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Scottish Utopian Fiction and the Invocation of God

TIMOTHY C. BAKER

Abstract

Explicitly utopian novels are relatively uncommon in twentieth-century Scottish fiction, perhaps due to a prevailing conception of Scottish literature as inherently peripheral; for many critics and authors, Scotland is already a place outside the mainstream of political and historical narrative. Utopian themes and imagery, however, have frequently been used by Scottish writers to address the role of religious experience in contemporary life. In novels by Robin Jenkins, Neil M. Gunn, Alasdair Gray, and Iain M. Banks, the utopian form presents the possibility of abandoning traditional religious practices in favor of direct discourse with the divine. Even as they appear to repudiate organized religion, these novels also demonstrate the continued relevance of God and myth. Whether in outright science fiction such as Banks's Culture series and portions of Gray's "Lanark," classical utopias such as Gunn's "The Green Isle of the Great Deep," or ostensibly realist novels such as Jenkins's "The Missionaries," utopian imagery is used to examine what role the divine might have in a secular society. These Scottish utopias offer a place to discuss the relationships between individuals, communities, and nations and how these relationships are reconstituted in a modernity where God is known only as absence.

Compared to contemporary English literature, twentieth-century Scottish fiction has been remarkably devoid of explicitly utopian texts on the order of those by H. G. Wells or Aldous Huxley. Utopian themes have been widely used in Scottish novels throughout the century, however, to foreground questions of religion, politics, and the nation. Whether in the dystopian future of Neil M. Gunn's *The Green Isle of the Great Deep* (1944) or the impossible religious community of Robin Jenkins's *The Missionaries* (1957), utopian imagery is often used to display tensions not only between individual freedom and societal progress but also between traditional religious practice and the direct experience of God. These novels are rarely as pointedly political as their English counterparts, yet similarly use a utopian paradigm in order to question the experience of modernity itself and to present, in the phrase of Isaiah Berlin, an "ideal in terms of which we can measure off our own present

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imperfections.”¹ Utopian imagery and themes are used in Scottish fiction to examine the relationship between a modern secular society and a persistent longing for the divine: only in a utopia can the relationship between everyday experience and a transcendent other be questioned and examined. While none of the novels discussed below posit a Durkheimian community where religious practice and belief can be integrated fully into a given society, in each the creation of a utopian society becomes a way to examine the role of belief in the modern era.

The very idea of utopia, however, has been anathemic to a prevailing critical conception of political imagination in Scottish fiction. Fredric Jameson has argued that one of the tasks of the utopian is to reduce “bad” or political history in favor of the utopian everyday;² according to the view of Scottish literature articulated by Cairns Craig, such a split or reduction is already endemic to Scottish fiction at large. As Craig has argued influentially: “For many Scottish novelists, Scotland is quite simply a world to which narrative, and therefore history, is alien.”³ Scotland exists as a periphery to the central narrative of English history; it is, like a utopia, already othered. Early nineteenth-century Scottish novels such as Mary Hamilton’s *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* (1808), for instance, depict Scotland as a testing ground for social and educational reform. If Scotland is not a perfect society, it is nevertheless a space that allows for the depiction of a better way of living.⁴ In Craig’s modern analysis, Scotland, as portrayed in literature, already exists at a remove from the political and narrative histories that many utopian novelists seek to call into question. Scotland, from this perspective, is already a utopia. Scotland’s peripheral status in relation to English or British culture has already allowed the very distancing and projection that underlie the introduction of the utopian.

In *Gay Hunter* (1934), for instance, a minor utopian fantasy by J. Leslie Mitchell that never approaches the thematic coherence of his more explicitly Scottish work under the name of Lewis Grassie Gibbon, the utopian ideal is sought after by neither Scots nor Americans but only by English Fascists, who look to the future in hopes of seeing “all this modernist botching of society and art and civilisation finished, and discipline and breed and good taste come into their own again.”⁵ Neither Craig nor Mitchell would argue, presumably, that Scottish fiction represents a cultural perfectibility but, rather, that the political and historical divide portrayed in classic utopian

fictions is already at work in the most realist of Scottish novels. From this perspective, Scottish fiction does not require explicitly utopian fantasies to highlight societal imperfections and to explore the relationship between history and politics; such a dialogue is already ongoing.

Numerous Scottish novelists replicate the production of temporal estrangement that Phillip E. Wegner argues is one of the key features of the utopian imagination. Indeed, Jameson locates Walter Scott as having been “uniquely positioned for the creative opening of literary and narrative form to this new experience” of temporality and “progress” occasioned by capitalism.⁶ In the twentieth century alone, the novels of Muriel Spark, Janice Galloway, and George Mackay Brown have been noted for their exploration of the relation between narrative form and the perception of history. Yet even as Scottish novelists following Scott “lay bare the horizon of temporal possibility located in any cultural present,” according to Wegner, the overriding concern of many of these works has not been with the present’s relation to the future but, rather, with its relation to the past.⁷ The central tension in many key works of twentieth-century Scottish fiction, from Lewis Grassic Gibbon’s *A Scots Quair* (1932–34) to Eric Linklater’s *Magnus Merriman* (1934), is not between reality and utopia but between reality and arcadia, the romantic myth of past freedom. As Craig reads the Jacobite romances of J. M. Barrie and Scott, and indeed the majority of Scottish literature produced since James Macpherson’s Ossian poems, “the refusal to look at the actualities of Scotland’s real history . . . can become the gateway to an alternate perception.”⁸

Magnus Merriman, like many of Eric Linklater’s other novels, explores the relationship between lived experience and a poetically informed view of the past. When settled in London, for instance, Merriman frames Scotland as a “Pindaric ode stilling its unlicensed rhythm in the wilder nose of Ossian.”⁹ Here Scotland is distinctly othered and presented as a land kept separate from the demands of history in favor of an overarching Celtic Romanticism. Yet Merriman finds, after working as a farmer, the apparent truth of a pastoral, arcadian Scotland: “Now he knew why, in far parts of the world, he had often felt the unreality of all he saw and descried a foolish artifice in his own business there. . . . This soil was his own flesh and time passed over him and it like a stream that ran in one bed.”¹⁰ Merriman journeys from an arcadian myth to an arcadian present (and potentially an arcadian future), a historyless state more real than the politics and history of the outside world. The truly

utopian, in such fiction, is found not through an image of the future but through an embrace of the past. Such novels bear many of the hallmarks of utopian fiction, then, but to substantially different ends: rather than using an imagined future to interrogate the demands of the present, they turn to tradition itself to establish, as Craig argues, “a dialogue between the variety of discourses which, in debating with each other, constitute the space that is the imagining of Scotland and Scotland’s imagination.”¹¹

