking to ameliorate the negative effect of short-sighted urbanism as transposed into lousy housing-schemes; is reinforcing them, there must have been positive alternatives of eager students and dynamic rather than dysfunctional teachers. We have demonstrated that most of the characters involved in the teaching business are failed teachers and artists (like Alfred or Doyle) and an option for a life as an artist may

have achieved more satisfaction. But then Friel decided not to write about this side of the story, if it ever existed. Furthermore, to use Douglas Gifford's remark, 'No easy analysis is offered; ambivalence is ubiquitous (a recurrent feature of Scottish fiction); and central to this ambivalence is the figure of Mr. Alfred himself'⁷⁶.

As a conclusion to our discussion of Friel, we should add the importance autobiography played in portraying Mr. Alfred, for it is hard to imagine the writer as a happy teacher. Similarly, Alasdair Gray's representation of the teacher in the next section depicts the Democratic Intellect under crisis.

⁷⁶ Gifford, Douglas, introduction to *Mr Alfred M. A.*, p. vi.

3.4 – Alasdair Gray - In the company of Mad Hislop

Alasdair Gray has interspersed his work with observations on the educational system and portrayals of teachers. His work mingles concise historical references with artistic, literary representations of various types of education. Gray's political agenda can be regarded as a framework for this treatment. In this respect the pamphlet *Why Scots Should Rule Scotland* contains the history of Scottish education in a nutshell⁷⁷. Thus Gray evokes the role of the Church as connected to the lad of pairs myth in the following passage: 'The church kept schools, hostels, hospitals and funds for relief of the poor. Only through the Church could the clever son of a labourer achieve the social power of a lord'⁷⁸.

In another passage Gray goes on to denounce the fact that at the beginning of the 15th century the class divisions within scholarly matters widened: 'After being bloodily suppressed a law was passed forbidding the teaching of reading and writing to children of labourers' (pp. 24-25). However, Gray also readily points out the positive aspects of the Scottish education system, even if these may in themselves form part of the myth-making. Gray informs us that 'The Scots system was deliberately anti-hierarchic' (p. 32). There is also the view of the rigid, exclusive English system versus the idealized Scottish system of the democratic intellect as expressed in claims that 'Scottish universities were never as inaccessible to the working class as Oxford and Cambridge', (p. 33) that 'Scottish education was more modern than England's', (p. 55) and that 'Scottish working people still expected more from education than their southern equivalents and sometimes got it' (p. 74). The inclusion of the adverb of frequency

⁷⁷ Gray, however, refutes the part of a historian and prefers the role of a deliberately unreliable narrator.

⁷⁸ Gray, Alasdair, *Why Scots Should Rule Scotland*, Canongate, Edinburgh, 1997, p. 14.

sometimes should make us aware that people with a working class background – like Gray himself – benefited from an egalitarian educational system set up after World War Two, only to become gradually dismantled by Tories and the Labour Party’s ‘increasing Toryism’ (p. 96). In a pertinent essay Angus Calder sums up Gray’s increasing disillusionment with the state of politics in the following manner:

Alasdair therefore stands before us as a reluctant ex-Labourite, to whom the party had once seemed to promise Socialism, whereas now it flagrantly favours the interests of rich people. In his anger he speaks for many writers in his generation and the next one.⁷⁹

As we have already commented upon earlier on in this chapter. Gray’s anger at mostly conservative politics – which after all affect educational matters – is shared by writers like William McIlvanney, Tom Leonard, James Kelman or A.L. Kennedy.

If we turn from Alasdair Gray’s politics to the literary treatment of aspects of education in his fictional writings, we shall see that the portrait of Mad Hislop in *1982 Janine* (1984) deserves prominence. On the one hand the representation of Mad Hislop stays faithful to the theme of dysfunctional teachers, on the other hand there are differences with Hislop’s literary foils Patrick Doyle and Mr Alfred. First of all, whereas in *A Disaffection* and *Mr Alfred M.A.* the main protagonists were both teachers, the voice of Gray’s *1982 Janine* belongs to ‘an ageing, divorced, alcoholic, insomniac supervisor of security installations’ (see flap-jacket/back cover of the book) called Jock MacLeish, who is spending a lost weekend in a hotel in Peebles, thinking up

⁷⁹ Calder, Angus, ‘Politics, Scotland and Prefaces’, in *Alasdair Gray, Critical Appreciations and a Bibliography*, edited by Phil Moores, The British Library, London, 2002, p. 133.

sadomasochistic fantasies interrupted by memories of a fragile adulthood and difficult childhood. The appearance of Mad Hislop seems to belong to the latter. The larger-than-life character, reminiscent of Gerald Scarfe's puppet-like visualization of a mad, belt-swinging teacher in Alan Parker's film *The Wall* (based on Pink Floyd's epic concept album), is introduced page 51. Mad Hislop is squeezed between Plato and Chairman Mao. This lining up of a teacher alongside a philosopher and a politician is used in connection with the line 'The house of happiness is entered through the gateway of self-restraint'. Not only does Gray typically play here with the reader's set of knowledge, in a similar way as Patrick Doyle was wisecracking; but the mentioning of Hislop in an odd context stylistically creates a sense of expectation. The importance of Hislop becomes highlighted towards the end of chapter five, when Jock links Hislop to images of cruelty: 'I HATE cruelty, I hated Mad Hislop' (p. 96). The sentiment of cruelty gets combined with the notion of madness later on in the same chapter five: 'He was not essentially cruel, just insane' (p. 85).

Mad Hislop comes to life in the next chapter. The narrative voice, which seems to belong to the author as reflected through young Jock, links the teacher with the father. And while it is never clear whether Hislop and Jock's father are one and the same, the novel contains strong hints. Thus Jock often thinks about where he got his learning and inspiration from: 'I must have picked them [ie. the phrases] up from Hislop, who was perhaps my real father' (p. 71). In a passage called 'The Sun Mirrors Hislop', Hislop is compared and contrasted to the other teachers. Whereas most teachers are described as 'ordinary easygoing people who hardly ever used the belt' (p. 71). Hislop is represented as a schoolmaster who generates fear. In a moment of brooding menace: 'Hislop stalked about the classroom with hands in pockets spouting verses which made no sense to boys

who sat as still as stones dreading the moment when he would pick on one of us' (p. 71).

The active verb 'to stalk' suggests someone eager to harass and prey upon a victim. The hands in pockets indicate restraint which will be abandoned in favour of hands clutching at the tawse at any moment. Hislop's frantic dynamism contrasts with the pupils' static state, reflected in the hissing, alliterative comparison of 'sat as still as stones' (p. 71). There is an atmosphere of fear and arbitrariness, for the children physically resent the occasion when Mad Hislop is going to lash out at them. And there is ample ground to be afraid of Mad Hislop, as the following passage shows. The young Jock has been staring at Hislop 'because he frightened me and I thought he would punish me if I looked anywhere else' (p. 71). The punishment will come after Hislop has discovered five spelling errors and a complete absence of punctuation in the young man's homework. Not only is he scorned by Hislop but summoned to the blackboard, expecting the rough treatment outlined in a poem by Tom Leonard mentioned earlier on. Gray acknowledges this debt by adding that 'The character of Mad Hislop is taken from Mr Johnstone in Tom Leonard's poem 'Four of the Belt' (p. 343-344).

The representation of Mad Hislop remains complex not only because of the continuing question surrounding fatherhood. The titles "Hislop and my Mother" and "Hislop and my Father" (pp. 82-83) contained in the margins of chapter five provide an Oedipal tint to the strange novel, especially since Jock defeats Hislop at the end of the novel ('I am a completely ordinary man but my birth is as mysterious to me as my death and I will never learn the truth of it now', p. 83). There is also the traditional lad of pairts imagery, as described by an old man whom Jock befriends in a railway carriage:

Hislop belonged to the old breed of Scottish schoolteacher, hard but just; if a boy in his class showed the slightest spark of talent or manhood he would move heaven and earth to encourage it; many a lawyer and doctor from the long town owed their university degrees to Hislop (p. 82).

