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‘Daughter of an Outcast Queen’ – Defying State
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Abstract

This essay considers Jenni Fagan’s *The Panopticon* (2012) as a contemporary Scottish gothic novel that unearths and depicts the systematic demonisation and dehumanisation of characters, such as vulnerable children in care. The constant policing, surveillance and erasure of such others is compared metaphorically with the Scottish nation and its historically uneasy relationship with Anglocentric hegemony. The text liberates its protagonist, Anais Hendricks, from state ‘soul-stealers’ (p. 255), so that she can maintain an identity out-with cartographic power structures. A link can be made between this personal narrative and the wider national story: the orphan Anais’s defiance of state expectations extends to an interrogation and resistance of the stateless nation’s discursive dominance. Instead of accepting the status quo, there is an urgency to seek alternative ways to respond to the neoliberal malaise of contemporary British society from the perspective of post-referendum Scotland. For Fagan, autonomy from repressive authority is enhanced with a relationship that nurtures our link to the outside landscape rather than the simulacra of society and, by curatively embracing an outdoor Scottish gothic, Anais becomes truly a child of her home nation. Her *bildung* journey to escape the care system can, in turn, be read as Scotland’s socio-political relocation towards an ethical alternative to Anglocentric neoliberalism.

Jenni Fagan’s *The Panopticon* (2012) is a contemporary Scottish gothic tale that portrays the experience of a teenage girl’s journey through the care system as a struggle to maintain her own selfhood against the destructive forces of state control. To keep hold of one’s identity becomes an embattled protest against hegemonic norms that attempt to define and control the

subject through constant observation. Rather than allow herself to succumb to state interpellation, Anais Hendricks, a socially marginalised Scottish fifteen-year-old orphan in care, is determined not to ‘disappear’¹ under the weight of the state’s controlling and defining stare, despite her uncertainty regarding her culpability of putting a police officer in a coma. As the text’s narrator, Anais defiantly refocuses the dominant gaze so that it is exchanged for a marginalised perspective which, in turn, offers the reader an alternative outlook that re-centres those ordinarily rendered invisible in society. She will not allow them to have the final say on her life, to claim it as their own; ‘*They* cannae have this soul. They have taken everything else and it’s the only thing left that I own’ (296), and she refers to the state or ‘the experiment’ throughout the narrative, as ‘soul-stealers’ (255). To allow society in is to sell your soul and Anais is convinced that she is the product of a devilish social experiment that ultimately sets her up to fail. Her powers of observation cogently deduce that the soul signifies an individual’s core ontological being outwith the strictures of social conditioning and confinement and, as such, she must vigilantly protect it. Similarly, in his discussion of Michel Foucault’s metaphor of the panopticon state, Thomas Mathiesen posits that ‘Foucault’s thesis’ is ‘the control of the “soul”’.² Fagan’s protagonist is alert to an institutional panopticism of soul sucking predicated upon a system of power that removes individuality in favour of manageable cogs.

While she has the recurring fear of gothic faceless men in wide-brim hats hiding behind the observation window of The Panopticon care unit’s watchtower, lest we dismiss this as a drug-induced paranoia, it is worth remembering that she makes a very astute political and philosophical point about contemporary society. According to Foucault, ‘the Panopticon was also a laboratory; it could be used as a machine to carry out experiments, to alter behaviour, to train or correct individuals’.³ Anais’s Foucauldian insight concludes that ‘This is *all* an experiment gone wrong, every single one of us, just wonky as fuck [. . .] we’re all just wandering about with no fucking idea what the universe is’ (251). Fagan’s Scottish gothic writing unearths that which society renders invisible, focussing upon the care system from the perspective of someone within that system, rather than the Anglocentric hegemonic positioning of those outside of its parameters and, by doing so, she is also offering a socio-political comment upon the simulated reality of social conditioning. According to Anais, one’s reality is reconfigured to suit

a matrix of power that is manipulated, regulated and controlled. She, however, refuses to be bent into shape by an alien uncaring system implemented by a gothic English night-nurse who serves as a trope for the containment of Scotland, as is argued later in the essay.

Anais's *bildung* awakening resistance to Foucauldian 'cartographies of power'⁴ can be read as symptomatic of post-devolution Scotland's journey towards cosmopolitical autonomy. Regardless of September 2014's referendum result, the Yes campaign's mobilised momentum is nevertheless a powerful defiance of neoliberal panoptical power that has reinvigorated a politics of the people which can be regarded as an active citizenship 'of cosmopolitanism from below'.⁵ Historically watched for any signs of rebellious civil disobedience, Scotland has remained contained within yet outside of Anglo-hegemony, much like Anais's state of dispossession. While neoliberalism is obviously an aspect of globalisation rather than a phenomenon peculiar to England, under the auspices of Thatcherism it has nevertheless fuelled the Westminster Establishment while Scotland's post-referendum discussions appear to be focused upon more ethical and socialist-leaning principles. With neoliberalism, 'Deregulation, privatisation, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision have been all too common',⁶ and it is a pertinent example of what Anais identifies as the state experiment imposed upon ordinary citizens from above and hegemonically promoted as democratic civilisation. Scotland, however, is attempting to stem the tide with a halt on council house sales and the attempts to prioritise rather than privatise the NHS. According to Tom Devine, this collective social conscience rather than aggressive entrepreneurial individualism is a Scottish cultural facet that heightened with the onslaught of Thatcherism's jingoistic sense of Britishness.⁷ As a vulnerable child in care, Anais is drawing attention to the alienating effects of a society predicated upon aggressive individualism and wealth rather than ethical responsibility.

