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Melancholia and Conviviality in Modern Literary Scots: Sanghas, Sengas and Shairs

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This paper considers the visions of Scottish identity projected in twenty-first century, post-devolution Scots literature, and seeks to read them against Paul Gilroy's *Postcolonial Melancholia* (2005) which examines the protean identities of post-imperial Britain. Gilroy looks particularly at social and artistic manifestations of racial and cultural inequality, although conceding that there is also room for a 'postcolonial conviviality' that celebrates diversity. His critique of this 'Britain' is, however, selectively constructed, making only passing reference to the constituent nations of the United Kingdom, and no space is devoted to an evaluation of post-colonial Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. As yet, no comparable analysis is forthcoming for these 'home nations', so this paper attempts to outline the ways in which Scottish—and particularly Scots—literature may provide relevant comparable cultural commentary. Focus is given here to literature written in Scots because the choice to write in Scots is strongly politically motivated and speaks immediately to the question of cultural inequality and loss. Specific attention is paid to Matthew Fitt's *But n Ben A-Go-Go* (2000), Suhayl Saadi's *Psychoraag* (2004), and Anne Donovan's *Buddha Da* (2003), which various engage with questions of personal and national identity as their main characters take part in their personal journeys.

> Sometimes I wonder if I belong to a country of the imagination. Outside
> it, I'm expected to explain, dismantle stereotypes, or justify my claim to
> being Scottish. [. . .] These folk make me explain my species of Scottishness.
> A Hebridean, Gaelic-speaking mother and Lowland, Scots-speaking father,
> who both spoke English. [. . .] They raised four children between two cultures,
> three languages, surrounded by a wealth of domestic, social, religious,
> cultural and political paradoxes.
>
> (Bennett 2002: 18–19)

In *Postcolonial Melancholia*, Paul Gilroy argues that 'though the critical orientation toward our relation with our racial selves is an evasive thing, often easier to feel than to express, it does have important historical precedents' (2005: 38). As Margaret Bennett's remark above demonstrates, attempting to define one's racial and cultural origins may quickly raise further questions about language, religion, socio-economic status and how those things came to be. Gilroy articulates a post-imperial Britain in which 'a variety of complicated subnational, regional and ethnic factors has produced an uneven pattern of national identification, of loss and of what might be called an identity-deficit' (2011: 190). Responses to this situation are observable in society and in the arts, and although Gilroy's critiques are often scathing, he also recognises 'spontaneous, convivial culture' through which Britain has been able to 'discover a new value in its ability to live with alterity without becoming anxious, fearful or violent' (Gilroy 2005: xv). Interestingly, however, Gilroy does not look specifically at Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, even though he often comments on political and cultural experiences that affected them differently. His discussions of 'Thatcher's long and damaging political experiment' (2005: 95), do not include (for example) Scotland's role as guinea-pig for the Poll Tax, the loss of the mining industry in Wales, or the Conservatives' inability to enter into talks with Sinn Féin in Northern Ireland under her premiership. Gilroy's resulting 'Britain' therefore leaves out comparable stories of postcolonial melancholia or conviviality in all of the country's constituent nations. There is as yet no comparable analysis for Scotland,

although it is worth noting that Carole Jones has used Judith Butler's conceptualisation of 'melancholia as a social issue' to read James Kelman's work as 'political critique' (2015: 109–110), focusing on melancholic aspects of Kelman's protagonists as symptomatic of 'the contemporary undermining of the autonomous masculine self' (2015: 89). What follows is a consideration of the ways in which three Scottish texts, roughly contemporary with Gilroy's critique, respond to the post-colonial and multi-cultural aspects of an increasingly globalised world (1999–). This paper seeks to demonstrate that these texts usefully complicate Gilroy's perspective, and argues that a full assessment of postcolonial melancholia and conviviality across the multinational polity of Britain has yet to be revealed.

In Matthew Fitt's science-fiction adventure *But n Ben A-Go-Go* (2000), Suhayl Saadi's *Psychoraag* (2004), and Anne Donovan's *Buddha Da* (2003), respective protagonists Paolo, Zaf, and Anne Marie and Jimmy struggle with perceptions of both personal and national loss. Paolo's personal quest takes him on a journey through a globalised dystopia where the United States is the main coloniser; Zaf examines his experiences of growing up as the son of Pakistani immigrants in modern Glasgow; and, also in modern Glasgow, Anne Marie and her father Jimmy attempt to redefine their places in the world, following Jimmy's separation from his wife Liz. These experiences involve differing degrees of melancholia, but by the end of the novels, each character can be said to have succeeded in locating a form of redemption, reconciliation or redefinition. In examining Freud's work on melancholy, Judith Butler suggests that mourning may involve 'agreeing to undergo a transformation', willing oneself to be psychologically rewritten through 'the transformative effect of loss' (2004: 21). Fitt, Saadi and Donovan's characters can be seen to embrace these transformative effects. Paolo solves the riddle of his partner's fatal disease, thus allowing her to die peacefully; Zaf works through memories of his Asian-Scots world to discover a renewed sense of hope; Anne Marie distracts herself from her parents' separation with a successful multi-cultural music project; Jimmy challenges himself through Buddhism, and also examines his perceptions of class.