The quote shows another side of Hislop. The image of a sadistic teacher void of feelings becomes furthermore altered after Hislop's wife dies. The reader learns in this context that Hislop had been 'a very brave soldier during the war. He spent three years in a Japanese prison camp' (p. 84). Hislop's odd behaviour may thus be the result of a post-traumatic war experience. Furthermore, the death of Mad Hislop's wife, followed by a period of bereavement, has profoundly transformed the once powerful teacher who 'no longer seemed a monster . He looked small, lonely and haggard, very ordinary and dismal' (p. 84). And yet again, in another structural twist, Gray portrays Hislop as a human being too weak to express his emotions. The page titled "Hislop loses a Wife" echoes "Hislop makes a Man" (pp. 84-85), in which passage Jock is belted by Hislop. In a perverse, proud manner; Jock takes the strap and even asks for more. At this moment Jock sees 'the whole terrible pattern of Mad Hislop's soul. He really believed that teaching small people to take torture from big people, and crushing their natural reaction to it, was a way of improving them' (p. 85). Jock has learned his lesson and the final line of chapter five is 'Goodbye to school for ever, I hope' (p. 86).

Before the final climax in the last chapter of *1982 Janine* Mad Hislop appears sporadically on pages 91 ('I refuse to blame poor Hislop for everything wrong with me. He was the only bad teacher I ever had and I had him for less than a year'), page 137 ('Shut up Hislop, I bet you you voted Tory like I do'), page 143 ('It sounds the sort of thing Hislop liked') and page 270 which mentions 'Hislop's poetry'. Taken out of

context, these asides do not seem interrelated. However, they continually stress the importance Hislop had in the development of young MacLeish's character. The reader also senses that the story of Hislop is not over yet and that the worst is still to come. Alasdair Gray put the scene relating the humiliation of Anderson, who suffers from a speech defect and is therefore ridiculed by Hislop, and the ensuing confrontation with Jock, towards the end of his book (pages 334 to 337). If Gray had told the episode right after chapter five, the effect and prominence of Hislop would not have been the same. We meet up with Hislop in the fragile state in which we had left him: 'In the week after his wife's death he grew strange and shrunken. We would enter his classroom and find him sitting at his desk, elbows on lid and hands covering face' (p. 334). As witnessed earlier on in the novel, the classroom atmosphere is tense: 'We were terrified. We knew he was on the edge of doing something really mad' (p. 335). The madness consists in the act of belting young Anderson in a senseless rage, until his lisp would have gone. Jock bravely intervenes and his interjection 'You shouldnae have done that', (p. 336) is repeated in unison by the class. If Jock comes across as a class favourite; or father-slayer, in the Oedipus reading, Hislop is ultimately defeated and humiliated by the headmaster's arrival:

And Hislop looked up with a trickle of blood coming from a nostril and said in the voice of a tiny weeping boy, "Oh sir they wullnae lea' me alane, they wullnae lea' me alane." We all felt ashamed of ourselves, and that was Hislop's last day as a teacher (p. 337).

Hislop the oppressor has finally become the victim of a school class exerting its power of solidarity. The mad teacher is physically touched, he is bleeding from the nose. Psychologically he shrinks back into childhood, crying like a wee boy. Even if the children feel remorse, Hislop's teaching career has come to a standstill. Interestingly enough, at a later stage in his writing career, Gray is using a similar incident in the collection of stories *Mavis Belfrage*. On a literary level, the book features teachers as main protagonists. Gray ironically shows his sympathy with the teaching profession by terming them 'Britain's lowest professional class between the late 1950s and 90s'⁸⁰. Whereas the book abounds with sympathetic teacher-characters, the final tale called "The Shortest Tale" recounts the situation of a small boy facing a teacher 'wielding a leather belt designed for striking people' (p. 158). In order to preserve his dignity in the advent of the upcoming thrashing, the boy cries out that:

I'll get my – ' and hesitated, then cried, 'I'll get my *Alstalion* to you. 'He lived with a granny who could not afford to keep a big dog. The way he pronounced Alsatian proved that his dog was nothing but a badly learned word – a word without power – a word which got him laughed at (p. 185).

Unlike the Mad Hislop passage, the schoolboy does not win against the teacher and the system. Brought up by a granny with a poor background, the boy somewhat senses that the position of an Alsatian dog would be high up the scales of power and as such represent a threat to the teaching force. Unfortunately, because the boy cannot master the language correctly, the word is 'without power'. Ultimately the threat not only fails

⁸⁰ Gray, Alasdair, *Mavis Belfrage, A Romantic Novel with five shorter Tales*, Bloomsbury, London, 1996, cover page two.

but the boy's uttering is being laughed at by the teacher with no trace of solidarity from the fellow classmates. The ensuing atmosphere of shame is not dissimilar from the situation and fate of Doyle, Alfred or Miss Galloway's antics after their nervous breakdowns.

The theme of education runs consistently through Gray's work. Fiction should not be mixed up with socio-historical records, but with Gray historical and social comments are often interspersed. Thus Gray's most recent opus *Old Men in Love* (2007) combines four stories set in Periclean Athens, Renaissance Athens, Victorian Times and Contemporary Glasgow. The main protagonist of the last setting is the retired Glaswegian schoolmaster and raconteur John Tunnock. Some of his comments could have been lifted from *Why Scots Should Rule Scotland*, and in the following passages the historical importance of the autonomy of Scottish education is connected with broader themes of globalisation and outsourcing. The quotes are taken from Tunnock's hodgepodge of a diary. He notices that:

Universal state education was made the law in 1870 Britain because – as Napoleon said – Britain was a Nation of shopkeepers, highly productive ones, who could not have lasted long as they did without a big workforce able to read, write and count (p.251).

Gray goes on to include the antics of the Victorian politician Robert Lowe, who chaired committees that ensured state schools taught children:

1. to sit still in rows,
2. to never question a teacher,
3. to only talk when asked by a teacher,
4. to *learn*, not *think* (p. 251).

Gray's wider image of modern school education in Blairite and post-Blairite Britain is not only sceptical but fatalistic, since the values of the public and private school systems have been perverted and discarded. The people 'no longer care if or what the state schools now teach, since productive British industries are now reduced to banking and weapons manufacture' (p. 252).

The representations of education as seen through Alasdair Gray's glasses can be divided into the literary treatments as in the case of Mad Hislop and often thinly veiled autobiographical comments. Gray shares with Kelman a love for provocation and political commitment, and in the same way as Kelman's essays help to interpret his work, Gray's critical comments are companion pieces to the literary texts. The exuberant humour always permeates his writing, which remains in itself an artistic state of education. And if Gray deplores the low status of education, he announces himself as the saviour of schools when he mockingly praises his *Book of Prefaces*:

'WARNING TO PARENTS, TEACHERS, LIBRARIANS,
BOOKSELLERS.

Do not let smart children handle this book. It will help them
Pass examinations without reading anything else.'⁸¹

⁸¹ Gray, Alasdair, *The Book of Prefaces*, Bloomsbury, 2000, book cover page two.

3, 5 – Conclusion

Whereas the preceding chapter has mainly focused on literary representations of schoolchildren, the present chapter has centered on the treatment of teachers in modern Scottish literature. The portraits are far from flattering, since the characterization is tainted with dysfunctional elements like alcoholism, burnout, identity crises or problems with sexuality. Bearing in mind that George Davie's *The Democratic Intellect* and *The Crisis of the Democratic Intellect* can be read as an optimistic versus a pessimistic version of education, we should add that the literary treatments lack any sort of optimism.

We have analyzed the political, philosophical and social background to James Kelman, George Friel, and Alasdair Gray. These aspects define the protagonists' human condition. We have illustrated how (for Kelman's Patrick Doyle and to a lesser extent Friel's Mister Alfred) an artistic career may have been a more satisfying option to the teaching job. Also, while the three writers share a belief in further education or the benefits of general knowledge fostered by public libraries, there skepticism towards educational politics is manifest. We can see then how the initial kailyard optimism towards education gradually turns into skepticism and even bitter disillusionment. The final chapter offers more bleak visions of the democratic intellect under crisis.

Chapter 4 – The continuation of disillusionment in education

4.1 – William McIlvanney's *Docherty*

William McIlvanney and James Kelman are contemporary writers, but some of their work is set in the past. Even if they are using different narrative techniques, they share much in common: both authors share similar political beliefs, which have gradually turned into disillusionment. The protagonists are often working-class and struggle against a harsh sociopolitical reality. McIlvanney and Kelman view issues like class, gender and masculinity or the various power structures like education critically.

