ENGLISH VOICE, SCOTTISH HEART:
A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE FICTION OF COMPTON MACKENZIE

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CONTENTS

Declaration iii
Acknowledgments iv
Abstract v

1 INTRODUCTION
   Personality and Perspective 1

2 POTENTIAL AND LIMITATION 1912-1915
   Carnival, Sinister Street 17

3 FUTILITY AND PURPOSE 1917-1927
   Vestal Fire 68

4 'TOWARDS A SCOTTISH IDEA'
   Mackenzie and Scotland 1925-1935 136

5 'THE ROSE OF ALL THE WORLD'
   The Four Winds of Love 184

6 REDEEMING THE KAILYARD
   The Scottish Comedies (1) 243

7 SCOTCHING THE MYTHS?
   The Scottish Comedies (2) 289

8 ABDICATION OF A NOVELIST
   Thin Ice, Mezzotint 329

REFERENCES 361

BIBLIOGRAPHY 376
I declare that this thesis is wholly the result of my own research, execution, and authorship.

Gavin A. Wallace
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ABSTRACT

The upsurge in the study of Scottish literature during the last ten years has seen frequent attempts to define comprehensively a critical context for the 20th century Scottish novel which posits the generic, thematic, and ideological homogeneity of a 20th century Scottish fictional tradition. Given the great value of this work, it is unfortunate that to date studies of the 20th century Scottish novel have avoided serious evaluation of two features of central importance to this field. The first of these areas is the status of certain Scottish novelists who possessed, or cultivated, discernibly 'English' creative personae in their work in contrast to, and often in contradiction of, a native Scottish perspective. The second feature is represented by several Scottish novelists who attained great public following and popularity in proportion to their repeated exclusion from critical or academic scrutiny.

The novelistic career of Compton Mackenzie (1883-1972) is uniquely illustrative of each of these conditions. As a novelist seemingly divided between conciously English and Scottish cultural affiliations in his work who also became one of the most popular literary figures of the 20th century, his fiction, which has never received satisfactorily detailed or comprehensive critical assessment, is a subject demanding examination. The trajectory of his career valuably illustrates cultural and political developments during the 20th century in England and Scotland and the corresponding relationship between those two cultures, while within that career can be located the valid case for long overdue assessment of novels which represent significant literary achievements in their own right.

This thesis is therefore principally revaluatory in intent, and presents serious and detailed analyses of Mackenzie's major novels written during five distinct periods within his career from 1912 to 1962. The underlying purpose is to present a full and satisfactory appraisal of
Mackenzie's status and achievement as a Scottish literary figure who is distinguished by his application of English fictional paradigms to Scottish subject-matter and preoccupations. In pursuing this theme, the work examines the nature and validity of Mackenzie's adoption of a creative and political Scottish identity in the late 1920s as a conscious departure from the context of early 20th century English culture which fostered his earliest work and within which he made his early reputation. Throughout, Mackenzie's fiction is considered and located within the parameters of a wide range of critical and political issues: the general context of the development of the English novel from the Edwardian period to Modernism; the impact in literary terms of the Great War and the author's serious post-1918 decline; the contrastive ideologies of the Scottish Renaissance and Mackenzie's relationship with its figureheads; and Mackenzie's role as activist in the Scottish Nationalist movement. Mackenzie's later reputation as one of Scotland's most successful popular novelists is further defined by examining critical attitudes to the late 19th century 'Kailyard' movement and how these are related to evaluations of modern popular Scottish culture as a whole.

The thesis has been written not only with the intention of relocating and reassessing the important achievements of an unjustly neglected writer, but also in the hope that in so doing, a means of clarifying the persistent complexities and contradictions characterising both 20th century Scottish literary consciousness and the critical orthodoxies which assist in shaping that consciousness can be explored.
...I'd like to say something about someone I know you're not going to ask me about: the writer that nobody – in London, at least – takes seriously. He had an American mother, like Churchill. I mean Compton Mackenzie'.

No doubt to the surprise of his interviewer, Edmund Wilson in 1965 interrupted his commentary on seemingly more challenging matters to make a claim for a novelist who, twenty years later, is still not regarded as sufficiently 'serious' for the purposes of critical enquiry. Although he became one of the most popular writers of the twentieth century, an author with a public profile, and public following, as distinct as that of Dickens or Kipling, within the precincts of critical and academic respectability Compton Mackenzie is the novelist everyone knows of, but whom no-one 'asks about'. It was this indifference in 1965 which provoked Wilson's complaint that 'nobody is able to bring himself to give Mackenzie the credit for being the fine artist that at his best he is...since nobody else is doing him justice, I'm going to have to write about him myself'. This study has been written in a similar spirit.

If very few critics have seemed willing to respond to Wilson's challenge, this is all the more surprising in light of the respect and attention Mackenzie has elicited from a whole gallery of eminent literary celebrities and authoritative critics throughout the great span of his career, a career which encompasses and reflects six decades of cultural and historical change. Never wholly relinquishing his Edwardian literary origins, Mackenzie was still publishing novels in the 1960s when a new generation of British writers were exploring the possibilities of post-modernism, reinterpreting the legacy of the early 20th century Modernism whose impact Mackenzie as a traditional novelist had resolutely struggled to survive. The remarkable longevity of Mackenzie's career can be measured from the fact that his first novel, *The Passionate Elopement*, appeared in 1911, the same year Arnold Bennett
published Hilda Lessways and two years before Lawrence's Sons and Lovers: his last, Paper Lives, appeared in 1966, the same year as John Fowles' The Magus.

Throughout those sixty years Mackenzie was not without the trappings of praise which accrue to the reputations of the great and influential. A highly-crafted and individual prose style, both lyrical and precise, made Mackenzie an English Edwardian literary celebrity immediately prior to the Great War as the author of two hugely successful novels, Carnival (1912) and Sinister Street (1913-14). In 1914 Henry James singled him out as the most promising English novelist of his generation; Ford Madox Ford described Sinister Street as 'possibly a work of real genius', while Edmund Gosse compared the same novel favourably with Proust's Du Côté de Chez Swann. Sinister Street furthermore provided the young F. Scott Fitzgerald with one of the most profound literary influences of his career. Following the Great War, even while Mackenzie's repeated adherence to a suddenly outdated pre-War idiom sent his critical star plummeting, T.S. Eliot remarked in 1922 that 'Mackenzie is better worth reading than many more pretentious and sophisticated writers. He is not admired by the intellectuals, but on the other hand there is a popularity which they will never attain'. Eliot's remark can be seen to encompass the issue perfectly illustrated in Mackenzie's career: in part due to Eliot's influence, the practice of literary criticism still finds itself caught in the contradictions between 'literary' and 'popular' values in its continuing process of determining the criteria of literary worth. Eliot's paradigm of 'intellectuality' and 'popularity' of course found its most pervasive expression in the schism generated between 'traditional' and 'modern' in the early years of the 20th century. As a writer caught within that process, Mackenzie's career offers not only an important perspective on that period of literary development, but, as writer who has received the attentions of a specifically popular audience throughout his career - and well beyond his death - he offers much-needed insight into the issues implicated in the conspicuous and continuing legacy of that schism.

Throughout his life, Mackenzie drew praise, and in some cases friendship, from novelists as diverse in temperament, style, and cultural background as D.H. Lawrence, Norman Douglas, Sinclair Lewis, George
Introduction

Orwell, Eric Linklater, Lewis Grassic Gibbon and Rosamond Lehmann. Hugh MacDiarmid — not renowned for flattering his fellow-writers — described Mackenzie in 1952 as one of ‘the very few men with whom such a man as myself can confer on Scottish political and cultural issues’.®

As MacDiarmid’s statement suggests, the absence of a satisfactory critical account of Mackenzie is closely connected with the fact that his achievements, and his popular reputation, were by no means confined within strictly literary terms. Nor were they confined within the restrictions of a single culture. In the late 1920s, Mackenzie sought artistic renewal and his lost critical eminence not in England but in Scotland, identifying himself with the country of his ancestors through a nationalism both pragmatic and romantic, the writing of a major work of Scottish fiction equal in ambition to Lewis Grassic Gibbon’s A Scots Quair, and, in the maturity of his career, through a series of comic Scottish novels which are among the most successful and best known works of popular Scottish fiction. Mackenzie was not simply a novelist any more than MacDiarmid was simply a poet; both writers share a bewildering diversity of interests and a plurality of literary output which has defied coherent analysis or appraisal, though the repeated attempts to do so since the 1960s in MacDiarmid’s case have spawned an academic industry, a scale of attention that will never accrue to his fellow-Scot.

Nonetheless, the enormous substance of Mackenzie’s work was brought to light for the first time in 1984 when Philip Vaughan Brooks published A Bibliography Of and About the Works of Compton Mackenzie,® a work of exhaustive scholarship, compensating within the confines of one weighty volume for many years of critical disinterest. Ironically, however, the scale of Brooks’ work, while providing the means, evidence, and justification for full appraisal, also demonstrates the seeming impossibility of the task. Here is a monument to the somehow indecent fertility of a writer who was cursed with fluency and abhorred restraint, characteristics memorably described by the novelist and critic Allan Massie as Mackenzie’s ‘wretched facility’.® Writing came so naturally to Mackenzie that — if he is to believed — he had been writing novels for fifteen years before he ever tore up a manuscript and started anew, an indulgence he never permitted himself again. His indifference to
selectivity, a trait encouraged by his remarkable powers of memory (he claimed to have a 'total recall' which embraced his experiences from the age of four onwards), resulted in the awesome statistics of Brooks' research. Of a total of one hundred and thirteen published titles, only forty-four of these are novels; seventeen are autobiographical; the remaining fifty-two embrace most of the disciplines in which Mackenzie proved himself to be a capable and professional author: history, biography, essays, children's stories, musical and literary criticism. Mackenzie, like MacDiarmid, was a professional journalist and editor in addition to creative writer and author, and probably more prolific. Brooks lists a total of five hundred and forty-one published articles: yet there are several omissions, and he deliberately does not include Mackenzie's book reviews, which run to almost the same figure again. Many of these articles appeared in two periodicals which Mackenzie founded and edited: The Gramophone (1923- ) and Vox (1928-29), while the importance of his relationship with the mass-media in Britain is demonstrated by Brooks' listing of five hundred and forty-two radio broadcasts and ninety-seven television appearances.

Although his first four novels display the self-consciousness of an artist cultivating a style of aesthetic distinction as a creative priority, this was soon to change. During the 1920s Mackenzie, sickened by the Great War, became a workaday writer largely as a matter of financial necessity, developing a stringently professional ethos which relied on opportunism. He found himself capable of turning any subject into a novel and making it readable, of taking any topic and making of it a lively and engaging newspaper or magazine article, of transforming an anecdote, a fragment of memory, into a half-hour radio talk. As J.I.M. Stewart accurately pointed out, Mackenzie 'never lost sight of the fact that he was among the first of contemporary novelists in a responsible line of business', and in his keen commercial sense he provoked the inherent distaste of the critical establishment for self-sufficient writers who opt for sheer survival at the expense of creative innovation and challenge. It is ironic that Henry James, whose promotion of the young novelist's genuinely creative character did so much to propel Mackenzie into an early eminence, was also so influential in establishing the mood of heightened aesthetic consciousness concerning the practice
of fiction which, accentuated after James's death by the self-reflexive techniques of the modernists, encouraged critical tenets of creative innovation and purity in the context of which Mackenzie's steadily developing 'wretched facility' and ease of superficial productivity throughout the 1920s stood little chance of approval.

An equally important factor, of course, was the personality which lay behind Mackenzie's extraordinary talent, a personality as exhibitory and colourful as his writing. In the view of his friend Frank Swinnerton, Mackenzie was unique in that his personality and his work, moreso than in the case of any other writer, were related in a pseudo-symbiotic way: '...for all who know Mackenzie his work is coloured by a sense of the irresistible personality from which it arises. If Mackenzie had never written a word he would have been a character'. That 'character' was expressed through an eccentric and expensive life-style which provoked recurring financial crises and redoubled bouts of frenetic writerly activity in order to avert disaster. While Mackenzie's rich theatrical inheritance - his father was Edward Compton, actor-manager of the Compton Comedy Company, his mother a Bateman - is evident in many features of his prose, specifically in his consistently brilliant ear for dialogue, it is most conspicuous in the theatrical flair with which Mackenzie conducted his life. With a penchant for self-dramatisation, arguably Mackenzie's greatest production was himself, a prolonged performance of alternating, and frequently conflicting, roles. He described himself as 'Protean', capable of assuming the characteristics of everything with which he became involved, whether as a skilled Military Intelligence Officer in the Aegean during the Great War; authority on ecclesiastical English law, Anglo-Catholicism, Greek politics and history, horticulture, islands, the gramophone, or cats. Flamboyant, raconteur, and mimic, a gregarious man with a brilliant sense of the comic, he was also the scourge of politicians, Governments, and bureaucrats. There was an awesome oratorical power and eloquence reserved for his preparedness to embrace the politics of minorities and the oppressed; his support for the anti-Monarchist faction in Greece during the Great War and thereafter for Greek independence won him from the country a pseudo-Byronic adulation.
Introduction

A liberal with what MacDiarmid detected as 'an inclination to the Left' (as a younger man he had been attracted to Christian Socialism), he was anti-capitalist, but not communistic; and, as the 1920s progressed, increasingly pro-Irish, pro-Scottish and anti-English, but not anglophobic. Beneath the political activism there was an equally reclusive and ascetic side in his nature: the Mackenzie who sought solitude on three different, and increasingly remote, island homes, the fervent Catholic convert and Celtic nationalist, the disciplined scholar who was capable of interminably long stretches of intensive and rapid composition. He was also prone to exciting controversy and publicity: his death in 1972 made the headlines, but he also found himself as front-page news at regular intervals throughout his career, whether over the banning of Sinister Street by the circulating libraries in 1913, his trial under the Official Secrets Act in 1932, or in 1938 with the row over his defence of the Duke of Windsor following the Abdication in The Windsor Tapestry.

If as a journalist editors could rely upon Mackenzie to provide high-quality writing, as a personality and a colourful subject Mackenzie made good copy himself. Brooks' bibliography lists a total of four hundred and eighty-two articles on or about Mackenzie, a figure which does not include the large spectrum of reviews which greeted almost every title he published. Yet the paradox of all this considerable attention is its overall slightness. An amalgam of the countless scattered and sketchy references to Mackenzie in critical works, literary histories, biographies and autobiographies amounts to very little. The charm and fascination of Mackenzie as a personality was soon to become mythologised; as a consequence, the individual became the object of attention at the expense of the writer. Commentators preferred to dwell on the profligacy of Mackenzie’s output, the eccentricities of his life-style and writing methods, and the diversity of his activities rather than submitting his individual achievements to critical scrutiny. This tendency became more apparent in the 1920s and 30s, and in the wake of the Modernist’s cultivation of creative impersonality and restrained purity of utterance, it is little wonder that the critical establishment as a whole during this time left Mackenzie to the journalists and...
concentrated on the modestly-scaled and consistent œuvres of more inscrutable literary ideologues.

This cultivation of Mackenzie as 'character' rather than 'creative writer' became so influential that it infected the only three book-length critical studies of him that have ever been published: Leo Robertson's *Compton Mackenzie: An Appraisal* (1954), Kenneth Young's *Compton Mackenzie (Writers and their Work Series)* (1959), and D.J. Dooley's *Compton Mackenzie* (1974). All three works are commendable for their attempt to make logical sense, within the limited scope of a brief introduction, of the diversity of the author's collected writings, but also common to each endeavour is the tendency to interpret Mackenzie's work from within the terms of that beguiling and essentially undefinable personality, whose omnipresence is a continuous distraction from objective evaluation of Mackenzie's fiction and its wider literary context. Dooley's account is perhaps the most balanced and penetrating, while least successful is Leo Robertson's, whose book is severely marred throughout by its over-laudatory, deifying tone. Robertson's obsequiousness, in fact, is as much a consequence of his infatuation with the personality of his subject as respect for his writing (he knew Mackenzie as a friend), and the deferential manner he adopts is testimony to the force of Mackenzie's individuality and the difficulty of ignoring it in consideration of his work. Robertson unwittingly demonstrates the extent of this barrier at the end of his introduction:

Though his understanding of the most complex characters is profound, yet in his own approach to life's problems and perplexities there is the simplicity which one so often finds in conjunction with largeness of mind. Once, when in the course of conversation our talk turned on Eastern affairs, he asked me to what I would attribute our failure to retain India and Burma. I launched into an explanation: it seemed to me that there were so many factors involved, and I fumbled for words. 'Don't you think', he broke in, 'it was because we did not learn to love the people? Was it not a failure in love on our part?' Cutting through my verbiage, with that single word love he placed his finger on the true cause, and there was nothing more to be said. It was an unelaborated statement, all the more effective for being couched in the modest form of a question, but it belongs to the category of those large utterances which spring from what is basic and best in humanity, so simple, yet profoundly true, lighting up in a flash the situation we were discussing; in the same flash revealing the heart of the speaker himself.
Another close friend, the novelist Eric Linklater, touched upon this charismatic intensity of feeling and communication when he summarised Mackenzie's nature thus: '...bureaucracy is only an item in the catalogue of his scorn, that blows against all belittlement of mankind. His faith, whose ardency would destroy a stronger man but nurtures him, is a romantic humanism.'

Without doubting the evident sincerity of these responses, the unwillingness of commentators to cut through the seductive trappings of the author's individuality and attempt objective appraisal of the critical issues implicated in his novels - in the way Mackenzie himself 'cut through' the 'verbiage' of Leo Robertson - has deprived Mackenzie of the serious status many of his works deserve. This stubbornly personalised perspective, and the reiteration of the author's unclassifiable eclecticism it encourages, has suppressed the most significant feature of Mackenzie's literary career, the feature containing the potential for a coherent account of his literary development and a reciprocal illumination of the cultural and historical context which influenced that development. Edmund Wilson remains the only critic to have appreciated its importance and relevance:

A good many of his books, actually, since his early period, are meant to convey 'a message'...for years he has been trying in his work to plead for the rights of small nations and cultural minorities, as against all the forces which are driving us in the direction of centralised power that tries to process or crush them. His rather odd long novel The Four Winds of Love...all amounts to a defence of oppressed and recalcitrant groups: the Greeks, the Poles, the Jews, the Irish, the Scottish, and even the Bretons and the Cornish. But I never remember to have seen a review of one of those later novels that gave any indication of what Mackenzie was driving at. The trouble is that he is a both a professed Scot and something of a crypto-American, so he is always at an angle to English society. They don't understand him or don't want to understand him...'

'He is always at an angle to English society'. The profound accuracy of Wilson's interpretation is emphasised, if not symbolised, by the fact that at the time Wilson gave his interview in 1965, Mackenzie, living in Edinburgh's New Town, was enjoying his status not as an English but as a Scottish writer, the most popular and publicly respected senior of the Scottish literary corps with a reputation as distinct as that of his friend Hugh MacDiarmid. In 1915, following the remarkable success of
Introduction

Carnival and Sinister Street, the Manchester Guardian summarised the extent of Mackenzie's critical eminence when it declared that 'the future of the English novel lies very much in his hands'. Yet by 1928, having repatriated himself in Scotland, Mackenzie had declared an explicit and uncompromising non-English perspective:

Let us turn to our own background and forsake utterly the enticement of an alien and for us unnatural culture. We have grafted ourselves upon the rich rose of England. It has flourished on our stock. We have served it well. But the suckers of the wild Scots rose are beginning to show green underneath. Let them grow and blossom, and let the alien graft above, however rich, wither and die.

By the early 1930s, Mackenzie's extensive and underrated contribution to the political and cultural nationalist revival in Scotland from 1925 onwards - culminating in his election as the first Nationalist Lord Rector of Glasgow University in 1931 - had become an ideological condition and priority of his writing. This was how, in 1929, he described that condition: 'An English voice and a Scottish heart is a better combination than a Scottish voice and an English heart'.

Mackenzie's major fictional achievement, The Four Winds of Love, marking a creative recovery that has been almost entirely neglected, was the logical fruition of this perspective, a consolidation of political and cultural allegiance registered in Allan Massie description of the work in 1980 as 'the most ambitious Scottish novel of the century'.

The 'oddness' Wilson detected in the novel is precisely the result of Mackenzie's duality of cultural perspective, and it is the nature and significance of the duality which provides the subject for this study. Wilson's impression of Mackenzie's angular relationship to English society, his tangential position, can be traced to the author's adoption of the perspective of a culture peripheral to England: that of Scotland. The validity of locating Mackenzie within this context is illustrated in the fact that the most worthwhile and perceptive reappraisals of Mackenzie made in the last decade have come from Scottish critics who have been prepared to acknowledge his work as a contribution to Scottish literature by a Scottish writer. The most insightful account in this regard is Francis Russell Hart's discussion of The Four Winds of Love and the Scottish comedy sequence in The Scottish Novel: A Critical
Introduction

Survey (1978), which in many ways forms the starting-point for the present work. No less important are the recent surveys of Scottish literature by Maurice Lindsay, Alan Bold, and Roderick Watson, all of which include Mackenzie within their general overviews.

The intention of this study has been to develop a more detailed and unified picture of Mackenzie's fictional career from the necessarily restricted and incomplete introductions which these works provide. For if critics and commentators outwith Scotland have been content to interpret Mackenzie as an English writer - Leo Robertson describes him as 'one of the most popular of English writers', while Kenneth Young dubs him 'the grand old man of English letters' - it is all the more regrettable that Scottish critics have lacked the space, or the inclination, to examine precisely the implications of Mackenzie's cultural duality, how and why it operated, and the way in which it manifested itself in his fiction.

There are other reasons for this reluctance to explore further the questions Mackenzie's status invites. The most important reason - considered in detail in Chapters Six and Seven - is the overwhelming success of Mackenzie's Scottish comedies in Scotland. A deep aversion to the ubiquitous presence of popular Scottishness, a mode to which these comedies clearly contribute, has been a consistent reflex within the Scottish literary and critical establishment since the huge impact of the Kailyard school of fiction in the late 19th century. This sensitivity has contributed to an inability to reconcile Mackenzie's status as both an intellectual and a popular Scottish writer, widening a schism which has undoubtedly resulted in further obscuring his more ambitious work, The Four Winds of Love in particular, and endorsing the persistent misrepresentation of Mackenzie in Scotland as the author of glib, patronising comedies based upon a spurious Scottish subject-matter. There is, however, a case to be argued which justifies both the success of these comedies and their contribution to Scottish themes and issues.

In 1933, in a memorable phrase, Mackenzie described the way in which the Kailyard movement had 'mortgaged Scottish literature to indignity'. In an irony peculiar to the Scottish cultural predicament Mackenzie's conscious adoption of Kailyard parameters in his comedies some years later, a manoeuvre through which he attempted to redeem the troublesome
and damaging implications of the Kailyard ideology, effectively made him a victim of the process he had so accurately summarised by 'mortgaging' his own reputation to indignity.

Yet this is precisely a manifestation of that ambivalence of cultural perspective in Mackenzie's work which is of immense value to the issues confronting a Scottish literary identity and tradition. A reiterated and inescapable truth of that tradition throughout its development, the powerlessness of Scottish culture to counter the assimilating grasp on its writers and its intelligentsia of the ideology of English culture, was particularly prevalent as an issue at the time of Mackenzie's identification with Scotland during the Renaissance. MacDiarmid's great influence in articulating the potential of Scotland as a peripheral cultural force, in explicit opposition to an anglo-centric cultural and political hegemony, was soon to be weakened in the 1930s in Edwin Muir's implicit attack on the linguistic and historical homogeneity of the Scottish literary movement in Scott and Scotland (1936), which - following the logic of Muir's identification with English cultural values - he saw merely as a flawed imitation of an 'organic' English literature and history. The apparent contradiction in Mackenzie's career and perspective, his adoption of the values of the periphery in his reaction against those he perceived in the centre which had fostered his literary beginnings, effectively illustrates a reversal of the insidious mechanism manifest in Muir, a mechanism also to be detected in the ideological and cultural dubiety which underlines two other Scottish writers of the period with whom Mackenzie had a good deal in common: John Buchan and Eric Linklater. Linklater and Buchan also displayed discernibly 'English' and 'Scottish' creative personae; their authenticity of national affiliation, however, has been more difficult to determine.

Mackenzie's position is exemplary in illuminating and clarifying many of the features of Scottish culture in which polarity with English values provides that culture with its dynamic. Interpreting his novels according to the model he provides, the English voice and the Scottish heart, does not presuppose any suppression of the extent of Mackenzie's indebtedness to the English culture which fostered his career. Instead, by considering his application of English narrative paradigms to a Scottish perspective, the nature and consequences of a process of
cultural interaction between centre and periphery which is all too frequently ignored can be accentuated, to the advantage of both cultural traditions.

By examining closely Mackenzie's claim to Scottish literary identity, it is possible to reassess his major novels in light of some of the major literary preoccupations of the 20th century as they have influenced both an English and a Scottish literary tradition: in the process, a discernible process of development within those novels, providing that thematic unity and consistency for so long obscured by a preoccupation with Mackenzie's eclecticism, can be established. This study divides Mackenzie's career into its five most important phases, and each Chapter deals with Mackenzie's most significant achievements within that phase. Chapter Two considers the English Edwardian context of Mackenzie's initial, and short-lived, eminence in the English literary mainstream as the author of Carnival (1912) and Sinister Street (1913-14), indicating the strengths and restrictions of Mackenzie's fictional technique, his relationship with the priorities of Modernism, and the self-conscious nature of his portrayal of English society and the dilemma of the artist within that society. Chapter Three examines the forcible impact of the Great War on Mackenzie's pre-War aesthetic and his subsequent loss of artistic and ideological focus as a traditional novelist whom Modernism had implicitly repudiated, resulting in his serious disorientation and decline in the 1920s and an increasing alienation from English culture, and his eventual attempt at creative recovery through articulation of the War's significance towards the end of that decade, fictionally in Vestal Fire (1927), autobiographically in Gallipoli Memories (1929). Chapter Four analyses the nature and validity of Mackenzie's political and cultural identification with Scotland from 1925 onwards, examining his relationship with Hugh MacDiarmid, his involvement with the National Party of Scotland, and the nationalist journalism through which Mackenzie expressed his assimilation. Chapter Five is devoted to a detailed analysis of The Four Winds of Love as the author's expression of the aspirations of the Scottish Renaissance as interpreted by his fellow-Scottish novelists, and explores the novel's status as an important fictional experiment. Chapters Six and Seven deal with Mackenzie's attempt to interpret popular representations of
Scotland in his series of six inter-connected Highland comedies, analysing further the nature of popular culture in Scotland and the adverse consequences of Mackenzie's popular success on his critical status. Chapter Eight concludes the study by concentrating on Mackenzie's last novel of major importance, Thin Ice (1956), as one of his most achieved works and an elegiac, retrospective study of the English preoccupations with which his career began.

It must be emphasised, then, that this is not another attempt at an overview of Mackenzie's life and work, but a selective study of his fiction through which, it is hoped, a more satisfactorily coherent interpretation of that life and work will emerge. Equally, this is not a critical biography; the bias of attention throughout is on close narrative analysis. But in considering Mackenzie's novels, it is no more possible to completely ignore the circumstances of his life and personality than has been repeatedly proved in the case of evaluations of Hugh MacDiarmid's literary achievements. Mackenzie and MacDiarmid are alike in that the impingement of an acutely politicised perspective upon their creativity demands examination of several biographical circumstances and features; they also share reputations created as much out of public activity as literary utterance. Further paralleling MacDiarmid's case, Mackenzie's life and career proves to be exemplary of a cultural situation; in turn, emphasising the importance of that cultural situation provides further illumination of the writer.

Where Mackenzie's life and extra-literary activities shed light on his fiction, such aspects have been given their due emphasis, but they are intended as secondary to the purposes of critical revaluation. It is to be hoped that Andro Linklater's biography of Mackenzie, forthcoming at the time of writing, will provide the balanced and objective interpretation of the awesome totality of that life which has been lacking for so long: in the meantime, the reader seeking an informative but brief biographical introduction is directed to the works by Kenneth Young and D.J. Dooley. The reader is also referred to the unpublished dissertation by T.R. Erlandson, 'A Critical Study of Some Early Novels (1911-1920) of Sir Compton Mackenzie' (1965), which provides a thoroughly researched account of Mackenzie's first five novels and their critical impact and reception. Erlandson's extensive quotations from
Introduction

contemporary reviews give an accurate impression of Mackenzie’s pre-war eminence and the beginning of his post-war decline, and his research has been of considerable value to the first two Chapters of the present work, although frequently my interpretation of the novels themselves does not accord with Erlandson’s in many respects.

Several of Mackenzie’s achievements deserve book-length treatment in themselves, most notably The Four Winds of Love. Two others require to be mentioned. The first is his massive autobiography My Life and Times, which the author commenced in 1963, at the age of eighty, and published in ten ‘Octaves’ – eight years to each volume – between 1963 and 1971. Maurice Lindsay describes the work as ‘without doubt the most astonishing autobiography in Scottish literature, if not in the English language’.20 Certainly, the work’s remarkable grasp of an insistently factual idiom, and its avoidance of introspection throughout its vast span, is an interesting repudiation of the aesthetic framework of spiritual design and development normally associated with the genre, typified by the mythopoetic structure of Edwin Muir’s An Autobiography. Also making it unique is the unrivalled quantity of social, cultural, and historical information it contains, providing one of the finest records of the century. As it began to appear, many reviewers, confronted with the evidence of a remarkable career and even greater staying-power, suddenly woke up to the fact of the author’s undeserved critical obscurity, but the revaluation so frequently suggested did not take place. Mackenzie’s autobiographical method – based equally on a vast archive of verifiable sources such as letters and manuscripts and the author’s vivid memory for dates – provides much of the secondary material drawn upon for the present work, but it is regretted that the emphasis on fiction has not permitted further analysis of Mackenzie’s interpretation of autobiographical style. The second important work not included is the Mark Liddersdale trilogy of novels – The Altar Steps (1922), The Parson’s Progress (1923), and The Heavenly Ladder (1924). Part-historical, part-autobiographical, Mackenzie furthered the technique of Sinister Street in this extensively detailed examination of Anglican political disputation within the English church as experienced by his central protagonist Mark Liddersdale in his quest for religious truth, in a manner also looking forward to The Four Winds of Love. The series

14
Introduction

proved unpopular (the author claimed it 'cut down my circulation by two-thirds'), largely as a result of the specialised and often inaccessible nature of its subject-matter and preoccupations. As a portrait of individual spiritual growth, however, the work succeeds, but an adequate revaluation would also demand an understanding of ecclesiastical law and internecine Anglo-Catholic politics equal to the author's.

Excepting the Mark Liddersdale trilogy, those novels omitted from this study are those of marked inferiority to Mackenzie's best work (and the least popular), and which as the author himself acknowledged contain little of literary interest. In addition to the principal novels considered, further novels are included where they clarify the principal lines of discussion: Guy and Pauline (1915), The Life and Adventures of Sylvia Scarlett (1917), Extraordinary Women (1928), and Mezzotint (1961). An attempt has made throughout to incorporate as wide a range as scope permits of Mackenzie's important works of non-fiction and autobiographical writings where these reflect on the concerns of his novels: this will be most evident in Chapter Four, which is concerned entirely with Mackenzie's letters to Hugh MacDiarmid and his journalistic output. It should also be noted at this stage that in order to convey as clear an impression as possible of Mackenzie's frequent stylistic brilliance and fluency in many different forms, and to emphasise his versatility, several of the quotations from works which remain unjustly out of print or difficult to obtain are given at some length, particularly in the case of The Four Winds of Love. This is done in the hope that in these instances the injustice of the author's critical neglect will speak for itself.

Mackenzie has many deficiencies as a novelist which will be evident to any critical reader, and these have not been underestimated. Paradoxically, however, these deficiencies are often directly connected with Mackenzie's finest quality as a writer: his fluency, and his insistence in manipulating that virtue as a novelist always determined to be generous to his reader. The works for which Mackenzie is remembered exhibit this quality at its finest, but the novels which remain representative of the author are not his most accomplished. The following pages explore the possibility of reconciling this imbalance. In
his conclusion to Literature in My Time (1933), Mackenzie assesses the impact of Joyce's Ulysses in terms of his own creative standpoint:

I belong sufficiently to this age to apprehend that the changes in literature we now perceive are not the fugitive expression of a temporary condition; but I belong too much to the past to presume to claim a right of exegesis, and with these words I shall return to my own dreams of ways and means to give machine-man as difficult a course as possible.  

Despite his confessed adherence to past tradition, Mackenzie's novels are valuable in the context of the issues of the present - and the past that shapes those issues - which determine why the work of any novelist is criticised, analysed or discussed. If the relationship between Mackenzie's novels and such issues is sometimes of more interest than the novels themselves, then the need to argue a case for those novels' own 'claim to a right of exegesis' is no less necessary.
CHAPTER TWO

POTENTIAL AND LIMITATION 1912-1915

Carnival, Sinister Street

I Transitions

In a footnote to his *History of the English Novel*, George Saintsbury remarked that 1913 had opened as auspiciously with *Sinister Street* as 1814 with *Waverley*.'The novels have more in common than might at first be supposed. Each occupies an epoch-marking position within the development of fiction: Scott's as the most influential expression of 19th century Scottish Romanticism and the work establishing the celebration of historical consciousness in the novel, Mackenzie's for its societal specificity as the finest evocation of pre-war Edwardian youth and as an unrivalled portrayal of that generation's experience of Oxford undergraduate life. Both share an added distinction: since publication, neither *Waverley* nor *Sinister Street* has ever been out of print. In his 'Epilogical Letter' to Volume Two of the first edition, Mackenzie concludes: 'whether or not it was worth writing at such length depends finally, I claim, upon the number of people who can bear to read about it'.² To adopt the author's criteria of literary value, then purely in terms of its sales figures since publication the numbers who have been able to 'bear to read' *Sinister Street* are concrete justification of Mackenzie's motives in writing it 'at such length' — almost one thousand pages.

George Saintsbury's gesture, however, of relegating a novel he clearly believed to be of major literary significance to the critic's peripheral territory of polite afterthought — the footnote — is strangely symbolic both of Compton Mackenzie's indeterminate reputation and the status of *Sinister Street*, his third novel and the most important work of his early period. Despite the excited critical acclaim which greeted its publication, the novel has never received the detailed attention and scrutiny it invites and deserves. Literary historians and critics since Saintsbury have persisted in restricting their acknowledgement to
further footnotes or the equivalent of a brief parenthetical mention. While such references are as plentiful as the surveys and histories in which they appear, they do little to develop beyond the restrictions in contemporary accounts of the novel, all of which were confined to the limitations of newspaper or periodical reviews. Although more considered evaluations of *Sinister Street* were included within several book-length period surveys of fiction which appeared in the 1920s, none of these succeed in doing justice to the novel's huge scope and substance. A consistent feature of Mackenzie's creative character - his disposition towards epic scale and largesse of structure in works of successive volumes - often contributed to the shortcomings in critical reception of his work, a problem which was to have serious consequences some twenty-five years later in the troubled publication history of *The Four Winds of Love* (see Chapter Five).

Although comparatively more modestly scaled, the publication of *Sinister Street* in two volumes (Volume One, 1 September 1913, Volume Two, 11 November 1914) over a period of fourteen months - during which time the world had gone to war - made Mackenzie and his publisher, Martin Secker, apprehensive, and with good cause. Quite apart from the deferred opinions critics and reviewers felt was their entitlement on greeting the first volume, and which meant that coherent appraisal was unhelpfully delayed, the scale of each volume and the long gap between them also helped to exacerbate many critics' impression of an apparent diffuseness or absence of form in the novel, charges which have never been convincingly refuted. Mackenzie's anxiety concerning this criticism can be detected in his defence of the novel's scale and structure in the 'Epilogical Letter' to Volume Two: 'A work of art is bounded by the capacity of the spectator to apprehend it as a whole. This on your authority was said by Aristotle'. Yet even Mackenzie's most eloquent and influential spokesman, Henry James, based his evaluation of *Sinister Street* as the work of England's most promising novelist on the first volume of the novel alone, the second not having appeared at the time he wrote his famous *Times Literary Supplement* article, 'The Younger Generation', in 1914.

James concentrated his hopes for the continuation of an English fictional tradition on a group of four young novelists - Hugh Walpole,
Gilbert Cannan, D.H. Lawrence and Compton Mackenzie, singling out the latter for particular praise - whom James perceived to be related in 'a quasi-parental way' to the already established fictional tradition of Joseph Conrad, Maurice Hewlitt, John Galsworthy, H.G. Wells and Arnold Bennett. With the exception of Lawrence, James's group represent that younger school of Edwardians poised on the edge of the Georgian period who achieved eminence just prior to the First World War (although he does not include J.D. Beresford, Oliver Onions or Frank Swinnerton), but whose achievements have subsequently been repeatedly eclipsed by the lasting status of their more successful contemporaries, Somerset Maugham and E.M. Forster.

If critics have subsequently been able, with the benefit of hindsight, to put James right on the question of his unfortunately timed predictions, particularly in the case of his very reluctant inclusion of Lawrence, few have attempted to correct his half-built impressions of Mackenzie's novel by apprehending it 'as a whole' in accordance with the author's invocation of Aristotelian standards. Of the three book-length studies of Mackenzie referred to in Chapter One, only Leo Robertson succeeds in defending the novel's length, but only in terms of an impressionistic recounting of plot and an avoidance of interpretation which fails to justify the flattering claims he makes for it, a failing more pronounced in the shorter discussions by Kenneth Young and D.J. Dooley. The latter, in fact, concedes in conclusion that Sinister Street has not yet been adequately assessed. The author's implication that his novel be considered as exemplary of a literary work of art observing the Aristotelian unities is a questionable aggrandizement of his creative aspirations, but a satisfactorily complete account of Sinister Street does reveal the overall thematic coherence and unity which few commentators have permitted to it.

A fuller analysis of the novel is necessary not only in terms of its critical position in Mackenzie's career. There are few novels as illustrative of historical and cultural transition as Sinister Street, which rests precariously on the very brink of two chasms: those between Edwardianism and the Great War, and traditional and modern. The author himself likened the intrusion of the War into his life to 'a deep gorge'. There is an ironically precise neatness in the confidence of
Mackenzie's status in 1914 as the author of a newly published novel which, confirming the promise of *The Passionate Elopement* and *Carnival*, appeared to embody the future promise not merely of Mackenzie's career but of an entire generation of English novelists; an eminence irretrievably swallowed by what Ford Madox Ford described, in a phrase very similar to Mackenzie's 'deep gorge', as the 'crack across the table of History' of September 1914. Mackenzie was as impatient to see action as the rest of his generation; by 1915 he was with the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force at Gallipoli, by 1916 he was in control of Military Intelligence in the Aegean, where he soon had a delicate and complex international situation at his fingertips which could be manipulated like a plot from a novel. After 1918 he was as profoundly changed and scarred, personally and artistically, by the experience as any of his generation who had survived. F. Scott Fitzgerald's impression was that the War had completely 'wrecked' Mackenzie. The wreck, however, was to prove capable of recovery.

The extent to which the Great War can be interpreted as a distinct contributory factor in the transition in literary sensibility taking place at this time has been a reiterated point of debate in discussion of the period. It was not until 1975, however, that Paul Fussell in his seminal *The Great War and Modern Memory* demonstrated for the first time the profundity of the experience of 1914-1918 not only in its effects upon creative writers and literary convention but the degree to which the mythology of the Great War infiltrated 20th century consciousness. Like Fussell's study, Mackenzie's career provokes doubts concerning the validity of D.S.R. Welland's warning, in his critical study of Wilfred Owen, against 'too facile a dovetailing of literary and social history'.

There are few novelists in whom the War registers its intrusive effects so precisely and unambiguously, largely because unlike the writers with whom the symptoms of a 'post-War' condition have been repeatedly associated, Mackenzie as a writer rooted in pre-War conventions could not find a means of expressing the War's significance, and in persisting in writing according to those conventions the War's indelible impact is all the more incongruously captured. The implications of this are considered more fully in Chapter Three. As a writer who appeared to have come of age in 1914, however, quite apart from its spiritual and
creative legacy, the War on its simplest level was for Mackenzie and his generation a damaging interruption to the continuity of writers' careers, as Douglas Goldring observed in 1920 in his aptly-titled Reputations:

The War has hung up all literary careers, those of the successful as well as the unknown, and it is hard to believe that any novelist can have emerged from it with his reputation unaltered.³

In Mackenzie's case the effects of this alteration were to be anticipated at a very early stage. Even in a novel as conspicuously Edwardian as Sinister Street, the circumstances of the intrusion of the War on its composition are uncannily preserved. In his Foreword to the new edition of 1949, the author describes the sense of urgency, and the astonishing speed, with which the second volume was written in 1914 amidst the ominous portents of war:

I was received into the Catholic Church in April 1914, and I found the perfection of that summer too seductive for steady work. Then came the assassination of the Archduke at Sarajevo. I knew that war was certain and hurried back to England from Italy. In spite of the equanimity at home my conviction was unshaken, and all that July I worked twelve hours a day at the second volume. I had just finished the Oxford part when war was declared. I can hear now the stillness of that August night before the clock struck twelve, and I can hear now the menacing rumble of the troop-trains and ammunition-trains southward bound all through that August night, until the sun rose and I went to bed. The manuscript of the second volume of Sinister Street, which is now in the Bodleian, is scrabbled with the places that haunted our fancy through the retreat from Mons. I used to doodle with Namur and Liege and Valenciennes while I was searching for an epithet or the name of a street.¹⁰

There can be few novels which provide such an apposite and powerful metaphor for what the War signified for Mackenzie's generation. The sense of compositional urgency - hastening to preserve an idealised Edwardian aesthetic from the forces poised to destroy it - actually assists the compositional process in a bizarre conflation of fiction and actuality. Tinkering with the enormity of these momentous labels of historical upheaval, the names of the towns falling to the German advance, in order to enhance the credibility of a fictional world, the creative celebration of the past stands alongside the strenuous realities of present history it attempts to contradict.

21
This dramatises and anticipates memorably the post-War disorientation which was to afflict the author so adversely for some ten years; his experience in the war, he claims, 'left me at the end of it as impatient of the mood of Sinister Street as any man in his mid-thirties should be of his teens'. Although registered very differently, Mackenzie's post-war sensitivity to a fracture in historical and artistic coherence was no less acute than in the case of the post-war transition in literary sensibility so conspicuous in the novels and career of D.H. Lawrence and in the new fictional alternatives of the Modernists. Unlike these experimental writers, however, Mackenzie was to find the increasingly 'psycho-analytical' trend in fiction distasteful - although he refers in My Life and Times to his careful reading of Freud, Jung and Adler throughout the twenties - and he was too closely identified with pre-War values to imitate the rejection or discrediting of the immediate past which became a prominent feature of post-1918 literary trends.

The promissory tone of Henry James's 1914 article was innocent not only of an impending war; he was further unaware of the equally impending pre-emptive wave of Modernism whose iconoclasm was not only to challenge but also to disperse long-standing artistic principles. The fact that Mackenzie's reputation and career were established at the same time as those of Somerset Maugham, Francis Brett Young, D.H. Lawrence, E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce is a forceful reminder of an eclecticism in early twentieth century literature which, after the War, was to alter from stylistic diversity into a new polarity between traditional and modern, a transition pinpointed by Samuel Hynes in which 'art as an instrument of social record is replaced by new conceptions of an aristocracy of artists, and an autonomous art of aesthetic values'. Hynes goes on to emphasise that although by 1910 the leading lights of the modern movement had 'begun their revolution', the impact of the War at first interrupted but afterwards proved to have intensified that revolution's aims:

What did happen was that the modern movement was cut off for four years, and when it did flower, after the war, it was different - more cynical, less assertive about points of morality and value, and most of all, determined to reject everything that could be identified with pre-war England...Many fine writers were caught in that rejection; but perhaps even more important, an idea of art was dismissed that might have lent vitality to the post-war literary world.
Published a few months before Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* began serialisation in *The Egoist* in 1913 and banned by the circulating libraries two years before the suppression by the authorities of D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*, *Sinister Street* exemplifies a novel, and a career, caught within the process of displacement Hynes describes. The status of the novel, however, is equally illustrative of the extent to which the Modernist disdain for traditional narrative criteria as practised by Mackenzie and his contemporaries encouraged a polarity in creative preferences which was invidious in its discrediting of fiction with considerable thematic and ideological value. A preoccupation with the qualities and features of *Sinister Street* which make the novel unmistakably pre-War, a perspective emphatically adopted by the author himself, has obscured certain thematic features very similar in emphasis to the preoccupations of Modernist fiction. The relationship between time and consciousness, the nature of aesthetic experience and artistic self-consciousness, and the alienation of the imagination are themes consistently examined throughout Mackenzie's novel.

In exploring these preoccupations from within the traditional techniques which Modernism rejected, Mackenzie provides an illuminating perspective upon the frequently too abruptly defined paradigm of the traditional pre-empted by the modern and the location of a schism which to some extent the emphases of *Sinister Street* belies. In his review of the novel Mackenzie's contemporary, Lascelles Abercrombie, detected this sense of a gradual rather than a sudden transition: 'we seem to be watching that strangest of all modes of evolution, the dissolution of one century's character to make way for the character of another century'. Although Abercrombie was describing the delineation of the novel's hero, his observation applies equally to the novel's echoing of a transition in literary sensibility. The concerns of *Sinister Street* help to clarify the nature of this process both from the point of view of tradition and the Modernism which discredited it.
II The Temperament of Prose

Although Sinister Street was the most outstanding success of Mackenzie's pre-War career, by the time he published it he was already a literary celebrity as the author of two novels, The Passionate Elopement (1911) and Carnival (1912). This critical eminence owed a great deal to the author's highly individual and distinctive prose style, a feature particularly prominent in Carnival and which attracted a corresponding degree of attention. A brief discussion of The Passionate Elopement and Carnival is necessary by way of an introduction to the preoccupations and characteristics Mackenzie develops in Sinister Street.

For Henry James, Mackenzie's meticulous concern with idiom suggested a parental devotion to style, evidence of an author (like James himself) positively caring for his expression as expression, positively providing for his phrase as a fondly foreseeing parent for a child, positively loving it in the light of what it may do for him - meeting revelations, that is, in what it may do, and appearing to recognise that the value of the offered thing, its whole relation to us, is created by the breadth of language.

It is interesting that James did not include The Passionate Elopement in his discussion, where the author's stylistic concerns were emphasised in a very different way. In one sense Mackenzie's career did begin in Scotland: it was in Edinburgh that his first play, The Gentleman in Grey, was first performed at the Edinburgh Lyceum in 1907 by his father's company to an enthusiastic audience, afterwards touring the rest of Scotland with equal success. Mackenzie, however, was dissatisfied: 'Was I going to write plays in the future of which the only good performance from my point of view would be when I read it to the company? After that, were the actors instead of giving life to my characters going to destroy that life?" Disillusioned with his youthful and derivatively Georgian poetic ambitions, Mackenzie made a sudden decision to turn The Gentleman in Grey into his first novel. As he began he experienced a kind of enlightenment:

I remember the sense of freedom at escaping from the thrall of narrative verse into narrative prose, and the elation of writing
dialogue that no actor would have to speak and in speaking destroy that dialogue as I heard it being spoken in my head.  

The novel which resulted, a pseudo-eighteenth century Regency romance based on Beau Brummell's cultivation of fashionable society in Bath, represents something of an anomaly when contrasted with the concerns of the author's more serious and accomplished fiction. A dependence on elements of melodrama, romance, and pathos in *The Passionate Elopement* anticipate the weaknesses of Mackenzie's inferior productions in the 1920s like *Fairy Gold* (1926) or *Rogues and Vagabonds* (1927). Nonetheless, as a skilful exercise in literary parody the novel's initial success is understandable, and as an adaptation from the stage it provides concrete evidence of the centrality of a theatrical perspective to Mackenzie as a writer of prose fiction. Although an achieved apprentice-piece, *The Passionate Elopement* does contain features significant in the context of the author's development. Mackenzie's mimicry of the artificiality of Regency manners, modes and styles, and his imitation of the narrative conventions of Fielding and Smollett, which is often deliberately infused with a contemporary idiom and sensibility, conspire to make the novel's narrative style its true subject. This self-consciousness, faintly suggestive of later Modernist narrative techniques, emphasises the important appeal to the author of a self-contained, artificial world of aesthetic value which informs portions of *Sinister Street*, but also the rural lyricism of *Guy and Pauline* (1915), and which can be traced even later in the hedonistic artistic cliques portrayed in *Vestal Fire* (1927) and *Extraordinary Women* (1928).

As Erlandson indicates in an interesting defence of *The Passionate Elopement*, the novel's artificial idiom owes as much to the influence of fin-de-siècle aestheticism as it does to its pastiche of eighteenth-century values, Oscar Wilde in particular. Mackenzie's adolescence and attendance at Oxford coincided almost exactly with the course of the Aesthetic Movement, when the combined influences of Wilde, Pater, Ruskin, Huysmans, Swinburne and the Rossettis were inescapable. Their legacy is conspicuous in the celebrated monologue of Beau Ripple towards the end of the novel where he describes his pursuit of aesthetic perfection after the season at Curtain Wells (Bath) is over:
"...I meditate in a charming rural retreat which I possess in the green heart of Devonshire. There I spend leafy days in pastoral seclusion. I have my plane trees, my jug of old Falernian. I have my spaniel, Lalage, and an impoverished female cousin who performs very engagingly upon the spin et. I sit in the austere musick-chamber with shadowy white walls, empty save for two or three black oaken chairs and the curiously painted instrument. I listen to the cool melodies of Couperin and admire his unimpassioned symbols of the Passions where a purple domino is the most violent, the most fervid emotion. I hear above the chirping of the crickets, the faint harmonies of Archangelo Corelli and the fugues of Domenico Scarlatti, whose name is so vivid, but whose musick like the morning is a mist of gold. I sit in a library hung with faded rose brocades and tarnished silver broideries. There I meditate upon the bloody deaths of Emperors and the grey hairs of Helen of Troy. There I move serenely from shelf to shelf and hark to the muffled thunder of volumes clapped together to exclude the odorous dust. I ponder Religion and Urn Burial and pore over the lurid histories of notable comets. At dusk of a fine day, I step out in the dewy garden to watch the colour fade from the flowers and the stars wink in the lucent green of the western sky. Presently I step indoors, light a tall wax candle set in a silver candlestick, go sedately to bed and fall asleep to the perfume of roses and jasmine and the echo of a cadence from the Anatomy of Melancholy."19

Although he would parody the extravagances of the nineties aesthetes in Sinister Street, where the decadent Arthur Wilmot is given lines of languorous self-gratification very similar to those of Beau Ripple, it was not until after the purgative experience of the Great War that Mackenzie completely shook off the sincere purpose and demands of a prose style insistent upon a heightened sense of felicitous ornamentation. The Encyclopedia Britannica attempted to capture the quality of the author's pre-War style in a word which might have been borrowed from Mackenzie's vocabulary: 'mellifluous'. Following the publication of Sinister Street, Edmund Gosse told Mackenzie in 1915:

...you have the temperament of prose. You are a most interesting and advancing prose-writer - far and away the best of your generation...Your verbal felicities are more numerous and more sparkling than ever. Don't let them be too deliberate...You hardly give yourself time to build a sentence, you puff out little flotillas of brilliant phrases.20

Paradoxically, the consolidation of Mackenzie's future fictional technique and priorities in Carnival, the second novel with which the author declared his creative commitment to the contemporary world, demonstrates
the extent of the author's meticulously stylistic voice more memorably than in the historically remote and seductively artificial social system recreated in *The Passionate Elopement*. Apart from a change in thematic priority, an important modulation in idiom can be detected. As the brilliant opening of *Carnival* illustrates, the author had located a style which synthesised decorative and poetic substance with precision and accuracy.

All day long over the grey Islington street, October casting pearly mists had turned the sun to silver and made London a city of meditation whose tumbled roofs and parapets and glancing spires appeared serene and baseless as in a lake's tranquility. The traffic, muted by the glory of a fine autumn day, marched, it seemed, more slowly and to a sound of heavier drums. Like mountain echoes street-cries haunted the burnished air, while a muffin-man, abroad too early for the season, swung his bell intermittently with a pastoral sound. Even the milk-cart, heard in the next street, provoked the imagination of distant armour. The houses seemed to acquire from the grey and silver web of October enchantment a mysterious immensity. There was no feeling of stressful humanity even in the myriad sounds that in a sheen of beauty floated about the day. The sun went down behind roofs and left the sky plumèd with rosy feathers. There was a cold grey minute before dusk came stealing in richly and profoundly blue: then night sprang upon the street, and through the darkness an equinoctial wind swept moaning.21

As the opening emphatically indicates, the novel's consistently vivid evocation of urban London is unusual in terms of the rural imagery through which it is frequently registered, detected here in 'lake's tranquillity', 'mountain echoes', 'a pastoral sound', 'plumed with rosy feathers'. Combining a sense of the ethereal and evocative with the concrete and the urbane, the novel generates the 'enchantment' which became the recurring term employed by contemporary reviewers attempting impressionistic definition of Mackenzie's distinctive stylistic voice.

In the novel's portrayal of the dancer Jenny Raeburn's tragically wasted life from childhood to early womanhood against a background of London theatrical life towards the end of the nineteenth century, the social specificity of *Carnival* reveals an indebtedness to the example of Arnold Bennett, while its vivid depiction of Cockney life and speech is equally reminiscent of two of Mackenzie's most important fictional influences: Dickens and H.G. Wells. On the evidence of *Carnival*, Frank Swinnerton declared that Mackenzie 'was one of the few writers able to
dramatise the Cockney scene'. This is a feature, together with the
delineation of Jenny's love-affair with the Oxford prig and would-be
artist Maurice Avery, anticipating much of the terrain common to
Sinister Street and Guy and Pauline (1915). The novel's evocation of the
London 'Orient Palace of Varieties' and the life of its 'corps de ballet,
based on the Alhambra Theatre, is one of Carnival's most memorable and
accomplished set-pieces:

Under the stars, the Piccadilly courtesans affect the onlooker less
atrociously. Night lends a magic of softness to their fretful beauty.
The sequins lose their garishness; the painted faces preserve an
illusion of reality. Moonlight falls gently on the hollow cheek;
kindles a spark of youth in the leaden eye. The Piccadilly courtesans
move like tigers in a tropic gloom with velvet blazonries and a
stealthy splendour that masks the hunger driving them out to seek
their prey. On the Orient Promenade the finer animalism has vanished;
it was never more than superficially aesthetic. The daughters of
pleasure may still be tigers but they are naphtha-lit, pacing
backwards and forwards in a cage. They all appear alike. Their hats
are all too large; their figures are too brutal, their cheeks too
lifeless. They are automatic machines of lust waiting to be stirred
into action by pennies. (Chapter XI, p. 137)

This reveals the maturity and adroitness of Mackenzie's 'temperament of
prose' in a passage which perfectly balances satirical tone with
striking colour and dynamic, culminating in the juxtaposition between
the fantastical connotations of the 'Piccadilly courtesans' and the
cynically prosaic image of 'automatic machines of lust'.

Beneath the assuredness of a prose both robust and lyrical, further
fictional influences are evident. Like Bennett himself, Mackenzie's
concern in Carnival with the social conditions and formative influences
upon his heroine, and his tendency to psychologise about the effects of
these external forces upon her, closely links the novel to the naturalism
of Zola and other European novelists of the nineteenth century. Much
space is devoted to complaints concerning the failures in Jenny's
education and the social restraints which impinge upon her imagination
and development, and the sense of futility and waste with which Jenny is
manipulated in the direction of her fate makes Carnival an especially
grim manifestation of naturalistic determinism. The cynical complacency
which infects the heroine, captured in her most frequently used phrase,
'Who cares?', is complemented in a foreboding inevitability pervading the
novel's plot, evoked in the title of Chapter XXXVI - describing Jenny's abandonment of all resistance in surrendering to meaningless marriage with the Cornish farmer, Trewella - 'The Tragic Loading', a title which is also a prefigurative pun referring to Trewella's shooting of Jenny in the final chapter.

Jenny's passivity in the hands of a brooding and malign external determinism, and the author's ambivalence between his surrogate role as novelist in manipulating that force and his affection for a stricken heroine, makes Carnival very close in mood and design to Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles. Mackenzie testified to his admiration for the novelist in Literature In My Time (1933). Just as the oppressive fatalism of Hardy's novel is mitigated by its poetic celebration of the rural and its insistence on the sensuous beauty of the heroine, in Carnival the grimmer aspects of Mackenzie's urban realism are often disguised by the lyrical intensity of his prose, and in the final portion of the novel, the urban is complemented by a pastoral Cornish setting where that intensity reaches its height as if to compensate for the predicament of the heroine and the disaster awaiting her.

Carnival is distinguished from Tess of the D'Urbervilles, however, in that Hardy's more inscrutable conception of an implacable agency controlling human activity drawn from Aeschylus - the 'President of the Immortals' - becomes in Mackenzie's novel an explicit and sustained metaphor: that of the conventions of the commedia dell'arte or the Harlequinade encapsulated in the title. Thus Jenny Pearl reflects the role of the Columbine; her lover Maurice Avery that of the Pierrot; while the dour farmer Trewella represents a combination of the Harlequin and the ridiculous Pantaloon. As an artist who owed his formative influences to theatre, the iconography of the commedia dell'arte as interpreted by French pantomime was of course a substantial part of Mackenzie's theatrical inheritance. Echoes of its devices can also be detected in The Passionate Elopement and later in Extraordinary Women. A much more powerful and wide-ranging artistic influence at the time, however, was Diaghilev and the Russian Ballet's interpretation of these myths in 1910 and 1911: Mackenzie described the effect of their season at Covent Garden in 1911 as 'revolutionary...a revelation of pulsating beauty'. Significantly, Stravinsky's manipulation of the Russian 'Carnival' in
Petrouchka pre-dates Carnival by only one year, and was one of the ballets produced under Diaghilev in London.

As a novel based on theatrical life, the commedia dell’arte metaphor is precisely apposite to Mackenzie’s purposes. As a novel based on realism, the application of this sustained metaphor of pantomimic artifice to the mundane material of a grimly deterministic plot is not only unusual for the time: by imbuing the fate of his heroine with the internal coherence and grace of an accepted artistic convention, much of the mechanised inevitability of the plot is mitigated by lending an added frame of reference to the narrative. Thus in Chapters XVII, XXIX, XXXVII, and XLI, entitled 'Columbine Asleep', 'Columbine at Dawn', 'Columbine in the Dark' and 'Columbine Happy' respectively and each only a page in length, critical junctures in Jenny’s life are registered explicitly in terms of the 'Carnival' metaphor as a means of emphasising the concerns of the remainder of the naturalistic narrative. Chapter XXIX, 'Columbine at Dawn', denotes Jenny after a loveless surrendering of her virginity as a helpless puppet:

Columbine, leaden-eyed, sat up in the strange room, where over an unfamiliar chair lay huddled all her clothes. Through the luminous white fog of dawn a silver sun, breasting the house-tops, gleamed very large. Wan with a thousand meditations, seeming frail in the mist of St. Valentine’s morning, suddenly she flung herself deep into the pillow and, buried thus, lay motionless like a marionette whose wire has snapped. (Chapter XXIX, p. 316.)

Mackenzie remained greatly attracted to the simplicity of the theatrical metaphor. In one of his more satisfactory novels written in financial haste, Figure of Eight (1936), he returned to the themes of Carnival in a shorter sequel based on the lives of Jenny Pearl’s fellow corps de ballet girls after Jenny’s murder, tracing the gradual destruction of their theatrical world and its eventual succumbing to new social forces: the novel concludes with the Palace of Varieties closing down in the 1930s and being reincarnated as a cinema. The poignant sense of demise and transience in the girls’ lives and careers is conveyed with an economical precision of form and structure which follows the balletic, symmetrical and graceful device of the novel’s title, demonstrating a narrative control and concision looking back to Vestal Fire, forward to
Thin Ice, and providing a curious contrast with the comparative langour of The Four Winds of Love, which had just begun composition.

Discussing the enormous influence of Diaghilev and the Russian Ballet as a source of expressive emancipation for a whole generation of English artists, Martin Green remarks:

Diaghilev became the general of an army of cultural images. The commedia figures had become prominent in the art of the 1890s, in both England and France...They became a great popular success in the early movies, in the work of Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Laurel and Hardy, and the Marx Brothers. They inspired modern poetry...through Jules Laforgue and T.S. Eliot. And in the 1920's they entered fiction.23

Mackenzie's manipulation of the 'cultural images' of commedia in Carnival eight years before Green's date - although Carnival is not a direct anticipation of the ends to which modern poets or novelists of the 1920s interpreted commedia dell' arte - illustrates the extent to which establishing a consensus of technique as it is manifest in a single period can obscure the preparedness of an earlier writer to interpret themes and techniques which anticipate future conventions.

In its contemporary fictional context, Carnival was widely perceived to be unusual as a novel adhering to the prevalent conventions of Edwardian fiction within which an individual sense of stylistic priority was nonetheless asserted. If in his meticulous rendering of detail Mackenzie was frequently compared to Arnold Bennett24, a review in The Globe epitomises the general response to his more unique characteristic:

The author paints his picture not with the unimaginative realism of a Zola, but with all the imaginative reality of a poetic and sympathetic writer. He is perfectly truthful, and describes things exactly as they might happen, yet he conceals something of the ugly crudity of his theme in a gossamer-like garment, fashioned of his own poetic feeling.25

Carnival established not merely that individual voice, but also a reputation: in Britain the novel reached a fifth edition in less than three months, and when it was published in March 1912 in America the first edition was exhausted within two days. In Sinister Street, Mackenzie would pursue the distinctive features of Carnival to more ambitious lengths.
In Carnival Mackenzie confessed his indebtedness to the technique exemplified by Flaubert and Stendhal of mediating his material through the consciousness of a central protagonist, and 'avoiding any incident that was not within his principal character's ken'. Henry James's receptiveness towards Mackenzie's work was undoubtedly enhanced by 'the Master's' disposition, as critic and novelist, to a technique based upon rigorous restriction of fictional perspective to one individual. James, however, perceived in Mackenzie's handling of his heroine an important weakness:

...the heroine of Carnival is frankly too minute a vessel of experience for treatment on the scale on which the author has honoured her - she is done assuredly, but under multiplications of touch that become too much, in the narrow field, monotonies; and she leaves us asking almost as much what she exhibitionally means, what application resides in the accumulation of facts concerning her...

This is evident in the novel at points where Jenny is seen to reflect on issues arising from the novelist's analytical purpose which would quite clearly be beyond his character's ken, and where the author imposes his narrative voice incongruously by attributing reflections to Jenny arising from an intelligence clearly not her own. It is within those portions of the novel which emphasize Mackenzie's naturalistic and documentative perspective that this incongruity is most conspicuous, particularly in Chapter XXVI, 'In Scyros', which describes Jenny's flirtation with the suffragette movement. In his wish to inject material of explicitly sociological and historical interest, Mackenzie loses sight of the parameters of his heroine's intellect and consciousness, and divorces the material of his narrative from its medium.

Mackenzie's consciousness of these flaws of methodology in his second novel (his suggestion of extensive revision of Carnival to James was met with horror) clearly influenced the technical approach to his third. In Carnival his heroine's theatrical experiences had been based on the vivid memories of one of the corps de ballet girls whom Mackenzie had met during his work for Harry Péliissier at the Alhambra in 1910; Jenny's marriage to Trewhella in the novel's last third was drawn from an earlier encounter in Cornwall. Sinister Street, however, was Mackenzie's first sustained manipulation of frankly autobiographical material, an approach to which the author felt attracted as a means of avoiding the
narrative imperfections he acknowledged in Carnival. The decision is also significant within a wider literary context. Sinister Street belongs with a group of long chronicle novels written in the early years of the twentieth century, the most notable of which are Somerset Maugham's Of Human Bondage (1915), Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage (1915-38), and Arnold Bennett's Clayhanger trilogy (1910-18). Common to these novels is their interpretation of the Victorian fictional model of the bildungsroman: the lengthy chronicle narrative of personal development from childhood onwards, not infrequently drawn from the experiences of the author. Sinister Street, however, shares features in common with more far-reaching developments in fiction at this time in which the preoccupations of the bildungsroman were given a new emphasis. This new emphasis gave rise to what might be termed the kunstler-roman, or the novel of the artist's development, usually based on semi-autobiographical character development but with a more explicitly realised delineation of the central figure's search for spiritual meaning in the attempt to reconcile questions of background and status with the creative impulse. Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage sequence reflects this concern, but it is central to the purposes of three other major novels of the time: D.H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers (1913), James Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916), and Wyndham Lewis's Tarr (1918).

While Mackenzie's novel is indebted to his more traditional contemporaries in his reliance on a leisurely narrative of objective documentation and social specificity, his hero Michael Fane is also presented in terms of the endeavour to impose aesthetic design and significance on life which preoccupies Lawrence and Joyce, and in this regard Sinister Street anticipates the concern of the Modernists with subjectivity and the role of the imagination, particularly the imagination of the artist. Though they are polarised in terms of fictional technique, Joyce's Portrait and Mackenzie's Sinister Street are complementary in their study of artistic failure: their common thematic focus, accordingly, sheds interesting light upon the division, in which Mackenzie would find himself caught, between traditional and modern.

The narrative method of Carnival of restricting scope to a central protagonist through whose consciousness is mediated a particular social and historical ambience, delineated with precision and detail, clearly
suited Mackenzie's attraction to large-scale and expansive novelistic structure. In turning to semi-autobiographical material in Sinister Street, the close identification between author and hero decreases the distance between narrator and protagonist which generated the unevenness throughout Carnival by removing the narrator's obligation to introduce psychological explication concerning his character. A more consistent reliance on his hero's consciousness, and a less obtrusive narrative voice, emphasises rather than obscures in Sinister Street a more specific preoccupation with the social, familial and emotional circumstances and influences which determine the development of the hero. The character of Jenny Raeburn had indicated Mackenzie's indebtedness to naturalism in that school's disposition towards features of lower-class life and experience as fictional material: in Sinister Street, as the author indicates, though the preoccupation with formative influences is equally evident the object of enquiry was to be very different:

I felt that it was time an attempt was made to present in detail the youth of somebody handicapped by a public school and university education instead of poverty or more humble circumstances.29

As this suggests, Mackenzie's concern is with the consequences of spiritual as opposed to material inadequacies: his hero's material stability, in fact, is to be interpreted as a factor which exacerbates rather than discourages his emotional anxieties. Michael Fane is the first of many of Mackenzie's protagonists whose relationship with their immediate social context is ambiguous and atypical. As can soon be inferred by discreet implications throughout Book One of Sinister Street, Michael Fane is fatherless, the illegitimate son of the peer Lord Saxby who, unable to obtain a divorce, maintains a discreet relationship with Michael's mother which accounts for her chronic absences from home. Therefore for much of the novel Michael is also effectively motherless. Michael is finally denied a true filial relationship when Saxby is killed in the Boer War: deprived of succession to a title and aristocratic heritage, his sense of isolation from hereditary security and continuity is intensified, and his subsequent restlessness concerning home and class illustrates that an intention of the author is to depart from Edwardian fictional practice and delineate a hero who cannot be defined
by class alone. Fane’s tangential status is an important anticipation of the equally displaced John Ogilvie in The Four Winds of Love, a hero who cannot be defined by nationality alone (see Chapter Five). Mackenzie’s two most important heroes, therefore, embody the condition of their creator as described by Edmund Wilson in that they are 'at an angle to English society', indicating the centrality of this theme to the duration of Mackenzie’s career.

The narrative’s probing into such issues in Sinister Street is of a far greater forensic accuracy and scope than the method of Carnival. Mackenzie divides the experiences of Michael Fane into four self-contained 'Books' - a four-part structure which in itself anticipates the four epochal phases of John Ogilvie’s life in The Four Winds - dealing with his early childhood, education, student days, and experiences in working-class London respectively, creating a massive chronological narrative with an intense attention to accumulative detail. Many contemporary reviewers’ complaints of an apparent formlessness in the novel dwelt upon its apparent achievement as a tour de force of autobiographical recollection, made at the expense of discernible fictional design. John Freeman summarised this complaint in 1924:

Sinister Street is vast in size and meagre in content; it is packed with superfluities. Three fourths of it is inessential to the author’s declared intention; it is no more than guide-book cleverly designed (eg the first week in Oxford) to evoke an allusion of Oxford in Pimlico and Shepherd’s Bush; and concentrating upon the remaining fourth, you feel that your author has been aware of little more than the physiology of adolescence and the usual facile religious reactions.30

Although Freeman was undoubtedly justified in pointing to Mackenzie’s determination to discard the burden of selectivity, his reading of the novel as something approaching a thematic and structural void is excessively insensitive. His condemnation of Sinister Street, in fact, might have served as a more useful and accurate interpretation of the author’s first post-war novel The Life and Adventures of Sylvia Scarlett (1917), a work which betrays all the failings Freeman unfairly attributes to Sinister Street (see Chapter Three).

Mackenzie was sufficiently conscious of the novel's reliance on extensive scale and autobiographical material to anticipate critics'
complaints, and he insisted upon the work's claim to satisfactory fictional design. In the 'Dedication' written for the first Volume in 1913, the author made the following rhetorical challenge:

...are a thousand pages too long for the history of twenty-five years of a man's life, that is to say if one holds as I hold that childhood makes the instrument, youth tunes the strings, and early manhood plays the melody?31

By the time of the publication of Volume Two, Mackenzie was moved to include in his 'Epilogical Letter' a more explicit response to his critics.

There has lately been noticeable in the press a continuous suggestion that the modern novel is thinly disguised autobiography; and since the lives of most men are peculiarly formless this suggestion has been amplified into an attack on the form of the novel. In my own case many critics have persisted in regarding Sinister Street merely as an achievement of memory, and I have felt sometimes that I ought to regard myself as a sort of literary Datas, rather than as a mask veiling the nature of a novelist.32

The author invites here questions which have exercised narrative theorists in recent years concerning the distillation of autobiography into successful fictional art, issues which often surface in consideration of the group of early 20th century novels to which Sinister Street belongs. As Mackenzie suggests, a difficulty facing critics of semi-autobiographical fiction is the extent to which the dual impulses of imagination and memory can be regarded as reciprocal mental activities, given that imagination and memory coalesce to varying degrees according to the element of confusion which can be seen to exist - whether by design or accident - between author and hero. Mackenzie in Sinister Street is caught between a fictional form which attempts to imitate the arbitrary formlessness of human experience while imposing discernible design upon that experience, a pattern the author envisages in terms of the musical metaphor he introduces in his Dedication. This is a tension which helps to clarify the critical complaints concerning the novel typified by John Freeman.

As a writer possessed of such substantial powers of vivid recall, Mackenzie's attitude towards memory as expressed in Sinister Street can often appear merely quantitative, as if the value of his fictional material
is dependent upon the extent of detail he can recall and register: a feature which led the critic W.L. George to comment upon the novel's 'great congestion of word and interminable catalogues of facts and things'. This material density can seem exacerbated by Mackenzie's unwillingness to depart from rigidly chronological narrative structures, a predilection to which he adhered for the duration of his career. *Sinister Street* marks the first in a long series of narratives whose multiple-volume extent reflects a stubborn confidence in the potential of narrative to imitate in quantity and breadth the historical spans they contain: *The Alter Steps* trilogy, the four volumes of *Great War memories*, *The Four Winds of Love*, and finally, in a last triumphant gesture of faith in this artistic principle, the ten volumes of *My Life and Times*. This characteristic as it is manifest in *Sinister Street* results in an apparent ambivalence in its narrative priorities which is compounded by a difficulty in establishing a discernible 'plot', the principal events of which are rather superficial. For the majority of contemporary critics this obscured the author's intention to create an outward narrative of external detail and chronology complemented by an internal plotting of his hero's psychological development which provided its own coherence. Leo Robertson remains the only commentator to have recognised this:

*Sinister Street* is not a novel of the story-telling type. It has as little plot in the popular sense as *Vanity Fair* or *David Copperfield*, and to say this is not to speak in disparagement of the work in any way. It belongs to a more advanced stage or to a more significant order of the novelist's art in which in regard to the movement of the events the emphasis is less on mere external causal relations, however ingeniously worked into a pattern, than on some process or principle of unfolding from within as in life itself, where in addition to motion of the mechanistic sort there is the movement of growth and development, and, in the realm of thought and feeling and volition, that of self-determinism.

Robertson's connection of Mackenzie's concern for the process of 'unfolding from within' with 'a more advanced stage...of the novelist's art' implies the novelist's anticipation of the Modernist preoccupation with the process of human consciousness as a structuring narrative principle at the expense of delineating objective reality. Robertson fails to emphasise, however, that in *Sinister Street* Mackenzie lends equal attention to that objective reality in his emphasis on vivid
Potential and Limitation 1912-1915

documentary detail in the endeavour to delineate with accuracy the social conditions in which his hero's patterns of consciousness are enmeshed.

The fastidiousness of the author's concern for detail has helped to obscure the narrative's internal rhythm of psychological flux to the extent that the novel has been remembered for its historical specificity rather than its thematic preoccupations, so that Robertson can also assert that 'in the first half of it we are presented with a faithful and detailed picture of school life...in the second half we have the most complete and the truest record of Oxford and of the undergraduate life of those days that has ever been written'. Mackenzie's discovery on re-reading Sinister Street for publication of the new edition in 1949 that the novel 'is so exactly dated that it remains alive' amounts to an admission that the novel might be regarded as an almanac for its period which makes instant documentary of the societal fabric it re-creates, a quality which helps to account for the acute distaste and impatience the author felt for the novel in the post-war climate. Books One and Two of the novel, apart from demonstrating Mackenzie's Stevensonian sensitivity for the poignant innocence of childhood, contain repeated examples of the novel's capacity for imparting a sense of period permanence:

Within a fortnight Michael had become a schoolboy, sharing in the general ambitions and factions and prejudices and ideals of schoolboyhood. He was a member of Pearson's victorious army; he supported the London Road Car Company against the London General Omnibus Company, the District Railway against the Metropolitan railway; he was always ready to lam young boarders who were cheeky, and when an elder boarder called him a 'day-bug' Michael was discreetly silent, merely registering a vow to take it out of the young boarders at the first opportunity. He also learnt to speak without blushing of the gym. and the lav. and arith. and hols. and 'Bobbie' Randell and 'my people' and 'my kiddy sister'. He was often first with the claimant 'ego,' when someone shouted 'quis?' over a broken pocket-knife found. He could shout 'fain I' to be rid of an obligation and 'bags I' to secure an advantage. He was a rigid upholder of the inviolableness of Christian names as postulated by Randellite convention. He laid out threepence a week in the purchase of sweets, usually at four ounces a penny; while during the beggary that succeeded he was one of the most persistent criers of 'donnez,' when richer boys emerged from the tuckshop, sucking gelatines and satin pralines and chocolate creams and raspberry noyaux. As far the masters, he was ready to hear scandalous rumours about their unofficial lives, and he was one of the first to fly round the playground with the news that 'Squeaky' Mordaunt had distinctly
muttered 'damn' beneath his breath, when Featherstone Minor trod on his toe towards the close of first hour.36

This conspicuous specificity has encouraged critics to attribute the importance of Sinister Street to its socio-historical veracity rather than its achievements as a novel, an interpretation emphatically confirmed in Douglas Goldring's verdict on the work in 1924, where Sinister Street is actually described in the terms of a historical textbook:

The educational reformer - any kind of reformer - who seeks material for destructive criticism of our Public Schools and Universities, could have no more valuable text-books than Mr Mackenzie's novels of his middle period. They are veracious chronicles - at least in so far as the Oxford characters are concerned - and, horrible as it may seem, they do faithfully hold up the mirror to Oxford life before the War. It was just as empty, as pretentious, as unreal, as snobbish and as decadent as Mr Mackenzie makes out.37

Although Goldring emphasises the sociological importance of the novel, he does so in such a way that divests the author of any mediating perspective in terms of thematic focus upon his damning material. Whether or not Mackenzie condones or questions the values recreated in the novel is not Goldring's concern.

In his article of 1914, Henry James perceived the social specificity of both the older and the younger Edwardian novelists as a shared aesthetic, although his attitude towards this technique is critical, apologetic and defensive by turns. In his discussion of Wells and Bennett, James is clearly more critical, where he analyses a fictional method described as 'saturation' by way of an ugly and unflattering metaphor:

What we recognise the author as doing is simply recording his possession or, to repeat our more emphatic term, his saturation...They squeeze out to the utmost the plump and more or less juicy orange of a particular acquainted state and let this affirmation of energy, however directed or undirected, constitute for them the 'treatment' of the theme.38

With its connotations of perfunctory exercise and the avoidance of form or selection, this anticipates Virginia Woolf's more explicit and stringent attack in 'Modern Fiction' (1919) and 'Mr Bennett and Mrs
as a precursor of Modernist narrative techniques - was less pre-emptive. Although his four junior novelists were related to the older Edwardians in their reliance upon 'saturation' (a term which provides the Jamesian analogue for Woolf's 'materialism'), in singling out Mackenzie as the most interesting proponent of the 'New Novel' James makes a distinction in terms of refinement and selectivity between Bennett's use of the 'slice of life' and the younger novelist's more finely mediated 'extract...flasked and fine' (my italics):

We are sure throughout both "Sinister Street" and "Carnival" of breathing the air of the extract, as we contentiously call it, only in certain of the rounded episodes strung on the loose cord as so many vivid beads, each of its chosen hue, and the series of which, even with a difference of price between them, we take for a lively gage of performance to come.33

For James, Mackenzie's manipulation of the more discerning technique of the 'extract' in Carnival and Sinister Street was a distinctive achievement in that 'certain betrayals of a controlling idea and a pointed intention do comparatively gleam out'. Therefore while still indebted to the solidity and specificity of the Edwardian narrative fabric, Mackenzie revealed an equal concern for a more subtly realised internal thematic coherence and design. In Sinister Street, then, Mackenzie's technique was, in James's view, 'the most sufficient in itself', since from beginning to end it is exactly, where it is best, the recovered and reported thing, that thing alone, that thing existent in the field of memory, though gaining value too from the applied intelligence, or in other words from the lively talent, of the memorizer. The memorizer helps, he contributes, he completes, and what we have admired in him is that in the case of each of the pearls fished up by his dive - though indeed these fruits of the rummage are not all pearls - his mind has had a further iridescence to confer. It is the fineness of the iridescence that on such occasion matters, and this appeal to our interest is again and again on Mr. Mackenzie page of the happiest and of the brightest.40

It is unfortunate that critics have been unwilling to probe for the subtext beneath this intensely obfuscatory critical essay - an example of late Jamesian prose at its most circumlocutious - and determine the real nature of his interest in these younger novelists, Mackenzie in particular. It is also the case that a preoccupation with the ironic
timing, rather than the substance, of James's praise for Mackenzie has obscured the features James perceived to offer a potential refinement of those established Edwardian fictional techniques which would soon be subject to more wholesale disparagement. This narrowly historical exploitation of James's article was typified in Angus Wilson's retrospective appraisal of James's group of novelists in his article 'Broken Promise 1912-1922' (1951). Contrary to Wilson's assertion that 'one can only conclude that [James] was very doubtful if there was a new novel worth describing', an analysis of Mackenzie's 'pointed intention' as James perceived it in Sinister Street reveals emphatic thematic priorities which represent not the twilight of the tradition of Bennett, Wells and Galsworthy, but an attempt to develop that tradition and in so doing indicate its potential and its limitation.

On the publication of Volume Two of Sinister Street, Henry James was able to complete his half-built appraisal of the novel by informing its author that he had 'emancipated the English novel'. The emancipation was of course soon engulfed in historical and aesthetic upheaval, but the nature of that emancipation is no less worthy of consideration.

III Portrait of the Artist as an Englishman

One of Mackenzie's clearest ambitions in the construction of Sinister Street was to intensify the limitation of the novel's perspective to the consciousness of its protagonist Michael Fane, creating a character 'through whose eyes we are compelled to look at life'. This firm intention was to be more carefully controlled than in the case of Jenny Raeburn in Carnival, and in itself explains Henry James's approval of a novel which is fastidious in its adherence to James's own disposition for creating fictional personae who function as 'intense perceivers...of their respective predicaments'. The 'exact' dating which struck the author on his re-reading in 1949 was complemented by his discovery that 'the technique which aimed to keep the reader at the same age as the principal character has been effective'.

Both novel and hero are co-extensive: everything which happens to Michael Fane from early childhood onwards is registered in terms of his
sensibility at that particular stage, while the novel's events are significant purely in so far as they influence his inner development. Michael's attitude to life always remains to the reader what it was at the time, even in instances where discreet ironic distancing from the omniscient narrator is introduced. The immensity of the narrative, and its process of leisurely accumulation, is designed to mirror the most important facet of the hero's inward development, which is perceived in terms of the relationship between development and stability, permanence and flux. Michael's life is registered through a carefully plotted sequence of crises both intellectual and emotional, creating a series of conversions and rejections underlined by a process of idealistic expectation and abject deflation. The narrative's affinity with the sensibility of the hero accurately registers his paradoxical illusion that as each tangible stage in the hero's life has been reached he has attained ultimate fulfillment. It is the slow, linear pace of the narrative, however, which emphasises the evanescence of such phases, which are merely preludes to a continuing process of transition which will culminate in another ending. This quality of the novel dramatises a psychological characteristic captured by Frank Kermode in *The Sense of an Ending*: 'when we survive, we make little images of moments which have seemed like ends; we thrive on epochs'. Michael Fane's imagination, acting out an aphorism of Wallace Stevens also quoted by Kermode, 'is always at the end of an era'. In *Sinister Street* beginnings and endings proliferate, a pattern which is of heightened relevance in the author's manipulation of the novel's conclusion.

The beginning of the novel itself, like Dickens's *Great Expectations*, memorably captures through the sensibility of the child an image of the hero's 'first sense of the identity of things', a mood reminiscent in turn of Joyce's famous opening to *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

From a world of daisies as big as moons and of mountainous green hillocks Michael Fane came, by some unrealised method of transport, to the thin red house that as yet for his mind could not claim an individual existence amid the uniformity of a long line of fellows."

In a striking echo of Joycean enactive language, the inverted word-order through the deferred 'came' expresses the child's bewilderment at his means of arrival by making the sentence itself a grammatical 'unrealised
method of transport' for the reader. Reflected in the title of the first chapter, 'The New World', the narrative's discreet allusion to a transition in environment - from rural to urban - indicates the prominence of physical surroundings and conditions common to the purposes of naturalism which also informed Carnival. The metaphor of the street's uniformity and the house's individuality encapsulates the hero's ensuing struggle to create an identity amidst sameness and anonymity.

The motif of the novel's title is also immediately established as an image of Michael's relationship with the rest of human life. His recurring childish nightmare of the 'sinister street' - a prefiguration of the real waking dream of Book Four - dramatises Michael's experience of alienation from the security of convention as he searches for a personal ethos which will define and accommodate his ego:

He would find himself alone in a long street in the middle of the night. Usually it would be shining with wet, but sometimes it would be dry and airless. The street stretched as far as one could see. It had on either side lamp-posts that converged in the farthest distance. The houses all seemed empty, yet everyone was in some way a malignant personality. Down this street Michael would have to walk on and on. He would meet nobody, and the only living thing was a bony hound that pattered behind him at whatever pace he went, whether he ran or whether he loitered. He would in his dream be filled with a desire to enter one of those houses, and often he would mount the steps and knock a summons on the door - a knock that echoed all over the gloom within. While he knocked, the bony hound would howl in the shadows of the basement. Every house at which he knocked Michael would be more and more anxious to pass, more and more fearful to disturb. One house would simultaneously repel and draw him more than any of those left behind. He would struggle to go by, but he would find himself on the steps with legs that refused to carry him away. He would knock: very slowly the door would swing back and, convulsed and choking and warding off horror, Michael would wake in a phrenzy of fear to his own real house of ghastly stillness, where no longer did even a belated luggage-train or jingling hansom assure him of life's continuity. (Book One, Chapter III; pp. 48-9)

This passage effectively symbolises the mutual concerns, and techniques, of the entire novel. The motif of the street and the house, in addition to anticipating the author's obsession throughout with depicting the physical and atmospheric qualities of a whole range of streets and houses, also establishes the extent to which the novel's narrative is rooted in the Edwardian fictional practice of objective documentation and specificity: houses are manipulated throughout Sinister Street in
their most obvious significance as societal symbols. Michael's nightmare, however, reveals that the author's evocation of social detail and specificity is determined by the effect of those conditions on the inward processes and psychological traits of his hero, which is why in this early stage of the novel its themes, future development and its location are mediated through the hero's subconscious figuration of the conditions through which his consciousness is both defined and delimited.

In developing the implications of Michael's nightmare, the first Book, aptly-titled 'The Prison House', is replete with images of the constraints and barriers imposed by the physical and adult world on the young mind as it attempts to reach beyond the limitations of the tangible as perceived by the senses. The capacity of Michael's imagination to impose personal attributes upon the surroundings by which his imagination is circumscribed is made especially clear.

Nurse retired in an aura of importance, and Michael set out to establish an intimacy with the various iron bars of his cage. To a grown-up person these would certainly have seemed much more alive than even the houses of Carlington Road, West Kensington: for Michael each bar possessed a personality. Minute scratches unnoticed by the heedless adult world lent variety of expression; slight irregularities infused certain groups with an air of deliberate consultation. From the four corners royal bars, crowned with brass, dominated their subjects. Passions, intrigues, rumours, ambitions, revenges were perceived by Michael to be seething below the rigid exterior of these iron bars: even military operations were sometimes discernible. This cot was guarded by a romantic population, with one or two of whose units Michael could willingly have dispensed: one bar in particular, set very much askew, seemed sly and malignant. (Book One, Chapter I, p. 17)

In Mackenzie's analysis of the late Romantic predicament he imposes upon his hero, Wordsworth's 'prison house' is seen to impinge upon Michael's consciousness even before the erosion of childhood innocence is underway. The 'bars of his cage' which determine his first sensual impressions will repeatedly impede his chronic search for objective expression of the continuity of imaginative development.

An immediate consequence of Michael's sense of restraint, exacerbated through the 'tyranny' of his alcoholic nurse, is a capacity for over-idealisation. This is most manifest in his excessively romanticised image of a mother whose continual absence from home provokes
intensities of childish adoration and dependence registered in a fashion very similar to the complex of the young Marcel in Proust's *Du Côté de Chez Swann*: interestingly, both characters suffer acute anxieties over a maternal goodnight kiss.

In these early episodes of the novel a theme essential to the design of the entire narrative is established: the incompatibility of reality and imagination. Mackenzie recreates with considerable sensitivity the continual tension between fear and security in which the young Michael is developing as 'Time stretches before him in unimaginable reckonings'. He slowly begins to inhabit a private imaginative domain of grotesque and sordid fantasies, most of which are inspired by the ominous mystery he perceives in his urban environment. The arrival of his governess - the novel's touchstone of stability and intelligence - diverts him from a near solipsistic obsession with social evil and ugliness:

> Miss Carthew's arrival considerably widened Michael's view of life. Nurse's crabbed face and stunted figure had hitherto appropriately enough dominated such realities of existence as escaped from the glooms and shadows of his solitary childhood. Michael had been for so long familiar with ugliness that he was dangerously near to an eternal imprisonment in a maze of black fancies. He had come to take pleasure in the grotesque and the macabre, and even on the sunniest morning his imagination would turn to twilight and foggy eves, to basements and empty houses and loneliness and dust. (Book One Chapter V, p. 69)

The insistent atmosphere of mental entrapment developed in the first phase of the novel is accentuated by a tension between truth and illusion in such episodes as Michael's fanciful anticipatory imaginings concerning the imminent arrival of a French governess, whose actual appearance reveals her as 'a fat young Frenchwoman with a bilious complexion and little pig's eyes and a dowdy black mantle and a common black hat' (53), and a brief but important incident in which the family friend Dick Prescott, in compensation for robbing Michael of his mother on her last evening at home, attempts to placate the child's misery by giving him money. While expressing the narrative's pattern of heightened expectation followed by bitter deflation, this is a gesture which anticipates Michael's dependence on wealth as an agent of comfort against the poverty of the London underworld in Book Four. The novel's preoccupation with class-identity is further prefigured in the ambiguity
of Miss Carthew's role, whose stabilising influence is partly conferred through her hierarchical overthrow of the 'tyrant' Nurse of whom Michael grows to be 'more and more deeply ashamed' in public.