While there have been few explicitly political Scottish utopias on the model of George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, or H. G. Wells, however, a number of Scottish novelists have used the utopian form to foreground not the question of history but that of religion. Wegner, among many others, locates religion as one of the dominant cultural themes of the utopia, yet the utopian form has most often been used in English literature either as an advocacy of religious freedom, as Thomas More’s *Utopia* has been read, or to predict a religion-free state. In the Scottish novels discussed below—Iain M. Banks’s *Consider Phlebas* (1987) and *Excession* (1996), Alasdair Gray’s *Lanark* (1981) and *1982*, *Janine* (1984), Neil M. Gunn’s *The Green Isle of the Great Deep*, and Robin Jenkins’s *The Missionaries*—however, the utopian form interrogates religion in a wholly distinct manner: if religion in the present is seen to be baseless or misguided, then the utopian state permits a direct encounter with God.¹²

Religious themes have long been central to the Scottish literary tradition, of course. As Craig writes, “Whether for or against Calvinism’s conception of human destiny, no Scot could avoid involvement in the imaginative world that Calvinism projected.”¹³ The majority of novels to engage explicitly with religious themes have done so against the backdrop of the individual or localized community, as seen in texts ranging from J. M. Barrie’s *Auld Licht Idylls* (1888) to Willa Muir’s *Imagined Corners* (1931). Almost as common are more fantastical imaginings filled with depictions of the Devil, from James Hogg’s *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) to Muriel Spark’s *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960) and James Robertson’s *The Testament of Gideon Mack* (2006). It is only in the utopian mode, however, that God appears.

In classically utopian novels such as Neil M. Gunn’s *The Green Isle of the Great Deep* and Alasdair Gray’s *Lanark*, as well as in the science fiction of Iain M. Banks and the apparent realism of Robin Jenkins, the

utopian—and more often, dystopian or anti-utopian—form is used to interrogate the failure of religion and the inefficacy of God. In Gunn's and Gray's novels, God appears as an embodied presence, a present God who must answer for His own absence. If, as Nicholas Brown argues, "the negative version of utopia . . . is utopia stripped down to its naked essence," Gunn and Gray propose negative utopias that reflect not the political life or future of Scotland but the nation's religious life.¹⁴ These are utopias in which God is already dead; even his appearance does not lead to either a utopian state or wholehearted devotion. Here, on the one hand, Gunn and Gray provide a parallel account of modern secularization to Callum G. Brown's, wherein the mid-twentieth century has seen a sudden, radical change to secularism after which no return to conventional religious practice is possible. At the same time, however, they also echo Charles Taylor's account of a "transcendent reality," wherein the possibility of transcendence is never completely lost.¹⁵ Gunn's and Gray's novels allow the reader simultaneously to assess what has changed in a larger cultural shift to secularization and to evaluate what possibilities for religious fullness still remain.

Lanark is one of the most widely discussed utopian fictions—indeed, one of the most widely discussed texts of any sort—in Scottish literature, although it has seldom been read explicitly in utopian terms. The novel is frequently considered as a study of the relation between politics, history, and creativity. The novel is split into four books, the first two of which follow the childhood and youth of Duncan Thaw in mid-twentieth-century working-class Glasgow. The second two volumes depict Thaw's transformation into Lanark in Unthank, Glasgow's hellish anti-utopian twin. Further complicating the narrative, the books are presented not in a linear order but with the Unthank sections bookending the Glasgow ones. The combination of realistic and surrealistic settings allows Gray to develop his primary themes of the inhumanism of government systems, the development of the individual conscience, and the relationship between art and history.

Juxtaposing the story of Duncan Thaw and his counterpart or future self Lanark, the novel follows a classical, albeit nonlinear, utopian arc in which the protagonist is thrust from a drab reality into a heightened, if broadly negative, future. In Thaw's Glasgow, the self is always threatened by outside social forces, while in Lanark's Unthank, the self is completely unknowable. This shift parallels what Jameson calls the "existential fear of Utopia": "the

possibility of a loss of self so complete that the surviving consciousness cannot but seem an other to ourselves, new-born in the worst sense, in which we have lost even that private unhappiness, that boredom and existential misery . . . which constituted our identity in the first place.”¹⁶

The protagonist’s arrival in Unthank in book 3 (which opens the novel) is one of the most vivid images of a lost self imaginable: arriving in a dark, nameless city on an empty train, Lanark has no name until he is given one by a clerk, no knowledge, and no identity. While Thaw’s death at the end of book 2 fills him with “annihilating sweetness,” this feeling is totally lost by the beginning of book 3.¹⁷ Unthank is not only an anti-utopian (dis)location, a nightmarish vision of things to come, but also a complete repudiation of anything that might give rise to the self: there is no space for politics, religion, art, love, or community. Indeed, the basic economy of the city depends on using individuals whose bodies have gone soft as a basic foodstuff. Lanark’s otherness and separation, both from himself and from those around him, is the dominant theme of the narrative. If, as Jameson argues, “utopian form is itself a representational meditation on radical difference, radical otherness, and on the systemic nature of the social totality,” *Lanark*, even as it plays with this form (reordering the sequence of its books, for instance, or foregrounding typography), can be considered such a meditation.¹⁸

Cairns Craig argues that the disjunct between the Glasgow of books 1 and 2 and the Unthank of books 3 and 4 is representative of the peripheral nature of Scottish fiction in general: “We must be inside and outside at the same time: we must live in history and yet with the consciousness of being outside it.”¹⁹ Gavin Miller, arguing that Duncan Thaw pursues “a cult based around a lunar goddess,” similarly finds that the novel contains “a formally encoded warning against living one’s life in terms of the temporality of a novel,” that is, according to a traditional narrative history.²⁰ Neither account, however, fully explores the import of the epilogue—placed four chapters before the end—in which Lanark encounters the character Nastler.

Nastler is not God, though he “used to be part of him”; he is instead “the king of Provan”—“a purely symbolic name”—and more importantly, Lanark’s (both the novel and the person) “author.”²¹ While Alan McMunnigall argues that Nastler is explicitly “a fictionalized version of Alasdair Gray,” the figure is more than that:²² he is both literary author and the author of all creation.²³ Nastler is the anti-utopian embodiment of God: he represents

God as creator, certainly, but he is also made powerless, not by his creation but by his witnesses, the believers—readers—who can turn against him. As he tells Lanark: “I’m like God the Father, you see, and you are my sacrificial Son, and a reader is a Holy Ghost who keeps everything joined together and moving along. It doesn’t matter how much you detest this book I am writing, you can’t escape it before I let you go. But if the readers detest it they can shut it and forget it; you’ll simply vanish and I’ll turn into an ordinary man.”²⁴

For Craig, such passages illustrate the importance of the novel’s “physical place within the system of production.”²⁵ Certainly such moments as Nastler’s assertion that Lanark and the world in which he lives are made of nothing but print, “tiny marks marching in neat lines, like armies of insects, across pages and pages and pages of white paper,” bear out such a reading.²⁶ If *Lanark* is most often read as a leading example of Scottish postmodernism, it is doubtlessly due to scenes such as this, which appear to shatter narrative illusions. Yet the epilogue must also be read within the context of the rest of the novel, which is in many ways a novel of religious doubt.

