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Tartan Noir, or, Hard-Boiled Heidegger

Abstract

This essay takes up the genre of Tartan Noir, and specifically the founding text of that popular brand of detective fiction, William McIlvanney's *Laidlaw*, in light of the ontological theories of Martin Heidegger and Alain Badiou. The essay inverts the normative critical relationship between literature and theory, taking *Laidlaw* as an explanatory text for Heideggerian thought rather than the converse and in the process makes Heidegger's influence seem like a reflex of genre fiction in its sheer conventionality, even its kitsch. Badiou's ideas become useful here as they situate such conventionality relative to ideas of 'state' considered as a condition of being as well as a political entity. What, this essay asks, does *Laidlaw* tell us about the 'state' of the literary tradition within which it is embedded? And how might *Laidlaw* help us conceptualise the political state of Scotland?

Tartan Noir is the name accorded by James Ellroy to the robust industry of crime fiction that has come of age in Scotland over the past thirty years, and whose exponents include Ian Rankin, Val McDermid, Denise Mina and many others. When the reputable novelist William McIlvanney unofficially inaugurated Tartan Noir with *Laidlaw* in 1977, he emulated the punchy, hard-boiled pulp that had emerged in the U.S. in the 1920s and 1930s: 'Milligan came in, a barn door on legs'; 'His mood was a crowd'; 'The room was a permanent hangover'.[1] The genius of such phrases, and also their inanity, consists in their reduction of phenomenological complexities (x is y: 'room' is 'hangover') to a set of stock objects, executing a kind of levelling justice against high-flown literary affect. Hard-boiled style has always had something punkish about it, originally deriving its tough-guy shtick through ironic imitation of Ernest Hemingway. Indeed, 'hard-boiled style' is almost a contradiction in terms, the installation of an orthodoxy against which the genre purportedly chafed. But this orthodoxy is precisely

what makes *Laidlaw* interesting. Adopted more than adapted by McIlvanney, hard-boiled expression amounts to an effective refusal of what Fabio L. Vericat identifies as the 'denationalising' (or de-Anglicising) poetics of Lewis Grassic Gibbon, James Kelman and other figures from Scotland's long modernist era. Whereas those writers sought to extract something irreducibly Scottish from the language and literary forms of English (moulding them, as Gibbon put it, to 'the rhythms and cadences of Scots spoken dialect'[2]), McIlvanney seemed less intent on diverging from the formulae established by such American writers as Dashiell Hammett and Mickey Spillane than on mediating modern Glasgow through them.

These generic codes adumbrate and adulterate a second, philosophical inheritance in *Laidlaw*. McIlvanney's eponymous detective keeps 'Kierkegaard, Camus and Unamuno' in his desk in place of a bottle, drowning himself in deep thoughts (*L*, p.9). One set of ideas resounds with particular force in the narrative. 'Your way of life is taught to you like a language', Jack Laidlaw instructs his young partner, Harkness. 'It's how you express yourself. But any language conceals as much as it reveals' (*L*, p.72). The allusion here is to the famous passage on the relationship of 'world' to 'earth', and on the status of truth as 'unconcealment', in Martin Heidegger's 1936 essay 'The Origin of the Work of Art'.[3] And in fact, the entire novel reads like a Heideggerian adventure, dense with mood (or with what Heidegger calls *Stimmung*, the 'attunement' to Being:[4] 'Just about as tangible as the furnishings, and sharing their unadaptable solidity, was the atmosphere' [*L*, p.94]) and inclined toward ontological reflection ('At the centre of this small ruin of domesticity was Tommy', the fugitive killer, taking refuge in a condemned building and seeming to have 'arrived where, within himself, he had probably always been' [*L*, p.49]).

This peculiar conjuncture of genre fiction and high philosophy captures a palpable zeitgeist in Scotland in the late 1970s – one that would endure into subsequent decades. As Gill Plain observes, 'the alienated figure of the detective was a trope well suited to the articulation of opposition to Thatcherism, and from these polemical roots crime fiction devolved into an ideal formula for investigating the state of Scotland'.[5] The 'state' here is ontological as well as political, posing the question of the 'being' of a 'stateless nation'.[6] But as Plain keenly notes, ontology in crime fiction attached itself to the 'trope' of the detective, and hence to the conventions of genre. This is where McIlvanney's novel becomes most provocative. For while Scotland's

political circumstances may help explain the ontological urgency of Tartan Noir, how do we account for the retroactively formulaic quality of Heidegger's philosophy – its status as a *Laidlaw avant la lettre*? Consider this section from one of Heidegger's 1946 lectures (later published as the essay 'What Are Poets For?'), which sounds like the set-up of a detective pot-boiler:

> The closer the world's night draws toward midnight, the more exclusively does the destitute prevail, in such a way that it withdraws its very nature and presence. Not only is the holy lost as the track toward the godhead; even the traces leading to that lost track are well-nigh obliterated. The more obscure the traces become the less can a single mortal, reaching into the abyss, attend there to intimations and signs.[7]

For all its metaphysical pathos over modern 'destitut[ion]', the passage's principal features – its references to corruption, ambiguous clues (the 'withdraw[n][. . .] nature and presence') and heroic 'mortal[s] reaching into the abyss' – evoke the quintessential hard-boiled scenario described by Raymond Chandler: 'down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid. The detective in this kind of story [. . .] is the hero, he is everything[. . .] The story is his adventure in search of a hidden truth, and it would be no adventure if it did not happen to a man fit for adventure'.[8] And 'What Are Poets For?' was hardly Heidegger's sole venture down the 'mean streets' of hard-boiled associationism. His essay 'What Is Metaphysics?' weds philosophy to suggestions of conspiracy: 'every metaphysical question always encompasses the whole range of metaphysical problems. Each question is itself always the whole', one thing implicating everything else.[9] We also find repeated references to 'mystery', and to the philosopher's role in solving it, in numerous other essays, from 'On the Essence of Truth' ('What conserves letting-be in this relatedness to concealing? Nothing less than [. . .] the mystery; not a particular mystery regarding this or that, but rather the one mystery'[10]) and 'The Question Concerning Technology' ('that which frees – the mystery – is concealed and always concealing itself'[11]) to 'What Calls for Thinking?' ('in being struck by what is actual, man may be debarred precisely from what concerns and touches him – touches him in the surely mysterious way of

escaping him by its withdrawal'[12]) and 'The Way to Language' ('Whatever has to remain unspoken will be held in reserve in the unsaid. It will linger in what is concealed as something unshowable. It is mystery'[13]). McIlvanney even broaches the Nazi politics that were, scandalously, Heidegger's own. 'What would happen in a war', Laidlaw's nemesis asks, 'if we didn't wear uniforms? We wouldn't know who was fighting who. That's Laidlaw. He's running about no man's land with a German helmet and a Black Watch jacket' (*L*, p.52).[14]

