Black Scottish Writing and the Fiction of Diversity

Churnjeet Mahn

On a Saturday afternoon in September 2018, after leading an anti-Faslane protest,[1] Jackie Kay, the Scottish Makar (national poet of Scotland) came to Edinburgh to act as a panellist at a one-day conference called *Resisting Whiteness*. She spoke optimistically about race and sexuality in Scotland, contrasting some of the stories of her youthful struggle to feel Scottish, Black, a lesbian, against her current status and experience in a Scotland keen to distinguish itself as more progressive and inclusive than England. Kay openly discussed raising her son in London and Manchester, places she argued offered a richer environment for Afro-British identity. But now Kay was firmly back in Scotland, talking about Scottish Blackness with ease and confidence. Kay's sleight of hand managed to seamlessly bring together an older narrative of a more hostile or challenging Scotland for a Black woman, with a contemporary account of possibility and hope without critically questioning how and why this change was possible. In this chapter, I am interested in the rhetorical gestures and silences required to reconcile

C. Mahn (✉)
University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK
e-mail: churnjeet.mahn@strath.ac.uk

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M. Breeze et al. (eds.), *Time and Space in the Neoliberal University*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-15246-8_6

different accounts of Black Scottish experience, one that can understand how older racisms can change, adapt and erupt into the present to maintain the whiteness of key cultural assets, in this case, the study of literature. The discussion layers contemporary debates around race in UK literary studies, with literary criticism on race and Scotland, and the experiences of students studying themes of race and nationality, to understand some of the difficulties in raising race as an issue in the Scottish classroom.

In January 2017 Meera Sabaratnam issued a clarification around the SOAS 'decolonise the curriculum' campaign led by students: 'You may have recently read false news reports that SOAS students have called for the removal of white philosophers such as Plato and Kant from their reading lists. It bears repeating that *these reports are untrue*—they are calling for a greater representation of non-European thinkers, as well as better historical awareness of the contexts in which scholarly knowledge has been produced' (Sebaratnam 2017). This theme continued as in October 2017 a media furore broke out over a discussion around 'decolonising' the English Literature curriculum at the University of Cambridge (Demianyk 2017). A conversation about an inclusive curriculum was reported in *The Daily Telegraph* as 'Student forces Cambridge to drop white authors', a strapline which the paper later corrected and apologised for. The arts and humanities have had a particular challenge when it has come to protecting its canons of knowledge, and have been reluctant, or unable, to think beyond Eurocentric aesthetic assumptions and values. The containment of diversity within the curriculum (which often sits at odds with university agendas to use diversity as a promotional tool) has been a delicate balance between acknowledging the importance of postcolonial theory and its developments, without dismantling the histories, values and aesthetic judgements which guarantee the whiteness of English Literature. Diversity has often acted as an additive in English Literature teaching in the UK which demonstrates the inclusive and diverse nature of literature, a sleight of hand which allows English Literature to universalise its aesthetic standards rather than challenging or radically refiguring what they might be. The calls for decolonising the curriculum, whatever that may mean, have been various and with quite divergent aims. But what makes each demand

distinct is the moment they belong to, a moment where the politics of race threatens to dilute the value of universalized (white) literary and philosophical knowledge which, in turn, is attacked as unreasonable political correctness.

The apparent threat of diversity in these contexts has superficially become synonymous with the straightforward sacrifice of quality and value (through the suggestion that white thinkers or writers must be ejected from the curriculum). But the moment and challenge to curriculum diversity, and their appearance in the media is illustrative of the way racial politics and activism has become focalised by political events and movements in the UK. Scholars have begun work on tracing the ways in which the debates around Brexit triggered and reworked older forms of racism, bringing them into contact with new contexts which could give the appearance of measured and uncontroversial sentiments such as overpopulation or balancing the economy (Bhambra 2017).[2] This has coincided with a visible growth in discussions of Black culture and postcolonialism in UK academic culture, from the introduction of new degree courses, to a growing connected awareness of the range of Black social and academic activism in the UK through social media platforms.[3] However, the evocation of the 'UK' in this context, generally means England.[4] Scotland, through the fashioning of its own version of a progressive civic nationalism, has posed its own challenges to ideas and debates around race and immigration.

