

Writing Regeneration: Literary constructions of urban change in postindustrial Glasgow

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Abstract

This thesis examines literary engagement with – and resistance to – changing modes of urban regeneration in Glasgow, from its year as the 1990 European City of Culture to the 2014 Commonwealth Games. It not only considers how deindustrialisation and urban regeneration are represented in local writing, but interrogates the impact of urban transformation on the social production of literature, and argues that literary activity has, in turn, influenced the social and material processes of regeneration. It identifies a growing tendency for writers to become involved in participatory work exploring, and potentially mediating, the social impact of regeneration, and contends that this emergent mode of literary labour carries hazards for authors and communities.

Drawing on perspectives from cultural policy studies, urban sociology, and new working-class studies to illuminate intersections between regeneration and literary work, it uses a variety of texts, archival sources and interviews to develop a case study approach. Each chapter focuses on a distinct type of urban space and period of urban transformation. Chapter One, concerned with cultural spaces, considers literary protest against Glasgow's 'Culture Year'. It demonstrates that while many writers contributed to events in 1990, such as the *Glasgow's Glasgow* exhibition and *Writing Together* festival, its literary legacy remains one of radical resistance. Chapter Two turns to domestic spaces, considering collaborative literary work in the context of housing regeneration - particularly Alison Irvine's *This Road is Red* (2011) which memorialises the Red Road Flats' social history. Chapter Three focuses on contests over public space, attending to the relationship between literary practice, community development and public health. Its principle case studies include Benjamin Obler's novel portraying the Pollok Free State protest camp, *Javascotia* (2009), and Alison Irvine's *Nothing is Lost* (2015) which reflects on the use and ownership of public space in Glasgow's East End during the Commonwealth Games.

Table of Contents

Introduction - Glasgow's 'long story of post-industrial regeneration'	1
'A city in decay or on the dole': Glasgow's literary legacy	4
Local literature and cultural policy	13
The 'search for space' in literary texts	17
Defining urban literature, locating community	27
'Claiming your portion of space': representations of urban regeneration in Glasgow writing	37
Chapter One - <i>The Words and the Stones</i>: Urban fiction and culture-led regeneration in 1990s Glasgow	44
'How did such a notoriously filthy hole become such a shining light?': The development of Glasgow's culture-led regeneration strategy	62
<i>Art, Subsidy and the Politics of Culture City</i>	70
<i>The Words and the Stones</i>	87
<i>Writing Together</i>	95
<i>1990: The Book</i>	111
<i>A Spiel Among Us: The Scotia Bar Writers' Prize</i>	115
Conclusion: The literary legacy of Glasgow's 'Culture Year'	119
Chapter Two - 'Built for community': Housing regeneration and literary participation	125
Literary Labour and the Creative Economy	130
<i>Glasgow 2020: An Exercise in Mass Imagination</i>	136
'High rises are the bones of a city': Tower blocks and urban memory in Glasgow fiction	142
<i>This Road is Red: 'Voices that speak of and from the place itself'</i>	156
Literary facilitation and participation: 'the ethics of being an artist in such contexts is complex'	171
<i>Waterline</i>	178
Weareglasgow	184
Conclusion - An 'ethic of care and respect': Literary participation in a post-regeneration era	188
Chapter Three - 'Our imagination needs exercise': Public space, public health and literary engagement	190
<i>Javascotia</i>	200
'Who owns the public squares'? Asset based approaches to community development and Glasgow's 2014 Commonwealth Games	220
<i>Nothing is Lost</i>	228
'Cultural assets', literary work and wellbeing	238
Concluding Remarks: The politics of literary engagement	258
Bibliography	272

