Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

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Narrating the State of the British Nations: National Identities in Post-Devolutionary Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish Literature

Master Thesis

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Statutory Declaration

I hereby declare that I have written this thesis on my on, without anyone else's help. I have also, to the best of my knowledge, acknowledged the sources of all passages and ideas used, and have placed in quotation marks all quotes used verbatim. I have used no other sources or aids than those indicated.

This thesis contains 31 213 words.

Lisa Bungeroth   Berlin, 28.9.2012

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A nation, like an individual, has to be able to recount a reasonable story of itself, one without either despair or presumption. As long as it veers between idealization on the one hand and disavowal on the other, it will behave exactly like Freud's neurotic patient, afflicted by reminiscences. It will be incapable of working through the traumatic moments of its history, which must then either be jettisoned from the narrative in a strategy akin to what Freud calls 'secondary revision', or remain as a stone to trouble the living stream.

--- Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* (ix)

1. Introduction: British Identity?

For a nation and its people, the telling of their story and their nation's present condition is of unequivocal importance for their national identity - the sense of how they define themselves as a national collective. In the British context, this presents both an interesting and complex situation as the complicated constitutional make-up of the United Kingdom and its history has led to a tense relationship between 'nation' and 'state' and the corresponding identities.

The state that is officially the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland consists of the three nations England, Wales and Scotland and the province of Northern Ireland. These have been incorporated into the Union at different points in the past. Despite the Union, the "people of these countries have always had a sense of distinctiveness and been conscious of their individual geographies" (Oakland 23) and a coherent supranational British identity never fully developed. Indeed, "Britishness sat lightly on top of the constituent nations" (McCrone "Unmasking Britannia" 584) with the constituent national identities continuing to exist and in a synecdochical manner Britain remained being equated mostly with England[1] - clearly reflecting the existing power relations in which "'Englishness' has long been the hegemonic component in the supposedly broader term of 'Britishness'" (Morley and Robins 4).

Hence, the constituent identities of the United Kingdom, i.e. English, Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish, have not only remained individually strong, they have also often been constructed in a fundamental opposition to one another. "Who are the Scots? Well, we're not English" (Rankin 74) - this definition of the Scottish identity by the Scottish author Ian Rankin illustrates this opposition in which the originally Celtic[2] countries define themselves first and foremost in differentiation from England. This oppositional identity construction has found its expression not only in cultural and literary movements but also in political ones with nationalist and separatist movements emerging around the turn of the 20th century in Ireland, Wales

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[1] The present thesis will use the term 'Britain/England' to refer to this synecdochical relationship between England and Britain.

[2] The adjective "Celtic" refers to "Celts or their languages, which constitute a branch of the Indo-European family and include Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, Breton, Manx, Cornish, and several extinct pre-Roman languages such as Gaulish" ("Celtic *adjective*" n.p.). For purpose of ease, this thesis will use the term "Celtic countries" when referring to Scotland, Wales and Ireland/Northern Ireland together.

and Scotland (cf. Matthew 503). While these movements have different shapes according to the differing historical and cultural context of the respective nation, what unites them is an opposition towards England and English rule and the struggle for autonomy.

This has been achieved to some extent by the process of devolution, begun in 1997, which has restored some autonomy to the Celtic nations in the form of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Parliament that were established in 1998/9 (cf. K. O. Morgan 596-7). With one of the main aims of the nationalist movements thus achieved and devolution having been in place for over ten years, many questions arise regarding the current state of the Celtic nations: has devolution achieved peaceful coexistence between the four nations[3] within the Union? Is the existence of the Union no longer in question? Has the construction of the national identities in the Celtic nations changed as a result of the developments in the past decade? Or is England still seen as the oppressor that the nation needs to be freed from, the Union thus still being in question, and are the national identities consequently still first and foremost constructed in opposition to England? In short: how has the process of devolution affected the national identity constructions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

This thesis will seek to answer these questions through examining representations of national identities in post-devolutionary novels from the Celtic nations. The genre of the novel lends itself particularly well to examining these questions given that "novels have been influential sources of ideas of nationhood and national belonging" (Parrinder 14) and the novel has indeed been termed "the symbolic form of the nation-state" (Moretti 20). The novels that will be examined are James Robertson's *And the Land Lay Still* (2010) for the case of Scotland, Grahame Davies' *Everything Must Change* (2004[4]/2007) for Wales and David Park's *The Truth Commissioner* (2008) for Northern Ireland. All of them have been published very recently, can broadly be categorised as 'state-of-the-nation novels' and feature a polyphonic

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[3] It should be noted that the process of devolution has by no means been without consequences for England and English identity. There is now a widespread discussion about 'the English question' that debates the state of England within the Union and, more specifically, that of the English regions. Given the limited scope of this thesis, the focus here will be on the Celtic nations exclusively. For a full discussion of the 'English question' see, for example, Tomaney&Mawson (2002) and Jones&MacLeod (2004).

[4] First published in the Welsh language.

narration depicting different characters coming to terms with the past and the present situation in the new political environment of the respective nation.

In order to provide the theoretical framework necessary for the analysis of national identity constructions in the selected texts, this thesis will first elaborate on the process of national identity construction in general, drawing on sociological theories as well as specific studies of the British situation. It will then outline the historical and political background of the UK that is relevant to the issue of national identity construction in its constituent nations. Resulting from this, it will then consider the relevance of post-colonial theory to the literature of the Celtic nations and also explain the political and societal relevance of literature in more detail. Drawing on this, the literary traditions and cultural movements of the Celtic countries will be briefly examined in order to establish how far they reflect the previous discussions as well as the extent to which the novels selected for the present study can be seen to continue them.

The thesis will then go on to analyse the perspectives offered on the state of the nations in the selected literature. A chapter will be devoted to each country and respective novel, and, in order to ensure comparability, each subchapter will follow the same analytical structure. First, the narrative form and structure will be examined. Then, the perspective the text offers on the current state of the nation will be established through analysing the different characters' voices, the existing tensions between them and the solution that creates unity among them offered to this.

This thesis will argue that each text presents conflicts corresponding to the specific historical and cultural situations and then creates a symbolic solution by uniting all the voices through a specific concept. Given that the essence of national identity is to provide the complex and diverse entity of the nation with unity, the texts thus position themselves as fictional spaces that offer possible national identity constructions. The analysis will show that post-devolutionary identities differ in the three Celtic nations. While the difficult identity situations and relations to Britain/England are far from resolved in Scotland and Northern Ireland, Wales presents a very different picture with a post-devolutionary identity marked by an acceptance of the Union.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Identity, Nation and National Identity Construction

On the most basic level, identity can be defined as the sense of one's self and "the property of belonging to, or feeling that one belongs to, a society or a group within a society" ("Identity" n.p.). A notion of the self and relating this self to a social context are thus essential to the concept of identity. Identities can be territorial as well as social: on the territorial level, local/regional identity, national identity and a state/supranational identity can be distinguished while the social level compromises of identities relating to family, gender, social class, occupation, ethnicity and religion (cf. Smout 102). These levels do intertwine given that identities are "neither exclusive nor singular [...] individuals, as social actors, experience the multiplicity and interactivity of these levels, in their repertoire of identity" (Kroskrity 107). The different identities are therefore constructed and negotiated concomitantly and their respective importance will vary individually and culturally.

 The present thesis is concerned with constructions of national identity in particular and some thought should thus first be given to the theoretical concept of 'the nation' which proves notoriously difficult to define (cf. Pecora 1). One basic definition of this concept is "a large body of people united by common descent, history, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular state or territory" ("nation *noun*" n.p.) and national identity in its simplest sense thus refers to the specific ways in which the individual feels and communicates a belonging to this rather complex entity. This complexity is echoed in the definition of national identity that the *Dictionary of Media and Communication* provides:

> The public image of an imagined community […], projecting an illusion of unity reflected symbolically in a flag, a national anthem, and distinctive rituals, and culturally represented in discourse primarily via historical mythologies and a popular cultural canon (including iconic images), narratively constructed and transmitted by social institutions, in particular the educational system […] and the mass media (notably in national news and in media events). ("National Identity" n.p.)

This definition draws heavily on Benedict Anderson's famous work on the origins of nationalism *Imagined Communities* in which he claims that the nation as such is intrinsically imagined given that "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 6). There is thus the

need to construct a unifying image of the nation and this image needs to be mediated. The above definition also points to the different means by which this is done, namely social institutions and the media. Indeed, the origin of national identity constructions in the form they present themselves today lies first in the rise of the Western nation-state in the eighteenth century (cf. Pecora 2) and then in the age of Modernity and industrialisation, around the turn of the 20th century, which saw the advent of print-capitalism that revolutionised opportunities of communication (cf. Anderson 36).

The nation and its cultural identity are thus principally constructed. As Hall points out, national identity is "a discourse - a way of constructing meanings which influences and organizes both our actions and our conception of ourselves" (Hall 292). This discourse is not only mediated to individuals, rather individuals "also form a conception of [them]selves as existing in relation" (Poole 12) to the imagined nation. During the process of self-formation the individual is surrounded and immersed in the powerful national discourse. In our upbringing, we encounter concepts and products laden with national and cultural meaning on an everyday basis, such as the "language we speak, the public symbols we acknowledge, the history and literature we [are] taught at school, the music we listen to, the currency we use, the sporting activities we enjoy, and the news bulletins on the television" (Poole 13, see also Bechhofer and McCrone "The Politics of Identity 191). In this way, the national identity is naturalised and internalised - "we come to feel that [it] is as natural and inescapable as our gender[5]" (Poole 14) and it "defines who we are, how we want to live and how we relate to others" (Bechhofer and McCrone "Politics of Identity" 190).

The theoretical basis of national identity has thus been established as a powerful, all-pervasive discourse that influences the individual heavily from early on and firmly links the individual to the, albeit imagined, social group of the nation. The main function of this is to provide the complex entity that is the national collective with a form of meaning and thus unity. The discussion will now move on to how national identity matters in practice. Given that this thesis is concerned with national identities in Britain, sociological studies of national identities in the British nations will be discussed. As mentioned in the introduction, the "identity situation" given here is somewhat unusual (cf. Poole 36) as the state identity 'British' is a supranational one and thus not congruent with one national identity but subsumes

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[5] The supposedly "naturally" given identity of gender is itself discursively constructed and then performed, as famously argued by Butler (1990).

those of the constituent nations, i.e. 'Scottish', 'Welsh', 'English' and 'Northern Irish'. The historical political development of this situation will be discussed in the following chapter.

As has been mentioned above, apart from the national identity, social identities are also important. However, in the Scottish context, Bechhofer and McCrone (2008) have shown that although these social identities are of significance to people, national identity is almost as important and that in terms of national identity considerable differences between Scotland and England emerge. In fact, "national identity does matter to people both in England and Scotland but is a more important identity in Scotland" and when it comes to emphasising national identity "the Scots are much more likely than the English to choose the 'national' (Scottish or English) and are much less likely to choose the 'state' identity (British)" (Bechhofer and McCrone "Talking the Talk" 85). In terms of the cultural icons that form part of the national identity discourse, Scottish respondents in the 2006 *British Social Attitudes Survey* named the Scottish landscape as the most important cultural item (46%), music and the arts followed with 38% and a 'sense of equality' with 35%, language with 30% and finally the Scottish flag with 27% (cf. Bechhofer and McCrone "Being Scottish" 75). In Scotland, we thus find a priority of Scottishness over Britishness when national identity is concerned and the Scottish landscape is the prime signifier of this belonging.

Turning to Wales, we find some similarities, but also some differences. First of all, less work has been done on Welsh national identity than on the Scottish and Irish counterparts (cf. Bradbury and Andrews 230). Similar to Scotland, the national Welsh identity is also preferred to the British state identity: in the 2007 *Wales Life and Times Survey*, 56% of respondents chose the Welsh identity, as opposed to 32% who opted for the British one (Bradbury and Andrews 231). However, there is a greater underlying tendency to accept Britishness (cf. Bradbury and Andrews 233, Bryant 126). This can be ascribed to the different historical circumstances of Wales, which affect the make-up of its population and internal regional differences as well as causing a different way of identity constructing: given the annexation of Wales by England, all legal and administrative differences had been removed (but see Chapter 2.2.1). Consequently, the Welsh identity is "based virtually entirely on cultural differences, most obviously the Welsh language" (C. A. Davies 170) and these differences along with the language "have long been contained by the British state with undue difficulty" (Bryant 117). Given that the above-mentioned internal

differences are strongly connected to the prevalence of the Welsh language (cf. Chapter 2.2.1), Wales is to some extent closer to the British state in terms of identity, however, the overall picture that emerges is that the Welsh national identity prevails over the British state identity and that the prime cultural symbol for this belonging is the Welsh language.

The situation in Northern Ireland is again different, but to a much greater extent. Identity construction here does not revolve around the national vs. the state identity, but rather entirely around the Northern Ireland conflict (cf. Chapter 2.2) and the connected religious and state identities. The Protestant-British identity and the Catholic-Irish identity have increasingly been constructed in opposition to one another since the outbreak of the Troubles in 1968 (cf. Muldoon 90-1) with the former favouring remaining in the Union and the latter advocating a unification with the Republic of Ireland. This divide is still deeply entrenched: indeed, in the 2005 *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey*, only 8% of the respondents stated they would not have any religious identity at all (cf. Muldoon 91). In the words of Muldoon, "collective identification in Northern Ireland is likely to continue to be a source of division and dissent in the post-Good Friday Agreement climate" (99). As in Scotland and Wales, cultural symbols also play an important role in Northern Ireland as the opposing national and religious identities are heavily mediated through them. The signification of the belonging to the two respective identities is most salient in parades and marches (cf. Chapter 2.2), flags and street signs and murals and graffiti (cf. Bryan and McIntosh 126, O'Dowd 92). Through these, the society's division is territorially and symbolically marked and defined and this also continues to be the case post-Agreement (cf. O'Dowd 92) - as Bryan and McIntosh note: "It is instructive when looking at the conflict in Northern Ireland to see how much political time and legislation is spent debating and controlling symbols" (126). The Northern Irish identity can thus be described as consisting of two opposed state (British vs. Irish) and religious (Protestant vs. Catholic) identities that still divide the community and accordingly belonging to these identities is still signified through the symbols of the Troubles. The main reference point for any identity construction in Northern Ireland is therefore still the conflict.

The overall picture of the constituent national identities in Britain that emerges is one where there is a clear supremacy of the national identity over the British state identity in Scotland and Wales, while in Northern Ireland the prevalence of the divided and conflicted religious-national identities persists. Moreover, in each nation,

there are distinct cultural symbols that signify these collective belongings. This identity situation matters considerably as it has indeed been the main driver behind the process of devolution (cf. Bryant 4) and continues to influence political attitudes (cf. Bond 116-7) - as Todd pointedly sums up: "[c]hanges in collective categories of identity are at the core of social transformation" (429). It is therefore useful to take a final look at the overall development of national identities in the constituent nations since the process of devolution was initiated and the *Devolution and Constitutional Change ESRC Research Programme* provides a meta-analysis of different national identity studies.

In Scotland, 61% of the respondents stated they would feel 'Scottish not British' or 'More Scottish than British' in 1997. By 2003, this number had risen to 65%. In keeping with what has been said about the Scottish identity situation above, there has thus been a clear prioritising of the national identity at the beginning of devolution and it has increased since. The Welsh numbers also reflect the discussion on Welsh identity above. The greater acceptance of Britishness is evident in the Welsh statistics: while 43% stated they felt 'Welsh not British' or 'More Welsh than British', 34% felt 'Equally Welsh and British' and 22% prioritised Britishness over Welshness in 1997. However, by 2003, a slight shift towards Welshness had taken place with 48% now prioritising Welshness over Britishness, 29% balancing both and only 17% feeling more British than Welsh or British only (cf. "Devolution, Public Attitudes and National Identity" n.p.). The overall decline in Britishness in Scotland and Wales that started the process of devolution has thus intensified since the process began. For Northern Ireland, there are no statistics available. Instead, and again reflecting the discussion on the Northern Irish identity above, it is stated that

> [t]here is a different pattern in Northern Ireland where Britishness is a sharply held identity among Protestants while the overwhelming majority of Catholics see themselves as Irish. Neither pattern of identification has been challenged by (attempted) devolution in Northern Ireland. Britishness and Irishness continue to be claimed by the respective Protestant and Catholic communities with undiminished vigour.
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> <div align="right">("Devolution, Public Attitudes and National Identity" n.p.)</div>

The present chapter has established the theoretical foundations of national identity construction and has, on this basis, discussed the complex national identity situations in the United Kingdom in their current state. The next chapter will now look at the historical background of each nation with two purposes: first, this will explain how the current identity situation came into being, given that history plays a central role

in the discourse that forms national identities - as stated in the above definition of national identity. The "historical mythologies" it refers to are termed "national mythologies" by Smith and these are created through history in the form of constructions that consist of a "systematic editing and reconstruction of much earlier motifs, themselves composed of objective records and legends elaborated around these primary data, which are combined into a unified account of the community's history and destiny" (Smith 191). The past is reconfigured to give meaning to the community's present situation. An elaboration of the nations' histories will also lay the foundation for the following chapter which will discuss the relevance of postcolonial approaches to literature of the Celtic nations.

2.2 Historical and Political Background Relevant to Identity Construction in the United Kingdom

The discussion of the histories of three different countries in this chapter will follow the chronological order of their respective incorporation into Britain by the Acts of Union and will thus start with Wales, before discussing Scotland and Ireland/Northern Ireland. All other chapters will follow the structure of discussing first Scotland, then Northern Ireland and finally Wales. This structure has been carefully chosen on the basis of the content and form of the novels selected for the analysis and does not represent any bias.

2.2.1 Wales

Wales was the first country to be officially incorporated into the English realm. It was inhabited by Britons, who were Celtic peoples that, faced first with the Roman invasion (cf. Jenkins 21) and then with the Anglo-Saxon one, were continuously driven further westwards (cf. Jenkins 34). Wales was not a unified entity in the sense of one kingdom; rather it was fragmented into different small kingdoms (cf. Jenkins 44-5) and it was not until the 13th century that some sort of unification was achieved under Prince Llywelyn who was acknowledged by the English King Henry III as 'Prince of Wales' in 1267 (cf. Gillingham 137). The Normans had been set on subjugating Wales from the onset of their conquest in 1066 (cf. Bryant 126, Jenkins 64) and it was Edward I who killed Prince Llywelyn and achieved the "Norman Conquest of Wales" (Gillingham 136) in the late 13th century. In the aftermath, the English legal system was introduced in some parts of Wales, Edward I gave the title

of 'Prince of Wales' to his eldest son (as the British monarch still does today) and English was introduced as the language of administration (cf. Bryant 127).