Laidlaw thus presents us with an interpretive circle, a structure Heidegger affiliates with enquiries into being: the novel devolves on ontological motifs that in turn evoke the conventions of hard-boiled narrative.[15] Questions of influence (with McIlvanney turning to Heidegger only to find the latter already on his trail – a classic crime-fiction scenario) recede here behind the quirky mystery of their relation. What are we to make of a hard-boiled Heidegger? Did the philosopher fall into genre fiction – or was he *thrown*? Ian Duncan put a version of that question to me in punning reference to the term by which Heidegger designates the contingent state from which individuals commence their query into being.[16] 'Thrownness' represents our dawning consciousness of being within our everyday circumstances, and it makes ontology a function of the *process* of interrogation rather than of the objects under it. This is why *Laidlaw*, so self-conscious of genre, so unapologetically derivative, poses such an enigma for Heideggerian thought. For in hard-boiled fiction, the mode of investigation itself is so thoroughly conventional, so formulaic, that it converts ontological process into predigested product, the coming-to-be into a caricature of itself.

In this way, McIlvanney's novel accentuates an ontology that is not 'thrown' as much as *thrawn*, a Scots term meaning *twisted* or *perverse*.[17] As such, it converts Tartan Noir into a template of one of the most problematic features of modern being: the relationship of the unique to the generic, the individual to the stereotypical, the 'authentic' to the 'recycled' – the *one* to the *not-one*. My aim here will be to analyse the 'mystery' of this relation, less through a reading of *Laidlaw* per se than of the literary and intellectual history in which it is inscribed. As we will see, this examination will lead us towards new directions in French theory as well as overlooked or underappreciated facets of Scottish criticism and philosophy, making what Plain calls the Scottish 'state' into a rebus of things even larger than itself.

Was There – Was *There* – a Scottish Literature?

Scholars of Scottish literature are obsessed with the 'being' of Scottish literature. So argues Stuart Kelly, persuasively, in view of the 'deluge of books [that] have been published in [recent] years that assert the existence of Scottish Literature as, if not a separate, distinct and discrete entity, then at the very least an acknowledged field of study'.[18] Kelly's general point, an Arnoldian precept updated for the twenty-first century, is that this fixation with 'Scottishness' poses a risk to new ideas and fresh creativity.[19] But Heidegger would contend more fundamentally that Scottishness as such evades sustained reflection. This is because Scottish-*ness* denotes *being* as much as *identity*, and 'being' itself is an elusive category, 'the most universal and the emptiest of concepts': 'everyone uses it constantly and already understands what he means by it'.[20] Western thought since Plato, exacerbated by modern science and industrialisation, has conditioned us to apprehend 'being' as one genus or entity among others; and yet, 'the Being of entities "is" not itself an entity', nor is it a genus, nor is it discernible through any of our typical (metaphysical or scientistic) habits.[21] Indeed, to apprehend being as a critical or historical object is to risk missing it altogether. For this reason, Scottish literature, say – the quality of 'being' that makes this literature Scott-*ish* – both implies and eludes ontological analysis.

By Heidegger's definition, this is precisely what happened to Scottish literary studies after 1919, when T. S. Eliot posed his notorious, ontological-cum-historical question – 'Was there a Scottish Literature?'[22] Edwin Muir would preserve and distort Eliot's thrawn query in his seminal 1936 essay *Scott and Scotland*. Remembered for its dissociationist polemic ('The curse of Scottish literature is the lack of a whole language, which finally means the lack of a whole mind'[23]), the essay's determinative gesture may simply have been its choice of method. Muir professed that he had 'felt driven to ask whether Scotland could be said to have a literature, and if so, in what sense it could be called a literature. Here the only standards [he] could appeal to were comparative. [He] knew three literatures passably well – the English, the French, and the German', and so his assessment of Scottish literature proceeded on that basis.[24] But in measuring Scottish literature against those traditions, Heidegger would say that Muir hastened the 'transformation of truth [. . .] from unconcealment to correctness', or from unique ontological disclosure to comparative standing on the basis of preformed (and *a priori* conventionalised) categories.[25]

Ironically, however, this 'fall' from ontology into history initiated a critical tradition, and thus an impression of national being, which Eliot had denied to Scottish literature. In his 1940 study *The Scots Literary Tradition*, John Speirs proclaimed the death of 'the old Scottish community implied in the poetry of Fergusson and Burns' on the basis of Muir's dissociationism, declaring that '[t]here can be no modern Scots literature if there is no modern Scots spoken language'.[26] Kurt Wittig accepted this divisive principle as axiomatic in his 1958 book *The Scottish Tradition in Literature*, addressing the 'schism' in 'the heart[s] and mind[s] of many Scotsmen' that results from a deep history of divided national loyalties, British and Scottish.[27] Three years later, David Craig traced this schism back to the Enlightenment, typically taken to represent the apex of Scottish letters but inhabited in his view by epigones of London high culture: 'being preoccupied with [. . .] *politesse*, [Scottish literati] lacked a proper self-sufficiency', giving themselves over to a set of strictly emulative literary models 'unequal to the demands of original men'.[28] And in 1977, the year McIlvanney published *Laidlaw*, Tom Nairn would craft an even more damning version of this argument, taking Scotland's rapid modernisation after 1750 as an explanation for the nation's rupture from its own past and corresponding corruption of living traditions to a menagerie of kitschified stereotypes ('vulgar tartanry', he called it[29]).

Scottish literary historians are all too familiar with this critical trajectory, and the trend in the field for nearly three decades has been to revise its basic premises.[30] However, by taking Eliot's assumptions seriously, Muir and his successors effectively established the Scottish tradition as one of ontological *thrawnness* – the uncanny being of literary non-being. Hence, whereas Eliot posed the question of the nation's literature by emphasising its pastness (*was* there one?), and whereas a later generation of scholars like Cairns Craig and Gerard Carruthers would challenge the assumption of that literature's unity (was there *one*?[31]), the ambiguity informing the work of Muir and those who followed him highlights instead the uncertainty of 'being' itself ('was' 'one' *there*? what does it mean for 'one' to 'be'?).