During and after the Brexit campaign, I've been congratulated several times for living 'on the right side of the border'. A public perception of less racism and a welcoming approach to refugees and migrants in Scotland has been an important part of a national discourse which has been highly selective in its evidence (Davidson et al. 2018), 'there's no problem here' has been a mantra in circulation for decades (Singh 1999) which is dependent on the circulation of some national myths about Scotland: Scottish people are friendly and welcoming, and Scotland is a left-wing nation with an inherent bent towards social justice informed by its experience of inner-city poverty and effective 'colonisation' by England. I am interested in the extent to which this distinction fosters a different debate about what 'decolonising' the English Literature curriculum might look like in Scotland. This chapter

is a reflection on the contemporary politics of teaching black writing in a Scottish university classroom, especially when delivered by a person of colour who is expected to embody an authentic minority experience. More specifically, it discusses the experience of teaching Jackie Kay's novel, *Trumpet* (1998) to two first-year cohorts in a major Scottish university, from designing the lecture and seminar questions, to the discussion and feedback of students.

Decolonising Scottish Writing

What is Black Scottish literature being decolonised from? England? A white canon? There is a growing body of criticism charting a distinct experience of race in Scotland, especially in the context of a civic nationalism which has been antagonistic to some UK-level policy and campaigns which have become conjoined with debates about racism.[5] A sub-category of critical writing has emerged in Scottish Literature and Scottish History, which addresses Scotland's distinct role in empire, and the potential relevancy of reading Scotland as a postcolonial nation. As Michael Gardiner has argued, 'Scottish Literature and Postcolonial Literature are less separate trends or two sets of texts, than intricately related and often conjoined critical positionings in relation to a much longer history, which has as one its main objects a critique of the jurisdiction of the imperial mode of British state culture' (Gardiner et al. 2011: 1). The story of Scottish exceptionalism is overwrought but in the knotty relationship between Scotland and postcolonial studies there is a meaningful division that defies the well-honed, convincing and thoughtful arguments to Scotland's entanglements with the postcolonial: whiteness. By expanding on, and borrowing from, postcolonial theory and studies, Scotland becomes a vantage point from which to critique the British state while displacing responsibility for social problems, such as racism (Davidson et al. 2018). Through this, Scottish postcolonial studies can undertake a critique of the British state without contending with whiteness in the same way as postcolonial studies of British writing.

Graeme Macdonald makes an argument about how/why 'Black Scottish' has become an important category in literature in the past 20 years, 'if the earlier generation of black British writing argued for legitimate inclusion within the expanded realms of British culture, then devolutionary *Scottish* black and Asian representation appears at a time when the unity and coherence of "British" in "the British novel" is under increasing scrutiny, partly as a result of the pressure placed upon it by the devolution of the Scottish novel' (Macdonald 2010: 85). By sequencing together the devolution of the Scottish novel and an emergence of a distinct Scottish Black Minority Ethnic (BME) representation in art and culture, there is an invitation to imagine a solidarity which strategically erases the potential conflict between these positions and, I would argue, tends to underplay and reduce the complexity of national and transnational narratives that can be evoked within Black writing which travels across borders to connect with other bodies of thinking unconnected to Scotland; indeed, some of these connections (in terms of critiquing whiteness, the Global North or the history of colonialism) would be antagonistic.

In this chapter I consider some of the challenges of talking about race in Scottish university classroom, especially when the text being studied is set in Scotland or about being Scottish. Like Gardiner, it is not my intention to contribute to a debate about whether or not Scotland can be read as postcolonial in relation to the British state, rather, my question is about the conditions required to mobilise a history of black activism and black intellectual thought in a nation which may refuse an explicit ethnic basis for nationalism despite having an implicit one. Remi Eddo-Lodge in *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* (2017) offers a compelling account of the whitewashing of racism:

> Structural racism is never a case of innocent and pure, persecuted people of colour versus white people intent on evil and malice. Rather, it is about how Britain's relationship with race infects and distorts equal opportunity. I think that we placate ourselves with the fallacy of meritocracy by insisting that we just don't *see* race. This makes us feel progressive. But this claim to not see race is tantamount to compulsory assimilation. My blackness has been politicised against my will, but I don't want it wilfully

> ignored in an effort to instil some sort of precarious, false harmony. (Eddo-Lodge 2017)

To what extent does postcolonial solidarity in the Scottish context rely on the erasure of racial difference to qualify for of national solidarity? While the street names of Glasgow act as testimonies of histories of slavery and racism (Jamaica Street, Tobego Street) and a statue to Lord Roberts, the nineteenth century colonial administrator, stands prominently overlooking the University of Glasgow, is it possible to take seriously the claims that Scotland is any more or less progressive in its racial politics than England? Or is this whitewashing of racism part of the terms for making space for ethnic minorities within the discourse of Scottish nationalism? To think of this question another way, does the inclusion of Scottish texts by an author of any ethnic origin have the potential to decolonise English Literary studies in Scotland?