Wales was officially and fully integrated into England by the Acts of Union 1536-43 - "[b]oth politically and administratively, it was made part and parcel of England" (Jenkins 146). As has been noted in Chapter 2.1, it was the Welsh language that survived as the only distinct identity marker. However, this could be easily held within the British state. The English supremacy having been established this early, before the Welsh were able to fully develop an own national consciousness, is one reason for the complex relationship to Britishness, and it is further complicated by the fact that the Welsh "lay claim to have been British for longer than the English" (Bryant 119). There is thus arguably no overarching national mythology - as there is in Scotland and Ireland (cf. the following Chapters) - that sets the base for Welsh nationalism

The Welsh nationalist movement emerged in the early 20th century - in parallel to those in Scotland and Ireland - with the Plaid Cymru (Engl.: The National Party of Wales) being founded in 1925 by Welsh-speaking intellectuals (cf. Jenkins 292). Also similar to Scottish developments, the Plaid Cymru did not have political weight until the 1970s (cf. K.O. Morgan 537). However, unlike its Scottish counterpart, Welsh nationalism could not construct itself around the idea of a nation politically resisting English supremacy (cf. Chapter 2.2.2), given that Wales had never been a nation and was wholly merged with England so early on. Instead, Welsh nationalism emphasised persisting cultural differences and had in this the Welsh language as its basis (cf. C.A. Davies 169-70). In the course of its development in the 1960s, Plaid Cymru incorporated an explicitly socialist stance, drawing on Welsh industrialisation. With this it managed to also include non-Welsh speakers from the industrial steel and coal communities in the South (cf. C.A. Davies 188), the decisive Welsh identity markers thereby becoming the Welsh language and/or being working class (cf. von Rothkirch 89-90).

The relations between Welsh speakers and language activists and non-Welsh speakers were nevertheless by no means always peaceful. While the language activism in the 1960s and 70s successfully focused on bilingual road signs and Welsh language television (cf. C.A. Davies 170-1), the situation got more difficult in the 1980s. Crucially, the 1979 referendum on devolution had failed in both Scotland and Wales (cf. Chapter 2.2.2), with the reason in Wales being an indecisiveness on full support both among Labour and nationalists, albeit for different reasons (cf.

Jenkins 296-7). In the Thatcher era that followed, Wales was hit badly by economic decline, a decline attributed to the neo-liberalist policies of a Conservative government that - just as in Scotland - the majority of the Welsh people had not elected (cf. Bryant 118) and the socio-political climate accordingly became more tense. The nationalist movement shifted their focus to the "perceived threat to Welsh-speaking communities from the conversion of housing stock to holiday homes and second homes" (C.A. Davies 172), being made available for English incomers, and a new Welsh Language Act, that should recognise the Welsh language as an official one (cf. C.A. Davies 172). The Welsh language had suffered a severe decline since the beginning of the 20th century (cf. Jenkins 261) and the campaigning of language activists for an institutional incorporation of the Welsh language from the 1980s on was fruitful in that public bodies began to recognise it as equal to English and it was most successfully incorporated in the education system with a considerable growth of Welsh schools that led to a continuous rise in the number of Welsh speakers from the 1980s on (cf. C.A. Davies 172-3). Most importantly, through this development, the "Welsh language provided an officially sanctioned recognition of Welsh distinctiveness for the first time since the sixteenth century" (C.A. Davies 172). While the language campaigning did happen relatively peaceful, the concomitant campaigning against English holiday homes was more problematic, with about 220 vacant holiday homes being set on fire in the course of the 1980s (cf. C.A. Davies 178-9). Moreover, demographic change caused by an influx of English incomers led to tensions and accusations of racism against non-Welsh speakers (cf. C.A. Davies 179).

   In the 1997 referendum on devolution, the Welsh people voted in favour of receiving their own political institution for the first time in Welsh history, albeit with a narrow margin and in the form of an Assembly that holds considerable fewer powers than its Scottish counterpart (cf. Jenkins 297-8). The National Assembly for Wales was set up in Cardiff in 1998 and the first Assembly elections in 1999 saw "Plaid Cymru emerg[ing] for the first time as a significant force in all regions of Wales, and the main opposition party to Labour in the Assembly" (Osmond 121). This initial nationalist strength turned out to be impermanent, however, as in the last Assembly elections in May 2011, Labour was the strongest party, winning 50% of the seats, and Plaid Cymru came third after the Conservatives (cf. Rogers n.p.). This is in keeping with what has been said about the lesser prevalence of the Welsh and greater acceptance of the British identity in Wales in Chapter 2.1.

As has also been mentioned, Welsh relations with Britishness and England are moreover affected by considerable regional differences within Wales, which are in turn also connected to the Welsh past. In context of this, the 'Three-Wales-Model', developed by Balsom in the 1980s has gained widespread currency (cf. Bryant 123, Day 28). It differentiates between a Welsh-speaking and Welsh-identifying region - Y Fro Gymraed - in the North and West, an English-speaking but Welsh-identifying area - Welsh Wales - in the South and two English-speaking and British-identifying regions - British Wales - in the North and East and far South-West (cf. Balsom 5-6). These 'identity regions' mirror the prevalence of the decisive identity markers, the Welsh language and the working class, which are both connected to the Welsh history. Firstly, the major part of British Wales is the one closest to the border and thus congruent with the area in which English rule has been established the longest and the influx of English settlers has been the highest. Secondly, Welsh Wales centres around the "Labour stronghold rooted in the coal industry" (Day 30) and thus revolves around the industrial Welsh history in which, as has been discussed above, the belonging to the working class in the close-knit mining communities became a distinct identity marker, especially for anglophone Welsh (cf. Day 38).

Accordingly, Bryant, who has updated the concept of the Welsh regions, prefers the term Labour Wales for this area and he further distinguishes Cymru-Wales, which he defines as 'civic and bilingual', and Modern Wales, which is "diversified and cosmopolitan" (Bryant 125). Crucially, Bryant does not only define the different concepts of Wales in relation to space but also in the way they rely on the past in their construction: while Y Fro Gymraeg and Labour Wales both centre around the Welsh past but differ in their emphasis on the Welsh language and (working) class as further identity markers, Cymru-Wales is more oriented towards the present but focuses heavily on bilingualism and the distinctively Welsh society under the new devolved administration. British Wales and Modern Wales are more oriented towards Britain, with the former emphasising an acceptance of the historical English-British influence on Wales and the latter being more cosmopolitan and non-language focused in its outlook (cf. Bryant 125-6).

Bryant's model pointedly catches the complexity of Welsh identity constructions and thereby helps to explain the underlying acceptance of Britishness in contemporary Wales. The latter is furthermore affected by the demographic composition of Wales differing considerably from that of its Celtic counterparts in

that there are far more English incomers (cf. Bradbury and Andrews 234). Moreover, social and economic links with England remain strong while internal divisions persist with "[c]ommunications in Wales run[ning] east to west, along the southern and northern coasts, rather than north to south in a way that would naturally unify the country" (Osmond 111). A proximity to England and Britishness thus continues to exist and affects the 'Welsh identity situation' considerably - as Bradbury and Andrews pointedly sum up: "while Welsh identity is stronger than British identity in Wales, and it has come to dominate public discourses since devolution, the everyday presence of a 'quiet' Britishness cannot be denied" (237-8).

2.2.2 Scotland

Inhabited by a mixture of Celtic peoples (Scots, Picts and Britons) as well as Vikings and Angles in the eighth century (cf. Hearn 100), Scotland became a relatively unified kingdom, stably ruled by one King and with peaceful relations with its neighbours (cf. Gillingham 138-9). In the late 13th century, the Scottish political system became unstable with the royal line dying out and this opportunity was seized by the English King Edward I, who had already successfully invaded Wales (cf. Chapter 2.2.1). Indeed, this was the beginning of a "period of mutual hostility between the two countries that lasted well into the sixteenth century" (Griffiths 168-9), with a number of English invasion attempts, Scottish resistance and the beginning of a Scottish alliance with France (cf. Griffiths 169), which led to the first hundred years of this period in particular becoming termed the 'Wars of Independence' (cf. Hearn 102). This term already hints at a significance regarding a historical mythology that forms the national identity discourse and indeed "[m]any of the key icons of Scottish nationhood come from this period" (Hearn 102).

The first of the cultural icons stemming from this period that needs mentioning is the Stone of Destiny, also known as Coronation stone or Stone of Scone ("Stone of Scone" n.p.) that was brought over to Scotland from Ireland in the 9th century and on which Scottish kings were crowned ever since. In the 1296 invasion of Scotland, Edward I imposed direct rule and removed the Stone of Destiny, in "a gesture intended as final settlement" ("Edward I" n.p.). The stone was henceforth kept in the coronation chair in Westminster Abbey and, thus heavily symbolically laden, it became a target of Scottish nationalists and was removed and brought back to Scotland in 1950. Initially, the British government reclaimed it and it was not officially returned to Scotland until 1996 (cf. "Lia Fáil" n.p.).

Of even greater cultural significance is the Scottish resistance that followed the 1296 invasion and culminated in the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. The Scots, led by William Wallace and after his execution by Robert the Bruce, defeated the English and thus ensured Scottish independence in the Middle Ages, the latter being further emphasised by the famous 1320 Declaration of Arbroath made to the Pope (cf. Hearn 102). In a nationalistic spirit, these events have become national mythologies that are collectively remembered. This is evident, for example, from there being a Wallace Memorial in Stirling and the tower of the restored Dunfermline Abbey[6] bearing the inscription "King Robert The Bruce" in giant letters on its top (cf. Smout 101). Moreover, an excerpt from the Declaration of Arbroath is inscribed in the Museum of Scotland, opened in 1998, (cf. Bryant 77) and the hugely successful movie *Braveheart* - probably the most popular reference - recounts these events in a stereotypical manner, portraying "the essentialized brave Scot who, like all Scotsmen, fights for freedom because that is what Scotsmen do" (Zumkhawala-Cook 154).

The national mythologies that are constructed with reference to the Wars of Independence thus depict a conflict with England and work "to infuse a sense of Scottish pride with a concomitant sense of the inevitability of Scottish political failure" (Smout 108, see also Bryant 76). In this way, an opposition to England and a feeling of cultural inferiority together with a defiant sense of pride are established and upheld through these historical narratives. Furthermore, they suggest a unified Scottish nation and identity before the 1707 Union, a notion on which the 20th century Scottish nationalism draws and which is highly debatable (cf. Davidson 2000).

The Treaty of Union in 1707 created the state of Great Britain (Thompson n.p.) by joining the two kingdoms of England (and Wales) and Scotland. While the main motivation for Scotland was access to a larger market and improved economic development, England wanted to remove the threat from the Northern border caused by Scotland's alliance with France, England's enemy at that time. It was thus a union of convenience, with England as the senior and Scotland as the junior partner. Scotland was from then on governed from Westminster but retained - unlike Wales - its legal and educational system as well as its church, the Presbyterian Church of Scotland and its system of local government (cf. Hearn 108, Bryant 80-1, McCrone

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[6] Dunfermline is the ancient capital of Scotland and was thus the seat of the Kings.

"Scotland and the Union" 97-100). As a result, a sense of 'national difference' was maintained.

The years following the Union were decisive for the development of a supranational British identity and Anglo-Scottish relations. Religious wars were fought against France until 1837, as France had, unlike England and Scotland, remained Catholic. In that way "a genuine sense of Britishness was created with reference to two related aspects: war with France, and Protestantism" (McCrone "Unmasking Britannia" 584). However, British identity did not replace single national identities, it overlaid them. A supranational British identity therefore never took strong roots in Scotland as it was principally externally oriented: in times of war and Empire, the Union and British identity were both convenient and necessary.

While the sense of a British identity was strengthened by the Great Wars in the first half the 20th century and by the rise of the Welfare State in the immediate post-war period (cf. Devine 14-5), the overall tendency in the second half of the twentieth century was that "[t]he loss of empire, the decline of political influence and waning economic standing highlighted the uneasy marriage which was the Union" (McCrone "Scotland and the Union" 105). Indeed, in parallel to the nationalist movements in Ireland and in Wales, the Scottish National Party (SNP) had been founded in 1928 (cf. K.O. Morgan 537) and became politically significant in the early 70s, pushed by the discovery of North Sea oil off the Scottish coast which promised a form of economic independence (cf. Bryant 93, Hearn 49).

The supranational British identity continued to weaken and 1979 saw the first referendum on measures of political autonomy from England. However, the Bill, which called for the establishment of a regional assembly, did fail for various political reasons (cf. Hearn 49). The following decade was decisive for Scottish nationalism as the Thatcherite policies and the decline of the traditional industries hit Scotland badly (cf. Bryant 93) and accordingly Thatcher was highly unpopular north of the Border. Crucially, the Scots had rejected the Conservative Party in all general elections from 1979 to 1992; they had thus "not voted for Tory radicalism and many began to feel that they were now suffering from an electoral dictatorship" (Devine 16). Consequently, Scottish national identity gained more strength in this period and after the Labour victory in 1997, another referendum was held with the majority voting for a Scottish Parliament which was finally set up in 1999 (cf. Bryant 4).

At present, Scotland remains part of the United Kingdom and is still not fully independent. However, the SNP has gained political support in every Scottish

Parliament election since 2003 (cf. J. Mitchell 134) and is currently leading a majority government (The Scottish Parliament n.p.). While the SNP continues to be firmly committed to Scottish independence and has now announced its plans for an independence referendum to be held in autumn 2014, public opinion does diverge on the matter (cf. Black n.p.). It is consequently not possible to predict the future of the Union, nevertheless, it is safe to say that the "Scots are now more strongly Scottish in their political self-identification than they have ever been" (McCrone "Scotland and the Union" 107).

2.2.3 Northern Ireland

Similar to Wales and Scotland, Gaelic Ireland was first invaded by the Normans, though in this case already in the 12th century. English influence concentrated on the 'pale', Dublin and its surrounding areas, and while Ireland was officially incorporated into the kingdom in the 15th century, Ireland could never be fully brought under English influence. Instead, the English had to cooperate with the local lords who maintained their Gaelic culture and language, and after the Reformation had taken place, also remained Catholic (cf. Bryant 240-1, Griffiths 193-4).

Anglo-Protestant hegemony became increasingly problematic in the 17th century when a plantation was founded in Ulster, the northern province of Ireland. Ulster had remained the most Gaelic and the most inaccessible part of Ireland for the English and English settlement in Ulster was seen as a method of stabilizing unrest by the imposition of English rule, law, religion, landholding systems, and commercial organization based on market towns (cf. Bryant 241). This caused a large-scale dispossession of the native Irish-Catholics in favour of the immigrating Protestants, indeed it represented "the largest change of landownership in any European country during the 17th century" ("plantations" n.p.) with the percentage of land owned by Catholics decreasing from 80% in 1600 to 14% in 1703 (cf. "plantations" n.p.). The significance of the Ulster plantation thus lies in the establishment of a large Protestant population in Northern Ireland, the 'Protestant ascendancy', and it is therefore the historical root of the Northern Ireland conflict as it "ensured that the Catholic Irish would never regard English or British rule as just" (Bryant 241). The 'Glorious Revolution' in 1688 and the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 firmly established Protestant rule in England. It was met with an armed rebellion in Ireland and an, albeit unsuccessful, siege on Protestant (London)Derry (cf. Bryant 241). In terms of historical mythologies, these events are of significance for the construction of the

two Northern Irish identities as the Protestant victory in both England and Ulster is still commemorated by Ulster Unionists in the form of parades today (cf. Chapter 2.1, C. Mitchell 85-6) - with a corresponding provocation and reaction from the Catholics.

Ireland was formally incorporated into the British realm with the Act of Union 1801 that created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Designed for British imperial purposes and therefore similar to the Acts of Union with Wales and Scotland, this was not a political act that led to the development of a coherent British-Irish identity. Indeed, given that the Union was not one "between Britain and Ireland, but rather between Britain and the Irish Protestant élite" (Jackson 28), the discrimination against Catholics continued and the society remained divided. It is not surprising then that the demand for home rule as well as for a repeal of the Act of Union followed shortly. The Great Famine in the 1840s and the slow development of Ireland's principally agricultural economy (which again disadvantaged Catholics as the majority of land was owned by Protestants) further fuelled dissatisfaction and led to the first significant emergence of Irish nationalism (cf. Bryant 243, Matthew 500-1).

Irish nationalist movements became considerably stronger in the beginning of the 20th century, most notably the Irish Republican Party Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Both were heavily involved in the rebellion against British rule in 1916, the Easter Rising, and, although this was unsuccessful, it marked the start of a fundamental change in British-Irish relations. Subsequently, Sinn Fein became a strong political force and the IRA fought the Irish War of Independence against Britain from 1919, leading to the partition of Ireland in 1921 and the creation of the Irish Free State[7] in 1922 that consisted of the 26 predominantly Catholic counties in the South - the six primarily Protestant counties of Ulster remained within the Union (cf. Bryant 244-5, K.O. Morgan 532, 535).

This status quo was contested heavily and the 1960s saw the escalation of the situation and outbreaks of severe violence. After partition, Northern Ireland was under firm Protestant control with a "system of patronage, electoral gerrymandering and paramilitary policing" that was culturally embedded in "elaborate royal and civic

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[7] Given that this thesis is concerned with Northern Ireland, the subsequent history of Ireland will not be elaborated on. It shall thus suffice to point out that the Irish Free State held the constitutional status of a British dominion at first and that the Republic of Ireland as it exists today was founded in 1949 and subsequently withdrew from the British Commonwealth (cf. Bryant 244-5).

ceremonies" (O'Dowd 88). The resulting Catholic grievances sought address in the civil rights movement, which began in 1967, and ultimately led to the beginning Troubles in 1968, which saw a

> violent Protestant reaction, the IRA's 'defence' of Catholic communities, the deployment of the British army, the mobilization of loyalist paramilitaries, Bloody Sunday (the killing of unarmed Catholic demonstrators by British paratroopers in 1972), the IRA's attempt to kill and bomb the British into withdrawal from Northern Ireland, and the Ulster loyalist determination to use arms to stop them. (Bryant 251)

The two dominant Northern Irish identities still centre heavily around this history, which is constructed differently in each. In the Protestant-British identity, "the Ulster Plantation, […] the Williamite wars of the seventeenth century, the Anglo-Irish ascendancy of the eighteenth century and the Act of Union (1801) are claimed as landmarks in the history of a substantial pro-British Protestant minority" (O'Dowd 83-4) and are used as evidence for holding a rightful position in the conflict. Correspondingly, the Catholic-Irish identity looks back to the resistance in the 19th century as well as to a "much older story-line of resistance by a Gaelic, Catholic nation to British involvement in Ireland" (O'Dowd 84) and the violent armed struggle of the IRA, that, although often having received only partial public support, has been "retrospectively adopted and legitimised as part of the struggle for national independence" (O'Dowd 84). In this way, both groups have developed compelling narrations that serve to justify and maintain their identity position in the conflict.