This sensitivity to status is partly encouraged by Michael's precocious discovery of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, representing the establishment of an important characteristic of the hero's imagination and the novel's most important structural feature:

Michael began to resent Nurse altogether, and so far as he was able he avoided her. His scheme of things was logical: he had already a philosophy, and his conception of the wonder inherent in everything was evidently not unique, because the pictures in *Don Quixote* proved conclusively that what Michael thought, other people besides himself thought. He might be old-fashioned, as Nurse assured him he was; but if to be old-fashioned was to live in the world of *Don Quixote*, he certainly preferred it to the world in which Nanny lived. That seemed to him a circumscribed and closed existence for which he had no sympathy. It was a world of poking about in medicine-cupboards, of blind unreasonableness, of stupidity and malice and blank ugliness. (Book One, Chapter IV, p. 60)

Michael's assimilation of Cervantes' satirical philosophy of conduct is to 'influence his entire life' (46), and its appearance at this juncture is crucial in that it marks the beginning of the hero's confusion of aesthetic value with actual experience, a confusion which exaggerates Michael's growing awareness of social distinction. Mackenzie's use of a thematic correlative in *Sinister Street* has never been noted by commentators. Although the *Don Quixote* myth does not serve the narrative in the way the sustained metaphor of the *commedia dell'arte* enhances theme and structure in *Carnival*, Mackenzie's consistent manipulation of literary allusion and motif does indicate his willingness to develop further from his second novel the possibility of informing his narrative with an internal aesthetic logic of its own.

The system of allusion, intriguingly, is a two-way process in *Sinister Street*. In Michael Fane's quest for a code of conduct and a justification of his idealism, *Don Quixote* suggests to him an appropriate ideologue through which he can continue to inhabit the historical and aesthetic values of the past. For the purposes of the narrator, Cervantes' satirical perspective provides the allusive parallel which illustrates the extent of Michael's self-delusion and emphasises the disparity between the hero's pursuit of decayed values and his alienation from the
present. Furthermore, as a means of mediating an implied irony, Michael's sincere participation in Quixotic values imparts an objective appraisal of his conduct which does not intrude upon Mackenzie's intention to reflect the sensibility of his hero without authorial interference.

This aspect of *Sinister Street* is suggestive of the Modernist preoccupation with ironic mythic self-consciousness and the intention of its writers to locate art from within its own context, James Joyce in particular. As a near contemporary example of autobiography distilled into aesthetic fictional form, Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and its mythical parallel, both ironic and redemptive, between the hero's aesthetic aspirations and the Icarus and Dedalus legend is not unlike the purposes for which Mackenzie manipulates the Don Quixote myth in *Sinister Street*. By the time of *Ulysses*, of course, Joyce's infinitely more ambitious exploitation of mythical allusion as a structural as well as a thematic correlative provides the paradigm for a new disparity between modern and traditional. Some observations, however, made by Mackenzie in his essay 'Poetry and the Modern Novel', written in 1912 - during the composition of *Sinister Street* - suggest an interesting anticipation of some of the stylistic preferences of Modernism as Joyce expressed them. Mackenzie's examination of novelistic priority contains implications which were to become synonymous with narrative experiment during the ensuing decade. Arguing that the 'complexity of modern life' imposes restrictions on aesthetic value that have rendered the traditional public values of the epic genre redundant, Mackenzie continues:

> Our contemporary epic is the united output of fiction...the novel probably originated in a desire to balance the claims of the heroic with the admission of the commonplace through the medium of contemporary manners...
>
> It is not easy for our present novelists to protect the claims of the heroic as many critics would have them believe. The novelist of today, if he be of a sincere and of a wide vision, has to deal with huge masses of conjoined individualities, with the personality of mobs and movements, with the appalling inhumanity of human aggregations.48

The crisis in priorities facing the 20th century novelist in Mackenzie's view - how to establish the criteria for an equilibrium between the heroic and the ordinary - found its solution ten years after this essay.
Potential and Limitation 1912-1915

in *Ulysses* and Joyce's depiction, in ironic epic form, of Leopold Bloom as a synthesis of the heroic and the ordinary in a modern world deprived of the values which create heroes. In *Portrait* Joyce presented Stephen Dedalus as the creative artist divided between heroism and failure: though in Michael Fane Mackenzie depicts a hero seeking to live on art rather than by it, his career and its parallel with that of Don Quixote's amounts to an attempt to 'balance the claims of the heroic with the admission of the commonplace'.

The appearance of the Quixote motif punctuates the narrative with a discreet rhythmic regularity at moments where the accumulative flow of episode and detail falls away to reveal the transition from one formative phase of experience to another. Early in Book Two, following a sequence of events in Book One which conveys the gradual dissolution of boyish naivety as it repeatedly stumbles upon the truths of the adult world (particularly in sexual matters), Michael's disillusionment with the innocent escapism once found in the adventure novels of Henty is exacerbated by the revelation of new profundities emerging from his immersion in Cervantes:

When Michael was at home, he took a new volume of Henty into the garden and began to read. Suddenly he found he was bored by Henty. This knowledge shocked him for the moment. Then he went indoors and put *For Name or Fame*, or *Through Afghan Passes* back on the shelf. He surveyed the row of Henty's books gleaming with olivine edges, and presently he procured brown paper and with Cook's assistance wrapped up the dozen odd volumes. At the top he placed a slip of paper on which was written 'Presented to the Boys' Library by C.M.S. Fane.' Michael was now in a perplexity for literary recreation, until he remembered Don Quixote. Soon he was deep in that huge volume, out of the dull world of London among the gorges and chasms and waterfalls of Castile. Boyhood's zenith had been attained: Michael's imagination was primed for strange emotions. (Book Two, Chapter IV, p. 176)

Following his self-dramatising sacrifice of the Henty volumes to the passing of 'boyhood's zenith', Cervantes, rather than signifying a mental progression or corrective, merely offers a more advanced form of intellectual escape. As Michael's imagination becomes more aware of its own processes, it is to develop an increasingly urgent need for gratification: 'All the cool security of boyhood had left him; he was in a turmoil of desire for an astounding experience'.(181)
This spiritual hunger leads to the introduction of two of the novel’s most significant themes: Catholicism and aestheticism. As two of the major influences on the author, their effect upon his hero is of particular importance and interest at this stage in terms of the objective distance between novelist and protagonist. Michael’s ‘turbmoil of desire’ is at least temporarily satiated when he succumbs to the seductive symbolism of Catholicism and the emotional correlative offered in its ritualism and theatre. His response to the solemnity of faith, however, is in terms of ‘an adventure’(182) which provokes intellectual curiosity rather than an awareness of profound spiritual truth. Mackenzie’s intellectual distance from the values of Anglo-Catholicism is indicated in the contrasting humorous and satirical portrait of Prout, whose obsession with the theatricality and antiquarian hardware of Anglican High Churchism is conveyed as an adolescent version of the schoolboy’s innocent fixation with collecting, and is adequate indication of Michael’s as yet shallow conception of religious sincerity. Mackenzie conveys his hero’s flirtation with Catholicism as an unfulfilled means of idealisation leading directly to a more thorough surrender to the values of aestheticism: a process J.W. Cunliffe recognised in the novel as a ‘conflict between the sensualist and the ascetic’.49 This is detected in Michael’s journey with a schoolfriend, Chator, in Book Two, Chapter VI to a monastery where they are to spend a holiday absorbed in religious observances, when Michael suddenly wishes to register an amorphous concept of conversion in a typically pseudo-Romantic gesture of personal symbol-making.

Michael’s superficial attraction to Catholicism marks a clear stage in the author’s conception of faith as it determined his own life and career. The attainment of both an aesthetic and spiritual purity from Catholicism in the novel is left unfulfilled in its conclusion, where there is a deliberately vague implication that Michael may become a priest. Mackenzie, who was converted to Roman Catholicism in explicit reaction from Anglo-Catholicism shortly after the publication of Sinister Street, offered a resolution of Michael’s impasse in his more objective study of Anglo-Catholic disputation in The Altar Steps trilogy, where the hero Mark Liddersdale struggles amidst the internecine contradictions of English religion towards the final affirmation of
conversion to Rome. This represented the process of emancipation from English religious ideology which determined the career of the novelist, who by the late 1920s had equated Catholicism with a European, as opposed to an English, perspective, culminating in his integration of Catholicism with Scottish nationalism in 1928 (See Chapters Five, Six and Seven). The close proximity in the novel between Michael's seduction by the trappings of Anglo-Catholicism and the adoption of aestheticism which determines the nature of his subsequent psychological development is highly significant. As a novel presenting a study in the failure of aestheticism Mackenzie includes those influences, such as Anglo-Catholicism, contributory to his hero's failure and final indeterminacy in relation to his culture and class, an indeterminacy to which Mackenzie himself had reacted by leaving England before the novel was completed.

In Chapters XIII and IX of Book Two, entitled 'Mirrors' and 'The Yellow Age', the carefully stereotyped 'nineties aesthete Arthur Wilmot, who lures Michael into association with an effete community of decadents, delivers monologues redolent of Pater, Wilde, and Swinburne, in which elements of self-parody on the author's part can be detected:

"Won't you smoke? These Chian cigarettes in their diaphanous paper of mildest mauve would suit your oddly remote, your curiously shy glance. You had better not smoke so near to the savage confines of St. James' school? How ascetic! How stringent! What book shall I buy for you, O greatly to be envied dreamer of Sicilian dreams? Shall I buy you Mademoiselle de Maupin, so that all her rococo soul may dance with gilded limbs across your vision? Or shall I buy you A Rebours, and teach you to live? And yet I think neither would suit you perfectly. So here is a volume of Pater - Imaginary Portraits. You will like to read of Denys l'Auxerrois. One day I myself will write an imaginary portrait of you, wherein your secret, sidelong smile will reveal to the world the whole art of youth". (Book Two, Chapter VIII, p. 230)

Wilmot's catalogue of the ideologues of the aesthetic movement, which determine his manner of speech, also serves as an acknowledgement from the author of precisely the same influences as they affected his own style: in terms of syntax and lexis, Wilmot's utterances are reminiscent of much of the sophisticated dialogue and diction of The Passionate Elopement and the ornate vocabulary of Carnival. In the context of its subversive influence upon the hero, however, the discreet satire of the
Potential and Limitation 1912-1915

values of aestheticism in Sinister Street reveals an important transition in the author's interpretation of these influences. More so than in Carnival, a fastidiously crafted prose idiom is directed toward a new accuracy of psychological portrayal rather than evocative elaboration. If Mackenzie's cultivation of style was indebted to tropes drawn from aestheticism, the debt is repaid in passages of an incisive prose where the influence of precisely these tropes upon the hero's mind is acutely registered, as in the following passage which depicts Wilmot's effect on Michael's mental processes:

He was not now decadent from any feeling of opposition to established things, but he was decadent from conviction of the inherent rightness of such a state. At first the phase had manifested itself in outward signs, a little absurdly; now his actual point of view was veering into accord with the externals...

Irregularity was now being subjected to Michael's process of idealistic alchemy, and since his conception of irregularity was essentially romantic, and since he shrank from sentiment, he was able to save himself, when presently all this decoration fell to pieces, and revealed naked unpleasantness... He began to play with the idea of departing suddenly from his present life and entering the spectral reality of the Seven Sisters Road, treading whatever raffish pavement knew the hollow steps of a city's prowlers. Going home on Sunday nights from the perfumed house in Edwardes Square and passing quickly and apprehensively figures that materialised in a circle of lamplight, he would contrast their existence with what remained in his senses of stale cigarette-smoke and self-conscious airs and attitudes. Yet the very picture he conjured of the possibility that haunted him made him the more anxious to substitute for the dark descent to hell the Sicilian or Satanic affectations of the luxurious mimes who postured against a background of art. (Book Two, Chapter IX, pp. 243-45)

In addition to its psychological accuracy, this also provides an anticipatory reference to the course of the novel and Michael's future, revealing the polarities accommodated by the novel's structure: bourgeois decadence and urban working-class squalor. The focus is provided by the potential contained in the 'alchemy' of Michael's imagination and the different possible versions of his identity that the imagination might define according to the context in which it finds itself. What has now emerged as the novel's principal theme, the confusion of the values of aestheticism with those of authentic existence, is highlighted through the harsh juxtaposition between 'the stark descent to hell' and the
'affectations of the luxurious mimes who postured against a background of art'.

With this thematic context established, the depiction of Michael's infatuation for Lily Haden which will determine the remainder of the narrative presents a wholly convincing analysis of adolescent love, complementing the analogous love-affair between the Oxford student Maurice Avery and Jenny Raeburn in Carnival. Michael's obsession for Lily also dramatises the consequences of imposing the ideals of aestheticism upon actual flesh and blood as opposed to 'the deckle-edges of negligible poets' (245). Lily becomes so much a product of Michael's imaginative capacity for confusing artifice and actuality that he actually believes her to be a poem: 'It had been romantic to snatch her on a dying cadence of Verlaine out of the opalescent vistas of October trees' (359). His conception of Lily is registered in terms of creativity and composition: he finds it impossible to express the 'very idea' of her to his mother, because 'somehow he felt that he was creating a work of art' and 'to tell...of conception or progress would be to spoil the perfection of his impulse' (341). The destruction of his ideal on accidentally discovering Lily with another lover - anticipating the climactic and sordid infidelity of Book Four - simply encourages a more intense idealisation of imagined innocence:

He would picture himself with Lily on these sunny uplands of the Lyonnais, and gradually she lost her urban actuality; gradually the disillusionment of her behaviour was forgotten. With the obliteration of Lily's failure the anguish for her bodily form faded out, and Michael began to mould her to an incorporeal idea of first love.

(Book Two, Chapter XX, p. 386)

Michael imagines Lily in terms of a pastoral purity which purges her of the urban environment in which she will be found as a prostitute in Book Four, providing a further instance of the novel's technique of thematic prefiguration.

As the failings of Michael's aestheticism are about to be crystallised in Mackenzie's analysis of the influence of Oxford in the early years of the 20th century in Book Four, Michael's imposition of artistic values upon life is juxtaposed with his younger sister Stella's first public concert as a professional pianist. Developing the irony of Michael's quixotic conception of guardianship over his sister's moral welfare, who
Potential and Limitation 1912-1915

throughout Michael's development has displayed comparative stability and self-discipline, Michael's parasitic relationship with art is contrasted with Stella's precocity and talent. Importantly, Stella's inheritance and training has been found out with England in the continent. Anticipating the major characters of The Four Winds of Love, who seek escape from an English environment into Europe in the search for artistic and ideological emancipation, Stella's role is a reminder of the critical distance of the author from the material of his novel and further illustration of Mackenzie's concern for the values which are seen to have stifled his hero's development. A sustained interior monologue provoked by Stella's playing emphasises Michael's ambivalent relationship with these values:

He would travel through the world and through the underworld and apply his standard of...of what? What was his standard? A classic permanence, a classic simplicity and inevitableness? (Book Two, Chapter XX, p. 393)

It is precisely the dubious ideologies of a 'classical' English education which in their consolidation through the Oxford ethos Book Four is to examine.

For Michael Fane, the prospect of Oxford is one that suggests the process of life 'beginning all over again': for the author, his retrospective recreation of Oxford life and values as experienced by the pre-War Edwardian generation offers an ambience through which Mackenzie can exploit to the full his particular technique of 'saturation'. The particular vividness and immediacy of Book Three has resulted in Sinister Street being remembered as the definitive 'Oxford novel', though the Oxford section occupies only a quarter of the entire narrative. Again, Book Three's fidelity to pre-War attitudes which were soon to seem unrecognisable - and unpalatable - after 1918 has lent the novel the status of an institutionalised elegy. A later generation of English writers, most notably Evelyn Waugh, George Orwell and Cyril Connolly have testified to its wide influence as the quintessential evocation of the Oxford ideology. Charles Ryder's scrupulous and highly 'aesthete' preoccupation with the decoration of his Oxford rooms in accordance with fin-de-siécle icons in Waugh's Brideshead Revisited (1945) closely
follows Michael Fane's example, while Sinister Street is numbered amongst Ryder's carefully advertised exhibits of required reading for the Oxford dandies of the 1920s.

This prominence and cherished fondness for Sinister Street as an elegiac classic has discouraged commentators from examining the significance of Book Three in terms of its thematic relationship to the remainder of the novel. Insofar as Book Three reveals a crystallisation of Michael Fane's repressive and idealistic imaginative tendencies and encourages the failed quest for conduct which is the concern of Book Four, Mackenzie's treatment of Oxford is much less romanticised and genuflective than its popular image suggests.

In terms of its meticulous recreation of atmosphere and period the status of Book Three is certainly deserved. Replete with accurate detail, which is never excessive, depicting every nuance of undergraduate life and manners yet deliberately sparing of memorable incident, Mackenzie takes pains to capture as faithfully as possible the actual rhythm and pace of the University's life, each term, each vacation forming a self-contained epoch of experience combining routine with spontaneity. It is precisely this temporal fidelity, however, which relates Book Three to the design of the whole, for the novel's most insistent and accurate evocation of passing time coincides with the hero's profoundest lapse into his quest for symbolist purity. The precise temporal context in which Michael finds himself effectively reinforces the contingency and flux from which he attempts to retrieve symbolic meaning and 'behold the visible expression of his own mental image of Oxford's completeness' (456). Even Michael's desire to select St Mary's as his College owes its origin to a photograph of it he discovers while still at school: an emblem for the static symbolist perfection he will attempt to redeem from the flux of his undergraduate experiences.

As with Lily, Michael assimilates and evaluates the qualities of his fellow students according to his conception of aesthetic unity and coherence:

Avery was so versatile. Michael mentally put him on one side to decorate a conspicuous portion of the ideal edifice he dreamed of creating from his Oxford society. There was Lonsdale. Lonsdale really possessed the serene perfection of a great work of art. (Book Three, Chapter III, p. 22)
Correctives to the sanctity of Oxford do intrude sufficiently for Michael to acknowledge them. Developing from her complementary role in Book Two, Stella's implicitly cosmopolitan, non-English artistic emancipation is introduced in Chapter VI. Her bohemian circle in Paris - 'the symbol of the artist's justification' - is measured in its self-confident assertiveness against Oxford conservatism, found to represent in comparison 'a colourless shelter for unfledged reactionaries, a nursery of callow men in the street' (484). Ironically, Stella invites her brother to Paris to satisfy her need of a 'corrective'; as the novel makes clear, it is the corrective manifest in Stella which throws Michael's intellectual predicament into sharp relief. In Chapter XI, the suicide of Dick Prescott following Stella's refusal of his offer of marriage is an implication of the fragility of the apparently idyllic convention of an educated, middle-class English bachelorhood of which Michael took Prescott to be the paradigm he hoped eventually to emulate.

These aberrations in the hero's system of values thrust him deeper into Oxford's ahistorical refuge, which encourages him 'to retire from the observation of reality'. Furthering the influence of Cervantes, Michael locates his intellectual sanctuary within the aesthetics of 17th century literature, where

...every night for a while he dreamed upon their cadences resounding through a world of polychromatic images and recondite jewels...mere words came to possess Michael so perilously that under the spell of these Jacobans he grew half contemptuous of thought less prodigally ornate. The vital ideas of the present danced by in thin-winged progress unperceived, or rather perceived as bloodless and irresolute ephemerides. (Book Three, Chapter VII, p. 502)

In thus pursuing the themes of the novel as they have been developed until this stage, Mackenzie reaches a culminatory point in which the complacent picture of Oxford as an intellectual idyll which many assume Sinister Street to celebrate is very remote from the passage that follows:

When people reproached him for his wilful prejudice, he pointed out how easy it would always be to overtake the ideas of the present and how much waste of intellectual breath would be avoided by letting his three or four Oxford years account for the most immediately evanescent. Oxford seemed to him to provide an opportunity, and more
Potential and Limitation 1912-1915

than an opportunity - an inexpugnable command to wave with most reluctant hands farewell to the backward of time, around whose brink rose up more truthful dreams than those that floated indeterminate, beckoning through the mist across the wan mountains of the future. (502)

While the poise and grace of the prose reflects the attractiveness of this ideal for the hero, for the novelist, Oxford as it infects Michael Fane amounts to a malign intellectual and social conservatism and a prejudicial repudiation of anything alien to its circumscribed system.

Whereas the deterministic fatalism of Carnival suggested a debt to Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Book Three of Sinister Street suggests a mirror image of Hardy's invective against Oxford in Jude the Obscure. The images of exclusion, alienation and elitism so fully exploited by Hardy in 1895 are inverted in Mackenzie's Oxford: trapped inside its academic precincts rather than doomed to tread its peripheries, Michael Fane's perspective provides a critique of Oxford's role from the internecine point of view of the individuals to whom it ostensibly offers the fulfilling privileges denied to Jude Fawley. Mackenzie's reflection of Hardy is made clearer in an episode depicting the victimisation of the working-class student Smithers - one of the more fortunate obscure Judges - whose 'plebeian origin' his superior middle and upper class colleagues find irritating. In his presence, their intent to bully him results in their profound embarrassment and shame, but not before the tone of social and intellectual condescension is very acutely registered. 'Smithers', the narrator concludes,

...was merely an advertisement of Oxford's democratic philanthropy, and would gain from his university only a rather inferior training in chemistry at a considerably greater cost but with nothing else that Oxford could and did give to others more fortunately born. (Book Three, Chapter V, p. 472)

That Michael endorses Oxford's dependence on social elitism is illustrated in Chapter VII, where he finds his personal quintessence of Oxford in Venner, the college steward whose office provides the home for an unofficially superior clique from which the likes of Smithers are expressly alienated. In this accomplished set-piece the novel probes deeply into contemporary Oxford manners. Michael's awareness of his inward schism between tradition and continuity finds its resolution in
Venner, a 'tutelary spirit' whose sagacious manner and experience provide a symbol of Oxford's past, but whose insight into various undergraduate communities make him a guardian of the Oxford of the present, and of the future. In Venner's office, an emblem for 'immortal preservation', Michael finds

...the perfect fruit of time's infinitely fastidious preservation, the survival not so much of the fittest as of the most expressive. Here indeed, whatever in his own rooms might affect him with the imagination of the eternal present of finite conceptions, was the embodiment of the possible truth of those moments in which at intervals he had apprehended, whether through situations or persons or places, the assurance of immortality. (Book Three, Chapter VII, p. 503)

Although incubated within the contradictions of tradition, Mackenzie presents through Michael a series of epiphany-like revelations of awareness which are analogous with the later concerns of modernist fiction in exploring the internal coherence of consciousness. The notion of aestheticism confronting its own failure to capture a fugitive truth is climatically developed towards the end of the Oxford section. Reading Keats on a St Mark's Eve which happens to fall on a Sunday, Michael is struck by the coincidence that 'Oxford on such an occasion was able to provide exactly the same sensation for him as Winchester had given to the poet'(619). Yet the evanescence in this revelation of Michael's Oxford deflects the aesthetic significance of the experience, merely emphasising the uncongenial truth of the mutual failure of art and history as potential arbiters of temporal chaos. Lacking the sincerity of inward vision with which he 'might forbid time to disturb this quintessential hour of Oxford'(619), art fails Michael in that it is incapable of illuminating the very nature of evanescence.

...when Keats had wrought for ever in a beautiful statement the fact of a Sabbath eve, the reader could not restate why he had wrought it for ever. Art could do no more than preserve the sense of the fact: it could not resolve it in such a way that life would cease to be the baffling attempt it was on the individual's part to restate to himself his personal dreams. (Book Three, Chapter XIV, p. 25)

This inextricable confusion of artificial with actual experience results not merely in the failure of Michael's interpretation of art, but in his own creative impotence. Michael secures none of Stephen Dedalus's sense
of aesthetic redemption in the epiphanies of Joyce's Portrait, where appropriately enough the circumstances and career of each hero are mirror-images: Mackenzie's dilettante cultivates aestheticism, confronts its failure, and makes gestures towards adopting priesthood; Joyce's artist adopts priesthood, loses faith, and departs for artistic self-discovery. The reciprocal identification between imagination and reality that characterises Dedalus's rescue of aesthetic meaning from the transient and ordinary creates in Michael's case a residual sense of dissociation and incompatibility, and artistic pretensions which come to depend on the posture of an enlightened detachment in order to disguise his inarticulacy. Stephen's mythical flight into creative exile might be polarised with Mackenzie's most weighted invocation of the Don Quixote motif towards the end of Book Three, where Michael's continued intellectual regression has prepared him for descent into London's underworld:

Perhaps Michael enjoyed more than anything else during his collection of books the accumulation of as many different editions of Don Quixote as possible. He had brought up from London the fat volume illustrated by Doré over which he had fallen asleep long ago...The shelf of Don Quixotes became in all his room one of the most cherished objects of contemplation. There was something in the 'Q' and the 'X' repeated on the back of volume after volume that positively gave Michael an impression in literal design of the Knight's fantastic personality...every year's new reading seemed to him to hold more and more certainly all that was most vital to life's appreciation. He no longer failed to see the humour of Don Quixote, but even now tears came more easily than laughter, and he regretted as poignantly as the Knight himself those times of chivalry which with all the extravagance of their decay were yet in essence superior to the mode that ousted them into ignominy. Something akin to Don Quixote's impulsive dismay Michael experienced in his own view of the twentieth century. He felt he needed a constructive ideal of conduct to sustain him through the long pilgrimage that must ensue after these hushed Oxford dreams. (Book Three, Chapter IX, pp. 529-30)

Divorced from his own century, Oxford rather than conferring intellectual advancement has in effect encouraged him to retreat backwards into history and his own past: his university education has amounted to 'merely the extension of the public-school spirit...the apotheosis of the amateur'(542). Michael's anachronistic assimilation of Cervantes seems to be intensified by his quantitative greed for the decayed values Don Quixote signifies. In the final Book, exploring the
repercussions of Michael's quixotic idealism in its confrontation with the realism of London's underworld, his amateurish and delusory voyage of discovery is a further step backwards in pursuit of Lily, an ideal exhumed from adolescence. Douglas Goldring suggests this process of regression when he detects in Michael Fane the affliction of an entire class of Oxford students during this period, resembling 'elderly schoolboys who refuse to grow to man's stature and yet were never young'.

The illusory quest of emotional and social redemption that inspires Michael's departure into an actual world so often prefigured for him in childhood nightmares and sordid fantasies unites two seemingly disparate periods of his experience:

It was designate in childhood dreams to this day indelible. He could not remember any period in his life when the speculum of hidden thought had not reflected for his fear that shadow of evil which could overcast the manifestations of most ordinary existence. (Book Four, Chapter II, p. 672)

The disparity between the coda to his Oxford sojourn and his arrival in the midst of London's urban dereliction is intentionally acute: 'it was with a sudden shock of conviction that Michael realised he was in Neptune Crescent, Camden Town, and that yesterday he had actually been in Oxford. And why was he here?'(671) Michael believes he has created an opportunity 'Which Oxford denied to test academic values on the touchstone of human emotions'(666), but his Oxonian inheritance pales before the challenge posed by the mores of London working-class life, presented with the same vigour and insight which characterises the Cockney world celebrated in Carnival. The resulting conflict in values is seen in the embarrassing encounters between the hero and the criminals and prostitutes of this new environment, the foreign nature of which he merely attempts to intellectualise according to his artificial concept of conduct.

It is appropriate that a contributory cause of Michael's incongruous presence in the underworld is a further instance of his personal adaptation of artificial experience. The combined effects of his reading of Prévost's Manon Lescaut on his final day in Oxford, and the accidental discovery soon afterwards of Lily's reincarnation as a
Potential and Limitation 1912-1915

prostitute, conspire to make the remainder of Sinister Street Michael's acting out of Abbe Prévost's novel. The ominous portents of this 'descent into hell' voiced earlier in the narrative are seen themselves to be subject to the same pattern of expectation and deflation that characterised the rest of Michael's experience. He is disappointed by the impact of the Seven Sisters Road, which he had endowed with an oppressive and dramatic mood of evil: on confronting it for the first time, it 'seemed to be merely the garish mart of a moderately poor suburban population'(669).

The irony in Michael's exploration of polarities in class as an Edwardian gentleman with the talisman of education, status, and wealth is frequently illustrated. In this respect the role of Barnes in the final section of the novel is particularly effective, providing an ironic corrective to Michael's reliance on social superiority. Finding himself in Michael's Cheyne Walk residence, Barnes remarks acidly "Easy enough to behave yourself in a house like this"(710). When in the underworld, Michael attempts to translate material stability into an agent of moral improvement by donating money freely where he perceives spiritual or financial deprivation, and attracts ridicule instead of dissolving social division. Once again the irony in his position is sarcastically exposed by Barnes, when he retorts earlier in the novel to Michael's expression of curiosity in the underworld "Oh yes, I think you'd like to take a peep without letting go of Nurse's apron"(316), a cutting reminder of Michael's childhood insecurity and an allusion to the pampered environment of security on which he still depends.

Having been unable to find satisfactory self-definition from the values embodied in his own class and education, Michael has ventured into its polar opposite, a 'morally antipodean world', where his received notions are inverted and distorted. Mackenzie illustrates this process, and recapitulates the themes of the entire novel, through the predominant symbol of Book Four: that of mirrors and reflection. The primary significance of mirrors in this portion of the novel, where a reliance on social specificity and detail is once more prominent, is as an emblem of realism and objective accuracy. Mirrors also imply a means of reflecting the nature of Michael's inverted perspective: he too finds himself 'grotesquely reflected in the underworld's distorting
mirror' (735). These refractions of the underworld's inhabitants through the hero's consciousness indicate standards which undermine all his moral presuppositions.

Michael was again face to face with topsyturvydom. It really was time to meditate on the absurdity of trying to control these people of the underworld with laws and regulations and penalties which had been devised to control individuals who represented moral declension from the standards of a genteel civilisation. Mrs. Murdoch, Poppy, Barnes, Daisy - they all inverted the very fabric of society. They were moral antipodeans to the magistrate or the legislator or the social reformer. (Book Four, Chapter IV, p. 735)

This theme of polarity also reveals how the novel in itself acts in the manner of a vast system of mirrors reflecting related aspects of the hero's development. The childhood world of Book One, permeated with presentiments of evil and squalor amidst a context of genteel stability, finds its inverted reflection in the world of Book Four, where the nightmare of the 'sinister street' becomes actuality; Book Two, devoted to the account of Michael's schooldays, is reflected in the depiction of Oxford in Book Three, which while contrasting the two distinct phases in Michael's education also demonstrates their essential sameness, Oxford representing not an emancipation from public school values but a further, if more rarified, immersion in those values.

The internal pattern of expectation and deflation is also incorporated within this large outer-structure to create a discernibly parabolic design in the trajectory of Michael's experiences. His youthful identification with Catholicism in Book Two, for instance, is mirrored by his subsequent loss of faith in Book Three; in Book Four the reappearance of the devout Chator as a pastor amidst working-class squalor heightens the incongruity of religious values in this environment, and consolidates Michael's religious disillusionment.

The distinctive atmosphere of the underworld having been imparted in symbolic, subconscious form to Michael in the form of nightmares, his anticipation of this new world - like his expectations of Oxford - is as a permanent and stable backdrop for his inconstant states of mind and self-contradicting theories of existence. Yet the underworld is characterised by a bewildering flux and evanescence hitherto unexperienced: identities, loyalties, enmity and love, even addresses, are
subject to a dizzying impermanence. Its ethereal quality drives Michael more intently towards his only remaining conception of static perfection: Lily. Yet in desiring to rescue her Michael is in effect attempting to arrest the process of time from which he has sought intellectual immunity for so long. Lily is now endowed with a philosophy of love which might assume final meaning for the hero:

So far, all his experiments in living had been bounded by ignorance or credulity on his own side, and on the side of other people by their unsuitableness for experiments. Certainly he made discoveries, but they might better be called disillusionments. Now here was Lily who would give herself to discover, who would open for him, not a looking-glass world in which human nature reflected itself in endless reduplications of perversity, but a world such as lovers only know, wherein the greatest deeps are themselves. (Book Four, Chapter VI, p. 766)

In short, 'all Michael's hopes, all his quixotry, all his capacity for idealisation, all his prejudices and impulsiveness converged upon her'(766). The crucial and final significance of the mirror symbol is contained in the phrase 'wherein the greatest deeps are themselves': the theme of egotism and vanity.

The paradox of this symbol lies in the fact that although the mirror can reflect actuality for the observer, it also distorts and idealises the selfhood of that observer. Towards the novel's end, the summation of Michael's experience of life is expressed in terms of reflection: 'Yet for nearly a year he had been peering into the souls of people. Had he indeed? Had he not rather been peering to see in their souls the reflection of his own?'(852). The novel's preoccupation with perception contains further symbolic resonance. In Book Two, Michael's introduction to the cultivation of aestheticism - an ideology which exaggerates self-regard to its most extreme form - occurs under the chapter title of 'Mirrors', while following his rejection of Arthur Wilmot's influence, the latter observes rhetorically "Farewell, Narcissus. Have you learnt that I was but a shallow pool in which to watch your reflection? Did I flatter you too much or not enough?"(274) Accordingly, the indulgence in intellectual narcissism encouraged by Oxford is conveyed in the history of a student paper, 'The Oxford Looking-Glass', which occupies considerable space in Book Three, a mirror for the jejune affectations of
those Edwardians who regarded themselves as the future hope for English culture.

In the climactic Chapter IX, 'The Gate of Horn', describing the house Michael secures for his captive Lily (a further intriguing anticipation of Proust's novel in the portrayal of Albertine as Marcel's 'captive'), the symbolism of mirrors is transformed into a garish temple to Lily's vanity and naive selfishness, for the house proliferates with them. The house itself, 'an extraordinary pile, built in some Palladian nightmare' (813), represents architectural pretentiousness on a vulgar scale, combining a hybrid of bastardised classicism and Gothic extravagance. Thus a further symbol is introduced: the house, an ironic amalgam of Michael's classical education and the Gothic horror of his urban nightmares, represents both his sham idealism and the insincerity of the woman he hopes to confine in it. Designed and positioned in such a way as to deny its urban context, its incongruity is merely exaggerated by its attempted remoteness from the surrounding city. Michael fails in precisely the same fashion in separating Lily from the city environment which has provided her with her livelihood.

Following the final shattering of his idol, even amidst the authentic security of upper-class English rural values to which Stella and Allan can withdraw on the bequest of Prescott's money Michael senses alienation from the inheritance he once sought. Openly satirical to Stella about the ease with which she assimilates an ideal which places her artistic future in doubt and which contradicts her previous European emancipation, a sense of homelessness induced in Michael in the wake of the underworld's lesson is finally established, leading him to the brink of a cynical sense of displacement. Having 'seen society in action' by experiencing society at its polarised extremities, he is still unable to define his status within it. He is left by his author in the act not only of societal, but cultural, escape.
IV The Unfinished Statue

Midway through Carnival, Michael Fane's Oxford contemporary Maurice Avery, the lover of Jenny Raeburn, is approaching the completion of a model of his Columbine in wax from which he intends to lend the perfected form of a statue which enshrines the aesthetic ideal of his infatuation:

"Finished", the artist cried, and dragged Jenny to look and admire. "Jolly fine", she declared. "Only it isn't very like me. Never mind, position in life's everything", she added, as she contemplated her sleeping form. "Not like you", said Maurice slowly. "You're right. It's not! Not a bit! Damn art!" he cried, and picking up the wax model, flung it with a crash into the fire-place.

Jenny looked at Maurice, perplexity and compassion striving with disapproval in her countenance; then she knelt to rescue a curved arm, letting it fall back listlessly among the other fragments when she realised the ruin.

"You are mad. Whatever did you want to do that for?"

"You're right. It's not you. Oh, why did I every try? Ronnie could do it with a box of damned paints. Why couldn't I? I know you better than Ronnie does. I love you. I adore every muscle in your body. I dream day and night of the line of your nose. Why couldn't I have given that in stone, when Ronnie could show the world your mouth with two dabs of carmine? What a box of trickery life is. Here I am burning with ambition to create a masterpiece. I have every opportunity, a flaming inspiration and nothing comes of it. Nothing. Absolutely nothing". (Carnival, Chapter XXII, p. 251)

A symbolic allusion to Jenny's eventual destruction at the hands of a malign determinism, Maurice Avery's agony and frustration with his sense of creative impotence and inarticulacy also provides something of an illustrative paradigm for the preoccupations which inform the three novels Mackenzie wrote between 1912 and 1915. Unable to imbue the idealised conception of his subject with artistic meaning, Avery is encouraged to abandon Jenny, leaving England and leading her to passive acceptance of an incongruous marriage which results in her death.

The unfinished statue suggests an equally appropriate metaphor for the experiences of Michael Fane in Sinister Street, where Lily comes to symbolise a similar incompatibility between imagination and reality, articulation and idealisation, resulting in a non-conclusive indeterminacy. Michael's personality and perspective is referred to in
Potential and Limitation 1912-1915

Book Three by Stella as 'a chord that never resolves itself' (496), an intended distinction from her own cadential grasp of artistic maturity. Michael suddenly locates the source of their complementarity:

You're all right. You have this astonishing gift which would have guaranteed you self-expression whatever you had been born...Perhaps I have a vague inclination towards art myself, but inclinations are no good without something to lean up against at the end...My difficulty is that by natural inheritance I'm the possessor of so much I can never make use of". (Book Three, Chapter VI, pp. 495-96)

An 'inheritance' of English values which frustrates creative potential is a condition common to the artist-figures of Carnival, Sinister Street, and Guy and Pauline, all of whom are seen in the course of each novel to abandon their native England in search of the fulfillment found abroad by Stella in Sinister Street.

The specificity of Mackenzie's exploration of Edwardian English values in his first creative phase is clearly marked by the recurrence of Avery's 'unfinished statue' as a determining preoccupation with those features of an English inheritance inimical to potential English artists. If in Sinister Street Mackenzie subjects this inheritance to its most forensic and detailed examination, within the form of the novel itself there is a wider structural interpretation of the symbol of the unfinished statue implied which sets it apart from its predecessor and its successor, Guy and Pauline.

As has been demonstrated, the novel's synthesis of an internal thematic consistency, complemented by an equally carefully wrought pattern of symbolism and motif which coheres the immensity of the novel's narrative throughout Book Four, shows that contemporary critics' suggestion of formlessness, absence of design, and thematic uncertainty are unfounded. Furthermore, Henry James's detection of a leisurely interpretation of the Edwardian technique of extensively linear chronological narrative imbued with a more tightly controlled thematic focus in Sinister Street can in retrospect be seen to have had more relevance than subsequent appraisals have suggested.

In spite of such indications of coherence, however, the definitive non-conclusion of the novel suggests Stella's 'unresolved chord'. At the point where Mackenzie abandons Michael Fane, he remains a dynamic fictional character: he is last presented contemplating Rome as a potential
Potential and Limitation 1912-1915

spiritual home, standing on the edge of a cultural re-definition of himself in reaction to his alienation from English culture. Sinister Street suggests in its inconclusive structure an alternative fictional aesthetic to the impending development within Modernist fiction towards an autotelic or autonomous perfection of narrative form. In aspects of Michael Fane’s inner processes of thought, particularly in his desire to retrieve symbolic shape from the flux of consciousness, Mackenzie offers a striking anticipation of the preoccupations of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf in particular. This suggests that the acute disparities located between traditional and modern techniques since are not necessarily valid interpretive paradigms of an ostensible polarity in thematic emphasis which has been accepted as a feature of British fictional development in the early 20th century. However, the Modernists’ attempts to accommodate the shapeless contingency of life within art that creates its own internal coherence is effectively questioned in the outcome of Sinister Street, for its concern is with the imperfections of art in life, as opposed to the location of life within the perfection of art. The novel’s ending is itself the victim of the failure of aestheticism it has analysed so insistently. In repudiating any final gesture towards aesthetic fulfillment by imposing the impossibility of finality upon itself, the novel symbolises in conclusion Mackenzie’s preoccupation with the theme of indeterminacy and creative alienation which infects Maurice Avery, Michael Fane and Guy Hazlewood in turn.

The final irony of this structure lies in its failure to grant traditional fictional fulfillment to a hero who preferred to live his own life (again foreshadowing Modernist fiction) in deliberately self-dramatised episodic shape through a continual cultivation of personally symbolic moments. Himself a sensitive reader of novels, Michael Fane appears at times to be aware of the nature of his own creation and development as a fictional character, a tendency culminating in the novel’s final gesture.

How this great column affected him with the secrets of the past. It was only by that made so much mightier than the bars of his cot in Carlington Road, which had once seemed to hold passions, intrigues, rumours, ambitions and revenges. All that he had once dimly perceived as shadowed forth by them was here set forth absolutely. (Book Four, Chapter X, p. 879)
This suggestion of a final circularity through the complementary symbols of column and cot identifies the hero's future with his past: the novel's conclusion confronts Michael with an awareness of life's infinite potential, but implies the final impasse of a creative form - narrative - that enacts life's finite limitations and restraints.

_Sinister Street_ demonstrates memorably the potential qualities of a novelist who perceived the ideological limitations within both the form he interpreted and the Edwardian cultural values in which the English novel was maturing immediately prior to the war. By the time the novel had completed publication to widespread acclaim, Mackenzie had already expressed his distance from the inheritance so fastidiously recreated in his novel by fulfilling the identification with Europe to which so many of his characters aspire. The next chapter examines, firstly, the nature of that, European perspective: secondly, the profounder impact of the First World War on Mackenzie's life and fiction, an event which would remain infinitely more indelible and intrusive than in its first innocent manifestation as the marginal scribbles which spurred the author to complete his finest pre-War novel.
CHAPTER THREE

FUTILITY AND PURPOSE 1917-1927

Vestal Fire

I From England to Capri

June, 1915. Henry James, two months after Mackenzie had sailed to join the Staff of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force in the Dardanelles, writes the author of Sinister Street the following ominous letter:

I confess I take an enormous pleasure in the fact of the exposure of the sensitive plate your imagination, your tremendous attention, to all these wonderful and terrible things. What impressions you are getting, verily - and what a breach must it all not make with the course of history you are practising up to the very eve. I rejoice that you finished and snipped off, or tuckd in and wound up, something self-contained there - for how could you ever go back to it if you hadn't? - under the violence of rupture with the past which makes me ask myself what will have become of all that material we were taking for granted, and now lies there behind us like some vast cargo dumped upon a dock and unfit for human purchase or consumption. I seem to fear that I shall find myself seeing your recently concluded novel as through a glass darkly - which, however, will not prevent my immediately falling upon it when it appears; as I assume, however, that it is not now likely to do before the summer's end - by which time God knows what other monstrous chapters of history won't have been perpetrated!

Although the tortured syntax so conspicuous in James's 1914 article is equally pronounced here, the implications are profoundly different. Images of historical and cultural disruption have supplanted the confidence of 'The Younger Generation' in the assurance of literary continuity. A striking acknowledgement of the War's significance, of which James's article appeared so innocently oblivious, his fears for an abandoned and decaying past - the 'dumped cargo' - might be taken as a troubled reference to that parcel of Mackenzie and his fellow-novelists who, until 1915, seemed destined to unwrap the future of English fiction.

For James in 1914, the merits of Sinister Street not only justified optimistic forecasts but suggested that its young author possessed a latent capacity for even higher attainments. Yet only a year later, James
in his tutelary role is obliged to refer to Mackenzie's new novel in terms of a past seriously distorted by the turbulence of the present: 'I seem to fear that I shall find myself seeing your recently concluded novel as through a glass darkly'. The initial perspective of a developing future has become ironically polarised.

Given the nature of the 'recently concluded novel' - Guy and Pauline (1915) - its author could not, in the circumstances, have found the forebodings of his literary godfather altogether encouraging. As indicated in the previous chapter, the marginal scribbles of the manuscript of Sinister Street establish a series of bizarre and incongruous manifestations of the intrusion of September 1914 in Mackenzie's work. Guy and Pauline continues the pattern. The novel was still one hundred and twenty-five pages short of completion when Mackenzie received a letter from his friend Orlo Williams informing him that Sir Ian Hamilton was prepared to offer Mackenzie a position with his staff: a favour, it should be noted, inspired by Hamilton's express enthusiasm for Sinister Street and based entirely on Mackenzie's literary eminence rather than his military potential. This made for a symbolically dramatic deadline: rushing to complete a novel before departing for Gallipoli is somehow entirely paradigmatic for both the author and the period. Mackenzie's reaction was, understandably, intense:

What between trying to finish the book and grow a military moustache, suffering agonies from neuritis, and imagining all the various obstacles that might prevent my helping to force the Dardanelles (our intention to do which was by now a topic of the Italian papers) I wonder I did not go permanently off my head. I was half-delirious with pain for the whole of a night and a day and, being under the impression that the Turks had landed and attacked Ventrosa I was with difficulty restrained by Faith and Brooks from sallying forth in my pyjamas to deal with them...

We had a dinner party on the fourth of May to celebrate the finishing of Guy and Pauline; for me there was a faint hope that it might be a farewell party.

It is difficult in the light of later knowledge not to invest such an occasion with an undue significance, not to fancy that the mind misgave some consequence yet hanging in the stars and really did bitterly begin his fearful date with that night's revels.

Yet I could not honestly claim that, when the guests bade me goodbye that night, I had the least premonition they were saying goodbye to somebody they would never see again. Looking back at that party now, I can recognise that it marked the end of a period in my life; at the time it seemed to be just the end of another jolly evening. ²
The publication of the novel on 15 September 1915, the day on which the British mounted the disastrous offensive near Loos which eleven days later had claimed 60,000 British casualties, illustrates powerfully the dichotomy between two worlds and the rupture of past and present conveyed in the author's likening of the intrusion of War to 'a deep gorge'.

Mackenzie even describes in Gallipoli Memories correcting the proofs of Guy and Pauline when off-duty, pondering meticulously the suitability of adverbs with fellow-officers, amidst preparations for the Suvla landing. These ironic disparities, however, find their most emphatic expression on the novel's title-page, which carries the dedication 'To General Sir Ian Hamilton G.C.B., D.S.O. and the General Staff of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force'.

If Guy and Pauline develops further from Sinister Street in its study of artistic failure (and failed adolescent love), stylistically it is a return to the author's 'temperament of prose' at its most baroque in Carnival, and it offers an even more deliberate celebration of the pre-War England whose values were already eroding in the trenches when Mackenzie wrote his Dedication. By 1915 Mackenzie had firmly established a home on the island of Capri, and following the completion of Sinister Street was anxious to incorporate into a novel the richly eccentric material to be found amongst the island's artistic and intellectual community. His impending entry into active service, however, altered his priorities:

While I was waiting for a chance of active service I set out to write what might be the last novel I should ever write, and for a brief while I was tempted to tell the Fersen story. Then I decided that Vestal Fire, the title for which I had already chosen, was an unsuitable book for what might be a last bequest. I wrote instead Guy and Pauline.

As the phrase 'last bequest' implies, Mackenzie construed the writing of the novel as intentionally elegiac. Possibly as a palliative for an unimaginable future, he resurrected his emotional past as the foundation of Guy and Pauline: the poignant broken engagement which ended his long affair with Ruth Daniel in 1904, and the sojourn in the rural Oxfordshire house of Ladyham with Christopher Stone (his future brother-in-law) where idealistic Oxonian poetic ambitions were cultivated, with little
success. The foredoomed idyllic love-affair of Guy and Pauline, and the narrative's celebration of Guy's house Plasher's Mead, were directly autobiographical in inspiration, drawn from the formative experiences of a distinctly pre-War youth.

While Carnival and Sinister Street display Mackenzie's distinctive talent for the realisation of London and the Cockney scene at its finest, Guy and Pauline represents their English rural equivalent, surpassing in descriptive intensity even the final portion of Carnival where the narrative takes to its wings on the subject of Cornish landscape. Guy and Pauline, which never attained the status of the two previous novels, remained the author's life-long favourite work, and while it is even more dated for contemporary taste than Carnival or Sinister Street it is no less important as an underrated monument in prose to an Edwardian English ruralism which was to assume an exaggerated, acute poignancy and nostalgia after the outbreak of the First World War. Enshrined in its consummately crafted lyrical flourishes is the ideology of English pastoral and landscape which curdled into nightmare through the seared sensibilities of the trench poets, whose imaginative distance from this ideal increased in proportion to the mounting horror of their surroundings.

This is a context connecting Guy and Pauline closely with the values of the Georgian poetic movement and its adherence to an imagined rural England imbued with symbolic unity and permanence. The evocation of these values in many cases was encouraged by the growing awareness of the gradual erosion and transience of English landscape, an awareness much intensified both during and after the War. Mackenzie's short-lived experiments in poetry were in fact derivatively Georgian in theme and style, an indebtedness reflected in the artistic ambitions of Guy Hazlewood in the novel. Guy's failure as an English poet implies an acknowledgement of the limitations and artificiality inherent in the Georgian temperament.

The poetical and decorative idiom of Guy and Pauline has little in common with the most celebrated proponent of Georgian rural nostalgia, Edward Thomas: Mackenzie's style corresponds more readily to the mysterious and lyrical pantheism of Walter de la Mare. In common with the Georgians however, the assured diction of the novel celebrates
ruralism in a mood of achieved literary and stylistic consensus in a
third person narrative confidently exhibiting his complicity with a
specific convention. Two examples, chosen almost at random, will
illustrate this:

Everywhere the snow glistened with the footprints of many birds, but
not a single call broke a silence which was cold and absolute except
for the powdery whisper of the snow where it was sliding from the
holly leaves.

When Guy reached the bottom of the shrubbery, he sat down on a
fallen trunk by a backwater, which dried up here in the drift of dead
leaves; and he watched the surface of it glazing perceptibly, yet not
so fast but that the faint motion of the freezing air could write
upon the smoothness a tremulous reticulation. (Chapter II, p. 87)

The apple trees were already frilled with a foam of blossom; and on
quivering boughs linnets with breasts rose-burnt by the winds of
March throbbed out their carol. Chaffinches with flashing prelude of
silver wings flourished a burst of song that broke as with too
intolerable a triumph: then sought another tree and poured forth the
triumphant song again. Thrushes, blackbirds and warblers quired deep-
throated melodies against the multitudinous trebles of those
undistinguished myriads that with choriquean saluted May; and on
sudden diminuendoes could be heard the rustling canzonets of the
goldfinches, rising and falling with reedy cadences. (Chapter III, p.
156)

Mackenzie's evocation of English landscape - and in this respect he
evoke the work of Edward Thomas - is energised through its consistent
interchange between landscape and the emotions of those who inhabit and
observe it: its power is dependent on the aesthetic of association and
memory. Any sense of an implacably hostile, or impersonal, nature is
avoided. The natural rhythm of ruralism provides the correlative for the
emotional evolution and flux experienced by the two principal characters:

The blackbirds sang to her now more personally, those sombre-suited
heralds who had never before seemed to proclaim so audaciously
masterful Spring; and when the young moon cowered among the ragged
clouds of a rainy golden sky and the last bird slipped like a shadow
into the rhododendrons, such airs and whispers of April would steal
through the open window. Every day too there were flowery tokens of
hope and in sheltered corners of the garden the primroses came out
one by one, an imperceptible assemblage like the birth of stars in
the luminous green West. This grey-eyed virginal month had now such
memories of the last progress it made through her life that Pauline
could not help imputing to the seasons a sentimental participation in
her life: there was a poignancy in the reopening of those blue Greek
anemones which Guy, a year ago, had likened to her eyes, a poignancy
Futility and Purpose 1917-1927

that might have been present if the flowers had been consciously reminding her of vanished delights. (Chapter VI, p. 304)

The rhythms of nature and landscape become the source of a symbolic continuity in contrast to the transience of the emotions landscape reflects and expresses: through a ruralism of association, the novel's idiom celebrates an implied unity in which the past achieves a self-contained, self-preserving homogeneity.

This is a predictable convention sincerely deployed in the novel which is further illustration of Mackenzie's affinity with the trivial and superficial quality of the Georgian movement: its commonplace themes, limp rhythms, sentimentality and clichéd absolutes. Despite the novel's sympathetic and insightful study of the self-inflicted pains of first love's infatuation and selfishness (a strength common to Mackenzie's three pre-War novels), the analysis is seriously handicapped by a reliance on sentiment and unrestrained effusion, particularly in the novel's presentation of the cloying charm and sweetness of Pauline's family. This is compounded by secondary characters who appear disproportionately shallow, based upon repeated caricature which jars strangely with the consistently acute psychological penetration into the emotions of the principal characters.

On a structural level, though, can be found redeeming features indicative of an increased finesse in terms of Mackenzie's perspective on technique. The inspiration for the novel was linked with more specific and carefully premeditated formal features inappropriate to the expansiveness of Sinister Street. Mackenzie comments 'I was determined to show with Guy and Pauline that I could tackle as difficult a piece of construction as any novelist could set himself, by composing a sort of violin and piano sonata'. Clearly Mackenzie had taken at least some of the critical complaints of formlessness and slackness of design in Sinister Street to heart. The apparent banality of the novel's calendrical narrative is, in fact, entirely apposite to its theme, which is the complementarity of a complex relationship between two young people: the complementarity, too, entirely justifies the author's musical analogy. Eight chapters (with the ninth as a short Epigraph) cover a span of two years, with each chapter carefully confined to a season and divided into three consecutive months. This feature permits a new
departure: narrated in the third person, the narrative’s point of view alternates between Guy and Pauline in each successive month, creating an interweaving of the two voices of ‘violin’ and ‘piano’ (though with typical disrespect for musical terminology the result is a sonata with only two – rather than the conventional three – movements).

By escaping from the single point of view which determines Carnival and Sinister Street, Guy and Pauline boasts a greater thematic flexibility by generating irony and tension through disparate contrasts in the two lovers’ experiences, defining sharply the symmetry and mutuality of two personalities wrestling not only with each other’s, but also with their own, emotions. This relative structural concision will not reappear in Mackenzie’s fiction for a further twelve years until the writing of Vestal Fire.

If there exists an ironic incongruity in Guy and Pauline, emphatically Edwardian in period and Georgian in its stylistic mood, as the work the author carried off with him as his possible valedictory utterance amidst two of the worst military disasters of the Great War, there is a corresponding irony within the novel itself quite separate from the contradiction between its thematic substance and its military dedication.

The symmetrical perspective created by the two protagonists extends into a thematic parallel between Guy and Michael Fane in Sinister Street, both of whom are seen to inhabit the complex of ‘the unfinished statue’ established by Maurice Avery in Carnival (see Chapter Two). Guy’s role in Sinister Street reveals him as perhaps the sole member of Fane’s Oxford circle possessed of authentic creative potential, in contrast to the undisciplined aesthetic musings of Sinister Street’s hero. Michael Fane’s failed quest for spiritual meaning and fulfilment amidst the squalor of working-class London, and his subsequent retreat from the failure of aestheticism into exile from England, is corroborated in the subsequent novel by Guy Hazlewood’s failure as lover and poet. Guy’s inability to inhabit an idealised English pastoralism as the inspiration for his mannered and self-conscious versifying mirrors Michael Fane’s eventual alienation from the ethos of his class and education.

Paradoxically however, the ruralist aesthetic of Guy and Pauline, which the narrative voice so fastidiously and insistently creates as a fictional idiom, represents precisely the ideology which the hero finds
himself incapable of articulating through poetry. The medium of the novel stands in deliberate contradiction to its subject-matter and theme, constructing an artistic ideal only to demonstrate through its effect on the hero that it remains 'ideal' in the sense of being unattainable. As Guy forsakes English rural stasis for foreign exile - following the path of Maurice Avery and Michael Fane - in search of an alternative to artistic ambition, this is precisely what the close of the novel implies:

Next day they parted, Michael going to the Benedictine house at Cava, Guy pressing on toward Salerno. With every breath of the rosemary, with every sough of the Aleppo pines, with every murmur of the blue Tyrrhenian winking far below, more and more sharply did he realize that what he had thought at the time was wonderful relief had been more truly despair. Yet in a happier September might he not hope to come back this way, setting his face toward England?

*One more turn of the head in the gathering gloom*
*To watch her figure in the lighted door:*
*One more wish that I never should turn again,*
*But watch her standing there for evermore.* (Epigraph, p. 393)

'But watch her standing there for evermore': the verse quotation serves as a compound image not only of the lost Pauline, but for the timeless perfection of rural England itself. By a final irony, the aesthetic symbolised by the poem is that which Guy has failed to achieve, to transfix through the imagination. Once again suspending his hero, a gesture further emphasised by the conclusion's reference to Michael Fane's choice of exile and ascetic withdrawal, Mackenzie's celebration of Georgianism in *Guy and Pauline* assumes a final ambivalence. Guy's imaginative and physical alienation suggests that even before reaching Gallipoli, Mackenzie was conscious of recreating an idealised English certainty he feared to have been already lost.

The close thematic affinity between *Sinister Street* and *Guy and Pauline*, dramatised in the conjoining of the heroes of each novel in exile in the conclusion of the latter novel, reveals the degree to which the intervention of the Great War corrupted the potential in Mackenzie's intended *Theatre of Youth* project for what might have proved otherwise a coherent and thematically integrated fictional sequence. In cultivating his distinctive pre-War stylistic idiom, *Carnival, Sinister Street* and *Guy and Pauline* display a distinct unity. *Guy and Pauline*, however, was to be the last novel in Mackenzie's early style, and it is fitting that
it should remain an intentionally elegiac expression of the author's prose at its most achieved level. Affinities in style and theme are furthered in certain structural interconnections with the previous novels which, although superficial, prove occasionally illuminating. To emphasise the thematic development between Sinister Street and Guy and Pauline, for example, several incidents from the earlier novel re-surface in the later one, mediated through the alternative perspective of its principal characters. Thus the opening scene of Guy and Pauline develops, through Guy's point of view, from Michael Fane's departure from Flasher's Mead in Book Three, Chapter XIII of Sinister Street, while the episodes of the earlier novel depicting Michael's subsequent visits to Guy and Michael's ultimate discovery of Lily's infidelities in Ararat House, with Guy as witness, take on new colour and significance in Guy and Pauline by lending to previously subordinate characters the central perspective on Michael's character and actions.

Although an unambitious, and predictable, technique for integrating an extensive fictional sequence, this indicates the sincerity of Mackenzie's emulation of Balzac, whose Comédie Humaine provided the inspiration for the Theatre of Youth. With further development this device of disparate perspectives on shared events might have proved modestly apposite to the theatrical parallels in the planned work, where a succession of principal characters would occupy, from their single perspective, the centre-stage, creating an eventual pageant or gallery of interconnected life-histories. By 1917, however, Sylvia Scarlett was to prove that this pre-War framework had been irrevocably damaged by the intervening War.

There is a final twist to the satire of circumstance ironically connecting Guy and Pauline with the Great War. In Gallipoli Memories Mackenzie quotes the letter from Winston Churchill's private secretary which finally admitted the novelist to active service in 1915:

I hope you will have got my telegram. Your letter came today, and I got you made a Lt. R.M. in record time! Sir Ian had written to me about you. I thought the only possible plan was to telegraph to him and send you instructions, and to you to await them, as I didn't know where to tell you to report yourself. As for uniform, God knows where you will get one, but I suppose you can scratch up something that will do when you get there.
I hope you will have started before this arrives, so I won't write a long letter, but I must say how much I enjoyed your 2nd volume of Sinister Street.  

This was written by Edward Marsh in his capacity as secretary to the Admiralty, the man better known as the amateur literary figure who by 1915 had already edited and published three anthologies of Georgian Poetry.

The intensity of Mackenzie's evocation of rural England in Guy and Pauline is markedly retrospective - an elegiac idealisation in reaction to the anticipation of a disruptive unwritten future - but of equal significance at the time of its composition is the new geographical polarity between an England forsaken and the society which had supplanted the metropolis on the Neapolitan island of Capri. Capri is all-important as Mackenzie's first declaration of personal separateness from a distasteful native milieu. A short visit to the island in 1913 by Mackenzie and his wife Faith en route to London following his tour of America with the dramatisation of Carnival provoked the time-honoured response of a restless writer seeking a more temperamentally congenial ambience:

The moment we emerged from the funicular in the Piazza we felt that nothing must prevent our living in Capri. Wherever we looked there seemed to be dizzy pinnacles of rock, crowned by Gothic castles. The white columns of distant pergolas made us think of Greece. A Judas tree flamed like a great rose of solid blossom against a passionate blue sky. Round us, in a jingle of bells and laughter and cracking whips, stood so many people, natives and foreigners, who from living in Capri had achieved such brilliance of effect as butterflies and humming-birds achieve from competing with the light and colour of the tropics. As for me, in my dull travelling-suit, I felt like a clothes-moth beaten out of a Persian carpet slung between pomegranate trees, like a piece of grey fluff in a kaleidoscope.  

Despite his modesty Mackenzie the moth was soon to metamorphose into an indigenous butterfly. This intuitive response to Capri was further justified by subsequent visits to London, where Mackenzie claims he became acutely aware of 'the jealousy' he had aroused in his contemporaries due to the combined effects of the circulating library controversy over Volume One of Sinister Street and Henry James's kind attentiveness to the author in his Times Literary Supplement article of
1914, which had been construed as favouritism by 'les jeunes who had not been singled out for such attention'. Mackenzie's distaste for England appears to have been exacerbated by an excess of recognition. Writing in 1915 to Norman Douglas to congratulate him on the publication of Old Calabria, he remarks 'You won't sell a copy, and you're very lucky because you may hope to escape being drowned in a vomit of undigested criticism. I've concluded that popularity is a curse'. This is oddly prophetic of the post-1918 wane in Mackenzie's critical reputation in proportion to his increasing success as a popular novelist.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the most immediate consequence of Mackenzie's alternative cultural orientation was his conversion to Roman Catholicism in Capri in 1914, itself a gesture of separateness from England:

During those bouts of pain that winter I made up my mind to be received into the Catholic church, and the Parroco of Capri used to make that long walk along the narrow roughly paved strade to give me instruction...He was surprised to find that there was nothing he could teach me about Catholic doctrine and I made it clear to him that my reception into the Church was not to be regarded as a conversion but as a submission, a logical surrender to an inevitable recognition of the fact that Jesus Christ had founded his Church upon the rock of Peter...I was not as spiritually elated as I might have been if it had been a conversion instead of a submission to what I felt was a logical necessity for somebody who saw his future against a European rather than a British background."

Capri society was nothing if not European in temper: its rich cosmopolitan profile made it exaggeratedly so. In Vestal Fire the island is to be referred to in retrospect as 'this microcosm of European culture'. The island's significance within the context of the arts during the first quarter of the 20th century has been almost entirely overlooked by commentators: Capri is usually confined to brief sketches of the background to studies of individual writers upon whom it exerted an influence. From the 1890s until the 1930s the island's colony contained a steady procession of two distinct types: homosexual artists, predominantly English, in flight from repressive intolerance at home, especially following the 1895 trial of Oscar Wilde, and a steady influx of American, Russian, and European expatriates, artists and intellectuals, many wealthy, many dependent upon allowances of dubious origin. The
resultant temper was rarified, Olympian, and eclectic, embracing polarised doctrines political and aesthetic within a milieu of hedonistic moral relaxation, and, inevitably, a claustrophobic hotbed of rival jealousies, personalities and cliques. One trait united this bewildering diversity: a malicious indulgence in extravagant gossip. A kind of Baedeker's Bloomsbury, the colony's fragility, complacency and frequent absurdity was compulsive. A mere list of those the island contained at various stages - frequently all together - is sufficient to suggest the island's atmosphere: Axel Munthe, Norman Douglas, Compton and Faith Mackenzie, Frieda and D.H. Lawrence, Somerset Maugham, E.F. Benson, Francis Brett Young, John Ellingham Brooks, E.F.T. Marinetti, Maxim Gorky, Lenin, ex-royalty, Soviet dissidents, and numerous European aristocrats.

It need hardly be said that for a writer of Mackenzie's temperament and personality, Capri offered the opportunity to live as richly as the corresponding raw material promised potential inspiration for future writing. Paul Fussell describes as 'one of the signals of literary modernism...the British Literary Diaspora, the great flight of writers from England in the 20's and 30's', but it is evident from the nucleus created in Capri - established well before 1914 - that this phenomenon had been set in motion long before the consensus of critics such as Fussell have repeatedly suggested, and more importantly, included many writers like Norman Douglas and Mackenzie who were expressly unaffiliated with the temperament of literary modernism.

Norman Douglas proves both typical and atypical of this largely unrecognised counter-movement, and also represents the important precursor of the post-1918 escape from an enervating Britain, London in particular. Douglas provided the Mackenzies with letters of introduction which guaranteed their safe integration within Capri society. Douglas's writing career, which defies brief analysis and cannot readily be classified within either pre-War or post-War trends, represents an urbane and energetic expression of opposition to Anglo-Saxon rigidities, moral and aesthetic. Creating a literature of escape and exploration, Douglas repeatedly celebrates an artistic and sexual licence, a freedom of enquiry, values he perceives to be synonymous with the exotic and archaic qualities of Mediterranean culture. His testament to this effect
was South Wind (1917), in Fussell's words 'designed in part as an uncontaminated island's rebuke to northern Europe, a plea for youth and sun and tolerance addressed to nations at suicidal war apparently contemptuous of these things'. Douglas's novel inspired a whole cluster of romans à clef based on Capri, varyingly fictionalised and uniformly scandalous, not the least of which were Mackenzie's Vestal Fire and Extraordinary Women. Aldous Huxley's These Barren Leaves (1925) continued the tradition, though its setting was mainland Italy. Mackenzie's great indebtedness to Douglas's general world-view is registered in his extension of the title of Douglas's most famous novel into all four points of the intellectual compass in The Four Winds of Love.

Although only an occasional resident, Douglas was to become the tutelary hedonist and pagan figurehead of Caprese society, from which he succeeded in remaining simultaneously emotionally separate and indispensably central. This is precisely the position he is seen to occupy, in fictional guise, as Duncan Maxwell in Vestal Fire, the novel which repeatedly provides him with the parallel of a modern Silenus: foster-father to more than one aspiring Dionysus.

Laughter enveloped him in a cloud through which his small deep-set eyes came glittering like two stars. He was of a florid complexion with a long tip-tilted sliced-off pragmatical nose such as you may see in any number of portraits of eighteenth-century Lowland lairds; but his magnificent vitality instead of exhausting itself in a struggle with agriculture, and his subtle mind instead of wasting itself on the split straws and dusty chaff of Presbyterian theology, had been allowed to swell and ripen in the sun...sitting in the moon's eye when the white walls of his villa were a filigree of ebony shadows cast by the trees, he would drink much wine and instruct the youthful Dionysus until the hooting of an owl amongst the crags might remind him that there was an owl in Austria or Tunis whose habits he had not studied. And the next day he would be gone. Mellow as a pear, stringent as nespolo, bitter-sweet and poisonous sometimes as the berries of nightshade, crisp as a pippin, ruddy and comfortable as a plum, juicy as an orange, taut as a grape, spicy as a peach, shameless as a fig, assertive as a pineapple, all these he was in turn, for he was the fruit of the ages.

Douglas's lifelong extrovert pederasty and his obsessive scientific objectivity make him an appropriate symbol for the intellectual and sensual liberty which would come to characterise the spirit of Capri for its residents. Mackenzie clearly became immersed in this social and
artistic vortex very rapidly. His integration into the colony became very central in one very real sense, since the most peculiar and enduring legacy of his stay lies in the indebtedness of three major writers to the loan of Mackenzie's typewriter, which permitted Douglas to complete South Wind, D.H. Lawrence his Fantasia of the Unconscious, and Somerset Maugham Our Betters.

In the meantime, Mackenzie's departure for the Dardanelles in 1915 promised an even more profound and painful enrichment of experience. On his return to Capri in 1917 a confrontation with that 'dumped cargo' of Henry James would prove unavoidable, when the War could be seen to have taken its toll of the island's pseudo-Olympian aloofness. Not for a further decade would the nature of this nemesis find an adequate expressive outlet, with fictional objectivity in Vestal Fire, and with the subjectivity of personal reminiscence in Gallipoli Memories.

II The Butterfly in the Graveyard: Gallipoli Memories

In common with the major prose works articulating their authors' first-hand experiences of the Great War - Siegfried Sassoon's The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston, Robert Graves's Goodbye To All That, David Jones's In Parenthesis, the novels of Remarque and Aldington - Mackenzie's Gallipoli Memories (1929) depends upon the standpoint of retrospection and a relocation of the past through memory (registered in the title itself) as the only perspective imparting coherence and significance to happenings which when lived through were beyond the imagination. The division between the stark and violent immediacy of the trench poets, and the necessary period of emotional and creative adjustment required prior to articulation in the later memoirists and novelists, suggests a paradigm fundamental to the distinctions between two literary forms. Paul Fussell captures the characteristic quality of prose dealing with the Great War succinctly:

In reading memoirs of the war, one notices the same phenomenon over and over. By applying to the past a paradigm of ironic action, a rememberer is enabled to locate, draw forth, and finally shape into significance an event or a moment which otherwise would merge without meaning into the general undifferentiated stream.17
Fussell's point is especially apposite to Mackenzie's decade of delay and indecision in integrating the War with his writing. The acute sense of displacement and restlessness which infected him after 1917, exacerbated by the sour weariness he encountered on returning to a Capri whose immunity from war-torn Europe seemed so assured, made an immediate assimilation of his War experiences into fiction temperamentally impossible. Moreover, he was still bound in the fetters of a pre-War sensibility by his as yet half-built Theatre of Youth, which appeared as an immediate barrier to experimenting with alternative means of exploiting the residuum of two years' frenetic active service. Somewhat perfunctorily, he introduced the War in a localised and episodic fashion in Sylvia Scarlett, and obliquely the War influences plot and action in Fairy Gold (1926). He soon realised, however, that incorporating the War into the Edwardian ambience of his early novels would result in a fictional non-sequitur: '...my original conception of Sinister Street as the prologue to a comédie humaine I intended to call The Theatre of Youth was...abandoned. The reason for that was the Great War which would inevitably become a monotonous deus ex machina for what was Youth before that War.'

Mackenzie's long-cherished alternative was a seven-volume novel entitled Our Seven Selves, planned, rehearsed, and very nearly executed over a nine-year period. This project assumes added importance later as the blueprint for The Four Winds of Love (see Chapter Five).

If Vestal Fire was the novel through which Mackenzie celebrated his rejuvenation and arrested his acknowledged loss of place during the twenties, its writing also forced an acknowledgement that the War was not suitable fictional raw material if that material was to be drawn from personal experience. The lukewarm reception of two thinly fictionalised accounts of his espionage activities with M.I.5 in Greece - Extremes Meet (1928) and The Three Couriers (1929) - confirmed that the author's first excursion into autobiography was necessary if the War was to be made a valid contribution to his writing career, which had by now produced a corpus of twenty titles. As Gallipoli Memories would spectacularly demonstrate, the War had created a self-contained narrative of its own where fiction had little purchase: Mackenzie
comments in the Preface 'I cannot invent a better story than what actually happened...the time I spent at Gallipoli seems to compose itself into a tale'.

Vestal Fire, establishing a perspective on past experience which had eluded him for the duration of the post-1918 decade, marks the fictional relocation of the novelist which permits him, in Gallipoli Memories, to re-assert the voice of individual experience. Correspondingly, the articulation of the importance of that individual experience emphasises the centrality of War - although it only happens off-stage - to the mood and themes of Vestal Fire. The two works represent twin pinnacles of achievement in Mackenzie's middle period, and wholly implicate each other in their transitional nature.

1928, the year before Gallipoli Memories appeared, is 'notable', to quote Fussell, 'for two unique kinds of books':

...on the one hand, the first of the war memoirs setting themselves the task of remembering "the truth about the war"; on the other, clever novels exhibiting a generation of bright young men at war with their elders. In 1928 we have Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front and the first performance of Sheriff's Journey's End, as well as Sassoon's Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man, Blunden's Undertones of War, Max Plowman's A Subaltern on the Somme, and Hugh Quigley's Passchendaele and the Somme. At the same time and on the same bookshop counters we find Aldous Huxley's Point Counter Point and Waugh's Decline and Fall.

While Gallipoli Memories displays affinities with each of these contrasted 'unique kinds', in the final analysis it is quite unique in itself in mood, style, and content from Fussell's indicators of contemporary conventions. It is arguably the most unique memoir of its kind to have emerged from the Great War, attributable to a paradox in its heart which can be traced to the author's Preface.

The title of this book strictly expresses what it is. I kept no journal, and the few letters I wrote while I was at Gallipoli, though useful for fixing dates, were too much taken up with the domestic problems at home of money, clothes, books, gardens and domicile...On the whole I do not regret my failure to keep a journal, for by not doing so I have been compelled to retain impressions, conversations, voyages, and actions in my head, which means that they are as fresh now as fourteen years ago. Moreover, continuous pondering over them during that period has enabled me, I hope, to achieve a measure of selection. At the same time, this is so entirely a personal record that it inevitably possesses many of the faults of a diary, and I
fear that nowhere does my narrative succeed in transcending the particular or escaping from egoism. It remains a peculiar, not a general experience, and as such I beg that it may be read...My object has been to recapture the spirit in which I passed through a memorable experience. This must be my excuse for not displaying as much moral indignation as the mood of the moment expects from a writer about the War. (*Gallipoli Memories*, 'Preface', pp. ix-x)

The implication that the 'spirit' of the author's emotions and reactions at the time dealt with were in some way less stringent in judgement than the perspective of hindsight has since conferred upon experience - creating the indignation of the 'mood of the moment' as defined by Fussell's angry young men - is a common enough disclaimer in autobiographical writing, especially when it deals with war. It is only by way of the vista of the past as illuminated by reminiscence, however, that Mackenzie finds himself able to articulate the War. Accordingly, any evocation of the memorable moments in the past must prove irrevocably coloured by the present of the time of writing.

It is the means by which *Gallipoli Memories* overcomes this paradox - by openly exploiting it - that makes it such a remarkable commentary on the Great War. What lends the book its accessibility and compelling vividness is the facility displayed throughout the narrative for integrating and polarising the immediacy and naivety of subjective impressions with the detachment of an achieved retrospective view, but in such a way as to avoid the emergence of an overt irony which discredits either perspective. Brief but often vivid apercus throughout touching on this creative ambivalence have the effect of making Fussell's emphasis on the centrality of irony to War reminiscence itself the focus of Mackenzie's thematic attention, and not simply an aspect of technique. In the following example, he describes the pathetic condition of a miserable Serbian refugee who has been mistakenly apprehended upon flimsy pretext and subjected to a humiliating search. The fact that the refugee was a woman provokes sincere doubts in the narrator concerning the moral superiority of the emphatically masculine military ethic.

Hole was a quiet and humorous bird - I use the colloquialism because it exactly suits him - and he took refuge in a kind of pawkiness from a decided inclination on Heathcote-Smith's part to treat him as very much the junior subaltern. The boat on which he had travelled from the Piraeus had been stopped by one of our ships, and for some reason or other probably connected with the bashfulness of the Navy,
Hole had been called upon to search a female Serbian refugee of according to him an indescribable hideousness and squalor. I forget the details of that high seas drama; but I remember we found it diverting at the time, which is a comment on the change of values that war effects. It seems strange now to remember that we once thought the miseries of this wretched creature something to laugh at. Yet pondering that last remark I ask myself whether the priggishness of the present masquerading as compassion gets any nearer to objective truth than the brutality of the past disguised as duty. (Chapter XVI, p. 317)

This contains the key to the quality of the entire work: it is poised on the crux of the paradox created by memory 'masquerading' as fact. The resultant tension accentuates one of Mackenzie's principle themes: 'the change of values war effects'. While much of the author's close involvement with General Hamilton's staff and strategy connects it to the documentary truth-telling about the war which Fussell perceives as the common impulse of the late 1920s memoirists, the book's factual foundations are repeatedly undermined by Mackenzie's insistence upon the subjective veracity and honesty of his immediate impressions and feelings. For this reason Gallipoli Memories unashamedly celebrates the individual sensibility of the observer, the 'I' of the narrative, who while delighting in his capacity for penetrating perceptiveness, always concedes his proneness to evasion of the actual.

The result of this strategy is arguably one of Mackenzie's most achieved and controlled stylistic performances, combining an unerring grasp of narrative pace and colour, an often impassioned eloquence, and dazzling descriptive power. Hugh MacDiarmid, in a zealous defence of Mackenzie written in 1930, testifies to the accomplishment of Gallipoli Memories: '...a remarkable book, sane and subtle and salutary - a testimony not only to his great and versatile powers as a master of the whole range of expression in English, but to his qualities as a man'.

In one of the book's most poignant images, Mackenzie captures in a near self-reflexive gesture these compound attributes of perspective and style. He describes his gradual 'divination', soon after his arrival at Hamilton's G.H.Q., that 'we should never take Constantinople':

I had no reasonable grounds at that date for pessimism. I had not yet experienced that insurmountable mental barrier of which Mr Winston Churchill was one day to write. A wall of crystal, utterly immovable, began to tower up in the Narrows, and against this wall of
inhibition no weapon could be employed. The 'No' principle had become established in men's minds, and nothing could eradicate it.

It would not be Gallipoli that would reveal to me the fearful profundity of Mr Churchill's words. I should not learn to appreciate them until I had played my part in the Greek tragedy, on which the curtain had even then already risen. I should be at Gallipoli a mere butterfly in a graveyard. (Chapter V, pp. 47-8)

Unforgettably, the symbol of the butterfly in the graveyard expresses both the narrator's acknowledgement of his insightful yet fragile superfluity and incongruity amidst momentous historical upheaval and destruction, while connotatively the butterfly - symbolising the fitful and evasive illumination of short-lived beauty - indicates the transcendent power of the imagination to contain and purge the unspeakable, however fleetingly.

The narrative of Gallipoli Memories is replete with moments which enact the substance of this symbol. Frequently, this is conveyed in terms of the imagination's potential for reveling in its own processes as a means of deflecting truths it does not wish to acknowledge. The surrealism of the war-torn Dardanelles landscape, for instance, takes on the qualities of childhood fantasy and innocence, belying the appalling violence being visited upon it and its inhabitants:

We all crowded forward in the bows to stare through our glasses at that astonishing sight which has been so often and so eloquently described. I felt that I was watching some arrangement of a martial scene in the window of a toy-shop, some artful method for displaying all the toy soldiers and toy boats, all the toy tents and trees and forts in stock, to their best advantage; and just as the colours of toys are always a little brighter than nature, so were they here. The very puffs of smoke from the shrapnel-bursts seemed much more like the cotton wool with which the crafty salesman had imitated the real thing itself; and we who were gathered up there in the bows were like passengers on the top of a halted omnibus who were gazing down at that shop-window, the polychromatic toyland in which was irradiating the dull pavement of commonplace existence. (Chapter IV, p. 33)

As this indicates, the circumstances and perspective of those observing the scene are given as much emphasis as the scene itself. A further feature of Mackenzie's honesty of presentation is his frank inclusion of periods during his service which made his particular war unequivocally enjoyable, an insistence likely to unsettle a present-day reader in its power to disarm. Moments of tranquil perfection which contradict the
horrific purpose of conflict - while providing the occasion for numerous flights of prose artistry - involve the admission that the stage for this particular theatre of war, from the safety of the wings, amounted to a sensual paradise.

We put into a channel between two diminutive islands and rowed ashore to bathe and breakfast. The splendour of that dawn with fairy coasts rising all round from the limpid sea, the exhilarating wash of wine-gold air, the mild warmth of the early sun on the grey pebbles of the beach where we lay after our bathe to gaze up at the egg-shell blue of the morning sky, listening the while to the sizzle of the fish being cooked on a fire of driftwood and to Hadkinson singing some old folk song of Macedonia light as the morning breeze...

The channel between those two small islands flowed across a level bottom of silver sand. To swim ashore through that limpid current and lie on the grey sun-warmed pebbles while Hadkinson sang softly his old songs to the accompaniment of a flute played by one of his men, in the distance somewhere a tinkle of goat-bells, close at hand the crackle of the breakfast fire, that was an experience which touched rapture. (Chapter XIV, pp. 256-57)

This near-mythologising excess may appear open to the charge of the complacent indulgence of the imagination gratified at the expense of the invisible prevalence of appalling suffering, but the book's defence is to insist upon the potent sense of unreality underlying such sensuous moments:

We enjoyed a good dinner with all those delightful Ariels of this enchanted island, and indeed to me they really were like beings of another world, so remote did they seem, thus beheld in a company, from even the topsy-turvy humanity of war, so much nearer to the mythical humanity a poet might dream of to inhabit the distant future. (Chapter XI, p. 189)

Similarly, an apparently unconscious slip into callousness can be seen to represent through its inclusion without extraneous comment from the retrospective narrator (the very mention of 'an old letter' is sufficient) Mackenzie's oblique expression of an uncompromising truth: that an inescapable condition of the psychology of war is the instinctive insensitivity it generates.

I read in an old letter that two poor chaps and about thirty horses were blown to pieces and that when the shells began to fall among us we went down to a jolly good lunch; but the memory of where I ate it or who our hosts were has completely faded. There are moments when I wish that I had kept a proper diary, and yet if I had I should
probably have been tempted to overload this book. Some days have remained clear in my mind from dawn to eve; others, often filled with events instead of trivial incidents, have passed like a brief landscape beheld from the windows of a train. (Chapter XII, p. 206)

Here is both the justification of memory's waywardness and a testament to its restrictions: the word 'overload' is itself loaded, implying the resultant artificiality that would arise out of more stringent forms of remembering, such as a 'proper diary'.

What begins to emerge from Gallipoli Memories as a major theme is the inescapable division between the real theatre of war and its unreal, idyllic off-stage settings, and the impossibility of reconciling two contradictory states of mind: 'To loiter there in the honied calm of early evening and look back from that perfumed arbour to the adventures of the morning with shells and the hot stale deck of a trawler in a rolling southerly sea was to believe that I was dreaming now or that I had been dreaming then, but that not both experiences could be real' (212-13). Mackenzie's skilful synthesis of past innocence and present irony makes the omission of Gallipoli Memories from Fussell's The Great War and Modern Memory a regrettable oversight in an otherwise comprehensive study. Gallipoli Memories does not only enact the substance of Fussell's title: it offers crucial illustration to every aspect of his argument, including his most central observation: 'Irony is the attendant of hope, and the fuel of hope is innocence. One reason the Great War was more ironic than any other is that its beginning was more innocent'.

Mackenzie dramatises the validity of Fussell's aphorism beautifully. He takes an almost masochistic pleasure in dwelling on moments when his self-consciousness (remembering the Preface's warning of inescapable 'egoism') as a mature writer of thirty-two departing for active service for the first time in his life created an obsession with externals strangely oblivious of the enormity of what he was about to witness: a poignant regression to innocence.

...from the moment I landed in Alexandria I became what I was supposed to be - a subaltern of nineteen joining his regiment for the first time. That somebody called Compton Mackenzie had written two or three successful books was no help to my present self at all. I regarded that pre-commission self as an uncle with whom I might claim kinship when I was sure of my company, not as a matter for
pride, but as an excuse for any eccentricity still discernible in his nephew. I fancy that this reversion to a younger self was more common among temporary officers than the reminiscence and novels of the war would lead one to suppose. (Chapter III, p. 29)

The narrator becomes, almost literally, a virgin with a rifle, as in the following remarkably uncharacteristic and piercing instant of revelation, provoked when he is at last granted an initiatory mission exposing him to both responsibility and danger.

And finally, which to my mind sounded the best job of all, a suspected traitor was to be lured to Tenedos and I was to have the pleasure of bringing him back with me to Imbros where he was to be examined about his alleged misdeeds. I felt through her holster the thrill of my virgin pistol; even war had its Freudian moments. (Chapter XI, p. 181)

The acknowledgement of innocence here is sufficiently intense to enforce a dual concession to sexual and Freudian symbolism - which Mackenzie otherwise studiously avoids - in order to convey it.

This naivety is not confined to the individual; it can be manifested collectively. In a description of British Tommies unable to control their exhilaration after an attack in which they have captured Turkish prisoners, it is the almost unbearable poignancy of their child-like innocent delight which is made haunting:

A requirement of reminiscences of the War, as Fussell shows, is that innocence must give way to irony in the end, and Mackenzie's insistence upon subjective impressionism may seem in danger of invalidating the detachment and objectivity upon which irony depends. Yet as the continuation of the above episode reveals, innocence becomes irony in one brilliant stroke of modulation:
In contrast to their jubilation I see a tall ungainly Turk in his ill-fitting khaki uniform who looks at me in despair. I realize that he wants to step out of the ranks to make water. I nod assent, and, whether he is hurt internally or whether too long retention is the cause, the business is an agony, for he stands twisted in a fearful cramp, his face showing what he is suffering not by any contortions, but by such dumb pain as you may see in the eyes of an animal. I turn away sick at heart for him, and then one of the merry Worcesters dances round me and babbles once more his excited tale of a few minutes' madness. (119)

The poignancy of the disparity between elation and agony is accentuated by the tense shift from past to present: the irony is located within the mood of immediacy rather than from detached distance.

In a wider sense, Fussell’s paradigm is inscribed upon the narrative of Gallipoli Memories through a more implicit irony, so discreetly suggested as to be almost imperceptible. Much of the idiom and diction of the work suggests an adherence to a distinctly pre-War sensibility, echoing an Edwardian faith in absolutes of class, glory, honour, sacrifice; values which found their exemplary symbol in Rupert Brooke and which Fussell’s ‘generation of bright young men at war with their elders’ were to attack forcibly. It is to echoes of an Oxbridge, dandified attitude of flippancy and playfulness together with the unctuous certainties of public-school/officer-class cant with which Gallipoli Memories opens in the form of Orlo Williams’s letter: ‘The General Staff are a charming set of people, and the possibilities of this show are romantic to a degree’. (Chapter II, pp. 7-8) This wearied lexis of class and privilege in English manners does, in a sense, amount to a kind of innocence, but it is an innocence Mackenzie does not appear to share in moments where he adopts such usages in an apparently self-conscious way, presenting himself within the cliched terms of public school values: ‘Still it was jolly good Turkish delight and much appreciated aboard the Arcadian, the sort of tuck with which a new boy ought to arrive well-provided’. (Chapter IV, p. 45)

If this suggests a discreet irony, many further features of the narrative reinforce the author’s affiliation with the Rupert Brooke code of values and the ‘Adonis’ myth of pre-War English stability and beauty. Repeated Homeric invocations and mythic parallels situate the War within the context of a classical purity and perfection which
enables its 20th century industrialised destruction. This is prominent in a vision of Australian troops bathing, invested with the aesthetic ideal of masculinity which reflects the connotations of innocence and purity prevalent in the homo-erotic motif in English poetry, both of the trenches and before it:

There was not one of those glorious young men I saw that day who might not himself have been Ajax or Diomed, Hector or Achilles. Their almost complete nudity, their tallness and majestic simplicity of line, their rose-brown flesh burnt by the sun and purged of all grossness by the ordeal through which they were passing, all these united to create something as near to absolute beauty as I shall ever hope to see in this world. The dark glossy green of the arbutus leaves made an incomparable background for these shapes of heroes, and the very soil here had taken on the same tawny rose as that living flesh; one might have fancied that the dead had stained it to this rich warmth of apricot. (Chapter VI, p. 81)

A measure of the unpredictability of Gallipoli Memories, however, lies in Mackenzie's refusal to restrict his attitude to the simple configuration of pro-Brooke 'decorum', contra-Owen 'horror'. Fussell captures superbly the schism between the two schools: 'If the War had actually been written by Hardy it could scarcely offer a bolder irony than that by which Brooke's "swimmers" of 1914 metamorphose into the mud-flounders of the Somme and Passchendaele sinking beneath the surface'. The remarkable feature of Gallipoli Memories is that it generates, within its own parameters, its own metamorphosis in very similar terms. The innocence of its pre-War diction and manner almost willfully defiles itself by curdling into an evocation of graphic horror in much the same way that Owen subverted the poetics of the Georgian movement in the trenches. Mackenzie is describing his visit to Quinn's Post at Anzac, one of the appalling boneyards of the Great War landscape.