Significantly, all three texts make use of the Scots language in their depictions of imagined, multi-cultural Scotlands.[1] *Buddha Da* and *Psychoraag* are written in Glaswegian Scots, while *But n Ben* uses a generalised Scots narrative with some dialectal forms for regional speakers, such as the Dundonian Java V Unit which transports Paolo to the virtual world of Vine (Fitt 2000: 27). In contemporary literary, cultural and political debates, the 'Scottish voice' of the marginalised or working-class is typically represented using (urban, often Glaswegian) Scots. Jeremy Scott argues that 'the voice of the Scottish working class constituency has been suppressed not only by the colonial ambitions of an English-dominated British project, but by the economically dominant social groups within Scotland itself' (2005: 6). By extension then, Scots, insofar as it is positioned as the language in which this voice speaks, is an ideal conduit for social commentary and critique. Hechter's investigation of *Internal Colonisation* (1999) is also pertinent here; many powerful members of the Welsh, Scottish and Irish populations responded to the construction of the United Kingdom with energetic cultural assimilation, including the wholesale adoption of the English language. In these 'home nations', those at the bottom of the socio-economic spectrum—to varying degrees—became the custodians of their local vernaculars. Scots is not currently accepted in all written and spoken contexts, and this marginalised status imbues it with a defining quality that allows it to be understood as a melancholic political voice. Additionally, Scots can be read by most English speakers due to the similarity between the two languages; it does not present as much of a 'challenge' to a global readership as, for example, Gīkũyũ, the language of notable postcolonial writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. Less dense varieties of Scots, like that found

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[1] It is worth remembering that the monolithic label for any language covers a multitude of diverse varieties including everything from slang to family idiolect to technical jargon, and that what we actually mean by any of these labels is extremely flexible. Using the term 'Standard' to specify the prestigious, most widely accepted variety of said language does not simplify matters. As Taavitsainen and Melchers characterise it, '"Standard English" [. . .] resists easy definition and seems to change identity according to the approach at hand. Yet it is used as if people knew precisely what it refers to, and some even consider its meaning self-evident, i.e. it is both the usage and the ideal of good or educated users of English' (1999: 1).

in Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993), provide texts with a distinctive Scottish sound without inundating the reader with less familiar grammar and lexis. As a result of these factors—its relative accessibility, its qualities of otherness, and its symbolic status as a voice outside of a narrowly-conceived metrovincial establishment—Scots can therefore be positioned as an ideal mechanism for interrogating modern British multiculturalism critically.

A further and important point is that the Scots language transcends class boundaries; this is perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the fact that it is officially the only language other than English which requires no translation if uttered in the Chamber of the Scottish Parliament (see further Scott, forthcoming 2018). Yet although Members of the Scottish Parliament have the freedom to—and indeed do—use Scots at times (Fitt and Robertson 2003: 263–269; Scott 2014: 109–110), this luxury is not extended to all public forums. Writing in 2007, McLeod and Smith described 'a recent notable court case [which] saw a Scots-speaker being ruled in contempt because of a failure to shift to a form of S[cottish] S[tandard] E[nglish] deemed appropriate for the occasion (he said *Aye* instead of *Yes*)' (2007: 22). Examples such as this provide disturbing, melancholic parallels between the loss of political status for the literal Scots-speaking subaltern and the literary Scots-speaking subaltern found in texts 'registering and negotiating forms of marginalisation, oppression and disempowerment' (Lehner 2011: 3). Writing or speaking Scots therefore becomes both an act of mourning and an act of defiance, and until the Scots language is normalised and accepted in all genres and contexts, it will remain the voice of a marginalised culture rejected by a 'British project' where English asserts ultimate domination. On a more fundamental level, ignoring the language results in all sorts of abnormalities of the obvious. As Fitt puts it, in Scotland, '[n]urses, teachers, labourers, lawyers, farmers, accountants, MSPs; Gail Porter, Marti Pellow, Jack Vettriano, Sir Alex Ferguson – anyone whose lugs ['ears'] are in working order knows that Scots is spoken in all walks of life' (2000: ix). Scots literature, therefore, is a natural medium for Scots speakers Fitt, Donovan and Saadi, as they explore the hopes and fears of characters conceived during the dawn of Scottish devolution, looking back on the legacies of the past while holding out hope for the promise of the new.

The Scots Literature of Donovan, Fitt and Saadi

> It has first to be stated firmly that, in objective linguistic terms, Scots is a language like any other, with its own structure, its own literature, its own set of varieties. it is also a language cognate with English. It is definitely not a debased form of English. Neither is it completely independent of English, nor, for that matter, is English entirely independent of Scots.
>
> (Sutherland 1997: 57)

To write in Scots is to write in a language which is currently in the process of reclaiming its cultural status—formerly employed uncontroversially by poets and lawmakers alike as the language of the medieval Scottish court, yet today rarely used for mainstream journalism except in pro-independence newspaper *The National* (see also Douglas 2009). Scots has some protection due to its inclusion under Part II of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, ratified by the UK and Scottish Governments in 2001, but this recognition did not lead to any immediate sea-change in policy (Millar 2006). Many Scots speakers and writers are working to achieve greater respect for the language, and few individuals have been more successful in this cause than Fitt, as author, translator and educator (see Scott 2010). His publications, such as *Tam O' Shanter's Big Night Oot: Wee Plays in Scots* (2003), capture the creative Scots voices of children more used to having to haud their wheesht ('keep silent') than use Scots in educational settings—and such books function in turn as practical teaching resources. In *But n Ben*, Fitt seeks to push the boundaries of writing in Scots. As Niall O'Gallagher notes, this novel 'shows us that the Scots language can describe worlds as various and exotic as the imaginations of those who use it' (2005). Fitt's Scots is unapologetic, eschewing guides and glossaries. As Fitt states in his introduction, '*But n Ben A-Go-Go* challenges the reader to wake up his or her own active and passive knowledge of the Mither Tongue' (2000: x–xi). If Scots is a national language, it ought not to require 'the stabilisers of a Scots-to-English word leet ['list']' (Fitt 2000: xi).

