

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Bridging Fantasies: A Critical Study of the Novels of Iain Banks

being a Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Hull

by

Martyn James Colebrook, BA, MA

(February 2012)

Introduction	Fear and Loathing in Midlothian	6
Chapter 1	“These Things of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine”: <i>The Wasp Factory</i> , Gender Performance and The Gothic	29
1.1	Gothic and Mental Disorder.	48
Chapter 2	The Player of Games?	66
2.1	Games and Fictionality.	67
2.2	<i>The Player of Games</i> and <i>The Magus</i> : A Comparative Study	81
2.3	Playing Games with Identity?	85
Chapter 3	Journeys into the Silent Land: <i>The Bridge</i> and <i>Lanark: A Life in Four Books</i> .	98
3.1	<i>The Bridge</i> and <i>Lanark</i> : Narrating Scotland as a Post-industrial Space.	102
3.2	<i>The Bridge</i> and the Contemporary Gothic.	123
Chapter 4	Moving out of the comfort ‘Zone’: <i>Canal Dreams</i> .	132
4.1	Not Playing by the Rules of the games: <i>Canal Dreams</i> and Genre.	136
4.2	“Maestro Please”: Memory and Performance.	146
4.3	Troubles with Banks: A political writer or a writer of political fiction?	158
Chapter 5	The Questions of Scotland: <i>The Crow Road</i> .	168
5.1	Landscape and Fiction.	170
5.2	<i>The Crow Road</i> and the Postmodern Gothic.	183
Chapter 6	‘Mad Lad Lit’: Iain Banks’ <i>Complicity</i> .	192
6.1	Three Writers Who Go Down into the Darkness: The Games of Contemporary Scottish Crime Fiction.	195

6.2	<i>Complicity</i> and Terror.	222
6.3	<i>Complicity, Sheepshagger</i> and Violence.	230
6.4	<i>Complicity</i> and Bodies of Evidence.	239
Chapter 7	Conclusion	246
	Bibliography	249

**Dedication** There are many people to whom I owe many thanks for this thesis as it presently stands: if you are not mentioned here, I will have thanked you in person or by another means of communication.

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Wendy Colebrook, and my grandfather, Brian Taylor, who gave me the motivation and the means to propose the subject but sadly didn't see the beginning. Their memories are the underpinning momenta behind the topic and the modes of expression. I suspect, in their own ways, they will find a method for reading it, as they did for everything else I wrote.

For his exceptional levels of professional supervision, direction and advice I can offer nothing but thanks to Dr Bruce Woodcock, whose inexhaustible patience and commitment has seen this project through to its current aegis. Dr Bethan Jones offered invaluable insight and suggestions (even before it began) and made the Annual Progress Reviews and weekend afternoon breaks watching the football a lot more enjoyable than they would have been otherwise.

For additional financial support I would like to thank the Ferens Trust at the University of Hull for their award of a 4 year Fees Bursary in 2004. This project would not have begun without such a substantial foundation. The Carl Baron Memorial Fund's generous award in 2006 and the University of Hull's Graduate School Travel Award in 2008 provided opportunities to present existing research at Rutgers-Camden University and Seton Hall University in New Jersey and to obtain otherwise inaccessible research materials.

There are a particular group of friends who have played more than a substantial role from this project's inception. Dr Brian Hoyle and Dr Jodi-Ann George provided beds to sleep in, wine to drink and much sustenance when I travelled north of the border to Dundee for conferences and research; not quite Banks' territory but still. Professor Philip Tew, Dr Nick Hubble and Steven Barfield of the Modern and Contemporary

Fiction Studies Network provided opportunities to present papers and organise conferences which informed a number of dimensions to the research. Professor Tew also took on the task of preparing me for the viva, offering extensive feedback on an earlier version of the thesis, prior to the amendments. Dr Mark Williams, a fellow transgressor of the policed boundaries of the popular and literary, collaborated, co-organised and co-wrote with me on a number of projects (and lived to tell the tales) which have fed into both the thematic and cultural background to this thesis; I didn't realise long conferences and long conversations could be as enjoyable as they are. Mike "Basil" Garbutt, Dr John Hoyles, Adam Grimmer, Julie Visgandis, Dr Sumreen "Summer" Pervez, the two Janines, Hatter and Chasmer, and Mary McCollum collectively and individually managed to get me out of the house and sometimes even away from the laptop when the occasion demanded.

Adele Reynolds, for your love and immeasurable confidence in me I cannot express how grateful I am. The patience, support, motivation and your inestimable capacity to pull me from the depths of despair through the toughest parts of this thesis make its conclusion even more emphatic and rewarding. I cannot even begin to indicate the extent to which without you this thesis, like me, would not be complete.

Finally, after 7 years of hearing, reading and doubtlessly trying to forget about it, Stewart Colebrook, Ellen Colebrook and Gill Hunter probably know as much about Iain Banks and the other writers featured in this thesis as I do. They probably know more than they ever wished to know as well. Without their emotional and financial stability, a positive and limitlessly patient environment to write up in when the end didn't even seem to exist, never mind seeming to be in sight, this thesis would not have been completed. I owe you more than I can ever repay.

Martyn Colebrook, February 2012.

**Introduction: ‘Fear and Loathing in Midlothian’** (Sutherland 1993: 25)

Iain Banks is something of a fictional magician: a novelist who plays fantastic and transgressive games with fiction. The Banksian approach is multifaceted. When it comes to genre his aim is to twist a particular characteristic against the ‘type’ or expected function of what otherwise appears to be a very derivative novel. The real development of this is the move from simple subversion of stereotype into a way of negotiating between the aesthetic demands of genre fiction and other, sometimes more experimental, modes of writing. In this respect, texts such as *The Wasp Factory* (1984), *Walking on Glass* (1985) and *The Bridge* (1986) conclude with metafictional gestures which reveal the artifice of the textual games being played and brazenly expect the reader to accept such disruption as a natural consequence of literary play and experiment. It is the breaking apart of expectation precisely by revealing the genre template which generates the opportunities to demonstrate more clearly how he departs from, bridges and transgresses these generic formulae and by that definition, exacts a process for transgressing the ‘rules’ and ‘expectations’ of genre fiction. The process of transgression involved breaching and convening the relative structural and technical “givens” within a piece of fiction, manipulating the rules to produce an outcome which the reader deems to be unexpected. Banks employs the generic modes of popular fiction and techniques associated with literary fiction throughout his work to enter into a dialogue with contemporary culture as a whole, by exploring how its fringes are formulated in respect to its centres (and therefore canons). We can review the whole of Banks’ corpus in light of his continued engagements with transgression and the transgressing of genre.

I intend to assess the major novels of Iain Banks, demonstrating how they contribute to his overall authorial practice. I will evaluate his fiction by examining it in relation to his oeuvre as well as the wider context of contemporary British fiction. The

study will consider how each text sustains itself as an individual novel and as part of an overarching arc, with recurrent images and narrative threads, constituting a body of work which is notable for its originality, its responsiveness to the concerns of the contemporary and which is characterised by the marrying of commercial success with academic neglect. Throughout I will expand upon the critical contexts of contemporary British fiction and how these different frameworks fit into the existing studies of Banks' novels.

The rationale for the provision of a context wider than contemporary Scottish fiction is determined by Banks himself who has claimed:

I don't really know enough about Scottish literature, so I'm very dubious about saying "Yes, I'm part of this tradition". I'm certainly part of the English *language* tradition. I've been a lot more influenced by *Catch 22*, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and *The Tin Drum*, and almost anything by Kafka, than by anything in Scottish literature apart from the single influence of *Lanark*. The extent to which I am different to someone born and brought up in Reading or somewhere who had the same influences would be the crucial test . . . but I don't think that you can run controls on people in that way. (Robertson 1989-1990: 27)

The resistance to Banks being presented within a specific heritage directly informs my strategy, meaning that there is a clearer sense of engagement with the present states of recent fiction as well as a far wider consideration of the trajectory into which the novels may be placed. Furthermore, this decision creates the space for a necessary discussion of the interplay between Banks and his contemporaries outside of the Scottish lineage, a topic which is notable for its absence from the existing corpus of scholarly criticism. By expanding the boundaries of debate, I am able to advance my main contention: Banks' fiction represents a totalising and continued fascination with the transgression of boundaries, whether technical, cultural, generic, national or otherwise.

Iain Banks publishes two different styles of novel: popular, commercial fictions that often focus on postmodern Gothic transformations of the thriller genres and works of scientific or speculative fiction which are set in his critical Utopia, the Culture. These two outputs are published under different names, Iain Banks and Iain (M.) Banks respectively. The space between the personae is often bridged and the differentiation between the two is overcome by the frequent overlaps and intertextual references he uses. Banks, then, is a novelist who has his own ‘double’, an author for whom the idea of a split writing persona is as emphatic as the articulation and presentation of the ‘double’ motif in his work. To corroborate this, Banks’ fiction is influenced by two foundational Scottish texts: James Hogg’s *The Private Confessions and Memoirs of a Justified Sinner* (1824) and Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Mysterious Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). The most potent figure of the Scottish Gothic is the double, or doppelgänger, which Karl Miller claims ‘stands at the start of that cultivation of uncertainty by which the literature of the modern world has come to be distinguished’ (Miller 1985 [1987]: vi). The manipulation of the double also allows for the gleeful renditions of violence, psychosis and outlandish behaviour that are a mainstay of Banks’ novels. The examination of these signature features is a dominant part of how I will conceptualise and evaluate his success in forging a reputation for a fascination with the forbidden and the significance of this critical standing in his continued dialogue with the contemporary canon.

The ‘Caledonian antisyzygy’ (Smith 1919: 12), a term originally applied by G. Gregory Smith to highlight the ‘characteristic yoking together of realism with fantasy in Scottish textual practice’ (Middleton 1995: 20) is another of the techniques which has been identified in Banks’ work, although proving in the process that it is not exclusively Caledonian and is actually closer to what ‘the OED defines as “szygy”’ (Middleton 1995: 20). The traits of ‘duality, division and fracture’ (Wallace 1993b: 218) have come



to authenticate the Banksian style and reinforce the overlaps between the different genres he operates in. Not content with this, Banks is also able to blur the boundaries between “fantasy” and “realism” in his novels, to the extent that often the reader is struggling to differentiate between the two, intensifying his appropriation and manipulation of a strategy which is still ‘a source of concern and puzzlement to newer, younger critics, but it would be difficult to deny the continuing relevance of the fundamental issues of contradictoriness and paradox to the Scottish imagination.’ (Wallace 1993b: 218) Contradiction and paradox are two significant aspects of Banks’ perception of his own craft as a novelist, as evidenced in his interviews where he (self-effacingly) distances himself from suggestions he is a “literary” writer but then structures his novels in forms which openly display the attributes popularly associated with works of “literature”. The persistent beguiling of academic critics and hoodwinking the establishment with tricks, flicks and pyrotechnics is a further display of Banks’ innovative and contemporary writing. It is the determination to experiment, even at the risk of failure, which also fuels his commercial reception and the erratic veering between praise and panning. Evaluating the different tactics and ruses which are employed in this on-going game is a further element in my assessment of the relative successes and problems of the Banks business.

The strongest case for Banks’ bridging of genres and his eclectic inhabitation of the double domains of the high and low/popular and literary is to be made through an examination of his non-science fiction work, namely that ‘his work outside the science-fiction field (though it is rarely far from its edges) is his most interesting’ (Nairn 1993: 127). Although I am not providing a qualitative evaluation of individual texts, the rationale is predicated on a reading of specific novels for the fertility of their thematic content and their contribution to Banks’ relationship with other practitioners in the field of contemporary writing.

In the wide-ranging field under discussion, Iain Banks' status as a non-canonical author is significant. As a wildly innovative, imaginative, popular and subversive novelist, his works are infused with darker elements that give them a forbidden, cultish, underground status but the fictions that are perceived as being in his more conventional and less evidently speculative mode fail to achieve recognition through awards and prizes perhaps because of that transgressive streak and the two different forms he writes in. Popular fiction is at once an agency portraying social and cultural anxieties and panics whose construction is, paradoxically, market-driven, a genre of fiction perpetually on the periphery of academic acceptance that revels in its capacity for insurrection and parody. It is most generally a product of and representative of the contemporary cultural climate, and explodes the boundaries between "high" and "low" culture whilst engaging in a continuous dialogue with the established literary canon. Reinforcing this intersection between the popular and literary, Duncan Petrie claims that Banks is a novelist whose:

*oeuvre* is distinguished by the integration of an engagement with the traditional concerns of literary fiction – contemporary subjectivity, politics and society – and a more self-conscious exploration of formal issues such as narrative technique, authorship and the conventions and limits of genre. (Petrie 2004: 119)

The hybridity in Banks' work reflects the ways in which he successfully moves between genres and is able to blend different strategies whilst retaining his popular appeal and the loyalty of his readership. Middleton notes that, when considering postmodernism and science-fiction, 'both genres . . . operate through a pluralistic relation with the canons of literary tradition, borrowing what seems useful and dispensing with methods which are restrictive.' (Middleton 1999: 7) In light of this, the success of Banks' fiction can be seen as a testament to the methods he deploys to utilise the genres in which he operates. In addition to these techniques:

[a] further asset is Banks's fascination with the nature of stories themselves, and how and why they are told. Equally, his repeated focus on time and the tricks it can play occupies an important role in establishing narrative structures and facilitating the range of forms they take in his work. (Nairn 1993: 134)

Noticeably though, Nairn equates the 'nature of stories' with other more innovative strategies such as 'time' and the 'tricks it can play', linking the non-creative regurgitation of essentially derivative plot platforms with qualities which are more academically recognised as postmodern, thus exercising a slippery escape from the grasps of popular fiction and into the more familiar and acceptable domains of the establishment. The ability to operate comfortably in a multitude of different genres is also recognised by the reference to Banks as a 'fiction factory' (Nairn 1993: 127) (a term which recognises both his prolific and commercially successful output) and the suggestion that 'he seems to have committed himself to convincing us that "Iain Banks" is actually the trading name of some sort of writers' collective.' (Nairn 1993: 127) This observation reflects not only his versatility but the variety of his work yet it also undermines Nairn's position as an establishment critic, having to concede that this is a writer who renders such artificial arbiters of taste ineffective, outdated and problematic.

A substantial proportion of Iain Banks' oeuvre is devoted to subverting and undermining the particular expectations of his audience, often by transgressing the conventions of genre. Genre fiction is perceived as having to conform to a series of "laws" or "regulations" in order to achieve the commercial success that its practitioners seek in order to sustain future writing ventures. By definition, genre is a self-reflexive entity and this is particularly true of the genres that Banks operates in most successfully: Gothic, crime fiction and political thriller. None of these are able to be easily identified as a 'pure' genre and it follows that they cannot be straightforwardly distinguished from the others, particularly the Gothic which is necessarily self-parodic and excessive. In the

context of Banks' novels, the overlaps add layers of sophistication to narratives and plotlines that are already impressive in their complexity.

The scope of Banks' output in two different forms and under two different names positions him as markedly outlandish in his somewhat cavalier approach to writing and with this, he is unafraid and shameless in his determination to reconfigure, transport and transform other authors' ideas into his novels. Cairns Craig's gambit, which informs the dynamic of how Banks transgresses genre through his writing, is a welcome framework and an effective analogy for Banks' authorial practice as a whole. Craig suggests that:

Genre is one of the defining elements of the game of literature. The expectations of readers are shaped by their awareness that what they are reading belongs to a particular literary game, whether that game is gothic horror, romance, social realism or thriller (all of which have their role in *Complicity*). Iain Banks is a player of games with the rules of fiction, not just because, unusually, he writes both "serious" novels and science-fiction, but because all of his novels, in either mode, are explorations of the possibilities of combining or disrupting the expectations of particular genres. (Craig 2002: 23)

By highlighting the importance of genre, Craig connects the variety of Banks' novels with the split personae or doubling that ensures his authorial technique differentiates him from many of his contemporaries. Banks' patent determination to hijack and fuse genres is rendered evident when airing his views regarding the Scottish tradition of blurring genres: 'It's just that we don't give a damn: boundaries are there to be crossed, genres are there to be mucked around with' (Hedgecock 1998: n.p.). The impact of this restless and fitful movement between different categories of novel underpins discussions of his work in both the academic and reviewing communities and is developed further by my appraisal of his writing.

In Banks' case a new critical formulation is required if the assessment of this popular writer is to avoid susceptibility to generalisation, misinterpretation or

ineffectiveness. Scott McCracken claims that such a language requires we ‘ask about the kinds of values a particular audience has a vested interest in creating or sustaining.’ (McCracken 1998: 5) Additionally there is the need to identify the contribution made by such fiction to maintaining the permeability of different cultural boundaries.

Lynnette Hunter surveys different arguments concerning the many definitions for “literature” and identifies one characteristic which is particularly pertinent to Banks’ fiction: ‘it uses language in a way that is different from the familiar; hence “popular” writing is not literature because it plays towards convention often because the writer needs to make money.’ (Hunter 2001: 13) One of the overt criticisms directed towards popular fiction is its requirement for a formulaic structure of characters, plot and narrative, which risks perpetuating the stereotype that all such fiction is repetitious, mass-produced and lacking in depth and originality. Additionally this criticism overlooks the potential for different forms of subversion, parody and carnival which contravene the conventions of genre fiction; language, particularly the use of the vernacular, is one such method for introducing instability. The importance of the vernacular can be seen in such notorious novels as James Kelman’s *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994), Irvine Welsh’s *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (1995) and Niall Griffiths’ *Grits* (2000), where the narrative is filled with colloquialisms and obscenities that are used to attack the dominant power structures. The appropriation of language is important in terms of identity formation and both language and identity are significant elements in Banks’ work, particularly his use of different experimental forms of language representation which are most prominent in *Feersum Endjinn* (1994) and *The Bridge*. There is an argument throughout for the use of language as one element of the oppositional and transgressive force that constitutes Banks’ oeuvre:

A theory of transgression . . . draws attention to popular culture’s role in struggles over meaning. It argues that the popular text is successful because it operates at the borders of what is socially

acceptable; and, in order to provoke a widespread interest, the text must, at some level, breach the bounds of that acceptability. It must, in other words, challenge social standards and norms. (McCracken 1998: 158)

Iain Banks' writing is a continuous celebration of the transgressive, through fiction that firmly acknowledges the rules and then promptly breaks them. With a mordant wit, a furious pace of narrative that ranks with the best thriller writers and an acute awareness of the contemporary, Banks' relentless witticisms, cerebral wordplay and tangential asides leave the reader unsettled and overwhelmed. Richard Todd concurs, stating that 'it is not technique alone, but his understanding of the genuine moral ambiguities his use of language compels that justifies Iain Banks's subject matter.' (Todd 1996: 156)

A key feature of Banks' writing which ensures his status as controversial yet tremendously popular, is his desire to shock: *Complicity* (1993) is an outraged scream against Thatcherism; *Song of Stone* (1997) and *The Bridge* are heavily involved with the violence and sexuality of sub-conscious and primary human impulses; and *Dead Air* (2002) deals with those who hold power over others, be that sexual, intellectual, financial or political.

Banks' work represents a new generation of writers who, after Malcolm Bradbury, Kingsley Amis and Anthony Burgess, were experimental, overtly politicised and keen to destabilise distinctions between the "popular" and the "literary".

Furthermore, Banks is one of the formidable figures in the flourishing period of contemporary literature, inviting comparison with novelists such as the more well-known James Kelman, Alasdair Gray, Ian Rankin, Irvine Welsh, J.G. Ballard, David Mitchell and Ian McEwan, but also the less acknowledged Russell Hoban, John Burnside, M. John Harrison (for whom Banks wrote the introduction to *Viriconium* (1988)) Niall Griffiths, Patrick McCabe, Ron Butlin and Duncan McLean. Their names are used as landmarks to navigate by in his writing and many of these novelists

represent individual strands around which the discussion of Banks is oriented, points for exploration in the course of my mapping the landscape of contemporary fiction.

The function of this study is to provide a compelling degree of critical attention and credibility to the only British writer who can claim a successful career in two different fields, speculative fiction and conventional fiction, but has yet to gain substantial academic recognition. At present there is no published comprehensive study of his works and there exist a limited number of doctoral theses which some of my material has been drawn from in order to develop existing scholarship.

Importantly for establishing how his juvenilia informs the oeuvre, there is coverage of how many novels Banks had written but not published before *The Wasp Factory*: ‘he has pointed out on many occasions that it was the seventh he has written but the first he had revised’ (Nairn 1993: 128) and correspondence with a long-standing friend of Banks, Dave Haddock, concurs with this. In his lengthy emails Haddock details extensively the previous attempts Banks had made at writing for publication and the books he was most influenced by in the early days of his prospective career as a novelist:

The pre-publication and unpublished work of Iain Banks is of major significance in the study of his early published work, in particular, the time around the bifurcation in what he describes as his Y shaped career. A chronology of these works is presented based on the information the author has divulged in interviews, public appearances and biographical writings such as those included in *Raw Spirit*, his non-fiction book on whisky. However, it should be noted that Banks’s public statements about himself are usually couched in self-deprecation: at a convention in 2008 he said that his inbuilt frivolity means that he will say something serious and then immediately undercut it. (Haddock 2009a: n.p)

Banks’ first major attempt at writing a novel was when he was 14 and titled *The Top of Poseidon*. Although the author now admits that while he thought he had written a novel, it was less than thirty thousand words in length and so would actually be classed as a

novella. The early attempts constitute one novella and three novels entitled *The Top of Poseidon*, *The Hungarian Lift-Jet* and *The Tashkent Rambler* (also known as TTR) – *The Top of Poseidon* is counted as a novella and a novel in Haddock’s chronology. Together they represent the early phase of Banks’ career when he was trying to write ‘action-adventure’ but the manuscripts are ‘full of purple prose and not worth attempting to rewrite into saleable commodities.’ (Haddock 2009a: n.p.) Banks’ next sequence of attempts involved “science fiction” and saw the inception of his Utopian civilization, the Culture, beginning during the middle of the 1970s. At University Banks wrote a poem called ‘My Dear Reader’ which was a forerunner of *A Song of Stone*.

*The Player of Games* (1988) was almost accepted for publication before *The Wasp Factory* (1984). Banks explains that ‘he considered himself to be a science fiction writer, but one that was not getting published.’ (Haddock 2009a: n.p.) If Banks had secured publication before he had written *The Wasp Factory* then it is possible that he would have just been a science fiction writer: ‘[he adds that] even if he had wanted to write non science fiction he imagines that he would have been ghettoized like many before him.’ (Haddock 2009a: n.p.) With this in mind, 1980 was a pivotal year in the career of Iain Banks. He was living on Upper Street in Islington and working as a costings clerk for a legal firm. The deadline he had set himself of being published by thirty was approaching and he decided to write something in the non-science fiction form that he could send to more publishers. This decision was difficult and part of him, he says, considered it ‘selling out.’ (Haddock 2009a: n.p.) *The Wasp Factory* was written over a ten week period in the summer of 1980. It was the first Banks work to get a proper second draft: ‘previously [he] had assumed that publishers would spot his talent from the first drafts he was sending them.’ (Haddock 2009a: n.p.) Haddock also explains that:

Banks is a writer who plans his work, not wanting to sit at a blank sheet of paper and not know what was



coming next. It was only at near the end of the initial planning stage for this book that he worked out the twist that has been called “one of 20th-century literature's great twists.” (Haddock 2009a: n.p.)

The editorial relationship upon which much of Banks’ success has been built reveals that *The Wasp Factory* had a significant influence upon his later authorial practices. The editor in question who provided Banks with his opportunity to break into the market was James Hale at Macmillan, who retrieved the manuscript for *The Wasp Factory* from a slush pile that had passed through the Crime Fiction department. This editorial intervention proved crucial and established a relationship between Banks and Hale that was to continue until Hale’s death in 2003. The presence of a mentally disturbed teenager with the propensity to become a serial killer who sets about killing a group of people located within a specifically domestic space confirms why Banks’ novel ended up in the Crime Fiction slush pile – it was a prototype for the subsequent serial killer sub-genre of thrillers which has become dominant in crime fiction.

Banks revealed that he submitted this novel to Macmillan because they had also published Martin Amis and Ian McEwan and ‘I thought *The Wasp Factory* wasn’t that different from anything they’d done.’ (Mullan 2008d: 06:05 – 06:19) Banks later describes their novels as ‘templates’ (Mullan 2008d: 44:40), reinforcing the programmatic aspect of his authorial practice. Significantly though, Banks’ and Robertson’s comments regarding *The Wasp Factory* and its shift in status from ‘popular’ to ‘literary’ are revealing in their perceptions of responses to contemporary fiction:

JR: There’s also a division between what’s literary and what’s popular - the same sort of idea as cutting off science fiction because it’s to do with engineering or something. Even the books that get published nowadays in paperback, the crap stuff is in A format and the snotty stuff is in B format.

IB: *The Wasp Factory* actually went from one to the other! (Robertson 1989-1990: 26)

*The Wasp Factory*'s status as a novel which garnered its place in the canon over a long period of time is significant because even the earliest reviews noticed dimensions in the text which are present in Banks' later writing. The movement from much maligned to re-assessed brilliancy could be aligned with the then pejorative attitudes of the British Book Reviewing community and the imposition of their own value system in relation to "non-literary" fiction. As Banks rather bluntly observed about the competencies of critical respondees to genre fiction:

There are a few specialist reviewers working in the genres who know what they're talking about and the other guys and gals who don't, frankly, and are determined not to find out, and will only be dismissive. (Hedgecock 1998: n.p)

Positive critical responses emerged from Marese Murphy who stated that 'there is no denying the bizarre fertility of the author's imagination: his brilliant dialogue, his cruel humour, his repellent inventiveness' (Murphy 1984: 12) but, as well as highlighting the problems and erratic qualities which one associates with Banks' writing, a substantial amount of the critical attention, indicated by the excerpts from reviews printed in the 1990 paperback edition of the book, acknowledge the talent and originality of the novel. Praise comes from Selina Hastings who enthused that 'His study of an obsessive personality is extraordinary, written with a clarity and attention to detail that is most impressive.' (Hastings 1984: 17) The most pertinent assessment comes from Stanley Reynolds who asserted that:

[t]he novel is not a fable. It has no moral. It is *not* an indictment of society today. It is instead a toy, a game and that confuses them. The novel works because Iain Banks is able to sustain the tone all the way through . . . there is something foreign and nasty here, an amazing new talent. (Reynolds 1984: 42)

This highly astute and insightful evaluation of the novel is made more impressive because Reynolds reveals in this review that the impulse to purchase the novel from a

second-hand shop was informed by a slip of paper he received detailing the castigations in the other publications. Immediately divorcing the novel from the cultural context, Reynolds concludes that the book is a ‘toy, a game and that confuses them.’ It is one of many games that Banks has been playing with reviewers and readers ever since, one at which he excels because of the confusion the reviewers are confronted with when they read a work with “literary” characteristics which does not take on the self-important didacticism that the genre of literary fiction feels compelled to with aching regularity. The marketing strategy plays upon the idea that a novel this poor must surely have been misjudged or misread: ‘anything that got people in Literary London that annoyed had to be somehow good’ (Mullan 2008d: 03:17 – 03:21) and Banks wryly admits that friends who purchased later editions of the novel (from which the negative reviews were excised) asked: ‘where have all the reviews gone?’ (Mullan 2008d: 01:19) Nevertheless there are also perceptive comments which have been replicated in reviews of novels written throughout his career. Andrew Marr shrewdly states that ‘it could not be said that the violence is casual or unnecessary’ (Marr 1984: 5) and cautions that ‘there is nothing to force you, having been warned, to read it’ (Marr 1984: 5), which is vital to understanding Banks’ cultivation of his profile as a self-fashioning novelist whose construction of his populist novels is informed by a ferocious intelligence and conscious awareness of the technical aspects of his authorial practice.

Brian Aldiss’ definition of science-fiction can be applied to Banks’ more mainstream fiction:

*[s]cience fiction is the search for a definition of mankind and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science), and is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mode. (italics in original)*  
(Aldiss and Wingrove 1986 [2001]: 26)

The ‘Gothic’ quality of Banks’ science-fiction is similar to the tone of many texts including *The Wasp Factory*, *Complicity*, *Song of Stone* and *The Crow Road* (1992) which, with the narrative clashes between primitive and civilised, social and barbaric, decadent and conservative, are redolent of the conflicts between the Culture and its neighbours. A key discussion in the dissection of the novels is the method by which different types of Gothic or Victoriana are consistently transformed or reconfigured from existing paradigms into a contemporary context.

To locate Banks within a cultural context, it is necessary to return to 1969, when David Lodge proposed that:

[t]he situation of the novelist today may be compared to a man standing at a crossroads. The road on which he stands (I am thinking primarily of the English novelist) is the realistic novel, the compromise between fictional and empirical modes (Lodge 1969 [1977]: 100).

Lodge goes on to discuss what he calls the ‘problematic novel’ (Lodge 1969 [1977]: 105), namely the ‘novel-about-itself’ (Lodge 1969 [1977]: 105). It is significant that Lodge identified this choice as being that of the ‘English novelist’ as opposed to the ‘British novelist’, as though emphasising the existence of an on-going tradition outside of the parameters of English fiction which was more adventurous and experimental. The compromise suggested by Lodge has been thankfully corrupted by a focus on the more challenging deviances, addictions and dirty realism emerging in the context of the late 1970s Thatcherite culture: ‘Banks’s *oeuvre* is entirely of the era of Margaret Thatcher and John Major: Conservative Party rule in the United Kingdom.’ (Riach 1996: 68) This firmly locates the political context for a novelist whose own left-wing invective has also become a prominent aspect of his writing.

In his assessment (or assassination) of the writing of the 1970s, Bernard Bergonzi claims that ‘in literary terms, as in political ones, Britain is not a very

important part of the world today.’ (Bergonzi 1970 [1979]: 57) In response to this Dominic Head offers a characteristically robust rebuttal:

Bergonzi’s appraisal set the tone for critical discussion throughout the 1970s, the decade that is generally held to embody the nadir of British fiction, since the gathering economic crisis had a deleterious effect on publishing, and on the range of fiction that found an outlet; but from the longer perspective of literary history (and we may just be able to glimpse this now) it is hard to see how even the 1970s will go down as a period of suppressed creativity. On the contrary, this was the decade which saw the publication of important novels by Iris Murdoch, John Fowles, J.G. Farrell, and David Storey, among others. It also witnessed the first books by Martin Amis and Ian McEwan. (Head 2002: 7)

The contrast here is between the immediacy of Bergonzi’s withering and pessimistic assessment and the longer, arguably more considered critical reception that has been afforded to the early novels of Amis and McEwan, authors whose earliest works benchmarked the transgressive fiction of the 1970s and 1980s. Head’s use of the term ‘suppressed creativity’ also draws attention to the co-dependent relationships between the publishing industry, the writers emerging during the 1970s and the political intervention and influences at work which led to the varying pronouncements about the effects on British ‘culture’. Head argues further:

It is, consequently, possible to overstate the importance of Thatcherism as political philosophy, since the state of the nation, as well as developing global trends, facilitated its success. Nevertheless, the changes to British society and culture were dramatic, generating a spirit of either adventurous entrepreneurship or deplorable avarice, depending on your point of view. Novelists tended to take the latter view, lamenting the imminent collapse of the welfare state, and a new era of inequality and social division. (Head 2002: 30)

These dramatic changes were reflected in equally startling developments in contemporary fiction, where innovation and experimentation became prominent and the political conditions of the time proved incredibly fertile for the next generation of

novelists to thrive in and, like Banks himself, respond with immediacy and urgency. Significantly, Head's survey does not make any reference to Banks' work and his omission from a substantial number of other scholarly surveys in contemporary writing makes this more noticeable. Of the major sources used for this thesis, Banks' more mainstream writing occurs more frequently in academic texts focusing on the Gothic or Scottish literature and culture, suggesting either academic pigeonholing at work or that he is simply vastly underestimated in the formation of the contemporary canon. Critics such as Rod Mengham (*An Introduction to Contemporary Fiction*) (1999) Jago Morrison (*Contemporary Fiction*) (2003) and Philip Tew (*The Contemporary British Novel*) (2004) all fail to mention Banks' debut or the longevity of his career and he only receives scant attention in Tew's second edition of *The Contemporary British Novel* (2007) because of *Dead Air* (2002) and the inclusion of a problematic section concerning the 9/11 novel and 'the traumatological'. By contrast, critics such as Tim Middleton, Cairns Craig, Duncan Petrie, Gavin Wallace, David Punter and Victor Sage acknowledge key texts within the Banks' oeuvre as contributing to their respective genres and national traditions. J. G. Ballard commented that '[a] lot of British fiction is too rooted. The writers are too comfortable' (Self 1995: 333) and this is another reason why, of the McEwan, Amis and Banks trio, only Iain Banks can be considered to have remained true to his original cultish status, despite achieving stellar sales figures. The pointed rejection of a comfortable position within the canon or an established reputation with the influential cultural commentators is a decision which complicates efforts to pigeonhole or categorise Banks, an aspect of his craft that enhances his uneasy and fluid relationship with the establishment and presents a contingency that I place under regular scrutiny.

Banks' assessment of his role as a writer differs from his approach to the practice of contemporary fiction. In his playful lambasting of reviewers and critical

reception of his novels, Banks claims that his commercial success must mean his books are substandard yet there is an overt and self-conscious craft about the complexities of his work which acts in opposition to the assumed lack of quality. The distinction is reinforced by his ability to maintain a narrative pace with this sophistication in his writing, sustaining the readers' interest but also challenging and unsettling their expectations. By contrast with the literary pretensions of his contemporaries, Banks is shamelessly forthcoming about his reputation as a devil-may-care writer whose attitude to the practice and craft of writing is both erratic and cavalier, but despite his phenomenal success, Banks maintains a self-deprecating view of the importance of his own literary output. Following the publication of *Dead Air*, Banks revealed that:

I assumed that if you were a good writer then you didn't sell very well, and if you were a rubbish writer you sold bucketloads – so I guess what I'm trying to say is I'm a rubbish writer. (Brooks 2002: B4)

Far from reinforcing the serious (but stereotyped) image of the author as a personification of austerity and intellectual artistry whose rarefication and literature embodies their philosophies, values and imaginations, Banks deliberately problematises the question of his role as a writer, demonstrated forthrightly when he was interviewed about the events of September 2001:

From a horribly selfish point of view, I'm glad I wasn't writing a book when it happened. It's quite a natural thing to think "What's the point of writing anything?" No matter how wonderfully intellectual your book might be, in a sense you're just part of the entertainment industry – very well reviewed novels are just entertainment for people who went to Oxbridge, if you want to be really pejorative about it. (Brooks 2002: B4)

He also recalls receiving invitations to write op-ed commentary about the James Bulger case (Mullan 2008d: 11:12 – 11:16) which were robustly dismissed. When asked about his views on the subject of contemporary fiction, he responded accordingly:

I love plot, I love stories. I hate these novels that just stop. I think, “Hello? What happened? Did they run out of words?” People seem to think that that’s the clever way to end novels. Well, I don’t think it’s good enough. I want closure, I don’t want any of this existentialist post-modern shite, pal. I want a story, with an ending. (Hughes 1999: B6)

These are the opinions of a writer who is unquestionably a wonderful raconteur, who lets his imagination run wild but who still appears to retain a predominantly traditional attitude to the conventions of the novel. When Banks is asked, his dismissal of ‘post-modern shite’ is a contradiction though, given his use of metafictional devices and the frequent multiple narratives which vie for dominance in his novels. Additionally, Nick Ryan comments that Banks ‘once studied under the legendary Malcolm Bradbury on the famous creative writing degree at the University of East Anglia’ (Ryan 2008: n.p.). Given that at no point have I seen this in print or seen Banks admit to it anywhere else, the veracity of the information for me is problematic. Such inconsistencies stimulate significant interest in Banks’ work and also reinforce the importance of examining his destabilising narrative conventions and propensity for mixing the literary and the popular. The practical approach of this thesis is to interrogate Banks’ novels in chronological order, focusing on one or two primary texts per chapter using a thematic structure and then supporting the analysis with reference to a wide range of other novels from the period of literature post-1970.

Chapter 1 focuses on *The Wasp Factory* and argues that the concept of ‘splintering’ and ‘fragmentation’ aptly describes both the authorial figure of Banks and his dual output. Iain Banks’ university background provided him with a particularly keen interest in the complexities and workings of the mind and identity more generally, two aspects that are at the forefront of later novels such as *Complicity*, *Walking on Glass* and *The Bridge*. By exploring the relationship between mental disorder and the Gothic and examining the ways in which theories of gender and identity performance



are satirised and parodied, this chapter explores two prominent concerns which lie at the heart of Banks' novels. There is also an opportunity to establish the methods by which Banks' characters and tendencies are often responding to cultural concerns and anxieties regarding 'authenticity' and different perceptions of the ways in which essentialist notions are undermined.

Chapter 2 addresses *Walking on Glass* and *The Player of Games* in relation to the themes of 'playing games with narrative' and 'playing games with identity' as well as providing a detailed analysis of the intertextual relationship between *Walking on Glass* and *The Cement Garden* (1978) using, primarily, the trope of incest and an etymological reading of characters' names. Highlighting the significance of the names and the tri-partite narrative structure in *Walking on Glass*, as well as Banks' use of prolepsis, his provision of clues for the reader to decode and his presentation of identities leads directly into the discussion of *The Player of Games*, in particular ideas of performance and transgression. By focusing on narrative and the metafictional qualities employed in these texts in the second section, the analysis demonstrates the significance of 'games' as a motif and a structural form in relation to Banks' work.

Chapter 3 examines *The Bridge* in relation to narrating Scotland as a post-industrial space and its connection with the contemporary Gothic. In terms of critical and editorial history, *The Bridge* derives from an earlier Banks manuscript that remains unpublished, with a narrative that portrayed 'a man waking up in the desert with no memory but with a circular mark on his chest.' (Haddock 2004b: 6) This chapter develops further the question of whether Banks is explicitly a Scottish novelist or one with wider concerns, particularly when locating him within the metafictional/urban realist territory that has been explored by, amongst others, Alasdair Gray and James Kelman. The focus on the post-industrial space highlights the ways in which Banks politicises his fiction, offering a playful critique of the decline in Scottish industry under

Thatcherism but it also provides the first evident example of Banks' two different forms (mainstream and science-fiction) cross-fertilisation, given that 'the Bridge' of the title is both an indication of his alternative genre and Borgesian link to the critical utopia which has similar characteristics to the Culture. The contemporary Gothic develops the 'post-industrial' theme, given the Gothic's traditional response to these existing forms and processes of urban decay and decline. This provides a foreshadowing of the key text for this thesis, *Complicity*, with its 'post-industrial male' protagonist, Cameron Colley.

Chapter 4 considers *Canal Dreams* in relation to subverting the thriller genre and the intersections of 'literature and memory'. Taking the work of Brian Docherty writing about one of Scotland's popular novelists, Alistair MacLean, whom Banks read at an early age, then expanding this into an assessment of the thriller genre, this chapter offers a survey of the media responses which varied between perceptive understanding of the influences and a degree of misunderstanding as to what Banks was attempting to achieve. Banks describes himself as:

a child of the television age, enjoying *The Man from UNCLE*, *Danger Man* and other similar Sixties shows. He does not remember a time when the family did not have a television set and once blamed what he called his "kinetic fiction" on Gerry Anderson, citing the opening credits of *Thunderbirds* (Haddock 2009a: n.p).

The way in which Banks plays "games" with genre is evidenced here, as well as demonstrating how popular fictions can become politicised in their responses to different events on a global outlook. The second section returns to the significance of 'repressed violence' in terms of gender expectation, as well as considering the relationship between historical events and their representation, symbolically, in contemporary fiction.

Chapter 5 focuses on *The Crow Road*, exploring Banks' use of landscape, space and the Gothic. The 'questions of Scotland' and Banks' critique of Capitalism are extended to a discussion of postmodern Gothic and spatial Gothic.

Chapter 6 considers Banks' portmanteau text, *Complicity*, in relation to contemporary Scottish crime fiction, the themes of terror and violence, concluding with a study of the representation of the postmodern body and fantasy. It is the strongest case for contemporary intertextual references in the Banks' oeuvre as well as demonstrating the presentation of the 'double' and the 'playing of games', which remains a key aspect of his authorial practice.

Although the overarching discussion requires a comprehensive survey of Banks' output, the extent to which this is achievable is mitigated by a requirement for balance and coherency of textual analysis and as such, omissions are inevitable. The selection of key texts from the early and mid-point period of Banks' career to date ensures that the discussion is focused around the identifiably dominant themes of his work: these include gender, terror, the 'Scottish question', game-playing and transgression. The excision of *The Business* is determined by *Complicity* offering a far more perceptive and critically richer discussion of the intersections between Capitalism, conspiracy, violence and politics, as well as the 'doubling' which is not present in the former. *Whit* (1995) does not fit with the body of analysis since its thematic content is not sufficiently relevant to the aspects of Banks' work that are discussed in my critique. Despite its impressive execution, *Song of Stone* is dislocated from the critical structure into which Banks' other novels fit, not touching on the main themes under discussion and not having a sufficiently concrete or identifiable cultural or historical context, an element that is necessary for constructing a convincing relationship between Banks as a novelist and the period of time which he is writing about. This is particularly pertinent to the relationship between politics and Banks' work, a recurrent contour in the integration of

his left-wing standpoint and key topics such as terrorism, Thatcherism and US politics which are examined in discussions of *Canal Dreams* and *Complicity*. A similar decision was taken to exclude *Dead Air* and *The Algebraist* (2004), the latter falls outside the category of fiction which is ostensibly mainstream but often speculative whilst *Dead Air* is notable for being one of Banks' less impressive texts and, by his own omission, a novelistic misfire. Whilst the importance of Banks' disposition for responding with characteristic urgency to momentous events is discussed, the lack of proximity of the other novels to the subject of September 2001 means a chapter dedicated to discussing that particular political moment would have imbalanced the focus. It would have been necessary to expand the range of contemporary British fiction to involve American novelists, since the only other British novelists with such swift responses are Ken Hollings' *Destroy All Monsters* (2001) which, presciently, concerns a ten-year long war in Iraq, Michael Moorcock's return to Jerry Cornelius in *Firing the Cathedral* (2002), the eccentric essay 'Tora-Bora-Boom-Di-Ay' (2003) by Robert Meadley which mixes journalistic style with fantastic tropes and China Miéville's modern fable 'Foundation' (2005). Taken in chronological succession they provide an alternate picture of the possibilities of representation, using techniques from genre fiction, from those of either media or film, or of realist textual approaches, and were among the earliest published responses.

With this in mind, the starting point for the discussion turns to another momentous event in alternative contemporary British culture, the publication of *The Wasp Factory*.

## **Chapter 1: “These Things of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine”: *The Wasp Factory*,**

### **Gender Performance and Mental Disorder**

No [wo]man is an island. (Donne 1624 [1942]: 270)

the absolute propriety of a gargoyle’s grinning at the elbow of a kneeling saint. (Smith 1919: 35)

I consider Banks’ narratives as a site of distinct creative conflict between the demands of popular produced genre writing and the impulse to subvert established genre conventions and transgress social rules which manifests itself as an aesthetic tension found throughout his novels. Genre and its manipulation is an element of Banks’ practice about which he is frank and overt, similarly his conscious use of the Gothic facilitates the exploration of transgressive behaviour. What follows is an analysis of *The Wasp Factory* that focuses on two dominant themes: gender and mental disorder, using the Gothic as a framework. The critical responses received upon *The Wasp Factory*’s publication constitute a foundational and persuasive starting point for discussing the novel which dramatically thrust Banks into the public eye – a bodily metaphor which is highly appropriate given his often articulated desire that he sets out to shock.

### **The Wasp Factory: Not Getting the Joke**

Published in 1984, *The Wasp Factory* represents one of the startling, unsettling and controversial debut novels of the period post-1970. Regarded as a shocking, visceral and disturbing entry into the world of contemporary British fiction, *The Wasp Factory* gained a notorious response, provoking astonishment, repulsion, praise, criticism and, importantly, a lack of unified critical acclaim. Of the detractors, scathing comments emerged from Andrew Gimson of *The Times* who claimed dismissively: ‘[a]s a piece of writing, *The Wasp Factory* soars to a level of mediocrity . . . Perhaps it is all a joke, meant to fool literary London into respect for rubbish.’ (Gimson 1984: 11)

Following on from this demolition, Patricia Craig in *The Times Literary Supplement* called it ‘[a] literary equivalent of the nastiest brand of juvenile delinquency: inflicting outrages on animals’ (Craig 1984: 287). She then complained with further indignancy that ‘the novelist’s satiric intention is overwhelmed by his relish for exorbitant brutalities.’ (Craig 1984: 287) The howls of uproar and opprobrium and the whinging histrionics from many reviewers, who greeted the publication with derision, were notable for their failure to recognise the ‘satiric intention’ identified by Craig. Characteristically the humour, the in-jokes and the commonly held opinion that he is being part-provocateur, part-prankster, has led to Banks’ reputation as a novelist who gleefully and shamelessly plays games with critics, with genre and with many other aspects of the writing process.

With such a strategic positioning of the reviews in the early and later editions, Craig’s review provides an assessment which is also useful for highlighting the ‘cartoonish quality’ of the novel and it generates curiosity about which reviews were excised from the original 1984 paperback edition, given that two of the review excerpts in the 1990 edition mention the ‘humour’ of the novel. This combination of comedy and over-the-top violence is of the Monty Python flavour but is also calculated to shock, informed as it is with an effective blend of surrealism and mania that is macabre and compelling - as Marr noted: ‘[y]ou can’t laugh and throw up at the same time.’ (Marr 1984: 5) Typifying the comedic aspect of *The Wasp Factory* is the scene in which Frances is attacked by a rogue giant rabbit. The situation is exaggerated to the point of disbelief, reinforcing the characteristics of Banks’ popular fiction that means he treads the fine lines of presenting acceptable scenarios to his readership before subverting their expectations and pushing their limits.

The failure to recognise the humour is an aspect of the reviews which Banks has noted in interviews. There is a consistent oversight amongst the early readings of the

novel which fails to identify the gender subversion that is at work within the novel and was concurrent with the time of *The Wasp Factory*'s publication. At this time, *Spitting Image* was: reflecting not only the "crisis in masculinity" but a growing understanding of the times: that masculinity and femininity did not necessarily map neatly onto the biological male and female.' (Horner and Zloznik 2005: 137) The 'times' in question are the prevalent gender politics of the Thatcher period when '[t]he popular culture of the 1980s demonstrate[d] a fascination with this gender instability' (Horner and Zloznik 2005: 137) and the significance of popular culture's engagement with this social and cultural context correlates with Banks' own strategy as a writer: the skilful and knowing appropriation of popular genre conventions in order to transgress them. In addition, the strategy reinforces Banks' renown as a novelist unafraid to reference a range of different cultural forms. One popular genre that Banks regularly utilises is the Gothic, particularly the postmodern strand, and it is this which I turn to in order to begin a close consideration of *The Wasp Factory*.

Kirsty Macdonald refers to Banks as one of the 'major contemporary Scottish exponents of the Gothic' (Macdonald 2007: n.p) and *The Wasp Factory* can be easily located within the Gothic, with its emphasis on 'excess, transgression and anxiety concerning the female' (Macdonald 2007: n.p). These tropes are considered central by critics such as Anne Williams (*Art of Darkness: A Poetics of the Gothic*, 1995) and Fred Botting (*Gothic*, 1996). By using the Gothic genre, Banks is able to provide an intertextual appreciation and understanding of texts which 'recognizes the play of surface effects as they locate themselves on the unstable boundary between humour and horror and transgress it in both directions.' (Horner and Zloznik 2005: 165) This utilises a technique that is in keeping with the qualities of the historical and contemporary Gothic. The target of Banks' novel is the Gothic genre, a number of the texts particularly: *The Monk* (1796) and *Frankenstein* (1818) are conspicuously ripe for

parody and ‘are already half-way to sending themselves up’ (Baldick 1992 [2009]: xxiii). Considering the repeated cultural reproduction of *Frankenstein* – Sara Alegre notes that *The Wasp Factory* is close to the worlds of ‘Alasdair Gray’s *Poor Things* (1992) with its mad surgeon Godwin Baxter’ (Alegre 2000: 202) - it is unsurprising Banks uses this as his foundational text, emphasising that:

[t]he comic turn in Gothic . . . is not an aberration or a corruption of a “serious genre”; rather, it is “intrinsic” to a mode of writing that has been hybrid since its very inception. (Zloznik and Horner 2005: 4)

Humour or the comic therefore represents a significant aspect of *The Wasp Factory* and the Gothic genre, an aspect Banks emphatically deploys.

The question of ‘satiric intention’ is also important when locating the novel in the Gothic genre and not that of ‘Horror’. Critical commentaries note that ‘[t]he black, absurdist *The Wasp Factory* is often, dubiously, designated “horror” (Nairn 1993: 127) and that ‘Banks’s sense of humour delivers him from the Horror genre.’ (Riach 1996: 67) Banks forthrightly distances himself from suggestions he is a writer of Horror fiction or has been influenced by authors such as Stephen King:

**JR:** Do you read horror writers like Stephen King and Guy Smith and so on?

**IB:** No, I don't. After *The Wasp Factory* somebody gave me a Stephen King book to read – *Christine* - which annoyed me because I cannot take the supernatural seriously and anything that involves it just leaves me cold . . . He writes quite well and has lots of wonderful ideas but it's just not my cup of tea. (Robertson 1989-1990: 26)

The disdain that Banks demonstrates for ‘the supernatural’ is important with a large proportion of his fiction transforming canonical Gothic texts or containing distinctive themes pertinent to the Gothic, such as mental disorder, gender and transgression. That said, the ‘supernatural’ contains different generic principles from ‘horror’ and although Malcolm Edwards argues that the novel moves away from the horror genre because it



avoids being ‘fuelled by any vision of a malign universe or sense of evil’ (Edwards 1992: 268), the tensions between Gothic and Horror here are exploited in the earliest indication of Banks’ determination to devour the menu of generic conventions available to him.

Discussing the decisions that Banks took when he made the switch from writing ‘sf’ to more publishable and “mainstream” fiction, his selection of the ‘normality-challenged teenager with severe violence issues’ (Mullan 2008b: 6) allowed him to write a novel that was still something “resembling SF” (Mullan 2008b: 6). Lowe states more explicitly that:

[a] decade on, with his attempts at getting his sci-fi published continuously drawing blanks, he had an “internal debate”. It was time for a “pragmatic change in strategy”, and as his 20s drew to a close Banks tried his hand at mainstream fiction. “I didn’t think I was going to make it with science fiction, so I decided to widen my circle of rejection,” he laughs. (Lowe 2008: n.p.)

This particular choice, which still ensured Banks could operate in the territory of science fiction, is significant, given that his use of the Gothic genre extends to the science-fiction novels, an aspect that is noted when Frances Cauldhame and Genar-Hofoen (*Excession*) are identified as ‘Gothic transgressors’ (Macdonald 2007: n.p.). Judging by the unsuccessful attempts at securing publication at this point in his writing career a novel of straight realism would not have gained the level of recognition that *The Wasp Factory* achieved nor would it have provided such a fertile ground for Banks to offer such perceptive critiques of essentialist notions of gender and mental disorder. The publication of *The Wasp Factory* also coincided with media scaremongering and hysteria surrounding the emergence of prominent ‘video nasties’ which were blamed for acts of sustained violence and murder in British society. Anthony Burgess’ *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) and Martin Amis’ *Dead Babies* (1975) are comparable with Banks’ debut (in terms of impact and controversy) but films such as *I Spit on Your Grave*

(1978) and *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980) had generated headlines and outrage for their treatment of topics such as gang rape, violence and accusations that Ruggero Deodato had made a snuff movie. Andrew Butler adds that ‘sensibilities at the time were also perhaps heightened over the media frenzy about Channel 4’s broadcasting policies and, more significantly, about so-called video nasties such as *Driller Killer* and *The Evil Dead*.’ (Butler 1999: 19) The connection between the portrayal of psychopathologised behavioural tendencies and the aggressive promotion of transgressive artistic materials within the public domain emerged from British tabloid newspapers and vox populi ‘experts’. Notably Graham Lord, the reviewer for the *Sunday Express*, claimed that it was ‘a bit better written than most horror hokum but really just a lurid literary equivalent of a video nasty’ (Lord 1984: 6). With this in mind, *The Wasp Factory* is justifiably described as a novel of its time, where the fear of the Other, mediated through existing social conventions and stereotypes, is then projected onto those bracketed as the vulnerable and the mentally ill. This is not to suggest that the text is a vindication of either ‘video nasties’ or the acts of violence Frances commits, but it does highlight Banks as an acute chronicler of contemporary culture. He and his writing are of the ‘moment’ and so at the point when violent public acts were being connected with those who promote and perpetuate artistic forms portraying such violence, this simultaneously satirical and serious novel emerged emphatically into the public consciousness. Burgess’ portrayal of Alex and his Droogs received a similarly hostile reception to *The Wasp Factory* and Burgess’ reflections on *A Clockwork Orange* tread similar territory to those of Banks’ own writing practice:

We all suffer from the popular desire to make the known notorious. The book I am best known for, or only known for, is a novel I am prepared to repudiate: written a quarter of a century ago, a *d’esprit* off for money in three weeks, it became known as the raw material for a film which seemed to glorify sex and violence. The film made it easy for readers of the book to misunderstand what it was

about, and the misunderstanding will pursue me till I die. I should not have written the book because of this danger of misinterpretation, and the same may be said of Lawrence and *Chatterley's Lover*. (Burgess 1985 [1986]: 205)

The misunderstanding, the elements of '*jeu d'esprit*' and accusations of glorifying violence are reflected in Banks' writing and the manner in which his debut was received. Banks has been recognised for making the known notorious and his debut novel provided the raw material for later texts such as *Canal Dreams* and *Complicity*. A story of estrangement, excision, absence, loss and dislocation, *The Wasp Factory* represents a provocative and edgy analysis of contemporary masculinities mediated through the 'Gothic [genre which], like the emerging post-feminist field of men's studies in Sociology is "where the scripts of the heterosexual matrix and normative masculinities are being interrogated and rewritten"' (Gutterman in Macdonald 2007: n.p.). The particular 'script' and 'matrix' at work within the text concern the intersecting historical and parental narratives which are being imposed upon Frances, which lead to her simulation and gender performance.

From the outset, Frances hints at something sinister or different lurking in the roots of her childhood and projects the blame onto her father:

I was never registered. I have no birth certificate, no National Insurance number, nothing to say I'm alive or have ever existed. I know this is a crime, and so does my father, and I think that sometimes he regrets the decision he made seventeen years ago, in his hippy-anarchist days, or whatever they were. (Banks 1984 [1990]: 10)

The lack of registration implies that Frances exists outside of the standard legal narratives and, as the conclusion of the novel reveals, that her father is responsible for conferring this criminal status onto his daughter, connecting her 'illegitimacy' or 'illegality' with being born female. Banks is known for leaving clues for his readers in the narratives and this is an early indication of his propensity for using prolepsis.

Allusions to Frankenstein abound with Frances' comment about the 'hippy-anarchist days' and the mention of Angus' science-based profession, 'a doctor of chemistry, or perhaps biochemistry - I'm not sure.' (Banks 1984 [1990]: 11) Riach considers the comments about the 'hippy-anarchist days' a reflection of Banks' 'ruthless critique of American sentimentalism and the idealism of the 1960s' (Riach 1996: 72) and refers to Frances' relationship with her father as the 'opposition between punks and hippies' (Riach 1996: 72) which adds further cultural context to this novel, particularly given Frances' interest in Punk music. The Frankenstein myth is 'functionally a discursive and cultural trope as much as a fictional paradigm' (Smith and Hughes 2003: 5) and considerable significance is attached to the writers who have exploited this myth (up to and including Joseph Conrad), who collectively 'have shaped a whole consciousness wherein and whereby monstrosity and deviance might be perceived and communicated.' (Baldick in Smith and Hughes 2003: 5) In this respect, Banks' deployment of the myth through the locus of the postmodern Gothic and contemporary Gothic continues a tradition embedded within the archetype of the genre. The 'monstrosity' and 'deviance' of Frances' impaired body represents Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the 'grotesque body', which is 'a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body.' (Bakhtin 1968 [1984]: 317) For Frances, her development cannot be completed or finished because of the drugs she has been given but, differently from the Bakhtinian model, she is unable to create another body due to the belief that she has been castrated and thus reproduction is, ostensibly, impossible. Here the interchanges between the names Frank and Frances reinforce the use of *Frankenstein* as an underpinning text, highlighting the parodic Gothic qualities and leading into a discussion of gender, bodies and the postmodern Gothic.