A significant body of Scottish literary criticism around issues of colonialism has focussed on the status of Scotland as a kind of colony, or experiencing social consequences analogous to other colonised nations. The 'minority' status of Scotland within the Union of the United Kingdom has been the focal point for the rejuvenation of Scottish literature in the twentieth century. Being British and Scottish, or in the case of *Trumpet,* being Black Scottish and Black British, is a recurring contradiction explored in Scottish literary criticism. Early twentieth century writers from Edwin Muir to Hugh MacDiarmid engaged with some kind of fundamental loss at the heart of Scottish culture: what does it look like to be a minority nation in a union? The fashioning of a distinct tradition of Scottish writing, especially in Scots and English, has involved identifying a distinct quality that cannot be predicated simply on language.

A key recurring concept for Scottish literature in the twentieth century has been the 'Caledonian Antisyzygy', the duelling of opposites and core contradictions that prevents it from presenting a unified face, which was defined as a characteristic of the Scottish psyche and writing by Gregory Smith in 1919: 'the literature [of Scotland] is remarkably varied, and that it becomes, under the stress of foreign influence and native division and reaction, almost a zigzag of contradictions.

The antithesis need not, however, disconcert us. Perhaps in the very combination of opposites—what either of the two Sir Thomases […] might have been willing to call "the Caledonian antisyzygy"' (Smith 1919: 4). Smith's formulation undergirds a perspective on Scottish Literature which is entirely based on variety and contradiction. Expansive and inclusive to the point of being vacuous, it has provided the means for Scottish Literature to refuse any singular anchoring tradition and canon of writing in favour of reading multiplying threads of Scottish writing. From Highland vs Lowland, to intense religious discord and the contradictions of egalitarian politics versus the realities of class and inequality, the Caledonian Antisyzygy has been a useful way for critics to pack together the fact that Scottish identity celebrates a struggle with itself that has come to act as a powerful mythology, whether or not it is a valid or relevant reading of Scottish culture.

When it comes to understanding the character of Scottish culture and writing in the wake of migration and increasing diversity in the late twentieth century, versions of the Caledonian Antisyzygy are deployed to understand the inclusive, capacious, diverse, and contradictory character of Scottish fiction. And this, in itself, carries an intense contradiction. For a country so fixated on its history and heritage, the bar to qualify for Scottishness is relatively low. As Willy Maley says in his discussion of Leila Aboulela's *The Translator* (1999), a novel by a migrant to Scotland set in Scotland:

> Scotland, at the heart of Sudan's colonial history, fittingly provides the context for one of its most significant contemporary literary works. *The Translator* belongs to Scottish as much as it does African literature. When asked in an interview about being designated a 'Scottish Arab writer', Aboulela expressed her satisfaction with *The Translator's* designation as a Scottish novel […] What this designation means in a postcolonial context is, of course, globally fashioned. The novel's publication history and its author's biography exemplify ways in which transnational contexts shape the parameters of Scottish Literature. (Maley 2011)

Maley acknowledges Scotland's influence in different forms of African colonialism to evidence a long history of Scottish participation in

colonialism. And while there is much to be researched on how these connections have 'shaped the parameters' of Scottish writing, where is the corresponding discussion about how Scottish intervention in colonialism has shaped the parameters of other cultures and traditions? Bashabi Fraser, a migrant to Scotland who has written extensively about BME writing in Scotland suggests that, 'New Scots are transcultural writers who can move across boundaries of nation and write with a deep consciousness of a global reality of interconnectedness' (Fraser 2016: 234). This view is optimistic when it comes to the stories and histories of racism, gender, and especially class.

I was an undergraduate student at a large Scottish university and studied English and Scottish Literature. Throughout the entirety of my degree, I did not study a single text by a Black British or British Asian author. Throughout my degree I was one of a few non-white faces in some of the largest subject cohorts of the Faculty. Whether this matters is a question of perspective. I did study the basics of postcolonial literature, but when these were applied to texts, they were primarily in colonial contexts, for example the writing of Chinua Achebe; in the context of north American civil rights, bringing in Audre Lorde and bell hooks; or in discussions of Scotland as a nation that had been subjected to postcolonial violence after the loss of its sovereignty. To be 'well-read' was to be well-versed in a tradition that was overwhelmingly white, middle-class, and apart from the odd expedition, confined to the Global North. By the time I was a graduate student teaching English Literature, I idealistically believed it was my duty to bring some intellectual activism into my teaching. I asked at an English committee meeting if we could introduce a Black British or British Asian text into the undergraduate curriculum. In a department that had approximately 40 members of staff, not including graduate teaching assistants, I was one of the few ethnic minorities in the staff and student body combined. I received a kind response but ultimately it was decided that there was no suitable text that could be included on the curriculum at the expense of other English Literature (for which we can read predominantly white with odd references to Black American or African).