Thaw’s own complicated faith is best summed up by Dr McPhedron, one of several notable ministers in the novel. As the minister states, in the midst of a lengthy argument on the existence of God: “You, Duncan, are intelligent. Mibby you’ve been searching the world for a sign of God’s existence. If so, you have found nothing but evidence of his absence, or less, for the spirit ruling the material world is callous and malignant. The only proof that our Creator is good lies in our dissatisfaction with the world.”²⁷ Throughout the first two books Thaw implicitly and explicitly rejects God—although he often finds the idea of Hell convincing—but the figure of God continually resurfaces in Thaw’s art. Thaw is torn between the impossible desire for “a big continual loving man . . . who shares the pain of his people” and the fear of a God “too like Stalin to be comforting.”²⁸ God, or at least faith in him, is continually present in the culture that surrounds Thaw, yet evidence of his presence is sorely lacking. Unthank, similarly, is a world filled with creators who “have become powerful by tearing tiny bits off the religion which cured them and developing these bits into religions of their own. No God unites them now, only mutual assistance pacts based upon greed.”²⁹ Religion is useful but perhaps unwarranted; God is a hypothesis that cannot exceed itself.

In both the Glasgow and Unthank sections of the novel, however, Thaw/Lanark has moments of real religious epiphany. In a pub, celebrating the completion of a religious mural, Thaw encounters an old Irishwoman who, alone among the novel's characters, believes "God's love an easy thing."³⁰ Her devout belief, coupled with the "surprising sweetness" with which his (atheist) friend Drummond breaks into a rendition of the 23rd Psalm, prepares the protagonist for his own vision of God. As Lanark, the protagonist has a mystical vision in *Lanark's* fourth book:

To left and right was a beach of pure sand as pearly-pale as the clouds, and the round lake and its beaches were enclosed by two curving shores which made the shape of an eye. And Lanark saw that it was an eye, and the feeling which came to him then was too new to have a name. His mouth and mind opened wide and the only thought left was a wonder if he—a speck of a speck floating before that large pupil—was seen by it. . . . There was a sound like remote thunder or the breathings of wind in the ear. "*Is . . . is . . . is . . .*" it said. "*Is . . . if . . . is . . .*" He knew that half the stars were seeing the other half and smiled slightly, not knowing up from down or caring which was which. Then, dazed by infinity, he did not fall asleep but seemed to float out onto it.³¹

The negative utopia of Unthank provides a space for both the repudiation of God and his appearance. Neither is complete: God's absence does not eradicate religion, nor do the divine breathings Lanark hears in something of a delirium offer full resolution (the crucial "if" within five utterances of "is").

This final vision, however, accords with Ernst Bloch's notion of a God who is not revealed in the material world, a "framework of mere opticality or pictoriality," but in sound: "the body of the last dream in the middle of the night is always of gold, is sound, is golden sound."³² Lanark's utopian vision of God can be considered as what Bloch calls the thing-in-itself "calling out to itself through goodness, music, metaphysics, but unrealizable in mundane terms."³³ God cannot appear in the painting of a mural, or even in the

potentially sublime environment of Ben Rua, but something very much like God, at least, appears in music and in visions, in the communal singing of a psalm, or in solitary dreams.

This apparent journey from doubt to belief strongly echoes “The Everlasting Yea” of Thomas Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* (1833–34): like those of Thaw/Lanark, “these mad shadow-hunting and shadow-hunted Pilgrimings” of Teufelsdröckh are “but some purifying ‘Temptation in the Wilderness’ before his apostolic work (such as it was) could begin.”³⁴ These moments of spiritual awakening in both Thaw’s and Lanark’s stories initially appear to prefigure a transformation: the tribulations of the preceding pages have given rise to moments of transcendence. Gray, however, almost immediately undercuts Lanark’s epiphanic moment in the epilogue. Nastler is called a “conjurer” by Lanark, and the term names him for the rest of the epilogue. He is “confused,” “unhappy,” and “querulous.”³⁵ Finally, Nastler is reduced to a position of complete impotence by his own creation, left mumbling under his bedclothes. Nastler, as conjurer, author, and creator, is unable to answer his subject’s demands; if he is part of God, he is the least efficacious and transcendent part imaginable.

After his meeting with Nastler, Lanark returns to a position railing against God: “Who will cry out against that second-hand, second-rate creator who thinks a cheap *disaster* is the best ending for mankind?”³⁶ Lanark’s final achievement is to die an ordinary death, untouched by either faith or doubt. The final lines of the novel show Lanark as “a slightly worried, ordinary old man.” After a blank space of half a page, there is a final prose poem that can equally refer to Lanark, Thaw, or Gray himself:

I STARTED MAKING MAPS WHEN I WAS SMALL
SHOWING PLACE, RESOURCES, WHERE THE ENEMY
AND WHERE LOVE LAY. I DID NOT KNOW
TIME ADDS TO LAND. EVENTS DRIFT CONTINUALLY
DOWN,
EFFACING LANDMARKS, RAISING THE LEVEL, LIKE
SNOW.

I HAVE GROWN UP. MY MAPS ARE OUT OF DATE.
THE LAND LIES OVER ME NOW.
I CANNOT MOVE. IT IS TIME TO GO.³⁷

The final page reads solely, in giant letters, “GOODBYE,” a typographical trope repeated in most of Gray’s later texts. The novel thus, after its religious interrogation, reverts to a depiction of a land-based—grounded—tradition. Time and land are more constant than either politics or religion. Gray here echoes the final line of Eric Linklater’s *Magnus Merriman*, in which “the country that was to share his [Peter, Magnus’s son’s] greatness lay dark and warm beneath the snow, and meditated nothing but the year’s new grass.”³⁸ Lanark’s encounter with God allows him to reject God entirely; solace in life—and death—comes not from faith in the transcendent but from faith in the land and tradition.

Lanark repeats the themes of doubt and God’s cruelty and incompetence found in a key early twentieth-century Scottish utopian fantasy, David Lindsay’s *A Voyage to Arcturus* (1920). Maskull, Lindsay’s protagonist, questions the religious devotion of the inhabitants of the planet Tormance: “In ancient times, when the Earth was young and grand, a few holy men are reputed to have walked and spoken with God, but those days are past.”³⁹ When Maskull does encounter a threefold, embodied God at the novel’s close, it is only to discover that that figure’s name on Earth is “Pain.”⁴⁰ In both novels, the utopian paradigm is used to reveal God as a figure best displaced; religious faith in the real present may not be wholly illusory, for there is a God figure to which it refers, but that figure does not contribute to human contentment or progress.