Patricia Waugh connects gender, monstrosity and contemporary fiction, suggesting that:

Bodies, monstrous, engineered, fantastic and hybrid, stalk the pages of postmodern fiction . . . In such postmodern fictions, the monstrous body functions as a means to voice and overcome anxieties concerning the construction of femininity as uncontrollability, but also concerning the contingency of materiality as a threat to crystalline perfections of rational theory. (Waugh 2005: 80-81)

That Waugh sees these bodies as ‘stalking’ the pages of ‘postmodern fiction’ emphasises their sinister status and the threat they pose to existing cultural constructions of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’. Waugh’s use of the terms ‘engineered, fantastic and hybrid’ is significant given that they relate to the type of fiction written in the different genres that Banks operates in. The ‘voicing’ of concerns over the ‘construction of femininity’ is also a response to the historical period immediately before *The Wasp Factory*’s publication, wherein ‘[a]t one extreme there was, in 1982, the reassertion of imperial values and a masculine warrior culture in the Falklands War, promoted so energetically by Mrs Thatcher’ (Horner and Zloznik 2005: 137) and the attempt to reassert traditional modes of masculinity proved fertile ground for responses from a variety of different artistic forms. The prominence of this period of government as a recurrent point of narrative context in Banks’ fiction means it remains the most likely framework, particularly given ‘his disgust with Margaret Thatcher and her greed-driven transformation of Britain inspired his novel *Complicity*’ (Lowe 2008: n.p.). In addition to this, the quotation from Riach used in the introduction highlights how the spectre of Thatcherism lurks in the background of Banks’ novels. The image of the ‘warrior culture’, as reinvigorated by Thatcherism, is characterised by Frances towards the end of the novel, when she explains the beliefs she subscribes to, in line with maintaining the performance of gender:

Having no purpose in life or procreation, I invested all my worth in that grim opposite, and so found a negative and negation of fecundity only others could lay claim to. I believe that I decided if I could never become a man, I – the unmanned - would out-man those around me, and so I became the killer, a small image of the ruthless soldier-hero almost all I've ever seen or read seems to pay strict homage to. (Banks 1984 [1990]: 242 - 243)

Schoene-Harwood analyses this comment, concluding that 'Frank's masculine self-fashioning is by no means a monstrous aberration but the result of a meticulous self-formation in accordance with hegemonic ideals' (Schoene-Harwood 2000a: 107) which suggests that the society Frances has been brought up in possesses this wider political and cultural expectation for someone of her purported gender. Banks' male characters frequently belong to 'an (apparently) historically outmoded barbarian, male, warrior-culture, essentially religious and ritualistic in nature' (Sage 1996b: 24) and that Frances acts in proportion to a specific set of formative cultural conditions. That Frances' model is a 'killer' and the 'small image of the ruthless soldier hero' corresponds with the historical context outlined in the introduction to this chapter. The rationale for assuming the performance of these characteristics is that Frances does not see any point in the processes of reproduction and thus she seeks to end lives rather than create them. That she was 'un-manned' encourages her to perform the opposite of this, an excess of masculinity.

By alternating rapidly between satire and a darker substrate, *The Wasp Factory* offers a commentary on the threat such interference in development poses to the 'contingency of materiality' and 'rational theory' which Waugh discussed. The term 'materiality' (Waugh 2005: 80) refers to an existing verisimilitude, the conditions of "nature" versus "nurture" in a specifically gender-based context. There exists the tension between what Frances was and what Frances has become, the underlying gender performance, the assumptions and expectations. 'Materiality' refers to the cultural

conditions into which Frances is born and the response to these that occurs as the narrative progresses. The satirical sending up of the essentialist notions of gender reverberates through the jokes and the conceit of the text itself, with a girl performing the extremities of masculinity. At one point Frances apportions the blame for Eric's breakdown to her father's interference with Eric's upbringing: 'that nonsense in Eric's early years, letting him dress as he wanted and giving him the choice of dresses and trousers' (Banks 1984 [1990]: 195). The tongue-in-cheek manner with which Frances casually articulates this comment underlines the satirical approach, the 'nonsense' is dismissive and not to be taken seriously, giving him the choice of attire is connected to the conventional role of the male as having to perform through to the fine points of his clothing. Frances alludes to her disability and asserts her presence in the narrative as being different from Eric when she refers to the comments she receives from the people who do not live on the island:

I'm not Eric; I'm me and I'm here and that's all there is to it. I don't bother people and they had best not bother me if they know what's good for them. . . . The people in the town may say "Oh, he's not all there, you know," but that's just their little joke (and sometimes, just to rub it in, they don't point to their heads as they say it) (Banks 1984 [1990]: 9-10).

Frances' view is rigid in its defiance: 'I'm me . . . I'm here . . . that's all there is to it' and there is no sense of flexibility, no expressions of doubt or sense of uncertainty. Her threat that 'they had best not bother me if they know what's good for them' contains a sinister undertone, a potentially violent or murderous intent if she is threatened or disrupted. The colloquial, clichéd language of the phrase, 'not all there' is reinforced by the acerbic afterword 'they don't point to their heads' which makes it apparent that Frances' disability is not just mental but also physical and that her disability is caused by loss, by absence, by lack. Her masquerade is hinted at throughout *The Wasp Factory* with allusions to novels such as *The Tin Drum* (1959) and *Myra Breckinridge* (1968)

and the sequence of jokes about Frances' 'manliness'. Gunther Grass' magical realist novel deals with the hyper-rational logic of a young child (taken as an allegory of post-war Germany) and Gore Vidal's text, published at the seminal point of '68, is a diaristic novel wherein the major themes are transexuality, feminism and patriarchy. At these points, for the wary or knowledgeable reader it becomes apparent that the text will deal with the topic of gender performance.

When applied to Frances, the 'rational theory' which Waugh highlights has multiple functions, partly for gender and partly for the presentation of mental disorder. Frances' idea of the rational, the fixed and the logical is revealed in the disquisition which connects her perception of 'Women' and 'the Sea':

My greatest enemies are Women and the Sea. These things I hate. Women because they are weak and stupid and live in the shadow of men and are nothing compared to them, and the Sea because it has always frustrated me, destroying what I have built, washing away what I have left, wiping clean the marks I have made. And I'm not all that sure the Wind is blameless, either. (Banks 1984 [1990]: 50)

Frances' hatred of women is rooted principally in her belief in their weakness and lack of intelligence, hence the elaborate and cunning methods of retribution she employs in retaliation. It should also be noted that her victims are male and female. Frances' hatred of women also suggests that the traditionally male traits of practicality and efficiency here are valued by her over pursuits which are less pragmatic. That Frances also hates the Sea connects the island with her understanding and preconceptions of what the male psyche ought to constitute - because the sea is always 'destroying what I have built, washing away what I have left, wiping clean the marks I have made.' (Banks 1984 [1990]: 50) The traditional associations of the sea with the feminine are once more invoked here but it is the power of the Sea that Frances fears, her inability to prevent it erasing the only markers she can use to support the systematic creation and development of both her identity and gender. There exists 'the link between violence



and misogyny as inter-related symptoms of a fundamental identity crisis' (Petrie 2004: 120) and violence can be read as an extreme reaction to instability, a physical reassertion of power that allows the individual to establish order over chaos. It also functions as evidence of Frances' 'whimsical cruelty' (Riach 1996: 69) and should not be read without also remembering the ironic and humorous tone that Banks adopts.

The conditioning that Frances undergoes and the violence she inflicts upon her peers means that her role in the narrative is twofold, she is 'both perpetrator and victim of abuse' (Petrie 2004: 120) which unsettles the clear distinctions between outright condemnation and any degree of understanding or sympathy that may be extended to her actions. This dual characteristic is brought to the fore in *The Wasp Factory*, articulated by Punter as:

an account of the formation of the male psyche, self-sufficient, islanded, fortified; every item in the inventory of torture can be seen as a reactive, as a protection against Frank's hatred of "weakness" of women. Eric's open madness is, in a sense, a side issue; it is Frank who has been driven into a ritual formation which involves torture, slaughter and appeasement by what might be a final form of child abuse (Punter 1996: 169).

The equation here between 'gender' and 'mental disorder' locates the violence as a reaction to the fear of being undermined by the 'feminine', of the psyche Frances needs to prevent being systematically eroded. Violence functions as a method of underpinning the cultural expectations and notions which are foundational for Frances' relationship with the culture into which she has been artificially doctored. Violence represents a form of control, a manifestation of controlling chaos and imposing rigid, systematic and brutal order over the sea and its chaos.

Frances' fear or loathing of the sea derives from its associations with femininity in mythology:

The Sea is a sort of mythological enemy, and I make what you might call sacrifices to it in my soul, fearing it a little, respecting it as you're supposed to, but in many ways treating it as an equal. It does things to the world, and so do I; we should both be feared. Women . . . well, women are a bit too close for comfort as far as I'm concerned. I don't even like having them on the island, not even Mrs Clamp, who comes every week on a Saturday to clean the house and deliver our supplies. She's ancient, and sexless the way the very old and the very young are, but she's still *been* a woman, and I resent that, for my own good reason. (Banks 1984 [1990]: 50 - 51)

That Frances treats the Sea as an equal suggests she recognises its capacity to enact change, its potential for erasing an identity, its destructive qualities and the capacity to take a life, all of which Frances is also capable of. That she feels 'we should both be feared' offers a further gender subversion because of the male qualities being projected upon something Frances fundamentally fears, that she despises. Banks blurs the characteristics of traditional gender roles and parodies the interaction and conflicts between nature and nurture which underpin this text. Frances' suspicion of women and her resentment that they have had the opportunity to perform traditionally female roles remains in conflict with her paradoxical self-loathing: she finds herself resenting this lack of opportunity but also fears the qualities she identifies with her own 'gender'. Frances conceptualises a 'woman' as embodying the antithesis of the 'warrior culture', as representing the chaos and the lack of control ascribed to perceptions of women. Frances represents an ambiguity, caught between roles which are circumscribed, those which have been doctored and imposed upon her and roles which she has chosen but still remains uncomfortable with. A further discussion of this, in relation to the Gothic and Mental Disorder can be found in the second section of this chapter.

The doctored and interference which Frances has endured suggests a connection with a dark past, the sense of atavism which dominates this narrative. With 'atavism' meaning the role of the 'ancestor' and the 'inherited' but not the 'parental' there is a

hint that Banks is not necessarily setting out to write a classically anti-Oedipal novel. This claim conflicts with Schoene-Harwood's consideration that *The Wasp Factory* 'aims to unmask the fraudulence of the old order and, ultimately, to demolish the Law of the Father by probing the subliminal turmoil that both upholds and potentially subverts it.' (Schoene-Harwood 2000a: 104) At the same time as challenging the 'old order', hence the emphasis on atavism, the novel also rejects the construction of the father as patriarch. There are echoes here of the Oedipus Complex in the relationship between Frances and Angus. A further Freudian parody derives from: 'Freud's conception that women suffer from a castration complex' (Craig 2002: 9) and Banks renders this in the text through Frances' on-going consideration that she was castrated by Old Saul.

Angus' obsession with trivia and testing Frances with information about measurements conforms to the 'rational sense' that Waugh previously identified. As Frances explains: 'my father couldn't abide a son of his not being a credit to him in some way; my body was a forlorn hope for any improvement, so only my mind was left.' (Banks 1984 [1990]: 11) In this case Frances feels the education she receives at home, as opposed to formal education off the island, is her father's way of compensating for the physical lack she has incurred. Unable to live up to her father's expectations as a male physically, she must perform intellectually through the practical acquisition of knowledge and information. There is a significant use of the word 'credit' here which can be interpreted as indicating Frances' status as the subject of the experiment her father conducts. Frances' value is reflected in a calculation of material investment through time and her potential as a medical experiment. Her body therefore becomes a commodity and she is a guinea pig to establish the benefits or disadvantages of interfering in biological processes. Frances' eventual outcome as a 'credit' means she becomes part of a lineage and can maintain the family inheritance through their property

holdings, the proverbial “man of the house” in a way that Eric is unable to because of his incarceration and insanity. The idea of investment and gender is continued at the conclusion of the novel when, following the revelation that ‘he’ is Frances, she muses on the reasons for the killings she has undertaken:

Perhaps it was because I thought I had all that really mattered in the world, the whole reason – and means – for our continuance as a species, stolen from me before I knew even its value. Perhaps I murdered for revenge in each case, jealously exacting – through the only potency at my command – a toll from those who passed within my range; my peers who each would otherwise have grown into the one thing I could never become: an adult. (Banks 1984 [1990]: 242)

The debate is couched in a semantic register of economy. Frances’ feeling that she has been robbed, that her role in continuing the species has been ‘stolen’ suggests a sense of emasculation, equating the role with the male and consequently the possessor, the owner. That she attaches a sense of ‘value’ to this capacity for ‘continuance of the species’ further reinforces her belief in the male performance which she subscribes to, as one who must procreate and establish another generation of Cauldhames, to whom she can bequeath the island upon her death or her being unable to continue controlling it. The belief in having control of the island concurs with this sense of ownership and property, the Gothic characteristic of reinforcing and disrupting the lines of ancestry and inheritance that Angus’ interference has created.

The tone of commerce continues when Frances claims to have been ‘jealously exacting . . . a toll’, specifically charging her peers as though to gain some form of material compensation for her lack of potential development. If the murders were the precise payment for this inability to progress into adulthood then this must equate Frances’ disability with the feelings of having died: being unable to function as a man s/he would prefer not to live and ensure those around her who have this procreative capability are prevented from succeeding. If the word ‘potency’ is considered, there are

a number of readings that Frances' actions attract: in its best known definitions, 'potency' can mean 'the ability to have sexual intercourse (in a male)' (Schwarz 1993: 1338) or 'a wielder of power, a potentate' (Schwarz 1993: 1338), both of which are specific to Frances' roles on the island – one of which she can perform and does so with deadly accuracy, the other she is incapable of and thus compensates with the performative excess of the other. A more obsolete definition for 'potent' is the heraldic term meaning 'a crutch with a crosspiece fitting under the arm; a support' (Schwarz 1993: 1338). Considering the medical terminology, Banks is playing games with language and punning on this term - a recurrent feature of his later novels. The image of Frances as a religious or sacrificial figure, given that the specific type of structure this 'support' or 'crutch' refers to is a cross (with the religious symbolism that accompanies it) has overtones of the person who Frances feels she is most aligned with – one who is God-like and one who has also been sacrificed for the purposes of others, the individual who is both the 'perpetuator of abuse' and the 'victim of abuse.' (Petrie 2004: 120) The more language-focused readings concur with the general point made by Craig who observes that in *The Wasp Factory* characters attempt to try and escape from that which they fear by undertaking a transformation into something that can symbolise or represent the fear that they are suffering. This is achieved by 'taking upon themselves God's role in relation to the rest of humanity.' (Craig 2002: 33) In order for Frances to escape the feeling that she cannot perform or function as fully as she wishes within her perceived role as the male owner or the patriarch of the island, she must perform a hyper-masculinity to compensate - she must kill or be killed, metaphorically or otherwise. Frances' determination to operate as a regal figure over her island is a further embellishment of the mind/body separation because by mastering her territory she is counteracting the lack of control over her body and the intolerable weaknesses inflicted upon it by the father. The symbolism of the island also represents the disconnection of

the mind from the body and a movement from one isolated, confined space into another. The ideas of ‘disconnection’ and ‘isolated, confined space’ are discussed at length in relation to mental disorder in the next section. Connecting religion with the idea of ‘fear’ and ‘potency’, there exists an ambiguity in its meaning: ‘the potency of fear remains central to Scottish culture - both the fear-stricken submission to a greater power and the fearful – because - fear-inspiring - denial of the ordinary limits of human suffering.’ (Craig 1999: 37) Such an ambiguity is characteristic in Banks’ work and means that for readers, there is continuous uncertainty about the authorial intention, which adds more layers of complexity to the novel. The ‘ordinary limits’ suggest that Frances has taken on the form of one who is not human, she has achieved a ‘primitive supernaturalism’ (Macdonald 2005: 119) but has also been forced to submit to the ‘greater power’ (Craig 1999: 37) that is the medical conditioning imparted by her father. Bearing in mind Banks’ admission that he is not interested in writing about the ‘supernatural’, Macdonald’s term could be revised to ‘Gothic primitivism’. Typical characteristics of individuals imbued with ‘Gothic primitivism’ are that they embody elementary emotions – wrath, fear, grief – that appear to be imposed upon them by invisible presences.

Frances’ awareness of her ‘limits’ and her ‘need for reassurance and safety’ means that the island can also be seen as a symbol for the body:

I know who I am and I know my limitations. I restrict my horizons for my own good reasons; fear – oh yes, I admit it – and a need for reassurance and safety in a world which just so happened to treat me very cruelly at an age before I had any real chance of affecting it. (Banks 1984 [1990]: 180)

Whilst she is aware of ‘who I am’, Frances also realises why she must ‘restrict her horizons’ which can be read as the imposition of a boundary on her physical development and her movement in relation to the island and the world away from her home. Her ‘fear’ derives from the removal of safeguards, both in a physical and

geographical sense and it is with these clearly defined limitations that she operates with 'reassurance and safety'. One also suspects that Frances' fear derives from people who are unfamiliar to her transgressing these limits and invading her territory. Since she has not had an opportunity to impose her mark on the world, she must make it within the security and confines of the island.

Through his portrayal of a woman who has been convinced she is a man Banks interrogates questions of gender performance and essentialist values. By using techniques and themes associated with the Gothic genre – namely satire, excessive humour and transgression – Banks creates a perceptive, referential and sophisticated work of popular fiction which transforms canonical texts and culminates in one of the most notable and successful debut novels from the 1980s. A novel that has been assimilated into the canon of contemporary British fiction and Gothic fiction and which has been a source of inspiration for other contemporary British novelists, *The Wasp Factory* achieves a rare blend of the madcap and the macabre in which 'patriarchal masculinity, traditionally the bedrock of all communal and individual identification, undergoes an elaborate process of ironic unwrapping.' (Schoene-Harwood 2000a: 104) Through this unwrapping, Banks is able to engage with and problematise different cultural assumptions and translate these into a successful study of gender through the Gothic genre.

## **1.1 Gothic and Mental Disorder**

The main debate in this section concerns the representation of transgressive mental disorder and interrogates questions of performance and simulation in relation to social constructions of mental illness and disorder. I establish the significance of the double as a recurrent symbol in Banks' fiction and explore the relationship between the double and Banks' use of the Gothic genre.

In terms of its impact 'the literary revival of the 1970s succeeded in the compellingly imaginative depiction of Scotland as the one country best designed to drive anyone with the faintest glimmer of imagination quietly insane' (Wallace 1993b: 218). Taking the trope of the 'insane' or the 'damaged mind', a recurrent feature in Scottish contemporary literature, this damage, whether it be through alcoholism - the subject of Ron Butlin's *The Sound of My Voice* (1987) - or the inability to discern between fantasy and reality as in Alasdair Gray's *1982 Janine* (1984), is reflected in the fractured or debased narratives through which the 'voice' and 'narrative' are articulated.

Angus Calder comments that 'The Scotland of recent fiction has been a grim and dangerous place' (Calder 1996: 237) and this is characteristic of Scottish literature's movement into the darker sides of the human. In addition to this standpoint:

such a preoccupation with a darker and more destructive side of the human condition not only asserts distance from the respectability and refinement of bourgeois Anglo-centric high culture. It can equally be regarded as a reaction to the cloying sentimentality and whimsy of a Kailyard tradition that continues to hold sway in certain quarters within Scottish culture. (Petrie 2004: 115)

The Kailyard tradition is regarded as a sympathetic, pastoral representation of Scotland that is a far cry from the politicisation that has dominated recent novels and it is the movement away from this in the post-industrial novel which Chapter 3 discusses in more detail.



Wallace claims that ‘[t]here is a new cultural identity celebrated in recent Scottish fiction, but an identity whose instability and claustrophobic intimacy with psychological maiming writers inevitably deplore, yet appear incapable of forsaking’ (Wallace 1993b: 218). The cultural identity that is identified seems to be riddled with ambiguous or contrary values. That it is celebrated does not mean that the writings are positive, but that they are revelling in their own fascination with the carnivalesque or the transgressive. This is suggested by the juxtaposition of the ‘deplorable’ identity with the ‘incapability of forsaking’ it – asserting that the persistent presentation of this identity type in Scottish Literature has become an intrinsic part of the nation’s culture, despite the writers’ and critics’ dislike of its presence. There is a sense of frustration and despair here, that to write about such individuals and their ‘instability’ and ‘psychological maiming’ has become an expectation rather than an opportunity for exploration. The despair is particularly evident given the argument remains that:

such motifs have become entrenched as readily identifiable and assimilable literary tropes which, despite their continued creative appeal, may have not only outlived their function, but also become the internalised submission to a condition in which the Scottish imagination will eventually colonise itself. (Wallace 1993b: 220)

Arguably the trope has become too familiar and is in danger of being exhausted – there is a cause for concern that its repeated use will cause the genre to impose limitations of creativity on the authors using it. The genre of the Gothic and the more regionally specific “Scottish Gothic” as a mode for exploring mental illness is rich in its depiction of and engagement with the process of Othering and the image of the Double, the fearful figure who becomes the focal point for society’s concerns. The opening chapter of *The Wasp Factory*, “The Sacrifice Poles”, introduces the reader to the world of Frances Cauldhame: ‘I had been making the rounds of the Sacrifice Poles the day we heard my brother had escaped. I already knew something was going to happen; the

Factory told me.’ (Banks 1984 [1990]: 1) The Factory is Frances’ ‘instrument of judgement, torture and destiny, an intricate implacable Gothic machinery worthy of Poe.’ (Brewster 2006: 180) Throughout the narrative the function of the ‘Sacrifice Poles’ is a commemoration of the sites at which Frances has killed or maimed and she offers her captures to the Wasp Factory in return for the cryptic predictions it brings forth. Frances’ marking of her territory using the Sacrifice Poles suggests she is performing the actions of a male (or animal) forming his domain, building a protective structure and then physically identifying practical and clearly-defined boundaries before defending them against all possible invasions. Reading the sequences of daily routines indicates that:

he lives his life entirely according to what he calls symbolism – every part of the island, every movement he makes, every part and exudation of his body forms part of this symbolism – but which would psychologically be more recognisable as a version of infant ritualism (Punter 1996: 168).

These actions represent a further variation on the ritualism discussed in Freud’s “Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices” from *Totem and Taboo* (1913). Similarly, the symbolism and the ritual killings allow Frances to carry out the maintenance of the island for her own security and the island comes to represent an entity ‘akin to the fortress of an autistic child, into which nothing must be allowed to intrude, and out from which Frank himself can barely venture.’ (Punter 1996: 168) This reinforces the sense of ritual and safety in the familiar confines of an environment, embellishing the notion that

[i]nfant ritualism itself is thus reexpressed as the fear of parental punishment, the need to be *locked* – inside rituals, inside rigid formulae, which may serve to prevent change and yet to hide the past from the inner eye. (Punter 1996: 169)

Frances' persistent apportioning of blame to other people about her condition, the idea of punishment as a reason for her 'lack' connects the theme of gender with the theme of mental disorder, that she is being persecuted.

Banks' use of the monologue form intensifies this symbolism through Frances' personal viewpoint and allows her to assume authorship of the narrative, which is her and, arguably, Banks' way of gaining a degree of power over the reader. His narrative technique means 'the confessional becomes conspiratorial as the reader is introduced to Frank's imagination at its most febrile. He retains the appeal of a gentleman mass murder (think of *Kind Hearts and Coronets*), while behaving like a hooligan.' (Riach 1996: 70) The emphasis on tension between conspiracy and confessional anticipates the exploitation of a similar narrative technique in *Complicity*.

That Frances makes 'the rounds' suggests a ritualised existence, the need for habit and regulation in her patterns. This existence links with Punter's argument that these are characteristics of Autism or Asperger's Syndrome, the need for order, repetition and control. The brother, although absent, suggests the presence of 'the double' through the return of the repressed, imprisoned family member – the proverbial mad (wo)man in the attic - who comes to haunt by invading the domestic space. By revealing Eric's 'escape', Frances alerts the reader to the possible criminal status of her brother, the confinement suggests he has committed a transgression but the act itself remains currently unknown. The presence of 'the Factory', with its appropriate capitalisation suggests it is a tool of communication and prediction. The Factory also has a prophetic function, Frances' admission that she 'already knew' about Eric's escape proves this. The Sacrifice Poles are of a similarly sinister significance, the name failing to reveal at this point if the subject of the sacrifice was human or animal. Although he desires to defer the revelation, this technique successfully maintains the suspense of the forthcoming Gothic narrative – a characteristic of Banks' successful

appeal as a novelist - he has already provided a little evidence to suggest that something is awry.

Frances' language has been analysed in detail. Focusing specifically on the register and the stylistic aspects, Toby Litt examines the dual level of narration and the self-conscious construction that exists at the heart of Frances' narrative:

*The Wasp Factory* is told on two levels, by two fairly distinct voices: one, the death-fascinated boy-as-boy: his is the capitalized language of the Wasp Factory and all its adjuncts - the Sacrifice Poles, the Rabbit Grounds, the Black Destroyer, the War Bag, the Snake Park; his, also, are the evasive nouns, the excitable verbs, and the overall bathos of cruelty; the other voice is that of what you might call the Implied Adult Organizer, a grotesque cold-hearted and hilarious raconteur spinning out histories of familiar damage and slaughterous autobiographies; his are the sentence structures, the more contemplative adjectives and adverbs, the arc of the story - in other words, the novelistic nuts and bolts. (Litt 2006: n.p.)

Litt's language here is telling and reflects the representation of mental disorder. The term 'Implied Adult Organizer' seems to be a direct reference to Frances' autistic qualities, her rational outlook combined with an emotional/empathetic disengagement and detachment from the murders committed. Similarly there is an equally structured and quite specific technical language ascribed to the foundations of the narrative which fit together with a congruent and complementary mechanical quality, the 'novelistic nuts and bolts' suggest an underlying formality, the semantics of the review, 'arc', 'adjectives, adverbs' reaffirm this. When comparing with this with a contemporary of Banks, Alan Warner, there is a link between the specific authorial voices that Banks imports for Frances and the voice Alan Warner (*Morvern Callar*, 1995) uses for his early twenties eponymous female character, Morvern Callar:

He'd cut His throat with the knife. He'd near chopped of His hand with the meat cleaver. He couldn't object so I lit a Silk Cut. A sort of wave of something was going across me. There was fright

but I'd daydreamed how I'd be. (Warner 1995  
[2002]: 1)

The structure of these sentences and the inflections of voice are similar to the style used by Banks and Morvern has the same sense of alienation or dislocation that one could perceive in Frances, but the main difference is that Morvern lacks the maturity and sophistication of Banks' protagonist. Capitalising 'His' throughout this suggests she recognises the deceased subject as a father or certainly patriarchal figure. Her sense of alienation has drawn comparisons with the figure of Mersault in Albert Camus' *The Outsider* (1942) and if he is compared with the calculating killer that is Frances Cauldhame, there are echoes and overlaps in the mental state of both Frances and Mersault. Mersault kills and rationalises and Frances claims '[i]t was just a stage I was going through.' (Banks 1984 [1990]: 49) The use of a confessional narrative form is a characteristic of the Scottish Gothic:

[l]ike all Gothic fiction, Scottish Gothic is intimately concerned with the process of telling a tale. But through its minutely detailed attention to the artefacts which give rise to narratives, Scottish Gothic debates the process of uncovering histories. (Wright 2007: 76)

The determination and debate about 'histories' connects a specifically Scottish Gothic with *The Wasp Factory* when we consider further the specifics of the Gothic genre in relation to the text. Frances' role is to tell the tale of 'What Happened to Eric' and through the process of investigation, she is eventually able to uncover the truth about her own history.

As Frances traverses her island, she identifies the link to the mainland as 'a little suspension bridge' and notes that guarding the island is a sign entitled 'Keep Out – Private Property' (Banks 1984 [1990]: 2). This connects *The Wasp Factory* with *Complicity*, which also contains a narrative of doubles, a protagonist who has suffered a violent, sexual violation which translates into a potential emasculation at an early age

and who demands restoration of order and vengeance against those whom he feels have committed a moral transgression against him. The significance of the language of the sign in the context of the narrative is that it identifies the island as an exclusive space in which Frances operates, a domestic location that simultaneously asserts her as isolated but also powerful. This also marks Eric as the potential invader of the domestic from the outside, the counterpoint and threat to the stability of Frances' world. The term 'Private' is suggestive of this desire for solitude, the refusal or unwillingness for social engagement or interaction.

Examining the complex relationship between postcolonialism and the Gothic, which has parallels with Frances' relationship to her island, Smith and Hughes suggest 'The Gothic gives a particular added emphasis to this through its seeming celebration of the irrational, the outlawed, and the socially and culturally dispossessed.' (Smith and Hughes 2003: 1) The sense of dispossession can be connected to 'the estranged' both in physical and metaphorical terms. Frances' home is situated in perpetual isolation on the island, cut adrift from the mainland and conventional mainstream social structures whilst her and Eric's minds are similarly disconnected and estranged. She remains the 'undisputed (and despotic) master of this domain' (Petrie 2004: 121) emphasising her status as the 'King' of this particular symbolic Castle. The significance of the island as a Gothic symbol concurs with critics such as Petrie, Punter and Sage, who note individually that the significance of the island in Frances' structures is that it 'comes to fulfill the function of the Gothic castle' (Petrie 2004: 121) and this concurs with the presence of other symbolic 'castles' in Banks' novels.

Frances' need for control and power, for the safety in repetition and the exclusion of people from her society is at odds with the erosion from the natural elements around her. Building dams in the early part of the novel suggests this need for safety and control and she identifies the sea as one of her enemies because of its

‘female’ qualities ‘The essential fluidity of the sea and its elemental ability to erase boundaries represents the antithesis of Frank’s obsessive need to control and micromanage his world.’ (Petrie 2004: 121) Throughout *The Wasp Factory*, Banks’ characters continually attempt to form and build worlds which they can understand and in which their attempts to live and flourish with a degree of self-capability often reflect the desire to be afforded some degree of understanding (or protection) from the world outside of the island.

The micromanaging that Frances attempts is inhibited by the secret that Angus keeps from her about the contents of the study, the familiar Gothic narrative of the ‘locked room mystery’ (with appropriate nods, one suspects, to the detective fiction genre Banks uses in later novels). As Frances reveals:

I think there is a secret in the study. He has hinted as much more than once . . . Only these little bits of bogus power enable him to think he is in control of what he sees as the correct father-son relationship. It’s pathetic really, but with his little games and his secrets and his hurtful remarks he tries to keep his security intact. (Banks 1984 [1990]: 13)

Frances views these bits of power as ‘bogus’, suggesting there is an underlying theme of performance and artifice running throughout the novel. In this case, Frances considers her father’s ‘little games and his secrets’ (Banks 1984 [1990]: 13) as something juvenile which he must then exercise in order to keep her in the appropriate place. The ‘correct father-son relationship’ further supports the significance of knowledge as something inextricably bound up in power, particularly since, at this point in the narrative, Frances is still in the belief that she is Frank. The outcome of these relationships is a ‘conflation of opposites (which occurs because the home is also the place of dangerous “private” secrets) enables a Gothic collapse between living/dead, human/non-human, and self/other.’ (Smith and Hughes 2003: 3) The feeling of collapse is part of a wider

narrative-based collapse in which the traditional structures of gender also implode when the home finally yield its 'private secrets' and Frank is revealed to be Frances.

Continuing the idea of collapse between individuals and identities, Eric first appears in the novel when he rings the Cauldham residence and Frances answers:

Frank! Frank! It's me. Me! Hello there! Hello!  
 Is there an echo on this line or are you saying every-  
 thing twice? I said. I could recognise Eric's voice.  
 Both! Ha ha ha ha ha!  
 Hello, Eric. Where are you?  
 Here! Where are you?  
 Here.  
 If we're both here, why are we bothering with the  
 phone? (Banks 1984 [1990]: 15)

The technique employed by Banks demonstrates the overlaps and interchangeability of voices, alerting the audience to the possibility (albeit remote) that Eric has in fact descended into a hallucination that he is Frances or that Frances may in fact be Eric - as Kevin McVeigh notes, Eric may be 'Frank's demon' (McVeigh 1997: 4), a product of the paternal repression which has been imposed. Banks' use of comic confusions disrupts the reader's perception of character and subverts the diagnosis of mental instability by suggesting that it is all a performance, a slapstick or vaudeville routine for the amusement of the reader. There is no way at this point of telling whether or not Eric is simulating this or any of the outlandish behaviour he narrates throughout the telephone calls. Macdonald suggests that this use of 'exaggeration and pastiche' (Macdonald 2005: 100) is a technique for projecting the suspected mental illness onto both Eric and Frances. Later, however, she criticises this position, suggesting 'excessiveness becomes part of the critique, as hyperbole undermines the possibility that such characteristics have a rooting in reality, and consigns them to the imaginary.' (Macdonald 2005: 123) The implication is that the fusion of fantasy and realism Banks employs to comic effect acts against the more disturbing aspects of text by taking it out of the 'ordinary' and back to the realms of fantasy or fiction. One of the inconsistencies



apparent in Macdonald's analysis is that there is an importance and a necessity for Banks to use this hyperbolic form of critique given its considerable contribution to the effectiveness of his writing.

During the first conversation Eric questions Frances about her unwillingness to come and visit the asylum:

I don't like leaving the island for that long,  
Eric. I'm sorry, but I get this horrible feeling in my  
stomach, as though there's a great big knot in it. I  
just can't go that far away, not overnight or . . . I  
just can't. I want to see you, but you're so far away.  
(Banks 1984 [1990]: 17)

The island upon which she lives forms part of her identity and she has elected herself as a regent figure of authority or power. This refusal or inability to leave is symptomatic of Frances' obsessive need for familiarity, for routine and finding safety in the locations she defines as her territory. Since Eric's insanity has successfully ensured her isolation from other people, Frances finds herself clearly on the margins, unable to interact socially with people other than those she knows well. By siting Frances on the remote Scottish island, Banks 'initially maintains the conventional association subverted by [Alasdair] Gray between the North, madness and death.' (Macdonald 2005: 118) Having established the convention, Banks then unsettles and transgresses these using strategies involving 'exaggeration and pastiche' (Macdonald 2005: 118). Questions about the validity of 'genuine' madness, disorder and performance lie at the heart of this text.

Banks' portrayal of mental illness throughout *The Wasp Factory* is not as clear cut as it may seem from the outset. Following her murder of Esmerelda, the calculating mentality of Frances comes to the fore: 'I knew that three deaths in my immediate vicinity within four years *had* to look suspicious, and I had already planned my reaction carefully' (Banks 1984 [1990]: 119).

Frances spends a week performing different states of hysteria and catatonia, pretending she has been disturbed by the death of three people to deflect the attentions of those who may suspect her of the killings. When discussing Eric's return with her friend Jamie, Frances suggests 'maybe he's not really crazy after all. Perhaps he just got fed up of acting normal and decided to act crazy instead, and they locked him up because he went too far. (Banks 1984 [1990]: 145) This unsettles the entire question of how mental disturbance is identified and measured, suggesting that the usage of such labels operates as convenient shorthand for a spectrum of conditions, the severity of which varies from case to case. Earlier in the text, Frances notes the excitement and opportunities for potential mayhem that accompanies a death:

A death is always exciting, always makes you realise how alive you are, how vulnerable but so-far-lucky; but the death of somebody close gives you a good excuse to go a bit crazy for a while and do things that would otherwise be inexcusable. What delight to behave really badly and still get loads of sympathy! (Banks 1984 [1990]: 48)

In this instance the difficulty of distinguishing between performance and authenticity seems to be one of the major points that Banks is focusing his attention on but it is the phrase 'makes you realise how alive you are' which is of particular interest. By inflicting death upon an individual, Frances is able to escape from the performance and illusion she has created for herself into a state that is more 'real'. In the tension between performance and an actual desire for murder, the concern is with power and the methods through which this power can be gained. The transgressive aspect becomes apparent when the reader tries to understand if they are witnessing the artifice of acting or the genuine sense of a God-like figure whose mental fragmentation has allowed her to become free from social restraint.

Through the premise of its plot and narrative, *The Wasp Factory* orients itself around a well-rehearsed parody of the Freudian uncanny. Given the *Unheimlich* is

usually regarded as the return of something that is familiar but not entirely as remembered, then Eric's madness could feasibly be read as a performance of Frances' disorder. Furthermore, the name Cauldhame translates loosely as 'cold home' as though to suggest a domestic space in which Frances feels or experiences nothing in the way of familial connections. Cauldhame is also a 'version of Holden Caulfield (who ends up in a sanatorium)' (Riach 1996: 72) and the *The Wasp Factory* is a satirical reading of 'J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* [1951], another *livre de cachet* in its own time.' (Riach 1996: 72) The different forms of transgression at work in the text make this a likely source text. On a more technical level, reading the name 'Cauldhame' through a Freudian lens, connects 'cold and 'home' with the 'heimlich' of the 'unheimlich' or the 'heimat'. The feeling of discomfort is the 'unhomely' which is an alternative reading of the name. The critical analysis of the name also attracts misreading. One such argument claims "'Frank" underlies the sincerity of, and therefore lack of conscious control over, his warped beliefs' (Macdonald 2005: 120). This is only partly correct because although her perspective on the killings and her logic is indeed frank, she does have conscious control over her beliefs. Although she seeks the advice of the Factory in deciding the different acts, her sincerity does not change the point that these motivations and actions are self-justified and acts of vengeance.

Maintaining the Freudian reading and the composition of the psyche as different competing structures, Frances suggests:

Often I've thought of myself as a state; a country or, at the very least, a city. It used to seem to me that the different ways I felt sometimes about ideas, courses of action and so on were like the differing political moods that countries go through. It has always seemed to me that people vote in a new government not because they actually agree with their politics but just because they want a change. . . . I can feel the same sort of thing going on in my head. Sometimes the thoughts and feelings I had didn't really agree with each other, so I decided I must be

lots of different people inside my brain. (Banks 1984 [1990]: 76-77)

That Frances considers herself ‘a state; a country or at least a city’ anticipates a recurrent motif in Banks’ later more politicised fictions, specifically *The Bridge*, where he uses the symbol of the ‘body politic’ to develop a wider consideration of the geographical and economic conditions of the time. The specific noting that Frances must be ‘lots of different people inside my brain’ is an image which is reintroduced in *Walking on Glass*.

When Banks reveals the reason for Eric’s insanity, it introduces a subversion and inversion of the relationship between Angus and Frances, through the process of conventional Gothic tropes. After he moves south to University to train as a doctor, Eric is sent to work on a hospital ward where he discovers a young child whose illness is of such severity that her condition is irredeemable. In the chapter entitled ‘What Happened to Eric’, Frank recounts the incident when Eric stumbled upon a child whose brain had become infested with maggots. The decay of the body and the mind is in keeping with the Gothic tradition of inheritance in decline, a dislocation from the origins, an excision of narrative reliability and authenticity. By virtue of this occurring after Eric has moved away ‘Frank interprets Eric’s journey south to university in the rational urban centre as the stimulant of his descent into madness.’ (Macdonald 2005: 120) This is in direct contrast with the initial assertion that the North is a place of madness, as made evident through the figures of Frances and Angus. Continuing the theme of insanity, the presence of brain damage in this text has several functions:

In terms of the plot it explains why the sensitive Eric went “mad”; it also positions Banks’s novel within the tradition of classic masculine body horror Gothic, its abject images of decomposition echoing many texts from Lewis’s *The Monk* onwards. (Horner and Zloznik 2005: 143)

The process of breakdown and decay is countered by Frances who is determined, through ritual and methods that link into the occult, to create a world in which she can flourish without the invasive capacity of outsiders. The key passage for this can also be read as an extended metaphor for the authorial input into the narrative and plot of *The Wasp Factory*:

All our lives are symbols. Everything we do is part of a pattern we have at least some say in. The strong make their own patterns and influence other people's, the weak have their courses mapped out for them. The weak and the unlucky, and the stupid. The Wasp Factory is part of the pattern because it is part of life and – even more so – part of death. Like life it is complicated, so all the components are there. The reason it can answer questions is because every question is a start looking for an end, and the Factory is about the End – death, no less. Keep your entrails and sticks and dice and books and birds and voices and pendants and all the rest of that crap; I have the Factory, and it's about now and the future; not the past. (Banks 1984 [1990]: 153-154)

Through this Frances suggests that that her madness is the same as anyone else's, whether they are on the island or off it. That 'all our lives are symbols' implies everybody has their own sense of ritual and superstition, their own generation of meaning through interpretation. There is a sense of Darwinism inherent here with the contention juxtaposing the 'weak' and the 'poor' and their respective decline and success. Given that the symbol of the island can also validly be read in terms of the fracturing of Frances' identity there is deliberate construction at work within this narrative so as to invite multiple readings without, seemingly, providing any definite conclusion about the meaning. By deliberate construction I mean that Banks is loading his text with symbols from which meaning can be derived but is stopping short of providing a conclusive answer – a game he plays with great success in later novels. In many respects Banks explodes the dialectic between performance and "reality" that he

established through his use of satire and humour, arguing that everyone exists on a spectrum of disorder which also fits the reading of Autism in the narrative.

In one final illustration of the problems of the tensions between performance and disorder (and as a method of concluding this section) this passage highlights the collapse of the relationship between Eric and Frances: ‘He reminded me of a hologram, shattered; with the whole image contained within one spear-like shard, at once splinter and entirety.’ (Banks 1984 [1990]: 184) The word ‘hologram’ suggests a projection which gives the appearance of existing but is constructed from cognitive or scientific processes. The process of ‘splintering’ is term used by psychologists to describe different degrees of severity on the Autism spectrum. The phrase ‘at once splinter and entirety’ leaves open to debate whether indeed this is the culmination of a sequence of psychotic episodes and projections where Frances has broken down into a manifestation of mental illness and disorder or if indeed the brother/sister dynamic means Eric and Frances are simply two conflicting sides of the same mind acting with excess and rationality respectively: the Gothic double.

## **Chapter 2: The Player of Games?**

All reality is a game. Physics at its most fundamental, the very fabric of our universe, results directly from the interaction of certain fairly simple rules, and chance; the same description may be applied to the best, most elegant and both intellectually and aesthetically satisfying games. (Banks 1988 [1989]: 41)

*Walking on Glass* (1985) and *The Player of Games* (1988) are two of Banks' most eclectic, eccentric and, at times, dissatisfying novels. They reveal the problems, strengths and quirks, which have come to characterise his oeuvre and represent his characteristic convergence of genres, the blending of the speculative with the conventional, the weaving of plots around fragmented ideas, literary allusions, recurrent motifs and a range of fictional games.

This chapter will address and analyse two aspects of game-playing in Iain Banks' fiction, "games and fictionality" and "playing games with identity", focusing specifically on *Walking on Glass* and *The Player of Games*. At the conclusion of the first section, a comparison between *The Player of Games* and *The Magus* offers a further illustration of the debates between postmodernism and metafiction in Banks' work. The examination of game-playing through the foci of 'fictionality' and 'identity' develops the overall exposition by establishing the significance of the game-playing trope in Banks' authorial tactics. It provides a clear authentication of Banks' status as a self-reflexive novelist, conscious of the impact of his technique on the reader and continues the discussion of a major thematic element in his work, marking out two identifiable strands which are present in the novels under consideration as well as corroborating the existence of another important flourish in the continued debate between Banks and his contemporaries.

## **2.1 Games and Fictionality**

The concept of “play” as a structural feature of the novel is recurrent throughout literature but manifests itself in forms not always apparent to the reader. Will Slocombe connects *Walking on Glass* and *The Player of Games* because each text ‘modulates the traditional literary use of games as a reflection of, or escape from, reality’ (Slocombe 2006: 1) and it is the notion of ‘reality’ in relation to narrative games and mental processes that this chapter will consider. This particular section will offer a survey of the criticism that has identified trends, innovations and continuations in the scholarly analysis that formed the basis for debates between two ideological points: historiographic metafiction and mimesis. With reference to two foundational texts, Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis* (1953) and Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg’s *The Nature of Narrative* (1966) as well as more recent analyses, *Narcissistic Narrative* (1980) and *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988) by Linda Hutcheon, we can locate Iain Banks’ fiction within the trajectory of these critical positions. There are three reasons for offering an extensive assessment of material in this field: firstly, Banks’ fiction veers erratically from hysterical realism to a self-conscious delineation of spatial, temporal and chronological structures, therefore my contention is that he cannot be comfortably categorised, neither consistently realist nor metafictional. Secondly, the two texts under consideration claim, in their own way, elements of realism and metafiction and although *The Player of Games* is more illustrative of metafiction, it contains elements of narrative that are more traditional. Finally, the criticism itself offers three significant points of view: avowedly oppositional to metafiction, through the work of Erich Auerbach, devotedly for metafiction, elucidated through the criticism of Linda Hutcheon and a survey of the critical landscape with an acknowledgement of both stances from Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg.



Scholes and Kellogg offer a survey of narrative in classical and contemporary texts, stating that from Modernism onwards ‘twentieth-century narrative has begun to break away from the aims, attitudes, and techniques of realism.’ (Scholes and Kellogg 1966: 5) Noting the general academic hostility to this change, the text then moves on to provide a dissection of the components that comprise narrative, how literature has evolved and the existing relationships between the range of different literary forms. Most pertinent is the differentiation between two styles that connect fiction and the problematic notion of reality, namely that this connection is ‘either *representational* or *illustrative* . . . The illustrative is symbolic; the representational is mimetic.’ (Scholes and Kellogg 1966: 84) The mimetic tradition posits the development of narrative through imitation, maintaining the emphasis on realism and rejecting Modernism’s devastating assault on textual conventions and structures. Alternatively, the ‘illustrative’ or ‘symbolic’ emphasises the move towards the metafictional text, that is self-conscious and playful, aware of its textual status and revels in the possibilities offered by this free and fluid form. In opposition to this development, Erich Auerbach offers a ‘single-minded devotion’ (Scholes and Kellogg 1966: 5) to realism, observing ‘that there is something peculiar about the treatment of time in modern narrative literature is nothing new’ (Auerbach 1953: 474). Auerbach contributes a lengthy analysis of Western literature, concluding with a polemical decrying of Modernism, whose writers and texts are ‘hostile to the reality which they represent’ (Auerbach 1953: 551) but asserting that while the transitions of narrative technique have always been present, it is the textual form that has changed. The hostility to reality that Auerbach perceives in metafiction is not an outright rejection but instead an appropriation which is often used for the purpose of satire. Hutcheon argues that ‘[h]istoriographic metafiction . . . inscribes and only then subverts its mimetic engagement with the world.’ (Hutcheon 1988: 20) With such an engagement, this new approach is fully aware of the traditions of textual formation and

that ‘the postmodern impulse is not to seek any total vision. It merely questions. If it *finds* such a vision, it questions how, in fact, it *made* it.’ (Hutcheon 1988: 48) Rather than representing a negative process, metafiction contributes positively to the authorial and textual process by highlighting the ways in which prose narrative is constructed. Within these points it is possible to start locating Banks’ fiction and even expand into a consideration of his motives for using such a style. Armstrong suggests that the decision to challenge the generic and narrative forms is political. He feels that Banks’ challenging of the division between “quality” and “low quality” genre fiction:

can be seen to be drawing attention to the economic as well as the cultural conditions in which his own, as well as other contemporary, novels are published and to the operation of literary value through generic distinctions. (Armstrong 1999: 5)

To this effect there exists a double impetus behind Banks’ novels that is characteristic of much contemporary writing: they are vehicles for raising social and cultural awareness, as well as novels that are commercially successful. This is part of the popular appeal and similarly the playing with narrative, that subverts mimetic engagement without being ponderous about it, has a knowing, tongue-in-cheek quality. The point of conversion between these two motives occurs when Banks is able to translate his political convictions into fiction that is pleasing on aesthetic and popular narrative levels as well as proving understandable in its allegorical or analogous form.

Banks’ fascination with the game-playing motif is apparent in the metafictional tropes that haunt his fiction and the recurrent theme of the quest that preoccupies characters from both of his literary outputs. Similarly, the ludic qualities associated with “play” resonate throughout Banks’ oeuvre with its stylistic puns, unnamed narrators and intertextual references, all of which abound in the two principal texts, *Walking on Glass* and *The Player of Games*. There are two modes of this’ “play” and Armstrong identifies

‘a vein of Rabelasian crudity’ (Armstrong 1999: 65) in Banks’ work, *Walking on Glass* representing a ‘metaphor for the sheer grubbiness of human society’ (Armstrong 1999: 65) which is what Park refers to as the ‘filthy, eviscerated mundanity of it all’ (Banks 1985 [1990]: 238). According to Auerbach, this Rabelasian play ‘is directed towards playing with things and with the multiplicity of their possible aspects; of tempting the reader out of his customary and definite way of regarding things, by showing him phenomena in utter confusion.’ (Auerbach 1953: 275-276) In this respect the narrative of *Walking on Glass* conforms to both of these types of play through, the ‘maddeningly complex and enigmatically attractive’ (Armstrong 1999: 67) games being played within the text and the deeply cynical, misanthropic analysis of humanity which is discussed in the second section of this chapter.

In an interview with David Garnett, Banks discussed his use of games, stating that he used to make up games that were ‘usually incredibly complicated...if not unplayable, then unmarketable.’ (Garnett 1989: 54) He likened the process to writing a novel in terms of the ultimate satisfaction derived. His admission that he is ‘more of a strategy games fan’ (Garnett 1989: 54) reveals that he employs such a range of games in his novels because they form part of his narrative strategy, representing control and tactics to force the reader into a contest. As he explains in an interview with Ed Ricketts:

I thought about [contributing to a game] very early on, in the mid-Eighties, but recently I’ve been too busy writing books. . . . I think you get too spoilt writing books. . . . So you get used to being like God. . . . with books you get to do exactly what you want to do. (Ricketts 1996: n.p)

These are crucial observations about the relationship between author and fiction and it highlights other games that Banks indulges in when the opportunity arises, those of allowing the author to ‘appear’ in the text and also of acting unashamedly as the omnipotent creator who controls the narrative. Interestingly, Banks’ sentiments echo the

statement that authors of the Jamesian and Joycean schools felt ‘that the author should be in his work like God in the universe: everywhere present but nowhere apparent.

(Scholes and Kellogg 1966: 268) That the author is given such mastery over the text is evidenced by the opening quotation of *The Player of Games* and thus this requirement for the author to ‘disappear’ seems largely to have been rejected by Banks and his contemporaries:

This is the story of a man who went far away for a long time, just to play a game. The man is a game-player called “Gurgeh”. The story starts with a battle that is not a battle and ends with a game that is not a game.

Me? I’ll tell you about me later. (Banks 1988 [1989]: 3)

Although this appears to be a simplistic or even self-evident method of indicating the unreliability of the narrator and an authorial intrusion, the technique works effectively on different levels. The opening line undermines and negates the importance of the plot because Gurgeh is going away ‘just to play a game’, which is later revealed to be a far greater challenge. Furthermore, the first part of the sentence, ‘[t]his is the story of a man who went far away for a long time’, has the tone of a children’s tale or fable, suggesting that the presence of an underlying moral or philosophical message to be drawn from the proceeding narrative. If this is indeed the authorial intention then to use this genre of literature as a vehicle for ideas is not uncommon in the practice of speculative fiction. Banks is also able to solve a problem by aligning the “real” world in which the reader exists with an “imaginary” or “fictional” world that the author has created. Namely, the author is afforded the freedom to comment or critique which would have been restricted if this text had been more geographically or historically-specific. The reader is therefore presented with a satirical acknowledgement and breaking of the rules, whereby the author makes their presence apparent but also disappears, leaving the narrative in the control of the unknown narrator.

Returning to the quotation, the anonymous narrator states that ‘[t]he story starts with a battle that is not a battle and ends with a game that is not a game’, immediately questioning the fictions present in the text and placing emphasis on the audience to identify clues in the narrative. Arguably this blurs the line between “enigma” and “narrative device”, as though Banks is challenging the reader to identify the narrator. Furthermore, he asks that the reader questions the narrator’s validity as a reliable witness in the ‘typical Conradian compromise, in which the eye-witness . . . tells of a protagonist . . . and attempts to understand the protagonist though an imaginative sharing of his experience.’ (Scholes and Kellogg 1966: 261) The degree of importance ascribed to this ‘narrative device’ is interesting because there is certainly an ‘enigmatic’ or mysterious quality to the identity of the speaker but the importance exists at another level. Banks’ selection of this type of journey narrative is significant because it represents a clue in itself to the knowledgeable reader, namely that ‘[t]raveller’s tales in all countries are notoriously untrustworthy’ (Scholes and Kellogg 1966: 73). The correlation between the idea of an ‘imaginative sharing’ and the “narrative device” is vindicated by the conclusion where it becomes apparent that the line between “engima” and “narrative device” disappears. The narrator reappears after the main narrative concludes, our protagonist’s role complete and the plot seemingly resolved:

To be honest I don’t know whether I’d have  
 liked old Gurgeh to have found out the truth or not; .  
 . . if you’re reading this he’s been long dead; . . .  
 This is a true story. I was there. When I wasn’t, and  
 when I didn’t know exactly what was going on –  
 inside Gurgeh’s mind, for example – I admit that I  
 have not hesitated to make it up.  
 But it’s still a true story. (Banks 1988 [1989]: 309)

The first two lines reveal that the protagonist and the reader have been subject to an unreliable narrator who questions the status of his own testimony by revealing that he was sometimes absent and has no qualms about fictionalising the thoughts of the protagonist. The final line appears to shatter any chance of resolving this conflict

between narrator and text. This is not just a comprehensively metafictional text, one that is aware of the 'provisional' and 'impermanent' status of 'reality', it also remains a text where protagonist and reader are both the 'players' and the 'played upon'.

The structure of *Walking on Glass* appears to conform to a similar metafictionality with each chapter referencing a specific place in an area of London, as though offering cartographical clues for the reader. However a plotting of these proves to be false because the only real clues are building names which relate to places that Banks worked when he lived in London, shortly before publishing *The Wasp Factory*. (Haddock 2004a: 3-4) This reveals in itself that 'the reader's task is to look for points of intersection in the three different strands, decoding implied links and rejecting those that might be irrelevant.' (Slocombe 2006: 2) Such games have become Banks' authorial signature and lie at the heart of both *Walking on Glass* and *The Player of Games*. In *Walking on Glass* there are Quiss and Ajayi: two former intergalactic opponents who have been imprisoned within the Castle of Bequest/Castle Doors and can only gain their freedom by learning and playing complex games which will ultimately provide the answer to the question '[w]hat happens when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object?' (Banks 1985 [1990]: 44) The emphasis on game-playing is evidenced most obviously by the subject of the narrative which is a riddle itself, as well as the condition that completing one game will lead on to another. It is also evident in the conclusion to *Walking on Glass* when Stephen Grout is walking around the hospital grounds and discovers a match-box with the cover displaying a brand called 'McGuffin's' (Banks 1985 [1990]: 217) which indicates that the number of matches contained within is ' $\sqrt{2}$ ' (Banks 1985 [1990]: 217). As Haddock indicates 'McGuffin is a plot device primarily intended to motivate the action, the phrase originating from Alfred Hitchcock's script editor' (Haddock 2004a: 3-4) and on the back of the box is a further conundrum: 'Q:

What happens when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object? A: The unstoppable force stops, the immovable object moves.’ (Banks 1985 [1990]: 217)

In this respect, Banks’ decision to translate his fiction into games is an act of game-playing itself, the necessity of making games becomes a need to insert them into the texts themselves.

