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Introduction. Contemporary Scottish Urban Fiction (2000-2020): Space, Emotions, Identity[1]

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The twenty-first century can only be understood in relation to the social, political and economic dynamics that have unfolded in cities, where cultural encounters transcend the spatial boundaries of exclusively local alliances. Most of the world's population now lives in these complex spaces of interaction and conviviality, but also of great division and segregation. Indeed, as Elizabeth Grosz argues, "the city's form and structure provide the context in which social rules and expectations are internalized or habituated (…). This must be seen as the most immediately concrete locus for the production and circulation of power" (2002: 302). Saskia Sassen links this circulation of power to the "new economic role of cities in national economies in an increasingly globalized world" (2009: 3) and goes on to denounce the new forms of inequality that shape urban life. According to the sociologist, there are specific circuits that connect specific cities, some of which are global, others regional. Spatial concentration is one of the main consequences of these processes, which involve the translocation of people from diverse places of origin in order to take on the new roles that sustain these new geographies. Alongside this displacement, issues of identity, belonging and adaptation emerge, and so (global) cities become "strategic sites for norm and identity formation", although these multi-layered transformations also occur "in smaller cities and suburbs, and even at lower levels of national urban hierarchies" (Sassen 2012: 88).

The city is a complex concept that involves a series of architectural materialities that provide its population with the infrastructures they need for their labour, housing and leisure, as well as cultural and other forms of interaction with other citizens. It is an ambivalent space of freedom and control, as "the city promises the possibility of multiple connections, and yet it is also mapped, surveyed, colonized, possessed and regulated" (Edensor 2000: 124). Living in a city necessarily has a collective dimension—urban life requires an adaptation to the spatial proximity of others—which entails the negotiation of a multiplicity of individual embodied experiences, which in their turn are affected by the presence of strangers. As Iris Marion Young puts it, "[d]welling in the city means always having a sense of beyond, that there is much human life beyond my experience going on in or near these spaces, and I can never grasp the city as a whole" (2002: 437). Forms of experiencing the city, therefore, are simultaneously determined by larger power structures and depend on subjective enactments of relational spatial identities, which are embedded within processes of embodied meaning-making (Wetherell 2012), both individual and collective.

These processes require the negotiation of normative representations of space that convey the laws of a particular society with respect to order and organisation, but which are also, and more importantly, a personal act of interpretation that emerges when we situate ourselves in these spaces and traverse them. In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), Michel de Certeau analyses urban spaces in relation to the private routes we take on our daily travels across the city, each one having a differentiated personal meaning. These routes are never identical and represent a form of *spatial stories* with which we reinterpret the significance of official representations of the city. As Fran Tonkiss explains, such an individual focus on the city implies that even if we share the same urban space, "no one (…) lives in exactly the same city" (2005: 129). In a similar vein, Henri Lefebvre (1991) differentiates between what he denominates *perceived space*—spatial practices and rhythms—compared to *conceived space*—codified representations of space in maps and urbanism—or *lived space*—the projection of a person's emotions and imagination onto the architecture of the city. This spatial triad is developed further by Edward Soja, whose integrated *Thirdspace* comprises both strictly individualised embodied urban experiences and the most normative renderings of collective space, a perspective that he argues is capable of enacting

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social change. According to Soja, every aspect of space comes together in his conceptualisation: "subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history" (1996: 56-57). This multiple perspective—never finished, always in the making—has a social projection that, in the hands of artists and writers, also has the potential to become a powerful political instrument.