By revealing the murky social underbelly of prostitution (including child prostitution), rape, murder and drug abuse, this often described type of gritty realism pivots around the child's journey through the care system. One immediately thinks of Charles Dickens's Fagin in *Oliver Twist* (1838), as the novel rings out with a plea for the unwanted and unseen in society, just as Tom Shone writing in the *New York Times* notes that she has 'a name that calls to mind the patron saint of literary street urchins'.⁸ The preoccupation with the social abject has led to many comparisons for Fagin

with Irvine Welsh's fiction and, for Shone, 'What we have here is a fine example of Caledonian grunge [. . .] leaving terrified book reviewers with no option but to find them "gritty" or "authentic"'.⁹ While there are autobiographical elements of authenticity paralleling author and narrator, it remains an imagined invention, since Fagan, although a product of the care system, has transcended its trappings and become a successful writer, so inverting the statistical story and creating an alternative outcome for herself. Also, *The Panopticon* is not straightforwardly realist but, instead, draws upon the gothic element that is familiar in Scottish literary history, as well as filtering the narrative through teenage drug-hallucinations and imaginative flights on Malcolm, the flying cat statue situated in the grounds of The Panopticon.

As a vulnerable child trapped within the care system, Anais and her peers have experienced the predatory danger that menacingly lurks within society like a gothic bogeyman. Isla (she and her twin children have HIV/AIDS, another historically demonised gothic monster), a fellow teenager in care says, 'There's soul-stealers out there, Anais. My old man's like that, even before the Aids, he'd sell my mum. He once sold her tae the guy upstairs. He would have sold me; that's why she wanted me in care, it's safer' (p. 255). For Fagan, a panopticon society is predicated upon a binary system of self/other that exploits and dehumanises others to set them apart, thus perpetuating an underclass of criminality, such as drug addicts and prostitutes. Fagan's text focuses upon those at the bottom, for whom the social ladder has been kicked away, where a 'social climber' (91) is restricted to the likes of Shortie's (another child in care) engagement in fights to feel valued. Crucially, though, Anais does not fit the constructed label of such lost children: she resists their attempts to craft her into that mould and disappoints her social worker, who 'really didnae like [. . .] that I wouldnae stick tae the uniform. No hair extensions, no tracksuits, no gold jewellery [. . .] She wanted a case that was more rough-looking' (185). Despite her juvenile delinquency, Anais's vintage 'old-school' (140) attire and taste in music anachronistically disrupts stereotypical signification and shapes an alternative identity. She also presents an articulate narrative interspersed with Edinburgh dialect that defies Anglocentric conformity, demonstrating a well-read and critical ability to interrogate rather than passively comply with discursive authority's power.

Fagan's chosen epigraphs links Anais's contemporary situation with his-

torical outcasts; 'Sometimes I feel like a motherless child' is taken, we are informed, from a US folk song from the 1870s – the song outlines the fate of the children of slaves, who are themselves sold into slavery and thus separated from their families. The other quote is from Oscar Wilde, outcast through his Irishness and homosexuality, and eventually incarcerated in prison, subject to state expectations. From the outset, then, Fagan's text is associating itself with oppression and suffering in aligning itself with outcasts. Anachronistic Anais (the first part of her name, Ana, chronologically disrupts dominant norms) is almost a product of a Victorian panopticon care-system. In other words, she is at odds with the society which she is a part of, but very much apart from insofar as she is a social outsider and a reminder that history is uncannily repetitive. Anais also sounds like 'a nay' or a nothing, which is the image of her depicted by society. Yet, it contradictorily sounds like 'I know', again in the Scots tongue, and that knowing equips her with an ability (she is an A grade student when she bothers to attend school) to question the system. In her attempt to break out of a cycle of institutional care and systematic abuse, Anais impinges upon the life of the reader, who is no longer comfortably able to retain society's waifs and strays at a safe distance, just as, for instance, Ali Smith's work focuses on the likes of homeless Else (*Hotel World*, 2001) within our field of vision. Fagan's gothic narrative returns the hidden poor child to view who, since Victorian times, society has repressed to avoid bearing responsibility for mythopoetic childhood's uncanny doppelgänger.