A milestone in attempting to solve the Northern Ireland conflict was reached with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) in 1998. The GFA consists of several strands, providing a devolved, power-sharing Northern Ireland Assembly, a North/South Ministerial Council as well as a British-Irish Council and includes the decommissioning of paramilitaries' weapons (cf. Sturm 151). A referendum was held on the GFA in Northern Ireland and while it found the support of 71%, this support was much divided with only 55% of Protestants agreeing, opposed to 96% of Catholics (cf. J. Mitchell 188). The signing parties were also divided in their support, to say the least, and the Northern Assembly has been suspended on several occasions since its introduction, the longest period being from 2002-2007 (cf. Sturm 152), due to "face-saving activities" (Sturm 151) on both sides. Since 2007, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Fein are the largest parties in Northern Ireland and while each represents one of the distinct communities, they have "moved significantly to the constitutional centre ground" (J. Mitchell 192). At present, the

DUP is the strongest political force in the Assembly with the Sinn Fein following (The Northern Irish Assembly n.p.).

While the political parties have thus found some consensus and the ceasefires and the decommissioning of the paramilitaries' weapons have been adhered to, the struggle over the symbolic mediation of the two identities persists (cf. Chapter 2.1). Indeed, the Unionist parades in July 2011 again led to outbreaks of violence between Protestants and Catholics (cf. McDonald n.p.).

2.3 The Postcolonial Vision of the Celtic Countries and the Political Relevance of Literature

The previous chapter has demonstrated that the histories and identities of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are deeply marked by the intervention of, and often struggle against, first England and later Britain. This has led some commentators to regard the Celtic countries as the first colonies of England. Most salient here is Hechter's analysis of the Celtic countries as "internal colonies" of England (Hechter 1975). While Hechter's argument has received widespread criticism (see, for example, Bryant 46-8, McCrone *Understanding Scotland* 58-62, Williams 8), there is nevertheless an ongoing debate on the 'colonial status' of the Celtic countries and accordingly also on whether it is valid to deploy postcolonial literary theory to the literatures of these countries. The present chapter will first examine this postcolonial vision of the Celtic countries and it will then expand on the political relevance of literature more generally.

Postcolonial theory in its broadest sense is "concerned with experiences of exclusion, denigration, and resistance under systems of colonial control" and thus "addresses itself to the historical, political, cultural and textual ramifications of the colonial encounter between the West and the non-West, dating from the sixteenth century to the present day" (Boehmer 340). This definition already pointedly illustrates the difficulty in assigning a 'postcolonial status' to the Celtic countries: while they undoubtedly have experienced English control, this started much earlier than the sixteenth century. Moreover, they are not only part of the West, they have also actively participated in the colonisation of the non-West. Indeed, Scotland engaged in the British imperial enterprise "for the most part with great patriotism and enthusiasm" (Hearn 113) and Wales similarly seized and profited from the opportunities the Empire provided (cf. Bryant 119, Williams 7). In Ireland, too, both

Protestants and Catholics were involved in imperial undertakings (cf. Jackson 37) and even after 1921, the Irish Free State officially remained linked to Britain in external affairs (cf. Chapter 2.2.3), putting Ireland in the position of being "both in and simultaneously out of the British Empire" (Flannery 20).

This intricate involvement in the process of colonisation of the non-West is indeed what most critics see as the greatest obstacle in allowing a postcolonial view of the Celtic countries. For example, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in their ground-breaking work on Postcolonialism *The Empire Writes Back* assert that

> while it is possible to argue that these societies were the first victims of English expansion, their subsequent complicity in the British imperial enterprise makes it difficult for colonized peoples outside Britain to accept their identity as post-colonial. (33)

However, there is also some consensus that a less rigid approach in determining the basis for a postcolonial identity is appropriate, especially in the case of Ireland. As Edward Said, one of the most influential postcolonial theorists, points out, Ireland can clearly be seen as an English colony: "True, the physical, geographical connections are closer between England and Ireland than between England and India, or between France and Algeria or Senegal. But the imperial relationship is there in all cases" (275). In a similar vein, Deane notes that "Ireland is the only Western European country that has had both an early and a late colonial experience" and has accordingly brought forth postcolonial literatures (3), Lloyd remarks that "Ireland remains […] in a classical post-colonial situation" (18) and Flannery emphasises the necessity of a more flexible approach in determining which society can be termed postcolonial and which cannot (cf. 20). There is then substantial ground to allow a postcolonial view of Ireland, albeit bearing in mind that there are considerable differences to the colonial and postcolonial experience of non-Western cultures. Most importantly, this assessment has to be carried out without any value judgement on whether one experience can be held to be more traumatic and/or valid than the other.

Turning to Scotland and Wales, a similar discussion regarding their validity as postcolonial cultures has been had. In the case of Scotland, a history of colonial oppression is also acknowledged. For example, Schoene points out that "Scottish literature does obviously qualify for inclusion in the postcolonial canon, with its tradition of postcolonial writing reaching back to the fourteenth and fifteenth

centuries and climaxing in the Scottish Literary Renaissance"[8] (116) and Crawford notes that Scottish literature "offers the longest continuing example of a substantial body of literature produced by a culture pressurized by the threat of English cultural domination" (8). However, Scottish involvement in the Empire is obviously also problematic here and a more flexible approach, as the one delineated above in relation to Ireland, is also helpful in this case. If we accept Scotland's dual relationship with Empire, given that "both Scotland's complicity with empire and its long history of resistance to empire are abundantly recorded" (Gardiner "Introduction" 10) and the lines between coloniser and colonised are accordingly impossible to define (cf. Gardiner "Literature, Theory, Politics" 45), to allow for the consideration of possible postcolonial tendencies in Scottish literature becomes very useful indeed.

The same applies for Wales. Again, the "Welsh have been the active agents as well as the passive subjects of imperial expansion" (Williams 7), too and are thus in a similar dual relationship as Scotland. This is, however, also affected by the specific Welsh language history (cf. Chapter 2.2.1) and Welsh literature in the English language which gives Welsh literature a specific postcolonial dimension (cf. Knight 159-60). Overall, overcoming what Gardiner terms the "disciplinary headlock in which English Literature often holds the postcolonial" ("Introduction" 12) and adopting an unbiased stance in approaching literature from the Celtic countries can thus offer valuable insights into these writings and it is this approach that will be adopted in the present thesis.

Central to postcolonial theory is the concept of 'the Other' which delineates how a powerful Western discourses create colonised non-Western oriental objects and legitimise their colonisation – in essence: "'they' were not like 'us', and for that reason deserved to be ruled" (Said xii). This concept has also been applied to the Celtic countries. Lennon, for example, shows ancient links between Ireland and the Orient and notes that "[i]mperial British texts had long compared Ireland with other Oriental cultures […] in order to textually barbarize Ireland" (Lennon xviii). Similarly, Pittock presents a comprehensive study of a longstanding, systematic 'Othering' of the Celtic cultures that is necessary to maintain the synechdochal Britishness (cf. Chapter 1): "[t]he Celtic must thus be 'other', and be also disallowed access to political identity within the British Isles" as "such access threatens Britain and Britishness, by contesting its political space" (Pittock 11). This kind of

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[8] The Scottish Literary Renaissance will be discussed in Chapter 2.4.

'Othering' is also relevant to the national identity constructions today: for Scottish national identity, England is the 'Other' (cf. Bechhofer and McCrone "Being Scottish" 65-6, see also Chapter 1) and in the oppositional constructed Northern Irish identities each functions as the 'Other' (cf. Muldoon et al. 100).

The relevance of postcolonial theory to contemporary British identities and literatures has thus been established as the reflection of the history of the Union and the unequal power and cultural relations between the Celtic countries and England that stem therefrom. The present analysis will draw on this postcolonial view of the Celtic countries where applicable.

The broader role of literature in social and political processes will now be examined more closely. Chapter 2.1 has already explained the discursive and pervasive nature of national identity construction and has also hinted at the important position literature occupies in this, not least through the establishment of a literary canon that is perpetuated through the educational system. As noted in Chapter 1, the genre of the novel is of particular prominence here as the rise of the Western nation-state in the late eighteenth century mirrored that of the novel and its specific narrative form: "[i]t was the *novel* that historically accompanied the rise of the nations by objectifying the 'one, yet many' of national life, and by mimicking the structure of the nation" (Brennan 49, emphasis maintained). The advent of print-capitalism that followed put the novel, alongside the newspaper, in the position of the major instrument for the imagining of the national community (cf. Chapter 2.1, Anderson 30, 36).

The imaginary nature of the nation and its corresponding reliance on fictional literature in its construction can easily lead to a rejection of the political relevance of literature in general. After all, if it is all imagined, thought up and constructed, what is its relationship to political and societal reality?

Countering this, Whitebrook emphasises that the specific narrative nature of the novel lends itself particularly well to political signification, given that "[t]he novel depicts the individual in relationship with others, and in their social setting, and thus extends interest in individual selves to a potentially political context" (43). For Whitebrook, it is in this way that novels "suggest the connections between the development of identity and the political realm" (43). The imaginary nature of novels is here not seen as a weakness but rather as strength, given that the "connection between thinking about politics and the 'real world' of politics […] is mediated via the imagination" (Whitebrook 44). Novels then are powerful media of political

possibility because they offer a site for inspiration, reflection, contemplation and thought that can then be put into political practice.

The concept of the national allegory developed by Jameson is also very useful in examining the supposed contradiction between fictional writing and political reality. According to Jameson, a national allegory is a narrative that uses allegory to illustrate the more abstract state of the nation by focusing on the lives of ordinary individuals, precisely because a description of the whole nation goes beyond what any novel can render - the national allegory thus functions as an "instrument of cultural critique" (Jameson *Fables of Aggression* 90). In this, an exchange between fictional individual and actual existing collective *must* take place: "the telling of the individual story and the individual experience cannot but ultimately involve the whole laborious telling of the experience of the collectivity itself" (Jameson "Third-World Literature" 85-6).

Any text thus carries some external reference within it, even if it is not directly discernible from the onset. Indeed,

> [t]he literary or aesthetic act […] always entertains some active relationship with the Real; yet in order to do so, it cannot simply allow "reality" to persevere inertly in its own being, outside the text and at distance. It must rather draw the Real into its own texture, and the ultimate paradoxes and false problems of linguistics, and most notably of semantics, are to be traced back to this process, whereby language manages to carry the Real within itself as its own intrinsic or immanent. (Jameson *The Political Unconscious* 66-7)

Jameson here usefully draws an analogy to the linguistic dilemma of ascertaining any definite meaning given the arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified which is in turn the basis for postmodernist postulations of the breakdown of any truth and meaning. This can be countered, however, with the fact that despite the arbitrariness, communication is possible, hence 'the Real' must be contained within these processes, albeit not always overtly. The text acts similarly, while it does not and cannot simply mirror reality, the text is intrinsically bound up with and within it, carrying it within as it mediates.

Given this relationship to reality, literature is of high political and cultural significance as it provides the means to depict, in a textual form, symbolic solutions to social and cultural problems existing in reality – those that are openly debated but also those that are subconsciously present (cf. Jameson *The Political Unconscious* 64-5). The present thesis will therefore examine how the selected texts depict social and cultural contradictions in terms of national identities in Britain, what solutions

they present, if national allegories can be found and how they thus engage with 'the Real' and serve as cultural and political critiques.

2.4 Literary Traditions and Cultural Movements in the Celtic Countries

The previous chapter has established the validity of a form of postcolonial vision of the Celtic countries as well as the legitimacy of literature to express political and societal concerns. The present chapter will now examine how these have been put into practice by discussing the literary traditions and their interrelations with wider cultural and political movements in each of the Celtic countries. This is done in order to ascertain whether the selected texts analysed in the present thesis can be classified as a continuation of or indeed as a break with these traditions. The thematic priorities of this chapter might seem slightly askew with respect to an equal weighting of the respective literary histories. However, since the limited scope of such a chapter renders a full discussion of the three literary histories impossible, the chapter will have to focus on those topics of the respective literary histories that are directly relevant for the following analysis of the selected novels.

Parallel to the political nationalist movements in the beginning of the 20th century (cf. Chapter 2.2), literary movements evolved in both Ireland and Scotland (the Irish Literary Revival and the Scottish Renaissance respectively) which were closely connected to the nationalist ideas. The Welsh nationalist movement also had some ties to literature and culture, with the Plaid Cymru having been established at the national literary festival Eisteddfod in 1925 (cf. Jenkins 292), however, there was no movement on a scale comparable to that of Ireland and Scotland (cf. "Wales - Cultural Life" n.p.).

2.4.1 Scotland

Integral to the Scottish Renaissance, and its most significant writers Hugh MacDiarmid and Edwin Muir, was the "intimate belief that Scotland could not be de-anglicised and rebuilt along new Scottish lines, without fully coming to terms with, and eradicating, both its cultural and political subservience to England" (Dixon 360). A form of postcolonial vision of the Scottish culture was thus present and indeed the main dilemmas for Scottish writers and Scottish literature identified by the Scottish Renaissance are intrinsically connected to the historical relationship with England. Most specifically, the loss of the Gaelic language was seen as an insurmountable

problem for the Scottish writer with the view that "the English language cannot provide adequate means for expression for the Scot, yet nonetheless, there is now no escape from this cultural and social predicament" (E. Bell 16) - thus again echoing postcolonial notions. More general, the incorporation into Britain and economic dependence on England after the 1707 Union were felt to have caused a fundamental loss of cultural and national identity (cf. E. Bell 20), a loss which had been idealised and whitewashed by the 'Kailyard' writing tradition of the late 19th century that was characterised by "sentimental tales of rural Scotland" and an "apparent irrelevance to the community [it] derived from" (Weißenberger 157). The Scottish Renaissance fervently dismissed these writings as a form of romantic cultural escapism from the Scottish social and political realities (cf. E. Bell 21) and a move "away from sentimentalised depictions of nationhood" (E. Bell 21) was hence one of the major demands of the Scottish Renaissance.

However, the focus on the loss of the Gaelic language as the main predicament for the Scottish writer was misleading insofar as it presupposed a Gaelic or Celtic linguistic and political unity that never existed as such (cf. Chapter 2.2.2). Furthermore, the Scottish Renaissance did not address contemporary issues. On the contrary it was "ill at ease with the 'modern' realities of urban concentration and industrial organisation" (Dixon 361) and was instead itself concerned with rurality and the search for Scotland's roots, again also through using the Scottish vernacular. While the writers of the Scottish Renaissance did thus offer a strong and confident position in terms of asserting a Scottish national identity, "the imagined national community that grew out of their writing – Scotland as they represented it in the past, present and future – was at its most vital in rural surroundings" (Dixon 361) and could thus hardly serve as a possible source of identification for Scots living in 20th century Scotland.

This was to change with the contemporary Scottish writing of the last decades which focused on urban spaces, social class and "can be seen as offering a radical literature of resistance and reclamation, persistently contesting the authority and the finality of the received imagining of Scots and Scottish culture, thereby […] reconfiguring the perennially vexed question of the Scottish national identity" (I. A. Bell 219). Mirroring the often grim realities of the housing schemes and suburbs instead of the popularly perceived romanticised images of rural Highland idylls, "the vision of Scotland that impregnates much of this writing is a cheerless one" (Dixon

365) and also reflects an overwhelming Scottish cultural self-hatred (cf. Craig *Out of History* 12-3).

This is pointedly illustrated in one example of contemporary Scottish writing, namely in Alasdair Gray's 1981 novel *Lanark* where the following dialogue about the literary non-representation of Glasgow takes place:

> 'Glasgow is a magnificent city,' said McAlpin. 'Why do we hardly ever notice that?' 'Because nobody imagines living here,' said Thaw. […]
>
> 'Then think of Florence, Paris, London, New York. Nobody visiting them for the first time is a stranger because he's already visited them in paintings, novels, history books and films. But if a city hasn't been used by an artist not even the inhabitants live there imaginatively. What is Glasgow to most of us? A house, the place we work, a football park or golf course, some pubs and connecting streets. That's all. […] And when our imagination needs exercise we use these to visit London, Paris, […] anywhere but here and now. Imaginatively, Glasgow exists as a music-hall song and a few bad novels. That's all we've given to the world outside. It's all we've given to ourselves.'   (Gray 243)

This quote highlights a perceived cultural under-representation that produces a feeling of cultural inferiority in relation to others but also in relation to the self with alienation and estrangement from the 'own' city and culture (cf. I.A. Bell 218).

Another prime example of the representation of Scottish attitudes towards England and Scottish self-conception in contemporary Scottish writing can be found in Irvine Welsh's 1993 novel *Trainspotting*, set in Edinburgh and written in the Scots vernacular:

> Fucking failures in a country of failures. It's nae good blamin it oan the English fir colonising us. Ah don't hate the English. They're just wankers. We are colonised by wankers. We can't even pick a decent, vibrant, healthy culture to be colonised by. No. We're ruled by effete arseholes. What does that make us? The lowest of the fucking low, the scum of the earth. The most wretched, servile, miserable, pathetic trash that was ever shat intae creation. Ah don't hate the English. They just git oan wi the shite thuv goat. Ah hate the Scots.   (Welsh 78)

This quote not only again portrays an extremely low self-esteem, Welsh even goes a step further by declaring a colonial status of Scotland and raising the English above the Scots, it is not the English that are hated but the Scots themselves. He thus depicts a deeply-felt inferiority that culminates in self-loathing. Both excerpts can be linked to the reviving Scottish nationalism of the 1980s and 90s which, in the aftermath of the failed 1979 referendum (cf. Chapter 2.2.2), was "based not on the confident assertion of Scotland's distinctive traditions, but on the belief that Scotland

was a *failed* nation" (Craig "Devolving the Scottish Novel" 123, emphasis maintained).

With regard to the post-devolutionary status of Scottish literature, some critics assert that it is now freed from the need for a postcolonial imagining, or indeed any political stance, based on the argument that, with a Scottish parliament in place again, a political representation of the nation is now no longer required by Scottish writers (cf. Kelly 175-6; Lehner 40). This view, however, dangerously deprives literature of its political significance (cf. Chapter 2.3). Indeed, Lehner terms it an "effort to erase 'political' voices in the cultural realm" which is "complemented by the advocacy of literature as an autonomous realm" (41), while Kelly similarly asserts that it is "a misguided reduction of the political to the national and a concomitant advocacy of a disengaged, individualised art" (176). The present thesis will engage with this conception of literature as politically significant by examining the post-devolutionary Scottish novel selected as representing a political stance.

2.4.2 Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the political situation since the 1960s has also created a kind of predicament for the Northern Irish writer: namely how to represent Northern Ireland in the context of the all-pervasive conflict. The Northern Irish fiction of the 1970s and 80s more often than not dealt with the Troubles in a stereotypical manner, either through 'Romeo&Juliet'- romance plots in which the union of the lovers overcomes the community's division or thriller narratives which use the conflict as a setting of suspense and danger or the portrayal of one innocent, apolitical individual that gets caught-up between the two sides of the conflict (cf. Brannigan 145; Patten 128-9, 31-2).