Here, Scottish literary history resonates with the influential criticism of Alain Badiou. A colleague of Louis Althusser's and Jacques Derrida's (among others) at the *École Normale Supérieure*, Badiou's work has rarely if ever been discussed in the context of Scottish studies. And yet, it has become powerfully influential in modern thought in recent years, and this

despite its notorious difficulty. Badiou's most striking contribution has been his engagement of mathematics – particularly set theory and topology – as an ontological discipline. And it is on that basis that Badiou dramatically pronounces 'the closure of an entire epoch of thought and its concerns' on the grounds of an unresolved crisis at the core of being.[32] This crisis revolves around the primary ontological unit of modernity: the number. 'A paradox: we live in the era of number's despotism; thought yields to the law of denumerable multiplicities; and yet [. . .] we have at our disposal no recent, active idea of what number is'. Number 'governs our conception of the political' in our appeal to polls and majorities, it 'governs the quasi-totality of the "human sciences"' in their endless stream of statistics, it 'governs cultural representations' in the 'viewing figures' linked to programming and advertising, it 'governs the economy' in the rise and fall of stock markets. Indeed, number seemingly 'informs our [very] souls. What is it to exist, if not to give a *favourable account* of oneself?' And yet, because 'we don't know what a number is [. . .] we don't know what we are'.[33] And we have not known what numbers are, Badiou asserts, since the seventeenth century, when traditional ontological assumptions eroded through the mathematical introduction of negative and irrational figures. Consisting of quantities less than nothing or else composed of unrepeating decimals and irreducible fractions, negative and irrational numbers enabled fledgling practitioners of the calculus, for example, to determine subtle rates of speed and variation. But such figures also undercut the metaphysical presumptions of whole number and thus the traditional basis of ontology, of what 'one' (or anything countable, anything extant) 'is'. After the seventeenth century, 'beings' (manifestly) *were* and (conceptually) *were not* at the same time. Ontology became uncanny.

Heidegger recognises this dilemma. 'Mathematics, which is seemingly the most rigorous and most firmly constructed of the sciences, has reached a crisis in its "foundations"'. So have physics, biology, the human sciences, the arts and theology.[34] However, rather than resolving this crisis formally, Heidegger resorts to what Badiou calls the seductive 'doctrine of the withdrawal and unveiling', the parcelling of truth into an un-whole composite of presence and absence that we saw Laidlaw preaching to Harkness.[35] But for Badiou, the 'crisis [of mathematical] "foundations"' demands that we reconfigure number as the primary unit of being. Appealing to Georg Cantor's set theory, Badiou defines numbers as multiples that may be

grouped in any variety of combinations. On this basis, he makes the powerful case that all beings (or 'sets') are the products of how we order them, such that every set reveals its own contingency, its susceptibility to reorganisation. These disclosures enable us to rearrange their sets – an intervention Badiou labels an 'event'. Medical breakthroughs, political uprisings, artistic innovations: all reorder the worlds out of which they emerge. And mathematics, Badiou says, explains the process whereby such historical events occur.

This leads us back to *Laidlaw*, for crime fiction inhabits the ontological space between ambiguous (or what Badiou calls 'inconsistent') multiplicity and its 'evental' reconstruction. Most crime novels, of course, take 'organisation' as their governing narrative principle. Ian Rankin claims, for instance, 'that the figure of the detective and the novelist are similar' in that both 'seek the truth [by] creating a narrative from apparently chaotic or unconnected events'.[36] Typically, however, chaos exacts its revenge in these novels inasmuch as momentary closure in a particular narrative only leads to more crime, a new case, another number in the detective series. In this respect, and evocatively of the Scottish literary tradition after Muir, crime novels find resolution only in the economy of genre, the narrative channelling that brings these novels into existence while rendering them inauthentic as (mere) emblems of representational superstructures. That is, no detective is simply 'one', always being a product of the genre that fashions his or her world. Badiou associates such dynamics with the political typology of the 'state', which superimposes itself over the elements of a given set and represses its ontological possibilities.[37] In subordinating beings to themselves, states acquire what Badiou calls an obtrusive or 'excrescent' quality.

'Excrescence' manifests itself in *Laidlaw* to the degree that the novel's 'events' precipitate narrative action without effectuating real change. While Jennifer Lawson's murder sets the plot in motion, the effect is primarily to divulge entities within their existential habitats. Hence Tommy Bryson, the killer, reflects that the feeling of having murdered Jennifer 'wasn't so much of having done something as of having been part of *an event* outside himself, like an explosion' to which he was privy, but almost as a spectator (*L*, p.19, my emphasis). In his case, the 'event' was precipitated by a fit of displaced rage at homosexual urges that had violated his sense of manhood during an intimate moment with Jennifer. Now, in its aftermath, he 'was left to go on living, to find out how he could inhabit what had happened' (*L*, p.20).

When Tommy's lover reflects on this 'event', he too sees an unformed multiple begging radical reorganisation: 'Harry thought he understood the pressures that had made [Tommy] make the [murderous] attempt. They were a kind of absolution', a redirection of the sublimated violence, the social mores, that had caused him to repress his sexual inclinations in the first place. 'A lot of people had been present at that murder', taking up space in Tommy's head. 'Why should [only] one person answer for it?' (*L*, p.113) Even Laidlaw concurs. He tells a colleague (in aptly fragmented, half-organised sentences) that 'there are always connections. The idea that the bad things can happen of their own accord, in isolation. Without having roots in the rest of us. I think that's just hypocrisy. I think we're all accessories' (*L*, p.186).