Her defiance of state expectations is Anais's strength of character throughout the text, which ultimately allows her to critique the system and strive for an alternative outcome to her narrative from her interpellated subject position. When she and her support worker, Angus (one of the few humane carers that she has ever encountered) attend the children's panel hearing, unsurprisingly the chairwoman's 'mind is [already] made up' and she retorts: 'It is my opinion, Miss Hendricks, that you are going to re-offend. Once you have done so, you will go into a secure unit' and, ultimately, 'spend your adult life in prison, which is exactly where you belong, because you, Miss Hendricks, present a considerable danger both to yourself and to *all* of society' (176). The repetitive use of Anais's surname reflects the impersonal weight of the state, intent on maintaining a scapegoat to maintain the social status quo. The danger of such discursive positioning is encapsulated in Angus's empathetic defence: 'This is ludicrous, you cannae

say things like that tae a kid. I've a mind tae fucking report you!' (176). His counter-narrative crucially remedies this impressionable child's full internalisation of the chairwoman's tirade, assuring her 'you've got something! I'm telling you. I've met a thousand kids in homes, and you're different [. . .] You could be somebody [. . .] You're a clever girl, Anais' (179). While he recognises her potential, the system of power subjects her to systematic scrutiny and condemnation, only interested in punishing rather than helping her in order to protect and preserve that power. To emphasise the interconnectivity between ideological and repressive state apparatuses in mechanistically confining a subject, the narrator reveals knowledge that the Chairwoman's 'brother-in-law' is 'in the police' (178). She is not, then, an objective observer, but maintains a vested interest in ridding society of any threat to that apparatus, since Anais is suspected of attacking PC Dawn Craig. Aided by Angus's counter-perspective, Anais sees them as a 'Stupid panel [. . .] and ignorant. They would never fit in, in Paris' (178), recognising that they lack any intellectual or humanitarian skills and are simply faceless bureaucrats who unquestioningly reinforce the status quo of state power by keeping those outside of it perpetually disenfranchised.

This binary entrapment of the social other is a phenomenon of historical development, as the name of the care unit pays testament to, and argued in Foucault's thesis of nineteenth century state surveillance. Upon her arrival at The Panopticon, Anais remembers her history teacher and speculates, 'I bet there's petitions to close this place down already [. . .] Mr Masters is right. He told us all about it in history – communities dinnae like no-ones' (6). Those subjected to discourses of otherness are often feared and despised, while so-called respectable society wishes to have them locked away from sight; NIMBYs resent the care unit, despite its location in a remote rural part of Midlothian: 'They're worried we'll fuck their children. Contaminate the bloodline' (63). Discourses of Victorian social-Darwinism are alive and kicking as the perceived threat to the social fabric continues to be monitored and policed. The narrator recognises her commonality with historical outcasts, pushed to the social peripheries and discarded, particularly as a female, for, 'Mr Masters said, in the old days, if a woman didnae have a husband or a family but she still did okay, people didnae like that. If there wasnae a male authority figure tae say she was godly – then they thought she was weak for the devil' (6). Historically, Woman, particularly the spinster, has been excluded from social authority, her destiny subject to

phallocratic inscription and her success checked, so 'if her crops were doing well [. . .] or she wasnae scared tae answer back? Fucking witch. Prick it, poke it, peel its fingernails off and burn it in the square for the whole town to see' (6). Similarly, state responsibility for this minor only concerns her removal from polite circles: 'They've wanted me banged up away from town and their stations, for how long? They think if they put me far enough away then I cannae get in trouble' (7). In an uncanny imbrication of past and present in the text, she recognises her outsider status and has an affinity with her historical peers, linking the burning of witches with her current predicament, while announcing that she is 'Pagan. Three-parts witch, white obviously – well, sort of!' (17). According to Angela Wright, 'Scottish Gothic debates the process of uncovering histories' in a 'careful excavation of Scotland's past'.¹⁰ *The Panopticon* as Scottish gothic fiction similarly disrupts the division of past and present to disclose a demonised suffering haunting the margins of society that has been ongoing since the implementation of surveillance mechanisms and the discursive control of others, including a marginalised Scottish nation.

Fagan's text, then, widens the discussion of Anais's personal plight to that of the nation's otherness within a nineteenth century panoptical system that strove to cast a divided Scotland as an unnatural menace plaguing an uneasy Union. Like the rootless orphan of *The Panopticon*, Scotland can be regarded as a nation in the care home of Anglocentric authority but statelessly craving a caring national home. Gothic tropes of doubleness and division litter the likes of Stevenson's and Hogg's texts that have often been regarded as a response to Scotland's fractured state, and *The Panopticon* returns to this literary heritage as a means of exploring contemporary issues that spectrally inhabit the social peripheries. As the double of normative childhood, Fagan deliberately associates her teenage tearaway with monstrous gothic otherness, including the queer association of spinsters and witches ('the lesbian resembles the witch in both her exclusion from mainstream society and the threat she poses to hetero-patriarchal values and conventional models of femininity').¹¹ Soon after Anais thinks about the historical plight of women, one of the girls in *The Panopticon* 'whistles, long and low' at Anais and, when the heteronormative policeman chastises her, the response is queerly defiant: 'I wasnae whistling at you, pal [. . .] we meant the hot one!' (8). Throughout the text Anais aligns herself with witches and arrives at *The Panopticon* in October, before Halloween,

accentuating the link between character and gothic setting, as well as emphasising that, like her historical predecessors, she is being subjected to a witch hunt. By informing the present through past events, it is a reminder of the historical plight of women, doubly marginalised within Scotland's otherness, particularly the queer Scottish gothic female figure of the witch.