McIlvanney's *Docherty* describes the hard times endured in the fictional Scottish town of Graithnock. The book is named after the main protagonist, Tam Docherty, a miner and loving father (miles away from old Gourlay) whose son Conn is supposed to go to school rather than down the pit. Unfortunately for Docherty, Conn refuses to fulfil his father's dream. One pathway to the understanding of *Docherty* is to quote McIlvanney himself. In his collection of autobiographical essays *Surviving the Shipwreck* (1991), McIlvanney sets out what he wanted to achieve in his novel:

I wanted to write a book that would create a kind of literary genealogy for the people I come from, the people whose memorials were parish registers. Since their history was largely silence, I would be constructing a communal fabric of myth.⁸²

Unlike Brown's Barbie and the cosy, rural settings of most of kailyard literature, the background to McIlvanney's novel is urban, and grapples directly with the socio-

⁸² McIlvanney, William, 'A Shield against the Gorgon', in *Surviving the Shipwreck*, Mainstream Publishing, London and Edinburgh, 1991, p. 223.

economic turbulence of the early twentieth century. Structurally speaking, the novel opens with a Prologue set in 1903, covers the years up to the First World War – with the wounding of Conn’s brother Mick – and ends in the nineteen-twenties. The ‘silence’ mentioned in the above quotation, refers to the daily struggle for life that the miners fought; bringing out the coal for low wages, feeding a family amid conditions of extreme poverty. And even if partly based on autobiographical experience (‘The material of *Docherty* I wrote is largely my own experience of family life’, p. 235) the temporal displacement of the book forecloses that reading: ‘the Dochertys are not my family’(p. 235).

If McIlvanney confesses that he is engaged in construing a ‘communal fabric of myth’, we shall follow our narrative thread about the lad of pairts treatment. For even if *Docherty* is post-kailyard, the motive for singling out the male carrier of intellectual hopes is akin to much of the dominie-populated literature of the nineteenth century. The prime reason for conveying Conn with a proper school education may be parental pride. However, it is one of Conn’s school-teachers who encourages the young boy. Musing over her son’s future, Jenny proudly remembers a note sent to her by one of Conn’s teachers:

He could try to read a bit for them. He should be able to, he was doing so well at school – top of his class. She had even received a note from one of the teachers – a Miss Anderson – saying that Conn was ‘something special’ and was to be ‘given every encouragement’. She still kept it, at the back of the drawer, like an IOU from the future.⁸³

⁸³ McIlvanney, William, *Docherty* (1975), Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1996, p. 65.

The notion of reading is introduced tentatively, with the conditional usage of the auxiliary verb 'can', the hesitation inherent to the verb 'try' and the diminutive 'a bit'. McIlvanney's implication might be that the young boy has to make up for the intellectual shortcomings of his parents, whose appetite for reading gravitates between the extremes of the mother's plunging into *The Dundee*, 'a weekly paper of addictive sentimentality' (p. 64) and the father's idealization of Ralph Waldo Emerson (p. 80). The second sentence of the above quotation contains the hyperboles 'so well' and 'top of his class' illustrating the boy's promising intellectual prospects, even if Conn does not come across as an ardent scholar. The fact that a teacher praises the young boy as 'something special' and recommends 'every encouragement' seals and stamps Conn's faculties with higher educational authority. And yet, even if kept like a relic, Miss Anderson's missive is only kept 'at the back of the drawer', as if the mother subconsciously sensed her son's refusal to opt for education.

The significance of Miss Anderson's writing as a token promising intellectual values becomes highlighted later on in the novel. The passage, situated in the middle of the novel (see chapter 7, pages 172 to 180), is relevant because it illustrates the unbridgeable gap between the father's wishes for school education as an alternative to the pits and Conn's refusal to follow the parental choice. After the son's feeble attempt to read out a speech made by Lord Brougham, Docherty has a lengthy conversation with Conn, in which the educational myth fostered by Miss Anderson is resurrected:

'Is that no' whit Ah've been tryin' tae tell ye a' along?' Conn waited. 'It's education, son. That's whit ye've got tae hiv. You're clever enough tae go oan et

the schil. Ah ken ye are. Yer mither's got a note there fae a teacher. A lassie. Whit's her name?' 'Miss Anderson.' 'Miss Anderson. That's who it wis. Miss Anderson. She says ye're capable. An' so ye are. But why are ye no'interested? Conn shuffled in the chair. 'Ah jist want tae work in the pits' (p. 173).

The passage echoes the mother's thoughts and stresses the value education possesses in an affectionate but intellectually not very stimulating household. Tam remains a kind father throughout; there is nothing of the tempestuous intolerance inherent to Douglas Brown's old Gourlay in McIlvanney's representation of fatherhood. Miss Anderson stands as an ambassador from the promised land but neither Tam nor Jenny perceive what is really going on at school. In view of the humiliations the boy has to brave, his decision to work in the pits would have become understandable. Unlike Gourlay, however, Docherty tries at least to understand why his son is not interested. Conn, not one for many words, declares his wish to follow in his father's footsteps. What Conn's declaration provokes, is first of all a rendering of Tam's self-contempt: 'Ah'm jist a miner noo' (p. 173). Then follows a revealing aside in which Uncle James, a glorified family member, appears to show Conn the fruits of true learning. In a narrative twist full of irony, which Docherty is unaware of, McIlvanney mentions that Uncle James got his diploma in Geology the week he died. And, like Miss Anderson's note, the 'certificate kinda thing' (p. 175) has been kept in a drawer ever since. A deadpan sentence puts the lid on James the educational prodigy, whose merits Conn is unable to grasp: 'There was a silence of some seconds for the legendary James' (p. 175).

It is only after his sordid description of a miner's life and the digression of the Uncle James story, that Tam seeks to find out the reasons for his son's sudden abhorrence of school. After reflecting on his son Mick fighting in the trenches of World

War One, he returns to the topic of education which becomes omnipresent. Against a general sense of hopelessness, education would have meant some sense. This plea for reason finds its climax in the following dialogue:

Conn. Why will ye no' see the sense o' goin' oan at the schil, son. Why no'?'

Ah jist don't want tae, feyther.' 'But why is it? Why no?'' 'Ah don't like it.'

'Is it the teachers? His somebody goat it in fur ye?' 'Naw. It's no that' (p. 176).

Tam's persistent questioning eventually touches a nerve. The young boy's image of the school has been fashioned by observations, half-digested remarks made by his brothers as well as personal humiliation effected by his teacher Mr Pirrie. The humiliation that Conn undergoes at school is not illustrated initially by McIlvanney. At the beginning of the book there is a mixture of curiosity and acceptance; Conn 'had to go to school', (p. 31) which implies a necessity; and 'very soon he accepted it' (p. 31). Unlike James Kelman's Kieron Smith, whose rejection of school is almost pathological, and unlike his own brothers, young Conn likes school. Whereas in Kelman's novel it is Kieron's brother Mattie who likes school and studying ('He always read his books'⁸⁴), the reverse is true for *Docherty*. Conn cannot understand why his brothers Mick and Angus do not like school. And his pondering introduces Miss Anderson into the novel: 'Their [his brothers'] contempt for school always puzzled him. He enjoyed it. Miss Anderson was nice. She told you a lot of things you didn't know' (p. 55). Conn has not yet experienced any kind of humiliation and his lack of bad experiences explains why he does not understand his brothers' reaction and why he wants to preserve his unspoilt, idealized image of Miss Anderson as a kind, educational benefactor: 'Conn was hurt. He

⁸⁴ Kelman, James, *Kieron Smith, boy*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 2008, p.12

was hurt for the school, for the way his brothers felt, and for the fact that he was different from them. The confusion depressed him' (p. 55).

Conn senses a difference between himself and his brothers. Somehow he cannot grasp this difference, this choice between work as a miner from a young age and a continuing school education. Unlike Kelman, McIlvanney intervenes in the characters' ways of thinking, and because the boy cannot really describe his feelings, the authorial voice takes over. It is as if the writer would shape the character's inner thoughts and thus create their identity. Kelman achieves a radically different narrative style through allowing each narrative character his identity without critically assessing or judging it. In her perceptive essay 'Class and Being in the Novels of William McIlvanney', Beth Dickson (who disagrees with Roderick Watson's points about McIlvanney's style which seeks 'a fully-realised effect'⁸⁵) describes the dilemma between authorial voice and authenticity of characterization in the following way: 'Conn, like many other "young, imaginative boy" characters in the Scottish novel, resists, often with little success, the identities which the fictional world gives him'⁸⁶.