At face value, then, McIlvanney's characters share Badiou's convictions: 'being' in modern-day Glasgow is confused and volatile; not knowing how to formulate the multiples of which they are composed (and thus delivered, Badiou might say, to Heidegger's play of dissemblance and unconcealment – perpetual existential wandering), *Laidlaw*'s characters struggle to arrive at self-understanding. However, and significantly, the novel virtually forecloses any possibility of Badiouian transformation of self or circumstance. For instance, Laidlaw's efforts to order the situation largely fail. Disregarding protocol, he enlists the aid not only of informers but also of gangsters. This eventually complicates his investigation by bringing down a little too much heat on Harry, who then blackmails a crime boss into helping him protect Tommy. This almost costs Tommy his life as the gangster executes a plan to eliminate the lovers rather than further embroil himself in the *Sturm und Drang* of their tryst. Laidlaw manages to find Tommy first, barely, but the novel concludes not with any revolution to the order of Glaswegian existence but only with a quiet moment of compassion shown by Laidlaw towards his fugitive – an episode in which Laidlaw offers Tommy tea and accepts 'the galaxy of undiscovered stars' (or unorganised multiples) in Tommy's eyes (*L*, p.224). The prevailing narrative logic here is less 'evental' than descriptive and almost defeatist: Tommy is (ontologically) complex, but alas, aren't we all?[38]

Accordingly, Laidlaw is not a big believer in 'events'; instead, he broods over what Heidegger calls the 'world's night'. 'Even if we solve the case, I'll feel worse than I did before. Lumbered with information I can't ignore. And I can't understand' (*L*, p.166). Such is the typical condition of the

hard-boiled detective. But McIlvanney's novel, like most hard-boiled texts, does not despair of its own pathos as much as it delights in the sheer aura of abject decay (or, as Badiou would see it, of 'inconsistency'). Says Laidlaw (again, in fragments), 'You think of Glasgow. At each of its four corners, this kind of housing-scheme. There's the Drum and Easterhouse and Pollock and Castlemilk [. . .] Just architectural dumps where they unloaded the people like slurry. Glasgow folk have to be nice people. Otherwise, they would have burned the place to the ground years ago' (*L*, p.32). The tone here is as weary as the setting it describes, its melancholy the common currency of the hard-boiled genre and thus well-worn – if not worn out – by the time McIlvanney reprised it in the 1970s. As such, it complicates the famous passage in Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* when Thaw laments that 'nobody imagines living' in Glasgow.[39] Laidlaw *does* imagine Glaswegian life, declaring it intolerable; however, since hard-boiled fiction pronounces this of *every* metropolis, Laidlaw's Glasgow only 'is' by half, exiled from an authentic (literary) existence on the basis of its status as a cliché.

If we read this passage alongside Plain's cogent observation that Scottish crime fiction interrogates the Scottish state, then we might see Glasgow's half-life as an indictment of the nation under British rule: McIlvanney's novel reflects a nation that does not wholly possess itself, that is not 'whole'. However, if we think about *Laidlaw* by way of Badiou, the picture changes. Consider again Badiou's notion of 'excrescence', which he takes to be a mechanism of representation converting multiples into countable units (with respect to *Laidlaw*, making narratives into emblems of genre) while essentially depriving them of self-determination. Badiou expressly identifies excrescence with the political state, observing that for Marxists 'the essence of the [capitalist] State is finally its bureaucratic and military machinery', its 'structural visibility of [. . .] *excess*'. Indeed, 'the State *itself* is an excrescence' which imposes itself on human life. 'By consequence . . . the Marxist proposes the revolutionary suppression of the State; thus the end of representation'.[40] This is what the hard-boiled detective ruminates, for instance, when he reckons with the corruptions of law enforcement and decides, effectively, to become a law unto himself. ('Laidlaw had been wondering if it was possible to be a policeman and not be a fascist' [*L*, p.14].) But in *Laidlaw*, 'representation' – the apparatus conventionalising the narrative – is an apparent desideratum, such that the novel does not discard as much as aspire to a set of generic features: angst, stock characters (the cop, the partner, the

perpetrator, the accomplice, the gangster), tough-guy twang ('His approach to things had all the subtlety of a mugging' [*L*, p.138]), the chase and so on. Hence, criticism of the state in one (Badiouian or, here, anti-British or at least -Thatcherite) context becomes its ratification (as an iteration of the laws of genre) in another: *Laidlaw* embraces a non-British (tropologically American) 'state'.[41]

And yet, we may well ask how such externally-imposed *Laidlaw*'s structure really is. After all, and as we have seen, the 'thrawn' tradition of Scottish criticism in the generation after Eliot, uniting Scottishness with certain formulaic strictures of expression (for Muir, language; for Nairn, tartanry), lays provocative conceptual groundwork for *Laidlaw*'s curious 'state'. And this prompts us to consider a little more intently the 'being' of crime fiction itself.

Tartan Noir and the Deep History of Kitsch

Hard-boiled fiction was itself something of a thrawn turn for McIlvanney. The son of a working-class family of Irish descent, McIlvanney's previous novel, the Whitbread-winning *Docherty* (1975), had told a story about a heroic miner who, at the narrative's climax, pushes another miner out of the way of a collapsing shaft and places himself in the direct line of falling debris. Conn, the protagonist's son, rushes forward and tries to dig his father out of the rubble. Then 'he gasped and recoiled'. He and the other miners 'saw a hand projecting from the rubbish, fixed in its final reflex, Tam Docherty's hand. It was pulped by the weight of the fall. The hand was clenched'.[42] This image of the dying hero's fist, emblematic of the so-called 'red salute', symbolically beatifies an expiring proletariat.

Laidlaw, published two years later, opens in some ways where *Docherty* leaves off, by talking about hands. But how different these hands!

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

> was a strange place. Hands were ugly. Inside, you were all hiding-places, dark corners. (*L*, p.5)

These are appendages we no longer recognise; Tam's heroic fist uncoils into the fingers of a surprised strangler, Tommy Bryson. In fact, *Laidlaw* touches several times on the strangeness of hands. A few pages after that opening episode, the narrator describes the 'enormous hands' of the victim's father, having 'driven rivets on Clydeside for thirty years' but now feeling 'helpless'.[43] Then there are Laidlaw's hands, reaching almost independently of his will for the phone on his desk or the philosophy he keeps stashed in one of its drawers.