...and everywhere Turks digging and digging graves for some four thousand of their countrymen who had been putrefying in heaps along this narrow front for nearly a month of warm May air. "I must trouble you to get off my parapet, Major. It's rather delicate," said one of the men in the front trench to Orlo Williams, who had been surveying the scene through his glasses and by so doing nearly created an incident. "And you've got your foot in an awkward place," he called up to me. Looking down I saw squelching up from the ground on either side of my boot like a rotten mangold the deliquescent green and black flesh of a Turk's head.
"This parapet's pretty well made up of dead bodies," said our friend below, putting out his hand to help me jump back into the trench, for he saw that I had had enough of it up there.

The impression which that scene from the ridge by Quinn's Post made on my mind has obliterated all the rest of the time at Anzac. I cannot recall a single incident on the way back down the valley. I only know that nothing could cleanse the smell of death from the nostrils for a fortnight afterwards. There was no herb so aromatic but it reeked of carrion, not thyme nor lavender, nor even rosemary.

(Chapter VI, p. 83)

This evokes Remarque or Owen - and the tone of Owen's letters from the trenches especially - more readily than Brooke or any writer of his generation. The peculiarly ornate diction of Mackenzie's pre-War style surfaces almost as a valediction: 'rotten mangold', 'deliquescent', the list of herbs, represent the tropes of the lyrical ruralism of Guy and Pauline defiled, by the reek of the trenches, into a form of black pastoralism.

Those portions of the narrative which rely on authorial retrospection begin to betray the disintegration of the codes and assumptions which in the book's earlier stages were registered with such assuredness. Mackenzie questions the insensitivity of senior ranks toward their cannon-fodder, the Tommies, and the ethic from which this complacency emanates:

Far different was the attitude of Captain George Lloyd. To him they were, these soldiers, as much barbarians as they were to Eddie Keeling; but to Lloyd their primitiveness was not a matter even for one wry smile so much as an urgent call to the mission field. I began for the first time in my life to appreciate that Imperialism could touch a man's soul as deeply as Religion. (Chapter V, p. 50)

Irrevocably, the disaster of the failed Suvla landing - one of the crucial reversals of the Great War - while providing the narrative with a compelling climax also represents the symbolic catastrophe in which the narrator's original innocence 'crashes to pieces'.

It was a long time before I fell sound asleep, for I kept waking to clutch at phantoms. There was no vestige of hope left in my mind that the Suvla landing could succeed. I felt as if I had watched a system crash to pieces before my eyes, as if I had stood by the deathbed of an old order. The guns I could hear might have been a growling that foretold the murderous folly of the Somme. The war would last now until we had all turned ourselves into Germans to win it. An absurd phrase went singing through my head. We have lost our
amateur status tonight. It was foolish for me who had been old enough to appreciate the middle of the South African War to go on believing in the practical value of the public-school system. I had really for long mistrusted it, but since coming out here I had fallen once more under its spell as I might have fallen under the spell of a story by Rudyard Kipling. Yes, the War would go on now. (Chapter XIX, p. 373)

The polarity in perspective celebrated in the book - impressionistic immediacy and starkly ironic reassessment - meet and stand opposed in a self-effacing acknowledgement of the 'amateur' flippancy with which Mackenzie entered the War and the equal inadequacies of an entire political and educational inheritance, questioned in Sinister Street, now dramatically repudiated. The writer’s career comes of age in the writing of this passage. Not until the reassessment of the Great War in The Four Winds of Love, written during the Second World War in a context which further crystallised with added hindsight the tragic significance of 1914-1918 (see Chapter Five), does Mackenzie register so forcibly the violence of the War's irreparable rupture.

Last night must somehow be separated from any other night by sleep. It had been too profoundly moving an experience to melt irritably into another dusty day. It must be enshrined in sleep, and remembered all the rest of my life as a dream in which I had beheld so many other people’s dreams topple over and crash. And away in London they would be getting up presently, unaware that during the night the old London had vanished. (374)

 Appropriately, it is Patrick Shaw-Stewart, whose death in the War, like Brooke’s, tolled the symbolic knell of a fated generation who were to 'lose their amateur status', who closes Gallipoli Memories. He is invoked in the mood of an obsequy for Sinister Street, the novel turned elegy.

It seems to me that above the splashing of the water against the side of the pier I hear Patrick Shaw-Stewart saying that he did not think Ronnie Knox was very happy at Trinity, of which he was then Fellow and Chaplain. I remember, too, telling him that Cyril Bailey had written to me after reading the second volume of Sinister Street to say that it marked the end of an epoch and that Oxford could never be the same again.

"But if six nights ago things had gone differently at Suvla," I added, "the continuity might not have been broken. But now it must be, for the whole spirit of the War will change as it goes on, which it must do now for God knows how long." (Chapter XXI, p. 394)
Since irony has proved so essential to this assessment of Gallipoli Memories, an ironic footnote for conclusion: the ten years of false starts and mistaken directions it took in order to find the confidence and perspective to write the work result in a book which demonstrates with finality why for its author that decade would set him so seriously adrift.

With Mackenzie invalided out to Capri in 1917, the Suvla landing would claim perhaps one of its earliest literary victims - The Life and Adventures of Sylvia Scarlett.

III A Decade Adrift: 1917-1927

The years 1917-1927 represent without doubt the most troubled and unsatisfactory decade in Mackenzie’s career as a novelist. There is an exception in the thematic control and firm purpose of the Mark Liddersdale trilogy, which echoes the assuredness of the pre-War novels but which sold badly as a result of its specialised subject-matter. The remaining novels written between 1917 and 1927 - Poor Relations (1919), The Vanity Girl (1920), Rich Relatives (1921), The Seven Ages of Woman (1923), The Old Men of the Sea (1924), Coral (1925), Fairy Gold (1926) and Rogues and Vagabonds (1927) - betray, to varying degrees, all the perfunctory and shallow features of books written in haste which the author himself confessed represented his period of 'marking time'. These are the symptoms of a serious decline from the accomplishments of his pre-War fiction - its fastidious attention to style, specificity, thematic control and exacting psychological delineation of character - which finds its source in the failure of The Life and Adventures of Sylvia Scarlett.

The novel which immediately followed Sylvia Scarlett in 1919, Poor Relations, marks the decisive turning point in Mackenzie’s critical reputation. In itself a poor relation to its predecessors, this first essay in comic fiction provided the juncture at which, for many critics, Mackenzie’s pre-War promise, ambition and creative direction disintegrated into uncertainty. This critical attitude was itself divided.
Some commentators, like Douglas Goldring, perceived Mackenzie to have settled for quick commercial appeal at the expense of his earlier claim to an earnestly literary profile of artistic seriousness:

Mr Mackenzie has found himself – not as a serious novelist, but as that very valuable thing, an entertainer. As such the success which he has achieved is thoroughly deserved.

Others, particularly those disposed to find fault with Sinister Street and its predecessors, were predicatably less lenient in their verdict upon Mackenzie’s post-War disorientation, an attitude epitomised by John Freeman in 1924:

...for imagination he learns to substitute invention, chooses the superficial, and does not even trouble to secure the consistency of his characters. He might have chosen otherwise. His alertness, his preoccupation with externals, his fullness of incident...might have been flogged into subordination; he need not have been very serious to have taken his work seriously...Mr Mackenzie has divagated. The task of presenting reality is left to the scientific mind, and the task of creating another reality is left to the poetic mind.

Ironically, it was precisely Mackenzie’s synthesis of the ‘scientific’ and the ‘poetic’ in Carnival and Sinister Street which had contributed to his eminence as a distinctive new talent before the War.

Although a conspicuously lightweight novel, Poor Relations does display the easeful facility in combining comic action and dialogue which would reach fruition in the Scottish comedy sequence some twenty years later. The novel, however, established an aspect of Mackenzie’s creative character as yet insufficiently matured – his talent for comic prose – which would plague him relentlessly for the next thirty years. Although few critics made real sense of the creative deceleration which Poor Relations signified, establishing the pattern for the remainder of the twenties, Mackenzie’s transition into popular comedy in 1919 is less important than the analogous departure in the mid-1940s which produced the Scottish comedy sequence. These mature and adroit comic novels are paradigmatic examples of a consciously popular and accessible light fiction fully engaged with their subject-matter and containing a thematic relevance to the culture the author ostensibly trivialises, tactics considered fully in Chapters Six and Seven. The light novels of the 1920s however appear vacuous in comparison, even when judged within
the context of the restrictions implied in the genre of popular fiction. No less than five of these novels were written hastily for serialisation in Cassell's monthly magazines or newspapers (The Vanity Girl (Cassell's, 1920), The Old Man of the Sea (Cassell's, 1924), Coral (Daily Mirror, 1925), Fairy Gold (Evening Standard, 1925), Rogues and Vagabonds (Sunday Chronicle, 1927)).

This shallowness of creativity is indicative of the decade of spiritual uncertainty heralded by the War during which decisive alterations in Mackenzie's personal life and political inclinations were threatening. His curious relationship with the War as an insistent self-dramatising metaphor did not cease even with his withdrawal from active service in 1917. Due to the wartime paper famine, Mackenzie had no choice but to begin writing Sylvia Scarlett on the reverse side of the manuscript of Guy and Pauline, a concretely schismatic expression of the discontinuity between innocence and irony, as the author himself realised:

...there cannot be many manuscripts of novels which display by turning them the other way round so complete a transformation of style, or in which one may find that the mere thickness of a piece of foolscap is a bridge between two worlds.27

The bridge the author divined was not altogether secure. As if this was not sufficiently symbolic of the War's intrusion into literature, the parallel extends itself further, indicating just how literal in nature many of the factors which made the Great War an accelerator of literary change were:

When I picked up my pen to write Sylvia Scarlett I realized that the hundreds of telegrams I had written during the last two years had emptied the honey from what the Encyclopaedia Britannica calls my mellifluous style. Telegram after telegram at nearly two shillings a word had made every adjective an unwarrantable extravagance.28

There is a joke that the Second World War was invented by Vera Lynn's agent. Similarly, the stagey inevitableness in this manifestation of Fussell's 'literariness of the Great War' invites a similar speculation that the Great War took place merely to make Mackenzie's novels as ironic as possible.
To pursue the seemingly ineluctable metaphor, it is not unreasonable to describe the seven hundred pages of *Sylvia Scarlett* as a fictional equivalent of the more unsubtle features of the military strategy of General Haig at the Somme and its devastatingly inept logic. What makes *Sylvia Scarlett* virtually unreadable is an analogous combination of absurdly grandiose scale and a reliance on chronic reiteration. The origins of this gargantuan novel were unashamedly prosaic: acute financial problems necessitated not only a novel which could be rapidly 'improvised' (the author’s own word) but also published in two - even by Mackenzie’s standards, large - volumes, resulting in a work of some 300,000 words. The personal exigencies which forced out the novel, at an astonishing speed, indicate emphatically the most far-reaching legacy of Mackenzie’s passage through the War. What distinguishes *Guy and Pauline* and *Sylvia Scarlett* above all is the transition from a conspicuously pre-War aesthetic fidelity to a cultivated prose into a more pragmatic and serviceable style. The novelist has become author.

Had he lived to read it, it would be impossible to imagine Henry James finding in *Sylvia Scarlett* the consummation of future fictional talent he detected in his protégé, a novel which thoroughly profanes the principle of carefully wrought inner design and Mackenzie’s erstwhile parental devotion in ‘positively caring for his expression as expression’. Indeed, given the novel’s shapeless bulk and its prosaic sameness, James’s uncanny prognosis of ‘dumped cargo’ becomes an unfortunately appropriate image.

As Erlandson notes correctly in an otherwise surprisingly uncritical apology for the novel, it contains one somewhat tenuous indication of a attempt to make good the fractured *Theatre of Youth* conception:

> Out of diverse backgrounds and experiences, Sylvia and Michael [Fane] arrive at similar attitudes, ideals and beliefs. Mackenzie seems to emphasise that Sylvia represents the parallel but reverse side of the coin by bringing the two worlds together in a love union at the end of the book.²³¹

This is too optimistic, given that any token thematic continuity or contrast is soon eclipsed by glaring stylistic and technical disparities between the novel and its pre-War predecessors. Where in Michael Fane is found the painstaking delineation of emotional development and social
background, in Guy and Pauline a skilfully symmetrical reflection of mutual points of view, in Sylvia Scarlett there is a dependence upon a central consciousness whose identity, never discernibly developed or consistently analysed, is never satisfactorily established or posited in the first place. Sylvia acts merely as the lifeless motor for a torrent of unselected episode and incident, and, towards the novel’s end, a blatant foil for voicing the author’s loquacious and rather half-hearted world philosophy.

Erlandson, although he partly concedes failure when he suggests that the novel ‘attempts too much and at the same time not enough’,30 embarks on the pointless exercise of recounting the novel’s ‘plot’, essentially a reductio ad absurdum. Plot, by definition the skeleton of external event upon which thematic evolution is fleshed out, can only with difficulty be applied to a novel with no satisfactory thematic development and where the entirety of its substance – a seamless accumulation of incident – is the equivalent of its plot. As a result the novel acts as a kind of narrative vacuum, where chronic improvisation and the persistent aggrandizement of scale simply disappears into the void created by the absence of a guiding structure or shaping principle.

In this way much of the novel’s failed picaresque aspirations, based upon an ironically mechanistic reflection of causality suggestive of Chaplinesque slapstick, acts as a paradigm for the process of the novel itself:

The encouragement put a fine spirit into Danny’s blows; he hammered the unfortunate Cohen round and round the room, upsetting tables and chairs and washtub until with a stinging blow he knocked him backward into the slop-pail, in which he sat so heavily that when he tried to rise the slop-pail stuck and gave him the appearance of a large baboon crawling with elevated rump on all fours. Danny kicked off the slop-pail, and invited Cohen to stand up to him; but when he did get on his feet, he ran to the door and reached the stairs just as Mrs. Gonner was wearily ascending to find out what was happening. He tried to stop himself by clutching the knob of the baluster, which broke; the result was that he dragged Mrs. Gonner with him in a glissade which ended behind the counter. The confusion in the shop became general: Mr. Gonner cut his thumb, and the sight of blood caused a woman who was eating a sausage to choke; another customer took advantage of the row to snatch a side of bacon and try to escape, but another customer with a finer moral sense prevented him; a dog, who was sniffing in the entrance, saw the bacon on the floor and tried to seize it, but getting his tail trodden upon by somebody
he took fright and bit a small boy, who was waiting to change a shilling into coppers.31

This illustrates well a narrative whose solidity relies upon the celebration of external coherence for its own sake at the expense of inward delineation of the characters' motives and thoughts. The contingencies of the physical world which create farce mirror the ceaseless contingency of invention which perpetuates the novel.

*Sylvia Scarlett* represents an acute exaggeration of the author's habitual reluctance to impose selection on his material. It conveys an impression of Mackenzie's pre-War fictional technique losing control and in the process wholly smothering the finely mediated thematic and expressive control of *Carnival, Sinister Street* or *Guy and Pauline* in order to perpetuate itself, creating a void rather than a thematic centre. The gigantism of the novel, and the physical feat of its rapid composition, might be seen to reflect a defiant, hyperbolic declaration that the War had left Mackenzie's creative integrity intact or that the seam of artistic development had not encountered the 'deep gorge'. This is why the novel boasts a deliberate outpouring of every fragment of Mackenzie's pre-War fictional material: Edwardian London, the Oxford graduates, chorus-girls, call-girls and dancers, demi-mondaines, sordid lodgings and loquacious Dickensian landladies, hansom cabs, travelling circuses, Pierrots, Columbines and Harlequins; all flowing inexorably with no spirit of restraint to check it into an inchoate monolith asserting the massive weight of the past, defying the present, eliding the future.

If the War had made a narrative chronology of spiritual meaning impossible, *Sylvia Scarlett* celebrates the external, causal chronology of confidently linear historical progress and development which the War had so decisively fractured. In other words, the novel's absence of selection increases in proportion to the necessity of expressing a yearning for surface continuity and stability. If the exploration of fragmentation was to become a conspicuous impulse in Modernism towards supplanting external historical coherence with interior consciousness as a structural principle, in 1917 Mackenzie can be seen, no less consciously, to be flaunting the stylistic antithesis of Modernism to a degree which
Futility and Purpose 1917-1927

anticipates the post-1918 widening in aesthetic polarities between tradition and experiment.

In his perceptive article on the post-1918 decline of Mackenzie and his contemporaries, replete with unkind but apposite images (see Chapter Two), Angus Wilson reflects on the obstinate endurance of the conventions of the 'traditional', pre-War novel:

Before we smile too readily, however, it is well to remember the periodic pleas made in some literary quarters for a return to this great tradition of the English novel. Disturbed at what they feel to be the growing cliquishness, the esoteric, the too slight quality of much modern writing, these critics look back to the happy days when the literary world knew not 'highbrow' or 'middlebrow'. A glance at what happened to Fortitude, Sinister Street, or Round the Corner, a diet of Sylvia Scarlett, Sylvia and Michael, The Dark Forest, The Young Enchanted, The Stucco House, or Mummery, would make them reflect again. Or would it? If, as I suspect, their fear is not so much of the chasm between high and middle brow, but of the new, the fresh, the experimental, they would probably return from their reading restored in spirit, more than ever determined that the great things of life are best conveyed broadly and simply in the old traditional manner.

One imagines them saying: 'You only have to look at Walpole and Cannan, Beresford, Compton Mackenzie and Francis Brett Young, to see that one can be contemporary and universal.' Alas! It is too late, I fear, for them to be so honest. Already by 1920 the die had been cast. The London Mercury, which, excellent periodical though it was could not be called avant garde announced in its reviews that the promise had not been fulfilled, that the hopes of 1914 had run away into a shapeless, meaningless stream.32

If this is a clear statement of a familiar argument, it is unfortunate that Wilson does not, as might have been expected, seek to analyse further the deeper implications of the pseudo-sociological, pseudo-aesthetic low, middle, and high brow configuration he appears to scrutinise. This is surprising in terms of Wilson's self-confessed debt to the conventions of 19th century fiction - Zola, Dickens, and George Eliot in particular - as a novelist and his resistance to the principles of Modernism, a resistance he did not reassess until the sixties, when No Laughing Matter (1967), a relatively ambitious experiment, revealed an indebtedness to Virginia Woolf. At the time of this essay, written in 1951, Wilson's adherence to traditional formal approaches ought to have encouraged a less uncharitable response to a generation of novelists inheriting the models of the Victorians and Edwardians but who became
seriously invalidated in the impact of Modernist displacement, a
displacement which did much to contribute to the restrictive ideological
segregations Wilson adopts towards the end of his essay.

This perspective, by no means confined to Wilson, often implies an
assumption that the pre-War novelists like Mackenzie who displayed
'business as usual' signs after 1918 were insensitive, if not oblivious,
to the condition of post-War disillusionment and decay simply because
the resumption of their careers suggested indifference to the impact of
the War on the arts. To be possessed of a post-War malaise has become
an imaginative preserve of those artists normally associated with the
innovative and oppositional temperament equal to the demands of
articulating the complexities of that malaise. By seldom questioned
implication, their critical integrity relies on their apparent
preparedness to respond to, and reflect, a wider cultural mood of
external fracture and inner chaos. How much such shared aesthetic
preferences were motivated by social phenomena, or whether the aesthetic
has since become imposed through association upon historical change as
a convenient paradigm for its interpretation, will always remain matter
for debate.

Yet within the parameters of his inheritance of formal conservatism in
fiction, though The Four Winds of Love reveals that he was not averse to
relative innovation (see Chapter Five), Mackenzie's reaction to the War
is still an acute one. Sylvia Scarlett, apparently exaggeratedly pre-War
in technique and mood, can be seen in effect as a post-War novel
disguised as its opposite. The author's suggestion of such a view has
been repeatedly misconstrued by critics. In his Foreword to the new
edition of the novel in 1950, he claims that Sylvia Scarlett 'was the
first novel affected by the weariness and disgust of the war and most
of the critics at that date had been left behind by the march of time;
they still thought war should inspire lofty and romantic notions in a
novelist's mind'.

Understandably, commentators have found this statement strangely
incongruous as a suggestion of nihilism applied to a work so over-
insistent in its celebration of material life, character, humour, detail
and action. Erlandson chooses to ignore the import of the author's
contradictory remark when he concludes
In the novel Mackenzie conveyed the vivid sense of life, the zest for experience, that delight in the human pageant which have always been noteworthy elements of his own personality and temperament but which had never before been so fully expressed in his work.

D.J. Dooley's reaction is similar, though he further assumes the author's forewarning to be an unnecessary reference, by way of apology, for the graphic though localised descriptions of wartime misery and horror incorporated into the latter portions of the novel. Sylvia Scarlett was simply not horrific enough for one contemporary reviewer, who expressed frank astonishment at what appeared to be the novel's sublime obliviousness of the War's virtually apocalyptic reversal of the process of history:

The frame of the world cracks, empires dissolve, there is overcrowding in the next world, God bethinks himself of recapitulating the first chapter of Genesis, - and Mr Mackenzie, with supreme impassivity, proceeds with his Hansard of the emotions and adventures of Michael Fane, Sylvia Scarlett, Maurice Avery, and Lily Haden.

Although it would appear justified to denounce the novel on the grounds of a complacency disguised as improvisational zest, the zest is perhaps more apparent than real. To go beyond this response, Mackenzie's remarks require closer scrutiny.

The Preface states that Sylvia Scarlett was affected by the War, not inspired. The distinction is important: the author's initial aim was the avoidance of, not confrontation with, his post-War mood. The 'weariness and disgust' reflex, then, becomes an implied dismissal of the technique of the novel itself: not an indication of any thematic coherence or guiding aesthetic but an acknowledgement of the impossibility of locating unity and coherence in a post-War world. This is enacted in the fragility of the narrative, with its co-existence of superfluous invention and paucity of architecture. The resultant 'weariness' refers to both the fruitless energy of the author and its ultimate effect upon the reader, numbed by the deprivation of a central focus.

In this way the novel begins to take on an almost masochistic quality. Mackenzie seems to impose his post-War indeterminacy upon clearly incongruous pre-War material in an act of inverted vitality, willing an artistic exhaustion in the guise of inventive exhaustiveness. The
ambivalence of this condition was detected by the young F. Scott Fitzgerald, the foundation of whose career with his first novel *This Side of Paradise* in 1920 owed much to the strong influence of *Sinister Street*. Paying homage to his 'old idol' in Capri in 1924, this was his impression of a novelist, thirteen years his senior, who by this time had drifted dangerously far from the pre-War eminence which had proved decisive for his visitor.

We're just back from Capri where I sat up (tell Bunny) all night talking to my old idol Compton Mackenzie. Perhaps you met him. I found him cordial, attractive and pleasantly mundane. You get no sense from him that he feels his work has gone to pieces. He's not pompous about his present output. I think he's just tired. The War wrecked him as it did Wells and many of that generation.37

Despite an evident affection, there is little of Fitzgerald's younger reverence remaining. The emphatic finality of tense ('gone to pieces', 'The War wrecked him') barely conceals the uncompromising verdict that this 'old' novelist – Mackenzie was only forty-one at the time of this meeting – was finished. Yet there remains a hint of the contradiction, manifest in *Sylvia Scarlett*, between Mackenzie's stubborn indifference to his artistic and critical decline and, if Fitzgerald's impression was accurate, clear evidence of an exhaustion both physical and spiritual.

Concluding his Preface to the novel, Mackenzie refers non-commitally to the verdict of a once-time fellow-novelist, friend, and neighbour in Capri infinitely more celebrated as an exemplar of post-War creative angst:

D.H. Lawrence read *Sylvia Scarlett* when he was in Capri. "It's so like life", he murmured in that high dreamy voice he used for his most benevolent moods. If Lawrence was right the book will still be readable. If he was wrong it will now be unreadable.38

Given Lawrence's lifelong aspiration to create the 'bright book of Life', it is doubtful if Lawrence intended his summation as a superlative. The sole novelist of Henry James's 'coming men' of 1914 to emerge from the War into a burgeoning critical reputation, to measure the verisimilitude of *Sylvia Scarlett* against this particular Lawrentian absolute is to find it sadly undeserving of the capital L. The novel, in fact, symbolises the obdurate impasse that would confront Mackenzie's fiction for the next
decade, for if it reveals the impossibility of development, it demonstrates equally that there was no way back. The exhaustion of the writing of Sylvia Scarlett confirmed the invalidity of continuing seriously with The Theatre of Youth, although following the dictates of his new professional identity Mackenzie would exhume its decayed interconnections in The Vanity Girl (1920) and Coral (1925) to make money and maintain a circulation flagging in reaction to the Mark Liddersdale trilogy. Dependent on reiteration and not thematic evolution, the final consequence of such novels was, in Angus Wilson's view, that the 'characters...got out of control':

With trilogies incomplete and novels that were only half a statement, they appear and reappear in successive books - Michael Fane, Sylvia Scarlett, Jenny Pearl...— until the whole edifice of the contemporary novel is burrowed through and through like a vast rabbit warren. The more the characters overflowed and multiplied, the less substantial and lifelike they became.39

This perfunctory professionalism, in addition to the grim problems of writing hastily a colossal novel to relieve financial worries, clearly amounted to a stressful period of forced adjustment and reappraisal. This was not all: on the domestic front Mackenzie was to confront emptiness and pain threatening his own life on his return to the much-altered Capri of 1917. Due to infidelities on both sides, but greatly exacerbated by a foredoomed affair Faith had had in Capri with a young sculptor during her husband's absence, the Mackenzies reassessed their marriage and opted for a separation in which the marriage would continue in name only, each party free to determine an independent life. Despite subsequent periods spent together, this arrangement continued until Faith's death in 1961. Faith had fallen prey to the treacherous web of emotional entanglements which previously had seduced the couple as a feature of the island's alluring character. Apparently so secure in its isolation from the intricacies of European politics, Capri's volatile cosmopolitan temper intensified racial and nationalistic antipathies so rapidly that it very quickly became a claustrophobic model of the external hostilities raging in the distance. The wider mood of a Europe at war found in Capri exaggerated and distorted expression, anticipating in Mackenzie's view 'what would happen everywhere in Europe in the search for pleasure after those intolerable years of war'.40
The irony in the bitter reversal of the Mackenzies' pre-War harmony with Capri becomes painfully clear in the fragile transience evoked in Vestal Fire. The onetime emotional stability of marriage, which had provided for the author a secure vantage-point from which the eccentricities of Capri could be fully savoured, had now been destroyed: in Mackenzie's absence, he had unwittingly become implicated in its excess and tainted with its hubris. The estrangement of the Mackenzies' marriage marked the first of three failed island exiles.

Even following this pact of readjustment, Faith's continuing sensitivity to the self-destructive emotional conflicts of the island, of which she still found herself a victim, became too oppressive for her husband. The antipathy to intense psychological introspection of the novelist was equally a characteristic of the private man:

I have myself an aversion from building up a situation; in the process the simple explanation is usually lost. Psychological embroidery had for some time now taken the place of simple incident in telling a story, and I realized that, if I were going to continue along the path I had chosen for myself as a writer, I should have to withdraw from the attempt to compete. I wanted to live as well as to write...I was still eighteen months away from any clear decision about my future, but the need for some profound change in my manner of life was beginning to prod me gently.\(^1\)

A worldly spiritual distaste for the after-effects of the War had not only serious implications for his priorities as a novelist; it had also infected his immediate personal circumstances. A 'profound change' in orientation and perspective was urgently necessary. The dismissive reviews which greeted the publication of The Vanity Girl in 1920, he remembers, 'convinced me that I must get away from the heart of things for the next two years. I realised that I had had six times as much experience of life as most of my contemporaries and therefore that I could afford to withdraw from the world for the present'.\(^2\)

One possible means of escape was a voyage seriously considered by Mackenzie and Lawrence to the South Seas which might provide them with the material for a joint travel-book: there was also talk of taking a film crew. This never to be realised exploit is perhaps one of the oddest footnotes to the life of either writer. It is evident from Lawrence's impatient letters to Mackenzie, anxious to discover if the latter had found a suitable vessel, that Lawrence in particular was
determined to see the ambition realised. It is strangely touching that these two figures - so artistically and temperamentally disparate - should be so desperate for escape that they planned one together: an indication of what was for a time an intimate friendship. It reveals a basis of mutual respect transcending aesthetic and personal polarities that was to be repeated in Mackenzie's far more important and productive friendship with Christopher Grieve (Hugh MacDiarmid) some eight years later, discussed in the next chapter.

If it was not an emotion already shared, during 1919-20 Lawrence's embattled aversion from a philistine and inert English culture was undoubtedly a trait to which Mackenzie, whose distaste for London had brought him to Capri in the first place, was attracted. However, Capri by 1920 was scarcely less oppressive than post-War England, London specifically, which for Mackenzie had become synonymous with his anger over the Coalition Government's policy over Greece and Ireland. In a letter to Mackenzie Lawrence was more nihilistic: 'London sounds as sickening as ever. Curse these strikes. I hate Labour and Capitalism and all that frowsty duality in nothingness'. A sudden opportunity in August 1920 suggested a possible end to Mackenzie's indeterminacy:

...Martin Seeker, who had all the while been struggling against the South Seas plan, showed me an advertisement in The Times inviting applications for a sixty-year lease of the island of Herm at £900 a year and of the island of Jethou at £100 a year...

I agreed with Seeker that if I could obtain the leases of both islands the Channel Isles might supplant the South Seas in my dreams. Completely convinced as I was that I must withdraw from that post-war world of London, Herm and Jethou seemed to offer the opportunity.

If Herm and Jethou promised only static as opposed to exploratory adventuring, they could certainly guarantee exile: conveniently close, yet peripherally remote, from the mainland, where Mackenzie could reconstruct his world in his own image free from the cloying European sophistication of Capri and its bittersweet legacy. His bid for egocentric isolation - Edmund Gosse referred to him as Herm's 'new ruler' - provided the inspiration for Lawrence's threatened 'skit', the short story 'The Man Who Loved Islands'. Brian Finney describes its background: 'The story was...published...in the Dial in July 1927 and in
the London Mercury in August. Mackenzie then took umbrage at it and asked Secker, their joint publisher, to omit it from Lawrence's next collection of stories. In self-defence Lawrence wrote to Secker that, 'though the circumstances are some of them his, the man is no more he than I am'.45

'The Man Who Loved Islands' is, in truth, an excellent example of Lawrence's short fiction at its finest, displaying a taut, controlled idiom of considerable symbolic and allegorical force. Its relationship to the circumstances of Mackenzie's life is certainly slight, yet the story's thematic insight into the grim psychological consequences of the imposition of the human ego upon impersonal surroundings (recalling the fate of Decoud in Conrad's Nostromo) - which Lawrence disguises in a fabular anonymity - clearly owes something to the faintly patrician tendency lurking in Mackenzie's 'romantic' cultivation of his self-centredness.

If the spiritual desolation which finally overwhelms Lawrence's islander was not true in the case of the new tenant of Herm and Jethou, material problems were certainly ineluctable and conspired to make Mackenzie's pretensions to island-farming more of a disaster than anything that might have befallen a voyage to the South Seas. His imaginative leap at exile had clouded over the most prosaic of the necessary pragmatic considerations: how to earn sufficient money not only for himself, but in order to maintain the sizeable retinue of retainers required to sustain a miniature agricultural economy.

Analogous with Hugh MacDiarmid's later (though far more severe) exile on Whalsay in the 1930s, Mackenzie was now forced into prodigious writerly output as a matter of sheer survival. If this exigent rate of productivity worsened his literary decline and entrenched the negativity of the critical establishment, the extent of his labours is remarkable. In just under a seven-year span he published ten novels and the children's classic Santa Claus in Summer, quite apart from an ever-increasing journalistic output.

His efforts were not sufficient. Farming losses on Herm in 1923 led to the paying-off of many of his staff and the abandonment of the island for the solitary Jethou; the transition (or regression) from the societal nature of the first to the ascetic, unpeopled alienation of the second is
duplicated in Lawrence's story. Caught between inferior productivity and the reawakening of more genuinely creative ambition, the latter appeared doomed to frustration: 'I was planning to write a huge novel in seven volumes to be called Our Seven Selves but in order to have the two years clear which I would require for such an undertaking I had to get my finances clear. It was vital for me to produce two books a year now. The need to do this made me almost hate these books...'. It is testimony to the indomitable energy - and impulsiveness - of Mackenzie's new-found professionalism that in the midst of this exhausting period he found room for the strenuous efforts involved in founding The Gramophone in 1922, the first numbers of which were written almost entirely single-handed, an enterprise which also brought further entanglement in high-risk financial commitments.

If there exists a moment in the seemingly shapeless chaos of Mackenzie's career which can be posited as a fulcrum or turning-point - a juncture at which biographical and creative factors crystallise his future development - that moment can be traced to a visit to Glasgow in October 1925 to fulfil two routine speaking engagements. A new vista of potential and change was suddenly opened: 'little did I dream', he remembers, 'that those two or three days in Glasgow would be fateful in my life'. During the visit, a chance tip-off encouraged Mackenzie, in his now fatalistic attraction to islands, to make a successful bid for the Shiant Islands in the Outer Hebrides, part of the Leverhulme estates, and he secured them for the remarkably low price of £500. The then tenant, Malcolm MacSween of Harris, and his family soon became an integral part of Mackenzie's repeated visits north to determine what to do with his new acquisition. MacSween's daughter Chrissie was soon to become Mackenzie's secretary, and eventually his second wife. Her younger sister Lily became his third in 1965 following Chrissie's death.

With the inevitable but nonetheless dramatic swiftness of a mystical conversion or enlightenment and the awakening of latent yearnings, Mackenzie's identification with Scotland can certainly be attributed to these events during the autumn of 1925. Some ten years later the building of his house of Barra would consolidate the conception of The Four Winds of Love. In 1925, the purchase of the Shiants and his attraction to the MacSweens had an equally decisive effect. The
premonition of a new yet long familiar orientation and affiliation provoked an uncompromising assessment of his creative predicament; the truth was that 'this was a crucial moment in my career as a writer':

The writing of novels against time and pain in order to preserve my financial integrity and be in a position to devote two years to the completion of a magnum opus was too much for me. When I returned to Jethou I realised that fixed date for completing *Our Seven Selves* must be abandoned...I felt I had worked hard enough to keep my contracts to be able to indulge myself in writing a novel I had long wanted to write.\(^\text{48}\)

The novel was *Vestal Fire*. With a natural focus for his liberal nationalist sympathies, a culture which would reflect his distaste for Oxbridge-London pretensions, and the signs of a cultural awakening, Scotland consolidated for Mackenzie a lucid perspective on his past, so long absent; an alternative stylistic direction; and a hope of artistic rejuvenation.

IV Recovery: *Vestal Fire*

Looking back on 1926, a year of new beginnings in every sense, Mackenzie writes:

I hoped that the underlying theme of *Vestal Fire* would appear as the tragedy, not the comedy, of futility. I knew that any tragedy of futility must contain more farce than tragedy; I knew that the reading of it would be a waste of time for people without a sense of humour.\(^\text{49}\)

With the exception of *Sinister Street* and *The Four Winds of Love*, the author's own observations concerning the genesis and composition of his novels are nowhere more germane than in the case of the remarks he made about *Vestal Fire*, some ten years after its publication. The four pages devoted to the novel in *Octave 6* of *My Life and Times* remain, in fact, the most satisfactory introduction to *Vestal Fire* available (though a reprint in 1985 carried a perceptive introduction by Sally Beaumann and arrested the critical neglect of a novel which had been for long periods out of print\(^\text{50}\)). The contradictions between the author's conception of his novel and subsequent remarks by contemporary critics are equally
Futility and Purpose 1917-1927

instructive. Personal remarks on his novels being habitually general in nature, even when these appear to be eccentric or inappropriate - as in the case of Sylvia Scarlett - a more considered response proves them in most cases to be usefully valid.

Not surprisingly, beyond their titles, dates of publication and the arduous context of their composition, Mackenzie dwells only fleetingly on the novels of those 'hard-pressed years' 1917-1926 which 'I made as good as I could make them':31 understandably, he often seems reluctant to mention them at all. In contrast, his comprehensive summary of Vestal Fire, which combines a frank delineation of aim and ambition with a discreet understated awareness of achievement, points to the mood of acute writerly self-consciousness in which it was rehearsed and written.

Not only did Vestal Fire enforce a new severity of technical and stylistic demands on a novelist all too frequently casual about his craft; the nature of his subject-matter also prevented recourse to the quick-success opportunism of the last seven years. In every sense Vestal Fire becomes polarised with Sylvia Scarlett: Mackenzie was at last in a position to approach, and to understand the significance, of Henry James's post-War 'dumped cargo'.

I have told in my fourth Octave how in 1913 Faith and I came to Capri first, and how we happened to arrive when Count Fersen-Adelswaerd was expected back from his exile after a term of imprisonment for an offence against a minor. I have told of the grand dinner of welcome given to him by Miss Kate and Miss Sadie Wolcott-Perry, those two wonderful American old maids, that dinner which was to split the island in two irreconcilable factions for the second time over the same subject. Being newcomers, we were able to preserve our neutrality, and I heard from members of both factions the earlier history of Count Fersen. At that date I was not halfway through the first volume of Sinister Street, but I promised myself to put that history down on paper one day. The tale made such an appeal to my imagination that I dreaded its capture by anybody else, although when all the chief characters were still so very much alive I felt fairly safe, because it would have been impossible to tell the story without changing the scene and the players. I realized that the story was still going on, and I had no desire to anticipate with an imagined end the bitter end that fate might provide...

...When I returned to Capri at the end of 1917 the story was developing so dramatically that I knew I must wait for its end in real life. In any case the publication of Norman Douglas's South Wind had made a novel set on a Mediterranean island out of the question for some time to come. So for the next few years I wrote novels that were for me a kind of Marking time...

110
...Meanwhile, Vestal Fire was postponed even when the death of the principal character allowed me to tell the story as it happened. This postponement was due to what resembled a beginner's self-consciousness...I knew that versatility would be counted a vice until I became old enough for it to become a virtue, but I felt that, if my handling of Vestal Fire was going to be sniffed at as another attempt to show off like Jack Horner, I might begin to worry about criticism...Somehow I must make a success of Vestal Fire. Towards the end of August 1926 I started, and did what I had never done before and have never done since; I made a false start with forty pages which had to be torn up. (Octave Six, pp. 92-93)

'There were so many technical problems', Mackenzie concludes. The admission of tearing up for the first time, after fifteen years of writing, if it is to be believed is in itself testimony to Mackenzie's greatest fault as a novelist: the fatal flaw of his 'wretched facility'. It is a technical and formal self-awareness which immediately sets Vestal Fire apart from the remainder of the novels; its relative sophistication of form did not reappear until the writing of the late and highly achieved Thin Ice in 1956 (see Chapter Eight). The thirty years separating the two novels is bridged by their complementary explorations of the theme of homosexuality: a celebration of paganism colours the first, while a study in conventional puritanism restrains the second. The bittersweet insight into lesbianism of Vestal Fire's companion-novel Extraordinary Women (1928) confirms the author's career-long preoccupation with fin-de-siècle homosexuality and aestheticism, a motif creating organic connections between Sinister Street, Vestal Fire, and Thin Ice as the finest achievements of Mackenzie's three distinct major phases.

In the cases of Vestal Fire, Extraordinary Women and Thin Ice, the attendant problems of satisfactory thematic treatment are equal to the demands of particular formal characteristics: content and technique fully implicate each other, as the author's introduction to Vestal Fire goes on to show.

First of all there was the problem of the old ladies themselves. Dared I make them Americans? Should I not by doing so ruin the book's chance of recognition in the United States by a few inconsistencies of speech which would make them not only ridiculous but improbable? I simply could not afford to have these old ladies seem either. If that was the impression they made, the book was lost; it would turn into a mere chronique scandaleuse, which was the last thing I wanted it to be. Finally I decided to take the risk, but I
doubt if I should have done so unless I had had an American mother and unless in earliest youth the speech of my American relations had been familiar to me. I knew this would not secure against me against the likelihood of offending against external probability, but I felt sure that it would at least prevent my offending against internal probability. At last with many qualms I decided not to change the nationality of the two old ladies I called Virginia and Maimie Pepworth-Norton.

The next problem was the cause of the scandal. How was I to avoid shocking my readers without endangering the story? I know that the notion of being shocked by Sinister Street or Vestal Fire will seem incredible today, but 1926 was not today. The 'twenties had moved quite a long way from Victorian prudery but it was still considered ill-bred to tell a smutty tale in mixed company. The passionate egalitarianism of today does not recognise the existence of mixed company and therefore the good manners of yesterday are regarded as survivals of snobbery and privilege. (Octave Six, pp. 93-94)

This betrays a self-consciousness very different from the various authorial apologies for Sinister Street, where declarations of thematic intent serve simply as justification for the 'formlessness' of the novel's 'form'. And even within the impressive aspirations of The Four Winds of Love, as will be argued in Chapter Five, the author is content to sacrifice more satisfactory formal restraint to narrative scale, though his motives for doing so are closely bound up with a concern for exhaustive analysis. Mackenzie's 'beginner's self-consciousness' ought to be interpreted literally: Mackenzie imposed upon his habitually relaxed approach to form, for the first time, more exacting stricture which would reflect and express his equally close concern for content.

The meticulous attention to the novel's overall structure, rhythm, and pattern - greater in complexity and mood than the unifying symmetry of viewpoint in Guy and Pauline - betrays an author newly captivated by the craft of artful fictional design:

There were plenty of other technical problems, not the least of which was how to introduce about forty characters into the first fifty pages without confusing or tiring the reader. I was anxious to avoid getting a picture of Sirene, as I called Capri, from the angle of any individual character, which would have been much the easiest method. I was also anxious, in view of what I knew would have to be the length of the story, not to take up one moment in scene-painting. So I allowed myself no scene that did not provide an immediate background for some character, and I relied upon being able to suggest the natural scene by the accumulated effect of dozens of snapshots...

The construction of a book with an unusually large number of characters spread over a period of years is always difficult. Vestal
Fire was divided into three books, each of which in turn was to be divided into eight chapters. I was successful in making the second book only three pages longer than the first, and the third book only three pages longer than the second. This may seem to have a merely arithmetical interest; but since there is no object in dividing a novel into books unless each one is to be relatively complete in itself as within each book each chapter is relatively complete, the least disproportion in these divisions will wreck the architecture of the whole. At the end of the fourth chapter of the second book, which was to be exactly half way through the novel, the crisis of the story must be reached. From that point onward Vestal Fire would have to be modulated into another key: whether such modulation had been successful or not could be decided only by the mood of the reader on closing the book. (Octave Six, pp. 94-95)

Although dead for ten years before the writing of Vestal Fire, perhaps the insights and careful premeditations revealed here represent the ultimate, long-delayed fruition - and vindication - of the seemingly doomed promise Henry James posited in 1914. This is certainly the closest Mackenzie ever came to emulating the artful tenets of the paradigmatic Jamesian Preface.

The pivotal modulation of the novel, from the farce of futility into its tragedy, is undeniably precisely registered in the manner intended, creating an ambivalence forcefully imaged in the provocative oxymoron of the title itself. Yet it is a duality which extends, further than the author implied, to permeate the perspective and structure of the entire novel, resulting in repeated fluctuations between absurdity and gravity, irony and compassion. The reliance on an ever-unfolding narrative present in Carnival, Sinister Street and Sylvia Scarlett (in the case of the last, as has been shown, a debilitatingly chronic reliance) is supplanted by a more sophisticated narrative perspective in which past and present become both synthesised and juxtaposed. At its simplest level this temporal duality is expressed through tense-shift, a device firmly establishing the novel's ambivalent register in its earliest stages, as the principal characters, the Pepworth-Nortons, are introduced.

They are dead now - Miss Virginia with her ivory eagle's countenance and eternally fluttering fan, Miss Maimie with her tight intolerant mouth and high cheekbone, her defiant smouldering eyes and her Quaker air. The Villa Amabile stands like a vast wedding-cake that has turned grey and dingy in a shop-window, and there is no sound within those rooms still crowded with inappropriate furniture, still hung with the pink and pale blue ribbons and muslin with which
the old ladies were wont to bedeck Gothic windows and Doric columns and Norman arches, no sound within except the chirping of the two canaries which have outlived them. They both lie in the same sprawling rococo tomb which is almost a replica in miniature of their own villa. The wind sighs in the rusted cypresses all around them instead of the mandolins they used to love; and about four o'clock of a summer day the towering bulk of Monte Ventoso casts a shadow upon their tomb and upon the Villa Amabile a few hundred yards below. It was at this hour that Miss Virginia used to emerge upon her favourite loggia and drink in the maestrale that was flecking the azure bay with caps of foam, drink in the welcome coolness of the summer breeze and sigh, "Oh, Maimie, doesn't Vesuvius look a great old boy this afternoon, and my! isn't it good to be alive in this real Italian weather, honey?" And through the romanesque window that is cut in the wall of the cemetery behind their tomb the maestrale still blows in upon the last resting-place of those two passionate old ladies. (Book One, Chapter 2, pp. 28-29)

The mingling of two 'present' tenses here has the effect of making the two ladies simultaneously present and absent, alive and dead, while in the ironic distance created between the statement 'isn't it good to be alive' and the narrative's sudden transition to the vista of the tomb and cemetery is compressed the discreet poignancy which will dominate the novel's conclusion. The subtle manipulation of tone here would be unthinkable within the context of Mackenzie's previous writing, and its presence represents a relative innovation.

The narrative paradigm established amounts to the fictional analogue of the dual perspective deployed in Gallipoli Memories a year later. The synthesis in the later work of retrospective detachment and subjective immediacy is equally crucial to Vestal Fire, since there is a shared intention to dramatise the process of innocence becoming irony; vitality, decay; farce, futility. Vestal Fire is the first novel whose technique permits the author to articulate fully the import of that fractured perspective effected by the fissure of 1914-1918 - the vitality of Capri 1913 and the decay of Capri 1917 - because the novel inhabits an ironic, and not sincere, idealised pre-War ambience from a discernibly cynical and enlightened post-War vantage point. The rich vitality so abundantly celebrated in the novel's first half, exhibiting the author's new-found exuberance and dexterity of style, is designed to disguise - but not altogether conceal - the latent hubris within the island's community which will surface in all its bitter self-destructiveness in the second. As the narrative voice discreetly suggests throughout, the hedonistic
freedom of the community is already inscribed with the inevitability of an eventual decay into pain and disillusionment. The outbreak of War provides the novel with its vital hinge and its modulation of tone, a historical paradigm of which the Olympian disdain of the community becomes an echo:

A world enambered indeed, a world now lost and as if it never was except in the mirage of a painting by Turner or Claude...and four weeks later, on a breathless June day when the island glittered like a sorcerer's palace through a haze of blue and silver, when it towered in a hush of dreams from a sea as calm and lucid as a gem, there was a murmur that the Archduke Franz Ferdinand had been assassinated at Sarajevo. And it seemed of such slight importance in that exquisite weather. (Book Three, Chapter 2, 328)

The word enambered carries a particular resonance here. An image of the island's ostensibly exquisite and timeless embalment from history, it also marks a retrospective gesture towards the author's pre-War proneness to an ornate diction - it immediately evokes Guy and Pauline - a style which, as in that earlier novel, itself enambered in a wider sense a world and an ideology whose post-War disappearance Vestal Fire sets out to concede. The mood of this passage insists upon the degree to which the perfection of the island rests on the fragility of magical fantasy and the imagination: 'the mirage of a painting', 'like a sorcerer's palace', 'in a hush of dreams'. The island's elitist contempt for a distant war-torn Europe is an irony even more potently indicated in Extraordinary Women:

The situation in Europe becomes graver. The allied press has just announced for the fifteenth time that this really is the darkest hour before the dawn. It is dark enough. Big Bertha is crashing shells into Paris from nobody knows how many leagues away. German offensives rush madly from weak point to weak point of the allied line. Frantic reunions take place between soldiers and politicians. The world begins to look dangerous for democracy, as the tooth-comb of conscription goes over it once more. The tuberculous, the pathetic, the neurasthenic, even the middle-aged father of a family with his suspensorry bandage, are all held up to the light, judged to be alive, placed on the anvil of the great war for civilization, and cracked with a hammer borrowed from Donner.

And on Sirene sits Lulu like a solitary discredited swallow belying summer.
The thematic affinity between this perspective, more central to Vestal Fire, and Gallipoli Memories is clearly apparent. In contrast to the subjective indulgence in the first-person promoted in the autobiographical work, however, Mackenzie perceived as a requirement of Vestal Fire - despite its equal emphasis on the role of memory - an overall sense of achieved distance gained from a standpoint of apparent objectivity:

As a novelist with a large and mixed public I felt it was my duty to tell a story with as little embarrassment as possible to all my readers. Finally I decided to insist, when the opportunity occurred, upon the comic aspect of the scandal even at the risk of suggesting a cynicism I did not feel...

When I made the comic aspect of my theme in Vestal Fire predominant I was not intending to satirize homosexuality. I was merely trying to deprive what was called an 'unpleasant' theme of any 'unpleasant' appeal. (Octave Six, p. 94)

The departure from the almost inevitable single central consciousness of Mackenzie's fiction to date, permitting the fullest possible deployment of a mediating objective narrative persona analytical and lyrical, into a spectrum of related characters introduces a narrative voice dispersed through a repertory of satirical and ironic devices. This is possibly the novel's most striking technical feature, and its synthesis with an intricate structure reveals Mackenzie's emancipation from the relaxed fluidity, particularly of the bildungsroman, to which his style appeared manacled. The mosaic-like technique of Vestal Fire, too, is the one most apposite to theme and subject-matter, given the novel's bold attempt to realise contrasted exemplars of eccentricity while retaining the sense of fraternity and inter-dependence which makes the characters a community. The collective identity of the colony replaces the central character as the novel's chief focus.

The effectiveness of this can be gauged from the opening chapters which gave the author such trouble, a creative strain nowhere evident in the easeful urbanity and adroitness of tone, gracefully fluctuating from the general to the particular:

Mrs. Neave was a little blonde with bright weary eyes, who was still pretty enough to make her elderly husband smack his lips at the idea of her being admired by other men. He was one of several Englishmen and Americans on the island engaged with magna opera. There was an American translating Goethe, an Englishman translating the sonnets of Hérédia, and another Englishman wrestling with
Mallarmé's L'Après-midi d'un Faune. There were novelists who came to Sirene for the Winter in search of quiet, and poets who came there in the Summer to find inspiration. There was a Russian at work on a new system of political economy, and a Swede who was elaborating a new theory of health. There was a German writing a history of the Saracens, and there was John Scudamore, an American, who was amassing the material for a history of Roman morals.

When these authors met in Zampone's Café they always enquired most warmly after one another's pregnancies before each began to talk exclusively about his own. But Joseph Rutger Neave was the most indomitable egoist of the lot. He could hitch the wagon of any conversation to the star of Dante with a dexterity that baffled even retired Indian Civilians, and anybody who has chattered feverishly about cabbages and kings to keep retired Indian Civilians from talking about the Punjab will appreciate what that meant. One of the recognised amusements of a Sirene dinner-party was to try to snooker Joseph R. Neave over Dante; but he never failed to find the right angle of the conversational cushion to reach his ball. (Book One, Chapter 1, p. 5)

This idiom, with its laconic sophistication and immediacy, suggests a productive compromise between the rich linguistic substance of the pre-War novels and the workmanlike prose forged through a decade of frenetic writing to order. Many early characteristics remain, however, but reveal the added finesse of a matured style. The raw material of Vestal Fire, for instance, permitted endless opportunity for exercise of the author's facility - drawn from Dickens - for registering character through idiosyncrasies of speech and manner in sustained monologues. This is nowhere more memorably and brilliantly exploited in Mackenzie's fiction than in the vacuous, staccato verbal attacks of Mrs Ambrogio:

"Dear old Macadam! Bless his heart," exclaimed Mrs. Ambrogio, blowing a kiss after him. "Drinks like a fish. Love him just the same. Love all the English. English myself. Always a gentleman, poor old boy. Lives next door to Peter and me. Found him lying on his back in our front garden the other night. Too drunk to get up. Put on his hat and took it off again. Perfect manners. Said 'Good evening, Mrs. Ambrogio. I'm sorry I find myself unable to move out of your way. Would you mind stepping over me?' Always a gentleman. Drinks like a fish and never forgets his manners. Four bottles of brandy a day, but always a gentleman. Hate Americans. Can't stand Americans. Love the dear English. English myself."

"I fear that I have the misfortune to be an American, Mrs. Ambrogio," said Follett.

"Can't help it. Not your fault. Always speak my mind. Always offending people. No brains. Take it or leave it. Can't help it if they don't like me. Love the darling old Hortons."
"I certainly agree that the Miss Pepworth-Nortons must inspire a very great affection in all who have the good fortune to make their acquaintance."

"Love the old pets. Love them!" (Book One, Chapter 3, p. 39)

Anticipating Mackenzie's mature comic style as found in the later series of Scottish comedies (Mrs Ambrogio's quickfire stupidity finds a distant relation in the innocuous blustering of Ben Nevis), this apparent superficiality in technique transcends its apparent function as localised comic gloss. As the unfolding of the novel reveals, beneath the attractive inanity of Mrs Ambrogio's splintered pronouncements lurks a shadow of the moral vacuity which infests the entire island. Her incessant, spontaneous and self-contradictory adjustments of opinion - dictated by the community's dizzying fluctuations in loyalties and antagonisms - become a comic metaphor for Sirene's cosmopolitan moral corruption.

Apart from this concise handling of caricature at its most effective, the narrative has at its disposal contrasting nuances of tone, which can vary from the pungently epigrammatical - 'Carlyle once said that Herbert Spencer was the most unending ass in Christendom. He had not met the Count' (47) - to distanced interjections of veiled irony:

In most places the arrest of so many prominent foreigners would have been a topic of conversation for weeks. In Sirene it was forgotten the next day. It is only to the sentimentalist over some tame midland prospect that man appears vile. In Sirene he holds his own with the sublime eccentricity of the natural scene. In Sirene he lives. (Book One, Chapter 7, p. 124)

These indicators of a complacent aloofness might be seen to edge the novel into the confines of traditional fictional satire, but this is a tradition to which Vestal Fire does, and does not, belong. As a result of its bittersweet narrative perspective, the novel is quite tangential to the mainstream of disdainful mockery which during the 1920s and early 1930s represented a prominent impulse in many English novelists, Fussell's 'generation of bright young men at war with their elders'. G.S. Fraser describes this group as 'satirical novelists, satirising social folly from a stance of privilege which is almost one of complicity: Norman Douglas, Ronald Firbank, Aldous Huxley, the early Evelyn Waugh, the early Anthony Powell'.53
The discernibly patrician nuances found in Waugh — in *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies* especially — emanate from stylistic gestures which are also a feature of *Vestal Fire*, which pre-dates *Decline and Fall* by one year. Unlike Waugh, however, the polished veneer of Mackenzie's narrative surface is repeatedly punctured by instances of emotional depth and poignancy which are at odds with strictly satirical parameters and implicate a mood of considerable thematic gravity. This first becomes noticeable in the preliminary depiction of the Pepworth-Mortons:

They could not bear to be considered anything but actual sisters, and with a passionate sentimentality they hyphenated their two surnames to become Miss Virginia and Miss Maimie Pepworth-Morton. It will be noticed that Miss Virginia gave the prominence to Miss Maimie's name, as if their alliance was to be something more vital than a marriage in which the name of the wife was lost. Some people, who knew that they were not really sisters, attributed the double name to a kind of pretentiousness. How remote such people were from understanding those two spinsters!

...It was Miss Virginia who was considered by most people to be the ruthless one, and to be sure it was always she who did the open fighting; but those who knew Miss Maimie said that she was really more unforgiving than Miss Virginia, and that it was she who provided the fuel for the older woman's flames. Even as they were merciless with passion and hospitable with passion, so too were they generous with passion. (my italics) (Book One, Chapter 2, pp. 25,28)

Italicised are those moments where, out of deference or a degree of humane respect for his characters and the originals upon whom they are based, the narrator's normal urbanity gives way to a discreetly voiced compassion. Elsewhere, precise manipulation of understatement is introduced to much the same effect, as in the farewell between the two spinsters, returning to America, and Count Marsac, in Book Two:

And when Marsac stood up in the prow of that small boat, which he had filled with mandolin players to strike up *Torna a Surriento* as the screws of the steamer began to churn the waters of the harbour, he shouted a reiteration of his promise through the still air of the January dusk. Then he flung carnation blossoms toward the shape that now loomed so dark against the lucent green and orange of the wintry sky and the lights of Naples twinkling out one by one, until suddenly the great ship was chequered with a blaze of gold from all her ports and she began to move very slowly out toward the open sea that shimmered like a pearl in the windless evening air.

"*Bon voyage,*" Marsac cried.
"*And a quicka come backs,*" Carlo shouted.
Two handkerchiefs were fluttering from the promenade deck; the opening chords of the mandolinata twanged farewell. (Book Two, Chapter 6, p. 216)

There is an evident pathos suggested here - emphasised in the sense of the ship's immensity - which with subtlety the deliberate bathos of Carlo's pidgin farewell and the carefully chosen 'twang' of the mandolins appears to undercut but which reinforces the intended tone.

If Vestal Fire reveals a separateness from 'mainstream' English fictional satire of the 1920s and 1930s, its supposed affinities with Norman Douglas's South Wind are by no means straightforward. Despite Mackenzie's indebtedness to South Wind as the novel which established both the intellectual ideal and fictional potential of 'the South' as a tangent to a mainstream English fictional tradition, the intent of each novelist is distinctly different. The sparse critical acknowledgement afforded to Vestal Fire, classified since its publication as a parenthetical imitation of South Wind, has proved seriously misleading in this respect.

To pinpoint the distinction crudely, South Wind is affirmative where Vestal Fire, though certainly life-affirming, is equally elegiac and non-conciliatory. From the outset, however, critics have assumed a parasitic relationship between the two novels. Cyril Connolly's contemporary New Statesman review, which corresponds with John Freeman's equally condescending dismissal of Extraordinary Women in 1928, are indicative of how low Mackenzie's critical standing really was as a result of his 1920s decline and emphasise the impatience of a new generation of critics with an author who had failed to repeat his pre-War success. Connolly classified Vestal Fire as an imitation only thinly disguised in its attempt to board the Douglas gravy train in hope of regaining critical esteem:

Vestal Fire is a novel about Capri. That is to say it is dialogue occasionally interrupted by a thread of plot and appealing to a small public of cynical and scholarly people and the larger one of those on the island itself. Both these publics were given a masterpiece in Mr Douglas's South Wind, and to write a book that enters into such vain and obvious competition with the latter is to merit deserved and speedy misfortune. The explanation must be that Mr Mackenzie is suddenly desirous of re-entering the literary world and has written this book as a testimonial that will placate the few and decimate the habitual readers of his books...
...As a sequel to *South Wind* it is as feeble as sequels are, as a new
departure for Mr Mackenzie, it is bracing and rather hopeful, for one
wonders what he will write next.\textsuperscript{54}

The feeble conciliatory last line is not only unfortunate but quite
contradictory of Connolly's preceding argument, and it completely failed
to convince both the author and Norman Douglas himself. Quoting the
review in *My Life and Times*, Mackenzie comments wryly 'I shall
charitably abstain from quoting what Norman Douglas wrote to me in a
letter about that review'.\textsuperscript{55}

The *Times Literary Supplement*, in a blinkered review, found nothing in
the novel worth emphasising other than gratuitous flippancy:

> In *Vestal Fire* he seems a man writing to amuse himself,
inconsequent when he wants to be, discursive when he feels inclined,
 witty, and all the time gaily and lightly satiric. The place...the
people...and the angle from which Mr Mackenzie approaches them
immediately bring Mr Norman Douglas's *South Wind* into the reader's
mind; but Mr Mackenzie is more determinedly frivolous and leaves at
the end only an impression of something gratefully done, something to
be banished from the author's mind as soon as the last self-
satisfying word is written.\textsuperscript{56}

As with Connolly, *South Wind* remains without equivocation the superior
work and the sole criteria of evaluation. D.J. Dooley comes close, but
not enough, to capturing the true distinction between the two novels
when he observes 'if [Mackenzie] employs some of Douglas's urbane
sophistication and irony, they are considerably toned down; and the note
of pathos or sentimentality which Douglas tries to banish by his *carpe
diem* philosophy comes in strongly'.\textsuperscript{57}

The title of Douglas's novel serves as metaphor for the strangely
imperceptible yet persuasive loosening of spiritual and moral restraint
which infects those of suitable temperament who become exposed to the
ethereal magic of Mediterranean culture, as represented by the island of
*Nepenthe* (Capri). Thomas Heard, the missionary English bishop who as
central character comes to display all Douglas's symptoms of this
seduction, is made to reflect:

Something new had insinuated itself into his blood, some demon of
doubt and disquiet which threatened his old-established conceptions.
Whence came it? The effect of changed environment – new friends,
new food, new habits? The unaccustomed leisure which gave him, for the first time, a chance of thinking about non-professional matters? The South Wind acting on his still weakened health? All these together? Or had he reached an epoch in his development, the termination of one of those definite life-periods when all men worthy of the name pass through some cleansing process of spiritual desquamation, and slip their outworn weeds of thought and feeling?  

The answer to Heard’s rhetorical puzzlement lies in his subjection to a Weltanschauung in recoil from a ‘North’, puritanically severe Europe embroiled in the outrageous purpose of war, a philosophy which challenges the ‘plague’ which has ‘infected the world – the plague of repression’ (151). Specifically, it is the species of English puritanism to which this Mediterranean tolerance and sophistication is seen as the alternative. It is Mr Keith, the novel’s authorial surrogate, who emerges in tireless self-promotion as the paradigm of an intellectual and moral freedom (posing as liberalism but amounting to monied hedonism) who, in an intriguing role-reversal, plays the preacher to Heard’s acolyte. Much of Keith’s extended dissertations on morals, aesthetics and human behaviour in general consist of a slowly erupting campaign of rebuke against English culture and values:

“The Russian has convictions but no principles. The Englishman has principles but no convictions – cast-iron principles, which save him the trouble of thinking out anything for himself. This is as much as anyone can ever hope to grasp concerning this lymphatic, unimaginative race. They obey the laws – a criminal requires imagination. They never start a respectable revolution – you cannot revolt without imagination. Among other things they pride themselves on their immunity from vexatious imposts. Yet whisky, the best quality of which is worth tenpence a bottle, is taxed till it costs five shillings; ale, the life-blood of the people, would be dear at threepence a gallon and yet costs fivepence a pint; tobacco, which could profitably be sold at twopence a pound, goes for fivepence an ounce. They will submit to any number of these extortions, being persuaded, in the depths of their turgid intelligence, that such things are devised for the good of the nation at large. That is the Englishman’s method of procuring happiness: to deny himself pleasure in order to save his neighbour’s soul. (237-38)

Spiritually, intellectually, and morally, Heard succumbs by degrees to the beguiling power of such reasoning, which repeatedly exercises the mastery of Douglas’s prose technique, the unorthodox quality of which testifies to the potent influence of his native Scottish background, a cultural perspective which further clarifies Douglas’s stringent
anglophobia. Towards the novel's close Heard nears an implied awakening from his creedbound inheritance and a reappraisal of his entire moral standpoint. This is dramatised in his witnessing the murder committed by his cousin, resident on the island, to escape the threat of blackmail: an event which to his astonishment Heard finds himself capable not merely of forgiving, but for which he can provide moral justification. The Christian foundation of his professional mores thereby become inverted. This effectively alters Keith's philosophy into the means to a guilt-free innocence, the benign nature of which is embodied in the magical and ethereal indeterminacy of the island. Nepenthe-Capri symbolises an amorphous version of pastoral innocence where the evils of 20th century civilisation find a paradoxical form of ameliorative and innocuous justification. Such is the suggestion in Heard's final retrospective attempt to evaluate his metamorphosis:

A kind of merry nightmare. Things happened. There was something bright and diabolical in the tone of the place, something kaleidoscopic, - a frolicsome perversity. Purifying, at the same time. It swept away the cobwebs. It gave you a measure, a standard, whereby to compute earthly affairs. Another landmark passed; another milestone on the road to enlightenment. That period of doubt was over. His values had righted themselves. He had carved out new and sound ones; a workable, up-to-date theory of life. He was in fine trim. His liver - he forgot that he ever had one. Nepenthe had done him good all round. And he knew exactly what he wanted. A return to the Church, for example, was out of the question. His sympathies had outgrown the ideals of that establishment; a wave of pantheistic benevolence had drowned its smug little teachings. The Church of England! What was it still good for? A stepping-stone, possibly, towards something more respectable and humane; a warning to all concerned of the folly of idolizing dead men and their delusions. The Church? Ghosts! (408)

This process of intellectual enlightenment goes on to reveal its origins in a climactic declaration of Keith's (and the author's) considered aversion from England.

And how would England compare with the tingling realism of Nepenthe? Rather parochial, rather dun; grey-in-grey; subdued light above - crepuscular emotions on earth. Everything fireproof, seaworthy. Kindly thoughts expressed in safe unvarying formulas. A guileless people! Ships tossing at sea; minds firmly anchored to the commonplace. Abundance for the body; diet for the spirit. The monotony of a nation intent upon respecting laws and customs. Horror of the tangent, the extreme, the unconventional. God save the King. (408-9)
Douglas's motive in writing the novel, he states, was

...the result of my craving to escape from the wearisome actualities of life. To picture yourself living in a society of such instability, of such "jovial immoderation" and "frolicsome perversion" that even a respectable bishop can be persuaded to approve of a murder - this was my aim."

There is, of course, a danger in underestimating the wilful escapism that informs so much of Douglas's novel and which generates its brilliant comic sense, as the author's justification suggests. Yet in its celebration of the South as the alternative to an ossified and effete English pastoralism - the ruralism of Guy and Pauline - the novel's aspirations take on a more genuinely serious intent, particularly in the context of its celebration of frank and seeking conversation between characters at a time - 1917 - when colloquy between European nations consisted in their firing shells at one another. Fussell is surely correct to argue that South Wind 'is sometimes taken as a satyr's mere naughty recommendation of pleasure as the end of life, but seeing it in the context of war makes it appear a more thoughtful critique'. The assiduous persuasiveness of Mr Keith and Count Caloveglia - articulate envoys of Douglas's particular brand of intellectual licence - occupy a significant portion of the narrative, and clearly betray the convictions of their creator.

The comic dynamic of Vestal Fire derives precisely from Douglas's insight into the absurd consequences of a cosmopolitan clique who indulge in a rarified ambience which permits them to shed their inherited moral inhibitions. The vivacious pulse of Douglas's dazzling prose is a further obvious influence on Mackenzie, as may be demonstrated by comparing the two novelists' treatment of Douglas's device of interspersed dissertations, frequently astutely parodic, on several features of Nepenthe's culture and history. Mackenzie freely takes as a model South Wind's pseudo-history of 'Saint Dodekanus' to much the same subversive and mock-heroic effect. Here is Douglas:

At the age of eighteen he had a second vision. This time it was a young woman, of pleasing exterior. He discoursed with her, on several occasions, in the grove of laurels and pines known as Alephane; but what passed between them, and whether it was a woman of flesh and
blood, or merely an angel, was never discovered, for he seems to have kept his brother monks in ignorance of the whole affair.

...He set sail for Lybia, suffered shipwreck in the Greater Sytris, and narrowly escaped with his life. Hence he passed onward, preaching to black nations as he moved along, and converting tribes innumerable. For three-and-thirty years he wandered till, one evening, he saw the moon rise on the right side of his face.

He had entered the land of the Crotalophoboi, cannibals and necromancers who dwelt in a region so hot, and with light so dazzling, that their eyes grew on the soles of their feet. Here he laboured for eighty years, redeeming them to Christianity from their magical and bloodthirsty practices. In recompense whereof they captured him at the patriarchal age of 132, or thereabouts, and bound him with ropes between two flat boards of palmwood. Thus they kept the prisoner, feeding him abundantly, until that old equinoctial feast drew near. On the evening of that day they sawed the whole, superstitiously, into twelve separate pieces, one for each month of the year; and devoured of the saint what was to their liking. (20-21)

At almost precisely the same stage in Vestal Fire the narrative is suspended to provide the following documentary gloss.

On the thirty-first of May in the year of grace 1173 a silver image representing life-size the upper half of a genial bishop in the act of episcopal benediction swam ashore one night at the Grande Marina of Sirene, walked up the hill to a little basilica which had just been completed, and took possession of a suitable niche behind the altar. That same night the Bishop of Sirene was aroused by a loud voice calling him by name "Innocente!", whereupon Bishop Innocente opening his eyes saw standing by his bed in a nimbus of celestial brightness a majestic episcopal form.

"I am San Mercurio," said the vision. "I was cut in half by the scimitar of an unbelieving Saracen, who was attempting to circumcise me against my conscience. My mutilated form has swum to Sirene from Epheseus in twenty-four hours. Henceforth I shall be the protector of this island. Appeal to me in times of difficulty, and be sure that my prayers for you shall not be unavailing." (Book One, Chapter 5, p. 75)

In spite of his close following of Douglas's ironic mythologising, Mackenzie's characteristic wit loses none of its edge, and his mock-heroic Saint is also employed to point out the commercial cheapening of tradition that has taken over the island: 'He had had his silver beard tweaked more than once, and had often been taunted in the rudest fashion by disappointed clients' (76).

These analogies and parallels are largely confined to matters of structure, idiom, and verbal texture: otherwise, the younger novelist departs entirely from South Wind. The moral tension at the heart of Vestal Fire, which consists in the community's reluctance to condemn the
gliming mendacity of Count Marsac in obeisance to the immoral nebulosity upon which the island's 'sublime eccentricity' depends, provides a penetrating study in destructive self-delusion, whose sad and dangerous consequences are accurately depicted. These are dangers which throughout its beguiling attractiveness South Wind carefully elides. In several of Mackenzie's characters, complementing the central concern with Marsac and the obstinately deluded loyalty of the Pepworth-Nortons, is traced the process of a cultural malaise attributable to the author's experience of contentment besmirched by post-War decay which compelled him to leave Capri after 1918.

The condition of Mackenzie's characters is a predicament conveyed explicitly within the context of art and intellectual pursuit, and artistic assimilation by incomers to a projected ideal of ancient European culture which holds the promise of aesthetic perfection and stability denied in the outsiders' strenuously contemporary backgrounds. Joseph Neave, lifelong translator of Dante's Inferno, introduces the first of the novel's composite angles of parallel with the island's rich legacy of classical Italian, Greek and Roman cultural ideologues. This is an intricately allusive process established on an authorial level by the systematic epigraphic quotations from Latin poets, introduced, Mackenzie explains, 'to help the impression of detachment I wished to convey' (Octave Six, p. 95).

In Neave is established the condition of identification with, and dependence on, these cultural ideologues, and from the perspective of monied stability (James's The Portrait of a Lady is recalled) with all the intellectual parasitism this implies.

Elsie Neave may have thought that she had obtained the worst of the bargain when she married an elderly hypochondriac, who devoted his whole life to translating the Divina Commedia into American. But she was loyalty itself, and the only expression of discontent she allowed herself was for the Villino Paradiso, which was poked away in a maze of ancient overarched alleys that clustered round the base of the Torrione, a steep hill whose summit was jagged with a mediaeval fortress and whose southern face, cleft by a yawning cavern, tumbled in fantastic limestone crags eight hundred feet sheer to the sea. Joseph had chosen the stuffy little house on account of the name and had promised his wife that they would move when his task was finished. As he had now been working eighteen years on the Inferno the prospect of leaving the Villino Paradiso before her blonde hair turned grey was remote indeed. Joseph himself rather liked to hear his wife apologising for their house. He had no objection whatever to
people's knowing that he could if he liked rent the largest villa in Sirene. His choice of a scholar's simple abode became thereby more impressive. (Book One, Chapter 1, pp. 5-6)

Neave's case is echoed by that of Christopher Goldfinch, the elderly American 'painter' whose livelihood depends upon his unashamedly dissembling exploitation of the icons of Hellenic culture which prove ripe for the gratification of a gullible and culture-hungry market: 'for thirty years he had been painting the same group of Greek-nosed females lolling about in heavy draperies on a marble terrace with the Bay of Naples in the background and a flautist in the foreground' (160). Miss Virginia's vicious destruction of one of these productions - 'the four-thousand dollar picture of herself and Miss Mainie in vestal contemplation' - in her anger at Goldfinch's prophetic warning that their 'infatuation for this Frenchman will end in your losing all your real friends' makes for a resonant symbol of both Goldfinch's curious blend as impostor and sage and the eventual destruction of the ladies' delusions.

A characteristically wry aside from the narrator concerning the adulation surrounding Goldfinch's later exhibition suggests the clue to his success, and furthermore why the author should have opted to give Goldfinch and Scudamore American nationalities and Neave the task of translating Dante into 'American':

[Goldfinch] appeared on Broadway like the last of the Mohicans. The people of New York had had no idea that they possessed such a fine Tennysonian antique. He made them feel that their culture was a great deal older than English lecturers had allowed them to suppose. With the slightest encouragement they would have put him in the Bronx Zoo, and when he was dead stuffed him and set him up under a glass case in the Metropolitan Museum. (Book Three, Chapter 2, pp. 324-25)

Once again there is a reminder of Henry James's preoccupation with the rootless American in search of the organic Europe.

The most significant member of Mackenzie's configuration, however, is John Scudamore, the last-mentioned in Mackenzie's introductory catalogue of visiting Sirene intellectuals and the only one there described by name and nationality. Scudamore is the novel's exemplar of an intellectual and scholar so thoroughly infested with a dead past that
he, in turn, is literally consumed by that past in an act of monumental self-sacrifice to foredoomed scholarly aspirations.

For the last two hundred years at regular intervals, perhaps for longer, foreigners had been coming to Sirene and there been seized with a passion to prove that Suetonius and Tacitus had monstrously slandered Tiberius. They had remained on the island for years some of them, working away with fanatical industry at his whitewashing. When Scudamore arrived the time was ripe for another coat. That was over ten years ago. By now he was a recluse - a tall thin man with a long fine beard and a skin unnaturally white and seeming traluent as the rim of a sperm-oil candle. He possessed as a writer a slow, laborious, and Teutonic style, though he was a ready enough and at times even a diverting talker. No sooner had he set to work on what was to be the final and grand rehabilitation of the slandered Emperor than he decided that his task would be but superficially accomplished unless it were preceded by a vast history of Roman morals. So he set to work on this magnum opus, accumulating more and more books, collating more and more notes, finding it every year more and more presumptuous to make a beginning until he had acquired more knowledge and still more. Everybody vowed that he was ruining his health by sitting up all night and sleeping all day. At this date he had not been seen outside one of the seven gates of the Villa Parnasso for two years. (Book One, Chapter 6, pp. 93-94)

Scudamore is a character skilfully integrated into the novel: his importance is infinitely greater than his few appearances would suggest. His manifestation of the theme of intellectual corruption is ingeniously connected as a parallel to the novel's chief plot, despite his apparently secondary status. The subtlety underlying this strategy is evidence of a new assuredness in the author's technical confidence in handling relatively complex thematic material.

It is the figure of Count Marsac who comes to personify the insights into 'Roman morals' which - enmeshed within the absurdly grandiose scale of his ambition - Scudamore is fated never to utter as surely as the Roman Empire itself was destined to eventual self-defeating collapse. Complementing Scudamore, Marsac's egomaniacal self-dramatising demands not only that he make symbolic gestures on behalf of the slandered Tiberius as the island's mythical figurehead: his eventual aim is to displace Tiberius altogether and install himself as an advocate of pseudo-Symbolist fin de siècle and homo-eroticism. Where Scudamore seeks to rehabilitate history, Marsac seeks to 'become' that history, the living embodiment of a historical paradigm. What begins as his defence of Tiberius soon becomes the projection of Marsac's messianic self-
importance, and the displacement created reveals the tendency of the characters to enact the parallels which the narrative creates, just as Duncan Maxwell identifies the origin of Neave's obsession with Dante: 'Joseph doesn't himself care a button about Dante. He simply takes a geographical interest in Hell because he thinks he'll go there one day. He just uses the Divina Commedia as a kind of Baedeker)'(144). Mackenzie's intellectuals resemble frivolous, wealthy, and deluded tourists eternally pursuing the perfection of cerebral landscapes and vistas, an escape which removes them from the obligations of contending with the real world.

The relationship between Marsac's conflation of art with life and Scudamore's corrupted historicity become beautifully intertwined. Oblivious to the moral depravity which underlies the Marsac scandal, Scudamore happily exploits the inherent corruption as a convenient analogue for the intellectual system he believes he can reconstruct:

...he derived the greatest pleasure from discussing with members of both parties the niceties of the moral problems involved. It was his chief recreation, before he settled down to a laborious night with his thousands of annotated slips, to hold forth upon the situation with solemn humour and classical allusions and obscure pedantic wit. For everybody he could find something appropriate in Tacitus or Martial, in Juvenal or Propertius. He even penned a copy of heavy-footed sapphics supposed to be addressed by Miss Virginia to Mr Bookham and an answer from him in the Second Asclepiadean metre. (Book Two, Chapter 2, pp. 172-73)

Soon after, the novel gestures towards the inevitable consequence of this dependence on history and art as corollaries for the present at the expense of suspending moral judgement upon the contemporary world: '...Scudamore corrupted by his researches into Roman morals had failed entirely to give eloquence to the disgust that every American ought to feel at the presence of a scoundrel like Marsac') (177).

Marsac and Scudamore eventually become fatefuly and ironically conjoined, in that the scholar is seen to idealise the Count's outrageous mannerisms as the living symbol of his vain pursuit. What Marsac ultimately fails to achieve within Sirene society he succeeds in doing through Scudamore's misdirected mind: he supplants Tiberius. This represents the vindication of the novel's most disquieting theme, for Scudamore adopts and assimilates Marsac on precisely those self-
symbolising terms the latter has constructed for himself, as an incapable egoist remaking history in his own image. Through the novel's most forceful and bitter ironic stroke, Scudamore's pathetic death dramatises the appalling callousness upon which the scholar has slowly constructed the pyre of his tragic self-sacrifice. As the mood of the writing modulates, as MacKenzie intended, into a mood of pathos and tragedy at this point (Scudamore dies, appropriately, in the Spring after the Armistice) the episode is quoted at length in order to preserve its accumulative impact.

That now in the early Spring after the armistice he should be clutching at his counterpane to fight the agony of the gastric ulcers which had been diagnosed by Dr. Squillace could not be blamed upon the war. No illness that ever overtook a man was ever more his own fault. Yet the physical pain he suffered was as nothing compared with the mental pain he suffered on account of Tiberius. Whatever Dr. Squillace might say, Scudamore knew that he was dying with the final rehabilitation of his hero unaccomplished. The pains of indigestion had never until now been strong enough to deter him from the most arduous pursuit of a cross-reference. Thee had been plenty of moments when in a spasm of agony he had clutched to his breast the great musty folio he was carrying from the remote confines of the library, as a mother might think to save her child from the peril of her own weakness; but now he could not have reached up to the nearest shelf and carried thence a duodecimo volume as far as his own work-table. He tried to divert his mind from the reproachful countenance of the slandered emperor by translating an epigram of Martial, which appropriate to the occasion was running in his mind... Scudamore was lying back and pondering the first sentence that should open his great History of Roman Morals.

"Living as we do in an age when man appears to be severing the last cords that bound him to...no...when man at last appears to be struggling free from the meshes...no...the deterrent meshes of medievalism, the study of Roman morals assumes an additional importance...no...is identified with the...no, no...I can improve upon that if only this durned belly-ache would let up for a while."...

...Then he put out his thin white hand and picked up a small vellum-bound volume of the Annals of Tacitus.

"Cum laude et bonis recordationibus facta atque famam nominis mei, prosequatur," he read aloud with a hollow chuckle. And had he possessed the strength he would have smacked his leg in jubilation at finding in the most deliberate slanderer of Tiberius a sentence from one of the Emperor's own speeches which inscribed upon his own tombstone could be used to the glory of that Emperor. "My name," he muttered. "His name! Our name! With praise and...how would one translate bonis recordationibus?"

Then the fever ran high again, and from the floor round the scholar's bed great gilded heads of Tiberius, the eyes wet with tears, rose and slowly swelled until they burst to make way for others. Sown these heads by the dragon's teeth of remorse for a labour never
Marsac, oblivious of course to the mental agony implicated in the physical pain of Scudamore’s end - a death of which he is a symbolic cause - is by this time sunk in pathetic and reclusive opium addiction. His reaction to the news of Scudamore’s death, in whose house he has stored trunkfuls of the drug without which he is deprived of his egomaniacal fantasies, represents that unwritten opening sentence of the great History of Roman Morals: "Que je suis un homme infortuné! Marsac cried. "Une haine implacable me poursuit." (377)

The tragedy of Scudamore’s realisation ‘that he was dying with the final rehabilitation of his hero unaccomplished’ is discreetly vindicated by this: if one takes ‘his hero’ to refer both to Tiberius and Marsac, Marsac’s equally appalling end signifies the danger, and the futility, of moral rehabilitation in a world which chooses to suppress the moral lesson of its identification with a dead and corrupt historical past. As a final ambivalent gesture, there is the novel’s epitaph for Scudamore: a tombstone whose inscription, composed by the scholar himself, suggests both a grotesque monument to the absurdities of miscomprehension, and a final moment of ironic redemption.

Dwelling on this particular angle of the novel’s theme illustrates two important points: firstly, that the charges of flippancy, authorial self-indulgence, and shallow imitation of South Wind are without foundation; secondly, that the relative technical sophistication which makes Vestal Fire such a conspicuous demonstration of rejuvenation is equalled by a corresponding thematic complexity and gravity perfectly integrated with technique. The habit of commentators to deal solely with the novel’s main narrative thread - the self-destructive infatuation of the Pepworth-Mortons with their beloved Count - suggests a bias the author did not intend and has obscured the means by which the varied tangents to the main theme are manipulated to create a coherence unparalleled in Mackenzie’s novels.

There is, however, much to be admired in the novel’s approach to its central figures which itself has not received acknowledgement. The narrative voice consistently succeeds in locating the absurdity of the Pepworth-Mortons’ increasing sacrifices on the Count’s behalf without
ever degenerating into outright ridicule. The sad ironies of the predicament, and its latent hubris, for instance, are carefully prefigured in the cultural and ideological chasm that yawns between the girlish naivety of the sisters and the sub-Symbolist pederastic rantings of Marsac’s ridiculous hysteria. The division is enshrined in Marsac’s publication of *La Statuette Mutilée*, the parodic Capri novel-within-the-novel which appears in Book Two as the Count’s creative revenge on the island for his ‘martyrdom by gossip’. Dedicated to the two spinsters, the gesture for them possesses a value absolutely nullified by the implications of the novel’s contents which for the most part its dedicatees find totally incomprehensible. The ironic poignancy of this increases when it becomes evident that the novel’s true intention is a virulent homo-erotically inspired diatribe against the female sex.

A moment of finely understated pathos results: it is the spinsters’ reciprocal dedication to Marsac, a childishly trite, commercial expression of American sentimentalism, which succeeds in conveying a sincerity wholly in contradiction to the Count’s ostensibly authentic creativity and which strips him of all his pretensions:

...all the happiness of the season shone in Miss Maimie’s eyes when Marsac drew the number that entitled him to receive at her hands an illuminated poem in a little gilded frame, which she could not resist reading aloud for the thrill it gave her to do so.

**BECAUSE YOU’RE YOU**

Just Because  
Your Ways are Ways  
Of Sweetness  
Just Because of  
Everything You Do  
Just Because  
Of Your Complete  
Completeness  
And Just Because  
You’re You -

**JUST YOU**

(Book One, Chapter 8, p. 137)

The central image of this delusion is the mock-temple of Vesta itself, which Marsac assists the spinsters in designing, a compound image of
The perfectly weighed cadence of *Vestal Fire* more than adequately answers the author's hopes that the 'underlying theme...would appear the tragedy, not the comedy, of futility'. Entirely unprecedented in the author's style, this evocation of a felt past within the subjective idiom of recreative memory powerfully asserts the tone of authorial compassion.
Futility and Purpose 1917-1927

that previously was carefully distanced. Just as Mackenzie felt impelled to write a novel enshrining a past that might make coherent sense of his present creative self and in so doing reveal where that past went wrong, so in Miss Virginia's refuge from pain in memory is found both the price of futility and - finally - a moving acknowledgement of human fallibility.

They are surrounded by so many friends now, and they are leaning over the balustrade of the terrace above the road, leaning over and clapping and waving and showering genista blossom and red rose-petals upon the throng. And now they are alone together in their new loggia, through which the summer maestrale blows with such a life-giving freshness when the sun has dropped behind Monte Ventoso, whose towering bulk casts a shadow upon the Villa Amabile. 'Oh, Maimie, doesn't Vesuvius look a great old boy this afternoon? And my! isn't it good to be alive, honey?'

Thus, reaching back and back, the old lady stretches forward to the end.

An inscription beneath the romanesque window in the cemetery-wall says:

*Within this bit of foreign earth*
*There lies*
*The dust of Two*
*Who loved this Italy.*

There is neither the date of their birth nor the record of their death upon the headstones of Miss Virginia and Miss Maimie. They brought with them the puritan fire of old America and quenched it in the pagan earth of ancient Europe. (Book Three, Chapter 8, p. 419)

Mackenzie's novel represents the creative dispellment of this final and futile anonymity while it is also concerned with tracing its cause to a dangerous reflex of shallow, idealistic cultural assimilation. What permitted the author to escape that condition as it was manifest in Capri, and recreate its effects so sensitively, was the glimpse of his own alternative source of cultural assimilation whose depths he was eager to explore. Like Mr Keith in *South Wind*, who betrays the dependence on a native cultural affiliation that characterised the personality of his creator, Mackenzie just prior to the composition of *Vestal Fire* in an emotion which had assisted its composition found himself drawn

Northwards!
To his little place in the Highlands, at first. The meagre soil and parsimonious culture, the reasonable discourse of the people, their
Futility and Purpose 1917-1927

wholesome disputatiousness, acted as a kind of purge or tonic after all this Southern Exuberance. Scotland chastened him; its rocks and tawny glistening waters and bleak purple uplands rectified his perspective. (301)

Scotland would lend to Mackenzie more than these things; it would further promise a permanency sought and lost on Capri, Herm, and Jethou. Having 'purged' the 'Southern Exuberance' of Capri in writing Vestal Fire as an essential act of personal and creative relocation, Mackenzie was ripe for further rectifying of his perspective and consolidating his movement 'towards a Scottish idea'.

The next chapter is devoted to an examination of Mackenzie's self-conscious repatriation to Scotland, the journalism through which he expressed his contribution to a new nationalism, and his relationship with the Scottish cultural and political establishment during the productive phase of its 20th century Renaissance.
CHAPTER FOUR

'TOWARDS A SCOTTISH IDEA'

Mackenzie and Scotland 1925–1935

I The Lone Shieling Complex

In 1941, Mackenzie would delineate in the first of his Scottish comedies, The Monarch of the Glen, the American Carrie Royde—a second generation Scot 'coming home' to the land where her great-grandfather was a victim of the Clearances—and her 'Lone Shieling Complex', a condition of romantic identification with Gaelic history and culture. The tag is Mackenzie's gibe at the psychic state typified by the celebrated 'Canadian Boat Song' of 1829, an anonymous verse which conveniently symbolises those three vital sources of Highland romanticism: exile, emigration, and nostalgia.

From the lone shieling of the misty island
Mountains divide us and the waste of seas;
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides...'