The other gothic figure intertextualised through this affinity with historical scapegoats is Magwitch in Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861), who is similarly subjected to state expectations. His name, almost a fusion of mage and witch, suggests a creative disruption and challenge to his interpellation as 'A warmint, dear boy'.¹² Like Magwitch, Anais is shaped by society into a suitable scapegoat, thus allowing it to turn a blind eye and feel superior to its disposable monstrous element. As with Magwitch, who initially stole as a child because of hunger and is thereafter criminalised, Anais's internalised criminality starts from a young age – she remembers back to making a child cry when she was in primary one who, in turn, 'told everyone I was evil and they believed her' (257). Labelled evil from early childhood, Anais starts to internalise and fulfil her identity as social menace: 'Truth of it is I'm mental, or I'm gonnæ be mental. Maybe I should just say it. I'm Anais Hendricks and I'm mental in the head [. . .] They should just lock me away. Stick a needle in my vein. Fry it all out [. . .] They think I'm scummy as fuck, maybe I am?' (112). Or, earlier in the novel, 'Probably there is something fundamentally wrong with me [. . .] Why do I think thoughts like that, unless I'm bad? [. . .] I'm rotten. There's something wrong with me' (70–71).

As with Louis Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses, through the discursive hegemony and conditioning of the care system, the education system, her peers, the police and social work, Anais has been interpellated into the subject position of criminalised other and feels the need to confess this internalised guilt in her narrative to confirm state expectations. Her affinity with Victorian subjects of discursive scrutiny is affirmed when she touches the wall of The Panopticon's watchtower 'and it's like going back in time, like this building has always been here and it doesnae care' (267). While mourning the death of Isla, who commits suicide after the disappearance and likely murder of her prostitute girlfriend Tash, Anais recognises that, as a state institution, it fails to empathise with the suffering of those individuals housed within its gothic walls. Simultaneously, though,

she understands her connectedness to the linked history of those marginalised lives, written off by society but included in her narrative to emphasise that, ultimately, history keeps uncannily repeating itself by discarding its most vulnerable citizens. When their carers take the children for a day out for a boating trip in the Highlands, Anais considers 'Imagine what's down there in that loch [. . .] Some dead witch' (195). Again, she anachronistically reaches back through time to consider those victims of sinister state expectations and, by association, the reader recognises that Anais's contemporary peers will, quite likely, become statistical casualties of the 'soul-stealers' (255) because 'They hate. You. Me. Everyone really' (122–23) and 'What they really want is me dead' (23).

Immediately preceding the demise of Tash and Isla, the narrative's excursion to the Highlands offers a pastoral interlude for this 'wee band of outsiders' (216) which serves as a pivotal moment of hope outwith the dehumanising judgement of an uncaring world. Indeed, throughout the narrative a powerful association exists between Anais (who asserts her Pagan witch credentials) and nature, signalling something other than the hyper-reality of the panopticon society. Examples include, 'The sky is azure' (14), 'D'ye know what I love? [. . .] The clouds, and the stars, and the grass' (48), and 'The skies are blue today, but it's blustery, autumn's well settled in already' (66). A vegetarian, she feels connected to the environment and there are multiple references to the stars throughout the novel, emphasising that the narrator's orphan origins are linked to a world beyond social definitions. With a transient non-familial lifestyle, moved to 'Fifty-one placements' (185), it becomes impossible for her to belong. So, 'I keep all sorts of shit in this bush, it's my only permanent chest of drawers' (42); her family roots are replaced with the nation's roots as this social outsider finds succour in the Scottish exterior landscape, much like E. M. Forster's homosexual refuge of the Greenwood offers an escape from being criminalised in *Maurice* (1971). During the aforementioned outing, Anais appreciates that 'I never knew I liked to be outside so much. I never knew I liked lochs and views and that, but I could seriously handle living in a cottage by the side of somewhere like this' (196). Thus, one of the pivotal binary structures of the text is between society and nature; despite being set around the bleakness of social care and the panopticon state, the natural world curatively intercedes. Her awareness of that other world allows Anais an insight into the fictionality of so-called reality:

I dinnae trust social workers [. . .] I'm a bit unconvinced by reality, full stop. It's fundamentally lacking in something, and nobody seems bothered [. . .] We live, we die, we do shit in between, the world is fucked up with murder, and hate, and stupidity; and all the time this infinite universe surrounds us, and everyone pretends it's not there. (100)

Ontologically connected to Scotland's countryside and the cosmos, Anais resists the hegemonic discourses of contemporary society and seeks to uncover our insignificance and self-delusion, which is constantly masqueraded and shaped by simulacra. Despite society scapegoating her as an uncanny or other child, Anais's environmental association disrupts and reconfigures Romantic discursive links between childhood innocence and nature. A parallel can be drawn with historically gothic depictions of Scotland's landscape as queer or other in eighteenth and nineteenth century literature: a threateningly unwelcome foreign and hostile space.¹³ Yet, in Fagan's contemporary Scottish gothic, the landscape becomes a pastoral haven that connects Anais to an environment far more homely than the *unheimlich* care system, so rescuing and relocating Scotland's landscape from alterity within a fiction that recognises the gothic menace to be Anglo-centric social hegemony.