> He felt his nature anew as the wrack of paradox [. . .] He was tempted to unlock the drawer in his desk where he kept Kierkegaard, Camus and Unamuno, like caches of alcohol [. . .]
>
> He was looking through the Collator's Report when the phone rang. He looked for a moment as if he could stare it down. Then his hand picked it up before he wanted it to. (*L*, pp.9-10)

In its opening pages, the novel tacitly conjures a relationship between manual duplicity – and the way these hands divulge the alienated state of existence in postindustrial Glasgow – and the famous passage in *Being and Time* in which Heidegger describes *Dasein*'s emergent self-consciousness as it grips a hammer and finds itself drawn from the specific task of its labour into a circumspect appreciation of what such tasks say about its 'being'. The hammer instigating this revelation, Heidegger remarks, is a piece of equipment that is 'ready-to-hand'.[44]

Laidlaw kitschifies Heidegger's vision by literalising it.[45] In effect, *Laidlaw* is to *Being and Time* (and genre fiction to high literature) what McIlvanney's detective is to his heroic miner – an estranging repetition, or an estrangement as a function of repetition, an uncanny double. References to such doubles abound in Scottish crime fiction, especially to Robert Louis Stevenson's iconic Hyde.[46] But even irrespective of any particular reference, kitsch bears within itself a mystery implicit to the structure of hard-boiled fiction and, in Nairn's analysis, to Scottish national being. In his famous 1939 essay 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', Clement Greenberg distinguished modern art from kitsch by contrasting the experimental *forms* of the one

with the profiteering *formulae* of the other. And yet, precisely because kitsch succeeds with the masses, it solves a cultural riddle which confounds the avant-garde. Artists in the early twentieth century, Greenberg asserts, found that 'the accepted notions' upon which they depended 'for communication with their audiences' had decayed.[47] (Greenberg's contemporary Walter Benjamin had expressed similar concerns in his 1936 essay 'The Storyteller': 'never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power'.[48]) In this new era, Greenberg remarks, 'it becomes difficult to assume anything [. . .] the writer or artist is no longer able to estimate the response of his audience to the symbols and references with which he works'. But this is not the case with kitsch, which results from 'the pressure on society' by 'the new urban masses [. . .] to provide them with a kind of culture fit for their own consumption'.[49] Traffickers in kitsch, that is, almost magically discern the cultural codes that have grown opaque to the 'genuine' artist. Hence, while kitsch emits the stench of false consciousness, its intuition of something like a spirit of the age also lends it an aura of hard-boiled ontology, eliciting as it does the contours of being from a corruptible world that has decayed into a mass of fragments.[50]

Hard-boiled fiction thus assumes a portion of the conceptual space vacated by modern art, which, Greenberg says, withdraws from a mass culture it can no longer understand. This connects modern art, conceptually as well as historically, with detective fiction of the late nineteenth century. Not only was the latter increasingly supplanted by hard-boiled detective fiction in the twentieth century, but its thematic differentiation of the one (clue, motive, criminal) from the mass was the essence of its narrative form. Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, inspired by Doyle's training at the University of Edinburgh, illustrate this principle brilliantly. Take 'A Case of Identity', published in *The Strand* magazine in 1891, which recounts how the detective solves the mystery of a jilted female whose betrothed leaves her standing at the altar. Holmes reveals that the malefactor is the woman's stepfather, who has disguised himself as her suitor in order keep the girl from marrying and retain for himself her annual income. The 'Case' comprises a quintessential Holmesian puzzle in presupposing a decipherable world: all is evident to those who can detect its signs, which often involve, as Holmes tells Watson, 'the importance of sleeves, the suggestiveness of

thumbnails, or the great issues that may hang from a bootlace'.[51] Holmes establishes himself as the master reader, better able than Watson to discern salient patterns amidst the heap of extraneous details. In fact, it is this hermeneutical triumphalism which for most critics distinguishes classical detective fiction from its later, hard-boiled permutation, where the detective becomes part of the situation he analyses and thus contaminates his own crime scene.

However, in a larger sense, virtually all Holmes stories represent exercises in misreading. This is because the cases involve not only the solution of puzzles but also, notoriously, the confounding of domestic and political spheres. The former is where most of the crimes (theft, fraud, murder) are committed, and it is the household rather than the commonwealth whose equanimity Holmes restores. And yet, the ultimate safeguard of the structures of class and property on which domestic affairs rest is the legal apparatus of the state, such that Holmes's deductions ideologically promote the enforcement of order on a grander scale. The arrangement is Oedipal and even a little hard-boiled: able to read any clue but unable to see himself, Holmes unwittingly upholds the (Badiouian) 'excrescence' that breeds corruption in the first place.[52]

The clue, the prime narrative device of these stories, exhibits a version of this paradox within its own semiotic structure. For Franco Moretti, the clue is a single item from which readers may draw multiple inferences, 'a signifier that always has several signifieds and thus produces numerous suspicions'.[53] Such numerical noise – consisting in the multiplicity of messages – is what the classical detective, anticipating Greenberg's modern artist, must reduce by asserting a one-to-one correspondence between sign and meaning.[54] In this way, Moretti concludes, detective fiction 'is literature that desires to exorcise literature', or explain mass (or complexity: anything irreducible to 'one') away.[55] Not that Moretti finds this entirely repugnant: 'Watson, poor fool', fills the expository function of dragging out the story through his erroneous inferences and narrative commentary. 'His specific function is purely quantitative' to this extent, providing the diegetic bulk that Holmes whittles to a neat solution.[56] But this also means that the dialectic between the duo ultimately amounts to something more than the sum of its parts. Holmes may reduce 'mass' to 'one', but Watson divulges the unresolved complexity of Holmes's character: 'You really are an automaton – a calculating machine [. . .] There is something positively inhuman in you at times'.[57]

The Holmes stories thus formalise the ontological space later occupied by hard-boiled fiction; 'A Case of Identity' in particular renders thematic the numerical crises that Greenberg and Badiou would later invoke. In it, Holmes listens carefully to the tale recounted by the vulnerable Miss Sutherland as she tells him about the disappearance of her (imagined) betrothed. He seems especially intrigued by her mention of numbers:

> 'Your own little income', [Holmes] asked, 'does it come out of the business [her dead father bequeathed to her mother and her]?'
>
> 'Oh, no, sir. It is quite separate, and was left me by my Uncle Ned in Auckland. It is in New Zealand stock, paying four and a half per cent. Two thousand five hundred pounds was the amount, but I can only touch the interest.'
>
> 'You interest me extremely', said Holmes. (p.472)

That pun is painful, both aesthetically and also because it connects Holmes and his attraction to the case with the deceitful stepfather (who also cares about Miss Sutherland on the basis of the numbers – the stocks – with which he associates her). Holmes effectively focuses the mystery around these figures, which he distinguishes from the minutiae that distract Watson: Miss Sutherland's story of the courtship, the shape of her hat, the colour of her clothing, and so on. 'A Case of Identity', therefore, effectively separates 'number' as an explanatory object from 'mass' conceived as a mound of inconsequential information.