This thematic and stylistic limitation changed, however, in the 1990s with the emergence of a generation of novelists raised during the conflict, who cannot remember a Northern Ireland without the Troubles and who have radically broken with the prevailing literary traditions. Their fiction is marked by an engagement with Northern Ireland and its unique situation, employing "literary strategies such as perspectivism, ambiguity and displacement which [...] may […] be perceived as attributes of a sustained constitutional and psychological identity crisis germane to any representations of a Northern Irish self-image" (Patten 129-30). How this Northern Irish situation infiltrates and confuses the minds of the children growing up in it is pointedly illustrated in Robert Mcliam Wilsons 1989 novel *Ripley Bogle*. The

following excerpt describes the first day at school of the protagonist, who is Irish-born and who, after his teacher asserts that Belfast is in Ireland and the pupils' names will thus always be Irish, terms himself 'Ripley Irish Bogle':

> This temporary solution was, however, shattered when little Miss Trotsky herself told us that the occasional Misguided Soul would try to call us British, but that of all the wrong things to call us – this was the wrongest. No matter how the misguided souls cajoled, insisted or pleaded, our names would remain Irish to the core, whatever that meant.
>
> Well, as you can imagine, this buggered me up no end. I was dazed and anxious. I was worried and confused. But with a precociously fine critical instinct and a juvenile distrust of pedagogical fervour, I decided to consult the maternal oracle upon my return home. In the meantime, in the spirit of compromise (ever with me even then), I dubbed myself 'Ripley Irish British Bogle'.   (Wilson 16)

Most prominent here is the irony and satire that pervades the narrative. However, combined with the naivety of the child's perspective, it becomes a powerful representation of how the Northern Irish environment forces profound questions of identity upon its inhabitants at a very early age.

This early experience of identity crises and surrounding violence suggests the notion of an individual trauma, an idea that is picked up by Glenn Patterson's 1992 novel *Fat Lad* that interweaves the experience of family violence with that of the communal violence in Belfast. The protagonist Drew frequently receives beatings from his father whenever violence erupts:

> *Newsroom* had returned to the day's main story. Belfast. Latest reports said up to ten dead, scores more badly injured. Parents were advised that children might find the pictures there were about to be shown distur …
>
> The last syllable was displaced from Drew's hearing by an exclamation of his own – half-word, half-gasp – as his father grabbed him by the ankles and tried to trail him into the middle of the floor.   (Patterson *Lad* 122)

Drew blames himself for his father's violence, however, Patterson goes a step further in letting his protagonist first reflect on jokes about the Irish and then on his own situation:

> So they would have loved the one about the eleven-year-old Irish boy who blamed himself for his father beating him up (becoming, in effect, an accessory to his own abuse), blamed himself, moreover, for the deaths of upwards of one thousand people in indiscriminate bombings and random shootings in all corners of the country, few of which, needless to say, he had ever visited; and all because, long ago, he had learnt to blame himself for having been born in the first place.   (Patterson *Lad* 139)

The experience of the family violence thus becomes inextricably linked to that of the community's violence and correspondingly, the individual trauma becomes part of the collective trauma.

The idea of a collective trauma in Northern Ireland is not only present in medical and psychological discourses (cf. Dillenburger et al. 17; Zenker 238), but is also frequently invoked when examining contemporary Northern Irish literature: "[e]ven a cursory scan of the historical settings of contemporary fiction in Northern Ireland might alert us to the significance of ruptured time, of history as interrupted by the experience of trauma" (Brannigan 146-7). This is particularly relevant in the light of the peace process and the GFA, which have marked a turning point in the history of the conflict (cf. Chapter 2.2.3), and thus open up the possibility of fictional spaces in which the hoped for transformations of the society can be negotiated. However, these recent fictions remain marked by a thematic turn to Northern Irish history (cf. Lehner 100) and the peace process itself continues to be "haunted by the narratives of loss, trauma, and elegiac desires which are recurrent features of the region's political rhetoric" (Brannigan 144). The analysis of the selected Northern Irish novel in the present thesis will examine this fictional space's treatment of a traumatic history and the extent to which it offers symbolic solutions in depicting possible cultural transformations.

2.4.3 Wales

As has been noted above, a strong interrelation between literary tradition and cultural transformations, as exists in Scotland and Northern Ireland, is not present in Wales. This is indeed to some extent symptomatic of the different history of Wales and its resulting different identity situation with a much greater cultural, geographical and political integration into England/Britain (cf. Chapters 2.1 and 2.2.1). This means that Welsh literature is governed by a publishing monopoly in London and due to the linguistic differences of Welsh/non-Welsh speakers, there is no homogeneous readership (cf. Bianchi 46, Knight 159), resulting in the "real arena where contesting narratives of Wales meet [being] severely skewed, as it must always be, by the material circumstances of cultural production and consumption" (Bianchi 46). This is moreover accompanied by the lack of a literary canon and a specifically Welsh criticism (cf. Bianchi 46-7). Thus, reflecting its specific historic circumstances, "[f]or the writer, Wales has become a blind spot which will not let the narrative gaze settle centrally" (Bianchi 45).

Nevertheless, attempting to sketch a decidedly postcolonial literary history of Wales, Knight identifies a succession of first rural romances in the 19th century, for the most part favourably depicting the contact between Welsh natives and English colonizers (cf. 160-4), followed by narratives of industrial self-realisations that chronicled the Welsh industrialisation in the South (cf. 164). Contemporary Welsh fictions now "avoid the quaintly rural and the rhetorically proletarian, and tend to explore forms of integration - integration between rural and industrial, between native and immigrant versions of Welshness" (Knight 168). It is conspicuous how this again echoes the contemporary identity situation in Wales in which Britishness is accepted to a much larger degree than in its Celtic counterparts (cf. Chapter 2.1). The analysis of the Welsh novel selected for the present thesis will seek to establish whether and to what extent this notion of integration and peaceful coexistence is constructed within the text.

3. The State of the Nations: Representations and Constructions of National and Cultural Identity in Post-Devolutionary Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish Literature

As has been pointed out in Chapter 1, the novels that will be comparatively analysed have been selected because they all share the features of broadly belonging to the genre of the 'state-of-the-nation novel' as well as using a polyphonic narration which makes their content and structure similar.

The term 'state-of-the-nation novel' has not been coherently defined in academia; it is, however, frequently used in the journalistic and publishing realm (cf. Claybaugh n.p.). Novels of this genre present "a comprehensive account of contemporary society" (Claybaugh n.p.) and thus lend themselves particularly well to depicting issues pertaining to national identity. As Claybaugh points out, the term originated in the US "as a response to what we now call postcoloniality" (n.p.), to create a sense of imagined national unity among the newly independent colonies. Indeed, the term is also used in the wider Anglophone world, thus mainly in former British colonies, and here the state-of-the-nation novel is "imagined as marking the end of postcolonial dependence, as demonstrating the nation's full political and cultural maturity" (Claybaugh n.p.). Allowing for a postcolonial view of literature from the Celtic nations (cf. Chapter 2.3), it is evident then that novels from this genre will offer fictional spaces in which the respective national identities and the power

relation - in particular, the post-devolutionary one - with Britain/England are negotiated.

The narrative pattern that is used in all the novels is a third-person narration with shifting focalization. This makes the novels polyphonic, meaning that the reader is presented with a plurality of narrating voices. The literary concept of polyphony is based on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and, literally meaning 'many voiced', it defines a text as being dialogic rather than monologic in terms of the narrating voice (cf. Pearce 224). Inherent to polyphonic narration is that, according to Bhaktin, it provides the narrative voices with autonomy and freedom: the "artistic position of the author […] affirms the independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability, and indeterminacy of the hero. For the author the hero is not 'he' and not 'I' but a fully valid 'thou', that is, another and autonomous 'I' ('thou-art')" (Bakhtin 63). While the text is of course still constructed by the author, the crucial point here is that the mediation of the (political or moral) message inherent in any text is positively facilitated by this technique. Indeed,

> for the novelist's 'message' […] to be palatable, acceptable, and perhaps, at times, even meaningful to us – we must feel strongly that, in terms of the familiar distinction, we have been *shown* rather than *told*. As far as possible, we need to feel that the author has been responsible only for setting in motion the world of the novel, into which we have entered and proceeded to judge and discover meaning for ourselves.   (Townsend 16, emphasis maintained)

The narrative technique used in the selected novels thus provides the reader with manifold perspectives on the respective national situation and mediates these in a very powerful and convincing way precisely because it conveys the impression of "showing", rather than merely "telling".

Nevertheless, the different voices present in the text need to be held together by some unifying factor. Unity is arguably a prerequisite for any novel, and is especially important when the novel is concerned with portraying a whole nation and culture (cf. During 147). As has been elaborated on in Chapter 2.1, the construction of national identity relies heavily on the illusion of unity among the members of the community it refers to. The analysis will therefore, for each text, first examine the narrative form and structure. It will then establish the perspective the text offers on the current state of the nation through analysing the different characters' voices and the existing tensions and conflicts corresponding to the respective historical, political and cultural situation between them. In accordance with the essential function of national identity - providing the complexity and diversity of the national collective

with meaning and thus unity (cf. Chapter 2.1) -, the analysis will then examine the unifying solution offered to the conflicts and thus establish what possible national identity constructions the text offers.

3.1 Identity in Nature and the Arts - Perspectives on the State of Scotland in James Robertson's *And the Land Lay Still*

James Robertson's 2010 novel *And the Land Lay Still* has been chosen as a primary text because it presents a "complete state-of-the-nation accounting" (Bathurst n.p.) that offers a sweeping fictional account of Scotland from the 1950s to the present day - indeed, it has been termed a "seminal work of almost American amplitude and range" (O'Rourke 26). It is a fictional space in which Scottish post-war political and societal developments are negotiated, including the lead-up to and the process of devolution. Constructions of national identity are intrinsically bound up in this fictional discourse and it is in its treatment of these as well as in its geographical focus on the Central Belt[9] that Robertson's work can be seen to be in the tradition of Alastair Gray and Irvine Welsh (cf. Bathurst n.p., Chapter 2.4.1).

The present chapter will begin its analysis of Robertson's novel by examining its overall narrative structure and form. It will then go on to first look specifically at the variety of characters presented as embodiments of different stances on the Scottish national identity before going on to examine the character Jack, who represents the central, unifying persona, in more detail. The chapter will argue that the novel takes the position that constructing any meaningful national identity within the social realm is highly problematic. Instead it offers the aesthetic sphere as well as an ex-societal realm in the form of nature and landscape as the site for identity construction.

3.1.1 Polyphony in *And the Land Lay Still*

Robertson's novel has a poem as its epigraph (see Appendix A), from which the novel also takes its title. As this epigraph situates the novel in a certain context before the narrative begins, it is worthwhile to examine this poem, and its meaning

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[9] The Central Belt is the most densely populated area of Scotland, stretching from Glasgow in the West to Edinburgh in the East. Indeed, Robertson has one of his characters reflect that these are the 'places nobody outside Scotland thinks of as Scottish, the Scotland so real it defies the imagination' (Robertson 358).

for the novel, in more detail before taking a closer look at the overall structure of the novel.

The poem entitled "The Summons" is taken from Edwin Morgan's *Sonnets from Scotland*, published in 1984 (cf. E. Morgan *Sonnets* 59). The collection consists of 51 sonnets and has - in the broadest possible definition - a mix of the topic of Scotland with that of science-fiction as its theme in which indeterminate extra-terrestrials travel Scotland on a similarly unknown mission (cf. Wallace n.p.). "The Summons" is the final sonnet of the collection and describes the departure of the visitors. Despite its science-fiction theme, the collection of poems is highly resonant in the context of the Scottish political situation in the 1980s. As Edwin Morgan points out, he wrote *Sonnets from Scotland* "as a kind of reaction, probably, to the failure of the Referendum to give Scotland political devolution" and to what he felt to be "a kind of gap, a hiatus, a numbness in Scottish thinking" (E. Morgan *Messages* 141). The work can thus be seen as an aesthetic manifestation of and a cultural reaction to the prevailing sense of Scotland being a failed nation (cf. Chapter 2.4.1). The defining characteristic of it is defiance: Morgan attests "a kind of 'Nevertheless' feeling" having been present and he wanted to "put something down that would make this 'Nevertheless' feeling quite palpable and tangible" (E. Morgan *Messages* 141).

Structurally, "The Summons" resembles a Petrarchan sonnet with 14 lines and a slightly altered rhyme structure of abba cddc efg efg. Typically, the sonnet form presents a problem in its first eight lines and then offers a turning point with some kind of solution offered in the final six lines. "The Summons" does not strictly adhere to this: the octave describes the state of the country as the travellers are about to leave with the dilemma being presented from line 1 to 10. The possible beginning of a solution is indicated in the final four lines. Right in the first line, we find the novel's title ("The year was ending, and the land lay still"), and the poem then goes on to describe the travellers' reluctance to leave, climaxing in a paralytic state: "…like a slate we could not clean of characters, yet could not read, or write our answers on, or smash, or take with us" (l. 7-9). This paralysis can be seen as a metaphor for the whole country and its people - for the Scottish political situation after the failed referendum. The following line then repeats the quiet and stillness of the first (l. 10) and the turning point is marked by the resigned departure of the travellers ("We sighed, climbed in, locked", l. 10). This is, however, followed by an avowal of love for the country (l. 11-12). Most importantly, in the last line, the quiet

is disturbed: "a far horn grew to break that people's sleep" (l.14). The paralytic state established by the octave is thus not finally resolved by the sextet, but a first awakening and the defiant beginning of a change are initiated in the final line.

The epigraph's significance lies in the novel taking its title from the poem and thereby directly situating itself it in the context of this Scottish failure and defiance. The historical scope of the novel does mirrors this. The narration starts in the 1950s and thus illustrates the lead-up to the state of paralysis - where everything lies still - to which the title explicitly refers, and then continues to portray the way out of this state, culminating in devolution. The novel thus extends and expands upon the poem by representing an awakening from the paralysis with which the poem ends.

The overall structure of the novel is that of six chapters, each preceded by a short, italicised passage written in a second person-perspective that convey the impression of addressing the reader and contrast with the chapters in terms of style and topic. While the first five chapters each introduce one or more characters in distinct historical Scottish settings that reflect upon the social and political situation, the intersecting passages always feature the same voice that speaks about his solitary travels through the land. The narrative strands are progressively woven closer together with the final, shorter chapter bringing all characters together. Through these focalizing shifts in the narration, the polyphony, the reader is thus presented with a plurality of voices as each chapter features at least one new focalizing character.

The performance of authenticity through polyphony is added to by Robertson's frequent use of regionally marked speech in his characters. Employing demotic voices invokes a regional familiarity and thereby creates a form of 'authenticity' through a performance of immediacy of the text (cf. Scott 78). Indeed, different regional dialects are frequently found in contemporary British fiction (cf. Scott 230). In the case of the present novel, it is conspicuous that the demotic voice is not present evenly in the sense of it being the 'base narrating voice', as, for example, in Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (cf. Chapter 2.4.1). Given the prevailing prominence of regional dialect in Britain as directly accessible markers of social class and regional belonging - a strong regional accent or dialect signifying a belonging to the working class as well as a regional affiliation (cf. Hughes et al. 9; Schmitt 147) -, Robertson implicitly characterises his characters' political and social stance through varying the degree to which he lets his characters speak in a way that is regionally marked.

In Robertson's novel, we can distinguish two different characters that can be assigned the function of providing the novel's unity through their structural position within the text and the themes and *leitmotifs* the text uses them to signify. The first is the character of Michael Pendreich, who comes closest to being the central character of the novel. Through the depiction of this character and his social setting, the narration is extended into the political and cultural context of Scotland (cf. Chapter 2.3). The character of Michael is the focalizer of the first chapter and is a principal figure in that he has access to all the different "camps" represented by the other characters: given that he is "[e]ducated privately amongst the Scottish Tory establishment, drawn - albeit fairly mildly - to the Nationalist cause, but in a long-term relationship with a grassroots Labour politician, he is able to navigate the post-war Scottish political scene to good effect" (Jamieson n.p.). This plot construction allows this character to become a central, connecting one. As Lukács has noted with reference to the central figures in Walter Scott's historical novels[10]; "it is their task to bring the extremes whose struggle fills the novel, whose clash expresses artistically a great crisis in society, into contact with one another" (36).

This is, however, not the only way in which Michael can be seen to be the central connecting character. The exhibition of the photographs his father Angus took in the course of his life forms another unifying narrative strand. At the onset of the novel, Michael is given the task of organising this exhibition and the final chapter, which brings all the characters together, has the opening of this exhibition as its setting. Not only is the theme of the photographs indicative of memories (cf. Jamieson n.p.) - connecting to the theme of the historical novel -, also most of the characters are present in the photographs and thus find themselves part of the exhibition in the final resolving chapter. In this way, a unification of the diverging characters is achieved through the medium of art and the character of Michael is the one facilitating this.

The second character that can be assigned a unifying function is that of the wanderer Jack. It is the second chapter that focuses on his story, focalized through his friend Don. Jack has a connecting function in that he encounters almost all characters at some point in his role of a tramp that hands out stones - the *leitmotif* of the novel (but see Chapter 3.1.3) - to his random acquaintances. While the character of Jack is already introduced in the first chapter, when he is photographed by Angus

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[10] It is worth noting at this point that Robertson regards *And the Land Lay Still* as a historical novel in some sense (cf. Derbyshire n.p.) and that he wrote his thesis on the novels of Walter Scott (cf. Jamieson n.p.).

and gives a stone to Michael, his identity is unknown to the reader and to Michael. Jack features again prominently in the final chapter, when, through the web of connections, Michael is finally able to identify him at the exhibition. This character's significance for the novel's unity is added to on the structural level. In the course of the novel, it becomes clear that it is the character of Jack who speaks to the reader in the short passages that intersect the chapters. Here, he is also given a special formal prominence: not only is his narration italicized, it is also rendered in the second person perspective which is rarely found in literary fiction (cf. "Second-Person Point of View" n.p.). It is thus the voice of Jack that is formally distinguished from all other characters' and that connects all the other voices structurally. It is this formal prominence of Jack's voice that gives his character supremacy in terms of providing the novel's unity over that of the character of Michael.

It has been established that the novel sets up a tension between diversity on the one hand, symbolised though the different voices, and unity on the other hand, represented through Jack and, to a lesser extent, Michael. Given that the basic function of national identity is to unite and give meaning to a diverse entity (cf. Chapter 2.1), it is these two characters and their position within the text that will be examined more closely in the following chapters. The diversity of voices present in the text will be analysed first to establish whether and how the text determines a problematic Scottish identity situation through its portrayal of social and cultural tensions and what symbolic solutions the text offers to this within the social realm. The thesis will then go on to examine the symbolic solution that is offered through presenting the character of Jack as well as the aesthetic sphere as unifying diversity.

3.1.2 The Relativity of National Identity

Through the positions of the various characters, different visions of Scotland all become interwoven: the political, the historical, and the postcolonial vision of Scotland; the sense of Scotland as a failed nation and the resulting defiance or acceptance this engenders. The problematic Scottish identity situation is ever present and possible solutions to the question of how the collective should be defined are also embodied through the novel's plurality of voices, each voice offering a specific solution. However, no single one of these solutions is presented as the unambigous one. Instead, a sense of relativity in terms of national identity is established through the various voices and their viewpoints.