Donovan discusses her reasons for writing in Scots in an interview with Adrian Searle in 2008, making these observations about 'authenticity' and 'identity':

> When I started out I suppose I wrote the kind of stories that I thought I should write—you know, it's that kind of third-person Standard English—a bit of dialogue, you know, maybe more 'Glasgow' because that's what people are speaking, and I never felt happy with them, and it was not until I actually started to write in a Scots voice that there was anything that I was happy with or in fact that anybody wanted to publish and the way that I did it originally was purely, again, character-driven because I realised that the character I wanted to write about—that was not how she spoke—she did not speak in Standard English, so therefore I started to write in Scots and, immediately, it just made much more sense, it was much more alive, it was much more true, it was much more real and I was much more excited by it.
>
> (Searle 2008, my transcription: Part 1 7:40–9:07).

Donovan articulates her position clearly in the interview, and much of the response to the question is included above to provide a fuller context for her argument, which goes beyond the précis provided by Pittin-Hedon: 'Donovan justifies her use of Glasgow demotic [. . .] simply by saying "that is what people speak", noting that *in her novel* she did not know how to speak in Standard English' (2015: 22; my emphasis). Donovan's point is that there are deep ideological problems with the weight of expectation she initially felt to write in Standard English.[2] Her stance is reminiscent of that stridently articulated in Liz Lochhead's 'Kidspoem / Bairnsang': 'Oh saying it was one thing / but when it came to writing it / in black and white / the way it had to be said / was as if you were posh, grown-up, male, English and dead' (2003: 19–20). Tom

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[2] It is also interesting that Donovan notes that publishers began to take more notice of her work when she began writing in Scots, as this suggests a specific market interest in novels which overtly exploit 'demotic' voices. Do note also, in relation to the quotation from Pittin-Hedon, that Donovan is fully bilingual in English and Scots.

Leonard's well known 'Unrelated Incidents (3)'—in recent years often encountered by A-Level students in England, where the same point can be made for English dialects—further develops the idea of different perspectives on 'truth': 'if / a toktaboot / thi trooth / lik wanna yoo / scruff yi / widny thingk / it wuz troo' (1984: 88). Leonard is here 'confronting the same assumption as Kelman: that Standard English is the proper language for "the truth"', and his poetry 'challenges authors and poets writing from the edge of the English centre to enact a new kind of linguistic truth' (Scott 2009: 109, 110).

In *Psychoraag*, Saadi takes these ideas of truth and identity in a different direction by writing about Scots-Asian culture in southern Glasgow, where everyday language can frequently be heard blending elements of Scots, Panjabi and Urdu. He admits to taking some risks in this work, 'to avoid [. . .] "safe multiculturalism" by employing a multiplicity of referents—language, identity, history, song, reality— in the text' (2007: 29). *Psychoraag* uses Scots blended with a scattering of words from Urdu, Panjabi and other originally Asian languages in a style reminiscent of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and Anthony Burgess's *Malayan Trilogy* (1972). Zaf's speech can therefore be seen as a remoulding of a wider practice of 'decorating' language with borrowings from other cultures, just as medieval Scottish writers gilded their verses with Latinate vocabulary. While it can be argued that Saadi 'rewrites Scots [. . .] to articulate the viewpoints of both a marginalised social group and an individual' (Innes 2007: 307), and therefore engages with questions of the subaltern, melancholic dimensions of Scots very directly, his experimental language also acts as a timely echo of the similar, real, hybrid voices of multicultural Scotland.

Scotland and Postcolonialism

Nations and peoples are largely the stories they feed themselves. If they tell themselves stories that are lies, they will suffer the future consequences of those lies. If they tell themselves stories that face their own truths, they will free their histories for future flowerings.

(Ben Okri, *Birds of Heaven*; quoted in Robertson, 2003, Preface)

Like Ireland and Wales, Scotland's status as a postcolonial location is not straightforward: 'in other parts of the Empire (such as India, for example) [Scots] functioned as agents of colonialism and prospered under colonial rule' (McLeod 2010: 284). It is thanks to the activities of Scottish missionary David Livingstone that Mosi-oa-Tunya—now bordering Zambia and Zimbabwe—is known in the English-speaking world as the 'Victoria Falls'; there was a Scottish Empire as well as a British Empire (Devine 2003). Scots were part of the general imperial project, but in Sudan, for example 'Scotland played a disproportionate role' (Maley 2011: 185). Linguistically, too, both Scots and Scottish Standard English are 'inputs to colonial Englishes' (Macafee 2004: 59). Historical events like the Scottish Clearances, Highland and Lowland (Aitchison and Cassell 2003), resonate very strongly with the ideologies of colonisation and conquest, even if they are understood as 'internal colonisation', after Hechter (1999). If we regard Scotland as a land of three cultures, embodied in Gaelic, Scots and (Scottish) English, we can apply a postcolonial perspective to our understanding of the relationships between them. Historically, at least, both Gaelic and Scots are languages deliberately subjugated under a 'Great British' yoke, though it is impossible to blame this on any power that is entirely external to the Scottish nation. In the eighteenth century, Gaelic was outlawed and those who adopted English wholesale sought to purge their language of Scotticisms (Jones 1995; Dossena 2005). Negative attitudes to Scots and Gaelic have persisted since then, providing a stark cultural legacy from these ideologies. Yet for the most part, 'the privileged sections of Scottish society profited from imperialism whilst others were subjugated by it' (Lehner 2007: 294).

In his discussion of Britain's coming to terms with the past, Gilroy emphasises 'the painful obligations to work through the grim details of imperial and colonial history' (2005: 6). Indeed, as he acknowledges, Scottish historians have done much to expose the 'multilayered trauma [. . .] involved in accepting the loss of empire' (Gilroy 2005: 99). In Scotland's case, these processes are complicated by economically-driven expulsions and cultural suppressions which still resonate across the country and the wider Scottish diaspora (Devine 2012). James Robertson's *Joseph

Knight (2003) recounts a slave's journey from servitude to freedom, and may be read as a Scottish response to Gilroy's plea to work through the colonial past. The novel brutally confronts the reader with the violence of the Scottish Empire, yet also reminds readers of the potential for social change and moral rehabilitation. Another Scottish novel relevant here is Leila Aboulela's *The Translator* (1999), which charts the life of a Sudanese Muslim widow who moves to Aberdeen where she falls in love with a Scottish academic. As Maley has argued, this novel provides an important literary response to the colonial past: '*The Translator* is a bridge-building, border-crossing book [. . .] holding out the possibility of a future marked, but not marred, by colonial history' (2011: 197).