Despite its translation into the comic medium, however, this complex was an equally serious and sincere characteristic of Mackenzie himself, whose eventual identification with Scotland owed its inspiration to a Highland-orientated conception of Scotland's national and cultural character. His 'exile' from Gaeldom was both generational and geographical, like Carrie Royde's, and a subject to which he repeatedly returned after 1926 when his exile had ended. The motif of a mysterious atavistic destiny is a recurrent theme, as in the following excerpt from My Life and Times describing an undergraduate holiday in France in 1903, when he encountered the then laird of Inverewe, Osgood Mackenzie, a distant cousin of the writer:

The laird of Inverewe, who was now in his sixties, took a fancy to me and I could not have enough of what I found his absorbing stories of Highland life...It was undoubtedly he who planted in my heart the determination to span the great gap more than a century wide which lay between me and my Highland birthright, although at the moment the achievement of such a determination was nebulous as a waking
dream which the busy day would dissolve. Yet Osgood Mackenzie offered me an opportunity to carry out that determination forthwith.2

The atavistic identification was to be deferred for almost a quarter of a century, a pattern duplicated in Mackenzie's fictional surrogate John Ogilvie in The Four Winds of Love and his latent Scottish destiny.

In the autumn of 1925, the publication of an article entitled 'Looking Northward' indicates the fuller significance of the purchase of the Shiant Islands which the author had just concluded, a purchase which made him, effectively, a Highland laird. It was published by Ruaraith Erskine of Marr, a non-Highland Gaelic activist who along with MacDiarmid was to play a central role in nationalist politics and the eventual formation of the National Party of Scotland in 1928 along with the refashioned Mackenzie. The mannered and archaic affectation of Mackenzie's article - the first public expression of his wish to be considered a Scot - suggests a distancing on the author's part from the tentativeness with which he makes a sudden protestation whose implications doubtless took himself as well as his readers by surprise.

I can scarcely remember the time when I was not a perfervid Gael; but I have never attempted to express this passion of race in words. The consciousness of being landless in Alba, coupled with ignorance of the language, forbade me out of pride to assume what I should have felt would appear no more than the trappings of a mock romanticism. So this is actually the first time that I have ventured to speak of something that has long lain nearer to my heart than rank or fortune or reputation. If the exiled Gael has been a frequent sorrow for poets, I can recall no poet who has sung of an exile between whom and his country stretched not the bitter estranging sea but time itself. Yet although over a century and a half has passed since that younger son from whom I sprang, like so many other sons of Alba, left his country, and though my grandfather to placate disapproving relatives had abandoned his own name when he went on stage, I was always even as a child of three insistent that I should be called Mackenzie and not Compton.3

The idiom is unmistakably indebted to that of the Celtic Twilight, which is recalled by the reiterated 'Alba' and the insistence on the themes of race, exile, and nostalgia. Ironically the acute parody of Highland romanticism Mackenzie provides through the writings of Hector Hamish Mackay throughout the Scottish comedies (see Chapters Six and Seven) is anticipated in this earlier style, but in 1925 Mackenzie's intentions are as sincere as those of the imaginary writer he will satirise in 1941.
Towards A Scottish Idea

This would suggest that for Mackenzie - a writer until now quite isolated from a distinctly Scottish cultural perspective - the only possible access to Scottish themes was by way of literary stereotype. The 'exile' in the sense intended here is wide-ranging in its implications - it is on one level cultural ('ignorance of the language'), but on another an exile from the means to articulation (I have never attempted to express the passion of race in words'). This first declaration of burgeoning cultural identification, therefore, is underlined by the central motif of an English idiom attempting articulation of a Scottish consciousness.

The article goes on to adopt further preoccupations of this Scottish consciousness common to 20th century Scottish writing. There is the anxiety over nomenclature, a feature common to all the major figures of the Renaissance. C.M. Grieve, Edwin Muir, and James Leslie Mitchell shared the use of an alias for differing reasons. Grieve became MacDiarmid in the need to transcend the Lowland and Highland schism; Edwin Muir became Edward Moore, emphasising the English critic and journalist as opposed to the Orkney poet; James Leslie Mitchell, the writer of 'English' novels, adopted the Scottish fictional persona of Lewis Grassic Gibbon. In each case the divided self was a combination of assertive cultural self-consciousness and artistic insecurity, a deliberate symbolic emphasis of national separateness. Mackenzie, Muir and Gibbon alike drew attention to the schism in order to absolve the tensions between English and Scottish creative personae. A sensitivity to national naming in these figures is closely bound up with birthplace and the obsession with 'community' so integral to Scottish writing in the 20th century, whether it is the insistence by Eric Linklater of Orkney as his birthplace when it was in fact Wales; MacDiarmid's small Borders hometown of Langholm becoming the focus of a new Scottish internationalism; Mitchell's dialectical love-hate for his native Mearns; Muir's mythopoeic Orkney forsaken for the Eastern Europe of Kafka.

For Mackenzie, the importance of surname is genealogical and historical, the means to a re-identification with an ancestral past that will, eventually, allow him to contribute to Scotland's present and its future. Appropriately, this is a yearning most forcefully expressed through the perspective of childhood:
Towards A Scottish Idea

On my seventh birthday an aunt gave me Scott's Tales of a Grandfather. Here at last were the enchanted pages for which my soul had been yearning. I was no longer flattering my imagination with the 'let's pretend' of novels and plays, but nourishing it now with solid ineluctable facts. Naturally the behaviour of the Mackenzies was of paramount importance, and how my pride surged when in the Clan map at the end of the volume I saw their territories - all Ross and Cromarty in pale yellow with Mackenzies sprawling right across them, and only here or there a few Rosses or Munroes or Urquharts intruding...

How many times I pursued the thread of their history through that thick volume. It is Scott, of course, who provides the paradigm for the nostalgic recreation of the Highland past and its omnipresent significance to Scotland's history; Scott's Gaeldom for Mackenzie represents the lost innocence of a childhood paradise as seen by the retrospective adult, the Lone Shieling of societal harmony and cultural purity denied to the Scottish nation after 1746. This perspective on the Scottish past, of course, is nothing new. Since the publication of the eponymous Gaelic poetic fragments of 'Ossian' in 1763, through which James MacPherson attempted to restore Scottish culture to its onetime autonomy by endowing it with the generic pinnacle of a national epic myth, perceptions of Gaelic culture have repeatedly centred on the interplay of symbolic polarities between innocence and corruption, scientific rationalism and creative spontaneity. It is this Highland consciousness which provided two of the most potent influences on the development of European Romanticism - MacPherson's mystical primitivism and the exploitation of historical consciousness in the novels of Sir Walter Scott to which the seven-year old Mackenzie was succumbing. In the maturity of his Scottish perspective Mackenzie would offer amusing satire of Ossianism in Hunting the Fairies, but that he was conscious of the considerable importance of this legacy is demonstrated as early as 1929 when he was invited to give a radio talk on 'Ossianism and the Romantic Movement in Europe'.

While the Gaelic poet Sorley MacLean and others have argued the distortion of Gaelic history and culture through bourgeois Romanticist constructs, in the 20th century the Highlands inspires much of the finest achievements in Scottish fiction, the source of the mythopoeic past central to the novels of Neil Gunn and Fionn MacColla in which
Towards A Scottish Idea

Gaeldom takes on potent and frequently sombre symbolic resonance. In Eric Linklater's best work, too, the heritage of Orcadian archaism can be ironically juxtaposed with contemporary values within the mock-heroic idiom of White-Maa's Saga (1929) and Magnus Merriman (1934). The same impulse is seen in the attempts by Erskine of Marr and Hugh MacDiarmid to suppress the true implications of Scotland's Lowland-Highland divide in their campaign to 'Celticise' the different historical and cultural experience of the Lowlands. Unlike his Scottish contemporaries, Mackenzie as a re-fashioned third generation Scot found himself excluded from first-hand experience of this cultural archaism in his dependence on a generational perspective confined to the past. The prominent emphasis on retrospection is captured in his description of a visit to the Duke of Argyll in 1928 at Inveraray Castle - a shrine to the traditional symbols of Highland romanticism as perceived by the Anglicised Highland gentry - which will provide the source for the satirical Glenbogle in The Monarch of the Glen.

When I look back now to that visit to Inverarary I remember most vividly being woken every morning at 8 o'clock by the Duke's piper with the sad melody Mhuinnitir a'ghlinne so, and lying awake after the piping was silent in a big four-post bed, looking at the mid-Victorian wall-paper along the top of which was a wide frieze of flamingoes wandering along among reeds, their necks arched at various angles. With those flamingoes I wandered back into Scottish history and the past of my race.

This betrays the superficial trappings of a cultural conservatism through an essentially aristocratic perspective on Scotland to which some might think Mackenzie to have been completely confined, but of whose dangerous shortcomings he was fully aware. In West to North Ogilvie warns his fellow Scottish nationalist Maclean Sanders of the contradictions inherent in the nature and basis of Ogilvie's, and his author's, assimilation to Scotland:

"You and I, Sanders, believe we can detect the influence in ourselves, you through your Maclean grandmother, I through my Macleod great-grandmother and probably in my case more strongly still through my Cornish mother. But you and I may both be kidding ourselves. We may be seeking an escape from contemporary existence through ancestor-worship. That's got to be considered. It may be a form of infantilism. We may be racial Peter Pans disliking the notion of being grown up in this machine age..."
Towards A Scottish Idea

The parallel with Peter Pan is ingenious, given the underrated significance to Scotland of Barrie's most famous work which says so much concerning Barrie's attitude as the founder of the Kailyard towards a Scottish past which refuses to acknowledge the present or the future - on the level of childish fantasy the refusal of the child to acknowledge adulthood. Mackenzie is forced to return to a Scotland defined through childhood as an adult, to a country which has long since been deprived of its innocence, inhabiting a vicarious perspective and effecting a form of displacement which he was to describe in his Rectorial Address to the students of Glasgow University in 1932: "You are luckier than I am, my constituents. You have not to return to Scotland: you are there." "Looking Northward" goes on to develop the motif of childhood innocence to suggest the cultural polarity which will become central to Mackenzie's Scottish-orientated writing:

I can see myself now reading by the school-room window at the top of a tall London house, the small print beginning to blur in the grey November dusk. My mind is troubled by Seaforth's battle with Montrose at Auldearn; and when in '15 the Mackenzies, held up by the Earl of Sutherland and his accursed Whig clans, were prevented for a whole month from joining forces with the Earl of Marr there are tears in my eyes. I turn over the sticky pages of India paper to console myself for the failure of my Chief by reading of the battle of Glenshiel and of how he was carried wounded from the field. Darkness descends upon the London room. The gas is lighted, and I search out a more comfortable subject. The '45 must be postponed for another day when I can bear to read the lamentable story. I recover my spirits by cutting down Covenanters with Dundee and unhorsing English knights at Bannockburn."  

The atmospheric touch of denoting the young reader's surroundings slips in almost unnoticed, accidentally, but for the retrospective adult it is a deliberate and emotive gesture. To the 'English' child of seven in a gaslit school-room in a London house towards the end of the 19th century - during the height of J.M. Barrie's popularity and the heyday of Kailyard - Scotland exists within the conventional ambience of an English education as a romantic country of the mind, a home beyond the urban murk never visited. It is illuminating that in the wake of his affirmation of Scottish identity the London of Mackenzie's childhood, which he could recall with an astounding vividness (celebrated of course
Towards A Scottish Idea

in Books One and Two of *Sinister Street*), becomes the terrain of a childhood innocence which he would revisit and evoke with a marked nostalgia in his radio broadcasts, thus effectively inverting the perspective adopted here. Domiciled in an actual Scotland, a vanished - and forsaken - London becomes the subject of cherished memory. At the time of writing in 1925, in the elation of purchasing the Shiant Islands which resulted in the crystallisation of *Vestal Fire* and a reorientation which ended the disillusionment of the post-war decade, the fulfilment of a spiritual dream has become a geographical reality: the acquisition of land symbolic of Mackenzie’s ancestors. At last the discrepancy between ‘shadow’ and ‘substance’ can be overcome.

When I was sixteen my legitimist sympathies found some expression by joining every legitimist society that existed. I lived in a world of white roses and white cockades, and then little by little I allowed modernity to smirch those loyalties and ridicule their lost and fragrant causes. I count myself a fool now in middle age, because I understand at last that what seemed the shadow was the substance, but that what offered itself as the substance was indeed no more than a mean shadow...13

Likewise, it is not until middle-age and a direct involvement in the wider struggle of European nationalism in Greece, Poland and Ireland that John Ogilvie finds the long-anticipated psychic identification with 20th century Scottish nationalism possible as a means of repudiating the absurd Jacobitism whose pretensions as a valid political force are carefully parodied in *The East Wind of Love*.

This tension between the shadow of sentimental romanticism and the substance of political revival is to dominate the remainder of Mackenzie’s Scottish career in a variety of ways. In 1925, having arrived by way of a decayed Jacobitism, Mackenzie was in need of a perspective which might reconcile myth and reality in a Scotland languishing in economic and cultural post-war decline, but poised on the brink of its most significant political and cultural reawakening. Like so many others, he was to find that focus in the imaginative and intellectual centre of the Renaissance in the 1920’s and its most forceful entrepreneur: Hugh MacDiarmid.
II Welcome To The Man Who Has Come Home

The phrase is MacDiarmid's, the title of an article - which is given, significantly enough, in its Gaelic form - written for the Scots Independent in 1928, in which MacDiarmid with considerable enthusiasm welcomes Mackenzie's return to Scotland and his identification with the new nationalist movement. The article's tone combines nationalist confidence with laudatory salutes to the home-coming novelist of whose potential contribution and value to an emergent Scotland MacDiarmid is in no doubt.

I have seen a good deal of him during his present visit to Scotland, and it has been absorbingly interesting to me to see the Scottish interests and issues with which I myself have been perhaps too intimately bound up during the past few years, in the mirror of a mind such as his. I have been too close to the whole matter; but Compton Mackenzie, while coming eagerly and hopefully to the new Scotland which is so evidently in the making, came with an experience of men and affairs which insisted upon perspectives and proportions. He has not come home empty-handed. He has a great deal to give our Movement; and the future of our Movement will depend to a very great extent upon its capacity to accept the sort of thing he has to give.14

Mackenzie's relationship with MacDiarmid, which was to continue uninterrupted by the rancour that so often set in between the poet and his fellow Scots until the novelist's death, is simultaneously the most unusual feature of Mackenzie's career and the element which gives the lie to the supposed superficiality characterising Mackenzie's relationship to Scottish matters. MacDiarmid's intolerance of such superficiality - Anglocentric condescension and ignorance, or native romanticism, insularity and triviality - was the creative and polemical basis of the first phase of his career during the 1920's and not only was he prepared to tolerate Mackenzie, but frequently to seek and endorse his opinions on the strong basis of an evident mutual liking and many shared convictions.

Like the association with D.H. Lawrence, underlying what was to prove the more enduring and productive friendship between Mackenzie and MacDiarmid appears to have been a willingness to transcend, or suppress, very marked polarities in terms of background, political leaning and
creative inclination. Mackenzie's first impression of MacDiarmid, in fact, immediately recalled Lawrence, as he explained in a letter to Faith: 'I found the poet Grieve very remarkable - a little like D.H. Lawrence, but with a harder intellect, and, I think, a richer genius'." Genius, though an unsatisfactory epithet, perhaps best captures the essential difference between MacDiarmid and Mackenzie, a quality it would be difficult to attribute to the novelist. Mackenzie's aesthetic was in contrast conservative, traditionally accessible and unobscure, and tied to the conception of the professional author with a definable public to serve; MacDiarmid was a modernist and linguistic innovator of a stature comparable to Joyce, equally committed to an aesthetic of impersonality and simultaneously the dialectic of perpetual contradiction and opposition. Mackenzie's tendency to the left and his cosmopolitan romanticism pale before MacDiarmid's stringent internationalist perspective and his rigorously pursued course through the extremities of tortuous political vacillations, a determination to identify and inhabit the vortex of politics and culture which eclipses the more lenient and liberal political profile of Mackenzie. There are possible analogies, however. There was a similarity in early formative influences upon the two men, as MacDiarmid would point out in Lucky Poet:

I was greatly interested to read the other year to see how closely my reading - albeit at an interval appropriate to the difference in our ages and to the fact that he had the facilities of London and Oxford, whereas I had only the facilities of a little Scottish burgh - in those years in my early teens had paralleled that of Mr. Compton Mackenzie as he details it chronologically in his book Literature in my Time. He does not mention a single book that I did not reach and read in almost the same sequence as he did..."

Given the disparate creative directions pursued by both writers, this shared intellectual heritage is a fascinating illumination, even if it emphasises further the creative gulf between them. On one level at least, however, this gulf can be ignored. Christopher Harvie writes:

"...logic and consistency figured nowhere in MacDiarmid's programme. Aristocrat and democrat, nationalist and cosmopolitan, communist and social creditor, urbane conversationalist and soap-box ranter, he set out, with all the energy of a Victorian sage like Carlyle, to comprehend everything."
Towards A Scottish Idea

With the exception of 'communist', this might just as well serve as an impressionistic picture of Mackenzie: the refusal to impose standards or restrictions on his writing output; the patrician tendency qualified by an amenability to populism; the cultivation of flamboyant individualism; the bewildering extent of interests and commitments. Indeed, closer to the mark still as an image of Mackenzie is MacDiarmid's amusing self-description as a volcano 'producing heat and light and also a great deal of rubbish'. Like Mackenzie, there was an element of defiance in MacDiarmid's refusal to objectify the contradictions in the heterogeneity and inconsistency of his total output, and underlying this is the thread which links the two writers: professionalism.

It is very probable that this shared characteristic formed the basis of Mackenzie's and MacDiarmid's mutual respect. Writing to Mackenzie to invite him to Montrose in 1928, MacDiarmid warns him: '...you must take pot luck. I am a working journalist with all that that implies of limitations in the way of living, and style of hospitality I can offer.' As Duncan Glen has pointed out, MacDiarmid was as much a journalist of considerable skill as poetic and creative genius, and remained so throughout his career, and he shared with Mackenzie a talent for indefatigable productivity and the ability to produce brilliant copy at astonishing speed. Like MacDiarmid, by the late 1920's Mackenzie was to find a disproportionate amount of his creative energy devoted to a constant stream of articles and reviews as a matter of sheer financial survival, and if his journalism lacks the intellectual and polemical depth of MacDiarmid's it nonetheless displays consistent flair and stylistic ease. Mackenzie's pen could also adopt an analogous missionary role - The Gramophone and Vox, many issues of which were written entirely by their founder against impossible odds, are an echo of the several magazines and pamphlets of the 1920's which owed their existence and maintenance to the single-handed determination of MacDiarmid. This shared characteristic would result in the shared, but short-lived, venture of Vox from 1929-30. More importantly, the journalism written out of Mackenzie's involvement in Scottish politics from 1925 onwards is outstanding for its consistency and depth, an appreciation of which is essential to an assessment of Mackenzie's
status as a Scottish literary figure. This pivotal phase of his career was indebted to, and closely bound up with, MacDiarmid’s own.

Mackenzie recognised immediately in MacDiarmid the intellectual and creative focus that his recently declared Scottish aspirations so urgently required, and it was his first encounter with A Drunk Man Looks At the Thistle which occasioned what can only be described as an enlightenment, both spiritual and political. Five years later in J.H. Whyte’s The Modern Scot he would write

...I still hold as one of the most precious moments in my reading life the memory of first turning the pages of A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle. It was as if a tremendous explosion had taken place to clear the air and reveal the sublime landscape which hitherto I had only perceived in a misty region between sleep and wakefulness. That first reading of A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle was followed by the formation of the National Party of Scotland, so that for me they will always be linked with an appearance of cause and effect..."

The image of an intuition hidden in the subconscious - 'a misty region between sleep and wakefulness' - appears as the fulfillment of the yearning implied in 'Looking Northward' to find the exit to those childhood Jacobite dreams and enter a Scotland not confined to the imagination or the past, but where creativity and political actuality coalesce in the present.

Mackenzie was sufficiently moved by A Drunk Man to eulogise it and its apparent offspring of new-found political revival in Erskine of Marr’s Pictish Review in 1928, and shortly afterwards he took the bolder step of writing to MacDiarmid himself. In this, the first letter of many, the self-consciousness discernible in 'Looking Northward' is seen in all its vulnerability, but without the protection of the archaic armour of the essay.

Dear Mr Grieve,

Erskine writes to me that you were good enough to express approval of my little paper in his review. I have truly meant to write and salute you, but I am always very shy of writing to poets about their work, and I was (and am) particularly shy of writing to you because I have been so deeply moved by your writing. It has been to me like a magic window amid the decorative waste of wallpaper that nearly all contemporary verse has seemed to me. You have said so much of what I could have said if I had had the gift of singing, but it could only have been said in verse, and moreover only in the way you have said it. You have, I venture to think, a great responsibility, and I
Towards A Scottish Idea

should much like to meet you and talk over many things. I have not one friend politically because I suppose I must be considered an Anglicized Scot, and yet since I was a child of two I have had only one real and ruling passion and that is to see Scotland a nation again.²⁰

Mackenzie, consciously or otherwise, was certainly flattering MacDiarmid's own self-image and self-appointed role as messianic re-creator of Scotland by referring to his 'great responsibility': later MacDiarmid would claim that Mackenzie 'realized that I was the fons et origo of the whole thing''²¹. As this first letter goes on to reveal, Mackenzie was doubtful of any similar pretensions:

Then again I am a Papist and have thought that I could only do more harm than good. Not until since the war has there appeared any practical chance of achieving this object, so little indeed that I had come to find in Ireland the expression of my hopes and latterly in Brittany where the movement for independence grows apace.
I shall be in Scotland in May and June, and if it would not bore you I should like to meet you.²²

Despite the uncertainty, in conclusion Mackenzie indicates that he had already reached the most significant decision of his career by transferring his creative allegiance from England to Scotland through one of MacDiarmid's most important innovations, the Scottish branch of P.E.N. He ends in a mood of constructive optimism, implying that in spite of dubious qualifications he was prepared to offer his own contribution.

I believe that you are the Secretary of the Scottish P.E.N. club, and I am just writing to the London people to say that I want to be transferred to the Scottish branch. I think that there ought to be a Scottish Society of Authors. These things may not seem important, but they have their effect. And similarly I think we ought to have a weekly to be called The Scottish Statesman, and with a little self-denial I don't see why we shouldn't have it. However, I musn't bore you any longer.
I think that at last, at last life is beginning to move again.²³

The affirmation of the last line, of course, refers as much to Mackenzie's own life as the spiritual condition of the country with which he wished to identify himself. From Montrose came the prompt, detailed, and positive response for which the new arrival undoubtedly hoped so intensely:
I need not say that I was delighted to receive your letter. Absence from home and domestic circumstances have prevented my replying sooner. I lead, as you may imagine, an extremely busy and difficult life. For a journalist of my type and with my tendencies to manage to carry on at all in Scotland literally involves hanging on by one's eyelids all the time. Every effort is made to freeze one out. However (though it is cold) I am inured to it now and quite insusceptible of being really frozen out, I fancy - though my powers may at times be numbed in many directions in which I would fain be active. You'd understand my position better if you knew how few were the encouragements such as yours which I have received from my fellow-countrymen. (I have had better luck with folks in Ireland, France, etc.) The sales of my poems are, of course, negligible: and I'm not sure that the fact that I write poetry at all does not lessen the influence I could otherwise exercise in other directions. People don't trust poets.

MacDiarmid goes on not only to allay Mackenzie's fears concerning the authenticity of his Scottish profile, but to write with confidence on the vital developments in which Mackenzie himself has a part to play.

However, our general propaganda is making real headway at last. The country is wakening up; and a new sense of nationalism is becoming very widespread and manifesting itself in all manner of promising ways. To gather them up and direct them to a goal is the task now: and I believe that the National Party now in process of formation will succeed in doing that. I do hope you will see your way to announce your candidature for a Scottish constituency. As I have just written to Erskine, even as a gesture it will be invaluable at this juncture - i.e. even if you did not really decide to go forward when the General Election comes. A great deal will depend in the immediate future on the evidence of return to Scotland of men of your prestige. If the old tendency of holding South is reversed - if people see that distinguished Scots are impressed by and in active sympathy with the New Nationalism and returning to take a personal share in the work - it will be half the battle. I do not think the two factors you mention will militate in any way in modern Scotland against your candidature. After all half the candidates for Scottish seats are always 'Carpet-baggers' from the South, without being real Scots as you are. The fact that your work and reputation have not hitherto been specifically identified with Scotland will not matter as against a definite stand now. And as for being a Catholic - the sectarian issue cuts little or no ice really. The anti-Irish propaganda of a few Protestant Zealots has had no practical political effect. There are quite a number of constituencies which are predominantly Catholic. There are very few in which the fact of your being a Catholic will prejudice any considerable section of the electorate.

I am delighted at your decision to transfer to the Scottish PEN. This, too, will help us immensely. Anything that will enhance our prestige in any way is of vital importance. I haven't yet heard from Ould re your transference: but my Committee (all of whom are strong Nationalists) will be as pleased as myself.
Towards A Scottish Idea

MacDiarmid concluded by inviting Mackenzie to visit him at Montrose during his forthcoming visit to Scotland. Meanwhile, plans for the formation of the National Party of Scotland were gathering momentum. Activated by the efforts of John MacCormick, founder of the Glasgow University Nationalist Association in 1927 and its chairman, and James Valentine, secretary, their aim was to amalgamate into a unified party the various bodies in Scotland already advocating Home Rule: the Scottish Home Rule Association, headed by Roland Muirhead; the Scots National League, headed by Erskine of Marr and Tom H. Gibson; and the Scottish National Movement, led by Lewis Spence. A conference, which Mackenzie attended, was held in Glasgow at the beginning of May in 1928 at which this was achieved, with Mackenzie being elected a member of the Council and asked by MacCormick to announce R.B. Cunninghame Graham's candidature as a Nationalist for the Glasgow University Rectorial Election in 1928. The election was won narrowly by Stanley Baldwin, who defeated Cunninghame Graham by only sixty-six votes, which for the Nationalists was tantamount to a victory and a considerable boost to the confidence of the movement. This was the first step towards the symbolic triumph of Mackenzie's election as Rector in 1931.

The National Party of Scotland itself was launched in Stirling in June 1928, with a massive inaugural meeting, at which most of its constituent figureheads, Mackenzie included, were present, held in Glasgow in October of the same year. As Mackenzie would later describe it, this was by all accounts a momentous occasion:

...[Cunninghame Graham] and I appeared on the platform at St. Andrew's Hall, Glasgow, with the late Duke of Montrose, Christopher Grieve, and young John MacCormick. The atmosphere of that huge gathering was tense. No meeting held in Scotland since has had 3,500 people seeming to breathe in the air of a national resurgence. That a group of young students should have been able to amalgamate the various associations in Scotland, each in its own way preaching the gospel of Home Rule, into a single body called the National Party of Scotland was a miracle.27

Prior to the formation of the National Party, Mackenzie had been invited by J.P. Macdiarmid, Labour and Home Rule candidate for the Western Isles, to stand for a Labour Scots constituency. Although his letter of invitation contained reassurances similar to those from MacDiarmid,
Mackenzie was by no means convinced of the authenticity of the Labour Party's commitment to Scottish interests.

We all agree that to a man of your calibre who is still young a great and beneficent career is open to you to play in Scottish Story (sic). Your being a R.C. and by place of birth an Englishman are not any real disabilities for such a part. Gladstone was an Anglo-Scot. You being of Highland extraction and a Hebridean laird beats out the objections you make. What Scotland needs to-day are leaders. I hope you will agree to stand for a Scots constituency at the approaching election.29

Mackenzie confided his misgivings in his next letter to MacDiarmid:

I was very glad indeed to get your letter. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to visit you at Montrose. But I don't want to be a nuisance and I hope Mrs Grieve will order me to the nearest train if I'm likely to upset her household!

I heard from Erskine today that the National Party is at last taking definite shape and that my name would be useful as a supporter. Of course I should be proud to have it used.

Between ourselves. Ben Shaw wrote to me the other day and asked if I would consider standing as Labour and Home Rule candidate for one of the smaller constituencies. I told him that my sympathies were entirely with the Labour Party, but that I could not pledge myself to support the Labour Party if I thought the Party was not doing its best for the country. I dread Nationalism's being used by Labour as Liberalism used it in the '80's.29

The tragedy of Ireland, of course, was - next to the position of Scotland - one of the preoccupations which obsessed Mackenzie most, and through its sectarian nature symbolised his two deepest convictions, Catholicism and nationalism. He continues:

I am glad you are not anti-Irish. I think we can get a good deal of help from Ireland if we tackle them the right way. They've invited me once again as a guest of the nation for the Tailltean games and I've always had from Ireland a kindly recognition. Indeed it was through a notice in the Irish Statesman that I first came across your work, and found in it the flame for which I had been searching. You mustn't let yourself get bitter, though I cannot understand why you have not had recognition. However, equally I cannot understand how any Scot can tolerate the position of his nation. And since the great majority do, there's the reason why your flame kindles no flame in them.30

The review to which Mackenzie refers was very likely one of A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle by Oliver St. John Gogarty, 8 January 1927, in
Towards A Scottish Idea

which he said that [MacDiarmid] 'has managed to become, as it were, a frenzied mouth letting the present-day soul of Scotland speak out with its metaphysic, its politic and its poetry': as Alan Bold notes MacDiarmid found particular encouragement from Gogarty's eulogy. By a coincidence Gogarty was an old friend of Mackenzie's and the latter's involvement with the Irish cultural scene went back to 1924, where on his first visit to the Tailltean Games as a judge he had gained much information and enlightenment concerning the Easter Rising and its aftermath, an event which had deeply disturbed him. Prolonged discussions with, among others, Tim Healy brought home to him the wider ramifications of the Irish political predicament.

It is probable that Mackenzie's familiarity with, and knowledge of, the Irish literary and political scene (in the 1930s Mackenzie was one of few who championed the work of the Irish novelist Francis Stuart) was one of the characteristics which earned him MacDiarmid's respect. In a letter of thanks to Gogarty MacDiarmid comments '...it is thoroughly encouraging to find my work so extraordinarily appreciated in such unexpected quarters. Compton Mackenzie, the novelist, for example, in the Pictish Review the other month said that he had so high an opinion of Mr Grieve's poetic genius that he thought it might even encompass the feat of recreating the Scottish nation yet!'

Mackenzie was anxious both to postpone a decision concerning the approach by Labour until he had taken MacDiarmid's advice, and, evidently, to further his knowledge of the contemporary Scottish literary scene:

I wish you'd be good enough if you can spare a minute to send me a list of any of the younger Scots poets' work that I can get hold of and that may have escaped me. I'd like to see you first before I see Ben Shaw. Suppose I get to Scotland by the 10th or 11th and come straight to Montrose for a night before going back to Edinburgh?

In his reply, MacDiarmid uncompromisingly and honestly endorsed Mackenzie's reluctance to submit to Ben Shaw's persuasions.

I am particularly interested in what you say about Ben Shaw and the invitation to you to stand as Labour and H.R. I have been a member of the ILP for over 20 years - and have taken and still take an active part hereabouts - JP, former Socialist Town and Parish Councillor, etc. A year or so ago Willie Stewart said they were going to put me up for a constituency - preferably a rural one...but I have
Towards A Scottish Idea

heard nothing more about the matter since. I know most of the Glasgow Socialist MPs, etc. and cordially detest them. I thoroughly agree with you as to the danger of the Scottish Socialist and Labour movement trying to use the new Nationalist feeling merely for party political ends. Writing recently in Forward, Cnclr. John S. Clarke expressed the view of the whole Glasgow group when he said: 'As a question of political expediency I am sympathetic to Scottish Home Rule, but I do not want the tin-can of Scottish Nationalism tied on to the Home Rule puppy's tail.'

The two men eventually met in mid-May 1928 at Montrose to discuss this and doubtless a host of other matters. Neil Gunn was also present, and the two novelists acted as godfathers for the baptism of MacDiarmid's son Walter. There was at least one amusing incident, which Mackenzie was to record in My Life and Times. Mackenzie was suffering from one of his acute bouts of sciatica, and required medical attention.

Grieve had been a medical orderly in Salonika in the war, and announced his familiarity with giving injections. Neil Gunn, whose novel The Grey Coast I had read with admiration, had just arrived to stay with the Grieve's in Montrose, where at the Episcopal church he and I were to be godfathers of the Grieve baby at his baptism. Neil Gunn was standing by when Christopher put the needle into my arm. As it went in, the tall and distinguished figure of Neil Gunn went down on the floor full length in a dead faint caused by the sight of a minute drop of blood. When he became conscious Grieve was able to assure him that lots of men nearly collapsed when being given an injection.

In the view of F.R. Hart and J.B. Pick, between the lines in this paragraph can be detected traces of the enmity that later developed between Gunn and Mackenzie, an issue to which this chapter will return.

Despite Mackenzie's discomfort, the visit was undoubtedly fruitful and congenial, and clearly consolidated a friendship - 'you saw me at my worst and that's not a bad way of seeing people,' Mackenzie wrote in thanks. Writing to Gogarty, MacDiarmid comments '[Mackenzie] spent the week-end here and is now off to Iona. We were talking of your poems [Wild Apples, printed in a limited edition] - he also having received a copy of your book - and were at one in a very keen and high appreciation of them. How curious that two of your fifty readers should foregather in this insignificant little Scots burgh!' In Iona, Mackenzie met J.M. MacDiarmid and told him definitely 'that I was not prepared to contest a seat for Labour because Home Rule was
Towards A Scottish Idea

obviously not going to be a main plank on their platform at the next General Election. MacDiarmid and Mackenzie obviously devoted much of their discussion to matters of the future policy of the National Party and its organisation. Organisation at this stage was possibly the most important issue confronting the Party, given the nature of its identity and composition, which was quite unorthodox in terms of conventional party political administration. As a culturally centred entity of a very eclectic nature - composed of students, writers, journalists, and intellectual figures all of varying shades in the political spectrum - its diversity was both its greatest strength and weakness. On the one hand there was an absence of the basic administrative experience which in the day-to-day running of a large political body [essential]; on the other, it boasted a pluralistic character which in itself permitted a degree of freshness and originality in approach, a synthesis of political and cultural consciousness to be found nowhere else at the time within the British political scene. Christopher Harvie emphasises its underlying weakness with admirable clarity:

Its first Chairman and its Secretary, Roland Muirhead and John MacCormick, were...refugees from the ILP, which during the 1920's had managed to combine the disparate (and ultimately mutually exclusive) functions of being a nursery of unorthodox radicalism and a training-school for Labour organisers. The ILP legacy - Muirhead's loyalty and cash and MacCormick's organisational ability - was to be crucial in keeping a potentially 'fissile' party together, but it could not resolve the contradictions between political nationalism and the Scottish context...The National Party had to contend with its own antisyzgy. The same problem affected its domestic policy. Should it provide collectivist remedies for the economic ills of the country, or should it appeal to the insecurity of the traditional Scottish establishment, worried about the drain of authority to the south? When in the 1930's its leaders opted for the latter course, even sympathetic observers like the poet and critic Edwin Muir found it difficult to forgive them.33

In May 1928 the issue absorbing MacDiarmid and Mackenzie was that of the Party's Parliamentary identity. Soon after Mackenzie's visit, Grieve was writing to Muirhead:

As I think he told you I had Compton Mackenzie down here over the weekend, and had long and thorough discussions with him...

The main point I wish to take up in the meantime is the question of Parliamentary candidatures.
Towards A Scottish Idea

I know your position. And you know also that Compton Mackenzie has been approached to stand as Labour Party candidate for Ross and Cromarty by Ben Shaw: and purposely deferred seeing him on the matter and coming to a definite conclusion until he had talked it over with me...

Now, on reading the National Party Constitution, Compton Mackenzie and I construe the relative clauses to mean that
(a) no candidate will be put up by the Party except he (or she) stands exclusively as a Scottish National Party candidate.
but
(b) this does not debar members of the National Party - not put up by it as candidates - standing under other auspices.
If this interpretation is correct it means
(a) That the National Party will put up as many exclusively Nat. Party candidates as it can;
(b) but may also benefit by having other members whom it cannot afford to finance as a Party and who cannot afford tofinance themselves standing under other auspices.41

Both men clearly realised that in its infant state the National Party was as yet incapable of making real Parliamentary headway without resort to expedient compromise in restricting its identity in terms of the existing political system; once it reached sufficient maturity, then it might be within its power to challenge the whole Westminster constitution more profoundly. MacDiarmid continues:

Both Compton Mackenzie and I would of course immensely prefer to stand as exclusively Scottish Nationalist candidates, but in view of the imminence of the next General Election, and, I am afraid, the unlikeliness of the SNP fighting funds being sufficient to promote many candidatures by then, it seems to us that it would be to the direct advantage of the SNP if some of its members allow themselves in the meantime to go forward as ILP or Labour Party candidates - while in their election addresses, speeches, etc., stressing the national issue as well as their party one. Otherwise (a) it seems that the party will be seriously limited in the number of candidates it can put forward, and (b) these may be practically confined to those who happily can finance their own candidatures.

We would like a definite ruling on this immediately.

As matters stand, Compton Mackenzie is anxious when he sees Ben Shaw (he - Compton - is returning to Glasgow on Thursday) to arrange:
(a) to stand in the Labour and SNP interest (i.e. insisting upon the fact that he is standing in the dual interest);
(b) to arrange a swap of prospective constituencies with J.M. M'Diarmid - i.e. Compton to stand for the Isles, M'D. for Ross & Cromarty. From a SNP tactical point of view I strongly recommend this if it can possibly be worked.41
Mackenzie had, in fact, suggested an expedient strategy which might, had it been implemented in time, have mitigated the miserable performance of the National Party in the 1929 General Election:

Compton Mackenzie wonders whether the best way in the interests of the SNP would not be to try to arrange with the Labour Party and ILP to compromise and run in certain constituencies joint candidates as suggested, while undertaking — as a quid pro quo — not to oppose or contest an equivalent number of other constituencies in the meantime. This provision, it seems to me, should be readily agreed to, as the SNP cannot possibly be in a position to contest more than a few constituencies by the next General Election — while the ILP and Labour Party might readily recognise that although certain Socialist members may not be willing to come out as Nationalists, others can do so without being any the less Socialist and even on the grounds that Scottish independence is a short cut to Socialist Government in Scotland, and that therefore a group of candidates who are definitely Nationalist-Socialists is quite a reasonable proposition, likely to be helpful to both parties at the present juncture.

I'd be glad to have your views on this. You will understand that I am arguing purely on grounds of practical expediency as matters stand — and that my argument in no way runs counter to my conviction that we need a S.N.P. exclusive of all existing parties...Mackenzie thinks you might discuss this with Ben Shaw & Stewart and so prepare the way for him before he sees them on Thursday or Friday.42

A second letter from Grieve to Muirhead, reiterating the argument — 'I think that at this juncture the suggestion I put forward as a result of my talks with Compton Mackenzie should be very carefully considered'43 — suggests that Muirhead had opposed it on the grounds that it would weaken the policy of the Party. But as Harvie points out, the existing strategy of the Party, which Mackenzie and Grieve sought to modify, was to prove weak enough:

...the options before the National Party were limited. The Scottish electorate was conservative, and a move to the left would alienate many potential supporters, particularly former adherents of the Liberal Party. It would also involve a competition — which the Nationalists could never hope to win — with the trade-union-backed Labour and Independent Labour Parties. They, and the Liberals, could still play the home rule card if challenged. The National Party would end up simply as the weakest section of the Scottish left. This was demonstrated by poor results in the 1929 general election, when the party polled less than 5 per cent in two seats.44

Despite its inherent limitations as a compromise, in retrospect Mackenzie's and MacDiarmid's advocacy of gradualism in the Party's
Towards A Scottish Idea

initial phase might have helped to arrest this early setback. As MacDiarmid remarked ominously to Mackenzie, 'It would be exceedingly unfortunate if the Party started business with any sort of ill-thought-out and half-baked policy: and, while I appreciate their many good qualities, I 'ha'e my doots' as to the amount of brain-power that is yet available amongst us.'

Problems were not confined to those of disagreement over policy. In December 1928 Mackenzie was writing to MacDiarmid:

I dreamt last night that you got in for Dundee on the second vote and this morning I get your rather depressed letter. The last Council Meeting nearly sent me off my head, but after a long talk with Angus Clark and Iain Gillies in London I cheered up.

I quite agree with you about the bloody vagueness over dates, and they have now picked Inverness for January 25th following Elgin 24th and Buckie 23rd, Fraserburgh 22nd, and Peterhead 21st, and Aberdeen 18th.

Then MacGill writes to propose a Pen Club Dinner on Jan.26th, at which I am to hand the real Mackay to Parnassus, then I speak in Linlithgow on the 28th, and if possible get them to arrange Dunfermline for the 29th or 30th. But what about the West Highland campaign? I consider it vital to tackle Campbeltown, Dunoon, Ballachulish, Kinlochleven, Fort William, and Oban as soon as possible. I must fit in my own work meanwhile and I shall not be able to come up to Scotland again before the end of March or the beginning of April, by which time I shall be thinking entirely of the Western Isles. The lack of personnel is, as you say, alarming, and it is not much good you and me going round to these meetings like a couple of squibs on strings unless we are going to be supported by something fiercer than watering-cans. I wish Erskine had waited to withdraw from the Council until he had seen us. However, I am too rushed with this miserable work one has to do to write you a proper letter at the moment...

The frustration voiced here is firm evidence of the extent to which — as H.J. Hanham and others have subsequently noted — the ambitions of the National Party were far in excess of the means, manpower and expertise to realise them. Four months later MacDiarmid was writing of the imminent failure, due to insufficient organisational back-up and finance, of his attempt to stand as Nationalist for Dundee, where the omens for his return were favourable. He concludes, gloomily, 'All this is due to our failure to seize the opportunity after the Rectorial and the big Glasgow Conference to sweep through the country with meetings in every important town.' The beginning of 1929 had brought the 'cold douche for the National Party' of Lewis Spence's defeat by Labour in the
Towards A Scottish Idea

North Midlothian Election, where Spence lost his deposit. Mackenzie had assisted at the campaign, though from the first he was pessimistic of the outcome: 'I recall a meeting to be addressed by Grieve and myself at which the audience consisted of a single man. To be sure, it had been announced by mistake for a different hall, but that was only one more example of the muddle our organisation was in.'

The surprising, and salutary, feature of Mackenzie's career in nationalist politics was his tendency to keep these very substantial, and justifiable, misgivings and doubts private, or at any rate not to advertise them beyond the precincts of Council meetings where he evidently always spoke his mind. Unlike MacDiarmid — quick to commence public battles through the nearest outlet with anyone who crossed his idiosyncratic and self-appointed adamantine path ploughed through Scottish affairs, and positively seeking symbolic expulsion from this body and that — when coherence of the Movement began to crumble Mackenzie for the most part maintained the same public face of vigorous, frequently passionate, optimism and affirmation of the strengths he continued to believe were latent within the Party and those who would follow it. If the fatal weakness of the National Party was its non-specific broad base, this and its often hazy pluralism were features that Mackenzie would attempt to redeem in his writings, arguing that only a generalistic approach would guarantee the complete revival which was vitally necessary before a premature political assault on the English political constitution. If this limited his capacity for political analysis it does not limit the significance of Mackenzie's contribution, which as has just been demonstrated emanated from a far from superficial awareness of and commitment to the interests of Scotland's political future. The ease and speed with which he appears to have become acquainted with the complexities of the post-war Scottish political context, in fact, is worth emphasising, as is his insistence on the analogy with Ireland. He would summarise this in My Life and Times:

I was...a little worried by what seemed to me the mistaken preoccupation of the National Party leaders with getting into Parliament. I was remembering what Tim Healy had said to me in Dublin five years ago about the Irish Nationalists at Westminster being swept away in a night by the young men of Sinn Fein in 1918. I was irritated by the way members of the Council were going to such pains to disclaim any Popish or Irish influence on the policy of the
National party. I began to suspect that some of these Council members were too much concerned with the temporary self-importance of being candidates for constituencies and that if any of them did succeed in getting into the Westminster Parliament they would be content with the same dilution of Home Rule as Northern Ireland. I did not want to see a glorified County Council in charge of Scotland's destiny.51

He was referring to the atmosphere during 1929, when dissension was beginning to emerge: Erskine of Marr had left the Council, while MacDiarmid had set in motion the process of self-alienation culminating in his expulsion in 1934 by insisting - in the face of the Council's opposition - on Social Credit as the foundation of party policy.

Undaunted, however, Mackenzie was to persist in publicising, and popularising, the general issues at stake in the nationalist cause. Characteristically, he concluded his particularly despairing letter to MacDiarmid of 28th December 1928 with the footnote: 'I know you're doing too much, and I wish I could see some way of helping - we'll have a talk about that too...All the best of things in this momentous year before us.'52 As he had already pointed out, there were plenty of mountains in Scotland on which political faith could be practised.

III English Voice, Scottish Heart 1929-1935

From the first, Mackenzie recognised in MacDiarmid's personality and work his attempts to supersede the accepted dimensions of 'creativity' in a determination to fuse culture and politics in a programme that - with 'our multiform, our infinite Scotland'53 as its foundation - would define nationalism in intellectual and political terms within an internationalist perspective. Though he does not refer to MacDiarmid in precisely these terms, in The Drunk Man Mackenzie perceived and emphasised the political significance of MacDiarmid's masterpiece.

Mr. Grieve has done well to state the need for a Scottish idea. A merely territorial nationalism must inevitably wither soon or late, and the position of Scotland on the map has long ago weakened hers. Our territorial idea was gratified and satisfied at Bannockburn. Mr. Healy once said to me, "You Scots had a Bannockburn. We never had a Bannockburn in Ireland." But the lack of such a victory has now given to Ireland the leadership of the Celtic world.54
As he confided to MacDiarmid in his first letter, Mackenzie had little time for and probably less understanding of developments within 20th century poetics: in his Preface for Maurice Lindsay’s *Poetry Scotland* in 1943 he admitted that he was completely steeped in the tradition of classical verse. If through background and inclination he was excluded from a realisation of MacDiarmid’s significance as the first manifestation of modernism in Scotland - the innovatory quality which Gogarty, for instance, had appreciated in his *Irish Statesman* review - Mackenzie was by no means blind to the long poem’s importance in terms of language and its philosophical and intellectual robustness. Mackenzie made an honest attempt to respond to MacDiarmid’s innovation within the limitations of his inherited Scottish perspective; unusually, he reconciled the radical spirit of *A Drunk Man* with the adolescent dream-world of Jacobitism, that mentality which had initially seemed so intellectually prohibitive.

If Bannockburn successfully affirmed a territorial idea, Culloden thwarted something much greater - a spiritual idea, and that it did not quench that spiritual idea altogether is due to the “romantics” of whom contemporary nationalists are too scornful. I would urge a little forbearance. The work of the Scots National League is far more practical than a devotion to white roses; but for many years a sentimental Jacobitism is the emotion that has kept alive the idea of Scotland as a nation, and it is now the duty of the nationalist leaders to see that such fervour is given an opportunity of practical expression. The time for keepsakes has gone. So be it. Then give those who cherished them something to fight for.86

Mackenzie’s historical preoccupation leads to an intriguing interpretation of MacDiarmid’s themes:

Yes, Mr. Grieve has done well to state the need for a Scottish idea, and he will, I hope, forgive me for insisting that his Scottish idea is precisely that for which Culloden was fought. I will admit that the men out in ’45 imagined that they were fighting for a dynasty and that not one of them would have known what Dostoiefsky was driving at. Nevertheless, the true inspiration of their enterprise was as much an impulse to protest against the dehumanization of humanity as any vision of the future that wrote its lightning across the murky horizon of a Russian mind. The darkness falling upon Drumossie Moor that fatal Spring night obiterated the Scottish idea. No lightning could disturb the mind of a people so comfortably positive that a great victory had been won for commonsense.86
Towards A Scottish idea

Despite the evidence of MacDiarmid's approval of Mackenzie's attentions as he voiced them to Gogarty, one need look no further than A Drunk Man itself to see that in his prejudicial historical fixation Mackenzie completely fails to recognise one of the poem's most salient features: its iconoclasm. Maudlin national nostalgia and shallow cultural sentimentality are perhaps the poem's chief targets, with its polemic specifically directed at the institutionalised cliché of Robert Burns' fetishism and the insulting falsification of Scottish identity enshrined in the figure of Harry Lauder. One of the more constant features of MacDiarmid's career is his consistent critique, frequently abusive, of the supposed worth to Scotland of accepted institutions, bodies, or individuals promoting an ostensibly authentic cultural identity, and he numbered among such instances of conservatism the remnants of Jacobitism and its most cherished, but much maligned, tragic symbolism of Culloden.

Mackenzie, on the other hand, displayed little of MacDiarmid's intolerant fierceness towards traditional representations of Scotland; on the contrary, his childhood Scottish 'dreams' were based upon them, and he would go so far as to inhabit, and attempt to redeem, the mentality of popular Scottishness - albeit from an ironic point of view - in his Scottish comedies during the 1940's and 50's. Mackenzie's own public Scottish image, in fact, was closely bound up with the more conservative aspects of the cultural establishment: the Scottish Arts Club, the more bohemian face of the Edinburgh Festival, his elegant New Town flat where he would hold court, his governorship of the Royal Stuart Society: the convivial, Toryesque profile in Scottish cultural life which drew snarls of contempt and derision from MacDiarmid. If MacDiarmid successfully stated an intellectual predicament within Scotland - the perverse effect of its stultified popular iconography upon the development of the arts - nonetheless he left a legacy of dismissive contempt amongst Scottish artists and intellectuals concerning the vital importance of a popular Scottish consciousness as the source of an identity for those sectors of society with which MacDiarmid supposed himself to be closely identified. That Mackenzie did not share this automatic repudiation of an entire sub-culture is an aspect of his career which will be examined in Chapters Six and Seven when his comic writing is considered.
Towards A Scottish Idea

In the meantime, it is important to recognise in Mackenzie's nationalist journalism of the 1920's and 30's the source of his later Scottish 'populism' as he would extend it in his comic novels. In this seminal article, Jacobitism represents a mentality whose shortcomings and inadequacies he is prepared to recognise, but his cynicism is tempered by the realisation that if Jacobitism is a distorted feature of Scottish identity it still represents a genuine repository of Scottish consciousness. Despite its flaws, it remains an element of the culture which the new political consciousness must be prepared to inherit. This is a conviction emphasised by the use of the very phrase 'a Scottish idea': the divination of Scotland, even as an amorphous emotional 'condition', is as important as any concrete or objective nationalist programme. As his apologia for Jacobitism implies, a general, if latent, Scottish political consciousness is much greater than the votes won for a Nationalist candidate: 'Nobody will believe in the existence of a Scottish idea until a few idealists have forfeited their deposits at the elections'. The problem is how the generality of an 'idea' can be mobilised and more clearly defined within specific political terms. If Mackenzie shared MacDiarmid's conviction that a nationalist politics must presuppose a culture, he saw the priorities facing the nationalist movement differently:

The real question [MacDiarmid] has raised in my mind is whether it will be wiser to concentrate all our passion upon political independence and let the renaissance of the arts take care of itself, or whether it would be wiser to nourish the artistic renaissance and assume that it will fire us with the desire for political independence. After meditating for a month on Mr. Grieve's words I have reached a conclusion in my own mind that the arts must take care of themselves and that every intelligent Scot, wherever he be, must devote himself practically to the cause of political independence. All the dreams that haunt us - the salvation of Gaelic, the revival of Braid Scots, a Gaelic university, the repopulation of the glens, a Celtic federation of independent but interdependent states, and a hundred others will only embody themselves when we have a Scottish Free State.87

There is an irony in Mackenzie's wish that a wider cultural renaissance would find its impetus from the winning of political autonomy: the consensus of later interpretation indicates that it was the cultural revival which would gain a coherence and consistency conspicuously
absent from the course of the political movement. Nonetheless, the suggestion that the arts might 'take care of themselves' does not amount to an interpretation of culture and politics as divisible entities; if nothing more than an impressionistic intuition Mackenzie's configuration of A Drunk Man and the formation of the National Party as a development based on cause and effect should be remembered.

The affirmative conclusion to 'Towards a Scottish Idea' presents MacDiarmid as the exemplar of the fusion of culture with politics - in Mackenzie parlance, 'thought' and 'action' - the relationship between which is to become a central theme in The Four Winds of Love, a work owing its ideological formation to the preoccupations the author was articulating in their applicability to Scotland throughout this journalistic phase. As the novel's Scottish preoccupations become more clearly defined towards the end of the work, in fact, the relationship between thought and action takes precedence, leading to a depiction of the failure of Scottish nationalism as a failure to synthesise idealism with political mobilisation. In 1928, however, there is more innocent optimism than jaded irony:

There must be no measure of Home Rule. There must be no taking of bribes from any English political party. It must be all or nothing. Produce your manifesto but intertwine it with a definite political programme. Publish your creed, but include a rule of life. Fuse thought with action and recreate a nation. I have enough faith in Mr. Grieve's poetic genius to believe that it might effect even as much as this.

Appearing only a few months before Vestal Fire, there is no starker contrast in the author's career than the disparity between the impassioned political optimism of 'Towards A Scottish Idea' and the retrospective, bitter-sweet valediction to the decayed and futile passions of Capri society recreated in his relocatory novel. The failed pseudo-European perspective of Capri, where, as has been argued, Mackenzie in reaction to an equally decayed England believed he had found an alternative cultural viewpoint, has become resolved in the ideology of a renascent Scotland, where an antipathy to England can find its most strenuous outlet. 1928, then, marks the inevitable climax of that long, often obscured process of alienation from England whose
Towards A Scottish Idea

origin can be traced to that displacement on which Sinister Street ends, providing the beginning for its hero.

Mackenzie's obviously intense efforts with MacDiarmid towards securing an effective policy for the National Party is only one manifestation of a new and emphatic sensitivity concerning the political character of England, a new stringency indicating the profound influence of the author's emotional and intellectual repatriation. In his reciprocal and equally laudatory article welcoming Mackenzie's 'return', MacDiarmid summarises the significance of Mackenzie's new orientation:

"The capacity for separating oneself temporarily from one's mother-earth for the purpose of self-contemplation, all prejudices apart," says Barres, "is the mark of a very strong personality, just as the power to look on the foreigner with kindly eyes is one of nature's highest and noblest gifts." Compton Mackenzie's life has fitted him, now that he has returned, to look upon Scotland and our Scottish Movement precisely in this valuable fashion... 

...(he) has an inclination to the Left - but it is entirely wrong to say, as has been said in the "Forward", that he believes that the salvation of Scotland lies in "Labour Home-Ruleism," and that he is prepared to help a Labour candidate in the Western Isles. On the contrary, Compton Mackenzie and the other Socialists in the Scottish National Party - like those of their fellow-members who have hitherto called themselves Tories or Liberals - have wholly repudiated English party-political distinctions. 

"These have lost their significance for us altogether", MacDiarmid concludes, "and, if the national effort for which we have temporarily sunk all our minor differences succeeds - as I believe it will - we will ultimately regroup on different lines".

What was once only implied - whether through Michael Fane, the twilight of a 'system' in Gallipoli Memories, or the adoption and rejection of Capri - can now be stated and argued as a creative and intellectual condition: an English idiom, but a Scottish perspective.

One year later in March 1929, we find Mackenzie speaking with a new-found tone of strident and robust opposition in an article for the Scots Independent, entitled 'The Significance of Nationalism: A Challenge To Insincerity In Politics':

We must not sell our faith with a discount for cash. A Scottish Parliament to manage Scottish affairs means in the minds of our opponents, when they render lip service to Home Rule, a Scottish Parliament to manage local affairs. It is true Mr. Ramsay Macdonald thinks that such important matters as the drains in Bermondsey might
Towards a Scottish Idea

have to take precedence of such a measure; but since both the Labour Party and the Liberal Party assure us that they have always been Home Rulers we may not be wrong in believing that they really will ultimately try to give us the kind of parochial Home Rule they contemplate.

To my mind it would be better to wait for thirty years and die at the end of it with every dream unfulfilled than accept such a parody of a nation's life.61

This emphasises the extent to which Mackenzie kept his doubts and his suggestions of compromise concerning party policy to himself, or shared them with MacDiarmid and others - his public utterances are consistently based on determination and unified purpose, built on the solid base of antagonistic broadsides fired endlessly at Westminster. In 'The National Party', written for The Modern Scot in 1931, the tone is if anything even more acerbically uncompromising:

One of our dearest resolves is the complete destruction in this country of the corrupt and insanitary remains of eighteenth-century parliamentarianism. We regard so called Conservatism, so called Liberalism, and so called Labour as enemies of the country and we will never regard them otherwise. Fortunately the meagre poll at Midlothian cured the Liberals of their too hasty flirtation. They dropped the National Party as a rickety old bachelor rake drops a young woman whose good looks do not compensate for her lack of money.61

This reveals another strong feature of Mackenzie's journalistic voice - its insightful wit - often employed as in this example to reinforce the mood of vigorous stoicism and continuing energy.

The culmination of the first phase of Mackenzie's identification with the Nationalist movement, from 1926 until 1930, is found in an address broadcast on radio on November 5th 1929, and reprinted in the Scots Independent under the title 'What's Wrong With Scotland?' The article won a spurious notoriety owing to its concluding metaphor of the little white rose of Scotland, from which MacDiarmid was inspired to write one of his most often anthologised verse-aphorisms, 'The Little White Rose of Scotland'. While Mackenzie's image is undoubtedly a striking one whose potency MacDiarmid's poem successfully accentuates, controversies over authorship have fully obscured the remainder of the article, one of Mackenzie's finest.
Towards A Scottish Idea

While drawing together several of the threads running through the author's pronouncements on Scottish nationalism since "Looking Northward", perhaps more important is the article's original medium - radio. The first number of Vox, that tragically short-lived innovation, had appeared in November of the same year, with MacDiarmid as London editor, and it is wholly appropriate that in the following month Mackenzie should give a broadcast devoted to his political convictions in which his intuition for the potential of the medium is so evident. By now an accomplished and frequent broadcaster, 'What's Wrong With Scotland' remains the best example of Mackenzie's wish to make the 'idea' of nationalism popular and accessible, stripped of its party-political complexities and ideological contradictions. The result is a performance revealing a command of the microphone's potential for immediate intimacy and authoritative rhetorical power.

Developing from the distinction between 'thought and 'action' in 'Towards A Scottish Idea', Mackenzie with conversational ease grapples with the potentially absurd profundity of Scotland as a spiritual and emotional totality - the soul of the nation.

I advise anybody who expects me to talk to-night as if I were on the platform at a parliamentary candidate's meeting to cut off his wireless and read the evening paper instead. At the same time, it will be difficult to avoid all reference to what is called Home Rule, for a series of talks like this cannot entirely ignore such a topic if it is to provide any attempt to answer the main question, "What is wrong with Scotland?"

The policy adopted by Vox indicates that Mackenzie fully appreciated the profound implications within the development of broadcasting as a means not only for communication but in a wider sense as a focus for creating and exploiting the notion of communities transcending geographical boundaries whose communal centre would be provided by the new medium. This is the idea manipulated here: Mackenzie's listeners, the invisible community of Scotland, in a sense comprise the nation's soul - those who do not belong to that soul having switched off - while the medium, Mackenzie, provides its voice:

I wish to talk about what I shall have to call the soul of the nation. I shall not try to compete with men better qualified than myself to prescribe for the body. However, let me make it clear at once that I regard as a waste of energy any attempt to heighten
Towards A Scottish Idea

Scotland's consciousness of nationality or suggest a direction for this steadily increasing desire for self-determination without being prepared to give the nation itself a fitting political background. A soul demands a body until death sets it free. Fortunately the body is not yet dead, though it may be suffering from several maladies due to the conditions of modern life. So, with that body so much alive, we can still talk about its soul without being accused of trying to raise ghosts.6,3

Having established the terms of the debate, Mackenzie proceeds to deal with two salient features of the nationalist complex which have proved to be lasting preoccupations within Scotland: the difficulty in construing nationalism as an expression of something more than simple economic greed, and how in the face of the distinct experiences of Lowland and Highland a unified Scotland can be posited at all.

There has been so much talk about money in Scotland, so much stress laid upon the merit of getting on, that many Scotsmen must be asking themselves if they really do respect themselves most for belonging to a nation whose material success at the expense of others has become proverbial, whether, for instance, they are more proud of having sold their King to the English or of having refused to sell their Prince a hundred years later. It may be argued that it was one Scotland which took the English money and another which refused it. Yet, tempting though it be to speak of two Scotlands, I do not propose to make even a geographical distinction between the Highlands and the Lowlands, for I believe that there exists in the composition of every Scotsman that ability to sell his King and that inability to sell his Prince.6,4

An identity fractured and contradicted by the motivation for economic advancement and the desire for preservation of the culture which that advancement will erode: drawn again from Jacobitism, one might envisage MacDiarmid's approval of Mackenzie's more modest delineation of the Caledonian antisyzygy. Further endorsing MacDiarmid, who like Erskine of Marr attempted the Celticisation of Scotland in their wish to suppress what they perceived as an artificial cultural division between Lowland and Highland, Mackenzie voices a similar emphasis on racial purity:

Circumstance and climate may have fostered the development of the two types we recognise as Highlander and Lowlander, but racially the stock is the same. The blood of the Norseman has blended with that of the Gael and the Pict even in the outermost islands of the West, and that blend modified and preserved by climactic conditions has produced as obstinately characteristic a strain as any in Europe.6,5

166
Ironically, this racial emphasis — and this is equally true of MacDiarmid's perspective — completely obscures the truth that Mackenzie has just previously implied and which reveals the weakness of the 'racial' bias: it is the disparity of the economic priorities of Lowland and Highland, each acting against the other's interests, which makes the cultural barrier a very real one.

With a sudden switch of emphasis, Mackenzie departs from Scotland's internecine divisions to formulate the basis of his own cultural position, one which the very nature of his broadcast effectively symbolises: 'It is difficult to sit here in London and not fancy that the emotion I am feeling tonight may embarrass my listeners'. Mackenzie would question strenuously in the pages of Vox the implications and restrictions in the centralism on which the B.B.C. depended, a centralism which — despite the irony of his subject-matter — Mackenzie is endorsing by addressing the soul of Scotland from the soul of radio: London. The paradox leads to the frank, surprising, and all-encompassing statement of Mackenzie's creative and emotional relationship to Scotland, the aphorism which encapsulates his career.

They may think that one who has been exiled from his country not by land or sea, but by the sundering flood of time itself, has little right to be heard in a discussion like this. But they will be wrong, for if once it be admitted that the exiles from Scotland have no right to let their voices be heard in the discussion of her destiny, then that Scottish pride which boasts of what Scotsmen have accomplished all over the world is an empty pride, because it will mean that, once a Scotsman leaves his country, he and his children and his children's children are to be no better than chameleons taking on the colour of the country in which fate has put them. An English voice and a Scottish heart is a better combination than a Scottish voice and an English heart. 

'An English voice and a Scottish heart is a better combination than a Scottish voice and an English heart' — sounding like another weighty if impressionistic pronunciamento universalising the Scottish condition, this statement is equally a personal one, both apology and assertion, which itself provides the 'heart' to the nature of Mackenzie's position within Scottish culture. A succession of English narrative voices is less important than the cultural perspective that voice conveys. The reverse of the configuration — an assimilation and commitment to English culture by Scots repudiating their native inheritance — is the ineluctable
Towards A Scottish Idea

mechanism behind a cultural condition which Mackenzie will effectively counter by throwing into reverse gear. The centre, the English 'voice', will be made subservient to the alternative centre, the Scottish 'heart', rather than the process of the heart following the dictates of the voice. The opposed values of centre and periphery have been reversed.

In Mackenzie's view, the man who - with himself as example - finding himself an alienated Scot reclaims and affirms his cultural identity is on however shallow a basis countering the accepted orientation toward the centre:

To my mind the Scotsman who claims his racial inheritance across whatever expanse of sea or time may stretch between his country and himself holds in his heart the profoundest, the most incommunicable secret of his identity.  

As a cultural priority this certainly reveals the secret of Mackenzie's identity as a writer from this moment onwards, as shall be seen in the chapters which follow dealing with Mackenzie's most significant fictional achievements in Scotland: The Four Winds of Love and the Scottish comedy sequence. The source of creative dynamic in each case, and thereby the source of critical interest, lies in the relationship between an English narrative paradigm and the voicing of a Scottish consciousness. Between those potentially conflicting entities will be found the worth, or the worthlessness, of Mackenzie's achievements as a Scottish literary figure.

If MacDiarmid had already commended the value of Mackenzie's perspective on Scottish matters, his poetic sensitivity to the forceful, and indeed very MacDiarmid-like, imagery which closes Mackenzie's article is sure proof that as a repatriated Scot who could induce one of MacDiarmid's best-known lyrics, Mackenzie had arrived.

Let us see to it that this precious stirring of our consciousness toward the familiar and beloved aspect of our own country is not destroyed by the workaday doubts which will follow soon enough. Let us turn to our own background and forsake utterly the enticement of an alien and for us unnatural culture. We have grafted ourselves upon the rich rose of England. It has flourished on our stock. We have served it well. But the suckers of the wild Scots rose are beginning to show green underneath. Let them grow and blossom, and let the alien graft above, however rich, wither and die. You know our wild Scots rose? It is white, and small, and prickly, and possesses a sharp sweet scent which makes the heart ache.
In a sense Mackenzie's version of MacDiarmid's fabulous thistle, the seemingly redundant and debilitated image of the Jacobite white rose has undergone the transformation embodied in the author, to become a powerful symbol of cultural polarity and cultural allegiance. With a complementarity that suggests effective co-authorship, MacDiarmid transcends the forceful metaphor of Mackenzie's prose into a bare poetic statement of imagistic power:

The rose of all the world is not for me.
I want for my part
Only the little white rose of Scotland
That smells sharp and sweet - and breaks the heart.70

1931 and 1932 mark the culmination of Mackenzie's career in nationalist politics, for within these two years he found himself the epoch-marking symbolic figurehead of an entire movement. On the 24th October 1931, he was elected, as the Nationalist candidate, Lord Rector of Glasgow University by 849 votes against 762 polled by Sir Robert Horne, 581 votes for Professor Gilbert Murray, 110 votes for Tom Johnston and 21 votes for Sir Oswald Mosley. In electing the first Scottish Nationalist Rector, the students had fulfilled that great promise in Cunningham Graham's near victory in 1928 and consolidated the crucial role played by the student Nationalists in steering the nationalist movement towards the focus of a single party in the same year. The University had also broken away from the tradition of honouring prominent leaders of the existing political establishment; since 1919 the Rectorial chair had been monopolised by the Conservatives. Mackenzie's election, then, was a triumph for his own and the Party's strenuous repudiation of the Westminster party political system, and suggested further implications - apart from routing the Conservatives, the triumph indicated disaffection for the then Secretary of State for Scotland, Tom Johnston, and repudiation of Britain's new manifestation of Fascism. Given the limited significance of University political life, it must be remembered that until comparatively recently such elections were prominent and highly politicised affairs often spilling over into the wider public arena. The significance of the outcome in 1931 was further emphasised by the proximity of the Rectorial to the General Election. Mackenzie's triumph
indicated that nationalism could be seen as a viable and eloquent force in Scottish politics, and one not necessarily led by 'politicians' in the conventional sense of the word.

Thus in December 1931 Archie Lamont, writing of the victory in the Scots Independent, stresses that

...Mackenzie stood as no milk and water cultural revivalist, but as a Nationalist first and always...
The victory means that Glasgow students believe that Scotland is a distinct nation with a continued value in the international scheme. It means that Scottish students have lost their former blind respect for Westminster politicians. It means that in selecting a Rector for a Scottish University we must have someone who possesses the individualism, and idealism, and adventure, which are typical of the best in our Nation.71

The March issue contained sizeable excerpts of Mackenzie's Rectorial address under the title 'Creative Nationalism', while in the May issue - the topic having already provided material for four months in a periodical devoted to Scottish politics - a review of a broadcast concerning recent Scottish literature by Eric Linklater states

But the contemporary "locus classicus" of nationalism was, of course, Mr Compton Mackenzie's rectorial address, delivered and published in Glasgow. Mr Mackenzie realised very clearly the difficulty of the nationalists' task. And yet, despite difficulties he foresaw, or perhaps because of them, his address was tonic and stimulant in all its properties.72

Mackenzie's address, then, combines the frankness of a personal testament with a degree of objective analysis of the principles upon which he finds himself elevated, resulting in a performance marking the culmination of the preceding six years. With recurrent references to the growth of his own political attitudes and that of his generation encountering the demise of Victorianism and confronting the impact of the Great War, much of the address is directed at the significance of Scotland as a peripheral European culture and the implications of its relationship as a partner in the rise and decline of an Imperial state. The penchant for potent ethnic generalities and symbolic polarities is much in evidence:

The Scot is a greater colonist than the Englishman, because he adapts himself more readily to fresh conditions; but he and his descendants
preserve their racial characteristics for generations after the Englishman has lost his. Another feminine characteristic of the Celt is a capacity for facing facts. He will decorate his realism and allow the masculine Saxon, who like man himself is much more easily deceived, to suppose him a romantic. The Celt does indeed possess the precious gift of making hard facts romantic, and in doing this he can face them when a Saxon faced by the same hard facts will sentimentalize over them and run away. To an Englishman something is what it is called: to a Scotsman something is what it is. Let me illustrate my contention with a single example. The Germans, a masculine nation, call their country the fatherland. Why do the English, another masculine nation, call theirs the motherland? As a matter of fact Britain was first called the motherland by a Scotsman, Thomas Carlyle, and in the different sense of their responsibility and in the different interpretation of their duty toward that mother can be measured the profound difference between the Englishman and the Scot.\textsuperscript{73}

This is by now a familiar and predictable trait of Mackenzie's nationalism: the reduction of cultural and national identity to easily symbolised, and generalised, psychological and mythical ciphers, and it is a habit of thought that will prove the foundation of the fictional edifice attempting to encapsulate Europe in \textit{The Four Winds of Love}. This reliance on impressionistic absolutes can become wearing, and indeed it would make Mackenzie's status as a commentator on nationalism a negligible one if this were the sole basis of his arguments. But as has been demonstrated by examining the course of his journalism, this feature is redeemed by an ability to extend this trading in generalities through very eloquent, frequently insightful, analyses of nationalism in its broadest sense as a political phenomenon. Both features are particularly prominent in the address, a consequence of an occasion where the author could combine the eccentricity of his personality and viewpoint with his more disciplined philosophical inclination. There is an evident logical and rhetorical skill in the development of his argument, based on his personal experience of the war, that nationalism represents the counter-reaction to imperialism and that the struggle of small nations resisting integration by larger political forces presupposes the desire for cultural survival and integrity.

The disillusionment that succeeded [1918] was caused by the realization that war like everything else was at the mercy of modern existence. Much that was good in that existence was better through the war: all that was bad was worse. And since in the present state of human evolution the bad far outweighs the good, war presents
Towards A Scottish Idea

itself to our imagination as an unmitigated evil. A renewed attack upon man's freewill by a determinism based now upon the theories of science and mathematics instead of upon the speculation of a pessimistic theology coincides with a general attack upon man's liberty. In such an atmosphere the rights of small nations appear as much out of place as the rights of the individual, and although the war was nominally fought for the preservation of those rights the survival of small nations is now regarded as the prime cause of war...

The task of the reactionary thinker is always more difficult than that of the progressive. He knows the evils that lie behind him, and the boldest reactionary is apt to quail at the prospect of persuading his fellows to turn back and face them again. That steady evasion of the ultimate implications of reaction was the ruin of true conservatism as a political theory... Nationalism in its political aspect is essentially a reactionary theory of government. It is the admission by the part of an inability to adjust itself to the whole. It is reactionary too in its opposition to centralization, the upholders of which can claim that man's ascent in evolution is the result of centralizing his nervous system. Reaction, however, should only be temporary, hardly more than the ebb of the tide before it flows again. Nationalism desires to perfect the parts before it allows progress to move forward to achieve the perfect whole.74

Mackenzie interpreted the role of the creative artist on precisely those terms he favoured for his definition of nationalism: the cultivation of expressive individuality is the part; the cultural distinctiveness of the nation can be personified on an abstract level as an individual expressing the whole. The preservation of cultural distinctiveness in the face of the encroaching anonymity of centralisation or standardisation is mirrored in microcosm by the role of the artist countering the prevailing tendency toward what he terms the 'group-mind', the future effects of which Mackenzie details in an uncannily acute prognosis: 'Art in any sense in which we use the word today will be confined to the efforts of architects to pack people into their huge concrete hives, of dramatists to stimulate with coloured stereoscopic films the appetites of a satiated and incurious public, and of musicians to translate industry into rhythm by volumes of electrical sound.'75

If this exalting of the individual sensibility represents little more than the residue of 19th century romanticism, he was prepared to justify an anachronism as an expression of nationalism:

This picture of a new humanitarian world freed from the shackles of nationalism and individualism may seem a caricature of the ideals of those who now in an intellectual majority condemn people like myself as the romantic exponents of discredited social, political and
Towards A Scottish Idea

religious theories; but it is not more unkindly distorted than the picture of a parochial nationalism which it amuses the fancy of international idealists to draw.76

Mackenzie exploited a romantic temperament of extrovert idealism in much the same way that MacDiarmid exploited a modernist one of opposition and dialectic, and for the same reason: to promote the individuality of a culture. MacDiarmid would certainly have corroborated Mackenzie's conclusion from the foregoing quotation, that 'If nationalism be something more than a sentimental emotion it must be able to fight for itself in the arena of mundane tendencies'. Mackenzie swings his argument back into a final flourish of romantic identification to a reiteration of the themes of exile and childhood, tracing the process of memory and youthful aspiration which have led to the present circumstances of his speech. He concludes:

You are luckier than I am, my constituents. You have not to return to Scotland: you are there. And you have not had to maintain your faith through the shifting and deceptive colours of a dream, waking from it only in middle age to behold the white and clear and steadfast dawn. You are young at that awakening.77

If an English voice and a Scottish heart was the basis of Mackenzie's new creative condition, he is forced to concede, in conclusion, that his perspective is limited through its contrast with the condition of his audience, whose cultural advantage provides the dynamic behind the close of his manifesto.

You have two languages. Use them. Gaelic is not a mixture of philology and sentiment. It is still a vital tongue and expresses a fundamental habit of thought...Add to your English the strength and savour of the Doric. It is ludicrous that Dutchmen and Russians should have so far outrun Scotsmen as linguists. It was not so before Scots copied the arrogant laziness of the English by sitting down to wait for English to become the universal language. Scotsmen have long been taking their hands round the world; but they have made a habit of leaving their tongues behind them. You have something more than two languages: you have two attitudes towards life. Use them. Do not allow both to be submerged in an attitude which whatever may be its virtues, represents neither.78

Mackenzie's duality in perspective was a different one: as much an agent of exclusion as a means of identification. Having reconciled its strengths and its limitations as the basis of his nationalism, the next
Towards A Scottish Idea

twenty years would see his endeavour to make it the basis of his fiction.

IV A Plume on Scotland's Dusty Bonnet?

Mackenzie's involvement with Scotland from 1926 until 1935 is notable for his avoidance of creative work specifically related to Scottish themes or issues. With commitments to The Gramophone, Vox, existing contracts with publishers to produce a certain amount of material per year, and an increasing flow of articles and reviews, and the search for a permanent Scottish residence, the energy and time he found to devote to Scottish matters as writer and speaker is remarkable. His popularity as one of the figureheads of the new nationalism in Scotland, though it was doubtless enhanced by the fifteen books he had already published, was certainly not due to those he produced between 1926 and 1935, despite an undoubtedly large Scottish readership. Mackenzie's popularity in Scotland at this stage was as a journalist, a broadcaster, and a public speaker, the last especially - details of his public-speaking schedules throughout Scotland, when Mackenzie, MacDiarmid and Cunninghame Graham would appear as a formidable platform trio, reveal a strenuous and hectic accumulation of locations and dates.

Between 1927 and 1929, however, Mackenzie produced three of his finest works - *Vestal Fire* (1927), *Extraordinary Women* (1928), and *Gallipoli Memories* (1929) - all written during the most intense phase of his nationalist activities. Although not specifically related to Scotland in subject-matter, in one very real sense they are Scottish, for it was the crystallisation and fulfillment of the author's political aspirations he encountered when coming north which provoked his most far-reaching personal and creative relocation, inspiring the first unified and satisfactory work he had written for ten years. Mackenzie's work reveals very deliberate priorities during this time. One of these priorities was to articulate the significance of the war, having found in *Gallipoli Memories* the only suitable medium: personal and historical reminiscence. Another was the purgative expression of the importance of Capri in *Vestal Fire* and *Extraordinary Women* (see Chapter Three), an ambition and
Towards A Scottish Idea

a creative necessity which was forced to gestate for ten years. A similar case of delayed articulation can be posited concerning the personal, political, and creative fruition of Mackenzie’s Scottish repatriation. Having explored the foundations of nationalism through some six years of hectic political activism, not until 1935 was he in a position to assimilate his politics into fiction with the inception of *The Four Winds of Love*, for which his journalism provided both the prelude and the ideological foundation. The significance of this relationship will be explored fully in the next chapter; for the present, it is sufficient to indicate that one of the author’s most long-cherished ambitions - his desire to write a continuous fictional sequence - was repeatedly deferred until it could be synthesised with the political background and thinking which would provide the project with its creative impetus and structure. The fact that Scottish issues appear only as one aspect of the design of *The Four Winds* is not a measure of its relevance to Scotland; the conception of the novel is the logical outcome of Mackenzie’s assimilation to Scottish nationalism ten years earlier. His cultural orientations appear to have an uncanny tendency of taking the neatness of a decade to come to creative fruition.

In the meantime, what was the nature of Mackenzie’s relationship to the Scottish literary establishment at a time when his own literary work, journalism aside, was conspicuously non-Scottish? How did native Scottish writers react to this eminent ‘English’ novelist who, it might be argued, had merely exploited a renascent Scotland as a new stage on which a career of political heroics could continue to unfold? Was his significance confined to the merely decorative function and superficial, romantic appeal suggested by the description of Mackenzie by his friend and fellow-novelist Eric Linklater?

...few authors can spare for their own lives much of the colour, the adventuring, and vivacity of their work. There are exceptions, however: Byron the most redoubtable, Blunt in his Arab saddle, d'Annunzio well-known, Graham the hidalgo, and like a plume on Scotland’s dusty bonnet, Compton Mackenzie.79

To investigate this, it is necessary to turn once more to the figure of Hugh MacDiarmid, without whose influence, as has been demonstrated, Mackenzie’s Scottish aspirations might have remained the childhood
Towards A Scottish Idea

memories and dreams to which he had seemed confined. MacDiarmid's relationship with his fellow Scottish writers, by his own design, mirrored the stormy and often violent fluctuations in affiliation, compromise and wilful conflict on which he based his creative aesthetic. The often confused ideological tenets of the literary movement he had spearheaded, and the troublesome nature of its relationship with political revivalism, had become by the early 1930's even too complicated for MacDiarmid's attraction to self-negation, culminating in his expulsion from the National Party in 1933. This was the year the National Party of 1928 had amalgamated with the moderate Scottish Party, and in anticipation the National Party had purged its left-wing element; MacDiarmid was the first to go. The amalgamation also found Mackenzie disaffected: in a letter to MacDiarmid of October 1932, he begins 'I hope you will rejoin the National Party for a conference, even if you have to go out of it immediately afterward, possibly in my company'.30 In 1934, Mackenzie himself was passed over for election to the new SNP council; Neil Gunn was successful. MacDiarmid's alienation, however, is contrasted at this time by Mackenzie's more spectacular and public achievements, having attained a personal victory in the Party triumph of the Rectorship; at the same time he was confidently planning The Four Winds of Love. Christopher Harvie has summarised MacDiarmid's predicament well:

...MacDiarmid was - almost by his own definition - no politician. But he had acted for so long as arbiter of what should, or should not, come within the pale of the literary movement, that he became identified with it more than with his own views: a battleship sailing uneasily in convoy with pleasure-steamers.31

MacDiarmid's star was very low indeed, and the disintegration which had infected his own status and that of the homogeneity of the nationalist movement as a whole is symbolised by his exile on the tiny and inhospitable island of Whalsay from 1933 until the early 1940's.

At the time of Mackenzie's and MacDiarmid's first meeting in 1928, however, there was more optimism than antagonism, with MacDiarmid more disposed to compromise than condemnation in his determination to attain political expression of his cultural ideals, and artistic expression of his politics. Though MacDiarmid's personality makes any objective
evaluation of his private and public contradictions difficult to sustain for long, it is possible to mount a powerfully cynical case against the validity of his enthusiasm for Mackenzie's return. MacDiarmid manipulated people as openly and as effectively as he did his own ideas, a trait Harvie encapsulates in his description of MacDiarmid as 'an unhelpful amalgam of Calvinist ranter and Stalinist commisar'. His early reassurance following Mackenzie's expression of diffidence stands repeating out of context: 'A great deal will depend in the immediate future on the evidence of return to Scotland of men of your prestige'. MacDiarmid's preparedness to support Mackenzie's assimilation, it can be argued, was based primarily on the opportunity to exploit Mackenzie's superficial kudos as a notable member of the English cultural establishment whose significance lay more in his disaffection with England than any worthwhile interpretation of Scottish priorities; one of Harvie's pleasure-steamers - or an exotic plume in a grim and monochrome bonnet - who might make Scotland's cultural profile more attractive. If MacDiarmid's early hymn to Mackenzie's political integrity in the Scots Independent is genuine enough, there is by way of contrast the empty and inflated over-laudatory rhetoric of MacDiarmid's review of Gallipoli Memories which appeared in the Scottish Educational Journal in 1931, which can be seen simply as a concessionary act of diplomacy in publicly returning Mackenzie's rapturous championing of MacDiarmid in 1928.

The situation is further complicated by Neil Gunn, who completed a complex and painful triangular relationship. Gunn was present as a guest at Montrose at the time of Mackenzie and MacDiarmid's first extended meeting, when there seems little evidence of the rancour that was to develop between Gunn and Mackenzie later. This subject has been treated fully elsewhere by Francis Russell Hart and J.B. Pick, who indicate that later MacDiarmid was to play an exploitative role in a case of obvious mutual dislike. Gunn and MacDiarmid themselves became estranged in the early 1930's as a result of MacDiarmid's intolerance of Gunn's affiliation with the conservative Scottish Party which had expelled him, Gunn, in MacDiarmid's view, having settled for a soft option which manifested itself in the transcendent preoccupation which marked his fiction. To all appearances MacDiarmid's friendship with Mackenzie
Towards A Scottish Idea

continued as before. Yet it is typical of MacDiarmid - who had himself made no secret of his critical attitude towards Gunn - that he should write to Gunn in conciliatory fashion in response to Gunn's grievance concerning Mackenzie's, and MacDiarmid's own, hostility towards his work:

I can afford to indulge in all manner of personalities because I proceed from an altogether abnormal basis of impersonality in regard to Scottish matters. Take Compton Mackenzie. I am sorry if he has been unfair to you in any way (as I am in the like case of The Modern Scot - whose dealings with you I was neither party to in any way nor did I know who reviewed The Lost Glen) but so far as I am concerned while he and I have been friendly enough and may still be or be again, I do not attach the slightest value to his literary work and I regard his bearing on the Scottish issue as wholly pernicious. Nevertheless pursuing my own tortuous and clearly enough comprehended course in certain contexts I would be prepared to eulogise his work. It is all a case of relativity; and if we come to that while not unduly overrating my own work as a poet I am prepared to hold...that no fiction whatever matters a damn in relation to Scotland while any poem whatever above a very low plane matters a great deal. 

MacDiarmid, of course, may simply have been using Mackenzie as a means of pacifying Gunn in such a way as to conceal the implications of his own negativity. To adopt MacDiarmid's own self-indulgent terminology, his dependence on abnormality destroys any possible basis for an objective conclusion concerning definite like, dislike, respect or contempt for Mackenzie or his work. As final evidence there is the fact that MacDiarmid and Mackenzie corresponded as warm friends until one year before Mackenzie's death; in 1962 Mackenzie concluded a letter 'Ours has been a very intimate friendship'.

Mackenzie professed to have read Gunn's first novel, The Grey Coast, with admiration, while he found in Morning Tide 'a wonderful sense of that sanctity of manhood which D.H. Lawrence sought all his life to express and never succeeded'. But he appears to have found more time and enthusiasm for the work of Fionn MacColla, the other great 20th century novelist of the Highlands whose emphasis on Highland history was as austere and bleak as Gunn's was spiritual and symbolic. Mackenzie praised MacColla's first novel, The Albannach, in the Daily Mail, as 'a richer promise of something in the future than any novel I have read about Scotland during the past decade', and an unfortunate sense of persecution and rivalry was generated - mostly, it seems, on Gunn's part.
Mackenzie's exceptionally hostile review of Gunn's *Butcher's Broom* in 1934 indicates a profound enmity which had spilled over into literary prejudice. This last act confirmed a definite enemy of Mackenzie's in the novelist George Blake, also confidante, adviser, friend and publisher to the sensitive and diffident Gunn. Following Mackenzie's review of *Butcher's Broom* he wrote to Gunn:

> It is one of the minor satisfactions of my drab existence to be able to say to you now and again "I told you so", and God knows my ancient reservations about Mackenzie have been bitterly justified. The Mail review of *Butcher's Broom* was outrageous, and everybody who matters is with me in thinking so; the Gaelic reference being particularly lousy. It is a matter beyond anger—though I understand Willie Power to be about to offer the Chieftain of Barra a choice between rapiers and pistols at dawn. It is either a) incompetence or b) an amalgam of vanity, malice and jealousy. But Mackenzie is not incompetent...It should be within your power to complete the syllogism. There will be consequences—but you had better leave them to others to exploit, even to the Lallan pikesmen.\(^{50}\)

Mackenzie's feelings concerning Gunn, however, were certainly not the expression of a hostility towards the fictional articulation of Highland culture, as his endorsement of MacColla indicates. As the Hart and Pick biography implies, the rancour was doubtless the result of very deep spiritual and creative antipathy; Mackenzie had even less in common with Gunn as a novelist than he had with MacDiarmid as poet.

With Lewis Grassic Gibbon the case is more clear-cut. Gibbon died in 1935 long before the full measure of Mackenzie's affiliation to Scotland was to fructify in *The Four Winds of Love*, a work in conception seemingly remote but closely related to Gibbon's *Scots Quair*. Mackenzie had a profound admiration for Gibbon's fiction—an admiration which also included the novels he wrote as James Leslie Mitchell and which to Mackenzie's regret were often obscured by the more celebrated achievements of Mitchell's Scottish pseudonym. Mackenzie, of course, could never come to terms with Gibbon's profound and consistent allegiance to communism, while for Gibbon strident Scottish nationalism—particularly in the romantic and stylish quality which Mackenzie brought to the emotion—represented a repugnant political irrelevancy. Nevertheless, the two men corresponded amicably enough when Gibbon invited Mackenzie to contribute to the 'Voice of Scotland' series with *Catholicism in Scotland*, which the author dedicated to Gibbon.
Towards A Scottish Idea

MacDiarmid's and Mitchell's joint satire on bourgeois Scotland, Scottish Scene, included Mackenzie in laconic fashion as part of its scheme. The original cover, a tongue-in-cheek cartoon map of 'Scotland Proper' and 'Scotia Irredentä', has as a feature the small figure of Mackenzie, perched upon the Hebrides in romantic pose surrounded by seagulls and next to a gramophone, above the caption 'Mr Compton Mackenzie extols the Gaelic'. MacDiarmid, similarly perched upon Whalsay, and Gibbon, being evicted from the Mearns by the Free Kirk, are the only other literary personages represented.

As a collaborative work, one of the most interesting features of Scottish Scene is the extent to which successive essays by the two writers reveal diametrically opposed points of view. Gibbon's outright repudiation of the nationalist movement is a notable instance of this, whose bourgeois character and affiliations he ridicules with gusto, including Mackenzie amongst his list of targets.

I like the thought of Miss Wendy Wood leading a Scots Expeditionary Force down to Westminster to reclaim the Scots stone; I would certainly march with that expedition myself in spite of the risk of dying of laughter by the way. I like the thought of a Scots Catholic kingdom with Mr Compton Mackenzie Prime Minister to some disinterred Jacobite royalty, and all the Scots intellectuals settled out on the land on thirty-acre crofts, or sent to re-colonize St. Kilda for the good of their souls and the nation (except for the hundreds streaming over the Border in panic flight at sight of this Scotland of their dreams).