Conn's identity is not only influenced by Miss Anderson or socio-economic factors like his working-class background or discussions about religion. Significantly, and this underlines McIlvanney's criticism of the educational system, Miss Anderson, despite the pride heaped upon her and the expectations emanating from her, is never physically present in the novel. Miss Anderson's literary foil, however, appears as a threatening, larger-than-life character in chapter 15 of Book 1 of *Docherty*. In a tradition we met in the anti-kailyard of Douglas Brown's feeble pedagogue excluding young Gourlay from

⁸⁵ Watson, Roderick, 'Oor Ain Folk?': National Types and Stereotypes in Arcadia', in *Nationalism in Literature: Third International Scottish Studies Symposium*, ed. Horst W. Drescher and Hermann Volkel, *Scottish Studies* 8. Peter Lang, Frankfurt, 1989, p.131.

⁸⁶ Dickson, Beth, 'Class and Being in the Novels of McIlvanney', *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies* (1993), eds. Gavin Wallace & Randall Stevenson, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1994, p.63.

education to the more recent examples of Alasdair Gray's *Mad Hislop* we encounter the sadistic teacher Pirrie who, rather than developing Conn's natural longing or knowledge, destroys his identity and the cultural heritage encoded in his native Scots. Cairns Craig is drawing an interesting parallel between Douglas Brown and McIlvanney, when he states that 'Seventy years later, the same descent into the gutter to discover the mouth of the nation is made by Conn as he confronts his school-teacher'⁸⁷. Craig's remark is to the point, as it is precisely the Scottish use of the word gutter (*sheuch*) which brings the confrontation between pupil and teacher to an extreme. At the outset, there has been an altercation between Conn and his schoolmate Simpson, which Pirrie wants to resolve. Pirrie's sadistic vein and the fact that he must occupy a higher position within the educational scale becomes apparent in the following macabre aside: 'You'll excuse, Miss Carmichael. I wouldn't want to get blood on your floor' (p. 113). The two boys are dragged out of the schoolroom to be questioned in an inquisitive manner by Mr Pirrie, whose overwhelming physical presence is underlined by comparing him to a Zeppelin (p. 114).

Mr Pirrie shows no understanding of child behaviour as he intends to administer the same punishment to both pupils. Worse than the fight in the school yard, however, is Conn's use of broad Scots in front of his master: 'Ah fell an' bumped ma heid in the sheuch, sur' (p. 114). Conn's utterance represents a challenge to Mr Pirrie's set of educational standards where English rules supremely and all Scottish roots must be eradicated. After a first blow with the belt, Pirrie remarks: 'That, Docherty, is impertinence. You will translate, please, into the mother-tongue' (p. 114). The inclusion of the polite 'please' is cynical. At all costs, Pirrie maintains the educational façade of

⁸⁷ Craig, Cairns, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination*, opus cited, p.76..

decent language and niceties, even when swinging the belt. At the same time Conn and Simpson get strapped, however, Conn's outlook on school as a peaceful place where knowledge is gained, crumbles like a castle made of sand. Any respect for the teacher disappears after strap six, with the disgust expressed in the italics of '*Big, fat bastard*' (p. 115). The crucial incident not only means a personal humiliation but, more importantly, an abnegation of one's language, a language which profoundly forms one's culture and character. In the view of critics like Fanon or Beveridge and Turnbull, Mr Pirrie not only functions as the purveyor of physical punishment, but also as the Anglicized colonizer and oppressor.

After this crucial incident, Conn's view has changed and he can now comprehend his brothers:

He was coming to understand through his own experience the attitudes Mick and Angus had expressed towards school. More and more he was beginning to envy Angus his escape and involvement in what was to Conn the real life of his family, work and the bringing in of a wage' (p. 117).

We have said that the relationship between Conn and his father is built on other premises than the one between Gourlay Junior and Gourlay Senior. And yet, at the centre of the paternal bond lies the incapacity or unwillingness – typical for many, mostly male, protagonists in Scottish literature - to express one's feelings in front of other family members. Thus in the conversation between Tam and Conn, the latter never mentions the incident with Pirrie and the boy's decision to stop going to school. It is a conjecture to think what would have happened if Tam had known about the boy's

humiliation. The turn of the novel would perhaps have become similar to Gunn's *Highland River*, but then McIlvanney never intended to write a *Bildungsroman*.

Our way of reading *Docherty* as a criticism of the educational system is incomplete without the subsequent three observations. First of all, after Pirrie's acts of thrashing and censoring, the boy's judgement of school remains devastating and definite. The father's asking if there is anything wrong at school triggers an 'antagonism against school' (p. 176) and because the connected thoughts have been heavily and necessarily filtered by McIlvanney, they deserve to be quoted at greater length:

Nothing he was taught at school took the slightest cognizance of who he was, that the fundamental premise underlying everything he was offered there was the inferiority of what he had, that the vivid spontaneity of his natural speech was something he was supposed to be ashamed of. Most teachers breathed hypocrisy, like tortured Christians trying to convert happy pagans, that the classroom wasn't a filter for but a refuge from reality (p. 177).

The boy's insight results from proper experience, but here McIlvanney does the introspection for him. Learned words like 'cognizance' are of the writer's register, and a Kelman voice may have rejected the comparisons between Christians and pagans, claiming that a little schoolboy with a working-class background would be unlikely to produce such thoughts. Leaving the question of authentic rendering of characters aside, it is true to say that the above passage explains the fear of losing his identity.

Secondly, it is not only the realization that school is a dead-end street for Conn. He perceives the lack of perspectives offered by education when he remarks that:

The nearest thing to clarity in him was a sense of the defeat of the stifling narrowness of school, the negation of its lies. But the feeling didn't occupy him long, for school was instantly and utterly irrelevant (p. 208).

Conn senses the meaninglessness of a school system which does not correspond to George Davie's ideal of the Democratic Intellect but to a world of 'lies'. And if school is 'irrelevant', the fatherly values and the miners' life and myth become more important. Ironically, Conn reacts – rather than revolting – against his father's wish. In later life he gradually comes to realize that his father could not have fulfilled this dream anyway. This failure is summed-up in the following sentence: 'He [Tam] could never have afforded to keep Conn on at school. It had been a silly dream for a grown man to allow himself' (p. 209).

Tam's socio-economic position would not have allowed for Conn to remain at school. Perhaps a bursary produced by Miss Anderson, the equivalent of the kailyard dominie, would have kept the boy at school. But then the destruction of Conn's cultural identity by Mr Pirrie also demolished the boy's initial love for school. Mr Pirrie represents the worst aspect of Anglicization and small wonder that the boy rips out all the English equivalents to the Scottish expressions like 'sheuch' or 'speugh' (p. 118).

Thirdly, by opting for a miner's life, the insignia of school education – the books, the jotters, the pen and the ink – are exchanged for the heavy boots, the work-jacket and the bottled tea. In chapter 14 (pp. 214-220). McIlvanney describes the boy's rite of passage and initiation into the miners' secrets. Conn's expectations are satisfied, he feels surprise at private jokes about Alfred Nobel and enjoyment in the company of

veteran miners. And Tam Docherty will take his 'silly dream', dreamt in all earnest and without the calculating mind of a Gourlay, into his grave in the mines.

On top of that McIlvanney's literary agenda expresses, as with many Scottish writers, a concern to find a distinctive style which gives a large space to the working class. He sees the Scottish identity as 'distinctive – through our language, through our literature, through our churches, through our law, through our education, through the radicalism of our desire for social justice. We are not English. We are Scottish'⁸⁸.

Docherty is peopled with representatives of the working class, people like Tam and Conn Docherty who fight for their distinctive, Scottish culture.

What connects McIlvanney with the outlook of the writers analysed in chapter three, is the fact that the teachers are represented mostly in a negative vein. A teacher like Mr. Pirrie fails to grasp Conn's negative attitude to school, and his clinging to down-to-earth values and an identity shaped by working down the mines. The general impression we gain is that, far from sticking to the ideal that the Democratic Intellect is automatically gained at school, education happens out on the street, and in the case of streetwise kids like Conn school has long lost its attractions. The following section introduces Dunky Logan, a boy who similarly discards possible benefits of Scottish schooling.

⁸⁸ McIlvanney, William., *Surviving the Shipwreck*, p. 250.