The group of girls break away from the boys and find a secluded island, and during their time there Shortie performs a pagan mock wedding ceremony between Isla and Tash. Though mock in the eyes of grand narratives, it is a heartfelt and real union of love. This pastoral interlude allows for a perfect moment of happiness for these outcast characters before the weight of an uncaring society bears down upon them again. The symbolism of the island, (Isla is a derivative of Island), the flowers, and the female camaraderie offer refuge to their vulnerabilities within heteropatriarchal society. But the language elucidates that it can only ever be a short lived ideal moment in time: 'This is the last nice day; they say winter's gonnae arrive tomorrow, and that's that' (202). Meteorologically, Anais is observing the seasonal shift from autumn to winter but, symbolically, the turn towards winter suggests a death of this innocence and joy towards something gothically traumatic and sinister. The marriage vow of 'Till death do us part' (209) exchanged between Tash and Isla chillingly reverberates later in the text when Tash goes missing after being picked up by a client, and Isla

commits suicide knowing her wife is dead. Notably, in relation to nature, the loving, positive relationship that Anais shared with her previous girlfriend Hayley is testament to its power beyond the confines of social judgement. Hayley, meaning clearing or meadow of hay, signifies Anais's true love of nature emphasised as a lesbian bond.

Being in care signifies to a child that they are outside of normative society and childhood, and that their life will continue on a downward spiral: 'We're just in training for the proper jail [. . .] That or on the game [. . .] Some go to the nuthouse. Some just disappear' (8). Even the minibus that transports them on excursions ensures that they are singled out from the herd; like a stigmata, it has '*Midlothian Social Work Department* emblazoned across it. It's that and the young-offenders aura. A children-in-care aura' (193). The ever-pervasive social gaze is prevalent throughout the text. Riding in the police car on her way to The Panopticon, Anais narrates, 'The policeman stares at me in the rear-view mirror' (3). The mirror and the gaze function to frame her as an outcast so that she avoids her reflection whenever possible. The night-nurse, a shadowy gothic figure who haunts the watchtower, heightens feelings of internalised guilt: Anais is exposed under her gaze: 'The woman sees everything. She sees what you had for breakfast and the kid you punched in primary school. She sees the first thing you ever stole' (160–61). The Panopticon's watchtower is testament to the care home's former existence as a penitentiary: 'It looks like a prison. It was one, once. And a nuthouse' (7). Like Bentham's design, here too each system of control functions as a place of constant observation so that one internalises that surveillance and polices oneself. Anais narrates that 'Each of those bedrooms used to be a cell [. . .] so each inmate could only see the watchtower, they couldnae see their neighbours. Divide and conquer' (10). This is one of the many moments of astute insight where Anais penetrates and exposes the façade of a criminality labelled and engineered by surveillance society and, by doing so, resists being utterly consumed by its discursive subjectivity. Part of her internalised inferiority and otherness is psychogeographical; it seems no accident that the night-nurse 'has the most proper English accent ever' (27), operating as part of an Anglocentric mechanism of state control that Anais undercuts and resists throughout a narrative interlaced with Edinburgh vernacular.

Already criminalised and accused of the attempted murder of the comatose constable, part of the open-endedness of the text is that the

policewoman's recovery is never certain and the culprit remains unidentified – we want to believe that Anais is innocent despite the state's eagerness to point the accusatory finger, but it is left ambiguous. Consistent with unreliable first person narration, her version of events is uncertain, exacerbated by ketamine-induced memory loss, while other drug use leads to continual flights of fancy, and she constantly speculates whether she has schizophrenia, inherited perhaps from her mother. Her uncertain, fragmentary memory and identity is also symptomatic of Scottish literature, with its use of schizophrenic tension and gothic split or dual self that straddles fantasy and realism. Unable to recollect her culpability or innocence echoes the gothic dualism of Stevenson's *Jekyll* or Hogg's *Wringhim*. Gerrard Carruthers discusses the 'Fractured personality' of Scottish fiction and suggests that 'Literature is often considered at its best when peddling ambiguity, rather than supposed cultural certainty'.¹⁴ Fagan's queer Scottish gothic text is, likewise, 'at its best', given that it is built upon the tension of ambiguity, peddled by Anais's drug-fuelled unreliable narration. That ambiguity is inbuilt: in interviews Fagan acknowledges that she was influenced by structuralism when writing the novel and, indeed, it is predicated upon a system of self and other, where the social norm defines itself by that which is deviant, and thus separated from the norm.¹⁵

Poststructuralism's decentred universe, though, disrupts any binary fixity; the text's open-endedness questions the futility of grand narratives such as religious discourse and Anais knows that our world is not the central axis of everything. Part of its critique of society's simulated reality is the text's transcension of realism through the gothic, with its labyrinthine, uncanny care home ('like somewhere that a giant lives' [154–55]), its remote setting, the cold, dark, wintry climate, the unsolved gruesome crime, the violence and vulnerability, and constant reference to witches. The Panopticon care unit itself, noted earlier as a residue of Victorianism, gothically haunts the corridors of an otherwise contemporary setting. Like *Jane Eyre*, Anais hears unexplained almost supernatural crying one night:

I was sitting in bed last night, feeling creepy – the building was too creaky, and I could hear someone crying and I couldn't work out who it was. The watchtower window had a wee light glowing in it, and the night-nurse came out [. . .] she turned around and said something. Like to someone inside the tower. (221)