With this idea of inserting games into the text, consider the plot and structure of *The Player of Games*: Gurgeh, a game-playing representative from the Culture, Banks’ critical Utopia, is blackmailed into competing in a series of games on the planet Azad, which has been highlighted as posing a threat to future harmony within the galactic hegemony that the Culture seeks to maintain. The game of Azad is at once a philosophy, a culture and a history embedded into the physical territory that must be conquered in order to gain success. Azad eventually becomes the fabric of its competitors’ personae, a reflection of the society into which the inhabitants are born, thus Gurgeh must learn the rules and traditions of this game before he is able to engage in competition. In this respect, Gurgeh’s comprehension of his rules is comparable with an author’s understanding of the new ‘rules’ of his particular textual game:

the moves could become a language, and Gurgeh thought he could speak that language now, well enough (tellingly) to lie in it . . . There was no single message, but rather a succession of contradictory signals, pulling the syntax of the game to and fro and to and fro until the common understanding the other players had reached began to fatigue and tear and split. (Banks 1988 [1989]: 148)

Referring to the language as ‘pulling the syntax of the game . . . until the common understanding the other players had reached began to fatigue and split’ places particular emphasis on the techniques that both types of game-players use to create their own text on their respective boards, if we see the author and his text as a board. Similarly, Gurgeh’s capacity to lie in this language means that he can play the same games that

Banks conducts with his readers by subverting expectations, offering misleading clues in the narrative as well as playing a series of textual and linguistic games.

From this point of analysis, the beginning of *Walking on Glass* is strikingly similar:

He stood on the steps for a second, smiling at the figures on the face of the watch. Three three three. A good omen. Today was a day things would come together, a day events would coalesce. (Banks 1985 [1990]: 11)

The recurrence of ‘three’ is integral to the overall narrative; three represents the number of different narratives: the *ménage a trois* that occurs between Sara Ffitch, Graham Park and Richard Slater/Bob Stock and the number of games played by Quiss and Ajayi before Quiss’ suicide. However, ‘coalesce’ is significant, its definition being ‘to fuse or unite into one whole’ and the etymological roots deriving from the Latin ‘coalescere’. David Leishman concurs, stating that coalescence is a reflection of the ‘novel’s central concern with the inter-connection between different ontological spheres.’ (Leishman 2009: 215) The technique being used is prolepsis and thus, in the conclusion to the novel, when the three plot lines are yoked together, one becomes aware of Banks’ foretelling the ending with this linguistic clue in the opening line of the novel. Nicholas Royle’s Derridean reading of the ‘secret of literature’ (Royle 2003: 266) can be applied to the game-playing aspect of Banks’ practice as a novelist:

[a]s soon as there is the explicit figuration of someone speaking as someone else, of an author speaking as a narrator, or of a narrator speaking as (or for) a character, there is literature and there is something essentially secret going on. (Royle 2003: 266)

Royle’s understanding seemingly assumes that such techniques are purely the domain of “literature” as opposed to “popular” fiction.

As with many of Banks’ novels, there are often clues hidden in the names of characters, linguistic games in the forms of a pun or etymological root. An examination



of *Walking on Glass* reveals the following significant semantic links with and connotations of glass and cement: ‘Slater’ is the most apparent reference, meaning ‘one who uses a form of brick or sand’ (Schwarz 1993: 1621) with the more colloquial form being ‘to have a slate loose’ and therefore suffer from mental illness; ‘Grout’ is ‘a thin coarse mortar used for filling cracks’ (Schwarz 1993: 741) which reinforces the ideas of degeneration, fragmentation and fracturing, as well as humorously reminding the audience of Stephen Grout’s former profession as someone who filled holes in the road with cement; ‘Ffitch’ would appear to be a slightly more erudite pun, deriving from the French heraldic term, ‘Fiche’, meaning ‘cut to a point’ (Schwarz 1993: 633). Given the presence of incest in the plot, then it is too much of a coincidence that Banks’ contemporary, Ian McEwan, published *The Cement Garden* in 1978, which addresses the brother and sister relationship between Jack and Julie. Banks stated that he had read this before *The Wasp Factory* was published (Mullan 2008d: 06:13) and the chronology supplied by Haddock indicates that *Walking on Glass* was written before *The Wasp Factory*. The significance of these allusions and intertexts are that they reinforce Banks’ reputation as a writer who is unafraid to play authorial games with the work of others, as well as using shocking and socially transgressive topics in order to generate his own commercial success. Therefore, the author inserts his own linguistic games into the text which operate at different levels according to the knowledge of the reader. Because it is possible to understand the narrative without identifying such puns and wordplay, Banks’ fiction does not presume awareness on the part of the reader but is able to enter into these games with a more capable readership.

The puns in *Walking on Glass* offer a point of comparison with the linguistic games played in *The Player of Games*. The connection can be seen in Gurgeh when he is compared with Quiss and Ajayi. This link is emphasised by their learning languages from the different books that form the walls of the castle in order to complete games

requiring different sets of rules, which is comparable with Gurgeh's realisation that the philosophies, subtleties and nuances in the game of Azad are hidden in the language of Azad. The point seems to be that, like the readers, understanding and interpreting the different languages offers a deeper insight into the nature of the game, thus the more a reader identifies the allusion and reference, the greater the reward or 'success' available: 'To enable them to play the game properly, they of course had to understand Chinese . . . and their equivalent in one of the languages common to both sides in the Therapeutic Wars' (Banks 1985 [1990]: 174). By using the metaphor of linguistic and grammatical structures to demonstrate how the tactics and moves of games can be interpreted, Banks begins to offer a commentary on the complex relationship he envisages between an author and a game-player. His identification of game-playing in relation to the creation of a text echoes the fictions of John Fowles, amongst others, who draws heavily on game motifs within his work. Significantly, such elaborate game-playing with prose suggests an awareness of literary theory and its impact upon the authors who then produce self-consciously metafictional novels where the emphasis lies with assimilating academic principles into fiction and exploring the hiatus between the two points of order. This point is made by Hutcheon when she suggests that historiographical metafiction 'provides, within itself, a commentary on its own status as fiction and as language' (Hutcheon 1980: xii). Katherine Doudou concurs with this, positing that *Walking on Glass* specifically 'draws the reader's attention to its fictitious nature and plays with its own identity as fiction.' (Doudou 2008: 33) Intertextuality is often a distinctive feature of the metafictional text and Banks is not afraid to offer glances to his literary sources through Franz Kafka, Jorge Luis Borges and the speculative fiction and fantasy writing of H.G. Wells (*The Time Machine*, 1895) and Mervyn Peake (*Gormenghast*, 1950). Ronald Binns comments that 'Banks' castle is an explicit recycling of Gormenghast – vast, crumbling, packed with eccentric figures.' (Binns

1991: 6) In *Walking on Glass* we find the Castle of Bequest, a monolith which controls the lives of its custodians (*The Castle*, 1930) and the presiding figure of the Seneschal, who tests and trials his subjects with riddles and puzzles but withholds the rules (*The Trial*, 1925). Furthermore the Castle of Bequest contains a game room with the walls composed of books and seems to extend into a labyrinthine structure which exists beyond the comprehension of those waiting inside the castle (*Fictions*, 1944). The use of the word ‘Seneschal’ locates *Walking on Glass*’ possible environment, with the definition of Seneschal being ‘An administrative and judicial title still retained for certain cathedral officials and a judicial position on Sark.’ (Schwarz 1993: 1570) The seneschal and his minions are comparable with Kafka’s judges and figures from *The Castle* and *The Trial*. Armstrong’s analysis of *Walking on Glass* raises an interesting point in its suggestion that by alluding to other texts, Banks is ‘mocking the literary practice of finding literary precedents for what is categorised as serious, quality fiction. Novels by the author are designed to disrupt such academic and critical practice.’ (Armstrong 1999: 68) This observation further highlights another aspect of the game playing at work below the surface in his novels, as well as offering an insight into why, to my mind, *Walking on Glass* is not as successful as other Banks novels in the same mode. The mordant satire which seems to be present within the narrative does not blend well with the cynical and disaffected conclusion, creating a problem because the reader is at a loss as to understand exactly what Banks is trying to achieve with the ending.

Responding to David Howe, Banks commented that *Walking on Glass*:

didn’t do exactly what it set out to do and I think you have failed to an extent if the reader can’t understand what you’re saying . . . I worry that sometimes that people will read *Walking on Glass* and think in some way I was trying to fool them, which I wasn’t. (Howe 1996: 11)

This highlights the failure of a regular feature in Banks’ work which has generally ensured his popular appeal as a novelist: the relationship between Banks and his

audience. With regard to *Walking on Glass* the plot does not appear to have worked because, in only his second “mainstream novel”, Banks is already attempting to introduce characteristics of speculative fiction into his narrative. After such a departure from *The Wasp Factory*, Banks seems to suggest that if the reader is unable to understand the game he is playing then the novel itself will fail to achieve the desired effect. This is reflected in Banks’ third novel, *The Bridge*, with its unconventional structures and themes that resulted in a clearer, more experimental and postmodernist piece of fiction. Because of the clumsy yoking together of the conclusion to *Walking on Glass*, the game appeared to be just a gimmick, whereas *The Bridge* portrays a far more self-consciously metafictional novel from the outset.

Similarly, Banks’ selection of the ‘game’ as the central focus for *The Player of Games* makes his intention evident and the conclusion further evidences this. As the competition for Azad reaches its final stages, the Emperor tells Gurgeh that, irrespective of whether he reaches the final boards, the population of Azad will be informed that he was defeated in an earlier round which will avoid embarrassment for the governing hierarchy. Gurgeh agrees to this and then assists the media in creating a series of false news stories and propaganda that eventually report coverage of his defeat. In the final stages of the competition, there remains only Gurgeh and the Emperor in combat. As the two Game-Players devise their strategies, it becomes apparent to Gurgeh that the Emperor has determined to bring the game to life literally:

The Emperor had set out to beat not just Gurgeh, but the whole Culture. There was no other way to describe his use of pieces, territory and cards; he had set up his whole side of the game as an Empire, the very image of Azad. (Banks 1988 [1989]: 269)

In many respects this is the perfect metafictional symbol for such a novel as *The Player of Games* to conclude with: a final conflict where the respective playing boards have been made real in order to ensure the battle is lifelike. Ronnie Lippens comments that

‘All “real life” strategies are allowed during the game, which mimics in minute detail the contingent complexities of the Empire’s internal strategics’ (Lippens 2002: 139).

The Emperor thinks that if he is to prevent the Culture’s interference then he must destroy their symbol, namely Gurgeh. He sets fire to the castle where the game is taking place and kills the guards so he and Gurgeh are the only remaining people.

Unfortunately, at this point the Culture’s interference occurs and as Gurgeh is on the verge of victory, but at the potential cost of his own life, their rescue services raze the castle and take the stricken Gurgeh back to his ship and, ultimately, back to the Culture.

This action is significant because throughout the narrative Gurgeh has made clear his desire to win this competition without assistance or favours from the opposition, yet when the ultimate conflict occurs he relies on the assistance of the Culture to escape from his final battle. In this respect, his desire for victory and heroism can be read as a play in itself, one that aggrandises his status and embellishes his profile. Similarly the position of Gurgeh as a pawn in the Culture’s game emphasises further the extent to which ‘playing’ impacts upon the text.

The significance of speculative fiction writers siting their narratives in other worlds is emphasised by the politicised writings that characterise this genre and *The Player of Games* emerges as a substantial text given its focus on the quest of the individual and its status as a critique of or commentary on contemporary society. The importance of this authorial technique of removing a plot from a familiar, contemporary location is identified by Auerbach, who observes that ‘The theme of the discovery of a new world . . . has a revolutionary force which shakes the established order’ (Auerbach 1953: 269-270). To this effect, Hutcheon argues:

In today’s metafiction, the artist reappears not as a God-like Romantic creator, but as the inscribed maker of a social product that has the potential to participate in social change through its reader.  
(Hutcheon 1980 [1984]: xv - xvi)

However, this demonstrates a further unease in attempting to locate Banks' fiction within a particular trajectory because he embodies both of these qualities, as 'God-like creator' yet also as the author of novels that respond to contemporary cultural and political conditions and thus articulate a demand for social change. In this respect there remains a potential problem between writers and readers of novels which represent reality through different worlds:

This problem of the alignment of "real" worlds can be solved by the imaginative use of learning. A much more complicated problem, however, and one less easily resolved, is the nature of the relationship between the author's fictional world and his real world. This is a creative problem for the author, and it is a critical problem for the reader. (Scholes and Kellogg 1966: 83)

The existence of this difficulty places greater importance on the writer's role as articulator in that if they wish to critique or polemicise (as Banks does, frequently) then they are seemingly obliged to offer their readership clues about the realities they are trying to portray, lest the point of the text is lost. Similarly, with her suggestion that:

There is no pretense of simplistic mimesis in historiographic metafiction. Instead, fiction is offered as another of the discourses by which we construct our versions of reality, and both the construction and the need for it are what are foregrounded in the post-modernist novel. (Hutcheon 1988: 40)

Hutcheon identifies the need for metafiction as a method of further investigating authorial practice and the necessity of the engagement between reader and text. This style of narrative therefore emphasises the importance of the reader's complicity in playing such games in order for the novel to succeed because the 'reflection of' or 'escape from' reality connects with a second notion in Banks' novels: 'most games are about control, about "winning"'. As is suggested in *The Player of Games*, '[o]ne can be the player, or one can be...played upon.' (Banks 1988 [1989]: 222) Both *Walking on Glass* and *The Player of Games*' protagonists are characters who assume a degree of

control over their lives and actions but find this undermined by agencies within and without. However, these are not the only game-players at work, indeed both texts address the idea of game-playing and control in different forms: structural and character-based.

Peter Hutchinson maintains that:

“Games” may involve sustained or intricate play, but they may also be seen as specific examples of play where some sort of rule can be seen in operation—such devices as allegory, parody, prefiguration—in which a clear method is adhered to. “Play” is less organised and less controlled. (Hutchinson 1983: 14)

This raises a vital point about Banks’ fiction in that both *The Player of Games* and *Walking on Glass* acknowledge both a playful, anarchic methodology and specific rules and motifs. In this respect, the propaganda and false realities created around Gurgeh are as necessary to the tactics of the game as an understanding of Azad itself. Gurgeh makes this observation before he is blackmailed and it is an interesting foretelling of the difficulties and challenges posed by Azad: ‘I used to think that context didn’t matter; a good game was a good game and there was a purity about manipulating rules that translates perfectly from society to society ... but now I wonder.’ (Banks 1988 [1989]: 20) The significance of context and translation lie within the unwritten rules of a Game-Player’s ethos to his practice, namely that all games are played for the spirit of the aesthetic and that all societies are, like the Culture, of such a mindset that rules within one society are able to be understood in another. Similarly, the importance placed upon context reflects the reader’s position as one who must translate the rules of Banks’ own games into their understanding of the text in order to find the hidden levels. Without identifying the motif of the ‘game’ and the interrelationships between Azad and its players, a reader would find it difficult to decode the philosophical or political statements that Banks makes, thus the translation has a double significance as it impacts upon both text and audience. To this effect *Walking on Glass* and *The Player of Games*

represent examples of how ‘all fiction relies to some extent upon agreed, but nevertheless arbitrary, rules of representation which are recognised by both reader and writer.’ (Armstrong 1999: 69) However, Hutchinson’s analysis contests this:

“Rules” suggest competitive play . . . In literature, too, the emphasis is rarely on triumphing at the expense of another: it is on the pleasure which is derived from analysis and recognition, on the pleasure of *mastery* over a text which has been presented as a specific form of challenge. (Hutchinson 1983: 7)

Hutchinson’s point is refutable, given that *Walking on Glass* and *The Player of Games* specifically emphasise the vital element of victory to maintain the rules of identity and narrative:

The element of competition is certainly central to the notion of a game, although I am not as convinced as Hutchinson that this does not involve some sense of victory. He would rather use the term “mastery” than winning, yet dominance is still an integral part of the game; the winner dominates the loser, the reader dominates the game-text. (Slocombe 2006: 3)

With this the emphasis moves away from a technical discussion of narrative and introduces a comparative section which demonstrates aspects of the arguments made in this chapter.



## **Chapter 2.2 *The Player of Games* and *The Magus*: A Comparative Study**

This section compares *The Player of Games* with John Fowles' *The Magus* (1966) to elucidate further the metafictional strategies and modulations deployed by Iain Banks. The overlaps between these novels occur at both thematic and plot content levels, and in terms of characters. Nicholas Urfe is an Oxford-educated poetaster, disaffected from what he perceives as the post-war mainstream, world-wearied by an ennui which he draws from the fashionable French existentialist writings of the period and, in his own image, 'an "original" and an 'exile' from 'the mass-produced middle-class world' from which he comes' (Conradi 1982: 45). Gurgeh presents discontentment from the position of a Master Game-Player who is bored with his record of overwhelming success and the celebrity status it brings. Both Urfe and Gurgeh make their decisions to take on assignments overseas based on the principle of self-elevation, through a process of being blackmailed for Gurgeh and for the assumed freedom to explore the poetic talent he feels that his work possesses, in the case of Urfe. Arguably Urfe is the self-aggrandising, middle-class *poseur*, comfortably wealthy and secure and thus able to take on such dalliances without especial concern for the consequences. He is essentially the bourgeois playing at being a revolutionary.

From a technical perspective, *The Magus* is narrated retrospectively by Nicholas Urfe from an unspecified present location and illustrates the narrator's complicated and mysterious existence on a Greek island as he perceived it at the time. The intrusive sense of an articulate, mischievous narrator, who switches narrative perspectives at will, sometimes becoming his own third person 'often gives the impression of a narrator rehearsing mode of narration.' (Lenz 2008: 54) Similarly, it becomes apparent at the conclusion to *The Player of Games* that Gurgeh's narrative is equally as complex, although the metafictional intrusion which reveals the provisional status of the narrator

and the unreliability of account – Banks' own “rabbit-from-the-hat” - is as noticeably abrupt as that of *The Wasp Factory*. The lack of nuance in the delivery of the post-scripted conclusion in Banks' early novels is as equally likely to be the exuberance and comparative inexperience of the young writer as it is a deliberate undercutting of the metafictional style which demonstrates Banks' on-going delineation of the popular and the literary. By comparison, Holmes states that ‘*The Magus* is a metafiction that is as much an inquiry into the ontological status of its own processes as a novel as it is a depiction of the education of its callous young hero, Nicholas Urfe.’ (Holmes 1985: 54) Whereas Banks remain concerned with “telling the story”, Fowles continues to question and interrogate the processes by which the novel is constructed and can be deconstructed, two markedly different positions on the authorial spectrum.

A further difference between Banks' and Fowles' approaches is that Banks does not adopt such a self-conscious and self-knowing postmodernist stance as that which is crafted into Fowles' novel. He resists, until the final lines, the temptation and, one may provocatively argue, the *need* to tell the reader that they are reading a novel which has literary pretensions or aspirations; possibly, because he and it do not. Both Fowles and Banks deploys the ‘game’ as a structuring principle – the novel structure of *The Magus* corresponds to the seventy-eight cards of the Tarot deck and the motif of the game which runs throughout Banks' novel acts as a foundation for the plot, yet the reader is not required to engage in an on-going exposition of how the different “novelists” within the narrative are subverting, constructing and manipulating the fractured and fragmented realities to which Fowles' readers are exposed. As Bradbury discerns, another method by which Fowles makes his novel self-referential is that ‘he creates in Maurice Conchis a substitute artist whose godgame constitutes an image of the novel itself’ (Bradbury 1973: 264) and here is a point of convergence between Banks and Fowles: Gurgeh’s game becomes a constructed reality at the conclusion of the novel

with the Emperor deploying the strategies and tactics in a manner which depicts an attempt to defeat the entirety of the Culture, not just Gurgeh. Similarly, Conchis remains ‘a sort of novelist sans novel, creating with people, not words’ (Fowles 2006: 214-215) and the storyteller functions as both ‘entertainer and teacher’. (Conradi 1982: 27)

Such a self-conscious declaration of *The Magus*’ status as fiction is indicated by the innumerable intertextual references within the text. Just as *The Player of Games* begins with language that imitates a fable, Fowles uses T.S. Eliot as his indicator:

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time. (Fowles 2006: 60)

As Lenz suggests, these allusions ‘indicate the intention of the elaborate use of artifice’ (Lenz 2008: 56) whereas, in this instance, Banks refrains from evident allusion or reference, relying on the conventions of the speculative genre in which he is writing to make it evident to the reader about how he is fulfilling their requirements and, similarly, engaging in the authorial games which have come to define and distinguish his oeuvre.

As with many comparisons, the danger with such crude demarcations and distinctions between the approaches means that the differences between postmodernism and metafiction could be crudely reduced to an arbitrary decision on the grounds of taste and preference over style, whether the more “literary” or “popular” novel is successfully received by the reader. In this respect, Peter Conradi suggests that ‘it is as impossible to hold the various illusory and mutually hostile fictional planes in a single comprehensible perspective as it is to separate them’ (Conradi 1982: 42) and I remain unable to tell if his tone is one of criticism or praise. It may be the case that another of the differences between Banks and Fowles is the complexity of the layering and its relationship to the success of its execution. Fowles rewrote *The Magus* with a view to

exorcising a number of the deficiencies in the novel whereas Banks' decision to redraft – at the advice of his friend Ken Macleod – was to solve the problem of the protagonist being 'too boring'. The difference between the respective motivations seems to make evident the difference between the novelists' ambitions towards their relationship with their readerships. That Banks' interview with *Spike Magazine* is entitled "Getting used to being God" creates an unerring overlap between the Godgames that both he and Fowles undertake, albeit using methods which are neither mutually exclusive but remain sufficiently distinct to substantiate the technical claims made within the first section of this chapter.

### **2.3 Playing Games with Identity?**

Sometimes I start to think I'm repeating myself, that even new games are just old ones in disguise, and that nothing's worth playing for anyway. (Banks 1988 [1989]: 20)

In an interview with Tim Metcalfe, Iain Banks revealed that his novels are 'essentially about questions of identity' (Metcalfe 1989: 7) which partly explains his fascination with persistent querying and subverting of the expectations and boundaries imposed on gender and psyche. Banks' focus on identity and his talent for combining this with a contesting of the 'moral and political terms' (Armstrong 1999: 3) of British society suggests that the ideas in his fiction occupies the 'division between sociological and psychological' (Scholes and Kellogg 1966: 98) for these two conditions 'are the product of the novelist's concern for the identity of the individual and the welfare of society.' (Scholes and Kellogg 1966: 98) In the case of *The Player of Games* and *Walking on Glass*, two of the principle ideas underpinning the narrative are transgression and performance. Given the emphasis so far placed upon rules in games, it is appropriate that Chris Jenks offers this definition:

transgressive behaviour . . . does not deny limits or boundaries, rather it exceeds them and thus completes them. Every rule, limit, boundary or edge carries with it its own fracture, penetration or impulse to disobey. The transgression is a component of the rule. (Jenks 2003: 7)

Thus, breaking the rule actually forms a vital and necessary part of the game because the boundary is then acknowledged and both players are aware of their individual ground. The 'boundaries' and 'limits' also connote ideas of rigidity and fixed positions, separate areas which are disconnected, thus the repeated undermining of these constraints through the respective portrayals of persona and mental processes contribute in different ways from each other but strongly as a collective to both texts.

To this effect, the authorial and editorial input into *The Player of Games* during the draft stage is highly significant in terms of understanding the necessary characteristics of the protagonist. After reading the first draft of *The Player of Games*, James Hale suggested that the text was: ‘lacking in terms of Gurgeh’s motivation’ (Rosser in Haddock 2005a: 4). Banks responded to this by adding a blackmail plot and a surprise ending involving a previously unnamed narrator. Responding to Metcalfe, Iain Banks admitted that ‘in the first draft he [Gurgeh] was more boring . . . in the second half he’s much more dynamic and forceful.’ (Metcalfe 1989: 7) The editorial input into this draft ensures that Gurgeh’s desire for victory is motivated by a need to dominate, possess and conquer his opponent physically. The advice offered to Gurgeh as he is introduced to the principles behind Azad is that ‘Whoever succeeds at the game succeeds in life; the same qualities are required in each to ensure dominance.’ (Banks 1988 [1989]: 76) Even though these competitive qualities are foreign to the Culture but not to Gurgeh, he must still find a way of rousing such character traits in himself to achieve a level of respectability in a game at which he is, principally, expected to fail but also required to win. It is a:

sense of “dominance” that informs Banks’s understanding—and use of—games in his fiction. Most of the names of games in his Culture fiction involve negative signifiers of pain, dominance, and control, such as Damage (*Consider Phlebas*), or Stricken and Possession (*Player of Games*). (Slocombe 2006: 5)

The differentiation that is required is between Gurgeh’s need for dominance to satisfy his separate personae: the game-player and the Culture citizen. Similarly, Banks’ use of the characteristics and the narrative form of the quest complements these terms of reference because ‘The ritualistic-romantic quest for the Grail is metamorphosed in modern fiction into the psychological search for identity.’ (Scholes and Kellogg 1966: 237) As Paul Kincaid shrewdly observes, it is ‘the films of sexual torture’ (Kincaid

1996: 46) enjoyed on the planet Azad that provide Gurgeh ‘with his motivation’ (Kincaid 1996: 46) for fighting the Azadian empire. However, the motivation is not the violence that characterises his engagements on Azad, but ‘in every scene’ (Kincaid 1996: 23) of the Empire, there is pornography and torture in which Gurgeh recognises an element of dominance. In this respect, *The Player of Games* also raises questions of gender and identity in relation to role-playing, given that Gurgeh is a hermaphrodite. The recurrent themes of fetishised violence are in marked contradiction to the decadent, Libertarian society of the Culture where an individual cannot transgress because such an opportunity does not exist.

As Gurgeh travels to compete in a game of Stricken against a young girl of prodigious abilities, he offers a companion the chance to play a game with him, with Gurgeh receiving a significant material handicap. Towards the climax of the game, Gurgeh seeks to check the placing of certain pieces and cards but finds that he accidentally reveals one of his opponent’s positions, an act that contravenes the rules and constitutes cheating. Gurgeh’s reaction is this:

He laughed again, and as he did so he felt a strange, clutching sensation coursing through him, seeming to squeeze his guts in something between terror and ecstasy. . . . The closest any sensation had ever come, he thought (suddenly, clearly), had been when he was still a boy and he’d experienced his first orgasm (Banks 1988 [1989]: 39-40).

In the act of cheating he discovers a sexual thrill and the emphasis ought to be placed on the sensations of ‘terror’ and ‘ecstasy’ that he experiences. Gurgeh is also encountering the terror of transgressing the law and being caught.

*Walking on Glass* offers a different treatment of identity performance by emphasising both physical and mental aspects in its three protagonists. Each case has a different degree of severity, from Graham Park’s insecurity about his potential relationship through to Quiss’ eventual suicide in frustration at his imprisonment within

the Castle of Bequest. An interpretation of the title equates the image of the glass with the effect of a distorted view, where someone looks through the glass and their ‘reality’ is being created or mediated by someone else. The presence of being surrounded or trapped within a false reality is hinted at as Graham Park walks through London. He notes that ‘Everything seemed fresher, brighter, more real today, as though all his quite normal, perfectly standard surroundings had until this point been actors fumbling behind some thin stage curtain, struggling to get out’ (Banks 1985 [1990]: 12). The analogy of ‘actors’ and ‘stage curtains’ typifies Banks’ fascination with performance, emphasised further when Graham Park meets his acquaintance, Richard Slater, who refers to himself as a ‘glaze.’ (Banks 1985 [1990]: 17) Given that ‘glaze’ means ‘to cover with a piece of glass’ there is a suggestion that Slater is hiding something behind that ‘glaze’.

Indeed, it is Slater who tells Park that Sara Ffitch will ‘let you down’ which is greeted wryly by Park’s observation that ‘this was just gay misogyny, not even genuine at that, but another of Slater’s roles.’ (Banks 1985 [1990]: 18) In the dénouement, it transpires that Richard Slater and Sara Ffitch are brother and sister, involved in an incestuous relationship, and that Slater has been playing the role of Bob Stock on all but one occasion, the one exception being when Sara Ffitch dressed up in his motorbike attire. When we think of these persistent and frequent impersonations, Stock’s portrayal as Park’s ‘macho black-leathered never-properly-seen image of Nemesis’ (Banks 1985 [1990]: 16) becomes more relevant. Along with the ‘distortion of view’ suggested by the title, *Walking on Glass*, and Park’s analogy with the theatre, this playful masking of identities and gender links with *The Player of Games*, given the emphasis placed on “virtual reality” and its many different forms within both texts. There the formal narrative begins with Gurgeh taking part in a Virtual Reality Simulation, as if to emphasise this persistent questioning of reality. After displaying his discontent and



boredom at the infantile nature of the game which appears merely to consist of destruction and brute force, with any tactical skill seemingly absent, Gurgeh and his fellow competitor, Yay, argue:

“But what about you?” Gurgeh looked with distaste at the pieces of missile in his hands. “Do you enjoy all this ... destruction?”

“It’s hardly destruction,” Yay drawled. “The missiles are explosively dismantled, not destroyed. I can put one of those things back together in half an hour.”

“So it’s false.”

“What isn’t?”

“Intellectual achievement. The exercise of skill. Human feeling.” (Banks 1988 [1989]: 6)

As one who commands the title of Master Game-Player, Gurgeh is an expert in the traditional and classically cerebral tests of strategy that take place during conflicts over the board but shuns such depthless challenges as those Yay seems to enjoy. His difficulty at comprehending her love of ‘destruction’ derives from the Culture’s societal and cultural tendencies away from conquest and hierarchy, a concept that becomes apparent to him when he arrives in Azad. Gurgeh’s observation that ‘intellectual achievement’, ‘exercise of skill’ and ‘human feeling’ are not false reinforces his own naivety, particularly when his time on Azad reveals persistent interference with what he perceives as the natural progression of individual contests. Ostensibly this is a further demonstration of Gurgeh’s ability to mould his personality to that of the Azadian culture in which he is immersed, but also suggests that he has a desire not just for victory but for a pure, untainted victory wherein two competitors are tested on their skill as opposed to gaining assistance from external parties.

The relevance of rules to both Gurgeh and *Walking on Glass*’ character, Steven Grout, is fascinating because both find them fundamental to the ordering of their lives, both positive and negatively. Gurgeh must play by them or manipulate them legally in

order to succeed whereas Steven finds them an imposition on the manner in which he conducts his daily business.

As Grout is introduced to the narrative, he is on the point of being dismissed from his employment, the first in a series of encounters with figures of authority whom he thinks are systematically persecuting him. His viewpoint is rigidly oppositional and strikingly defiant of the formal procedures that are imposed upon his attempts to work and interact with those around him, but what is most characteristic is his perception of the machinations into which he has been enmeshed. The following extract highlights several features or representations of Grout's mental confusion:

There was a war somewhere. He didn't know where. . . . But something had gone wrong, he had been betrayed, lost a battle with the forces of chaos and had been ejected from the real battleground to languish here, in this cesspit they call "life". (Banks 1985 [1990]: 27)

His perception that he was in conflict with chaos suggests that he now lives in a state of controlled reality, where there is structure but also an absence of free will or freedom. Similarly, recollecting a war but not the location suggests geographical dislocation or partial amnesia.

Quiss and Ajayi claim that they have fought in the Therapeutic Wars and this would seem to echo the treatment that Grout undergoes in order to repair the consequences of his fractured skull and his amnesia at the end of *Walking on Glass*. Grout's therapist, Doctor Shawcross, observes in the latest medical report that Grout was 'totally disorientated in time and space' (Banks 1985 [1990]: 213-214) which would concur with the absence of any temporal and spatial conventions or restrictions within any of the three narratives, not just that of Quiss and Ajayi. As if to emphasise the impermanence of structures and relationships within each narrative, Ajayi comments that, with regard to herself and Quiss 'They might be fixed in one age, but it was an old and fragile one' (Banks 1985 [1990]: 182). The themes of conflict and war which

represent themselves through the motif of the game are found to have different meanings: Gurgeh is sent away to act as a civilising representative of the Culture but Quiss and Ajai's previous history as soldiers fighting on different sides during the Therapeutic Wars is something of a trick for the unsuspecting reader. The 'war' is a metaphor for the psychological and mental processes which occur in Stephen Grout's brain as he undergoes medical rehabilitation thus the ideas of performance and psyche which are underlying become a fundamental part of the narrative. Notably, the identity games take on greater complexity in the same way as the games themselves become more advanced as both texts progress.

Grout's identity crises also stem from his self-imposed isolation and his belief that if he attempts to seek out and communicate with other people of his type or condition, the unseen and omniscient forces that are responsible for his continued misfortunes will seize their opportunity to have him institutionalised. At one point, Grout himself admits that his delusional state is exacerbated by his obsession with science-fiction novels:

He had long ago realised that if he was going to find any clues to the whereabouts of the Way Out, the location or identity of the Key, there was a good chance he might get some ideas from that type of writing. (Banks 1985 [1990]: 29)

Grout's identification of the 'Key' and 'Way Out' is significant because both terms are found within the register of fantasy and science-fiction. That Grout is attracted to this literature and feels he can 'get some ideas' from this genre of writing makes it apparent that he is already suffering the inability to differentiate between the different states of 'art' and 'life', between the game of 'fiction' and 'reality'. Indeed Armstrong goes further than this, suggesting that Banks uses Grout's narrative to 'draw attention to the artificiality of distinctions which are usually used to favour realistic fictional representations or genres and demean non-realistic popular genres like science-fiction

and fantasy.’ (Armstrong 1999: 68) This claim in itself provides an interesting crossover between *Walking on Glass* and *The Player of Games*, even emphasising the multiplicity of intentions within Banks’ authorial practice, one intention being to demonstrate the seriousness of popular fiction’s narrative games. Referring back to language and reality, Ajayi and Quiss play Chinese Scrabble with pictograms whose meaning is being translated through a language from the Therapeutic Wars. The title of the wars is suggestive of a psychological or physical recovery process but this is more important because the typographical convention of capitals immediately suggests that this war was a historical, documented event. Banks is once again appropriating the register of science-fiction which suggests that this castle is the mind of Grout. Importantly, the word ‘Key’, used by Grout, is used in cryptography terminology and means a series of characters that can be used to encode or decode a text. Banks here is emphasising the relationship between processes of understanding language and developing identity.

Both Grout and Ajayi define their respective worlds by the literature they read and the languages they learn. By portraying Grout’s recovery process as a war, Banks suggests that the therapy and removal of paranoia have to become incorporated into a battle between different elements of the psyche in order for Grout to determine which mental framework will succeed. Given that Ajayi’s intellectualism and Quiss’ warlike nature and bullying represent the conflicting psyche, there is a suggestion that Grout may be undergoing a Freudian battle of the competing psyches as his true mental state starts to emerge.

Referencing Grout’s many book piles in his flat, it is appropriate that the Castle of Bequest is described thus: ‘The castle, rising on a single outcrop of rock from the plain, was built very largely of books.’ (Banks 1985 [1990]: 38) It now becomes apparent that Quiss and Ajayi’s home is located inside Steven’s flat or, if Steven has already read the books that Quiss and Ajayi have found, then they are living inside his

head. The castle is a recurrent motif in Banks' work and this leads to the conclusion that Quiss and Ajayi are indeed inside Grout's head. Similarly, if Gurgeh's mindset at the beginning of *Walking on Glass* is compared with this, the reader is again being subjected to game-playing with people's identity, given the subversion of the narrative at the end of the text.

The ideas of game-playing with identity can be linked with occurrences later in *The Player of Games* as Gurgeh's behavioural patterns change when he starts to take on the aggressive characteristics and traits that are embedded in the philosophies and the ethos of Azad. This transition is explained through identifying the translations and evolutions in Eachaic, the language that Azad is based on:

Eachaic was an ordinary, evolved language, with rooted assumptions which substituted sentimentality for compassion and aggression for cooperation. A comparatively innocent and sensitive soul like Gurgeh was bound to pick up some of its underlying ethical framework if he spoke it all the time. (Banks 1988 [1989]: 247)

The 'rooted assumptions' in the language relate to the expectations of the populace who use it to communicate. Therefore, they will not have a requirement for 'compassion' or 'cooperation' and so they replace this with 'sentimentality' and 'aggression', thus placing the emphasis on coercion rather than cooperation. The suggestion that Gurgeh is 'comparatively innocent and sensitive' may not be entirely accurate when he is considered against the Azadian competitors because his own combative personality means that he thrives on the thrill of the victory. The problem with such a diagnosis is that the reader is never sure about the validity of this narration because Gurgeh has to lie in order to win and, as the dénouement revealed at the beginning of the section, this may or may not represent our protagonist's true thoughts. Furthermore, when he removes any chemical assistance he has been offered, these are the sensations he experiences:

he was awash with a bitter-sweet flood of new and enhanced emotions; the terror of risk and possible defeat, the sheer exultation of the gamble that paid off and the campaign which triumphed . . . and the sheer unbridled joy of victory. (Banks 1988 [1989]: 194)

These are all of the feelings he was unable to experience under the repression of the Culture and if these are his genuine emotions then he is not so far removed from the Azadians. Such extremities and degrees of reaction are akin to the sexual thrills he found after transgressing in the practice game and are as strong as those emotions, albeit of the different type.

Such transgression manifests itself in the form of humour after Quiss and Ajayi have attempted a series of games and failed to answer the question. Quiss demands the Seneschal's attention in order to complain about the general living conditions and to try and find some form of alcoholic liquid. His precise words, 'to find *some* way of getting out of one's skull in this place' (Banks 1985 [1990]: 132) highlight Banks' typical sense of humour and word play. Quiss soon discovers a method of getting into everyone's skull when he explores the castle, but the emphasis on '*some*' suggests that Quiss is of such desperation that he will accept any methods of escaping from himself. After he meets and abuses one of the Castle's minions who occupy the lower echelons, he forces them to reveal the Castle's secret. As the narrator explains 'Then, by chance, he found something which really did do just that; alter reality. But not in the way he had expected.' (Banks 1985 [1990]: 132) Quiss discovers that the Castle has a method of controlling the thought processes and constructing the realities experienced by people on the 'subject planet' (Earth). The description of this device is thus: 'A single light approached; an orb of shifting, multi-coloured hues, like something cellular, dividing and re-dividing within a single membrane' (Banks 1985 [1990]: 134). The language in this section of the text is quite intriguing in relation to the idea of fracturing, which is one of the key terms of *Walking on Glass*. These 'shifting, multi-coloured hues,' which

are ‘like something cellular, dividing and re-dividing’ represent an object in the processes of evolution, in a permanent state of change and something that is continuously seeking to find an order or structure to the chaotic, formless patterns which are currently trying to define it. This subverting of realities is characteristic of Banks’ work and as the next quotation demonstrates, the linking of narratives seems to be an extreme example of how crudely this can take place: ‘just then all the images and noises seemed to coalesce, become part of some single feeling, which included the impression of touch and taste and smell as well.’ (Banks 1985 [1990]: 135) The key word here once more is ‘coalesce’ which appeared earlier in Graham Park’s opening narrative. At this point, Quiss experiences the fusion of images, noise and physical sensation as each disparate element is unified into a whole. He finds himself experiencing someone else’s thought from inside their mind, but is fully aware that this thought has been drawn from a seemingly limitless pool of material that facilitates the creation of individual realities. Later Quiss will advise that no one should ‘assume things were set and certain’ (Banks 1985 [1990]: 142) which reinforces the lack of foundation and emphasis on mental and physical impermanence characterised by *Walking on Glass* and its protagonists.

As Quiss is led in to the room he sees rows of uniformly ordered bodies sitting in rows who exist in the minds of their hosts on earth and live their lives by this method of observation. These people have all failed to solve the challenge set for Quiss and Ajayi and have been offered the choice of an interminable existence in the base of the castle, fulfilling the role, or killing themselves and metaphorically escaping such a life.

As the crow states:

Each one has given up trying to answer the riddle  
they were set, and while others have chosen  
oblivion, these have chosen to live out what time  
they have as parasites, in the minds of others in  
forgotten times. . . . It is to delay death, to turn to  
something like a drug, to turn away from reality, to

refuse to face one's own defeat. (Banks 1985 [1990]: 225-226)

The key words and phrases here are 'parasites', 'illusion', 'turn away from reality' and 'refuse to face one's own defeat' because they appear to illustrate Banks' point, not only in *Walking on Glass*. Each character who submits to enslavement within the castle is refusing to take a responsibility for their plight and engaging in a fantasy to prolong an illusion that they can still contribute and that they still have an influence. The idea of 'free will' with regard to mental processes and identity is consistently subverted in each narrative, from Grout's paranoid conspiracy theories to Graham Park's deception by Richard Slater, and Banks seems to be offering a critique of those who refuse to take responsibility or exist in a permanent state of delusion about their impact on the society around them.

With the semantic relationship of glass, sand and stone in mind, the significance of *Walking on Glass* as a title and as a study of identity becomes more apparent. The absence of permanency and the temporary, fragmentary nature of each narrator's persona is suggested by their state of moving across a fragile landscape which is prone to shattering at any moment. Further to this is the fluid, chaotic composition of this glass, a liquid masquerading as a strong, durable structure. Quiss is engaged in a constant struggle against the chaotic randomness of his classic parable 'What happens when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object?' (Banks 1985 [1990]: 217) but his only method of escape is by solving a series of challenges whose solution lies in the identification of patterns, rules and structure.

If the significance of the parable is considered along with Quiss and Ajayi's game-board, it evidences a link between their game-playing and the technique used for processing thoughts in another's mind. This also refers to their temporal dislocation from the rest of the characters, particularly given that they seem to exist in an environment of limbo, unable to progress without the answer to the riddle but also



unable to regress from the Castle back to the Therapeutic Wars. Similarly, when Sara Ffitch reveals the hopelessness of Graham Park's love for her, he claims that 'She had changed all the rules, put the whole relationship that had existed between them into quite a different category.' (Banks 1985 [1990]: 196) The recurrent theme of rule-making and rule-breaking emphasises the game-playing feature of *Walking on Glass*, which is further evidenced by the change in category that Park identifies, as though their relationship was governed by a series of conditions which distinguished it clearly from others.

When the end is reached there has been a stark transition from the initial 'romantic idealism' (Armstrong 1999: 66) which 'ends in a self-mocking and highly stylised bathos' (Armstrong 1999: 66). This almost parodic conclusion highlights a feature of Banks' writing which links *The Player of Games* and *Walking on Glass* as well as providing a sophisticated point of convergence between this section and the first in the chapter, as Armstrong notes:

the personal growth of the character is intertwined with a fictive growth, and novels by Banks advertise their provisional and unfurnished form. By doing so, they also refuse any status as finished or definitive works of fiction. (Armstrong 1999: 81)

The sense of impermanence that accompanies these texts is a reflection of the realities that Banks is trying to represent, as well as the temporary nature of the identities within the characters he seeks to portray. In achieving this and then displaying it through his own practices, Banks adds a level of humorous play to novels that move swiftly and smoothly between the serious and comic and respond with urgency to developments in the contemporary culture he is so deeply immersed in.

### **Chapter 3: Journeys into the Silent Land: *The Bridge* and *Lanark: A Life in Four***

#### **Books.**

The city, our great modern form, is soft, amenable to a dazzling and libidinous variety of lives, dreams, interpretations. But the very plastic qualities which make the city a great liberator of human identity also cause it to be especially vulnerable to psychosis and totalitarian nightmare. (Raban 1974: 8)

the clock-face itself comes from an old Royal Bank of Scotland building: Frank discovered it in the town dump. While it is a universal sign for time, it also suggests the idea of Scotland as a failed economic unit, a lapsed state (Riach 1996: 71)

This chapter will examine one of the pivotal novels of Banks' career, *The Bridge* (1986), his most ambitious, intellectual and sophisticated literary undertaking and a striking blend of realism, fantasy and speculative fiction. Taking its predecessor, Alasdair Gray's *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (1981), as a source text and focusing on themes including 'critical Utopia' and 'the Gothic', *The Bridge* and *Lanark* will be considered with regard to two clearly defined topics: 'Narrating Scotland as a post-industrial space' and 'the contemporary Gothic'. The Gothic will also be used as a portmanteau term in which the post-industrial space is a vital element that responds to the political and socio-economic conditions and anxieties that were manifest in the United Kingdom during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Focusing on two manifestations of the Gothic generates further discussion of the bearing that the genre has on the success of Banks' work, as well as the historical framework it offers for scrutinising the continued relationship between popular fiction and politics. Additionally there is a reinforcement of the ever-decreasing space and blurred distinctions between the 'popular' and the 'literary', the 'speculative' and the 'mainstream', zones that Banks haunts and flamboyantly destabilises at every turn.

The significance of the Gothic in relation to 'post-industrial space' is suggested by Linda Dryden who observes that:

[t]he city itself is figured as monstrous in its geographical and social divisions. The duality that some of its citizens exhibit is also manifest in the oppositions of light and dark, atmospheres of airiness and stifling oppression (Dryden 2003: 188-189)

thus the city becomes ‘corrupt, diseased’ (Dryden 2003: 188), a site of anxiety and decay. Roderick Lyall emphasises the significance of *Lanark*’s structure, stating that ‘it is important to recognise as well that Unthank is an *interior* landscape.’ (Lyall 1993: 43) These configurations concur with Paul Smethurst who, commenting on *Lanark*, declares the city of Glasgow particularly to represent ‘a map of psychological interiors’ (Smethurst 2000: 139) thus reinforcing the structural overlaps that Gray envisaged in his epic novel. The phrase ‘map of psychological interiors’ highlights intersections between the psychological, the cartographical and the geographical, as though the geographies of the external city are a representation, or projection, of the internal psychological mappings of the individual. Lucie Armitt describes *The Bridge* as ‘hover[ing] on that precarious point where psychological and fantasy narratives meet’ (Armitt 1996: 104) and Andreas Huyssen uses the term ‘urban imaginary’ (Huyssen 2003: 7) to formulate ideas of the reimagination of urban space, which is attempted in *Lanark* and *The Bridge*. Parallels between the monstrous and the internal/psychological, the corrupt and the socially divided emerge in early Scottish literature through *The Mysterious Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, which will be given a more extensive treatment in the later chapter dealing with *Complicity*. This distinction between the presence and use of doubles in Gray and Banks is important, as Marie Odile Pittin claims, suggesting that ‘The Lanark/Thaw duality cannot be viewed as a manichean relationship of the Jekyll and Hyde type, but as a *mise en abyme* of a new genre, since it can be observed to work both ways.’ (Pittin 1996: 201) Similarly, Dryden observes that ‘Issues of duality – split personalities, physical transformations, mistaken identities, doppelgangers – were found to be manifested in the social, geographical and

architectural schisms of the modern city.’ (Dryden 2003: 19) Both thematic concerns of this chapter are present in Dryden’s definition of science fiction:

[i]n the midst of this flurry of generic experimentation in fiction, [H.G.] Wells applied scientific themes to the romance: the resulting hybrid was the “scientific romance”, which later became the genre that we know today as science fiction. (Dryden 2003: 2)

Hybridity is the key to Banks’ oeuvre and *The Bridge* can be considered as Banks’ first “crossover text”, which contains the elements of both speculative and mainstream fiction. The ‘bridge’ of the title references a self-conscious authorial choice, symbolising a textual link between two different, although interrelated, genres, and the narrative structure explicitly engages with the connections between different psychological states and characters. *The Bridge* as a text is tentacular when it comes to identifying intertextual connections and the influences become as disorderly and sprawling as the society outside the Bridge. In opposition to this is the rigid, totalitarian status of the society in the bridge which, like the text, is persistently threatened by and responsive to extraneous influences. With echoes of Franz Kafka, M. John Harrison’s *Viriconium*, Mervyn Peake’s *Gormenghast* trilogy, Jorge Luis Borges and a brief reference to a minor character from *Catch-22* (1961) (a novel Banks regularly cites as an influence on his writing), *The Bridge* may not be as referential as *Lanark* but it remains similarly ‘caught in a centreless, postmodern web of intertextuality with which its author aims to fuel critics, to entertain readers, and to demonstrate the condition of authorship.’ (Crawford 1991b: 6) The image of the web correlates with the sense of ‘stifling oppression’ (Dryden 2003: 189) exemplified by the Gothic city, as well as the postmodern author who is: ‘preoccupied with systems from which life seems unable to escape.’ (Crawford 1991b: 7)

Such concerns generate the scholarly criticism which identifies *Lanark*'s dual concern with the labyrinthine complexities of 'Glasgow' and 'international postmodernism.'

(Crawford 1991b: 7)

### **3.1 *The Bridge* and *Lanark*: Narrating Scotland as a Post-industrial Space.**

This “single living city” is not utopian, because it is split by the forces of capitalism that only appear to unite it. (Smethurst 2000: 137)

This section begins by foregrounding the links between *Lanark* and *The Bridge* and the critical debates regarding ‘critical Utopia’ and ‘narrating Scotland as a post-industrial space’ and then moves into a close reading of both texts. In Banks’ and Gray’s work, fantasy landscapes are spaces of the imagination and characters represent or espouse political views and aesthetic practices which contest, share and affect that terrain.

There are two principal reasons for the comparison of *The Bridge* and *Lanark*:

Banks has acknowledged that:

[c]ertainly of all the books I’ve written, *The Bridge* is the one that was most influenced by any other single work, definitely *Lanark* – I don’t think *The Bridge* would be the work it is at all if it wasn’t for *Lanark*. (Robertson 1989/1990: 27)

Not only is Gray’s novel a predecessor to Banks’ text, it has acquired a monumental status. Anthony Burgess states that ‘it was time Scotland produced a shattering work of fiction in the modern idiom’ (Burgess 1984: 126) and Janice Galloway declares:

*Lanark*, in common with all great books, is still, and always will be, an act of resistance. It is part of the system of whispers and sedition and direct communion, one voice to another, we call literature. Its bravery in finding voice, in encouraging the enormous power of public, national, artistic, sexual and political imagination, is not something to take for granted. (Galloway 2002: xv-xvi)

Considering this, *Lanark* can claim status as the catalyst for developments in contemporary Scottish fiction and the departure from straight realism into fantasy and critique that these developments created.

*The Bridge* is a tri-partite narrative, beginning with Lennox, a wealthy and ambitious Scotsman whose business interests have succeeded in the thriving economics of Thatcherism. The tension between the politics of the past and present, the struggle

and the success, along with the inevitable contradictions that it identifies in respective characters is a consistent theme of Banks' novels. Lennox suffers a car accident and whilst comatose in hospital is replaced in the narrative by John Orr, an opulent resident of the Utopian society known as the Bridge, whose experiences in and out of this society are recorded to form the second strand within the novel. This triple narrative progresses from Lennox's days as a student through to the moment when he regains consciousness in the hospital, and is interspersed with episodes from John Orr's life on the Bridge. Interspersed with this is the intriguingly ambivalent narrative of a wandering barbarian, voiced in a pseudo-Burnsean Scots vernacular that is thuggish and stereotypical but hinting at much greater narrative complexity. A connection to Banks' novels that are written in his science-fiction alter-ego can be drawn here with the transgressive games that are played with language in *Feersum Endjinn*. A quarter of the book is narrated by Bascule the Teller and is written phonetically. Whilst this is explained by Bascule's dyslexia, it provides further evidence of Banks' determination to subvert and undermine the expectations of the reader using innovative and unexpected techniques in both his speculative and more mainstream texts. Similarly, each section of *The Bridge* raises many textual questions about primary and secondary fantastic worlds but provide few definite answers.

*Lanark* is a modern vision of Hell which narrates the interconnecting tales of Lanark and Duncan Thaw in the perpetually decaying and degenerating cities of Unthank and Glasgow. Self-consciously metafictional, saturated with analogues and intertexts, the "text" is structured around four books which are ordered out of sequence and an index of annotated plagiarisms, forming a history of other people's (failed?) escape attempts, perhaps. Duncan Thaw is a working-class schoolchild seeking to attend Art School whilst his counterpart, Lanark, finds himself in Unthank, a city stranded in almost permanent darkness, where creative indolence and the pursuit of leisure are

supported by a State welfare system. The pronunciation of Lanark corresponds phonologically with Banks naming his protagonist Lennox, whilst Thaw's rhyming quality with Orr is noted, Orr also representing a pun on the word "or"/"ore" which would correspond with the blurring of the identities and the geological puns that are embedded within *The Bridge*.

The speculative/dystopian nature of Banks' work is reflected by his juxtaposition of different social arrangements such as the highly stratified hierarchy of the Bridge against the militaristic, orderless barbarism occurring in the surrounding rurality. In contrast to this:

Gray uses a natural landscape in *Lanark* to give a firm geographical context to a city that in economic, political and cultural terms is subsumed, consumed, and then destroyed by fire and flood. This destruction seems to signify the *death* of a modern industrial city, very like Glasgow, as it fails to find the means to sustain itself. (Smethurst 2000: 139)

The clash between the urban and the natural landscape is also reflected in Banks' structuring of *The Bridge* and its different narrative layers, moving between Edinburgh and the Bridge itself.

In a further parallel with *The Bridge*, Gray's novel was marketed in the U.S as a work of science fiction:

In the USA, the novel was due to be published 6 months or so after the original UK issue, to use whatever promotion had been garnered. As it happened, management changes at Harpers and Row meant that they were issued at the same time, it was marketed as a straight science-fiction novel in the States and disappeared without trace. (Anon 2006: n.p.)

This decision and reduction of the marketing space made available in the US further emphasises the problem of classifying *Lanark* in terms of genre. The tensions between textual game-playing and the demands placed upon authors by commercial pressures



and the subsequent impositions of academic classifications are reflected and summarised in this way: ‘Despite Nastler’s furious assertion that “*I am not writing science fiction*” it is really in this recent context of combined science fiction and postmodernist forms that *Lanark* belongs.’ (Stevenson 1991: 57) A similar combination of speculative fiction and postmodernist form has come to characterise Banks’ oeuvre.

In the spirit of incendiary authors delivering charges to the depths of Literary London, 1981 saw Canongate publish *Lanark*, a novel that ‘detonated a cultural time-bomb which had been ticking away patiently for years’ (Wallace 1993a: 4). With its publication, there sparked the new contours of thematic, narratological and ideological concerns that have come to pervade the resurgence in politicised Scottish literature. Recent analyses of Alasdair Gray’s work have suggested it is both an exploration of and a fantastical removal from the systems of political, economic or emotional entrapment that choose to encapsulate and consume the individual. Any compensation in this text is linked to those who will challenge such structures. Lanark tells his son: ‘Of course you changed nothing. This world is only improved by people who do ordinary jobs and refuse to be bullied. Nobody can persuade owners to share with makers, when makers won’t shift for themselves.’ (Gray 1981 [1985]: 554) The challenging of such existing structures links with the critical utopia, the problematising of oppressive social and economic relationships and subsequent efforts to transgress these create tension.

Alasdair Gray’s novel straddles the boundaries of mainstream and “escapist fiction” and the term “escapist” instead of ‘science-fiction’ hints at one of the main themes in *Lanark* and *The Bridge*, namely the desire to escape from realities into the freedom of fantastic worlds. Craig argues that the reader is taken:

through a fantasy world that is part science fiction, part medieval romance . . . turning *Lanark* into a compendium of the modern mind – but through many different kinds of society, so that the novel is also a compendium of human histories, and of the

societies that humanity has envisaged as the end to which it aspires. (Craig 1991: 93)

The suggestion that *Lanark* is a 'compendium of the modern mind' connects with Smethurst's concept of 'psychological interiors', as though the text now becomes a manifestation of internal knowledge, processes and information, observations about the human condition and the conditions in which humanity exists and interacts whilst ultimately seeking to achieve these states of living.

The resistance to the conventions of genre apparent in the work of both novelists, this subversive stance towards the expectations of the reader, is highlighted in the way that *Lanark* as an object comes to represent, at one level, avant-garde experimentalism and at another, the manufacturing process that creates the novel:

a book is not simply a text, it is an object, and in this case a substantial object . . . its making is a function not merely of the genius of the author but of the production processes which connects typesetters in Tennessee with publishers in Edinburgh, readers around the English-speaking world and an author in Glasgow. . . .

That *Lanark* should emphasise its physical place within the system of production in this way points towards the nature of the culture from which it came and the major theme around which it is built. (Craig 1991: 90-91)

The use of fantasy and speculative fiction characteristics allows the authors to bypass and move away from the typically 'working class' representations of the city that are to be found in the work of novelists such as James Kelman or Jeff Torrington, the latter's *Swing Hammer Swing* (1992) being greeted with acclaim for its fierce portrayal of the Gorbals area of Glasgow. The creative space that is Scotland has inspired a range of novelists whose positions could be seen as hostile and oppositional to the dominant literary forms: writing contemporaneously with Torrington and Gray is the hardline invective of James Kelman whose desire for realism creates a volatile melange of traditional Scots language and demotic vernacular. This is a complex and provocative

combination that further assaults the reader when Kelman ‘allow[s] that language to fuse together with his own narrative voice so that the distinction between the language of narration and the language of dialogue is dissolved.’ (Craig 1993: 102) Kelman has managed to find a highly personal and innovative method of solving a problem that has plagued Scottish writers: the distinction between English as a medium for narration and Scots as the form of dialogue. As demonstrated by the character of Sammy Samuels in Kelman’s momentous *How Late it was, How Late*, the freeing of the narrative voice from written English is a moment of lingual solidarity because the narrative occupies a world commensurate with that of its characters.