After I received my Ph.D. I moved to the south-east of England in 2008 where it was impossible to ignore issues of race in the curriculum.

Our student body was diverse, issues of race and migration played out visibly and violently from the rise of Islamophobia after the 7/7 attacks, to the riots in South London in 2011, not to mention the escalation of tension between communities and the police. Reading texts like Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* in the classroom was impossible without reference to the life experiences of students and the diversity of nearby London. In 2015 I moved back to Glasgow shortly after the Scottish Independence Referendum, which had taken place the previous year. Devolution and independence had become the key cultural framework within which to debate the social and cultural issues around inequality, social justice and identity. Debates around race in Scotland have not been focalised and politicised in the same way as parts of England, and while the English and Scottish Literature university curriculum has become more diverse than before, the staff make-up of English and Scottish Literature departments is still overwhelmingly white, with some of Scotland's largest English Literature departments having no BME staff on permanent contracts. There may be an appetite for talking about Scotland's diversity in culture and literature, but there is little or no interest in questioning why the undergraduate, graduate and academic experience of English and Scottish Literary Studies in Scotland is so white.

Black Scottish or Black British Writing?

In a curriculum where making space for Scottish texts is a consideration in a programme of reading dominated by English writing, Jackie Kay has found herself onto a series of university courses in Scotland as the premier example of Scottish Black writing. For the rest of this chapter, I want to consider Jackie Kay's role in Black British or Black Scottish writing, and then consider this in coordination with student's responses and feedback to ideas around the opportunities and limits of thinking about the distinctiveness of Black Scottish writing. Jackie Kay is currently Scotland's Makar, or national poet. She was born as a mixed-race child in Scotland and adopted by a white couple and raised in Glasgow. Her first novel, *Trumpet* (1998) draws on the life of the American jazz

musician Billy Tipton (1914–1989) who was born female but who lived the majority of his life as man, a 'secret' discovered upon his death. Her novel's protagonist, Joss, follows a similar trajectory in his life but he is mixed-race, and the story is set between Scotland and England. The novel is told through a series of perspectives from Joss's wife, to his son, a coroner who takes care of his body and a journalist writing about the sensation around Joss's death. Joss makes an appearance towards the end of the novel, from beyond the grave, where he reflects on his own heritage and journey. The entire novel is structured around the evasion and refusal of any stable categories and relies on a pervading dissatisfaction with the labels and prejudices which delimit people's lives. Writing 18 years after the novel's first publication, the Scottish writer Ali Smith has reflected on the ways in which *Trumpet* made a distinct contribution to writing in Scotland while being part of a recognisable tradition of Scottish writing:

> There had certainly never been a Scottish book like it, yet it came from the Scottish tradition of honouring the margins, the vernacular and the ordinariness of things and lives (an 'ordinariness' that is always extraordinary). It came from a literary tradition of shapeshift itself, one that finds voice in unauthorised, unexpected forms and places; one often concerned with the search for a communal form, a tradition that can be traced in writers such as Lewis Grassic Gibbon, Hugh MacDiarmid, Nan Shepherd, Willa Muir, Alasdair Gray, Liz Lochhead, James Kelman. It came from such tradition and expanded it with influences from international black writers such as Audre Lorde, Jamaica Kincaid, and especially Zora Neale Hurston and Toni Morrison. Plus, it said things about and for that Scottish tradition, and about and for a wider British tradition as well, concerning gender and ethnicity, that had never been said before. (Smith 2016)

Smith creates a mixed genealogy for Kay but does not address the ethics or possibilities of connecting different kinds of marginalised positions (marginalised from what, by whom?). Her laboured genealogy does not question how different margins may connect and who benefits from marketing or positioning these 'margins'. In terms of the possible points

of connection between a Scottish and 'international black' tradition, ideas around the unexpected and/or unauthorised are hardly unique in any literary culture. Smith's observations are valuable not as evidence of a parallel between the history of African-American or Caribbean writing and Scottish writing, however, they are valuable in terms of evidencing the will to make that connection. Discussing her own literary traditions, Kay has reflected on the problem with locating her voice in fiction:

> When *Trumpet*, her first novel, was published in 1998, Kay became one of the most prominent of a small number of women writers of African descent in Britain. The poet Jean 'Binta' Breeze and novelist Joan Riley both emigrated from Jamaica and published here in the 1980s. Unsurprisingly, it was to African-American writers – Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Maya Angelou – that Kay turned as a young woman, and the poet Audre Lorde, who told her she didn't have to deny her Scottishness in order to be black. 'It's a strength! You can be both!' Kay says in a hearty approximation of Lorde's accent. 'That was an amazing thing to hear. So I stopped feeling like a sore thumb and realised that complexity could bring something, that there are advantages as well as disadvantages'. (Rustin 2012)