While *Lanark* echoes the despair found in Lindsay’s work, it cannot be read as Gray’s final word on God. Gray’s second novel, 1982, *Janine*, cannot be categorized as a utopian fiction—indeed, it defies all generic classification—yet it contains a similar approach to many of *Lanark*’s religious themes. God appears quite literally as a small voice, set in miniscule type on the side of the page, during the protagonist Jock McLeish’s climactic psychological breakdown. Earlier McLeish has described himself in the terms Lanark ascribes to God: “I AM THE EYE BY WHICH THE UNIVERSE BEHOLDS ITSELF AND KNOWS IT IS DIVINE.”⁴¹ God himself, however, is merely an undesired voice of conscience: “Prayers work, they really do summon up God, but when the bastard arrives he does nothing but hang around my head telling me what a nasty boy I am.”⁴²

When God himself appears during McLeish’s breakdown, it is not as a cosmic eye, or a moral judge, or an authorial creator, but as the embodiment

of land and tradition itself. Speaking from the margins, as it were—each word is given a line of its own, adjacent to the primary text—he says:

i am not mysterious am no king judge director
inspector supervisor landlord general manager
or any kind of master no expert computer plan-
ner lawyer accountant clergyman policeman
teacher doctor father who is cruel to be kind
I do not rule thunder threaten you will not
leave you . . . listen i am light air daily bread
common human warmth ordinary ground
that drinks every stain takes back all who fall
renews all who have not poisoned their seed
my one power is letting nothing rest which is
not well balanced my only intelligence is what
you lend when you forget yourself i endure for
you endure you why always run away tear apart
climbing higher by kicking me down o i bear it
you no longer can.⁴³

This notion of God as both land and humanity drives the rest of the novel: it is only when something larger than the self has been recognized that the self can experience true freedom. The second half of the novel is more traditionally realistic than the preceding chapters: while the first half of the novel is largely occupied with McLeish's pornographic imagination, after his breakdown he begins to narrate his life in terms of real history and his desire "to make folk glad I exist again."⁴⁴

Cairns Craig interprets the novel's eventual turn toward a more humane and personal narrative as representing a move toward freedom. The Godlike author's point of view, as seen in *Lanark's* Nastler or in *Janine's* first half, restricts humans to a predefined script; humans must free themselves from this fixed and all-controlling God in order to be truly free. Yet Craig completely elides the voice of God that appears on almost every page in the novel's second half. This God is partly antithetical to the one that appears in *Lanark*: he is inquisitive but powerless, appearing only in parenthetical asides. Indeed, when McLeish engages in traditional forms of religious reverie, it is God who dismisses such praise. When McLeish exhorts: "You are the small glimmer of farseeing, intelligent kindness which, properly strengthened and shared, will light us to a better outcome. Lead kindly light amid the encircling

gloom,” God replies merely: “(Sentimental rot).”⁴⁵ The religious view Gray adopts in *Janine* is that of a God without “God”: an embodied, or at least voiced, God who is not responsive to the supplication of believers but instead endures as the ground of being.

These passages may explain Gray’s position in the more classically utopian *Lanark*: the appearance of God allows an eradication of traditional organized religion in favor of an individual embrace of the manifest, corporeal world. Only by abandoning religion in favor of direct discourse with the divine—a discourse that is embraced in *Janine* and rejected in *Lanark*—can the world itself be known. God is irrelevant to human existence if thought of as a removed creator, yet central to it if thought of as “ordinary ground,” in a both metaphysical and literal sense. Even as they appear to repudiate traditional religion, these novels also demonstrate the continued relevance of God and myth.

Utopia cannot offer a simple eradication of religious belief. Instead, as Gianni Vattimo explicates Friedrich Nietzsche, demythologization is itself exposed as another form of mythmaking. As Vattimo writes: “If we wish to be faithful to our historical experience, we have to recognize that once demythologization has been exposed as myth our relation to myth does not return as naive as before, but remains marked by this experience.”⁴⁶ Utopia, for both Gray and Vattimo, is not a space of renunciation of old myths but a space in which the awareness of these myths as myths gives rise to a new perspective. If it is a space in which traditional religion is rejected, it is not because such forms of belief have been surpassed by something better but, rather, because the modern, secular era allows for new forms of exploration. Utopian fiction is revealed in Gray’s novels as a form that allows the testing of traditional metaphysics; for Gray, the image of God as a figure of religious devotion must be replaced by a finally all-encompassing, humane, and grounded tradition.

This tension between traditional religious observation—predominantly Calvinist—and the utopian possibility of interaction with God is also explored in Robin Jenkins’s *The Missionaries*. The protagonist, young student Andrew Doig, initially takes an academic approach to religion and is concerned with placing Christianity in the context of a larger mythology: “Few saw that the sunlit mysterious quest for the Golden Fleece was complementary to Christ’s sombre inevitable journey towards Calvary; together, they were the inspiration

needed for an age too smug for wonder, too mercenary for sacrifice, and too ethical for glory.”⁴⁷ Doig’s intellectual approach, much indebted to James George Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, is tested when he encounters a small community who believe that they have been directly called by God to inhabit the island of Sollas.

The community’s right to inhabit the island is framed as a legal question: in the absence of a verifiable, manifest God who can support their claims of his intervention, they are trespassers. As Mr. Nigg, a police clerk, and Doig argue:

“You see, then,” [Nigg] went on, “it is really no good their merely saying that God gave them the right; they must also prove it.”

“But how are they to do that, Mr. Nigg, especially in an age of enfeebled faith, such as ours. . . . They cannot produce God as a witness.”

“No, like yourself I do not think they can; but that is because I could not produce him myself. I do not know how. Faith is not enfeebled so much as lost. It can be found again. Perhaps these people have found it.”⁴⁸

The novel explicitly contrasts the wild and direct faith of the Sollas community and their leader, Donald McInver, with a more traditional form of religious adherence, represented by Doig’s minister father. Religion is explicitly connected with authority: the police, clergymen, and landowners who investigate the situation on Sollas are portrayed as supportive of religion and intolerant of delusion and superstition, under which any form of divine revelation must assuredly fall. The faith of McInver and his followers, grounded in an unverifiable belief in direct communication with God, is correlated not with religion but with myth.