In a powerful switch from ridicule into gravity, Gibbon declares the irrelevance of nationalism as a needless digression from the struggle for an international communism:

There is nothing in culture or art that is worth the life and elementary happiness of one of those thousands who rot in the Glasgow slums. There is nothing in science or religion... For the cleansing of that horror, if cleanse it they could, I would welcome the English in suzerainty over Scotland till the end of time. I would welcome the end of Braid Scots and Gaelic, our culture, our history, our nationhood under the heels of a Chinese army of occupation if it could cleanse the Glasgow slums...

Gibbon perceived an obsession with Scottish cultural and political identity as a species of literary fascism, a tendency he believed was typified by J.H. Whyte's journal The Modern Scot, which merely
Towards A Scottish Idea

represented the attempt to 'out-English the English'. If the motivation to preserve a distinct Scottish culture was based on illusion, equally illusory in Gibbon's view were the qualifications of non-Scottish writers like Mackenzie that permitted them to be assimilated to the Scottish scene.

With a few exceptions...there is not the remotest reason why the majority of modern Scots writers should be considered Scots at all. The protagonists of the Scots literary Renaissance deny this. They hold, for example, that Norman Douglas or Compton Mackenzie, though they write in English and deal with un-Scottish themes, have nevertheless an essential Scottishness which differentiates them from the English native writer...
The chief Literary Lights which modern Scotland claims to light up the scene of her night are in reality no more than the commendable writers of the interesting English county of Scotshire.31

Thus Gibbon effectively endorses Muir's corroboration of English cultural centralism in Scott and Scotland, published in the same year. It is an astonishing contradiction that the author of A Scots Quair - the most impassioned celebration in 20th century Scottish fiction of a linguistic and cultural separateness and individuality - should conspire to nullify the significance of his own creative achievement. Following for a moment the course of Gibbon's logic, if the invalidity of Mackenzie and Douglas rests on their dependence on 'un-Scottish themes', then by implication there are 'Scottish' themes available to 'Scottish' writers, indicating an identity, however, Gibbon refuses to acknowledge. Gibbon is striking a blow not only at Mackenzie but at one of the foundations of the Renaissance, both cultural and political, that was initially exploited by MacDiarmid: that Scottishness was not confined to a geographical definition if there was a genuine worth in exiles who sought to re-assimilate themselves. As has been argued Mackenzie's acceptance on precisely these terms led to his formulation of the creative dynamic underlying a duality in cultural perspective, an English voice and a Scottish heart. Gibbon was hostile to an equation of Scottish nationalist consciousness with an automatic aesthetic value; to Mackenzie the matter was much simpler. As in his own case, if not Scottish by birth, Scottishness could be reduced to a basic quality of emotional and intellectual intent, an essentially 'romantic' motivation. Gibbon's anti-nationalist communism and Mackenzie's pro-nationalist anti-communism
are beautifully polarised: national individualism was the barrier to collective mobilisation for one, while for the other collective class identity, the 'group-mind', represented the suppression of the individual.

The curious nature of Mackenzie's nationalist career until 1935 as a mixture of romantic flourish and solid intellectual input was a matter to which MacDiarmid returned in retrospect in 1952 in an essay on R.B. Cunninghame Graham, the figure with whom Mackenzie possessed so much in common. It is an essay which makes some worthwhile and badly needed objective observations about the two men, whose public image, MacDiarmid argues, often acted against their real potential.

MacKenzie, too, is a picturesque figure - but Cunninghame Graham was picturesque to a literally incredible degree; and his over-romantic appearance actually operated against him, whereas MacKenzie's physical graces were sufficiently in keeping with modern standards to serve as an asset. But neither of these men were able to pull anything like the weight they should have been able to pull, because they were both more or less exotic figures, and their very gifts and graces made them hated and distrusted by a Scotland overwhelmingly devoid of culture, hopelessly provincialised and full of a 'bad conscience' towards arts and letters.3:2

If Cunninghame Graham and MacKenzie were unavoidably isolated from certain sectors of Scottish life and society with which MacDiarmid had the advantage of being identified, MacDiarmid also construes both men as unfortunately hampered by the infancy of the Movement they supported:

Both of them were socialists (like myself, Mackenzie was on the I.L.P. panel of parliamentary candidates at the time the National Party of Scotland was formed - and we both withdrew our names on the strength of pledges by the other leaders of that party; pledges which were not redeemed - by no means the only instance of gross betrayal to which both Mackenzie and I were subjected by the same people), but they had no organic relationship to the Scottish working class; their interests were almost all 'caviare to the general', their idealism was not supported by any real grasp of the essential facts and figures of Scottish social and economic conditions, and they had not the effective help of the socialist and Labour Party organisations, while the National Party organization was still hopelessly inadequate and its propagandist literature had scarcely begun to scratch the surface of the problems with which it purported to be concerned.33

But MacKenzie's political activism, of course, is only half the picture, since any adequate assessment of its worth depends entirely upon the major fictional contribution he made within Scotland as an expression of
Towards A Scottish Idea

his initial experiences. MacDiarmid’s account, like so many others, is incomplete: those few accounts of The Four Winds of Love ignore the ideology of the journalism, while those, like MacDiarmid, who based their evaluation upon his political activism often ignored or were unaware of the existence of the long novel. The next chapter, it is hoped, will redress the imbalance in making Mackenzie’s Scottish image a complete one in reconciling politician and journalist with novelist.

In conclusion, if MacDiarmid could criticise Cunningham Graham and Mackenzie for not being more like himself, he was prepared to allow through his striking final image that as themselves their significance and importance should not be underrated.

If Cunningham Graham and Compton Mackenzie had not been so much engaged in other directions but had been able to bend their abilities to make the necessary comprehensive analysis of the whole Scottish question – and if, instead of being bourgeois nationalists and mere reformist socialists they had been thoroughly instructed Marxists and had gone all out from the beginning for Scottish workers republicanism à la John Maclean, Scotland would be in a very different position today. A great opportunity was lost, and Cunningham Graham and Mackenzie in council with the officials and branch delegates of the Scottish Nationalist Party were like a pair of golden eagles, with their wings clipped, in a crowded poultry run, full of poultry far gone with the ‘gapes’.

By 1935, however, Mackenzie had established himself as repatriated Scottish literary figure who had overcome the barriers to articulating an authentic Scottish point of view, and he had done so by developing two important themes. Firstly, that the romantic formulation of equating the creative individual with the individuality of a peripheral culture – in the manner that R.B. Cunningham Graham had done before him – could be rehabilitated to Scotland’s advantage; and secondly, that an articulacy in the seemingly inimical English cultural tradition could be made a creative dynamic rather than an agent of cultural impoverishment. If the accent was one alien to Scotland, then what the voice was trying to say was not.

As he settled down to writing The Four Winds of Love on Barra, mirroring his friend MacDiarmid’s equally hard-pressed intensity of production on Whalsay, Mackenzie’s greatest opportunity was just beginning.
CHAPTER FIVE

'THE ROSE OF ALL THE WORLD':
The Four Winds of Love

I Groundplan

Mackenzie, Marr, the best o' Scots
Are frae their donnart country hid
Like him wha's sunk more Spanish gowd
Off Scotland than th'Armada did.'

Thus MacDiarmid in 1930, in To Circumjack Cencrastus, expresses the regret he analysed more fully in his essay on Cunninghame Graham in 1951 quoted as the conclusion to Chapter Four, where the poet delights in his image of Mackenzie and Cunninghame Graham as the most colourful exponents of a nationalist romanticism which hampered their utility to Scottish political affairs and obscured their true value from the point of view of their more pragmatic fellow-nationalists.

Yet by 1932 Mackenzie was ready to commence a fictional project which would far outweigh in substance, if not value, all the literary 'Spanish gowd' sunk by Cunninghame Graham in his specifically Scottish writing, the long novel which, comparable with Lewis Grassic Gibbon's A Scots Quair in terms of scale and ambition, represents a contribution to the consciously politicised writing of the 1930's which has not only been almost entirely forgotten, but which in the final analysis might be seen as the most unique and wide-ranging expression of political intuition within fiction attempted in Britain during this time. A work of universal ambition and Mackenzie's definitive fictional statement, The Four Winds of Love represents the equivalent in 20th century Scottish fiction of MacDiarmid's career-long preoccupation with totalising poetic narrative structures. The novel, in fact, is a notable advertisement for MacDiarmid's attraction to what he termed 'giantism in the arts': six volumes comprising almost a million words, a massive gallery of characters, with themes and a plot which embraces an extensive European canvas. It is the parallels suggested between MacDiarmid and Mackenzie in Chapter Four, rather than their divergences, which become evident in
Mackenzie's novel: the work is developed from a depth and authenticity of political commitment and understanding equal to the consistency of MacDiarmid's own. This primacy of political consciousness - like MacDiarmid's achievements - is more acutely felt and expounded than within the contemporary left-wing English literary movement of the 1930s which became a consistent target of MacDiarmid's polemics.

If - as has been demonstrated in Chapter Four - during the period 1925 to 1931 Mackenzie was far from 'hidden' from his newly-adopted country in the way MacDiarmid's rueful stanza implies, it has also been indicated that a growing political preoccupation with national and international politics had yet to be assimilated to Mackenzie's fictional career. His pronouncements upon literary developments in Scotland, in fact, were few during this time, and confined almost entirely to his weekly book-reviews for the Daily Mail. In 1933, however, Mackenzie published a definitive book on literature and literary criticism, Literature In My Time, both a subjective account of his chief literary influences and an important interpretation of literary change in Britain from the late Victorian period to the advent of Modernism, and he included within it a brief, but perceptive, account of the literary character of Scotland and Ireland. To some extent this compensates for the apparent absence of Mackenzie's response to the literary issues prevalent in Scotland at the time. The essay indicates Mackenzie's awareness of Scottish cultural limitation and stereotype within the tradition to which he would soon attempt to contribute. He begins:

An examination of the state of Scottish and Irish literature during the last fifty years reveals a humiliating state of affairs for the Scotsman, and although in the year 1933 there are signs of a new vitality in the Scottish literature of the immediate future, it would be both premature and fond to claim results of more than local interest. No doubt if every writer in English of Scottish extraction were credited to Scotland an imposing list might be drawn up. None would deny to Scotland the honour of claiming Carlyle; but how many would be equally ready to grant Scotland the honour of claiming Ruskin, who by blood was just as much of a Scotsman as Carlyle?2

By alluding to the persistence of a centralising English culture in assimilating and defining elements of a peripheral culture to the advantage of the first and the detriment of the second, Mackenzie applies the argument reiterated throughout his nationalist journalism, which
asserted the validity of his political repatriation, to the arena of Scottish literature for the first time, in the hope, one suspects, that the justification of his political assimilation would hold good for his own future writing. The implication becomes obvious as Mackenzie continues:

Nobody questions the fact that Bernard Shaw in spite of his Scots name is an Irish writer, but comparatively few recognise Norman Douglas as a representative of modern Scottish literature. (LIMT, p. 238)

Clearly, this reclamation of a writer, who for Mackenzie represented a profound personal influence, to a Scottish tradition conceals a wish to be regarded in precisely the same way. Ironically, the creative and temperamental features which through a subsequent consensus of critical opinion have established the validity of Douglas's status as a Scottish writer would not have flattered Douglas herself, to whom an explicit Scottish consciousness was a matter of indifference. Concerning Mackenzie he is once said to have remarked 'he's all right, Mackenzie...of course, he's got this ridiculous Scottish nationalism, but he's all right'. Douglas, of course, excepting his distaste for 'Englishness', was a negligible political influence on Mackenzie, but Douglas's political indifference to Scottish issues did not discourage Mackenzie from positing his entitlement to a genuine native inheritance and status.

Echoing MacDiarmid and anticipating the attitudes later expressed by George Blake, William Power, and Lewis Grassic Gibbon, Mackenzie goes on to indicate a sensitivity to the Kailyard as an inhibitive cultural stereotype.

The fact was that the Kailyard school during the nineteenth century mortgaged Scottish literature to indignity as Sir Harry Lauder and his fellow comedians have mortgaged Scottish humour. Nevertheless, whatever one may think of the Kailyard school, their representative character cannot be denied. The fiery young Scots writer of today who has revolted from what he thinks a degraded sentimentality is inclined like everybody else to attribute the morals to the fiction instead of the fiction to the morals. (LIMT, pp. 238-39)

Equally, Mackenzie was conscious of the significance of the counterreaction the Kailyard had provoked:

A book like The House with the Green Shutters by George Douglas would be accepted today as a bitter but not greatly exaggerated
presentation of small town life in Scotland; but when it was published in 1901 it was regarded as a combination of parricide and matricide in the brutality of its exposure. It was within narrow limitations a good book, but nothing like so good as the repercussions of the shock it caused have made those who have not read it suppose it to be. While the spirit of the nation was oozing away in the pawky sentimentality and Judaic self-depreciation of the Kailyarders, other Scottish writers used cloak-and-sword romance to drug their sense of provincial decline. Of these Robert Louis Stevenson managed to make most of the English-speaking inhabitants of the world dream his own dreams; but Neil Munro and others never succeeded in bewitching any except a few of their own countrymen. (LIMT, p. 239)

If the observations made up to this point in Mackenzie's discussion are not new, they are made with a remarkable conciseness and clarity, summarising the major features of a Scottish cultural condition within a few paragraphs: the problem of cultural identification; the stunting effect of the Kailyard; the persistence of romance and sentimentality and its counter-reaction of antithetical naturalism. This general awareness of underlying cultural issues is essential to an adequate appreciation of Mackenzie's tactics in the Scottish comedies some ten years from the time of this essay; it also indicates a wider acknowledgement of the dilemmas facing the Scottish novelist in the 1930's. These are all concerns which will be reflected in The Four Winds of Love.

In 1933, as Mackenzie goes on to indicate, MacDiarmid still cast a large shadow over the achievements in prose, though the prevailing fictional trends of the decade had not at this time fully crystallised. It is perhaps indicative of the apparent enmity between Mackenzie and Neil Gunn that Gunn's novels The Grey Coast (1926), Morning Tide (1930), and The Lost Glen (1932), which had already secured him a considerable status as one of the leading Scottish novelists, are nowhere mentioned. Instead Mackenzie reiterates his obsession with A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle as Scotland's 20th century cultural landmark.

It was not until C.M. Grieve, writing under the name of Hugh MacDiarmid, published A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle, a long poem written in a synthetic Scots dug out from the whole treasure of the Scots language as far back as the Middle Ages, that a new spirit sprang to life in Scottish literature...The very nature of the medium of communication "Hugh MacDiarmid" has chosen forbids the possibility of any direct communication except to an infinitesimal minority, who, feeding on his poetry, must be the means of conveying it to the
majority. I have no hesitation in calling C.M. Grieve the most powerful intellectually and emotionally fertilizing force Scotland has known since the death of Burns. Yet owing to the peculiar conditions of literature today few poets can have had such a small body of actual readers. (LIMT, p. 240)

In fairness to Mackenzie, he concludes by explaining his omission of any reference beyond MacDiarmid to other Scottish writers, although he makes a concession in the case of Eric Linklater, who by this time was a close friend of the author: 'Having deliberately avoided mentioning any of the younger generation of English writers I do not propose to single out any of the younger Scottish writers. It is to be hoped that a novelist like Eric Linklater will fulfil all his rich promise, but he will only be handicapped by feeling that he carries big money. Twenty years hence will be time enough to be writing books about the younger generation of today'. (LIMT, pp. 240-41) But perhaps the most significant part of this last paragraph is also its most ostensibly trivial: the mention in a single sentence of 'English' and 'Scottish' writers in innocent acknowledgement of two individual cultures and traditions. Mackenzie's indebtedness to both cultures, both traditions, and the creative and political complex he made of them - the English voice and the Scottish heart - is given its most sustained expression in his most ambitious novel.

One year before the publication of Literature in My Time, in 1932, Mackenzie had informed Eric Linklater of his conception of The Four Winds of Love, and Linklater was to be the dedicatee of the novel's first volume in 1937. In his introduction to his anthology of Scottish prose The Thistle and the Pen, published in 1950, Linklater drew attention to his inclusion of an extract from The North Wind of Love: '...there is a chapter from Compton Mackenzie's immense novel, The Four Winds of Love, that I chose deliberately in preference to many passages of a more purely literary interest because it tells a good deal about the ideas implicit in Scottish nationalism and about the sort of people one may hear discussing it'. More generally, Linklater continues by echoing Mackenzie's earlier argument concerning Scottish cultural identity having a valid expression in writers who though not 'native' to Scotland geographically or genealogically demonstrate a native strain in their work:

188
I have not, it will be observed, confined my choice of scenery to native heath nor borrowed only from authors who still pay taxes on their own soil. To have done that would have been to show an imperfect and most misleading view; for the tale of Scotland is no more to be told between Carter Bar and the Pentland Firth than the history of Jewry between Dan and Beersheba. The true parties to the Caledonian antiszyzygy...may be, indeed, not Highlanders and Lowlanders, not Jacobite romantics and hard-headed Whigs, but forth-faring Scots and home-keeping Scots. A remarkable sentiment for their own country dominates the latter, a vigorous preference for far places appears to inspire the former - but blood is thicker than the estranging seas...I cannot think it likely, I admit, that Norman Douglas makes a habit of attending Burns Suppers, but even against a Mediterranean background the ancestral bone shows clearly in his countenance and work.\footnote{By implication Linklater would have believed this to apply equally to Mackenzie; the continuation of his argument is in fact specifically relevant to his case. 'Even the English climate, in some ways a more subtle menace than Capri, does not often quite obscure a Scottish origin, at least not for a generation or two; and if in his sentimental consciousness a Scot may continue so in the pervasive airs of Hampstead and Nottingham and Bournemouth, then the confines of Scotland are assuredly not limited by geography.\footnote{This last point is particularly apposite to The Four Winds and its author, both of which find their definition in Scotland, but their expression far outwith its geographical or cultural boundaries.}'}

Although Mackenzie outlined the idea of his long novel to Linklater three years before he began its composition, the origin of The Four Winds goes back much further. In a career as apparently haphazard and opportunistic as Mackenzie's, there is one aspect of his creative thought and development running like a thread throughout the course of his fictional development, discernible from his earliest novels. This was the author's determination and long-nurtured desire to write an ambitiously long chronicle novel, an idea which underwent a protracted genesis. It surfaces first in the ill-fated Theatre of Youth project, intended to be the equivalent of Balzac's Comédie Humaine in its panorama of Edwardian English society. The foundations for a series of linked novels were indeed promising in Carnival, Sinister Street, and Guy and Pauline, which reveal a stylistic and thematic consistency, but by 1917 and The Life and Adventures of Sylvia Scarlett, purged of the earlier lyrical prose...
and technically uneven, there were fewer traces of architecture. This absence of more coherent design can be seen as a manifestation of the loss of Edwardian certainties following the Great War and its residual mood of futility (see Chapters Two and Three). For ten years, however, the pre-war world of Sinister Street remained the only fictional edifice in which Mackenzie felt he could live; not until 1927 and Vestal Fire did he find an alternative fictional structure and style. In the meantime, Mackenzie was forced to produce novels in accordance with an outworn formula, in which the substance of his pre-war fiction - and many of his characters and themes - reappeared in perfunctory and wearying fashion. Thus we find John Freeman in English Portraits and Essays (1924) capturing in an unkind but apposite image the prevailing critical attitude towards Mackenzie's post-war novels:

...his characters, as Johnson said of Gilbert Walmsley, mingle in the great world without exemption from its follies and vices. He loves their activities; he sets them going and follows their whirring motion with the ruthless gaiety of a child playing with toys, who stops them, breaks them, and sometimes sets them going again. He understands mechanics and they must move, and when they are run down in one book he winds them up again for another; he hurries hither and thither, clutching at the skirts of perpetual motion like that other pageant master, Time.7

The concept of a long, chronicle work could not find fruition in the half-built Theatre of Youth, which soon became no more than a series of linked novels with characters and certain incidents in common. By the 1920's, of course, Mackenzie's performance was being played to an impatient audience. The novelist could not find the narrative framework, and the substantial thematic skeleton, required to write a sustained and self-contained work. By far the most significant reason for this was the omnipresence of the Great War in Mackenzie's imagination, the articulation of which had become an urgent priority (see Chapter Three). Hostility towards Sylvia Scarlett in 1917 encouraged Mackenzie to begin constructing '...the war novel in seven volumes I proposed to write. The Dark and the Fair was to be preceded by two earlier volumes, and the whole work was to be called The Labyrinth. It would be divided into Alien Corn, The Apple of Discord, The Dark and the Fair, The Topless Towers, The Molehill, The Mountain, The Olives of Home.8
Mackenzie allowed the idea to gestate for a further eight years, believing a long period of assimilation and retrospective adjustment was necessary before the articulation of the war's significance. This is, of course, a period of delay common to all the prose writers of the Great War who saw action and eventually wrote of their experiences. In 1926, he replied in response to an enquiry from the Daily Mail concerning his intention to write a long novel with an outline, somewhat modified in the interim, of the work he had contemplated in 1917:

The novel is to be seven volumes and a million words will be the approximate length. For a long time I decided to call the book Life and Adventure, but for a year now I have been calling it Our Seven Selves, and that is the contract I have made with Mr George Doran...to issue in the United States the whole seven volumes together.

The titles of the various volumes will be:

The theme of the book is the self-determination of man in relation to (1) his art, craft or profession (2) Women (3) Family (4) Class (5) Country (6) Humanity (7) God.

The book will begin in the year 1897 and finish in the 1920's. The length of the book is due to the large stage, which extends from Ireland in the West to Greece in the East, to the length of time covered by the narrative, and to the number of personages and groups involved...I am supposing at the moment that it will be the last novel of modern life I shall write.10

It would appear that the writing of Vestal Fire, which was underway at this time, had sharpened Mackenzie's new taste for ambition and experiment, perhaps to the extent of clouding his judgement. The reply continues in a sudden burst of grandiloquent creative egotism concerning future projects, apparently intended to be taken seriously: 'After Our Seven Selves I plan to write a history of the Crusades in eight volumes to be followed by a History of Polynesia and a History of Scotland. Then I shall start a novel in about thirty volumes beginning in the year 1000 and ending in 1914, a kind of ancestral epic which will amuse my old age'.10

Drawing-board epics apart, in Our Seven Selves - with the exception of the titles and an extra decade added to the time-span - can be seen clearly The Four Winds of Love in embryo. That Mackenzie had gone to the lengths of negotiating a contract with an American publisher (Cassell's
and Gollancz in Britain had refused) would indicate that, for a time at least, he had in some small way commenced this seemingly amorphous but equally carefully premeditated project. Mackenzie’s provisional titles are a clue to his return to fiction of a high moral seriousness; the title Vestal Fire itself was indication of this. It is perhaps regrettable that he did not retain his working titles as part of the scheme for The Four Winds of Love, a novel whose potential appeal is certainly not enhanced by the unrepentantly reiterative naming of its successive volumes. Mackenzie, in fact, was prone to under-selling himself through his choice of novel-titles—though Sinister Street, Vestal Fire and Thin Ice are exceptions—which are often pedestrian or flippant, a habit which makes the loss of these provisional titles more unfortunate. If the writing of Vestal Fire had provoked future confidence and a marked stylistic rejuvenation, a more pragmatic response was soon to follow the equally arduous demands imposed by Extraordinary Women, in which Mackenzie had not allowed any relaxation of a new narrative consciousness and restraint:

Nine years later when experience had been laid down long enough in the cellar of my imagination I felt, after finishing Extraordinary Women, that the time had come for this magnum opus to be started. Then I realised that Tolstoy had used his experience in the Crimea to write War and Peace but had taken his story back to the Napoleonic Wars. He had moved his story from the less to the greater; if I were to move my story back to the Crimea I should be moving it from the greater to the less. I had been held up in the middle of Extraordinary Women by the difficulty of handling all those variations on a theme. During that hold-up I had started Gallipoli Memories. I said to myself that it was absurd to suppose I could write a great novel about the Great War on the scale I planned; I should be much wiser to take advantage of my memory and of the papers I had preserved to finish Gallipoli Memories and carry on with First Athenian Memories, Second Athenian Memories and Aegean Memories.11

The transition to autobiographical reminiscence with Gallipoli Memories (1929) demonstrated a new stylistic flair and confidence which was integral to the fictional recovery marked by Vestal Fire and Extraordinary Women (see Chapter Three). Mackenzie’s ease with the idiom of autobiography provided a means of satisfying both the motivation to articulate the significance of the war—which, as he had remarked in the preface to Gallipoli Memories, created a narrative of its
own\textsuperscript{12} - and inhabiting the large-scale, chronicle narrative framework of four large volumes which at the time seemed incompatible with his new approach to fiction. His autobiographical chronicle of 1914-18, however, which had commenced brilliantly in Gallipoli Memories, was ill-fated. As a consequence of the frankness with which he exposed the mechanisms of M.I.5 in Greek Memories came his celebrated prosecution under the Official Secrets Act in 1933, resulting in the withdrawal of the book. The trial was a telling revelation of the ineptitudes and internecine jealousies and intrigues of military bureaucracy, aspects of English military life which had occasioned some of Mackenzie's most vitriolic and bitter commentary on English conduct throughout the War. Indeed hints were made to the author during the proceedings that the prosecution had been engineered by those in M.I.5 who had been stung by his barbed criticisms. The frequently farcical nature of the trial gained Mackenzie much public sympathy, but at the expense of enormous legal fees which greatly worsened his financial predicament and brought him to the verge of bankruptcy.\textsuperscript{13} Furthermore, the withdrawal of the offending volume effectively wrecked the intended design of the entire series.

In July of 1932, precarious circumstances had not deterred Mackenzie from making the confident declaration to Newmann Flower, his literary agent, that 'The Four Winds of Love is intended to be a very long novel, and will consist of four love stories and four philosophies of love and four decades of a man's life'.\textsuperscript{14} In the Spring of 1933 Mackenzie moved from Inverness-shire to the island of Barra, where he was to remain for a further ten years - in terms of his habitual restlessness, a comparatively long time, and a decade which represents the consolidation of his identification with Scotland. By settling on a remote Hebridean island overwhelmingly Catholic in character with a distinct, close-knit community and culture, Mackenzie had merged his religious and political fixations without lessening his commitment to Scottish affairs. His new remoteness from the mainland did not seriously restrict his political activities, although he resisted pressures to offer himself for the Chairmanship of the reformed Scottish National Party in 1933 'because I was not prepared to spend my time in administering sedatives to calm internal quarrels'.\textsuperscript{15} He had been further disillusioned with the Party
policy of contesting Parliamentary seats when, despite of Mackenzie's platform support, Eric Linklater lost his deposit as a Nationalist candidate in the East Fife by-elections in the same year. Despite the significant influence of Barra, however, Mackenzie could still not see his way clear to commencing his immense project. The enormous legal costs of his trial had made his financial circumstances grim; much time and energy was being spent in local political matters (see Chapters Six and Seven); his reviewing and journalistic commitments had increased; he was further immersed in time-consuming works of criticism (Literature in my Time (1933)) and Scottish history (Prince Charlie (1933), Catholicism in Scotland (1935)).

A solution of sorts presented itself in the symbolic decision in late 1934 to build a permanent residence on Barra, an act which would confirm the author's national and local affiliation, but also guarantee the means for undertaking his massive task and fulfilling an ambition nurtured for eighteen years. The building of 'Suidheachan' ('the sitting down place') commenced in early 1935. As it happened, the measuring out of the ground for the house and the writing of the preliminary ground-plan for The Four Winds of Love took place within hours of each other, a coincidence enhancing the significance of Mackenzie's decision: the foundations of the fictional edifice owed their inspiration to the foundations of the physical one in which the work would be written over the next nine years.

After Maclean had pegged out the ground which the house was to occupy I had one of those bad goes of pain which with me used nearly always to succeed the construction of a book in my mind... ...I came back with Coddie from that pegging out and felt that the decisive action taken over the site and direction of the house demanded that I should begin The Four Winds of Love. I sat till the small hours with half a sheet of typing paper in front of me, jotting down slowly one by one the names of the chief characters. It is improbable that a bottle of wine stiffly corked suffers any conscious reaction from being uncorked and slowly poured out into glasses until it is empty. Yet if a bottle could feel, that is what I felt like on that February night when at last I had constructed the fundamental design of The Four Winds of Love and told Chrissie that she need not put any more records on the gramophone.16

Illustrating Mackenzie's talent for the vinous metaphor, the image of fulfillment and creative exhaustion goes back to the author's description
of the 'experience' which had matured sufficiently long in 'the cellar of my imagination' in 1929, revealing the extent to which the assurance of a permanent affiliation to Scotland - which might be reduced in this case to the simplest of needs, somewhere to live - brought Mackenzie's concept for *The Four Winds of Love* to life. There were to be no further false starts, but no shortage of compositional hardships. The scheme of his novel, whereby both hero and narrative turn their attention finally to Scotland in *North Wind*, is an allusion to the author's deferred identification with Scottish cultural and political ideals. In the maturity and hindsight of a political awareness formed through an involvement in Eastern European nationalism, the Easter Rising in Ireland, a brief flirtation with Italian fascism, soon soured, and foreboding for a burgeoning Nazism, John Ogilvie's recapitulatory contribution to Scottish nationalism expresses the fulfillment which for the author provided the inspiration of his novel.

II Fictional and Political Worlds

Owing to the grandiose aspirations of Mackenzie's new project, he found himself for perhaps the first time in his career at the mercy of the natural caution of publishers, who until now had displayed infinite tolerance and flexibility with a writer on whose professionalism they could depend. *The Four Winds of Love*, however, was a very different proposition, and from the moment Martin Secker (the author's first publisher) declined to publish the work the pragmatics of writing the novel became tortuously complicated.

Loans from friends prevented his complete financial crash during the writing of *East Wind*, but Mackenzie encountered overwhelming difficulties in arranging an agreeable contract between author, agent and publisher that would allow him sufficient income during the lean years of war to sustain the writing of several volumes over a seven-year period with long gaps between the publication of each part. Some anguished exchanges between the author and Newmann Flower at the outset
of the project, when his then publishers Cassells were anxious to keep him but nervous of the considerable outlay The Four Winds would involve, make painful reading, but also testify to Mackenzie's determination to complete the novel against seemingly impossible odds. The greatest problem - from the publisher's point of view - lay in the fact that the proposed scale of the entire work had more than doubled since Mackenzie's more modest outline of it in 1932. The following letter of April 1936 from Mackenzie to Ralph Pinker is typical of the author's frame of mind at this time; exasperation underlined by fierce tenacity to the integrity of his conception.

...I wish to negotiate Winds myself. I have put all I know into the first of them, and as you are unable to pull me through the four months necessary to write The South Wind, I feel that you should with good will let me have the satisfaction of doing what I can with it. You have already had one novel this year on which I have paid your commission; if Cassell's wish me to go on you will have a second in the autumn. If Cassells insist that the whole contract is void by my failure to hold out long enough to write both The East Wind and The South Wind you still have a chance to make a contract with any publisher you like. In any case I profoundly hope that there will be no question of any other publisher, except for The Winds. I should like you to tell Newmann that I am without any money except what I have borrowed from a friend in humble circumstances; if you do this I am sure that Newmann will agree to let me negotiate The East Wind right away. If I am sued by the Inland Revenue it can only mean bankruptcy, and he must realise what it will mean if I can't meet those monthly cheques...

As it turned out, East Wind and South Wind were published by Rich and Cowan, the remainder by Chatto & Windus, who remained thereafter Mackenzie's publishers until his death. This discontinuity was furthered by Mackenzie's interrupting composition of the novel to write, in white-hot indignation, The Windsor Tapestry (1938), an impassioned defence of Edward VIII's abdication and an equally vociferous denunciation of the political establishment and its role in the crisis (MacDiarmid, certainly no Royalist, approved thoroughly of the book's political salvos). The intense controversy surrounding Mackenzie's book - which put his name in newspaper headlines for the third time in his career - and his near nervous collapse in hurriedly writing it, meant that West Wind and West to North did not appear until 1940, an interval of three years from the first two volumes. The planned four volumes had by now, of course,
The Rose of all the World

become five; in the end, six, when North Wind was published in two volumes in 1944 and 1945 respectively. Thus The Four Winds of Love had taken eight years to appear in its complete form, and four of its volumes had been published during the war. This factor greatly hampered adequate recognition of the work at the time. While the individual volumes were fully and favourably reviewed, wartime paper restrictions meant that by 1945 there was little possibility of any newspaper or periodical sacrificing the scant reviewing space available to assess the work in its entirety. The considerable gaps in an adequate contemporary response have encouraged the novel's subsequent neglect: forty years on, the work is still omitted from most surveys of the 20th century British novel, furthering an obscurity which the paucity of critical attention it has received has done little to mitigate. Thus is found the greatest irony in Mackenzie's career: his most substantial, ambitious, and arguably his finest work - the one by which he wished to be remembered - is the least discussed. Of the few substantial discussions of the novel available, Francis Russell Hart's is by far the most perceptive and interesting, while Stewart Sanderson's article of 1972 in Ariel provides the best overall introduction. Other worthwhile comments can be found in Alan Bold's Modern Scottish Literature, Roderick Watson's The Literature of Scotland, and Allan Massie's 'The Four Seasons of Compton Mackenzie'.

Mackenzie's wish to 'see Secker's name on the title page' of The Four Winds of Love was not mere sentimentality: he believed 'that The Four Winds of Love would be the Sinister Street of my middle-age'. Later, he admitted to cherishing 'a fancy that (The Four Winds) will be recognised in time as a justification for the kind things said over half a century ago about Sinister Street'. If Sinister Street and The Four Winds of Love represent Mackenzie's two major fictional achievements, they are furthermore organically connected in such a way as to indicate logical growth and progression from Mackenzie's earlier period to his artistic maturity.

The uncanny determinism of war played into the hands of Mackenzie's writing with The Four Winds of Love just as it did with Sinister Street, completed at breakneck speed after the outbreak of the Great War in the attempt to secure the artistically enshrined world of Edwardianism it
celebrated from the historical forces which would destroy it, along with
the validity of the novel. In 1936, Mackenzie refers in the course of his
dedication to Eric Linklater in East Wind to ‘inviting fortune’s mischief
by setting out to build yet again a work in successive volumes’.23
Looking back on 1936, he commented

As I wrote that dedication I was back in 1912 and asking myself why
I was going on with Sinister Street when a great European war would
make such a novel seem out of date. Now I was wondering how far I
should have reached in The Four Winds of Love when a second European
war would begin.24

Unlike Sinister Street, however, The Four Winds of Love was not to be a
novel of retreat into a remembered past contradicted by the present; it
was to be a fictional bridge spanning not only Mackenzie’s life and
career, but also – for the first time – linking both sides of that chasm
created by the Great War which swallowed his future with such apparent
finality. Vestal Fire of course had been a more limited attempt to make
sense of the post-war world as it infected the European microcosm of
Capri. The Four Winds of Love, however, would attempt the same, but in
macrocosm, delineating historical evolution and not historical retreat;
the shallow cosmopolitan clique of Vestal Fire becomes, instead, the
stage of European history itself. This is why instead of external
history provoking creative conservatism in Sinister Street, The Four
Winds of Love would increase in scope as it continued its process of
mirroring the narrative of historical change. To some extent Mackenzie’s
sense of historical significance and epochal perspective is an
anticipation of two later comparable chronicles by English novelists:
Henry Williamson’s massive Chronicles of Ancient Sunlight (1951-1969)
and Anthony Powell’s A Dance to the Music of Time (1951-1975). Both
works began publication in 1951, commencing reappraisal in the wake of
the Second World War of an historical period very similar – especially
in Williamson’s work – to the span of Mackenzie’s narrative. Mackenzie’s
experience of the Second World War demanded that the closing portion of
the novel be extended:

My original plan was to make this final volume start with the year
1926 and finish in 1934; but the planning of a novel of about a
million words cannot be too rigid, and contemporary events suggested
an extension of the period to be covered.25
Thus *The Four Winds of Love* ends in 1937 with the world in the Northern winter of burgeoning Nazism and Europe on the brink of war, but with its hero John Ogilvie in southern, Hellenic stasis, bringing the narrative to the point in history at which Mackenzie had begun publishing the novel. Its harmonious, familial close— with Europe again poised on the brink of war— is the novel’s single instance of explicit authorial irony, a conclusion with even graver implications given the fact that three of the chief characters are Jews.

If Mackenzie set out to contain the evolution of Europe between 1900-1937 and the influence of historical and political change on its intellectual life, he also attempted to recapitulate and synthesise the disparate priorities within his own career. Central to the design of *The Four Winds of Love* is the author’s career-long obsession with two epoch-changing moments both of his life and of his times: the turn of the century and its conscious transition from late Victorian to Edwardian, and the destruction of Edwardian values in the Great War. As late as 1956, Mackenzie would return to this fixation in *Thin Ice*, which is also the only of his novels to contain serious reflection on the impact of 1939-45 (see Chapter Eight). Thus the Edwardian societal canvas of *Sinister Street* provides *The Four Winds of Love* with its starting-point, but disregards the concluding impasse of the earlier novel by developing its themes into the universal canvas of European history until 1937 from a viewpoint which specifically contradicts that of *Sinister Street*. In the central figure of John Ogilvie is found the extension of the artist-as-hero as found in Michael Fane, and Guy Hazelwood in *Guy and Pauline*, but with a more comprehensive and searching delineation of the position of the creative artist within English culture. From *The Life and Adventures of Sylvia Scarlett* can be found the germ of the picaresque, episodic and sprawling chronological narrative which blossoms into a *roman fleuve* of sorts.

More important, however, is the portrait of that bitter-sweet legacy of Capri in *Vestal Fire* and its tone of modern, post-1918 weariness and disillusionment: it is 1918 which in *The Four Winds of Love* provides the narrative with its great central hinge, dividing the youthful optimism and adventure of *East Wind* and *South Wind*, 1900-1918, from *West Wind* and *North Wind*, 1918-1936, where there is a modulation into a new tone
of political decay and tragedy - the pattern of innocence becoming irony in *Gallipoli Memories* and *Vestal Fire* amplified to a much wider thematic arena. Mackenzie's attitude to this modulation is unmistakably acute, informing the latter half of the novel with what amounts to an extended portrait of political disillusionment. This is a feature he justifies in the dedicatory letters (to Rosamond Lehmann) which preface *West Wind* and *West to North*, which provide an authorial gloss and summary of the historical period covered by each volume. The stringency of Mackenzie's perspective arises from an interaction between the political events of the present and the reappraisal of the past these events have provoked:

...this new war has enabled me to see the years immediately after the last war in all their tragic significance...I cannot pretend that the irruption of war has made me disinclined to write: the dreadful present has been brought so much nearer to those fateful years with which 'The West Wind of Love' and 'West to North' are occupied that they seem no further away than the prologue of a play to its first act, and they are so much part of this catastrophe that my mind is haunted by remorse for that misused past, which may have given my pen something that nostalgia for a happy and well-ordered past could never have given it. (Dedication, *West Wind*)

This synthesis of present and past historical upheaval acquires even sharper emphasis in the dedication to *West to North*, where the author cannot restrain a sudden searing attack on the Government's handling of the Second World War; Mackenzie wrote the preface in June, 1940.

I have tried to recapture in these latest two volumes of 'The Four Winds of Love' the mood of the lustrum 1918-22, and I do not believe I have allowed myself to be unduly influenced by the contemporary tragedy. Yet, as I reached the final pages and was wondering whether I had written too harshly of politicians once upon a time, the stupendous events of May and June 1940 have justified a greater harshness than any I could have contrived.

Our soldiers and our airmen have been betrayed. The politicians and permanent officials who failed them may not be driven with appropriate ignominy from the public life they have abused nor debarred with appropriate severity from holding office again; but the exaltation and gratitude with which heroic youth has filled our minds need not beget a weak mood of generosity towards those men who have sacrificed that youth to their own complacency. Such complacency can never be forgiven. (Dedication, *West to North*)

This brutal frankness is indicative of the intentionality with which Mackenzie set out to make his novel a summation of the political
The Rose of all the World experiences not only of himself, but of the political preoccupations of an entire generation and period which was as much a reaction to the present as to the past. The past history of the 20th century, then, is not perceived through a mood of benign isolation as an escape from disturbed immediacy, but as past events which have found their fruition in the turbulent historical context of the novel’s composition: the Second World War.

Mackenzie’s maturity and breadth of historical perspective is complemented in an equal maturity of political intuition, and their integration dictates both narrative pattern, style and theme, making the novel the logical culmination of Mackenzie’s involvement with, and interpretation of, Scottish nationalism from 1925 onwards. The novel’s basis on a narrative of ideological debate and political explication—creating an unfolding analysis of political reason—emanates from the author’s journalistic and oratorical exploration of political themes throughout his Nationalist activism, so that Mackenzie’s journalistic voice is clearly discerned in much of the novel’s idiom. The nationalistic preoccupations of the author discussed in Chapter Four are further enacted through the novel’s internal scheme. The conception underlying Mackenzie’s Scottish nationalism—that the preservation of Europe, and democracy, could only be attained through the self-determination and self-preservation of small nations from imperialist absorption—becomes in The Four Winds of Love a delineation of England’s decline as an imperial culture refusing to relinquish its domination of the Celtic peripheries. Treating specifically the tragedy of Irish and the non-fulfillment of Scottish separatism, this process is mirrored in the novel’s attention to the plight of Poland and the Venezelists struggle in Greece, and the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany.

Integrated with the semi-autobiographical identification between author and hero, the novel is structured upon the intellectual growth of the individual and the historical evolution which determines that growth. Synthesising Mackenzie’s fictional and political worlds, The Four Winds remains the supreme vindication of the author’s declaration that by 1915 he had chosen to interpret his future from a European perspective. The modern odyssey of The Four Winds becomes, therefore, an
The Rose of all the World

odyssey of progressive 'acculturation', idealising the author's own life, projecting it as it might have been and often was. In this way the novel is polarised with Michael Fane in Sinister Street, and his seeming entrapment within English society and values. It is helpful to clarify the parallels and departures between both novels further, for in one sense it might be argued that between the themes of Sinister Street and The Four Winds, little has changed, except the terms and the ideologies within which the exploration takes place: catholicism, class, education, aestheticism, and the experience of music are preoccupations shared by both novels.

Yet the Four Winds is not merely a six-volume extension of Sinister Street. The expansive scope Mackenzie sought in his long novel demanded a departure from the conventions interpreted in Sinister Street; Michael Fane, as has been argued, is a character who symbolises the tension created in interpreting a fictional tradition which offered potential while it imposed limitation (see Chapter Two). Michael is denied fulfilment through his entrapment not only in English cultural values, but through an entrapment in the form of the English novel itself, which fails - through the final gesture of the author - to endow the hero with a continued fictional dynamic. Very deliberately, the same period and ideology is precisely where John Ogilvie and the Four Winds begins, bringing Mackenzie back at last to the 'non-conclusion' of his career - his failure to fulfil the potential of that novel and his promise as an English novelist. Therefore while John Ogilvie's and Michael Fane's educational heritage is paralleled in East Wind, Ogilvie, granted the means of escape from English public-school servitude, launches himself upon a mythic course through a spectrum of differing cultural versions of his identity which permits the entire work's European canvas. Where Ogilvie in a sense is propelled into world history, a history which he is even seen on occasion to manipulate personally, Michael Fane's repressive aestheticism is defined within the terms of a sham historicism as an escape from the contemporary world. This is made clear in Fane's relationship with the aesthete Wilmot, who tells Fane 'you will soon reach the temperamental entanglements of the nineteenth century, for you may avoid the coarse, the beery and besotted obviousness of the Georgian age':27

202
...O wonderful nineteenth century, in whose humid grey dusk you and I are lucky enough to live!"

"But what about the twentieth century?" asked Michael.

Mr. Wilmot started.

"Listen, and I will tell you my intention. Two more years have yet to run before that garish and hideous date, prophetic of all that is bright and new and abominably raw. But I shall have fled, how I know not; haply mandragora will lure my weary mind to rest."23

If Michael attempts to resist the total intellectual retreat advocated by Wilmot, 'the twentieth century' remains for him in the novel's conclusion very much the speculation which perplexes him here.

John Ogilvie's escape from the repressive influence of English values - the critique of which forms one of the work's foundations - corresponds with the author's escape from his earlier traditional limitations, where in the maturity of a European perspective these limitations may be re-interpreted from a non-English point of view. This new perspective, in conjunction with an anticipation of the novel's themes, is beautifully symbolised in the opening stages of East Wind, which depicts a public-school debate on Irish Home Rule. Within the narrative's obesiance to the conventional idiom and ambience of English public-school values is contained the growing seed of its antithesis, suggested by the young Irish nationalist Edward Fitzgerald in his venomous condemnation of internal English colonialism and the gradualism of Irish Home Rule MP's alike:

...when the master sat down the lank young Irishman sprang up, his pale blue eyes alight with fury, a flaming spot on each high cheek-bone. He had no intention of being stopped by the President's bell and therefore he avoided personalities; but he denounced England with such savagery that the audience, forgetting the Nationalist Member's moving presentation of the Irish case, reverted to their ingrained hostility to and deep-seated misunderstanding of Ireland...The hostility of the audience was made even more acute when at the end of what they considered the speech of a tub-thumping demagogue Fitzgerald with a menacing gesture of his large bony hand turned to the Honourable Member for North Connemara, whose sombre eyes regarding him seemed as large as an owl's:

"And, let me say to you, sir, that the young men of Ireland are growing more than a little weary of their elected representatives...'England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity,' your gallant and honourable friend on the other side of that club you call the House of Commons warned us tonight. He did well, and I tell him now that it is the harsh truth. And I warn him that the young men of Ireland are waiting for that opportunity." (EW, 26-28)
An incidental glimpse of Michael Fane is even included within this new pattern, seen behaving true to the conventions so faithfully celebrated by the descriptions of St. James's Public School in Sinister Street. The treatment of the same school in East Wind, where Ogilvie is both a typical schoolboy favourite and personally removed from his stereotype, contains notions and personalities which would have been unthinkable in the earlier novel. The contribution to the debate of the young and precocious Jew Emil Stern, an attack on Fitzgerald, is as powerfully articulate as Fitzgerald's was extremist, touching on the theme of racial and cultural persecution which becomes central to the novel.

Whether by England's enmity or from an ingrained indolence Ireland has been so long now a European no thoroughfare that she has become the prey of her own emotions. Erin is an old beldame who sits by the fireside, dreaming of her youth. She ascribes her wrinkles not to inexorable time but to the aggressive behaviour of her successful brother across the Channel. Mr Fitzgerald has talked - or perhaps I should say shouted - as one of a persecuted race, but where does the persecution of Ireland stand when it is put beside the persecution of the race to which I belong? Do we seek the refuge of a narrow nationalism? Oh yes, we have our Zionists, but do not most of us regard them as feeble representatives of our race who cowed by persecution desire to throw up the struggle and revert to the primitive life from which iron circumstance had reduced them in spite of themselves? (EW, 31)

The fact that Ogilvie remains silent in the debate is deliberate, for the three differing contributions symbolise the matrix in which he finds himself and which will shape his development and that of the novel: the conventional influence of English society and values (Fane), England's relationship to its peripheral cultures and European nationalism, and the search for religious certainty and political commitment (Fitzgerald), and doctrinaire anti-nationalist Marxism and atheism (Stern). In this way The Four Winds begins by interpreting the model of Mackenzie's Scottish nationalism - the English voice and the Scottish heart. The conventional public-school, the voice, embodies the author's dependence on the narrative limitation of the English novel; Fane's presence is an extended allusion to Mackenzie's pre-war style and themes. The heart, however, the debate, dramatises the fact that the restrictive ideology of those early novels is to be challenged, and it is the debate which contains in
miniature the major themes which will sustain that challenge through the ensuing volumes.

Relative to Mackenzie's fictional practice, then, The Four Winds represents a thematic, stylistic and structural departure. In a wider sense, it also represents a shift within a fictional sub-genre which has been adopted and amended throughout the development of 20th century English and European fiction - the ambitiously planned chronicle novel, novel cycle or roman fleuve. The status and influence of this sub-genre has never received uniform or comprehensive analysis, and a result of this is a flexibility in the terminology used to describe greatly differing fictional designs which have only extensive narrative length in common. The sheer number of novels constructed on these lines, and the difficulty of establishing adequate criteria for evaluation, perhaps conspire to make such an assessment impossible. One of the form's exemplars, Balzac's Comédie Humaine, Mackenzie had entertained vain hopes of emulating throughout the first decade of his career, and in 1935 there were a host of precedents at his disposal: John Galsworthy's Forsyte Saga (1906-1929) and Hugh Walpole's Rogue Herries (1930-1933) were both, in terms of their 'traditional' narrative technique, the most obvious models from Mackenzie's point of view. Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage, which had commenced publication in 1915, was perhaps more removed in terms of its stream-of-consciousness technique, although despite its relative technical sophistication it shares many of the bildungsroman features which Mackenzie had interpreted in Sinister Street one year earlier. By far the most conspicuous paradigm of the sequence-approach for British novelists from the 1920's onwards, however, was Marcel Proust's masterpiece of social satire, subjectivity and the individual's perception of time and memory, A la Recherche du Temps Perdu, which had begun publication in 1915 and translation into English in 1923. Mackenzie contributed a perceptive, albeit brief, piece to a tribute to Proust by an assortment of contemporary literary celebrities, collected by Scott-Moncrieff, to mark the publication of the latter's translation of Proust's novel. While A la Recherche du Temps Perdu - which Mackenzie had begun reading in 1914 - may be posited only as a potential influence, Edmund Gosse's parallel between Sinister Street and Swann's Way should be remembered: Mackenzie's contribution to
the tribute indicates that Proust's narrative limitation to the subjective analysis of the single consciousness and its unfolding development captivated his attention²⁹, a technical feature shared by Richardson's Pilgrimage and which is perhaps reflected in Mackenzie's near-total restriction of the narrative to the protagonist John Ogilvie.

Despite the inevitable relativity of individual novelists' interpretation of the extended novel, however, it is at least possible to distinguish two distinct creative priorities as paradigms within this technique in English and European fiction since the 19th century. Very broadly speaking, these priorities might be classified as societal or subjective in origin. The first can be defined as the attempt by the novelist to 'contain' an entire societal spectrum in his or her desire to analyse and imitate social change by expressing an extensive intuition for, and attraction to, 'historicity'. The second reflects the principle defined by the Modernists of subordinating the depiction of external, typically linear, chronology and coherence to the internalised human consciousness as a means of structuring and ordering the world. The creative paradigm of each model can be traced to the history of the French novel, for the first technique finds its definitive and hugely-influential expression in Balzac's vast Comédie Humaine series, while the second technique achieves an unsurpassed depth and consistency of exploration in Proust's A la Recherche du Temps Perdu. These creative priorities, of course, are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and a narrative which reflects the familial or genealogical saga can provide a basis for both techniques; Proust's novel, for instance, despite its reliance on the subjective workings of consciousness and memory, places equal emphasis on acute observation of early 20th century upper-class French social manners. Turning to the development of the novel in England, however, if one contrasts Galsworthy's Forsyte Saga with Richardson's Pilgrimage the distinction becomes very clear as one with implications going beyond the aesthetic schism between traditional and modern techniques to reveal the differing ways in which novelists comprehend the potential offered by extended scale. While The Four Winds of Love reflects both fictional approaches, in the final analysis it belongs with neither of these paradigmatic techniques. Mackenzie certainly attempts to reflect societal change, and, as will be argued, he
The Rose of all the World

attempts unsuccessfully to filter that change through the consciousness of his protagonist, but this represents only a feature of his wider intention. Such features are subordinated in a narrative created not principally out of the societal or subjective focus, but from philosophical and cultural exploration.

The novel’s emphasis on the intellective and the factual, and the wide compass this permits, combine to break the mould of the accepted conventions within the long chronicle narrative in England, both before The Four Winds and after. A review by Douglas West in 1937 of East Wind suggests why this is so: 'This is a book triumphantly alive, packed with thought, and mercifully free from the influence of coteries and the faint provincialism ineradicable from most English fiction'.30 It remains a conspicuous paradox that so many of the firmly established English novels which have interpreted the novel-cycle framework operate with a deliberately restricted scope of subject-matter and setting. While it would be unreasonable to criticise the purposeful specificity and detail of Bennett’s Clayhanger trilogy or Galsworthy’s Forsyte Saga - novelists who remained indebted to the principle of social investigation as interpreted by Victorian novelists - it is a fact that in later models can be found little endeavour to escape a thematic narrowness and insularity. C.P. Snow’s Strangers and Brothers sequence (1947-1970), Anthony Powell’s A Dance to the Music of Time (1957-1975), and more recently Simon Raven’s Alms for Oblivion and The First-Born of Egypt sequences (1964- ) share a rigidly narrow focus in their exclusive concern with English middle and upper-class life and an obsessive fascination with the moeurs of its professional and social elites. Paradoxically, an abnormally large potential for the deployment of increased fictional scope in these writers has an inverse creative effect, provoking contraction rather than expansion and an intensified adherence to one specialised area, resulting in the contradiction — in Powell and Raven especially — of indulgent specificity and reiteration within seemingly limitless space. A resistance to the modern and post-modern context of narrative innovation in these novelists is reflected in a conservative technique more reminiscent of the conventions of the Victorian novelists which Edwardian novelists had interpreted before them.
In contrast, *The Four Winds* immediately reveals the great strengths of its separateness from an English context. The novel, both in scheme and in content, amounts to a surprising anticipation of the new political thinking which has been developed since the 1970's concerning the politics of culture and nationalism in Britain. The novel's sustained analysis of English political centralism and the legacy of its suppression of her adjacent peripheral cultures, and the corresponding emergence of nationalism in the latter, has been a preoccupation of political and historical commentators such as Tom Nairn, Christopher Harvie, and Michael Hechter, whose analyses of Celtic nationalism applied to the wider context of Europe represent a perspective mirrored in Mackenzie's concern with England's role in Europe throughout the historical period contained by his novel.

In spite of this innovatory context, however, critical problems remain in the fact that in terms of style and idiom Mackenzie remains dependent upon, for the most part, an English narrative voice and an unfolding action perceived through an uncriticised English affluence. This internal contradiction gives rise to a narrative voice which frequently juxtaposes stringent rebuke of English values and behaviour with a style suggestive of a complicity with those values, a feature most notable throughout *South Wind* where Ogilvie's fury over England's suppression of the Easter Rising is articulated alongside many of the clichés surrounding typically romantic English military adventuring.

In many ways the novel's hero John Ogilvie shares with Michael Fane the trappings of the middle-upper class English elite, its ex-public school Oxford and 'City' mechanisms. For this reason it is highly significant that between *East Wind* and *South Wind* the reader encounters the only gap in the narrative's chronological seam: the years 1901-11 are missing in order that Mackenzie can dispense with Ogilvie's years at Oxford and his early manhood. One might unkindly envisage an authorial footnote at the opening of *South Wind* which reads 'For 1900-11, refer to *Sinister Street*'. Why do we fail to see Ogilvie in Michael Fane's Oxford context? Aside from a wish to avoid unnecessary and self-defeating thematic repetition, had Mackenzie wished to delineate Ogilvie's Oxford years it is probable that the incompatibility between his hero's fixations and the kind of preoccupations glorified in the
The Rose of all the World

Oxford portion of Sinister Street might have driven a thematic fissure through the consistency of the Four Winds, just as the tension between the public-school ambience of East Wind and the powerful contradictions manifest in the debate would have been difficult to sustain. Just as Ogilvie escapes the confines of a public-school education before Fane can, the reader can assume that Ogilvie by dint of character remains immune from the inhibitive tendencies encouraged by Oxford which afflict the hero of Sinister Street. Fane’s appearance in East Wind suggests that Mackenzie’s implied critique of Oxford values in the earlier novel holds good for the Four Winds.

Many of Ogilvie’s subsequent adventurings may occasion frequent encounters with characters who are part of the solid Oxford nexus, but in ideological terms the novel is quite alienated in its sympathies and implications from the ‘English ideology’ its idiom would appear to implicate. In its internal schema - the English-Irish-Scottish matrix of core culture and periphery - English values are perceived from the perspective of the periphery, rather than from the standpoint of a process of anglicization which instantly presupposes the marginality of England’s neighbouring cultures. In this way The Four Winds may be posited as the first attempt in the 20th century at creating a ‘British’ novel in that it attempts to dismantle a conceptual totality which is merely the product of England’s assimilation of its Celtic fringe by lending proportionate attention to England, Scotland, Ireland and Cornwall (though Wales, curiously, is omitted from its design with the exception of a brief reference in North Wind). In this way the novel is the first creative fruit of Mackenzie’s affiliation to the Scottish Renaissance and its sustained critique of cultural and political anglocentrism. Its political ideology, furthermore, represents the author’s attempt to contribute to the salient political characteristic of the Modern movement while seeking in terms of technique and style a relatively innovative approach which would resolve his alienation from the aesthetic priorities of Modernism. That salient political feature of Modernist innovation - the extent to which its priorities emanate from the linguistic and political tensions created by the experience of belonging to a peripheral culture - is a condition best illustrated in the case of James Joyce and closely reflected in Scotland by his
counterpart Hugh MacDiarmid. It is to literary developments in Scotland — not England — that *The Four Winds of Love* owes its ideological origin.

As Francis Russell Hart argues in *The Scottish Novel*, the major novelists of the Scottish Renaissance, despite their creative and stylistic differences, reveal a unifying impulse in their work: the attempt to lend fictional expression to the search for nationalist and epic myth in the hope of containing, and resolving, the contradictions of Scottish historical experience. This feature is prominent in Scottish fiction written during the 1930’s, its most achieved expression found in Lewis Grassic Gibbon’s *A Scots Quair* which traces through the experience of its central consciousness Chris Guthrie the transition of the Scottish peasantry from agrarian community to the industrialised working-class in which the distinctive cadences and character of the Mearns dialect become the novel’s mode of narration. In Neil Gunn’s *Highland River* (1937), the novelist’s mythopoeic evocation of Highland life culminates in this novel’s synthesis — through the central figure, Kenn — of scientific rationalism, the subjective intuition of the imagination, the determination of the individual to community and the symbolic journey to the source of the river, the novel’s metaphor for both Scottish history, civilisation and the self. Gunn’s *Sun Circle* (1933), and Eric Linklater’s *Men of Ness* (1933), are linked to the novels of Naomi Mitchison, whose fascination for ancient myth and ritual in archaic civilisations bore fruit in *The Corn King and the Spring Queen* (1931), a consciously historical approach to the novel which she would integrate with Scotland in the epic *The Bull Calves* (1947). George Blake’s *The Shipbuilders* (1935), an important attempt to realise urban Scotland in its portrayal of Glasgow’s shipbuilding industry during the Depression from the complementary points of view of shipping magnate and working-class hero, can be seen as a proving-ground for the series of dynastic novels concerning the Oliphant shipbuilding family, based in 'Garvel' (a fictionalised Greenock), beginning with *Late Harvest* (1938), concluding with *The Westering Sun* (1946). The same epic impulse of societal containment takes Blake’s characters from the early 19th century through to the death of the heroine in the Second World War. Infused with a doctrinaire Marxism, James Barke in *The Land of the Leal* (1939) — in a novel clearly indebted to Gibbon — delineates, over a
massive and richly-detailed narrative canvas, the history of two Galloway farming families through three generations, depicting finally the destruction of rural values and their struggle to come to terms with their new working-class identity in Glasgow during the Depression. The values symbolised by the poetry of Robert Burns provide one of the narrative seams of The Land of the Leal, and Barke furthered the epic ambitions of his novel in the 1940's with a cycle of five novels based on the life of the poet.

In spite of the wide disparities in terms of style and technique, and subject-matter, the unity of purpose which emerges from these novelists' best work remains one of the most remarkable features of the development of 20th century Scottish fiction. Common to all of them is the desire to reflect a historical consciousness of Scotland's national identity in the attempt to imbue Scottish experience with an epic totality and coherence, whether in Gibbon's and Barke's attempts to realise the disparity between rural and urban, Blake's dynastic social realism, or Gunn's mythopoeic symbolism which reconciles timeless archetypal values with the present in the hope of regeneration. This shared urge to reconstitute a national identity fractured through political and cultural conditioning absolves many of the ideological tensions or differing regional emphases between individual writers; all of these novelists, directly or indirectly, were reflecting in these works the political themes which had come to prominence from the late 1920's onwards. In Gibbon and Gunn especially, the emphatic concern for community and individual represents a wider concern for the nation to re-enter, regain, its own sense of historical development, the coherent historical narrative which the novels of the 1930's endeavour to re-create. This is the basis of a creative motivation which found its deeply harmful antithesis in Edwin Muir's implied attacks on the ideological coherence of the Renaissance in the 1930s. In 1935, travelling through the very Scotland which the novels of that time were attempting to re-constitute, Muir applied the developmental, organic model of English historiography to a fragmented Scotland and reached the opposite conclusion:

...I tried to extract a picture of Scotland as an entity, but I did not succeed...I could not think of any modification of the law of being that fitted Scotland and Scotland alone, any Scottish way of life
that I had observed from the time I had left Edinburgh for the Borders, the Borders for Glasgow, and Glasgow for the Highlands. I had to admit to myself that I had seen a great number of things, but no thing, and to fall back on the conclusion that nationality is real and yet indefinable...32

Muir cannot absolve the contradictions of Scottish society in the way that his fellow-writers of the 1930's had attempted to absolve them: where they perceive plurality and contrast within a creative entity, Muir perceives a vacuum; there is no 'modification of the law of being that fitted Scotland' because for Muir the only law applicable is that which corresponds to the 'organic' nature of English history and culture. In this way Muir simply applies the literary model of discontinuity and fragmentation from Scott and Scotland to the nature of the country itself.

*The Four Winds of Love* is a novel which belies Muir's all-too influential diagnosis according to the pattern established by Mackenzie's fellow-Scottish novelists, but with one crucial difference: a difference in scale, framework and ambition. Where Gibbon, Mitchison, Blake, Gunn and Barke confine themselves to the parameters of the community as a paradigm of national identity in inspiration, subject-matter and scope, Mackenzie traces in his hero Ogilvie a universal urge for cosmopolitan opportunism which is combined with an authentic search throughout Europe for national and cultural roots. For Mackenzie, the community becomes the nation, and the nation becomes the concept of Europe, a framework in which not one but several processes of national self-determination can be re-created. The motivation to epic containment in 1930's Scottish fiction is adopted by Mackenzie and expanded into a framework of cultural universality as opposed to cultural specificity, expressing the wider ramifications of that Scottish historical consciousness by revealing it within the context of a universal historical process. Unlike other Scottish novelists, Mackenzie now found himself in the creative position of being able to include England within
that process in its role as a stubborn imperial power by drawing from the cadres of its societal elites a large gallery of English characters who are frequently delineated in interaction with non-English contexts, attitudes, and characters. This ability for developing extensive and tangible contrasts and polarities effectively ‘externalises’ the condition which so many Scottish writers of the 20th century have only been able to ‘internalise’ through the devices of narrative voice, idiom, speech and dialect – *A Scots Quair* is a case in point – or the celebrated divided consciousness that has been a reiterated motif of Scottish fiction since Walter Scott, James Hogg and R.L. Stevenson in the nineteenth century. 'Let us turn to our own background and forsake utterly the enticement of an alien and for us unnatural culture. We have grafted ourselves upon the rich rose of England. It has flourished on our stock. We have served it well. But the suckers of the wild Scots rose are beginning to show green underneath', Mackenzie had declared to his listeners in 'The Soul of the Nation'. If it does not 'forsake utterly' an 'unnatural' England, Mackenzie's novel takes the little white rose of Scotland, and grafts it instead to the Rose of all the World.

**III Elation and Abasement**

In a novel of such prodigality and attempted universality, the need for a means of focussing and centralising its themes is not only an urgent priority but also more difficult to realise. By manipulating the central figure of John Ogilvie for precisely this purpose, Mackenzie was further reflecting the thematic and ideological links between *The Four Winds of Love* and the work of Scottish novelists during the 1930's, many of whom as a result of their mythopoeic or epic ambition manipulate a central, archetypal figure in the attempt to synthesise the particular and the universal. This is a feature most notable in Gibbon's *A Scots Quair* in the author's reliance on central intuitive consciousness of Chris Guthrie - 'Chris Caledonia' - whose development throughout the trilogy is made to symbolise the transition of an entire culture and society. Her three marriages, therefore, represent emblematically three disparate elements
of Scottish life: the peasantry, the Church, and the industrialised working-class. To very different effect, the ironic portrayal of Scotland's political and cultural regeneration in the late 1920's and 1930's expressed in Linklater's *Magnus Merriman* (1934) - in some ways the ironic mirror-image of Mackenzie's novel - is conveyed through a hero whose very name symbolises the archaic heritage of an Orkney background with the ascetic profundity of sainthood, and the shallow and flippant nature of contemporary values upon which the hero must base his mock-heroic quest for authentic spiritual fulfillment. Although his purposes are as sincere as Linklater's are cynical, Mackenzie manipulates throughout his novel not only one but several characters who function as cultural ciphers and archetypes.

Mackenzie informed Newmann Flower in the letter quoted previously that his 'very long novel' would 'consist of four love stories and four philosophies of love and four decades of a man's life'. The novel, as Hart argues and as Mackenzie implies, 'is ultimately about Ogilvie', but his role as the author manipulates it goes beyond the limitations of the straightforward spiritual history or 'life-novel' found in *Carnival* or *Sinister Street.*

The *Four Winds of Love*, in fact, contains a more complex and interwoven inner and outer design, of which Ogilvie is the central key. His primary role is similar to that of Marcel in Proust's *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* and Miriam Henderson in Richardson's *Pilgrimage*: founded on the technique of the bildungsroman as Mackenzie interpreted it in Michael Fane, Ogilvie embodies through the same stubbornly linear chronological narrative the unfolding creation of a personal life-history, creating an essential manifestation of subjectivism. An equal narrative weight, however, is devoted to the comparative objectivity of the work's total design - its framework of political, philosophical and cultural exploration - a design emanating from the idiosyncrasies of Ogilvie's character and the self-dramatising symbolic scheme he seeks and imposes upon life. 'You understand almost too much', his first wife Athene tells Ogilvie: the seemingly infinite parameters of Ogilvie's consciousness are enacted through the work's catholicity of themes, creating the paradox of a hero who, in a sense, is much greater than the vast narrative which contains him. Mackenzie's all-encompassing
narrative ambition demands that his protagonist be equivalent to the challenge of the novel’s universality, and in imposing this infinity upon the finite entity of fictional character the novel generates its most baffling, and serious, weakness. Two critics have recognised this. Hart, while recognising the novel’s significance within the general context of 20th century Scottish fiction, is quick to point out its greatest structural flaw:

...seldom are the dilemmas John’s destiny imposes actually examined. The shape of that symbolic destiny matters more to Mackenzie. The result is a character who in his inner life is almost wholly sentimental or intuitive and in his public roles is tirelessly dialectical; the fusion between them is slight...The novel’s emotion remains intensely romantic, while its intelligence is abundantly forensic.34

Roderick Watson, in an admirable summary, endorses Hart’s tone in acknowledging the novel’s significance while voicing critical misgivings:

With a truly Scottish didactic exhaustiveness, Mackenzie’s magnum opus is a lengthy romance of travel, ideas, and, once again, semi-autobiographical character-development. The hero of the sequence is Juan Pendarves Ogilvie - public-schoolboy, playwright, traveller, lover, philosopher, politician and pedagogue - and each book adds a few more years to his odyssey...The Four Winds of Love offers over three thousand pages of travel, complicated love-affairs and political, personal and philosophical discourse, and in the end the tireless eloquence of its hero-spokesman may overwhelm all but the most dedicated reader.35

In fairness to Mackenzie, neither Hart nor Watson acknowledges one feature of the novel’s narrative which goes some way to redeem this structural flaw and which mitigates slightly Ogilvie’s ‘overwhelming’ effect on the reader. In limiting the narrative of The Four Winds to the experiences of a semi-autobiographical hero and authorial surrogate, Mackenzie limited himself in one respect to the technique established in Sinister Street, but unlike the earlier novel he makes considerable effort to allow more attention, emphasis and more than merely subordinate status to the secondary characters who influence Ogilvie’s life and thinking. Departing from the co-extension of narrative with the sensibility of Michael Fane in Sinister Street, Ogilvie’s viewpoint is often suspended while secondary characters take over, to be developed with comparative
speed and descriptive economy. Two outstanding examples of this can be found in the brief but incisive delineation of the emotional background and history of Miriam Stern and her two sons Emil and Julius in the early stages of *East Wind*, while in the opening of *West Wind* the portrayal of the embittered and soured Langridge marriage indicates not only a new frankness in the author's tone but a style discreetly combining compassion with cynicism in a manner indebted to but far less brittle than *Vestal Fire*. In the following passage Athene Langridge contemplates the scattered belongings of her dilettante husband Wacey, who has just left to serve in the War:

The pathetic spell cast by the relics of Wacey scattered about was broken. She could no longer be moved by the copy of a cheap edition of Matilda Serao's *Paese di Cuccagna* lying face downwards on the seat of his armchair, open at the page at which he had laid it aside. She picked it up and found a place for it on one of his bookshelves. No doubt he would buy himself another copy if he remembered he had not finished *Paese di Cuccagna*. That was the kind of extravagance he always scoffed at if it was pointed out to him - the kind of extravagance that somebody who relies on an allowance from a father does scoff at. Thirty-three, Wacey now. About the same age as John Ogilvie, who had tasted of success with two plays and lived through three years of war. And most of Wacey's attempts to express himself had been left half-finished like his reading of that Italian novel. Athene's gaze turned to the glass-fronted case above the bureau. Manuscripts and typescripts stuffed away, some promising well, but all unfinished. In one corner a neater and much smaller pile, with half a dozen magazines on top. The monument to his published work. 'Wacey, it's just self-indulgence!' 'It would be self-indulgence if I went on with work that didn't satisfy me.' At first she had argued with him, but for a long time now she had not bothered. She listened now to his enthusiasm about the book he was going to write, with as little heed as one pays to the narrative of another person's dream. (*WW*, 9)

A perceptive suggestion of Wacey's essential hollowness and inadequacy as evoked by the seemingly impersonal attributes of objects, this also reveals the author's skill in synthesising his authorial voice with a discreet representation of Athene's own inner musings.

These figures are 'secondary' only in the sense that Ogilvie, demanding the edge of the novel's attention throughout, determines that their development is seen always in relation to his own, but relieved as they are from the awesome responsibility of bearing the entire novel's structure on their shoulders, they represent for the most part more
interesting, complex and engaging creations than the protagonist. As their appearances are also carefully regulated, the reader's capacity for objective response is not so readily exhausted as is the case with the incessant pronunciamentos of the hero. For this reason it is telling that Ogilvie gains what little credibility accrues to him when he is depicted within the terms of his relationships with the more believable subsidiary characters: the latter, always portrayed as fallible individuals, provide the novel's only outlet for the much-needed questioning of what motivates the hero. Thus in Ogilvie's intellectual and spiritual trajectory, paralleled but often polarised with those of the subsidiary figures, Mackenzie's command over thematic and narrative development is displayed at its finest, underlined with an insight indicative of the author's maturity. The technique is most prominent in the triangle of intellective possibilities open to Ogilvie in East Wind, where in some two hundred pages Mackenzie introduces the major characters and themes of the entire work. His technique, at its most adroit in this first volume, further reflects the affinity in Scottish fiction with symbolic cultural archetypes: its tapestry of contrasting and polarised cultural states—both geographical and spiritual—demonstrates the efficacy of the novel's method.

As in Sinister Street, East Wind displays a deliberate concern for social detail and fabric in its delineation of the transitory phase 1899-1901, evoking the restlessness and uncertainty of the younger generation of the upper-middle class confronting loss of faith in an English Imperial mythology during the slow twilight of Victorianism. The very different characters of the later novel, however, and the additional advantage of the author's more matured hindsight, produce a more condensed and explicit account of this period than within the more leisurely approach of Sinister Street.

The ambience of this first volume is all-important in that it carefully creates the cultural zeitgeist of England at the turn of the century from which Ogilvie and three of the major characters—Edward Fitzgerald, Emil and Julius Stern—seek an ideological liberation, political and artistic. The failure of an English aesthetic in both Michael Fane and Guy Hazelwood, then, is traced again in Ogilvie, but the author's increased ideological distance from the themes of his Edwardian
The Rose of all the World

novels is evident in the explicit gloss he provides. Discussing Ogilvie's failed attempts at self-consciously English versifying, the narrator comments:

...The first years of the twentieth century were not favourable to poetry. Young men were depressed by the overwhelming achievement of the past, and although mentally disturbed by the feeling of change in the air they were still unable to perceive any new road along which poetry could progress. The reaction against the art of the previous decade had already begun, but it was a negative reaction which inspired no substitute. Events in South Africa had finally discredited Kipling with the younger generation. The cynical exploitation of the war by the Unionist party which was ultimately to receive the sharpest political chastisement ever administered by the British electorate was still five years away from being punished. The country seemed a rubbish heap of the Victorian era which could never be cleared up, and poetry does not find rubbish heaps fertile soil. The mental state of the young man at the beginning of the twentieth century might be divined from his belief that the future lines of English prose had been laid down by George Meredith. (EW 463-64)

Thus towards the end of East Wind the musical prodigy Julius Stern explains his determination to live in rural Poland in order to nurture his art: "...How am I going to learn to express the emotional state of this time of ours in terms of Western man except by living in the heart of Europe? England has many advantages, but it has one great disadvantage for an interpreter of emotion, which is that it is on the fringe of Europe. It is excluded from the common hopes and fears". (EW 512-13)

This sense of alienation is exaggerated in Ogilvie, like Michael Fane before him, through his irregular hereditary circumstances and his position as a witness of historical transition. East Wind very tellingly captures the strange, protracted double-ending of the Victorian age and its amorphous blurring with Edwardianism, which is why Ogilvie's celebration of the new millenium, 1901, far away in Scotland, coincides with his learning of the death of Queen Victoria in a railway station on his return journey. Ogilvie represents the potential agent of continuity between two epochs: a paradigm of extrovert youth, he possesses the understanding to interpret the present from the perspective of the past:

John's youth lay in the gap between two periods. He was able to criticise the Victorian discipline of respectability, but the influence of a childhood spent under the sway of that respectability would not
allow him to break completely clear of it. That ability to face hard physical facts which was to distinguish the youth of the next generation was beyond his imagination. (EW 424-25)

Ogilvie's outlook is further intensified by the warring genes of his parentage. He is the son of Alexander Ogilvie, an inward, self-preoccupied barrister of tentative liberal sympathies and strong Scottish descent who has sacrificed nationality and heritage to the lure of Anglicised professional success. His suppression of a Scottish heritage and viewpoint was strongly criticised by his now dead Cornish wife Athene, whose passionate but repressed sense of Celtic superiority and separatism has been passed to her son, who before leaving school declares to Fitzgerald "I don't believe I have a drop of English blood in my veins". (EW 36) Alexander Ogilvie is haunted throughout the novel by a discussion between himself and his wife just before her death concerning John's education, in which Athene's spiritual influence upon her son is obvious:

"...You have made a success of life, Alec. Therefore you may hold an exaggerated notion of the value of a conventional English education." "We'll call it British, Athene."

"Alec, Alec, how pathetic you expatriated Scots are with your insistence on that quaint meaningless amalgam of Britain! In Cornwall we are prouder. We still regard England as a foreign country, and we lost our material independence hundreds and hundreds of years before Scotland lost hers."

"This is rather beside the point, Athene."

"The lawyer speaks. I bow to his logic. But, Alec, while John is young I want to be sure he has a chance of considering some of the illogical ideas that his mother entertains in her crack-brained Celtiberian head. And if she lets him go into a nice gentlemanly little preparatory school situated in a bracing position on a southerly slope of the Sussex downs, he will either come back with his noddle full of silly games or he will come back secretive and shy because his essential self has been violated by the communal self of an English preparatory school situated in that bracing position on the southerly slopes of the Sussex downs." (EW 243-44)

This cultural self-consciousness provides the dynamic for the entire novel: Ogilvie, in fact, is seen to pursue his mother's ideological legacy to its logical conclusion in North Wind, when he expounds his concept of Celtiberian solidarity to the Breton nationalist poet Yves Mazy:

"...Mazy, don't you think [De Valera's] vision of Ireland would be enriched by the prospect of what I'll have to call Pan-Celticism? I
The Rose of all the World

don't believe that Ireland alone can sustain itself like Andorra. Yet, if Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany could form a Celtic federation, with regional autonomy, it would genuinely weigh in the balance against Pan-Americanism or Pan-Germanism or Pan-Slavism. I should be glad if France took the lead in joining such a federation, for I believe that France is the fine flower of Celticism and that the only other alternative would be absorption in an American federation." (NW Bk One, 12-13)

If these fantastic projections seem to stretch Ogilvie's ideological integrity to its utmost limits, his mother's acknowledgement of ideas which are 'crack-brained' is important. An admission of sorts of the more utopian tendencies in Ogilvie's ambitions is perhaps suggested towards the end of the work, when 'a meeting John had planned between Archie Beaton, Henry Pendarves, Yves Mazy, Liam O'Falvey, and Elwyn Evans...which he had called the Celtiberian conference, did not materialise - the representatives as usual being unable to fix a date which suited all of them'. (NW Bk Two, 213)

Ogilvie's cultural indeterminacy duplicates the perspective which had become the author's creative condition. In his resultant restlessness, Ogilvie strives for intellectual and emotional alternatives which will fulfil as-yet embryonic conceptions of a world-view, the most significant of which are the three ideologies forming the thematic triangle established in the opening debate of East Wind. But the East Wind, too, also represents the new and youthful energy leading to false starts and premature affiliations, a thematic feature which demonstrates the effectiveness of Mackenzie's technique of polarised cultural alternatives. This is most pronounced in the contrast between Ogilvie's temporary surrender to the values of English militarism and the Imperialist ideal and, just prior to this, his promissory encounter with Torquil MacLeod - a distant Scottish ancestor - who brings Ogilvie to Sutherland 'to bequeath him a dream'. MacLeod, heirless and soon to die, wishes Ogilvie to inherit his land and his Gaelic values, but Ogilvie insists he is as yet too much a part of his English-orientated heritage to make, or fully appreciate, such a commitment: "Can't you see that this silly English public-school education prevents my doing that
because it has saturated me with prejudices against which I am powerless?" (EV 276). Unable to unravel the contradictions which during his visit upset his preconceived and youthful notions about Scottish nationalism, the identification must be deferred for some forty years, until reason and experience have exerted their influence upon emotion.

Immediately following this Ogilvie is seen succumbing to one of the 'prejudices' he must subsequently lose. In a self-consciously realised setting of aristocratic English ruralism, through the myopia of adolescent love for Rose Medlicott, he enshrines a cultural stereotype of English femininity beauty and the Imperial ethos through participation in a Volunteer Regiment with an illusory sense of English stasis. Mistakenly believing himself to be in love with England itself, both illusions are soon rudely shattered when his love-affair is defeated by the social pressures of the class he had aspired to join. Now able to conclude that 'he was not an Imperialist', Ogilvie has found the ideological basis upon which the burgeoning ideals typified by the Sutherland episode, his friends Fitzgerald, Julius and Emil Stern, can be explored.

Fitzgerald's fanatical Catholicism and Irish nationalism - symbolised in his prophetic vision of his own death, and contrasted with Ogilvie's deferment of his own Catholic affirmation - Emil Stern's Marxism, and Ogilvie's own liberal anti-Imperialism provide the narrative with parallel lines of development which occasionally cross each other through conflicting ideological debates. The novelist's skill in manipulating his thematic development is most evident in the heart of the sequence, West Wind and West to North, where the various historical realities of the post-war world are seen to overtake the abstract philosophies of the characters, leaving disillusionment in their wake. Against the background of the Depression, the worsening bloodshed and intransigence in Ireland, the Soviet annexation of Poland, and Turkish atrocities in Mileto, Ogilvie turns for solace to the fulfilment of his marriage with Athene Langridge, but in his disillusionment with external upheaval is troubled by the disjunction between his creative work as a fashionable dramatist and his political inaction.

...if like Fitz and Emil he flung himself actively into politics, that would only mean he should write no plays at all. This was a strange period. One could not contemplate a serious work of art without
The Rose of all the World

presuming that it would be coloured by politics. What an abominable assumption that would have appeared to the aesthetics of even twenty years ago! Then it was a dogma that a work of art could not survive the introduction of politics. The novel or play with a purpose was condemned to death before it was written, and it was hardly possible to write a political novel or play without a purpose. (WN, 145)

Although he finds temporary alleviation from this predicament in his writing of How It Was Sweet, the play in which he manages to 'express the spirit of that year 1922 which history would recognise as the first of three fatal years during that uneasy repose between disaster and catastrophe', (WN, 257) the wider arena of disaster and catastrophe soon infects his personal world. Emil Stern is imprisoned for communist agitation amongst the armed forces; Ogilvie's half-sister Prudence loses her lover, the young fascist Mario Aprili, when he is the victim of political murder, an event which confirms Ogilvie's disillusionment with Mussolini whose Fascist transformation of Italy had initially attracted him; the same doctrine contributes obliquely to the sordid death of Geoffrey Noel, homosexual and engaging personality from the pre-1914 innocence of Ogilvie's sojourn on Citrano. The author, in a superb stroke, also weaves together two of the novel's thematic elements, Poland and Ireland — which are paralleled throughout as consistent touchstones for the articulation of the author's political morality — while simultaneously widening the historical perspective of the novel.

The spiritual elation which uplifted John when the news came from Poland that the Bolshevik armies had been driven back in confusion almost from the very gates of Warsaw, was followed hardly a week later by the most profound spiritual abasement of his life, when in response to Turner Rigden's insistence he left David with the deer and reached Belfast in the middle of an organised attempt by the Orange faction to drive the Nationalist minority out of north-east Ulster. The mob was led by armed Ulster Volunteers of whom the Government was proposing to form a Special Constabulary. Five thousand Catholic workers were driven out of the shipyards, and now methodically, district by district, the mob, directed and encouraged by authority, was destroying their homes. Refugees from Lisburne and Bangor were pouring into Belfast, only to find a greater horror of human ruthlessness there. Houses were being burned to the ground, women were being murdered, and even children were being flung into the street, with chairs and tables and bedding. (WN, 74)

'Elation' and 'abasement': in a sense the great thematic hinge of the work can be seen moving here. In microcosm, this polarising of
contemporary historical events in Poland and Ireland reflects the paradigm of historical experience and evolution expressed in the narrative as it is manifest in the sensitive observer's development: from the innocent naivety of youthful ideology to the cynicism, despair and tragedy which must be the outcome of that ideology as it confronts the contingency of historical change. This explicit modulation in Ogilvie's experience culminates, shortly after, in the murder of Fitzgerald's wife and Fitzgerald himself by the Black and Tans; the event which finally leads Ogilvie firstly, to Catholicism, secondly, to a crystallisation of his politics through the long-promised return to a renascent Scotland.

With a remarkable rhetorical and emotive power - indicating the indebtedness of his style to the oratorical experience gained in the 1920's in Scotland - Mackenzie delineates Ogilvie's new mood in the letter he writes to the owner of the newspaper for whom he was intended to report on the Irish situation. As the wider mood of the novel embraces a new gravity, one can almost visibly detect the hardening of John Ogilvie's political arteries.

I cannot do the articles you want. The facts are too bad. The Turks may have behaved with a greater brutality in Armenia, but nothing the Germans did in Belgium to the civil population was any worse than what is happening now in north-east Ulster. If I had the faintest hope that anything I said would do good I would write for you. But to tell the truth and find it disregarded would turn my blood to rennet. I dare not expose myself to a rancour which would ruin my sense of proportion for the rest of my life. Send a junior reporter from the 'Journal' and print his narrative unedited. You will be suspected of trying to blackmail the Government into giving you one of their 'honours', but I do not believe you can impress the ignorant bulk of English opinion, which has been fed for too long now with Sinn Fein outrages. Unless you can convince the English people that there is a war between them and the Irish people, and that these murders by Sinn Fein are courageous acts of war and not cowardly assassinations, you cannot do any good. The moral sense of the average Englishman has been shocked by the behaviour of Sinn Fein because that behaviour has been most skilfully presented to him with that precise intention. Tell the average Englishman that a lorryful of Auxiliary Cadets wantonly shot a woman and her baby sitting in a garden as they drove by and he just won't believe it. Tell him that British officers in uniform have authorized the torture of prisoners to extract information and he won't believe it, he can't believe it. Tell him that MacCurtain the late Lord Mayor of Cork was deliberately murdered by British agents and he won't believe it...Tell him that thousands of pounds' worth of damage is being done every day by irregulars for acts which might even lead to the United States
The Rose of all the World

breaking off diplomatic relations with this country, and he won't believe it. Tell him that throughout the civilised world the name of England is beginning to stink because of what his government is doing in Ireland, and he won't believe it. Tell him that Russian behaviour in Finland, Prussian behaviour in Poland, Austrian behaviour in Italy, Turkish behaviour in Greece, or German behaviour in Belgium are not considered by the rest of the world any more cowardly, barbarous, and irrational than British behaviour in Ireland, and he won't believe it.

If I thought any words I wrote would change the mind of the average Englishman at this moment I would write them with my own blood, but I do not want to hate the average Englishman, and hate him I should if I told him the truth and he paid no heed. What is to come out of the shame and horror of the Coalition's handling of Ireland I cannot imagine, but until this bestial folly ceases I must withdraw from any kind of public life in England. (WN, 75-76)

Further reflecting the pattern of abasement and elation, from the horror of Belfast and the Black and Tans Ogilvie turns in Edinburgh to the potential hope of a new Scottish nationalism.

IV Triumph and Failure

Despite this redeeming command over thematic development, Ogilvie remains a problem in that the distance created between secondary characters and hero by their repeated criticisms of Ogilvie's behaviour and opinions does not amount to a juncture between the author and the persona of his narrative voice, creating a closed circle which leaves little space for critical detachment. The serious consequence of depending on a protagonist as impersonally reflective and unmemorious as Ogilvie is that rather than eventually numbing or exhausting the reader's sensibilities and sympathies, the hero has the effect of precluding any exercise of reader response in the first place. Instead of the localised instances of authorial irony that puncture Sinister Street, the authorial persona of The Four Winds, to reduce it to its simplest terms, plays the fanatically loyal bodyguard to his hero to the last, vigorously ensuring that nothing more than well-reasoned intellectual criticism can cross the threshold and compromise Ogilvie's two-dimensional integrity. With no critical infrastructure available other than that voiced (often vociferously) by the subsidiary characters, the
collusion between author and persona merely consolidates the novel's implied assumptions concerning Ogilvie's indecent profusion of virtues and gifts: his serendipity, capacity for friendship, boundless energy, creative imagination, wit, intelligence, compassion and philosophical intuition. The only subject upon which Ogilvie seems incapable of applying his formidable intelligence is himself; the unceasing intellectual explorations of the narrative stop short at the hero. The Four Winds is as remarkable and unique a novel as its author was an individual, and its hero is undoubtedly a projection of the author's conception of his own personality at its most idealised.