Kay claims her Scottishness through a playful approximation of a difference that is not anchored in a historicised and politicised challenge to, and writing back, to a national(ist) politics which has harboured racism, whether historical or contemporary. In other words, while Lorde wrote with the backdrop of Black civil disobedience and activism, and Jean 'Binta' Breeze and Joan Riley arrived in an England which experienced major race-related riots in the 1980s, Kay's depiction of Scotland and race moves in and out of a dialogue with a British or American/Caribbean experience which does not challenge Scotland's own specific contribution to empire or discourses of racism.

Trumpet introduces a proliferating series of identity categories (which it goes on to critique), from lesbian and trans to Scottish and Black. In designing two lectures for *Trumpet*, the challenge was to introduce and explain the biopolitics of the text without getting 'stuck' in identity politics, something Kay has commented on frequently:

> Kay says she was 'bogged down' in identity politics for a long time, and worries that the labels and categories it created – 'lesbian writer', 'black writer', 'Scottish writer' – can become a drag. 'You want to be open about being gay – why would you not be open about being gay? But you don't want to be defined by it,' is how she expresses the conundrum. 'You never have control over how much the volume goes up or how much flavouring goes in. Ultimately I'm a writer and I don't want my work or my characters to be constrained by the fact of me. I think a lot of writers feel like that'. (Rustin 2012)

Trumpet is a novel which resolutely refuses a sustained engagement with any single thread of identity politics (what it may mean to be Scottish or black or queer) and instead situates itself at a confluence which uses music and reconciliation as strategies to demonstrate the inadequacies of understanding identity as a definition rather than a process of making or becoming. The text is split into a series of diverse perspectives which run through Joss's family, and the media and medical reception to his death. While Joss's voice enters the narrative towards the end of the text, the narrative structure is dependent on refracting him through frameworks of intimacy, medical-legal language and prurient media interest to displace the narrative. Joss's absence is a refusal to realise an authentic voice that can account for, or explain, the categories of race, gender, and sexuality that come into play. Through refracting Joss through other perspectives, some of the contradictions and impossibilities of his life are brought into sharp relief through the description of a wife who loved her husband, and a son who comes to view his father's body as a lie and betrayal. Jack Halberstam describes a different kind of authenticity that this narrative structure can reveal:

> In a flurry of investigative zeal, Kay's novel shows us that a life carefully written by its author, owned and shielded by loved ones, may suddenly stand exposed as a lie. The beauty of Kay's narrative is that she does not try to undo the life narrative of a passing man; rather, she sets out to honor it by weaving together a patchwork of memories from Joss's survivors, but mainly his wife, and making that patchwork into the authentic narrative. (Halberstam 2005: 59)

Kay does show some of the 'undoing' of Joss's life through Coleman's emotional and violent rejection of the 'truth' about his father which leads to him cooperating with a journalist, who herself, is part of a broader metaphor of exposure than runs through the text. Joss's post-mortem neatly brings together social censure around passing with the undermining of easy(?) equations between the body and gender (ed) truths: 'Doctor Krishnamurty felt as if she was removing skin, each wrapping of bandage that she peeled off felt unmistakably like a layer of skin. So much so that the doctor became quite apprehensive about what kind of injuries the bandages could be hiding' (Kay 1998: 43). Through the transmogrification of gauze to skin, the injury to the memory of Joss's life as a man is implied through the removal of the bandages. The negative media and social attention Joss's death garners layers with this scene to produce a kind of literalised excoriation through the demand to expose the apparently real body of a woman and negate the reality of a man's life.

When Joss does speak to the reader at the close of the text, he recalls a life which involves following traces back in time that slip into an attempt to recall and reclaim the stories of a land he did not belong to. Speaking of his father he comments: 'But he couldn't remember what he wanted to remember. He would read many books to see if they might remind him of what he wanted to remember: the hot dust on the red road, the jacaranda tree […] The trouble with the past, my father said, is that you no longer know what you could be remembering. My own country is lost to me now, more or less all of it, drowned at sea in the dead of a dark, dark night' (273). Joss recounts his own experience of racism alongside an identification with Scotland and being Scottish which becomes the only home available as a past life of his father is as far as a past world. Coordinating the loss of an imagined African heritage with the contrasting fit of a sense of Scottish belonging, if not heritage, becomes another way in which the text interrogates the assumptions made about bodies and lives.