Smethurst observes that ‘Although the tradition of Scottish urban writing was realistic, it left a dark and heavy legacy for post-industrial Glasgow.’ (Smethurst 2000: 125) Through the process of transforming the post-industrial into the postmodern ‘Gray presents the power of multinational corporations in postmodernity, as they homogenise and command economic space which then subsumes other spaces: social, political and cultural.’ (Smethurst 2000: 115) In Archie Hinds’ *The Dear Green Place* (1966), a landmark in the history of the Glasgow novel, the protagonist offers his own hymn to Glasgow past with the phrase (from the Gaelic name for Glasgow) ‘*Gles Chu!* Glasgow! The dear green place’ (Hinds in Witschi 1991: 37) and Scottish urban writing has traditionally depicted the corruption of: “this dear green place” by the forces of industrialisation. (Witschi 1991: 37) One suspects that this break by Gray may, (pertinent to Scottish literature), have prompted the migration of other authors into using more fantastic forms and narrative methods such as the examples we have already considered. Following the appearance of Gray, alongside others such as James Kelman, literary criticism in Scotland was made to awaken ‘in a reconfigured country’ (Wallace 1993a: 5) to new approaches to historical and political experience that brought fresh awareness ‘to the limitations in its myths of dualism; to alternate representations of

linguistic fissure; [and] to ossified stereotypes of community, class and gender.’

(Wallace 1993a: 5) Moving away from realism, we find that ‘[T]he imaginative re-creation of Glasgow begins with earlier literary representations of the city through a harsh, gritty realism concentrating on the inescapable and unrelenting hardship of life for the working classes.’ (Smethurst 2000: 116) The transition from such a harsh representation allows for more elaborate, critical and, one may argue, sophisticated opportunities for critique, which are to be found in the ‘critical utopia’, which is marked by:

the awareness of the limitations of the utopian tradition, so that these texts reject utopia as blueprint while preserving it as dream. Furthermore the novels dwell on the conflicts between the ordinary world and the utopian society opposed to it so that the process of social change is more directly articulated. Finally, the novels focus on the continuing presence of difference and imperfection with utopian society itself and thus render more recognizable and dynamic alternatives. (Moylan 1986: 10-11)

The presentation of the utopia as a dream concurs directly with the structure of *The Bridge*, whilst the meditations on conflicts between separate worlds links the work of Gray and Banks and, additionally, Simon Guerrier identifies the inhabitants of the Culture as a ‘leisured middle-class.’ (Guerrier 1999: 30) The socio-demographic would be an appropriate marker for the lives that John Orr and Lanark lead. However, Le Guin, (another of Banks’ influences) sees utopia as ‘ambiguous’ (Le Guin in Moylan 1986: 44) with ‘faults, inconsistencies, problems, and even denials of the utopian impulse’ (Moylan 1986: 44). Indeed Moylan suggests and Guerrier agrees that ‘the social alternatives offered in the texts are dialogues rather than monologues.’ (Guerrier 1999: 36) To this effect ‘critical utopias keep the utopian impulse alive by challenging it and deconstructing it within [their] very pages.’ (Moylan 1986: 36) The idealistic society in which John Orr attempts to progress and thrive is certainly not all that it seems. Writing on more classical varieties of utopia, Richard Gerber suggests that:

[L]ife in the future haunts the utopian's mind in many different ways. It affords the subject-matter for various kinds of speculation on human destiny, but it also gives rise to a new kind of grammatical statement. In a utopia the narrator first jumps forward into the future in order to be able to look back at the present. (Gerber 1955: 81)

The idea of speculation and a possible grammar of utopia raises questions about the status and significance of genre throughout Banks' oeuvre. A grammar anticipates such a discussion by asserting correctly that genres such as the Utopia have existing characteristics and conventions by which their classical models are identified and, importantly, by which their contemporary transformations can also be considered. In this context, there are evident temporal shifts in the narrative of *The Bridge* and the deliberate overlaps between scenes make it apparent that rather than the future haunting the present, it is an alternative world which is running concurrently with his own, derived from the psyche of Lennox. In this respect, Guerrier and Moylan's respective analyses seem to diagnose the acute problems inherent in trying to classify Banks' fiction and thus the genres in which he operates, namely his ability to use elements of different genres but insufficient amounts to allow a conclusive and comprehensive analysis that comfortably locates his work. Considering his particular penchant for the speculative and questioning the position of 'utopia' between the extremes of fantasy and realism, there is a clear indication that one of Banks' strategies is to bridge the two, namely deploying 'the technique of fantastic realism.' (Gerber 1955: 87)

Banks is implementing his own literary allusions with the third narrative in *The Bridge*, featuring the barbarian and the familiar, a sequence that Armstrong interprets as rendering 'the culturally elevated form of epic poem into the ramblings of ordinary description.' (Armstrong 1999: 70) This connects with Martin Horstkotte who, responding to Frederic Jameson's *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), suggests:

the period of postmodernism questions the traditional value judgements of literary critics and stimulates their discussion concerning the integration of “lower” forms of literature into the canon. Postmodern texts make use of genre conventions to fuse several genres and to level the differences between them. This “closing of the gap” between disparate genres and the juxtaposition of “low” and “high” forms of literature shows a change that also concerns the fantastic. In many postmodern novels, the conventions of the fantastic are used in conjunction with genres like the historical novel or with postmodern literary techniques. (Horstkotte 2004: 10)

Despite Banks’ apparent determination to operate firmly between realism and fantasy, he employs Scots dialect and phonetics for the purposes of establishing a sense of place to the narrative by using the pseudo-comic figure of the barbarian.

When *The Bridge* and *Lanark* are compared further, there are distinct structural similarities: both novels have multiple narrators and overlapping narratives and there is strong thematic convergence through the representation of the cities and post-industrial spaces. Orr and Lanark demonstrate feelings of alienation from the society around them and at the conclusion of each novel there are, respectively, moments of self-discovery and revelation. Both texts trespass on the boundaries between mainstream and speculative fiction and both transgress the conventional narrative forms employed by realist novels, in the case of Gray he places each ‘book’ in a non-sequential or non-chronological order, meaning both authors signal an immediate intent to subvert the familiar paradigms of time and to transgress the usual flow of a linear text. Each narrative deals with a society that offers support for its inhabitants through an advanced social welfare system. Similarly each novel has two male protagonists whose respected narratives are interwoven throughout; Duncan Thaw and Lanark in Alasdair Gray’s novel, and Lennox and John Orr in Banks’ novel.

Commenting on the structure of *Lanark*, Craig suggests that ‘Duncan can only see history as like the Glasgow in which he is trapped: “an infinitely diseased worm

without head or tail, beginning or end” (Craig 1991: 95). This absence of separation and duality, the identification of a body without head or tail echoes the status of ‘the Bridge’ itself with the connections to land at either end often alluded to but only revealed towards the conclusion of narrative. Later Craig explains that:

Thaw and Lanark divide between them the possibilities of trying to transform life by art and politics – another dualism of the modern condition surrendering the aesthetic from the practical - only to discover that they live in a nightmare world in which every escape route that they take leads straight into the maw of another monstrous head on the hydra of a system in which one is either the exploiter or the exploited, in which one is almost inevitably both at the same time. (Craig 1991: 94)

This persistent duality, the living in a ‘nightmare world’ links *Lanark* and *The Bridge* as texts aiming to represent Scotland before and after, retaining the dark industrial novel but venturing forth into a more fantastical style in order to free the imaginations of the authors.

*The Bridge* and *Lanark* depict the post-industrial city as a ‘postmodern chronotope’ (Smethurst 2000: 1), which addresses spatial and temporal readings of contemporary fiction. Smethurst defines a chronotope as ‘a time-space in which the conscious mind frames and organises the real, but it can also be the time-space where it disorganises and re-presents the real.’ (Smethurst 2000: 5) Additionally the chronotope functions as ‘an attempt to organise and articulate the main features of the shift in time-space relations that gives rise to postmodern ways of seeing.’ (Smethurst 2000: 6) With this in mind, both Gray and Banks are appropriating their respective geographical locales in order to assert a re-imagination of these fantastic spaces yet they are adopting different techniques to achieve this, methods of representation which are expressed through a striking variety of play using different forms of narrative and different genres. Gray uses intertexts from Blake and Dante invoking ‘the idea of connecting the “hell” of contemporary life with other religious and imagined spaces that might not only

transcend, but also help transform them’ (Smethurst 2000: 117) whereas Banks offers his own connections between contemporary life and the imagination using the world of ‘the Bridge’ as the product of a comatose mind, that of Lennox as he recovers from a car accident that occurs at the beginning of the novel. In the case of both texts:

[t]he urban spaces of Glasgow [and, in the case of Banks, Scotland] are transformed and extended into an extravagant literary “park”, a representational space in which the inhabitants of Glasgow [and more generally, Scotland] might take their imaginations for a walk. (Smethurst 2000: 116)

The feeling of a ‘representational space’ and departure into this ‘imagination’ is reflected on the first page when Lennox’s narration begins moments after his car crash and, in a significant movement away from the narrative techniques present in Banks’ previous novels, draws the reader into a disorienting internal stream of consciousness:

Trapped. Crushed. Weight coming from all directions, entangled in the wreckage (you have to become one with the machine). Please no fire, no fire. Shit. This hurts. Bloody bridge; own fault (yes, bloody bridge, right colour; see the bridge, see the man drive the car, see the man not see the other car, see the big CRASH, see the bone-broken man bleed; blood colour of the bridge. Oh well own fault. Idiot). Please no fire. Blood red. Red blood. See the man bleed, see the car leak; radiator red, blood red, blood like red oil. Pump still working – shit, I said *shit* this hurts – pump still working but the fluid leaking out all over the fucking place. (Banks 1986 [1990]: 11)

The idea of ‘leakage’ features as a narrative convention, with material leaking from the convergent narratives. ‘Entangled in the wreckage’ may refer not just to the car accident, but also the wreckage of the text and the Bridge itself as both appear to disintegrate at different points in the novel. The formal conventions of grammar and language are omitted from this passage of text and later they move into Scottish vernacular; the Bridge is attacked by forces from outside and similarly the different narratives seem to collapse under the weight of textual pressures. Lennox observes,



‘you have to become one with the machine’ which recurs in different forms throughout *The Bridge*. The machine represents a multitude of relationships within the text: his dependency on the hospital equipment as he exists in the comfort and the totality of the Bridge and its spectral omnipresence that haunts the inhabitants as well as his economic support from the Capitalist machine that ensure his middle-class lifestyle before the car crash. Lennox’s alter ego, John Orr, endures numerous difficulties when he tries to escape the confines of the Bridge, suggesting that the positioning makes it the novel’s centrality.

Shortly after the beginning of *The Bridge*, Banks playfully imitates the plagiarisms used by Gray to emphasise both the self-conscious referentiality of the narrative and his own knowing ludic fictional practice. As Lennox’s car crashes, he verges on immersion in a coma, the environment around him merging into a cinematic sequence:

It’s stopped. The scene whitens, holes appear in it; a film burning through (*fire!*), trapped in the gate (*jaguar in the gate?*); stopped, the scene melts, the seen scene disintegrates (see the seen scene disintegrate); nothing stands too close enquiry. White screen left.

Pain. Circle of pain on chest. Like a brand, a circular impression (am I a figure on a stamp, postmarked?

A piece of parchment embossed with ‘From the library of ‘,,,,,,,’ (Please complete):

- (a) God, Esq
- (b) Nature (Mrs)
- (c) C. Darwin & Sons
- (d) K. Marx plc
- (e) all of the above. )) (Banks 1986 [1990]: 12)

Playing with sources has a considerable resonance in Scottish literature where there is ‘a questionable disposition to separate a narrative from a wider national context: a work from a “corpus” . . . intimately connected with the preservation and correct transmission of a manuscript.’ (Wright 2007: 76) The circle is significant, not just because of its relationship to the title of the unpublished manuscript that inspired *The Bridge* (entitled

O), but also for the circular nature of the narrative. This begins with Lennox's monologue just after the car accident and culminates 277 pages later with his waking up from the coma with Andrea Cramond, his long-term lover from University, by his bedside.

The suggestion of a film burning through itself and a scene disintegrating immediately highlights an awareness of the multiplicity of media that Banks perceives as being at his disposal. Repeated punning on the 'seen/scene' demonstrates an open engagement with the novelistic antecedents of this text: the metafictional novel that willingly displays its own part in the creative process. Identifying the 'stamp' on the 'piece of parchment' and its location in a relevant 'library' highlights the composition of *The Bridge* as being similar to a palimpsest, fragmentary in its structures as a coherent narrative and brazen in its intertexts and references. This is also an index of references that indicates potential sources for Banks' writing and political pronouncements, comparable with the way Gray establishes with his own index of plagiarisms as part of the respective epilogue in *Lanark*. The 'piece of parchment' is also suggestive of Orr's later dreams, which frequently take the form of fragmented scenes from mythology and literature and are usually framed in environments that are specific to a particular style of architecture or geographical feature that is drawn from the influences of Lennox's geological work.

The circle itself also echoes the narrative logic Banks employs and is a return to his previous novel, *Walking on Glass*, which employed the same technique but with much less success. That 'nothing stands too close to enquiry' suggests a distancing process between observer and object, a view of the outside when there is a partition between the seer and seen, a deliberate decision on the part of the author to ensure the reader can see the symbols and metaphors but may not be entirely certain as to how they can be understood, interpreted or used in their understanding of the text. The language

imitates the opening of *Walking on Glass* which also uses a theatrical/revelatory tone to reveal the narrative structure, foundations and overarching technique that Banks will use throughout the novel.

As well as being a patient, John Orr is also a wealthy member of the higher social strata on the Bridge. In the early stages of his narrative, Orr reveals that his allowance is principally spent on ‘things which amuse me or which I find beautiful; I visit galleries, I go to the theatre, concerts, the cinema; I read’ (Banks 1986 [1990]: 35). Such pursuits are those of an individual who is sufficiently free from the obligations of work to patronise the artistic and cultural facilities offered by a moneyed society. Further parallels can be made with the character of Lanark who, when asked how he occupies himself, states: ‘I walk and visit libraries and cinemas. When short of money I go to the security place. But most of the time I watch the sky from the balcony.’ (Gray 1981 [1985]: 5) The contrasts in fortune for each character are important when examining John Orr’s role within the society of the Bridge. Orr’s long-term project involves attempting to discover historical documents that will offer information about the Bridge and avoiding the hypnosis that Dr. Joyce offers him in order to cure his amnesia. However, early in the novel, the welcoming and cultural freedom of the Bridge is swiftly revoked. Orr’s determination to reach the lost library results in his demotion to U7: ‘where workers, ordinary people live’ (Banks [1986] 1990: 134) with the decision being authorised by Dr. Joyce. Following this, Orr discovers that he is excluded from his regular haunts and institutions and forced to wear the uniform usually given to the workers who occupy the lower orders in the Bridge. Both Banks’ and Gray’s decisions to use protagonists with artistic ambitions are significant because of the potential to realise this portrayal of the post-industrial landscape and express it through the medium of their work. In the case of John Orr, he posits himself as a historian and as Sludden announces in *Lanark*, it is their function which poses the

greatest threat to the utopian or dystopian State: ‘An artist doesn’t tell people things, he expresses himself. If the self is unusual, his work shocks or excites people. Anyway, it forces his personality on them.’ (Gray 1981 [1985]: 6) With regard to *The Bridge*, this is a vital contribution to John Orr being demoted because his status as a historian gives him the opportunity to offer a revision of the accepted and standard history ascribed to the Bridge, the narrative employed by the dominant order to prevent its occupants questioning the different practices and strata which are currently used to pacify the citizens.

The dystopian aspect of the Bridge’s social construction is demonstrated during a conversation between John Orr and his friend, Engineer Brooke. An unauthorised fly-past occurs, involving aircraft that do not have a connection with the Bridge or its authorities and this starts a debate about the acceptability of these actions. Brooke claims that it is not his decision to ‘approve or disapprove’ (Banks 1986 [1990]: 48) but when Orr enquires as to whether there are any laws against it, Brooke responds:

There’s no laws to *permit* it, Orr, that’s the point.  
 Good grief man, you can’t have people going off  
 and doing things just because they want to, just  
 because they think something up! You have to have  
 a . . . a framework. (Banks 1986 [1990]: 48)

Such emphasis on structure and framework not only reflects the way that the rigid structure of the Bridge is embodied in its social values, and the methods of control that ensure the populace do not have the opportunity to think or act independently. The Bridge represents a totalitarian society that that will take care of its occupants’ needs but does so by removing their capacity for question or dissent. This is essentially an endorsement for ‘freedom from responsibility’ politics that manifests itself as a State-controlled society where one finds it difficult to generate opposition because a recorded statement of laws does not exist. Therefore, if ideas do not exist in law then they cannot exist in the minds of the populace.

Smethurst observes that ‘In literature, the modern “hero” in the city is depicted as a shadowy figure, lonely and alienated, and failing to bond with others in a seemingly unknowable mass of individuals.’ (Smethurst 2000: 133) This alienation correlates with the status of Thaw, Lanark and Orr in their respective societies. Orr’s demotion and comparable estrangement from the societal values shared by his colleagues emphasises this sense of alienation whilst Lanark and Thaw are driven respectively to suicide and escape in order to overcome their disillusionment with the society in which they have become trapped. Furthermore, Smethurst argues that:

the demise of community in this once great industrial city is presented partly as social realism, or at least that sub-genre of social realism in which the working class artist fails both to climb out of his class and to stay in it. He fails to bond in his community, becomes alienated both as an individual and an artist, and finally commits suicide. (Smethurst 2000: 122)

It is therefore demonstrable that just as Modernity and industrialisation were responsible for the alienation of the individual, who is symbolised here as the ‘failing artist/writer, postmodernity creates a whole alienated place’ (Smethurst 2000: 119). Such persistent tensions between the protagonist and the Utopian State function as the imperative which creates the ‘critical’ aspect, the potential for individual revolution and transgression.

The image of a whole place in alienation recurs in *The Bridge* through the depiction of Lennox’s home in Edinburgh: ‘the industrial heartland which was already failing, silting up with cheap fat, starved of energy, clogging and clotting and thickening and threatened.’ (Banks 1986 [1990]: 101) He remembers the lofts ‘all tall and misshapen and unplanned and made of corrugated iron painted black.’ (Banks 1986 [1990]: 101) The use of ‘clogging, thickening, threatened and clotting’ suggests an artery at the point of implosion, a lifeline or channel destroyed by the consumption of low-grade food and which, like the body it supports, is declining into a bloated, lethargic obesity. The parallel with cheaply produced goods ready for excessive

consumerism is clear. This environment has bred and prepared Lennox for his future prosperity, a locale and people that later he will admit to becoming ashamed of. However, his neglect to return works as a representation of the educated and aspiring middle-class who abandoned their roots and migrated South in order to improve whilst their relatives were systematically cut adrift, trapped in the North. For Lennox Edinburgh is 'a stark volcanic remnant' (Banks 1986 [1990]: 103) and a 'village within the city in its not-yet-quaint decrepitude' (Banks 1986 [1990]: 103). There is a resonance of memory, history, stark geographical evolution, the use of 'real' emphasises this desire for authenticity, whilst 'the Craggs [and] grey-brown corrugations' (Banks 1986 [1990]: 101) have a particularly harsh tone. This city in transition, reinforced by the 'not-yet-quaint decrepitude' of Edinburgh, suggests that the pervasive nostalgia and memory associated with historical commemorations of industrial dominance is still absent from this temporary home. Making the connection with the politicisation of the Gothic through its response to industrialisation, Catherine Spooner comments that '[t]he past chokes the present, prevents progress' (Spooner 2006: 18) and in this respect the decaying body of industrial heartland suggests a symbol of the future that Banks sees as the industrial age becomes more reliant upon technology in place of human labour.

The idea of decay can be supported further when considering the characterisation of the Bridge, which is portrayed as 'sloping sides rise, russet-red and ribbed from the granite-plinthed feet in the sea' (Banks 1986 [1990]: 154) containing a hospital complex formed 'like an energetically growing tumour' (Banks 1986 [1990]: 154) and shops that are sited 'like brittle hernias popping out between immense collections of muscles' (Banks 1986 [1990]: 154). Banks' portrayal of the Bridge renders it as an illness-ridden body, paralleling the links with Lennox's body lying comatose in the hospital and the metaphor of the body politic. The Bridge would appear

to represent the physical structure of a human body, with John Orr's initial social milieu symbolising the mind with its rarefied existence and artistic sensibilities.

Further evidence of the post-industrial can be seen between the land that exists at both ends of the Bridge, known as the City and the Kingdom. These two titles highlight the Bridge as a link between a Capitalist, labour-intensive sphere and the fantasy-inspiring, leisure-oriented society. In this respect, the Bridge exists in a functional capacity and so offers an appropriate link between the two states, as demonstrated by the marked contrast with Orr's aestheticism that is found when he ventures below his own level. The indulgence in debauchery and licentious behaviour that he partakes of suggests that the dichotomy between different layers of the Bridge represents a symbol of his psyche, with two different levels of pleasure fighting for dominance.

Similarly to the decaying body in post-industrial decline, the monstrous Hell envisaged by Gray is the postmodern city's relationship to the illogic of late Capitalism: 'Glasgow is indeed turned into a monster' (Smethurst 2000: 118) and a 'Leviathan' (Smethurst 2000: 120) whose rapacious appetite is the market itself. The multinational corporations who seek to consume Glasgow or Unthank see it as the next step to total consumption, they are '[a] conspiracy which owns and manipulates everything for profit.' (Gray 1981 [1985]: 410) When multinational corporations subsume the unproductive space of Glasgow 'Unthank, the fantastic vision of post-industrial Glasgow set in the near future, is eventually swallowed *en bloc* by a multinational economic and political conspiracy: Gray's Leviathan.' (Smethurst 2000: 120) In opposition to this highly mechanised, controlled and Capitalist society is the Intercalendrical Zone, the name itself highlighting the rejection of conventional considerations of time and chronology, its status of being between calendars and thus in the space where such formal structures cannot extend to. As Lanark passes through here

and into post-apocalyptic Unthank, he experiences a sense of relief, a sense of escape from ‘the material of time ... respect for the decimal hour’ (Gray 1981 [1985]: 416) and he is no longer trapped within rigid and controlling boundaries. As the *Western Lobby* of Unthank declares, the boundaries are ‘melting into intercalendrical mist’ (Gray 1981 [1985]: 416).

This sense of relief permeates the narrative when Lennox makes the decision to move out of the coma at the conclusion of *The Bridge*. Similarly, he releases a burden but he is moving back into a world where the constraints exist. One suspects at this point, Banks’ selection of a different conclusion may be suggesting that this moment of relief in *Lanark* is not so much optimism as temporary sanctuary from the realities Gray later comes to portray: the apocalyptic end and rebirth of Unthank, the political and Capitalistic machinations which lead to Unthank’s demise. Banks’ conclusion presents a far less idealistic resolution to the reimagination of Scotland, offering less a cynical assessment but a more socially responsible conclusion by ensuring Lennox/Orr rejects the status of his terminal condition, a life without commitment or accountability and makes his way back from the coma into the world from which he seemingly departed. Unthank could be read as a terminal afterlife for Thaw as the Bridge so nearly is for Lennox; so that *The Bridge* is a kind of extension of, or reading of, the debate raised by *Lanark*.

Smethurst posits that ‘The object of all of this literary and geographical play is to create a rich contemporary identity for Glasgow that incorporates the past, but does not attempt to recapture or dwell on it.’ (Smethurst 2000: 116) The reimagination undertaken by Banks raises questions about whether it functions as progression or critique. With these two opposing functions it becomes more apparent that whereas *The Bridge* is a critical utopia, *Lanark* is ‘a “heterotopia”’: a city constructed of oddly connected, confusing, chaotic and outlandish chronotopes.’ (Smethurst 2000: 117)



Richard Gerber suggests that:

In modern utopias, the need for organization has become stronger than ever before . . . [t]herefore a modern utopia cannot be a state in which man would feel naturally happy, as he might in an arcadian one. He is hemmed in on every side. The utopian economic organization may be perfect, but the individual may not be satisfied with his political status. If he is tempted to revolt, the whole utopian structure is in danger. The most admirably constructed utopia fails to convince if we are not led to believe that the danger of revolt is excluded.  
(Gerber 1955: 68)

The distinction between arcadia and utopia is important here. Associating ‘arcadia’ with ‘a place traditionally idealized as having a simple rural lifestyle’ (Schwarz 1993: 81) contrasts usefully with the utopian ideal. Although both ‘places’ are cultural products designed to reflect the desires and wishes of their inhabitants, the difference between the two is vital. The arcadia represents an Elysium for its inhabitants, free from conflict, oppression, deprivation or other social problems whereas the modern utopia suggests a society in which persistent restrictions affect the conditions in which the individual is placed.

The status of the utopia as a ‘no place’ indicates how attempts by its inhabitants to represent it in different artistic media pose a threat to the subsequent stability and control of the ruling orders and it is significant that when Duncan Thaw begins repeatedly to capture Glasgow’s tenements and streets in pictorial form, Lanark escapes from Unthank and find himself located in The Institute, a sinister, encapsulating building where heat and light are generated from the bodies of the terminally ill patients. The shift from dark to light may suggest progression but this is tempered by the literally body-intensive Capital system used to power the Institute, where the inmates and patients are used to generate energy and heat. As one protagonist begins to

achieve their artistic output, the other character escapes his own ‘hell’ but finds the sanctuary to be equally problematic.

Gray places responsibility on the society from which the individual is produced whereas Banks adopts a contrasting position by emphasising the role of the individual in changing the society around them, or at least making an attempt to extricate themselves from this society. Craig argues that the existing conditions do not offer reasons for the problems, they just offer their existence without any hope for solution, rendering Thaw:

not . . . the fulfilled artist who represents the best of human creativity, but as an ordinary human being with no escape to the elite but as a human being whose ordinariness is only possible because of the imaginative escape route provided by Gray’s fantasy projection that is *Lanark* itself. (Craig 1991: 103)

In contrast to *Lanark*, the conclusion to *The Bridge* offers a more optimistic vision the protagonist rejecting the opportunity to remain absolved of responsibility and choosing to return to life, the problematic aspect of this being that although Banks uses Lennox as a potential vehicle for social change or adjustment, the reader is never informed of the outcome of this until *Complicity*, where Lennox re-appears as the protagonist.

The distinction between the conclusions which Gray and Banks draw and the success of both novelists in their representation of the post-industrial is emphasised by their contrasting positions as members of this production process: Banks has achieved populist, commercial success through publication and marketability whereas Gray’s text emerged from the minor, eccentric Canongate press, but for both writers there is a talent for politicisation, putting hard edges onto our postmodern soft cities. This is just one of the persistent debates about the relationship between Banks and his contemporaries: how much “value” or “significance” is attached to a text which addresses important concerns such as the post-industrial *and* achieves substantial commercial and critical success in the process?

### **3.2 The Bridge and the Contemporary Gothic**

In dreams begin responsibilities (Yeats 1914 [1990]: 148).

Having examined the post-industrial space in *The Bridge* and *Lanark*, we can now turn to the Gothic in *The Bridge*. This section seeks to establish how the Gothic in Banks' fiction is used as a tool for political representation as well as maintaining a literary tradition that has been well documented and analysed, that of Scottish Gothic fiction, which was anthologised in *Damage Land: New Scottish Fiction* (2001). For Spooner, writing about the contemporary Gothic, characteristics and concerns of this genre are

the legacies of the past and its burdens on the present; the radically provisional or divided nature of the self; the construction of peoples or individuals as monstrous or "other"; the preoccupation with bodies that are modified, grotesque or diseased. (Spooner 2006: 8)

As with the post-industrial space, the focus is firmly on the historical and its influence on the contemporary, as well as the degeneration and breakdown of the body and the mind. This recurrent preoccupation and fascination with psychological or mental instability concurs with Dryden, who asserts that 'Gothic fiction is often a literature of transformations where identity is unstable' (Dryden 2003: 19) and, more specifically to the Scottish Gothic: 'Tales of haunted doubles, disowned sons and ineffectual heroes populate their fictional explorations of Scotland's fractured state.' (Wright 2007: 73) With this in mind two links between Scottish fiction and the Gothic can be established namely the themes of mental illness and breakdown. These links provide a firm connection with the historical origins of the Gothic, which enables 'the construction of a convenient set of dualisms, primitive versus civilized, barbarism versus culture' (Spooner 2006: 13) which in turn reflect the relationship between the narratives of John Orr and Lennox as they blur and seep into one another.

Baldick identifies the key characteristics of a Gothic text. Such a text should comprise a 'fearful sense of inheritance in time with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space, these two dimensions reinforcing one another to produce an impression of sickening descent into disintegration.' (Baldick 1992: xiii) The wider function of the Gothic in *The Bridge* means it operates in conjunction with but also in opposition to the post-industrial. The Gothic places emphasis on a conviction that the protagonists will suffer or endure the consequences of actions and that they are unavoidable, hence the atavism or inheritance which is present. This confrontation with and assertion of fears and anxiety from the past reinforces that 'Gothic is about breakdown, about terror, about the collapse of territory, structure, order, authority.' (Bissett 2001: 5) A Gothic text flourishes in spaces which imprison or restrict the protagonists' efforts to move or exist comfortably and that the combination of both circumstances creates the feeling of 'disintegration' or 'fragmentation'. The Scottish Gothic is also present in *Feersum Endjinn* through the 'cryptosphere' or the 'data corpus', a world-spanning computer network which contains millions of uploaded mindstates that allows individuals to be reincarnated, albeit with restrictions about the number of times. The links between history, re-telling of the tale and, by that definition, the retelling of a life, are specified by Punter when he pinpoints that *idée fixe* of the Gothic – a concern with history – as a defining feature of the texts he discusses: Punter discusses 'a range of contemporary Scottish fictions, which [...] suggest some of the issues and problems which accompany the depiction of past and present national history', including *Feersum Endjinn* and focuses on 'Gothic's chief mode of functioning, which has to do with a certain dealing with the necessary distortions of history. For Punter, a number of contemporary Scottish texts engage with distortions of the nation's history, in particular the myths and fabrications on which national identity is frequently based. More generally, Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy identify that within the Gothic there is 'a dual interest in

transgression and decay (McGrath 1997), its commitment to exploring the aesthetics of fear (Punter 1980) and its cross-contamination of reality and fantasy' (Jackson 1981). (Spooner and McEvoy 2007: 1) The presence of 'transgression' and the 'cross-contamination of reality and fear' frequently haunts Banks' narratives and it is present in the first dreamscape found in *The Bridge*.

The last place that Lennox mentions before he is overcome by the coma is '*The Dark Station* (sic)' (Banks 1986 [1990]: 13). This section draws heavily on the Gothic atmospheres that characterise *The Wasp Factory*, *The Crow Road* and Banks' later, darker novel, *Song of Stone*. The undoubtedly Gothic quality of these scenes provides a substantial amount of characterisation to individuals whom Banks portrays throughout his novels by virtue of their unstable identities, their fascination with decay and the inextricable intertwining of sexual and political economies. The Dark Station is imbued with insularity and desolation reminiscent of China Mieville's fantastic New Crubozon worlds from *Perdido Street Station* (2001) and the London of *Looking for Jake and other stories* (2005) which, like society of 'the Bridge', are also continually being reconfigured by internal revolutions and terrorism. The Dark Station is described as 'shuttered and empty' (Banks 1986 [1990]: 17) while the mountains surrounding it: 'covered in their close, dark weave of trees, absorbed the sound like heavy cloth' (Banks 1986 [1990]: 17). The station itself is: 'overcast . . . , black on grey' (Banks 1986 [1990]: 17) against the sky and 'An odour of burned coal and the damp, used smell of steam seemed to cling to my clothes.' (Banks 1986 [1990]: 17) This is an area steeped in the last vestiges of traditional industry with 'burned coal and damp' and the cloying legacy of 'used steam' that is inescapable. The name 'Dark Station' and the remnants of 'used steam' is also suggestive of a railway, connecting the legacy of industrialisation in this Gothic/post-industrial hybrid. Lynne Stark shrewdly observes that '[r]ailway networks powerfully epitomise modernity' (Stark 2004: 80) and the tensions between

both sides of the Bridge emphasises the connection between modernity and the post-industrial/Gothic. In the course of this scene, the narrator drives a carriage across the station and out into the surrounding forest. Upon inspecting his load he finds that the lamps he uses for light shine upon ‘the damp vapour like contrary shadows, obscuring more than they revealed.’ (Banks 1986 [1990]: 19) Such a statement is easily applicable to the Bridge itself which poses more questions than it answers.

As the narrator moves through the road, he comes upon an impasse with a single piece of track and another carriage with a driver who mirrors his movements. At the point of realising the way each movement is being anticipated by the opposing driver, he states that ‘a strange unnamable fear gripped me; a sudden and uncontrollable spasm of shivering ran through me, as if an electric charge had struck my body’ (Banks 1986 [1990]: 20). This is the recurrent doubling that is such a prominent feature of Banks’ work and the narrator’s response is that of confronting the Freudian *unheimlich*. Banks is using two people in opposition as a symbol for conflicts within the psyche. However, at the conclusion of this scene, he subverts the traditions of the Gothic and the expectations of the reader by having the unnamed protagonist endure a vision in which both parties draw their guns and misfire, before riding away unharmed. Thus when confronted with his double or *döppelgänger*, the person perceived as the ‘hero’ is unable to kill his opponent and suppress or subordinate the evil. The narrator claims that he experiences a moment where he envisages the revolver being fired, the projectiles striking each other and then ‘flattening into a perfectly circular coin of squashed metal.’ (Banks 1986 [1990]: 24) As he looks at his double, he experiences ‘. . . a sort of ancient bitterness, a heaviness, an ice-brittle thickness which invaded me, more deadly and intense than any air-borne chill.’ (Banks 1986 [1990]: 24) This is the moment of unwitting recognition, when his history and his present collide with the outcome being a symbol of currency, of finance, transaction, the symbol that dominated this period of the

1980s. As he rides away, the narrator claims that the carriage contains his ‘dread load’ which may well be a symbol for the political and cultural guilt identified previously in this chapter.

For Spooner, in the Gothic ‘the past is a site of terror’ (Spooner 2006: 18), a point echoed by Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd-Smith, for whom the Gothic provides ‘the perfect anonymous language for the peculiar unwillingness of the past to go away.’ (Sage and Lloyd-Smith 1996: 4) Similarly, the Gothic can be connected through the relationship with the past when considering Punter’s suggestion that, in relation to Banks and other contemporary Scottish novelists (such as Irvine Welsh and Alasdair Gray): ‘To think about Gothic as an element in the writing of these authors is to invoke a deconstruction of linear forms of history and memory’ (Punter 2002: 102). This manifests itself in *The Bridge* through these repeated confrontations with memories or feelings from the past which Orr and Lennox must confront. One example of the past haunting the immediate present is The Dark Station and its relationship to Lennox’s description of Edinburgh and his home in the West of Scotland, later in the novel. Edinburgh is a ‘[g]host capital, Real city of varied stones (Banks 1986 [1990]: 101)’ therefore emphasising the idea of a place haunted by spirits and memories from the past, aspects of the city which Banks returns to in *Complicity*. From Lennox’s lodgings he can ‘just see edge of the Craggs, grey-brown corrugations above the slate roofs and smoke of the city’ (Banks 1986 [1990]: 101) and this reinforces the Gothic architecture and the atmosphere of the geographical area.

Moving from the Gothic atmosphere and to a recurrent symbol of the Gothic in Banks’ work, the double, it is apparent that John Orr’s only compensation for his demotion to the lower regions of the Bridge is his on-going relationship with Abberlaine Arrol, the daughter of a Senior Director in the hierarchy of the Bridge. There is a definite significance in the physical doubling between Abberlaine Arrol and Andrea

Cramond, the two female protagonists in *The Bridge*. Banks' personification of 'the Bridge' in terms of a diseased or decaying body is a conscious attempt to intersect the narrative development and relationship breakdowns involving Abberlaine and Andrea with a society that shifts rapidly from utopian to dystopian. In terms of doubling and gender, Abberlaine is characterised by a manner of dress that begins with a hint of androgyny and slowly comes to resemble the structure of the Bridge itself.

As the narrative progresses, it becomes apparent that the society of the Bridge is under threat from without as well as within and Orr discovers those who pose this threat when his escape is finally revealed. Upon first venturing forth into a train in order to escape to the land outside of the Bridge, Orr becomes involved in assisting the victims of wrecked express train and offers the following thoughts:

Here I am in a thing become place, the link become location, the means become end and route become destination . . . and in this long articulated symbol, phallic and poised between the limbs of our great iron icon. (Banks 1986 [1990]: 182)

This is the journey that concurs with both Orr's and Lennox's narratives but in radically different ways; whereas Orr seems to be talking about his train still remaining within the firm grasp of its protector (The Bridge), the use of 'iron icon' cannot help but inspire satirical images of an "iron lady" who now controls Lennox's career in engineering. Moving from 'link' to 'location' represents Lennox's stasis in Scotland, 'route become destination' reinforces the idea of a temporary resting place becoming a permanent home, whilst 'phallic' reinforces the recurrent theme of dominant masculine women, such as Andrea Cramond and Abberlaine Arrol, who have cultivated their abilities to disempower males.

After Orr is discovered and ejected from the train, he finds himself in an area known as The Republic, a 'cold concentric place once known, they say, as The Eye of God' (Banks 1986 [1990]: 218) which is under the martial jurisdiction of an autocratic



Field Marshall. The feeling of entrapment within the Bridge could be compared with the alienating sense of otherworldliness that the protagonist experiences at this point of expulsion into the Republic, a lawless barbarian territory ruled by martial law. Continuing the images of stasis and movement, Lennox's transition is from Geology as an academic subject to a career in Engineering, whilst Orr moves from being a patron of the arts to one who must entertain his militaristic companions with artistic stories and anecdotes. The movements both involve the rejection of aesthetic and natural evolutions (be it art or rock formations) into more practical, overtly pragmatic disciplines. Effectively, Orr receives an appropriate retribution for falsifying his dreams by having to exercise his imagination: 'I am reduced to telling stories for my living' (Banks 1986 [1990]: 227). This is a preoccupation in Scottish Literature, given that 'Scottish Gothic is intimately concerned with the process of telling a tale.' (Wright 2007: 76) Lennox's loyal support for the Socialist cause is undermined by the significant contribution he makes to the Thatcherite Government's prosperity, as well as his own. Indeed perhaps Banks' most biting comments may be that both of these are being forced to take responsibility for engaging in self-deception and forgetting their histories, be it through shame or recklessness in the face of wealth. This is not to forget the lowly status and function of the story teller, a re-counter of existing tales rather than an innovator and fantasist, such as Orr was at the beginning of the novel in his interviews with Dr. Joyce.

*The Bridge* concludes with the protagonists having to make a choice between independence and freedom to take responsibility for their actions or returning to a life where they are accommodated by the society in which they live. John Orr escapes from and kills the Field Marshall and returns to the decaying Bridge, now characterised by its own destruction following an invasion from those on the outside, a place that is '[s]imultaneously a figure of home ... and terrifying estrangement' (Armistead 1996: 105).

As he moves through the wreckage, Orr finds himself in an old drinking establishment that he and Brooke used to frequent. Although he recognises the place, he is completely disillusioned and disoriented to the extent that he can no longer distinguish between reality and dream, as he observes ‘Let’s get one thing absolutely straight: it’s all a dream. Either way, whatever. We both know that. I have a choice, however.’ (Banks 1986 [1990]: 274) John Orr finds himself in hospital, surrounded by Dr. Joyce and the fleeting figure of Abberlaine Arrol who is now employed as a nurse. The doctor suggests that they have a new type of treatment for the amnesia Orr suffers but after Orr agrees, it becomes apparent that he must tell everything to a machine. When Orr claims that he does not believe the information being imparted by the machine, it claims rather perceptively “‘You will.” “Why?” “Because I’m a machine, and you trust machines, you understand them and they don’t frighten you; they impress you. You feel differently about people.’ (Banks 1986 [1990]: 275) The machine explains that John Orr represents the mental stimulus for Lennox and that if he goes back now, then Andrea Cramond will be waiting for him. When Orr makes the decision to come back into this reality from the hospital, an unnamed narrator interjects, arguing: ‘Fool! Idiot! What the hell do you think you’re doing? You were happy there! Think of the control, the fun, the possibilities! And what are you going back to?’ (Banks 1986 [1990]: 281) John Orr’s only response asserts that the most important principle is ‘self-preservation’ (Banks 1986 [1990]: 281) and then argues that:

I know one thing: I don’t need the machine to tell me the choice. The choice is not between dream and reality; it is between two different dreams.

One is my own; the bridge and all I made of it. The other is called our collective dream, our corporate imagery. We live the dream; call it American, call it Western, call it Northern or call it just that of all we humans, all life. (Banks 1986 [1990]: 283)

With this, Banks offers what we have now come to acknowledge as his customary heavy-handed political analysis that emphasises the nature of his oeuvre. This is the choice between a self-fulfilling, entrepreneurial career where one acts independently of the corporate consumer lifestyle and maintains a wholly personal, objective viewpoint as well as indulging their whims and desires to the maximum, and the passively consumptive, self-deceiving, dependency on the 'machine' of Capital and commerce that will instruct you about what to buy, how to live and how to survive. Parallels can be made here with an observation from Lanark's long-term rival, Sludden, who claims that:

Moments of vivid excitement are what make life worth living, moments when a man feels exalted and masterful. We can get them from drugs, crime and gambling, but the price is rather high. We can get them from a special interest, like sports, music or religion. (Gray 1981 [1985]: 5)

There is an emphasis placed here on artificial methods for achieving such fantasies and highs through stimulants which generate sensations of power, as Banks demonstrates through the character of Cameron Colley in *Complicity* in Chapter 6.

In terms of these boundaries and choices, Banks' creation of a world that eschews the usual temporal and spatial constraints, where the dreamlike and the fantastic, the past and the future are engaged in continuous fusions, frees him from the conformities and restrictions that a realist narrative may have imposed. In terms of the cross-over between his speculative and conventional fiction, *The Bridge* exists as the bridge between the genres, a bridge between his individual novels and a bridge between the contemporaneous political injustices that Banks perceives in our world and those of a more courageously imaginative and exuberant yet sinister and often disturbing existence in worlds he and we can only dream about.

**Chapter 4 – Moving out of the comfort ‘Zone’: *Canal Dreams*.**

*Canal Dreams* sees Banks move into previously uncharted territory in his unrelenting and irresolute fascination with violent transgressions and genre. He deploys a number of different authorial ruses in one single work; playing games with language, narrative and identity, as well as moving into previously unmapped imaginative domains. This chapter specifically addresses Banks’ engagement with the rules of genre in *Canal Dreams*, an examination of the function of memory in the text and an analysis of how Banks’ functions as both a political novelist and a writer of political novels. The preponderance of critical responses to this novel reinforces the manner in which Banks continues to flaunt his disregard for the postulations of popular fiction, appropriating, transgressing and transforming inexorably.

Iain Banks' fifth novel was published in 1989, five years after *The Wasp Factory* and maintains a number of the thematic concerns and narrative techniques which are present in his oeuvre: doubling, violence, game-playing and terrorism. In keeping with the traits of Banks’ female characters he presents what Moira Martingale calls ‘a despairing gaze into the abyss of human darkness and that of the isolated female’s power to unleash her inner barbarian’ (Martingale 2007: 219).

*Canal Dreams* is comprised of three sections: “Demurrage” which means ‘the rate payable to a ship owner for failure to load or discharge the ship within the time allowed’, “Casus Belli” which means ‘an act or situation justifying or precipitating war’ and “Force Majeur” which means ‘an irresistible compulsion or co-ercion’. The premise of *Canal Dreams* involves Hisako Onada, a Japanese cellist of prodigious ability who is travelling with her younger lover, Philippe, the Captain of one of a fleet of ships trapped within the Panamanian Canal. The ships, Nakoda, Le Cercle and Nada, have been impounded during a period of embittered civil war between the Panamanian

Government and rebel guerrilla forces. The name of the ship in which Hisako berths maintains a continued use of prolepsis and puns in Banks' work: *Le Cercle* (the circle) is the final image of the novel, a ring of fire created by Hisako as she traps the remaining soldiers.

The second narrative, embedded within the primary, moves from Hisako's early career in music school through to her tour and seduction of the French captain who eventually becomes both her 'beau' and her 'bow', the pun emphasising the doubling of instrument and player which is a recurrent image throughout the text, with 'bow' also being the front of the ship.

The location of the plot, the Panama Canal, represented Banks' first movement away from a British setting. The clear identification of place is in marked contrast with *A Song of Stone*, where the territory is marked by a geographical anonymity yet Banks still manages to generate a sense of familiarity with the surroundings. His use of this locale is also significant in problematising further the persistent attempts made by interviewers and critics to claim him as a novelist within a specifically Scottish tradition, a claim I set out to repudiate in the introduction. As evidence of the "Scottish question", the following exchange took place in an interview with Kate Kelman:

KK There is a Scottish element to most of your novels, whether it is a particular place like in *The Bridge* or a sense of a place that resonates throughout, something which is apparent in your newest novel, *A Song of Stone*. Could you imagine writing without this Scottish background?

IB Well I have done in *Canal Dreams*. I certainly prefer writing in a Scottish context because it is what I am used to, so I don't have to do any research.

(Kelman 1998: 19)

Banks' response elicits a significant contradiction between his opinion and the evidence presented in his novels, because although he claims to dislike research there are sequences in *Canal Dreams* which are incredibly detailed and suggest an acute eye for the Panamanian land and seascape. A further (and more convincing) explanation is that

setting a political thriller in South America gives Banks free reign to continue articulating the strongly-held anti-American stance on US foreign policy which also characterises his work. David Daiches also writes, of Scottish Literature in the twentieth century, that:

[n]or need Scottish subject-matter loom large, as was shown in quite different but convincing ways by Allan Massie (b. 1938) and Iain Banks (b.1954). A new dimension of originality and force was added by Alasdair Gray (b. 1934) (especially *Lanark* and *1984 Janine*) and the skilful probing of alienation in James Kelman (b. 1946) (*The Busconductor Hines* and *A Disaffection*) (Daiches 1993: 192).

Tom Adair points to a more canonical presence in *Canal Dreams*, noting: ‘currents of dark wit swirl through Banks’ writing, enriching its buoyancy ... and like Graham Greene, he can readily open the reader’s senses to the “foreign-ness” of places.’ (Adair 1989: 32) Identifying the “foreign-ness” of Greene’s writing is also significant, given that Banks notes Greene’s influence (Wilson 1994: n.p.). It remains important for the contentions of this thesis that Banks uses strategies which are employed in popular fiction and is still able to retain a ‘literary’ quality to his work. By contrast, fans who post regularly on the forum of [iainbanks.com](http://iainbanks.com) refer to this novel by the less flattering nickname “Anal Dreams” in reference to aspects the readers consider to be unbelievable, such as the arsenal of weaponry at Hisako’s disposal and the overblown dramatic scenes of violence and escape. The excessive violence and hyperbolic escapades which Hisako embarks on draw comparisons with the adventures of Lady Sharrow in *Against A Dark Background*, a picaresque non-Culture romp in which the protagonist joins a quest to recover the final Lazy Gun, a weapon with an irreverent, humorous and surreal approach to death, involving the appearance of giant electrodes, an animal or another object which will be instrumental in the death of the person who the gun has been fired at. Much of the novel concerns Sharrow's adventures in searching for and acquiring it. Her motivation is that the Huhsz religious cult regard it as a sacred

object, and that if she can find it and give it to them, their vendetta against her will lapse.

#### **4.1 Not Playing by the Rules of the Games: *Canal Dreams* and Genre.**

The forms of the artistic genres are not arbitrary. On the contrary, they grow out of the concrete determinacy of the particular social and historical conditions. Their character, their peculiarity is determined by their capacity to give expression to the essential features of the given socio-historical phase. Hence the different genres arise at particular stages of historical development, they change their character radically (the epic is transformed into the novel) sometimes they disappear completely and sometimes in the course of history they rise to the surface again with modifications. (Lukacs in Frow 2006: 135)

Lukacs' statement reminds us of the historical specificity of genres. Peter Middleton and Tim Woods make the following claim:

[g]enre is too often treated as a formalism, as if it were no more than a form of prosody that could be copied out of a manual. It is better thought of as a code of practice constantly under negotiation between texts and their readers, listeners, publishers, academics and reviewers, which advises them how they are expected to respond to the text. Genre is a projected biography of a text's circulation. It is this temporal extension out into the long history of the interactions of the text which takes it beyond formalism and makes it possible for genre to inscribe a specific technics of memory. (Middleton and Woods 2000: 7)

Middleton and Woods' statement is similar to the claim made by Craig, namely that *Lanark* deserves to be considered as an object within the manufacturing process.

Middleton and Wood's emphasis on the text as a 'code of practice' dovetails with the approach that this chapter takes and the overarching argument concerning the agreement between reader and author, presenting material about popular fiction from two different schools of critical thought: academics and writers who are 'fans'. The code of practice also highlights the complicity with fans and readership whose own responses are informative in assessing the success of genre fictions. The rationale for this selection of material is based on the paucity of attention that has been paid to the "political thriller"



and the notion that those with the relevant comprehension of a particular genre may well be the fans and the readers. Comparing and aligning different approaches creates an important dynamic within the discussion which mirrors the principles established by Middleton and Woods . By identifying 'genre' as 'a projected biography' of the text's circulation, they highlight the significant role that readers play in determining whether a novel is deemed to have been successful or otherwise. If readers 'advise' the novelist about how they are 'expected' to 'respond to the text' then this emphasises further the relationship that must be respected by both parties. It can be inferred that the most successful genre fictions are those which combine commercial success (as suggested by reader satisfaction) with an effective integration of the conventions of the genre but Banks is able to break these rules and still retain his readership. With this in mind, a more accurate understanding would be that although readers have a requirement for certain conventions to be maintained, they are not averse to innovation or inversion as long as their appetite for the 'thrill' is satisfied. McCracken and Christopher Pawling provide the foundational theories regarding popular fiction in this chapter and they are reinforced by the work of a self-confessed 'fan', Jerry Palmer, who gives a detailed discussion of the conventions of the thriller. McCracken states that 'The analysis of how meaning is achieved in popular texts requires close attention to narrative form. . . . The term "genre" in its simplest sense relates to the classification of narratives.' (McCracken 1998: 12) In this case, McCracken writes of genre in relation to narratives and not narrative forms; the latter's function as a method for identifying how meaning is constructed represents an important distinction when applying this principle of analysis to Banks' novels. It is often comparatively easy to see which genres he is working in from the plot, but Banks will then break the rules by employing different or unexpected narrative techniques. In his assessment of the popular genres, McCracken opines that 'The artful weaving of several popular genres into one narrative can allow a more

complex exploration of self-identity, while still giving the reader familiar boundaries within which to project his or her fantasies.’ (McCracken 1998: 13) In this respect the importance of ‘self-identity’ in popular fiction cannot be underestimated. This would also account for the blending of fantasy and thriller into multiple plots using dream sequences which allow Banks the freedom to experiment with elements of speculative fiction. According to McCracken’s statement, the formation of ‘self-identity’ means that if readers can engage with the text on a personal and imaginative level then the novelist has been successful in their use of the genre. This level of identification relies on the reader being able to place themselves in the psychological mindsets and scenarios presented to them and lends itself to the pejorative attitude that popular fictions are simply used as escapism rather than having a serious underlying quality to them. This is not to say that the greater the narrative ‘complexity’, the more attractive they will prove to wider audience and thus they will achieve more commercial success. This complexity, however, must still remain within the limits of comprehension and belief for the reader, ensuring that their ability to interact and imagine is not compromised – this argument is congruent with fans naming the text ‘Anal Dreams’ due to their disbelief about the weaponry at Hisako’s disposal. In Banks’ texts the sense of ‘reality’ or ‘likelihood’ is generally not exaggerated beyond the believable, unless its intention is for comic effect. Such restraint does not compromise the complexity of his work indeed one could argue that it heightens the interest and sophistication for both the reader and the critic.

Moving away from the underpinning theories of popular fiction and into a modulation of Banks’ novel in relation to his influences, Craig notes that critics tend to be ‘least approving of novels such as *Canal Dreams*, which combine the elements of a realistic novel of social analysis with the form of the thriller.’ (Craig 2002: 25) It is this combination that Banks ‘requires if his novels are to confront the realities – and the

brutalities – of modern existence and of the universe as revealed to us by modern science.’ (Craig 2002: 26) These ‘brutalities’ and ‘realities’ of modern life partly root Banks’ novels in the locale of ‘popular fiction’ and the danger of dismissing the relevance of popular, non-canonical fictions is reinforced by Pawling. He warns that ‘Once one begins to examine literature as a “communicative practice” with social and historical roots, then one cannot afford to ignore those fictional worlds which command the widest public.’ (Pawling 1984: 2) This is particularly appropriate given the relevance of *Canal Dreams* to the Foreign-Policy-driven, Imperialist intentions of the USA in more immediate historical narratives and their own expansionist butchering of the South American territory for continued industrial development.

It is with another Scottish novelist who wrote thrillers and “adventure stories” and to whom the “popular” label can be applied that this chapter begins. Banks mentions having read Alistair MacLean when he was young (Wilson 1994: n.p.) and when this is considered alongside his love of ‘kinetic fiction’, the origins of the thrill in his writing become apparent. MacLean’s books have received ‘no attention or even mention by most critics, whose view of the modern novel seems to ignore most of the books the reading public borrow from libraries or buy in shops.’ (Docherty 1990: 203) The lack of critical attention remains despite selling an estimated 150 million copies (John Sutherland, *Bestsellers*). Brian Docherty offers what remains a contemporary but critical assessment of MacLean’s novels, suggesting that his use of stereotypes and reliance upon formulaic plots is not always effective, nor is the convenient manner in which incidents occur to assist with a neat finish to the novel. Docherty’s analysis highlights aspects of MacLean’s work which overlap and contrast well with *Canal Dreams*. Commenting on *The Guns of Navarone* (1957), MacLean’s debut, he observes that:

[a]s in many other books from and about the Second World War, your own side can be as much of a

threat as the enemy, and betrayal or failure by your superiors or comrades is seen as worse than anything the enemy does. (Docherty 1990: 203)

This concurs with Banks' plotting: the 'terrorists' prove to be CIA agents undertaking a 'black operation' in the Suez Canal, a fact that the heroine, Hisako, uncovers when confronted by their superior, Earl Dandridge. The point is reinforced by Docherty's further suggestion that 'The greatest enemy is not the man wearing the uniform but the traitor or Judas figure in your own camp.' (Docherty 1990: 203) Fundamentally, those who are the "liberators" become the oppressors and the criminals. A further parallel is that at the time of the publication of *HMS Ulysses* (1955), crime fiction and detective novels 'were flagging at this point. Writers such as Hammond Innes, Nevil Shute and Ian Fleming all took advantage of this market' (Docherty 1990: 204) and this reflects the eye Banks has for finding markets and genres in which his work has not yet appeared and then exploiting them to their optimum commercial level. By this point in his career, Banks' science-fiction was flourishing and he had already produced one hyperbolic tale, *The Wasp Factory*, and two highly experimental novels, *Walking on Glass* and *The Bridge*. These had already left enough of a mark on the reviewers to suggest that a new talent had arrived and irrespective of the outrage attributed to *The Wasp Factory*, it was a talent that did not have any plans to go away quietly. As Docherty shrewdly notes: 'MacLean's audience, therefore, is comprised of people to whom the world and action he depicted, especially in the early books, was realistic or meaningful.' (Docherty 1990: 204) An equivocal point can be extrapolated into Banks' use of genre. If the historical context of *Canal Dreams* and the novel's publication dates are considered, then the plot would be politically familiar, if not necessarily faithful in terms of its accuracy, for Banks' readership. Such a familiarity is present in MacLean's work and Docherty suggests that:

those early books achieved their popularity because MacLean found a mass audience for his work, and thereafter he wrote for that audience, offering them a book per year, each containing new thrills and new scenarios. Unlike crime writers such as Chandler, or Christie, or thriller writers such as Ian Fleming, MacLean does not have a recurring named hero or central character with known attributes and characteristics who solves the case or averts the threat by employing his special or unique faculties. In such books, unless the reader is an acolyte rather than an initiate, and unfamiliar with the procedures of, say, Hercule Poirot or James Bond, a lot of the reading pleasure is derived precisely because the reader knows that certain expectations will be fulfilled. (Docherty 1990: 205)

Overlaps abound here once more: Banks typically publishes a book a year, 26 since 1984, thus once he acquired a readership with a fascination for the outlandish, quirky and unsettling fiction he writes, he can carry on with the same technique but varying the outcomes, plots and forms so as to leave the reader guessing as to where he will turn next. Banks' fiction also lacks the recurrent hero and central character – instead they vary in nationality, gender and age. His novels do have recurrent themes and motifs though, which mean the reader knows that: 'certain expectations will be fulfilled.' (Docherty 1990: 205) Such expectations would include memorably creative acts of violence, revenge, incest, gender disruption, multiple narratives and Gothic atmospheres which saturate his work. Docherty also posits that MacLean's books: 'do have serial characteristics and function as detective stories rather than thrillers or adventure stories.' (Docherty 1990: 205) Although the detective story construct does not fit in with all Banks' work – *The Wasp Factory* could be claimed as a "locked room mystery", *Complicity* fits the profile of Scottish Crime Fiction and *The Crow Road* is a *bildungsroman* with a detective element – the serial characteristics and recurrent themes are such that a reader can identify consistent techniques or ideas at work in his novels.