Recurring, distasteful instances of egomaniacal indulgence shared between author and hero throughout the novel indicate this. In South Wind, for instance, there is Ogilvie's self-righteous exercise in smothering with cold and sophisticated reason the adolescent emotion of the young Greek who, infatuated with Ogilvie's intended Greek bride Zoe Gadrilakis, is making life difficult for him. Similarly, in North Wind as Nazism becomes a more ominous reality for the characters, Ogilvie's eloquence is targeted eventually upon the hapless naivety of the Hitler youth Hans Bauer: it is the implications of Bauer's blind obeisance which demand scrutiny, but instead he is sacrificed as an abject authorial puppet at the altar of the hero's moral and intellectual supremacy. At moments like this, the political sympathies informing the novel which make its neglect so regrettable are in danger of inverting themselves into an oblique racism, since the author relies not upon a narrative of explication but of thinly veiled prejudice. Here is Ogilvie at the height of his tirade:

"...It's not surprising you went in so much for making cheap toys: they expressed a great deal of the Teutonic spirit. And the goose-step! The whole of the rest of the world laughs at it, but you poor introverted Germans do genuinely believe that it must be a noble manifestation of the disciplined body because you invented it. So you goose-step through life - your diplomacy, your administration, your organisation, your science, your history, your philosophy, even your amusement, it's all goose-stepping. Only in music are you free. For God's sake put this talking-toy of yours back in his box and produce another Goethe to teach you and the rest of the world what civilization means, and what a power for good a German extrovert might be. Or if you must be introverted, then turn your minds into music..." (NW Bk Two, 102)
The Rose of all the World

It is a curious fact that in its stringent anti-Nazism - a manifestation of the novel's uniform critique of nationalism in the form of imperialistic aggression - *The Four Winds* should provide such an exact mirror-image of two of the few works of fiction written in England with which it can be compared. Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*, which has already been mentioned, reflected its author's interest in Germany, an interest not unlike Mackenzie's wider European perspective, but an interest which considerably damaged Richardson's reputation not just during 1939-45, but also after World War I. A more overt ruination of a career on the grounds of Nazi sympathies befell Henry Williamson, best known as the author of *Tarka the Otter* (1927), whose *Chronicles of Ancient Sunlight* (1951-1969), in its massive, fifteen-volume semi-autobiographical panorama, is certainly the equal of *The Four Winds* in terms of scale. Williamson's later volumes in the sequence, however, became increasingly marred through his blatant projection of admiration for Oswald Mosley and Hitler, just as Mackenzie's *North Wind* becomes increasingly strident in its condemnation of the same ideology. Williamson's political contentiousness ultimately led to the continuing obscurity, and neglect, which some consider unjust, of this massive work, while the author's reputation never recovered.

If Ogilvie's condescension towards Bauer exaggerates the weaknesses within his role, *North Wind* also features a more internalised moment of what can only be described as sanctimonious self-congratulation, but this time on the part of the author. Travelling through Italy, Ogilvie reads an extract from 'an English novel' concerning Monte Cassino as a gloss on the scenery, which is quoted at length and which Ogilvie then discusses with James Yarrow. The novel in question is Mackenzie's *The Altar Steps*. Hart points out that the conclusion of *The Four Winds*, where Ogilvie's daughter Corinna marries Sebastian, the son of his closest friend Julius Stern, makes Ogilvie in effect 'his own ancestor: ultimate dream of the world-maker': by interpolating his own fiction-within-fiction, Mackenzie would seem to betray similar aspirations.

Ogilvie's self-indulgent and extrovert romanticism necessarily demand that he himself should articulate and order the blatant metaphysical design that propels him through world-history and his personal destiny, and he does so inexhaustibly with characteristic verbosity and wit,
often to the women themselves whose emotional influence is implicated in
the hero's psychodrama. The spiritual, emotional and political symbolic
romance scheme of the entire work, its crucial kingpin, is suddenly
declared in *East Wind* during a visit to Cracow in one of the work's
finest passages, marking the beginning of the European odyssey through
which Ogilvie can articulate his embattled distaste for the English
scene. Poland is described in the novel as 'the Ireland of Eastern
Europe'; fittingly, in St Mary's Church, Cracow, Ogilvie is granted his
subconscious conception of an affirmation of Catholicism to be conferred
in later life, a transcendental revelation of spiritual truth and the
potential of selfhood:

This awareness of absorption became a moment of burning acquiescence
which were moment used as a measure of time might equally well be
called an aeon. During this moment it seemed that in what he could
feel was truly a second birth he was humbly accepting the gift of
life now conferred upon him with wider implications...Suddenly, above
the cooing of a myriad pigeons, the trumpeter's horary tune was heard
from his room under the eight small spires of the taller of the two
towers of St. Mary's Church. That tune had been blown half-way
through the thirteenth century to warn the city that the Tartar
hordes were at hand. An arrow had pierced the watchman's throat
before his tune was finished, and ever since, without missing an hour
of the day or night, trumpeter after trumpeter had blown that same
tune from the four windows of that room at the top of the church
tower and ever since had ended on the same wavering note, the last
note blown by the watchman before the Tartar arrow pierced his
throat. Eastward the trumpeters had blown defiance to the Tartar, and
southward they had blown defiance to the Turk. To the West they had
proclaimed that Poland was the guardian of Europe against Mahomet
and to the north they had given warning that she stood firm against
Luther. (*EW*, 498-99)

Thus not in suffocating England but far away in Poland - to become one
of the novel's emblems of peripheral self-preservation from imperialist
absorption - in the first year of the 20th century do Ogilvie and the
musical prodigy Julius Stern find themselves in a cultural and spiritual
milieu distinctive enough to awaken them to an inner awareness of their
individual potential. Emotional fulfilment is at once granted to Ogilvie
through Miriam Stern, in whom he finds the influence of his lost mother,
the novel's administering angel. Her grasp of emotional and intellectual
experience, and her empathy for Ogilvie's character and aspirations,
confer on her the role of prophet and critical observer on Ogilvie's
life, past, present and future. Their love is consummated one night in Cracow - immediately following this episode of embryonic conversion - bestowing on Ogilvie the gift of eternal youth, and consolidating a relationship to continue in platonic terms of perfect reciprocal understanding. Immediately following this baptismal experience, the trumpeter is heard once more: '...that tune had defied time. Its strength was in the feeble wavering note at the end. Its triumph was its failure'. (EW 529) The tune is finite yet infinite, and it is strangely appropriate that this emblem - the major symbol of the novel - should be so suggestive of the nature of symbolism itself.

The protracted theme of Miriam Stern's embattled relationship with the warring ideologies of her two sons, her inward battle with conscience and unrequited love, represents one of the novel's great strengths. Perceptive enough to realise the consequences for Ogilvie in 'concentrating all the aspirations of youth on an ideal embodied in a single woman', she attempts to fulfil her life in guiding Ogilvie's vision of his own. The author's incisive and compassionate treatment of his character, however, is not so evident when one turns to the larger emotional scheme of the novel on which Miriam will exercise her wide understanding. The novel's symbolism, rarely implied, recurs in explicit and over-emphatic fashion, lending the novel's outer-scheme the same perfunctory and pedestrian two-dimensionality which frequently surrounds Ogilvie himself. This is most evident in the stagey deaths which must take place in order to determine the hero's trajectory through his political-erotic career: no less than three. Ogilvie's future bride in South Wind, the archetypal Greek maiden Zoe, drowns; Athene Langridge's husband Wacey dies of influenza with dramatic suddenness to liberate his wife and allow her marriage to Ogilvie in West Wind; Athene herself dies in similar fashion in North Wind, making way for Ogilvie's return to Greece and a mature union of emotion and intellect, in Hellenic stasis, with the Greek patriot and poet Euphrosyne Ladas. This last union, the fulfillment and conclusion to the entire work, has been anticipated from the outset. In South Wind, Ogilvie remarks to Euphrosyne soon after their first meeting

"It's strange I should come to Lipsia", John said.
"Why?"
"Oh, it's a fancy I had to divide my life into the four winds".

228
"Indeed? And which is blowing now?"
"The south wind. That's why I said it was strange I should have come to Lipsia. I've a feeling that this place will be influential over my life." (SW, 389-90)

Similarly, following Ogilvie's pseudo-mythical Aegean exploits during the Great War, the loss of Zoe and the exhaustion of his energies, he returns to recuperate and confront the post-war world in his Saracen Tower in Citrano, retiring to his purpose-built library with its windows opening 'to the four winds', there to await the influence of the West Wind and its new orientations. This is a feature of The Four Winds accentuating Mackenzie's creative distance from his pre-war fiction, a distinction which might be broadly termed as the difference between internalisation and externalisation. Whereas Michael Fane in Sinister Street is a character trapped in imaginative self-consciousness and aestheticism confronting the impossibility of imposing symbolic meaning on real experience, in John Ogilvie's case the symbolic destiny and external reality become co-existent to the extent where the minimum of introspection is necessary. Fane's Quixotic career of solipsistic idealism has become in Ogilvie the Juanesque myth of extrovert romanticism. Though much of South Wind and West Wind is taken up with Ogilvie's post-war fear of a dialectic between the intellect and action, the solidity of Mackenzie's symbolic scheme soon supersedes its real implications. Ogilvie's sense of a surfeit of action is a condition suffered by the novel itself, and the persistent, pedestrian literalism of its symbolism reveals an absence of internal sophistication which in a work exhaustively devoted to the sophisticated intellect is potentially disastrous. There are, of course, moments of localised symbolic resonance within the novel divorced from the central design, but more often than not the author, reluctant to imply and anxious to advertise, cannot resist providing his own commentary of explication. In West Wind, Ogilvie is reflecting on the new jazz played by Homer, the young American saxophonist, during a party in Citrano:

And John would look back to this night of dancing to Homer's saxophone on the roof of his mediaeval tower beside this classic shore as symbolic, for good or for ill, of American influence over the life of post-war Europe. (WW, 377)
The Rose of all the World

This demonstrates in miniature the problem of a hero who must be seen to reflect on everything in collusion with his author: thus Ogilvie is made to interpret the symbol the author provides.

But Mackenzie elsewhere proves that he can avoid authorial advertisement in this way. In East Wind, for example, there is the perceptive moment where Ogilvie's failed English love, Rose Medlicott, is symbolically 'stolen' from him, swallowed by an emblem of the decayed Victorian values she represents:

It was close upon four o'clock when the hansom reached Portman Square. A sharp east wind was whipping the tender foliage of the trees in a colourless dawn.

"Perhaps it will be all right," said John as he stood on the pavement waiting for Rose to unlock the front door.

She shook her head, kissed the tip of her finger as a kiss of farewell for him, and was lost behind the Early Victorian portal. One could have fancied that the slim figure in the organdie balldress passed through like a ghost. (EW, 453)

Similarly, there is this discreet imagery of disintegration introduced as Ogilvie ponders his post-war mood of disorientation and futility in West Wind when he visits the mythical islet of Galli in an attempt to recapture pre-1914 serenity and coherence. Musing on the deteriorating political predicament,

He scooped up a handful of mosaic and let the fragments trickle through his fingers. It was time to row back. The chill of the afternoon was already perceptible upon this sweet-scented air, and there were the kingfishers again, winged with blue fire as they flew landward away from the sun. (WW, 35)

This anticipates the gradual fragmentation of Ogilvie's classical heritage and values in the wake of 1918, a wholeness he must endeavour to re-constitute.

More generally, Mackenzie does make one significant and consistent attempt to check the weakness in presentation arising from the overall tendency of the narrative to eschew suggestion of the internal processes of memory in his characters, Ogilvie included, and he attempts this in his treatment of the nature of musical experience. The aesthetic appreciation of music, and the nature of its development from tradition into experiment, is a reiterated theme of the novel, particular works and composers functioning as motifs for the characters' inner states. At the
conclusion of *East Wind*, for instance, Ogilvie's anticipation of a later identification with Scottish nationalism finds its correlative in the *Swan of Tuonela* by Sibelius, the early 20th century Finnish composer whose innovative approach to form and orchestration and strongly Nordic idiom have made him an exemplar of self-conscious nationalism in music. As music of the future - both in the aesthetic and the political sense - Ogilvie's affinity with Sibelius is distinguished from his appreciation of Brahms, whose Second Piano Concerto he hears at the same concert, epitomising the expressive capabilities of musical structure which acknowledges formal tradition. Mackenzie's consistent refusal to follow the narrative models formulated by the Modernists relaxes slightly when he depicts Ogilvie and Miriam Stern allowing the associations evoked by music to provoke long and arbitrary inner reveries which range over past, present and future events. Significantly, Mackenzie concludes the entire work with one such internalised monologue in which Ogilvie recapitulates the novel's themes and contemplates the implications of the present in which he finds himself, while listening to a sonata composed by Julius Stern's son Sebastian:

*Allegro*...March 1900...That was when he had supposed himself madly in love with Connie Fenwick, and in March a year later he had fallen in love with Rose Medlicott. She had been picking daffodils on the lawn at Medlicott Hall when he saw her first, picking daffodils by the light of the moon, picking daffodils...*adagio cantabile*...yes, it was a lovely melody...that mossy bank by the wood's edge out of the east wind...it was there they first kissed, and when he asked her why she was so pale she had told him she had never kissed anybody before...

*presto*...on, on, on, on...mount the four horses of the Apocalypse...and if war come the whole world must inevitably be involved again...Sebastian, Padraig, Yan, Arthur...was it really to late to avert the calamity? would not any sacrifice be justified?...on, on, on, on...make an honest attempt to secure a Russian alliance now?...*presto*...so much ado to put a king off his throne, so little ado to avert a worse war than any man had contrived to wage yet...on, on, on...humanity sliding down into the abyss and politicians trying to save themselves and humanity by holding on to one another's coat tails...*presto*.  (*NV* Bk Two, 295-97)

This technique does not, however, wholly surrender the narrative to the inner consciousness of the character: Mackenzie's authorial voice is still in evidence, combined with Ogilvie's own in order to mediate the flow of material. The fact that the author reverts to this style in the
last pages of the work is significant - it represents a small, but nonetheless important readiness to experiment in the attempt to redeem a uniform style in which time and memory for the most part remain disjunct, a serious flaw in a work of such daunting temporal scale.

The Four Winds of Love is a work much simpler to demonstrate than appraise, however, and it is easy to over-emphasise its shortcomings, although it would be dangerous to underestimate them. The work’s virtues are more resistant to classification, since an adequate impression of its strengths depends upon the accumulative effect of the entire narrative on the reader, and despite the author's claims to the contrary the four individual parts of the novel do not possess the coherence of self-contained works in themselves. The author's thematic development depends too much on a gradual and leisurely momentum. This has little to do with a complexity of plot, as Alan Bold has observed: 'although the novel is massive the story is surprisingly simple, a monumental tribute to Mackenzie's ability to spin out a story until the subject is exhausted'. This would seem a legitimate interpretation of the author's method if the novel did not pose the considerable problem of how to determine precisely what its 'subject' is. It would be presumptuous to accuse the author of selecting one finite theme and painstakingly mining it to exhaustion, for the central conception of the 'four winds of love' emblem as a sustained metaphor for historical evolution undergoes extensive permutations and variations in their relevance not only to Ogilvie but to the secondary characters. The nature and analysis of 'four philosophies of love' applies not merely to Ogilvie's self-dramatising whims and penchant for women who represent new cultural alternatives of his psyche, but - as Stewart Sanderson suggests in his straightforward introduction to the novel - possesses more universal connotations, woven into the novel's fabric:

...who can now say what are the four philosophies of love which the novel explores? Adolescent love; romantic love; physical passion; the love which leads to marriage and family? Or human love; love of place and race; love of music; and love of God? The enlargement of the original concept seems to have moved beyond affairs of the heart to encompass also affairs of the mind and of the soul.

The reason for the novel's neglect, and its only means of retrieval from obscurity, lie in the riddle of John Ogilvie and his paradoxical
relationship with his own narrative, for in the novel's triumph is its failure. The great irony of Mackenzie's masterpiece is that the reader or critic unable to persist with the irrepressible virtue and indefatigable articulacy of its hero will never discover the work's great enigma: that the startling originality and invigorating intellectual experience the novel offers is radically at odds with the flaws in the medium through which the material is presented. To put this another way, the novel's organisation and articulation of political and philosophical intuition is made at the expense of the coherence of the fictional world which contains it, a schism which may be traced to Mackenzie's relatively original narrative mode. Stewart Sanderson argues that his novelistic method is 'complex':

Mainly he relies on a post-Jamesian technique of dramatizing the material, but other techniques are also brought into play. The evolving story is unfolded not in a succession of more or less standard chapter divisions but for the most part in a series of dramatic scenes of various lengths. Throughout the novel the action is matched to the characters, very much as they reveal themselves in their talk, reflections and correspondence, all of which devices are used within the framework of the novel's construction.

Furthermore, the principal personae are interested in ideas. Much of their time is spent in argument and discussion - a device which allows the author to present in dramatic form greatly enlarged areas and varieties of human response to social, political, emotional, intellectual and religious problems.

Although this is undoubtedly accurate as a technical summary, there remains the problem of narrative precedence: do the characters or their ideologies interest the author more? If Mackenzie's creative priority is characterisation, then the novel is open to the charge that page upon page of ideological wrangle, argument, counter-argument and summary must strike the reader as blatantly invalid representation of human behaviour and ordinary discourse, even between inexhaustibly articulate intellectuals and pedagogues, resulting in a hero who can reflect intelligently on everything but himself. If the novel's 'ideologies' are secondary, then it would be tempting to locate them in terms of an internal catalogue of themes which provide an added interest to the plot. To do this, however, would obscure the author's astonishing capacity for organising vast expanses of cerebral material into a logically compelling and often greatly exciting form. This aspect of
Mackenzie's technique is most evident in Ogilvie's recurrent debates with Emil Stern — Ogilvie's most eloquent critic — since the ideologies each represents, Catholicism/nationalism and Marxism/collective internationalism, are the most polarised. A lengthy quotation is necessary to give a representative impression of the percentage of the novel's narrative style. Emil, newly released from his imprisonment for Communist agitation, opens a discussion which recapitulates the source of his philosophical disagreements in the past with Ogilvie:

"I was allowed paper and pencil during the last three months of my sentence," Emil went on. "But all I wrote was confiscated before I left prison. These poor little bureaucratic minds with their dread of revelations! These wretched little ostriches!

"Well, don't let's talk about prison any more. I suppose you'll write something about it?"

"No, I don't think I shall. For the first three months I was fuming to be free and able to criticize; but gradually I realized the futility of persuading others that I could take an objective view of my own experience, and at the same time I discovered a way of turning that experience to my own benefit. Astrid is right. It has softened me, but I don't think it has weakened me, John. I shall be more pliant in future, but I think I shall be just as tough. And so you revisited Mileto and found that dull fellow Drayton in charge of a difficult situation? Well, I'm not sure that grim disaster may not be for the best. We shall see what Venizelos makes of it. I'm inclined to think he will succeed in doing a deal with Turkey if he has the courage to suggest an exchange of populations. I'm sure that's the only remedy for the Balkans, and for that matter the rest of Europe. We don't seem ripe yet to get rid of nationalism, and that being so we must get rid of minorities. If the problem of minorities had been faced at Versailles we might have had a healthier Europe by now."

"You're not abandoning your hope of general communization?" John asked in surprise.

"Certainly not, but I'm beginning to wonder whether we Communists haven't been putting the cart before the horse."

"In what way?"

"Why, by assuming that because nationalist revivals have so far been identified with the bourgeoisie we must achieve our object through internationalism. Tell me about this Fascist business in Italy, John. I suppose that is on a par with Mannerheim and his Finnish Whites? In fact the bourgeoisie response to the Red threat."

"Yes, to a great extent it certainly is, but it is also an attempt to create or, as the Fascists claim, to revive an Imperialism. I was rather impressed by it at first, but I discover in it now the same threat to man that I discern in Communism. It portends the destruction of the individual."

"John, John, you'll have to face up to the fact of human development. Circumstances have already destroyed the individual. He destroyed himself by the machinery he invented. We are moving now toward so complete a change of all human values that a century hence the people of the nineteenth century will seem more remote than for
us seem the Incas. We are on the edge not of a political change, John, but of an evolutionary change. That's why to me your excitement over what happens in Ireland seems almost parochial."

"On the contrary, Emil, the more profound the evolutionary change with which mankind is threatened the more anxiously do I turn to find in Ireland a fount of spiritual life from which humanity will by God's grace be healed again. It happened before in the Dark Ages, and I see another era of darkness enveloping the soul of man."

"Yes, well, of course, that sort of apocalyptic talk appears to me as reason disordered by emotion, but I don't say so offensively. And I'm not trying to be offensive when I ask you why you should expect a fount of spiritual life to well up from a country which has exalted violence in the way Ireland has exalted it."

"I shall not be exalting violence myself, Emil, when I say what I'm going to say, for I hate violence: but it is important to understand that the Irish on account of their invincible belief in the life to come do not regard the temporal life of a man as all important. Where I think them open to reproach is the carelessness with which they will accept the responsibility of launching a man into eternity. And though I've not surrendered my opinion that the fundamental blame for what has happened in Ireland rests upon England, I do not believe that the spiritual health of Ireland is in danger from this acceptance of violence as natural. It has taught me to be aware in the future of supporting any movement that must involve violence if it is to succeed. And Ireland may one day regret the intransigence of these unhappy days."

"I still think that you exaggerate absurdly the importance of Ireland," Emil insisted. "It seems to me to have the same kind of significance in Europe as Albania - and that is purely strategic." (V1, 435-37)

And so on, and in some instances at greatly extended length: in the opening of North Wind, for instance, a massive debate on Scottish nationalism between Ogilvie and Alisdair McPhee continues for some sixty pages. This dependence invites the question of whether this idiom indicates a novel whose narrative is repeatedly held in abeyance, or whether the extended speechifying is the narrative itself. Another consistent feature of Mackenzie's technique in The Four Winds is the manipulation of the epistolary form as a secondary mode of narration. Thus throughout South Wind a long series of letters from Ogilvie to family and friends expresses his outrage and despair concerning the Easter Rising and its suppression in considerable detail, each letter emphasising different aspects of the case as Ogilvie's argument is determined by the character of the recipient. Furthermore, Mackenzie assists the reader to assimilate the vast extent of discussions like the one quoted above through the habit of Ogilvie and the other characters
The Rose of all the World
to provide gloss and summary of debate in letters subsequently written. Following a particularly intense argument with Fitzgerald on Irish nationalism and English imperialism at the beginning of *West Wind*, we find Ogilvie writing to his friend in further clarification of his position:

But I do not want to argue, Fitz. All I do want to assure you is that I am not content with ambiguity. I have always envied you your clear horizon, and if I may use the word, perhaps I shall one day behold one of my own. Meanwhile, my position is that I know humanity would be a better humanity if all of it accepted and carried out the mental and moral obligations of the Catholic creed. But that is not enough for me. I want more than pragmatic truth. If wholeheartedly I agree with you that Catholicism (which I regard as the same thing as Christianity) works, that does not prove to me its truth.

In political matters I am much more positive. I know with absolute certainty that imperialism produces only a specious appearance of unity, because it is inspired solely by the spirit of greed, gain, and competition. I know that the only composition of a perfect state must be a society of perfect individuals, and I perceive that the universal tendency of contemporary evolution is to destroy the individual and that one method of destroying the individual is to destroy the small state which encourages the individual. I believed (for a very short time) that the intervention of Great Britain on behalf of Belgium was an expression of genuine virtue, but I have learnt that it was a piece of sentimentalism. The treatment of Ireland and Greece has proved that. An Englishman saw a bully knocking about a small boy and intervened, that was Belgium. The same Englishman prevented his sister from living her life because he wanted her money to support his household, and when she tried to run away he did not hesitate to use violence. That was Ireland. (*VV*, 53-4)

Though the same eloquence is apparent as in the speechifying, much of Ogilvie's articulation of his intellectual and emotional development is to be found in the letters he writes, a small but nonetheless effective concession to internalisation of a sort, given that the characters are seen in a self-conscious response to literary convention. Ogilvie's writerly eloquence is more credible than the spontaneous verbal fluency in which he more frequently indulges.

There is a third and equally significant register within the novel's narrative modes, and that is its idiom of social and historical documentation. This is of course an inevitable feature of a novel attempting to encompass the evolution of history, and one which allows the omniscient narrator to come into his own. This almanac-like register is a prominent feature of the heart of the work, *West Wind* and *West to
North, where the disturbing import of events portrayed - often actual ones - exercises the author's impulse to document more frequently. Interestingly, despite the consistent collusion and close identification between author and hero, the persona of this factual narrative gloss speaks with a cynicism markedly more stringent and bitter than even Ogilvie can summon in his moments of omniscient despair.

In fact it looked as if the new post-war world was tumbling to pieces a good deal faster than it was being built.

Meanwhile, in order to set an example to the rest of Europe of justice, equality, toleration, and respect for national aspirations, the British Government intensified their methods for compelling Ireland to remain quietly conquered and discouraging her from supposing that her case bore the slightest resemblance to that of Poland or Finland or Moravia or Slovakia or Estonia or Lithuania or Latvia. Besides fresh troops added to those already in Ireland a new force was invented that spring to supplement the Royal Irish Constabulary, some of whom were suspected by now of being too kind to their rebel fellow-countrymen. This force was dressed in khaki coats with black trousers and caps. The men were paid ten shillings a day and were nicknamed 'Black and Tans'. They were largely recruited from desperate characters that seemed likely to prove too much for their own police...The decent and kindly folk of England were poisoned by successful propaganda, and the country, unaware, in the words of a great Liberal weekly, that "the government which refuses to give peace to Ireland may find, sooner or later, that it has broken the peace of the world," was prepared to welcome any enormity as reasonable treatment for what were believed to be a band of assassins. (WW, 5-6)

Even more acerbic is the following passage, where in 1926 an unemployment march in London converges violently upon Ogilvie's and his friend Turner Rigden's gentleman's club, that persistent emblem of the English class-system:

...darkness enveloped the smoking-room and from along Piccadilly sounded the murmur of resentful, cheated, hungry men.

A few windows were broken with bricks. A few shops were looted. That was all, that and a decision to rebuild the Bank of England and create a fortress in the heart of the City of London at a cost of five million pounds. There was no lack of credit for that. A month later the house-breakers would begin to knock down Devonshire House. The Whig oligarchy which had controlled the democracy so long was a thing of the past; but democracy was to be more ruthlessly ruled by the sinister oligarchy that controlled the credit of the nation, that created money out of nothing, that in the words of an ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer, now Chairman of the Midland Bank, 'directed the policy of Governments, and held in the hollow of their hands the destiny of the people'.

237
The Rose of all the World

The golden Dance of Death had begun. (WN, 154)

These three integrated narrative voices - philosophical colloquy, epistolary summary, social and historical documentation - are not present merely as material incidental to a primary narrative of plot or character development in the fashion Mackenzie had followed in earlier novels. The equation, in fact, is reversed in The Four Winds of Love to such a degree that the following conclusion is suggested: the novel is experimental both in relation to Mackenzie's previous technique and traditional fictional practice in Britain as a whole in that the author's delineation of a process of philosophical and historical understanding has become the very mode of the narrative itself. If all aspects of Mackenzie's habitual technique are present - descriptive scene-setting, interpolation of minor comic characters and scenes within the principal material, an acute awareness of speech-styles - all these features are subordinate to the central intention of an intellective and historical narrative. The reader's recollection of the novel, for this reason, is based on its challenge as a historical and philosophical treatise rather than its memorability in terms of character and plot, a fact borne out by the way in which critics have responded to it. Alan Bold opts for the label of 'ideological romance', while Stewart Sanderson refers to the author's 'operation of his formidable critical intellect...and sound historical sense'. The remarks by Eric Linklater concerning North Wind quoted earlier in this chapter indicate this even more forcefully: he explains the inclusion in his Scottish prose anthology of its massive opening dialogue as the part he chose 'deliberately in preference to many passages of a more purely literary interest because it tells a good deal about the ideas implicit in Scottish nationalism and about the sort of people one may hear discussing it' (my italics).

As Linklater implies in his distinction, the novel's status on the fictional and stylistic plane is far outweighed by its factoidal, and, in this case, its political, value and importance. The pseudo-Socratic idiom of the extract is more reminiscent of Wilde's technique in his philosophical dialogues, or the technique typified by Dostoievsky of reducing narrative to a descriptive minimum and giving precedence to his characters' exposition and interchange of abstract ideas. Perhaps the only long novel in terms of this reification of philosophical
understanding which might be contrasted with Mackenzie's method is Robert Musil's masterpiece Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften (The Man Without Qualities) (1930–33; 1952): in terms of content and approach, in fact, European fictional practice offers more immediate analogies with The Four Winds than its English counterparts or antecedents.

Hart can be seen making a distinction similar to Linklater's when he traces the division of intention in The Four Winds: 'its emotion remains intensely romantic, while its intelligence is abundantly forensic'. In other words, the 'romantic' element of the novel - its pedestrian symbolism, the shortcomings within the authenticity of its hero's extrovert personality - remains a feature simple of classification and easy to dismiss, while its 'intelligence', the real substance of the narrative, is in its very nature as a process of perpetual explication impossible to contain in the critical sense. Locating the priorities of the novel in this way helps to clarify further its 'separateness' from an English fictional context suggested previously. Mackenzie's subordination of a traditional emphasis on character development in favour of the intellectual states of mind his characters typify reinforces the extent of the novel's integration with the aims and methods of Scottish novelists at the time, particularly in their dependence on cultural archetype and the political accentuation in their narrative styles: where Gibbon in A Scots Quair exploits dialect as his mode of narration to emphasise a collectivity of experience and identity, Mackenzie exploits political and philosophical dialectic in his attempt to contain an intellectual totality. These shared characteristics are not only confined to the ambitions voiced in Scottish fiction: the all-encompassing reflex behind The Four Winds is reminiscent, too, of MacDiarmid's experimentation from the 1930's onwards with 'a poetry of fact' in catalogue poems of world language and philosophical universalism, in which a rationalist conception of the material universe replaced his earlier lyricism. MacDiarmid's increasingly extreme obsession with poetry of information is very similar to Mackenzie's didactic purpose in prose.

The analogy with MacDiarmid's creative aspirations - aspirations which embraced not only the impact of Modernism in the early 1920's but which also surpassed in depth and extent the politicisation of literature
during the 1930's - is one which further clarifies the motivation behind *The Four Winds of Love*. Mackenzie's attempt to arrest his post-war decline - a decline which had been checked to an extent by the limited achievements of *Vestal Fire* and *Extraordinary Women* - and re-enter the literary mainstream, was mediated through a work wholly representative of the 1930's trend to inhabit literary forms in which precedence was given to political motivation as opposed to the aesthetic consciousness of Modernist innovation. His perspective is distinguished from left-wing English writers of the period, however, in that Mackenzie's endeavour to synthesise his politicisation with his creativity, like MacDiarmid's, presupposed the adoption of the politico-cultural values of the periphery as opposed to the centre, values which implicate the wider arena of European nationalism which *The Four Winds* so ambitiously attempts to reflect. The tension between political and aesthetic priority is an issue obliquely dealt with in the novel. In *South Wind*, as Ogilvie's political consciousness is maturing through his experience of the War, his frustration with English intransigence towards Venizelist politics in Greece provokes a moment of intuition:

...John was caught up in a sudden surge of emotion from the crest of which he was aware of an immense abyss dividing humanity, and in that instant of vision he understood how superficial was the strife between nation and nation compared with the strife preparing between class and class.

"I believe in Venizelos," he affirmed, and in making that affirmation he realized that from now on for the rest of his life the fundamental inspiration of his political philosophy would be the well-being of the people at whatever cost to his other ideals. (*SW*, 500)

Back in London, Ogilvie's 'affirmation' exacerbates his impatience with the artistic scene. He visits the novelist Freddie Rodney, for whom the political implications of the war represent only an intrusion into his cultivation of the latest developments in metropolitan aesthetic fashion, his pursuit of which has led to his refusal to fight.

Rodney pushed a yellow-bound volume to him across a self-consciously and austerely artistic table of some light wood. "Have you read that?"
It was *Du Côté de Chez Swann* by Marcel Proust.
"I haven't even heard of it."
Rodney shook his head compassionately.
The Rose of all the World

"A piece of really great literature at last, and Captain Courageous has not heard of it. My god, John, can't you see what a bloody business this is for civilization? Can't you see that it is the duty of all artists to protest against the Great European Bore by refusing to have anything to do with it? Can't you see that anybody who does have anything to do with it is not an artist?"

"But what difference does it make to a world at war whether I am an artist or not? And anyway what is the peculiar merit of being an artist that I should be worried about my status? I'll agree with you that probably most of the experience gained through active participation in the war will be worth nothing from the point of view of art, but I doubt if deliberate abstention from it for the sake of art will be worth any more. If I'm asked to spend perhaps five years in a bad temper I may as well relieve my feelings by smashing the furniture as by sulking over quires of foolscap under the impression that by taking the latter course I am keeping my sacred vocation unspotted." (SW, 525-26)

Ogilvie's impatience turns to disgust after this exchange with a group of the London literary elite who come for a party, indulging in their poses and 'jargon'. For Ogilvie, and his author, the modernist cultivation of aesthetic priority and self-consciousness implies a repudiation of the political intuition conferred by participation in the War. Ogilvie's stance reflects Mackenzie's acknowledgement that the Great War, through the growth towards political and historical understanding it has conferred, represents the continuing process of liberation from Edwardian values. It is a liberation, however, which has been won at the expense of aesthetic and artistic development: in Mackenzie's case, the cost was his disorientation as a writer in the 1920's, the vindication of that loss the political enlightenment he reconciled fully with his fiction in 1937.

This is made even more explicit in North Wind, when Ogilvie confronts Astrid Hellner, the wife of Emil Stern and a 'modern' novelist whose fictional theorising hints strongly of Woolfian aesthetics and Bloomsbury values, with his defence of fiction which conforms to traditional techniques. The substantial lacuna in his hero's intellectual catholicism - his unwillingness to acknowledge the substantial impact of Modernism on 20th century thought - is justified in the author's view by the priorities which have been consolidated in the vast political narrative of the preceding volumes. The author's exposure of Ogilvie to the schism of traditional and modern would suggest Mackenzie's endeavour to come to terms with his own reputation as a novelist. The novel in
The Rose of all the World

which the debate takes place is not only Mackenzie's attempt to arrest his decline as a writer whom Modernism implicitly repudiated, it is also a determined effort to demonstrate the possibility of fusing fiction with alternative ideologies in the way MacDiarmid, before him, had revealed in poetry.

To pursue the analogy with MacDiarmid further, the division between the intellective density of The Four Winds and the apparent frivolity of the Scottish comedies suggests an antisyzygy of its own. If the implication in MacDiarmid's regret for Mackenzie's obscurity in To Circumjack Cencrastus, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, has come to be sadly accurate where the critical status of The Four Winds is concerned, it is possible to revise his conclusion, in hindsight, in turning to the next phase of Mackenzie's career. The huge public success of Mackenzie's popular Scottish novels, written between 1941 and 1956, made him one of the most celebrated literary figures in his 'donnart country'; a popularity, as will be argued, which pushed The Four Winds and his other most achieved works into a deeper obscurity.

The next two chapters will deal with the implications of this apparent creative schism in examining the motives underlying Mackenzie's attempt to popularise his comic vision of Scotland, how this vision is related to The Four Winds of Love, and the extent to which the specific nature of Scottish culture is one which has made this schism more acute.
CHAPTER SIX

REDEEMING THE KAILYARD

The Scottish Comedies (1)

I Intellectual or Entertainer?

In one of those relatively rare moments of tolerant approval for his fellow-Scottish writers, MacDiarmid comments in *Lucky Poet*:

> It is very pleasant to think of men like Norman Douglas, Hector Munro, Compton Mackenzie, and a few others when one is oppressed by the terrible lack of wit in Scotland today and particularly - save for the blessing of Eric Linklater - in Scottish authors today, and disfigured by the antics of Sir Harry Lauder and the other Scotch 'comics'.

For MacDiarmid, Lauder represented - as he still does forty years later - commercialised Scottishness at its appalling zenith, a comedian whose image served as the envoy of an insulting cultural stereotype which he succeeded in exporting and implanting world-wide. Lauder's facetious falsification of the Scots was bitterly and repeatedly attacked by MacDiarmid throughout his writing, most notably in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*. As that poem and these remarks suggest, Lauder's music-hall version of Scottish 'wit' was the corrupt exploitation of a genuinely innate national characteristic, displayed at its finest, if not sufficiently recognised, in the writings of the figures MacDiarmid endorses. He continues: '...it is not so pleasant to think of how the brainless buffoonery and 'chortling wut' of the latter are accepted as particularly Scottish, while the brilliant sallies of the few such as I have mentioned go for nothing and entirely fail to leaven the sad dough of modern Scottish 'mœurs'.

It might be thought, then, that MacDiarmid's testimony for Douglas, Munro, Mackenzie and Linklater ought to have assisted in securing them a firmer reputation as Scottish comic writers of integrity than any in reality has attained, given MacDiarmid's authoritative weight for so many years as self-appointed arbiter of all that was vital to the interests of Scottish culture and all that threatened its valid identity. Yet none of this group of writers is
Redeeming the Kailyard

adequately recognised today as an exemplar of a specifically 'Scottish' humour, with the exception of the very partial critical attention paid to Linklater.

This is at least partly due to the fact that from the group of writers MacDiarmid selects as exemplars, Mackenzie, Douglas, and Linklater especially have proven particularly difficult to locate within a precisely Scottish context given the discernibly English quality of so much of their writing and the nature of their subject-matter and influences, a fact which makes MacDiarmid's statement all the more uncharacteristic. We have become familiar with the category of comedy (more accurately, social comedy or comedy of manners) as used to specify a considerable sub-genre of novels in 20th century English fiction, specifically satiric in intent. Novelists like Evelyn Waugh and Anthony Powell from the 1930's onwards, like Angus Wilson in the 1950's, and most recently Simon Raven, have established a lucrative fictional terrain that has been frequently described in evaluation of their work as 'English social comedy'. The society to which that comic perspective is subjected invariably being the world of the English middle and upper classes, the uncongeniality of this label to the development of the Scottish novel throughout the same period is self-evident given the centrality of working-class experience and values to the development of a 20th century Scottish literary consciousness.

In contrast to this sub-genre of 20th century English fiction, the recognition of comic writing in the modern Scottish novel is beset by hazy definition and lack of clarification, if not indifference. This is by no means a symptom of a paucity of appropriate material, though doubtless a conclusion inevitably reached. Commentators on Lewis Grassic Gibbon, for example, have rarely given emphasis to the central role of comedy in A Scots Quair (Cloud Howe in particular) or his satire - following MacDiarmid's spirit - of the pier-place 'Scoats Coamics' in Grey Granite. Sydney Goodsir Smith's Joycean comic masterpiece in prose, Carotid Cornucopias (1947), still remains an obscure work; while perhaps most significantly the absence for many years of any balanced assessment of Eric Linklater's considerable oeuvre (with the notable exception of the recent critical biography by Michael Parnell) - undoubtedly the most important comic writer in 20th century Scotland -
indicates an uncertainty in appraising writers who through varying tactics have attempted to undermine the grim pragmatism and defeatism so often seen as the most obdurate feature of the way the Scots perceive their history and culture.

Mackenzie's case would appear to vindicate the truth that an excess of popularity in Scotland breeds an intensity of intellectual contempt, for like his fellow-novelist Eric Linklater, Mackenzie attained his most popular manifestation in Scotland through his comic fiction, at the expense of his critical reputation. His long series of interconnected Highland comedies - The Monarch of the Glen (1941), Keep the Home Guard Turning (1943), Whisky Galore (1947), Hunting the Fairies (1949), The Rival Monster (1952), and Rockets Galore (1957) - is more readily classified with MacDiarmid's contempt for the commercialised dishonesty of Lauderesque Tartan parody than his claims for a genuine form of Scottish humour to which, as MacDiarmid implied, Mackenzie himself had positively contributed.

Apart from a penchant for donning the national costume - which the Scottish novelist Robin Jenkins has described recently as 'the garb of stage comics or caber-tossers or anglicified lairds, but not of poets' - Harry Lauder and Compton Mackenzie, insofar as Lauder's legacy and Mackenzie's comic novels are concerned, share one feature in common: an immense and enduring popularity. Three of Mackenzie's Scottish comedies are still in print, while the legacy of Lauder is still inescapable, a popularity which in each case was the result of keen commercial intuition for public image-making. The image proving ripe for exploitation, Lauder and Mackenzie were alike in maintaining the role each had mapped out for himself. As a result both found a conspicuous place within the icons of Scottish popular culture, a culture much easier to dismiss than to understand. Establishing a satisfactory approach to Scottish popular culture since the overwhelming impact of the Kailyard school in the late 19th century, and its even more unpalatable related offspring of Tartan fetishism, has been fraught with difficulties where literary evaluation has been concerned, since the Kailyard was perhaps the first literary phenomenon to intertwine itself with an entire material sub-culture which, by force of habit, has not habitually been seen to impinge upon the ethics of literary criticism.
This issue of a Scottish sub-culture, of course, is not only entirely germane to Mackenzie's comic writing; it extends beyond any basic need for reassessment to the very nature of cultural production in Scotland as a whole. Any adequate assessment of this problem would implicate the whole of Scottish culture from MacPherson's *Ossian* to the recent films of Bill Forsyth, and the available space for examining this generalisation is obviously limited. What follows is an attempt to define these general issues in relation to Mackenzie's underlying tactics in exploring not only the potential for a popular fiction in 20th century Scotland, but to an extent the means of redeeming a conscious 'post-Kailyard' formula. It should be stressed at this point that subjecting these novels to such close scrutiny does not automatically presuppose their central importance to 20th century Scottish fiction: they are evaluated on the basis of their success or failure as experimental but inherently limited attempts to contribute to the author's conception of popular Scottishness. It is the validity of that conception which is the concern throughout this and the subsequent chapter. Mackenzie had already revealed his willingness to experiment, and court failure, by writing *The Four Winds of Love*, and he was too intelligent and experienced a professional author not to have been aware of the artistic restrictions he invited by adopting more superficial fictional scope. In a sense the critical establishment in Scotland is still, almost a century later, attempting to come to terms with the consequences of the Kailyard's vast and persistent success, so much so that more recent Scottish popular fiction has become obscured, even misrepresented, through a preoccupation with its infamous progenitor. Mackenzie's Scottish comedies are exemplars of a conspicuous post-Kailyard success, and therein lie both their limitation and their importance.

As with the body of Mackenzie's fiction, there is the predictable paucity of committed discussion of the comic novels which in itself is indication of their assumed relevance or importance. The exception to this is Francis Russell Hart, who makes an interesting examination of Mackenzie's comic method in the course of *The Scottish Novel*, an argument to which this and the next chapter repeatedly return. Those few other commentators who have given the comedies some space, moreover;
share one strongly misleading conception of the novelist's career that has been inimical to a fuller understanding of his creative personality. This is the tendency to interpret his career as an unbalanced schism between two conflicting disciplines: those of intellectual and entertainer. This is a division which has its origins in Poor Relations, Mackenzie's first and unmemorable essay in comic prose of 1919, which had such a decisive effect on his post-1918 reputation (see Chapter Three). There are dangerous assumptions at play in thus partitioning any writer's motives that call into question the uses for which a written culture is co-opted and the process by which the criteria of canon and repertoire are established. It is a process which has lead ultimately to the kind of view concerning Mackenzie expressed most recently by Alan Bold in his *Modern Scottish Literature*:

He managed to participate in Scotland as both intellectual and entertainer...he wrote both light and heavy fiction; made his fortune with one and his critical reputation with the other.\(^4\)

The novelist and critic Allan Massie - who dismisses the comedies as 'frothy romps' - suggests that 'his public reputation depended to a great extent on his least serious and substantial work',\(^5\) while the Scottish historian Christopher Harvie concludes:

MacDiarmid excepted, the contribution of literary nationalists in the 1930's was either playful, like Eric Linklater and Compton Mackenzie, or journalistic, like William Power and Lewis Spence.\(^6\)

Most occasional references to Mackenzie by Scottish commentators betray a similar form of tokenism. As shown in the previous chapter, it would be difficult to argue a reading of *The Four Winds of Love* which demonstrated, in a novel of close on a million words, a 'playful' attitude towards the politics of nationalism, yet Harvie is merely responding to the reflex which assumes Mackenzie to be the author of lightweight books and nothing else, least of all an ambitious and committed novel, commenced during the mid-1930's and making an important contribution to precisely those issues which absorbed MacDiarmid during the same period.

Alan Bold's comment, in particular, is testimony to the half-truths and evasions which result from the persistence of accepted views of Mackenzie. If it would be churlish to quibble over the statement that
Mackenzie 'made his fortune' with his 'light' fiction - which is certainly inaccurate - to suggest that he made his 'critical reputation' with his 'heavy' fiction is astonishing, since Mackenzie as a novelist has never possessed a critical reputation of any significance in Scotland; if he created for himself a 'serious' Scottish profile it was largely as a result of his extra-literary activities (See Chapter Four). Bold, unconsciously, pinpoints the serious consequences of insisting upon a surface-deep distinction of this sort, for if the basis for a critical reputation does exist then it has not only been divorced from the popular (and vice versa); it is the success of the popular reputation which has so handicapped the means to an adequate critical reassessment. Bold instead implies that the two are wholly incompatible. Unless one gains the notoriety of a MacDiarmid, say, writers who blur the distinction between the two labels are likely to become a little blurred themselves. Mackenzie's best work, and that of many others, has suffered considerably as a result of the stubborn intellectual/entertainer configuration, and more from the point of view of the Scottish, as opposed to the non-Scottish, critical establishment.

It must be asserted that there is a need not only to reconcile these conflicting images of Mackenzie, but also that they embody two priorities of a career which qualify - rather than invalidate - each other. Recognition of this in Scotland is surely a priority in the context of a literary culture illuminated by writers who have attained great public following at the expense of critical respectability and attention. This is a division nowhere more obvious than in the repeated endeavours to understand the complex relationship between high and popular culture in a society whose native media are seemingly entirely dependent upon the modern analogues of Kailyard and - even more unpalatable for intellectuals and critics - pervaded ineluctably by "the awesomely conspicuous sub-culture of ostentatious Tartan symbolism and kitsch romanticism."

Fortunately, a more systematic and demystifying approach to this whole subject has recently emerged through the work of the media analysts Murray Grigor, Colin MacArthur, and others. Grigor's massive Scotch Myths exhibition of 1981 examined for the first time the root sources of popularised representations of Scotland, sources which were
Redeeming the Kailyard

frequently located within 'high' cultural discourses: for instance, Scott’s savage Highlanders becoming tamed and castrated through the Tartan parody of the Hollywood musical and appropriated by countless picture-postcard jokes of the Scot as avaricious bekilted drunkard: this is only an isolated example. MacArthur has applied the same rigorous perspective to cinematic representations of Scotland and the Scots, while jointly, both have revealed — to an alarming extent — not only the gargantuan proportions of this collective image-making, but also the manner in which systematic deployment of recurring and established icons has been manipulated in order to summon up automatic responses. The important efforts made in a hitherto entirely uncharted field by Grigor and McArthur have yet to be fully appreciated by the Scottish literary establishment, and the relevance to Mackenzie of this upsurge in media analysis will be considered in the next chapter. The work of Grigor and McArthur has served as a potent reminder of the degree to which an emotive self-consciousness of this stultifying iconography, and the difficulties in representing a culture wrought with its own internal divisions and dominated by its assimilation to a more powerful neighbour, is a common denominator for the majority of 20th century Scottish novelists. In fiction which is in Hart’s view 'a sometimes desperate expression of the problem of identity in a national culture doubted, polarized, multileveled' its finest achievements, often bitterly fought for, are resolutely defended, its adjudged failures condemned with an equal vigour. For the modern Scottish writer, acknowledging the ineluctable pervasiveness of this sub-culture is of vital importance to the problem of ‘identity’.

This is a state of mind which finds its paradigm in the angry polarities that were articulated — by novelists and critics alike throughout the Kailyard and anti-Kailyard controversy of the early years of this century. Perhaps its most deeply-felt manifestation was Lewis Grassic Gibbon’s A Scots Quair, tracing in quasi-mythic terms the demise of the Scottish rural peasantry in the wake of the Great War and massive urban industrialisation, highlighting for the first time the realities of the new and vast Scottish working-class whose condition, the anti-Kailyarders argued, was complacently belied in the ruralism and parochialism of J.M. Barrie and his followers, S.R. Crockett and Ian
Redeeming the Kailyard

MacLaren. According to the critic and journalist William Power, the omission was all the more disturbing in that the Scots people were already scarred by an upheaval which it was possible to express within the proportions of epic or myth:

The Scots people were vigorous industrialists and slum-builders, but they never reconciled themselves spiritually to their own urban creations...It was better to help keep alive the native faith and virtues and idyllic memories of the people than to remind them of the scorching fires of Moloch through which they were passing. Not until these fires had been largely quenched was Scots literature able to face la vraie vérité of Scots life."

The effect of Kailyard was galvanic in several respects: provoking both critical energy and creative anxiety in Gibbon, George Douglas Brown and J. MacDougall Hay and their inheritors, it heightened a sensitivity in Scotland to the general problems of the relationship between its culture and society. Hart in The Scottish Novel refers generally to 'the haunting possibility that Scottish culture has features inimical to the novel"; one could invert the observation and claim that the Kailyard had created a fiction which was seen to have features inimical to the interests of Scottish culture.

The mechanics by which Barrie, Crockett and MacLaren constructed an emigre ideology of Scottish lowland life which presupposed its historically powerless and politically sterile condition has been well-rehearsed by critics, who, as Hart has noted, have become embroiled in their own anti-Kailyard clichés as they attempt to outdo each other in decrying its extent of offensive degradation.11 Many critics are torn between acknowledging the patent professionalism and skill of these writers while exposing the troubling lacunae which those skills conceal. The lurking shadow of 'betrayal' in the Scottish national psychosis as manifest in the cultural sphere is therefore nowhere more evident, and is often reflected in the familiar lament for the dismal failure of the Scottish nineteenth-century novel after the supreme achievements of Scott, Hogg, and Stevenson, which degenerated into the triviality of Barrie, Crockett and MacLaren. The general explanation for this failure is familiar and can be briefly paraphrased. The potential for a national culture in 19th century Scotland depended upon an intellectual class committed to expressing that culture; the rise of the post-Enlightenment
bourgeoisie, identifying its economic and social aspirations with the neighbouring English culture to which Scotland was legislatively assimilated, was obliged to absolve itself of any commitment to suppressed nationalist hankerings. In the late 19th century, therefore, a surrogate version of this absent culture arose which allowed this class - which included a large proportion of emigres - to idealise a static Scottish past left behind, void of any real political personality, trapped in the quaint circumference of the parochial. Parochial is a word which gains an added adjectival poignancy after whatever it denotes has been forsaken for higher things; it presupposes retrospection.

While largely concurring with this analysis, Tom Nairn in his polemical The Break-Up of Britain locates a consequence of this leitmotif of betrayal which he describes as 'retrospective necromancy':

The simple idealism and voluntarism of this diagnosis should need no further stressing. It amounts to saying, if only the intellectuals and behaved differently, then our national history might have left its banks, and changed its course. It is not explanation, but retrospective necromancy...

In his Scottish Literature and the Scottish People the contemporary critic David Craig makes a similar point: 'During the 19th century the country was emptied of its notable literary talents - men who, if they had stayed, might have thought to mediate their wisdom through the rendering of specifically Scottish experience. Of the leading British "sages" of the time an astonishingly high proportion were of Scottish extraction - the Mills, Macaulay, Carlyle, Ruskin, Gladstone'. This last is an especially characteristic judgement, with its suggestion of retrospective voluntarism: if only the emigres had chosen to stay at home, then it might all have been different. The point was that in reality they had no such 'choice': 'specifically Scottish experience' in the sense relevant here would have been a product of culture, not its natural, pre-existent basis - and since Scottish society did not demand the formation of that culture, there was no 'experience' and nothing to be said. 12

If Nairn's critique of this habitual perspective is justifiable, his own distinction between 'culture' and 'its natural, pre-existent basis' is equally open to question. It suggests a purely functional diagnosis of culture which refutes its own logic. We are to assume that because no relationship existed between culture and its 'pre-existent' material there was no genuinely nationalistic experience in Scotland extant; in other words, that such experience could only be defined through culture. This non-sequitur is ironic within the context of a culture whose major
Redeeming the Kailyard

predicament is one that Nairn, as Marxist, urgently defines as the basis of his critique of nationalism (and, in turn, his critique of Marxism from the nationalist viewpoint): the fact that Scottish 'identity' in its most self-lacerating guises is the historical product of an internalised anglo-centric viewpoint. 'Specifically Scottish experience' as such has, through its relationship to English hegemonic cultural constructs, been expressed in terms of a dependence which immediately refutes its independent expression.

By the same token, the issue of Scottish popular culture is perceived by Nairn in The Break-Up of Britain (his stance in the seminal, earlier essay The Three Dreams of Scottish Nationalism is more overtly negative and anti-nationalist) as having little relevance except through its relationship to the mainstream, 'high' culture of which it represents some form of illegitimate, deviant off-spring:

...popular or 'Kitsch' Scotland is certainly a form of 'romanticism'. And it is certainly important, and not to be dismissed with a shudder as most nationalist intellectuals tend to do...I think it is enough to point out that [it] is a sub-cultural creature rather than a performer in the elevated spheres we are concerned with. Whisky labels, the Sunday Post, Andy Stewart, the Scott Monument, the inebriate football patriots of International night: no-one will fail to compose his own lengthy list or discern its weighty role in the land. But this is a popular sub-romanticism, and not the vital national culture whose absence is so often lamented after Scott.13

We are exhorted to avoid at all costs the superior contempt of intellectual snobbery if we are fully to appreciate this phenomenon: but in the same breath, we are reassuringly reminded on our way down to the vulgar depths that we have the 'elevated sphere' to return to as a refutation of the ugliness: we can buy the Sunday Times instead of the Sunday Post; switch off Andy Stewart and listen to Radio 3; and when the bus passes the Scott Monument avert our gaze and carry on reading Waverley instead. Nairn would appear reluctant to posit the discernible genealogy linking this 'elevated' sphere of Scottish culture with its bastard child which Murray Grigor has so penetratingly brought to light.

Yet this attitude - which is by no means unique to Nairn - operates through polarities which the great majority of educational and cultural institutions have made a pre-condition of critical thinking, a
Redeeming the Kailyard

manifestation of which is the critical dogma examined in the foregoing which has made objective appraisal of Kailyard and popular fiction in Scotland so very difficult. Such objective approaches as do exist are repeatedly delimited by the persistence in evaluating popular culture's importance only insofar as that culture distorts or diverts the means to a social and political awareness and mobilisation whose terms, more often than not, are defined by those who do not require to participate in that culture. This is a position necessitating the qualifying prefix - sub-culture - to denote the misshapen parody of the institutionalised, élite culture from which it must remain ignominiously divorced.

If there is an exit to this seeming impasse, it is perhaps to be found in looking more closely at that neglected sector of the reading-public who contributed significantly to Kailyard's success; those Scots who were not perceiving their culture vicariously from the emigre perspective, but living in the actuality of that culture at home. In the opening essay of Colin McArthur's collection of media essays Scotch Reels: Scotland in Cinema and Television, Cairns Craig points towards this important aspect of the Kailyard phenomenon hitherto neglected in critics' preoccupation with matters confined to the literary:

...it is important to recognise that Kailyard's success is not just the exploitation of Scottish lower-class life by exiled Scots who want to remember, nostalgically, the land they have left behind, but also want to be convinced that they were right to leave it behind. Kailyard also gave expression to the only class in Scotland which still felt itself to have, or to be burdened with, a separate identity - the working class. And if that class found its experience and its language, however partially, mirrored in Kailyard works, it is not something we should scoff at.14

The failure so far to evaluate this essential sociological dimension is closely bound up with the fact that Scottish culture as a whole has never benefited from the detailed analyses of reading habits and literacy among the 20th century reading public in Scotland (although, partially, David Craig's Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1630-1830 is a work written in this spirit for that specific period). There is no Scottish equivalent of pioneering English works in this field - Hoggart's The Uses of Literacy, Q.D.Leavis's Fiction and the Reading Public - which while pretending to a comprehensiveness in accordance with the concept of 'Britain' as a state entity are
effectively anglocentric, in common with the great percentage of historians engaged with the same British concept who betray - consciously or otherwise - an obeisance to the narrow parameters of an English historiography. More lamentably, the initiative displayed in the recent emergence of cultural and media studies in England through the work of Bennett, Martin, Mercer, and Woollacott is not specifically relevant to Scotland, a fact which makes the comparative weakness in any Scottish adoption of the 'cultural studies' approach all the more regrettable. This represents an absence compounded by the unsuitability to a Scottish context of the definitive ideology of culture and society as established by the English New Left since the 1950's. Cairns Craig has accentuated the urgent need for this kind of attention when he points out, 'it is testimony, perhaps, to the long traditions of literacy among the lower classes in Scotland that it is Scotland which provides the most successful version of the literature for this new mass public'.

It may well be the case that this absence is both symptom and cause of the existing inadequacy of critical attitudes towards popular fiction in Scotland. In the meantime any interest in the subject must depend heavily upon conjecture and intuitive guesswork. Yet even without concrete tabulated evidence, other than substantial sales figures, the relevance of the preceding discussion of cultural background and attitudes to Mackenzie's reputation - as it was affected by his comic fiction - is obvious.

The extent of popularity of the comic series must certainly have come close to the saturation level of Kailyard in its heyday, for it was through those works towards the end of his career that Mackenzie became - for almost twenty years - the author in the forefront of public consciousness in Scotland, creating for himself a public profile as distinct as that of J.M. Barrie or Hugh MacDiarmid. Like MacDiarmid, Mackenzie showed no hesitation in promoting that public image at every available opportunity. His career neatly encapsulates the paradoxical background to Scottish culture this chapter has been tracing, for within the 'high' cultural endeavour of creating the definitive fictional statement of The Four Winds of Love as an expression of Renaissance aspirations, Mackenzie foresaw and exploited the potential for popular
and accessible novels, with a distinctively Scottish appeal, that might transcend the limited currency of more ambitious work.

And perhaps more importantly, Mackenzie acted out in reverse the classic symptoms of the Kailyard trajectory. For J.M. Barrie especially (and to a lesser extent for Crockett and MacLaren), assimilation to the cultural values of the English centre provoked a retrospective image of his native culture underwritten with a sense of mundane inferiority. For Mackenzie, assimilation to the values of the Scottish political and cultural reawakening in the early 1920's represented an acknowledgement of the unease he felt within the values implicit in his earlier status as one of England's most celebrated writers.

II Domesticating History and The Monarch of the Glen

As has been argued in Chapter Five, The Four Winds of Love owes its uniqueness, in part, to its systematic and comprehensive exploration of 20th century European nationalism as a dialectic between national self-determination and fascist or imperialist aggression; a force paradoxically progressive and regressive, a condition which Tom Nairn has described as 'the modern Janus'. Yet it was in 1941, as Mackenzie was in the midst of writing the sequence and focussing the novel's action on renascent Scottish nationalism in the 1920's and 1930's, that he interrupted composition to write the first of his Highland comedies, The Monarch of the Glen. The antithesis is not as bizarre as might first appear. The Four Winds celebrates through its protracted development the narrative of historical evolution impinging on cultural and social upheaval, whereas the comedies - in a mirror-image parody - play games with the cultural blinkering and distortion arising from a 'domesticated' conception of history, frozen in an ancient past as a refuge from acknowledging that the present ever takes place at all, where the future can be safely deflected also. This is a thematic polarity anticipated in The North Wind of Love, for nationalism there is interpreted as a further dialectic between ideology and mobilisation. Hart sees this 'domestication' as a motif recurring throughout the development of Scottish fiction as a whole though, sadly, he does not
give Mackenzie full credit for the extensive use he makes of this perspective: 'The domesticating of history, like that of the devil, is a strategy of diminution noteworthy in Scots humour, an expression of distrust in history itself, and a sign of traditional Scottish affection for the close, small community'.

The dialectic is a theme first suggested within the massively extended, wearisome, yet important dialogue between Ogilvie and Alisdair McPhee the young radical nationalist which opens The North Wind of Love, providing the declaration for the entire work's shift of attention northwards, an orientation that has been promised since the novel's second volume. For some forty pages of pseudo-Socratic dialogue between sage and neophyte, the ego of Caledonia is tackled with gusto while the respective ids of the speakers are heart-searchingly tested and paralleled. Ogilvie rehearses with characteristic exhaustiveness his blueprint for a renascent Scottish republic over which he would reside as deified stage-manager: extravagant political utopianism is qualified, but only just, by the philosophical intuition and wisdom conferred by middle-age and the accumulated experience of East, South and West respectively.

Yet in what is a highly deliberate tactic on the novelist's part, Ogilvie's visionary Caledonian paradise is severely undermined in the plot by the attempt to translate his ideology into action - the ploy masterminded by the Four 'Airts' to retrieve the Stone of Destiny 'from Westminster, precious icon of Scotland's cultural dignity and onetime political autonomy, which is thoroughly botched when one of the conspirators, in whisky-fired bravado, cannot resist boasting transparent hints of the impending theft to an aspiring sleuth-journalist on the scent of a potential scoop. Consequently the Unionist Scottish press denounce the rumoured scheme as an affront to British national interests and the plan is doomed even before it can be executed. As Ogilvie observes during the conference with McPhee in the Highland hotel lounge:

...I recognise just as well as you the danger of allowing action to evaporate into sentimentality. But isn't that a threat to everything in our country, the way we put our deeds at the the service of others and nourish ourselves on words?
Almost fatalistically, it would seem to be a condition of Ogilvie's imaginative and intellectual aspirations that they be dished by the subsequent deflation and sordid spectacle of inebriated Scots triumphalism. The impassioned optimism of Ogilvie's commitment is, furthermore, suggestively belied by the very surroundings in which the characters stage their debate.

On the wall opposite the door hung a large steel-engraving spotted with brown mould which represented a mythical Fitzgerald saving an almost equally mythical King Alexander from the antlers of an infuriated stag and thereby gaining the favour on which the fortunes of Clann Choinnich were supposed to have been built up. Above this engraving hung a pair of antlers mounted on a wooden shield, the Cabar Feidh of the Mackenzies gained by the feat represented below. Under the engraving was a diminutive and ill-executed water-colour of Dunvegan Castle...On either side of the engraving hung a sea-trout in a glass case, to both of which time had given a somewhat kippered appearance. The rest of the pictures showed the stock sentimentalised scenes of Highland life - sheep, shepherds, plaided lassies, shaggy cattle, hills, lochs, birds, and sunsets.

McPhee later cites this kitsch decor in desperation as testimony to his deep despondency with contemporary Scotland's plight:

Look round this room, Mr Ogilvie. Doesn't it sum up the Highlands of today? That steel engraving of a legend that was never worth believing anyhow - a nineteenth-century piece of snobbery spotted by damp and flies. That washy water-colour of Dunvegan hardly fit for a schoolgirl's autograph album. Those two sea-trout to catch the eye of the rich sportsman and persuade him the hotel's bad food is compensated for by the fishing obtainable in the land of bens and glens and heroes. Those rosy maidens from the lone shieling who are smiling so sweetly because next week they'll be meeting their friends again on the Jamaica Bridge in Glasgow. And that meditative shepherd! Ay, ay, meditating on the prices his hoggets fetched at Dingwall last week. That's the reason for so noble an expression of Celtic gloom and dignity.

'This room', in fact, serves as a type of microcosmic Chamber of Horrors exhibiting the worst excesses of Nairn's necromantic falsifying of history and culture, boasting almost the entire catalogue of clichés and kitsch symbols ossified (or Ossianified?) in a history comprising a kind of monologue of the past in which no dialogue with the present world of disintegrating culture is possible, a present the shallow values of which McPhee condemns with equal cynicism:

What is it now? Rabbits and bracken; Indian pedlars on bicycles hawking cheap silks and French-letters; inshore fishing destroyed by
English trawlers; unemployment benefit instead of the benefit of employment; education planned to make good North Britons but bad Scotsmen, and to fill the minds of children with the belief that a city man is a bigger fellow than a countryman; ministers without scholarship and scholars without religion; tinned salmon and tinned lobster; Midlothian porridge like clay and Glasgow bread like chalk; plus-fours, Government officials, pink asbestos tiles, and the People's Journal.

Although as a sincere critique of modern Scotland this is a little feeble - it lacks the passionate venom of polemic and political satire found in MacDiarmid or Gibbon, for example, in The Scottish Scene - the attitudes towards the Scottish past enshrined in that room, and the disparity between those attitudes and present reality, contain a potent irony which forms the basis of the 'Scotland of the imagination' which will be the new terrain of the comic sequence. The decor of the room will become the mentality which the comic characters inhabit, a mentality which Mackenzie attempts to popularise, but also to undermine.

Two important factors emerge from Mackenzie's own references to his comic fiction, despite the invariably sketchy nature of such comments. Firstly, he stresses that he would write them as a temporary relief from more arduous work (The Monarch of the Glen and Keep the Home Guard Turning were written during composition of The Four Winds of Love), or as a palliative for the prostrating bouts of pain caused by the sciatica which afflicted him regularly for the duration of his adult life. Secondly, it is perhaps not surprising to learn that the relative conciseness of the comic novels as opposed to the habitually discursive structure he favoured demanded far more hard effort, time and concentrated labour than anything else he wrote. In conceiving The Monarch of the Glen, however, the author clearly formulated a simple narrative framework and thematic design which was too prove endlessly pliable.

Mackenzie often seems anxious to justify the existence of these books throughout My Life and Times, and the evidence he cites to demonstrate that several 'important' personages congratulated him on their success would suggest that the author himself entertained a suspicion about the possibly adverse effect on his image of a cluster of comic best-sellers. Doubtless remembering the decisively harmful legacy of his first comic novel, Poor Relations, in 1919, twenty years later there was
perhaps a premonition that a newly appreciative audience for the Scottish comedies might obscure the graver import of *The Four Winds* and its long years of toil. Any anxiety, however, is belied by the author's insistence on the potentially deprecating label of 'farce' to describe these books. While not entirely a misnomer, it is certainly only partially accurate. The aim of Mackenzie's characterisation and action is comedy, frequently satirical in nature; to achieve that end his characters are immersed in accessible, if predictable, plot structures which depend largely on farcical and fantastic manipulations and improbabilities.

It is a technique revealing Mackenzie's great indebtedness to the earlier fiction of Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers* and *The Old Curiosity Shop* in particular, where the plot serves as a form of independent self-perpetuating machinery through which the characters are automatically propelled. In this way the entities of character and plot are related on the most simplistic, transparent level possible and are never permitted to overshadow each other. The tactical advantages of this untrammelled clarity of presentation are that the characters serve as easily definable stereotypes, whose identity can be prolonged and sustained beyond the novel in which they originally appear. Mackenzie is simply resurrecting a fictional habit which sustained him from *Carnival* onwards throughout the Theatre of Youth sequence until 1927, when *Vestal Fire* broke new ground. In the Scottish comedy sequence, the Glenbogle (Ben Nevis) and the Todday (the islands) factions eventually fuse effortlessly together, enriching the thematic scope available.

Of the six connected comedies, three are centred around Ben Nevis, and three on the two Toddays, though both communities often overlap in the same novel. Falling into two chronological groups - *The Monarch of the Glen*, *Keep the Home Guard Turning*, *Whisky Galore* and *Hunting The Fairies*, *The Rival Monster*, *Rockets Galore* - there is a discernible difference in the latter group, which reveals a willingness to expand in theme and comic scope in exploiting more contemporary representations of 'Scottishness'. *Rockets Galore* (1957) is entirely different from the remainder; the political implications of the events which inspired its writing pervade the novel so insistently that they threaten to undermine comedy confronting a world proof against the comic perspective. The
tension was very real: it was Mackenzie's last comic novel with a Scottish relevance. It should also be pointed out that The Monarch of the Glen was not the first comedy to be written according to the formula which the author went on to perfect. The foundation of the technique is to be found in Water on the Brain (1933), an affectionate if ruthless farcical satire on the Secret Service written as a comic outlet for the author's anger following his famous trial under the Official Secrets Act in 1932. His fascination for ridiculing the ineptitude of institutional bureaucracy was established with this novel, a target drawing even keener parody in The Red Tapeworm (1941), a gentle though effective spoof on Government red-tapeism, notable for the first though comically understated appearance of Ben Nevis and Glenbogle. The departure into a Scottish comic perspective with The Monarch of the Glen eventually provided a means of integrating the Highlands with this earlier theme, by examining the same bureaucratic world-view in a graver light in its effect upon beleaguered Highland communities and the threat to their isolated independence. This is a theme to be seen developing steadily into wider political implications; by the time of Rockets Galore this has become a preoccupation which supersedes the initial satirical intention. In the remaining Scottish comedies the author's Highland sympathies clarify his embattled disgust with Whitehall bureaucracy, whether military in character (Keep the Home Guard Turning, Rockets Galore), ethical and moral (Whisky Galore), or cultural (The Rival Monster, Hunting the Fairies). If the emphasis varies from novel to novel, there is an underwritten implication common to all of them, accurately summarised by Hart: the concern 'for the survival of traditional vitalities against threats of remote bureaucracy, imperialist brainwashing, and other forces destructive of personal and communal integrity'.

Mackenzie invites the reader into his newly-conceived Scottish world with an all-important gesture. The narrator immediately concedes his task of scene-setting to the voice of the imaginary pseudo-1890's Celtic Twilight 'topographer' Hector Hamish Mackay - a kind of Kailyard traveloguer of the Highlands - in whose painfully platitudinous idiom the mood is established.

Those who have promised themselves the pleasure of passing a summer's day exploring dark Glenbogle or wild Glenbogle as it is
variously called, will do well to provide beforehand for the refreshment of the inner man. The grandeur and desolation which greet the eye on every side from the moment the wayfarer enters Glenbogle will amply compensate for the absence of any dwelling-place until the immediate surroundings of the castle are reached. No, gentle reader, Glenbogle has no hotel, and the sophisticated traveller who expects teashops and restaurants should not wend his steps towards this historic spot. For him, however, who is content with a mossy bank for his resting-place, with water from the burn, and with the simple fare he carries in his knapsack, Glenbogle is 'Paradise enow'. Many a long summer's day the present scribe dreamed away in that delectable spot 'far from the madding crowd', pondering upon the lore of the misty past and recapturing with the mind's eye the stirring scenes of auld lang syne. The scent of the bell-heather and the bog-myrtle, the buzzing of the honey bees, the babbling of the peaty burn, the solemn shapes of the old brooding hens, are not these better than the superficial luxury of our so-called civilization? If we go to Glenbogle when 'the world is too much with us' there is no doubt what our answer will be.27

Mackay is adopted as a parodic caricaturing shorthand which typifies skin-deep historical Highland romanticism, the condition manifest in other characters and which outsiders will attempt to assimilate. The perspective depends upon the well-rehearsed dualities between civilisation and 'barbarity', antiquity and modernity, upon which the external perception of Gaelic culture has always been based.

One of the book's central characters, the American Carrie Royde, is to be seen immediately following Mackay's opening flourish not only to be absorbing his book unquestioningly, but participating precisely in his mode:

With a romantic sigh young Mrs Chester Royde laid down Summer Days Among the Heather and gazed out of the window in the North Tower of Glenbogle Castle at the Three Sisters of Glenbogle dreaming majestically in the flickering haze of a fine morning on the Twelfth of August. She had some reason to sigh romantically, for this was her first visit to the home of her forefathers, one of whom, much against his will, had been deported to Canada by the twentieth MacDonald of Ben Nevis, the great-grandfather of the present laird. As a girl Caroline MacDonald had suffered from the Lone Shieling complex. (12)

Those 'rosy maidens from the lone shieling' in the tawdry sentimentalised Highland painting sneered at by McPhee in The North Wind will be remembered; the attitudes embodied by such paintings now come to life in the comic world, creating a mental landscape which can not only be read (Mackay's books) but also inhabited by the characters.
In his discussion of The Monarch, Hart is suspicious of the interpolation of Mackay's voice into the narrative on the grounds that the author never implies any deprecation of Mackay's falsity: "the only "serious" descriptions of this world are those supplied in excerpts from the books of Hector Hamish Mackay, whose absurdity, though patent, is curiously never repudiated".26 His emphasis here is misleading - and inaccurate, given what tests Mackay faces later in the series - since if the device of Mackay had been repudiated, it would not have been possible for Mackenzie to have developed his comic material in the direction he wished to pursue, just as it would have been unthinkable for Ogilvie and McPhee in The North Wind of Love not to have repudiated the Highland hotel knick-knacks which ostensibly embody the truest essence of Scottishness. In one sense the comedies depend upon Mackay's presence, for through him the author exhibits the self-consciousness with which he accepts the parameters of a literary vision he knows to be suspect, but within which the novels must endeavour to operate. This internalised rejection is a cunning ruse: by mimicking the voice and ideology of another, the author partly absolves himself from the responsibility of opening the gate to the Kailyard and stepping through himself.

Like the archetypal Kailyard village, Ben Nevis's Glenbogle represents an ahistorical country of the mind, with all the conservative energy equal to the challenge of resisting and denying intrusion or change, defending the mentality of an antique Highland past already destroyed in the evolution of the present from which its inhabitants seem so entirely immune. Mackenzie would seem to suggest an ambivalence in the flaunting of Highland symbols as an identity already branded with a sense of historical defeat, but which express a genuine, if myopic, repository of Scottish consciousness. This tension allows for the novel's mock-heroic and satirical dynamic - the bloody rage of rival clan conflict or national causes butchered on the battlefield become the absurd confrontation between the anglified Scottish gentry and arrogant, trespassing Cockney hikers. Needless to say, the threat of political overthrow in this topographic monument to Caledonian nostalgia is successfully routed.
Redeeming the Kailyard

Ben Nevis himself possesses all the force of his own blustering, gruff, yet genial innocence, while his conception of Highland history is as absurdly anglocentric as Mackay's is romantic. Imperialist, arch-conservative traditionalist, epitome of the old Unionist philosophy, as an anglicized Scottish laird he embodies a phoney cultural interdependence which guarantees inexhaustible satirical scope. Everything his Scottish pretensions encounter is inscribed with his upper-class English accent and manners. Yet the laugh is not entirely on him; his reckless vitality is pitted successfully against his effete English alter-ego, the inert Earl of Buntingdon who, in hiking-shorts and staff as opposed to kilt and philibeg, plays the timid English democrat to Ben Nevis's hot-headed Tartan fascist and loses. Buntingdon's potential dynamism as a 'progressive' English aristocrat is cruelly but memorably captured in the novel's repeated references to his passion for rearing innumerable tortoises. The novel would seem to imply that in spite of its bogus trappings and its absurd pretensions, if there has to be an aristocracy it provides more entertainment if dressed in tartan.

The three Roydes are soon at home with Ben Nevis's expression of Scottishness, for it is precisely what they anticipate and wish for. If the novel would have us laugh at the Americans' cultural daytripping - their historical naivety is equal to their spending-power - then their influence is seen, obliquely, to be benign. Royde injects lucrative American capital into Kilwhille's depreciating estate by building a huge house, in itself an act of historical redemption: Royde's wife's ancestor was a victim of the Clearances at the capitalising hands of Ben Nevis's great-grandfather. The historical trauma of the Clearances symbolically domesticates itself: the exile returns to re-integration, the Highland lineage which expelled him is secured a monied future. Through retrospective wish-fulfilment, history is re-routed in such a way as to fulfil the ideology of the characters and guarantee their continued immersion in the past.

Thematic seriousness and nationalist realpolitik of the Four Winds variety is also safely absorbed into this neutering world in the form of the 'Scottish Brotherhood of Action' - the four 'Airts' of Mackenzie's comic persona - and completes the system of opposites: their extremism.
is safely assimilated within the comic world, that of the Hiker's successfully excluded. There is little to suggest that the reader take the two representatives of the Brotherhood seriously - political commitment is hastily jettisoned in favour of the liberal American spending which promises personal dividends, the same spending which ensures the persistence of the system they seek to eradicate - yet the novel allows them to voice their moral opposition authentically enough:

'Take a man like MacDonald of Ben Nevis,' Alan urged. 'He's a friend of yours. But you must see how fatal that kind of stodgy comfortable existence is to any display of national energy. A man like that could do so much to give a lead to the country. But what does he do? Shoots, stalks, fishes, forbids camping on his land, and thinks he has fulfilled his political duty if he votes against a measure of reform which will put a halfpenny on the Inverness-shire rates...Men of his type require mental shocks imaginatively applied. They move in a rut.' (40)

The severity of 'mental shock' required, of course, is incompatible with the dictates of a comic vision; the Hiker's invasion, and their subsequent overthrow, only entrenches Ben Nevis further in that rut. If this and further instances of nationalist complaint sound suspiciously like the reasoning of young Alisdair McPhee in The North Wind, any potential for genuine political opposition from the Brotherhood suffers an analogous deflation, with disturbing implications, in the novel's conclusion, when Scottish Nationalists join forces with Tartan Tories to repel the evils of an aggressive democracy. Yet on a further level - an aesthetic one - the novel registers a valid and effective counter to the prevailing mentality established by Mackay and Ben Nevis. Alan MacMillan is an aspiring poet 'who from what he and the young poets of the Scottish Renaissance believed was the sunny summit of Parnassus had been hurling savage epigrams at the Celtic Twilight since his first term at Glasgow University' (39). Significantly, his love-poem is one of the few things in the novel left unscathed by its overall comic intent: the result, in fact, is a great deal better than might be feared of the author of the derivatively Georgian Kensington Rhymes, who displayed little or no interest in 20th century poetics, emulating MacDiarmid and his fellow-poets:

The sweet breath of bog-myrtle
Blows on the wind,
And green grow they still,
The leaves of the bog-myrtle.
But the heather,
The fading heather,
Is spread like the robe of a dead king
Upon my country.
Upon my dying country.
I do not lament, therefore, but laugh
When down through the stale dead purple
Dances the peaty water,
Warm with the sharp sun of the high tops,
Prickt by the sun of the high tops,
The prattling peaty dark-brown water,
The warm dark-brown water of life
Whose sweet breath blows on the wind,
Bringing bog-myrtle. (234)

The contrast with Mackay is undoubtedly an intended one, given that the poem's key-images, heather, bog-myrtle, and peaty water, first appear in their suitably romanticised context towards the end of the excerpt from Mackay's book which opens the narrative, a book providing the paradigm of the 'Celtic Twilight' against which the Renaissance directed so much of its creative energy. The poem's further purpose is in its comic juxtaposition with the birthday-card greeting verse of Ben Nevis's chaplain, Mr Fletcher; a combination of sorts of MacGonagall, Celtic Twilight, and Scots militaristic drum-and-trumpet doggerel in the spirit of Aytoun's Lays, which provides the novel's closing peroration. The irony within the three spoken sentences immediately following the poem - Myrtle's admiration, Alan's ambiguous modesty, and Ben Nevis's stupidity - which comprise the novel's last paragraph is carefully calculated and perfectly judged.

Though hikers may camp in the rest of the country,
Not a tent shall be seen where Ben Nevis is lord:
Ben Boomey, Ben Gorm, Ben Glass, and Ben Cruet
Will never bow down to the pestilent horde.

Salute Mac'ic Eachainn, the brave and the mighty,
The chief who has routed the Sassenach crew,
The lord of Ben Nevis, Glenbogle, Glenbristle,
Strathdiddle, Strathdun, Loch Hoch, and Loch Hoo.

'You couldn't write a poem like that, Alan,' said Myrtle.
'No, I couldn't,' Alan agreed.
'Marvellous, isn't it?' Ben Nevis glowed. 'I simply don't know how it's done. I don't really.' (272)
Redeeming the Kailyard

If this disparity in representation mitigates slightly the union between radical nationalists and Ben Nevis's regime, that union is still seen to repeat the inscribing of transcendent wish-fulfilment upon the course of Scottish history as reactionaries and traditionalists, the powerless and the powerful, are temporarily reconciled:

The members of the Scottish Brotherhood of Action left for Glasgow about midnight, all now as firmly convinced that there was something to be said for Highland chieftains of long authentic lineage still in possession of their land, as the Chieftain himself was now inclined to admit that there was something to be said for young men who desired the glory and grandeur of Scotland. In reaching this opinion he was much encouraged by the performance on the pipes of Mac'ic Bachainn's March to Sherifmuir by Colin Campbell, the student who had been responsible for desecrating the air of Glenbogle with The Campbells are Coming. To sit in his own Great Hall and hear a Campbell piping that tune to a MacDonald was compensation for many historical events which had taken the wrong course. (271)

Like the novel's domestication of the tragedy of the Clearances, this is another 'historical event' not merely vindicated but symbolically rewritten, a redemption which sanitises the truth of Scottish bloodshed; further illustration of the ahistorical power of comic irony within Mackenzie's comic world.

There is an unmistakable and disturbing confidence in the various voices proclaiming the restoration of 'Ben Nevis for Ever' as 'the greatest man in Scotland' at the close, re-asserting his stance of what amounts to a species of fascist nationalism. Is Ben Nevis merely an extension of the implied king figure Mackenzie projects through Ogilvie in the North Wind? The Monarch in this sense suggests an ambivalence similar to that detected in the North Wind; whether Ben Nevis represents a supremacy the author sought to endorse, or alternatively, if the comedy is locating the dangers within a nationalist movement which might threaten democracy itself in its obsession with a national identity dependent on traditional, institutionalised symbols of cultural dignity which in themselves have little purchase on contemporary political reality. There seems too deliberate a similarity between the Four 'Airts' and the Scottish Brotherhood of Action to make this doubleness unintentional, a political equivocation to be found nowhere else within the remaining comedies.

266
Whatever its import, one feature remains all too clear — it is made at the expense of the hapless National Union of Hikers, whose 'final discomfiture, through doubtless necessary, is regrettable', concluded Edwin Muir in his otherwise favourable contemporary review in the Listener. The victimisation of the Hikers concentrates on their active dissemination of the ideals of a popular democracy, rather than on their significance as arrogant English invaders destroying sanctified Scottish natural beauty, the polarity one might have anticipated as the most inevitable target. The incidental detail of Ben Nevis blasting both barrels of his shotgun through an unfortunate hiker's portable radio (blaring out the sound of a 'crooner') suggests a further dimension to authorial intention: is this to be read as further illustration of Ben Nevis's absurdity, or beneath the comedy is there an implication that the author was taking vicarious revenge on personal irritants, such as popular culture (or American tourists?). If such distaste is genuine, it belies the author's life-long amenability to promoting the benefits of new forms of mass-media as the founder of Vox, The Gramophone, and as an accomplished broadcaster.

This reflects a difficulty within the novel as a whole of denoting precisely where the boundaries between ridicule and sympathy lie. Despite the concluding unity, reflecting a generic accuracy, the book is comprehensively reductive: there is the great stag, the Muckle Hart of Ben Glass, which actually laughs at the spectacle of Ben Nevis — an ironic allusion to the novel's title; Chester Royde's discomfiture and humiliation on the stalking expedition, and his orange kilt; Ben Nevis's masculine daughters. With the exception of the book's love-interest (which here as in the rest of the series represents a real weakness in its reliance on hackneyed cliché), there are possibly too many conflicting comic targets jostling for authorial treatment and the reader's attention, a perhaps inevitable excessiveness given the author's self-consciousness in constructing a deliberately flippant perspective on Scottish history, an act of diminution subverting its traditionally sacrosanct image, as Muir recognised:

The Highlands of Scotland have been treated with such awed reverence by novelists that it is a relief to find them used as a stage for a comic battle.30
Redeeming the Kailyard

Perhaps wishing to promote the value of a degree of self-irony within a culture obsessed with its own failures, Muir felt able to conclude that the method celebrated by The Monarch of the Glen was 'its own justification'.

III Aristocrats of the Democracy: Keep the Home Guard Turning, Whisky Galore

The first novel of the Todday group, Keep the Home Guard Turning is a quieter, perhaps less memorable work than its predecessor for its relative unpretentiousness. If its theme and plot tend to wilt a little towards the end as a result of over-treatment, the author's satirical and comic fluency does not have the enervating effect that is a characteristic of The Monarch of the Glen. A firmer grasp of underlying seriousness emerges too: the second novel develops further the manipulation of the Kailyard perspective by extending the theme of exclusion and assimilation, largely through the introduction of the character Paul Waggett - undoubtedly the most important figure in the entire series. In his Appraisal, Leo Robertson suggests the reason for Waggett's relative complexity:

Captain Waggett...for instance, is no mere type of the stupid, pompous literal-minded bureaucrat who finds scope for his fatuities when suddenly placed in a position of a little authority. His pomposity and his obtuseness are peculiarly his own, not parts given to him to play. He is a definitely recognisable individual.

Relative to the parameters within which he is placed, Waggett is Mackenzie's most satisfying comic character in that he presupposes a moral position which provokes genuinely important moral tension and conflict. Within a recognisable stereotype, the author develops a character which invites endless permutations of comic perspective.

In his pseudo-English colonialist pretensions, Waggett remains utterly oblivious until Rockets Galore and the conclusion of this comic world of the native cultural values by which he is being found ridiculous, unpleasant and domineering to the point of being dictatorial by the
islanders, and of course in turn by the reader. Waggett is that plot element which allows Mackenzie to turn the tables on the familiar tactics of the Kailyard practitioners. In their most influential work, they deployed those images of Scottish lowland life which would elicit a latent sense of superiority in their emigré and English audience towards the characters they described and patronised. In presenting a picture of Scotland as politically inert it was necessary to imply superior values which the reader would realise Kailyard characters did not share, let alone possess. In Waggett's career as a latter-day anglicised laird imposing the sophisticated mores of English civilised (or civilising) values upon the infantile backwoodsmen of the islands, he arrives ready to inhabit - as he believes - the very manifestation in actuality of the Kailyard perspective expressed through the imagination. Scurrilously intolerant of any concession to the deep communal values of the islanders which Mackenzie implicitly asserts on every page of his writing through his deft characterisation of the Hebridean temper, Waggett in effect is made his own satirical target. With a refreshing absence of authorial gloss, this implied tension accentuates Waggett's unpleasantness as self-appointed missionary more effectively than a more explicit approach might have done. Mackenzie's own favourite description of the real inhabitants he lived with on Barra for a decade was that 'they were all aristocrats of the democracy', a phrase that tells us much about the significance of Waggett's presence; as 'aristocrats of the democracy' the islanders advertise an inherent dignity and indifference to social divisions providing a potent moral corrective to the overtly self-conscious arriviste pretensions of Waggett the pseudo-aristocrat.

Waggett presents a more sophisticated and credible profile than his antithesis, Ben Nevis - the first is deluded arrogance personified, the second unconsciously innocent and genial arrogance - yet it is further indication of the effortless and seemingly spontaneous facility of Mackenzie's stylistic fluency in this mode that Waggett is repeatedly epitomised in short, understated displays of characterising shorthand: his pontifical pronouncements to the quietly resigned but discreetly long-suffering wife Dolly; his insistence on rigorously enforcing absurdly inappropriate wartime restrictions on the islands, while extracting gifts of eggs and so on from them in order to ensure his own
personal comfort; his eccentric taste for malt whisky with lemonade; the pedantry he parades at every available opportunity. The author deploys such suggestive pointers throughout with a minimum of authorial comment or explication - the touch is feather-light, while the effect is strikingly acute. In this example Waggett is grappling with mundane bureaucratic correspondence immediately after appointing himself Home Guard Commander:

"I must say I hadn't realized when I took on this job that it was going to mean quite so much correspondence," Paul Waggett admitted to his wife.
"Couldn't I help, dear?"
"I'm afraid not, old lady. A good deal of it consists of secret orders," he replied, with a smile half-appreciative of her wifely dutifulness, half censorious of her feminine presumption.
"I think I'll take the old bus over to Bobanish and see if John Beaton can give me a hand. I may get some eggs from Mrs Beaton."
Differently though it might be spelt, the name sounded upon Mrs Waggett's ears like a tucket blown upon the horn of plenty.
"Yes, that would be splendid. Mrs Beaton's such a good henwife."
Mrs Waggett was proud of this Scotticism she had just acquired and her blue eyes sparkled with the faint rogueishness of her flapperhood in anticipation of a verbal pat on the back.
But the commander was too deeply absorbed by military problems to notice her new word. 35

In easeful and transparent writing of this sort where every nuance receives precisely the right emphasis, commenting upon stylistic technique is made very difficult, for in explicating the comic effect the effect itself can be obscured. The comedies advertise a fluency in style which demonstrate precisely the difficulties involved in treating Mackenzie with a critical seriousness: why should such a self-sufficient and generally scrutable author require detailed explication? This is a problem that was touched upon in the Times Literary Supplement review of Keep the Home Guard Turning:

[Fluency] exempts the writer from the search for words and the adjustments which automatically entail re-examination of the idea they express and as an inevitable corollary its intrinsic claims to the space accorded it. We doubt if all the ideas to which Mr Mackenzie has accorded expression would survive such self-criticism. 36

The point, of course, is that if Mackenzie's technique impedes critical scrutiny then the need to examine such 'ideas' - for the comedies most
certainly manipulate ideas - is all the more urgent. By subjecting the Scottish comedies to close analysis, it can be suggested that the manner of critical scrutiny they have often received is as open to question as the validity of the novels themselves. If the above reviewer had given more consideration to the importance of Waggett's role, his prejudice may not have survived reiteration.