It is worth stressing that many of the vociferous examples of postcolonial melancholia in Gilroy's work are actually 'English', rather than being shared, claimed, or claimable by the other home nations of the United Kingdom. This is not to suggest that there are no Scottish parallels, but rather to show that Gilroy's perspective is very particular. The 'brash motto of true-Brit sponsoring nationalism [. . .] supplied by the curious boast: "Two world wars and one World Cup, doo dah, doo dah"' (Gilroy 2005: 107) in factual terms at least, 'belongs' to England by dint of its footballing success in 1966. This expression often invites ridicule, especially from members of the other home nations, for its ironic, comedic desperation to assert nationalistic power. As Gilroy argues, '[t]he phrase furnishes us with a compressed but still priceless history of postwar class relations in what is harder these days to call the United Kingdom' (2005: 107). Also relevant to debates around 'British' postcolonial renegotiations of nationalism are the stances adopted by Scots who welcome an independent Scotland as a route to self-determination, but refute any subscription to the racist, exclusive ideologies of 'traditional' nationalism. Kelman states: 'I cannot accept nationalism and I am not a Scottish Nationalist. But once that is said, I favour a "yes or no" decision on independence and I shall vote "yes" to independence' (2012: 121). With the introduction of the devolved Scottish Parliament in 1999, a much wider debate about Scotland's future was opened up, and novels written during this post-devolution period have successfully taken up this creative space for debate (Pittin-Hedon 2015).

The Scots Language: an Inherently 'Melancholic' Medium?

> Phrases like 'Scottish (or Glasgow) slang', 'lazy urban speech', 'the real Doric',
> 'speaking properly', 'bad grammar', 'teuchter talk' and many others display
> the sad level of nonsensical prattle that passes for serious comment on lan-
> guage even among educated people in Scotland today.
>
> (MacGillivray 1997: 126)

In some quarters, Scots still struggles for recognition. As such, it can act as an emblem
for loss, its subaltern status inherently symbolising a distinctly Scottish postcolonial
melancholia. In order to counter this cultural inequality, discussions of Scots litera-
ture should therefore be tempered by current linguistic scholarship. Scots is defined
as 'a language continuum that ranges from "Broad" Scots to "Scottish Standard Eng-
lish"' (Corbett, McClure and Stuart-Smith 2003: 1; see also Aitken 1992: 903; Douglas
2009: 39–49). 'Broad' Scots designates the geographical and social varieties of Scots
which are most distinctive from English, and 'Scottish Standard English' (SSE) desig-
nates the 'prestige Scottish hybrid variety that is distinct from both broad Scots and
southern English' (Corbett and Stuart-Smith 2012: 74). SSE is more than just English
with a Scottish accent. As Corbett and Stuart-Smith point out, 'the linguistic behav-
iour of many Scottish Standard English speakers continues to draw upon traditional
Scots linguistic resources, to which are added new features local to areas of Scotland'
(Corbett and Stuart-Smith 2012: 74).

Scots, therefore, has a practical working definition that can be conveniently
utilised as an umbrella term for all of its varied forms, be they written, spoken, lit-
erary, formal or informal (this case has been variously argued and supported by com-
mentators including Morgan 1990: 312; Kelman 1994, quoted in Scott 2009: 98;
Watson 1995: 142; Scott 2007; McKay 2010). Like English, Scots is a language with
regional and urban varieties, a range of registers and its own forms of slang (Scott
2014). English is still generally regarded as 'English' even if peppered with innovative
slang, as in Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) or includes conspicuous
amounts of local dialect, as in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1846). Perplexingly,

however, many commentators seem reluctant to adopt the term 'Scots' when discussing Scots literature. For example, in his discussion of James Kelman's work, Michael Gardiner states that the language Kelman uses 'is not "Scots" (a nativist model), but rather a kind of "broken English"' (2010: 106). Oddly, rather than examine the type of *Scots* that Kelman uses here, Gardiner chooses to deny Scots so much as a name, tacitly reinforcing the outdated Anglo-normative linguistic hegemony that silences the language. Even though a robust defence of Kelman's Scots has been proffered in response to the negative appraisal by Rabbi Julia Neuberger, who resigned from the awarding committee of the Booker Prize in 1994 when *How Late it Was How Late* took the prize (McGlynn 2002: 50), and of Simon Jenkins who notoriously described Kelman as 'acting the part of an illiterate savage' (1994, quoted in Müller 2011: 234), worryingly, such prejudices continue to surface every so often, and it is apparently still 'not deemed unacceptable to make such comments' (Saadi 2007: 29).

Scots speakers themselves are not always linguistically self-aware. As Caroline Macafee noted in 1997, '[m]any, especially middle-class people, know and even use quite a large body of Scots vocabulary and idiom, but would not think of themselves as Scots speakers' (515). However, this situation is changing. The new 'Curriculum for Excellence' (Scottish Government 2012) has provided an opportunity for a re-assessment of language teaching, and 'Building the Curriculum 1' states that 'Scotland has a rich diversity of languages including Scots (Scottish Government 2006). After a long campaign by Scots activists, the 2011 Scottish Census asked respondents about their use of the Scots language, and over 1.5 million people identified themselves as Scots speakers (National Records of Scotland 2011).