Palmer offers an analysis of the thriller genre and its different mutations and forms from a perspective that, aside from the limitations imposed upon it by the

material he uses, seems to stem from the viewpoint of a ‘fan’ or ‘addict’ (Palmer 1978: 2) as he refers to himself. This is in contrast with the formal concerns of more scholarly work from McCracken and Clive Bloom. The advantage of identifying and using a critic such as Palmer is not to fetishise the perspectives of a critic from a non-academic background but to assert the argument that when writing about popular fictions, the commentary produced by fans of the genre is as important, if not more so, than those written by established scholars. Indeed Palmer’s conclusions provide a significant number of opportunities to assess just what Banks is trying to achieve with *Canal Dreams*. In order to establish *how* the rules of the game are broken, however, it is essential to identify just what the rules are. According to Palmer, the plot of the thriller thrives on ‘competition and conspiracy’ (Palmer 1978: 3) in order to generate and maintain both reader interest and a viable narrative framework. Banks’ conspiracy provides an opportunity for him to formulate a political critique set against the backdrop of a turbulent South American country in which US infiltration occurs. It is after another diving expedition that the plot begins to gather pace, when Philippe and Hisako return to their new ship. Upon receiving word from the Officers’ Mess, first Philippe and then Hisako leave their cabin to be confronted by armed soldiers under the command of Major General Sucre, wearing National Guard fatigues but with camouflaged faces, known ostensibly as ‘The People’s Liberation Front of Panama’. Upon realising the gravity of the situation, Hisako submits to their enforced jurisdiction and they declare Hisako’s group to have been ‘liberated’.

Hisako is requested to play a concert for the hostage takers, led by Earl Dandridge. In keeping with the text, Dandridge represents the stereotypically sinister and spectral figure lurking in the background of this militia and he admits that she has calculated correctly that the *venceristas* are not Panamanian but covert CIA

representatives, *agent provocateurs* who are portrayed with Banks' distinctly anti-American sentiments. As the scene is played out, Hisako offers this analysis:

You are here because of the plane and the congressmen. I couldn't see why the *venceristas* wanted to shoot down the plane; it would be madness; the whole world would despise them. It would be an opportunity for the US fleet to retaliate, the Marines to come in. There would be no sense to it. But for you? . . . For the CIA? . . . It might be a worthwhile sacrifice. (Banks 1989 [1990]: 123)

Conspiracy is one of the defining qualities of the political thriller, 'an absolute structural necessity.' (Palmer 1978: 23) The presence of the CIA in this narrative gives it a contemporary resonance with American Foreign Policy having generated many tentacular incursions into South American politics and economics. There are further conformities with the expectations of genre which ought to highlight to the knowing audience that the 'liberators' would have a more malicious intent. Palmer explains that 'if the villains represent political organizations, they are from organizations that can be characterized as dictatorial in intent' (Palmer 1978: 18) and this explains Banks' use of the CIA operatives, namely his overt naming of the US Secret Services as a group who are essentially supporting dictatorships within South American politics. This represents a rejection of the conventional Other in such fictions, which tend to locate the protagonist in groups or countries who are not part of an Alliance or who have a history of provoking conflict such as Russia China, or more recently, Al-Qaida; Palmer concurs stating that 'villains are usually exotic.' (Palmer 1978: 16) However in the case of Banks, the roles are subverted throughout. Continuing this sequence of expectations and outcomes, the basis of the thriller is that it 'promotes the belief that the ends justify the means and rarely stop to examine what the ends are.' (Palmer 1978: 5) Banks achieves this with both sides of the conflict but in different ways: Dandridge and the CIA regard their role as one of instigating conflict in favour of the US whereas Hisako's approach of complete annihilation is justified because Banks provides a regular sequence of

events that motivate and argue for such a reaction to her attackers. In this case the ‘morality’ that thrillers contain has ‘little in common with the ethics that are publicly admitted to regulate men’s lives in our society; it has no respect for equality, privacy, due process of law or the impartiality of authority.’ (Palmer 1978: 5) Morality is subverted through Banks’ wanton and repeated use of vigilantism on the part of his assaulted protagonist, thus bringing to the fore a sense of morality that has a specific set of mitigating circumstances to it.

Umberto Eco has analysed the James Bond novels in terms of a set of contrasts in pairs: pairs of characters such as hero/villain or hero/woman; and pairs of values – cupidity/idealism for instance.’ (Eco 1969: 79-80) Banks rejects this structure outright with his heroine Hisako, who emerges as another significant female protagonist in his novels when she adopts the mantle of the Avenging Angel, the violated woman who then enacts her revenge through an excessive performance of gender, in this case hypermasculinity. Banks does throw in a further twist with a member of Hisako's group, Steve Merrick, who stages a single-handed revolt but is shot dead, later revealed to be an individual who has been marked out as a future CIA operative. The specific role of villain is extrapolated into the group holding Hisako’s ship prisoner rather than one person, although Earl Dandridge’s presence as the officer organising the capture may elevate his status above those of the other characters.

If *Canal Dreams* is examined more in terms of Eco’s and Palmer’s analysis of the genre then there is considerable evidence to see how Banks subverts the conventions. Initially Palmer categorises two classes of possible ‘heroes’, namely the Bureaucrat or the Amateur. Palmer argues that, in the thriller genre, a principle aspect of the hero’s actions is the ‘capacity to learn from experience.’ (Palmer 1978: 12) The aspect of experience is inverted powerfully by Banks’ selection of a female protagonist who does not have any directly relevant previous experience to draw from (aside from



her martial arts training) and thus works instinctively to escape from her captors, which reinforces the expectations that the conclusion is can be a 'triumph of improvisation over planning.' (Palmer 1978: 10) Referring to the Amateur, Palmer claims that 'Most frequently the Amateur is a girl which the hero is obliged to rescue.' (Palmer 1978: 10) This is an exception which is overturned when realising that Hisako acts for self-preservation but also rescues her boyfriend, Philippe, the ship's captain. Hisako's status as an Amateur in her 'heroism' but a professional in her musical life problematises these expectations, given that Palmer claims 'the hero can be neither an Amateur nor a Bureaucrat.' (Palmer 1978: 14) Ending with the difference in status of the roles that Hisako plays when she is fighting terrorism and playing music leads well into the next section which examines the role of 'performance' and 'memory' in *Canal Dreams*.

## **4.2 ‘Maestro Please’: Performance and Memory**

[t]here can still be *a silent extinction beyond the zero*. (Pynchon 1973 [1995]: 85)

The relationship between identity and performance is a consistent theme of Banks’ oeuvre but its expression in *Canal Dreams* requires it to be considered using a different approach from previous chapters. Instead of focusing on the transgression of gender expectations, as discussed in *The Wasp Factory*, this section will examine the relationship between memory and performance in relation to Hisako’s different roles and actions within the novel.

Craig notes that Banks’ structuring of *Canal Dreams* links it with *The Crow Road* because the reader moves ‘forward in the “present” time of the novel’ (Craig 2002: 26) but ‘back and forth across the protagonist’s past to release the memory of those moments which have fundamentally shaped his or her existence.’ (Craig 2002: 26) *Canal Dreams*, however, differs from *The Crow Road* because Banks releases the memory of those moments in Hisako’s past in order to precipitate and determine the actions she takes in the present whereas Rory must solve the fragments from the past which have had an impact upon his family but not him directly.

The temporal intercutting Banks uses here is also significant when considering Craig’s notion of ‘releasing the memory’ because, as in *The Bridge*, each event slowly seeps into the main narrative as if to build up a historical collage of factors that are, in part, responsible for Hisako’s activities. Similarly, different historical acts come to impact upon Hisako’s body as her experience is composed of these competing layers and narratives. This ‘slow release’ technique imitates, in part, a process of detection whereby fragments of information are revealed and the reader must piece together the clues in order to realise that Hisako’s actions are not completely out of character but that they operate as a wider metaphor for the relationship between historical trauma and

current violence (as the next section discusses in greater detail). In relation to the conscious authorial input into this process, Banks has admitted that his own practice of writing is to ‘collect scraps’ (Mullan 2008d: 12:35) but that throughout the drafting process, he always knows where each character is going and what they are doing. The idea of writing by ‘collect[ing] scraps’ may, in fact, explain the somewhat fragmentary narratives and personae which are present in his novels but it also reflects the ways in which he plays games with his readers, making detectives of them as they seek to interpret the clues whilst discerning and discarding the red herrings.

The first chapter is titled ‘Fantasia del Mer’. The word ‘fantasia’ is defined as a ‘musical or other composition not governed by the ordinary rules of form’ (Schwarz 1993: 608) and having discussed *Canal Dreams* in relation to genre, there are more nuances to this title: ‘Mer’ means ‘sea’ thus the reader is presented with a text which claims to be a ‘tale or fantasy of the sea’. Given that the sea often operates as a Gothic liminal space for subversion and the carnivalesque (think William Hope Hodgson’s Gothic sea novels), it comes as no surprise that Banks uses such a location as a site for Hisako’s activities, in which she acts out the heroic desire that Banks’ readers can only imagine undertaking, thus reinforcing the relationship between readership and novelist. ‘Mer’ can also be read as a corruption of ‘Mere’, meaning ‘mother’, and the political connotations of ‘mother’ can be geographical (the motherland) and biological (one who gives birth to a child) and from this Hisako can be perceived as representing Japan, in its relationship to and enacting revenge for the US assault in World War II.

When the narrative commences, Hisako and Philippe are diving in the water surrounding their ship in an effort to separate themselves from other members of the crew and ease the atmosphere of uncertainty, boredom and malaise that their confinement has created:

*tic tic tic tic . . .* Tiny noises of compression, sounding through her skull.

She'd been alarmed, the first time she'd heard them over the noise of her breathing and the tinny wheezes of the scuba gear which sat on her back, wrapping its plastic limbs round her and jamming rubber and metal into her mouth. Now she just listened to the ticking noises, imagining they were the signature of some erratic internal metronome; the unsteady beats of a tiny, bony heart. (Banks 1989 [1990]: 3)

The reference to a 'metronome' suggests regulation of time or movement, the repetitive sound providing a balance and a pattern which must be adhered to, a rule that must be followed. The motif of the double is presented differently here with the scuba gear being personified as the Other, a human attachment in a parasitic relationship with Hisako, from which she draws her oxygen. The image of 'jamming rubbers and metal into her mouth' also anticipates the rape sequence where masking tape has been placed across her mouth and it is ambiguous as to whether Hisako is being maternalised in her portrayal or if the 'child' is represented as a burden to her. That this metronome is aligned with a 'tiny, bony heart' develops further the significance of the child, emphasising its fragility and instability at such an early age (which is echoed later by Hisako's own complicated birth).

As Hisako dives further her body achieves a desired feeling of balance:

The pressures equalised, the column of the water above her and the fluids and gases of her body achieving a temporary equilibrium. The warm water moved against her skin in silky folds, and her hair ruffled behind her in the slipstream of her body, stroking the nape of her neck. (Banks 1989 [1990]: 4)

The body becomes a central motif of the text, both as a physical, living structure which is subject to the social and cultural pressures placed upon it and as a wider metaphor for the political conflicts which are occurring, a metaphor that Banks returns to in *Complicity*. As Hisako dives, she notes the balancing of different pressures and stresses;

her body reacts to the surrounding conditions and responds accordingly. The ‘temporary equilibrium’ represents a point or period of stability, a moment when all is equal. A recurrent theme of Banks’ work is that his characters are rarely stable in their actions but seek professions or activities which require ritual, order and repetition as a way of countering the chaos that they experience. The ‘temporary equilibrium’ that Hisako seeks is an echo of the protectiveness that the womb is supposed to offer to a foetus.

Hisako reveals her major fear when comparing the sensations of diving with flying: ‘Under the waves, with the skull adjusted. Headlong through the warm waters, like an easy and continual birth. Swimming like flying; the one buoyant image of her fear she could accept.’ (Banks 1989 [1990]: 4) An ‘easy and continual birth’ is not something that Hisako experiences and the comfort and pleasure afforded to her by diving is in opposition to her own manner of entry into the world as a new born. This birth difficulty is alluded to when she describes being ‘untied’ and reflects the security that Hisako finds as she dives below the surface of the Zone in the Panama Canal:

She felt – as she always did, down here – untied from the commonality of breath that was the air above. Here, however briefly, she was free. It was a freedom with its own many and precise rules - of times and depths, atmospheres and experience, maintained equipment and weights of air – and it was a freedom purchased through surrender to the technology that was strapped to her back . . . but it was freedom. (Banks 1989 [1990]: 4)

The feeling of dislocation is the key to this sequence and to developing a more comprehensive profile of Hisako. That she is ‘untied’ suggests release and the freedom to drift without direction or coercion but this is tempered by the precision and regulation of the equipment upon which she remains dependent, along with its strictly regimented balances and patterns. The image of being ‘untied’ also refers back to the complications at her birth, the removal of the constricting cord and her being physically taken from the womb by Caesarean section, rather than undergoing a natural delivery. Arguably, the

search for freedom from structures is continuous and wherever 'freedom' is achieved, further boundaries and regulations are put into place. The freedom Hisako seeks is referred to as having been 'purchased through surrender' and the language here is suggestive of a relationship predicated on power structures (as well as referring to her dependency upon an incubator which would likely have been part of her recovery from the birth process) where the person seeking the freedom must compromise or exchange something of value in order to gain.

As Hisako and Philippe dive, they encounter a drowned village and Hisako makes the silent observation that: '[t]he thickness of the underwater light' (Banks 1989 [1990]: 7), the 'monotonous ubiquity of the grey mud' (Banks 1989 [1990]: 7) and 'the enfolding quietness of the place, somehow denied the past that had brought the village and the church into existence' (Banks 1989 [1990]: 7). In both instances, Banks uses sonorous, dense sequences of language that reflect moments of tension or loss, as well as the suffocating political climate. The 'crumpled, grey landscape fading slowly into the gloom' (Banks 1989 [1990]: 4) and '[t]he thickness of the underwater light' (Banks 1989 [1990]: 7), the sense of being placeless, of being contained and cut off yet somehow free as well also reinforces the sense of vacillation and dislocation that Hisako experiences, rootless yet still restricted, moving with the boat yet not making progress towards her destination or any sense of resolution to her internal conflicts. The denial of a particular history which is associated with the sunken city in the Zone furthers the argument that this is a space in which temporality and historical narratives are absent, meaning it functions as a place where Hisako can escape from her own personal history and restrictions.

Recalling the Zone of *The Bridge*, Banks presents an area which is isolated temporally and spatially from the major landmasses, representing a site where subversion takes place and the rules are broken. Just as the Zone was characterised by a

sense of isolation, Hisako remains estranged from her own geographical surroundings and her own sense of self. Such confinement is characteristic of Zones in Banks' work and *Canal Dreams* is about the 'experience of entrapment, immobility and helplessness caused not just by the situation and place but also his or her instability to break away from it.' (Martingale 2007: 120) Such feelings correlate with the Gothic elements of Banks' fiction, the neurotic interiority and enclosure of confined spaces. Martingale comments further that there is an 'uncanny use of the surreal, petrified space within a landscape of geographical reality . . . a study of Hisako's psychology and her culturally constrained background using flashbacks and dreams of rich Gothic symbolism.' (Martingale 2007: 219) As their ship moves through the Canal, the analogy for its progress is rendered thus:

the ship made its way up towards the level of the lake, as though it was a novice being gently guided, prepared and anointed and clothed for some fabulous arcane rite in the heart of a great basilica (Banks 1989 [1990]: 52).

The personification of Hisako's ship at this point is significant in terms of Hisako's eventual role as the heroine of the narrative, but the image used provides it with more conviction. The religious undertones of this extract are evident, with 'novice', 'anointed' and 'rite', but their juxtaposition against a more classical set of terms, 'arcane' meaning 'secret' and 'basilica' meaning 'an arena for the judicial or commercial' (Schwarz 1993: 139) suggests that there is a greater significance to the language in terms of its exploration of these different historical backgrounds. The word 'novice' although originally bearing religious connotations in the text, also derives from 'novum', meaning 'new'. Given that the 'basilica' can mean a place of judiciary and commerce, there is an argument to suggest that Hisako is the 'novice' who has been prepared for this throughout her historical and cultural experiences to carry out a ritualised revenge.

Throughout the narrative, Hisako comes to represent a ubiquitous figure from traditional Japan: ordered, requiring ritual to function, restrained, constrained and traditional on the outside yet when she is seen to be representing an ‘insider’ and not an ‘outsider’, she becomes chaotic, unpredictable and lacking restraint. Her subversion of the identity performance which is expected highlights such a change in persona but it is also the attraction of life on the ship which makes these varying characteristics more prominent:

life aboard ship seemed simple and easy. The set structure, the regular watches and rhythms, the adhered-to rules and definite lines of command, all appealed to the orderly side of her nature. There was the ship, and the rest of the world. All nice and definite and unarguable. The ship ploughed the ocean, affected by tides and wind, in touch via radio signals and satellites, but it was basically a unit, separated by its mobility. (Banks 1989 [1990]: 27)

The presence of a routine, a set strategy of duties, requirements and rules which must be adhered to lends itself well to Hisako’s temperament. In opposition to the non-traditional structure of a *Fantasia* the reader is presented with something that is seemingly orderly and coherent. Banks here presents the image of the ship as Hisako, her being ‘a unit, separated by its mobility.’ (Banks 1989 [1990]: 27)

The principle of ‘balance’ is a key for Hisako. If her balance is disrupted then she is pitched to a position of extremities. The first point at which the reader is given any detailed reference to the consequences of this balance is when she experiences a flashback to her last attempt to board a plane where she is ‘wallowing without way in the face of the dread she’d tried and tried to confront but with which she had never been able to connect’ (Banks 1989 [1990]: 100) and this ‘balancing disaster came from inside, where she was most vulnerable’ (Banks 1989 [1990]: 103). The recurrence of her lack of connection echoes the earlier sensations from when she was underwater yet Hisako’s personality ensures that:



She'd never needed to develop the spurious justifications and excuses, or the fragile ego-props and unlikely hopes so many other people had to construct to cope with their lives. She'd lived with some inner certainty they hadn't had; safe inside, defences turned outwards, weapons trained beyond her immediate space (Banks 1989 [1990]: 103).

The presence of a 'balancing disaster' inside Hisako suggests that there is something which acts in opposition to events that have affected her externally or physically earlier in her life. Her lack of need to 'develop excuses' to cope suggests further that she is in some way capable of distancing herself from problems or difficulties, which supports her problem in 'connecting' with the fear of flying. The expectations that people have that she can overcome this phobia is expressed using the analogy of music: 'a set of irrelevant symbols in a language that was not the reverberating note of her fear. Mere scrawls on a page pitched against the resonating physical chord of terror.' (Banks 1989 [1990]: 103-104) Her psychological composition being represented by a series of notes that are discordant suggests not instability but a lack of balance or coherence.

Similarly, when Hisako is captured after the rebellion she begins to assess her feelings, comparing her body to an 'assemblage of delicately balanced, highly stressed components which had been roughly shaken and left ringing with the after-effects of shock' (Banks 1989 [1990]: 106-107) which invokes a sense of the mechanical or the robotic in her emotions and reactions. That these components are 'delicate' makes it clear that a slight disruption will cause imbalance and it is Hisako's relationship with authority figures that catalyses the 'inner barbarian' which Martingale identified.

When Hisako is summoned to play the cello for Earl Dandridge she refuses his request for a second performance and snaps the bow in defiance, effectively demonstrating her refusal to communicate with him. This is followed by a series of recollections detailing how she killed a policeman during a student protest against the war in Vietnam, her visit to Hiroshima after the dropping of the atomic bomb and her

experiences of returning to Tokyo. As she attacks the policeman, the language reveals that she expertly and knowledgeably focuses on areas of his body where severe damage will be inflicted: 'She stabbed at his throat with her fingers, instantly furious, beyond all reason or normality, the pressure of all her frustration hammering her bones and flesh into his neck.' (Banks 1989 [1990]: 125 - 126) When Hisako witnesses the Cenotaph in Hiroshima, she concludes that 'The flensed stone and bleached concrete of the wrecked trade hall was much more eloquent' (Banks 1989 [1990]: 126). The feeling here is that there is a far more powerful message conveyed by the visual chaos of the Hiroshima site as opposed to a message written in the language of those who sided with the Americans. In both sets of circumstances, Hisako prefers the violent, chaotic aftermath to act as a testimony, rather than a simple translation or sanitised commemoration. Given that her father's death was a consequence of Hiroshima and the policeman's death was a result of the violence enacted against those protesting against Vietnam, Hisako would appear to be acting out her revenge with her main tools of communication, her hands, against an authoritarian figure she perceives as representing those who support the American actions. These are the same hands that, after she is attacked by her schoolmates, allow her to 'tell the judges how much it hurt' (Banks 1989 [1990] 39) when she plays for the Tokyo scholarship examination.

When her medium of communication, the cello, is destroyed, Hisako finds that her repression of emotions and her lack of agency are removed but it is the 'needless' destruction which 'finally killed her':

Strings tugged, snapped, flailed. Wood burst and sprang, turned to dust and splinters under the hail of fire. Bullets sang and sparked against the metal of the bows behind the instrument as it disintegrated and collapsed in a cloud of dark and pale-brown fragments, string waving like anemone limbs, like a drowning man's fingers. . . . but it was the cello; the needless, pointless (apart from to hurt) destruction of the cello that finally killed her. (Banks 1989 [1990]: 142)

At one point following the cello being destroyed, Hisako notes that ‘Old wood. New metal. Guess which won? No surprise there. Killed. She was free.’ (Banks 1989 [1990]: 142) The suggestion is that she finds the discipline of music a constraint or restriction on her personal expression. Her refusal to demonstrate outward emotion during the cello’s destruction can be interpreted as resistance or tradition but as she is raped in the subsequent narrative, Hisako distances herself from the pain and the humiliation, observing absurdity and humour in a sequence of memories from her recuperation period: ‘She suspected she’d disappointed them; they’d ripped the masking tape off her mouth so they could hear her scream when they shot the instrument, but she’d kept quiet.’ (Banks 1989 [1990]: 143) She thinks that her silence ‘disappointed’ her attackers, because they expected a performance and instead found resistance. As Hisako witnesses the senseless destruction of the cello, she equates it with a destruction of conventions, expectations and an opportunity for liberation. She offers a condemnation by claiming that:

Now she couldn’t be who or what she had been. She hadn’t asked for this, hadn’t wanted it, but it was here. Not her fault. There was no forbearance, no vengeance, just chance. But it had happened, all the same, and she did not feel that she had simply to succumb; acceptance was not nearly enough and far too much. (Banks 1989 [1990]: 143)

To render herself content, Hisako must find a balance between extremities and the freedom from her musical instrument also creates a breakdown in the personal boundaries that allow her to distinguish between the performance she felt compelled to maintain, namely silence, femininity and subservience, and the revenge enacted in this finale.

Banks reconfigures the rape scene when Hisako kills Sucre:

Sucre. His chest was smooth, almost hairless; nipples very dark in the half light. She crossed

quietly to the bed and fumbled with the holster at her hip. . . .

But he was too late, and she was already pumping down with the heels of her hands, the tip of the old cello spike on his chest then bursting through as she put all her weight on it, forcing it between his ribs and into his heart. (Banks 1989 [1990]: 154-155)

The feminised Sucre is killed using the cello in a scene which echoes the male-male stabbing in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Beach of Falesa* (1893). His 'smooth' chest and 'dark nipples' present him as sultry and exotic whilst the cello is voluptuous in its formation and outline. Martingale comments that 'the cello: mellifluously female in its shape conceals a penetrative maleness which can be brought textually to bear: a sensuous instrument to be played upon, played with, until, in essence, it commands its own tune.' (Martingale 2007: 220) The heavily phallic 'spike' is thrust into Sucre's chest, replicating the soldiers thrusting guns between Hisako's legs during the rape scene: the 'toys for the boys' that she identified in conversation with Dandridge now takes a far more sinister and violent role.

Hisako's systematic destruction of her attackers is portrayed with Banks' inventive yet sadistic poise. There are two notable points in the revenge sequence: when Hisako confronts Dandridge after she tracks him down to another boat on the canal, he asks her 'Are you still alive?' Her response is a decisive "no" therefore she becomes a chimera, a ghost from his near past.' (Banks 1989 [1990]: 214) Hisako now represents an avenging angel who embodies two sides of a culture; the contemporary Westernised Japan with its Capitalist ambitions and the traditional Japanese warrior culture. Hisako's father died three months before she was born and the same doctor who identified her father's terminal scenario delivered Hisako by Caesarean section following difficulties during her birth. Her avoidance of deformities (developmental and cognitive) during this birth is referred to as:

the way it worked, by statistics. It came down to probabilities, a cellular image of the jeopardising

indeterminacies that lay beneath the physical world, and where its absolute – but absolutely uncertain – foundations. So maybe the bomb did kill him, eventually, or maybe it didn't. (Banks 1989 [1990]: 185)

There is a feeling here that her avoidance of physical deformities at birth is a result of events that she had no control over, those which lay beyond the limits of the human experience. The 'cellular image of jeopardising indeterminacies that lay beneath the physical world' and the idea of 'absolute' yet 'absolutely uncertain' foundations connects the theoretical possibilities of the roots in her cultural memory with her practical rejection of them, essentially the conflict between pragmatic biology and more speculative psychological explorations. Connecting the retributive violence and memory of atrocities, *Canal Dreams* ends with Hisako creating her own infernal circle, concluding two different chronologies and bringing to birth a revenge that unifies violations from before she was born and those that left her, in her own words, 'dead'. What Banks presents here is the fantasy of the mother(land) avenging her violators, transgression in the liminal space of the sea and the orchestration of atavistic violence that has been rooted in the cultural memory of the nation. But it also indicates that there is a question to ask about Banks' status as a "political writer".

### **4.3 Troubles with Banks: A political writer or a writer of political fiction?**

I didn't want to “not mention the war”. I am fascinated by the historiography,” says Mitchell. “It costs you to remember, but it also costs you to forget, and in Japan the war is like a dead twin for the whole country. (Hindell 2001: 5)

Banks' preoccupation with US politics and his vehemently anti-Conservative stance would suggest that the answer would be decisively in favour of him being political but there still remain doubts about this conclusion due to his own inconsistency when responding to questions in interviews – for instance his suggestion that the politics in *The Bridge* make it more of a dialogue than a commentary are less than convincing.

There is a particularly moral and ethical quality that underlines Banks' work and such observations about the motivations and inspirations for his writing recur throughout his public interviews. Banks claims that the writing process allows him a unique opportunity:

Like anybody else, I want to make the world a little more like the world I'd like to live in, sad though that is. So I put forward these ideas however subtly or cack-handedly to the extent that I can get away with it. The good thing about writing is that you can do this in a non-invasive, non-penetrative way, you're not telling people this is what they should do, you're just presenting ideas. (Mitchell 1996: n.p)

The admission that his ideas are put forward ‘subtly or cack-handedly’, depending on ‘how he can get away with it’ further reinforces the idea of the writing process as a game for Banks. It is a process where the limits of readers' patience and rules of acceptability are to be pushed and transgressed. There is a feeling of playfulness about this statement when he claims that the novelist can be ‘non-invasive, non-penetrative’ and he is just ‘presenting ideas’. The vitriolic pronouncements which pour forth in his novels suggest more than such a passive stance, or at least a desire for more than this and his own activities in later life (such as ripping up his passport and sending it to

Tony Blair in protest at the invasion of Iraq) reveal a novelist with a wish for more than just observation.

Banks offers this frank assessment of *Canal Dreams*:

I always worry, with all these things, *Canal Dreams* was my first attempt at a political thriller – an action book. As a political thriller it's not very good and a sign that it's not so good at what it's supposed to be doing is that it would be so easy to take the politics out and make a pro-CIA propaganda movie. If it's that easy to strip out the political element, I haven't done my job properly. (Stevens 1995: n.p.)

Banks' admission that this is the novel he is least satisfied with is one point but his reason that it is due to the ease with which it could be converted to propaganda is contestable; it represents a feminist revenge narrative and an *exposé* of a C.I.A. dirty tricks campaign. The motif of rape as a tool of war/conflict makes taking the politics out difficult and it would likely require a full-scale demolition of the text before this could be realistically achieved. When asked about the film rights, Banks replied:

Och yeah. At the moment there's some interest in *Canal Dreams* although I think I could only sell it to Oliver Stone, anybody else doesn't have the clout not to get shoved off the picture and they'd just make it into American CIA propaganda . . .  
Actually of all the books *Canal Dreams* is the one I am least pleased with. By the usual reckoning, the worst books make the best films so going on that it might be quite a good film! Make a film like *Die Hard* and cut out most of the first half of the book. (Stevens 1995: n.p.)

In this respect, although he feels that the political aspect of his novel has failed, the interest in the film rights would indicate that he has succeeded in writing an 'action book'. This would suggest that he views the political thriller as a genre in which the politics is the main characteristic but that the correct execution of the written techniques is equally important for the purposes of audience satisfaction. Notably Banks subverts the conventions of the "political thriller genre": he is able to interrelate different historical and contemporary events using a sophisticated narrative technique while

adding a further layer of complexity through the consequences of repressed violence and violations in his protagonist. Violence between countries and cultures is paralleled with personal violence, suggesting a more complex form of genre thriller than is first apparent.

Moving away from genre politics (or the politics of genre), the concept of terrorism on a local and global scale is also a subject which Banks has come to address in his later books: written in just six weeks, the critically mauled *Dead Air* (2002) represented his first attempt at writing a novel about the events of September 2001 and instead turned into a flimsily constructed rant filled with vitriolic anti-American commentary, not to mention the thinly-veiled potshots he took at Israel, Holocaust deniers and fundamentalism. Banks' second attempt was far more successful: written under his alter-ego, Iain M. Banks, *The Algebraist* (2004) has many overtones of the momentous events of September 2001 involving New York and the World Trade Centre, represented in a monument, the Barquille Equatower, which contains a revolving restaurant and the complicity in this terror narrative between an industrialist known as The Archimandrite (whose physical description echoes Lucifer) and the perpetrators suggest that Banks adopts a more formal exploration of the subject but with an equally politicised approach. This would represent the politicisation of a genre in which there are many genre politics.

In her essay, 'Terrorists as Moralists' (focusing on Don DeLillo), Diane Johnson concludes that 'Terrorist action is not so much an example of lawlessness as a comment on the rules, an aspect of the structure itself' (Johnson 1977 [1982]: 109) and this suggests that the official, governing orders of power are complicit in creating and, at times, replicating the form that any challenge to their authority takes. Banks uses a similar structuring device in *Canal Dreams*, depicting a mission which, if successful, will allow the US to overthrow resistance in the Panamanian Canal.



As Andrew Gould comments at the conclusion of *Complicity*:

compassion and a few fair laws . . . exist against a background of bloody barbarism, they float on an ocean of bloody horror that can tear apart any petty social construction of ours in an instant. (Banks 1993: 302)

This is the type of restructuring that takes place when an act of terror occurs. The ‘compassion’ and ‘laws’ are fragile and invoked only when deemed ‘appropriate’ to the act or the persons involved, hence the violent image of ‘tear[ing] apart any petty social construction’, a savage analysis of the methods by which cultural mores and norms come to have such an impact upon the way in which daily life is regulated. These constructions are ‘petty’ and childish, bearing little reality to the horrors that they are supposed to prevent and protect citizens from, hence Gould’s scathing analysis. In terms of the global terror (which I suggest Banks is also alluding to here), there exists the self-importance of legislators and law-makers who are there to suggest that preventative measures are in place, to imply that the governments and individuals assigned to protect from terror are fulfilling their requirements and to work as a smokescreen for the ‘ocean of bloody horror’ which Banks, Colley and Gould view as State-sanctioned terror and atrocity, hence the significance of *Canal Dreams* in the context of Banks’ oeuvre.

The historical and political events that contextualise this novel are global, as the narrative details:

Panama City was under martial law. The President of Columbia has been shot dead and five groups had claimed responsibility. More US carrier groups were arriving off the Pacific Coast of Central America and in the Caribbean. Cuba said it was preparing to be invaded. The Kremlin was threatening a new blockade of Berlin. America and Russia had both called for an emergency session of the UN. The US peace mission was on again; the plane would leave Dulles the following morning. A thousand rioters were dead in Hong Kong, and the Azanian Army had found a giant glass crater in the sands three hundred kilometres east of Otijwarongo, which they claimed was the site of Johannesburg’s unobtrusive

cruise-missile warning shot. The news ended with American baseball scores, then the martial music resumed. (Banks 1989 [1990]: 144)

This is a characteristically jarring sequence of potentially world-changing political conflicts and the litany of consequences, civil unrest and governmental machinations and gerrymandering is concluded emphatically with the abrupt introduction of ‘American baseball scores’. Banks is seeking to remind the audience of the impact upon political regions by Imperialist nations and does so through the juxtaposition of US sports against martial music. The technique also jolts the reader back into the narrative by reminding them that the ships are imprisoned in a microcosm, a secured and isolated Zone.

Within the stasis of the Zone, the symbol for US Imperialism is found in Earl Dandrige who comes to represent the ‘imperialist motive of self-determined righteousness.’ (March 2002: 96) When he discusses the history of commercial airlines being shot down as part of terrorist activities, it is with a calm elucidation that ‘[t]hese things have to happen sometimes.’ (Banks 1989 [1990]: 123) His righteousness manifests itself in the determination that the activities in the Panamanian Canal are for the greater good but, as March also suggests: ‘Dandrige also notes the moral ambiguity that subscribing to or benefitting from a capitalist system implies.’ (March 2002: 96) Such moral ambiguity is captured in his comments to Hisako after she has begun to fight back:

You have to do bad things in a bad world if you want to stay able to be good. Do you understand that? I mean there’s all these people think goodness and rightness is somehow indivisible, but it isn’t, can’t be. . . . Romans found that; the Spanish and the English too. You got to remain *dynamic*, or you fall down; you sink into your own indulgence; you get decadent. Free society . . . free society like America’s, that sort of stuff is bubbling away under the surface all the time (Banks 1989 [1990]: 166-167).

The emphasis here on justifying acts of terrorism as a method for preserving the ‘good’ in life is a rhetorical invocation but it does mean that Dandridge, in spite of his own ‘moral bankruptcy’ (March 2006: 96) recognises the level of complicity he has in preserving, developing and sustaining the Capitalist system he is part of.

The reason for Banks’ juxtaposition of Japanese history and the US intervention in South American politics and trade is to comment on the danger of remembering and forgetting, which is rendered starkly through Hisako’s actions and Banks seems to be warning his audience, using his characteristic “morality tale”, against forgetting acts of atrocity that the West has carried out against the East. Banks’ novels tend to suggest an atavistic history or inheritance which propels a culture towards recurrent terminal situations and Hisako’s own conflicts within her past are used to demonstrate her personal alienation. It is the socio-historical aspects of the text which highlight this politicisation of Banks’ texts; America’s deployment of the Atom Bomb during World War II, separate incidents in Hisako’s childhood and her involvement in periods of civil disobedience contextualise and offer a motivation for the one-woman assault she embarks upon. However, in this case the choice of location and topic provides an interesting global outlook and possibility for rounded yet ranting political commentary that is resonant with Banks’ oeuvre. His known left-wing Socialist standpoint further supports this claim, and his deliberate exercising of caution when asked about the possibilities for adaptations of the text makes it clear there is a political message and intention on his part.

Having identified ways in which history motivates violence in the present, Banks threatens to launch into his own personal atrocity exhibition but resists, instead choosing to document a chronology of the conflicts and genocide that have been perpetrated in Century Europe and South America. His bleak prognosis remains that ‘[h]ope was endemic and sometimes reality implied despair.’ (Banks 1989 [1990]: 115)

Such an outlook echoes and refers to his selection of a book title in which the only alternative to the stasis of the Canal is dreaming. The political motivation for using dream sequences is made emphatically in *Canal Dreams*:

In the past, she had always coped, she'd put up with it, with them. Dreams were dreams and took their cue from what had happened, accessories after the act. She'd dismissed those she'd been having recently as she'd dismissed those she'd always had. But now they spoke of a lake of blood, and it occurred to her that the brown slick of oil, the great dumped flat platelet she'd spread over by the waters, was a kind of blood. Blood of the planet, blood of the human world. The oil-blood greased the world machine; the blood-oil carried energy to the workings of the states and systems. It welled and was pulled out, bled to the surface, was transfused and transported. It was the messenger of soil and progress: the refined lesson of its own development. (Banks 1989 [1990]: 189)

The body politic is only able to function using blood and the world it represents can only function using oil. Blood is not just the life force for the body, it is a political statement referring not only to those with 'blood' on their hands but also to the way in which oil represents a currency which can be bartered with, exchanged for favours and becomes the centre for territorial and geopolitical conflicts. That it 'carried energy to the workings of states and systems' highlights how Banks perceives the roots of contemporary acts of terror and attrition globally. The 'messenger of soil and progress' conveys how vital it is to be owned and used by governments and political entities on either side of the State-enforced legal line. The analogy of the body is reinforced further when Hisako lights the oil, creating a 'kilometre-wide ring of fire, enfolding and enclosing a dark and lifeless heart.' (Banks 1989 [1990]: 198) The 'dark and lifeless heart' is a deeply pessimistic and bleak image which symbolises the stasis and lack of hope in resolving conflicts in areas such as Panama.

The use of elaborate and fantastical images correlates with Martingale's analysis:

fiction takes us into a fantasy world where we rely on narratives for the frame which provides us with a sense of the “Real”. Once established, the narrative can overstep the frame, upsetting our sense of proportion and giving us an uneasy sense that something is wrong. The Uncanny interrupts the fantasy setting, calling into question its parameters . . . Punter remarks that the moment we awaken ourselves from a nightmare is not when the dream becomes fantastic but when it comes too close to our personal anxieties. (Martingale 2007: 133)

One of the successfully transgressive qualities in Banks’ work is that he places his readers and characters into an uncomfortable proximity with their ‘personal anxieties’ and plays upon disrupting the ‘sense of proportion’ in order to achieve both the optimum shock value and the most effective technique to generate narrative momentum. McCracken aptly summarises this: ‘the ritual elements of the tale, traditional and modern, are placed firmly within contemporary history and society. Ritual and modernity, magic and the mundane are the carefully balanced context for the emergence of horror.’ (McCracken 1998: 139) By systematically using and fusing fantasy and the Gothic, Banks is able to introduce moments of the Uncanny abruptly (such as the use of dream sequences in *The Bridge and Canal Dreams*) which straddle the boundaries between genres. A reader anticipating the ‘uneasy sense that something is wrong’ is experiencing the uncanny, a sensation that is generated when a scenario which appears to be familiar differs slightly from the expectation. The overlaps between Hisako’s dreams and the events they foretell is one such example of this uncanniness in Banks’ work.

March misreads the significance of the dream sequences in her assessment of Banks when she claims: ‘Banks also uses dream sequences as a means of developing such fantastic or supernatural elements without requiring their presence in the “real” narrative itself.’ (March 2002: 84) Banks deliberately avoids using the supernatural in his work but what is more problematic with this assessment is that the dreams clearly

have a presence in the “real” narrative, whichever can be constituted as “real” because they are linked with events occurring in the main part of the novel. Craig’s observations support my analysis:

Edwin Muir believed that it was in dreams that we encountered this timeless realm of the mythic and dreams continually erupt into Banks’s narratives not as elements of a character’s consciousness but as though they were realities in themselves. (Craig 2002: 37)

If March is able to prove that it is possible to clearly distinguish between the “realities” in Banks’ work then she has identified a possible failure in his practice as an author which sets out to blur such distinctions and boundaries. Craig’s conclusion also hints at but does not seem to go far enough when he claims that they are ‘not . . . elements of a character’s consciousness’. I would suggest that they represent part of the consciousness but not all of it, given that evidence of Banks’ deliberate playing with psychoanalytical precepts has been identified in earlier chapters. One of the strategies that Banks deploys effectively is the juxtaposition of bizarre and surreal narrative events against examples of violence and terror constructed from a deeply discomforting proximity to our own world and this is why the dream sequences are so effective in their impact upon the narrative. Whether they are allegorical or referential, the symbolism that Banks employs can be traced to specific scenarios which bear relationship to the barbaric and outlandish events that have inspired Banks’ own writing. The recurrent use of political tropes and motifs in each text under discussion in this thesis, along with the on-going commentary – subtle or otherwise – mean that to argue Banks is not a politicised novelist or a writer of political fictions, is to dismiss vital elements of his work. In his most recent works, *The Business*, *Dead Air* and *The Steep Approach to Garbadale* (2007) this aspect has perhaps become most imbalanced and extreme. But in the works I am considering it is a consistent technique whereby the movement into fantastical or allegorical narrative spaces provides a freedom from the restraints of realism and thus when violence bears

an uncomfortable sensation of the punishment fitting the crime, there is usually a clear motivation and a sense of justification, from the novelist himself if not always from the reader. Placing such demands upon the reader characterises Banks' power and effectiveness as a novelist in the contemporary marketplace.

### **Chapter 5: The Questions of Scotland: *The Crow Road***

*The Crow Road* represents a confident display of Banks' tricks, techniques, obsessions and oddities, yet remains his most mature work. By interrogating the intersection of landscape and fiction and a direct analysis of how landscape functions in *The Crow Road*, there is a further genuine and clear engagement with the different functions of Scotland in Banks' fiction but this is an opportunity to consider some of the ways in which Banks is a writer with a political and geographical imagination that seems subtle, sophisticated and critical. The second part of this chapter will consider the role of the postmodern Gothic in *The Crow Road* as one of the genres that form the foundation of Banks' aesthetic.

As the reader has become accustomed to when encountering a book by Iain Banks, this fiction is 'generically promiscuous' (McMillan 1995: 88) and Douglas Gifford suggests 'it can be read as a family chronicle, thriller, *bildungsroman* or spiritual journey' (Gifford 1992: 12). With the addition of 'detective novel', this is a comprehensive list and the deftness with which Banks can often (but not always) manipulate and blend these genres is an underpinning point of his success. Gifford's identification of the different ways that *The Crow Road* can be read reinforces McMillan's assessment of Banks' predilection for moving between genres and the phrase 'generically promiscuous' suggests that Banks is once more deploying hybrid forms but also anticipates the reception it will receive from the reviewers. Banks remains a novelist who seems determined to unsettle presumptions and confident assertions about which type of novel he is writing.

Nairn openly refers to the games that are played between Banks and his reviewers and readers:

When asked what his novel new novel *The Crow Road* (1992) was about, Iain Banks replied: "Well it's about 147,000 words at the last count, but



seriously, it's about Death, Sex, Faith, cars, Scotland and drink" (Gifford 1991: 57). His remarks may come closer to the truth than his book-jackets and reviewers. Regardless of their likenesses and differences, his novels are rarely about what they appear to be about. (Nairn 1993: 127)

Reviewers concur as to the quality of *The Crow Road* but the aspects of the text which are highlighted reinforce the recurrent argument about the difficulties of 'placing' Banks and about how to market his work. Natasha Walther astutely notes that 'He continually proves himself master of two rare tricks: he marries pacy plot-lines with languorous literary diction, and he mixes a wealth of straight social realism with flights of gothic fantasy' (Walther 1992: 21) The emphasis from Walther highlights qualities which are traditionally more associated with the tenets of "literary fiction" (although the presence of Gothic and a 'pacy narrative' may unsettle this distinction further), the 'languorous literary diction' and 'social realism' seem to add more weight than its brief which seems to be often rendered equivocal with the literary. McMillan calls *The Crow Road* a 'bourgeois fiction' (McMillan 1995: 88), suggesting that Banks' concern ostensibly stems from that of a 'middle-class' perspective, using the text to 'survey from the lower to the upper class' (McMillan 1995: 88) whilst Middleton considers *The Crow Road* 'a complex multi-layered novel that tackles profound issues about nationhood, community and identity' (Middleton 1998: 23) and a 'richly realized family saga' (Middleton 2006a: 67). It is the interconnections between politics and class, nation and identity, which lead into the first section of this chapter, 'Landscape and Fiction'.

### **5.1 Landscape and Fiction.**

In his unpublished keynote address, “Landscape & Imagination: Iain Banks’

Representation of Argyll in *The Crow Road*”, Middleton states that ‘Iain Banks has not been conventionally regarded as a writer whose concerns with Scottish culture involve an imaginative engagement with Scottish landscapes and locations.’ (Middleton 2006b:

1) Despite the clear presence of a substantial knowledge of Scottish geography and culture in such novels as *The Bridge*, *Complicity*, *Whit* and *The Steep Approach to Garbadale*, a substantial amount of the small critical corpus dedicated to his work chooses to regard this as a backdrop rather than a more significant element. In *The Crow Road* (and, arguably, *The Bridge*), Scotland becomes a symbol of much more than geography; it stands for a nexus of politics, class, history, myth and the overlaps and divisions between urban and country space. Doreen Massey identifies three propositions concerning the nature of space:

Firstly, *space is relational* - it is not anything in itself but derives its apparently natural characteristics from its relations with other places, people and things. Secondly, and as a consequence of this, space is *multiple and heterogeneous*. Places contain different elements and possibilities, can be experienced in many different ways, and are contested by clashing forms of social difference. Finally, space is *in process*, not closed and fixed. (Massey 2005: 18)

This correlates with the analysis of post-industrial space in Chapter 3 and so Scotland comes to represent a multiplicity of nodes whose interactions and continued state of flux mean that they are subject to shift and change. Banks’ use of the town of Gallanach complements these precepts: as a location or area it is distinctly heterogenous, composed of global influences, particularly ‘the Ballast-Mound, the World-Hill’ (Banks 1992 [1993]: 74). The mound is formed of the ballast that ships took from the starting-points of their journeys; Ashley’s grandfather told her ‘[t]here’s aw ra world unner yon turp a grass’ (Banks 1992 [1993]: 75) and as a child she used to think ‘I was sitting on

rocks that had once been a bit of China or Brazil, or Australia or America.’ (Banks 1992 [1993]: 75) This emphasizes the relationship between geography and globalization. Banks uses Ashley’s thoughts as a reminder for Prentice to consider the global activities of Rory, who he describes as: ‘our family connection to the rest of the globe’ (Banks 1992 [1993]: 75) but this set of connections can be expanded to take into account Gallanach and Scotland as a whole. Banks’ description of the Ballast mounds suggests that it is not just Gallanach that has received earth from far-flung ports but also the other way around. In this respect, the town functions as a bridge between “here” and “there”, the convergence point of different material and geographical discourses which inform its current status and presentation. As Kneale concludes: ‘The ballast mounds are hybrid places, materialising relations between a network of specific places. Gallanach is a relational space.’ (Kneale 2006: 7) This symbol of history represents not just the locale but also Scotland’s outward facing global links. The state of flux and time shifts suggests that this ‘space’ is perpetually in transition, the Ballast Mound removed and set to be replaced by a marina and other forms of leisure complex. These changes represent a ‘register for the shifting economic fortunes of this region’ (Middleton 2006b: 7) in the same way that Edinburgh and Lennox’s move to the city functioned in *The Bridge*. The nodes which comprise Gallanach and Scotland are connections between different temporalities and historical periods and just as Prentice functions as the balance or generational gauge in his family, the town of Gallanach as a whole is a microcosm for Scotland’s development and adjustment to ongoing social, cultural and economic changes globally. The state of Gallanach is also defined and impacted upon by the internal, more local activities of the Urvills whose proto-feudal ownership of the Glass-making factory, the main source of economy, contributes to the antagonisms which also shape the socio-economic landscape of the novel. Kneale observes that ‘Banks’ fictions do seem to associate change with life, if not progress’ (Kneale 2006: 8).

Prentice declares ‘I have a fascination with places people think powerful or important’ (Banks 1992 [1993]: 73) and this interpretation of the terrain of Scotland (particularly) emphasises the role of atavism and the intersection between geography and the mythic in Banks’ works. The atavism at work in Banks’ novels frequently affects the individual via the acts of others or conditions which are imposed upon them, but in this instance, it is the relationship between the place and space which is of interest. Anna Paterson claims, rather unfairly, that Banks is ‘a fantasist through and through and one of the least “place sensitive” writers in Scotland.’ (Paterson 2002: 28) The significance of Edinburgh and the Forth Bridge in *The Bridge*, Edinburgh in *Complicity* and the Panama Canal in *Canal Dreams*, to name but three instances, demonstrates Banks’ clear sensitivity to the potential and significance of place and space. Arguably the most coherent and conclusive statement would be that Banks is a novelist who combines elements of the fantastical with an eye for the world around him, which leads to the success and acceptance of the speculative fiction aspects of his books. Without this sensitivity, Banks would struggle to introduce and integrate the wilder and more inventive parts of his writing to a readership more accustomed to mainstream novels than science-fiction. In contrast with Paterson, Armitt has been one of the few critics to read this use of landscape differently in *The Crow Road* claiming that ‘Scottish topography . . . is revealed . . . as the source of ancient powers that pre-date questions of nation state or human struggle’ (Armitt 2002: n.p.). Given that topography’s etymology is ‘the writing of place’ (topos = place, graphein = write) then it is clear that he wishes to represent the writing of place in the contemporary period. Armitt suggests further that:

[s]ome might claim that Britain’s topography is inadequate territory for such writing, but Banks, amalgamating the historical and the geographical in a manner that suggests vastness in terms of the momentous landscape of rural Scotland, gives the lie

to this assumption using superimposed chronotopes.  
(Armitt 2002: n.p.)

By creating the fictional town of Gallanach, Banks is also inserting his own worlds into the existing landscape, reimagining and reconfiguring the terrain. The historic significance of the area in which Banks sets *The Crow Road* is its status as a site of Celtic power struggles and kingdoms and Banks uses the underpinning myths to ‘juxtapose the historical and the present, identifying the structures by which power has been inherited and passed down through the different periods of time’ (Middleton 2006b: 3). The juxtaposition which Banks deploys is a technique he used in *Canal Dreams* and in this instance it is used to politicise the text, also reinforcing the Gothic elements of the novel. The implications of using the geographical region are that it is characteristically resonant with a period of Scottish history that mirrors the socio-economic structure of the present. Alan Warner used a similar technique with *The Man Who Walks* (2002) concluding at Bannockburn.

Duncan Petrie notes the historical significance of the ‘fictionalised town of Gallanach and the surrounding area in rural Argyllshire – the centre of old Dalriada, the ancient kingdom of the Scots’ (Petrie 2004: 123) and it is thus of little surprise that the Urvills’ castle occupies a centrality in *The Crow Road*, reinforcing further the Gothic aspects of the narrative. Connecting this to Dalriada also ensures Banks can make subtle but pointed observations about the politics of how such wealth is accrued. Petrie connects the two, stating that ‘concerns with the negative consequences of the onward march of global capitalism and imperialism emerge in both *The Bridge* and *The Crow Road*’ (Petrie 2004: 125). *The Steep Approach to Garbadale*, also addresses these topics through the portrayal of the Wopuld family and the company’s younger generation’s determination to prevent their older colleagues’ attempt to sell Spraint Inc. to an American bidder. Similarly, to the Wopulds, Fergus uses the profits from the glass factory to maintain Gaineamh Castle – the inherited seat of the aristocratic Urvills,

which he has restored and remains the symbol of his power and status within the local community, this contrast between the generated and the inherited wealth also suggests that the concerns of the novel seem to locate themselves firmly between the tensions of the lower and the upper classes.

Prentice's father explains about the history of the area to the children:

We learned about the people who had made Scotland their home: the hunter gatherers of eight or nine thousand years ago, nomads wandering the single great wood and stalking deer, or camping by the edge of the sea and leaving only piles of shells for us to find; the first farmers, just beginning to clear the land of the blanket of thick forest a few millennia later; the neolithic people who had built the tomb of Maes Howe before the pyramids were constructed, and the stone circle at Callanish before Stonehenge, in the thousand year summer of the third millennium; then came the Bronze Age and Iron Age people, the Vikings and the Picts, Romans and Celts and Scots and Angles and Saxons who had all found their way to this oceanically marginal little corner of northern Europe, and left on the place their own marks; the treeless slopes themselves, the roads and walls, cairns and forts, tombs, standing stones, souterrains, crannogs and farms and houses and churches; and the oil refineries, nuclear power stations and missile ranges, too. (Banks 1992 [1993]: 322)

There is a distinct strategy at work here with Banks' overt conflation of the historical and the contemporary. The location which is being narrated begins with Argyll and then expands to Scotland as a whole, clearly demonstrating that Banks intends to correlate *The Crow Road* with the wider narrative of Scottish history.

Further contrasts in this passage include the shift between pre-industrial and post-industrial, as well as the different topographies at work, with the people who 'left on the place their own marks' (Banks 1992 [1993]: 322). These marks are a symbol of the other ways in which languages have constructed narratives upon the landscapes. The geography here becomes accompanied in more industrial texts by the similarly alienating bleakness of the modern society and although Banks chooses not to recreate

the clogged industrial heartlands of *The Bridge* there are pointed references to ‘oil refineries, nuclear power stations and missile ranges’ which reinforces Middleton’s earlier point about Gallanach representing a ‘register for the shifting economics fortunes of this region’ (Middleton 2006b: 7). In *The Crow Road* we see Prentice grappling with

the new spatial disorientation in postmodern society, where the inability of subjects to map ... space ... is a manifestation of a larger and more serious problem of their inability to position themselves individually and collectively within the new decentred communication networks of capitalism (Best and Kellner 1991: 188)

The extract from *The Crow Road* also represents a juxtaposition of the natural development of the Scottish landscape against the more recent impact of industry and technological progress. Craig makes a similar connection to Middleton, noting that:

When Banks approaches the matter of Scotland, its history of double identities shapes the nature of his narratives and the presentation of his characters. They inhabit a world that is modern, rational, technological – like the world of Lowland Scotland as it was shaped by the Industrial Revolution – but they are conscious of another, older forgotten world which, like the Highlands, sits alongside it. (Craig 2002: 32)

The ‘matter of Scotland’ is a pertinent pun with regard to this text in particular (though it could also be extended to *The Bridge* as well). ‘Matter’ here represents the ‘condition of Scotland’ as well as the historical objects and narratives which have come to form the landscapes surrounding Gallanach. The dualism between the two worlds is a reflection of the scientific separating from the primitive, which can be expanded and extrapolated into the foundational motif of the double, lying at the heart of Banks’ oeuvre.

The reader is persistently reminded of the ways in which inhabitants of a location are connected to the land and, arguably, the nation to which they belong. Melanie Ebdon states that ‘land, history and story are linked in a way which allows the subject the ability to construct their identity in relation to the world around them.’

(Ebdon 2002: 44) Prentice senses a direct connection with the ancient Scottish cultures, but this chain is shown to have evolved and he is prepared to see himself as related to much more than that mysterious era of ancient Scotland.