Introduction - Glasgow's 'long story of post-industrial regeneration'¹

“On 31 July 2014, as part of the Tin Forest Festival, the people of Glasgow were invited to attend *Dear Glasgow*. Here they were asked to discuss the burning issues in their city...”.² So began a series of ‘reports’ generated during the participatory *Dear Glasgow* performance, marking the end of the National Theatre of Scotland’s productions as part of Glasgow’s 2014 Commonwealth Games Cultural Programme. The site for *Dear Glasgow* was the dilapidated South Rotunda, one of two late nineteenth-century gatehouses to transportation tunnels running under the Clyde, standing by the Finnieston Crane and now flanked by the archetypical design ‘icons’ of this riverside regeneration project. The setting held historical and political resonances for Graham McLaren, then associate director of the National Theatre of Scotland and director of the Tin Forest Production. McLaren spoke of the site as “the last great undiscovered, underused building in Glasgow [...] I know I’m a romantic, but in this place you can hear the voices of John Maclean, of Mary Barbour, of Jimmy Reid [...] people on whose shoulders we stand as modern Scots and Glaswegians”.³ Reflecting on the “uncannily” fitting setting for the festival’s “parable of regeneration” the theatre critic Joyce McMillan suggested that this “memorable experience, in a remarkable building” could be “the last piece in the jigsaw, perhaps, for Glasgow’s long story of post-industrial regeneration”.⁴

Arguing that the collective, participatory literary project initiated by the National Theatre of Scotland in the course of the Commonwealth Games is indicative of an emergent mode of literary engagement in the postindustrial city, this

¹ Joyce McMillan, ‘Theatre Review: The Tin Forest, Glasgow’, *The Scotsman*, 26 July 2014 <<https://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/theatre/theatre-review-the-tin-forest-glasgow-1-3489587>> [accessed 7 May 2016].

² National Theatre of Scotland, ‘Dear Glasgow Report: Work’, *The Tin Forest* <<http://www.thetinforest.com/dear-glasgow-report-work/>> [accessed 7 May 2016].

³ Peter Ross, ‘Telling Glasgow’s Stories: NTS’s The Tin Forest’, *The Scotsman*, 19 May 2014 <<https://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/theatre/telling-glasgow-s-stories-nts-the-tinforest-1-3416202>> [accessed 7 May 2016].

⁴ Joyce McMillan, ‘Theatre Review: The Tin Forest, Glasgow’.

thesis seeks to situate the city's literature within "that long story of post-industrial regeneration".⁵ It does not only set out to consider how deindustrialisation and urban regeneration have influenced Glasgow's literary history, by way of discernible influences on the style or character of published texts, but examines the impact urban change has had on the social and material production of local literature. Moreover, this inquiry is equally, if not more urgently concerned with the effect local writing can have on social and cultural perceptions of the city and, more controversially, its influence on the social and material processes of regeneration which reshape urban space.

Broader relationships between cultural production and urban regeneration have been extensively addressed from a wide range of disciplines and perspectives. The insight that creative practice, including the visual arts, design-led practices, and event or performance based cultural forms, can act as a catalyst for gentrification or other modes of urban transformation is, by now, fairly orthodox, bolstered by volumes of impact assessments, policy papers, and sociological analyses. This thesis contends, however, that the effects literary texts and literary practices may have on processes of urban transformation are less clearly understood. Until Sarah Brouillette's analysis of urban writing and urban change in *Literature and the Creative Economy* (2014), literary activity has rarely been considered in the context of the creative economy.⁶ Drawing on key aspects of Brouillette's work, this thesis will be the first to offer a sustained and detailed analysis of the reciprocal relationship between specific instances of urban regeneration and the social and material production of urban literature in a UK city strongly shaped by deindustrialisation.⁷

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

⁷ Other studies which offer potential critical models for this work in their analysis of North American urban writing are also outlined in this introduction, including Carlo Rotella's *October Cities: The Redevelopment of Urban Literature* (London and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998) and Catalina Neculai's *Urban Space and Late Twentieth-Century New York Writing* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014). Maia Joseph's research presents a similarly detailed examination of urban writing and regeneration in Canada, 'Urban Change and the Literary Imaginary in Vancouver' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of British Columbia, 2011).