As Doig struggles to understand the motivations behind the community’s actions, he feels “not like a modern man at all seeking a buttress for faith, but like the adventurer of fable who needed and obtained the help of the gods in a world where rocks could speak, birds were wise men translated, out of the waves came green monsters to devour, and a beautiful

woman was a witch and a murderess.”⁴⁹ Faith in a God who can be experienced directly is considered in terms of all other things that can be experienced directly: rocks, birds, sea, and other people. Indeed, God himself is described in the novel’s later pages in terms drawn from nature: he preys on the McInver’s followers “like a pike among trout.”⁵⁰ If belief in an immanently incarnate God is derided as superstition by those in the novel who speak for society, Jenkins also ties this belief in with all else that is immanent; as in the novels of Eric Linklater, Alasdair Gray, and Neil M. Gunn, who will be discussed below, the community’s experience of God is closely tied to the land.

Like *Lanark*, *The Missionaries* depicts everyday religious faith as it is practiced in Scotland as being something close to futile, while the possibility of a direct encounter with God remains enticing if elusive. Yet, as in *Lanark*’s scene of a spiritual awakening brought on by a drunken woman in a pub, Jenkins does not entirely dismiss traditional religious practice. The sincere belief of many of the policemen is portrayed as being, while more restrained than McInver’s direct encounters with God, perhaps also more appropriate to actual modern life. Jenkins does not offer Sollas as a utopian paradise. The community is never proved to be justified in their beliefs, and the practice of rote religion ostensibly triumphs. Yet in his depiction of the island community he outlines the space of a utopian imagining. Doig decides to abandon his city career, and the wealthy woman he loves, in order to devote his life to “the exciting and irresolvable doubt of God” and, like Fergus Lamont in Jenkins’s 1979 novel of that name, live at a remove from the rest of society.⁵¹ Unlike Gray’s more fantastical works, *The Missionaries* never presents a voiced or embodied God. In showing largely sympathetic, if quite possibly deluded, characters who base their actions around such a figure, however, the novel at least raises the question of response: If God *were* to appear, precisely in a time and place in which such events are widely accepted to be impossible, how would one change one’s life?

The Missionaries thus follows the general pattern of many of Jenkins’s novels, which feature, as Glenda Norquay writes, characters “who are presented either as seeking extremes of good or, more rarely, represent extremes of evil, but who are themselves trapped within a relative and conditional universe which apparently denies the polarity they epitomise.”⁵² Even as McInver retires to one of the most isolated locations in Scotland, he is unable to fully abandon the constraints of a society that refuses to believe in manifest good. His followers, removed from mainstream Scottish society both in terms of

location and by a religious fervor unparalleled on the mainland, in many ways resemble More's original Utopians. As Richard Halpern argues, the political and religious possibilities presented in More's *Utopia* are in part predicated on the nomadic community that inhabits it: "Precisely because they have been expelled from society, the decoded masses are perfect subjects for imaginative recombination. Stripped of all prior social bonds, they have been suitably prepared for entrance into the utopian polity."⁵³ Only a community that is reconstituted according to its own specific demands can inhabit a utopia. While McInver's followers' motivations are only glimpsed secondhand, Andrew Doig's own renunciation of the world also fits this paradigm.

Having taken leave of society, Doig is free to search for the utopian. In the final moments of the novel Doig leaves his possessions in a pool "where crabs and prawns lived" so that he can be "free to explore the infinities of life."⁵⁴ Utopia can only be found when everything else has been abandoned. For Jenkins, however, any utopia these characters find will remain private and unverifiable. If God appears to them, as McInver believes, such a manifestation remains so contrary to the rest of society that it cannot be understood.

This difficulty is perhaps best captured by Jean-Luc Nancy, who writes: "The divinity lets himself be seen, manifestly invisible and invisibly manifest. God reveals himself—and God is always a stranger in all manifestation and all revelation."⁵⁵ The strangeness of revelation reappears throughout the novel: Doig calls his first encounter with the religious community the "revelation on Sollas," yet his affair with Bridie, one of the laird's servants, is also a "revelation."⁵⁶ The term thus refers to both the seen and the unseen, the carnal and the divine: that which is manifest remains invisible, and that which is invisible remains manifest. Even the unsympathetic Sheriff speaks of the possibility of revelation but argues that it could only be of his "own miserable conceit and personal puniness."⁵⁷ Revelation is always at hand yet never sufficient. The world that would allow God to reveal himself as manifest and visible, known and immanent, is a world for which both McInver and Doig struggle, but it is not the world that surrounds them. Instead, they remain characters searching for a religious utopia that will always remain mysterious.

Iain Banks has closely echoed the themes of *The Missionaries*—albeit with much greater humor and to substantially different ends—in novels such as *Whit* (1995), wherein some misguided religious fanatics attempt to set up their own utopian community. His science fiction series of Culture

novels—written as Iain M. Banks—engage more directly and seriously with religious questions. The Culture is a completely irreligious society, centered on technological advancement. In *Consider Phlebas*, the first of the Culture novels, the Culture is pitted against the Indirans, a society structured around religious belief. As Horza, an Indiran sympathizer, explains to a member of the Culture: “I don’t care how self-righteous the Culture feels, or how many people the Indirans kill. They’re on the side of life—boring, old-fashioned, biological life; smelly, fallible and short-sighted, God knows, but *real* life. You’re ruled by your machines. You’re an evolutionary dead end.”⁵⁸ Yet even as the Culture is a utopian state free of religion, the space for Godlike creators emerges.

The society is governed by Minds, enormous computers with unparalleled, “almost God-like power.”⁵⁹ The Minds, as Simon Guerrier argues, “make the culture work as a utopia,”⁶⁰ yet they also introduce a religious sensibility to the society. In a later novel, *Excession*, the first Minds, or Elders, are described as “gods to all intents and purposes”;⁶¹ even the most atheistic society cannot, finally, shake itself free of, if not gods, unfathomable and omnipotent beings. Banks’s most recent Culture novel, *Matter* (2008), goes so far as to posit a planet built around a “WorldGod.” The “God” is an ancient creature called a Xinthian Tensile Aeronathaur, now classified as “Developmentally Inherently, Pervasively and Permanently Senile.”⁶² The efficacy, or divinity in any common sense, of these Gods is irrelevant; what matters is that every society finds its own godlike being.

The fight against the Indirans in *Consider Phlebas* takes on the scope of a religious war, as is explained in an appendix: “For all the Culture’s profoundly materialist and utilitarian outlook, the fact that Idir had no designs on any physical part of the Culture itself was irrelevant. Indirectly, but definitely and mortally, the Culture *was* threatened, not with conquest, or loss of life, craft, resource or territory, but with something more important: the loss of its purpose and that clarity of conscience; the destruction of its spirit; the surrender of its soul.”⁶³ As the quasi-religious terminology makes plain, the Culture is presented as a society in which freedom from religion is itself a religion. The utopia is already corrupt; it continually engages in a religious self-undermining in which its values collapse upon themselves.