This relationship sees Prentice, the protagonist, exist as the text's detective character. *The Crow Road* demonstrates this overtly: Prentice's name alludes to the idea of an 'apprentice', one who is trained and developed under the tutelage of senior figures who attempt to guide and influence. However an apprentice must also be able to learn and solve problems independently using existing information that he has been provided with by others. That Prentice chooses to study history at University is a more judicious choice of discipline that it seems at first, given that his dominant role within the narrative is to piece together the palimpsest of clues and fragments of text that his Uncle (Rory) has left for him to try and solve just why Rory disappeared. In line with this pedagogic role, Ken's name can be read as a play on words since the name is the Scots dialect version of the verb 'to know' (Schwarz 1993: 916). Prentice and Ken's relationship is also suggestive of a pupil/teacher dynamic. Banks' use of the *bildungsroman* means that Prentice represents the fulfillment of his apprenticeship and overcomes his own doubts in order to achieve the role.

The second significance of Dalriada relates to a consistent theme of Banks' work: atavism. The concept of atavism suggests that the narrative is structured by history and the ways in which each character is influenced by inheritance or deviation from a set of existing conditions. McMillan darkly suggests that 'for contemporary Scottish novelists, the nation, its myths and allegories, however monstrous, are probably inescapable.' (McMillan 1995: 81) Banks has tapped into this dark and terrifying history of his nation of birth. Suggesting this is 'probably inescapable' also conveys the feeling that a 'Scottish writer' feels a sense of obligation to utilise and therefore further



reinforce the importance of this tradition, as well as preserving its place in contemporary Scottish culture:

Dunadd Rock had been the capital of Dalriada, one of the early and formative kingdoms in Scotland. The footprint -looks more like a footprint, actually, just a smooth hollow in the stone - was where the new king had to place his foot when he made his vows, symbolically - I suppose - to join him to the land. (Banks 1992 [1993]: 396)

Here any connections with the land that are hinted at in the coronation ceremony and the idea of land-ownership embodied by the Urvill family are demonstrated to be superficial ideas with no practical significance. The basis of any such land-claim is clearly open to be scrutinised as the narrative suggests that everybody is a coloniser as land cannot belong to anyone. As Ebdon claims ‘Nationality as a principle is set within a geological timescale which calls into question the notion of attaching particular values and a name to a piece of land.’ (Ebdon 2002: 56) Craig suggests further that:

[t]he crises of Banks’s novels turn on moments when the characters live not in the timescale of ordinary human experience – the timescale of “story” – but in the timescale of a universal “geology”, a timescale of which only “fable” can make sense. (Craig 2002: 38)

Such ‘geology’ reflects the natural formations at work within *The Crow Road*. The sense of ‘ordinary human experience’ would seemingly exclude the extraordinary death of Kenneth, where the crisis is one of faith and death which seemingly restores this question of power. Taking Craig’s definition, namely that “fable” is ‘a world to which the actualities of history are irrelevant and only the mythic patterns of things are significant’ (Craig 2002: 38) and connecting *A Song of Stone* with *The Crow Road*, Craig’s analysis concludes that:

the “song of stone” is the Castle in which Abel has grown-up - both the genealogical and the psychological fortress of the self, and like all the castles of Banks’s fiction, representing an ancient

home from which modern humanity is exiled. (Craig 2002: 38)

Critics such as Sage and Punter have discussed the symbolism of the Castle in Banks' novels but this emphasis on the 'ancient' is recurrent through *The Crow Road* and *Complicity*. Craig goes on to quote the following passage:

We carry the silt of our own memories within us, like the castle's long –stored treasures, and we are top-heavy with it. But ours is geological in its profundity, reaching back through our shared histories, blood-lines and ancestries to the first farmers, the first hunting band, the first shared cave or nested tree. By our wit we look further back, and out, so that we hear the buried stripes of all our planet's earlier geology in the strata of our brains, and contain within our bodies the particular knowledge of the explosion of suns that lived and died before our own came into being. (Banks 1997: 196-197)

The 'silt of memories' and the 'shared histories' anticipates the ideas of atavism as well as the ways in which Banks' narratives overlap and converge, people yoked together through familial and generational lines, through ostensibly chance encounters and through connections with their nation and its own history.

The identification of the strata concurs, in part, with *The Crow Road* and in one particularly heady scene, Prentice extrapolates these connections onto a far wider scale:

for one long, swim-headed instant my veins seemed to run with ocean-blood, dark and carrying as the black water sucking at the edges of the tumbledown wharf beneath us. I thought, *God, how we are connected to the world!*, and suddenly found myself thinking about Uncle Rory again, our family connection to the rest of the globe, our wanderer on the planet. I stared up at the broken face of moon, dizzy with wonder and a hunger to know. (Banks 1992 [1993]: 75)

This fusion of the global with the local and the geographical bluntly emphasises just how the microcosm of the human experience relates to the macrocosm of the world itself. Banks shifts from the question of historical connection on a personal level to the

figure of Rory as the ubiquitous traveller, exploring and seeking out unknown parts of the world, not yet traversed by Prentice. Significantly, at this point in the narrative, Prentice is still young and so the vast scale of the globe is still something to bewilder and fascinate him. Bridging the world that Prentice sees before him and that which for him is inestimable is a connection not tangible but inescapably related. The provisional status of these boundaries and borders, like the temporary but connected nature of identity, is emphasised here:

I don't know, not God, not as such, not as a man,  
something in human form, or even in an actual thing,  
just ... just a field ... a force

...

I mean a sort of interconnectedness; a field effect. I keep getting this feeling its already there, like in quantum physics, where matter is mostly space, and space, even the vacuum, seethes with creation and annihilation all the time, and nothing is absolute, and two particles at opposite ends of the universe react together as soon as one's interfered with; all that stuff. It's like it's there and it's staring us in the face but I just can't ... can't access it. (Banks 1992 [1993]: 168)

The sense that everything is linked in some way, that one action will influence something seemingly disconnected links strongly with the location that Banks' uses to site the glass factory. Adding further emphasis to this is the importance of inheritance which is present throughout Banks' oeuvre. The generational congruence and discordance, the pathetic fallacy is replicated in the environment in which Charlotte gives birth to Verity:

Above, on the hillside, stood the lattice forms of two electricity pylons, straddling the heather like grey gigantic skeletons wreathed in darkness. The black wind howled and there was another blinding flash and a titanic concussion; a line of violet incandescence split the night mid-way between the two huge pylons as energy short-circuited through the air between the wind-whipped power-lines.

Charlotte screamed again and the child was born. (Banks 1992 [1993]: 97)

The 'lattice forms' are resonant with the structure of 'the Bridge' but it is the simile of the 'gigantic skeletons wreathed in darkness' that adds to an atmosphere which has been saturated with Gothic apparel. Lightning here represents the connection between birth and death, the symbol of creation and destruction. As Armitt aptly puts it: 'landscape remains a presiding leitmotif combining oppressive architecture and extreme atmospherics' (Armitt 2001: 305). The play on 'presiding' (leading to "president") further emphasises the significance of structures such as Gaineamh Castle and their connotations of historical inheritance and socio-economic dominance, as well as their contribution to the pervasive imposing landscape of *The Crow Road*.

As befits such sequences of history, inheritance and the relationship between atmosphere, birth and death, before Kenneth dies, Verity is born and once more the manner of her conception and the way in which she enters the world is heavily symbolic: 'Verity: conceived beneath a tree two millennia old and born to the flare and snap of human lightning, Emerging to emergency, making her entrance, and duly entrancing.' (Banks 1992 [1993]: 56) Verity's name implies purity and truth, linking directly with the lightning strike at her point of birth and further reinforces the recurrent sense of connections which echo throughout the text. It is heavily symbolic that Fulgurite is made of 'earth and air', suggesting the fusion of elements and emerges when lightning strikes 'unconsolidated sand'. The idea of sand being 'unconsolidated' suggests it is disparate, fragmented and disconnected.

Connecting the disparate and fragmented notions of nation, location and glass, McMillan offers an alternative reading of the symbolism of glass in relation to the focus of *The Crow Road*, suggesting that this is symbolic of the nation being, 'brittle and as resilient as glass' (McMillan 1995: 89) and McMillan reinforces the symbolism, aligning the text with the fragmentation of the Scottish nation.

McMillan goes further in her assessment of Scottish writing in relation to the nation, linking the work of Banks with that of Alasdair Gray: ‘Alasdair Gray’s *Poor Things* and Iain Banks’ *The Crow Road* explicitly invite readings as national allegory which they then subvert and complicate.’ (McMillan 1995: 86) Whilst there are undoubted overlaps between Gray and Banks – their stylistic game-playing, blurring of genres and treatment of the Scotland as a post-industrial space, the approach I prefer is to move away from a discussion of contemporary Scottish writing in relation to nation. The reasons for this movement away are that, as stated in the introduction, equating nation with allegory is problematic for a writer who has openly described himself as a British novelist. This is not to say that Banks avoids the ‘question of Scotland’ (as discussed earlier) but that the international focus of his novels would suggest that his priorities are not restricted or limited to one nation.

Moving from narration of nation to a consideration of the mythic, although described using humour, Banks makes a serious point about the dichotomies and tensions at work within *The Crow Road*:

anybody wacko enough ever to have bought the idea that there was some sort of weird cosmic energy beaming out of a geriatric shrub in a back-end-of-nowhere Scottish graveyard on a wet Monday night probably hasn’t the wit to lie about it. (Banks 1992 [1993]: 60)

The debates regarding religion and loss of faith are seemingly resolved by the presence in the text of what Craig refers to as ‘the mythic’, which acts as a bridge between the more rational and scientific explanations:

The pregnancy of Verity (whose name gestures, of course, to truth) is celebrated by a tour “around Gallanach [which] is thick with ancient monuments; burial sites, standing stones, henges and strangely carved rocks, [a place] where you can hardly put your foot down without stepping onto something that had religious significance to somebody, sometime” (Craig 2002: 37).

The description of this tour quite insistently contradicts and, indeed, highlights the short-sighted attitude he perceives in the religious traditions of Scotland, suggesting directly that the landscape of Scotland is saturated in materials that reflect the historical populations and diversity over the course of the millennia. For Sage the petrified settings in Banks' fiction constitute 'a stock-taking of the value and the failures of Science-based Humanism in post 1960s popular culture ... a fictional meditation on the continuing, dialectical relationship between humanism and religion.' (Sage 1996b: 23)

Banks' use of Scotland as a landscape and a space for exploration different genres of fiction means that he:

uses rural Scotland in way that makes him part of that recent tradition in Scottish writing which we might trace back to Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* which is about: "breaking significantly with the urban-fixated, anti-historicism of the post-war period" (Gifford 2002: 732-733) exemplified by James Kelman and those younger writers influenced by him like Duncan MacLean and Irvine Welsh. (Middleton 2006b: 5)

Noticeably and significantly, the tradition Middleton identifies is found 'in Scottish writing', and is not a tradition 'of Scottish writing', demonstrating the wider influences that the novelists in question draw from, places Banks' firmly as a British novelist, not just a Scottish novelist. This multi-focused outlook, simultaneously examining the future whilst invoking the past, characterises Banks' oeuvre and leads into the next section which develops the earlier consideration of the contemporary Gothic and considers the "Postmodern Gothic".

## **5.2 The Crow Road and the Postmodern Gothic.**

The Gothic lends itself well to exploring the ways in which Banks negotiates the tensions and conflicts which characterise popular and literary fiction. Using Armitt's consideration of the relationship between magical realism and contemporary Gothic as a starting point the section will then move into a discussion of the postmodern Gothic.

Armitt cites Botting's comments that:

far from “enabl[ing] a return to the patterns of sentimental fiction” (Botting 1996: 75), or any other kind of feature for that matter, much contemporary Gothic eschews “pattern” altogether, favouring new direction. Iain Banks' *The Crow Road* (1992) is a perfect illustration of this literary development (Armitt 2001: 305).

Given that the argument within this thesis has consistently focused on the transgression of genres and the gleeful provocation and upsetting of such labels, the conjunction of 'magic realism' and 'contemporary Gothic' is in keeping with a technique whereby Banks' fiction slips uneasily between the grasps of genre and academic critics. In her treatment of Banks, Armitt identifies aspects of *The Crow Road* which other critics have also identified as being characteristic of different branches of the Gothic, as opposed to the outright identification of a direct correlation between two genres which, although they have common elements, are not usually paired together.

Armitt's contention is that:

partly because it [magical realism] is an imported literary form to Britain, it is also frequently read as a post-colonial fantasy discourse, as opposed to the Gothic which tends to be read as an Anglo-European and/or North American tradition. (Armitt 2001: 307)

This is not to say that *The Crow Road* is a postcolonial narrative but it is the novel (of those under discussion in this thesis) which could be most easily claimed as 'realist'.

Armitt reinforces the exoticism by suggesting that the hybrid is: 'a double edged *frisson*

which oscillates around the disturbing aspects of the everyday.’ (Armitt 2009: 306)

Such transgressions and intrusions in the narrative are the points where the Gothic becomes a hybrid form with magical realism, a ‘disruptive, foreign, fantastic narrative style that fractures the flow of an otherwise seamless realist text.’ (Armitt 2001: 306)

The shifts in temporality within the text and the fragmented narrative style in *The Crow Road* lend themselves well to demonstrating potential connections between the two genres, given that there is a recurrent palimpsest-style material that Prentice must deal with and address if he is to successfully piece together the solution to his cousin's disappearance. This palimpsest structure, however, featured in a far more extreme version in *The Bridge* than that which is present here and the question seems to be whether ‘magical realism’ or ‘fantasy’ or the particular label in play is determined by the limits which the author seeks to transgress. The one convincing argument from Armitt's claim is that ‘when magic realism meets the contemporary Gothic we start to carve out a cartography for the unconscious.’ (Armitt 2001: 308) My consideration is that whilst ‘magical realism’ has its place as a genre, the uncomfortable way it is positioned here suggests that the relationship with the contemporary Gothic is not as convincing as the other methods.

The Gothic and its postmodern form is a key feature of Banks’ oeuvre, particularly when the texts are infused with a characteristic dose of Banks’ ferocious sense of humour. The outlandish incident at the beginning of *The Crow Road* exemplifies this: ‘[i]t was the day my grandmother exploded’ (Banks 1993: 3).

The narrator, Prentice McHoan, recalls the day of his grandmother’s cremation and the incendiary incident, a pacemaker unwittingly left in the body as it was processed through the furnace, which occurred directly after the service. The casual manner in which this event is played out and revealed through the first sentence of the novel, against a plot backdrop that seemingly has all the trappings of realism, leads Duncan



Petrie to suggest that this is ‘a much more naturalistic novel than *The Wasp Factory*. However, the very first sentence immediately suggests the presence of altogether darker and more surreal undertones.’ (Petrie 2004: 122). The Monty Python-inspired comedy present in *The Wasp Factory* returns with the proverbial bang and is one of a number of such moments in the novel which, concurring with Petrie, is ‘more naturalistic’ in its representation of Scotland. In contrast with this stylistic naturalism, though, *The Crow Road* thrusts the reader straight into the narrative but deliberately omits sufficient information to locate the events in any temporal or sequential order. Comedy of the sort found in Banks’ work characterises the Gothic and when it is combined with death, transgression or subversion then the relationship is strengthened. The presence of the Gothic in the text is reinforced further when Prentice claims further that ‘I reflected that it always seemed to be death that drew me back to Gallanach’ (Banks 1992 [1993]: 3). Death presents itself as the definitive fulcrum upon which the narrative is founded and the plot rests and is symbolic of the ways in which individual characters find themselves returning to particular locations in Banks’ Gothic narratives, namely Cameron Colley in *Complicity* and Eric in *The Wasp Factory*. The title itself, as Prentice reveals, corresponds with the theme ‘away the Crow Road . . . it meant dying; being dead’ (Banks 1992 [1993]: 126).

An equally Gothic death greets Prentice’s father, Kenneth, who is a militant atheist, in one of the most memorable scenes from *The Crow Road*. This is a moment which demonstrates Banks’ ability to confer startlingly creative deaths upon his characters where the ‘punishment’ all too comfortably fits the crime or the transgression at work. Prentice, upon being informed about the accident, claims that:

Dad died – my uncle Hamish seemed to be maintaining – in suspicious circumstances; God killed him. . . .  
I suspected, that all this time my uncle had just been playing a game, and his retributive proto-heresy was

exactly as frivolous as my dad had been given to claiming. (Banks 1992 [1993]: 302-303)

When returning back home from an evening out, Hamish tells Kenneth that Christ loves him and is greeted with a suitably snide and dismissive rebuke. The weather conditions have ensured this is an especially ‘dark and stormy night’ and in his determination to prove the lack of power in God, Kenneth scales the local church using the lightning conductor as a ladder. After summoning all sorts of punishment for his atheism, he is then struck down emphatically by a bolt of lightning. Martingale suggests that the ‘looming church, pathetic fallacy contained in the lightning storm are ominous similes of elemental destruction’ (Martingale 2007: 2). The ‘elemental destruction’ is not only a simile of the Gothic but it presents an environmental power on a scale similar to that of the connectedness discussed in the previous section. Just as the historical inheritance of the present from the past has aspects of atavism, the impact of the environment upon the individual is similarly disposed, albeit in a comic manner designed to emphasise the humorous play of the Gothic rather than any moral commentary on someone choosing to challenge the notion that a God exists.

Such punishment can be read alongside Fergus’ blinding of Lachlan Watt given that the act of blinding represents a biblical response to transgression. Fergus, however, represents a far more significant Gothic character in the context of *The Crow Road*, particularly in the scene prior to Lachlan’s blinding, where Fergus is taunted for hiding inside the castle’s towers. After Lachlan refuses to desist with his comments, Kenneth sees Fergus’ expression and feels ‘the fleeting, extraordinary impression of seeing something buried alive, and felt himself shake suddenly, almost spastically, shivering’ (Banks 2002 [2003]: 89). The moment of rage, untapped anger which lies within Fergus pronounces itself as something monstrous concealed below the surface, a Mr. Hyde to the outwardly serene Dr. Jekyll. The shivering is equally of the Gothic atmosphere, locked away, imprisoned and unable to manifest itself outwardly, the rage remains

within. Armit্ত reads this psychoanalytically, proposing that ‘What Kenneth prophesies here is, perhaps, that future event when the adult Fergus witnesses Lachy's penis “buried” in his wife’s living body (Banks 1992 [1993]: 253), a moment of transgenerational haunting in itself.’ (Armitt 2001: 305) Petrie’s analysis continues this line of thinking, suggesting that the young Fergus’ reaction to Lachlan gives the reader a ‘glimpse of an ancient residual barbarism [that] motivates both Fergus’s “accidental” blinding of Lachy Watt and his later murders of Fiona and Rory.’ (Petrie 2004: 123)

The ‘residual barbarism’ connects the geographical space and its history with the present, continuing the atavistic lineage which haunts Scottish fiction. The overt sexual connotations of the ‘shiver’ that Armitt identifies also problematise whether there is, later, a frisson of voyeurism on Fergus’ part, Fiona having taunted him in the car on the night he kills her about ‘not fucking me, Fergus’ (Banks 1992 [1993]: 291) and the scenes of her unleashed passion with Lachlan, described by Fiona as ‘the best time I’ve had in five years’ (Banks 1992 [1993]: 295) would correlate with hints about Fergus’ lack of sexual prowess or interest towards Fiona. The moment after Fergus observes the pair coupling he moves down the passage way, described as ‘*the far end of the chill, cramped roof space*’ (Banks 1992 [1993]: 253). His voyeurism from a secret passageway unknown to Fiona renders him the unseen observer, one who pries upon the intimate transgressions within private lives, a peeping tom who loses control at the sight of his wife in her full sexual virility, realising as he walks away that he has ‘*pissed himself*’ (Banks 1992 [1993]: 253), causing the sensation of being ‘warm around his balls’ (Banks 1992 [1993]: 253), the longing and release all associated indirectly with the sensations of a post-ejaculatory state.

The class struggle between the upper-class Urvills and the working-class Watts is posited as the basis for Fergus’s insatiable revenge over his wife's affair with Lachlan, suggesting that it is Lachlan’s possession of his property that offends Fergus so much.

Fergus berates Lachlan's family for not owning their own house and Lachlan threatens to damage Fergus' expensive ornaments, demonstrating upper-class notions of ownership and working-class contempt for ostentation (Banks 1992 [1993]: 152-153). The transgression of spaces between class leads to the next aspect of the genre, namely the spatial Gothic.

Having examined 'space' in the context of geographical change, the alternative spatial aspects (in relation to the Gothic) of *The Crow Road* are those of the interior, locked away in the looming presence of Castle Gaineamh. Sage notes that:

*The Crow Road* is dominated by the image of a Castle, the site of Prentice the narrator's family's childhood games, which is bought and refurbished by Fergus, the capitalist and which is the conduit for an unexpected and violent return of the past (Sage 1996b: 23)

and as is recurrent in Banks' novels, the castles provide a location for refuge and withdrawal from society, imprisonment and transgression, and crucial decisions which affect the outcomes of characters' futures, particularly *A Song of Stone* and *Espedair Street*. Kneale suggests that:

The second way of thinking about space concerns the geographies produced by Banks' narratives. Banks is a superb plotter, well known for his intricate narratives and surprising twists. His non-sf often concerns the revelation of family secrets – most obviously *The Wasp Factory* (1984), but also *The Crow Road* and *The Steep Approach to Garbadale* (2007) – through clearly gothic tropes: uncanny homes and families, dangerous desires, tragic plots, and revelations in hidden letters. (Kneale 2006: 12)

It is this crossover between the uncovering of family secrets and the gothic tropes which reinforces the argument that Banks is often writing detective fiction which crosses over with the presence of the Gothic.

Martingale observes that 'the Urvill estate manifests the scars of its generations of ancestry, bearing the stigma of destruction, a history of family secrets, betrayal and

death.’ (Martingale 2007: 25) This language adds further emphasis to the Gothic overtones, images such as ‘scars’ and ‘stigma of destruction’ bringing the castle into the narrative as a key character with a number of personal characteristics.

The Gothic is not just limited to atmosphere or symbolism in *The Crow Road* and presents itself as postmodern Gothic through the text that Prentice is trying to decipher and, arguably, interpret to solve the mystery of Rory’s disappearance. Alongside the castle, this text’s other main Gothic motif is the ghost. However, in Banks’ version of the modern Gothic novel, the ghost does not take its usual supernatural manifestation but rather appears in the form of fragments of writing by Prentice’s uncle, Rory McHoan, which are discovered and pieced together again by Prentice.

The title of Banks’ novel suggests a terminal outcome and the text itself is presented as a document which appears from beyond the grave, Rory’s girlfriend Janice, presenting it to Prentice when they reunite. This ghostly palimpsest which emerges from the past takes the form of scrapbooks, jottings and other scrawled remnants and clues about ‘Rory’s Big Idea’. Describing them as ‘a vortex of microscopic info-debris, chaotic witnesses of a past that I could not comprehend’ (Banks 1993: 383) Prentice’s language engages with the postmodern textual breakdown he must confront if he is to provide a solution. This also reflects further Banks’ awareness of the language of technology, ‘info-debris’ juxtaposing the geographical remnants with the more technologically dependent typing and computer-generated texts. That these notes form a ‘vortex’, namely a place or situation regarded as drawing into its center all that surrounds it, demonstrates clearly the centrality of the text within the wider novel as well as its status as the narrative’s fulcrum, linked once more with a death. That this data are ‘chaotic witnesses of as past I could not understand’ highlights their ghostly presence, having made the transition into the present and the use of ‘witnesses’ conveys

further that the act which they bear testimony to is transgressive, illegal or harmful. Martingale refers to the text as a 'supernatural revenant of the text in the form of old manuscripts and other artefacts' (Martingale 2007: 28) and even though Banks openly denies any interest in the supernatural, the metaphor of the text as an 'animated corpse' (or corpus) works well, given that Prentice's task is to bring back to life what is purporting to hold the answers to a death. The reanimation is complete when Angie sends the computer floppy disks to an IT specialist in Texas who has to bring them back to life in order to unencrypt the existing data held on them. This is an intrusion of the past into the present, a further layer of data resolution and conflict which must be undertaken as part of the detective work for solving the clues. Martingale views this sequence as being where the 'computer disk is the emblem of the arcane impinging on the hi-tech present.' (Martingale 2007: 28) *The Crow Road* is thus composed of a sequence of layered narrators who represent different story-tellers. Craig emphasises this point, highlighting that Banks uses 'embedded first-person narrators [such] as when . . . Rory's writings [are] preserved on a primitive computer disk [and] allow him to become, long after his death, a subsidiary first-person narrator.' (Craig 2002: 27) The narrative games played within this novel are therefore threefold: principally Banks deploys the metafictional strategy of a text within a text, positing different narrators as 'storytellers' and then using a character who must solve a sequence of written codes, messages and documents which will ultimately reveal the twist at the end of both tales. Later references in Rory's Crow Road drafts folder (given to Prentice by Janet) to Roland Barthes' 'Death of the Author' emphasise the knowing parodic engagement with different literary theories and postmodernism that Banks has, self-effacingly, satirised in interviews previously. The title itself provides a clue to the outcome of Rory's plot, that this will reveal a conclusion about a death and so Prentice must solve a sequence of clues, linguistic and fictional, which are provided from an anonymous

source in order to reveal a killing from earlier in his life. This revelation often takes place through the technique of storytelling, in which ‘the truths of the past are resolved into games; the games of the present dissolve the very notion of truth’ (Craig 2005: 232). In each case it is achieved by using particularly Gothic postmodern games, as the final chapter will illustrate.

## **Chapter 6: ‘Mad Lad Lit’: Iain Banks’ *Complicity***

This chapter represents the culmination of this study of Iain Banks’ novels, ending with an analysis of the text that is last in the chronology under discussion. Focusing on three major topics in *Complicity*: Contemporary Scottish Crime Fiction, terror, violence and ‘the body’, the chapter contextualizes the text as a major proponent in Banks’ oeuvre and the thesis as a whole, hence the extensive analysis that is undertaken. The different thematic and intertextual references identified within *Complicity* support its status as Banks’ most successful (in terms of critical reception) and one of his most complex novels to date. Following from the comparative restraint and maturity of *The Crow Road*, the reader is taken into the territory where Banks deliberately ‘set out to shock’ (Mullan 2008d: 06:54). *Complicity* represents the fulcrum of Banks’ oeuvre. A crucial text, the novel is emblematic of the Banks business as a whole. Embodying the major thematic concerns of this study and epitomising the obsession with the darker sides of contemporary culture and the aftermath of Thatcherism, it represents a cipher and blueprint for Banks’ authorial practice, a pugnacious retort to the critics who police the boundaries of the “popular” and the “literary”, his legacy as one of the influenced and the influencers. Containing the trademark tactics and manoeuvres, this is the point where all the laws are broken and the gloves are firmly off. Banks openly asserts the justification for the violence and his motivation for the confrontational approach that *Complicity* takes:

In principle, anything’s OK, as long as I’ve got an excuse to put it in - which is a more honest way of saying, “Is it artistically justified?” You shouldn’t self-censor yourself just because you have a gut reaction that an idea is too horrible. If there’s a reason for it, it has to be done. There’s a moral point to that ghastliness, pain and anguish. Which is why I would absolutely defend *Complicity’s* violence, because it was supposed to be a metaphor for what the Tories have done to this country. . . .



In a sense, letting off steam, a way of getting out all the anger and bitterness I felt about the 80s and the Thatcher years. (Mitchell 1996: n.p.)

His extraordinary rendition of transgression and identity, the deployment of a truly diabolical double and the bewildering movement between genres means *Complicity* is, like Banks' body of work, a matter of collision and collusion, which bridges the spaces between whilst revealing and revelling in the multiple meanings of fantasy.

Described in *The Guardian* as 'his livid comment on Thatcherism and the 80s zeitgeist' (Brooks 2002: B4) it is a compelling, impassioned 'exploration of the morality of greed, corruption and violence, venturing fearlessly into the darker recesses of human purpose' (Banks 1993: n.p) that combines the frenetic narrative pace of a thriller with an overwhelmingly powerful dose of drugs, betrayal, sexual intrigue and retribution. Craig goes further, claiming the novel 'is at one and the same time a modernised version of Hogg's *Confessions*, a political thriller and a challenge to the values of the consumer capitalism that define the era of the postmodern' (Craig 2005: 230). Banks' portrayal of the relationship and conflict between Andrew Gould, a calculating, selectively sadistic yet 'morally-righteous serial-killer' (Brooks 2002: B4) and his childhood friend, the cocaine-snorting, left-wing Socialist, underdog-championing journalist, Cameron Colley, is, in principle, an outraged scream against the hypocrisy, exploitation and savagery that was levied against those who were marginalised under a Conservative Government at the height of its powers. Set during the legacy of Thatcherism, represented in the 'grey ghost of Thatcherism' (Craig 2002: 43), John Major, *Complicity* is a novel of the moment and, along with novels such as Duncan McLean's *Bunker Man* (1996) and Niall Griffiths' sensitively titled *Sheepshagger* (2001), deals with the murders and actions of individuals and social groups who are fuelled by rage and fury about social structures, the equation between wealth (or lack of) and

entrapment, and the stability of the male identity in the postmodern, contemporary landscape.

Given the veritable explosion of publicity surrounding Iain Banks' debut novel, *The Wasp Factory*, and its protagonist, Frances Cauldhaume, as well as the blurring of gender performance by Banks' principle protagonists, Abel and Morgan in *Song of Stone* and Hisako Onada in *Canal Dreams*, it is unsurprising that Banks uses such a similarly challenging and polemical tone to address both aggressive and controversial agenda such as masculinity, politics and power. Equally notable are the distinctive themes of "the avenging angel", "the double" and "individuals as consumers and consumed", all of which are prevalent throughout Banks' work.

Banks reveals that there is 'a happy ending to *The Bridge* which is in *Complicity*' (Mullan 2008d: 13:07 - 13:10) and thus *The Bridge* yields the protagonists for *Complicity*, so Andrew Gould and Cameron Colley represent the culmination and the embodiment of the reinvigorated and transformed Lennox, a wealthy Scottish lad o' pairts who has prospered under the free-market Capitalist policies that Thatcherism allowed to run rampant.

## 6.1 Three Writers Who Go Down into the Darkness: The Games of Contemporary Scottish Crime Fiction.

IM: Before I leave McIlvanney's example completely, my impression was that it was basically *Laidlaw* that struck you. [*Published in 1978, Laidlaw was an unexpected crime novel from a 'serious' writer.*]

IR: It was definitely the first one. I wasn't aware of any Scottish crime writing that I could read to become part of a tradition. There was no Scottish equivalent to Agatha Christie. There were plenty of thriller writers – John Buchan, people like that, if you wanted to look at the Scottish tradition of adventure; or Alistair MacLean. But I didn't think of myself as writing in the tradition of any of those guys. (Murray 2008: 198)

Ian Rankin's statement provides an insight into the problems of labelling Iain Banks (amongst other novelists) a "Scottish" novelist when the influences he draws from and the genres he works in transgress and reject such narrow dimensions, preferring to distinguish themselves from, amongst other things, the restrictions of canonical status and the expectations of another broadsheet reading "literary" audience. That genre fiction should now assume a natural superiority is testament to the importance of novelists such as Banks who have elevated its reputation. Edmund O'Connor reinforces this position:

Advocates of Tartan Noir should not be satisfied to see crime fiction considered an *equal* genre to literary fiction but a *superior* one. Literary fiction has now detached itself into its own hermetic bubble away from the rest of the world, where people do and say things that are excused from reality because they are 'literary'. Despite its faults (and it has many) crime fiction is more relevant to us and our situation because, from leaders declaring war for ropey reasons, to smokers daring to puff in an enclosed public space, everyone has broken the law. We are all criminals. (O'Connor 2006a: 58)

Trying to solve the problem of a lack of tradition that a novelist can write themselves into which Rankin identifies in this interview is something Banks seems not to have been especially concerned with throughout his career. Borrowing liberally from sources and peers, Banks remains notable for his ability to write about a moment just when the “moment”, appropriately enough, seems right. In this respect, *Complicity* represents a text that repeatedly transgresses its apparently rigid borders, sprawling awkwardly and successfully straddling a number of different forms. At once a crime novel in the ‘whodunit’ tradition, an overt political critique, a contemporary rendering of the 1980s cult of the individual and an anticipation of the Scottish chemical generation, *Complicity* ‘resists arrest’ (Craig 1993: 99), refusing to come quietly and submit to the law of genre without then morphing or twisting uncomfortably away from the handcuffs that each particular academically-minded textual detective is using to try to restrain it. In keeping with the often controversial and devastatingly vibrant oeuvre that Iain Banks has created, *Complicity* is admirably confrontational, provocative, contentious and upsetting, a remarkably contemporary and edgy portrayal of unstable masculinities veering erratically between crisis and resurgence and the drastic actions that each male takes in order to identify and then reassert their self.

The deliberately provocative commentary from Edmund O’Connor highlights an important point that Banks makes through the selection of his title. McCracken astutely identifies *Complicity* as a novel in the ‘tradition of masculine gothic’ (McCracken 1998: 144) that examines the ‘delicate relationship between coercion and consent’ (McCracken 1998: 148) and this focus is given immediacy by the title, *Complicity*, which is the fact of being an accomplice, particularly in a criminal act. Not only does this add an unsettling undertone to the interplay and interrelationships between protagonists and readers, the lack of clarity in the phrase ‘criminal act’, namely the legal and social perceptions of “criminality”, introduces instability and ambiguity with regard

to the authorial position regarding events within the narrative. Similarly, the blurring of the boundaries between ‘coercion and consent’ contributes wholly to a novel that explores social and sexual dynamics. The presence of two males who are inextricably intertwined within convergent narratives immediately invites countless readings, speculations and constructions concerning the homoerotic, homosocial or homosexual subtexts which may or may not be present according to the reader’s particular theoretical framework.

Moving away from the theoretical and back into just one of the traditions that Banks has momentarily traversed before rushing off to pastures new, the flourishing scene that is contemporary Scottish crime fiction has seen a number of critically acclaimed novelists come to prominence. In this section, the comparison I offer focuses on another of Fife’s finest exports, Ian Rankin and a predecessor of established longevity, William McIlvanney, whose trilogy of detective novels featuring the eponymous Glaswegian interloper, Jack Laidlaw, provided the outline for the existentially angst-ridden, hard-bitten John Rebus. Rankin is happy to admit this influence and in a lengthy interview with Isobel Murray, he recalls meeting McIlvanney at the Edinburgh book festival and telling him: ‘I’ve just finished writing a book which is a bit like Laidlaw but set in Edinburgh.’ (Murray 2008: 195) This is the book that became *Knots and Crosses* (1987) in which a grizzled character by the name of Jim/Jock Laidlaw has a walk-on part as the novel draws to a conclusion. As the exchange in the interview that prefaces this chapter highlights, McIlvanney is posited as the progenitor for the rise to eminence that Scottish crime fiction has undergone, the Tartan Noir that Rankin refers to, but another pertinent comment that accompanies this is the critical reception that *Laidlaw* received in relation to the previous works such as *Docherty* (1975) and *The Kiln* (1996). As Murray informs the reader: ‘Published in 1978, *Laidlaw* was an unexpected crime novel from a ‘serious’ writer.’ [italics and

emphasis in original text] (Murray 2008: 197) thus the generally pejorative attitude to popular genre fictions and the ‘serious’ writers who indulge in them makes for an important statement that Banks and his contemporaries counterpoint and react to through the different complexities they weave into the text and their unashamed appropriation of and transformation of canonical texts as well, with *Complicity*, a reworking of Ian Rankin's *Knots and Crosses*. If “genre” and “tradition” are two clubs to which Banks does not wish to become a member then this may be why the form that offers such a portmanteau of different elements has proved such an attractive and successful presence in his fiction to date. The Gothic is unavoidably intertwined with crime fiction and, as this thesis has demonstrated so far, is a prominent aspect of Banks’ writing is the reconfiguration of seminal texts in this trajectory. *Complicity* continues this practice and when considering the connections between these two prominent forms, it becomes apparent why he and other Scottish contemporaries adopt this source material. Paul Skenazy, when discussing Raymond Chandler, applies the term ‘gothic causality’ (Skenazy 1995: 114) to the ‘hauntings that structure most crime narratives’ (Scaggs 2005: 16) where ‘a secret from the past . . . represents an occurrence or desire antithetical to the principles and position of the house (or family)’ (Skenazy 1995: 114). In all three focus texts, the secret disrupts different traditional power structures in place and *Complicity* adopts this approach with a double-layering of plot. *Laidlaw* and *Knots and Crosses* deal with the murder of children which challenges a sequence of established societal codes but *Knots and Crosses* and *Complicity* have their killers justify the murders as a consequence of the breach of trust between two friends which results in the damaging of the injured party. However, the potential subversion of the traditional Othering of the criminal is manifest when the serial killer provides, in their own mind, a morally acceptable motivation for each murder in that he is killing for the purposes of avenging those who have been wronged. Continuing to embody this

compendium of Gothic characteristics is the figure of the serial killer. As Mark

Williams commented:

This is not to say that serial killers themselves are so recent; they have formerly been relocated outside of the paradigmatic chains of the "human" for preceding generations. Our contemporary notions of them are handed down to us from the popular Gothic Tradition, and populist penny-dreadfuls, via newspapers and the mass media. One who kills several times may be a murderer; one who kills pathologically, in series, delivering regular doses of extreme behaviour – which can be rendered in lurid detail – earns the modern sobriquet. (Williams 2007: 13)

Andy Gould's pathological methods of killing concur with this definition but it is interesting that, when considering the events in his childhood, he would be located *outside* of these 'paradigmatic chains of the human' since his 'death' establishes him as a ghost, the typical embodiment of the Gothic. His damaged body (through the rape) and sense of justification in his quest further intensifies his symbolism as a Gothic figure – when considering a comparative serial killer, that of Hannibal Lecter: 'It is an exercise in recreating a sympathetic devil; with his body already a site of Gothic overdetermination.' (Williams 2007: 3) The image of the 'sympathetic devil' concurs with Gould's profile as a killer who, mitigated by the opinions of the reader, wages his own personal conflict against those who transgress an unspoken code of conduct, the proverbial 'fallen angel'. In terms of the 'Gothic overdetermination' this could feasibly be applied to violence and assault which is rooted in his past, similarly the figures of Frances Cauldhame in *The Wasp Factory* Abel and Morgan from *A Song of Stone* and Hisako Onada in *Canal Dreams* are also haunted by personal transgressions, albeit sexual in the case of Abel and Morgan with their incestuous relationship and Onada due to her rape. The context of the serial killer is emphasised when Inspector McDunn, interviewing Cameron Colley, comments: "I helped interview Dennis Nilsen; remember him, Mr. Colley? Guy that killed all those blokes." . . . "He didn't look like a

murderer, either.” (Banks 1993: 114) Craig refers to this comparison, claiming that ‘the serial murderer is terrifying because the murders are not crimes of passion but part of a calculated assault upon the values of society’ (Craig 2002: 52-53).

Further to these Gothic characteristics is the theme of hidden secrets awaiting detection and Fred Botting suggests that crime fiction draws ‘From the Gothic novel, a concern with secret or hidden knowledge and the narrative and thematic spectre of social disintegration’ (Botting 2001: 5). The knowledge lies in the eventual solution to the crime and the aspects of social disintegration are located strongly in McIlvanney’s work with his distinctive focus on the families and communities which are affected by the murder, an aspect that seems less important in Rankin’s novels. McIlvanney and Rankin’s detectives share a different community, created by their isolation and disparate relationships with members of their own family, which lies with their colleagues and the supposition that when seeking the murderer the Police Force will unite in their efforts. Laidlaw and Rebus ostensibly buck this trend by their decisions to operate alone yet still rely on colleagues for information and thus the sense of ‘social disintegration’ operates a different levels, within the personal lives of the detectives and within the wider groups of whom they are a part through familial or other connections. Interestingly, one criticism of McIlvanney which has not been extended to Rankin, given the consistent way in which Rebus rejects the socialisation and assistance of his colleagues, is that ‘One reason *The Papers of Tony Veitch* and *Strange Loyalties* don't work so well is that Laidlaw and Harkness have learned to work together – giving less scope for Laidlaw’s existential witticisms.’ (O'Connor 2006a: 53)

*Complicity* and the Rebus detective series are both set in Edinburgh, city of ghosts, and the spectre of two foundational texts from Scottish novelists haunt their respective pages: Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Secret Adventures of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* are



significant reworked and transformed in Banks' text whilst, in interviews with Murray and O'Connor and his introduction to the newly-released John Rebus series, Rankin admits a debt to Stevenson:

*Knots and Crosses* is a pretty nasty book, dealing as it does with a serial killer who preys on children. I'm fairly sure I meant it to be a contemporary reworking of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Having studied Stevenson's masterpiece as part of my thesis, I was intrigued that he chose to set the story in London. Yet it remains a very Scottish novel, based as it is (at least partially) on the real-life Edinburgh character Deacon William Brodie, who was gentleman by day, criminal by night. (Rankin 1987 [2005]: x)

I suspect that the importance of Stevenson to Rankin is somewhat understated here, given his later novel *Hide and Seek* (1991) is a far more comprehensive and self-conscious reworking. Importantly though, *Knots and Crosses* was published in 1987, some 6 years before *Complicity* yet there are significant overlaps in plots of both texts, as well as the different narrative techniques that Banks and Rankin use, which I contend has its roots in *Laidlaw*. In his introduction, Rankin explains that his title emerged when 'sitting in a chair in my bedsit, directly in front of the gas fire, and toying with the pun of noughts/knots and crosses.' (Rankin 1987 [2005]: ix) The punning and language games are just a few of the tricks of the trade that Rankin, Banks and their contemporaries are employing. Further evidence of these clues and puzzles can be found in the scene where Rankin reveals the name of the final child to be kidnapped. Gill Templer is contacted by Professor Eiser, who lectures in Literary Theory at the University of Edinburgh. He announces that the names of the abducted girls form an acrostic puzzle in which the first 6 letters lead to the name 'Samantha', Rebus' daughter (Rankin 1987 [2005]: 138). Rankin admits this is evidence of his 'doing all that Deconstructionist nonsense when I was a post-grad' (Murray 2008: 209). The reference is to the theorist Wolfgang Iser and it is interesting that, like an opinion expressed by

Banks in an interview quoted in Chapter 1, that after studying Literature, Rankin ‘almost had to unlearn all that’ (Murray 2008: 210) when he started writing because he ‘wanted a wide general readership.’ (Murray 2008: 210) In the same sentence Rankin differentiates himself from novelists ‘who write in a literary manner’ (Murray 2008: 210). In this respect, Banks’ and Rankin’s use of the crime genre as a form is important because they are claiming to reject the ludic opportunities that the complexities of such a genre naturally lend themselves to. A further connection between Rebus and Banks’ investigative journalist, Cameron Colley, lies in the associations of Rebus as a type of crossword puzzle and the method by which Banks structures much of his work using language and word games.

McIlvanney plays a similar game his detective's name encompasses his intention and profession, the metaphorical ‘laying down the law’. Edmund O’Connor notes more of these in-jokes and references in his survey of Tartan Noir, finding in *Black and Blue* (1997): ‘there’s typical Rankin playfulness . . . Rebus finds a copy of Iain Banks’ *Whit* amongst the dead oil worker's “personal effects” (two tips of the hat to his fellow Fifer: one on purpose, one by accident)’ (O’Connor 2006c: 52). The memories of the notorious ‘Bible John’ serial killer murders which are also a foundational cultural event in Banks’ satire of religious cults, *Whit*, also resound through *Complicity*, given the sequence of killings where the execution fits the nature of the offence but the killer remains anonymous until the conclusion of the novel. The intertexts and analogues which lie at the heart of contemporary fiction ensure the readers and critics must be clued into the game of literature as well as the unspoken rules that each author brings to their individual writing practices.

In view of the different aims of this section, there are a number of valid and highly relevant points that appear in O’Connor’s article and the one that concurs with the textual strategies addressed here is that ‘we are all criminals.’ (O’Connor 2006a: 58)

At this point, I am not trying to ascribe the traits of a serial killer or one who commits murder in the heat of the moment to those readers who devour crime fiction, instead there is a quite striking relationship between the three practitioners of the writing craft whose work is explored here: their use of narratives that render the reader complicit in the murders committed within their pages and this is expanded to include the problematic position for the detective who finds themselves accused of betrayal, a crime not recognised by legal statute but by the unspoken codes of fraternity.

In a later Rankin work, *Hide and Seek*, the title itself plays upon the source text and in a Rebus-like puzzle, invites the reader to seek the reference that is hiding and Rankin is successful in his efforts to achieve a structural and thematic mirroring of Stevenson's novel. This is reinforced with the opening word of the text, 'Hide!' (Rankin 1991 [2007]: 1), a word which remains unexplained, at that point, as to whether it represents a name, a command or a noun. However, the opening of *Knots and Crosses* is where I want to start the direct textual comparison with *Complicity*:

The girl screamed once, only the once.

Even that, however, was a minor slip on his part. That might have been the end of everything, almost before it had begun. Neighbours inquisitive, the police called in to investigate. No, that would not do at all. Next time he would tie the gag a little tighter, just a little tighter, just that little bit more secure.

Afterwards, he went to the drawer and took from it a ball of string. . . . A car revved up outside, and he went to the window, upsetting a pile of the books on the floor as he did so. (Rankin 1991 [2007]: 2)

Using the third person omniscient narrator, Rankin ensures that the first actions the reader is exposed to are those of the killer. The recollections of the murder are at the forefront of their consciousness. The word 'girl' establishes the age as being young and thus conveys a hint of vulnerability, her 'scream' places the point of interpretation uncomfortably on the boundary between it being a consequence of pain or fear. That she

has screamed ‘only the once’ also further disrupts any sense of certainty, suggesting she have been killed at that point or that it may have taken more time. That the scream might have been the ‘end of everything’ then further invites the reader to speculate on just how long the scene was played out for and just what happened during this time, whether the victim is still alive. Even the use of ‘[a]fterwards’ does not necessarily confirm whether the victim is still alive or what has taken place, it simply ensures that the reader realises they are still in the room with the killer and young victim, entirely at the mercy of the eyes and mind through which everything is narrated. The narrator is self-reflexive in their analysis of the situation, ‘[e]ven that, however, was a minor slip on his part’ asserts that the narrator is methodical in their activities, a perfectionist seeking to commit a crime without alerting others to the activity at hand. Emphasising that tying the gag ‘just a little tighter’ suggests an element of compassion to their treatment of the girl, the intention at this point seems not to cause discomfort for the purposes of pleasure to the person inflicting the pain; instead this sounds deceptively like a functional act for self-protection and preservation.

This deliberately uncomfortable transformation of the reader into the witness through the mind of the narrator is employed in *Complicity*. The opening chapter, “Independent Deterrent”, a reference to the killer's social standpoint, begins as follows:

You hear the car after an hour and a half.  
During that time you’ve been here in the darkness,  
sitting on the small telephone seat near the front  
door, waiting. You only moved once, after half an  
hour, when you went back through to the kitchen to  
check on the maid. She was still there, eyes white in  
the half-darkness. There was a strange, sharp smell  
in the air and you thought of cats, though you know  
he doesn’t have cats. Then you realised the maid had  
pissed herself. You felt a moment of disgust, and  
then a little guilt. (Banks 1993: 3)

The use of ‘you’ throughout this scene has two different functions; initially it projects the emphasis directly onto the reader, as though this scene is being narrated through

their eyes, but the short, terse sentences are similar to a series of instructions. In one respect, they locate the reader and their position relative to objects and the other person in the room but such a style of narrative and writing is similar to that of a film script, with an actor listening to a narrator before reproducing the different instructions they are issuing. The repeated use of ‘you’ also ensures that the audience is unable to escape the feelings of personal engagement with and, ultimately, complicity in and responsibility for the situation of each victim in this scene. The maid’s ‘eyes white in the half-darkness’ suggest a terrified animal rather than an individual and with the feeling of ‘a moment of disgust, and then a little guilt’ it is interesting that the self-regret comes after the reaction that the maid has failed to control herself, has failed to maintain discipline or standards. There is a distinctly uncomfortable voyeuristic realism that pervades throughout the waiting period, with the maid who ‘was quivering with fear’ (Banks 1993: 4) and who ‘whimpered behind the black masking-tape’ (Banks 1993: 3), who is secured with a rope that is ‘good and taut’ (Banks 1993: 3), her discomfort indicated by ‘[a] drop of urine [which] fell and joined the pool on the tiled floor.’ (Banks 1993: 4) The presumption that there is an absence of compassion is tempered by the narrator’s concern that ‘[he] didn’t think [he’d] cut off her circulation’ (Banks 1993: 4) and that he ‘patted her shoulder as reassuringly as [he] could’ (Banks 1993: 4). The individual’s guilt and concern suggests that they can identify with a similar feeling of powerlessness and the regret stems from knowing that although the power dynamic had to be reversed, it may have been unnecessary to involve an innocent. The alternating between ‘you’ and ‘I’ and its blurring creates the disorienting feeling about how exactly is carrying out the killings. In her study of contemporary crime fiction Gill Plain explains:

In its repeated emphasis on murder as an enactment of sexual gratification, the serial-killer narrative confronts our most basic and horrific taboos. It confronts both our desire for violence and

our most violent desires, foregrounding the uncomfortable proximity between hunter and killer (Plain 2001: 227).

This raises a sequence of points applicable throughout Banks' and Rankin's novels, the most pertinent here being the 'uncomfortable proximity' that this narrative generates. Banks has admitted his pleasure at the number of people who were unsettled by *Complicity* (also stating that he was disappointed it did not shock as much as he wished, hence he then wrote *Song of Stone*) and this unwanted intimacy that he creates is just one aspect of the text that would provoke as much outrage as the author feels.

McCracken also suggests that 'This opposition of "I" and "You" destabilises the relationship between self and other to the point where the reader is unsure whether or not "You" is Cameron in another guise.' (McCracken 1988: 145) Through the process of destabilisation, there occurs a potential blurring of the boundaries, suggesting that Cameron may be carrying out the murders in an altered state, that he possesses an alter-ego, a double that is the physical manifestation of all the frustrations and injustices he perceives in the society around him.

Shortly after literally spiking his victim, Sir Toby Bissett, on the railings of his Belgravia home, the narrator leaves swiftly but at this point the narrative returns momentarily to its uncomfortable tone: 'You hear the first faint, distant screams just as you take the bike's key from your pocket. You feel suddenly elated. You're glad you didn't have to hurt the women.' (Banks 1993: 9) Locating the pause between 'screams' and 'elated' immediately conveys a sinister suggestion that the narrator is gaining pleasure and thrill from knowing that the females are screaming, the sound generating this reaction. This is then unsettled and disrupted by the deliberate grammatical structuring, a completely separate line in which the relief of not hurting the women reveals that the narrator is using a specific, methodical and skilled technique for selecting his victims, not just that of a barbaric killer with a thirst for motiveless

violence. This is reinforced in the title of the chapter, “Independent Deterrent” suggesting someone acting alone who is not beholden to others for their instructions, a professional assassin with a specific agenda rather than an amateur killer selecting victims at random.

When we consider the level of complicity that Rankin and Banks force upon their readers at this point, one suspects that there is an awareness of a deliberate technique which informs their decision. In support of this, the third text, written before *Knots and Crosses* and *Complicity* in this tri-partite comparison comes into play: William McIlvanney’s *Laidlaw* (1977). As the opening sequence displays, there are further parallels and overlaps with the beginnings of *Complicity* and *Knots and Crosses*:

Running was a strange thing. The sound was your feet slapping the pavement. The lights of passing cars batted your eyeballs. Your arms came up unevenly in front of you, reaching from nowhere, separate from you and from each other. It was like the hands of a lot of people drowning.  
 . . . Running was a dangerous thing. It was a billboard advertising panic, a neon sign spelling guilt. Walking was safe. You could wear strolling like a mask. Stroll. Strollers are normal.

The strangest thing was no warning. You wore the same suit, you chose your tie carefully, there was a mistake about your change on the bus. Half-an-hour before it, you had laughed. Then your hands were an ambush. They betrayed you. It happened so quickly. Your hands, that lifted cups and held coins and waved, were suddenly a riot, a brief raging. The consequence was forever.

And the meaning of everything was changed. It had no meaning or too many meanings, all of them mysterious. Your body was a strange place. Hands were ugly. Inside, you were all hiding places, dark corners. (McIlvanney 1977 [1992]: 5)

Once more the strategy deployed is that of the second person narrator, immediately unsettling the reader and forcing them into a situation of confusion, bewilderment and unknowing. The first lines establish the atmosphere and the environment but are also alienating due to the anonymity of the narrator and the dislocation within unknown

surroundings, 'strange' suggests the narrator's actions are obviously different, out of the ordinary, inappropriate to the location they are moving in but the reasons for the actions are not revealed. That the lights of cars 'batted your eyeballs' indicates the speed of the movement, not a gentle jog but an intensive, frantic, panicked run but the gender and intentions of the narrator have still not been revealed. That the 'arms came up evenly in front of them' problematises whether this is a pleading run and they are seeking help from a pursuer or whether they are the chasing, their arms reaching to grab and touch their victim to prevent escape. These arms which are 'reaching from nowhere, separate from you and from each other. It was like the hands of a lot of people drowning' seem dislocated from the body running, they may be the arms of others attempting to obstruct or capture, their separation 'from you and from each other' further questions just how many arms there are, suggesting a lack of co-ordination and control. The final image of 'drowning' suggests an inevitable helplessness, the narrator pleading for assistance or trying to attract attention. Paragraph two intensifies the problematic position for the reader because it now becomes apparent that the narrator is in a degree of distress and their activities are attracting the seemingly unwanted attention of others who may intervene but may pose a threat. The repetition of 'strange' in the first and third paragraph suggests a detachment from the actions that are occurring and disorients the reader further because it is apparent that these actions are being observed and witnessed. That '[t]he strangest thing was no warning' implies that the events precipitating this have been observed as well and that there is a background to this running which is out of the protagonist's control, hence it is 'strange', out of character for the time, the lack of warning reinforcing this, that the running is a product of confusion. McIlvanney's selection of 'riot' and 'raging' are the key to understanding the temperament of the scene and, one suspects, the protagonist. The actions were not expected, not anticipated, they were the product of unanticipated conditions, a situation gone wrong in which



emotion has ruled over pragmatism or logic. This in itself makes the narrative harder to read than those of Banks and Rankin, more unsettling because the nature of the protagonist has been imbalanced, is unpredictable, their next actions cannot be determined whereas the killers in *Complicity* and *Knots and Crosses* were fully aware of their methods and procedures, demonstrated a considered sequence of thoughts and had a specific focus. Once their goal was achieved they departed confidently but this protagonist has no long-term escape route and has been driven to desperation. The concluding paragraph of this sequence demonstrates powerfully the possible endpoints of the actions:

And the meaning of everything was changed. It had no meaning or too many meanings, all of them mysterious. Your body was a strange place. Hands were ugly. Inside, you were all hiding places, dark corners. (McIlvanney 1977 [1992]: 5)

Now everything has changed and nothing is known, certain. The absence or excessive amounts of meaning creates further confusion, people and places now take on different connotations and possibilities. The ‘strange’ body the protagonist inhabits is not one they know, their actions have dislocated persona and body, ‘hiding places’ and ‘dark corners’ implies something lurking that is estranged from the outward facade, a deeper instinct that manifested itself during the activities which was previously unknown, unsuspected. At the moment of ‘raging’ the darker side of the protagonist was exposed, able to escape when the wits were fragile and vulnerable, the restraints let go and unable to be recoiled or hidden again.

Reinforcing the Jekyll and Hyde structure in *Laidlaw*, the narrator soon begins to analyse the psychological profile of ‘you’:

You were a monster. How had you managed to hide from yourself for so long. . . . for twenty years to make your life a blur behind which that was really you could hide. Until it came to introduce itself. I am you. . . .