4.2 – The dark vision of Gordon Williams

Gordon Williams was born in Scotland in 1934 and went to school at the John Neilson Institution in Paisley. Amongst other jobs he worked as a farm labourer, which experience must have enriched the material of *From Scenes Like These*, which tells the story of the young farmhand Dunky Logan. Despite the fact that *From Scenes Like These* was short-listed for the Booker Prize it seems to have faded into literary history. In a Guardian article aptly titled ‘Gordon who?’ DJ Taylor remarks that ‘a writer praised for his “tremendously fierce truthfulness” by Melvyn Bragg seemed to have disappeared off the literary map’⁸⁹. And yet, in our discussion of various representations of education, ‘the bleak but by no means humourless account of a teenage boy put to work on an Ayrshire farm in the early 1950s and to these [ie Taylor’s] eyes, one of the greatest novels of the postwar era’ (Taylor, p. 24) has indeed much to offer. Roderick Watson describes it as ‘one of the darkest pictures of Scottish life since *The House with the Green Shutters*’⁹⁰. The style is, to use Marshall Walker’s words, ‘paint-stripping realism’⁹¹.

Williams’s novel is very bleak indeed and the humour mentioned by DJ Taylor grim. Dunky Logan the main protagonist, is a fifteen-year-old boy who dropped school in order to work on a farm in Ayrshire. In this section we shall analyse how the young boy refuses to be cast in the conventional educational mould and in how far his experience is typical of most of the characters we have discussed. We shall also focus on the roles which the teachers played in Dunky’s life at school and, in the case of Mr

⁸⁹ DJ Taylor, ‘Gordon who?’, *The Guardian*, Wednesday 22 October 2003, p. 24.

⁹⁰ Watson, Roderick, *The Literature of Scotland*, opus cited, p. 166.

⁹¹ Walker, Marshall, *Scottish Literature since 1707*, opus cited., p.325.

Nicoll, outside the academic treadmill. After three weeks of farm labour, his recollection of school experience is summed up as follows:

Three weeks! It didn't seem more than a day or two since he'd been sitting in school waiting desperately for the Christmas holidays, to be finished at last with the daftness of lessons and homework, the whole silliness of being a schoolboy.⁹²

During those three weeks the boy has tried to acquire a new identity through sticking to the rough work on a farm and shedding off the schoolboy skin. By willingly accepting to work on a farm, Logan refuses to follow the educational myth of the Democratic Intellect. Similar to Conn and Kieron, who are disillusioned with education and are therefore either opting for a miner's life or seeking work as a labourer, Dunky seems to have made his choice. This choice parallels Dunky's attempt at coming to terms with adolescence and masculinity, which effort is closely connected with Dunky's rejection of school. At school Dunky used to indulge in daydreaming, the latter a mix of Hollywood films and fantasies about Chicago gangsters creating havoc in Kilcaddie. Dunky realizes, however, that these fancy ideas interfere with his desire to stop school and redefine his masculinity through farm work:

He'd noticed that the more he stayed at the silly school the dafter these notions had become. He'd wanted to get a job, be a hard case, a real working man, not a silly schoolboy whose brain was affected by too many pictures (p. 12).

⁹² Williams, Gordon, *From Scenes Like These* (1968), Allison & Busby, London, 1980, p. 8.

The term 'silly', already used in the first quote of this section, contrasts with the seriousness of hard labour. The break with school suggests the embracing of the real world of farm labour. Furthermore, there is a double refusal since Duncan rejects the – for that age – typical temptation of celluloid heroes. Dunky has opted for hard work at Craig's farm, a place which lacks any glamour and is opposed to the softness of 'them in this case being a vague conglomeration of town people, schoolteachers, girls who'd been in his class, guys he knew in football teams' (p. 14). The enumeration is telling, since it includes the town-dwellers as opposed to the rural labourers Dunky encounters at work, the veiled feminine universe, the tough guys at football, the epitome of a masculine sport and the representatives of the educational system.

The theme of school runs throughout the book, and Williams' narrator constantly challenges Dunky's decision to leave school. For our analysis, we shall group Dunky's attitude to education into two overlapping categories: Dunky's reactions to the more general remarks about school, and the more pertinent relationship with school teacher Nicol, Dunky's *bête noire*.

Under the first category belong historical asides, like the fact that until the late nineteen-fifties, Scottish kids were freed from school to gather potatoes. Williams ironically describes a scene where 'twenty or so school-kids (were) let off by the Education for tattie-howking – in the national interest' (p. 16). Interestingly enough, the authorial voice immediately shifts to the main protagonist who 'was glad he worked horse now', (p. 16) whereas he dismisses the children's digging the earth somewhat arrogantly as 'these kids thought that it was better than school, grovelling about on their knees in cold, wet earth, hands so numb you'd think they'd been pulverised by a hammer' (p. 16). The observation juxtaposes the dull, dry brain work done at school

with the physical labour expressed in the powerful image of the hands ‘pulverised by a hammer.’ The notion is that Dunky considers the village kids to be intruders, as if the benefits and recognition of hardships endured on Craig’s farm were solely reserved for him. Dunky’s confirmation to have made the right choice in life is illustrated in the following monosyllabic reply to Telfer: ‘ “Aye, aye,” Telfer shouted, “You still think it’s better’n school?” “Oh aye,” Dunky shouted back (p. 18). Dunky’s short aside, however, masks a thinly-veiled search for self-confidence. As Roderick Watson rightly remarks, Dunky’s ‘notion of “manhood” is an inauthentic pose in the first place’⁹³. The boy’s behaviour is indeed a macho posture typical for adolescents worldwide.

Significantly, during one of his frequent musings over a lost romance with a girl called Mary Gibson, Dunky expresses his virility while scorning scholarly matters: ‘She’d be working now, or at University or something. Pity she couldn’t have seen him with Charlie [eg a farmhand], she’d have realised he was big time now, not just a stupid scholar’ (p. 45).

Similarly, after an excursion with a horse whose final destination is the knacker’s, Dunky reaffirms his longing for a different sort of education, this time with respect to Mary O’Donnell, the new housekeeper:

This was the great thing about being away from school, when you started real work you got to know a lot of things they kept quiet from kids. Wait till the new housekeeper heard he’d been to the knacker’s (p. 49).

⁹³ Watson, Roderick, ‘From scenes like these-Scottish literature and Scottish politics 1966-1999’, Colloque franco-britannique, Lyon, 2 and 3 March 2007. p. 4.

The disgust of school is almost physical, and the contrast between the world of the farm promising freedom and the education system as prison becomes apparent in a line like ‘stick your rotten old school, I’m free of you now’ (p. 82). However, amidst the turmoil to find one’s identity, there is a perceptive sense of questioning of identity, and the choice between broad Scots and proper English remains a central dilemma of Scottish education and literature, as shown through Chris Guthrie, Conn Docherty or Kieron Smith. The predominance of the English language is stressed at school (‘They were very hot on proper English at the school’, p. 22) as well as at home, where Dunky’s mother echoes Kieron’s mum: ‘His mother spoke proper English, but then she was hellish keen on proving they were respectable’ (p. 22). The fact that from an early age Dunky discovers that the Scottish language loses out against the domineering English culture, in the sense of the Fanon and/or Beveridge and Turnbull notion of linguistic colonization, is illustrated in the following long extract. It deserves to be quoted in full, because it shows Dunky’s clever questioning of identity and heritage (see the direct reference to Robert Burns, from whose poem ‘The Cottar’s Saturday Night’ (1786) the novel borrows its title) as well as a mix of homophobia⁹⁴ and swearing revealing Dunky’s sense of masculinity:

Was it your faither or your father? Your mither or your mother? You see, if school was any use it would teach you things like that, not just jump on you or not talking like a Kelvinside nancy boy. Why teach kids that Burns was the great national poet and then tell you his old Scots words were dead common? What sounds better “gie your face a dicht wi’ a clootie” or “give your face a wipe

⁹⁴ also contained in *Kieron Smith, boy* for instance, which reflects general prejudice against homosexuality.

with a cloth”?. One was Scottish and natural and the other was a lot of toffee-nosed English shite (p. 23).

Ironically, or should one say typically enough; the roots for a proper Scottish identity get eradicated at school. And it is here where the second category matters, in which we focus on the schoolmasters. There is first of all a Miss Fitzgerald, who blames the children for speaking with local accents:

Once he'd [ie Dunky] got a right showing up in the class for accidentally pronouncing butter “bu'er”. Miss Fitzgerald had gone on (him having to stand in front of the class) about the glottal stop being dead common and very low class, something that would damn you if you wanted a decent job (p. 22).

Again, there is the connection between an Anglicized school agenda which abnegates the fostering of a national identity, the snobbish class-consciousness reinforced and propagated by the teacher, as well as the job prospects with broad Scots as an obstacle. The fact that Dunky hears variations of the dialect on the farm initially confirms his choice of having opted for something ‘natural’. It is this very choice which gets challenged throughout the book, mainly by teacher Nicol, whose literary treatment remains ambiguous throughout the book.