Indeed, as Kevin McNamara posits in his analysis of the representation of British cities in fiction, "[e]xploring the interplay of urban environments and human behavior is one of the things that city literature does best, whether in fictions that map social spaces and interaction, utopian and dystopian speculations, or all manner of reformist projects built on foundations of sentiment, sensationalism, 'experiment', or social and political theory" (2014: 5). Other authors, like Magali Cornier Michael, agree and see cites as entities in progress with regard to their ongoing demographic and architectural changes, and also "in terms of the ways in which they are conceptualized" (2018: 5). Here, the political, social and economic context plays a crucial role, especially when culture becomes a catalyst for the examination of collective identity, as has been the case in Scotland. In a similar vein, in their introduction to *The Poetics of Space and Place in Scottish Literature*, Monika Szuba and Julian Wolfreys argue that "[t]he literary text, rather than the historical or philosophical, is the place (…) where we may come to understand the significance of place to one's experience of being-there" (2019: 4). The complexities of this "stateless nation" (McCrone 1998), which in the twenty-first century comprise, among other significant events, its (first?) Independence referendum (2014) and the Brexit referendum (2016), cannot be analysed without taking into consideration the final decades of the twentieth century, which witnessed the two Devolution referenda (failed in 1979, successful in 1997) and an intense exploration of issues of national identity, mostly associated with new conceptualisations of the Scottish urban self. Gerard Carruthers and Liam McIlvanney highlight the role of contemporary Scottish authors in this political scenario, arguing that "the renaissance of Scottish writing [of recent decades] has been bound up, in complex ways, with the country's successful progress towards constitutional change" (2013a: 10), a vision that is also shared by Robert Crawford (2000), Duncan Petrie (2004) and Christopher Whyte (1998), among others. On the other hand, Berthold Schoene, in "Post-devolution Scottish Writing", draws on Raymond Williams's *structures of feelings*—"affective elements of consciousness and relationships" (1977: 132)—to reflect on the impact devolution has had on Scottish literature and how it has changed previous "preoccupations" with collective identity. He contends that with the reestablishment of the Scottish parliament, the nation's structures of feeling have changed, as too have "cultural representations of the personal and the political, the self and the nation, [which] are assuming new guises and rehearsing previously unheard-of crises and emergencies" (2007a: 4). Kate Turner and Jane Steadman, editors of the special issue of *C21 Literature: Journal of 21st-Century Writing* on *Scottish Fiction: Where Are We Now?*, also connect the inauguration of the Scottish Parliament with a new literary stage characterised by "an energising diversification" of the national paradigm, which they consider has been "enriched and ruptured by new voices and critical cross-currents", thus contributing to the questioning not only of Scottish "uncertainties", but also of issues related to Britishness and statehood (2017: 3).

One of the most significant changes can be seen in the literary relationship that Scottish authors demonstrate with Scottish cities. In "The Glasgow Novel", Liam McIlvanney explains the complex but limited representation of urban life in this cultural territory and even speaks of an "urbane silence" or rather of a tradition of "novels lamenting the absence of a viable tradition" until the early 1980s, "when the 'Glasgow Renaissance' galvanised contemporary Scottish literature with its potent fusion of vernacular energy, formal innovation and generic eclecticism" (2013: 2018). Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Scottish authors have explored contemporary urban spaces, their rhythms, the collective daily choreographies of their inhabitants and the significance of these lived spaces in a multitude of texts that led to Alan Bisset speaking, in his study of Glasgow fiction, of a "hide tide" (2007: 59) that can also be extrapolated to Edinburgh and, to a lesser extent, other Scottish cities. The present year, 2021, is characterised by great uncertainty about the near end of the COVID-19 pandemic, a crisis that will no doubt have an impact on the portrayal of global urban life in the literature that will be published in the coming years. This year also marks the 40th anniversary of the publication of Alasdair Gray's masterpiece *Lanark: A Life in Four Books*, the ground-breaking book whose unquestionable influence can be traced in numerous contemporary works. In it, Gray famously claimed that "if a city has not been used by an artist not even the inhabitants live there imaginatively" (1981: 243). In complaining against the alienation that such voids of representation created in the psyche of Scottish citizens, Gray thus initiated the profuse and complex literary urban production that has followed in subsequent decades.