You could only walk and be rejected by the places where you walked, except the derelict tenements. They were big darkneses housing old griefs, terrible angers. They were prisons for the past. They welcomed ghosts. (McIlvanney 1977 [1992]: 5-6)

‘Monster’ and ‘hide’ seem to be evident references here and the idea of ‘hiding from yourself’ suggests a split personality, a hidden side which has been repressed. More emphatically, ‘monster’ is the standard tabloid terminology repeatedly applied to a killer of children which imparts another clue for the linguistically alert reader. Referring to the life as a ‘blur’ suggests something smudged or unclear, difficult to identify or interpret, the ‘life’ that is the ‘blur’ is a perpetual act of deception and masking, one person hiding behind another. The idea of this alternative side, the ‘I am you’ coming ‘to introduce itself’ suggests not only a state of alienation but also that the repressed side has been hidden and denied, buried deep in an effort to prevent its return, an assiduously forgotten friend emerging uncomfortably from the past. Emphasising the haunted Gothic cityscape which is the location for this atavistic clash between the suppressed and the latent is the characterisation of the ‘derelict tenements’ as ‘prisons for the past’ that ‘welcomed ghost’. That the past must remain imprisoned implies that it has a criminal status and the word ‘ghost’ locates the narrator’s alternative side as something presumed dead which is haunting, lurking spectrally in the far reaches of the mind.

At this point, the influence of McIlvanney on Rankin and Banks becomes less apparent excepting that all three novelists share a mutual American influence upon their work. In his review of McIlvanney’s work, Simon Dentith lauds his ‘skilful appropriation of the conventions of American hard-boiled style to challenge the dominant, more genteel tradition of British crime writing’ (Dentith 1990: 19-20) and this transatlantic dimension is also heavily present in Banks’ and Rankin’s work.

The transatlantic influence is apparent in the convention of the abrasive, isolated but street-savvy detective of the hardboiled genre who shirks the company and assistance of their colleagues and refuses to play by the rules, which is partly hinted at in the uncompromising figure of Cameron Colley whose self-interested, self-important quests and aggressive style of detective journalism brings him into conflict with his employers and those who he seeks to expose but in this case, Banks roots his investigative influences in the American journalism of Hunter S. Thompson, explicitly parodied in the text itself. As Cameron is first introduced to the reader he has been assigned to coverage of a Trident submarine. As he leaves the scene to interview the naval officers involved, he begins a fervently informed political analysis of the geopolitical and economic effects of Trident, an act that leaves him:

feeling charged and alert and justified again, fully firing on all cylinders and just fizzing with the good great god-damn Gonzo juice of the determination to get down to that there nuclear submarine base and *cover the story*, as the blessed St. Hunter would say. (Banks 1993: 16)

There is an overlap with both Banks and Rankin citing the influence of American writers on their writing; Rankin explains that, whilst studying for his degree at Edinburgh University: 'I struggled through the first two years, doing stuff I didn't really want to do, to get to what I really did want to do, which was American lit' (Murray 2008: 189). Rankin cites Thomas Pynchon, Robert Lowell and William Carlos Williams as writers he admires but the two most interesting for the purposes of comparison are Saul Bellow and Joseph Heller given that *Catch-22* is one of the few novels Banks admits to influencing his work, to the extent that he names a character in *The Bridge Orr* (who shares a surname with an escaped prisoner in *Catch-22*). Furthermore Banks also mentions Saul Bellow as an author he admires (Wilson: 1994: n.p.).

When considering the history of characters and structuring devices that Rankin and Banks bring to the text, the convergences become even more apparent: Rebus'

former profession is the Parachute Regiment and then transferred to the Special Air Services where he meets and befriends his ally and eventual tormentor, Gordon Reeve, are treated whereas Cameron's mysterious contact, later revealed to be his friend Andrew Gould, is a veteran of the Falklands and left after being wounded in a near suicidal attack that, although he was commended with a DSO, saw him leave the next year in anger after 'the officer who'd been in charge of the attack was kicked upstairs instead of being court-martialled.' (Banks 1993: 77) Similarly Rebus leaves the Special Air Services in disillusionment after undergoing and passing a sequence of psychological tests and tortures which drive him to near breaking-point and Gordon Reeve is discharged following questions of his capability to function in such an environment, a decision which he holds Rebus responsible for and which ultimately leads to him suffering a psychological breakdown prior to beginning the abductions. During this incarceration, Rebus admits that (as a further linking text between *Complicity* and *Knots and Crosses*) he told Reeve 'the plots of my favourite books.' (Rankin 1991 [2007]: 165) One of these novels is *Crime and Punishment* (1886). Disillusionment at the lack of responsibility, the mistrust of and the culpability which is afforded to figures of authority connects Rebus/Reeve and Colley/Gould but the relationships between both pairings are blurred at different points during the Rebus series and *Complicity*.

The roots of the relationship between Andy and Cameron parallel those of Rebus and Gordon Reeve, for the dynamics upon which both narratives rests occurs in their past, for Andy and Cameron it occurs at the cusp of their teenage years and, in the case of Rebus, in his early twenties. Cameron and Andy are playing on a frozen lake when the ice shatters and Andy is dragged under the ice. Cameron runs to get help from an adult instead of helping and Andy is rescued but not without having been on the verge of death due to the duration of time he spent without air in the freezing water. In

the aftermath, Cameron notes that ‘sometimes I felt he was different, and had changed’ (Banks 1993: 161) and the idea that Andy has come back from the dead (or brink of death) is then intertwined with the various codes of friendship and trust that Cameron broke when he abandoned him on the ice.

Interestingly, Rebus’ betrayal of Reeve's takes place during a different point of fraternity but with similar consequences: the Armed Forces. Following a brutal sequence of simulated interrogations, solitary confinement and the threat of being thrown from a helicopter flying above the Irish Sea, Rebus refuses to reveal the information his captors demand and is forced to occupy a cell with Reeve.

Reeve tells Rebus that ‘[y]ou’re just like the brother I never had, John.’ (Rankin 1991 [2007]: 165) Afterwards they cut palms and touch, Reeve declaring them ‘Blood brothers’ (Rankin 1991 [2007]: 165) and Rebus admitting internally that he knew Reeve ‘had become too dependent on me already, and that if we were separated he would not be able to cope.’ (Rankin 1991 [2007]: 165) This establishes the formative relationship, similar terms and language used by Andy Gould to describe Cameron, and the moment of transgression when Gordon tries to kiss Rebus, pleading ‘[j]ust a kiss.’ (Rankin 1991 [2007]: 167) This puts Rebus in the position of compromising the training and his own success for the sake of cementing the close friendship they have developed. Like the decision Cameron makes to abandon Andy on the ice, this is the refusal to sacrifice the self in a moment of solidarity, breaching the unquestionable loyalty that binds friends and colleagues in the respective situations. As Rebus leaves, Rankin’s language is key, describing Reeve’s scream as ‘the scream of the mad.’ (Rankin 1991 [2007]: 169) The sound is one of imminent mental breakdown in the face of betrayal, the sound of the voice and the image of Reeve which persistently haunts Rebus during the novel when he is unable to place either, unable to recall where they emerge from. Rebus reveals that he had heard that Reeve had died which can be linked with Andy’s recovery but, in a

more elaborate overlap, Rebus is only able to recall who the killer may be when he is placed under hypnosis by his brother, Michael. The significance of repressed memory due to trauma, of haunting by the “dead” connects the second moment of transgression in *Complicity with Knots and Crosses*.

The second transgression occurs not at the narrative’s inception but towards the end of the text, a technique that Banks employed in *The Wasp Factory* returned to in *Canal Dreams*. Cameron refers to Andy as ‘my old soul-mate, my surrogate brother, my other me’ (Banks 1993: 29) and their childhood hiding place as holding ‘aching, poison-sweet memories’ (Banks 1993: 28) repeatedly emphasising a brotherly relationship which is connected to a place loaded with contrasting memories and sensations. It transpires that Cameron and Andy have been experimenting with sexual games in the woodland, Andy persuading the unwitting Cameron to masturbate him to ejaculation, but a hiker who has been observing their activities interrupts them. Andy claims that the woodland is ‘private property’ and the hiker counters by asking ‘Private property, is it? And that gives you the right to do dirty, perverted things, does it?’ (Banks 1993: 232) The paedophile identifies himself as a ‘*policeman*’ (emphasis in text) (Banks 1993: 232) and proceeds to sexually assault Andy before Cameron finds a tree branch and strikes the paedophile across the back of the head, stunning him. After managing to free himself from the body, Andy administers a frenzied assault with the branch, rendering the hiker unconscious and then makes the decision that they must hide their secrets, pushing the body down a disused mine shaft. By connecting this killing in the formative teenage years with the later retribution, Banks once more combines a playful representation of psychoanalysis with the Gothic idea of the return of the repressed. Furthermore, this further emphasises the ways in which Banks demonstrates a strong awareness of the conventions of genre, as Gill Plain’s comment suggests ‘the genre’s profound investment in dynamics of power inevitably incorporates discourses of gender

and sexuality.’ (Plain 2001: 8) That this discourse, rendered explicitly through Banks’ oeuvre, represents one of the key aspects of the detective fiction or crime genre strengthens the contention that this text is a genre piece which knowingly transgresses the rules throughout, on both technical aspects and an in its presentation of the plot. Plain adds later in the introduction: ‘At the root of nearly all twentieth-century criminal fictions lies the literal body of the corpse. The corpse is a contradictory site within criminal fictions: the end point of a life that simultaneously signifies the beginning of a narrative.’ (Plain 2001: 12) Andy and Cameron’s decision to bury the consequences of their actions can read as a literal as well as a symbolic sense, with the inevitable Freudian reading that this is not only the physical act of burial but also the metaphorical decision to consign this to the depths of their collective memory in an attempt to nullify and render benign any feelings of guilt. Developing this, there also the a suggestion of childhood secrecy and loyalty between Cameron and Andy that transcends such official power structures as the law, echoed by Cameron’s determination to resist the overtures of Inspector McDunn, who will interrogate him about the more recent killings. As Cameron explains, by betraying Andy over the killing there is a chance to ‘buy my freedom from the burden of buried horror that bound me to Andy twenty years ago’ (Banks 1993: 235). The rape scene offers more than just a comparison with Rankin’s work: ‘Gender transgression and the disruption of “normative” sexuality have always been an integral part of crime narrative. (Plain 2001: 6) Since the rape plays such a vital part in *Complicity*, it roots the text further in the crime genre and the persistent fascination with transgression which pervades Banks’ oeuvre. I suspect that Rankin’s use of the betrayal scene involving a kiss and the reaction to this scene is not as directly related to this convention, but the noting of the ‘distaste’ (Rankin 1991 [2007]: 167) displayed towards Reeve does have a convenient dual function, both reinforcing the stereotypes of the traditional attitudes still present in the upper echelons of the Armed

Forces (and, by nature, a specific class-based stereotype) as well as connecting the disruption of a 'normative sexuality' with just one of the motivations for the subsequent revenge narrative. These stereotypes and ideas of fraternity, as well as the authoritarian approach to non-heteronormative sexuality, are ideas which Banks appears to relish subverting, particularly through his recurrent use of incest in earlier and later novels such as *Walking on Glass* and *Song of Stone*. Like Cameron and Andy's experimentation, viewed as transgressive by the 'policeman', a senior English Armed Forces Officer interrupts the scene involving Rebus and Reeve, regarding it with 'distaste' (Rankin 1991 [2007]: 168) and declares to Rebus 'You're on our side now'. (Rankin 1991 [2007]: 168)

The identification of the land Andy and Cameron were playing on as '[p]rivate [p]roperty' and the subsequent act of appropriation or policing, actioned by a figure who is perceived as representing authority, legitimacy and rule-enforcement but who instead manifests himself as a subversive, violent and dangerous invasive force presents a scenario which is replicated by Andy, suggested by the surname 'Gould', echoing 'Ghoul'. In their analysis of the 'Police Procedural', Robert Winston and Nancy Mellerski note that the policeman represent 'a dominant Western symbol of social control' (Winston and Mellerski 1992: 2) and this concept of 'social control' lies at the heart of the crime narrative, whereby the policeman is a bridge between the worlds of the criminal and the law-abiding citizen, patrolling the boundaries to prevent permeation of one by the other. Similarly, when not on duty, the policeman is the exemplar of ambiguity, preparing to 'go down into the darkness' (Sallis 2003: 7) in order to preserve order by eliciting and soliciting information from those in the criminal fraternity, hence the often uncomfortable relationship Rebus has with Gerard McCafferty, Rankin's most prominent gangster and both the saviour and scourge of the detective's investigations.



In the first instance, the process of an individual occupying private territory and engaging in voyeuristic activities echoes the *modus operandi* of the serial-killer who, because of the narrative technique that Banks uses, ensures that the audience has a level of complicity through their witnessing of each murder. Similarly, the sodomising or rape by a male authoritarian figure who holds power over their victim acts as a strong and familiar metaphor for the political and historical activities that are referenced within *Complicity*'s timeframe, from the Falklands War through to the aftermath of the first Gulf War. Indeed, the colonising and violation of the body and psyche is a recurrent trope throughout *Complicity* and is Iain Banks' main vehicle for the exploration of the relationship in adulthood between Andy and Cameron, which will be explored in detail in section two, concerning "violence" and "terror". A brief reference here to Niall Griffiths' *Sheepshagger* sees his protagonist, Ianto, subjected to a violent sexual assault and partial but literal dismemberment by an English hiker which partly motivates his revenge - in personal correspondence, Griffiths admitted that *Complicity* is his favourite novel by Iain Banks (Griffiths 2008: n.p.) Similarly to the reception of Banks' own justified sinner, Ianto forces the reader to question their own perception and comprehension of his actions, given the deeply damaged humanity that he symbolises.

The choice of Colley's profession in journalism had interesting overlaps with the reason Rankin selected a detective for his novel, namely that 'I chose a policeman because they have access to all areas. He is the perfect figure . . . no doors are going to be closed to him or, if they are closed, they won't be closed for very long.' (Plain 1998: 106) This investigative capability is pervasive in Colley's determined efforts to get as close to the story as he can – a figure who is capable of operating both within and without the law, the journalist turned detective here is able to 'access all areas' partly due to receiving information about the prospective killings from his contact which

ultimately leads to his implication as the murderer when he arrives at the scene of the crime just before the police but in the deceased's presence.

Colley receives his information from a mysterious contact named 'Mr. Archer', who provides him with the latest in a series of clues that may be linked to a number of murders involving significant members of the nuclear or security industry. Similarly, Reeve, the killer, provides Rebus with cryptic clues concerning his identity in the form of knots and crosses made from string, which he sends with handwritten notes.

To conclude, I want to reintroduce *Laidlaw* and offer a comparison with Banks which demonstrates how both novelists adopt potentially problematic standpoints in the conclusions to their work. Craig argues that by letting Andy escape: 'Colley will end by releasing into the world a "monster" who has made a lot of people "terrified to open their doors"' (Craig 2002: 34). The act of facilitating Andy's avoidance of legal punishment is arguably Cameron's only decisive act throughout the text. The equation of Andy with 'monstrous' is one of the many problematic aspects of *Complicity* because by identifying themselves with the detective, readers are forced to confront just how they would personally react in such situations and are uncomfortably situated between the civilised outrage which would greet the misdemeanours of the victims and the applauding of the vigilantism which Andy engages in. Furthermore, the police's function in the novels is to prevent Andy carrying out the killings and thus Banks problematises the usual role of those who enforce the law by questioning just which code of belief they are adhering to, thus establishing an uneasy tension between questions of morality and legality. Jack Laidlaw represents a figure for whom these problems of paradox and contrast come to define his approach to police work and the actions he takes:

He felt his nature anew as a wrack of paradox.  
He was potentially a violent man who hated  
violence, a believer in fidelity who was unfaithful,  
an active man who longer for understanding. He was

tempted to unlock the drawer in his desk where he kept Kierkegaard, Camus and Unamuno . . . He knew nothing to do but inhabit the paradoxes. (McIlvanney 1977 [1992]: 9)

In this sequence, the contrasts inform the reader's perception of Laidlaw: noting the term 'wrack' as opposed to the expected 'wreck' suggests this is an individual in possible crisis and fragmentation. Laidlaw's outlook means he is ethically questionable but morally indomitable, similarly to Andrew Gould (and Cameron, in his self-perception rather than his presentation) and this causes him to exist in those margins, the places between the paradoxes, committing to neither side lest he must change. The philosophers he maintains suggest a sense of alienation due to these paradoxes and the 'wrack' which lies at the heart of it as he sets about repairing the damage caused by the child's murder but at realizing he has the dangerous potential to go against his own beliefs and instincts in order to achieve this.

Noting and then transgressing one of the central conventions of the detective genre, John G. Cawelti states that 'the criminal act rips apart the social fabric and the detective must use his unique investigative skills to sew it back together again.' (Cawelti 2004: 300) The 'sew[ing] it back together again' of the culture is aspect of *Complicity* which remains problematic for the reader. The claim that the process of detection unearths aspects of a culture which is hidden is correct but it is arguable that Banks only partly subverts this because the corruption which Colley discovers is already apparent to 'Mr. Archer' but it cannot fully be unearthed to the public because Cameron's editor persistently vetoes his attempts to expose these problems and controversies.

Andy's subsequent evasion of the police challenges the conventions of the crime genre by the failure to catch the criminal and leaves conclusion remarkably open-ended for the reader is unaware of where Cameron or, indeed, Andy goes from here. I am

reminded here of McIlvanney's comments about *Laidlaw* which poses equally as challenging moral and ethical questions through the protagonist:

Laidlaw invites us to join him in a place where there is no them and us. There is only us. It is a place where murder may result from a still-born attempt to love, where in the ugliest moments we may catch a momentary reflection of part of ourselves, where protectiveness may be a mode of destructiveness, where we may feel a little bit lost among the shifting borders of good and bad, of right and wrong, of normal and abnormal. (McIlvanney 1991b: 162)

The lack of distinction between 'them' and 'us' highlights the criminal potential in everyone and the persistent opportunities for alignment between legality and criminality, irrespective of the severity (or lack of) in the act which has been committed. Particularly powerful is his comment that 'murder may result from a still-born attempt to love' which I would contend can be connected with *Complicity*, wherein Andy's equivocation links to the betrayal on the ice and the acts of negligence which have marked his life. The murders function as his attempts to generate change in a positive way, to make Cameron and others aware of their own responsibility. This is echoed further in Petrie's idea of being 'a little bit lost' between the persistently moving points and where there is a recurrent lack of clarity with regard to just where boundaries are and, as Cameron realises, the 'ugliest moments' adds more emphasis to the identification and blurring the boundaries between the 'criminal' and the 'innocent'. With their respective novels, *Complicity* and *Laidlaw* Banks and McIlvanney problematise the position of the reader, forcing the reader to question different standpoints and the places where their empathies and sympathies may lie. Ray Ryan contends: 'In responding to Scotland's disenfranchisement under Thatcherism, McIlvanney here comes dangerously close to endorsing an essentialist, unapologetically masculinist, ethnically tinged foundational myth as their replacement.' (Ryan 2004: 80)

Figures such as the father of the dead girl, Bud Lawson, and Jack Laidlaw come to embody these models for performance and action with their own opinion and potential for violent revenge against the killer. In essence, McIlvanney counters this Thatcherite assault on the nation and the culture with a suggestion that the answer is a return to the reductive gender-based attitudes which recent Scottish writers and publishing have worked hard to progress beyond. As Petrie argues further:

[t]he centrality of class, gender, national identity and the modern city, alongside considerations of the meaning of morality, justice and criminality in modern society, provides a clear indication of the more weighty dimensions that are contained within contemporary Scottish crime fiction, and equally central to the reimagination of the nation itself.  
(Petrie 2004: 159)

I position Banks as a British novelist rather than specifically Scottish, given the characteristics of his work which lend themselves to an outlook beyond Scotland's borders. That said, the centralities which Petrie identifies at the centre of McIlvanney's work are concerns within *Complicity* and other texts within Banks' oeuvre, which suggests that, in keeping with his capacity to transgress genres, he is also able to subvert boundaries concerning national literatures, literary traditions and the lineages which are imposed, often uncomfortably and definitely unhelpfully, upon his writing.

## **6.2 Complicity and Terror.**

Terror operates in a variety of different ways throughout *Complicity*, whether it is represented by one who causes fear in others or one who is afraid of a greater force. Banks' location for *Complicity* is interesting in this respect, given that the killings begin in the Imperial heartland of London and expand to a variety of locations nationwide but the narrative is rooted firmly in Edinburgh, a comparative capital city. Both capital cities have been incorporated into narratives of 'terror', from the previously identified *The Mysterious Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Edinburgh has its own narratives and authors for whom history and terror are juxtaposed and usually located around the motif of the double, to name but two there are James Robertson (*The Fanatic* 2000) and Ian Rankin's Rebus series. As a comment on the structures, terror, for both the perpetrator and the victim, has the capacity to destabilise and cause the redefinition of formal power structures and ideologies which were thought dominant and hegemonic.

Within *Complicity* there are many pertinent examples of terror, both artificial and natural. When talking about his memories of their childhood explorations, Cameron describes his recollections about their roaming places as being 'aching poison-sweet' (Banks 1993: 23) and this connects the 'poison-sweet' memories with the sexual and murderous acts committed by Andy and Cameron. Although not directly antonymic, 'aching poison-sweet' is informed by sensations of pain and pleasure, the 'aching' memories of Cameron suggesting both sexual excitement or orgasm and a lasting discomfort that plays awkwardly on the mind. The 'poison-sweet' is that of an individual who is coerced by regulations and gains such pleasure from transgressing them. This duality of thrill and terror can be connected to both the sexual act and the murder, the desire to express anger by inflicting pain and holding such mastery over an individual's fate, as well as the feeling of gratifying and pleasing a lover by enslaving

yourself to their desires despite the awareness that it is illicit or forbidden, or the thrill gained by the exhibitionist at the presence of the voyeur.

Similarly terrifying, Colley finds himself under suspicion of having committed murder which leaves him in the transgressive state whereby he has moved from journalist to killer, putting his words and threats into action. The points at which this takes on a more serious and significant threat are one third of the way through *Complicity* when Cameron is confronted by the police about a particularly vitriolic article he wrote as part of a piece of television journalism and halfway through the narrative when, in conversation with Andy, Cameron is told that '[w]e all have responsibility, Cameron. You can't escape that' (Banks 1993: 142). Tellingly, Andy also informs Cameron that 'I still haven't forgiven you for not trying to rescue me on the ice that time. . . . Only kidding. I've been out-machoing men and bedding women with that story for twenty years.' (Banks 1993: 143) In the first instance, the article calls for a 'Real Avenger, a Radical Equaliser who will take on some alternative hate-figures' (Banks 1993: 108) and it is these named figures who have been mysteriously killed or assaulted within a time-frame that implicates Cameron. From an authorial perspective, there is a pervasive sense of paranoia that infuses this idea, the notion of a fantasy which becomes true, the idea that someone observes, monitors an individual in order to use their desires as a framework for the bringing to birth of such a plan. Cameron therefore becomes immersed in Andy's own terrifying *tableaux vivant* and this manifests itself in the most horrific of ways, an amateur snuff movie in which a character in a gorilla mask (Andy) intercuts different scenes from the murder of a pornographer who deals with snuff movies into a film which is then sent to the police. As Cameron comments, petrified:

like something from a nightmare from an old movie from a horror film and I can feel my heart beating wildly because *that's what this is*. This is a horror movie a fucking horror movie this lunatic is making

his own horror film and you can't even tell yourself  
 Hell it's only a story aren't the special effects good  
 it isn't real because that's exactly what it is (Banks  
 1993: 181).

Cameron has become immersed in Andy's own theatrical performance, his fantasy has escaped and refuses to be assimilated or confined to controlled limits. Like the novelist and his character or the director and his actor, Cameron has been reduced to a mere patsy who unwittingly waits at the behest of his master. He has been transformed from someone who writes biased fiction in order to stir up the popular moral conscience to someone appearing in an underground film, whereby they are the lead actor. The significance of Cameron playing within this role is echoed by his aggression in print but the inability to translate these threats into actions – in essence he remains comfortable within a continuous state of fantasy but when this state moves beyond boundaries which can be controlled, his uncertainty and fear becomes apparent. This exposes an interesting parallel between the positions of Cameron and Andy because both are used to operating within constraints that are enforced by institutionalised power structures, Andy by necessity of his career in the Armed Forces and Cameron unwillingly through the censorious approaches of his editors, but it is the ability to exercise control using different methods which demonstrates the differences between the two individuals. As Cameron is interrogated by police, the 'terror' he experiences manifests itself in a different way from other moments in the narrative:

It's hilarious, it's really ironic and you explain all  
 this to McDunn and you laugh because it actually  
 isn't the fault of the police you're not sleeping it's  
 the nightmares where you're stalked by a huge  
 gorilla with the voice of a baby and a huge syringe  
 and he wants to fuck you with it, isn't that hilarious?  
 (Banks 1993: 182)

The equation at this point is between hilarity and terror, two different aspects of emotional extremity which generate new and invigorating highs for the person experiencing them. To emphasise further the contrasts between Andy and Cameron, this



duality is similar to that which is experienced during the recollection by Cameron of his and Andy's playing in the woodland.

A minor departure from murder to killing on a mass scale connects the significance of different media and the impact they can have when narrating and recontextualising a variety of acts of terror. In his paper examining narratives concerned with or anticipating these events, Peter Brooker notes that, commenting on Siri Hustvedt's analysis of New York in the wake of 9/11:

[f]or this unspeakable scenario was already there, if not spoken, in one or another disaster movie. "A hackneyed fiction", comments Hustvedt, "remade ad nauseam by the studios was manipulated by the terrorists into grotesque reality" (Hustvedt 2002: 44). And immediately it was on TV; simultaneously a real and mediated happening. (Brooker 2005-6: 16)

This 'unspeakable scenario' can be reapplied to the use of a film as part of Cameron's torment and manipulation – the terror of a creation or a prediction coming to life is the fear (or dream) of many authors and artists but when this is appropriated and used on grand media scale, there is the imbalance, persistently, between the 'real' and the 'mediated' and the differentiation between them. Such terror echoes the relationship between Colley and Gould in *Complicity* wherein Gould, another one of the disaffected middle-class professionals, controls his friend through establishing a series of murder scenes and has Colley's arrival timed with that of the police, thus demonstrating the innocent's complicity with his murderous master. Colley comments (about Gould) that, during his formative years: 'I was always jealous of him, always somehow yearning for what he had even when I knew I really didn't want it.' (Banks 1993: 77) The feeling here is that the 'yearning' and 'jealousy' derive from Gould being 'more involved' through his different lines of work and adventures than Colley. As a fantasist, Colley needs to live out the boys' own adventures narratives, playing the different heroes and success stories which are the staple diet of the imagination when younger, he thrives on

the escapism and the myths and legends which make such careers attractive to the thrill-seekers. When he becomes enmeshed in the world of journalism, his fantasy then locks into the stereotypical icon for this sort of personality, Hunter S. Thompson, hence everything is a conspiracy, all his stories must expose the truth despite the pressure not to publish and he must represent the voice of the people, the journalist of the people. He views himself as an outsider, a renegade fighting his own crusades despite the best efforts of the authorities to stop him. The problem is that when his opportunity comes to play the hero and balance all of these social justices, the universal truths behind the myth are distinctly more unpleasant than he realises. Andy suffers similarly except he is able to compensate for the harsh realisations of the life he chooses by manipulating the skills to his advantage. As Colley comments 'He's disillusioned,' I say. 'He used to have lots of illusions, and now he's got only one: that what he's doing will make any difference.' (Banks 1993: 264) It is difficult to establish here if this is another example of Cameron's 'yearning' to be like Andy or if there is a sense of despair in Cameron's tone, that Andy's quest has become such an obsession but ultimately it will not have any long-term consequences or impact in terms of changing society at a fundamental level, however there is an underlying idea that the killings themselves will establish a form of personal equality or equivalent.

The clearest example of terror can be found at the point when Cameron meets Andy in Mary King's Close in Edinburgh, abandoned where the plague-ridden bodies are placed in a shared grave. Cameron allows Andy to escape and notes:

for all your late-twentieth-century materialist  
Western maleness and your fierce despisal of all  
things superstitious, you felt a touch of true and  
absolute terror, a consummately feral dread of the  
dark; a fear rooted back somewhere before your  
species had truly become human and came to know  
itself, . . . you glimpsed – during that extended,  
petrified moment – something that was you and not  
you, was a threat and not a threat, an enemy and not  
an enemy, but possessed of a final, expediently

functional indifference more horrifying than evil.  
(Banks 1993: 310)

A close reading of the language here establishes strong connections with the sense of atavism at work in Banks' narratives, the historical terror and the uncanny relationship which has come to form the links between Andy and Cameron. The ideas of fear and terror allow for a brief reference to other Banks novels and Craig notes that in *Whit*:

Salvador makes himself God-like by ceasing to be fearful, revealing the double sense of a word which can imply either one who is afraid or one who *inspires* fear in others. Man is fearful in the first sense because God is fearful in the second. (Craig 2002: 33)

Like Salvador in relation to his disciples, Andy is able to generate this fear in Cameron and his potential enemies and victims through the power he commands. In this respect, Andy is also like Hisako in *Canal Dreams*, someone who emerges from being “so full of fearful hope and hopeless fear” (114-115) to become a fear-inspiring and vengeful angel of death’ (Craig 2002: 34). Hisako is described as being ‘dead and kicking’ (Banks 1993: 164) whilst Gould echoes this with his status as a ‘free radical’ (Banks 1993: 305), this last phrase is important because it makes Andy even more dangerous. As the next section, focusing on ‘violence’, will discuss in more detail, the term suggests that Andy gets to the root or base of a problem but that he also exists outside of formal existing power structures, that he cannot be traced or tracked down. This overlaps with the significance of Frances Cauldhame in *The Wasp Factory* who does not exist in formal records, archives or documentation and when an individual achieves this status, they cannot be controlled by the existing legal and State-legitimised power structures. The term ‘free radical’ is also directly associated with the scientific terminology for ‘a group of atoms containing at least one unpaired electron existing briefly during certain chemical reactions’ (Schwarz 1993: 664) and the importance of the ‘unpaired electron’ is further reflected in Andy’s function within the plot, existing

independently and therefore without attachment or commitment to anyone else. Whilst I am not claiming that Banks is using a deliberately complex metaphor to illustrate how Andy operates, it is arguable that the scientific analogy is appropriate for a text in which the changes and differences Andy is able to make are seemingly going to be brief and temporary until he is caught, essentially a transgression that can then be recuperated by those in power and translated into a spectacle.

Returning to the central quotation regarding fear and terror, the ‘fierce despoliation of all things superstitious’ suggests the rejection of religion and mythology for a more secular solution to mysteries and problems but despite this, Cameron still feels ‘true and absolute terror’. This is a suggestion of extremity, of breaking through the stimulated and simulated thrills that Cameron managed to create for himself, the movement into a different sensation of the ‘real’ where ‘true’ and ‘absolute’ are not defined by safe boundaries, they are an edge over which Cameron may fall or be pushed. The ‘feral dread of the dark’ connotes an animalistic wildness at work, untamed, uncontrolled and free to roam, the same ‘dark’ of the Gothic estates in *Laidlaw* which represented prisons for the evils lurking within. That this ‘dread’ emerges from before the species began to ‘know itself’ suggests it is pre-conscious, rooted deep in the Freudian id and the unregulated drives, a propensity for killing which is present and inherent in everyone but is only able to express itself in those who can control it. The use of ‘petrified’ implies a hypnotic quality, the capacity to render the observer motionless and that the moment is ‘extended’ reinforces just how powerful this capability is, a long ‘moment’ contrasts with the ‘glimpse’, it adds a quality of fascination and awe to this ability, a seductive, teasing example of the power that one individual can command over others. The alluring quality is that this, for Cameron, is ‘you and not you’, that which creates this terror is uncanny because it appears to be like Cameron but there are slight points of difference, those which determine who is able to kill and who must simply speak about

the act. Interestingly, the slippage is between ‘an enemy and not an enemy’ because Andy comes to represent the values Cameron writes about and espouses, he is capable of exacting the revenge which is sought after but he is also able to implicate his friend for an act of abandonment which occurred in their childhood, an act where the morality can be questioned within both the judicial strata and the unspoken codes of conduct.

The final line highlights just what is most terrifying about this, that Cameron observes an entity which is ‘possessed of a final, expediently functional indifference more horrifying than evil’, where the violence and the terror are tools to complete an act of self-determination. There is not the emotional or adrenalin-inspired high that accompanies Cameron’s personal methods of self-gratification, there is a detachment and a calmness which does not offer sentiment it simply views the killings as ensuring a rational, logical balance. The lack of empathy is considered to be ‘most evil’ because this suggests a lack of humanity, a dismissal or refusal to recognise the value of an individual’s life. This is the calm after the crisis, the confrontation of the self that determines where fantasies end and practicality begins, the moment when this ‘functional indifference’ becomes more dangerous because it is not the overtly violent masculine fantasising and assertion that is most effective, it is the feral dread concerning the manifestation of the terror into human form, the confessions of the Justified Sinner and the Jekyll and Hyde that haunts this narrative.

### **6.3 Complicity, Sheepshagger and Violence.**

Underpinning the texts discussed in this section of the chapter is the idea of social responsibility and society's 'complicity' in the fates of the protagonists whose narratives Iain Banks and Niall Griffiths confront readers with. For Banks, violence operates as a transgressive metaphor and an act of moral equalising, the settling of scores in response to politically motivated irresponsibility and the flight from culpability that such conditions permit. For Griffiths, violence functions to balance revenge and to instil fear into those who may attempt to perpetuate the cultural trespass his protagonist, Ianto, sees. However, at the heart of these two texts also exists questions of how the interpretation of different socio-cultural influences mitigates and determines individual responses to violence. For Mirna Radin-Sabados, 'killing' (and therefore 'violence') functions in *Complicity* as a method for 'deliberately communicating a message' (Radin-Sabados 2005: 158) and McCracken echoes these sentiments, claiming that 'death in popular culture often signifies not the end of the individual but the possibility of social change and renewal.' (McCracken 1998: 162) Craig claims initially that:

Banks's characters are caught in a world that makes it impossible for them to tell whether they are committed to violence in order to attain peace or committed to peace only as a justification for their violence. (Craig 2002: 11)

Emphasising this paradox, he connects *Complicity* with *Canal Dreams*, suggesting that 'the past which we seek to put behind us is, for Banks, always going to circle back in a new and even more violent form.' (Craig 2002: 13) Each critical perspective identifies and evaluates not only the moral quality in Banks' fiction but also the manner in which the text operates as a tool for agitating the restructuring of existing social paradigms. There is also the recurrent argument, which has been identified and supported in this thesis throughout, that violations and transgressions of the violent and sexual type

generate a later response in which the victim responds with a 'performance' of their own gender-based violent impulses, often in marked opposition to the socially-constructed expectations of their gender.

The focus therefore turns to a text which has parallels with *Complicity*: Niall Griffiths' *Sheepshagger*. In terms of plot, Griffiths addresses the plight of a virtually mute teenager, Ianto, whose ancestral home, a dilapidated lair in the West-Wales mountains, has been turned into a weekend retreat by a group of young English middle-class professionals. Ianto's grandmother dies during an eviction prior to the house conversion and after he is chased away by the tenants of the newly-occupied house, Ianto vows revenge upon the English who he perceives as having wronged him. However, this is not the only influencing factor in his revenge: as detailed previously, like Andrew Gould, Ianto suffers a literal dismemberment during a sexual assault by an English hiker who refers to him as a 'sheepshagger' and Griffiths' exploration of the familiar tropes of childhood emasculation, violation and alienation leads to novel that is replete with acts of revenge.

Similarly, Radin-Sabados argues that mystery fiction represents a 'modern man's morality play desiring to re-establish the clear cut difference between good and evil' (Radin-Sabados 2005: 159) but this does not seem to be entirely congruent with *Complicity*, in which these precise terminologies and concepts are openly questioned in the same way that Griffiths makes it difficult for the audience to establish a firm and comfortable standpoint in relation to the plot. Once more Banks problematises the expectations and conventions of the genre. Violence in both of these narratives is retributive but, in the case of Griffiths, critics have argued that the moral quality is ambiguous, given that the victims are determined by their nationality rather than any direct association with their social status. Griffiths himself has admitted that he would not necessarily be comfortable with a character such as Ianto operating in contemporary

society and it is here that the further complexities of his text emerge. Our first encounter with Ianto takes place during a sequence (which may be a dream) when he finds a lamb whose eyes have been pecked out by predatory birds on the Welsh mountainside. Ianto attempts to restore sight by placing two pebbles into the bloodied eye sockets but as the lamb begins to bleat, Ianto realises that there was '[s]omething within him but not without. Something in him dashed against the ancient world.' (Griffiths 2001 [2002]: 5)

The clash between two temporalities appears to be those of nature and adaptation and those of nurture who struggle against the irredeemable, or that which cannot be changed. Despite the starkness of this scene, there is tenderness to the act that Ianto attempts and this dichotomy between the ancient and the modern has a resonance throughout. The feeling here is that Ianto is fighting against a force that, despite all the flawed but good intentions, he will be unable to overcome. Using the opening passages, Ianto effectively represents the blind lamb which is ultimately unable to be redeemed or understood by those who affect him and is ultimately sacrificed wrongly for the supposedly greater social good at work.

As Ianto observes his grandmother's former home, Griffiths makes explicit the connection he sees between the protagonist and his domestic heritage:

with the immense world-cupping knowledge  
 comfort of living on and in his ancestral land his feet  
 on the same soil his far forefathers dug in . . . Which  
 they can't feel that here, these new owners, ignorant  
 of the particular preterite here, its knowledge and  
 possible belonging, they can't feel that connection in  
 their blood: although, which burns in Ianto more,  
 they behind the double-glazing . . . don't seem at all  
 perturbed or attenuated or even bothered by this  
 lack. (Griffiths 2001 [2002]: 22)

In this respect, Ianto physically and mentally embodies the named geography of Wales (despite Griffiths being born in Liverpool, he now resides in Aberystwyth). A key word here is 'preterite' (denoting a verb tense used to express past action, belonging to the past), which establishes the house as a structural feature of the overall narrative. By



identifying this as a grammatical feature, *Sheepshagger* then becomes oriented around the moment when this object is removed from its owners and transferred to people whom Ianto regards as ‘other’ or those who have no inherited right to ownership. Indeed, the preterite is mentioned before the formative Celtic mythologies, histories, the primitive, feral and unformed landscape blood-sodden and battle-torn in its infancy, all of which inform the ‘knowledge’ and ‘belonging’ that come to differentiate Ianto from the owners. The idea of ‘lack’ within this quotation characterises Ianto; he is ‘defined by no date or place of birth nor lineage nor pedigree.’ (Griffiths 2001 [2002]: 38) He exists outside of all formal structures, he is rootless and wandering yet unfettered and therefore free. Parallels here can be made with Frances Cauldhame from *The Wasp Factory*, whose own lack of existence within legal structures is noted and Andrew Gould who also finds himself a ‘free radical’ within society as a whole.

As Ianto confronts the owners of the house, he is told that the land is ‘private property’ and therefore exclusive, enclosed and encompassed within specifically defined domestic borders. Ianto’s rage at his exclusion is not the anger of one who desires such domesticity, it is the frustration at what he perceives as a colonising of his history, the Imperialist civilising of his nature. The significance of ‘private property’ as a site where violence and transgression occur has already been identified in *The Wasp Factory* and earlier when discussing *Complicity*. After being chased from the house, Ianto hides in a nearby bog:

Before Ianto was this land was, forming and flowering and forever waiting its wearer. And almost as proof, jack-o’-lantern shows himself in the middle of the mire, rises slowly from the sizzling marsh some messenger of methane made from the rancid aftermath of some battle long forgotten, some steel-hewn bone leaching its mulch, the compost of long-forgotten warriors. This bog is a wet necropolis for man and for beast. The heat of corruption and that of the earth’s innards themselves the searing scorched genesis of this delicate and fragile pale flame, which as Ianto watches sputters and worms

itself into some soft substance . . . *Ignis Fatuus*,  
floating phantom lantern guiding Ianto up on to the  
drier land he mounts as if triumphant, arms spread in  
the drizzle. (Griffiths 2001 [2002]: 26-27)

The bog, 'a necropolis for man and for beast' suggests it is a site of fusion. Such words as 'genesis', 'fragile pale flame' connote a spiritual or religious image to this passage and if you consider that the 'pale flame' is a product of 'the heat of corruption' and 'some long forgotten battle' and that it lead Ianto out of the bog then it is arguable that this is the moment at which Ianto's quest becomes spiritual. In the same passage, the narrator suggests the reader '[m]arvel at what dreams may rise from blight and canker. From putrefaction, from decay. His perpetual grin in the always rain which is mirrored in the moon' (Griffiths 2001 [2002]: 27). Given the symbolism of a 'pale fire', the genesis of 'man and beast', the symbolism of the moon is irony, it is a dangerous hybrid, equating the moon and madness with a human undertaking a spiritual quest, his perpetual grin giving him the appearance of a 'lunate-tic'. That the bog is waiting for a wearer projects the figure of Ianto as being composed of many layers; a skeletal form wearing the history of a nation, framed by 'the ancient and the modern', capable of abhorrent violence and innocent tenderness. There is a complex yet viable comparison to be made here between Andrew Gould and Ianto in terms of their formative experiences and Gould's later profession. If Andy's childhood experiences are considered then there is a logical equation between the attempted rape and his decision to join the Army in order to conform to the traditional rites of passage for a male. By immersing himself in the traditions of the Armed Forces then he is reasserting his masculinity through the act of warfare, but more interesting than this is that he is also being sold on the myths, rhetoric and grand narratives of previous conflicts involving the British Army. In both texts, myth functions in different ways: Ianto, by virtually being mute and, to a degree, mentally impaired is incapable of fully understanding the Welsh language and thus his own history and culture. The sequence in which he

emerges from the bog and proceeds to begin killing people is founded on an authorial trick. The inability to translate the language relates to his *misunderstanding* of the history and so the site of the bog as a burial ground for the bloody Celtic history he proceeds to re-enact does not necessarily conform to a need for violence. Myth, in this case, is misread and misinterpreted and the consequences are fatal when Ianto performs his understanding of the expectations.

By contrast, Gould's contribution to the Falklands would be recorded as that of one who contributed to defeating the Argentine invaders, who suffered and represented the best interests of his nation. However it is the corruption within a system that symbolises authority and connotes honour, trust and obedience, leads to disillusionment and a venture into the world of advertising before entering into the retail industry. The warrior culture and Thatcherite project for the reassertion and reinvigoration of British Imperial history is also mis-sold to Gould as a method for performance but he then inverts this, using it as a tool for the execution of those who propagated this ideological position. The method by which this is inverted is two-fold, most evidently through the use of violence as a tool to punish those who successfully profited from the Thatcherite project, at the expense of others. Secondly, Andy also becomes the epitome of the hyperreality of the 1980s; firstly as an exponent of fantasies, a practitioner of dreams and a seller of myths in advertising and secondly as an individual who becomes independently wealthy through the entrepreneurial activities of retailing expensive and fashionable toys for the designer-seeking Yuppies and executives. His profession in advertising is significant because he has moved from one who was sold on myths and fantasies to a proponent of them. As one who gained prosperity under the laissez-faire economics of Thatcherism by establishing and owning *The Gadget Shop* chain-store, Andy is a symbol of one who exists outside the rigid structures of subservient employment and it is this independence that dictates his own success or failure. Both

Andy and Yvonne (Cameron's lover), as the next section will examine, come to represent a symbol of the aggression of masculine capitalism and trading in the economy of the body and violence. The manner in which Andy is able to 'seduce' customers using advertising and sell dreams and ideas means he is a figure from one of tomorrow's dreams in his ability to carry out activities which would be unobtainable and impossible for many people, most notably and importantly, Cameron himself.

Moving from dreams (in which responsibility can often be absolved, such as in *The Bridge*) and back to questions of responsibility, in the figure of Ianto, a chimera, there exists a necessary anti-hero who has been influenced and shaped by the contingencies of his childhood. The persistent questioning of the relationship between nature and nurture is the point at which the debates concerning responsibility and motivation emerge. Ianto makes the decision to kill based on his understanding, on that which he feels is his necessary right to equalise the disinheritance and the violence he has endured but this is predicated on his own impairments, leading to the problematic question of responsibility and where it lies.

After realising that he is responsible for the series of murders that have taken place, Ianto's friends lure him to the mountains and kill him, claiming that they will be heroes for murdering a 'sicko and a pervert'. The debates surrounding this decision and Ianto's level of responsibility resound from the first page of the novel to the last:

-Hell of a boy, Ianto, wasn't he.

-Hell of a boy's right, aye. Straight from-a fuckin place he was if yew ask me, like.

-Nah, he wasn't. No demon him, mun. He wasn't put yer on this earth fully formed as a murderer, like, he –

. . . Hundreds, no fuckin *millions*-a people have a shitey upbringing and they don't turn into killers, do they?

. . . No, Griff's right, mun. Under fuckin' Thatcher? Major? The poverty, the repossessions? All that shite? New fuckin' Labour's no bastard better, either. So, fuck, by yewer reasoning, Danny, we'd all be fuckin murderers. Awful fuckin lot uv shitey

upbringings in-a past couple-a decades, mun.  
(Griffiths 2001 [2002]: 1)

At the novel's inception, this opening chorus of voices provides one of the major debates in the narrative, whether Ianto's actions are those of one influenced by nurture and social conditions or if his violent tendency is innate. His friends argue that if his nationalism and violence were justified then the entirety of the Welsh nation would be murderers whilst they are confronted with the suggestion that he was not born as an evil individual and it is the social conditions which have caused his demise. In later conversations this argument will extend to the philosophising Danny who argues that 'nothing natural can ever be truly evil' (Griffiths 2001 [2002]: 120) and 'we're all blank canvases when we're born like an Ianto' (Griffiths 2001 [2002]: 158). Coupling these quotations with the epigraphs from Nietzsche and the Bible allows for the recurrent confused stabs at concerns about abuse, culpability and nature versus nature.

A similar debate and difficulty in assessing the rights and wrongs of murder occurs in *Complicity*, when Cameron suggests he has a degree of admiration for Andy's later, vengeful crusade:

Part of me feels sorry for him, despite what he tried to do, what he did do. God knows, maybe he'd have ended up killing Andy, killing both of us, but nobody deserves to die like that. On the other hand, there's a part of me that rejoices, that is glad he paid the way he did, that for once the world worked the way it's supposed to, punishing the wrongdoer . . . and that saddens and sickens me too, because I think that this must be the way Andy feels all the time. (Banks 1993: 249)

This observation is made when Cameron reveals the site of the body under police interrogation. It establishes a crucial tension and dichotomy that initially asserts a liberal and politically correct view, noting 'nobody deserves to die like that', a comment which rejects the view of an individual's punishment befitting their actions. However, Cameron is then 'glad he paid the way he did, that for once the world worked the way

it's supposed to, punishing the wrongdoer' which equates his attitude with that of Andy, but this 'sadden and sickens him'. The reader is witnessing vacillation which betrays an uncertainty in Cameron, a reluctance to acknowledge the depth to which his beliefs extend.

### **6.3 Complicity and Bodies of Evidence.**

The body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency: the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of others, but also to touch, and to violence, and bodies put as at risk of becoming the agency and instrument of these as well. Although we struggle for the rights over our own bodies, the very bodies for which we struggle are not quite ever only our own. The body has its invariably public dimension. Constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine. (Butler 2004: 26)

Paranoia is fed by the fantasy of omnipotence (Butler 2004: 9).

The presentation of the body and the performance of fantasy are the final themes which this chapter addresses. Lynne Stark suggests that ‘the baroque modern body is a phenomenon that occurs within the context of postmodernity’ (Stark 2001: 36) and this emphasis on the physical is recurrent throughout *Complicity*, particularly through the figure of Yvonne, a figure who provides Cameron with one in a range of different fantasy scenarios. Cameron represents an interesting figure through his drug use because, whilst he is not an addict, he represents the post-industrial male, for whom drug use represents a form of fashion accessory and a further stimulus for his fantasy lifestyle. Despite this, his casual drug use does, in many respects, have a connection with the significance of addictions in contemporary culture. Stark notes that addictions ‘have a particular resonance in baroque modernity because they attempt to resolve the wider social struggle between physical release and cogitative control at the lead of the individual body’ (Stark 2001: 59) and represent ‘distinctly (post)modern patholog[ies], relating as they do to the issues of consumption and control.’ (Stark 2001: 52) Breaking down these respective points yields a number of pertinent themes in *Complicity*: the ‘struggle’ between control and release concurs with Cameron’s refusal to translate the conspiracy theories and fantasies he uses as secure boundaries into any sort of tangible

entity and Gould's significance as the embodiment of some of these darker fantasies. That such 'pathologies' relate to 'consumption and control' converges with Cameron's own drug use, just one of the aspects which leads to Rina-Sabados calling *Complicity* a novel which 'pinpoints representations of postmodern "reality" within the framework of postindustrial consumption culture' [sic] (Rina-Sabados 2005: 160).

Shortly after the first murder, the reader is introduced to Cameron Colley as he joins fellow journalists offering coverage to Britain's latest Trident submarine, whilst opining his hard-line left-wing invective and consuming the usual intake of nicotine with the more secretive finger of speed. In the newspaper office he receives another call from his mole, Mr. Archer. After realising his Trident story is likely to make the front page, Cameron experiences 'near-instant in-print-gratification' (Banks 1993: 24), the 'modest thrill of news-fix' (Banks 1993: 24), a 'dose of journo-buzz' (Banks 1993: 24), all of which are comparable to the highs his respective drug, nicotine and alcohol intakes stimulate. The point of this analysis is to highlight Cameron's technique for surviving in the heavily institutionalised and censorious world of the journalistic hack is to immerse himself in a world of fantasy. His earlier anti-Trident statements lead to a self-comparison with Hunter S. Thompson, the Gonzo journalist who Cameron models himself on and the mysterious sequence of names he is provided with suggest a potential political conspiracy and expose but lack anything definitive.

A more artificial form of high achieved by Cameron is related to his recreational drug habit and represents one of the more controlled and therefore safer methods of stimulus he is able to generate. As he enjoys a risqué fix of cocaine whilst on a journalistic job, the language of his consumption reflects the way in which he relates to the material: 'that micro-lick of powder' (Banks 1993: 31), a 'getting-away-with-it promissory glee about sticking my finger in my mouth, then my pocket, then my mouth again' (Banks 1993: 31) while simultaneously 'my tongue went numb and the chemical



taste thickened in my throat and this firingly, chargingly addictive illegal drug did its business' (Banks 1993: 31). The 'micro-lick' suggests a package constructed specifically for the customer, downsized for convenience, the 'getting-away-with-it' implies a childlike naughtiness in his activities, knowing he is acting illegally but still generating a thrill from the experience. The adjective, 'firingly', suggests a charge or burst of energy and this is the overlap between the print-based exhilaration and his other addictions. Interestingly, tying into the representation of the body in this text, the characters seem to place themselves and their bodies in situations where they can consume and be consumed, be it their work (in the case of Cameron's readership) or in their private, fantasy and personal lives.

In his personal life he is fluent in the vocabulary of the contemporary consumer rhetoric, his 'bleeper, mobile, Tosh, Nicads' (Banks 1993: 29), whilst overdosing on the computer game *Despot*, 'a world-builder game from the HeadCrash Brothers' (Banks 1993: 53) which is able to continue 'building your world for you if you leave it alone because it actually *watches* you . . . it *knows* you, it will actually try its little damnedest to *become* you.' (Banks 1993: 53) Aside from the readings of this computer game as being yet another extension of Cameron's world of fantasy power games, there is the opportunity for a more adventurous reading of this scene in terms of the narrative as a whole. *Complicity* is based on the thematic idea that Andy renders Cameron more complicit in his vengeful quest than Cameron realises and is comfortable with. Consequently, Cameron's observation that the game of *Despot* imitates the user, learns from them, observes them and tries to become them can be read in terms of the mysterious relationship between Mr. Archer (who, it transpires, is Andy) and Cameron.

At this point I am persistently reminded of Mark Renton's patter in *Trainspotting*, published in the same year as *Complicity*:

Society invents a spurious convoluted logic tae  
absorb and change people whae's behaviour is

outside its mainstream. Suppose that ah ken aw the pros and cons, know that ah'm gaunnae huv a short life, am ay sound mind etcetera, etcetera, but still want ta use smack? They won't let you dae it. They won't let ye dae it, because it's seen as ah sign ay thir ain failure. The fact that ye jist simply choose to reject whit they have tae offer. Choose us. Choose life. Choose mortgage payments; choose washing machines; choose cars; choose sitting oan a couch watching mind-numbing and spirit-crushing game shows, stuffing fuckin junk food intae yir mooth. Choose rotting away, pishing and shiteing yersel in a home, a total fuckin embarrassment tae the selfish, fucked-up brats ye've produced. Choose life. Well, ah choose no tae life. If the cunts cannot handle it, it's their fuckin problem. (Welsh 1993 [1994]: 187-188)

Renton and Cameron share the same conviction of hating what they perceive as a mainstream culture predicated on false concepts of "life" and like to feel they exist outside of this mainstream, yet both are exemplars of the Capitalist culture through their consumption of drugs and use of them to provoke fantasies. Craig argues that rather than viewing them as being symptomatic of isolation and rebellion:

Welsh's addicts and pushers and users are the mirror image of the free market capitalism which they believe themselves to have refused: rather than its antithesis, they simply perform at its most extreme both the inability to become a Person . . . and the lack of responsibility for others that means the one with the drugs is the one with power (Craig 1999: 97).

Such a sentiment can be extended to Cameron's depiction as one whose vitriolic anti-Thatcherite statements are in marked contrast with his purchases and indulgences. Responsibility has been one of the key points in *Complicity* but what makes this text different from *Trainspotting* is that although Cameron has the drugs and the financial clout to be comfortable, he certainly does not have the power.

When he is not unearthing conspiracy, Cameron is involved in a casual sexual relationship with Yvonne, a university friend turned bankruptcy specialist who is

married to William, who operates in the burgeoning world of technology and computers. As Cameron reveals his relationship with Yvonne, he refers to her only as 'Y' and reinforces his construction of a childish world composed of mystery, secrets and fantasy. Their extra-marital relationship is founded on the bondage and role-play sex games they indulge in which emphasises not only the power dynamics of the master/mistress relationship but also the significance of the body as a symbol of capital in their repeated illicit transactions.

Stark argues that: [r]ecent economic developments and changing modes of productions are fundamental to the baroque modern reformation of the body' (Stark 2001: 76) and this is apparent when we consider the language of one such encounter between Yvonne and Cameron, she is described as 'a woman who ran a self-defence course for female students, still regularly thrashes me at squash with technique or power depending on what sort of mood she is and does serious weights.' (Banks 1993: 93) All of these characteristics suggest a woman who will determine to out-man those around her, the word 'thrashes' immediately suggestive of physical violence or punishment, an S&M rhetoric. Yvonne's career in the growth industry of bankruptcy specialism posits her as an insatiable and voracious consumer, a figure of duplicity who administers the last rites to businesses with the minimal "pain" but the maximum possible personal gain. Interestingly, Cameron's behaviour during their foreplay, 'I moan dramatically again' (Banks 1993: 93), his penis is 'totally rampant but bizarrely vulnerable too' (Banks 1993: 93), he is 'giggling now and again and pretending to be involved in this crap soap opera' (Banks 1993: 94), is that of someone engaging in a harmless game, he is playing a piece of adult theatre with the 'crap soap opera' but his body remains 'totally rampant' yet 'bizarrely vulnerable' because this is a fantasy in which he is physically involved and cannot switch off or unplug. As they finish 'suddenly I'm coming, still crying and sobbing' (Banks 1993: 95) with 'the pain in my legs and arms

and joints worse and better at the same time' (Banks 1993: 95). There is a parallel with the consequences of the necrosis in the murdered arms dealer's body and it is this juxtaposition of pleasure and pain, extremities that leave him simultaneously elated and shattered but ensure he has a balance, like the drugs and alcohol he administers to maintain his state of a permanent high. In the post-coital warmth Yvonne asks 'How was that?' (Banks 1993: 95) and Cameron whispers 'Fucking brilliant.' (Banks 1993: 95) This whispering reinforces the secretive nature of their games and suggesting that he must keep this particular illegitimacy, like his chemicals, private.

However, these are the two extremes that Cameron veers between and *Complicity* exploits in its narrative structure. His pleasure with Yvonne is safe because it is confined to a private, fantasy space in which both parties are consenting, even if there is a theatrical coercion involved. The chemical highs he experiences are also controlled and dictated by his own needs and wants, they are secure within the physical sites and limits of his body because he has not yet become enslaved to an untamed dependency. Similarly, his relationship with Mr. Archer is still at the point where he has a level of control because murders have occurred in the past and there is no risk of exposing any major institutional conspiracy because he does not possess all the necessary information.