This sinister otherworldliness hangs bridge-like in between the pastoral interlude and the horrific sequence of Tash's disappearance, Isla's death and Anais's gang rape when the utter vulnerability of those apparently protected by the care system is exposed to the harshness of its elements. The contradiction, then, of surveillance society is that those inhabiting the peripheries are rendered invisible by a paradoxically uncaring caring system. So, Tash, who is prostituting herself to save enough money for her and Isla to live together, falls off society's radar, likely to never be seen again, except perhaps as a cadaver, 'Disappearing. It happens when you blink. It happens as you write down the registration number for a car pulling away' (264). Anais realises when looking at a poster of the missing Tash in the train station that 'all the commuters are just walking by. People dinnae want to look. They dinnae want tae see. Nobody will ask' (264). Coupled with Isla's suicide, the narrator demonstrates how insignificant vulnerable lives really are. In 2012, the year of *The Panopticon*'s publication, a fatal accident inquiry ruled that the suicide of two teenage girls (Niamh Lafferty and Georgia Rowe) from a Scottish care home in 2009 was preventable, given adequate care and protection.

The monstrous gothic 'soul-stealers' are deemed not those outcast from respectable society; instead a hypocritically disrespectable society is exposed as vampirically praying on vulnerability. Despite being subject to panopticism, contradictorily 'People in care are always disappearing. Nobody finds out where they go' (124). It is a cold world that Anais inhabits and only fleeting moments of camaraderie and love that she glimpses allow her to retain her own humanity despite a system that appears hell-bent on dehumanising her. Remembering Hayley, she notes that 'Kindness is the most underrated quality on the planet. I feel hollow now. Hollow where a heart should be' (183). Living in a time that anachronistically parallels a gothic Victorianism, when material wealth is prioritised over creativity, humanity, animal welfare or environmental issues, Anais feels jaded by having seen too much of life's callousness, as the text identifies something rotten at society's core. But, despite her heartache, she does retain her capacity to care and empathise for those who suffer. Immediately after she observes that kindness is rendered redundant and regarded as a feminised weakness, she reads a newspaper headline 'Nobody Could Prevent Child's Murder' (183) and responds with empathetic outrage. In her view, there is a clear link between the mistreatment of vulnerable children (including herself) and the hege-

monic protection of wealth, for ‘if you’ve no money [. . .] They just let it happen. They say they dinnae, but they do. All the fucking time’ (184). According to Fagan’s text, contemporary society is heartlessly unkind and exploitation for those without economic stability, and its raw subject matter brings to mind countless incidents such as the child abuse cases in Rochdale and Rotherham.

Fagan also considers the ways in which filtered reality fuels empathetic detachedness, where mass media and surveillance tactics have penetrated the home, in a society immersed in observation and image. Anais is perplexed at our ignorance:

I dinnae get people, like they all want to be watched, to be seen, like all the time. They put up their pictures online and let people they dinnae like look at them! And people they’ve never met as well, and they all pretend tae be shinier than they are [. . .] their bosses are watching them at work, the cameras watch them on the bus, and on the train, and in Boots, and even outside the chip shop. Then even at home – they’re going online to look and see who they can watch, and to check who’s watching them! (34)

She summarises: ‘Is that no weird?’ (34). The exhibitionist willingness to put it all out there on ‘Shitebook’ (114) for the world to see is not only narcissistic, but incredibly naïve. As Anais continues, ‘If they knew about the experiment they wouldnae be so keen to throw it all out there. The experiment can see very minute, of every minute, of every single fucking day’ (34). In an online era of digital fingerprinting, NeoFace recognition and monitored phone calls, Anais’s dystopian vision of faceless men is not entirely overreaching.

With the few watching the many as is the case with panopticism, Zygmunt Bauman considers how globalisation entices the many to watch the few: ‘The Panopticon *forced* people into the position where they could be watched. The Synopticon needs no coercion – it *seduces* people into watching’.¹⁶ As Mathiesen writes, ‘Increasingly, the few have been able to see the many, but also increasingly, the many have been enabled to see the few – to see the VIPs, the reporters, the stars, almost a new class in the public sphere’.¹⁷ A synopticon society is increasingly composed of isolated individuals shut behind closed doors accessing a hegemonically mediated virtual world. While,

In the older context, people were gathered together; in the modern media context, the “audience” has increasingly been delocalised so that people have become isolated from each other. In the older context, “sender” and “receiver” were in each other’s proximity, be it in the ancient theatre or the festivals and image-building of the Colosseum; in the modern media context, distance between the two may be great.¹⁸

Mathiesen extends, then, Foucault’s thesis on the panopticon state, citing a fusion of panopticon and synopticon resulting in an excessive Orwellian society of constant observation. The most extreme and sinister version of this is when Anais is filmed being gang raped in Jay’s ironically named safe-house, with the intention of uploading it onto the internet to pay off his debt. It is a harrowing example of one’s soul being drained by an invasively penetrative gaze, while Anais’s body is reduced to a commoditised spectacle acted upon by male control and sexual violence. Afterwards, she vows to escape from her current life and ‘learn how tae be nice to me’ (299), focussing for the first time on prioritising her own importance. Ultimately, she rejects self-subjugation and reinscribes her narrative to avoid becoming yet another statistical casualty; the end embarks upon a journey that defies state expectations to reclaim herself: ‘I – begin today’ (324).