Indeed, Scottish writers have proved to be capable of imagining Scottish cities in rich and varied ways, ranging from James Kelman's inscription of working-class urban dialects and subjectivities to the *Trainspotting* (1993) phenomenon and its "expressly non-literary urban speech" (Innes 2007: 302), to Janice Galloway's troubled female embodiment of urban spaces in *The Trick Is to Keep Breathing* (1989) and beyond to the more recent social criticism characteristic of crime fiction writers such as Denise Mina, Ian Rankin and Louise Welsh. As such, Scottish cities have been reinvented symbolically, yet also in accordance with the socio-

political and cultural debates affecting their geopolitics. In the aftermath of the intense literary and critical exploration of collective identity at the turn of the century, Scottish urban writing has complicated these debates, facilitating the inclusion of diverse perspectives, among them gender, sexuality and class (Jones 2017)—as is demonstrated, for instance, in the work of Laura Hird and Zoë Strachan—while it has also strengthened its translocal connections in the fiction of writers such as Jackie Kay, Suhayl Saadi and Leela Soma. Contemporary Scottish writers have created literary urban Thirdspaces from which to explore the heterogenous experience and imagination of contemporary Scottish urban life from different positionalities. Their situated views on Scottish cities serve to analyse the identity processes involved in spatial practices, where emotions and embodied experiences are determinant in understanding how the identity of a place and its politics are constructed. Emotions play a crucial role in these practices, as Sara Ahmed contends, since "emotions work to align bodily space with social space" (2004: 6), blurring the boundaries between the individual and the collective, the self and the surrounding environment. This special issue explores the different portrayals of Scottish urban spaces and practices that have appeared in the fiction produced in the last two decades. The main focus of the issue is the affective exploration of these urban spaces, as well as the process of meaning-making (both individual and collective) that these works suggest.

In the first article, "Beyond the 'Glasgow Discourse'? Emotions and Affects in Ellie Harrison's *The Glasgow Effect* and Darren McGarvey's *Poverty Safari*", Carla Sassi draws on Colombian anthropologist Myriam Jimeno's conceptualization of *emotional community* (2004, 2007, 2010)—the relational experience of individual trauma channelled through collective memory and shared political endeavours—to analyse these two essayistic memoirs within the framework of the working-class tradition of the Glasgow novel. Sassi contextualises her analysis in the *Glasgow discourse*—the powerful relocation of subaltern voices characteristic of twentieth-century Glasgow fiction—to discuss how Harrison's (2019) and McGarvey's (2017) texts both negotiate and collide with this tradition from their differentiated situatedness. She studies how the angry media debate that followed the launch of Harrison's artistic project (2016), in which the London-based artist became the observer and recorder of city life from what was perceived as her privileged middle-class position, complements the divergent literary perspectives of the two artistes and contributes to unravelling the limitations and expanding the scope of the Glasgow discourse at a time of cultural transition in the nation.

This analysis gives way to Carole Jones's focus on the Scottish capital in "Dis-Comforting Urban Myths: Challenging Brexit Nostalgia in Recent Edinburgh Fiction", where she analyses Mary Paulson-Ellis's *The Other Mrs Walker* (2016) and Ever Dundas's *Goblin* (2017), two novels with a transpatial dimension that connects contemporary Edinburgh with Second-World-War London in a subversive reworking of the "Blitz spirit"—the myth of the good-humoured resilience developed by the British in the face of adversity during the Nazi bombing campaign (particularly in London), which Jones identifies as a one of Williams's structures of feeling—and Edinburgh's traditional depiction as a dark and gloomy northern city. By focusing on the unhomely spaces that these cities provide, Jones analyses the gendered distribution of spatial power and reads these novels in the light of the Brexit debate, which dominated the public arena at the time of their publication. Her analysis of the fluid time and spatial dimensions of the novels allows her to reflect on the construction of exclusive forms of (English) nationalism that were used to support the campaign to leave the European Union, and to study how these two authors present Edinburgh as a more inclusive space of conviviality and interaction, reminding us how Scotland voted by a large majority to remain in the EU.