On the surface, Nicol seems to embody the idiosyncratic representative of a repressive educational system. Like Miss Fitzgerald or Pirrie, Nicol proves the value of a colonized and colonizing system. At the beginning Dunky may well look to Nicol for

guidance and help in assessing the dominance of English over Scottish, as the following passage indicates:

He [ie Dunky] remembered Nicol the English teacher saying that broad Scots was pronounced very much like Anglo-Saxon or middle English or some other expression. If that was so why did they try and belt you into speaking like some English nancy boy on the wireless? He'd asked Nicol that and Nicol said right or wrong didn't come into it, proper English was what the school had to teach you if you weren't going to be a guttersnipe all your life (pp. 22-23).

Similar to previous quotations, there are Dunky's observations about the absurdity of discriminating against one's mother tongue, the in Scottish literature ubiquitous reference to belting ('Kids got belted at school, horses got belted on a farm', p. 23) and the homophobic remark about 'nancy boys' associated with the standards of BBC received pronunciation. Not only does Gordon Williams perceive and describe the discrepancies between two antagonistic linguistic strands, he furthermore illustrates the topic through the ambiguous character Nicol, who deserves closer analysis. For if it is true to say that a reading of the above extract casts Nicol as a representative of the official Scottish school curriculum modelled on a rigid Anglicized structure which until the early seventies did little to encourage Scottish culture, at least two significant examples seem to show the contrary.

The first example provides an interesting shift of perspective and setting from the classroom to a meeting of the Communist Party. Dunky Logan has been dragged to the political assembly by his friend Alec. To his surprise, Dunky notices that his former

teacher Nicol is among the audience. After an extrapolation which allows Gordon Williams to explain how Dunky had fallen out with Nicol during a Free Discussion period, termed by Dunky as ‘typical of school, a lot of baloney’; (p. 86) there ensues a lengthy speech by Comrade MacLean that includes reflections about capitalism, socialism, the role of the Labour party and recent developments in the USSR. In a challenging, provocative move Nicol, in a voice ‘dry and sarcastic, like all schoolteachers’ (p. 88) puts forward the following question: ‘If the Communist Party were to get into power what would their policy be towards the disappearing language and history and literature of Scotland?’ The question remains rhetorical, and in a move typical for any politician, MacLean calls it ‘a very good question’ (p. 88).

Nicol answers the question himself, warning against a Communist central dictatorship ruled by London which would crush the development of Scottish culture, and citing the invasion of Hungary by the Soviet Union in 1956 as an example of state-political hegemony. Nicol causes an uproar, during which we pause for a moment to reflect why Williams has chosen to include this lengthy scene (pages 86 to 91) relating propaganda in his book. For Williams, renowned as a sports journalist, this inclusion of politics may come as a surprise. Unlike writers like Grassie Gibbon, William McIlvanney, Tom Leonard or James Kelman, Williams can hardly be said to be a political writer. Then again, we have said how *From Scenes Like These* gravitates around the themes of education, culture and identity, topics which are never politically neutral. Also, Nicol’s sharp reaction, while initially a contradiction of the credo of an Anglicized agenda professed at school by Nicol as an administrator of a domineering system, remains faithful to his general views on cultural heritage. Within the narrow confines of the schoolroom, Nicol is an instrument of the empowering, educational state apparatus. He

seeks a political meeting to voice his views on the importance of language and cultural identity. To confirm this viewpoint, after the escape from a possible lynching he utters the following statement to Dunky and his friend: 'Scotland was the first nation in Europe to have a proper system of mass education, never forget that. This used to be one of the leading countries in European culture' (p. 90).

This is not a mere crisis but a farewell to George Davie's ideal of the Democratic Intellect, in the same way as there is no element of kailyard in Williams's writing. Dunky's reaction to Nicol is again typical of his machismo, when he discards Nicol and opines that 'Real men didn't suck up to schoolteachers' (p. 90). In this confusion between identity, sexuality and the shifting importance of role models the former schoolkid does not stand alone. Nicol's attempt to maintain the façade of the functioning teacher bears cracks, as becomes explicit in a monologized confession to his wife. His verdict is devastating and self-deprecating indeed:

"“ I wish I'd never seen a blackboard,” he said. It was true. Chalky hands, bleary eyes, beginning of a stoop, the studied sneer and, if that failed, the belt; parents who drove their children on not for the sake of educating them, oh no, that was the very last thing they cared about, no, to be able to show off their children's exam marks to other parents, like a new fur coat, the parental rat-race. Boys who thought of school as punishment. A whole system of education designed to cater for the parental pride league” (p. 92).

The clipped sentences reflect Nicol's helplessness in a paradoxical situation. Unlike James Kelman, however, Williams does not attack the upper echelon of the educational

system but mainly puts the blame on the parents. His idealization of education and his lenient view on the function of corporal punishment furthermore fails to perceive that he himself, as a civil servant, contributes to restoring the power balance. The Darwinian comparison to the survival of the fittest, the 'parental rat-race', as well as the equation of education and material value, the 'new fur coat', fails to include the socio-economical situation of the parents as well as Nicol's professional background and the deeper perception of his personal short-comings.

The only feedback Nicol gets is from his partial wife, who reminds her husband of an episode where Nicol 'told that old gasbag from the Education Department that he was turning Scottish Education into an apprenticeship for mindless robots' (p. 94). Hardly consoled, Nicol rejects his spate of criticism of the educational hierarchy as ' "Ah yes, my moment of heroism"' (p. 94).

The tradition found in recent Scottish literary representations of pessimistic teachers suffering from self-doubt goes hand in hand with a crisis of sexuality. Friel's and Kelman's protagonists, for instance, are hardly balanced and seek adventures with prostitutes, a young girl or a married colleague. Nicol indulges in erotic fantasies with his female students. He is dissatisfied with his marital status, as shown by Williams' crude depiction of the act of love-making: 'He made love with his eyes closed, knowing that he was only using her body as a masturbatory substitute for heavy-chested girls in white blouses, ripe girls with bottoms that strained against pleated hocky skirts and full, bare calves' (p. 94).

Nicol realizes that his academic aspirations as well as his libido undergo moments of pressure. Within such a context Nicol's admission 'I pity Logan and envy him at the same time', becomes understandable.

The mixed feeling of pity and envy gets reinforced later on in the book, in a scene during which Dunky Logan and his new-found love Elsa (pages 148-155) are spontaneously invited for a drink at Mr Nicol's and his wife Roberta's house. The episode is revealing from several viewpoints. First of all, by comparing and contrasting each other, both males question and redefine their masculinity. The moment of mutual scrutinizing is awkward, not least because of the dynamic of a chance meeting, which is different from the rigid classroom structure. Here the power balance between pedagogue and pupil is unequal, and Nicol's encounter with the young couple is viewed with mixed feelings: "That's my *bête noire* Duncan Logan coming towards us now," he murmured to Roberta. "The brown shirt. He'll hate this" (p. 149).

The term '*bête noire*' more than suggests that Dunky is some kind of pedagogical puzzle, a beast slouching towards his old master, challenging his preconceived set of values, as illustrated in the self-awareness about his choice of clothes. Nicol's self-realization gets close to the sort of paranoid masochism found in Patrick Doyle's actions. The contrast between the desire to avoid Dunky and the urge to impress him through imposing his values makes for a very dramatic reading. As the middle-aged Nicol says, 'Many older teachers suffered from insecurity outside the classroom, now it was happening to him' (p. 151). Nicol's invitation to have a cup of coffee represents a shift from the safe, institutionalized haven of the classroom to the private, middle-class safety. The teacher's self-consciousness runs on a high level and he puts Dunky's apparent prejudice into words: 'I know you think teachers are on a social level with pariah dogs' (p. 149). The fact is that Nicol considers himself to be an outcast from the educational system and that, similar to Doyle, the authoritarian figure risks becoming a non-entity. As an intellectual resort, and an interesting literary device

which introduces journalistic reality into an already realistic tone of voice, Nicol tries to keep his wits and out of a protective, fatherly move he confronts Dunky with an article about the grim conditions of farm life (pages 152-153)⁹⁵. However, the bulk of the information is either lost on Dunky, or he views it as an insult to his position of a farm boy, a status he has after all constructed all by himself. The communication between Nicol and Dunky remains strained and the teacher's missionary endeavour bears no fruit: 'Dunky didn't feel any need to put his side of the case. Nicol wasn't really asking him questions, not really interested in him, just giving him a lecture in class' (p. 155). What Nicol really triggers off is Dunky's hatred of school, an anger which he does not express yet. In a gesture which seems to be sincere, Nicol offers Dunky to speak openly and tell him the reason for having dropped school: 'Forget I'm a schoolmaster, I'm asking you man to man. Why did you really want to leave school so much? Really?' (p. 155).