The Culture novels can thus be read as a neat inverse of *Lanark*, which Banks has described as the only work of Scottish fiction to have influenced

his own writing.⁶⁴ Whereas the latter traces a path from religious doubt to the complete absence of God to his revelation and finally to the birth of the individual, the Culture novels begin at a point of irreligious certainty but then move from the appearance of God to his rejection and finally to the perpetuation of community.

After Lanark's encounter with Nastler, he returns to a political summit where nothing is accomplished. A character jokingly describes the delegates' impossible dream: "The opening of a new intercontinental viaduct, perhaps. . . . The unrolling across the ocean of a fraternal carpet on which all the human races could meet and sink into one human race and get Utopia delivered by parachute with their morning milk, no?"⁶⁵ This vision is, taken seriously, what the Culture aims to provide. The Culture relies on Minds for war strategy and social planning, leaving its humans "free to take care of the things that really mattered in life, such as sport, games, romance, studying dead languages, barbarian societies and impossible problems, and climbing high mountains without the aid of a safety harness."⁶⁶ Yet the Culture is doomed to failure: its utopian idealism is "lethal"; it brings "chaos from order, destruction from construction, death from life."⁶⁷ Banks's utopia is defined by its unsustainability. Consider *Phlebas* itself is largely the story of a Mind that has gone into hiding, not unlike the sequestered Nastler: the various Culture and Indir operatives searching for it have both religious and political motivations for its capture, yet end up killing each other without the Mind's involvement. If the Mind can be seen as a God, it is again an ineffectual one. Even when it is glimpsed in embodied form, it is ultimately helpless: it is revealed in an appendix that the Mind's ultimate use was in a number of space battles. The link between God and machine, and their relation to living creatures, is always tenuous in Banks's novels: as is the case for the police and clergymen of Robin Jenkins's work, faith in things larger than oneself is most successful when those things remain unknown.

The above-discussed novels by Iain Banks, Robin Jenkins, and Alasdair Gray thus present, in very different ways, ideas of utopias in which God, or gods, is at once present and ineffectual, both longed for and disappointing. For Gray and Jenkins, the promise of a real utopia lies in the individual's development out of complacent religious belief into simultaneous doubt and revelation, while for Banks the utopian promise of the Culture at once outweighs and is undermined by religion. These complicated relationships

between religion, politics, and individuality are not solved by the realization, or even the possibility, of a utopian ideal but are instead forced into bolder relief. This tension is most explicitly worked out in what is arguably the sole Scottish utopian novel to be critically ranked with *1984* and *Brave New World*, Neil M. Gunn's *The Green Isle of the Great Deep*.

Perhaps providing a template for *Lanark*, *Green Isle* opens with Young Art and Old Hector, characters from Gunn's earlier realistic novel of that name, drowning in a Highland river and waking up in the Green Isle, a "Paradise" in which they first shelter under the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil."⁶⁸ Led by the wayward Art, the pair deviates from the island's rules, eating a reputedly poisonous fruit that provides them with knowledge, sleeping out-of-doors, and speaking to strangers in a culture that is suspicious of friendship. Art and Hector, that is, enter into what they believe to be a paradise and attempt to treat it as such; for this they are punished by the bureaucratic authority of the island. The fruit itself has been forbidden, as the farmer Robert explains, "so that man would be restored to his original innocence, so that he would be without blemish, so that he would be the perfect worker, so that he would do all the things he was told to do, so that perpetual order would reign everywhere."⁶⁹ A place that initially appears to be both arcadia and utopia is revealed to be corrupt not on the basis of its visible failings, for it is in many ways an ideal society, but in its denial of individual freedom. Like Banks's *Culture*, Gunn's *Green Isle* is a perfect utopian society that only succeeds as such if its controlling mechanisms are ignored.

Francis Russell Hart terms *Green Isle* an "antiutopian satire" for its depiction of a "rigid pseudo-intellectualism" that crushes individual freedom,⁷⁰ but this is not quite accurate. Instead, Gunn offers up a society that is indeed utopian in the strict sense, a land that can properly only be called a paradise, in order to demonstrate that such a paradise is not an environment in which humans can be happy. Utopia can be realized, but its costs are too high: it is far better to live in a modern society marked by the Clearances and concentration camps and retain individual freedom than to submit to a utopia in which that freedom is relinquished.⁷¹ As Art's conversation with his sister in *Young Art and Old Hector* (1942) has it:

"I don't think," said Art, after a thoughtful moment, "that Nowhere is a nice place. Do you?"

“I don’t,” replied Morag. “I would rather be somewhere any day.”⁷²

Nowhere, the distant and imagined paradise, may hold many possibilities, especially in the mind of a young boy, but it pales in comparison to everyday reality, whatever the hardships of the latter might be.

Richard Price takes pains to counter the novelist Naomi Mitchison’s early assessment that *Green Isle* is anti-communist; instead, he argues, the novel’s target is “the dehumanising centralised bureaucracy which manages the mass as if ‘the mass’ were more important than the individuals of which it is constituted.”⁷³ Yet Gunn is equally critical of the mind state that allows such domination to take place; it is not only the bureaucracy that is to blame but also those who have allowed it to govern their lives, creating a world in which, as Alistair McCleery states, “the desire for knowledge has obliterated wisdom.”⁷⁴ The inhabitants of the Green Isle have embraced rationality, yet “in the mind no longer susceptible to myth, logic takes myth’s place. And just as with myth, so with logic there is no final certainty.”⁷⁵ The triumph of utopia is ultimately illusory precisely because its basis in logic and rationality is not superior to the myth and faith found elsewhere. As Price has pointed out, in reference to Gunn’s nationalism, for Gunn a “Golden Age” lies not in a return to myth or to historical arcadia, or in a perfected future, but in individual sensibility; such an age would symbolize “a synthesis of individualism, community values, tradition, and the challenge of the modern.”⁷⁶

Green Isle is thus not the utopia it appears to be, for in denying myth and tradition it also denies individualism. The individualism that would provide a true utopia is founded not on opposition but on cooperation. As Gunn writes in his autobiography, equality comes from “that independence which being independence on oneself was not directed against any other but, on the contrary, respected a similar independence in all others.”⁷⁷ Green Isle contains a community of equals, to be sure, but it is a false equality, based not in shared myth or history but in equal domination. In an essay written three years before *Green Isle*, Gunn makes his position explicit:

The ideal is no longer the unity of the individual but the unity of the herd, and advanced thinkers are already contemplating the emergence of a new kind of consciousness,

a corporate consciousness of the herd. Well, we must take our stand somewhere, and for me, quite simply, all this is the great modern heresy. It is an implicit denial of the freedom of the adventuring individual spirit; ideally it is an effort, in time of great difficulty and danger, amid a destructive welter of conflicting ideas, to round man up and drive him back into a state of stable security, such as the security of the beehive, with its perfect economic efficiency and corporate consciousness.⁷⁸

For Gunn, this “unity of the herd” must be fought by the individual. In a text written in 1941, this seems to be a meditation on communism and fascism. However, as Gunn makes clear, the divide between the herd and the individual is not political but, rather, can be seen in terms of the natural world.