However, it is for this very reason that mass as unformulated number, that uncertain multiple haunting modern being, becomes the greatest enigma, the elusive concept that eventually converts Holmesian solutions into hard-boiled crises.[58] Andrew Seth, a contemporary of Doyle's, evoked this median position between number and mass (the *one* and the *not-one*) as the historical place of Scottish philosophy. In 1883, Seth gave a series of lectures at the University of Edinburgh in which he anticipated Heidegger's 'destruction of metaphysics' by presenting the eighteenth-century 'common sense' philosophy of Thomas Reid as the forgotten alternative to the idealism of Descartes and Kant. Where idealists erroneously differentiated world from mind, causing thinkers to seek an illusory origin of mentality (for example, in the Cartesian *cogito* or the Lockean 'impression'), Reid's philosophy, Seth argued, did not reduce thought to some fabricated provenance

(or imaginary 'one') but instead situated it within a 'temporal and spatial environment', a 'complex of [. . .] relations' at once historical and phenomenological, rooted in a being's past as well as in the myriad sensations of its present.[59] As Paul Gorner has shown, this circumvention of idealism – this matrix of inconsistent multiplicity – would pass from eighteenth-century Scotland into the German tradition of Husserl and Heidegger.[60]

In this way, Seth asserts, Reid potentially sets the course of Western thought. Or, at least, he might have done so if his work were more widely known. But the embedded dynamic he describes applies equally to the relation of common sense philosophy to its own society. 'Reid wrote no *magnum opus*, in the sense in which Kant wrote several', Seth remarks. 'He had no learned class to whom he could have appealed, if he had written with the elaborate technicality of Kant. His works were addressed to the reading portion of his countrymen generally', falling under the aegis of public discourse. And while this diminishes some of the technical rigour of Reid's thought, 'it is possible that what Scottish philosophy lost in scientific precision may have been compensated for [. . .] by the greater influence which it has exerted upon the body of the people – an influence which has made it a factor, so to speak, in the national life'.[61] For Seth, that is, common sense constituted a kind of intellectual atmosphere in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Scotland. Anticipatory of *Laidlaw*'s Glaswegian mood, it permeated quotidian life. But it also informed the writings of Edgar Allan Poe, who absorbed common sense philosophy by reading the cosmological treatises of such Reid-influenced, nineteenth-century thinkers as Robert Chambers and John Pringle Nichol.[62] This is why Poe opens 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' (1841), usually cited as the ur-text of modern detective fiction, with a credo Reid employs against Hume: 'The mental features discoursed of as analytical are, in themselves, but little susceptible of analysis'.[63] This is essentially Laidlaw's lesson to Harkness, his dictum about linguistic obscurity acquiring greater meaning in this context: 'any language conceals as much as it reveals. And there's a lot of languages. All of them human. This murder is a very human message. But it's in code. We have to try to crack the code. But what we're looking for is a part of us. You don't know that, you can't begin' (*L*, p.72). The passage weds hard-boiled Heideggerianism to a set of structures that reach into Scottish traditions of literature and philosophy – Doyle's embattled domestic sphere and Reid's kaleidoscope of everyday life.

Laidlaw and the Body Politic

Reid's example, and perhaps Seth's (who situates Reid relative to a tradition of German Idealism that followed him), divulges a long tradition of Scottish thought and writing bound up in the drama of the *not-one*. Reid, Doyle and McIlvanney posit in diverse ways that no thing is simply one thing, or in other words, that nothing 'is' in the straightforward, classical sense. According to Badiou, this is a condition that afflicts but also potentially animates modernity generally, with ideas concerning postmodern fragmentation but the latest verse of an *auld sang*.[64] But as becomes evident in the work Muir and the tradition of non-tradition (the 'one' of 'not-one') that followed him, this dynamic ramifies with particular urgency in Scottish literature and culture. The difference is one of degree if not of kind.

Then again, perhaps it is also a difference of kind – not racial or ethnic, but ontological nonetheless to the extent that contingent circumstances breed what John Protevi calls a unique set of affects, a 'body politic' imagined after new notions of society as a complex organism. 'Affect', Protevi says, represents the intersection or 'imbrication of the social and the somatic, as our bodies change in relation to the situations in which they find themselves'.[65] A Scottish 'body' from this perspective would hardly conform to the contours of a national boundary, nor would it involve every individual or mode of expression in a given space. Bodies as Protevi conceives of them are virtual systems in perpetual process of transformation and renewal. As distributed entities, they are tangible though not composed of simple matter, 'actual' though not predetermined by any inherent essence.

One advantage to the field of Scottish literary studies of thinking along with Protevi (or by way of other systems theorists) is that such ideas enable us to circumvent the impasse of the 'symbolic' and the 'real', and thus uncouple 'authenticity' from the discussion of (Scottish) being. These ideas also prompt us to ask new questions about the relationship between culture and politics – between literature and the worlds in which it ramifies. For example, if we take seriously Plain's compelling remark about the allegorical significance of Scottish detective fiction, then what might we make of the 'body' that manifests itself in *Laidlaw*? What is the nature of the subject that produces this fiction, and that consumes it? Bearing genealogical traces of previous bodies – Doyle's and Reid's and doubtlessly many others – this 'body' exists, we might say, as the product of a peculiar relationship between a place (the novel's depiction of Glasgow, say, or a field of

Scottish writing, a tradition) and a 'state' (as Badiou defines it, as a mechanism of oppression but also of order). More specifically, Scottish 'being' expresses itself in McIlvanney's influential novel as a playful run-in with the law – the law of genre, certainly, and perhaps, allegorically, other laws as well. The effect is at once subversive and, crucially, constitutive. The novel declares itself, but it is not 'one'.

The ontological nuances at work here shed new light on a well-known anecdote recounted by Neal Ascherson. During the European Summit held in Edinburgh in December of 1992, a politically-disenfranchised assembly of 30,000 people, frustrated by the recent election of the fourth consecutive Tory government in Westminster ('Welcome to' Scotland, Ascherson writes, 'a European nation where the will of the people is ignored at every election!'), gathered at The Meadows 'and asked for their country back'.