Cyclically ending with a rebirth of the self inverts the *bildungsroman* format because Anais does not comply with social discourses that strive to condition her, and, unlike conventional *bildungsroman*, she never finds out her true identity beyond the information gathered from the monk in the psychiatric hospital where she was born. *The Panopticon* is a novel of self-formation or education, but not that which has been internalised from hegemonic discourses. Rather than complying with her expected social outcomes, Anais utilises her imagination and intellect so that she disappears from their control rather than from herself, unlike the other female victims in the text. While ‘Teresa used to say school was an unnecessary form of social control’ (85), ultimately ‘You can learn a lot on Google, but some of it’s lies [. . .] Knowledge is power, and what fucking other power do I have? [. . .] I’ll learn tae master mind control and take over the fucking world’ (84–85). Her awakening recognition inverts the mechanisms of discursive power, establishing a counter-discourse to dialogically intervene against hegemonic dominance. Part of that resistance is the application of a

particularly Scottish self-determination through the use of periodic dialect and expletive language, as well as the gothic imagination in order to evade Anglocentric authority figures. The name, Anais, given to her by her murdered adoptive Mother Teresa ('she named me after one of her favourite writers', [121]) is another Celtic facet from her namesake Anais Nin, who lived a bohemian lifestyle in Paris, and ensures that she will be actively writerly rather than passively readerly regarding the narrative shaping her life. Finally, though, Anais renames herself, indicating maturation by inscribing her own *bildung* development. The interpellative identity of Anais, then, is replaced with Frances – which 'means freedom' (323) – as she travels on the Eurostar to Paris. It also signifies a citizen of France, as her psycho-geographical relocation becomes a heterotopic space of new possibilities. Fagan says in the *Granta* interview that her novel began with a question regarding whether it was possible for an individual to achieve autonomy, reclaim and liberate themselves from the panopticon state. Anais/Frances is liberated by fleeing to Paris but, in terms of first person narration, this might simply be wish-fulfilment and an imaginative fugue. The ambiguity leaves the reader to decide, echoing Todorov's concept of the tension between the 'uncanny' and the 'marvellous' and befitting of the text's gothic tropes.

But art, music and literature, for Fagan, are directly engaging with reality, unlike society's simulacra: '*everything you will ever need to know can be found in songs, books, art, films and lovers*' (85), and Anais constantly wants to 'imagine' alternative possibilities. Despite an apparent compliance with social discourses of internalised guilt and culpability, her resistant counter-narrative undercuts it: 'I bet I know more about paintings than they do [. . .] I know what the meaning of empathy is' (114–15), and she psycho-geographically identifies with a foreign bohemian city of art and culture: 'I umnay meant to be here. I was meant to be born in Paris' (115). In her imagination she is someone much better than the state allows her to be and through which she transcends the trappings of social hegemony to create alternative outcomes. The imagination is a crucial counterpoint to the realism of dominant discourses: 'I sit down on Malcolm the cat's back, put my arms around his neck and lean in' and says 'Take me tae Paris' (155). In a flashback to when she was eight, the narrator remembers when a social worker assessed whether she had inherited schizophrenia from her biological mother. Anais 'thought it sounded cool – seeing stuff other people couldnae see, like some-

thing out of a book' (236). As with Scottish literature, Anais associates schizophrenia with a creative insight to see beyond the confines of so-called reality thereby allowing her mind to be open to alternative truths rather than fixed doctrines. While the authorities mapped her life out as shifting from care to prison, in turn, Anais's vision allows for an alternative prospect that breaks the frame of their reality and reaches beyond: 'all I can see is stars' (160). The stars, noted earlier as linking Anais with a wider universe, also indicate that she sees further than the limits of social reality, instead imaginatively aspiring to soar towards something better. Notably, just before Tash's disappearance and Isla's death, Anais observes, 'Malcolm's wings haven't moved for ages. He's given up. I'm giving up' (232). Instead, 'I lie back and watch the sky. My heart aches. It's every day now this ache, this need to get the fuck away' (233). Her desire to escape to Paris is intertwined with sorrow that pre-emptly and confirms her fear that 'something bad is gonnae happen' (186) as she grows increasingly anxious for Tash's safety while prostituting herself. Thus, her imagination is stifled and Malcolm remains static.