The opportunity of supervising the Toddays' contribution to the war effort grossly inflates the repressed Napoleon in Waggett. For Mackenzie, it provides the means of pronouncing sharply the real cultural division between the Hebridean islands and the Scottish and English mainland when ostensibly united in common, collective 'national' endeavour. Waggett's fated attempts to transform the two tiny islands into crucial theatres of the European war with armbands, pikes, and military zones and permits is parodied further by the novel's structure, which juxtaposes parochial trivia against universal military upheaval and makes the former appear more important, displaying once more the author's perceptive application of the technique of ironic diminution.

The central episode in which Ben Nevis stages a mock-attack between the Glenbogle and Todday Home Guards only in order to retrieve a lone boot lost in a blizzard of pedantic bureaucracy takes place on the date of Hitler's invasion of Russia, which for the majority of the characters involved amounts to scarcely the distant whisper of a history with far less importance than their own.

The culture, history, and values of the islanders are as a consequence made to assume the importance of a universal norm, and Waggett, determined to impose the English historical ideology of 'national' urgency upon a 'nationless' people is destined never to perceive the islanders' separateness. For the islanders themselves, even for those whose sons are serving in the Navy, the war is personified by Waggett and the stupefying ineptitude of the centralised military bureaucracy he delights in perpetuating - one of Mackenzie's most cherished comic targets - culminating in two self-righteous Security Officers confiscating the fateful boot and deciding in the interests of national security to have it 'tested for secret communications'. The war, although lending an excuse for the endless one-upmanship between Little Todday (Catholic) and Great Todday (Protestant) to gain momentum, is
largely an extension of the repeated failures and neglect of a centralised London government, this time in uniform. From the islanders' point of view, the whole war ethos remains predominantly a preserve of the incoming English.

In his definitive The People's War (1969), the social historian Angus Calder examines the process by which the War Government helped to forge in the nation's consciousness a myth of British 'national unity' cemented by national urgency appropriate to the needs of its own propaganda, a myth whose post-1945 residuum was to have a pervasive effect on British political developments and whose legacy is still omnipresent. Waggett is made to revel in the militaristic platitudes and cliched fillips to Home Guard morale which were commonplace at the time in their mock-heroic progress through repeated false alarms and absurdly imprecise imitation of military convention, a perspective which conforms accurately with the spirit recreated in Calder's detailed research, and beneath the veneer of comic action there is in Mackenzie's novel a certain amount of verifiable social documentation. It is not Mackenzie's intention, however, to demolish wholesale the ethics of English militarism; as a counter to Waggett's pomposity the novel introduces the humane Sergeant-major Odd, the genial and genuine Cockney who finds immediate harmonious assimilation to the islands' community consolidated by his love-affair with Peggy Macroon. His adoption by the islanders parallels Waggett's ever-increasing and self-imposed alienation, and could be seen as redemptive: Odd's cockney sensibilities find more in common with Hebridean idiosyncrasies than with the churlish superiorism of his ostensible fellow-countryman.

With the pattern of assimilation and exclusion established throughout Keep the Home Guard Turning, this theme, and the qualities of the islanders themselves, are to be even more sharply defined in the next comedy, a novel which obdurately remains Mackenzie's single most popular work and whose remarkable success, though justifiable, is nonetheless responsible for the damaging misrepresentation of its author, a fulfillment - much later than he anticipated - of his ominous prophecy that 'popularity is a curse.'
With the D.S.Thomson newspaper empire still producing its diet of post-Kailyard journalism, The Broons, Oor Wullie and pawky Scottishness in general, with Neil Munro's Tales of Para Handy or the popular novels of Nigel Tranter or Dorothy Dunnett, with these Whisky Galore shares the honours as one of Scotland's most conspicuous popular classics, one of the most frequent subjects of amateur theatricals, synonymous with the Hebrides, repeatedly cited as a reach-me-down metaphor for that most enduring of Scottish institutions and myths - whisky - a novel which perfectly answers those who would associate whisky and its mystical liturgy with some innate truth about the Scottish psyche. The novel's phenomenal popularity firmly guaranteed Mackenzie's reputation as Scotland's best-known popular literary figure in the closing phase of his career; a popularity by no means confined to Scotland. It is not too unkind to say that for many English and foreign readers a knowledge of 20th century Scottish fiction stops dead at those numerous images, on the covers of innumerable editions, of Lauderesque red-nosed Highland worthies moronically soused from half-empty bottles of 'Stag's Breath' dangling from sporrans, staggering in picturesquely Celtic manner before a background of Hebridean moonlight. A glance at the cover illustration of the recent Penguin 'Highland Omnibus' edition (1983) of The Monarch of the Glen, Whisky Galore and Hunting the Fairies will confirm that this is no exaggeration: it celebrates the omnipresent glib contempt of metropolitan publishers towards Scottish culture, confirmed by the woefully inadequate biographical note concerning the author in this book, which fails to mention The Four Winds of Love, never mind Sinister Street. As if this was not sufficient evidence of cultural myopia, a subtitle beneath the headline of the front cover reads 'Three fine, furious farces from the forerunner of Tom Sharpe'. Reducing Mackenzie's importance to a matter of the indebtedness of an author like Tom Sharpe to a novelist with which he shares absolutely nothing in common, as a cultural artefact, one designed for instant mass-appeal, the book symbolises sadly the profound damage visited upon Mackenzie's image and reputation by Whisky Galore and the rest of the comedies. The conventions regurgitated by this Penguin production return us to the issue raised at the beginning of this chapter: the book represents a conscious contribution to what one might generally refer as the
iconography of Scottishness, the phenomenon which Murray Grigor's vast assemblage of popular imagery in Scotch Myths represented a bold and genuine attempt not only to cohere but to understand. Very surprisingly, the Mackenzie of the Penguin tartan fiction category was nowhere to be found in the exhibition, an exhibition whose salutary lesson for the observer was that however distasteful the commercial solidity and initiative which produces a material culture of such astounding pervasiveness and magnitude, the imagery which sustains it amounts to an important sphere of cultural consciousness whose derivation from high culture simply cannot be ignored. If a facet of Mackenzie's image finds itself within this iconography - which it undoubtedly does - then scrutiny of the author's motives and perspective is no less urgently required: to what extent did the author wish the attitudes typified by Penguin Books upon himself?

The commercial profile emphasised by Grigor's exhibition is a case in point, for Mackenzie did not simply further his Scottish commercial appeal through writing alone; he was also to be seen in the late 'fifties on television advertisements endorsing a famous blend of Scotch whisky in an act of complicity with the mythologising process which was already hard at work on his most famous novel. A further angle is provided by the universally popular Ealing Studios film made of the book in 1948 with which Mackenzie collaborated, often grudgingly, attempting unsuccessful interventions to counter many filmic departures from authorial intent which resulted in a near-comprehensive distortion of the novel, a distortion which is considered in the next chapter. The film's remarkable success still forms the basis of Mackenzie's image as a writer for many, and has doubtless supplanted knowledge of the novel altogether for many more.

The novel Whisky Galore carefully draws together several of the motifs that have been established in the first two comedies. The third exploits more conspicuously the device of the particular mimicking the general. Wartime food-rationing seriously afflicts the British mainland, while in the two Toddays the sole concern is the enforced sobriety resulting from a whisky drought which strongly threatens the spiritual and social welfare of the two island communities. Concentrating on the delayed marriages of two suitors, Sergeant-major Odd and the Great Todday
schoolteacher George Campbell, it is not until the providential wreck of the Cabinet Minister carrying fifty thousand cases of whisky - which must be smuggled ashore under the righteous nose of the puritan naysayer Waggett and Military Intelligence - that the plot tensions can be resolved, concluding, true to the conventional arcadian comic structure, with a double-wedding, resolution, and restoration of harmony.

This helps in making Whisky Galore perhaps the most superficially accessible and pleasing of the comedies: within the intentional mood of threatened Gaelic idyll incidental detail, event, dialogue and humorous action are carefully combined to create a well-balanced and entirely genial novel. Part of its success also emanates from its discreet and understated identification of a conflict in values; the increasingly self-righteous meddlings from Waggett, redoubling his efforts to suppress the spontaneous and communal pleasure of the islanders in securing their find of whisky, while - perhaps more dangerously - there is the figure of George Campbell, languishing under an authentic maternal tyranny which at times stretches the comic boundaries a little too far. Yet Whisky Galore, more so than its companion-pieces, possesses strong Kailyard overtones in the sense of a conspicuously honest seam of sentimentality which would appear to be endorsed if not flattered by the novel’s implications, not subverted or short-circuited in the manner of The Monarch of the Glen.

The novel’s comic dynamic is decidedly Lauderesque, even reminiscent of the antics of Will Fyfe, in that the plot relies upon the sanitising of a social ill possessed of its own peculiar character and legacy in Scotland, a theme which few modern Scottish writers have felt able to ignore - alcoholism. Whisky Galore is in effect a prolonged euphemism for the drunken Scotsman postcard-joke. This is of course a dangerous accusation, and it would represent an untenable one if it were merely a case of begrudging a writer for attempting to persuade us into laughing away a national shortcoming, but while this is the ostensible nature of the book’s undoubted appeal, on a deeper level, probably a subconscious one, there is an undercurrent of glib wish-fulfillment at play. If the novel successfully transcends actuality into the benign terrain of the comic perspective, it also seriously distorts that actuality by attempting to elide it.

275
The elusive whisky is presented not simply as a feature of the island's peculiar social character: the community's social character depends upon it. Fearless bravado fired by the water of life was responsible for political failure in the four 'Airts' episode from The North Wind of Love; in Whisky Galore the same state of inebriation ensures an equally 'political' triumph, the islanders' triumph over a pedantic and autocratic English bureaucrat. Whisky deprivation actually results in the only death of the entire comic series, and it is also the obstacle preventing George Campbell from confronting the repressive Calvinist regime directed against his happiness by his draconian mother. Following a sufficiently large dose of the gift from the sea administered by Dr MacLaren - the closest the novel will allow itself to depicting a genuine alcoholic - George finds sufficient courage to arrest the regressive middle-aged childhood in which he has been bound:

"...I thought that drink made me muddled. Well, I never felt less muddled in my life. I see quite clearly that the time has come for me to put my foot down, and I am going to put my foot down tonight, Doctor. Mind you, I knew I was treating Catriona badly by not insisting on my mother's inviting her to tea as soon as she heard we were engaged, but I just hadn't the strength of mind to assert myself. And then suddenly tonight at the reiteach I saw that I was risking the whole of my future happiness and I made up my mind that I must do something about it. Either my mother is going to behave sensibly and decently to Catriona or I'm going to turn her out of the schoolhouse.'

'George, I think you must really be very tight.'
'I may be. I don't know. I've never been tight before.'
'The test will come when you're sober again.'
'If I find that being sober means being shy and feeble and unable to stand up to my mother I shall get tight again, Doctor. I've got this case of whisky that Alan Galbraith gave me.'
'You'll have to watch out you don't become the slave of drink, George. I very nearly let that happen to me, and I've only just pulled myself out of it. Indeed, a lot of people don't think I've pulled myself out of it yet.'

There is a discernible modulation in tone throughout this episode which takes the reader very far from the comedies' habitually relaxed and gentle idiom: George's oratorical denouncement of his mother would not sound out of place within the impeccably stylish and soundly-reasoned dissertations beloved of the characters of The Four Winds. It makes clear that Whisky Galore takes us into a terrain of deliberate wish
fulfillment, with implications which become very clear if one contrasts Mackenzie's treatment of George's intoxicated liberation with the interpretation of precisely the same theme (substitute paternalism for maternalism) in George Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901), the first and most bitterly antithetical anti-Kailyard novel. Such a juxtaposition is too artificial to permit the suggestion that Brown's treatment is somehow 'right' whereas Mackenzie's is 'wrong'—critics have long since agreed that the strenuous naturalism of Brown and MacDougall Hay is as excessive as the sentimentality of the Kailyards they were attempting to subvert. MacDiarmid himself claimed that *The House with the Green Shutters* and Gillespie represented the Kailyard 'disguised as its opposite'. The polarity illustrates, however, the extent to which Mackenzie's most blatantly sentimental evocation of Barra life in *Whisky Galore* obliged him to inhabit a perspective clearly reminiscent of the Kailyard. A novel very deliberately concerned with weaknesses within the Scottish creative imagination, the *House with the Green Shutters* portrays in John Gourlay a man whose commercial imagination is dulled by his dependence on an awesome physical power and presence, and in his son, one whose imaginative potential as a writer can only be fulfilled through the sensitivity accentuated by alcohol:

But Gourlay, though he could not understand,.felt the fortitude of whiskey was somehow akin to the fortitude described. In the increased vitality it gave, he was able to tread down the world. If he walked on a wretched day in a wretched street, when he happened to be sober, his mind was hither and yon in a thousand perceptions and a thousand fears, fastening to (and fastened to) each squalid thing around. But with whiskey humming in his blood, he paced onwards in a happy dream. The wretched puddles by the way, the frowning rookeries where misery squalled, the melancholy of the street, were passed unheeded by. His distracted powers rallied home; he was concentrate, his own man again, the hero of his musing mind.

The complementary imaginative failures of father and son are ironically resolved in the novel's climactic act of patricide: if alcohol permits young Gourlay to harness fleetingly the excessive impulses of his imagination, it allows him when confronted with his father on a purely physical level sufficient brutality to murder him violently. No liberation of Mackenzie's sort results, of course: instead, entrapment in hallucination and hysterical paranoia, leading eventually to the
group-suicide of young Gourlay, his mother, and sister. For Brown the murder symbolises two of the irreconcilable forces he perceives in the Scottish character - dependence on brute physicality at the expense of the intellect (John Gourlay), and the debilitating absence of an intellectual confidence independent of creative angst (young Gourlay). Much the same theme is developed to even more horrific lengths, and with a more awesomely relentless realism, in J. McDougall Hay's masterpiece Gillespie (1914), in an even more uncompromising expression of Brown's antithetical naturalism.

Mackenzie of course strongly eschewed the stark Scottish realism, predominantly urban, which was to become a preoccupation of the Scottish novel in the wake of Brown, Hay, Blake, Gibbon and others, although one must not forget those localised depictions of urban Scotland within The Four Winds. In Whisky Galore the horrific alcoholism of Brown and Hay has become an innocuous euphemism, an endemic and collectively genial inebriety which permits the oppositions to self-fulfillment and communal harmony to be overcome. The magical dram and its associated litany is not depicted simply as an aspect of local tradition: unable to combat external interference on the level of intellect, it requires intoxicated guile to secure the final triumph. Like Fionn MacColla in his autobiography Too Long in this Condition, Mackenzie presents the islanders' innocuous intoxication as a manifestation of their subconscious expression of a lost Gaelic purity and glory, embodied in Whisky Galore by the Gaelic poet Duncan Ban and his inebriated muse:

[Scottish drunkenness] is very largely due, and this applies to even the most seemingly coarse of Scots, to the fact that they retained in the benmost recesses of their consciousness, but insistent and demanding, a sense or awareness that there had been a Glory: and they lurched into drunkenness, excessive and senseless drunkenness it might well be, cut of despair that they had lost contact with what might have given them dignity, and in the attempt to establish contact and connection...I have all my life understood that beyond the drunkenness of the drunken Scot lay precisely such an ineradicable spiritual nostalgia.42

Mackenzie shares with MacColla a subjective identification with the Gaelic condition, and this 'ineradicable spiritual nostalgia' is clearly a feature of Mackenzie's portrayal of his islanders. Whisky Galore reveals in its intention an elementary mythic impulse which has assisted in its
Redeeming the Kailyard

popularity as nostalgic escapism. The plot amounts to an unashamed exploitation of modern fairy-tale or epic folk-legend where the innocent and impoverished islanders find salvation in a liquid crock of gold. Resistance can be overcome, love can be rewarded, and well-being restored:

Many romantic pages have been written about the sunken Spanish galleon in the bay of Tobermory. That 4000-ton steamship on the rocks of Little Todday provided more practical romance in three and a half hours than the Tobermory galleon has provided in three and a half centuries. Doubloons, ducats, and ducatoons, moidores, pieces of eight, sequins, guineas, rose and angel nobles, what are these to vaunt above the liquid gold carried by the Cabinet Minister? (400)

As important an impulse behind this mock-heroic gesture is the strenuous reality of world war which forms the background against which the novel's life-affirming optimism and innocence is a reaction, just as in Waugh's Brideshead Revisited the novel's orgiastic preoccupation with food and drink emphasises the same war-torn context of stringent denial which the author escapes by inhabiting an idealised pre-war past. Leaving aside the war, the level of fantasy offered to the Scottish readership of Whisky Galore is one where Scottish characters can assert after a dram the freedom of expression and communal identity denied them on the level of their actual lived experience. This represents a justifiable enough motive, but it is a putative identity offered through an icon in Scottish representation whose infliction of a cruelly disfigured self-image is unparalleled in its definition of the Scots for outsiders: whisky, drink, and drunkenness.

If The Monarch of the Glen attempts in part a demythologising approach to Highland history, Whisky Galore re-mythologises - in the illusory sense of myth - an escapist identity as delimiting as the salutary kitsch decor of that Highland hotel lounge in Portrose upon which Ogilvie and McPhee must establish their politico-cultural transformation of Scottish society; the same representational blind alley through which Mackenzie entered this first phase of his comic transformation of Scotland. If Whisky Galore indicates that its author did not see, unlike the majority of his fellow Scottish writers, repudiation of the Kailyard as essential to cultural sincerity, it
it remains to be asked to what extent the author's entry into the
Kailyard represents an attempt to redeem it of its acknowledged
deficiencies.

IV Kailyard: Culture and Genre

In his autobiography Thank You For Having Me, the poet and critic
Maurice Lindsay, in a brief reminiscence of his friendship with
Mackenzie, concludes:

The early novels, especially Carnival, Sinister Street, and Guy and
Pauline, have in them the stuff of period permanence, while the long
series of Ben Nevis farces contain a laughter-potential ingredient
bound to re-erupt for the delight of some future generation, and
disturb once again the apparently indispensable ferment of stodgy,
starchy Scottish hypocrisy in the doing.\textsuperscript{42}

If hypocrisy is perhaps too splenetic a term to denote the suspicious
reluctance of the 'high' cultural establishment to evaluate objectively
and fully popular Scottish literature amidst the complexities and
inadequacies of attitude examined previously, Lindsay's diagnosis is
nonetheless a tempting one in this context. Mackenzie, the Catholic-
Nationalist flamboyant who carries out a rigorous hatchet-job on John
Knox in Catholicism in Scotland (1935), waves the convivial wand of
Catholic non-conformity over neo-Calvinist guilt by transforming
Scottish history into a mock-heroic farce, Presbyterian sobriety a dull
nightmare. His comedies are the distorted mirror in which stodgy,
starchy Scottish hypocrisy sees its exaggerated image. The sagacious
and satirical intelligence - and the unshakeable faith - of Father James
Macalister is at the heart of Mackenzie's Gaelic sentimentality.

A culture under the influence of colonisation or imperialism, as Frantz
Fanon has convincingly demonstrated in The Wretched of the Earth, often
assists in the process of 'inferiorisation' by endorsing the values of
the dominant culture through the creation of its own self-deprecatory
images. Many commentators on popular Scottish culture perceive in its
most clichéd fixations precisely this mechanism at work. Lindsay
Paterson, in a symposium devoted to Grigor's Scotch Myths exhibition in
The Bulletin of Scottish Politics, illustrates this well:

280
The enemy to national development is, in short...our own perverted collective self-image...Tartan's principal legacy is, in other words, a cancerous national inferiority complex: the quite unmistakable end-product of two centuries of tawdry palliatives - of escaping from social problems into wishful fantasy.\textsuperscript{44}

Self-laceration of this kind, however, involves in a sense turning Fanon's diagnosis against oneself: the symptoms of cultural colonisation are frequently most discernible in those who, in stressing their aversion to the manifestation of their own cultural condition, imply a fear of being equated with that culture, a reflex which effectively reinforces the values of the coloniser.\textsuperscript{45}

Maurice Lindsay's seemingly innocent complaint that the Scottish intellect appears hag-ridden with a form of guilt is accentuated in the light of Fanon's perspective. Too obsessed with the need to maintain a distanced superiority to be able to contemplate self-irony, 'Scottish hypocrisy' is equally crucial to an appraisal of Mackenzie's problematical status within the prevalence of what Paterson sees to be an endemic national 'inferiority complex'.

The preceding pages have suggested an approach to The Monarch of the Glen, Keep the Home Guard Turning, and Whisky Galore - the last especially - which highlights the various ambivalences to be seen at play: between fantasy and realism, sentimentalism and falsification, parody and celebration. The novels' creation of paradox, however, is possibly as much on the part of the audience as the result of authorial intentionality. The attempt to resolve such ambivalences is handicapped by the need for both a generic interpretation (arcadian comedy, pastoral), and a cultural analysis (Kailyard, Tartanry). While so much of the comic substance clearly derives from the author's perception of representational paradigms in Scottish culture, in formal and technical terms the novels owe just as much to a reliance on traditional features of established pastoral and comic modes. Plot dynamic emanates from conflicts within an acknowledged Green World, in which the presence of an alien agency provokes the devices of assimilation and rejection, the struggle to overcome obstacles to communal stability, and the final restoration of unity.
Redeeming the Kailyard

Francis Russell Hart, in the only sustained and serious discussion of the comedies available, detects in Mackenzie's method an incongruous imposition of the pastoral and comic mode upon a superficial Scottishness, the final result of which is an overall slightness:

...it is relevant to recognise in [the comedies] a humour that is always at a distance from its own materials...when [Mackenzie] turned north to Scotland, he came with a strong ideological and sentimental view of Gaelic Scotland, and without access to the Gaelic or Nordic archaism underlying the farcical humour of Gunn, Linklater, and Jane Duncan...Even in the Highlands, Mackenzie remains the Hellenist he and his hero Ogilvie have always been, and fittingly his humour or 'farce' is in the sentimental mode of arcadian comedy.46

The problem with this approach - it is a problem inevitable within the classificatory motive behind Hart's survey as a whole - is the way in which it allows for a conveniently generic gloss which dispenses with the need for evaluating the relationship of genre to a wider cultural context. By this token, the significance for Hart of Whisky Galore can be reduced wholly to that of genre:

The polarities in these mythical Hebrides are those of festive comedy in modern dress: the autocratic precisian, the Malvolio, Captain Paul Waggett...his antagonist, Chestertonian Falstaff, Father Macalister, boisterous, jovial leader of the local resistance.47

Mackenzie's comic parameters, in otherwords, are just that: pale reflections of the larger cultural paradigm of English and Shakespearian comedy, effectively depriving the result of either a generic or a cultural significance since each element is seen to be at odds with the other. Loosely put, Mackenzie poaches on Englishness to further a spurious Scottishness, without fully engaging with either.

The particulars of Hart's perspective in this instance are important in a way which extends beyond their specific relevance to Mackenzie, since in miniature they echo Edwin Muir's Scott and Scotland (1936) and that book's argument, which posits the deprivation of Scottish culture of linguistic and literary autonomy by inscribing upon it the 'organic' values of an English literary 'tradition', a centralist culture through which any expression of a Scottish identity depends for its valid utterance. Underwritten in Muir's whole approach is an implication that genre and culture, or tradition, are synonymous concepts, for he sees the absence in Scotland of the sufficiently extensive range of genres
Redeeming the Kailyard

required to create a 'national' literature as a symptom of the discontinuity he takes pains to assert:

But it is clear that Scottish literature lacks whole areas which we find in others. I have already spoken of the absence of poetic drama. But Scots is also without a prose, that is a separate vehicle for thought...In poetry itself, apart from its great period, Scotland has little more than two forms to show: the lyric and the ballad. Burns, Ferguson and Hogg overstepped these narrow confines, and Hugh MacDiarmid has done so in our own time. Nevertheless these two forms have been the almost unvarying staple of Scottish poetry since the sixteenth century, while England had produced a variety of poetic forms to indicate which one has only to mention the names of some of its chief poets: Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, Pope, Blake, Wordsworth, Browning. In these the English tradition lives, and lives in perpetual change."

The resonant finality of that last line is beautifully weighed - the reiterated lives, modulating into the closing sense of an ineluctable absolute, in perpetual change. The implied polarity is between an English culture of eternal evolution and a Scottish culture that has not only died, but which never evolved at all. Muir's equation of genre with an organic culture becomes the means of asserting an English hegemony, and a means of imposing that cultural hegemony upon the peripheral Scottish culture in a way which renders the context of that culture negligible. The facile relativity of this argument is quite remarkable if it is reduced to its most simple configuration: the anglocentric perspective turns Scottish cultural difference into cultural poverty. Though thankfully Hart cannot be blamed for similar motives, to a significant extent he is in danger of endorsing this ideology in his well-reasoned dismissal of a genuine Scottish context for Mackenzie. This is testimony to the persistently stunting influence of Muir's diagnosis, which has greatly assisted in furthering the complexities confronting an adequate 'generic' understanding of 20th century Scottish fiction.

Alternative ideologues are equally inappropriate. The most influential, Northrop Frye's The Anatomy of Criticism (1957), demonstrated the case for a grammar of literary genre which assimilated the identity of individual cultures into a multi-levelling amorphous typology of myth and archetype, a kind of literary Esperanto. To instance a relevant example, no critic of the modern Scottish novel has
presumed to classify Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* as generically indebted to the form of Greek tragic drama without also outlining the specific cultural background of Kailyard popularity which was a far more conspicuous motive in its composition. Likewise, the thematic contrast between Brown's novel and *Whisky Galore* somewhat presumptuously attempted previously in terms of Mackenzie's manipulation of the ubiquitous and loaded Scottish icon of whisky, possesses a significance which cannot be subsumed by the anonymity of the label 'festive comedy'. This can be taken further: if it is possible both to justify and condemn *Whisky Galore*, then the dialectic can be attributed to one between culture and genre.

There is an obvious distinction to be made between enjoying whisky and celebrating it as an aspect of social life on the one hand, and urban alcoholism on the other; perhaps the wish-fulfilling structure of Mackenzie's novel ought to deflect, rather than encourage, criticism of misrepresentation or sentimentality. Within the comic genre, one has to be careful not to dismiss the Green World for lacking social realism. Yet once again Maurice Lindsay's hypocrisy rears its starchy head, in the sense that Scottish culture so specifically finds itself wary of endorsing sentimentalising distortions in the wake of Kailyard's and Tartanry's grip on imaginative potential. With this in mind, William Power's implied vindication of the Kailyard quoted previously must be borne in mind: '...it was better to help keep alive the native faith and virtues and idyllic memories of the people than to remind them of the scorching fires of Moloch through which they were passing'. Power, deeply unsettled as any other Scottish critic about the Kailyard, found it possible to exonerate the movement of its exploitative role in the political and cultural sphere by omitting any reference to the context of cultural mass-production in the late phase of Victorian popular journalism which spawned it; he reduces it, instead, to a manifestation of a collective national 'psychosis', or in George Blake's famous phrase 'a sort of national infantilism'. For the dispossessed, industrialised working classes of the Lowlands - a large percentage of which comprised the Highland diaspora of disintegrated rural communities before and after the Clearances flowing into Scotland's rapidly expanding urban industrial lowland belt - the Kailyard was 'infantile' enough in that it
Redeeming the Kailyard

represented an innocently childish urge for an idealised image of rural Scotland that was as instinctive as pastoral. Similarly, the phenomenal acceleration of Tartan fetishism can be seen as the disembodied, stunted version of nostalgia for the Highland culture which had undergone a gradual process of destruction since 1746 in the aftermath of Culloden. This is an escapist motif repeated in the Hebridean isolation of Keep the Home Guard Turning and Whisky Galore, which subvert the turbulent historical immediacy of world war, a conspicuous feature of much British fiction written during the 1939-45 period.

Crucial though this pastoral motive is, to impute the success of Kailyard solely to an expression of a fundamental, 'generic' impulse is insufficient. This chapter has already alluded to the important dimension of the emigré perspective which did so much to nourish its popularity. As Christopher Harvie has convincingly argued recently, of equal importance is the role played by the culturally and politically centralist metropolitan establishment throughout the high phase of late Victorian imperialism, a period which further witnesses the consolidation of London-based print-capitalism. At this time the political hegemony of London was facing radical demands for reform in the land system and church government from the British provinces, grievances which included agitation for devolution from Westminster to regional assemblies. In Harvie's analysis, these demands, embodied in The Radical Programme of 1885, represented

...a challenge which the political realignment of 1886 frustrated. By concentrating the Liberal party's attention on the 'great moral issue' of home rule for Ireland, Gladstone restored the balance of power within Britain. The hegemony of the traditional governing elite, now reinforced by the growing efficiency of Oxford and Cambridge, was enhanced, and its ideology of centralization under parliamentary sovereignty endorsed. The centre of gravity of British politics swung decisively towards London.50

This consolidation of English hegemony found a literary correlative in the leading non-conformist journal of the time, the British Weekly, edited by the entrepreneurial Scot William Robertson Nicoll, whose shrewd literary salesmanship made the journal perhaps the most influential arbiter of popular literary taste in the late 19th century. London-based of course, the British Weekly

285
soon became an influence for drawing provincial literary currents into the mainstream, in which process they became mysteriously transformed. (Robertson Nicol's Kailyard) was not limited to Scotland, although the Scottish example provided it with most of its momentum. In the 1880's and 1890's he took the lead in producing a new and sanitised provincial identity, in which the character of the English provinces, as well as of Scotland, was recreated in terms not of politics but of marketable culture.  

Robertson Nicol's editorship instated on the cultural plane the political assimilation of its provinces by the metropolitan political establishment to an ideology of British identity of 'unity', an identity to which the concept of Englishness was, and still remains, essential. If this new sanitised and neutered cultural identity and nostalgia corroborated the newly-consolidated balance of political power, it furthermore guaranteed the increased solidity of metropolitan print-capitalism: not only the native talent, but also the the massive literary dividends, flowed south from Scotland.

In the context which Harvie clearly establishes, it becomes clear that the term 'Kailyard' is particularly unsuited in referring to a genre, or even a sub-genre, within Scottish fiction. Genre, by its very definition as an abstract entity in the armament of literary terminology, denotes a concept incapable in isolation of dealing with individual cultural configurations. Precisely because the Kailyard not only loosely refers to a particular school of prose writing sharing recurrent stylistic, structural and ideological features but also implies the entire process of Scotland's and England's political and cultural development, a process constantly altering perceptions and attitudes, 'Kailyard' cannot signify a genre: the inherent value of genre is that its applicability can extend outwith the process of cultural change.

Following the logic of this, the 'anti-Kailyard' tag which became synonymous with the novels of George Douglas Brown, J. MacDougall Hay and Lewis Grassic Gibbon is equally restricted in its generic applicability. As William Power realised, the Kailyard/anti-Kailyard complex as a double-edged configuration is potentially incapable of unravelling its own contradictions; Barrie and Gibbon may be polarised in terms of intent and emphasis, but the cultural situation from which they set out is the same.
Redeeming the Kailyard

Drumtochty and Kinraddie exist alongside and even within each other, without being fully conscious of each other's existence, for we all have a queer self-preservative faculty of not seeing what we don't want to see. There is a middle element which is neither Drumtochty nor Kinraddie but is conscious of both...52

It is this strange and not often acknowledged 'middle element' - the fusion of conscious artifice and sentiment with unconscious idealism and evasion - which Mackenzie inhabits in his Scottish comedies, and the dialectical tension Power detects helps in illustrating this further.

'Mackenzie's achievement in the best of his tartan farces is to dramatise genuine crises of value in the comic stereotypes of arcadian romance', concludes Hart in summary.53 He remains hesitant to concede, by the addition of a single word, that the crises in question are related to cultural values, for above all it is the values of Highland culture and the extent to which these can be manipulated and exploited by alien modes of perception that the comedies return to incessantly as their focus. Like Eric Linklater's Laxdale Hall(1951), the Scottish novel closest in spirit to Mackenzie's Highland fiction, where the relationships in a remote Highland community are ironically and comically juxtaposed with Greek myth and tragedy in order to accentuate thematic aspects of the narrative, Mackenzie's reconciliation between the seemingly irreconcilable - his Scottish subject-matter and an 'alien' arcadian narrative pattern - can be seen as redemptive. Strangely, though Hart is favourable towards Linklater's technique in Laxdale Hall which he describes as 'set in Compton Mackenzie country', he is not prepared to interpret Mackenzie in the same positive spirit. Like Linklater's, Mackenzie's is an approach lending a new accessibility to the popular Scottish novel which does not necessitate the cultural impoverishment which underwrites the Kailyard. Reversing the process so often bemoaned in Scottish fiction, Mackenzie's intention is to divert the mainstream - Hart's English comic parameters - so that it flows into the peripheral current rather than swallowing that current in its tidal pull to the centre.

It now remains to examine the precise geographical influence upon the author of that peripheral source which affected his writing so decisively and which he, in turn, wished to enrich - the island of Barra - and its peculiar combined legacy of political intuition and
Redeeming the Kailyard

sentimental nostalgia. This, and the second group of the Scottish comedies, is the concern of the next chapter.
CHAPTER SEVEN

SCOTCHING THE MYTHS?
The Scottish Comedies (2)

I 'Catholic Barra': Politics and Sentiment

More so than any other of the Scottish literary figures identified with the Nationalist movement, Mackenzie's Catholicism became integral to his conception of a Scottish nationalist politics. This undoubtedly influenced his decision to move to Barra, an overwhelmingly Catholic island, in 1933 (see Chapter Four), and his faith underlies the ambiguity between affectionate sentimentality and pragmatic political activity which characterises his ten-year sojourn on the island, living on which permitted him to write The Four Winds of Love. In typical self-dramatisation, this is symbolised by the ceremonious laying of the foundation-stone of 'Suidheachan', Mackenzie's new Barra home, in 1935, which was reported in the Daily Record:

Father Mackenzie blessing the foundation stone of the author's new house at Vaslain, said 'You came to assimilate our life...we need his help...by blending together, by mutual transfusion of our ideals and grafting of sentiment and character. A golden circle of nobleness and character used to surround Eilean na h'Oige (the island of Youth). That circle, although not broken and shattered altogether, suffered the coming of a world whose ways are artificial and insincere. It is up to us, with your co-operation and help, to repair the damage done to that golden circle.' Stevenson and Samoa are evoked. Tusitala, as the natives called him, also built himself an island home and in time fashioned a 'golden circle' with servants and retainers around him and became a benignant island chieftain. If Mr Mackenzie has not forsaken politics, we may see the analogy further realised, though Scotland's future will probably remain his sphere of service, Barra may be the core of things inspirational.'

The last phrase is particularly important: Barra offered a wider perspective on developments in mainland Scotland whilst securing a remoteness of spiritual ambience.

If the 'assimilation' to the golden circle was successful from the new settler's point of view, this certainly appears to have been reciprocated
Scotching the Myths

by the islanders themselves. Since Mackenzie's own recollections of life on Barra are scattered throughout his various autobiographical writings, perhaps the most coherent picture available of his relationship with the island and its community is provided by Eric Linklater in The Man On My Back, in which he vividly depicts a winter visit to the author:

He has malicious laughter for the quiddities of other men, especially for the limitations of Whigs, prigs, and bureaucrats...But bureaucracy is only an item in the catalogue of his scorn, that blows against all belittlement of mankind. His faith, whose ardency would destroy a stronger man but nurtures him, is a romantic humanism...There is no wall round his house, but a great girdle of affection, and on a Sunday evening the billiard-room that was built for many books and a little company is full of Barra men who come, intent as if to holmgang or a horsefair, to play snooker. There will be Crockle, who was a sailor and once a Turkish prisoner, and Father John, a minstrel and a poet; Father Dominic, the Red Scholar, the Coddy, and a dozen more; and the room will be warm with jollity, clamorous with Gaelic voices. And in a corner of the room, in a lull of the game, they will tell you, 'He is a great man. Compton. And he is a kind man too.'

Yet Mackenzie's commitment to the island and its welfare was not restricted to the maintenance of social cosiness, the 'great girdle of affection' so clearly reflected in the Todday comedies. In 1933 he had met and formed a close friendship with John Lorne Campbell of the neighbouring island of Canna, who, like Mackenzie, shared that mature assimilation to Scottish culture in defiance of an English public school and Oxford education. A wide-ranging and accomplished Gaelic scholar, he had already published in 1933 the authoritative and still-influential Highland Songs Of The '45. He has continued to publish extensively and continues to be regarded as one of the few remaining bastions of Gaeldom.

At Campbell's instigation, together in 1933 they formed the Sea League - in imitation of the Land Leagues of the 1880's - in an attempt to rouse Whitehall from its apathetic indifference to the increase in illegal trawling around the West Coast of Scotland, which was seriously threatening the livelihood of indigenous drift-net fishermen. By addressing many meetings and widely circulating leaflets and petitions in both Gaelic and English, the League's joint-campaigners won almost unanimous support, and succeeded - more remarkable - in persuading the Government to accelerate further legislation for penalising the
Scotching the Myths

offenders. There were further successful campaigns of this sort which clearly provided first-hand experience for the depiction of the fictional confrontations between the Toddays and implacable Whitehall bureaucracy.

During this same period, Mackenzie and Campbell collaborated further in the latter's scholarly pursuits. The Book of Barra, published in 1936 and edited by Campbell, was an anthology of definitive essays on the culture and history of the island, acknowledging Mackenzie's editorial guidance, the latter also supplying the opening contribution, 'Catholic Barra'. Ostensibly an account of the violent impact of the Reformation on the Catholic community of the island, it contains interesting apercus which pinpoint the author's equation of Catholicism with the innate nature of Scotland's historical - and contemporary - cultural character, a character defined specifically within the confines of Gaeldom:

I have drawn particular attention to the Catholic history of Barra because the religious question is unfortunately still a dominant political attitude in Scotland, and it is useful to remind some of my fellow-countrymen both in the north and in the south that the Catholicism of the Highlands and Islands, which was the faith of Wallace and of Bruce, is as essentially Scottish as the Established Church. Mackenzie enlarged this perception into manifesto in Catholicism and Scotland (1935), his contribution to the Routledge ten-volume Voice of Scotland series edited by Hugh MacDiarmid and Lewis Grassic Gibbon. Mackenzie's correspondence with Gibbon concerning his contribution is revealing. Initially, Mackenzie had declined Gibbon's invitation to write on the Catholic question, offering as an alternative the significance of Jacobitism, which, Mackenzie suggested, would still permit him to promote an explicitly Catholic perspective:

I should immensely like to do the book you so kindly suggest, but I feel that it is not one which a Catholic can do without involving himself in the morass of prejudice. However much I tried to be fair sectarian fury would never be mitigated, and my arguments would be defeated before they began. If you include this book in your series it should be written by a rather less prominent Catholic than myself, or better still, by an agnostic. What about Bruce Marshall? He has an objective eye and writes well. Why don't you let me write What Jacobitism has meant for Scotland, which is after all only another aspect of the religious business, and is surely as important an influence as Lenin, who if I may be allowed to say so has had no influence at all.
The concluding gibe at Lenin, a strangely fatuous statement, emphasises once again the political polarity between the two novelists which Mackenzie had made uncompromisingly public in his 'hostile' Daily Mail review of Gibbon's Grey Granite (see Chapter Four). Gibbon does not appear to have borne any ill will towards Mackenzie on this account, and he relented to Mackenzie's suggested alteration. In his acknowledgement, Mackenzie outlines his contention:

My Jacobitism would have to begin with the first of the Stuarts, and be carried down to the year of grace 1935. I can knock John Knox just as effectively with such a book, and the Prince Charlie part of it will take up practically very little space.

In brief the thesis will be that (1) The Covenanters (2) The Jacobites (3) The Republicans of the beginning of the 19th century were all expressions of nationalism and because unfortunately they were irreconcilable Scotland is in her present hash.6

Never one to pale before the scent of battle, however, Mackenzie on the strength of his rigid convictions

...felt suddenly impelled to return to the original suggestion and immediately notified Mitchell of my change of mind. I was too late. He was already dead when my letter was posted to him. A melancholy coincidence, no doubt, and nothing more; but as some of Mitchell's friends might suppose Catholicism and Scotland an inappropriate book to dedicate to the memory of this writer whose untimely death has been such a heavy loss to Scottish letters, I think it is right to append this note of explanation.7

'Catholic Barra' and Catholicism and Scotland were written within a year of each other: clearly it was the spiritual ambience of Barra which effected a form of synthesis between a religious and political identification with Scotland which was to culminate in John Ogilvie's advocacy of a Catholic-Nationalist confederation of all Celtic cultures in The North Wind of Love, written in 1944-45. If the decade 1935-1945 represents a crystallisation of Mackenzie's pro-Catholic nationalism, one consequence of this was an obviously acute commitment to undermining the superficial manipulation of Highland culture, which, as Mackenzie explains in 'Catholic Barra', was a major editorial motive in the compilation of The Book of Barra:

292
Scotching the Myths

My complaint as a reader, as a critic, and as an inhabitant against some of the numerous works published during the last decade about the Western Isles is not so much of their superficiality as of their effort to make the Islands and the Islanders conform to a sentimental preconception in the minds of their authors. The religious, political, and economic prejudices of the past which are apparent throughout The Book of Barra assist, if involuntarily, the triumph of the inexorable fact; but this nebulous twentieth-century impressionism will be of as much service to historians in the future as the posters of esurient railway companies.

The irony of this complaint should require no stressing. The fact that Mackenzie should unwittingly supply a critique of his own 'sentimental' recourse to island life as a comic medium fourteen years before the composition of Whisky Galore, and a critique in precisely the terms favoured by those who have denigrated the Highland comedies, evokes Maurice Lindsay's 'hypocrisy' once more. If this provides something of a depressing parable for the complex paradox created by the intention of the comedies and their critical reception, Mackenzie's remarks at least serve to demonstrate that long before The Monarch of the Glen was conceived, he was already conscious of a representational pitfall - Scottish 'kitsch' romanticism - the inadequacies of which he wished to be seen taking pains to question, and avoid.

He goes on to assert explicitly that the purpose of The Book of Barra was to challenge the trivialising perspective that reduces Gaelic culture to postcard-sized appropriation of stock-Celtic institutions:

It is difficult in these days to persuade people afflicted with the second-sight to speak about it. If there has been on one side too much slick scepticism, there has been on the other a tawdry romanticism which has brought even greater discredit upon the subject. Therefore it was decided in editing The Book of Barra not to supply any more fairy-lamps for the Celtic twilight. Those who visit the Islands must discover their own road to the confidence of the people whom they will find equally contemptuous of the sceptic and the professional fairy-hunter.

By the time of this second phase of comedies, Mackenzie has clearly evolved a more ironic, acutely perceived sense of 'Scottishness' in its exploitative role as commercialised 'marketable culture', in Christopher Harvie's phrase, precisely in keeping with these critical remarks of fifteen years earlier; indeed, the 'professional fairy-hunters' to which he cynically refers become the subject of the first novel of this group.
Scotching the Myths

Tourism, the role of the Scottish media, popular, more contemporary icons like the Loch Ness Monster, inject a further dimension of fresh topicality to Mackenzie's comic invention. If there is little diminution in the inevitable diet of sentimental celebration which so displeased the author as a younger man, there is at least an equally discernible tendency towards subversion of Scottish myths rather than their corroboration, in which the mature Mackenzie and his more critical younger self can be seen as reconciled.

II 'Ossian’s Astral Body': Hunting the Fairies

Developing further the terrain of The Monarch of the Glen, this fourth novel of the series concerns the assimilation of Scottish romanticism by rich, culture-starved, gullible American tourists injected into Ben Nevis's topographical shrine to Tartan, and also introduces the theme of aggressive American social competitiveness in the rivalry between the two high-society Boston dames, Florence Urquhart-Unwin and Linda Wolfingham. Significantly, then, the chief emblem of the cultural quest in Hunting the Fairies is the attempt by Mrs Urquhart-Unwin to capture, with cranky photographic hardware, the 'psychic presence' of Ossian himself - complete with harp and white robes - on film for the enlightenment of the Ossianic Society of Boston, her Presidency of which she is determined to secure in defiance of Mrs Wolfingham's sly campaign to win her out.

The novel might be seen as Mackenzie's contemporary parody of James Macpherson's spurious 'search' of 1760-1761 (financed by eminent figures within the Enlightenment) for further material towards the authentication of his pseudonymous ancient Celtic bard, Ossian, which - more importantly - would authenticate for the rest of the world a demonstrably Celtic epic consciousness, endorsing in the literary context the intellectual supremacy of the Scottish Enlightenment by creating a Scottish generic paradigm equal to that of Homer and Shakespeare.

As an example of widespread and spectacular cultural appropriation, Ossian provides a symbol ideally suited to Mackenzie's purpose. The
Scotching the Myths

importance of the Ossian phenomenon is concisely summarised by Murray Grigor, in the accompanying booklet to his Scotch Myths exhibition:

At once Scotland had been dealt a glorious and heroic past (albeit an Irish Celtic one) and a place in the vanguard of European thought bent on creating the Romantic Movement. Over the next fifty-odd years Ossianism gripped the western world. Some measure of Macpherson’s impact can be gauged by the 122 separate editions and translations indexed under Ossian in the National Library of Scotland...though never read today, (Macpherson’s Ossian) has left behind an enduring image of the Highlands alive in music, opera and painting. Of all Scottish myths his is still the most potent underpinning spirit in Scotland’s invented history.10

The startling, and salutary, paradox arising from the Ossian phenomenon is that Macpherson’s seminal influence on the development of European Romanticism (somehow encapsulated in the fact that Goethe taught himself Gaelic specifically in order to read him) should be based to such a degree on highly questionable pseudo-historical and cultural constructs. Critical speculation on the poems has always fluctuated uncertainly between acknowledgement of artificiality and the positing of genuine cultural importance and literary merit for this very reason.11 Perhaps more so than is the case with Walter Scott - in many ways Macpherson’s natural successor - Ossian somehow epitomises the inevitable dependence of a sense of a Scottish cultural identity, past and present, upon resources which, under scrutiny, begin to erode any inherent sense of authenticity. This is precisely the case with Kailyard and Tartanry, in part the legacy of Macpherson and Scott: pseudo-cultural configurations that are simultaneously real and illusory.

The appearance of Ossian as an icon in the author’s arsenal of Scottishness in Hunting the Fairies reveals a new level of ability in Mackenzie’s need to establish a potent symbol of false cultural consciousness more instantly realised than the comparatively laboured development of Hector Hamish Mackay’s pseudo-Kailyard paradigm in the earlier group. The shift in intention, in fact, maps out a much-altered role for the Celtic topographer than his earlier use as the comedies’ surrogate narrator.

Hired by Linda Wolfingham as her guide and mentor for a tour of his own Tory perception of Highland history, the validity of that mentality is severely tested by the more acerbically commercial, politically
conscious personality of his niece, Fionnaghal Maclean. Mackay's stifling cultural parameters are threatened by an equally stubborn cynicism: his niece embodies a newer, less compromising spirit of cultural promotion.

Fionnaghal Maclean was the daughter of an Edinburgh bank-agent, and she had already had a novel published. *Lad with the Philabeg* was a Jacobite romance that was neither better nor worse than many others. She was employed by the Highland Tourist Association as an itinerant advertisement, and for once in a way the abuse of the Gaelic word for war-cry was justified in the vulgar world of publicity. Fionnaghal Maclean was a slogan in herself.12

The fact, of course, that Hector Hamish Mackay's conception of Scottishness can be 'bought' by eager American capital illustrates further the novel's emphasis on processed culture, compounded by Fionnaghal's affiliation with The Scottish Tourist Board. The monied American influence which ensured the continuity of the Anglicized Scottish aristocracy in *The Monarch of the Glen* takes on a more ominous character in *Hunting The Fairies*. This more exportable Scotland suggests that the money that was once to be made from the destruction of clanship throughout the 18th and 19th centuries is now to be made from pretending that such clanship still exists.

The discord between Mackay and his niece illustrates pointedly that - in contradiction to Hart's view discussed in the previous chapter - Mackenzie implies a more positive 'repudiation' of Mackay's authority. In an early scene in the book the 'blimpish' English laird Colonel Lindsay-Wolseley is being discussed:

"One more of these English landlords who are draining the life-blood of the Highlands," Fionnaghal railed. She had changed out of her doublet and kilt into a frock of the dress tartan of her clan, in which she looked like a delight or a warning to shepherds and sailors according to the capacity of the observer for being more fascinated by her flashing eye, melodious voice and high colour than repelled by her untidy hair and rather grubby finger-nails.

"Oh, with the electricity from the lochs and the gas from the Tourist Association," Mr Mackay gibed, "the Highlands will last a while yet. I hear there's a scheme afoot now to dam Loch Tay at the Killin end and supply Birmingham with electricity. I suppose that means desecrating the MacNab burial-ground."

"You're behind the times, Uncle Hector. Industrial development is inevitable if the Highlands are not to become a desert. I don't mind draining any lock if it raises the standard of living for the people themselves. What I object to is supplying the English with our power. They took our blood to make their Empire, and now they're taking our
Scotching the Myths

As a means of probing realistically beyond the superficial Tartan veil of Mackay and the American folklorists, the introduction of the freakish Gaelic poet Fingal MacNabba - the novel's modern parodic analogue of the spectral remains of Ossian (and the antithesis to the Kailyard bard-figure of Duncan Ban in the Todday novels) - widens considerably the comedy's acknowledgement of an external, real world of pragmatic cultural cynicism beyond the clans, bens and glens. As the aggressive Americans redouble their efforts to out-consume each other in the perfunctory menu of Highland culture on offer, so MacNabba seizes more opportunities to make them choke on their diet. Typical of this is his sarcastic aside during the relation by the Gaelic crofter Ailean Ruadh (for the benefit of an American recording-machine) of an ancient folk fairy-tale:

So Ailean related his story of the man from Ballyhoo who was carried away by the sluagh or fairy host to Ardnamurchan and had there seen the green fairies embarking on boats of iris-flags and sailing out to sea.

"Sailing over to Ireland, no doubt," Fingal MacNabba commented, "with reinforcements for W.B. Yeats and A.E." (HF, 178)

It is the fraudulent artifice of the Ossian paradox which Fionnaghal Maclean and Fingal MacNabba inhabit: the banality of the psychic camera as opposed to an authentic poetic integrity. In this sense they function as a parody within a parody, since their status as exemplars of a literary culture derives from cultural sources whose mendacity and spuriousness they only too readily expose to sneering scrutiny.

As with Ben Nevis and the Scottish Brotherhood of Action in The Monarch of the Glen, again there is a suggestion that there is no legitimate cultural perspective which Mackenzie is prepared to advocate; native intelligentsia and idealistic tourist are equally exploitative and ridiculed alike. The eventual expulsion of the Maclean-MacNabba faction by Hector Hamish Mackay and Mrs Wolfingham may be in accordance with the motif of rejection from a Green World which is unable to contain inhospitable cynicism, yet connotatively it seems that the Mackay perspective is to be made positively secure in the removal of threats to
Scotching the Myths

its repudiation. This is echoed in the affirmative conclusion to the
plot, which once more centres on the ascendancy motif of the pro-feudal
Anglo-Scottish laird and the landed aristocracy upon which Mackenzie's
perception of Highland society seems to be based. There is no irony
implied in Mrs Urquhart-Unwin's 'rhapsodies...about Beatrice MacDonald's
claims to represent all that was best in the life of the British
aristocracy'. (HF, 121)

Unlike The Monarch of the Glen, however, two key-episodes in Hunting
the Fairies, while not dispelling the implications of this conservative
ideology altogether, question seriously the legitimacy of the
relationship between that conservatism and the culture upon which it
depends. In these two localised instances the interplay of cultural and
historical perceptions of the Highlands typified by the characters is
dramatised and exposed in a fashion quite unique within the context of
the novels' comic tactics as we have come to recognise them.

The first of these occurs in Chapter 9, 'House of Two Hearts', as a
result of both the Urquhart-Unwins' and Wolvinghams' violent expulsion
from the house of Aeneas Lamont, a rabidly eccentric, reclusive, fiercely
unpleasant Highland topographer as neurotic and paranoid as Hector
Hamish Mackay is affable and verbose. Lamont serves as an emblem of the
prejudicial extremity to which the Mackay brand of romanticism can
ultimately lead: fervent hatred of the Campbell clan, detestation of
modernity and publicity, Catholic bigotry, and a grossly distorted vision
of historical reality. His deranged and hypochondriac sister (an
inordinately close relationship suggestive of incest is subtly implied)
complements her brother's absurdity by inhabiting her own psychosis of
the Scottish obsession with historical defeat. Convinced of the Young
Pretender's imminent return to the shore of Loch Shiel at the head of a
phantom Highland army to arrest the truth of history, as a result of the
ensuing disturbance she appears, wraith-like in a white shift, at the
Prince's monument only to encounter the Urquhart-Unwin party paying its
respects in the book's most climactically comic moment:

Loch Shiel in the golden radiance of that immortal hour in the
northern summer between late afternoon and early evening was
magically romantic. Not a soul was in sight. The motionless stretch
of water lightened by the westering sun dazzled the eyes. On the top
of his rococo column the figure of the Prince glowed like living
flesh. Mrs Urquhart-Unwin and Deirdre read the inscriptions in
Scotching the Myths

English, Gaelic and Latin round the base. Tom McTaggart stepped forward with the wreath made of old-fashioned pink cabbage-roses gathered by Deirdre in the garden of Kilwhillie House, and Mrs Urquhart-Unwin had just laid it reverently against the railing round the base of the monument when Deirdre called out: "Mumma, Mumma, look what's coming towards us!" she gasped. "It's a ghost."

They all stared as the figure drew nearer. It was a woman, who might have been any age between thirty and forty, with a pale round face from which a pair of pale blue watery eyes gazed before her like a sleepwalker's with an expression near to absolute vacuity. She was wearing a white silk dress.

"He's not come, then?" she asked, and now her eyes seemed normal.

"Were you expecting somebody?" Mrs Urquhart-Unwin enquired politely.

"No. I'm not really expecting him before the end of the month, but I thought I saw the clans gathering. So I came down to the lock just in case. It wouldn't do not to be there when he did come." She smiled politely. "I'm so sorry to have troubled you. Good afternoon."

She turned round and wandered away in the direction of the church.

"That wasn't a ghost," Mrs Urquhart-Unwin said decidedly. "No, that certainly wasn't a ghost."

"Och, that was no ghost," said Tom McTaggart. "That was a fairy-woman."

"A fairy-woman?" Deirdre cried. "Oh, Mumma!" Awe at her own fortune in being granted this vision deprived her of words sufficiently ecstatic. (HF, 141-42)

For Mrs Urquhart-Unwin, of course, this represents an 'absolute triumph' - a genuine fairy manifestation, 'and three witnesses'. The two delusions - one cultural, one historical - suddenly coalesce: the Highlands of the Romantic imagination appears in the flesh (the 'living flesh' of the Prince's monument), while in fact the substance of that flesh is the symbol of a historical myth in neurotic paralysis. In technical terms, it is remarkable that within the uniformly unadventurous scope of the comedies Mackenzie perceives a moment of symbolic significance (symbolism being a device he consistently eschews) in a fashion which, simultaneously, integrates plot, theme, tone, and satirical intention in a single deft illumination of pure farce.

Chapter 11, 'Ailean Ruadh', provides us with the second, and more important, of these two key-episodes, where the novel approaches the true heart of its comic and satirical purpose in a comparatively complex corroboration of the themes symbolised in the earlier example. It suggests that in Hunting the Fairies Mackenzie had found a new comic
maturity - a synthesis of theme and technique, like Linklater's, in which by way of a familiar paradox stereotypical humour is inscribed with a sense of thematic gravity.

Within the limitations of this set-piece creating a caricatured study of Highland minister and Gaelic peasant, the narrative shares for a brief interlude the preoccupations that inform the 'mainstream' novelists of the Highlands, Neil Gunn and Fìonn MacColla, stylistically so antithetical to Mackenzie's farcically subversive attitude to archaism, symbol and myth. Within his defined parameters, Mackenzie gains access through comedy to the terrain denied him by Hart - the tragedy of Highland history - and it is the modulation into comedy that compensates for that truth. The Catholic prejudice of the author may be largely responsible for this reductive depiction of the neo-Calvinist doctrinal suppression of Ailean's inherited folk-culture, yet the import is as sincere as MacColla's bitter indictment of Presbyterian oppression, and passivity in the face of the Clearances, in And The Cock Crew.

Ailean Ruadh's innocent conviction in fairies may initially give the lie to the necessary absence of condescension and the need for compassion, but subsequent events in this chapter reveal this belief as the novel's image of that authentic culture bastardised and commodified for foreign expropriation. In this instance, exploitation would be more accurate than expropriation, for the price of Ailean's marketable culture is the plentiful whisky supplied by the tourists, which, they find, loosens his tongue and conveniently jolts his mythic unconscious. Presbyterian oppression and alien exploitation compound one another. In order to ransack Highland myth, the tourists assist in the corroboration of a wider Scottish one: Scotus Inebrius. As with Whisky Galore, it is disturbing to find reiterated the equation of cultural vitality with intoxication; here, however, its purpose is the exposure of the incomers' blatant insensitivity as opposed to the inebriated naivety of the native. Ailean exercises sufficient guile to ensure that his services exact the stiffer possible price as a recipient in a bargain rather than the victim of a cultural rape.

Scottish culture can be extracted with whisky; another dram ensures another folk-tale; the biggest cache of folk-tales will guarantee one of the American rivals the coveted Presidency and a top niche in her native
society. Disturbingly, the native intellectuals Finnaighal Maclean and Fingal MacNabba, present at Ailean's 'ceilidh', participate equally in this obliquely imperialistic process:

"I'd like to think it was genuine fairy music," said Finnaighal, with the ability to face facts and the frankness to express them which characterises the younger generation of writers, "because I'd like to give Fort William a boost. Inverness cashed in handsomely on the Monster. Of course Ballyhoo is a bit too far from Fort William to get the rush of tourists there was for Loch Ness, and anyway tourists are much keener to go and see things than to go and hear them." (HF, 184)

It is at this juncture in the novel's cultural quest that Mrs Urquhart-Unwin is finally confronted with the schism between the actual Highlands and the Highlands of remoulded pseudo-national identity. Innocently she enquires of Ailean Ruadh if the fairy music he hears resembles the sound of the clarsach:

"He says he never heard a clarsach."
Mrs Urquhart-Unwin was staggered by this. The picture in the minds of the Ossianic Society when the Clarsach Society entertained them with a concert of Gaelic music was of spinning-wheels revolving to the sound of clarsachs in every cottage in the Highlands. That an old man of eighty-two with very few words of English could have lived his life without ever hearing a clarsach's melodious twanging was a distinct shock to her Celtic sensibilities. (HF, 167)

And, of course, her ensuing psychological deception of Mrs Wolfingham effectively dramatises the gullibility and artifice upon which her 'Celtic sensibilities' depend.

This entire episode revolves around a complex interchange of opposed attributes and attitudes, and while it might be argued that the comic mood subsumes their importance, it is nevertheless undeniable that it is by way of the comic action that their significance is enacted. The laughter-ingredient is no mere adjunct, but related to its material by the very fact that the synthesis is so conspicuously incongruous.

Hunting the Fairies displays an even surety in thematic purpose and a carefully controlled incidence of comic perception which, fused together, react vigorously in a way which highlights sharply both these features, and for this reason it is perhaps the most coherent and satisfying achievement of the whole comic series. There is a marked absence of the
Scotching the Myths

perfunctory superfluities found in its counterparts: the stock sentimental love-interest, for instance, is replaced in the novel with the subtle presentation of the melancholic Kilwhillie - performing a role that goes beyond the stereotypical straight-man he usually plays to Ben Nevis's buffoon - and the doomed middle-aged resuscitation of youthful love he experiences for the nineteen-year old Deirdre. Mrs Urquhart-Unwin's saccharine daughter, more than once significantly identified with J.M. Barrie's Mary Rose. It leads, of course, to an inevitable farce of miscomprehension between Kilwhillie and 'Yu-Yu': American emotional and intellectual pretentiousness conflicts with Anglicised reserve and emotional timidity as the denouement confirms the isolated satirical references throughout the novel to a variety of hyped American cults - spiritualism, pseudo-psychology, reincarnation, personality-obsession.

Reconciliations, however, are still possible and take place: between Mrs Urquhart-Unwin and her chastened rival; Kilwhillie to the prospect of chronic bachelorhood with the added compensation of young Dutton, his newly-adopted heir, in whom he can invest high hopes for the continuity of his Highland antiquarianism (ingeniously, a son without a marriage).

If the end result of the cultural pilgrimage is symbolised by the amorphous photographic blur elusively concealing the astral body of Ossian, Mrs Urquhart-Unwin implies in her letter to Kilwhillie that on a further, compensatory level the search has been genuinely redemptive:

You and I have both been hunting for fairies in a different way. Can I say that if we failed to find our fairies we have each found a dear friend? (HF, 272)
III Popular Mythology and The Rival Monster

In his essay 'Glasgow' in 1934 Lewis Grassic Gibbon voices his detestation of urbanised and industrialised Scotland, in terms reminiscent of Carlylean hyperbole, by describing the city as 'the vomit of a cataleptic commercialism'. By means of a metaphor drawn from a more recent Scottish myth, he evokes the gulf between escapism and the horror or urban actuality:

The monster of Loch Ness is probably the lost soul of Glasgow, in scales and horns, disporting itself in the Highlands after evacuating finally and completely its mother-corpse.13

This is a particularly apt and suggestive quip. The Loch Ness Monster industry, without doubt, seems so blatantly banal that it remains the one popular Scottish icon which most commentators on Scottish popular culture cannot even bring themselves to contemplate, let alone explain away. Surprisingly, 'Nessie' was conspicuous by its absence from Grigor's Scotch Myths: possibly it was felt to be sufficiently ubiquitous to need no further publicity. Yet its very ubiquity is what makes it important; it is quite common to find in Highland Tartan souvenir shops Loch Ness Monster trivia in close proximity to editions of the very comedies under discussion.

Gibbon perceives that, in a sense, Glasgow as a symbol of industrial and urban Scotland embodies the negation of Scotland's archaic and prehistoric significance as one of the most ancient of Celtic cultures, possessed of an antediluvian dignity which the putative inhabitant in the murk of Loch Ness might be seen to signify: the bathetic equivalent of Gibbon's own anti-industrial diffusionism.

Interestingly, The Rival Monster is the only of Mackenzie's comedies in which Glasgow appears to off-set the idealised, wish-fulfilling isolation of the novels' Highlands and Islands, and it is Ben Nevis, the exemplar of this world, who is seen to visit the city to make a deputation to the editorial offices of the Daily Tale:

A minute later the Chieftain was in the lift under the escort of a small page-boy who as an embryo Nationalist looked up at him with stern approval.
"Are you a Scottish Nationalist, mister?" he asked in a high Glasgow voice.
"Am I what?" the Chieftain gasped.
"A Scottish Nationalist? Ma father is."
"Who the devil is your father?"
"Och, he's the Secretary of the Gorbals Branch of the League for Scottish Independence. He wears the kilt to meetings the same as you do. His name's MacDonald. Hector MacDonald. I'm Donald MacDonald masel'."

It took a great deal to deprive Ben Nevis of the power of speech, but that page-boy of his own clan, three feet ten inches tall, achieved what Lochiel had never managed to achieve, nor Simon Lovat before him, at many a session of the Inverness County Council. In fact it was a temporarily subdued Ben Nevis that was shown into James Donaldson's editorial office.\(^1\)

Unlike Ben Nevis's experience of the bourgeois Scottish Brotherhood of Action, here he is withered altogether in his confrontation with the working-class nationalism of Lowland Scotland (to which he finds himself invisibly linked by the coincidence of surname): a more potent threat to his Toryism, as evidenced by his impotent response. This typifies the underhand method of the later comedies in which the boundaries between an external, actual Scotland and its isolated, escapist parody - which is most conspicuous in *Rockets Galore* - become increasingly difficult to define precisely. This permits Ben Nevis's trivialising historical perspective to be revealed for what it is while simultaneously highlighting his comic impetus:

"This'll be the third expedition of a MacDonald of Ben Nevis to Todday. Yes, an ancestor of mine went over once and hanged the MacRurie of the time in his own chimney. Yes, by Jove, he did. Smoked him like a ham and delivered the result to King James IV in Holyrood, poor chap."
"Well, well, I daresay he deserved it."
"I didn't mean this scoundrelly MacRurie. I was thinking of James IV, Flodden and all that, if you know what I mean."
"The Flowers of the Forest?"
The Chieftain sighed deeply.
"The Flowers of the Forest. Exactly."
The Editor replenished his glass.
"Slahnjer," the Chieftain woofed.
"Slahnje," the Editor echoed. (RM, 62)

Likewise, the opening of the novel finds the islander Joseph Macroon emerged disconsolate with Roderick MacRurie from a meeting of the Inverness-shire County Council, complaining bitterly about the ineptitude
Scotching the Myths

and indifference of local governmental bureaucracy. His earnest request for a lobster-pool for Little Todday has been turned down (in favour of improvements for the rival Great Todday), to the considerable disadvantage of the island's economy.

The intervention of localised verisimilitude cheek-by-jowl with the absurd fantasy upon which the novel's plot depends is perhaps stretching the effectiveness of incongruity a little too far, but The Rival Monster is an important illustration of an increasing degree of opportunism evident in the inspiration behind Mackenzie's later novels. In Hunting the Fairies, The Rival Monster, Thin Ice and Rockets Galore, the theme emanates from a mood, phenomenon, or event which through media familiarisation is already at the forefront of public consciousness, ensuring a ready-made market, but furthermore consolidating a relationship of mutual respect between the reading-public and the writer which in many ways uncannily resembles the English populism of J.B. Priestley, or, to go back further, the career of Dickens. Creatively, Mackenzie at this late stage in his career betrays little writerly elitism in the extent to which he permits his close scrutiny of shifts in public mood to determine the nature, and the pitch, of his subject-matter. One does not have to look far in the later volumes of My Life and Times to find repeated examples of Mackenzie's belief that the popular novelist carries an obligation to behave in the manner of a creative public servant.

The fantastic plot of The Rival Monster, accordingly, permits gentle satire on popular excited speculation into the inexplicable domain of U.F.O.'s and flying-saucers to be pitted against the emergent folklore of the Loch Ness Monster. Science-fiction and futurology collide - literally - with prehistory. The consequent ironic contrast between those who condemn belief in flying-saucers while devoted to the welfare of the Monster, and vice versa, provides much implicit comedy - which faction is sane, which insane? Much narrative space, too, is occupied by acute parody of the Scottish popular press and its diet of cliches, seeking to promote the sensationalism - and, of course, returning us to the theme of Hunting the Fairies - give an opportunistic boost to flagging circulation and the tourist-industry.
It will be remembered that Traigh Vooey was where Christina and Elizabeth MacCodrum encountered the monster, and Miss Ross's experience confirms that of her young pupils on whose story some strangely incredulous people have ventured to cast doubt. We hope that this latest appearance of the Todday Monster has taught such sceptics a lesson.

One wonders, a little anxiously, what was the object of the mysterious visitant from the deep in approaching Miss Ross at such speed. Can it be that, like the sea-monster from which Perseus rescued Andromeda in the days of yore, the Todday Monster is also carnivorous?

Meanwhile, the excitement is intense and those ardent young adventurers who have flocked to Great and Little Todday in the hope of winning the prize of £250 offered by the Scottish Daily Tale for the first authenticated photograph of the monster are more ardent than ever. An element of danger has been definitely added to the explorer's task, and who responds more quickly to danger than the youth of Britain? In the classic words of Field-Marshal Montgomery on the eve of Alamein, the Scottish Daily Tale wishes those adventurers "Good Hunting!" (RM, 151-52)

If, as here, Mackenzie blithely extracts much risible hyperbole from a popular myth in a way that would have been anathema to the majority of his fellow-Scottish writers - Ben Nevis's passionate conviction in the Monster is near proprietorial, while one contributor to the Scottish Daily Tale asserts 'if the monster has indeed been killed Inverness will have suffered the greatest blow since the Battle of Culloden' - this is not an approach which deserves instant derision. Beneath the easyable absurdity, the existence of the Monster, like Ailean Ruadh's conviction in fairies, allows the characters self-expression of identity on the level of make-believe denied them in the pragmatic, rational world, and allows a Scottish readership to do the same. Macromay lose his lobster-pool, but gains from the influx of sight-seers to his island. As an emblem of cultural pride, the monster plays an equivalent, though less ambivalent, role to the tipple in Whisky Galore.

Accordingly, the presence of Paul Waggett as the spirit of denial is greatly emphasised in the later novel, and his manipulation as chief satirical target seriously pronounced. As implied in the chapter entitled 'Paul Waggett, K.C.', the extremes to which his egomaniacal self-righteousness lead him are shown as infinitely more contemptible than the innocuous belief in the existence of an inflated reptile. This is Waggett's most achieved performance in the Hebridean outpost of his beloved colonial empire, mimicking its Anglicizing process: permitting
Scotching the Myths

him like the 'sizeable numbers of bourgeois and petty bourgeois to play aristocrat off centre-court: i.e. anywhere in the empire except at home'. To his arid Anglo-Saxon rationalism the sighting of an unidentified monster is the most pathetic manifestation in his experience of wayward Celtic lunacy. His response is a new, more strident tone of cultural colonialism which threatens to outgrow his essentially comic proportions as a character:

"Well, you must have noticed the way Hector Hamish Mackay flatters the people here. You'd think to read Faerie Lands Forlorn that the people here were all poets. There's no poetry in them. I arranged a poetry reading for them soon after I came to live here, and I read them some of Rudyard Kipling's best known poems and some of Adam Lindsay Gordon's - oh, yes, and Macaulay's poem about the Armada, and The Charge of the Light Brigade, and they sat there like a lot of dummies. They just sat like a lot of dummies." (RM, 193)

Within this context of a feeble litany of English imperialist jingoism, Mackay's antiquated Celticism wins hands down. Waggett's increased assertiveness, in fact, although short-circuited by his farcical discomfiture at the conclusion, reaches its limits within the graver import of Rockets Galore, where, instead of preserving his authority over the islanders, he is obliged to quit their society altogether.

As an indication of the widening frame of reference in the scope of the later comic writing, and Mackenzie's acknowledgement of more contemporary, realistic substance, the role of B.B.C. broadcasting in the novel is important. By a deft stroke, the narrative has already hinted - in contrast to the parody of journalesse - at the urban weariness of the Glasgow reporters as their professional attention turns northwards from modernity to Highland isolation:

"We've had a follow-up to that telegram yesterday from Little Todday, Mr Donaldson," said Ian Carmichael to the Editor of the Scottish Daily Tale, and as he said this he could not resist glancing at the strip of blue sky just visible above the ravine of high grimy Glasgow buildings in which the offices of the newspaper were situated...

"Losh, I wish sometimes I were a young reporter again," said the Editor, and this time it was his eye that was turned in the direction of blue sky above the ravine.

While young Ian Carmichael, with a light heart, was westward bound the monster was seen for the third time. (RM, 48,49)
Similarly, in the portrayal of the existing Scottish network of the B.B.C. and its struggle to create some measure of autonomy outwith the prejudicial manipulation of metropolitan control, we are discreetly primed in advance for the evident shortcomings imposed upon the radio representation of Scotland as a result, demonstrated by the broadcast 'ceilidh' which closes the novel:

At this moment the Director came in.
"London has just been through to suggest that Howard Marshall should come up on the chance of our being able to establish contact with the Todday monster."
"What?" exclaimed Francis Urquhart. "Why don't they send Wilfred Pickles up as well and Richard Dimbleby and the whole bl..."
"Now don't get excited, Urquhart," the Director interrupted. "I'm going to ask if we get a good recording whether they won't take it on Home and Light...they might take it on Third as well...After all, it has a great scientific interest."
"But what does London want to interfere for at all? The damned monster didn't bob up in the Thames. Och, I've nothing against Howard Marshall, but I think a monster in the Hebrides is entirely a matter for Scottish Regional."
"Well, I had put that point of view to them."
"Point of view!" Francis Urquhart scoffed. "When did London ever understand our point of view up here?" (RM, 161-162)

With an insight which confirms that Mackenzie was conscious of the inevitable distortions in media representation which, ironically, analysts thirty years on have detected as faults in the filmed versions of his own work, the radio broadcast in the final chapter is seen to be promoting the neutered image of a culture which is already in decline. A highlight of the broadcast is to be the traditional 'waulking' song of the island women:

A narrow trestle-table about fourteen feet long was set out in the middle of the hall with benches on either side and on the table lay a piece of blanketing folded back on itself in the shape of a U. If the waulking had been a genuine process of shrinking and fulling, the blanket would have been soaking in a tub of diluted ammonia; but the weaving of tweed and blankets had almost died out in the Toddays and a waulking to-day was only an illustration of what it was once upon a time, and indeed unless Father Macalister had insisted on a luadh from time to time in the Kiltod hall it would have become extinct even as an illustration of the past. (RM 232-33)
In an internal parody of Mackenzie's own comic Scottish-representational method, the role of radio is presented as one which remoulds in its own image, for popular consumption, a cultural identity whose restrictions are determined by the centralised control through which the expression of that identity is defined.

Inevitably, then, this is preparation for the final novel in the Highland comedy sequence which endeavours, despite a stubborn refusal to concede completely the dependence on established comic parameters, to come to terms with the logical, if not irrevocable, culmination of that centralised political domination.

IV A Breath of North Wind: Rockets Galore (1957)

With a circularity that is unusual within a seemingly diffuse and random series of hastily written novels, Rockets Galore returns us to The North Wind of Love and the themes informing that novel, which, it was suggested, helped to inspire the comic antithesis with which Mackenzie found a diverting palliative to the composition of his roman fleuve - The Monarch of the Glen. That his comic technique was essentially evolutionary in nature is evidenced plainly enough in the fact that in terms of both style and intention, Rockets Galore shares more features in common with The Four Winds of Love than it does with The Monarch of the Glen or any of its 'generic' stablemates. For if the political ideology of the Four Winds is at odds with its structural and technical deficiencies, in Rockets Galore political ideology wars disparately with an ostensibly farcical framework; farce in a world proof against farce.

Conscious of the expectations readers familiar with the foregoing comedies would hope to have gratified in another production with 'Galore' in its title, the author breaks trust for the first time in an explanatory note whose tone is both justificatory and apologetic:

MR MALCOLM MACMILLAN, the Member of Parliament for the Outer Isles, observed recently in the course of a speech he made in the House of Commons that the meeting held in South Uist to protest against the murder of the island's life by the Government's rocket range reminded him of Compton Mackenzie "at his best - or worst" writing one of his
Scotching the Myths

burlesques of Island life. Rockets Galore, from Mr Macmillan's point of view, will undoubtedly exhibit me at my worst...

Whisky Galore was a genial farce: Rockets Galore is a bitter farce. It is difficult to be genial when a way of life that seemed, with all its hardships and all its disgraceful neglect for sixty years by the Government of the day, to be a good way of life is in danger of extinction. The millions which are to be spent on setting one kind of an example to Russia if they had been spent on construction instead of destruction might have set an example to Russia that even the most bigoted doctrinaire Muscovite of the Communist Party might have been impelled to admire.16

The island community of fact, so vital to Mackenzie as a resident of Barra, and the island life with which he toyed so affectionately in his fiction, had become disturbingly entwined. A letter to Faith written in 1955 - immediately after news of the actual Governmental project had broken - betrays genuine concern and anger:

I am in state of agitated fury by the announcement that the Government is going to turn South Uist into a guided missile experimental range! This means death for the Outer Isles that were a refuge from this machine-ridden world of today.

A letter of protest in The Scotsman has rallied a lot of people. Moray McLaren goes to South Uist to attend a meeting of protest and to read a message from me. They have clearly sprung this on when Parliament wasn't sitting so that it could be a fait accompli by the time it meets again.

I hope to get a public meeting here during the Festival...I cannot tell you how this rocket business appals me.17

This confluence of fact and fiction, politics and farce is strangely apparent in MP Malcolm Macmillan's observation: his reference suggests the clear extent to which Mackenzie's Hebridean and Highland escapism had reached a level of popularity at which such moods become institutionalised, something intangible but tangibly real; something a dangerously more real Whitehall could threaten to eradicate.

Hence a further paradox: the evasion and short-circuiting of realism generated by farce in Whisky Galore is now thoroughly permeated with a potent political awareness that only farce will permit to be circumvented. Interpreting an actual threat by confining it within a farcical straitjacket is in itself an act of opposition to that threat. But does the wily, life-affirming postponement of danger in the conclusion of Rockets Galore shut out such an implication? Is it merely a species of shallow conservatism, the kind of conservatism implied in

310
Scotching the Myths

Mackenzie's heartfelt plea for the Western Isles as 'a refuge from this machine-ridden' age?

The two Toddays of Rockets Galore, certainly, are seen to exist no longer as ironic echoes of an inexorably continuing external history, as was the case in Keep The Home Guard Turning and Whisky Galore. No longer Mackenzie's ahistorical refuge from a machine-ridden world, they are being wrenched into the mainstream of historical development. This is why the novel opens amidst that often-deprecated off-stage bureaucratic nightmare of Whitehall, and why for the first time politicians are amongst Mackenzie's principal characters, presented through the plot in direct confrontation with the islanders on several occasions. Until the conclusion, there is little crafty elusiveness about the islanders' moral challenge.

References in the conversation between the embarrassingly compromised Andrew Wishart, an Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, and his Private Secretary, Hugh MacInnes, to the evacuation of St Kilda (a tragic analogue) and the Suez crisis underline this altered mood of political verisimilitude. Wishart epitomises the post-war ineptitude of the Scottish Office in implementing its ostensible national obligations in the face of its bureaucratic subservience to Whitehall centralism.

As we know, behind the political scene the Scottish Office had done its best to dissuade the Government from seizing Little Todday for the new look in national defence, but once the Government had decided to disregard the opinion of the Scottish Office the Scottish Office toed the line as meekly as any mushroom ministry spawned to find an excuse for further Government expenditure. (RG, 219)

Wishart provides an opportunity, through keenly observed parodic satire, for the novel's study in platitude-ridden political circomlocution. In Chapter 2, 'The Nobost Meeting', Wishart stumbles through every conceivable weary bromide and half-truth in the repertoire of Conservative patriotism:

"But why do I turn my eyes to the past?" he asked. "It is to the future that we gathered here tonight are looking. And I am speaking for the Government when I say that the Government is proud to think that it has been able to offer to such intelligent, far-sighted and patriotic communities a solution of so many problems that were coming to seem insoluble. For years we have been trying at the Scottish Office to fit the Hebridean way of life into the framework
of the modern world. No stone - everything that could possibly be done has been done...

...in co-operating with the Government over this rocket-establishment you are doing your part to secure peace for the world. I know that I do not have to tell you this. I know that any sacrifices of your immemorial way of life you may be called upon to make will be made with willing enthusiasm because you know that you and your three islands are privileged to be the spearhead of peace in this unhappily anxious world of today. Every rocket that goes soaring into the air will seem to you an olive branch carried by the dove of peace." (RG, 33-34)

In his feeble attempt to convince the inhabitants of Uist what he himself knows to be euphemistic nonsense, Wishart becomes a sitting target for the new and sharp-edged political consciousness of the islanders:

"Why didn't you put the Scottish Fisheries Act of 1895 into operation?" a lean man with purposeful eyes and a purposeful mouth rose from the middle of the audience to ask.

"I have to confess that I do not understand my friend's question."

"If you had put that Act into operation you could have saved the fishing industry in the Islands and West Highlands, but you let yourselves be frightened out of it by the trawler lobby in the House of Commons."

"I'm afraid that I am rather at sea myself at this moment," said Mr Wishart.

"You are an Under-Secretary of State for Scotland?" the lean heckler asked.

"I certainly am."

"And yet you have never heard of the Scottish Fisheries Act of 1895?"

"I must admit that I have not."

"Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise," the heckler scoffed as he sat down contemptuously. (RG, 33)

This critical perspective in the novel is more sharply focussed by the character of Hugh MacInnes. Suddenly enlightened to the real political implications of Wishart's predicament and the potential plight facing the islanders as a result, a promising career in politics is renounced as he gradually succumbs to assimilation to the Celtic separateness of the Hebridean green world, personified by his love for the Irish-Celt Jane Kinsella, who, sadly, suffers as the author's adoption of the winsome Celtic maiden stereotype. Her command of Gaelic folk-singing is the embodiment of the culture for which MacInnes will provide the role of self-appointed protector.
In this much-altered context, it is clear that the comedies' dependence so far on the Scottish-Romantic parameter of Hector Hamish Mackay — he figures largely in The Rival Monster, and was seriously tested in Hunting the Fairies — by definition will require a requisite de-mythologising within such a blatantly real ambience. Accordingly, his non-appearance in person (for the first time) is substituted by a somewhat perfunctory reference to Faerie Lands Forlorn, as a reach-me-down comparison with reality, by MacInnes, who dismisses his perspective with the single epithet 'flowery'. To further the disparity, this takes place against the background of Jane Kinsella's misery over her witnessing of the first of the threatened evictions, the tragedy of which is also presented to the reader. Mackay now performs a role analogous to that of the canvasses of the Victorian Sir Edward Landseer, whose panoramic high-Romantic celebration of deserted Highland landscape owes its dehumanised 'natural' grandeur to systematic depopulation; instead, it is the Highland wildlife which becomes personified.

Similarly, the affectionate parody of the Scottish press so omnipresent in The Rival Monster is altered alike in the process of modulation, since its influence can no longer be contained within the limitations of the farcical vision to which it contributed. Geniality has curdled into bitterness in Father Macalister's acute aside concerning a propagandic pro-Government piece from the Inverness Times which attacks the islanders for questioning the proprietorial sagacity of their political superiors:

"Those who had accused the Government of a piece of hasty and ill-considered vandalism must have wished that they had kept silent when they heard of the praiseworthy assistance afforded to the Ancient Monuments Department of the Ministry of Works by the Air Ministry. As a result numerous wheelhouses dating to the Iron Age in the first centuries of the Christian Era have been excavated, and also a Viking long house of the tenth century. It is hoped that some of these may be preserved, but should necessity dictate that launching-sites for guided missiles require their destruction archaeologists will have the gratification of knowing through photographs more about these remains of former inhabitants of the three Uists than they would otherwise have done because the requisite funds for excavation had not hitherto been available."

"Good shooting," commented Father James. "They'll destroy the houses of living crofters without mercy, but they'll do their best to
The distinctive strategy underlying these features discussed above, and the very frequency of the words violence and force, denote the patent erosion of Mackenzie's habitual terrain: the twilight of the Celtic Twilight.

Importantly, Father Macalister's weighty role as the island's centre of resistance and the novel's necessary ideologue furthers the parallel between this most unusual of Mackenzie's late novels and *The North Wind of Love*: it resembles, in a sense, ideology in oddly-fitting farcical garb. Catholicism, nationalist self-preservation, and exuberant vitality comprise Father Macalister's credentials; the perspicacity of John Ogilvie's intellect in a cassock with the author's celebrated command of witty conviviality thrown in for good measure. The synthesis of Catholicism with nationalistic identity and communal culture, returning us to 'Catholic Barra', implies a voice clearly the author's own in Macalister's impressive response to Maclnnes's cautious warning against violence as the threat of Government-enforced evictions looms closer.

"Todaidh Beag kept the Faith for sixty years without a priest to administer the Sacraments. Todaidh Beag was loyal to its rightful King in the Forty-five. In the years of the potato famine the men of Todaidh Beag were offered the free maize that was being distributed if they would renounce their Faith. And what did an old man of eighty reply to the temptation? 'No, no, Almighty God has put a ring of gold around Todaidh Beag and I would not be the one to break it.' And only a hundred years ago the men of Todaidh Beag were being hunted with dogs to compel them to go aboard the emigrant ship that was waiting in the Coolish to carry them away to Canada. Through the years since, except for the Crofters Act, which was passed in a panic by Parliament after the resistance to the soldiers in Lewis and the Marines landed in Skye, nothing was done for the Western Isles. Their fishing was destroyed by English trawlers. The shipping companies were allowed to impose villainous freights which we pronounce here as 'frights'. When the Government for its own purposes has decided to spend millions of pounds, which if spent once upon a time would have made the Western Isles happy and prosperous, the people are expected to be grateful for the money they earn as navvies. Let them surrender in the other rocket islands. We will not surrender here. If they try to lay violent hands on our crofts, we will lay violent hands on the invaders." (RG, 154-55)

The island's lineage, in other words, of Catholic martyrdom becomes both the impulse and the justification of resistance rather than an
Scotching the Myths

elementary sense of morality: so much so that those not privileged to share this special spiritual dispensation can be dismissively ignored - 'Let them surrender in the other rocket islands'. Macalister's rational justification of violence for the attainment of a legitimate political and spiritual end by a man to whom violence is intellectually repugnant is equally reminiscent of John Ogilvie. The Catholic bias, and the doctrinal echo of Ogilvie, coalesce in a superbly climactic set-piece by Macalister, his final declamation as the ultimate confrontation between islanders and authorities bent on eviction takes place in Chapter 13, 'The Sheriff's Party.' As the overall effect is accumulative, the extract is quoted at length.

"The people of Little Todday will adopt the same attitude six weeks hence as they have adopted this morning. They can only be evicted from their crofts by military force, and if the Government decided to use such force it will be disgraced in the eyes of the world. We are glad you have decided not to inflict on the police the humiliation of being carried off the island and dumped in a boat, because Sergeant MacGillivray and Sergeant Macrae are old friends of ours. And we wouldn't have liked to carry you gentlemen from the Department of Agriculture and the police, who have prevented any display of violence by the moderation of their own behaviour. One last word. We are fighting for our own homes in a small island on the outermost edge of Western Europe, but we are fighting at the same time for millions in Western Europe who have been betrayed by the example that Great Britain is setting in starting this insensate and suicidal project to fight the Devil with the Devil's own weapons. In the Dark Ages there were many years during which the light of Faith in Europe was almost extinguished except in Ireland and in these Western Isles. The Devil has been waiting for a while to pay us back for that, and now he thinks his chance has come. Yet I believe that we are going to beat him, and that belief is the most formidable feat of faith I have ever performed." (RG, 193)

Significantly enough, this is immediately followed by a reference to 'the wind which had veered to the north-west', which in this context can hardly be seen as accidental.
Scotching the Myths

If in terms of ideology Macalister's manifesto encompasses the vision of John Ogilvie in The Four Winds, there is much in the narrative technique of Rockets Galore which supports the author's recourse to his earlier material. Much of the later narrative of the novel, Chapter 15 especially, dispenses with the habitual style of the earlier comedies: the dependence on dialogue fleshed out with discreet moments of distanced, ironic authorial comment makes way for sustained, urbane commentary depicting the perception of Little Todday's struggle through the eyes of the mainland in an omniscient narrative voice which only thinly disguises the critically factual tone of Mackenzie, suggestive of the prose style of My Life and Times. Dialogue, in turn - as in the latter half of Chapter 13 - expands to attempt the tireless verbal wrangling of the characters in The Four Winds, off-set by a minimum of authorial gloss.

The author's new reliance on this more factual, less circumlocutory medium and the necessary concessions demanded is compounded by the gradual diminishment of the comic stereotypes upon which the parameters of the comic world were founded; the valedictory reference to Hector Hamish Mackay has already been noted. Despite the dubiously deceptive means by which total catastrophe is deflected, there are equally serious signs of capitulation in the text acknowledging that the comic potential of this imagined world has outlived itself. The original exemplar of the comedies, Ben Nevis, is seen to be so dismayed by the persistence of the Government - who symbolise his most deeply-cherished convictions - in their harassment of the islanders that he renounces his conservatism.