Glasgow presents an ideal locus for grounding a study of the reflexive relationship between a city's literature and its postindustrial identity. Not only because deindustrialisation has had an intense impact on the city and the urban West coast of Scotland, but also because Glasgow was early to implement a culture-led regeneration strategy as a partial response to those economic injuries. As Kirsteen Paton observes in her study of urban restructuring in Glasgow, the city seems to offer "an ideal type: an industrial working-class city par excellence in terms of industry, consciousness, politics and culture, expressed through the imagery of Red Clydeside; and as a pioneer of neoliberal experimentation and restructuring to become a 'post-industrial' city."⁸ Moreover, the city does not lend itself as a locus for this interdisciplinary investigation for reasons of political economy or social history alone, but because of its rich, diverse literary output which has sustained a long thread of aesthetic and critical engagement with the city's cultural identity.

Beginning with oppositional literary responses to Glasgow's inauguration as the European City of Culture in 1990, and ending on participatory literary projects developed in the course of Glasgow's 2014 Commonwealth Games, this thesis traces points of confluence between the city's literature and its "long history" of urban regeneration. By closely considering the different purposes to which literary work has been put in the context of urban regeneration - at points pressed into service of urban change and placed in resistance to it at others - an overall shift can be discerned in strategic approaches to the arts in Glasgow over past decades: from the attempt to position the arts as a catalyst for job creation and economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s, to envisioning cultural engagement as a means to mitigate health inequalities resulting from poverty, unemployment, poor housing and local services.

Given this inquiry's focus on the material, social and textual relationships between local literary activity, urban regeneration and cultural policy formation, the scope and methods of this thesis are necessarily interdisciplinary. Its chapters draw on strands of literary criticism, cultural policy studies, theoretical approaches to community development, and perspectives from urban sociology and new working-class studies in order to illuminate intersections between the material and social

⁸ Kirsteen Paton, *Gentrification: A Working-Class Perspective* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), p. 7.

production of urban literature and processes of urban regeneration in Glasgow. Following Brouillette, I frame my interdisciplinary approach as a mode of literary sociology: focused on the way in which economic pressures and related local policy contexts have shaped the material and social production of urban literature, and in the process, placed new pressures on the creative practice and professional identity of local writers. As outlined later in this introduction, this thesis focuses primarily on narrative fiction which is explicitly concerned with the aesthetic representation and political economy of urban regeneration. This is not to say that it offers a particularly restrictive definition of texts that might be considered in terms of the city's urban literature, and it seeks to draw further critical attention to more marginal aspects of the city's literary output. Most significantly, the scope of literary work examined in this thesis extends beyond the production and promotion of literary texts. It identifies emergent modes of literary labour at work in Glasgow's changing urban environment and considers how changing notions of authorship relate to the city's creative economy and postindustrial identity.

This introduction first outlines some of the anxieties expressed by notable Glasgow writers in the later part of the twentieth-century, when the economic and social costs of deindustrialisation were very keenly felt, but long before the city's political leadership began to pursue a distinctive approach to revivifying Glasgow's local economy by other means. It goes on to consider the role that Glasgow's literary legacy played in shaping those regeneration efforts. It acknowledges some of the methodological challenges and theoretical obstacles this thesis must address before examining a number of critical models which later chapters draw upon.

'A city in decay or on the dole': Glasgow's literary legacy⁹

Critical interest in Glasgow's literary identity has a long reach: stretching back at least to James Kilpatrick's early survey of local writing, *Literary Landmarks of Glasgow*, which was published in 1893.¹⁰ Even this initial attempt to discover the

⁹ William Harrison, 'The Power of Work in the Novels of Alasdair Gray', *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 15.2 (1995), 162–69 (p. 163).

¹⁰ James Kilpatrick, *Literary Landmarks of Glasgow* (Glasgow: St Mungo Press, 1893).