“Corporate consciousness” can be overcome, Gunn argues, “only by [the individual’s] standing on his two feet and looking at a thing, at a leaf, a bird, at a new thought, and realising what is taking place in this calm moment of well-being.”⁷⁹ In *Green Isle*, this individual adventuring spirit, as shown in moments of interaction with the natural world, is represented by Art, whose defiance of the community’s rules is represented as a myth. Like Dougal in Gunn’s novel *The Serpent* (1943), Art uses the “religion of the individual” to guard himself “against creeds and the existing economic system in which he did not believe.”⁸⁰ Yet it is Old Hector who finally must argue his case, first before a Dostoyevskian Questioner and then before God himself.

Unlike the God or gods discussed above, Gunn’s God in *Green Isle* is articulate, embodied, and omnipotent; while he has left his paradise to govern itself, he is still able to make himself manifest in order to discuss the nature of life with an elderly peasant. He is, as McCleery points out, a reflection of Hector himself, sharing the same language and mannerisms, even “the face of someone he [Hector] had seen long long ago in a tall mirror at the end of a landing in a forgotten house.”⁸¹ Together, God and Hector develop the idea for a council of wise men who will oversee the bureaucrats, and behind them will be Wisdom itself, a Wisdom that represents both God and the land, tradition and community, and individual determination and myth. *Green Isle* is revealed to be imperfect because it has founded itself as

if universal wisdom is not necessary, yet the paradise requires this wisdom to survive: "This Wisdom haunted man. That was its awful potency, its strange and elusive delight. Man might get power in the head and destroy without measure, but the Wisdom would haunt and draw him."⁸²

Even as the formation of this council appears to propose a new direction for utopia, however, it is not a utopia in which Hector will take a part. Offered the chance to remain on the Green Isle and serve on the council, Hector requests instead to be reunited with his wife. God, in the character of the Starter, who has appeared briefly earlier in the novel, then takes Hector and Art back to the river, and they are returned to present-day Scotland. If utopia offers the opportunity to speak directly with God, it remains a place in which the true individual cannot reside; it is best left not experienced but only watched "on the screen of the mind."⁸³

Gunn thus uses his utopian fantasy to expound a certain form of what Vattimo calls "archaism," where "not only is myth not a primitive phase superseded by our own cultural history, it is in fact a more authentic form of knowledge, untouched by the devastating fanaticism for quantification and objectification characteristic of modern science, technology and capitalism. From the renewed contact with myth . . . there arises an expectation of a possible release from the distortions and contractions of the present techno-scientific civilization."⁸⁴ Hector's ability to live as an individual in the present is strengthened by his direct experience with utopian myth. Gunn uses God to articulate these ideas not because God is divine or a worthy object of religious devotion but because he represents what is "beyond reason's reach."⁸⁵

Green Isle is neither an advocacy of a naive return to a mythical past nor a dystopia showing the dangers of progress. Instead, it fits into the grander scheme of Gunn's fiction, which offers a vision of a modernity in which myth and tradition are held close, not in defiance of the present but in conjunction with it. For Gunn, it is only an embrace of myth as a necessary superstructure that permits individual freedom. While Gunn's God is far more cogent and powerful than Gray's, displaying an interest not only in his own acts of creation but in the things created as well, he does not serve as an inspiration for a particular style of devotion. God appears in both *Lanark* and *Green Isle* not as a figure to whom the individual human must be subservient

but as a figure who speaks to the triumph of individualism. God must appear in order that he can confirm the right to individual determination. As Ernst Bloch writes: "God must exit the stage (for, we would add, he does not exist, but may only be valid; there shall be nothing but God), but a spectator he must still remain: as this is the only kind of piety still possible, it is also the historical, the utopian possibility for tragic ages, epochs without a heaven."⁸⁶

The four authors discussed above all use variants of the utopian form to, in George Steiner's phrase, "explore the void, the blank freedom which come of the retraction . . . of the messianic and the divine."⁸⁷ Their novels do not advocate, in a strict sense, either religious freedom or freedom from religion. Instead, they posit worlds in which God can be known, through his manifest appearance, yet in which he remains something other than completely divine or transcendent. For Neil M. Gunn and Robin Jenkins, the experience of God gives rise to individual freedom in opposition to traditional forms of religious observation. For Alasdair Gray and Iain Banks, the experience of God is more convoluted still: the power of God or gods is not complete but must be accepted or rejected according to individual desire. Yet, in all of these novels, it is the utopian form that permits such a discussion.

As Eric Linklater writes in *The Dark of Summer* (1956), it is when time is thought of as a stream not from the past but from the future that the role of the individual can fully be seen: "Now I see time as a river rising in the future, and like—but contrary to—the lordly fish that swim from the light of the sea to the darkness of their spawning-grounds, we may swim upstream from darkness towards the light of its undiscovered source. No compulsion leads us by the nose, but free will permits the choice."⁸⁸ Only in proposing a world that breaks free of the constraints of temporality can the presence or absence of God be truthfully examined, and only by looking to the future can individual determinism be fully recognized. The focus on religious experience in these novels ties them to a long tradition of Scottish fiction that questions the relationship between community, the individual, and God. At the same time, however, the examination of these themes within a utopian paradigm ties these novels to broader questions of the role of religion in a postmodern, secular culture. For each of the authors discussed above, the utopian form allows discussion of issues of individual conscience,

free will, and the resurgence of myth that are central to any imagining of Scottish modernity.

Endnotes

1. Isaiah Berlin, *Roots of Romanticism*, ed. Henry Hardy (1999; London: Pimlico, 2000), 22.

2. Frederic Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005), 36.

3. Cairns Craig, *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and British Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 37.

4. While the Highlands are initially depicted as dirty in Hamilton's novel, and the Highlanders as lazy, Scotland's distance from mainstream society is exactly what makes it a perfect place to institute new social and religious practices. For a detailed account of utopian aspects of Hamilton's earlier *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800), as well as anti-Jacobin novels more generally, see April London, "Clock Time and Utopia's Time in Novels of the 1790s," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 40, no. 3 (2000): 539–60. See also Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), especially chap. 3, for an account of the way the national tale in Scotland was an attempt by female authors to address issues of cultural distinctiveness and the relationship between the nation and history. Scotland, in early versions of the national tale, is a place where history cannot be assumed but is constantly called into question.

5. J. Leslie Mitchell, *Gay Hunter* (1934; Edinburgh: Polygon, 1989), 13.

6. Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, 284.