"I don't know what this infernal Government is thinking about. I'm resigning as Chairman of the West Inverness-shire Primrose League."
"You're not going to join the Labour Party surely?"
"Of course I'm not going to join those Bolshies. But I'm never again going to sit on a Conservative platform," Ben Nevis proclaimed majestically. (RG, 220)

And this proclamation is his last: by effectively divesting him of the vital source of his comic dynamic - a Tartan Tory no longer - this exit acknowledges the fact that the values so comically manifested in him no longer have any purchase on an impinging real world.

Waggett's final departure from Little Todday, more pointedly conveyed, is indicative of the final collapse of the islands' comic immunity which
throughout his fictional career Waggett has made such sedulous campaigns to eradicate. Compensation and adjustment for the final extremity of his actions is quite impossible: arming himself with a pistol to assist the police in forcing the islanders to capitulate, he has finally aroused the islanders to their sole act of violence - smashing the windows of his house. Waggett's immediate retreat to insular Green Belt Englishness, the source of his still unshaken prejudices, is inevitable: 'Sherwood or Arden would have looked like suburban parks beside that Green Belt which stretched like a limitless savanna before Paul Waggett in his vision of the future.' (RG, 222) The continued persistence of the Waggett mentality, this suggests, is ominously secure, and its logical outcome is violence.

*Rockets Galore* embodies a final balance between assimilation and rejection which demands adjustments going beyond a temporary conclusive harmony: it ejects those features which formed the basis of the comedies' fictional potential.

What Mackenzie's world has lost on the level of character (Ben Nevis and Waggett), and tenuously achieved on the level of the farce of illusion (the pink-painted gulls), it gains symbolically through the final restoration of the statue of St Tod, Catholic saint and potent icon of Little Todday. Removed to sanctuary in the face of the island's imminent extinction, its return presages spiritual regeneration and continuity endorsed in a sphere far above farce or comedy. Through the uncharacteristic gesture of flirting with a symbol, Mackenzie abdicates from his comic world whilst implying, in a final paradox, its assured spiritual immortality.

The combined denouement of *Rockets Galore* - contrived illusion and symbolic recuperation - is, given the modulation within the farcical context which is so apparent, perhaps more problematical than the similar ideological manoeuvre in *Whisky Galore* discussed earlier. Hart writes:

> Meanwhile the 'way of life' itself must be taken largely for granted; the real possibilities of defiance are short-circuited, the problem of fatalistic despair cannot be explored.'

It is easy to dismiss the fact, however, that the novel's final ruse is two-edged, and that the novel makes it explicitly so. If MacInnes's
painting of gulls pink cheapens the gravity of the threat the ploy
divers on the one hand, on the other the trick is exploitative of the
power wielded by the mass-media, whose creation of wide 'gullibility'
convinces the public consuming it that the preservation of wildlife is
more matter for concerned action than the extinction of community and
culture. In the spirit of the The Rival Monster once again, this instant
media-fodder gives full scope for the novel's parody of a combined T.V.
and press campaign, which, added to an influx of inquisitive sightseers
to the island, produces adequate public indignation to force the
Government to concede the project altogether.

The boat owners of the two islands made an agreement with one
another not to land any of the bird-watchers on Pillay even when the
sea made landing possible. This act of self-denial was given
prominence in the Press, and many who had heard with indifference of
the proposed fate of the island at the hands of the Government when
only the future of human beings was involved were deeply moved when
they heard of the islanders' determination to protect the Pink Gull,
and swelled the agitation to preserve Little Todday from being turned
into a rocket range. (RG, 239)

The ambiguous shortcomings and inadequacies in the concept of 'cultural
preservation' as perceived and filtered by the larger systems external
to that culture represent an appropriation aggravated by a centralised
media. Their powerful capacity for trivialisation is infinitely more
troubling than the trivial practical joke designed to attract its
attention.

'The serious novel of the latter-day Clearances', concludes Hart, 'was
to come later with George Mackay Brown's Greenvoe.' Certainly, Mackay
Brown's long-evolved idiom of mythic and archaic symbolic resonance, the
crafted narrative technique counter-pointing image and symbol with
disparate narrative voices, could not appear further removed from
Mackenzie's stylistic conservatism. Thematically, too, the drastic and
undignified suddenness, and the insidious guile, with which the islanders
in Greenvoe are cleared from their island amply justifies Hart's bias.
There are parallels, however. Just as Mackenzie's solemnity of purpose in
Rockets Galore edges him towards a conflict between the comic-Kailyard
paradigm established previously and a grudging realism, so in Greenvoe
part of Mackay Brown's intention is to unite Kailyard and anti-Kailyard
in his frequently consciously idyllic portrayal of the innocent beauty in
Scotching the Myths

the island's isolation - symbolised by the innocuous insanity of the 'village-idiot', Timmy Folster - with the repressive, internecine growth of distorted petty malice within the community which eventually leads to its destruction. The innocent freedom of Timmy's 'Kailyard' world is wrenched from him as he is duped into incarceration in a mainland mental-home by Joseph Evie, the community's internal instigator of its destruction.

In biographical and creative terms, Mackenzie and Mackay Brown coincide further in their conversion in adulthood to Catholicism, and although the aesthetic to which their faith lends expression is distinctively different for each writer, their conception of Catholicism in its relationship to Barra and Orkney respectively is strikingly similar. In the essay 'The Broken Heraldry', which plays the equivalent role in Mackay Brown's perspective to Mackenzie's 'Catholic Barra', Mackay Brown echoes the equation of Catholicism with those symbolic qualities of archaic communal integrity and unified culture splintered by the Reformation and the encroachment of modernity:

The fissure reaches far back through many generations to the Reformation. It was then that the old heraldry began to crack, that the idea of 'progress' took root in men's minds. What was broken, irretrievably, in the 16th century was the fullness of life of a community, its single interwoven identity. In earlier times the temporal and the eternal, the story and the fable, were not divorced, as they came to be after Knox; they used the same language and imagery, so that the whole of life was illuminated...Suddenly the violent change to Calvinism was thrust on them. Their sacraments were forbidden and squandered; their altars and images put down; black preachers solemnly impressed on them that their strivings towards the consummation of heaven would avail them nothing, since either their salvation or their damnation was sealed before the beginning of the world...From that time, too, the old music and poetry died out, because the single vision which is the source of all art had been choked. Poets followed priests into the darkness.21

Whereas Mackay Brown's emphasis lies in the symbolic and mythopoeic, Mackenzie's in the ideological and political, what is shared by the two writers is the conception of the Reformation as the agent of Scotland's gradual cultural decline from an ideal Catholic homogeneity and spiritual integrity. The redemptive restoration of the statue of St Tod in Rockets Galore, symbolising the continuance of communal spiritual identity, is
Scotching the Myths

mirrored in the closing scene of Greenvoe, where the evicted islanders return to their deserted home in secret to complete their interrupted mythic ritual, enacting within their loss the symbolic continuity of the archaic, pre-historic culture from which they have been only physically severed.

Although by now it should not require repeating, this final parallel should emphasise the fact that Mackenzie's unorthodox contribution to the 20th century Scottish novel does not suffer from the absence of a serious critical context against which this may be evaluated.

V The Scottish Comedies and Media Analysis

As an accomplished broadcaster, founder of The Gramophone, television presenter, invited to become associated as an Advisor with Independent Scottish Television in 1955, and above all through his critical shrewdness in founding Vox in the infant days of broadcasting, Mackenzie possessed an impressive familiarity with, and perceptive insight into, the role and potential of the British media from the late 1920's until his death. This is a qualification that is perhaps unparalleled in any other Scottish writer of the period, excepting the radio and television work of Maurice Lindsay. Mackenzie in many ways represents the Scottish equivalent of the amenability to the presence of mass media demonstrated in the careers of English writers like J.B. Priestley and George Orwell.

Christopher Harvie, contrasting MacDiarmid's indifference to the importance of the media with Mackenzie's long distinctive record in this field, sees this as characteristic of yet another opportunity lost to 20th century Scottish culture:

A powerful prosecution case can surely be mounted against the renaissance. MacDiarmid aimed at national regeneration, but his methods were those of the nineteenth century, or even more antique forms of pamphlet literature and 'flyting'. He totally ignored the impact of film and broadcasting. Would matters have been different, one wonders, if Compton Mackenzie's attempt to make him edit a critical magazine on broadcasting - Vox - in 1929 had succeeded? If this had worked, could his influence have been swung beside that of the other great Scots cultural innovator of the period - John Grierson? 22
Scotching the Myths

Despite the fact that circumstances conspired to end both Grieve's affiliation with Vox and, sadly, Vox itself, its inception indicated that Mackenzie envisaged the furthering of particular cultural aims that Grieve would almost certainly have applauded, and perhaps developed further. The first number of Vox, in an impressive stroke, carried in its opening pages an editorial in English translated into Scottish and Irish Gaelic, Welsh, Cornish, and Manx: an implicit - and extraordinarily punctual - manifesto directed at the centralist hegemony of the then-fledgling B.B.C. This early awareness and willingness to question was to develop coherently throughout Mackenzie's career, as is demonstrated in the content of these later comedies, which acknowledge the significant advent of television and the growth of the British film-industry.

In 1949, of course, Mackenzie had experienced personal involvement with the latter in the famous Ealing Studios production of Whisky Galore, an experience which, on the whole, left the author dissatisfied as a demonstration of the ability of cinema to cope successfully with fictional material. He voiced his displeasure with the original screenplay proposed by the producer (Monya Danischewsky) and the director (Andrew Mackendrick), and supervised considerable alterations.

I felt it was important to know what was going to happen, and...I dined at the Ivy with Danischewsky and Sandy Mackendrick, the director. My leg was being troublesome, and that script of the proposed film was no sedative.

"Another of my books gone west," I muttered. "Well, perhaps the trouble with this script is that it has not gone west. It has gone south. It must be entirely reconstructed and given authentic dialogue."23

Mackenzie was to introduce the phenomenal success of the film as an ironic echo in his subsequent comedies, as in the opening chapter of The Rival Monster:

"We all enjoyed the film, Mr Macraon," the porter said.
"I went three times myself."
"Is it Whisky Galore you'll be talking about?" Joseph asked indignantly. "What kind of a film is it that was after turning me into a Protestant and never had so much as one view of Little Todday from one end of the film to the other? I don't call that a film at all. Just a piece of ignorance." (RM, 12)

For one teasing moment Mackenzie toys with the creative illogic of self-reflexive narrative, the implication being that the author's fictional
Scotching the Myths

Hebrides - filmically transformed into myth - possess an existence beyond the boundaries of fiction and imagination which the author does not require to elaborate. Macraon's complaint, however, makes this more than a flippant quip; in his view the film is guilty of serious misrepresentation, since it distorts the truth of his faith and of the religious nature of the islands' communities. Mackenzie himself regretted this cinematic short-cut:

I made one last attempt to restore the scene where the islanders are waiting until midnight before they could break the Sabbath by setting out for the whisky in the wreck. In the book the agony of the Protestants in Great Todday was intensified by the thought that the Catholics of Little Todday were getting at the whisky before themselves. In the film it was merely nervous agitation about getting to the ship before she sank. However, it was no use. Everybody was firm about taking no risk of offending religious prejudices. When Rockets Galore was made into a film some years later, Little Todday was allowed to be Catholic.24

Beneath this representational quibble are stronger hints at the full implications of Whisky Galore having 'gone south'. Far from creating a logical extension of Mackenzie's celebration of Barra in the novel, in truth the imposition of a sizeable film crew and production team on the island - and the inevitable degree of exploitation that must have taken place in order to create a full-length picture - created resentments and prejudices amongst the islanders against this invasion of the cinematic world, feelings which are still apparent within the community some thirty-five years later. This is remarkably exemplified in Mackenzie's own evident astonishment at the attitude of the actor playing Paul Waggett, Basil Radford, who illustrated an uncanny synthesis of fiction and truth:

Basil Radford's memorable performance as Captain Waggett was partly due to his inability to understand why people thought that Waggett was a comic figure. In his view Waggett's attitude to the behaviour of the islanders over the whisky was exactly as it should have been. He really believed that his condemnation of the islanders' lawlessness was in complete accord with that of any Home Guard commander who appreciated his responsibility.26

Ironically, the production of the film can be seen to have re-enacted the theme of the novel, except that the bureaucracy at the hands of which the islanders suffered was a filmic one - as opposed to military or
Scotching the Myths

Governmental - which, ostensibly, was present to recreate the island in the inhabitants' own image.

This offers something of a parable for the ethos of the Ealing Studios and the British film industry of the time, which was emerging anew in peace-time from its vigorously propagandic role in filmically perpetrating aspects of a myth of patriotic British unity throughout the war of 1939-1945. Examining this process as displayed in literature, radio, and film, Angus Calder writes

Granted that the Myth omitted so much that intelligent people could apprehend during 1940-1 or at any rate later, it is not surprising that its expression in worthwhile literature is scanty. Despite powerful work by forceful historians, the Myth's imaginative grasp has surely endured chiefly through film. It may be that the Myth grew almost unchallengable because people could suppress inconvenient memories in favour of screen images which became what they remembered. Government propagandists and film industry personnel alike realised in 1939 that the still-young medium had a crucial role to play in the war. Michael Balcon, who ran Ealing Studios, wrote in the trade press, 'Clearly the need is for a projection of the true Briton to the rest of the World.' Ealing carried on doing something like this long after victory, so that aspects of the Myth are embodied in Passport to Pimlico and The Cruel Sea, and Whisky Galore stereotyped Scottish Highlanders as successfully as other Ealing comedies utilised Priestleyesque 'Englishness'.

The effect of the film of Whisky Galore, in short, is to exacerbate the troubling implications and distortions of the novel raised earlier. Mackenzie's 'affectionate' portrayal of the islanders becomes transmuted into the condescension of filmic stereotype, in which Ealing 'Englishness' provides its version of cute Highland eccentricity, the waywardness of the islanders' indifference to national emergency deflected by their unsophisticated 'naivety', their hint of lovable 'naughtiness'. In essence, the filmic narrative inverts the strategy of the novel, in which it is English values which are tested against the natives' and found ridiculously wanting. Through the perversity of such things, however, it is the Ealing stereotype, rather than the novel itself, with which Mackenzie is most often - no doubt subliminally - associated.

To return to an area mentioned in the beginning of Chapter Six, in recent years one of the most interesting, and long-needed, developments within Scottish cultural debate has been the emergence of a
Scotching the Myths

predominantly leftist school of deconstructionist criticism which, for the first time, has turned attention towards incisive analysis of the representation of Scotland and the Scots in both material culture and the media, specifically film and television. In the spirit of Yeats's assertion that 'a nation is a bundle united by an image', Murray Grigor and Colin McArthur especially have rigorously applied a Barthesian methodology of demythologising to images perpetrated through popular Scottish culture and representation of Scotland in cinema respectively.27

A real value of this work has been its demonstration of the extent to which the predominant icons in Scottish representation amount to a filtered residue from sources of literary discourse, though, sadly, few contemporary Scottish literary critics seem prepared to develop this idea to date. As Murray Grigor and others have carefully illuminated, Tartanry, emanating in the 18th century from the Romantic appropriation of Highland culture after the near-total destruction of that culture in 1746 - finding its most influential instigators in Ossian and Walter Scott - and the phenomenal success of the Kailyard school in the late 19th century are the twin ideologies which, often inextricably intertwined, have permeated every conceivable manifestation of popular consciousness in such a way as to impose an accepted false and denigratory perception of its own history on the Scottish mind. In his contribution to the Scotch Reels symposium, Cairns Craig has summarised this synthesis concisely as 'the joint creations of an imagination which, in recoil from the apparently featureless integration of Scottish life into an industrial culture whose power and whose identity lies outside Scottish control, acknowledges its own inability to lay hold of contemporary reality by projecting itself upon images of a society equally impotent before the forces of history.'28

Given that the combined Scotch Myths and Scotch Reels approach of merciless demystifying has accentuated the extent to which this deficient sense of national authenticity becomes a crippling impasse for the Scottish creative writer, it is all the more regrettable that this new critical energy has all but neglected to pursue adequately the process by which the image has impinged upon the written word (and vice-versa). Much of the Scotch Reels analysis, in particular, has favoured such an exclusively mono-thematic approach to its subject that
Scotching the Myths

it conveys the impression of modern Scottish cultural identity as virtually monofilmic.

Colin McArthur, in 'Scotland and Cinema: The Iniquity of the Fathers', examines 'the seriously stunting effects Tartanry and Kailyard have had on the emergence of alternative discourses more adequate to the task of dealing with the reality of Scottish life', and in the comprehensive sweep of an impressive essay demonstrates the stereotypic narrative style and icons of these discourses as interpreted in Scottish cinema from the 1920's onwards. A generic confusion, however, takes place when McArthur turns to the films of Whisky Galore, Linklater's Laxdale Hall, and Rockets Galore, and other films based on Scottish novels. His argument implies that the Tartanry/Kailyard paradigms deployed in filmic narrative are equally applicable to the literary narratives which inspired them. Novels, novelists and films merge amorphously; there is an unspoken, but dangerous, assumption that somehow the film versions and the fiction which they represent are synonymous:

Like Bonnie Prince Charlie and Rob Roy, the cluster of comedy films which emerged in the late forties and in the fifties, for example Whisky Galore (1949), Laxdale Hall (1952), The Maggie (1953) and Rockets Galore (1958), while offering a representation of Scotland and the Scots, were meaningful along another axis, this time a British social axis. Not all of these films emerged from the Ealing studio, but all had about them the 'feel' of the Ealing ethos discernible across a wide range of that studio's films. Central to this was a detestation of modernity as it related to the city and to the power of capital (though the films are by no stretch of the imagination pro-socialist; they are rather pro-feudal) and particularly to the power of central government bureaucracy. Set against these ills, the films construct a set of contrary humane values invested in a range of lovable rural eccentrics and non-conformists.

It has been commonplace to observe that an important consequence of the filmically mediated culture of the 20th century has been the power with which the image can subvert the word. While McArthur is certainly on the right track in referring to the aristocratic celebration so conspicuous in Linklater and Mackenzie, what is ignored here is any distinction between the mechanism through which a filmic ideology has been inscribed upon the original literary source, which, as we have seen, resulted in friction in the case of Whisky Galore. To suppress the literary and cultural context against which a legitimate response to
Scotching the Myths

Whisky Galore and the other comedies depends effectively distorts the nature of both film and novel - image and word - simultaneously.

These lacunae become more problematical in McArthur's references to the film of Rockets Galore. The complete absence in this analysis of the essential basis to the comedies - their self-conscious adoption of a combined Tartanry/Kailyard framework which leads, developmentally, to the utilisation of more contemporary manifestations of popular Scottishness which, in the main, have already been processed by mechanisms of the media with which the author was familiar - conspires to make McArthur's conception of both novel and film quite redundant:

The objective function of popular cinema is very often to paper over the cracks in society, to mask contradictions...The ideological manoeuvre whereby this contradiction is masked is most clearly evident in Rockets Galore (1958) which, characteristically, reserves its most carefully-mounted scenes for images of the Scots lamenting the putative loss of their island with dignity, and - unlike the actuality of these things - draws back from the brink of evicting the people by giving them the canny ruse of painting some seagulls pink and having the island declared a bird sanctuary. With a nod, a wink and a dram the Scots once more triumph at the level of the imagination while in the real world their country gets pulled out from under them.31

By accepting the elision by the film of the important features of the novel which question the endorsement of this 'ideological manoeuvre', and thereby condemning the film, McArthur cancels out any conception of Mackenzie's comedies as anything other than automatic expressions of a deformed, 'pathological' cultural identity. 'Pathological' is the operative word here, for it is the classification of Scottish nationalism, and the popular Scottish consciousness, as manifestations of a collective psychotic identity which underwrites the polemic of Tom Nairn's The Break-Up of Britain, aspects of which were questioned in the preceding chapter. As has been argued recently, Nairn's concept of Scottish national identity has been adopted wholesale as a major tool in the methodology of the Scotch Reels movement: 'In the absence of any serious challenging of Nairn's work, his account and evaluation of modern Scottish cultural history seems to be becoming authoritative, particularly for the sophisticated left. In the Scotch Reels volume, there is quite uncritical deployment of Nairn's approach'.32
Scotching the Myths

Just as Nairn is clearly repelled by this 'deviant' sub-culture which, he asserts simultaneously, his fellow-intellectuals must square up to in order to comprehend Scottish consciousness, the attitude of this branch of 'the sophisticated left' to the same phenomenon is equally open to question. To reduce this to its crudest terms, what their conception amounts to is the formation of an elevated, essentially private system of rigid deconstructionist tenets which suppress any understanding of the relationship between that sub-culture and those who continue to consume it unquestioningly, because their methodology presupposes the continued existence of the material on which that methodology is formulated and through which it can be developed further.

This merely reiterates that long absence of critical attitudes relevant to an assessment of Mackenzie's comedies and other productions sharing their features, and why Scotch Reels falls short of accounting for their vast popularity, even as it is confined to their filmic counterparts. One feature which all conflicting interpretations of Scottish popular culture share, however, is the conviction that the culture in question is in some sense 'deviant'. Given that this consensus betokens an acceptable fact, then Mackenzie in writing these six novels undoubtedly participated in that deviant culture, and participated consciously. The comedies' continuing prosperity indicates how thoroughly the author understood the consciousness which maintains this culture, and how little both have changed. Somewhere in that there is a lesson.

In conclusion, it might be said that in subjecting these novels to such laborious, and detailed, analysis one is guilty of a highly questionable aggrandizement of superficial and ephemeral material. Such, partly, has been the intention of these two Chapters: both to counter the almost total absence of discussion of the comedies either independently or as a sequence, but also to emphasise - through a form of self-conscious exaggeration - the importance to modern Scottish culture of the ostensibly unimportant and trivial. Mackenzie's comedies, like the Kailyard, bear out the truth that it is often through lesser literature that important features of cultural identity and consciousness are emphasised in instructive ways. That such material deserves, indeed demands, the attention habitually reserved for the exemplars of the
Scotching the Myths

upper strata of cultural production it is hoped these chapters have gone some small way to demonstrate.

Within this significance of the Highland comic sequence lies also their final paradox: that in intentionally endorsing the paradigms of Tartanry and the Kailyard, Mackenzie also succeeded in subverting them. No other 20th century Scottish novelist can be said to possess such a peculiar qualification. Having established his Scottish comic persona as an extension of the complementary roles of nationalist activist and Renaissance novelist, the creative paradigm of the English voice and the Scottish heart finds its final, recapitulatory expression in Mackenzie’s late novel Thin Ice, one of his most accomplished and satisfactory works. In conclusion, the final chapter assesses the considerable achievements of this novel, and the significance of its thematic return to the English perspective with which Mackenzie’s fictional career began.
CHAPTER EIGHT

ABDICATION OF A NOVELIST

Thin Ice, Mezzotint

I Sinister Street Revisited

Paul Waggett's escape from the Green World into the Green Belt in the conclusion of Rockets Galore, signalling the completion of Mackenzie's explicit fictional commitment to Scottish subject-matter, finds further authorial reverberations in the novel immediately preceding: the last Highland comedy, Thin Ice (1956).

As one of Mackenzie's most accomplished fictional performances, and the long-delayed return to thematic gravity from the author of The Four Winds of Love, Thin Ice is an autumnal elegy for Englishness not only representing the Sinister Street of Mackenzie's maturity, but completing the discernible circle which this study has been tracing within his seemingly shapeless fictional career. With the objective detachment afforded to him as one of the most popular and respected of Scottish literary figures, the thematic return to the Edwardian cultural ambience of Carnival, Sinister Street and Guy and Pauline, the author's forsaken English persona, marks the supreme vantage-point of hindsight in over forty years of writing. In the full maturity of his technical powers, at the age of seventy-three the doyen of the Scottish literary establishment reinterprets, retrospectively, his younger preoccupation with themes identifiably English from the creative perspective of a novelist who had made himself identifiably Scottish.

If the return to England was creative, his second 'return' to Scotland was geographic. After leaving Barra for good in 1946 he spent some six restless, unsettled years in the south of England and travelling extensively in India, to collect material for his massive Eastern Epic. Resolved to return to Scotland, in 1952 he purchased the elegant New Town flat in Drummond Place, Edinburgh, where until his death he became increasingly in demand as something of an elder statesman of the cultural life of the capital and the nation as a whole. His final
domiciling in Scotland carried with it a sense of political and cultural mission analogous to that of his attraction in the late 1920's—though a little less strident—and once again MacDiarmid was to champion publicly the committed perspective he believed the novelist was able to offer. Arriving on the wings of the post-1945 revival in Scottish nationalist agitation, Edinburgh—an acknowledgement, for once, of the mainland as opposed to island exile—was a symbolic choice in its image as the centre of regeneration:

If I could have acquired the house I wanted within an hour of Edinburgh I should not have moved south when I gave up living on Barra. Destiny ruled otherwise; that house was not obtainable. Now I must find in Edinburgh itself the flat I want and I hope that nothing will intervene to prevent my living in it.

It was in Edinburgh forty-five years ago in March of this year that my first play was produced at the Lyceum Theatre, and a few months later I set out to turn that play into my first novel *The Passionate Elopement*, which was at long last published in 1911...Even if there was no stronger motive for coming to live in Edinburgh than the desire of a writer to end his career where that career began it would be a strong enough motive. There is, however, a stronger motive still, and that is the unassailable belief I have that the full glory of Edinburgh's renaissance is in sight, and in all my life I have not known a more harmonious combination of pleasure with duty than my determination to spend in Edinburgh what years shall yet be granted to me.

Implicit in that Edinburgh renaissance is that larger renaissance of Scotland which with too eager and sanguine a faith we believed was round the corner twenty-five years ago and which at the end of that disappointing decade of the 'thirties seemed stillborn. I do not propose to embark upon a *post-mortem*, because something like a remarkable revivification took place after the Second World War.'

The homecoming would represent both a reawakening and a reprise, a motif common to many Scottish writers of the post-Renaissance period: the mood is captured in Moray Maclaren's *Return to Scotland* (1932) and *The Capital City* (1950). Mackenzie went on in this piece with an appeal to Grieve to renounce his Communism and 'to return, single-hearted, to the cause he more than any man alive has inspired'. In a swift rejoinder, Grieve justified the alliance between his nationalism and his Communism, tactfully prefacing his argument with a praiseful welcome of Mackenzie's return:

I am delighted to know that Sir Compton Mackenzie is returning to Scotland. I remember how I welcomed him when he came back and threw in his lot with the Scottish Nationalist Movement, and how I rejoiced...
when, standing as a Scottish Nationalist, he became Lord Rector of Glasgow University. I was very sorry when he went to live in the south again. There are very few men with whom such a man as myself can confer on Scottish political and cultural issues and I will be glad indeed to have Mackenzie at hand for consultation in the crowded days just before us when at last these great issues are coming to a head.3

He concludes, of course, with a characteristically tart disclaimer - 'Not, as he knows, that I will always take his advice'. A discernible echo, however, of the two writers' close affiliation throughout the 1920s is present.

The mood of his spiritual homecoming represents the final statement of what Mackenzie perceived to be his cultural identity. As if to emphasise further the English and Scottish schism underlying his career and creative personality, the transition in Thin Ice to fictional seriousness4 is particularly abrupt: from the exuberant and affirmative gaiety of the Highland comedies into sombre and understated tragedy. In thus deserting the ambiguities of attitude discernible in his Scottish comic style, Scottish critics have turned to Thin Ice as a redemptive source of thematic and stylistic consistency and a contrasting relief from the troublesome status of Mackenzie's Scottish productions. Thin Ice is the only of the novels after Sinister Street to have won unambiguous and unanimous commendation. Thin Ice, concludes Alan Bold, 'is one of his most perceptive performances; it is short and to the point, a short story in the context of Mackenzie's output'.5 Allan Massie refers to it as 'a novel of real and startling quality', and continues

One would not have thought he could do it; he brings it off beautifully and so we have this late and satisfying creation: a true work of art. Why, it might even have satisfied Henry James, and set Ford talking again about Flaubert or Turgenev.6

Contemporary reviewers were no less fulsome in their praise, occasionally betraying a sense of astonishment that a novelist could display such sudden late mastery. The Times Literary Supplement called it 'a most effortless and distinguished novel as it is possible to imagine'; 'this year he has given us something substantial and new and ambitious',6 began Evelyn Waugh; Anthony Rhodes described it as 'certainly the best by Compton Mackenzie that I have ever read', with 'a
Abdication of a Novelist

narrative sense that is brilliant';35 'The theme is treated with an accomplishment and urbanity which shows Sir Compton's old mastery'10 was the conclusion of The Times; while John Raymond stated that 'For a writer in his seventies' this book is a remarkable achievement'.11

If Chapters Six and Seven have attempted to correct Scottish critics' unwillingness to perceive an implicit seriousness in the Highland comedies in their reaction against an ostensibly flippant structure, it is certainly the case that Thin Ice, as these remarks suggest, boasts a perfect synthesis of theme and technique surpassing anything in Mackenzie's output since Vestal Fire.

The economic precision of the novel can be attributed almost entirely to Mackenzie's radical departure from creative habit in adopting, for only the second time, a first-person narrative. Massie's invocation of Henry James - literary godfather to many novelists of Mackenzie's generation - is particularly apposite, for Thin Ice is impressively indebted to the fundamental Jamesian principle, exemplified in The Turn of the Screw and What Maisie Knew, of imposing narrative restraint by delimiting its scope to the parameters of a central consciousness, creating a narrative voice, in James's own words, 'ideally immersed in his own body of reference, in a closer notation, a sharper specification of the signs of life and consciousness in the human scene and the human subject'.12 The carefully premeditated structure and design of Vestal Fire, which suggested a delayed fruition of Henry James's high hopes, make their final appearance in a novel even more technically adroit.

Mackenzie's narrator, George Gaymer, is a penetrating study of English reticence and insularity wrestling with the pain and bewilderment of witnessing - and failing to arrest - the degeneration of his close friend into reckless homosexual pursuits as compensation for the failure of his political ambitions. Consciously, the novel's subject introduces a theme with pronounced and instantly identifiable English overtones, and it manipulates as its focus an interplay between two complementary English stereotypes: the dynamic, self-confident Edwardian public figure, political guardian of Empire, and the retiring, evasive and self-effacing little Englander, cocooned in apolitical English stasis.

The resulting polarity creates throughout the novel an intriguing double-focus, lending the narrative a scope and consistency of treatment
which exceeds thematic parallels elsewhere in the 20th century English novel. Allan Massie suggests that Thin Ice declines to speculate the 'cause' of the subject's homosexuality, given the absence of objective psychologising in the narrative. It is one of the great strengths of the novel, however, that its inferences are wholly implicit, for Henry Fortescue's decline is closely allied to his fading imperial ambition as dangerous moral issues begin to erode the public exterior of his politics.

The alienation afflicting Fortescue in his non-conformity is skilfully mediated, and ironically heightened, through Gaymer's undiminished, though severely tested, devotion to his friend and his powerlessness in both rebuke and entreaty to change him. Part of the novel's subtlety is its success in evoking sympathy for the predicament of both narrator and subject. It is Fortescue's dangerous isolation, however, which embodies the novel's oblique, but acute, statement of the invisible - and ultimately malign - repression generated by a prejudicial public. It also goes beyond this, since Gaymer is, on his own admission, a representative member of that society, an emblem of English respectability. The limitations in his narrative role reveal an equal concern with the profound shortcomings, and barriers, to sympathetic understanding of the afflictive pressures weighed against those who challenge the moral codes which Gaymer so respectably advertises. That Gaymer's growing confusion eventually compels him to study closely the available literature on sexual deviance points to the inadequacies of educated attitudes.

Gaymer's capacity to transcend his accepted sense of the reality of societal norms is severely circumscribed by that reality: through the paradox of that perspective Mackenzie manipulates to the full a conflict in ethical and sexual codes which ironically, occasionally to amusing effect, contrasts the shifting balance between Gaymer's tolerance and exasperated misunderstanding, sympathy and revulsion. His problem is compounded by a creative one, for the self-confessed restrictions in Gaymer's narrative capabilities are revealed, in the opening 'Proem', to be bound by strict literary parameters, belonging to an epoch which has been eradicated by the historical present which marks both the starting, and ending, point of Gaymer's story.
Abdication of a Novelist

A telegram from Muriel Fortescue to say that Henry was killed last night in the blitz. I shall miss him sorely but in my heart I know it was a mercy. He would have been 63 next month and we have been intimate friends for 44 years.

That bleak little entry under the date March 20, 1941, is an extract from the diary I have kept in desultory fashion through the years, with many more days blank than recorded and of not much use except occasionally to check my excellent memory with a date, kept nagging me until six months later I decided to tell the story behind Henry Fortescue's failure to attain the eminence which at one time had seemed such a certainty...

It has been a difficult story to tell, an unpleasant story indeed, and I have not ventured outside my personal association with it. My attempt to give the story fictional trimmings must be regarded as the vanity of an elderly man who wrote and published three 'promising' novels before he was thirty, all three of which are now completely forgotten...

I have changed the names of most of the people and of many of the places, but those who knew Henry Fortescue will have no difficulty in recognising who he was. Whether I shall ever publish these memories I do not know. I have locked them away.14

The new idiom of the first-person is integrated with an equally important further technical departure: the habitual, seemingly inevitable linear chronology is abandoned, replaced by a discreetly understated depiction of recreative memory, an endeavour to reconstitute an epochal past whose coherence has been fragmented by its violent transition into an inhospitable present - evoked by the anonymous destruction of the blitz. Like Ford Madox Ford's The Good Soldier, the novel's reliance on memory results in a two-way temporal fluidity in perspective and a striking dependence on prolepsis, an unusual feature in a novel so insistently elegiac and retrospective.

If this the blitz which is seen to have obscured the life of the novel's subject for ever, it ominously tolls the demise of the integrity of Gaymer's Edwardian narrative sensibilities and emphatically confers extinction on the broken promise of his failed career. The development of narrative and an evolving external history can no longer complement one another hand-in-glove. Gaymer's sense of discontinuity implies an acknowledgement by his creator - for it was the world of Gaymer's pre-1914 fiction which determined the context of Mackenzie's early career - that the traditional fictional certainties which sustained his novels, even in The Four Winds of Love where narrative doggedly pursues the ongoing trajectory of history, have been divested of their social, and
Abdication of a Novelist

artistic, significance. The aesthetic self-confidence and authority of the past has now been undermined by obscurity and communicative reticence; besides a forgotten reputation, there is the hesitancy to be authorially committed - 'Whether I shall ever publish these memories I do not know. I have locked them away'.

It is post-1945, and not post-1918, which the author perceives to be a locus of historical and aesthetic disruption: at the end, rather than the beginning, of his career. Unlike the careers of so many of his contemporaries, MacKenzie refused to make the acknowledged post-1918 mood of disruption and transition a condition of his artistic development, stubbornly adhering instead to the traditional pre-1914 priorities which were to lose their credence so noticeably amidst the flowering of Modernism after the Great War. Not until 1927 and Vestal Fire would MacKenzie attempt to check his decline, but more definitive still was the 1939 - 1945 period during which with his long novel he made his most determined attempt to re-enter the mainstream. Having initially delayed the moment of consensus for artistic transition, his time of self-reckoning was postponed until further social upheaval determined his course. As The Four Winds makes very clear, it was the author's personal experience of 1939-1945 which clarified the 'tragic significance' of his post-1918 disorientation and bitterness, a perspective equally integral to the mood of Thin Ice.

Gaymer's self-deprecating attempt to mediate the history of his friend is regularly expressed in terms of a stylistic dependence on anachronistic convention (he champions Trollope and checks himself for anticipating the outcome of future events 'like a Victorian novelist') through which he can conceal the weakness of his authorial power. In the opening chapter he confesses 'Where sometimes I have to obtrude myself it will be merely as a rather feeble candle to illuminate Henry' (16), and, towards the conclusion, the London blackout of 1940, in a vivid paragraph, becomes an explicit image for the anonymous chaos of the present as a harbinger of creative impotency in which Gaymer is helplessly enveloped:

Presently I was driving back to Westminster through a darkness that seemed like a great maelstrom of ink, in which every thought as soon as it formed itself in my mind was sucked helplessly down to extinction. (187)
Abdication of a Novelist

During his last meeting with Fortescue he encapsulates his predicament: '...what's the use of my talking? It's all outside my imagination'. (222) Fortescue's reply - 'Yes, that's why you've been such a boon to me all these years' - captures the paradoxical significance of Gaymer's role: he is an illustration of the necessity and the ineptitude of common sense.

Mackenzie's surety of control over his material produces in George Gaymer his most satisfying character creation, largely because he is so unlike his author; his role requires the complexity of creating a narrator confronting his reluctance, if not his inability, to fulfil himself creatively. As a result Gaymer is simultaneously identified with, and distanced from, his creator. If through the discipline of his long comic series Mackenzie tempered his tendency towards fluid expansiveness, the long practice undoubtedly paid dividends in the compression of Thin Ice, with its absence of superfluity. Every feature of the narrative content is carefully calculated in its relation to the overall context of style and thematic development. If the spare and concise elegance which results is seen as the novel's most conspicuous feature, it is not difficult to appreciate the extent to which the narrative represents a considerable act of self-restraint on the novelist's part.

By conceding his voice to the first-person, Mackenzie effectively resigns from his habitual narrative standpoint of objective narrator, authorial and authoritative arbiter of plot, idiom, and character. In Sinister Street this permitted him to identify, in subjective semi-autobiographical terms, with Michael Fane; in Vestal Fire, to pontificate on the theme of Thin Ice from the perspective of superior satirical distance (as with the Highland comedies); in The Four Winds of Love, authorial self-projection in the idealised hero-surrogate John Ogilvie who recreates Mackenzie's life as it might have been and sometimes was. Thin Ice abruptly denies the author the traditional exuberance of his voice as we have come to recognise it - the studied, lyrical prosing of Carnival, the didactic thoroughness of The Four Winds, the witty vitality of the comedies. In Thin Ice he surmounts both his strength and
Abdication of a Novelist

weakness as a writer: an indomitable fluency and a reliance on largesse as opposed to frugality. It represents his abdication as a novelist, for if George Gaymer is seen to be engaged in a struggle to overcome self-restraint, Mackenzie is seen for the first time in the act of imposing it. The Catholic extrovert is finally in harness to a rigorous puritan spareness.

Gaymer therefore possesses all those characteristics most antithetical to the dynamism of John Ogilvie and the inward spiritual restlessness of Michael Fane; in contradicition to those two heroes, he is content to be defined within the restrictions of English society rather than seek liberation through priesthood or cultural experiment:

I was a little Englander more out of laziness than anything. The only son of a widower, I could expect to inherit enough to keep myself in reasonable comfort one day. I had a vague notion that it would be fun to go in for writing...

My father's death left me comfortably off. I had been called to the Bar, but I lacked the inclination and the inability to make my mark in the Law, and financial independence relieved me of the pretense of earning town living. I sold the lease of the house in Cavendish Square, quitted my chambers in the Temple and bought a charming Regency house on the outskirts of a small market-town in the north of Hampshire, the outstanding feature of whose gardens was an orchard of old peach-trees which when the spring frosts were kind still bore a heavy crop of fruit. Here I settled down to amuse myself if not the subscribers to Mudie's by adding another superfluous novel to the many that were being published every year. (11, 53)

This immersion in green-lawn Englishness is the antithesis of the accepted Mackenzie virtues and positives, both personal and artistic: articulacy, ambition, intellectual curiosity, zeal for life and hard work, and continual experiment. Gaymer's prosaicism, of course, is an embodiment of the cultural repression from which Fortescue seeks escape into his sense of self-appointed imperial mission, in the Levant especially, where temporarily a succession of administrative and diplomatic functions discourage him from indiscretion. Only when in England do his proclivities begin to weaken his self-control. In contrast to John Ogilvie, however - who is fulfilled through an identification with European culture which is assertively anti-imperialistic - Fortescue is advised, as the decay in his ambition sets in, to 'get away from Europe' (129), to seek an insularity advertised by the limitations of the narrator. Clearly, as these polarities illustrate,
Mackenzie's new stance of authorial invisibility reflects a need for a new intensity of focus on themes inspired by sharply critical hindsight of his onetime English profile.

II Empire and Aristocracy

The relative degree of narrative compression permitted by the design of *Thin Ice* is more readily appreciated when compared with the sweep of *The Four Winds*, for each novel encompasses a roughly equivalent time-span: 1896-1942 in the case of the former, 1890-1939 in the latter. The longevity and forensic detail of treatment that era receives in Mackenzie's *roman fleuve* is due to the panoramic complexity sought in its recreation of historical transition; in contrast, the compression of *Thin Ice* contributes to its mood of rapid, almost unheeded change and decline, contradicted by the psychological stasis of the narrator, whose stubborn constancy belies the historical flux surrounding him. This runs against the grain of the novelist's earlier indebtedness to the methodology of the *bildungsroman*, where the growth of the central character is co-extensive with the narrative's reflection of external change. Functioning in the manner of a photographic negative, this reversal highlights strongly the concern of the novel, since Gaymer's separateness from political change merely exaggerates Fortescue's vulnerability to that change.

The calendrical precision of Gaymer's method, reminiscent of the design of *Guy and Pauline*, where the chapters are distinguished merely by the years with which they are concerned, not only reflects Gaymer's Edwardian discipline in attempting to chart with precision the ebb of Fortescue's career. Like the Commander of British troops on the first day of the Somme who, so distant was his station from the scene of the slaughter, could conclude his daily report with the words 'fortunately our casualties have not been very heavy', Fortescue creates an inadvertent but accurate record of the first fifty years of 20th century English history. Underlying Gaymer's personal preoccupations is a subsidiary narrative, documenting an era opening with the Liberal-Unionist conflict over Irish Home Rule and the Boer War, the precarious
Abdication of a Novelist

balance of British power in the East and the build-up to the First World War, mirrored in the latter half with the years 1925-1941, the inter-war phase characterised - most notably for the concerns of the novel - by the increasing tension between Britain's European role as a world power and her threatened imperial commitments. Significantly, the novel concludes just prior to the climactically decisive imperial twilight of post-1945, the final eclipse from which the hero has already been spared.

The crucial juncture in the novel is accurately seen to be the Conservative victory of 1924, when Fortescue fails to attain Cabinet office in the new Baldwin administration, the latter having succeeded Bonar Law as leader rather than Curzon, disappointing the expectations of many. As a staunch traditionalist, Baldwin imbued post-war Conservatism with a new moderate and moralistic mood, in part a reaction against the excesses of Fortescue's younger generation. Baldwin's legendary cautionary slogan implies his opposition to Fortescue's political inheritance of imperialist self-confidence. In Martin Green's words, 'Baldwin led the revolt against the younger generation on moral grounds, and when in power he did much cleaning up of British public life - and was both valued and hated for what he did'.

Fortescue's background carries an echo of Kiplingesque values - the late Victorian aristo-political and military family, the ruling caste of Empire - while he is also identified with the myth of beautiful Edwardian youth, 'one of the flowers of pre-war England who had not been mown down' (131). He is a survivor, as Mackenzie himself was, of an entire generation of beautiful and heroic sons of England, numbering amongst them Rupert Brooke, Raymond Asquith, and Patrick Shaw Stewart, the generation whose loss in the Great War is closely connected with Mackenzie's sense of the twilight of an entire 'system' in Gallipoli Memories. Their sacrifice during 1914-1918 representing 'the Adonis myth of pre-war England', their mythical presence was important for those who survived them:

The most famous group of white hopes who died included Patrick Shaw Stewart, Charles Lister, Edward Hornby, Raymond Asquith, Aubrey Herbert, and the Grenfell brothers. These were friends and heroes to quite a large circle, who survived to tell of them in post-war England, including Ronald Knox and John Buchan, Hilaire Belloc and
Abdication of a Novelist

Compton Mackenzie, Duff Cooper and Lady Diana Cooper...these friends still mourned them, both as friends and as England's lost hope, forty years later. They were commemorated more than once by Evelyn Waugh, who never himself knew them. These were England's last true Sonnenkinder, whole images of glamour, of which the post-war dandies were only the sharp edged fragments.17

Gaymer's attraction to this ideal, as manifest in his friend, is clearly a figuration of the author's own retrospective identity with this particular phase of English culture, closely bound up with the Oxford ethos of the period as it is celebrated in Sinister Street.

A corollary of the 'Adonis' myth is that of an idealised celebration of aristocracy and ancient English lineage, given that many of these heroes were sons of the English landed classes. Gaymer is effortlessly seduced by the pedigree of his friend's heritage, in reaction to a conventional middle-class upbringing; he first visits the family seat after the Diamond Jubilee of 1897, the high summer of Victorian imperialism, whose sunset then seemed inconceivable.

How vividly that golden afternoon at June's end comes back to me from forty-four years ago. I can see the groom standing by the head of the chestnut mare between the shafts of the high dog-cart outside the little railway station and the hedgerows of the lane leading to it starred with wild roses. Henry took the reins and we drove off along the six or seven miles to Pye Hall. An avenue of limes led from the park gates to the Jacobean house of honey-coloured Ham stone, and the sight of it dreaming there in midsummer prompted me to ask Henry why he could not stay content with Pye Hall without bothering about the Empire. (13)

Gaymer, an orphan-figure displaced by his need for adoption into a maternal image (embodied in Lady Fortescue's 'ideal womanhood') of social stability, seeks assimilation to the icons from which Fortescue is in recoil:

Pye Hall had caught hold of my imagination and Lady Helen was seeming ideal womanhood. I longed to be accepted as a sort of extra son of this perfect house. I was not yet twenty. Pye Hall offered so much that I had missed in Cavendish Square, where my father had seemed uncomfortably aware of his paternal responsibility after my mother died when I was fourteen. (15)

In complementary but contradictory fashion, both Gaymer and Fortescue react against the traditional England of the 'fathers'. To Gaymer the
Abdication of a Novelist

aristocracy embodies his need for a surrogate mother as compensation for the stuffy Victorian paternalism of his youth, while Fortescue denies his obligation to 'father' the continuity of his lineage. The 'stagnation' he perceives as his traditional inheritance is both symptom, and cause, of his sexual psychosis.

It is at Oxford, through the flamboyant postures of Edward Carstairs, that the divergent paths awaiting both narrator and hero are determined. Carstairs, a publicist for decadence and a political careerist, represents the glamour of those 'nineties Wildean aesthetes upon which the post-1918 Oxford generation would model themselves: members of the later movement, in fact, become associated with Fortescue later in the novel. There is a suggestion, in Carstairs' distant Scottish ancestry and career in the Foreign Service, of Norman Douglas, the homosexual exile who became for Mackenzie, and many others, a paternal figure of hedonism and cosmopolitanism. Carstairs' seduction of Fortescue, and his anti-establishment mannerisms, represents the route Gaymer rejects in favour of stable English conformity and the maintenance of the social hierarchy, enshrined in Pye Hall.

If the dangerous fragility of Fortescue's alternative morality is enacted in his slow dissolution and imaged by the novel's title, equally, however, the continued permanence of the societal values he repudiates is no less assured. Fortescue's self-willed rejection of his future — since only a heterosexual heir can determine it — suggests an unconscious reconciliation to its inevitable end, an aristocratic death-wish speedily fulfilled:

Alas, the heir of Pye was never to see that nursery. Muriel and Tom were going to bring him to England in the summer of 1914 but the outbreak of war put an end to that plan. Then on a night of high wind in January 1918 that golden house was burnt, and nothing of it was left except a blackened shell. Three months later the Squire, who in the rescue of what pictures, plate and heirlooms could be saved from the fire had forgotten about his heart, had a severe attack and a week later was dead.

In spite of what most people would have fancied was Henry's indifference about the future of an ancient family, I believe myself that the destruction of Pye Hall was in its ultimate effect upon him a moral disaster. (71)

Coinciding with Fortescue's first refusal of office in the Coalition Government of 1918, the simultaneous onset of personal decay and
Abdication of a Novelist

societal disruption corresponds to the wider breach in continuity and coherence effected by the Great War. Non-conformity has been robbed of the moral foundation against which it rebelled, and that the two were somehow mutually dependent in their opposition is implied in Gaymer's verdict of 'moral disaster'.

The post-1918 political foundation, of course, has become equally volatile. It is Oliver Attwood, a disillusioned Liberal-Unionist whose career, like Fortescue's, has foundered earlier on the rocks of political storm over Ireland and in an echo of the main theme finds solace in a cynical dependence on alcohol, who summarises Fortescue's predicament.

You'll want to watch it, Henry. You made a mistake by being out of the country in 1915 when you Tories were so patriotically determined to do your bit by getting office without asking the electorate whether they wanted you. You'll be fifty before you know where you are. That's what happened to me...

...You made the mistake, Henry, of thinking that you must sacrifice yourself for the Empire. I made the mistake of thinking that I must sacrifice myself for social welfare. (78)

'Sacrifice' here is poised on an ambivalence. If Fortescue was prepared, through ambition, to sacrifice expression of his homosexuality at the altar of imperial mission, in the post-1918 decline of Empire into Commonwealth his personal political failure - echoing the larger historical context of England's imperial failure - becomes justification for his moral self-sacrifice, through the abandonment of discretion, to an increasing irresponsibility which all but destroys his integrity. Imperial responsibility, it is implied, has served as a precariously fragile veneer of thin ice protecting the public face from the dangerous personal chaos lurking beneath.

As fleeting aperçus from Gaymer suggest, the innate moral superiority which acts as the essential ideology of imperial administration and expansion is in conflict with the moral weakness which afflicts the hero, the lie beneath the facade of colonial power. Early in the novel, Gaymer makes this discreet critique concerning English elitism in the face of alien culture exploited for entertainment:

It was the stock entertainment offered to tourists in Algeria, Tunis or Morocco, particularly British tourists, which they ought to find humiliating but by some operative alchemy of the mind they
Abdication of a Novelist

manage to suppose reflects more moral discredit on the performers than upon themselves. (42)

Avoiding the risk of over-burdening the novel with too overt a parallel between this theme and the main subject, by an ingeniously controlled sub-plot, linking the narrator with the principal action, the novel’s exposure of the fragility of Empire is subtly reinforced. Fortescue’s brother Tom, portrayed in the novel’s earlier stages as a paragon of the Kiplingesque imperial boyhood from which Henry by temperament is excluded, represents in adulthood the military, land-owning complement to his brother’s political career: the twin institutions of power protected by the imperialist ruling caste. Dull and unimaginative where Henry is dynamic and quick to self-analyse, Tom enjoys conventional heterosexuality. His analogous weakness, however, lies in an incapacity to see beyond the superficialities of colonialist rule, a role he attempts as farmer in British East Africa and later the Seychelles. Inevitably he exercises his perceived duties in accordance with the assumptions of racial superiorism that have fostered him, as his letter to Henry makes clear:

We’re worried out here about the attitude the Colonial Office are taking over the natives. What on earth does Sir Percy Girouard think he means by development on native lines of thought? I thought when I came out here that I should get away from all this interference with landowners. But what really has maddened us is this Cole business. Cole shot a native dead who was trespassing on his farm, obviously for no good. He was acquitted by a jury of manslaughter and that should have been the end of the matter. But the Colonial Office made an order for Cole’s deportation on the grounds that he was provoking racial enmity, and in spite of our protests he has now been deported...The settlers are all furious and regard the attitude of the Colonial Office as a direct encouragement of native agitation. (70)

Lacking the diplomatic niceties which have made his brother’s service to the Empire an initial success, and deprived of his native English ambience, he steadily degenerates into an oafish alcoholism, sympathetically registered through the estrangement and frustration of his wife Muriel. Her quiet despair betrays a growing detection of colonial futility and isolation through its exaggerated reliance on the vestigial Englishness of white settler society in reaction to cultural alienation.
Abdication of a Novelist

Tom's disintegration into personal carelessness and an oblivious neglect of the misery undermining his status is symbolically enacted in his sudden death. Underwritten by a discreetly anticipated irony and a barely suppressed hint of black humour, his destruction at the hands of a colony of white ants which have seriously weakened a flight of stairs presents Tom as the victim of the steady erosion of the fragile imperial edifice which sustained him, a widening crack in that seemingly solid expanse of uniformity.

When we arrived we found Tom lying dead in the sitting-room at the foot of the collapsed stairs. The white ants had successfully undermined them while poor Tom was having his feud with the carpenter bees. (158)

Through complementary failures of character, Henry and Tom refute their hereditary mores in personally destructive expressions of irresponsibility. The ultimately fatal campaign of the white ants and carpenter bees, reclaiming the territory appropriated by the colonisers, connotes that this hierarchical upheaval is the legitimate end of a process sanctioned, and assisted by, the forces of nature.

Emphasising Henry's social displacement, the opportunity for Tom's posthumous fulfillment of his societal function is denied by historical forces operating in opposition to those social interests. The Second World War which claims Henry also kills Tom's only son Richard while he is pursuing his father's military career in the officer class: as the sole successor to the Pye estate his death irrevocably precludes any vestige of aristocratic continuity. The insidious destruction of 1939-1945 concludes with finality a process of societal transition set in motion after 1918, the effect of which is registered through Gaymer's personal isolation at the novel's conclusion. His understated grief for Fortescue is as much an implicit acknowledgement of this change as the pain of personal loss. He values Fortescue's experience as definitive of transition, the authoritative voice of an epoch who, had he survived, might have provided for the new post-war generation a bridge back into a dislocated past:

I began to build a castle in Spain for Henry's old age in which like a worldly-wise hidalgo he was to be the guide, philosopher and friend of aspiring political youth after this wretched war was over. Those
who had whispered about Henry's propensities would have to admit how unjust they had been...

...Dreams! Dreams! The castle in Spain I began to build for Henry's old age proved to be as precarious as a house of cards. (198)

Death-haunted, however, only Gaymer remains to provide that link, to perform the narrative obsequies 'at the funeral of a world that was dead'. (139)

If the economy of Thin Ice reveals the hand of a mature craftsman, the bleakness of the novel makes it unmistakably the work of a novelist nearing the end of life and career. Gaymer, whose isolated old age is later paralleled in the final volume of My Life and Times, studded with spare elegies for dead friends and contemporaries, has only his narrative as consolation for his loss: 'That manuscript locked away on March 31st, 1942, will now be published fourteen years later. All the people in the story except myself have passed away' (Postscript). Similarly, it was in 1959 that Mackenzie made the decision to devote his remaining years to his monumental autobiography, a testimony to the power of narrative over shortening days, spanning an equivalent period to Gaymer's narrative and even to display the same calendrical accuracy of year-by-year segments. It would also represent the ultimate gesture of justification of an individual who had been moulded by - and survived - an extensive phase of history.

The quiet disillusionment and abdicational mood which permeates Thin Ice and dominates its conclusion stands in stark contrast to the harmonious continuity guaranteed by the comic resolutions in the preceeding Scottish novels, anticipating the tenuous tragi-comedy of Rockets Galore. This is also attributable to the time of publication: although the manuscript of Thin Ice was completed in October 1955, it appeared in May 1956, one month before the withdrawal of British troops from Suez, which would precipitate the crisis unresolved until November of that year. Mackenzie had been following Eastern developments closely. In March 1956, he sent an indignant open letter to the Scotsman, criticising the Government's potentially disastrous mismanagement of its Eastern commitments and in particular the agitation by Cyprus for self-government - 'How the Government managed to persuade itself that the development of Cyprus as a basis of defence for the Near East would compensate for the voluntary abandonment of Suez is incomprehensible'.

345
It is likely that Mackenzie, given his interest in the Cyprus question and Britain's irksome policy towards Greece, was conscious of an impending crisis in Suez from 1954 onwards, when phased withdrawal was agreed and serious undermining of Britain's standing in the Middle East looked to be the inevitable consequence. His letter concludes in a tone of incensed despair:

If, when after our surrender of the Suez Canal defences to Egypt and removal of our base to Cyprus we had given a solemn pledge of self-determination by a fixed date, violence could have been avoided, and the base secured. Our premature departure from Egypt has encouraged the Muslim revolt against French rule in North Africa, has encouraged the Arabs to believe they can overrun Israel, has made the Baghdad Pact a note of interrogation and has put fresh heart into the oil lobby on Washington. And to recover our prestige we preferred to subdue a small island of 400,000 hostile Greeks and 100,000 obsequious Turks.

On whom lies the stigma, on Sinn Fein or the Black and Tans, of a Coalition Government? on William Wallace or Edward I?"

The outcome of Suez was decisive for British colonial interests; as momentous a watershed for Commonwealth as the outcome of 1918 had been for Empire. As Keith Robbins observes,

The Suez affair disclosed that the British government did not now have the power, militarily or economically, to mount an overseas expedition if the United States disapproved...what had happened was a gross miscalculation of Britain's power and capacity...The props and assumptions of post-war policy had all proved unhelpful. Britain could no longer suppose that the United Nations would invariably find British policy congenial; the United States would, in the last resort, always look after its own interests; the Commonwealth was not likely to expand its ranks yet maintain the similarity of outlook and interest which had hitherto characterized it. After 1956, apprehensively, uncomfortably and uncertainly, the United Kingdom began to enter the post-colonial world."

Thin Ice, in its depiction of an ineluctable imperial and colonial decay conveyed through the tragedy of those bound up with its twilight, represents a timely manifestation of the post-Suez condition. If, technically, its narrative betrays the abdication of the novelist, then in its mood it would appear to be permeated with the legacy of abdication of empire. In this respect it is no surprise to find that Thin Ice is the coeval of Angus Wilson's Anglo-Saxon Attitudes, one of the most marked of novels appearing during the 1950s which sets out to
recapitulate the twentieth century and which features a strong Edwardian section counterpointed to the present, a perspective also reflected in William Hartley’s *Museum Pieces* (1952) and L.P. Hartley’s *The Go-Between*.

The insistently abdicatory and retrospective register of *Thin Ice* finds its coda in the last of Mackenzie’s novels to deal consistently with a serious theme, *Mezzotint* (1961), a work with none of the narrative experiment of its predecessor and even less of its incisive characterisation, marked by a uniformly perfunctory quality in style and development. The authorial distance which enhances the mood of *Thin Ice* so considerably here becomes a disadvantage, betraying the ageing novelist relying on his narrative instincts to the detriment of a sense of his emotional involvement with the material: a quality evoked in Alan Massie’s description of *Mezzotint* as ‘an old craftsman’s work’.21 *Mezzotint*, however, in terms of theme, serves as an important footnote to *Thin Ice*, since its intention is to provide a portrayal of post-1945 failure in colonial liberalism. This is a theme anticipated by the vignette of Seychelles colonialist society which appears in *Thin Ice*:

One was aware of the slightly self-conscious exclusiveness that marks all clubs in the tropics, and in Seychelles *les grands blancs*, as the old French families were called, were three times as exclusive as even a suburban Englishwoman contrives to be in India. The large native population descended from emancipated Negro slaves of every shade from palest café au lait to café noir was to a man ineligible for membership; a doctor who had taken his degree at St. Thomas’s Hospital or a barrister of the Inner Temple who had studied law at the University of Caen could never be elected as a member of the Club. (148)

Assumption, the island portrayed in *Mezzotint*, is dominated by a similar hierarchical system, representing the distillation of two failed empires. Initially the domain of French settlers from Guiana, by the terms of the Peace after the Napoleonic wars the island was annexed by the British:

Beyond insisting strictly on the emancipation of the slaves which *les grands blancs* as the French planters were known had been importing for a century and a half from West Africa, the new owners hardly interfered at all with the established way of life on the island. The local laws were retained, and as these had been untouched by the Napoleonic Code Assumption for a long time remained the last territory of the ancien régime. With imperial development during the reign of Queen Victoria Assumption was given a Governor and a
Abdication of a Novelist

Legislative Council with the usual official trimmings of the Colonial Office.22

The ineptitudes of the British Colonialist administration, and the continued oppressive apartheid against the emancipated slaves maintained by the remaining French grands blancs, are the combined evils of imperialist legacy which George Clapshaw, the idealistic liberal imperialist appointed as Governor of the island after 1945, and Jules Dumont, a half-caste slave-descendant of the island and a brilliant lawyer who has been victimised in love and profession through the racialism of the planters in younger life, attempt in tandem to undermine.

The method of Clapshaw’s reformist campaign is discreetly to challenge the social exclusiveness of the ‘plantocrats’ as a residue of imperial domination, and to resist the role of the Catholic elite, whose conservative resistance to educational reform is in allegiance with the racially-orientated motives of the planters’ economic supremacy. This culminates in his symbolic attempt to have Dumont appointed as the island’s Attorney-General, partly to permit Dumont the authority to uncover tax fraud on a massive scale by the grands blancs, but, more importantly, to invert figuratively the existing power structure of the island by subjecting the planters to the authority of the habitually powerless.

The outcome of this, and the conclusion of the novel (in its implications as pessimistic as Thin Ice) is determined by resigned failure. The moral depravity of the French colony, symbolised by the suicide of a half-caste girl spurned in pregnancy by her lover, the son of the most influential of the plantocrat families, goes unpunished. The societally-protective web of deceit spun to prevent the boy’s exposure proves too intricate to permit Dumont retributive justice. Clapshaw’s self-appointed mission of liberal rule - ‘It’s not enough to put a red line under an island on the map and think your imperial duty is done’ (48) - is of course doomed to failure through the institutionalised and ossified intransigence of the very ideology he sets out to question. By declining Clapshaw’s nomination of Dumont as Attorney-General, the British Colonial Office perpetuates precisely those perverse corollaries
Abdication of a Novelist

of imperialism which, ostensibly, the transition from Empire to Crown Colony was intended to mitigate.

Clapshaw’s abrupt resignation from office and his departure from the island reveals Mackenzie’s resignation as a novelist to a truth inimical to his fictional preference for harmonised closure so conspicuous in the mature phase of his career. His valediction, therefore, to serious themes founders on this note of inconclusion, the negation of fulfillment and ambition. Unlike Waggett, Clapshaw departs leaving corruption, not harmony, behind him. Contrary to Mackenzie’s own life and the figuration of that life in John Ogilvie, Mezzotint as a final statement concedes, in the face of that much-altered post-Suez world, that the man who loved islands is no longer able to live on them.

III Antecedent and Parallel: Maurice, Brideshead Revisited

Maurice, although written at the time Mackenzie was publishing Sinister Street and not to appear until 1971 – fifteen years after Thin Ice and a year before Mackenzie’s death – reveals affinities with its later counterpart which are remarkable in the context of the creative distance between Forster’s Edwardian career and a novelist whose Edwardian apprenticeship was fifty years behind him. Forster made drastic revisions to the manuscript of his novel in 1959-60, and it is possible that in the interim he had encountered Mackenzie’s novel, for this would explain a striking textual coincidence in Forster’s first chapter:

...Mr Ducie was never deterred from doing what is right. He smiled and was silent. Mr Read knew what the ‘good talk’ would be, for early in their acquaintance they had touched on a certain theme professionally. Mr Read had disapproved. ‘Thin ice’, he had said. The Principal neither knew nor would have wished to know. Parting from his pupils when they were fourteen, he forgot they had developed into men.23

Forster, of course, was resigned to the impossibility of publishing Maurice in 1914 given the explicitness of its theme, and still declined to do so in 1960: if it was to appear at all, it would be after ‘my death and England’s’24, the latter being an event there is little to suggest in Forster’s writings he believed was ever likely to occur with such
finality. 'England' in this context refers to the obdurate skin of societal prejudice against sexual deviation with which Maurice is so concerned, symbolised in the opening chapter when the crudely explicit sexual diagrams of Mr Ducie are obscured, to his relief, by the incoming tide: the repressive sea of hypocrisy which engulfs expression of sexual freedom.

'England' had sent Wilde to jail for sodomy only a few years previously, an instance of Establishment persecution and philistinism which was to acquire mythic significance: the case haunted Mackenzie from childhood until the end of his life. It must be stressed, too, that in 1960 the radical liberation in social and sexual attitudes synonymous with the decade to follow had scarcely begun to revolutionise past prejudice. Open discussion may have supplanted secrecy, but euphemism and distortion were no less prevalent - in Forster's view the only change was 'from ignorance and terror to familiarity and contempt'. In 1961, Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was banned under the Obscene Publications Act, and in 1962 a publisher's advertisement for Mackenzie's novels relies on this instance of feeble circumlocution: *Mezzotint*...shows the keen attention which Compton Mackenzie pays to the world we live in, bedevilled by problems new and old. One such problem, which we have heard a lot about lately, was firmly and compassionately handled in *Thin Ice*.

Forster's restless tinkering with his manuscript, the unease discernible in his 'Terminal Note' over the inconsistencies he acknowledged in his own work, betray the predicament of an Edwardian artist circumscribed by the conventions upon which his art relies in his attempt to articulate truths hostile to those conventions, larger than the parameters which define him. Added to this, Forster's own homosexuality compounds the tension between authorial objectivity and his subjective self-projection into the issues confronting his hero. A consequence of this is stylistic; the peculiarly clipped, reticent diction of much of the writing, as Stephen Adams has observed: 'The early chapters are very short and rely heavily on generalisation and summarised information; at times, they read more like a synopsis or set of notes on character and plot'. Forster's ostensible detachment from his hero is regularly short-circuited when the author imbues Maurice
with a capacity for analytical summary and reflection in a fashion quite inappropriate to his defined limitations as 'mentally torpid, not a bad business man and rather a snob'.

The restrictions in Forster's narrative role correspond closely to the parameters imposed by Mackenzie on Gaymer in *Thin Ice* who, as a failed Edwardian novelist, gingerly approaches Forster's theme from the obverse angle of narrow-minded heterosexuality. The creative advantage conferred by hindsight and separateness in Mackenzie's narrative strategy grants his novel in consistency a comparative superiority. Because its creation of an Edwardian idiom is self-consciously objective, the ambivalence in Gaymer between explicitness and evasion is part of an intentional ironic pattern, whereas the inconsistencies in Forster's design are the result of an acknowledged creative dilemma.

Thematically, *Maurice* and *Thin Ice* are closely akin in attitude. A firm conviction underlying *Maurice* is that in order to win spiritual fulfillment the hero must transcend the confines of his class by escaping the delimiting definition of 'the niche England had prepared for him'. Like Fortescue, Maurice is to subvert the accepted societal structure by falling in love with a member of its servant-class, thereby spurning societal and sexual codes simultaneously. Clive Durham's 'conversion' to heterosexuality - unsatisfactory though it may be in terms of the novel's structure - is essential, for Durham's surrender to his inherited upper-class function in perpetuating the Penge estate counterpoints the implications of Maurice's only means of escape. Both novels, therefore, employ the motif of upper-class English lineage as a touchstone of moral and societal prejudice.

Mackenzie, too, depicts a homosexual hero whose predilections carry him beneath the veneer of his social privileges, but with added subtlety reveals a narrator who, facing the ultimate test in his continued loyalty, is forced to do the same. To avoid the certain exposure of Fortescue's undesirable affiliations, Gaymer finally rejects passivity and descends 'into the dark underworld of Henry's secret life' (171), the terrain of a criminal fraternity, lewd bars, violence and blackmail. It is the concluding irony of *Thin Ice* that the 'dark underworld' which all but destroys Fortescue's integrity completes Gaymer's character, by lending him briefly the guise of a comparative dynamic heroism.
Abdication of a Novelist

selflessly risking his respectable image by intervening to preserve his friend's. Gaymer momentarily transcends in the sphere of action his inadequacies in the sphere of narrative.

If this permits a moment of redemption to both narrator and hero it is, of course, short-lived, dissolving into an ignoble death and a concluding desolation. In 1914 Forster can conclude, with traditional innocent affirmation, with his hero's retreat into an idyllic and archaic English ruralism of natural love and natural labour - Forster's acknowledgement of the influence of Edward Carpenter's visionary sexual and socialist ideals. In contrast, Mackenzie's novel spells the demise of those English values which, in 1960, Forster was forced to concede no longer existed:

(Maurice) belongs to an England where it was still possible to get lost. It belongs to the last moment of the greenwood...Our greenwood ended catastrophically and inevitably. Two great wars demanded and bequeathed regimentation which the public services adopted and extended, science lent her aid, and the wildness of our island, never extensive, was stamped upon and built over and patrolled in no time. There is no forest or fell to escape to today, no cave in which to curl up, no deserted valley for those who wish neither to reform nor corrupt society but to be left alone.31

Of the excellent press Thin Ice received, a review by Evelyn Waugh stands out for the studied insight it reveals into the quality of the novel's organisation and style, and in particular its sombre register:

The imaginative writing of the old has certain rare and attractive qualities. One is the entry of death. It is not a violent intruder. The characters of Thin Ice die away one by one with little fuss... (Gaymer's wife's) death and that of the hero's brother are accidental, but they complete their lives...32

What is absent here, however, is any suggestion that Waugh perceived in Thin Ice an all-encompassing elegiac intent, the significance of which this chapter has been analysing, and for this reason it is equally surprising that Waugh betrays no detection of similarity to his own Brideshead Revisited, the most flagrant example in post-war English fiction of a defence for the aristocratic social order. That defence, inspired by Waugh's fear of a developing history epitomised by a new middle-class stridency and philistinism, is also construed as an anticipated elegy for pre-1945 English upper-class culture; in Waugh's
own words, 'a panegyric preached over an empty coffin'. Mackenzie provides the elegy which Waugh hopes history will indefinitely postpone, and it is this distinction which connects two novels sharing common material but deploying it to radically different ends.

To begin with a shared technical feature, the narrative style of each novel is particularly similar. In both cases, the narrator, conscious of artistic failure, is attempting to escape the alienation of a war-torn present into the past of an epoch enshrined in memory whose coherence is under assault from the force of historical upheaval. Charles Ryder inhabits the dandy-aesthete movement of 1920s Oxford, epitomised in the novel by the European modernist aestheticism of Anthony Blanche (a fictional distillation of Harold Acton and Brian Howard): the pre-1914 generation of Oxford aesthetes, embodied in Edward Carstairs, is the starting-point of Gaymer's reminiscence. Waugh acknowledges Mackenzie's part in the influence of that earlier generation through mention of Sinister Street among the books in young Ryder's undergraduate collection (Cyril Connolly, George Orwell and others of Waugh's generation all recollect the novel's importance in their development).

If in the aesthetic sphere George Gaymer's inclinations remain stubbornly Edwardian, Charles Ryder, it has been suggested, is seen to renounce the potential of post-1918 modernism in favour of an aesthetically conservative subservience to insular Englishness:

(Anthony Blanche) is associated with Cocteau, Diaghileve, Picasso, with modern art at its boldest. Charles prefers the art of painting British country houses. He prefers charm. But when his first exhibition is held, Anthony attends it, and he alone understands what Charles is doing and what has gone wrong with his artistic development. He tells Charles that he has succumbed to English charm in just the way he had warned him against in their conversation about Sebastian. And Charles admits that Anthony is right. Gaymer, a generation earlier, is faced with an analogous choice: between the social non-conformity of the friend he loves and the traditional English social order, embodied in the lure of the aristocratic ideal. Gaymer and Ryder alike gain their admission to aristocracy through a son engaged in active opposition to its values - Sebastian Flyte through a psychotic rejection of adulthood, Fortescue through homosexuality. Gaymer, perhaps more through natural inclination than conscious choice,
Abdication of a Novelist

comes to inhabit the middle-class respectability typified in Brideshead Revisited by Ryder's cousin Jasper and the cynical seniority of his father.

Neither Gaymer or Ryder are uncritical spectators of the society to which they bind themselves, since in each case the family is seen to lack the qualities required to endorse the moral system whose interests it ostensibly represents. Gaymer restrains himself from articulating fully his disagreement with the Squire's racial prejudice against Irish Home Rule, while at the heart of Waugh's novel is the friction between Ryder's agnosticism and a conveniently mysterious Catholicism, through which those corrupted members of the Marchmain family can be reconciled in ultimate spiritual redemption, symbolically conferring Waugh's 'divine grace' upon the social order he sets out to mythologise.35

It is here that Mackenzie and Waugh are divided in purpose and attitude. Gaymer is Mackenzie's elegiac spokesman for a generation, and for the decay of a questionable ethos of imperial superiority and social privilege, which is portrayed in the process of an inevitable collapse. Where Mackenzie is resigned to its defeat, Waugh's perspective is unequivocally in allegiance with the traditional aristocratic order and its continued survival in the face of hostile social change. Aesthetically, Ryder's failure may be construed as a figuration of Waugh's failure to follow the radical opportunities offered by modernism through Harold Acton at Oxford, as Martin Green has suggested:

Charles Ryder, who represents Waugh, fails as an artist because he turns away from Anthony Blanche (the figure derived from Acton and Howard, an international dandy-aesthete) to make a friend of Sebastian Flyte (who stands for the pre-war, purely English dandyism of the beautiful Etonian and Oxonian aristocrat). If Ryder had affiliated himself to Blanche (if Waugh had affiliated himself to Acton), he might have become a great artist. Instead he chose charm, playfulness, quaintness, and whimsy - and became the writer of Brideshead Revisited.36

In its religious and political implications, however, Brideshead Revisited suggests that what Ryder loses aesthetically through devotion to a conservative English values his creator has gained, if not justified, through his Catholic salvation. Ryder's concluding nihilism - 'I'm homeless, childless, middle-aged, loveless'37 - is offset by the
Abdication of a Novelist

final, teasing hint of spiritual hope, continuing if not eternal, which closes the novel:

'Something quite remote from anything the builders intended, has come out of their work, and out of the fierce little human tragedy in which I played; something none of us thought about at the time; a small red flame - a beaten-copper lamp of deplorable design relit before the beaten-copper doors of a tabernacle; the flame which the old knights saw from their tombs, which they saw put out; that flame burns again for other soldiers, far from home, farther, in heart, than Acre or Jerusalem.30

The political and religious aesthetic of power of the aristocracy is dependent upon the exploitation of the lower orders, 'the builders', whose values, Waugh clearly implies, are negligible, values which serve merely as the foundation for the maintenance of Ryder's elite aesthetic:

More even than the work of the great architects, I loved buildings that grew silently with the centuries, catching and keeping the best of each generation, while time curbed the artist's pride and the Philistine's vulgarity, and repaired the clumsiness of the dull workman.39

Waugh's allegiance to aristocracy and Catholicism requires his explicit opposition to the new prosperity of the 'philistine' lower and middle class - 'the age of Hooper' - whose figurative and literal assault on the traditional order is enacted in the novel's Prologue and Epilogue. Waugh's Catholicism, as he betrays elsewhere, is integral to his elitist conception of that order.

The Catholic structure still lies lightly buried beneath every phase of English life; history, topography, law, archaeology, everywhere reveal Catholic origins.40

If the Second World War represented Waugh's dreaded altar at which the aristocracy would commit self-sacrifice to permit 'the advance of Hooper', by 1959 he is sufficiently convinced the ritual is not yet irrevocably complete to intrude, prior to his novel, to declare his confident prejudice.

It was impossible to foresee, in the spring of 1944, the present cult of the English country house. It seemed then that the ancestral seats which were our chief national artistic achievement were doomed to decay and spoliation...the English aristocracy has maintained its
Abdication of a Novelist

identity to a degree that then seemed impossible. The advance of Hooper has been held up at several points.¹¹

Contrasting this self-satisfied advertisement with the import of Thin Ice, published three years previously, reveals the extent of Mackenzie's alienation from this blatant stance of right-wing extremism. As with Maurice, the parallel again displays the degree to which the writer's acute separateness from the context of his theme reinforces its perspective. Waugh, by writing his Preface, declares openly his subjective identification with both narrator and narrative, and goes to the length of casting the helpless Hooper as the accessory to the crime of murder although we are reminded that the corpse is still twitching. By all but refining himself completely from his narrative through a late display of creative ingenuity and experiment, Mackenzie forbids himself the luxury of psychologising; he has total self-confidence in his distance from the material.

The unpleasantness of Waugh's outspoken political affiliations aside, the novel's explicit intentionality not only assists in its invalidity, but demonstrates Waugh's inability - a feature shared by his fellow English novelist, Anthony Powell, in his Music of Time sequence - to separate the objective analysis of his conservative English culture and perspective from a delimiting but irresistible identification with, and celebration of, his participation in that culture. The declared political leanings of Waugh and Powell as arch-conservatives depend on the preservation of a social system whose coterie-mindedness and insularity is frequently the source of their satirical and comic energy.

Gaymer and Ryder are emblems, and products, of a road not taken; an escape route renounced in favour of an English cul-de-sac. Gaymer is entrapped in a mentality in proportion to the freedom with which his author is able objectively to assess it, having joined the literary diaspora of the 1920s in flight from the metropolitan core culture abroad or, in the case, into the peripheral nationalism of Scotland. His alienation from the centre bore fruit most conspicuously in The Four Winds in its indebtedness to the Scottish Renaissance, a perspective contrasted and consolidated through the Highland comedies. Inverting the orientations of his career in a final salute of acknowledgement, in this remarkably satisfying novel the Scottish cause célèbre conceals a veiled
portrait of the artist as he might have been, had he remained an English
novelist. In this way Thin Ice provides a coda to Mackenzie's initial
preoccupation with the 'unfinished statue' motif as a characteristic of
Edwardian society and culture, analysed in the artistic failures of
Maurice Avery, Michael Fane and Guy Hazlewood (see Chapter Two).

The distinction is yet more sharply defined if one compares the
implications of Waugh's Catholicism, an ideology which conveniently
combines a traditionalist morality with a chauvinist English
conservatism, with Mackenzie's faith. For the latter, Catholicism offered
a spiritual corollary to the idealised retrieval of a fragmented Gaelic
culture implying the wider redemption of a lost Scottish national
identity. Despite Gaymer's remark that Edward Carstairs 'spoke of
Scotland as if it was farther away than Lapland', a moment of discreet
authorial irony referring to Mackenzie's creative distance from Scotland
in the novel's material, Mackenzie in fact obliquely exploits his
Scottish persona in one of the novel's key episodes.

This occurs in Chapter XV, when Fortescue, arrested in Glasgow by a
Highland constable for an implied act of public homosexual indecency,
plays diplomatically and obsequiously on the policeman's wartime
patriotism in order to escape arrest. He narrowly succeeds, but the
victory is bitter-sweet. His closest flirtation with certain ruin in the
novel also coincides with his sole experience of abject humiliation,
humbled entirely in the revelation of the painful truth of his
irresponsibility from a moral authority more potent than any
remonstrance encountered in London or the home counties:

'Don't tell me you broke your promise to that policeman,' I
exclaimed.
'No, no, I didn't do that. I thanked him and put out my hand. He
would not take it. 'You'll excuse me, Mr Fortescue,' he said, "but I'd
rather not shake hands with you. I'm not letting you go because of
yourself but because I won't give that bugger of a Haw-Haw the chance
to open his dirty mouth over the wireless. And you'll be taking my
meaning if I say a gentleman like you ought to know better than give
such trash the opportunity." With that he turned back in the
direction from which he had come, leaving me, I'll be frank, Geegee,
considerably abashed.' (197)

Fortescue's inherited hubris, his English moral laxity and assumed
superiority, is withered by a sternly Presbyterian moral rigidity and an
uncompromising absence of deference ironically in conflict with Fortescue's instinctively English gentlemanly overture. Thus in the novel's most explicit moment, Mackenzie relies illustratively on an agency apparently alien to his wider purpose but in truth integral to his creative standpoint, his Scottish inheritance. His Scottish self pronounces oblique judgement on his English, and it is the latter which is found wanting, a perspective reflecting the comic tactics of the Highland series. The issue of creative 'selves' proliferates into further divisions. If Mackenzie's idiom of gaiety and vitality in the Highland comedies is an expression of Catholic affirmation, the creative suppression and gravity of Thin Ice, sombrely English, betrays a mood antithetical to Scottish Catholicism: a spirit which, in its puritan implications, is Calvinistic. For if, as Anthony Rhodes suggests, 'Thin Ice is a puritanical novel, pointing the danger of excess'\textsuperscript{12}, then Mackenzie's moral critique of English society, a critique antithetical to the affectionate satire of the comedies, imposed upon him a creative polarity the extent of which is seen in his dependence on a sternly Presbyterian morality otherwise anathema to Mackenzie's pro-Catholic Scottish sensibilities.

More accurately, Thin Ice is not puritanical in the sense that it condemns homosexuality as a perverted vice – Mackenzie's interest and psychological insight into sexual deviance is sympathetic, not dismissive. Instead, Thin Ice exerts a severe and alien moral perspective on aspects of English cultural behaviour and attitude which for the related concerns of the novel happen to be dramatised most effectively through the predicament of the hero's homosexuality, a subject which had held Mackenzie's fascination as a creative writer since the late 1920s in Vestal Fire and Extraordinary Women. Where these earlier novels manipulate homosexual behaviour within communities as manifestations of beguiling eccentricity and absurdity, Thin Ice, in its self-conscious restraint and sombre intentions, insists upon alienation and the struggle for integration.

Waugh's radically different conception of Catholicism making him blind to the interplay of these polarities, ironically he expresses his approval of this incident in the novel.\textsuperscript{13} Doubtless his delight was due to his personal knowledge of the actual event on which Mackenzie based
the fictional encounter. The real location was Edinburgh, the real
practising homosexual Tom Driberg, journalist and onetime politician, an
important member of Waugh's Oxford generation. Caught during the
blackout in homosexual embrace with a sailor in Princes Street Gardens,
his story eventually played into Mackenzie's hands and his opportunism
for factual ingredients to inspire a narrative or eke out an existing
one. Driberg's reaction of indignation to his unwitting contribution to
the novel is of interest to the foregoing discussion of the fictional
episode, and the novel as a whole.

'Monty' Mackenzie was a man I liked, and a novelist whose books I
have enjoyed, and I had no objection to his using the story, but there
was one detail in his version which I did take strong exception to:
at the end of his politician's conversation with the policeman, the
policeman refused to shake hands with him. This was inaccurate, and I
found it deeply offensive.44

Driberg of course was justified in his complaint at Mackenzie's amending
of the facts as he had been told them. In his quickness to take offence,
however, he innocently reveals his obliviousness to the real implications
behind the author's modification of the borrowed event, which reveal a
conflict in cultural mores that was integral to the author's creative
condition. This provides a final implicit illustration, perhaps, of the
significance of Mackenzie's finest achievement, where the valedictory and
most self-conscious utterance of the English voice expresses the
authentic depths of the Scottish heart for the last time.

To return to the reviewers' and critics' chorus of praise with which
this chapter opened, it is sad to consider the irony of this sudden
expression of approval for a novelist who had not only reached the end
of one of the most remarkably devoted fictional careers of the 20th
century, but who had awakened the attentions of a critical establishment
that persisted in ignoring his finest work with a novel clearly voicing
the author's abdication from serious fiction and the perilous process of
reputation-making. By this time, critical praise was as much a matter of
indifference to a writer nearing his eighties as the critical hostility
and neglect he had indomitably survived throughout sixty years of
writing.
Abdication of a Novelist

At the age of eighty-eight, almost totally blind, the last Octave of My Life and Times had been published when he began a new novel, using a board with wires stretched across the paper to guide his pen. Mackenzie's wretched facility remained inextinguishable until the end. Its most fitting tribute can be found in one of the last letters Mackenzie wrote, two years before his death, to his friend Hugh MacDiarmid, the man whose encouragement and inspiration some fifty years earlier had proved so crucial to the novelist's career. To his fellow-Scottish writer who also found it impossible not to write, Mackenzie begins: 'I am sorry to hear you have been having a bad time with your health and I can easily understand your temporary allergy to pen and paper. I think both of us might be forgiven for that'.
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365
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ibid., pp. 188-89. Mackenzie goes on to remember that '...Erskine of Marr and Christopher Grieve were both in sympathy with my fear of parochialism and we discussed the possibility of forming a society to be known as Clann Alba, the members of which would be pledged to do all they could to foster the Celtic idea with a vision, on a far distant horizon at present, of rescuing the British isles from being dominated by London'.

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2 ibid., p. 151.
3 Robin Jenkins, Fergus Lamont (Edinburgh: Canongate Publishing Ltd, 1979), p. 139.
10 Hart, Scottish Novel, p. viii.
11 As a background to this discussion a general knowledge is assumed of the principal works of the Kailyard school by J.M. Barrie, S.R. Crockett, and 'Ian MacLaren', all summarised adequately elsewhere; see David Daiches (ed.), The Companion to Scottish Culture (London: Edward Arnold, 1981); Tom Nairn, The Break-Up of Britain (London: Verso/New Left Books, 1981).

12 Nairn, Break-Up, pp. 120, 124.

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16 Cairns Craig, Scotch Reels, p. 11.

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18 Hart, Scottish Novel, p. 401.


21 North Wind, pp. 8-9.

22 North Wind, pp. 19-20.

23 North Wind, p. 20.

24 My Life and Times Octave Eight (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969), p. 119: 'With pain and irritation I found The North Wind of Love too much of a strain and took refuge as I have so often done in writing a comic book. This was The Monarch of the Glen'.

25 My Life and Times Octave Eight, pp. 135-36; 216-17; 218-19.

26 Hart, Scottish Novel, p. 399.


28 Hart, Scottish Novel, p. 379.

29 Edwin Muir, 'New Novels', The Listener, 24 December 1941, p. 862.

30 ibid.

31 ibid.


33 One testimony to the efficacy of Mackenzie's characterisation is provided by the actor Basil Radford who played the role of Waggett in the film of Whisky Galore, and who believed that Waggett's attitude to the islanders over the whisky was exactly as it should have been. He really believed that his condemnation of the islanders' lawlessness was in complete accord with that of any Home Guard commander who appreciated his responsibility'. (My Life and Times Octave Nine, pp. 183-85). See Chapter Seven.
34 My Life and Times Octave Seven, p. 124.
36 Unsigned review, Times Literary Supplement, 4 December 1943, p. 586.
37 Mackenzie was on familiar territory here, since he himself commanded the Barra Home Guard platoon during the war: needless to say, the only real combat experienced was that waged against military bureaucracy. See My Life and Times Octave Eight.
43 Maurice Lindsay, Thank You For Having Me (London: Robert Hale, 1983), p. 156.
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47 ibid., p. 382.
51 Harvie, 'Kallyard Revisited', p. 68.
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3 Further publications include Act Now for the Highlands (1939); Gaelic in Scottish Education and Life (1945); Folksongs from the Isle of Barra (1950); Stories from South Uist (1961); The Furrow Behind Me: The Autobiography of a Hebridean Crofter (1962); (with F. Collinson) Hebridean Folk Songs (1969).
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12 Hunting the Fairies (London: Chatto & Windus, 1949), p. 75. Subsequent references are to this edition and appear in brackets following each quotation.


16 'Author's Note', Rockets Galore (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957). Subsequent references are to this edition and appear in brackets after each quotation.


18 Of many Scottish artists who have manipulated the 'icons' of Scottish Romanticism, perhaps the most recent artist of interest is Peter Seddon, who employs intertextual, deconstructionist methods to considerable effect in his series of paintings 'The Highland Clearances'. See 'Highland Clearances': Peter Seddon Talks to Ray Mackenzie', Cencrastus, no. 14, Winter 1983, pp. 28-31.

19 Hart, Scottish Novel, p. 384.

20 ibid.


24 ibid., p. 183.

25 ibid., p. 184.
Chapter Eight (pages 329-360)

1 'Home Thoughts From Abroad', Scottish Journal, No 1, September 1952, p. 4.
2 Ibid.
3 'MacDiarmid Replies to Mackenzie', Scottish Journal, No 2, October 1952, p. 10.
4 The transition into 'seriousness' was one of which Mackenzie appears to have been acutely conscious. Reporting the death of his friend Leo Robertson in My Life and Times Octave Ten, who wrote the first book-length study of the author in 1954, Mackenzie comments 'He had been a little concerned by my seeming to desert serious themes after The Four Winds of Love. He was pleased to hear about my projected novel Thin Ice'. (53)
13 'The Four Seasons of Compton Mackenzie'.
14 Thin Ice (London: Chatto & Windus, 1956), 'Proem', p. 7. All subsequent references are to this edition and appear in brackets after each quotation.
16 Children of the Sun, p. 64.
17 Children of the Sun, pp. 66-67.
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25 'Terminal Note', Maurice, p. 221.
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31 'Terminal Note', p. 221.
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36 Martin Green, Children of the Sun, p. 220.
37 Brideshead Revisited, p. 330.
38 Ibid., p. 331.
39 Ibid., p. 215.
41 Preface, p. 8.
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43 'A Story With A Moral', p. 4.
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