Being Scottish in the text, on one level, operates within the parameters of progressive nationalism with the lacuna of Joss's heritage being filled by his life and upbringing in Glasgow. However, Matt

Richardson reads more resonance in the absence: 'Primarily, Kay's work suggests that people of African descent in the United Kingdom find a precarious (im)balance between their relationships to blackness and black identity and their Scottish or English or Welsh identities. Ultimately, Kay's work suggests that to be black and Scottish is to be absent from the national historical imaginary' (Richardson 2012: 364). Richardson's writing belongs to a tradition of American writing which reads cultural outputs alongside politicised and cultural experiences of race. The history of that political consciousness in Scotland, of solidarity between people of colour against the forces of racism or histories of colonialism and imperialism are absent in the text. While Kay may riff off Audre Lorde or be categorised at times as a Black British writer, there is something about her dimension as a Scottish writer which deemphasises a political or explicit historical consciousness of race. For critics such as Carole Jones, 'Embracing the openness in Scottish literary culture enables an aspiration to more queering representation and queer readings that productively challenge the boundaries of our notions of community, identity and the human' (Jones 2016: 195). What is the cost of the embrace? The discussions of race in Kay's work often reroute her through Black British or Black traditions of writing that exist within a well-defined consciousness of race that has been accompanied by activism. Kay's critique of race and nationality is not as nuanced as her critique of sex and gender. This produces an ambivalence in the text around the relationship between Scotland and racism: is this a British (or English) problem which reaches into Scotland, or is there something distinct about its manifestation in Scotland? If openness and ambivalence have become trademarks in Scottish writing, then *Trumpet* is an excellent example of a text which embraces and refuses all kinds of progress:

> When the century turns. Everybody turns like people in a progressive reel dance. Some turn over a new leaf, some turn a blind eye, a deaf ear, some turn the long barn tables, some slip back, sliding towards the old tongue. When the pendulum of the old clock's big hand moves forward, somebody always turns it back. Somebody who resents progress or is irritated by it or decides all change is false. (Kay 1998: 272)

Prejudices old and new recur in rhythms. In a text self-aware of its effects, time, music, and movement become the guarantors of change without a promise of something 'better'. This discussion forms the basis of the two lectures on Jackie Kay that I deliver to students, and which have become an entry point into gathering student responses to the question of race and Scotland.

In the Classroom

Trumpet was introduced on the Level 1 English Literature curriculum at the University of Strathclyde in 2016 in an attempt to create a more inclusive reading list. Kay is the only non-white author to appear in the primary reading for Level 1 students. Most humanities faculties in the Scottish university system will allow students to take subjects as core or minor subjects so our cohort is made up of students who have chosen English Literature as their degree, or joint-degree subject, and students who may have an interest in studying literature at a pre-honours level, with no obligation to take the subject to graduation. This makes Level 1 English Literature (which is taught in the first year of a four-year degree) a more diverse group of students in their interest level and commitment to studying English. Students are predominantly from the west coast of Scotland with a significant number living in Glasgow, where part of *Trumpet* is set. Teaching comprises a mixture of lectures and seminars, with first-year lectures having to bridge the gap between secondary, college, and access routes into university-level English.

In order to provide active feedback on student's writing and to encourage debate amongst students, we piloted a student response/feedback mechanism over two years. The format was the same for all texts: students would be asked to take responsibility for collectively writing up/summarising seminar discussion in a way that would demonstrate different perspectives (through representing the various views of individual students) as well as a good knowledge of the text (through providing evidence from *Trumpet* through quotes or analysis). For the two weeks on *Trumpet*, the student feedback was structured in response to a series of questions around eight key terms, two of which focussed on

race and nationalism. While other questions focused on form, technique, and transgender representation, for this chapter I am interested in the way students explicitly addressed issues of race and nationalism in the Scottish context. The extracts used in the following discussion are from responses to seminars held over two sessions (2016–2017 with 129 students and 2017–2018 with 139 students). Divided into smaller groups of approximately 12, students were asked to produce a collective response to 8 questions over two seminars which were then summarised and produced as a written reflective reading log. Each cohort (2016–2017 and 2017–2018) produced 11 substantial responses (22 in total) ranging from 200 words to 1000 words, with 10 responses explicitly addressing the following two questions:

1. Think about the role of 'identity' in the text. More specifically, what makes this text Scottish? Is Scotland important for the text?
2. In the interview, Kay discusses the importance of black writers in creating a different kind of voice. Why is Joss Moody's race significant in the text? How is 'blackness' or 'black culture' represented?