We may consider the former quotation as some sort of scheming by Nicol but he may also express a subconscious longing to establish the scales, through the offer of speaking 'man to man'. Nicol's almost pleading questioning is an impossible attempt to discard the self of the schoolmaster, in order to understand Dunky's motives for leaving school. Williams uses the technique of subtext to reveal Dunky's controlled politeness as opposed to his ferocious thoughts on educational matters. On the one hand he professes to have opted for work on the farm, rather than dull office life, on the other hand Nicol's penetrating queries have triggered off a very strong reaction, and Dunky's response reads like a summary of Dunky's attitude to school:

⁹⁵ ironically enough, the newspaper cutting is kept between the pages of Lewis Grassie Gibbon's *A Scots Quair*.

Because I felt silly. Because I hated it. Because I got the belt from Miss Colquhoun and Miss Peacock and Mister Sinclair and Mister Everybastard. Because I hated exams. Exams and more Exams. Because I hated being treated like a wee boy. You got an hour's homework every night and two hours after the third year. Because it was official (p. 155).

The coinage of 'Everybastard' underlines the omnipresence and universality of education gone wrong. The rejection of the 'wee boy' treatment furthermore confirms Dunky's self-perception of the grown-up lad who hates the mechanism of assessing and penalizing the absence of knowledge through exams. Furthermore, in a sequence of loaded compound adjectives, Dunky reaffirms his position and clearly breaks with the father-figure Nicol wanted to play: 'I didn't want to get like you, I mean snobbish, peely-wally, pan-loaf, stiff-collar, useless hands' (p. 155).

The rapprochement between Nicol and Dunky is never successful because both characters are controversial and do not find any common ground. In one of the final scenes of the book, symbolically set on New Year's Eve, Nicol, the teacher who has to implement an Anglicized educational system, tries to expose his Scottish identity through wearing the kilt, which dress code triggers off threatening comments from Dunky's mate Jackie: 'Ah know whut to do wi' guys wearin' the kilt. ... Chuck stones at them, stupid buggers' (p. 249). Dunky, too drunk to react, nevertheless has a delirious insight which challenges the posture of masculinity maintained with difficulty, and the ending of Williams' novel shows his anti-hero as the rural rebel without cause, a nihilistic adolescent at the end of his tethers: 'What did it all mean? What were men,

anyway? Why wasn't he a man himself? He was a nothing, a collection of poses' (p. 254).

Roderick Watson relates this sense of defeatism to what he calls the 'provincial cringe'⁹⁶ and a feeling of disempowerment connected to Frantz Fanon's ideas of inferiorism. Ultimately, Dunky's defeat and struggle with images of masculinity, is partly due to an educational system unable to sustain one's culture and identity. In Fanon's words:

Every effort is made to bring the colonized person to admit the inferiority of his culture which has been transformed into instinctive patterns of behaviour, recognize the unreality of his "nation", and, in the last extreme, the confused and imperfect character of his own biological structure.⁹⁷

Gordon Williams' Bildungsroman offers an illustration of the above quote. Our next discussion centres on a pupil-teacher relationship which shares similarities as well as contrasts with *From Scenes Like These*.

⁹⁶ Watson, Roderick, 'From Scenes Like These-Scottish literature and Scottish politics 1966-1999', op. cit., p. 4.

⁹⁷ Fanon, Frantz, *The Wretched of the Earth*, first published in 1961 as *Les Damnés de la Terre*, F.Maspero, Paris, translated in 1965, this edition Harmondsworth, Penguin Classics, London, 2001, p. 190.

4.3 - Robin Jenkins - The teacher as Good Samaritan?

Robin Jenkins (1912-2005), the creator of more than thirty novels, has been ‘hailed as Scotland’s greatest fiction-writer’.⁹⁸ And yet, despite this large creative output, the critic Marshall Walker deplores the fact that Jenkins’ novels never reached a large audience:

Robin Jenkins’ novels have failed to attract a readership commensurate with his imaginative effort because he bottles up his feelings in elusive symbolism and complex philosophy, making much of his work seem tangential both to the condition of Scotland and twentieth-century life in general.⁹⁹

However, in *The Changeling*, for instance, the ‘elusive symbolism’ and ‘complex philosophy’ described by Walker remain largely absent, and if the mathematical definition of a tangent means the touching of two segments, then Walker’s critique goes wrong because Jenkins’s treatment of the educational theme is not tangential but piercing, touching the inner nerve of Scottish identity. In her perceptive essay, ‘Disruptions: The Later Fiction of Robin Jenkins’, Glenda Norquay makes a general remark which remains truthful for our discussion of Jenkins’ representation of education and the connected themes of culture and identity as shown through his literary work at large. As central to the understanding of Jenkins’ novels, Norquay sees a dilemma, explained as follows:

⁹⁸ anon, biographical note on Robin Jenkins, first page of the 2008 edition, published by Canongate.

⁹⁹ Walker, Marshall, *Scottish Literature Since 1707*, Longman, 1996, p. 321.

Because of the intractability of moral questions, and the apparently insoluble contradictions of Scottish identity, built as it is upon so many contradictions, the writer is suspicious of anything that hints of compromise, of anything in fiction that seems to offer a neat pattern. Instead his writing seeks to establish its own dynamic- to keep moving its perspective, to keep the reader working at the contradictions rather than expecting answers, to deny stability or security.¹⁰⁰

The 'moral questions' at the centre of *The Changeling* deal with the relationship between Charles Forbes, a somewhat naive teacher, and Tom Curdie, an emotionally troubled pupil. The premises, however, are different from the Nicol-Dunky structure we have analysed in the previous section, because Forbes's benevolent act and its impact on his family bear wider, disastrous consequences. Within the progress of the novel Forbes quarrels with contradictions and because of the impenetrability of Curdie's character, the reader is not given any respite and neither 'stability' nor 'security' but questions as to why Tom Curdie takes his life in the end. So bearing Norquay's quotation in mind, we shall analyse how *The Changeling* produces an instability for both the reader and the main protagonists; an instability for which a flawed educational system is mainly responsible.

Roderick Watson, echoing Norquay's notion of moral uncertainty in Jenkins's work, describes the relationship between teacher and pupil as well as the moral question of choosing between right or wrong, plus the motives which guide this choice as such:

The Changeling traces the relationship between a sanctimonious but well-meaning schoolteacher and one of his pupils, a boy from the worst slums in

¹⁰⁰ Norquay, Glenda, in *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies*, edited by Gavin Wallace, 1993, p. 17.

Glasgow, to whom he becomes a mentor. The novel explores what makes us what we are, and is never certain about the motives of those who would seek to do good.¹⁰¹

Robin Jenkins must have known the offspring of ‘the worst slums in Glasgow’ quite well. Jenkins was furthermore well informed about poverty, as he grew up in the mining village of Flemington where poverty and deprivation were widespread. Robin Jenkins, like so many Scottish writers and authors in general, used to work as a schoolteacher, in what Isobel Murray calls ‘a rough area of Glasgow’s east end’¹⁰². The school scenes in *The Changeling* are in fact set in a ‘schoolroom in the east end of Glasgow’¹⁰³.

In this schoolroom, teacher Charles Forbes is introduced with the biblical comparison to the Good Samaritan. This simile could signify a non-typical departure from the cynical, selfish teachers present in McIlvanney, Kelman, Friel or Gray, and a return to the glorification of the dominie-teacher in kailyard literature. Equally, the selection of Tim Curdie, the child from a Glasgow slum, could establish, or continue; for Williams’ Dunky is made a laid off pairts against his will by Nicol.

As opposed to the image of the Good Samaritan, whose advantage it was to act alone, Forbes’ plan gets constantly criticized by his colleagues as well as by his spouse: ‘There were for instance, no business or professional colleagues to warn against the

¹⁰¹ Watson, Roderick, *The Literature of Scotland, the twentieth century*, opus. cited, p. 162.

¹⁰² Murray, Isobel, *Robin Jenkins’ Fiction*, www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ScotLit/ASLS/Loverock-Robin-Jenkins, p. 1.