Despite the growing acceptance and utilisation of Scots as a robust linguistic identity within which different types of Scots can be scrutinised for their polyphonous complexities, the continued rejection of the term 'Scots' risks perpetuating the perception of Scots as something at best amorphous and at worst illegitimate. Puzzling anomalies such as Simon Kövesi's term 'standard Scots' (2007: 30) are also observable, though there is no agreed, codified standard spelling for Scots. This is an area where commentators need to rethink the cultural stances implicit in their own terminological metalanguage, especially if they agree with Jeremy Scott that 'the act

of communicating the elusive yet essential essence of a people or culture through narrative fiction (or through any art form) should be thought of as a worthy and laudable achievement' (2009: 24).

But n Ben A-Go-Go: A Dystopian Adventure

> He wis gawkin intae the hert o Cowp. Unco things bade there. Unraivelled technologies. Non-degradable military saftware. Blootered adventure-capital projects broukit, buried an left there tae beal on the wrang side o reality. It wis the midden o the new millennium [. . .].
>
> (Fitt 2000: 33)

Fitt's dystopian novel is set in the year 2090 in an ecologically damaged world where most of 'the Scottish peninsula' has been drowned through natural disasters (Fitt 2000: xiii). What remains of southern Scotland is now called 'Port', and is composed of a group of island cities that float on the sea; the only remaining land is the 'Drylands', formerly the Highlands. Fitt's world is a neoliberal paradise where contemporary social concerns are exaggerated, as shown by the above description of the 'midden' ('rubbish dump') of unravelled technologies, military software and broken adventure capital projects; this world depicts the projected outcomes of 'growing inequality [. . .] prompted by turbo-capitalism's merciless destruction of once-proud welfare states' (Gilroy 2005: 149). A bullying rich-kid is clearly not 'local', as noted by the novel's protagonist, Paolo Broon: 'He could hear in the boy's skittery Delta accent the unpalatable scrauch o a Sino-American education an the wrang-wittit encouragements o a baw bag commisar faither' (Fitt 2000: 75). The privileged new colonisers are also evident in place-names that have been changed to reflect the new world order:

> Roch blue waves skited hermlessly against the aboriginal stanes o the moontain formerly kent as Cúl Mor. Its new Nipponese American designation, Kasuko Island 12B, didna import quite the same cultural wecht as its auld Celtic name but the institution Cúl Mor cairried on its back wisna biggit wi culture in mind.
>
> (Fitt 2000: 20)

The increasing global reach of the United States, responsible for building 'Kasuko Island 12B' without culture in mind, is reflected in the names of the storm, 'Hurricane Elvis', and of legislative buildings like 'the Senate Hoose on Inverness Parish' (Fitt 2000: 134, 40, 36). The blackly comedic 'Inverdisney' (Fitt 2000: 36), a jail, is described in the global, 'colonising' language—American English—as a 'penitentiary' (Proffitt 2016 s.v.). In contrast, more harmonious multi-cultural developments are represented through the characters' personal names of the characters. 'Paolo Broon' combines the Italian form of *Paul* (Hanks, Hardcastle and Hodges 2006 s.v.) with the Scots form of the surname *Brown*. Nadia MacIntyre's first name, although not unfamiliar in Britain, is an adoption from Russian *Nadya* (Hanks, Hardcastle and Hodges 2006 s.v.), while her surname is a commonplace Gaelic-derived Scottish patronymic. First names are typically less traditional and borrowed from other languages, but family names are recognisably traditional; in the case of lawyer Aga Dunblane we are told she is 'third generation Libyan' (Fitt 2000: 15). Such names appear to indicate everyday multi-cultural interaction and intermarriage taking place in 'normal' Port life.

The experimental Scots prism through which Fitt refracts reality is constructed using highly inventive and playful language, using humour to sweeten the dystopian pill. The smallest unit of currency is the 'eurobawbee', closed circuit television cameras are 'clype-cameras', and the lead character Paolo is employed as a 'cyber-janny', cleaning up social middens in cyberspace for his bosses at 'Clart Central' (Fitt 2000: 21, 58, 75). Scots speakers therefore encounter everyday Scots words like 'clype' ('inform on; tell tales'), 'bawbee' (usually in the plural meaning, 'money'), and 'janny' ('janitor'), humorously morphed into futuristic contexts. For most Scots, the cultural resonances of such very widely understood terms also highlights the cross-class aspects of the Scots–SSE continuum. Most Scottish schools, for example, have a 'janny' (or 'janitor'); in the English of England, however, 'caretaker' may be a more usual translation. Whether or not the humour of these imaginative Scots compounds translates across cultures is debatable; but in principle they involve taking words normally associated with informal, spoken domains and remaking them, inviting readers to look at them differently. A Londoner might invent a similar Cockney term such

as 'cyberchina' ('a virtual online friend'), using the rhyming slang '*china* plate' (mate). Scottish readers are invited to laugh with Fitt, not at Scots, his account of Paolo's pedigree establishing the novel's tongue-in-cheek tone: 'The Klog faimlie pool wis a bree o grippie east coast insurance men an born again presbyterian fishwives, lowsed by the lord fae Prozac, sex and involuntary hame shoppin' (Fitt 2000: 4). More subtly, his inventory of criminals imprisoned in Inverdisney includes 'corporate pauchlers' (corporate thieves), 'taxlowpers' (tax evaders) and 'snecklifters' (burglars) (Fitt 2000: 20). Fitt's comedy involves the shock of the new, which at the same time may give readers pause to consider *why* such coinages make them laugh; that shock may trigger an epiphany.