As this work was not assessed and in a very different format from marked assessments (essays and exams), students approached the task of summarising seminar discussion with a language less critical than their assessed work. Students were asked to read a range of secondary material including interviews with Jackie Kay and the article by Matt Richardson discussed earlier in this chapter. Students were made aware of two perspectives on this issue through lectures and this secondary reading, namely, that reading Kay in a Scottish or British or Black continuum presented different kinds of political challenge. The majority of responses attempted to take a critical stance by referring to statements Kay had made, or analysing sections of the text. However, this was disrupted in two ways. Students who identified Scotland as more inclusive or progressive than England, moved towards personal language around friendliness an openness with less direct evidence from the text. Students who identified Scotland as racist, or having a problem with race, moved towards more abstract references beyond the text and Kay.

The 10 direct responses to the questions on Scotland and race produced an extremely broad range of responses. While a single student within one of the group responses called Scotland's culture 'white supremist', the most common view (5 out of the 10 group responses) was that Scotland was important to the text because Jackie Kay was Scottish and it would appeal to Scottish readers. While this response deflected the issue of race onto authorship, 3 of the group responses flagged that Scotland was less diverse and therefore issues of race appeared less frequently in public discourse. For example, one group's response included: 'It is a "*Scottish*" novel not only in the use of slang and locations but in the way that some of the characters act. […] Joss comes across as very Scottish as he seems very nationalist and identifies with Scots, he tells his son to "speak properly" when he picks up another accent other than Scottish.' The students picked up on a series of complex arguments: the conflation of Scots with slang, or the misidentification of Scots as slang is demonstrated through Joss's remonstration of his son's English. The text does not express any nationalist political sentiment, but language choice here becomes read as part of a nationalist project of distinction from and against English and England. The observation about language was extended through to culture by another group discussion: 'We felt that the interactions between characters really showed a Scottishness within the text – the way Joss always withheld [sic] his little Scottish values and refused to lose his accent. The behaviour of the people on Torr, the warmness and "open door" values were really a staple of old Scottish values.'

Despite the majority of students identifying a positive framing of Scottish identity and values in the text, and Joss's attachment to them, students tended to take as fact that Glasgow is less diverse that other large UK cities, equating diversity with more 'progressive' or 'accepting' views[6]: 'Setting of Scotland important as at the time it was not as progressive or multiracial as other parts of the UK such as Manchester or London so gives a different perspective on people'. In this discussion, depictions of racism in the text, combined with the absence of black communities, or a broader consciousness of black lives in Scotland is equated with Scotland being less 'progressive' (thereby reading a critical mass in population and a politicised conflict around race as a platform

to generate 'progression'). This was supported by another comment, 'We felt that the story would work the same if it was set in another city with similar attitudes at the time but not in a more diverse city such as London since people would be more likely to be accepting'. Equating London with acceptance bypasses notions that Scottish civic nationalism automatically produces more inclusive contexts for racial minorities.

The responses did include positions more explicitly critical of Scottish identity in the text, but these were in the minority and tended to include more emotive language: 'Joss's femininity can be seen as threatening to White Scottish masculinity. As soon as it is revealed to the public that he is biologically female joss [sic] goes from being the proud face of a culturally diverse Britain (a façade) and is quickly relegated to the role of the perverted Black who duped the public'. By layering white Scottish masculinity and a culturally diverse Britain, the students appear to disaggregate the intersectional politics of the text, attributing anxieties with whiteness and masculinity to Scotland and racial diversity to Britain. Another position raised its criticism through refusing Scotland's immunity from structural racism or heteropatriarchy: 'Not to say Scottish people or that Scottish culture is patriarchal or racist/transphobic, but it is evident that these ideas still exist at the heart of our institutions, much like those across the majority of Western countries. This intolerant culture may appear non-existent to those who don't experience large scale oppression, but Kay draws upon these ideas in the novel'. In their discussions, the students moved between discourses they identified as 'British' and 'Scottish', often attributing more sentimental or inclusive values to Scotland. The accumulation of affective evidence for Scotland's inclusivity (warmth and openness) in the majority of the student discussions fails to find a way to accommodate to respond to explicit instance of racism in the text, Kay's own recollections of racism, or the material in Matt Richardson's work which directly names a failure in representing black Scottish experience. The affective response to Scottishness provides a means to sidestep real experiences of individual and structural racism in the text through its displacement to other contexts, namely, Britain.