This is well exemplified in the first chapter where, focalized through Michael, we are presented with a dialogue. Set in an Edinburgh pub in the 1970s, shortly after the SNP had won a seat in a by-election, it pointedly illustrates three different positions on the Scottish situation:

> 'The Scottish Nutter Party,' the biker said.
>
> 'Tartan Tories,' Greatcoat said. 'What's the difference between a London capitalist and a Scottish capitalist? Four hundred miles and a kilt. The SNP are a bunch of wankers.' […]
>
> '…The last thing the Scottish worker needs is to be diverted from the class struggle by pipe dreams about independence.'
>
> 'What about Vietnam?' Mike said. 'Or Ireland? I take it you're not opposed to them being independent countries?'
>
> Greatcoat rolled his eyes at the biker. 'Listen to Robert the Bruce,' he said. 'That's totally fucking different. I mean, come *on*, man!'
>
> The biker seemed in two minds about whose view to favour. […]
>
> 'It's just that I've noticed,' Mike said, 'that there's always one rule for Scotland when it comes to independence, and another rule for everyone else.' (52-3)[11]

Here, the nationalist cause is set in an opposition to that of the working class through the character of Greatcoat who advocates the view of accepting Scotland's dependence and ridicules any opposing arguments. In this view, the collective identity should not be defined through the nation, but instead through the collective working class identification. Mike counters this with the argument of other countries having achieved independence, thus evoking the sense of the postcolonial Scotland. In both views, the nature of the collective and the defining characteristic of it are contested. This is indeed relevant for the novel as a whole in that it embodies the central tension the novel tries to overcome. However, the text here gives no supremacy to one viewpoint or the other.

A stance on the nature of the defining characteristic of the collective is also exemplified in the third chapter. Focalized through the character of Peter Bond, a Scot who works for the British intelligence service, this plot construction enables the views of the British state to be constructed and incorporated into the narrative. While the following dialogue between Peter and his boss Canterbury again centres around the collective-defining characteristics of nationalism and communism, the text simultaneously opens up another criterion, namely that of belonging to the British state:

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[11] All page references in this chapter refer to *And the Land Lay Still*, unless otherwise indicated. All emphases are maintained.

> They [the SNP] threw Grieve[12] out years ago. He's a Communist.
>
> I'm well aware of that, Bond. And I also know there are parts of Scotland that are little less than Soviet fiefdoms. The question is, are there connections between the Nationalists and the Communists? Are Grieve and his associates able to make those connections and cause any serious trouble? (268)

The two collective-defining criteria of nationalism and communism that have, in the passage before, been constructed in an opposition are here put into association. As this association is stated as the fear of the British state, Britishness as the defining characteristic for the Scottish collective is concomitantly constructed and, from this viewpoint, favoured. Moreover, given that Scotland is portrayed as a hotbed for both negatively-perceived identities, the disassociation and tension between both countries is emphasised and Scotland is constructed as a dangerous 'Other' for England (cf. Chapter 2.3).

A view from within this 'hotbed' is offered in the fourth chapter, focalized through the character of Ellen Imlach who recounts the memories of her childhood, in particular of her grandparents. With reference to Harold Macmillan's famous 1957 'We never had it so good'-speech, she reflects:

> Well, maybe there was some truth in what he said but you would never have got the miners of Borlanslogie to admit it. '*Maist* o oor people,' her Dey stressed. 'He's saying *maist* o oor people. He's no including us, then. He disna ken onything aboot *us*.' 'We're no haein it as bad as we usually dae, that's aboot the best ye can say,' was her Nana's opinion. If there were Kremlin-watchers in Whitehall, there were Whitehall-watchers in Borlanslogie, analysing what capitalists said, dissecting and rubbishing the fat lies every night over their tea, with or without the assistance of the *Daily Worker*. (402)

The view offered from 'within' is that the Scots see themselves as explicitly excluded from the British prosperity, and moreover as the 'unknown' and as decidedly Communist, thereby confirming their status as 'the Other'. Furthermore, this excerpt is also one example of Robertson's use of the demotic Scots voice which here, given that regionally marked speech directly signals a belonging to the working class and a strong regional affiliation (cf. Chapter 3.1.1.) underlines the political stance of the characters.

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[12] C.M. Grieve was, under his alias Hugh MacDiarmid, a defining figure for the Scottish Renaissance (cf. Chapter 2.4.1).

This relationship between speech and identity is also used in the novel to depict the lack of Scottish cultural self-esteem through the character of Peter Bond and his parents:

> Some people in London still found it hard to make him out even though he's toned the accent down a lot. Now Hugh was looking at him queerly when he spoke. Ye're awfie English getting, he said, but there was a touch of pride in his resentment. Peggy, who'd spent years rooting out Scotticisms from her own speech and endlessly correcting her children's language, glowed with pleasure, not least because to her the difference between how father and son spoke only underlined how far up in the world Peter had already risen.   (248)

Here, the English accent is equated with success and speaking Scots is a sign of inferiority, a view that is also held by the character of Roderick Braco, a Conservative politician, who describes his constituency as "miserable" and "awful" and the speech of the "natives" as "unintelligible" (486). In these views, the Scottish collective therefore does not deserve an autonomous definition, it should instead define itself through its belonging to Britain. This sense of Scottish subordination is indeed also frequently found in the views of Peter Bond. He regards Scotland and its history as "wreckage";

> the wreckage of an edifice he tried to construct for more than forty years, but which was crumbling almost from the outset, was mothballed in the late 1970s, suffered a serious structural failure in the mid-1980s and collapsed more or less completely in the spring of 1997. (235)

The sense of the whole country and its history being an utter failure is reflected here and through the same character we are presented with an echo of the lack of cultural and fictional imagination presented in Gray's *Lanark* (cf. Chapter 2.4.1): "Somebody asked him why he set his books in Italy, France, America and England, but not in Scotland. The writer stroked his chin. Because nothing happens here (244)". Moreover, in his position of working for the British state, the character of Peter Bond is the one that is assigned the task of reflecting on a dual British-Scottish identity. In the instances where this is done, this dual identity is, however, seen as a necessity borne out of the Scottish inability to govern itself successfully (cf. 334) and offer its people prosperity (cf. 310). The option of Britishness or a Scottish-Britishness as defining the collective, favoured by the British state, is deconstructed as meaningless for the Scottish collective. This is underlined by the fact that the only character possessing this dual identity ends up being plagued by alcoholism and psychological issues.

A contrasting example to Britishness as defining the collective is offered when a dispute over the state of Scotland is resolved by an interruption of a song being sung in Gaelic (cf. 106-7). The defining criterion offered is thus a romantic return to the Gaelic roots (cf. Chapter 2.2.2), with the statement of the singer that learning Gaelic "had rescued something so deep in herself that it had barely been there" (109) underlining this notion of a fundamental cultural difference between the Scots and the English and echoing the views of the Scottish Renaissance writers (cf. Chapter 2.4.1).

Returning to the opposition of working class allegiances and nationalism as defining for the collective, the text provides the Thatcher years with particular importance. At a Labour conference, characterised by "a tension in the air: identity politics versus class consciousness" (532), a speaker states:

> 'I have not been an extravagant supporter of the Scottish dimension.' […] 'But I've changed my mind. I don't give a bugger if Thatcher has a mandate or not – I will simply do whatever I can to stop her.' There was a stunned silence, then a smattering of applause. […] The rigid anti-devolutionist had moved – out of expediency, no doubt, but it was a brutal, honest kind of expediency. Adam nudged Mike. 'If he can shift his position, anybody can.' (532-3)

The onset of Thatcherite rule is thus portrayed as an impetus to "shift positions", and can indeed be seen as a social awakening from the paralysis described in the poem (cf. Chapter 3.1.1). The economic restructuring under which Scotland suffered badly (cf. Chapter 2.2.2) is depicted as an impulse for action ("It felt necessary to resist, […], at all levels and every opportunity." [542]) and a supremacy of identity politics over class allegiances is underlined by an equalisation of Thatcher and trade union leader Arthur Scargill when Michael reflects: "Class warriors, dogmatists, idealogues – they could have swapped roles and people would have hardly noticed. They even had similar hairstyles" (543). The awakening function of Thatcher's politics is again depicted with reference to the late 1980s ("They built alliances across parties, local authorities, churches, trade unions, small businesses and cultural organisations – across that very society that Mrs Thatcher had declared did not exist" [573]), however, an ongoing 'part paralysis' is also ascribed to the Major years (cf. 587). While all these stances on the 1980s as a driver for a positive change are focalized through Michael, another angle is offered through the character of Don, who sees the radical changes of Thatcher years as "the undoing of society" (528) that do not strengthen his national identity, but instead make him lose it: "Was he losing touch

with his country, or was his country losing touch with him? And which country?" (528).

The fundamental question of cultural and national identity, the 'who are we?', and the shift to devolution does indeed become intertwined with the Thatcher years. When we are offered a temporally more distanced view by Michael, the Thatcherite rule is portrayed as enabling devolution, but also as destabilising identity:

> It's only with the passing of time that the picture comes fully into focus, as the present slides and settles into history. Who are we? One of the unintended effects of Margaret Thatcher's revolution, he sees now – and let's face it, that's what it was, a revolution – was to destroy Scottish loyalty to the British state. […] In the Thatcher years the great presumption of the left – that the industrial working class would eventually tame capitalism – came crashing down. The class war may not be over but it's certainly not what it used to be. In its stead there are many creeds, ancient and new, ethnic and national and religious and green, all jostling for a position; and though Mike has escaped from the din, he still likes to ask what the din is all about.
>
> (36)

The Thatcher years are thus portrayed as the ultimate push for a change in Scottish identity politics. The collective-defining criteria of working class allegiance and Britishness have both been destroyed irrevocably. However, although devolution is now in place, neither it, nor nationalism, can serve as giving meaning to the collective; instead fragmentation and uncertainty about where to look for a collective meaning remain, a "din" of which Michael has "escaped" but that still does not let him alone.

This relativity of the definition of the collective, of national identity, is underlined again when the process of devolution is no longer portrayed as the ultimate goal finally achieved, but instead as an event causing "disillusion" (616) and deep resignation:

> 'What's wrong with you? You sound so depressed.'
>
> 'Maybe I am. Or maybe I'm just Scottish.'
>
> […]
>
> 'I'll tell ye the truth, Mike, I've had enough. Aye, the old political certainties are changing, and that's aw for the good. It's what we wanted, and it's happening. […]. Onybody can vote for onybody noo and if they dinna like the big parties there are greens and socialists and God kens who else tae vote for. Fine. Or they can vote for naebody. But there's something I canna get oot o my heid. It's the thought that just at the point when we've won, when we've got what we worked for aw these years, right at that moment we throw it away because naebody can be bothered ony mair. Thatcher won after all, in spite of everything. That's what I think.'

'How can you say that?' Mike said. 'Her own party chucked her out. She fought against devolution all the way, and we beat her. And the Tories won't be back in power for years.'

'They don't have to be. Blair and Brown are gonnae dae it aw for them. It's true. The market is king. So what aboot this parliament of oors? It's twenty years ower late. It's like we fought our way tae the bar just in time for the barman tae tell us he's stopped serving.' (618-9)

To begin with, the depressed nature of the Scottish psyche (cf. Chapter 2.4.1) is explicitly mentioned and precedes the elaboration on the present state of the nation by the character Adam. This not only sets a scene of negativity, but also constructs "depression" as the only collective-defining characteristic. In keeping with this, Adam's view of devolution is a very hopeless one. Also referring to the fragmentation of alliances in terms of politics (the 'din' mentioned above), the longstanding goal of autonomy has become meaningless as the Thatcher years have changed politics and society so dramatically that "naebody can be bothered ony mair". The Thatcher period has destabilised collective identities so profoundly that even the autonomy, supposed to give meaning to the collective before, now makes no difference anymore - it comes twenty years too late. The overall picture that emerges is that of Scotland having failed to grasp its opportunity for self-governance at the right time - alluding to the historic scar of the 1979 referendum (cf. Chapter 2.2.2). The construction of national identity here therefore still takes place in negative terms, with a total destabilisation of any collective meaning.

This instability of national identity is also present when Michael reflects:

But what was the cause? It's easy to remember what they stood *against*: Thatcherism, London rule, the destruction of old industries, the assault on the Welfare State, the poll tax. But what were they *for?* A Scottish parliament, of course. But now they have it, what is *it* for? Forget smoking bans and other worthwhile legislation, what is its primary function? Maybe it's for saying, *Look, listen, this is who we are.* And maybe that is no insignificant thing, and the purpose of a parliament is to say it again, over and over. What can be more important, politically, than to know who you are, and to say it? (35-6)

While the opponent, the 'against', is clear - English hegemony and in particular Thatcherite politics - the 'for' is much harder to ascertain. The newly regained autonomy in form of the Scottish parliament is given a symbolic function slightly heightened from the generic one: its primary function is not to democratically represent the people and pass legislation in their name, but to give meaning to the nation by saying "who they are", and thus to define and give meaning to the collective. The fact that the protagonist feels the need for the parliament to fulfil this

function continuously, to "say it again, over and over", is evidence for the persistent sense of meaninglessness, instability and fragmentation - for a lack of unity.

Through surveying the plurality of voices and their perspectives on the Scottish national identity, on what provides the collective with meaning, the present chapter has established that the text does not give priority to any of the manifold positions. Instead, it emphasises the relativity of all these positions and thereby renders any meaningful identity construction within the social realm impossible. The novel's position on Scottish national identity can therefore only be established when analysing the features that go beyond this social realm. This is what the next chapter will do.

3.1.3 Jack's Escape into the Land and Nature

As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, the text does not create any overt unity between the diverging voices; rather relativity prevails. As has been noted, there are two characters that are given the function of uniting all these contesting voices: one is Jack who fulfils this function mainly through the formal positioning of his narration, the other is Michael who facilitates the exhibition at the end of the novel which is the setting in which the greatest unity within the social realm is constructed (cf. Chapter 3.1.1). We are presented with two different symbolic solutions to the tension of diversity, one outside the social realm, embodied through Jack, and one within, in the form of the exhibition. Both become interwoven and the present chapter will first analyse the character of Jack and then look at the exhibition and the symbolic solutions they respectively present as well as the significance of this for the whole novel and its perspective on the state of Scotland and Scottish national identity.

The character of Jack is introduced in the second chapter, focalized through the character of Don. Jack is deeply traumatised by his experiences of the Second World War and the concept of his imaginary Scotland is depicted as his escape from the trauma. Consequently he is a keen nationalist:

> '… Full-blown independence is the thing.'
>
> 'Canna see there's much appetite for that,' Don said. 'Why would ye go doon that road, after all we've been through thegither? Why are you sae keen on independence?'
>
> 'I love my country,' Jack said. 'It's what kept me alive. I've told you that.' […] Scottish nationalism's different,' he went on. 'It's not about conquest or oppression. It's about freeing ourselves. We're not going to invade anybody, we just want what's ours. Our own country.'
>
> 'A poor country it would be, on its ain,' Don said. […]

> 'You've swallowed the propaganda,' Jack said. 'That's what they want us to believe, that we can't stand on our own feet. They tricked us into believing it in 1707, and it's been the same ever since.'   (164)

A postcolonial vision of Scotland is clearly evoked here with Scotland having to free itself from English oppression, an oppression which is upheld with the "propaganda" of a dependency of Scotland ever since the 1707 Union. This postcolonial vision is again emphasised later on in the conversation ("'Yet you support independence for India, Burma, Sudan, Ghana. Every country but your own. Why? What's different about us?'" [166]). It is conspicuous here that Robertson employs the demotic Scots voice (cf. Chapter 3.1.1) not for the speech of the nationalist, but for the character opposing this view. Through this blurring of the lines of easily identifiable national identity markers, the relativity and instability of national identity is again emphasised.

Not only is Jack directly characterised as a nationalist (cf. 256), he is also explicitly linked to the disappearance of the Stone of Destiny (cf. Chapter 2.2.2). This national mythology receives considerable attention in the novel (cf. 70-4) and its truth is affirmed by Jack: "'It's not been stolen,' Jack said. 'It's been recovered from the thieves that took it in the first place.'" (207). While this once again emphasises his nationalist beliefs, the story about the Stone of Destiny becomes interwoven with Jack's disappearance: "For a day or so Don thought it possible that there was some connection, that with the stone's reappearance Jack might also emerge from wherever he'd been hiding. […] Like that original stone he believed in, Jack was gone for good" (216). On another level, this link also becomes highly significant as the character of Jack haunts the novel and its characters through handing out stones to them. On the one hand, the stones here can be seen to stand for a way of Jack leaving tracks and impacting on the world. They thus underline his connecting function as it is through them that he keeps in touch with the society he has escaped from. On the other hand, they also have an ambiguous double meaning. They signify the Scottish paralysis (cf. Chapter 3.1.1) as indeed stones are symbolic for "motionlessness" and "fixity" ("Stone" n.p.). The thematic linkage to the Stone of Destiny also allows for them be seen as reminders of Scotland's right to and need for independence.

This is emphasised further with the reasons for Jack's leaving. Before his disappearance, he tells his nephew: "I love this country, Jimmy, but there's too much wrong with it. […] You're the same as me, lad, you don't fit. I can tell. I've had

enough. I'm going away" (259). The fierce nationalist thus feels he does not fit into the society of his country and his escape is to go into nature. Examining the passages in which Jack directly addresses the reader can shed more light on his positions. On his reasons for leaving, the character reflects:

> *Didn't matter what your politics were after all. Irrelevant. Didn't matter whether you were free or independent or democratic or oppressed,* […]. *It wasn't the age of small nations as you'd thought, it was the age of money and waste and garbage and pollution and destruction and it was all going to get worse, you could see it coming and you couldn't do it,* […]. *It was time to go.* (228)

Here, a critique of civilization is presented. The modern age is depicted as creating impossible living conditions and the only possible solution is to leave this environment and retreat into nature - a trail of thought highly reminiscent of Romanticist and early Modernist ideas. This is underlined when Jack reflects upon the history of Scotland in a relativizing way:

> *Once were Irish and Picts and Egyptians and Britons and slaves and cave-dwellers and hunters of mammoths and gatherers of clams and berries and once they were not here and once they will not be here again. Only the land will remain. People dug it and cut it and burned it and built on it but the land remained. 'It is we who must reconcile ourselves to the stones, not the stones to us'.* (522)

Civilization is here depicted as meaningless since nature and the land are timeless - they "remain". This statement is illustrated with a quote from Hugh MacDiarmid's poem "On A Raised Beach" which "has most often been interpreted in a philosophical or metaphysical/religious context, even […] on an ecological basis" (Palmer McCulloch 189). It has also been understood as a critique of mass culture and its potential negative effect on human consciousness (cf. Palmer McCulloch 189). Using this poem thus not only emphasises the function of nature as a symbolic solution, it also connects the character Jack to the Scottish Renaissance and picks up the topic of the stones as a symbol for nature.