The devastating virus, central to the plot, is known formally by the French name *Sangue de Verde* (literally 'Blood of Green') but informally as 'Senga', the nickname simultaneously gendering it and localising it in an attempt to 'defuse' its power. In parts of Scotland, *senga* has some colloquial currency as a term for 'a woman', usually with unsavoury connotations stereotypically associated with low socio-economic status. Scottish English 'nedette' might be a near synonym. The folk explanation for the name explains it as backslang for 'Agnes' which was a name 'especially popular in Scotland' in the twentieth century (Hanks, Hardcastle and Hodges 2006 s.v.). Fitt frequently plays on these sorts of local associations and linguistic in-jokes, which may make some readings of the text less accessible to those outwith Scotland. Where he perhaps invites non-Scottish readers to engage more fully with his words is through invented terms with wider intertextual resonances. For instance, Law enforcement in Port is provided by 'The Ceilidh' giving a twist on George Orwell's 'Ministry of Peace' (1949).[3]

Fitt parodies many issues present in the real world in his even more broken, future world. A 'colonising' force employed with barbed humour is that of the 'cells of tough rebel American tourists' (2000: xiii) occupying the Drylands—at once a dangerous guerrilla army and an echo of the present time, when the benefits of American

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[3] A *ceilidh* can be an informal social get-together, especially in Highland culture, or it may designate a formal social gathering involving Highland music, song and dance (Robinson 1985 s.v.).

tourism to the Scottish economy are widely apparent. Paolo's experiences of personal loss and social disempowerment centre on his partner Nadia's contraction of the sexually transmitted *Sangue de Verde* through her affair with Paolo's father, a notorious criminal. The Broon family is already badly fractured at the start of the novel and there is no great healing or reconciliation in the novel. Paolo's eventual victory is bitter-sweet and pyrrhic—by obtaining a sample of Diamond Broon's DNA his partner can pass away—so the main, 'literal' message of hope centres on the role of heroic, determined individuals who will do the right thing under duress. But as Corbett argues, the storyline is 'largely a pretext for Fitt to lead his readers on an exuberant, satirical journey into a looking-glass Scotland' (2012: 121). By taking part in the exercise of reading his futuristic, imaginative reworking of the language, we as readers are invited to re-examine the status of the language and challenge prevailing norms that limit the genres in which Scots exists. It has often been lamented that 'the Scots tongue is inconveniently coded as a medium of the past' (Corbett 2012: 120), making its choice for a science-fiction text especially unlikely. What is therefore most significant about Fitt's novel is that it 'reclaim[s] literary Scots for genre fiction' (Corbett 2012: 126). It therefore encourages a convivial approach to Scots as a living language, capable of articulating not only the past, but also the present and the future.

Psychoraag: A Two-Way Mirror

> Under the mornin skies of Scotland, anythin wis possible.
>
> (Saadi 2004: 338)

Psychoraag charts a pivotal six-hour period in the life of Zaf, a Glaswegian DJ and son of immigrants from Pakistan, while he presents the last instalment of his show on Radio Chaandni ('Moonlight'). Through his disembodied, DJ voice, he navigates his way through many questions about identity before coming to his ultimately hopeful (if uncertain) conclusion that anything is possible. His brand of Glaswegian includes terms from Urdu, Punjabi, Arabic, Scottish Gaelic and other languages; it represents

a distinctively Scots-Asian voice, but also stands as a metaphor for the diverse mix of cultures in the city:

> *Salaam alaikum, sat sri akaal, namaste ji,* good evenin oan this hoat, hoat summer's night! Fae the peaks ae Kirkintilloch tae the dips ae Cambuslang, fae the invisible mines ae Easterhoose tae the mudflats ae Clydebank, welcome, ivirywan, welcome, Glasgae, welcome Scoatland, tae *The Junnune Show*.[4]

> (Saadi 2004: 1)

The influence of Salman Rushdie *Midnight's Children* (1981) is palpable both through Saadi's practice of decorating Scots with vocabulary from the languages of the Indian sub-continent, and through the setting of the novel. Zaf's story also begins at Midnight, but while he explores a different postcolonial context, there are observable cultural parallels. The potentially 'alien' Urdu and Arabic words, and the relatively uncommon sight of Scots words on a printed page invites readers to consider the colonial history that Gilroy encourages Britain to work through (2005: 99). Zaf provides a vehicle for a personal psychological journey through history, politics and social geography. As Saadi characterises it, '*Psychoraag* is not an exotic theme park of "The Scots-Asian experience"; rather, it traverses the rivers of history and memory and the courses these rivers take through our lives' (Saadi 2007: 30).

Throughout the novel, Zaf wrestles with questions about his past, present and future. During his radio show he asks: 'who knows whit's tae come, *samaeen* ['people']? Who knows whit lies ahead? It's hard enough tryin tae figure oot whit lies behind!' (Saadi 2004: 36). As he reflects on his experiences of growing up in Scotland, Zaf provides a number of commentaries on the places and people he has encountered, many of whom stand as overt symbols of the old empire, yet which are complicated by his nostalgia for his childhood:

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[4] The glossary in *Psychoraag* (pp. 421–430), includes the following explanations: *salaam alaikum* a Muslim greeting, literally 'peace be upon you'; *sat sri akaal* a Sikh greeting, literally 'truth is eternal'; *namaste ji* a Hindu greeting, literally 'the spirit in me bows to the spirit in you'; *junnune* 'madness, a trance-like state'.