Students, on the whole, did not question how 'Scottish' the text was, but their discussion of its content and politics demonstrated a shifting

view about the location of 'progressive' politics or acceptance around racial and sexual difference. Without a pathway to offer a sustained engagement with literature about race and Scottish Literature, many of the discussions raised in Level 1 simply disappear in the degree, as is the case in many English Literature degrees. In Scotland, the space given to 'Scottish texts' often constitutes its own minority status within the teaching of English Literature degrees which elides other kinds of minority positions which might slide across the borders in messier ways. The study of race in Scottish writing finds itself falling between different gaps which allows Scottish literary criticism to make easier, or less contested, claims to postcolonial conditions that do not have to contend with whiteness, race, and ethnicity in the same way as English Literature from England.

Conclusion

What happens to *Trumpet* after it has been dissected in the class and put back together? Its inclusion within the university English Literature curriculum in Scotland offers a gesture towards a devolved and diverse reading list. But the response from students is an excellent demonstration of the ambivalent ways in which the politics of race are triggered in the context of various intersecting nationalisms. While the postcolonial debate in Scottish studies has been overwhelmingly dominated by white critics, these first-year classrooms have opened a space for Scottish BME students to read about race and racism in a city they knew intimately due to my institution's exceptionally high recruitment from the local area. It can be dangerous to evoke the language of authenticity or authentic encounter with literature, this is not what I want to suggest here, but what I do want to suggest is that some of the more 'provocative' and direct responses we had from students makes an important contribution to our understanding of race in the Scottish context. From the visceral rejection of inclusive nationalism to using language and literary analysis as the foundation for challenging the intersection of ethnic, sexual and national selves, the students on the course articulated some of the contradictions that critics in Scottish Literature have

avoided. However, there is a remaining difficulty in raising questions of race in this context. In the face of accumulated affective responses to a Scottish national project which is often viewed as progressive in distinction to UK politics, the charge of structural racism is too difficult to touch or feel. The strategies for avoiding race or its politicisation in the classroom, and the prevailing efforts in Scottish literary criticism to read Scotland as a historically postcolonial state, works to subdue the power or possibility of Scottish black politics to challenge how we envisage and make national literature.

Notes

1. Faslane is popular name for Her Majesty's Naval Base Clyde where the UK's nuclear deterrents are located (Trident missiles). As Scotland's Makar, there were some question as to whether it was appropriate for Jackie Kay to lead the protest.
2. The June 23rd, 2016 Referendum where Britain voted to leave the EU and the September 18th, 2014 where Scotland voted to remain part of the United Kingdom have created two waves of divisive political campaigning. A UN envoy sent to the UK to examine race relations since the Brexit vote argued that racism and racist views had increased in the UK (this was widely reported in the media, see, for example, Dearden 2018).
3. Birmingham City University (BCU) began the UK's first undergraduate degree in Black Studies in 2017 and postgraduate courses such as the Goldsmith's MA in Black British Writing (which took its first cohort in 2015) signal a growing interest in literary and cultural study in British Black cultures. However, it also signals the appetite for some universities to tap into diverse student markets. Goldsmith's Equality and Diversity Report (Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2015–2016) reported that while the average HE BME population was 23.2% in the sector, the average at Goldsmiths was 32.1%. At BCU, student composition figures for 2013–2014 reported that 45% of students were from a BME background (Birmingham City University Staff and Student Profiles 2015). The development of these programmes are important landmarks in British higher education, but they also demonstrate a logic in the market which insulates much of the sector from the imperative to take race

seriously: BME staff and students are far more likely to be interested in content with a BME focus. For two recent detailed discussions of structural inequalities in British higher education specifically related to race, see, Gabriel, D., & Tate, S. A. (Eds.), *Inside the Ivory Tower: Narratives of Women of Colour Surviving and Thriving in British Academia* (2017) and Kalwant Bhopal, *White Privilege, The Myth of a Post-Racial Society* (2018).

4. It is worth noting that Wales and Northern Ireland have their own distinct issues with race and racism in education which are distinct from Scotland's.
5. Scotland has a smaller ethnic minority population than the UK as a whole (on average 4% versus a figure closer to 13% in the UK), but there are significant concentrations of ethnic minorities in Scotland, for example in Glasgow, where approximately 12% of the population is classed as ethnic minorities (based on the 2011 census). Work from Robert Miles and Anne Dunlop (1986) to more recent studies on Scottish nationalism and education, and work on young people and nationalism (Botterill et al. 2016) has highlighted a contradiction in Scotland's approach to understanding the role of race and ethnicity in the nation, namely, inclusive civic nationalism and a common sense idea about Scotland being 'less racist' than England exists in a tense relationship with an expectation of integration and form of allegiance to 'Scottishness'.
6. This is interesting as the policy and sociological evidence gives the opposite impression: the smaller presence of ethnic minorities has made Scotland more tolerant.

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