Edinburgh, and more specifically Leith, is also the focus of Julie Briand-Boyd's "A City of Betrayals: Irvine Welsh's Minor Literature of Leith", where she reads the *Transpotting* saga—*Trainspotting* (1993), *Porno* (2002), *Skagboys* (2012) and *Dead Men's Trousers* (2018)—in the light of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of *minor literature*, which according to these authors is characterised by the "deterritorialization of the language, the connection of the individual and the political, the collective arrangement of utterance" (1983: 18). Briand-Boyd's article traces Welsh's ethical and aesthetic agenda from the publication of his first novel, in relation to his linguistic and social concerns, and examines his portrayal of a dual city marked by a spatial segregation that reaches far beyond the New/Old Town divide. She contextualises Welsh's works in the framework of the Scottish urban working-class tradition—William McIlvanney's *Laidlaw* (1977), Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* (1981) and James Kelman's *The Busconductor Hines* (1984)—in order to examine the specificities of his literary project and the multi-layered forms of alienation endured by Edinburgh's *precariat* (Standing 2011) in recent decades.

The next article, Irene González Sampedro's "Revisiting Female Resilience within the Psychiatric in Janice Galloway's Fiction", also offers a comparative perspective. It analyses the development of one of Glasgow's most significant literary voices, Janice Galloway, in terms of her portrayal of spatial gendered hierarchies in her spear-heading debut novel *The Trick Is to Keep Breathing* (1989) and her recent short story "and drugs and rock and roll", included in the collection *Jellyfish* (2015). González Sampedro studies the dialogue between both works and defines the psychological processes undergone by Galloway's protagonists as *spatial resilience*, a continuum she identifies in this author's fiction and which she studies in relation to the representation of embodied experiences by women, particularly with respect to medical institutions, which appear as ambivalent spaces of repression (at the hands of the medical authorities) and sorority (among the patients). These individual

experiences become indicators of larger problems affecting urban life in Scotland, yet also point to the possible alliances that may emerge through the fracturing of the patriarchal order.

Jessica Aliaga-Lavrijsen's article "Transcending the Scottish Postmodern City: Ken MacLeod's Future Urban Geographies" adds to the perspectives explored before by focusing on Scottish science fiction and the possible future spaces it allows us to envisage. She analyses Ken McLeod's novels *Intrusion* (2012) and *Descent* (2014) from the standpoint of the fluid *Transmodern* spaces they suggest. The blurred limits of (virtual) reality, (g)locality and translocality are interpreted by Aliaga-Lavrijsen as a palimpsest constructed upon physical spaces, which contributes to imagining alternative realities that simultaneously reach into the past urban history of the nation and project into the future.

These five articles are accompanied by two interviews, "Out of the Frying Pan, into the Fire": An Interview with Laura Hird" conducted by Clara Botamino González, and "The Heavens and Hells of Scottish Literature: An Interview with Alasdair Gray", by Paula Argüeso San Martín, both of which delve into the spatial dimension of these authors' writing. These interviews are complementary, as they concern two authors from two different generations, each with a different perspective on gender issues and whose careers are respectively associated with Scotland's two largest cities: Glasgow and Edinburgh. Both interviews were conducted in 2019, a few months before the COVID-19 crisis hit the world, and in the case of Gray, this is one of the last interviews he gave before he passed away in December 2019. An integral part of Gray's literary and political project, Stephen Bernstein contends, was "to envisage identities that offer a broad range of possibilities, positive and negative, for meeting the twenty-first century" (2007: 167). With this open perspective in mind, and as a homage to his figure, Gray's interview closes this special issue, whose scope could never fully reflect the varied representations of the city that characterise twenty-first-century Scottish urban fiction. However, taking into consideration Angela Carter's reflection on "how impossible it is to pull down imaginary cities" (1991), it can be argued that the politics of representation suggested by the works analysed here have contributed to putting Scotland, its citizens and glocalities on the map by means of literary urban cartographies whose amplified significations have reached beyond its national borders.

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