> Out of many speeches, I remember only one, and snatches of it are still quoted by many others who remember. The novelist William McIlvanney is the one writer whose face is recognized in any Scottish street. He is a witty, elegant West of Scotland man, a working-class teacher and orator whose Kilmarnock ancestors came from Catholic Ireland. McIlvanney looked out over the faces stretching away towards Salisbury Craigs in the distance and he said: 'Let's not be mealy-mouthed about all this. The Scottish parliament starts here, today!'
>
> When the clapping died down, he went on: 'We gather here like refugees in the capital of our own country. We are almost seven hundred years old, and we are still wondering what we want to be when we grow up. Scotland is in an intolerable position. We must never acclimatize to it – never!'
>
> And then, in a tone of tremendous pride, he said this. 'Scottishness is not some pedigree lineage. This is a mongrel tradition!' At those words, for reasons which perhaps neither he nor they ever quite understood, the crowd broke into cheers and applause which lasted on and on.[66]

In its way, Ascherson's story about McIlvanney resembles Seth's of Reid. In each case, a conflicted ontology overwhelms the reflective process that would try to explain it. And the result is a tacit appeal to a practicum of order – common sense for Seth and a Scottish Parliament for Ascherson.

Might we consider this anecdote in light of Scottish literary history? McIlvanney's stirring punch line synthesises 'Scottishness' as a product of collective dispersal, the 'mongrel' 'state' of modern being that so beguiled Greenberg and vexed Badiou. In its way, then, the speech is *Laidlaw* in a slightly different register.[67] It essentially takes the conclusions of a generation of critics after Eliot, who presented Scottish literature as a set of dissociated and inauthentic tropes, and converts these conventions into the substance of modern being as well as a nation's history. In McIlvanney's novel, inaugurating Scotland's most popular contemporary genre, 'statehood' is a cultural practice that cathects a political ideal. This may help explain why, in *Laidlaw*, as for many Scots in a decades-long (and longer) debate over the question of sovereignty, the national being seems unthinkable outside that statist framework. The question Tartan Noir tacitly poses, then, concerns the name by which that state will be called, the thing that state will determine itself to 'be'.

Notes

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1 McIlvanney, *Laidlaw* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1977), pp.10, 14, 21. Subsequent references will be cited in the text.

2 Gibbon, 'Literary Lights', quoted in Vericat, 'Letting the Writing do the Talking: Denationalising English and James Kelman's *Translated Accounts*', *Scottish Literary Review* 3.1 (2011), 129-51 (p.135). I derive the notion of Scotland's 'long modernist' tradition from Margery Palmer McCulloch, who extends the modernist influence in Scottish writing into the latter half of the twentieth century. See Palmer McCulloch, *Scottish Modernism and its Contexts, 1918-1959: Literature, National Identity and Cultural Exchange* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

3 See Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', *Basic Writings*, trans. David Ferrell Krell (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993), especially pp.167-82.

4 See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1962), pp.172-73. Aptly, Paul Gorner asserts that Heidegger imagines mood in terms of assault. See *Twentieth-Century German Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.77-79.

5 Plain, 'Concepts of Corruption: Crime Fiction and the Scottish "State"', *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. Berthold Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p.132.

6 The phrase 'stateless nation' is David McCrone's. See *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation* (London: Routledge, 1992).
7 Heidegger, 'What Are Poets For?' *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Perennial, 1971), p.92.
8 Chandler, 'The Simple Art of Murder', *Later Novels and Other Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1995), pp.991-92.
9 Heidegger, 'What Is Metaphysics?' *Basic Writings*, p.94.
10 Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, p.130.
11 Ibid., p.330.
12 Ibid., p.374.
13 Ibid., p.409. Gerald L. Bruns reads this 'mysterious' motif in Heidegger, attached to poetry as 'the darkness of saying, as unique' in the world of philosophy. *Heidegger's Estrangement: Language, Truth, and Poetry in the Later Writings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p.54.
14 On the furor surrounding the relationship between Heidegger's philosophy and politics, see Charles Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots: Nietzsche, National Socialism, and the Greeks* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), esp. pp.1-15.
15 Heidegger both refuted accusations of circular reasoning in his own work – 'In the question of the meaning of Being there is no "circular reasoning" but rather a remarkable "relatedness backward or forward"' – and embraced them – 'What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way'. *Being and Time*, pp.28, 195.
16 'In thrownness is revealed that in each case Dasein', or human 'being', 'is already in a definite world and alongside a definite range of definite entities within-the-world'. *Being and Time*, p.264, Heidegger's emphases deleted.
17 The *Dictionary of the Scots Language* defines *thrawn* as 'twisted, crooked, distorted, misshapen, defomed'. http://www.dsl.ac.uk/. Accessed 8 February 2012.
18 Kelly, 'How Tartan Is Your Text?' *International Journal of Scottish Literature* 5 (2009): http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/issue5/kellyOP.htm. Accessed 6 April, 2012.
19 See Matthew Arnold, 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time', *Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold*, ed. A. Dwight Culler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), pp.237-58.
20 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.21.
21 Ibid., p.26.
22 Eliot, 'Was There a Scottish Literature?' in *Modernism and Nationalism: Literature and Society in Scotland, 1918-1939*, ed. Margery Palmer McCulloch (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2004), pp.7-10.
23 Muir, *Scott and Scotland* (1936; New York: Robert Speller, 1938), p.22. Muir's clarification of his position and defence against Hugh MacDiarmid's criticism was published in the *Bulletin* newspaper 27 January 1938, p.18. This exchange was rediscovered and reprinted in *Scottish Studies Review* 6.1 (2005), 59-73 (Muir: 68-70).
24 Muir, *Scott and Scotland*, pp.9-10.
25 Heidegger, 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking', *Basic Writings*, p.447.
26 I am quoting here from the preface to the 1962 edition of *The Scots Literary Tradition: An Essay in Criticism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), p.15. Speirs thus condemned – as Muir had done – the revisionist poetics of Hugh MacDiarmid. See *Scott and Scotland*, pp.21-22.
27 Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1958), p.7.