> Suddenly, Zaf longed for the Ayrshire coast, with its retired colonists, the
> pieds noirs of Alba and its dank jardinières [. . .] As a child he had been taken
> there on a fairly regular basis. [. . .] he'd gone to visit and, after the long
> gap of adolescence, Zaf had marvelled again at the dark bulk of Arran and
> the Kabbalistic triangle of Ailsa Craig, the island which did not really exist,
> unless you were a bird.
>
> (Saadi 2004: 167)

Here Saadi uses local references that require direct knowledge of the west of Scot-
land context for full understanding—such as the existence of Ailsa Craig as a bird
sanctuary and not a tourist destination—with the idea of learning these facts as an
incomer, and finding them 'marvellous', exotic and strange. The novel also presents
its readers with a hybrid language that makes use of the full range of the Scots con-
tinuum, though there is more Scots in the dialogue than the narrative. The Scots
voice gives way to Scottish Standard English at times, with only occasional gram-
matical markers signposting it as Scottish. There are points where a deliberate code-
switch takes place, for example when Zaf recalls—with discomfort—his girlfriend's
description of him as her 'brown god', suddenly and awkwardly foregrounding her
perception of their intrinsic differences (Saadi 2004: 25). In articulating his reaction,
Standard English takes over Zaf's narrative as he distances himself from Babs, the
formality of the language masking his emotion like a press release: 'he had always
tried to see their relationship as colour-blind but, that night, he had realised that
it could not be. Only in madness might such a thing be possible. She needed his
brown-ness—just as he needed her white' (Saadi 2004: 25). Having concluded the
thought to his satisfaction, Zaf's insecurity subsides and a hint of a more personal,
more 'Scots' voice begins to creep back in: 'They were both conquerin territories'
(Saadi 2004: 25). At this point in his journey, Zaf appears to equate Gilroy's idea of a
positive, 'cosmopolitan conviviality' (2005: 8) with an unrealistic ideal, available
'only in madness', yet he also calls his radio show *Junnune* 'madness', which may
delineate it as an 'unreal' or 'imagined' space where protean culture can morph

and flex. This ambiguity hints at a more optimistic, possible future in which a more convivial identity politics may have room to emerge. Yet before that can take place for Zaf, *Psychoraag* has to confront Gilroy's 'grim details of imperial and colonial history' (2005: 99). Especially melancholic and poignant are the indignities endured by Zaf's father, Jamil, the hopeful immigrant who finds himself slopping out the sewers of his wonderful new homeland. He finds himself living in 'a world made up of two words', *izzatt* 'honour' and *sharam* 'shame' (Pittin-Hedon 2015: 90), a reality composed of personal disappointment and social inequality. Zaf later muses on the plight of various other historical 'visitors' to Glasgow, their journeys inextricably linked to the growth of the British Empire. He imagines the Irish immigrants making their way from the Clyde to the 'O'Neill hovels where they would live, twenty to a room, and from whence the roads, the railways, the canals, the flyovers would emerge' (Saadi 2004: 370). Standing next to the River Clyde, he recasts 'the muddy site intended for the BBC buildin' as the place where 'slaves had shivered in the rain as they waited to be bought and parcelled off' (Saadi 2004: 371). The novel frequently confronts these difficult histories directly as Zaf explores his sense of place. Ultimately he seems to accept his context, warts and all, and at times he even appears to melt into the city: 'standin there on Bell's Bridge, in the windless mornin sunshine, he became almost transparent' (Saadi 2004: 370).

The Scots of *Psychoraag* reminds readers that Zaf is very much a young urban Glaswegian. His knowledge and location situates him plainly within Scotland's culture, both as its product and as its critic, and it may be that voices like his are particularly well placed to invite readers to consider the postcolonial melancholia that may arise from a post-imperial 'accumulated guilt', and invite readers to seek greater 'ethical maturity' on these issues (Gilroy 2005: 98, 99). Writing the novel in Scots may have deterred some readers, but the Scots Saadi uses is not especially dense, and not nearly as challenging to the English-reading public as that of *But n Ben*. A handful of Scots terms including *gey* 'considerably; rather', *high heid yin* 'a boss' and *skite* 'to fly awkwardly; to slip or fall' are also glossed by Saadi—though the majority of

translated words are Urdu (2004: 421–430). Yet despite its accessibility, Saadi's work has received surprisingly little critical attention outwith Scotland, and particularly in England. There is more than a little troubling irony in this situation: 'the critical silence that met [*Psychoraag*] down south is an interesting reaction in itself to a book about race and invisibility, voice and silence, whose central theme is the question of whether anyone out there is actually listening', as Ali Smith noted in her *Guardian* article, 'Life beyond the M25' in 2004 (quoted in Saadi 2007: 31). Nevertheless, *Psychoraag*, like *But n Ben* and *Buddha Da*, have been read widely in their Scottish constituencies, and all three were included in *The List's* Best 100 Scottish Books of All Time (2005).

Buddha Da: The enlightenment of conviviality

'Ah just phoned the Rinpoche. Had tae tell him aboot yous bein on the TV. He was dead chuffed.'

(Donovan 2003: 329)

Buddha Da describes an everyday, multi-cultural Glasgow. The narrative belongs alternately to family members Jimmy, Liz and Anne Marie, and is written in Glaswegian Scots, largely retaining English spellings for words shared by Scots and English which makes it very accessible to English-speaker readers. (Scottish) Standard English is reserved for specific characters. Donovan is acutely aware of social and linguistic insecurities, and reflects some tendencies of generation and gender through her portrayal of different members of the family as they narrate their own chapters. Different perspectives on the same situation are therefore quickly invoked through the structure of the novel. This is very apt for this novel, given Buddhism's emphasis on the importance of training the mind to reach a state of egolessness, constantly questioning the apparent solidity of the 'I' and the self (Trungpa 2002).