This is the transgressive dynamic upon which *Complicity* rests; the notion that Andy is Cameron's avenging angel, his manifestation of masculine frustrations and incapability, his crusader against the constant social injustices and vigilante of the travestied victim is able to act out the exposes, the retribution and the necessary violence that Cameron fantasises about wreaking on behalf of those who have been wronged.

In this respect, Andrew Gould and Cameron Colley's roles in *Complicity* are also those of 'Radical Equalisers', people who seek to expose the truth behind the

corruption and wreak vengeance for those who have been wronged, Gould operating as a God-like figure whose power, knowledge and experience allow him to hold sway over his victims. Banks similarly uses language to render his audience complicit in the different killings, thus creating an uncomfortable dualism and doubling between himself and Gould, whereupon the reader must identify themselves with the individual who, as in so many of Banks' other novels, is both the player and the person being played upon.

## **Chapter 7 Conclusion**

In a typically iconoclastic and self-assuredly effacing response to David Armstrong's letter about his results of his own doctoral research, Banks replied:

I take your point about the lack of serious critical appraisal of my books and, yes I guess it is because I'm seen as a relatively popular writer rather than a real Eng. Lit. writer. . . . The price of self-indulgence and one which I'm perfectly happy to live with. (Banks 1996: n.p.)

Such a gung-ho and provocative response aligns itself with the ways in which Banks punctures and punctuates the methods by which the vehicles of literary and high culture mobilise in order to exclude his work from the academic zones to which his more illustrious colleagues have been granted access. As each chapter has shown, novels by Banks open many rich veins of popular, oppositional culture, which are used to infect the bodies of work which constitute serious culture.

I have shown that Banks' oeuvre represents an on-going fascination with transgression and that the competing demands of generic popular fiction and literature reproduced itself as an aesthetic or sequence of motifs throughout his work. The exploration of the Double and the Gothic, in addition to a subversive presentation of gender and mental disorder in Chapter 1 provided a starting point from which the rest of his major novels were analysed. Examining narrative games and identity in Chapter 2 provided a technical consideration of the self-conscious deployment of games within Banks' fiction which emphasises further his problematising the boundaries between "popular" and "literary". Exploring the interrelationship between the Gothic and the post-industrial in Chapter 3, as well as the ways in which Banks' delineates spaces between his "mainstream" and "speculative" writing highlighted the capacity for transgressing genre, space and time. By considering genre in Chapter 4 I was able to introduce Banks' first novel set outside Scotland and his first attempt at the thriller genre, in order to explore how he breaks the rules set by the 'fans' and addresses

historical conflict through the theme of personal violence and revenge. Chapter 5 provided the opportunity for analysing spatial and postmodern Gothic, as well as discussing the application of terms such as ‘magical realist’ to Banks’ novels. By considering landscape and identity, I explored how the location is a framework within which Banks works and which he consciously reimagines for the purposes of politicising the genres he is using. Chapter 6, as the final textual analysis, presented a culmination of the transgressive themes within a novel which stands alone as Banks’ most powerful and provocative work. By exploring violence, identity and the body through a postmodern Gothic lens I ended the analysis in the manner it began, bringing together the dominant themes of Banks’ oeuvre to synthesise the individual strands which have been in play throughout each chapter.

The rationale and justification for omitting novels such as *Espedair Street* and *Whit*, as well a more recent novel such as *Transition*, is founded on the principal that that the texts which have been covered offered the best demonstration of the themes which this thesis set out to discuss. In addition to this the perception and reception of Banks’ most recent novels, in terms of their lack of critical success, suggests that the eclectic balance which characterised the earlier fiction under discussion is absent.

Novels by Iain Banks conduct an on-going and sustained critique of politics and social concerns within contemporary British society using popular genres and transgressive subjects and techniques which are rarely deemed suitable or of sufficient quality to achieve this. In the process, Banks demonstrates the capacity for such genres and strategies to advance complex and highly developed analyses of issues within contemporary politics and society as a whole.

Through his persistent transgression of genres Banks is able to manipulate his readership’s expectations, regularly invoking tropes from the Gothic, fantasy, crime fiction and the thriller before blending them with outrageous inversions, subversions

and rabbits from the hat, firmly establishing his status as an innovator, a player of games and an novelist who mischievously bridges fantasies into the populist nightmarish worlds in which he revels and reviles his readers and his critics alike.



## **Bibliography**

### **Primary Texts: Iain Banks**

Banks, Iain. n.d. *The Top of Poseidon*.

Banks, Iain. n.d. *The Hungarian Lift-Jet*.

Banks, Iain. n.d. *The Tashkent Rambler*.

Banks, Iain. n.d. *TTR*.

Banks, Iain n.d. 'My Dear Reader'

Banks, Iain. 1984 [1990]. *The Wasp Factory*. London: Abacus Books

Banks, Iain. 1985 [1990]. *Walking on Glass*. London: Abacus Books

Banks, Iain. 1986 [1990]. *The Bridge*. London: Abacus Books

Banks, Iain. 1987. *Espedair Street*. London: Macmillan

Banks, Iain. 1988. 'Introduction.' in M. John Harrison. [1988]. *Viriconium* (pp. vii – xii). London: Allen and Unwin

Banks, Iain. 1989 [1990]. *Canal Dreams*. London: Abacus Books

Banks, Iain 1992 [1993]. *The Crow Road*. London: Abacus

Banks, Iain. 1993. *Complicity*, London: Abacus

Banks, Iain. 1995. *Whit (or Isis amongst the Unsaved)*. London: Little and Brown

Banks, Iain. 1997. *A Song of Stone*. London: Abacus Books

Banks, Iain. 1999 [2005]. *The Business*. London: Abacus Books

Banks, Iain. 2002 [2003]. *Dead Air*. London: Abacus Books

Banks, Iain. 2007. *The Steep Approach to Garbadale*. London: Little and Brown

Banks, Iain. 2003. *Raw Spirit*. London: Century

Banks, Iain M. 1987. *Consider Phlebas*. London: Orbit

Banks, Iain M. 1988 [1989]. *The Player of Games*. London: Orbit

Banks, Iain M. 1990. *Use of Weapons*. London: Orbit

Banks, Iain M. 1991 *The State of the Art*. London: Orbit

Banks, Iain M. 1993. *Against A Dark Background*. London: Orbit

Banks, Iain M. 1994. *Feersum Endjinn*. London: Orbit

Banks, Iain M. 1996. *Excession*. London: Orbit

Banks, Iain M. 1998. *Inversions*. London Orbit

Banks, Iain M. 2000. *Look to Windward*. London: Orbit

Banks, Iain M. 2004. *The Algebraist*. London: Orbit

Banks, Iain M. 2008. *Matter*. London: Orbit

Banks, Iain M. 2011. *Surface Detail*. London: Orbit

*Complicity*, (Gavin Millar, 1999, United Kingdom)

*The Crow Road* (Gavin Millar, 2002, United Kingdom)

### **Secondary texts: Iain Banks**

Alegre, Sara Martin. 2000. 'Consider Banks: Iain M. Banks' *The Wasp Factory* and *Consider Phlebas*,' *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses (RCEI)* 41. pp. 197-205

Armitt, Lucie. 2001. 'The Magical Realism of the Contemporary Gothic.' In David Punter (ed). *A Companion to the Gothic* (pp. 305-316). Oxford: Blackwell

Armitt, Lucie. 2002. 'The Crow Road'. *Literary Encyclopedia*. First published 31 July [http://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=1177, accessed 22

November 2011.]

Armstrong, David. 1999. *Gestures Towards A Better Place: Approaches to Contemporary British Fiction*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. De Montforte University.

Banks, Iain. 1996. Personal letter to David Armstrong, August cited in *Gestures Towards A Better Place: Approaches to Contemporary British Fiction*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. De Montforte University.p.155

Bell, Ian A. (ed). 1995. *Peripheral Vision: Images of Nationhood in Contemporary British Fiction*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press

- Binns, Ronald. 1990. 'Castles, Books, and Bridges: Mervyn Peake and Iain Banks,' *Peake Studies* 2.1, pp.5-12
- Brewster, Scott. 2005. 'Borderline Experience: Madness, Mimicry and the Scottish Gothic,' *Gothic Studies* 7.1, pp.79-86
- Brewster, Scott. 2006. 'Beating, Retreating: Violence and Withdrawal in Iain Banks and John Burnside.' In James McGonigal and Kirsten Stirling (eds). *Ethically Speaking: Voice and Values in Modern Scottish Writing* (pp. 179-198). Amsterdam: Rodopi
- Brooks, Libby. 2002. 'The Monday Interview: The word factory', *The Guardian*, 26 August, p. B4
- Brown, Carolyn. 1996. 'Utopias and Heterotopias: The 'Culture' of Iain M. Banks.' In Derek Littlewood and Peter Stockwell (eds). *Impossibility Fiction: Alternativity, Extrapolation, Speculation* (pp.57-74). Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi
- Brown, Chris. 2001. 'Special Circumstances: Intervention by a Liberal Utopia,' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 30.3, pp. 625-633.
- Butler, Andrew M. 1999. 'The Strange Case of Mr Banks: Doubles and *The Wasp Factory*', *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction*, 28 (76), pp. 17-27
- Colebrook, Martyn. 2009. 'Journeys into Lands of Silence.' In Ruth Annolik (ed). *Demons of the Body and Mind: Essays on Disability in Gothic Literature* (pp.217-226). Illinois: McFarland
- Craig, Cairns. 2002. *Iain Banks' Complicity: A Reader's Guide*. Continuum: London
- , Cairns. 2005. 'Player of Games: Iain M. Banks, Jean-François Lyotard and Sublime Terror.' In James Acheson and Sarah CE Ross (eds). *The Contemporary British Novel since 1980* (pp. 229-239). New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Craig, Patricia. 1984. 'Exterminating Agents', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 16 March, p. 287.

- Dodou, Katherina. 2006. 'Evading the Dominant "Reality": The Case of Iain Banks' *Walking on Glass,* *Studio Neophilologica: A Journal of Germanic and Romance Languages and Literature*, 78.1, pp.28-38
- Duggan, Rob. 2007. 'Iain M. Banks, Postmodernism and the Gulf War,' *Extrapolation* 48.3, pp.561-578
- Ebdon, Melanie. 2004. *Remembering Identity after Postmodernity*. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis. University of Wales, Bangor.
- Edwards, Malcolm 1992. 'Review of *The Wasp Factory*.' In Stephen Jones and Kim Newman (eds). *Horror: 100 Best Books* 2nd edition (p. 268). .London: Hodder and Stoughton
- Garnett, David. 1989. 'Iain M. Banks: Interview,' *Journal Wired* 1, pp.51-69.
- Gifford, Douglas.1991. 'Interview with Iain Banks', *Festival Times*. 17-23 August, p.57.
- Gifford, Douglas. 1992. 'Raven's Way and Crow's Road', *Books in Scotland*, No. 43, p.11-16
- Gifford, Douglas, Sarah Dunnigan and Alan McGillivray. 2002. 'Scottish Literature since 1945.' In Douglas Gifford, Sarah Dunnigan and Alan MacGillivray (eds). *Scottish Literature*. (pp.721-1005). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Gimson, Andrew 1984 "Hype the Good Hype" in *The Sunday Times*, , Feb 16, 1984, p. 11
- Griffiths, Niall. 2008. Personal email to Martyn Colebrook. May 2008
- Guerrier, Simon. 1999. 'Culture Theory: Iain M. Banks's "Culture" as Utopia,' *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction*, Volume 28 (76), pp. 28-38
- Haddock 2004a. 'Walking on Glass', *Banksoniain: An Iain M. Banks Fanzine*, Volume 2. pp. 3-6
- Available online at

[://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/\\_02.pdf](http://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/_02.pdf)

Last accessed June 2011

Haddock, David. 2004b. 'The Bridge', *The Banksoniain: An Iain M. Banks Fanzine*'

Volume 3. pp. 3-5

Available online at

[://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/\\_03.pdf](http://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/_03.pdf)

Last accessed June 2011

Haddock, David. 2004b. *The Banksoniain: An Iain (M.). Banks Fanzine*. Volume 1

Available online at

[://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/\\_01.pdf](http://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/_01.pdf)

Accessed July 2011

Haddock, David. 2004c. *The Banksoniain: An Iain (M.). Banks Fanzine*. Volume 2

Available online at

[://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/\\_02.pdf](http://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/_02.pdf)

Accessed June 2011

Haddock, David. 2004d. *The Banksoniain: An Iain (M.). Banks Fanzine*. Volume 3

Available online at

[://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/\\_03.pdf](http://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/_03.pdf)

Accessed May 2011

Haddock, David. 2004e. *The Banksoniain: An Iain (M.). Banks Fanzine*. Volume 4

Available online at

[://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/\\_04.pdf](http://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/_04.pdf)

Accessed June 2011

Haddock, David. 2005b. *The Banksoniain: An Iain (M.). Banks Fanzine*. Volume 5

Available online at

[://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/\\_05pdf](http://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/_05pdf)

Accessed April 2011

Haddock, David. 2005c. *The Banksoniain: An Iain (M.). Banks Fanzine* Volume 6

Available online at

[://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/\\_06.pdf](http://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/_06.pdf)

Accessed January 2011

Haddock, David. 2005d. *The Banksoniain: An Iain (M.). Banks Fanzine*. Volume 7

Available online at

[://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/\\_07.pdf](http://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/_07.pdf)

Accessed March 2011

Haddock, David. 2005e. *The Banksoniain: An Iain (M.). Banks Fanzine* Volume 8

Available online at

[://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/\\_08.pdf](http://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/_08.pdf)

Accessed February 2011

Haddock, David. 2006a. *The Banksoniain: An Iain (M.). Banks Fanzine* Volume 9

Available online at

[://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/\\_09.pdf](http://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/_09.pdf)

Accessed April 2011

Haddock, David. 2006b. *The Banksoniain: An Iain (M.). Banks Fanzine* Volume 10

Available online at

[://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/\\_010.pdf](http://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/_010.pdf)

Accessed January 2011

Haddock, David. 2007a. *The Banksoniain: An Iain (M.). Banks Fanzine* Volume 11

Available online at

[://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/\\_011.pdf](http://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/_011.pdf)

Accessed June 2011

Haddock, David. 2007b. *The Banksoniain: An Iain (M.). Banks Fanzine* Volume 12

Available online at

[://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/\\_012.pdf](http://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/_012.pdf)

Accessed February 2011

Haddock, David. 2008a. *The Banksoniain: An Iain (M.). Banks Fanzine* Volume 13

Available online at

[://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/\\_013.pdf](http://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/_013.pdf)

Accessed March 2011

Haddock, David. 2009a Personal Correspondence with Martyn Colebrook via email n.p.

July 2009 – September 2009

Haddock, David. 2009b. *The Banksoniain: An Iain (M.). Banks Fanzine* Volume 14

Available online at

[://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/\\_014.pdf](http://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/_014.pdf)

Accessed June 2011

Haddock, David. 2010a. *The Banksoniain: An Iain (M.). Banks Fanzine* Volume 15

Available online at

[://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/\\_015.pdf](http://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/_015.pdf)

Accessed February 2011

Haddock, David. 2010b. *The Banksoniain: An Iain (M.). Banks Fanzine* Volume 16

Available online at

[://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/\\_016.pdf](http://www.banksoniain.netfirms.com/_016.pdf)

Accessed May 2011

Hardesty, William H. 1999. 'Mercenaries and Special Circumstances: Iain M. Banks's

Counter-Narrative of Utopia, *Use of Weapons*' in *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction*, 28 (76), pp. 39-47

Hardesty, William. 2000. 'Space Opera without the Space: The Culture Novels of Iain M. Banks.' In Gary Westfahl (ed). *Space and Beyond: The Frontier Theme in Science Fiction* (pp.115-122). Westport CT: Greenwood.

Harrison, M. John. 1988. *Viriconium* (ed.) Iain Banks. London: Allen and Unwin

Hastings, Selina. 1984. 'Recent Fiction', *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 February, p.17.

Hedgecock, Andrew. 1998. 'The Edge Interview: Iain Banks':

[://www.theedge.abelgratis.co.uk/iainbanksiview](http://www.theedge.abelgratis.co.uk/iainbanksiview).

Accessed June 2006

Heilman, James and Jackson, Patrick. 2008. 'Outside Context Problems: Liberalism and Other in the Work of Iain M. Banks.' In Donald M. Hassler and Clyde Wilcox (eds). *New Boundaries in Political Science Fiction* (pp. 235-258). Columbia SC: New Carolina Press.

Howe, David 1996 'An Interview with Iain Banks,' *Starburst* 151, pp.11-13

Hughes, Colin. 1999. 'Doing the Business. Profile: Iain Banks', *The Guardian*, 7 August 1999, pp.B6

, Stephen R. 2004. 'Action at a Distance: Narrative Structure and Technique in Iain Banks' *Whit*, in *Scottish Literature*, 33-34, pp.372-86.

Kelman, Kate. 1998. 'A Collision of Selves,' *Cencrastus* 60, pp.19-22

Kincaid, Paul 1996. 'Iain M. Banks.' In Pedersen, Jay P. (ed). *The St. James Guide to Science Fiction Writers* ( edition). (pp. 45-6). Detroit: Detroit University Press

Kneale, James. 2006. 'I have never been to Nasqeron: A Geographer Reads Iain (M.) Banks. Conference paper delivered at 'Bridging Fantasies: The Fiction of Iain (M.) Banks' Conference. University of Westminster.

September

Kulibicki, Michal. 2009. 'Iain M. Banks, Ernest Bloch and Utopian Interventions,' *Colloquy: Text, Theory and Critique*. 17. pp.34-43.



- Latham, Rob. 2002. 'Iain M. Banks.' In Darren Harris-Fain (ed). *British Fantasy and Science-Fiction Writers since 1960* (pp. 63-77). Detroit, MI: Gale
- Leishman, David. 2009. 'Coalescence and the Fiction of Iain Banks,' *Études Écossaises* 12, pp.215-230
- , Ronnie. 2002. 'Imachinations of Peace: Scientifictions of Peace in Iain M. Banks's *The Player of Games*.' *Studies: Journal of the Society for Utopian Studies*, Volume 13, pp.135-47
- Litt, Toby. 2006. 'Penguin Readers' Group this Month features *The Wasp Factory* by Iain Banks'
- [http://readers.penguin.co.uk/nf/shared/WebDisplay/0,,71489\\_1\\_12,00.html](http://readers.penguin.co.uk/nf/shared/WebDisplay/0,,71489_1_12,00.html)  
Accessed June 2008
- Lord, Graham. 1984. 'Books', *Sunday Express* 19 February, p6.
- Lowe, Gregory. 2008 'Iain Banks: Interview' in *Spike Magazine* 24 March  
[://www.spikemagazine.com/iain-banks-interview.](http://www.spikemagazine.com/iain-banks-interview)  
Accessed June 2011
- Lyall, Roderick. 1993. 'Postmodernist Otherworld, postcalvinist purgatory: An Approach to *Lanark* and *The Bridge*,' *Études Écossaises* 2, pp.41-52
- Macdonald, Kirsty A. 2005. *Spectral Ambiguities: The Tradition of Psychosomatic Supernaturalism in Scottish Fiction*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. University of Glasgow.
- Macdonald, Kirsty. 2007 'Anti-heroes and Androgynes: Gothic Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Men's Fiction,' *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*, Issue 3 n.p.  
[://irishgothichorrorjournal.homestead.com/ScottishGothicMasculinities.html](http://irishgothichorrorjournal.homestead.com/ScottishGothicMasculinities.html)  
Accessed July 2008
- MacGillivray, Alan. 1996. 'The Worlds of Iain Banks,' *Laverock* 2, pp.22-27

- MacGillivray, Alan. 2002. *Scotnotes: Iain Banks' The Wasp Factory, The Crow Road and Whit*. Glasgow: Association of Scottish Literary Studies
- March, Christie. 2002. *Rewriting Scotland: Welsh, McLean, Warner, Banks, Galloway and Kennedy*. Manchester: Manchester University Press
- Marr, Andrew. 1984. 'Mad, bad and dangerous to know', *The Weekend Scotsman*, 25 February, p5.
- Martingale, Moira. J. 2007. *Iain Banks: The Renovation of the Gothic*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. University of Bristol.
- McCracken, Scott. 1998. *Pulp: Reading Popular Fiction*. Manchester University Press: Manchester
- McMillan, Dorothy. 1995. 'Constructed out of bewilderment: stories of Scotland.' In Ian A. Bell (ed). *Peripheral Vision: Images of Nationhood in Contemporary British Fiction* (pp.80-99). Cardiff: University of Wales Press
- McVeigh, Kevin. P. 1997. 'The Weaponry of Deceit: Speculations on Reality in *The Wasp Factory*,' *Vector* 191, pp. 2-7
- Mendelsohn, Farah. 2005. 'The Dialectic of Decadence and Utopia in Iain M. Banks' Culture Novels,' : *The International Review of Science Fiction* 93, pp.116-24.
- Metcalf, Tim. 1989 'An interview with Iain Banks,' *GM Magazine*, 2.3, pp.7-10
- Middleton, Tim. 1995. 'Constructing the contemporary self: the works of Iain Banks.' In Hill, Tracy and William Hughes (eds). *Contemporary Writing and National Identity* (pp. 18-28). Sulis Press: Bath
- Middleton, Tim. 1996. 'The Works of Iain M. Banks: A Critical Introduction,' *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction*, 28 (76), pp.5-16
- Middleton, Tim. 1998. 'Iain Banks' in Merritt Moseley (ed). *British Novelists since 1960: Second Series* (pp. 19-26). Detroit, MI: Thomson Gale

Middleton, Tim. 2006a. 'Iain (Menzie) Banks.' In Dominic Head (ed). *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English* ( edition) (p.67). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Middleton, Tim. 2006b. 'Landscape & Imagination: Iain Banks representation of Argyll in *The Crow Road*.' Keynote address delivered at 'Bridging Fantasies: The Fiction of Iain (M.) Banks' Conference. University of Westminster. September

Mitchell, Chris. 1996. 'Iain Banks: Whit and Excession: Getting used to being God'.

<http://www.spikemagazine.com/0996bank.php>

Accessed September 2005

Moore, John. 2009. 'Iain M. Banks: Nearly God' in *Exposure Magazine*.

<://members.multimania.co.uk/exposuremagazine/banks>.

Accessed June 2010

Morton, Oliver. 1996. 'A Cultured Man,' *Wired*, pp.46-48

Mullan, John. 2008a. 'Behind it All,' *The Guardian* "Review", 28 June, pg.6

Mullan, John. 2008b 'Born Free' in *The Guardian* "Review", 5 July, pg.6

Mullan, John. 2008c 'Out of this World' in *The Guardian* "Review", July, pg.6

Mullan, John 2008d 'Iain Banks on *The Wasp Factory*'. Friday July

<://www.guardian.co.uk/books/audio/2008/jul/16/guardian.bookclub>.

Accessed July 2008

Mullan, John. 2008e 'Shock Tactics' in *The Guardian* "Review", 19 July, pg.6

Murphy, Marese. 1984. 'When History Became Fiction,' *The Irish Times*, 10 March, p.

12

Murray, Isobel. 2002. 'Iain Banks.' In Isobel Murray (ed). *Scottish Writers Talking 2:*

*Iain Banks, Bernard MacLaverty, Naomi Mitchinson, Iain Crichton Smith, Alan Spence*

(pp.1-34). East Lothian: Tuckwell Press.

Nairn, Thom. 1991-2. 'Scottish Identity: A Cause Unwon,' *Chapman* 67, pp.2-12

- Nairn, Thom. 1993. 'Iain Banks and the Fiction Factory.' In Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (eds). *The Scottish Novel since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams* (pp.127-135). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Nicholls, Stan. 1993. *Wordsmiths of Wonder: Fifty Interviews with Writers of the Fantastic*. London: Orbit
- Nicholls, Stan 1994. 'Cultural Difference,' *Interzone* 86, pp.22-23
- O'Connor, Edmund 2006a. 'Tartan Noir,' *Chapman*, Volume 108, pp. 50-58
- O'Connor, Edmund 2006b, 'Mr. Iain and Mr. Iain (M.) (Banks)' in *Chapman*, Volume 108, pp. 119-125
- O'Connor, Edmund 2006c. 'Ian Rankin interviewed,' *Chapman* 108. pp. 27-34
- Palmer, Christopher. 1999. 'Galactic Empires and the Contemporary Extravaganza: Dan Simmons and Iain M. Banks,' in *Science Fiction Studies* 26.1 [77], pp. 73-90
- Paterson, Anna. 2002. *Scotland's Landscape: Endangered Icon*. Edinburgh: Polygon
- Petrie, Duncan. 2004. *Contemporary Scottish Fictions: Film, Television and the Novel*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Punter, David. 1980. *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*. London: Longman
- Punter, David. 1991 'Heartlands: Contemporary Scottish Gothic,' *Gothic Studies* 1.1, pp.101-118.
- Punter, David. 1996. *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions, Volume 2: The Modern Gothic* ( edition). Essex: Longman
- Punter, David. 2001. *Writing the Passions*. Harlow: Longman.
- Sabados, Mirna. 2005. 'Beyond Crime and Punishment: Metaphors of Violence in Ian Banks's *Complicity*,' *Language Overseas Perspectives and* 2, pp.155-64
- Rennison, Nick. 2005. 'Iain Banks.' In *Contemporary British Novelists*. Abingdon: Routledge.pp.21-22

Reynolds, Stanley. 1984. 'A Stinging Tale', *Punch*, 29 February, p.42

Riach, Alan. 1996. 'Nobody's Children: Orphans and their Ancestors in Popular Scottish Fiction after 1945.' In Susanne Hagemann, (ed). *Studies in Scottish Fiction: 1945 to the Present* (pp. 51-84). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH.

Ricketts, Ed. 2004 'Interview with Iain Banks.' Available online at <http://www.futurehi.net/phlebas/text/banksint15.html>. Last accessed 15 August 2007. First published in *PC Format* (June 1996).

Robertson, James December 1989/January 1990 . 'Bridging Styles: A conversation with Iain Banks,' *Radical Scotland* 42. pp. 26-27.

Rosser, Adam. 2000. 'An Interview with Iain Banks.' *Science Fiction World*, 3, pp. 16 - 18 in Haddock, David. 2005a. *Banksoniain: An Iain Banks Fanzine*, 'The Player of Games' 7. pp.4-5

Available online at [http://www.banksoniain.net/firms.com/banksoniain\\_07.pdf](http://www.banksoniain.net/firms.com/banksoniain_07.pdf).

Last accessed 17 August 2007.

Ryan, Nick. 2008. 'The King of Culture'. [://www.nickryan.net/articles/banks.html](http://www.nickryan.net/articles/banks.html)  
Accessed June

Sage, Victor and Lloyd-Smith, Allan (eds). 1996a. *Modern Gothic: A Reader*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Sage Victor. 1996b. 'The Politics of petrification: culture, religion, history in the fiction of Iain Banks and John Banville.' In Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd-Smith (eds). *Modern Gothic: A Reader* (pp. 20-37). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Schoene-Harwood, Berthold. 2000a. *Writing Men: Literary Masculinities from Frankenstein to the New Man*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Schoene-Harwood, Berthold. 2000b. "'Dams burst": devolving gender in the *The Wasp Factory*,' *A Review of International English Literature*, pp.131-148

Slocombe, Will. 2006. 'Game-playing roles in the fiction of Iain M. Banks'

Unpublished conference paper presented at 'Bridging Fantasies: The Novels of Iain (M.) Banks at University of Westminster, September

Stevens, Gary. 1995 'Interview: Excession'.

[://www.sandm.co.uk/mary/sfjournm/Iain\\_Banks/iain\\_banks](http://www.sandm.co.uk/mary/sfjournm/Iain_Banks/iain_banks).

Accessed May 2006

Sutherland, J. 1993. 'Binarisms'. *London Review of Books*, 18 November, pp.24-25

Tew, Philip. 2004 [2007]. Edition. *The Contemporary British Novel*. London:

Continuum

Todd, Richard. 1996. *Consuming Fictions: The Booker Prize and Fiction in Britain Today*. London: Bloomsbury

Wallace, Gavin. 1993b. 'Voices in Empty Houses: The Novel of Damaged Identity.' In

Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (eds). *The Scottish Novel since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams* (pp. 217-231). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Walther, Natasha. 1992. 'Growing up in the Glens,' *The Times Literary Supplement*, 17 April, p.21

Wilson, Andrew. 1994. 'Iain Banks Interview' in *Textualities* [://textualities.net/andrew-wilson/iain-banks-interview/](http://textualities.net/andrew-wilson/iain-banks-interview/)

Accessed May 2005

### **Bibliography – Additional Secondary Texts**

Adams, Douglas. 1978 [2002]. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. London: Picador

Aldiss, Brian, and Wingrove, David. 1986 [2001]. *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction*. Thirsk: House of Stratus.

Altman, Dennis. 2005. *Gore Vidal's America*. Cambridge: Polity Press

- Amis, Kingsley. 1961. *Lucky Jim*. London: Penguin
- Amis, Martin 1973 [2003]. *The Rachel Papers*. London: Penguin Books
- Amis, Martin 1975 [2004]. *Dead Babies*. London: Vintage
- Amis, Money 1984. *Money: A Suicide Note*. London: Cape
- Amis, Martin 1999. *London Fields*. London: Vintage Books.
- Anon. 1984. 'Briefly', *The Daily Mail*, 16 February, p7.
- Anon. 2006. 'Lanark 1982: An unofficial Alasdair Gray site'  
 < [://www.lanark1982.co.uk/lanark](http://www.lanark1982.co.uk/lanark). > Accessed February 2006
- Adair, Tom. 1989. 'Doomsday in Panama', *The Scotland on Sunday*, 27 August, p.32.
- Armitt, Lucie. 1996. *Theorising the Fantastic*, London: Hodder Arnold
- Auerbach, Erich. 1953. *Mimesis: The Representation of Western Literature*. Translated from the German by Willard R Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhailovich. 1968 [1984]. *Rabelais and His World*. Translated from the Russian by Hélène Isolwolsky. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Baldick, Chris. 1992 [2009]. *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baldick, Chris 1987 [1990]. *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-Century Writing*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Ballard, J.G. 1979. *The Unlimited Dream Company*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Ballard, J.G. 2003. *Millennium People*. London: Flamingo
- Ballard, J.G. 2006. *Kingdom Come*. London: Fourth Estate
- Beckett, Samuel. 1949 [2008]. *Waiting for Godot*. London: Faber
- Bellow, Saul. 1953. *The Adventures of Augie March*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson
- Bentley, Nick (ed.) 2005. *British Fiction of the 1990s*. Abingdon: Routledge.

- Bergonzi, Bernard. 1970 [1979] edition. *The Situation of the Novel*. London: Macmillan.
- Bertens, Hans and D'Haen, Theo (eds). 1993. *Postmodern Studies 7: British Postmodern Fiction*. Atlanta GA: Editions Rodopi B.V
- Best, Steven and Kellner, Douglas. 1991. *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*. London: Macmillan
- Bissett, Alan (ed). 2001. *Damage Land: New Scottish Gothic Fiction*. Edinburgh: Polygon
- Bissett, Alan. 2001. 'The Dead Can Sing: Introduction.' In Alan Bissett (ed). *Damage Land: New Scottish Gothic Fiction* (pp. 1-8). Edinburgh: Polygon
- Bloom, Clive. 1996. *Cult Fiction: Popular Reading and Pulp Theory*. London: Macmillan
- Bloom, Clive. 2002. *Bestsellers: Popular Fiction since 1900*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. 1941 [2000]. *Fictions*. Translated from the Spanish by E. Bonner. London: Penguin Books
- Botting, Fred 1996. *Gothic*, London: Routledge
- Botting, Fred. 2001. *Gothic*. Woodbridge: D S Brewer.
- Bradbury, Malcolm. 1959. *Eating People is Wrong*. London: Secker and Warburg
- Bradbury, Malcolm. 1973. *Possibilities: Essays on the State of the Novel*. London: Oxford University Press
- Bradbury, Malcolm. 1975. *The History Man*. London: Secker and Warburg.
- Bradbury, Ray. 1962 [1973]. 'The Small Assassin' in *The Small Assassin*. London: New English Library
- Bretnor, Reginald (ed). 1979. *Modern Science Fiction: Its Meaning and Future*. Chicago: Advent Publishers



- Brooker, Peter. 2005-6. 'Terrorism and Counternarratives: Don DeLillo and the New York Imaginary,' *New Formations* 57, pp.10-25
- Burgess, Anthony. 1962 [2000]. *A Clockwork Orange*. London: Penguin Books
- Burgess, Anthony. 1984. *Ninety-nine Novels: The Best in English since 1939*. London: Alison and Busby
- Burgess, Anthony. 1985 [1986]. *Flame into being: The Life and Work of D.H. Lawrence*. London: Sphere Books.
- Burnside, John. 1997. *The Dumb House: A Chamber Novel*. London: Jonathan Cape
- Burnside, John. 1999. *The Mercy Boys*. London: Jonathan Cape
- Burnside, John. 2007. *The Devil's Footprints: A Romance*. London: Jonathan Cape
- Burnside, John. 2008. *Glister*. London: Jonathan Cape
- Butler, Judith. 2004. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso
- Butlin, Ron. 1987. *The Sound of My Voice*. Edinburgh: Canongate
- Butlin, Ron. 1997. *Night Visits*. Edinburgh: Cultural Press
- Butlin, Ron. 2006. *Belonging*. London: Serpent's Tail
- Calder, Angus. 1996. 'By the waters of Leith I sat down and wept: Reflections on Scottish Identity.' In Harry Ritchie (ed). *New Scottish Writing* (pp. 218-238). London: Bloomsbury
- Camus, Albert. 1982 [199]. *The Outsider*. Translated from the French by J. Laredo. London: Hamish Hamilton
- Cawelti, John G. 2004. *Myth, Violence and Popular Culture*. Wisconsin: The Popular Press.
- Chandler, Raymond. 1939. *The Big Sleep*. London: Hamish Hamilton
- Christie, Agatha. 1933. *Lord Edgware Dies*. London: Collins

- Clareson, Thomas D. (ed). 1971. *SF: The Other Side of Realism*. Ohio: Bowling Green Popular Press
- Coe, Jonathan. 1994 (1995). *What a Carve Up!* London: Penguin
- Coe, Jonathan 1997. *The House of Sleep*. London: Penguin Books
- Conradi, Peter 1982. *John Fowles*. London: Methuen
- Craig, Cairns. 1991. 'Going down to Hell is easy: *Lanark*, Realism and the Limits of the Imagination.' In Robert Crawford and Thom Nairn. (eds). *The Arts of Alasdair Gray* (pp.90-107). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Craig, Cairns. 1993. 'Resisting Arrest: James Kelman.' In Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (eds). *The Scottish Novel since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams* (pp. 99-114). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Craig, Cairns. 1999. *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination*. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh
- Crawford, Robert. 1992. *Devolving Scottish Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Crawford, Robert and Nairn, Thom (eds). 1991a. *The Arts of Alasdair Gray*. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh
- Crawford, Robert. 1991b. 'Introduction.' In Robert Crawford and Thom Nairn (eds). *The Arts of Alasdair Gray* (pp. 1-9). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Crawford, Robert. 1998. *The Scottish Invention of English Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Currie, Mark. 1998. *Postmodern Narrative Theory*. Basingstoke: Macmillan
- Daiches, David. 1993. *The New Companion to Scottish Culture*. Edinburgh: Polygon.
- Davis, Lennard. 1987. *Resisting Novels: Ideology and fiction*. New York and London: Methuen

- Dentith, Simon. 1990. 'This Shitty Urban Machine Humanised: The Urban Crime Novel and the Novels of William McIlvanney.' In Ian A. Bell and Graham Daldry (eds). *Watching the Detectives: Essays on Crime Fiction* (pp.18-36). London: Macmillan
- Docherty, Brian. 1990. 'Grace under Pressure: Reading Alistair MacLean.' In Clive Bloom (ed). *Twentieth-Century Suspense* (pp. 203-224). Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Donne, John. 1644 [1942]. *The Complete Poems*. Chicago: Packard.
- Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. 1885 [2008]. *Crime and Punishment*. Translated from the Russian by Jessie Coulson. (ed.) Richard Arthur Peace. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Dryden, Linda. 2003. *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles: Stevenson, Wilde and Wells*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Duncan, Hal. 2005. *Vellum*. London: Macmillan
- Duncan, Hal. 2007 [2008]. *Ink*. London: Pan
- Eagleton, Terry. 2000. *The Idea of Culture*. Blackwell: Oxford.
- Eco, Umberto. 1966. 'James Bond: une combinatoire narrative,' *Communications* 8, pp.77-93
- The Driller Killer* (Abel Ferrara 1979, USA)
- Fleming, Ian. 1978. *Casino Royale*. London: Hutchinson
- Fowles, John. 1963 [2004]. *The Collector*. London: Vintage
- Fowles, John. 1966 [2004]. *The Magus*. London: Vintage
- Freud, Sigmund. 1913 [1989]. *Totem and Taboo: some points of agreement between the mental lives of savages and neurotics*. James Strachey (ed). London: W.W.Norton.
- Frow, John. 2006. *Genre*. Abingdon: Routledge
- Galloway, Janice. 2002. 'Introduction: Something to Say.' In Alasdair Gray, 1985 [2002] *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (pp. ix-xvi). Edinburgh: Canongate

- Gasiorek, Andrzej. 1995. *Post-War British Fiction: Realism and After*. London: Edward Arnold
- Gasiorek, Andrzej. 2005. *J.G. Ballard*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Gauthier, Tim S. 2006. *Narrative Desire and Historical Reparations: A.S. Byatt, Ian McEwan, Salman Rushdie*. Abingdon: Routledge
- Gerber, Richard. 1955. *Utopian Fantasy*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Gifford, Douglas. 1996. 'Imagining Scotlands: The Return to Mythology in Modern Scottish Fiction.' In Susan Hagemann (ed). *Studies in Scottish Fiction: 1945 to the Present* (pp. 17-50). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH
- Grass, Gunther. 1959 [2009]. *The Tin Drum* Translated from the German by B. Mitchell. London: Harvill Secker
- Gray, Alasdair. 1981 [1985]. *Lanark: A Life in Four Books*. Edinburgh: Canongate
- Gray Alasdair. 1981 [2002]. *Lanark: A Life in Four Books*. Edinburgh: Canongate
- Gray, Alasdair. 1984 [2003]. *1982: Janine*. Edinburgh: Canongate
- Gray, Alasdair. 1992. *Poor Things: episodes from the early life of Archibald McCandless M.D. Scottish public health officer*. London: Bloomsbury
- Greenland, Colin. 1983. *The Entropy Exhibition: Michael Moorcock and the British 'New Wave' in Science Fiction*. London: Routledge
- Gribbin, Lewis Grassic. 1932 [1995]. *Three Go Back*. Edinburgh: Polygon
- Griffiths, Niall. 2000. *Grits*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Griffiths, Niall. 2001 [2002]. *Sheepshagger*, London: Vintage.
- Griffiths, Niall. 2002. *Kelly and Victor*. London: Jonathan Cape
- Griffiths, Niall. 2003. *Stump*. London: Jonathan Cape
- Griffiths, Niall. 2005. *Wreckage*. London: Jonathan Cape
- Griffiths, Niall. 2007. *Runt*. London: Jonathan Cape

- Gutterman, David. 1994. 'Postmodernism and the Interrogation of Masculinity.' In Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman (eds). *Theorizing Masculinities* (pp.219-238). California: Sage Publications
- Halcombe, Garan. 2005. 'British Council Contemporary Writers: Niall Griffiths' [://literature.britishcouncil.org/niall-](http://literature.britishcouncil.org/niall-)  
Accessed September 2006
- Head, Dominic. 2002. *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction 1950-2000*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heller, Joseph. 1961 (1964). *Catch-22*. London: Corgi.
- Hesse, Hermann 1943 [1972]. *The Glass Bead Game*. Translated from the German by R. Winston and C. Winston. Harmondsworth: Penguin
- Hindell, Juliet. 2001. 'Oceans of Stories to explore,' *The Daily Telegraph: Arts&Books*, 8 March pg. A8
- Hinds, Archie. 1966 [2001]. *The Dear Green Place*. Edinburgh: Birlinn.
- Hoban, Russell. 1980. *Riddley Walker*. London: Cape.
- Hodgson, William Hope. 1908 [1948]. *The House on the Borderland*. Sauk City, Wisconsin: Arkham House
- Hodgson, William Hope. 1914 [1967]. *Men of the Deep Waters*. Sauk City, Wisconsin: Arkham House.
- Hogg, James. 1824 [2009]. *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinne* (ed.) John Carey. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hollings, Ken. 2001. *Destroy All Monsters*. London: Marion Boyars.
- Holmes, Frederic M. 'Art, Truth, and John Fowles' *The Magus*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, Volume 31, Number 1, Spring 1985 pp.45-56.

- Home, Stewart. 1998. 'Stewart Home's Introduction to Grant Morrison's *Lovely Biscuits*.' In Stewart Home. 1999. *Confusion Incorporated: A Collection of Lies, Hoaxes and Hidden Truths* (pp. 28-30). Hove: Codex Books
- Home, Stewart. 1999. *Confusion Incorporated: A Collection of Lies, Hoaxes and Hidden Truths*. Hove: Codex Books.
- Horner, Avril and Zloznik, Sue. 2005. *Gothic and the Comic Turn*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Horstkotte, Martin. 2004. *The Postmodern Fantastic in Contemporary British Fiction*. Dusseldorf: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier.
- Hunter, Lynette. 2001. *Literary Value/cultural power: Verbal arts in the twenty-first century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press
- Hustvedt, Siri. 2002. 'New York: Big, bad and back to its ballsy best' in *The Observer*, 10 March, p. 44
- Hutcheon, Linda. 1980 [1984]. *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*. New York: Methuen
- Hutcheon, Linda. 1988. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory and Fiction*. London: Routledge
- Hutchinson, Peter. 1983. *The Games Authors Play*. London: Methuen
- Huysen, Andreas. 2003. *Present Pasts: urban palimpsests and the politics of memory*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Innes, Hammond. 1940. *The Trojan Horse*. London: Collins.
- Innes, Hammond. 1940. *Wreckers Must Breathe*. London: Collins.
- Jackson, Rosemary. 1981. *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*. London: Methuen
- Jameson Frederic. 1991 [1993]. *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. London: Verso.
- Jenkins, Robin. 1955. *The Cone-Gatherers*. London: Macdonald

- Jenks, Chris. 2003. *Transgression*. Basingstoke: Routledge
- Johnson, Diane. 1977 [1982]. *Terrorists and Novelists*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc
- Jones, Carole. 2004. *Displaced masculinity: men, women and gender disorientation in contemporary Scottish fiction*. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis. Trinity College Dublin.
- Kafka, Franz. 1930 [1995]. *The Castle*. Translated from the German by William Dodd. London: Penguin
- Kafka, Franz. 1926 [1995]. *The Trial*. Translated from the German by William Dodd. London: Penguin
- Kelly, Aaron. 2005. *Irvine Welsh*. Manchester: Manchester University Press
- Kelman, James. 1994. *How Late it Was How Late*. London: Secker & Warburg
- Kelman, James. 2002a *And The Judges Said ...: Essays* London: Secker and Warburg
- Kelman, James. 2002b. 'A Look at Franz Kafka's Three Novels.' In *And The Judges Said ...: Essays* (pp.265-334). London: Secker and Warburg
- King, Stephen. 1983. *Christine*. London: Hodder and Stoughton
- Lee, Alison. 1990. *Realism and Power: Post-War British Fiction*. London: Routledge
- Le Guin, Ursula. 1969 [1992]. *The Left Hand of Darkness*. London: Virago.
- Le Guin, Ursula. 1974 [1999]. *The Dispossessed*. London: Millennium
- Legge, Gordon. 1998. *Near Neighbours*, London: Jonathan Cape
- Lem, Stanislaw. 1991. *Microworlds*. London: Mandarin Paperbacks
- Lenz, Brooke 2008. *John Fowles: Visionary and Voyeur*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi
- Lessing, Doris. 1971. *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*. London: Cape
- Lewis, Matthew. 1796 (1995). *The Monk*. Howard Anderson and Emma McEvoy (eds). Oxford: Oxford University Press

- Lodge, David. 1969 [1977]. 'The Novelist at the Crossroads.' In Malcolm Bradbury (ed). *The Novel Today: Contemporary Writers on Modern Fiction* (pp. 84-110). Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Lowell, Robert. 2001. *Robert Lowell: Poems*. (ed.) Michael Hofmann. London: Faber
- Luckhurst, Roger. 1997. *The Angle between Two Walls: The Fiction of J.G. Ballard*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press
- Luckhurst, Roger and Marks, Peter (eds). 1999. *Literature and the Contemporary: Fictions and Theories of the Present*. Essex: Pearson Education
- Lukacs, George. 1969. 'Probleme der Asthetik,' in *Werke*, 10, Neuwied: Luchterhand. Np.
- (Translated in Frow, John. 2006. *Genre*. Abingdon: Routledge)
- MacLean, Alisatair. 1955 [1957]. *HMS Ulysses*. London: Fontana
- MacLean, Alistair. 1957. *The Guns of Navarone*. London: Collins
- Manlove, Colin. 1996 (ed). *An Anthology of Scottish Fantasy Literature*. Edinburgh: Polygon.
- Massey, Doreen. 2005. *For Space*. London: Sage Publications
- McCabe, Patrick. 1992. *The Butcher Boy*. London: Pan
- McEwan, Ian. 1978. *The Cement Garden*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- McGrath, Patrick. 1997. 'Transgression and Decay.' In Christoph Grunenberg (ed). *Gothic: Transmutations of Horror in Late-Twentieth-Century Art* (pp.151-159). Boston, MA: MIT Press
- McIlvanney, William. 1975. *Docherty*. London: Allen and Unwin
- McIlvanney, William. 1977 (1992). *Laidlaw*. London: Sceptre
- McIlvanney, William 1983. *The Papers of Tony Veitch*. London: Hodder and Stoughton
- McIlvanney, William 1991a. *Strange Loyalties*. London: Hodder and Stoughton



- McIlvanney, William. 1991b. 'The Courage of our Doubts.' In William McIlvanney (ed). *Surviving the Shipwreck* (pp.153-155). Edinburgh: Mainstream
- McIlvanney, William. 1996. *The Kiln*. London: Sceptre
- McKerrow, Joyce Janet. 2002. *Under the Influence: Addiction and Literary Politics in Five Scottish Contemporary Novels* Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. University of Glasgow
- McLean, Duncan. 1995. *Bunker Man*. London: Jonathan Cape
- McLean, Duncan. 1997. *Ahead of Its Time: A Clocktower Press Anthology*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Meadley, Robert. 2003. *Tea Dance at Savoy*. Manchester: Savoy Books
- Mengham, Rod. (ed). 1999. *An Introduction to Contemporary Fiction: writing in English since 1970*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Middleton, Peter and Woods, Tim. 2000. *Literatures of Memory: History, Time and Space in Postwar Writing*. Manchester: Manchester University Press
- Mieville, China. 1999. *King Rat*. London: Pan Books
- Mieville, China. 2002. *Perdido Street Station*. London: Pan Books
- Mieville, China. 2003. *The Scar*. London: Pan Books
- Mieville, China. 2004. *Iron Council*. London: Macmillan
- Mieville, China. 2005. *Looking for Jake and Other Stories*. London: Macmillan
- Mieville, China. 2005. 'Foundation' in *Looking for Jake and Other Stories*. London: Macmillan
- Miller, Karl. 1985 [1987]. *Doubles: Studies in Literary History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mitchell, David. 2001. *number9dream*. London: Sceptre.
- Mitchell, David. 2004. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre
- Mitchell, Kaye. 2000. *A.L. Kennedy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Moorcock, Michael. 2002. *Firing the Cathedral*. Hornsea: PS Publishing

- Morace, Robert. 2001. *Trainspotting, A Reader's Guide*. London: Continuum
- Morace, Robert. 2007. *Irvine Welsh*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Morrison, Jago. 2003. *Contemporary Fiction*. London: Routledge
- Moylan, Tom. 1986. *Demand the Impossible – Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination*. London: Methuen
- Murray, Isobel. 2008. 'Ian Rankin.' In Isobel Murray (ed). *Scottish Writers Talking 4: Jackie Kay, Allan Massie, Ian Rankin, James Robertson, William (Bill) Watson* (pp. 181-236). Glasgow: Kennedy and Boyd
- Palmer, Jerry. 1978. *Thrillers: Genesis and Structure of a Popular Genre*. London: Edward Arnold
- Pawling, Christopher (ed). 1984. *Popular Fiction and Social Change*. London: Macmillan.
- Pawling, Christopher. 1984. 'Introduction: Popular Fiction: Ideology or Utopia.' In Christopher Pawling (ed). *Popular Fiction and Social Change* (pp.1-19) London: Macmillan.
- Peake, Mervyn. 1946 [1989]. *Titus Groan*. London: Methuen Mandarin
- Peake, Mervyn. 1950 [1969]. *Gormenghast*. Harmondsworth: Penguin
- Peake, Mervyn. 1959 [1998]. *Titus Alone*. London: Vintage
- Pittin, Marie Odile. 1996. 'Alasdair Gray: A Strategy of Ambiguity.' In Susan Hagemann (ed). *Studies in Scottish Fiction: 1945 to the Present* (pp.199-216). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH
- Plain, Gill. 1998. 'An interview with Ian Rankin,' *Scotlands* 5.2, pp.106-121
- Plain, Gill. 2001. *Twentieth Century Crime Fiction: Gender, Sexuality and the Body*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Pynchon, Thomas. 1973 [1995]. *Gravity's Rainbow*. London: Vintage
- Raban, Jonathan. 1974. *Soft City*. London: Hamish Hamilton

- Rankin, Ian. 1987 [2007]. *Knots and Crosses*. London: Book Club Association
- Rankin, Ian. 1991 [2007]. *Hide and Seek* London: Book Club Association
- Rankin, Ian. 1997. *Black and Blue: An Inspector Rebus Novel*. London: Orion
- Raymond, Derek. 1984. *He Died with His Eyes Open*. London: Secker and Warburg
- Robertson, James. 2000. *The Fanatic*. London: Fourth Estate
- Cannibal Holocaust* (Deodato Ruggero, 1980, USA)
- Royle, Nicholas. 2003. *The Uncanny*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Ryan, Kiernan. 1994. *Ian McEwan*. Plymouth: Northcote House
- Ryan, Ray. 2002. *Ireland and Scotland: Literature and Culture, State and the Nation 1966-2000*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Salinger, J.D. 1951. *The Catcher in the Rye*. London: Hamish Hamilton
- Sallis, James. 2003. 'A writer who went down into the darkness'. *The Boston Globe*, 'Arts and Entertainment', 28 December, pg.8
- Scaggs, John. 2005. *Crime Fiction*. Abingdon: Routledge
- Scholes, Robert E. 1979. *Fabulation and Metafiction*. Illinois: Urbana (III) University of Illinois Press.
- Scholes, Robert and Kellogg, Robert. 1966. *The Nature of Narrative*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Schwarz, Catherine (ed).1993. *The Chambers Dictionary*. Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap
- Self, Will. 1992. *Cock and Bull*. London: Bloomsbury
- Self, Will. 1994. *My Idea of Fun*. London: Penguin
- Self, Will. 1995. 'Conversations: J.G. Ballard.' In *Junk Mail* (pp.329-371). London: Bloomsbury
- Shelley, Mary. 1818 [2004]. *Frankenstein* (ed.) Glennis Byron. Harlow: Longman
- Shute, Neville. 1950. *A Town Like Alice*. London: Heinemann

- Skenazy, Paul. 1995. 'Behind the Territory Ahead.' In *Los Angeles in Fiction: A Collection of Essays* David Fine (ed). (pp. 103-125). Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press
- Smethurst, Paul. 2000. *The Postmodern Chronotope: Reading Space and Time in Contemporary Fiction*. Atlanta GA: Editions Rodopi B.V
- Smith, Andrew and Hughes, William (eds). 2003 *Empire and the Gothic: The Politics of the Genre*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan
- Smith, G. Gregory. 1919. *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence*. London: Macmillan.
- Soja, Edward. 1989. *Postmodern Geographies: The reassertion of space in critical and social theory*. London: Verso
- Spooner, Catherine. 2006. *Contemporary Gothic*. London: Reaktion Books
- Slusser, George and Shippey, Tom (eds). 1992. *Fiction 2000: Cyberpunk and the Future of Narrative*. Athens: University of Georgia Press
- Stark, Lynn. E. 2002. *Beyond skin: the exposed body and modern Scottish fiction*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. University of Edinburgh.
- Stephenson, Gregory. 1991. *Out of the Night and Into the Dream: A Thematic Study of the Fiction of J.G. Ballard*. Westport: Greenwood Press
- Stevenson, Randall. 1991. 'Alasdair Gray and the Postmodern.' In Robert Crawford and Thom Nairn (eds). *The Arts of Alasdair Gray* (pp. 48-63). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Stevenson, Robert Louis. 1886 [2009]. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde: And Other Strange Tales*. London: Arcturus
- Stevenson, Robert Louis. 1889 [1975]. *The Master of Ballantrae*. St. Albans: Panther
- Stevenson, Robert Louis. 1893 [1955]. *The Beach of Falesa*. London: Folio Society

- Sutherland, John. 1981. *Bestsellers: Popular Fiction of the 1970s*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Tew, Philip. 2004. *The Contemporary British Novel*. London: Continuum
- Thompson, Hunter S. 1972 [2005]. *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. London: Harper Perennial
- Torrington, Jeff. 1992. *Swing Hammer Swing*. London: Secker and Warburg
- Vidal, Gore. 1968. *Myra Breckinridge*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Vint, Sheryl. 2007. 'Cultural Imperialism and the Ends of Empire: Iain M. Banks' *Look to Windward*,' *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 18.1, pp.83-98
- Wallace Gavin 1993a 'Introduction.' In Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (eds). *The Scottish Novel since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams* (pp. 1-7). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Warner, Alan. 1995 [2002]. *Morvern Callar*, London: Vintage Books
- Warner, Alan. 2002. *The Man Who Walks*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Waugh, Patricia. 1984. *Metafiction*. London: Methuen Publishers
- Waugh, Patricia. 2005. 'Postmodern Fiction and the Rise of Critical Theory.' In Brian W. Shaffer (ed). *A Companion to the British and Irish Novel: 1945-2000* (pp.65-82). Oxford: Blackwell
- Wells, H.G. 1895 [2010]. *The Time Machine*. London: Gollancz.
- Welsh, Irvine. 1993 [1994]. *Trainspotting*. London: Mandarin
- Welsh, Irvine. 1995. *Marabou Stork Nightmares*. London: Cape.
- Welsh, Irvine. 1998 *Filth* London: Jonathan Cape
- Welsh, Irvine. 2001. *Glue*, London: Jonathan Cape
- Welsh, Irvine. 2002. *Porno*, London: Jonathan Cape
- Welsh, Irvine. 2007. *If You Liked School, You'll Love Work* London: Jonathan Cape

- Welsh, Irvine 2008. *Crime*. London: Jonathan Cape
- Whyte, Christopher (ed). 1995. *Gendering the Nation: Studies in Modern Scottish Literature*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Williams, Anne. 1995. *Arts of Darkness: A Poetics of the Gothic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Williams, Carlos William. 1987 (ed.) Christopher John Macgowan. *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams*. Manchester: Carcanet.
- Williams, Mark. 2007. 'Out of Mind: Fictions About Conflict.' Conference paper delivered at 'Globalisation and Writing'. Bath Spa University. March – April.
- Winston, Robert P. and Mellerski, Nancy C. 1992. *The Public: Ideology and the Police Procedural*, Basingstoke: Macmillan
- Witschi, Beat. 1991. *Scottish Studies: Glasgow Urban Writing and Postmodernism*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang
- Wright, Angela. 2007. 'Scottish Gothic.' In Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy (eds). *The Routledge Companion to the Gothic* (pp. 73-82). Abingdon: Routledge
- Yeats, William. B. 1914 [1990]. 'Responsibilities' in Daniel Albright (ed). *The Poems*. London: J.M. Dent.
- I Spit on Your Grave*. (Meir Zarchi, 1978. United States of America)