28 Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People, 1680-1830* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), pp.48, 42.
29 Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain* (Altona Vic, Australia: Common Ground Publishing, 2003), p.144.
30 For some of the complexities involved in this recuperative project, see my essay 'The Emergence of Scottish Studies', *The Cambridge Companion to Scottish Literature*, ed. Gerard Carruthers and Liam McIlvanney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
31 Craig uncovers a tradition of hybridity in Scottish thought while Carruthers discusses how Muir and others suppressed the diversity of Scottish literature. See Craig, *Intending Scotland: Explorations in Scottish Culture Since the Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp.203-44 and Carruthers, *Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp.4-28, pp.197-99.
32 Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2005), p.1.
33 Badiou, *Number and Numbers*, trans. Robin Mackay (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), pp.1-3.
34 *Being and Time*, pp.29-30. One form taken by this crisis is a pervasive and un-whole being Heidegger calls the 'anyone self' or 'they' whose constitutional indefinition captures modernity's ontological vagaries. See *Being and Time* pp.163-68; cf. Michael E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, and Art* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp.21-26.
35 Badiou, *Being and Event*, p.9.
36 Rankin, *Rebus's Scotland: A Personal Journey* (London: Orion, 2005), pp.30-31.
37 See *Being and Event*, pp.104-11. D. A. Miller ascribes this quality to narrative more generally. See *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
38 Duncan Petrie remarks that 'the central mystery of the novel is Jack Laidlaw himself', the novel concerning itself more with complexities of character than neat resolutions of plot. *Contemporary Scottish Fictions: Film, Television and the Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p.141.
39 Gray, *Lanark* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1981), p.243.
40 *Being and Event*, p.108, Badiou's emphases.
41 On the anti-British history of the hard-boiled genre, see Dennis Porter, *The Pursuit of Crime: Art and Ideology in Detective Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), pp.161-62.
42 McIlvanney, *Docherty* (London: Sceptre, 1987), p.333.
43 'His hands, illumined in the lights as he passed, rose and fell hopelessly on the steering. They were enormous hands that had driven rivets on Clydeside for thirty years. They weren't used to being helpless. Just now they signaled an anger that, lacking a focus, took in everything. Bud Lawson was angry with Laidlaw, the police, his daughter, his wife, the city itself' (p.16).
44 'The less we just stare at the hammer-Thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiledly is it encountered as that which it is – as equipment. The hammering itself uncovers the specific "manipulability" ["*Handlichkeit*"] of the hammer. The kind of Being which equipment possesses – in which it manifests itself in its own right – we call "*readiness-to-hand*" [*Zuhandenheit*]'. *Being and Time*, p.98, Heidegger's emphasis.
45 According to the novelist Thomas Bernhard, this descent into the world of kitsch is precisely what we should expect from Heidegger: 'The Black Forest philosopher Heidegger, has kitschified philosophy [. . .] Heidegger was a kitschy brain [. . .] always

merely comical [. . .] a ceaselessly gravid German philosophical cow [. . . who] for decades let [his] smart little cowpats drop' on philosophy. *Old Masters*, trans. Ewald Osers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp.41-43.

46 Rankin confesses that he 'was keen to point out parallels between [his] work and predecessors such as *Jekyll and Hyle* and [James Hogg's] *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*' in his early work (*Rebus's Scotland*, p.85). Later novels, like *Resurrection Men* (2002), take up historically uncanny figures like the gravediggers Burke and Hare.

47 Greenberg, 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian, 4 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 1, p.6.

48 Benjamin, 'The Storyteller', trans. Harry Zohn, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968), p.84.

49 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', 1, p.12.

50 It is on this basis that Andreas Huyssen declares that 'mass culture has always been the hidden subtext of the modernist project'. *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p.47. On the relationship between kitsch and false consciousness, see Matei Calinescu, *Faces of Modernity: Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), pp.240-41.

51 Doyle, 'A Case of Identity', *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Stories* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2006), p.476.

52 As Jon Thompson, puts it, 'a crime in hard-boiled fiction always signifies the presence of a wider social or political malaise of which the corpse is merely a signifier. Ultimately, there can be no solution to a crime, because crime is not extrinsic to the system but intrinsic to it, part of it'. *Fiction, Crime, and Empire: Clues to Modernity and Postmodernism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), p.146.

53 Moretti, 'Clues', *Signs Taken for Wonders: Essays in the Sociology of Literary Forms*, trans. by Susan Fischer, David Forgacs, and David Miller (London: Verso, 1983), p.146. For a more extensive discussion of the historical origin of the clue, see Carlo Ginzburg, 'Clues', *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, trans. by John and Anne C. Tedeschi (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

54 Holmes actually possesses a taste for the avant-garde, taking a break from a case to enjoy the work of such 'Belgian masters' and Symbolists as Félicien Rops and James Ensor. See *The Hound of the Baskervilles* in *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Stories*, p.207.

55 Moretti, 'Clues', p.146, Moretti's emphases deleted.

56 Moretti, 'Clues', p.146.

57 *The Sign of the Four*, in *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Stories*, p.105.

58 Raymond Chandler's iconic detective Philip Marlowe draws this comparison: 'I'm not Sherlock Holmes [. . .] I don't expect to go over ground the police have covered and pick up a broken pen point and build a case from it'. Instead, he investigates human nature, things 'looser and vaguer' like the shady behavior of those charged to protect and serve. *The Big Sleep* (New York: Vintage, 1992), p.213.

59 Seth, *Scottish Philosophy: A Comparison of the Scottish and German Answers to Hume* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1890), p.42.

60 See 'Reid, Husserl and Phenomenology', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 9 (2001): 545-55.

61 *Scottish Philosophy*, 129.

62 Poe makes particular and repeated reference to Nichol's 1837 *Views of the Architecture of the Heavens* in his zany prose-poem-qua-philosophical-treatise (qua-literary-hoax) *Eureka* (1848).

63 Poe, *The Complete Tales and Poems* (New York: Vintage, 1975), p.141. Compare with Reid's argument concerning the inaccessibility of the mind's origins in the Introduction to *An Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764).

64 For a brief rehearsal of Badiou's antipathy toward postmodernism, particularly in light of a discussion of Scottish literary studies, see my essay 'In Defense of Inferiorism (and Other Lost Causes)', *Studies in Scottish Literature* 38:1 (2012): 28-34.

65 Protevi, *Political Affect: Connecting the Social and the Somatic* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p.xiv.

66 Ascherson, *Stone Voices: The Search for Scotland* (London: Granta, 2002), pp.74-75.

67 McIlvanney delivered it a year after the publication of *Strange Loyalties*, the third and final instalment of the Laidlaw trilogy.

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