The tension that Anais observes regarding a panopticon society is its blind failure to see what is important, like the beauty of Scotland's landscape, or the horror of vulnerable people disappearing, or the wonder of the imagination. Instead, faceless bureaucracy has no time or space for aesthetic or intellectual probing. When the mad monk talks to her about her birth and her biological mother, he says that she arrived on a winged cat, but 'They didnae see it, of course [. . .] They dinnae see much, though – do they?' (244). The winged cat links mother and daughter, since Malcolm is in the grounds of The Panopticon; it offers a liberation, particularly for the caged bird/female, to become the flying feline, while also intimating the flying witch's familiar. The monk describes her mother as 'a cigarillo-smoking Outcast Queen' (245), a paradoxical identity that fuses otherness with great power, very much like Anais herself. During her delivery 'It was the prettiest snow I have ever seen – it began tae fall just as you were born. It was the biggest snowstorm for fifty years that winter [. . .] the moon was full [. . .] We all heard your first cry, you sounded so fierce!' (248). The natural world anticipates her 'fierce' arrival in the midst of a winter storm like some Narnian White Witch, while her mother and the flying cat 'disappeared by the light of [. . .] such a big moon' (248). Born in 'a nuthouse' to a mother labelled insane, the 'big moon' poignantly links to lunacy,

while Anais's feminist observation that women were historically vilified echoes the Victorian practice of institutionalising unmarried mothers. The associated lunar/menstrual cycles also links to Diana, the Roman goddess of hunting and the woods, just as Scotland's landscape accommodates Anais, while the social world rejects her. Labelled an outsider, she is most comfortable outside. The monk's reference to her as the 'daughter of an Outcast Queen' (249) confirms her outsider status, but also suggests that she has a power to write her own script and defy social confinement – as the daughter, she can look back through her mother and shape an alternative ending to her life, with his reminder that 'they dinnae own you' (248). Her affinity for historical outcasts and travelling to France contains a textual revenant in the reverberated ultimate outcast Queen of Scots, whose threat to Anglo-centric legitimacy led to her utter silencing. Kirsten Stirling's discussion of the link between the monstrous female body and the Scottish nation notes that 'the body of Mary functions in an unfortunately apt way for the state of Scotland after her death. Metaphorically decapitated, effectively losing her king to England, from 1603 on Scotland is well on the way to becoming the monstrous Scotland that Alasdair Gray describes'.¹⁹ The stateless Scottish nation's desire for autonomy from its confinement as England's binary other parallels Fagan's demonised orphan's desire for liberty from faceless power. Anais's fleeing to France could be regarded as a comment upon an Anglo neoliberal stranglehold of Scotland: until the socio-political climate improves, she must seek refuge in a country historically welcoming in terms of the Auld Alliance and currently led by a Socialist Government.

The Panopticon's vulnerable adolescent's narrative unearths the gothic environment of society's margins and the tunnel vision of hegemonic power that suppresses their plight and renders them ethereally insubstantial. To avoid the dehumanising soul stealers of Anais's Foucauldian nightmares, Fagan's text urges a collective responsibility that prioritises rather than underrates kindness in relations with others. Politicising the aesthetic backdrop of Scotland's landscape envisaged through the lens of queer Scottish gothic fiction, Fagan recognises a common connectivity to outside that transcends simulated Anglocentric state expectations. Gothic tropes expose the invisibility of those hauntologically rendered less human in an *unheimlich* neoliberal society and challenge Scotland to remedy its own dispossessed alterity and reclaim itself in a post-referendum homecoming.²⁰

Notes

- 1 Fagan, Jenni, *The Panopticon* (London: Windmill Books, 2012), p. 8. All further references to this text will be in pagination throughout the body of the article.
- 2 Mathiesen, Thomas, 'The Viewer Society: Michel Foucault's 'Panopticon' Revisited', *Theoretical Criminology*, Vol. 1 (2) (1997), pp. 215–33, p. 218.
- 3 Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London and New York: Penguin, 1991 [1975]), p. 203.
- 4 Braidotti, Rosi, Patrick Hanafin and Bolette Blaagaard, eds. *After Cosmopolitanism* (Oxford and New York: Routledge 2013), p. 16.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- 6 Harvey, David, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009 [2005]), p. 3
- 7 Devine, T. M., *The Scottish Nation: 1700–2007* (London and New York: Penguin, 2006), p. 545.
- 8 Shone, Tom, 'Surveillance State: 'The Panopticon' By Jenni Fagan' *New York Times* review (July 18, 2013) www.nytimes.com/2013/07/21/books/review/the-panopticon-by-jenni-fagan.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1& [Accessed 17 September 2014]
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 Wright, Angela, 'Scottish Gothic' in *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, ed. by Catherine Spooner and Emma McAvoy (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 76.
- 11 Palmer, Paulina, *Lesbian Gothic: Transgressive Fictions* (London and New York: Cassell, 1999), p. 29.
- 12 Dickens, Charles, *Great Expectations* (London and New York: Penguin 2003 [1861]), p. 330.
- 13 Wright, p. 74.
- 14 Carruthers, Gerard, *Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 194.
- 15 Granta Podcast, Ep. 74, 2013. <http://www.granta.com/New-Writing/Jenni-Fagan-The-Granta-Podcast-Ep.-74> [Accessed 17 September 2014]
- 16 Bauman, Zygmunt, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000 [1998]), p. 52.
- 17 Mathiesen, p. 219.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 222.
- 19 Stirling, Kirsten, *Bella Caledonia: Woman, Nation, Text* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008), p. 102.
- 20 For a discussion of those dehumanised lives considered ungrievable, see Judith Butler, *Frames of War* (London and New York: Verso, 2009), while Braidotti refers to a 'disposable humanity' in Braidotti, Hanafin and Blaagaard, eds., p. 13.