7. Phillip Wegner, *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 20.

8. Craig, *Out of History*, 58.

9. Eric Linklater, *Magnus Merriman* (1934; Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1990), 13.

10. *Ibid.*, 299.

11. Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 33.

12. Sanford Kessler, "Religious Freedom in Thomas More's *Utopia*," *Review of Politics* 64, no. 2 (2002): 207–29, at 207–8.
13. Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, 37.
14. Nicholas Brown, *Utopian Generations: The Political Horizon of Twentieth-Century Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 23.
15. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 768. See also, however, Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800–2000* (London: Routledge, 2001), especially chaps. 1 and 8.
16. Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, 191.
17. Alasdair Gray, *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (1981; London: Paladin, 1987), 354.
18. Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, xii.
19. Cairns Craig, "Going Down to Hell Is Easy: *Lanark*, Realism, and the Limits of the Imagination," in *The Arts of Alasdair Gray*, ed. Robert Crawford and Thom Nairn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 90–107, at 104.
20. Gavin Miller, *Alasdair Gray: The Fiction of Communion* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 53, 110.
21. Gray, *Lanark*, 480–81.
22. Alan McMunnigall, "Alasdair Gray and Postmodernism," *Studies in Scottish Literature* 33–34 (2004): 335–48, at 340.
23. Indeed, if *Lanark*'s belief at the start of the novel that his name was "a short word starting with *Th* or *Gr*" (Gray, *Lanark*, 20) is taken seriously, the epilogue can be read as both God speaking with his creation and Gray's conversation with himself.
24. Gray, *Lanark*, 495.
25. Craig, "Going Down to Hell Is Easy," 90.
26. Gray, *Lanark*, 485.
27. *Ibid.*, 183.
28. *Ibid.*, 296–97.
29. *Ibid.*, 80.
30. *Ibid.*, 330.
31. *Ibid.*, 468–69.
32. Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia* (1923), trans. Anthony A. Nassar (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 145. A similar portrayal

of God, or a Godlike being, as sound can be found in Andrew Crumey's novel *Sputnik Caledonia*, where the protagonist, journeying into space from a Russian-controlled Scotland, hears "the voice of the Red Star," at once an astronomical body and an image of the divine (*Sputnik Caledonia* [London: Picador, 2008], 421).

33. Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*, 158.

34. Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (1833–34), ed. Kerry McSweeney and Peter Sabor (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1999), 141.

35. Gray, *Lanark*, 498.

36. *Ibid.*, 527.

37. *Ibid.*, 560.

38. Linklater, *Magnus Merriman*, 308.

39. David Lindsay, *A Voyage to Arcturus* (1920; London: Gollancz, 2003), 42.

40. *Ibid.*, 280.

41. Alasdair Gray, *1982, Janine* (1984; Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 2003), 60.

42. *Ibid.*, 123.

43. *Ibid.*, 169–71.

44. *Ibid.*, 330.

45. *Ibid.*, 304.

46. Gianni Vattimo, *The Transparent Society*, trans. David Webb (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 40.

47. Robin Jenkins, *The Missionaries* (1957; Edinburgh: Polygon, 2005), 1.

48. *Ibid.*, 58.

49. *Ibid.*, 115.

50. *Ibid.*, 187.

51. *Ibid.*, 220.

52. Glenda Norquay, "Four Novelists of the 1950s and 1960s," in *The History of Scottish Literature, vol. 4: Twentieth Century*, ed. Cairns Craig (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), 259–76, at 271.

53. Richard Halpern, *The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation: English Renaissance Culture and the Genealogy of Capital* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 155. While, as many critics have noted, the Utopians do happily convert to Christianity once it is introduced, Thomas More

is careful to articulate that this is not because Christianity has any special merits but, instead, because the Utopians appreciate that “Christ approved of his followers’ communal way of life” (*Utopia* [1516], rev. ed., ed. George M. Logan and Robert M. Adams [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], 93). Christianity is presented in More’s text primarily as a celebration of a community on the outskirts of society not, in the end, unlike McInver’s community in *The Missionaries*.

54. Jenkins, *The Missionaries*, 229.

55. Jean-Luc Nancy, “Of Divine Places,” trans. Michael Holland, in *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 110–50, at 124.

56. Jenkins, *The Missionaries*, 88, 109.

57. *Ibid.*, 94.

58. Ian M. Banks, *Consider Phlebas* (1987; London: Orbit, 1988), 29.

59. *Ibid.*, 87.

60. Simon Guerrier, “Culture Theory: Iain M. Banks’s ‘Culture’ as Utopia,” *Foundation* 28, no. 76 (1999): 28–38, at 31.

61. Ian M. Banks, *Excession* (1996; London: Orbit, 1997), 82.

62. Ian M. Banks, *Matter* (London: Orbit, 2008), 68.

63. Banks, *Consider Phlebas*, 482.

64. James Robertson, “Bridging Styles: A Conversation With Iain Banks,” *Radical Scotland* 42 (1990): 26–27, at 27.

65. Gray, *Lanark*, 505.

66. Banks, *Consider Phlebas*, 87.

67. *Ibid.*, 265.

68. Neil Gunn, *The Green Isle of the Great Deep* (1944; Edinburgh: Polygon, 2006), 28, 27.

69. *Ibid.*, 93.

70. Francis Russell Hart, *The Scottish Novel: A Critical Survey* (London: John Murray, 1978), 361.

71. Old Hector’s lifetime includes both events, making him, as Richard Price points out, well over 150 years old if the novel’s chronology is taken literally.

72. Neil M. Gunn, *Young Art and Old Hector* (1942; London: Souvenir Press, 1976), 111.

73. Richard Price, *The Fabulous Matter of Fact: The Poetics of Neil M. Gunn* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 105.

74. Alistair McCleery, "The Genesis of *The Green Isle of the Great Deep*," *Studies in Scottish Literature* 22 (1987): 157–72, at 169.

75. Gunn, *The Green Isle of the Great Deep*, 135.

76. Price, *The Fabulous Matter of Fact*, 93.

77. Neil M. Gunn, *The Atom of Delight* (1956; Edinburgh: Polygon, 1993), 94.

78. Neil M. Gunn, "Memories of the Months: A Balance Sheet" (1941), in *The Man Who Came Back: Short Stories and Essays*, ed. Margery McCulloch (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991), 85–90, at 86.

79. Ibid.

80. Neil M. Gunn, *The Serpent* (1943; Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1997), 8–9.

81. Gunn, *The Green Isle of the Great Deep*, 253.

82. Ibid., 259.

83. Ibid., 258.

84. Vattimo, *The Transparent Society*, 32–33.

85. Gunn, *The Atom of Delight*, 128.

86. Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*, 219.

87. Georg Steiner, *Real Presences* (1989; London: Faber, 1991), 229.

88. Eric Linklater, *The Dark of Summer* (1956; Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1999), 231.