Since Scots is not stereotypically associated with formality, Jimmy's natural speech tends to defuse the aspirational pretentions of his religious journey: '"Ah'm just gaun doon the Buddhist Centre for a couple hours, [. . .] have a wee meditate, try

it oot, know?"' (Donovan 2003: 1). He wrestles with his instinctively negative reactions to a monk called Vishana: 'Mibbe it wis his English accent or the way he wis dressed in they robes when he wisnae a real Tibetan or that, but he just got right up ma nose' (Donovan 2003: 32). Given that Donovan openly links the use of Scots with 'truth', it is perhaps tempting to see Jimmy's attitude as an extreme version the same sentiment here, but the point deserves closer scrutiny. Jimmy automatically associates Vishana's lack of 'authenticity' with his 'English accent'—which from a subaltern Scots speaker's perspective provides a stereotypical metonym for misappropriated power and insincerity. Jimmy often feels personally judged by speakers of (Scottish) Standard English. When Barbara verbally identifies him as Glaswegian on their first meeting, he is discomfited by her implicit assessment of him, and replies self-consciously: '"And me wi ma posh voice on"' (Donovan 2003: 33). Jimmy's discomfort lends itself to a reading of his character as having fallen foul of what Gilroy terms 'cheap appeals to absolute national and ethnic difference that are currently fashionable' (Gilroy 2005: 6), which is to say that Jimmy focuses on language as a badge of identity. While prejudiced, his views attest to the silencing polarity imposed by extant linguistic imperialism; Jimmy does not so much put up barriers to Standard English speakers as feel put down by those 'voices of power'. His perceptions of this hierarchy are therefore deterministic and limited because that is what he feels subject to and controlled by; the association of Scots (and often Glasgow itself) with a 'working-class' identity, the top-down prejudice, has set him up to understand, within the social order, this form of 'culture as an unbridgeable division' (Gilroy 2005: 6).

Buddha Da also draws attention to the problematic representation of national locations in 'official' narratives, symbolised by the atlas that Anne Marie and Nisha consult in the public library. They struggle and fail to find Tibet in the atlas, much to Anne Marie's alarm: '"Tibet's no in this." . . . "Anne Marie, that's it. It's no a country." "Aye it is, that's where the lamas come fae." . . . Nisha turned tae the back of the atlas. "Look here it is . . . in the index. Tibet – see Xizang Zizhiqu, China." It gied me a shock, seein it like that' (Donovan 2003: 261). In order to complete her assignment on Tibet, Anne Marie has to make use of the details supplied for Xizang Zizhiqu, which doesn't include any mention of the Tibetan language. This metaphor

for political power is further complicated when the girls also fail to find Scotland in the atlas. Nisha even predicts that this will be the case: '"Bet you Scotland's no in it either." And it wasnae. No as a country anyway, just part of the UK. (Capital: London. Status: Monarchy.) And nae flag either. Or languages of wer ain' (Donovan 2003: 262). While a direct comparison between Tibet and Scotland may seem overtly strident given their radically different political realities, this event starkly underlines the rendering of both nations as subaltern by omission. Donovan's inclusion of this example therefore reminds us that in Scotland too, writing that emanates 'the writings that emanat[e] from anti-colonial movements around the world [. . .] continue to rail against injustice, and to use the power of language to convince us that other worlds are possible' (Gilmartin and Berg 2007: 120).

Anne Marie has to negotiate challenging events including her parents' separation and her grandmother's death. While mourning for these personal losses and dislocations, she finds ways to use her mother's Catholicism, her father's Buddhism, and her friendship with Nisha, whose family are Sikh, to form a renewed identity, assertively pursued through music. As Jones has argued of Kelman's eponymous hero of *Mo Said She Was Quirky*, such overtly positive characters are 'the antithesis of the melancholic' (2015: 109). In Donovan's novel, Anne Marie embraces a hopeful cultural hybridity made possible by the realities of post-colonial Scotland. She and Nisha record a song which is a triumphant synthesis of different influences: Glaswegian and Indian, Latin and Punjabi, old and new, Catholic and Buddhist. Nevertheless, she is apprehensive about her parents' reactions: 'it occurred tae me that ma daddy couldnae stand sampled music so he'd probably no like it and ah wondered if mammy would think it was a bit disrespectful usin the "*Salve Regina*" that way, especially since ah'd sung it at ma granny's funeral' (Donovan 2003: 310). Part of her apprehension is associated with taking a set of emotionally-charged ingredients loaded with history to make her own. In this way she can be read as an emblem of the newly-devolved, forward looking Scotland.

Anne Marie's eclectic creation succeeds locally with her family and friends, and wins a BBC competition. Forms of 'approval' for this hybrid experiment are therefore

granted both by her community and the pan-British authority figure of the BBC, traditionally a potent force for influencing cultural perceptions through language use (see Mugglestone 1995). Anne Marie, though also a Scots speaker, does not appear to share her father's linguistic and cultural insecurities; she represents an ideal 'lass o pairts', embodying the 'mature response to diversity, plurality, and differentiation' identified by Gilroy within 'Britain's vernacular dissidence, lending energy to an ordinary, demotic multiculturalism' (2005: 99).

Conclusion

While not specifically examining Scottish responses to 'postcolonial melancholia', it is notable that Gilroy reflects on the fractured identities within Britain and the United Kingdom and their relationship to the 'demotic' and 'vernacular'. Scots is therefore an ideal vehicle for articulating such concerns; in *Psychoraag*, *Buddha Da* and *But n Ben* there is a very strong relationship between the medium, the message, the sound, and the sense of what is said. The Scots language currently remains culturally subordinated to the established language of power, which in Scotland remains English (albeit Scottish English). Scots literary voices may therefore be read as postcolonial melancholic voices, providing echoic, haunting reminders of the oppressive histories and inequalities that have yet to be fully grieved, and as emblems of hope for the future. By confronting the ghosts of the past, telling new stories that help to confront those often unmentioned, uncomfortable injustices, and by demonstrating the practical positivity of the creative imagination to address complex and contested ideas of cultural, national and personal identity, these vernacular texts can provide examples of the ways that Gilroy's postcolonial 'cultural disorientation' (2005: 113) may be replaced by newer, more honest assessments of the past and the present. The protagonists in *Psychoraag*, *Buddha Da* and *But n Ben* are not stereotypes arising from deterministic, narrowly-defined social or cultural labels. Their personal journeys chart evolving, changing, overtly protean identities, which, by turns reflect on the 'melancholic' injustices of empires and colonies, and respond to their engagement with loss through optimistic 'convivial' hybrid multiculturalism.

Acknowledgements and Note on the Title

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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