¹⁰³ Jenkins, Robin, *The Changeling*, (1958), Canongate, Edinburgh, 2008, p. 1.

folly of interference; and no wife to cherish him for his altruism but also shrewdly to point out likely repercussions' (p. 1).

One guiding motivation for Forbes' action is the desire to obtain promotion, and Forbes' tragedy partly results from the fact that he would like to negate this way of thinking. In a rare moment of introspection, which happens after an argument with his wife about Curdie's stealing a tin-opener and a tin of ointment at Woolworth, Forbes, alone wandering on the beach, readjusts the Good Samaritan image:

The sight of the Sleeping Warrior in the sunset sky had certainly never compensated for his lack of professional success; and his Samaritan succouring of Tom Curdie had been motivated by an intricacy of selfish hopes (p. 115).

Such a moralising passage saves Jenkins' main protagonist from ridicule, and illustrates how Forbes is not a one-dimensional character but 'in his galumphing, ridiculous way retains a fundamental optimism about humanity without which we are lost souls'¹⁰⁴.

Forbes' dilemma, however, furthermore reappears towards the end of the book, where the Samaritan symbol is dealt with a third time. Curdie's family have made an unannounced visit to the fictional Argyllshire village of Towellan where the Forbes are spending their vacation. The description of the Curdie family comes close to caricature, even if somewhat hastily Marr finds that 'In a few strokes, Jenkins draws the life of industrial poverty as deftly as Dickens, and without a flicker of sentiment' (Marr, p. 228). Forbes views the intrusion – or invasion – of privacy and the threat to family harmony as follows:

¹⁰⁴ Marr, Andrew, afterword to *The Changeling*, p. 227.

It had occurred to him that here was the opportunity for a grand Samaritan gesture: take in these wretched specimens of humanity, feed them, cherish them, sleep them in comfortable beds, while he and his family slept on chairs or floors (p. 199).

Forbes is once again fooling himself. His grandiloquent speech betrays that the gap between his patronizing, bourgeois ideas and the reality of the slums cannot be bridged. The Good Samaritan ultimately fails. However, Forbes realizes that his attempt at taming Curdie, whom his wife Mary calls the 'pet delinquent from the slums', (p. 113) has not only been unsuccessful but also shows Forbes' limitations: 'only if he acted accordingly would he find peace; that it would be the peace of mediocrity could not be helped' (p. 199).

In order to conclude, we can say that Forbes plays a double role because he is both acting as a father and as a teacher. Most of the teachers we met so far had no children. They are either single, in the cases of Martha or Doyle, or widowed like Mad Hislop, or married with no kids like Nicol, who may have dreamed of Dunky as the child he never had. Jenkins' Forbes may be benign and unselfish on the surface, but this façade gets progressively torn down to expose a schoolteacher who is, according to Andrew Marr, 'a terrible blether', a humbug and a bore' (Marr, p. 227). Forbes may start with good intentions, even if his plan to provide slum-child Curdie with different perspectives by taking him on a family holiday is doomed from the start. The reader is informed that Forbes' decision to take Curdie under his wing occurred in the spur of the moment: the pupils have written an essay titled 'The Sea', and even if Curdie has never seen the sea, Forbes tells him that he 'imagined it most beautifully' (p. 2). As was the case for

Brown's young Gourlay winning the Raeburn, Curdie's essay becomes the entrance key to a seemingly better world, the idealized and sentimentalized home of the bourgeois Forbes family as opposed to the poverty of the slums. Curdie never seized the dubious chance of intellectual prestige contained in the Democratic Intellect, and it is a moral conjecture to state that Curdie would not have taken his life if this opportunity had not been given to the boy by his teacher in the first place!

4,4 – General conclusion

The final chapter illustrates education in connection with further miserabilism and mediocrity in Scottish culture. William McIlvanney's literary treatment of education as present throughout *Docherty* bears a historical displacement. Conn's attitude to education is negative and his rejection of school goes hand in hand with a growing awareness of his working-class heritage. He resembles Gordon Williams' main narrator Dunky Logan, even if *From Scenes Like These* offers a much darker vision than McIlvanney's. Finally, Robin Jenkins' *The Changeling* does present a very ambivalent picture of the teacher as Good Samaritan. The question in how far the seemingly benevolent teacher Forbes is responsible for his pupil's suicide is open to the debate. The experiment to tear a child from his natural, working-class background was risky indeed. Forbes, like most of his colleagues, had underestimated the part played by issues like patronizing attitudes that are typical in class divisions.

As a general conclusion to our dissertation, we should add that the positive elements initially contained within the various literary examples, have gradually disappeared. There existed a certain optimism in most parts of kailyard literature. We have observed how a present-day readership may still enjoy the picturesque scenes of kailyard literature. Also, while Ian Maclaren's simple style may have allowed for the popularity of *Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush*, we think, however, that James Matthew's artistically more demanding representations will stand the test of time, as the recent publication of Heinz Günnewig's study on Barrie suggests.

Furthermore, we should point out that a deliberate choice was being made to select examples from kailyard literature. The latter has been the foundation for the lad of

pairs imagery. However, the author of this thesis fully realizes that while kailyard was immensely popular especially at the end of the nineteenth century, there existed at the same time a range of other popular genres which became serialized in newspapers.

William Donaldson's *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland, language, fiction and the press* has explored this issue and warns against a restricted viewpoint:

Bourgeois book-culture assumes the Kailyard to be typical and considers further enquiry unnecessary, while even middle-class fiction during the period is unexplored and the real popular fiction of Victorian Scotland is practically terra incognita.¹⁰⁵

Donaldson's criticism is to the point as it reminds us of the by now largely forgotten popularity of literature as found in the printed press. Also, the vast amount of regional papers may show us how the democratic ideal must have been treated and received differently in the remote Highlands than in the urban settlements. An analysis of educational elements within serialized fiction could have been the scope of another thesis.

If we move from the assessment of the first chapter of this thesis to the second one, we can see how George Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* stands out as a watershed with kailyard tradition. The positive educational values have been perverted, and Brown's proper disillusion with academic affairs may partly explain the bitterness of the book. The literary treatment of characters like John Gourlay and his son, foreshadows a tradition of pessimism within Scottish literature.

¹⁰⁵ Donaldson, William, *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland, language, fiction and the press*, Aberdeen University Press, 1986, p. 86.

The inclusion in the second chapter of the authors Nan Shepherd, Lewis Grasic Gibbon and Muriel Spark shows that female characters seem to adapt a more positive attitude. Our brief analysis of the gender question in said chapter has illustrated that girls seem more prone to continue an academic career. Then again, the cases we have discussed strengthen our argument that education appears to happen outside school, rather than within the venerable college walls. The case of Muriel Spark's heroines is particularly interesting, since the main character Sandy not only betrays her despicable mentor Jean Brodie, but opts for a life within convent walls.

After a seeming optimism, the tradition of shattered educational ideals has been analysed in chapter three, which describes the break-up of teachers as reflected through the dysfunctional schoolmasters Patrick Doyle, Mr Alfred, and Mad Hislop. James Kelman has been the most outspoken in his criticism of the educational establishment, be it in his critical essays or his short-stories and novels. In this respect it is interesting to see how Kelman's literary treatments include both the child's and the teacher's perspectives, as presented in *Kieron Smith, boy* and *A Disaffection*.

Chapter four has finally buried the idealization of the Democratic Intellect. One should repeat that the deterioration of these ideals had started with George Douglas Brown, and that the decline continued with writers like McIlvanney, Williams and Jenkins. Positive images of teachers in contemporary Scottish literature are either hard to find, or, as in the case of Anne Donovan's *BuddhaDa*, are leading an ephemeral existence within the structure of the novel.

Finally, we may say that the lad of pairs and dominie imagery, interconnected with aspects of meritocracy, while typical elements of Scottish education, may by no means be restricted to Scotland. Similarly typical the negative representations of teachers in

literature outbalance the positive messengers of knowledge. In this respect, a similar analysis of education in countries like Switzerland, the Netherlands, Lithuania, or Luxembourg, may have brought to light similar findings.

We had said at the beginning of our thesis, that historical records and literary treatments are two different pairs of shoes. The shoes of the smirking Glaswegian boys happily leaving the schoolyard have long faded into obscurity. Jürgen Schadeberg's photography from 1968 illustrates the vision our thesis has hoped to illustrate. Life begins at the schoolgates, and the ghost of the Democratic Intellect remains in the dusty classroom.

Booklist

* Primary sources:

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