The escape of Jack into nature and the relationship to nature and the land is portrayed as a process of gradual coalescence with the land. While Jack in the beginning describes the landscape and his position towards it as "*connected but never connected, always apart*" and as "*reachings for the unreachable, yearnings for the unobtainable*" (1), this evolves to "*Then, like the snow, you melted into the landscape*" (377). In this process of becoming one, the stones again play a significant

part, which lends them yet another meaning. The character of Jack explicitly states that

> [*t*]*he stones had no purpose, they were just a story. You kept the story going.* […]
>
> *You heard another story about stones once, or did you read it? Memory was a confusing place of mist and time. This story was much older than yours, but you liked it, you felt it. It became you.* […] *Maybe it was the same story but on a different scale.* (145)

First of all, the stones Jack hands out are equivalent to "the story" which underlines their connecting function for the narrative, in particular as they "keep the story going". Moreover, Jack's reflections on his memory strongly hint at a degree of unreliability in his narration, which in turn adds to the ambiguity, and the multiplicity of the stones' meaning(s). Most importantly, the story he refers to is a primeval one of the land, that of a giant picking up rocks, which he then loses and that end up forming the Hebrides (cf. 145). In this way, as in the quote from MacDiarmid's poem, the stones become directly equated with the land and the tale that holds this information is explicitly equated with that of Jack. This coalescence with the land is finally taken to the extreme when Jack, shortly before his death, begins to eat the stones:

> *You swallowed them slowly, one after another.*
>
> *You were going.*
>
> *You ate the stones, and the sea faded, and the land faded, and the sand filled your ears and nose, and you faded into the land, into the sea.* (636)

The eating of the stones is depicted in unison with the process of dying which cumulates in a "fading" of human and nature, a total coalescence of Jack and the land. The symbolic solution to the problem of defining the collective presented by the unifying character Jack therefore lays in the land, a return to landscape and nature.

Relating this to the novel's overall perspective on the state of Scotland, it can be stated that the relativity of the diverging voices presented in the novel (cf. Chapter 3.1.2) embodies the relativity of the social in which no meaningful collective identity can be constructed. It is thus the ex-societal realm in the form of the land and nature that is presented as the site enabling the construction of this identity. The tension of the post-devolutionary age, having arisen from contradiction of the Thatcher years, which while having broken the paralysis, have not provided any meaningful basis for the collective identity but instead destabilised it further (cf. Chapter 3.1.2), is thus resolved by a return to the level of the land. As the concept of the 'land' constructed

through Jack stands for a sense of eternity, earthiness and an unspoilt state, the text takes the position that a meaningful and stable collective identity no longer being possible because too much has been changed.

Through this construction of the character of Jack as the nationalist that finds himself unable to come to terms with life in the modern age and thus reverts to travelling and becoming one with the land, the novel takes a very Romantic stance in which nature and landscape become the symbolic solution and define national identity. Indeed, this is to some extent in keeping with the contemporary constructions of national identity found in sociological studies in which the Scottish landscape is often found to be the most important cultural icon and thus serves as the prime signifier in terms of signifying the national belonging (cf. Chapter 2.1). However, at the same time, this solution of leaving society and civilization behind is also somewhat inaccessible to the reader. The text's awareness of this is not only evident in the fact that Jack's perspectives are narrated in the second person, which directly addresses the reader and thus aims at an identification, but also in the structure of the text which provides the reader with the depiction of a social setting *after* Jack has died. Thus, while Jack begins the novel and structurally holds the different voices together, his character does not finalise the text.

Instead, the novel ends with the final chapter presenting the exhibition of the photographs as the moment of greatest unity within the social realm. This moment is intrinsically connected to Jack: on the one hand through him being present in one of the photographs and Don and Michael thus finally being able to identify him and shed light on his disappearance, on the other hand through all the characters joining in the Scottish traditional song "Come aw ye tramps and hawker lads" (cf. 658) in which the implicit recipient is asked to "come listen". Through the song as well as the photographs and the speech Michael delivers, in which he reflects on the concept of history and cites the novelist William Faulkner (cf. 645), manifold forms of the aesthetic are present and all of them are constructed to connect memories, the past and a sense of eternity with the present. The text therefore creates the greatest unity of the social within the aesthetic realm and thus constructs the site of arts and culture as the one where the inaccessible solution of the ex-societal eternity of the land as providing the collective with meaning can also be found within the social realm. In doing so, the text self-reflexively refers to its own importance as well as making a statement on the necessity of art, especially in the post-devolutionary age (cf. Chapter 2.4.1).

It has been demonstrated that in James Robertson's *And the Land Lay Still* resignation, fragmentation and destabilisation prevail in terms of collective identity constructions, especially with reference to post-devolutionary identity. The ex-societal realm in the form of an escape from civilization into nature and landscape is presented as a solution, as the site for a meaningful identity construction. However, at the same time an awareness of the inaccessibility of this solution is displayed. This is overcome by presenting the aesthetic sphere as a site where the unspoilt state of the land and the sense of eternity can be accessed from within the social realm to provide the collective with meaning. Through this, the text self-reflexively takes the stance of prioritising aesthetic solutions to the problem of Scottish identity constructions. In its recurrence to the essential notion of nature and the past as providing the collective with meaning as well as through its manifold references to the Scottish Renaissance, the novel can be seen to be claiming its place in the tradition of the latter, however, while at the same time being aware of the literary, cultural and political developments that have taken place in the meantime. For Robertson, these do not seem to contain sufficient potential for a post-devolutionary Scottish identity, though. It can only be meaningfully constructed through a reversion to the 'essential Scotland' - to its land - and it is the aesthetic realm that provides access to it. Devolution therefore has not brought about a coherent sense of a British identity of which the Scottish identity is part. More than ever, there is a need to engage with the past and revisit notions of an unspoilt Scotland to provide the nation with meaning.

3.2 One Collective Identity Only in the Future - Perspectives on the State of Northern Ireland in David Park's *The Truth Commissioner*

David Park's 2008 novel *The Truth Commissioner* offers a fictional space in which the post-Agreement Northern Irish society's trying to come to terms with the new political environment is negotiated. As the construction of the two opposing identities fundamental to the Northern Irish situation (cf. Chapter 2.1) are of central importance to this, the novel has been chosen as a primary text. The novel takes its title from the fictional "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" that is set up in the text - modelled on the existing South African commission (cf. 9)[13] - in order to

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[13] All page references in this chapter refer to *The Truth Commissioner*, unless otherwise indicated. All emphases are maintained.

provide the divided society with closure through hearing and finally deciding on still unresolved cases of sectarian violence. Central to this novel and its construction of national identity is thus also an engagement with the past, that is especially difficult in the Northern Irish context - as Patterson puts it: "at the heart of this novel is the vexed question - it's Northern Ireland, we only do *vexed* questions - of how we deal with the past" (Patterson "Park" 162).

Park also uses a polyphonic narration and it features five different voices in distinct political positions to shed light on possible approaches to this question. It is then both in terms of the plot and on the formal level that this novel has sufficient similar features to Robertson's novel on Scotland in order for the both to be compared. The present chapter will therefore use a similar structure to that of the previous chapter: it will first analyse the overall narrative structure and form before going on to analyse the four characters presented in the text as embodiments of distinct Northern Irish identity positions. It will then look again at what provides these different voices and the novel as a whole with unity. The chapter will argue that the novel takes the position of no stable post-conflict and post-devolutionary identity being possible in the present. Instead, the text constructs children and the next generation as the only power that can alter the persisting identity positions of the conflict through an acceptance of difference. With this, the novel also postpones the renewal of Northern Irish identities into the unforeseeable future.

3.2.1 Polyphony in *The Truth Commissioner*

Park's novel takes a quote from the Bible (see Appendix B) as its epigraph. Similarly to the poem preceding Robertson's novel, this directly situates the narrative in a certain context and the epigraph will therefore be analysed first. Taken from the gospel of St John, the quote describes the pool of Bethesda, one of the settings in which Jesus is said to have performed his miracles (cf. *The Bible. Authorized King James Version*, St. John 4-6.2). The passage does not, however, contain any explicit reference to Jesus, rather, it describes the pool as containing "a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered" and states that an angel would sometimes stir the water which would then heal the first person that enters the pool. Similarly to the Scottish novel, we are thus also presented with a reference to paralysis, indeed the gospel goes on to tell of Jesus healing a paralysed man at this pool (cf. St. John 5.7-9).

The paralysis, blindness and sickness of the people in the pool can be taken as a metaphor for Northern Irish society, ridden and divided by the conflict and unable to free itself from its set identities. Just as in the Scottish novel (cf. Chapter 3.1.1), the narrative is therefore preceded by a metaphor that ascribes a paralytic state to the society. However, while the in the case of Scotland, an awakening and a change is open-endedly indicated, the Bible passage refers to the healing of the sick as a miracle. The metaphorical healing of Northern Irish society is therefore compared to a miracle, thus highlighting its unlikelihood. The narrative is therefore directly situated in a negative context; while it is concerned with precisely this healing it simultaneously emphasises its improbability and questionability.

In terms of structure, this polyphonic novel features 15 chapters, of which the first, the last and the tenth are markedly set apart. While all other chapters are focalized by one of the four central characters, with the first four explicitly announcing the focalizer through their heading, the focalizer of the first chapter is at first unknown and becomes identifiable as the child Connor Walshe in the course of the novel. The case of the disappearance of Connor Walshe is brought to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and it is this case and its story that the narrative evolves around. Accordingly, the tenth chapter, that has the hearing of the case as its topic, is formally distinguished in that the focalization shifts quickly between the participating characters within the chapter. The final chapter is focalized through an unknown "driver" (372) and the scene describing a digger arriving at an area of bog suggests that it is the body of Connor that is finally to be excavated (cf. 372).

Apart from forming the central plot, the character of Connor is thus also formally 'enclosing' the voices of the other characters as well as uniting them in the central chapter and it is thus this character that can be assigned the function of uniting the different voices in the novel. As the plot unravels, it becomes clear that Connor has lost his life because he got caught in the middle of the opposing sides of the Northern Irish conflict: supplying the Ulster police service (RUC) with information, he got abducted and killed by the IRA. The text therefore creates its unity through connecting all its characters to a child that is an embodiment of the corrupting forces of the conflict.

Apart from Connor's voice in the first chapter, we are presented with four other different voices which are assigned distinct political positions and identities within the conflict. The character of Henry Stanfield is English, the commissioner presiding over Connor's case and as such is in a supposedly neutral position concerning the

conflict and its identities. The characters of Francis Gilroy and Danny/Michael Madden are both ex-IRA members, with the former now being Minister for Children and Culture in the power-sharing executive and the latter having left Ireland for a new life in the US. Both of these characters thus embody the Catholic-Nationalist identity. Finally, the character of James Fenton is a retired RUC detective and thus stands for the Protestant-British identity. Park's character constructions do therefore feature all available identity positions, including those who have actively participated in the violence and those who have suffered from it as victims. However, the former are given prominence as it is through these characters that the narration is mediated for the most part.

The different perspectives on the conflict, on the future of Northern Ireland and therefore on identity are presented in the text through these four characters. Apart from their unification through Connor, they are also all united in a coming to terms with their relationship to their own children. The concept of the child is thus extended from the case of Connor to the personal realm of the characters and the concept of the child becomes the novel's *leitmotif*. The next chapter will take a closer look at the different perspectives of these voices before the text's overall perspective on Northern Irish identity is analysed through examining the relationships to as well as the symbolic meaning given to children.

3.2.2 Reconciliation and the Recurrence to the Past

After the brief glimpse into Connor's experience (cf. Chapter 3.2.3), the novel starts with the perspective of the character of Henry Stanfield. It is very telling that in his position as the truth commissioner - the supposedly unbiased person in charge of resolving the conflict - this character offers us very negative views on Northern Ireland, Belfast and the conflict and its possible resolution through the work of the commission from the very beginning. Belfast he describes as "a piece of dirt that he hoped he had shaken off his shoe" (20), as "primitive" (39) and dangerous ("unexpectedly and unpredictably life might at any moment be struck in this city" [40]), as a "provincial backwater" and "this forsaken part of the world" (56). Similarly, he sees the conflict as a "rather pathetic and primitive tribal war" (25), Northern Ireland as "this midden of a country" and reflects: "On the edge of Europe, […] this place gets the dregs of light, the left-over luminosity from brighter worlds" (360). Both Belfast and Northern Ireland are thus constructed entirely negatively, as worthless, hazardous and dark places. As this image is constructed through the

character from England that is given authority through having the task of overseeing the reconciliation process, a postcolonial vision of Northern Ireland is clearly evoked. It becomes 'the Other' not only to England, but also to civilization. In the light of this, the whole reconciliation process is undermined from the start.

This is indeed underlined by Stanfield's frequent references to his personal career gain from taking his position as truth commissioner (cf. 18, 244, 360) as well as his thorough disbelief in the ability of the reconciliation process to be successful. Considering the process, he "feels a desultory randomness about it all, a sense of fragmentation" (24) and, using strong imagery, regards it as "an old manged, flea-infested dog returning to inspect its own sick" (25). The catchphrases of 'transparency' and 'integrity', that accompany the process, he exposes as "words no doubt that help feel the user ennobled and elevated to a higher plane than his listeners" (21). Similarly, he regards the word 'healing' as being used so often that it loses all meaning and can therefore no longer serve as the defined goal (cf. 49). The fact that he is complicit in this 'word game' by using the empty phrases himself when in an official situation (cf. 245, 317), because they are "lodged in his memory" (317), further underlines the futility of the process as a mere exercise in which all parties participate for the sake of it. In this way, both the terminology used as well as the whole process and the possibility of reconciliation are inherently destabilised from the beginning on.

A similarly pessimistic perspective is offered through the character of Francis Gilroy. He provides the view of the post-conflict Catholic-Irish identity. His own coming to terms with having left behind the IRA and accepted the post as government minister ("Does it really mean that he has sold his principles or forgotten what the struggle was about?" [81]) as well as his observations of the community he works in ("…they have their strict codes of conduct and because they come from the Protestant estates up the road, he knows they probably still think of him as the Antichrist" [80]) construct an image of Northern Ireland in which the opposing identities and the conflict continue to exist. In keeping with this, the character remains haunted by suspicion and fear of an attack (cf. 68-9, 88-9), but is also proud of his achievements enabled through the GFA: "Pride for himself, the son of a sign-painter, pride for his people - the second-class citizens - who now through him sit at the very top table" (89). While here a positive evaluation of the peace process is constructed, the reconciliation process and the concomitant revelation of past actions are portrayed negatively. Reflecting on telling the story of his life, Gilroy notes that

he would be "damned for the truth and damned for what he left out" (93) and on participating in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission he states that it was "always a bloody stupid idea" (97) borne out of necessity: "…we sang so loud about having the truth on everything they ever did that we stumbled blindly into the net and then it was too late to get ourselves out when they turned round and asked for our truth" (97). The Catholic-Irish identity position is thus constructed as one where knowledge about responsibilities for what happened in the past - the prerequisite for reconciliation - is not desired. Similar to the character of Stanfield's position, personal interests are valued higher.

Examining the other character representing this identity position confirms this. Opposed to Gilroy, Danny/Michael Madden has left Northern Ireland and his IRA past behind for a new life in the US. Having been involved in the Walshe case, he initially refuses to take part in the Commission to save his new life but is eventually forced by the IRA to come back to Northern Ireland (cf. 236-8). It is also from this character's perspective that we get an insight into the IRA's view of the reconciliation process when Michael is told that

> '…things have moved on but there are some things that are still the same even though sometimes they get called by a different name. This is a new phase of the struggle, […] We're all volunteers in that same struggle and we'll all be volunteers until we live in an Ireland that is finally free.' (305)

Both the peace and the reconciliation process here become corrupted as mere instruments to achieve the enduring goal of the IRA: a free Ireland. No change of thinking has taken place; rather the divided identities that continue to exist unaltered.

The Protestant-British identity is embodied through the character of James Fenton. Similar to those of the other identity positions, this character also has no interest in revisiting the past to reveal responsibilities (cf. 127). He also shows some corruption, in this case because of having accepted "too generous" a pension and pay-off deals (127), paid because he is "part of a past that had to be quietly replaced" (127). The notion of glossing over the past in order to be able to move on is also explicitly evoked when Fenton is told he is to appear before the Commission:

> '…, and now they want to take the truth and twist it into whatever shape they think suits them best?'
>
> 'It's hard to grasp, […] but it's got to do with protecting the institutions, safeguarding the future. With bringing people inside the system and making sure they stay there. Trying to build something better than we had in the past.' (134-5)

Here, it is not the existence of 'the truth' that is portrayed as questionable; rather ignorance is seen to be a necessary prerequisite for a peaceful future. The purpose and the idea of truth and reconciliation are thus similarly undermined from the Protestant-British identity position.

It has been demonstrated that all of the different voices are assigned distinct political positions within the conflict and all of them remain restricted by these positions. While the text constructs no position more valid than the other and truth - as the knowing about responsibilities for actions in the past - as a prerequisite for reconciliation, the text concomitantly destabilises this truth as corrupted by personal guilt and personal and political interests, arising from the distinct identity positions. It thereby constructs the reconciliation of the opposed identities as impossible in the present. The next chapter will examine the character Connor and the symbolic meaning of children as the device that unifies the different voices and the meaning this has for possible future constructions of Northern Irish identities.

3.2.3 Connor and the Significance of Children

As has been pointed out above, the character of Connor and the case of his disappearance is the central theme of the novel, and unites the different voices. There is only one short chapter that is focalized through Connor. Right at the beginning of the novel, it tells of his time in capture by the IRA and stops shortly before his death. Most significant in Connor's narration is the construction of the corrupting influence the Northern Irish conflict has on children and the ambiguity of his own character. He tries to actively portray himself as an innocent child in the hope of his capturers then letting him go (cf. 2-3). The fact that he actually still is a child, but self-consciously reflects on how to best present himself in order to deceive is both evidencing this corrupting effect of the conflict and highlighting the ambiguity of his innocence. Similarly, "he pleads with practised sincerity" (4) and lies when questioned about his work for the RUC. Reflecting on this, he also gives his motivation for his actions: "… how can he tell himself, or them, the truth that he did it because just for a while it made him someone? That he liked the meetings with Fenton, that out of nothing, out of nowhere, he found an importance that he savoured […]" (4). The perfectly natural need of a child to receive attention and feel special is thus portrayed as something that, in the environment of the Northern Ireland conflict, can lead to grave consequences.

Both the ambiguity of Connor's innocence and the depiction of his relationship to Fenton are indeed confirmed by the narration of the latter. Thus Connor only becomes the focus of the RUC because of his persistent small time offences (cf. 139) and Fenton does establish an almost caring relationship, knowing that Connor provides no valuable information but that he enjoys the meetings (cf. 148). Finally, Connor gets desperate when Fenton wants to terminate the cooperation and promises to supply him with better information (cf. 151). Again, there is ambiguity in Connor's character as it remains unclear what information he did provide in the end. In Fenton's narration, the focalization briefly shifts to his colleague in the decisive scene so that the reader has no access to what is being said between Fenton and Connor (cf. 157) and Fenton's statement in the Commission hearing that no meaningful information was ever provided by Connor (cf. 332) cannot be trusted, given the corruption of the whole process (cf. Chapter 3.2.2). The text thus denies the reader access to the information at the heart of the central plot and in this way again destabilises any notions of truth and moves the focus instead to the structures of Northern Irish society during the conflict that allow for a child to become involved in these grave matters.

While the text thus emphasises the need to move beyond the conflict and its set identities, through the reference to children who have lost their lives in the conflict it does simultaneously take the position that this is impossible by means of recurring to the past directly. Focalized through the character of Stanfield, we get the following assessment of the overall situation:

> The portraits of children are the most disturbing as they force the viewer to try and project how they now would look and in the imagination construct the life they never knew. But there is no elegy played out in the increasingly elaborate rituals that grief has created, only a fractious, bitter stirring of the water to which people rush with earnest hope of healing. He has presided over some truth but little reconciliation and […] what the plaintiffs want is truth and the justice that they feel they've been denied. (246)

While this passage does not explicitly refer to Connor's case, it is implicitly evoked through the reference to the portraits of children that lost their life in the Troubles. These deaths are given particular importance and they are not mourned with an elegiac 'letting go', but instead the habitual reaction is to turn to the offender, who in the specific Northern Irish situation is easy to be found, but cannot be brought to justice. Thus healing cannot be achieved, as is metaphorically indicated in the passage through the mention of the "stirring of the water" - a clear reference to the

Bible passage preceding the novel (cf. Chapter 3.2.1). This, although people sincerely wish for closure, remains "fractious" and "bitter" as people linger within their defined identities. Similarly, and also referring to the Bible quote, Stanfield at the end of the novel notes "sometimes the angel troubling the water might only darken the swirling pool of the past" (368-9), thereby denoting that communal healing cannot be achieved by seeking it in the past. The text thus constructs any attempts at reconciliation by means of recurring to the past as futile as the set identity positions cannot be overcome in this way. Instead, the text constructs children as providing these means, given that the greatest unity of the diverging voices with their very different positions is provided by their preoccupation with the relationship to their children.

In Gilroy's case, it is his daughter that he struggles with. The tension here arises from the fact that she is soon to be married to an Englishman, a plot construction that enables the strained Northern Irish - English relations to be played out. Gilroy sees his English son-in-law and his friends and family as 'the Other', who are in turn intimated by the Minister for Children and Culture with the IRA past (cf. 90-1, 100-1) and he is worried about his grandchild having and English accent (cf. 113). Similarly, the best man's speech delivered in an English accent makes him "wince" (119) and in return, he begins his speech in Irish (cf. 119). This conflict is resolved in this same speech, in which Gilroy, accepting his daughter's decision, states that Northern Ireland is "building a new future for our children and perhaps this marriage which spans two nations is a symbol of this new understanding" (122). Similarly, the quote from a Larkin poem he refers to in his speech reads "'all the power that being changed can give'" (123) which again refers to a resolution of the conflict through a shift of identity positions. This change of thought and acceptance of difference is only brought about by his daughter as indeed Gilroy otherwise remains restricted by his identity position in relation to the following generation. This is evident in him frequently lamenting the "younger ones" (69), who "snigger" (69) at his constantly remaining vigilant of a possible attack (cf. 68-9), who he sees as having "no respect anymore" (84) when an IRA mural (cf. Chapter 2.1) is defaced with a graffiti and who cannot be trusted because they lack the same experience of having actively participated in the conflict (cf. 274-5). It is thus only his own child that enables him to alter his identity position.

The character of Danny/Michael Madden presents a similar construction. Making his statement in the hearing, he declares his reasons for joining the IRA when he was

18. We find some interesting parallels to Connor's motivations for working with the RUC when Michael explains that after his home had been burnt out by Loyalists, he joined the Provisional IRA: "…I thought it made me into somebody, I suppose it made me feel big" (337). Precisely echoing Connor's words, this not only again underlines the corrupting forces the conflict has on young people, it also emphasises the instability and meaninglessness of the two opposed identities as both boys joined one of the opposed 'camps' for the exact same reason. Moreover, relating to his own, yet unborn child is what makes Michael shift his identity position. Having had to leave his future with his pregnant girlfriend behind in the US to come back to testify before the Commission, he sees this loss as the way he has to repent for his involvement in Connor's death (cf. 314). Both the thought of how the IRA has affected his life ("He's angry that they used him and he's angry that they're still using him now" [336]) and the thought of his now lost future with his girlfriend (cf. 336) cause Michael to deviate from his prepared statement, given to him by the IRA, and to tell the 'truth' instead (cf. 337). It is thus again the concept of children - his own child as well as his and Connor's lost childhood - that are constructed as having the power to overcome the set identity boundaries.

Simultaneously, the notion of 'truth' again becomes destabilised as Michael's statement before the Commission that Gilroy had killed Connor (cf. 344) is contradicted by Gilroy's own reflections on the incident - not uttered to anyone - in which another IRA member had shot Connor (cf. 342-3). Again, none of the two characters' opposing statements is given more reliability by the text than the other and it thus remains unclear who is to blame for Connor's death. With this destabilisation of the notion of any 'truth' being readily available, the text once more underlines its position of the past offering no means for overcoming the present conflict. Instead, it constructs the future, and with this children, as the only hope for change.

This is also evident in the character of Fenton and his relationship to children. He is haunted by the image of Connor's face (cf. 136, 176) and his frequent charity trips to a Romanian orphanage represent his way of repenting his involvement in Connor's death (cf. 136, 311). The fact that Fenton and his wife have no children of their own is recurrently portrayed as problematic for their relationship (cf. 127, 280, 285), with his job and his related position within the conflict being given as the reason for this (cf. 285-6). In this way, the conflict becomes constructed as overpowering the characters' own life choices and simultaneously children are

explicitly ascribed the power to move beyond the conflict and its identities by the character of Fenton. Reflecting on his past work life, he is beset with flashbacks that "deaden any vision of the future" (127) and "he blames the absence of children in his marriage and believes that it diminishes his ability to move on" (127).

Finally, the concept of children is also of importance for the character of Stanfield. It is his character that is marked by cynicism about the Northern Ireland conflict and any reconciliation the most (cf. Chapter 3.2.2) and throughout the novel, he remains emotionally distanced. The only thing that moves him is the relationship to his pregnant daughter, who lives in Belfast and has severed all contact with him (cf. 26). The tension in their relationship is eventually resolved by Stanfield's acceptance of her different life choices (cf. 56-7, 366) and when he is allowed to hold his grandson "he's compelled to sit down on the edge of the bed by the sudden power of it" [367]). Once again, children are thus explicitly given the power to enable an resolution of conflicts.

It has been demonstrated that David Park's *The Truth Commissioner* takes the position that no stabilised post-conflict and post-devolutionary identity is possible in present Northern Ireland. All of the different voices present in the novel are assigned distinct political positions within the conflict and all of them remain restricted by these positions. The text constructs no position as more valid than the other and truth - the knowing about responsibilities for actions in the past - as a prerequisite for reconciliation. At the same time, it destabilises this truth as non-existent and corrupted by personal guilt and personal interests, arising from the distinct positions, and thus renders it impossible to get to.

Instead, the greatest unity of the diverging voices is constructed as being found in the concept of children, which forms the *leitmotif* of the novel. On the one hand, this is symbolised through Connor, whose case defines the plot and who structurally holds the different voices together, on the other hand, this is evident in all of the characters coming to terms with the relationship with their own children. It is these relationships that hold the greatest influence and power in that only they are able to make individuals change their positions. All of the parent-children relationships portrayed are marked with a tension and with the theme of hybridity as a going beyond the set identities of the conflict that unifies all the children's positions. Gilroy's daughter marries an Englishman and moves to London, Stanford's English daughter has chosen to raise her family in Belfast, Madden's girlfriend is Latin-American and their child will be raised in the US and Fenton's 'surrogate' children

are Romanian orphans. The parent's acceptance of the child's difference resolves the tensions and the text thus constructs children and the next generation and its potential for hybrid identities as the only source of altering the identity positions of the conflict through an acceptance of difference. Indeed, as Park notes himself, he has "come to realise [...] that communal healing is not to be found in truth commissions or in institutions, but is simply to be found in the renewed rhythms of life. Young people falling in love, children being born" (Sansom n.p.).

While the novel can be seen in the tradition of contemporary Northern Irish literature in light of its reference to the question of how to overcome and deal with the traumatic past (the "elegiac desires" Brannigan ascribes to Northern Irish culture [cf. Chapter 2.4.3]), it simultaneously also emphasises the futility of this and postpones the construction of any renewed Northern Irish identities to the next generation and thus into the unforeseeable future. The novel thus reflects the enduring division of Northern Irish identities (cf. Chapter 2.1) as well as the role that Northern Irish adolescents ascribe themselves in the peace process. As a recent study has found, young people in Northern Ireland do indeed see themselves "both as part of the solution and part of the problem" (Magill and Hamber 521) with reconciliation surely being desired, but the conflict still being perceived as ongoing (cf. Magill and Hamber 521-2).

3.3 Duly Arrived in the Union - Perspectives on the State of Wales in Grahame Davies' *Everything Must Change*

Grahame Davies' 2007 novel *Everything Must Change* presents a fictional space in which the post-devolutionary Welsh identity is negotiated. In this, it focuses heavily on the two main markers of the Welsh national identity, namely the Welsh language and the housing/incomer debate (cf. Chapters 2.1 and 2.2.1), and has therefore been chosen as a primary text. The novel interweaves the stories of the fictional Welsh language campaigner Meinwen with that of the 20th century French philosopher and political activist Simone Weil (cf. McLellan n.p.). It thus centres around questions of political and cultural beliefs and activism and this is in Meinwen's case heavily bound up with the present situation of the Welsh national identity.

Davies also uses a polyphonic narration, featuring a wide range of voices to mediate the manifold perspectives on the issues raised in the novel, and so both the plot and the formal level feature sufficient similarities to the Scottish and Northern

Irish novel in order for them to be compared. The present chapter will therefore use a similar structure to that of the previous chapters: it will also first analyse the overall narrative structure and form before going on to examine those voices that are given quantitative and thematic priority by the text in more detail. It will then again look at what lets these different voices and the novel develop into a unified whole.

The chapter will argue that the novel can be seen as a 'Bildungsroman' or novel of development, focused on the personal development and change in the protagonist's Welsh national identity. With Meinwen undergoing a process of change in which she becomes less uncompromising and arrives at a similar identity position to that of the other voices, marked by an acceptance of the Union, the novel constructs the post-devolutionary Welsh identity in stable coexistence with the British one, emphasising diversity and flexibility.

3.3.1 Polyphony in *Everything Must Change*

Similar to the Scotland and Northern Ireland novels, Davies' novel also features an epigraph, in this case a short quote from Simone Weil's *Gravity and Grace* (cf. Weil 160) that reads 'We want everything which has a value to be eternal'. Given that this immediately follows the title of *Everything Must Change*, the text is, from the beginning, negotiating between the conflicting priorities of change and eternity. This tension between the desire to provide things that are ascribed with an integral value with perpetuity and accepting change in relation to these things is indeed the main theme of the novel; and in Meinwen's case it is the Welsh culture and language that have this value.

The text features a polyphonic narration with shifting focalization, however, it provides us with many more voices than the other two novels do. First, the narration shifts back and forth between two different settings: the world of Simone Weil, which can broadly be described as inter-war Europe, and Meinwen's which is post-devolutionary Wales. All in all, the novel features 26 voices in total, 15 in Simone's setting and eleven Welsh voices, which are always 'announced' by a heading setting out whose perspective is given and the belonging to each of the two settings is further emphasised by a change in the heading's font. While there is no distinct pattern to the order in which the different voices appear, there is a marked difference in quantitative terms as it is indeed Meinwen's voice that is featured the most. This quantitative formal difference gives the character of Meinwen superiority over all other ones; which is indeed also found in terms of the plot as it is her character that is

constructed amidst the tension of change versus uncompromisingness and eternity set out by the epigraph.

While we are thus not presented with a narrative form that creates a unity for the novel as a whole, as was the case with the previous novels, we instead find a formal prominence of one character. Given the fact that it is also this character that undergoes a distinct development - precisely within the above-described area of tension - the novel can be seen as a Bildungsroman[14]. The Bildungsroman can be defined as a novel in which the personal development of the protagonist "through a troubled quest for identity" ("Bildungsroman", *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* n.p.) is depicted and in Meinwen's case this personal development of identity is heavily bound up with her Welsh national identity. In this sense, the depiction of the character of Meinwen and her development can be termed as presenting a national allegory (cf. Chapter 2.3), as is indeed frequently the case with the genre of the Bildungsroman where "the personal history can be read as an allegory of a particular trajectory within a national history" ("Bildungsroman", *Dictionary of Critical Theory* n.p.). It is this construction that provides the novel as a whole with unity as it lets Meinwen, through her development, arrive at an identity position in unison with the other Welsh voices as the analysis in the following chapters will show.

3.3.2 Eternity and Change, Compromise and Contest

The present chapter will analyse the different Welsh voices and their stances on the status quo of the Welsh nation, and more specifically the Welsh language and the housing debate which are constructed as the core symbols of national identity as well as core matters of argument in the novel.

In her position as a Welsh language activist, it is the character of Meinwen that holds the most extreme position with regarding Welsh national identity and the Welsh language. Early on in the novel, Meinwen is explicitly characterised through another voice as a selfless, longstanding political activist who has devoted her life to campaigning for a range of good causes with her main focus being advocating the

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[14] The German term 'Bildungsroman' has been translated as development novel (cf. "Bildungsroman", *Dictionary of Critical Theory* n.p.), formation novel (cf. "Bildungsroman", *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* n.p.) or coming-of-age novel. However, as none of these translations are wholly appropriate, the present thesis will adhere to the German term.

Welsh language (cf. 10).[15] In relation to this, we are presented with the first reference to the novel's title as well as to the tension area between change and eternity (cf. Chapter 3.3.1) when Meinwen reflects on a slogan of the Welsh language activist movement: "'If Welsh is to live, everything must change!' Everything. Just everything, that's all." (33). Here, it is the Welsh language that is ascribed the desired value of perpetuity, which, if it is to be achieved, requires a change of "everything" else. This very sweeping and uncompromising attitude is what defines the character of Meinwen and it permeates all her positions.

For Meinwen, the issue of the survival of the Welsh language and culture is not sufficiently safeguarded by the Welsh Language Acts, whose success she does acknowledge (cf. 34 and Chapter 2.2.1). Rather, the steady influx of English incomers (cf. Chapter 2.2.1) is perceived as a "colonisation" (34) which is evident not in political but in cultural terms with the renaming of properties constructed as the main means of this colonisation: "too many [of the incomers] chose to pretend the indigenous culture didn't exist, and wasted no time in changing the ancient names of their newly-acquired farms and smallholdings to suit their English country garden dreams" (34). As in the Scotland and the Northern Ireland novel, we are then clearly presented with a (post)colonial vision of Wales (cf. Chapter 2.3) in which the English are perceived as cultural oppressors and here the Welsh language is once more, in form of the "ancient names", ascribed an eternal value.

Meinwen's voice frequently invokes this sense of a colonised Wales in which market mechanisms give the more prosperous English an advantage in the housing market and the majority of the English incomers completely disregards the (historic) value of the Welsh language and culture (cf. 84, 96, 119, 134, 154, 163, 194-5, 214, 236). In this way, the character of Meinwen constructs the Welsh as 'the Other' to England and her Welsh national identity in opposition to England, with the "incomers as representatives of English domination" (125), as "white settlers" (195) who wish to "transform[… Wales] into a new England" (125) and the national activist lifestyle as "radical alternative to Britishness" (96). Also frequent are references to the 'eternity' and perpetuity of the Welsh language and culture, for example when Meinwen points out that the Welsh language is much older than the English one (cf. 154), when it is stated that "[a]ll her life, Meinwen had hated the idea of anything coming to an end" (200) and when she heightens this sense of

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[15] All page references in this chapter refer to *Everything Must Change*, unless otherwise indicated. All emphases are maintained.

eternity to Wales as a whole and combines it with the opposition to England, reflecting on "the eternal Welsh experience: sheltering from external threat, cultivating an inner warmth against a coldly hostile world" (93). The conflicting priorities of change and eternity are thus constructed as featuring the Welsh language and culture on the 'eternity end' and the threat to it in the form of the English incomers on the 'change end'.

This notion of the eternity and the threatening change of the Welsh language and culture is explicitly interwoven with Meinwen's own identity:

> Welsh-speaking communities […] which had created her, loved her, given her a sense of belonging, and without which her life would lose all meaning. The words of her earliest memories […] which bound all those things and more together in one living, intimate web of belonging […]. The culture which had taken thousands of years to create looked set to be eradicated in less than a decade. (37)

It is here that her personal identity - her own upbringing and origin - become intricately bound up with her national and cultural Welsh identity, her sense of belonging. Moreover, the Welsh culture is again ascribed the value of the ancient, thus justifying her position of feeling threatened by change. This already very personal experience of threat becomes even more heightened when the character is portrayed as experiencing the English language as menacing *within* her body: "Not even her mind was safe. English was pushing into it, colonising it cell by cell, possessing its neural pathways, Saxonising its synapses, supplanting, renaming, uprooting" (237). In this way - and again echoing notions of the postcolonial in which the English language domination is seen as inherently political (as also present in the Scottish context [cf. Chapter 2.4.1 and 3.1.2]) -, the cultural is made very personal and the threatening loss of identity is epitomised, causing the reader to sympathise with the character of Meinwen.

It becomes clear that Meinwen's construction of national identity is very much exclusively focused on the Welsh culture as opposed to Welsh politics. While she does acknowledge devolution and the Welsh Assembly as a success (cf. 133-4), she simultaneously dismisses it as insufficient for promoting Welsh culture given that the "Welsh government was answerable to an electorate of whom only a fifth spoke Welsh and of whom even a smaller proportion were nationalists" (134). This again emphasises the construction of the Welsh national identity as purely cultural. Additionally, it hints at Meinwen's minority position within Wales itself and it is

here that the tension and disunity between the different voices is constructed in relation to the tension area of eternity vs. change.

As has been demonstrated above, the character of Meinwen is positioned at the 'eternity end' of this spectrum, feeling threatened by and thus fighting against any change in relation to the Welsh language and culture. All other characters, however, are much more open to this change. This is first of all evident in Meinwen's own narration, for example, when she notes that devolution has brought about a shift towards acceptance of the status quo of Wales among her fellow activists that she, however, fervently rejects (cf. 111) as well as when she acknowledges that "[p]raise for standards achieved was not in her repertoire of responses" (175). The character construction that emerges in the course of the novel contrasts Meinwen's frequent statements of this dissatisfaction and radicalism (cf. 111, 134, 154, 175) starkly with the other Welsh voices. These are marked by their acceptance of change, albeit to different extents.

The character of Jonathan Rees, a TV presenter hosting talk shows that feature Meinwen as a speaker, is constructed in an unbiased position to provide the reader with an overall assessment of the Welsh situation. He does acknowledge Meinwen's work as having resulted in the official bilingualism which he evaluates positively and notes that the Welsh schools - the most important means for fostering the Welsh language - are accepted by the majority of the Welsh population (cf. 20-1). The character constructed in the severest opposition to Meinwen is that of the journalist John Sayle, who strongly rejects any Welsh language activism. This character highlights a wholly different national identity construction that and that refers to the internal regional differences of Wales (cf. Chapter 2.2.1). Having been raised in South Wales, Sayle sees the "communities where he'd grown up, with their belonging, their socialism, their shared wit" as "the real Wales" (45) where the Welsh language has no value at all (cf. 45). While the text presents us with an alternative national identity construction through this character, it simultaneously destabilises it given that the character of Sayle is portrayed negatively (cf. 20-1) and eventually suffers a classic downfall (cf. 278-80).

Another Welsh voice, the character of the Tory politician Sir Anthony, also represents one of Meinwen's opponents in public life whom she frequently encounters in debates. While he does criticise her political stance, for example through revealing her version of Welsh history as nationalist and simplistic (cf. 178), he also shows sympathy for Meinwen and explains his career choice with the same

urge to make a difference that drives Meinwen (cf. 177). It is through this character that a parallel between two opposed characters is established with the common denominator being a desire to alter a situation. The means for this, however, are very different: politics is contrasted with radical activism, with the former being marked by the more flexible approach that the latter lacks.

This notion of change is also present in other Welsh voices and it is here that Meinwen's uncompromisingness and inflexibility become constructed as highly problematic. Similarly to Sir Anthony, the Welsh politician Haydn Davies also shows some sympathy for Meinwen's position in that they "shared many ideals" (127). Most notably, this character is constructed as having begun his career as a campaigner in the miner's strike who had then "traded the megaphone for the manifesto, deciding that he could have more influence inside the system than shouting from the margins" (127-8). Not only is this a direct parallel to the character of Sir Anthony, but also change and flexibility on the personal level are here portrayed as enabling wider change. Moreover, Haydn is at first sympathetic to Meinwen's proposal of a Property Act that should safeguard the provision of housing to Welsh people (cf. 128-9), however, Meinwen's threat to "take direct action again" (129) makes Davies change his mind about any potential support (cf. 130-1). Meinwen's inability to compromise and her inflexibility are thus constructed as ultimately preventing her from reaching her goals.

In a similar way, the character of Arianrhod is constructed as a former activist who is now successful in the Welsh media and has thus undergone a profound change. When she is approached by Meinwen to help promote a possible Property Act, she feels some embarrassment reflecting on statements she made in her activist time (cf. 145) and notes that "[n]ow she knew her limitations and played to her strengths" (145). Analogously, she describes the nationalist movement as simplistic and stuck in a rut, without acknowledging the change that has taken place (cf. 146). Indeed, in the setting of a restaurant where "[o]n almost every table, the conversations were in Welsh" (147), she directly addresses Meinwen with "'The fight's over' […] 'Haven't you noticed? We've won'" (147), thereby highlighting the change that has already been achieved but that Meinwen does not acknowledge as sufficient.

It has been demonstrated that the protagonist Meinwen holds the most extreme identity position in the novel. Her national identity is constructed as a purely cultural one, focused on the Welsh language and culture, which she ascribes the value of

eternity. This she sees threatened by the change brought about by non-Welsh speaking, English incomers. The character of Meinwen is marked by her inability to compromise and adapt this identity position which marks her out from all the other voices who are open to change. In this way, the text creates a tension between perpetuity and change, it being the main source of social tension between the characters. This tension is eventually resolved through Meinwen's own personal development in the course of the novel, which lets her arrive at an identity position in unison with the other voices. This provides the novel with unity and the next chapter will examine how this process of Meinwen's development and change is constructed in the text.

3.3.3 Meinwen's Development towards Accepting Change

As has been elaborated in Chapter 3.3.1, Meinwen's personal development is central to the novel and provides it with the classification of a Bildungsroman. It is in the present chapter, examining Meinwen's development from her position of total inflexibility to the allowing for change and compromise, that the function of interweaving Meinwen's story with that of Simone Weil will become apparent.

The figure of Simone Weil is constructed as a parallel character to that of Meinwen, in particular in terms of their inability to compromise and their radicalism. Thus, both are portrayed as refusing to eat food when they were children. While Simone expresses her solidarity with the soldiers fighting in WWII in this way (cf. 16), Meinwen loses her appetite already as a child - when she is confronted with gravestones that are covered in moss in her local graveyard and her parents, dismissing her already then present urge for perpetuity, refuse to let her clean them (cf. 93-5). The motif of personal sacrifice in the form of a refusal of food is indeed frequently used as a means to draw parallels between the characters of Simone (cf. 189) and Meinwen (cf. 51, 73, 109, 201). Moreover, Meinwen also explicitly sacrifices a possible relationship for her cause (cf. 50). It is in these terms of radicalism and uncompromisingness that Simone functions as a role model for Meinwen as the following passage shows:

> Meinwen found that Simone meant more and more to her as time went on, […]. […] She had spent her life unswervingly in the effort to change the world, the patron saint of every radical activist. It was her example that always spurred Meinwen on to work harder, to sacrifice more. (37).

Accordingly, the figure of Simone is constructed as providing Meinwen with strength when she is faced with difficult situations (cf. 181, 196).

In the course of the novel, the figure of Simone and her political actions do, however, become more and more satirised. When Simone begins to work in a factory to show her solidarity with the working class, her misconceptions about the workers become apparent. Using the French intimate 'tu' form and quoting Dante, as she believes they are "all workers" (103) and "many workers concealed rich intellectual lives beneath their tough exteriors" (103-4), Simone is met with incomprehension by her fellow workers (cf. 103-4). Similarly, Simone is laughed at when she volunteers to help with the hay harvest in rural France and questions the workers on their wages and a union (cf. 198-9). Furthermore, she embarrasses the family she is staying with there with questions about the possible forces of mechanisation and political discourse (cf. 207-8), leading them to ask their landlord to remove her (cf. 210), who then reflects: "Simone seemed not to realise that her generous egalitarianism wasn't always appropriate" (211). In this way, the character of Simone and her radicalism are caricatured as being unaware of other realities.

It is at this point that the text begins to let the parallel developments of the two characters Simone and Meinwen diverge. In the setting of a protest rally, Meinwen's former mentor Professor Mallwyd Price, another character that she used to see as a role model, is heavily satirised (cf. 212-4) and Meinwen is embarrassed by his public speech (cf. 213). Moreover, at this protest, Meinwen meets an American shaman with whom she has a conversation about spirituality and it is to him that she for the first time confesses doubts about her radicalism (cf. 220). His answer to this presents another reference to the novel's title ("'Everything must change,' he said. 'That's the only way new life can come.'" [222]) that Meinwen does not understand (cf. 223) and the significance of which does not become clear until later on in the novel. The text constructs Simone's search for spirituality in parallel to this, through interweaving the passages of Meinwen's encounter with Simone's discussions about religion with church representatives (cf. 211-225). In this, Simone, while expressing her belonging to the Christian belief, wants to remain outside the church as an organisation (cf. 224, 228); stating "'I don't want to live my life among people who say "we"; I don't want to be part of an "us", I don't want to be "at home" in any human setting, of any kind'" (229). Thus, while Meinwen is constructed as showing irresolution, Simone is simultaneously constructed as clearly remaining in her

inability to compromise and radicalism by explicitly choosing an ex-societal realm to which to belong.

This first contrast between Meinwen and Simone is built upon in the course of the novel, with the two characters beginning to slowly develop in opposite directions. A first instance of this is presented when Meinwen's opponent Sir Anthony approaches her before a TV debate, acknowledging that he has read her articles on Simone Weil in a Welsh-language nationalist magazine (cf. 226). The opposed characters now actually have some common ground, which Meinwen, however, distrusts (cf. 227). In the actual TV debate, Meinwen speaks about Simone's theories, stating that Simone's Jewish culture-shame can be paralleled to the Welsh situation and that "she's superb on the question of rootedness - the need to belong" (231). Instead of a full embrace of Simone's personality and theoretical stances, Meinwen thus begins to limit herself to certain aspects of Simone's work.

Nevertheless, Meinwen still remains confined by her radicalism. As a form of protest against the English incomers, she smashes estate agents' windows in her town (cf. 241) and is imprisoned as a consequence. The text again creates a performance of simultaneousness through interweaving Simone's story, who returns from her exile to WWII London and seeks work with the Provisional French Government (cf. 238). This plot construction creates another stark parallel between the two characters, however, now with a decisive turnaround in Meinwen's character. This is evident when Meinwen, in prison, is confronted with a letter to her stating "Wales was more resilient than she thought" (246) but remains in her position of non-compromise that "such a hope was not only unrealistic but irresponsible" (246). While Meinwen is in prison, Simone similarly sets her room into a "cell-like quality that alone felt appropriate to [her]" (249) and also remains wholly radical and uncompromising. Most conspicuously, she does so in relation to her French national identity when she writes: "'So it is self-evident that one owes an obligation to one's nation. […] it does not require us to give everything always. But it does require us to give everything sometimes'" (250). In accordance with this statement and both women's history of refusing to eat as a form of self-sacrifice and self-destruction, both women then begin to increasingly reject any food (cf. 253). Simone persists in her radicalism and, dying from tuberculosis, still refuses to take any food (cf. 259-60). Her eventual death is again interwoven with the theme of eternity (cf. 263) and it is here that the decisive reversal in Meinwen's development takes place.

After having decided to go on a hunger strike and thus to die in order to achieve her goal of a Welsh Property Act, explicitly citing Simone in her decision-making process (cf. 255), Meinwen realises that Simone and her values have become "worthless" (265) to her and has an almost afflatus-like experience in relation to her meeting with the American shaman:

> 'Everything must change,' he had said.
>
> Everything must change.
>
> The realisation hit Meinwen like a blow. Only now […] did she understand what the phrase had meant.
>
> It didn't mean she should accept her personal destruction fatalistically; neither did it mean the Movement's belief that circumstances could be forced to fit their ideology […]. No, it meant recognising that mutability was inevitable; it meant riding the waves of transformation, working with the forces of change […]. Immutability could only result in death. Being flexible, adapting oneself, that was how to survive. (265-6)

This 'conversion experience' is explicitly set within the dichotomy between eternity vs. change. The text sets Simone's death in the context of eternity and constructs Meinwen's development as one of change and a letting go of Simone and her radicalism as a role model, based on the realisation that change holds more value. The figure of Simone thus functions to invoke the reader's sympathy towards Meinwen as Simone's radicalism and uncompromisingness are satirised, portrayed as making her unaware of other realities and she eventually dies as a consequence. Opposed to that, Meinwen realises this, sees Simone no longer as a "mirror-image of her own self" that she wants to "emulate" (282) and changes herself.

The text thus symbolically resolves the tension between the characters through constructing the character of Meinwen as undergoing a fundamental development - from the radical valuing of perpetuity towards the acceptance of flexibility and change. This has her arrive at an identity position in harmony with the other characters (cf. Chapter 3.2.2). Given the intricate involvement of national identity and sustaining its symbols in this process, the character of Meinwen and her development can be read as a national allegory.

This is further confirmed by the text as the Property Act the Movement had fought for is introduced *after* Meinwen has undergone her 'conversion' (cf. 270-1). The text thus symbolically rewards her reversal towards an acceptance of change as leading to the achievement of her goals. Simultaneously, it heightens this to the level of the nation, given that this reward is a political, nationwide law that directly affects

the central identity issue of housing and English incomers and unites all the diverging voices in a common ground of compromise (cf. 271).

The unifying of the diverging voices through compromise and flexibility is further underlined by previously opposed characters now agreeing on adaptable means ("promotion than […] protest"; "[c]harm not challenge" [275] "politics" [276]) to achieve their common aim of supporting the Welsh language and culture (cf. 274). Similarly, Meinwen's changed personality is portrayed allegorically to the British state and Empire when she is offered "'Jamaican ginger cake. Highland oatcake biscuits. Fruit Shrewsbury'" (272). After rejecting the Shrewsbury as "English, the place where Dafydd ap Gruffydd had been executed for rebellion in 1283" (272) at first, she eventually eats it. This not only shows her change in personality in that she has overcome her radical refusal of food, but also emphasises the acceptance that Wales and Welsh identity are part of the British state. The text thus constructs the Welsh language and culture as integral parts of the Welsh identity, but highlights that these are sufficiently strong and safeguarded by the devolved political institutions in place so that any opposition to the Union is no longer necessary.

It has been demonstrated that Davies' *Everything Must Change* can be seen as a 'Bildungsroman', depicting the personal development of Meinwen, whose Welsh national identity is constructed exclusively around the Welsh language and culture. Meinwen's development from rigidity to compromise presents a national allegory and leads to the unity of all the Welsh voices in an acceptance of the Welsh language's status quo as well as a Welsh acceptance of the Union. This reflects the Welsh identity situation found in sociological studies which is marked by a greater tendency to accept Britishness than those in the other Celtic countries (cf. Chapter 2.1). The novel thus constructs Welsh identity as a stable part of the British one, emphasising diversity and flexibility. Indeed, as Davies has stated with reference to Welsh-English bilingualism, it "improves one's performance in all areas. Perhaps the same might be true of a country whose two languages live in a constant creative tension" (G. Davies "Speaking With Two Tongues: The Welsh Book Awards" n.p.). His novel suggests that this is also true for Welsh national identity with the Union presenting such a "creative tension" from which both England and Wales benefit.

4. Conclusion: Divisions and Unities in the Kingdom

This thesis set out to examine representations of national identities in post-devolutionary literatures from the Celtic countries, aiming to answer the specific questions of whether devolution has achieved a peaceful coexistence between the four nations within the Union, with the existence of the Union no longer being in question and national identities in the Celtic countries no longer being constructed in opposition to Britain/England.

After having established the concept of national identity as a powerful, all-pervasive discourse that heavily influences the individual from early on and whose main function is to provide the complex and diverse national collective with a sense of meaning and thus imagined unity, the thesis has shown that the histories of the Celtic countries and their relationship to England have always been marked by unequal power relations which are the basis for allowing a postcolonial view of the Celtic countries and their literatures. The evidence for the political relevance of literature and a survey of the literary traditions in the Celtic countries has shown that literature does offer a fictional space for political contestation and that it has fulfilled this function in the Celtic countries with their literatures often reflecting their political status and the situation of their national identities.

The analysis of the selected texts from the post-devolutionary period has demonstrated that this continues to be the case as each of the selected texts presents conflicts corresponding to its specific national historical and cultural situation and then creates a symbolic solution in the form of offering a unifying resolution through a specific concept. Given that the essence of national identity is exactly this provision of unity, the texts thus position themselves as fictional spaces that offer possible national identity constructions. The analysis has demonstrated that post-devolutionary identities differ in the three Celtic nations and in each case tie in with and reflect the historical background, the identity situation evidenced by sociological studies and the literary tradition of the respective nation.

In the case of Scotland, the theme of the imaginary, non-existent Scotland as the site for the national identity construction is the common thread running through the national historical mythologies, the literary tradition of the Scottish Renaissance and is again to be found in *And the Land Lay Still*. Indeed, the analysis has shown that the text constructs collective identities within the social realm as relative, fragmented and unstable. Instead it offers an escape from civilization into nature and landscape as a solution for a meaningful identity construction, while simultaneously displaying

an awareness of the inaccessibility of this solution. This is overcome by presenting the aesthetic sphere as a site where the unspoilt state of the land and the sense of eternity can be accessed from within the social realm to provide the collective with meaning. Devolution has then not resulted in a self-assured Scotland that sees itself as a definite part of the Union. On the contrary, the rejection of the societal realm in favour of notions of an essentially Scottish unspoilt nature and the mythical past is still needed to meaningfully define the collective national identity. A similar persistence of identity patterns has been demonstrated with the analysis of the Northern Irish text. Here, a stabilised post-conflict and post-devolutionary identity is also withheld with the notion of any truth and reconciliation being found through revisiting the past inherently destabilised. Instead, the text constructs the future and children, especially the hybridity of their relationships, as the only potential source for a possible single peaceful Northern Irish identity. However, the case is very different for Wales where the analysis has demonstrated that the text constructs the Welsh post-devolutionary identity as a stable part of the overarching British supranational identity and the relation to Britain/England as marked by an acceptance and integration.

While the Union, then, seems no longer in question in Wales, Northern Ireland remains in its divided 'checkmate'- identity position for now and Scotland still seems to be on its search for a coherent collective identity basis, which is unlikely to result in an accepted and peaceful Union.

Through the remarkable connection of the results of the analysis with the historical background and the sociological studies, this thesis has demonstrated the potent resource that literature presents for examining questions pertaining to the wider cultural and political realm. The fundamental question that underlies the present work is whether national identity does matter. Bechhofer and McCrone, on the basis of their sociological work on the post-devolutionary Scottish national identity, have answered: "we can unequivocally say that it does" ("Politics of Identity" 202). They assert that it functions as a "key descriptor" (202) that "may stand for perceived unequal relationships of power" (203). Through its analysis of national identities in literature, this thesis has shown that despite devolution, precisely these perceptions of unequal power relations between the constituent parts of the United Kingdom persist for Scotland, while Northern Ireland remains caught in its post-conflict power struggle. It is only in Wales that the national identity is no longer constructed in opposition to Britain/England, rather the Union has come to be

accepted there. A new overall picture of the division and unities within the UK thus emerges where one can no longer speak of a unity among the Celtic countries in opposition to Britain/England. Instead, Wales and Britain/England have to be seen as now fully integrated and a division persists between this entity and Scotland and Northern Ireland - for whom the shape and form of their future within the Union remains to be considerably uncertain.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Epigraph of *And the Land Lay Still*

The Summons

The year was ending, and the land lay still.
Despite our countdown, we were loath to go,
kept padding along the ridge, the broad glow
of the city beneath us, and the hill
swirling with a little mist. Stars were right,
plans, power; only now this unforeseen
reluctance, like a slate we could not clean
of characters, yet could not read, or write
our answers on, or smash, or take with us.
Not a hedgehog stirred. We sighed, climbed in, locked.
If it was love we felt, would it not keep,
and travel where we travelled? Without fuss
we lifted off, but as we checked and talked
a far horn grew to break that people's sleep.

— Edwin Morgan (from *Sonnets from Scotland*)

Appendix B: Epigraph of *The Truth Commissioner*

Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool,
which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda having
five porches.

In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of
blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the
water.

For an angel went down at a certain season into the
pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after
the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of
whatsoever disease he had.

St John 5, 2-4