“literary history of Glasgow” was marked by anxiety around the city’s literary heritage in contrast with its strong industrial identity.¹¹ In his prologue, Kilpatrick stresses that he “seeks to show that Glasgow is none the less rich in literary associations for her great commercial vigour and industrial enterprise”, concluding, “if these chronicles prove an effective rejoinder to the common reproach that Glasgow has cut a poor figure in the literature of the country, then I shall be well satisfied”.¹² Despite efforts to historicise and celebrate Glasgow’s literature, concerns that it ‘cut a poor figure’ endured. A significant strain of criticism has grappled with the persistent notion that Glasgow’s literary output is deficient or in some way aberrant: that Glasgow’s place in relation to literary constructions of Scottish nationhood is troubling. The early decades of the twentieth century saw critics and writers struggle with an intense ambivalence about the emergence of industrial writing in Scotland. Often, as for example, Edwin Muir insisted in his reflective tour of the country, *Scottish Journey*, Glasgow was not to be thought of “as Scotland at all” but “merely one of the expressions of Industrialism”.¹³

Yet, there was also a growing critical concern that widely read Scottish fiction had not adequately confronted the realities of industrial life. For example, in his retrospective “essay on the twentieth-century novel” for BBC radio in the mid-1950s, George Blake characterises dominant modes of Scottish fiction in the earliest parts of that century as “caverns of nostalgia”.¹⁴ Blake complains that while “Scotland had been most miserably industrialised”, and the “coal and iron fields of the Forth-Clyde Valley were being energetically exploited” with “slums growing up in clotted profusion”, “The representative Scottish writers of the period went on – and on – representing their coevals as either bucolic philosophers or eagle-plumed gallants in the heather.”¹⁵ Similarly, in his preface to the same text, Edwin Muir regrets that Scottish literature had continued to draw “its chief strength from the past” while fiction in England, marked by a keener “awareness of the present and its

¹¹ Ibid., p. vii.

¹² Ibid., p. x.

¹³ Edwin Muir, *Scottish Journey* (1935) (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1996), p. 102.

¹⁴ George Blake, *The Annals of Scotland 1895-1955* (London: BBC Books, 1956), p. 9.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

demand”, was “pouring out political poets and proletarian novelists”.¹⁶ Tracing sinuating critical attitudes to Glasgow writing within the pointed discourse of the Scottish Literary Renaissance, Sylvia Bryce-Wunder delineates a “legacy of anti-urbanism” that “dogs” representation of Glasgow, and goes so far as to say that “negativity about Glasgow is part of the city’s cultural heritage”.¹⁷ For many decades later, criticism continued to vacillate between emphasising the central importance of Glasgow’s industrial identity to the city’s writing and downplaying its significance for Scottish literature. For example, in the early 1990s, Douglas Dunn complained that a critical preoccupation with a “working class, left-wing, vernacular authorship” in Scotland (though principally Glasgow) had constrained literary variety.¹⁸ At the same time, critics such as Christopher Whyte had stressed that “the problems raised in Glasgow fiction of the Thirties” continued to predominate, and post-war authors tended to “reiterate them forcefully, and without the buoyant political idealism of an earlier generation.”¹⁹ Throughout the 1980s, in the midst of another so-called ‘cultural renaissance’, writers and critics continued to interrogate the reception and influence of Glasgow’s literary heritage. An argument had coalesced that as well as having been characterized by a seam of slum fiction, Glasgow’s literary identity had been shaped by an absence: by a lack of more refined or reflective modes of literary writing.²⁰

¹⁶ Edwin Muir, ‘Prologue’, in George Blake, *The Annals of Scotland 1895-1955* (London: BBC Books, 1956), pp. 3-6 (p. 3-4).

¹⁷ Sylvia Bryce-Wunder, ‘Glasgow, Anti-Urbanism and the Scottish Literary Renaissance’, *European Journal of English Studies*, 18.1 (2014), 86–98 (p. 96). Liam McIlvanney also explores the perception that Glasgow was a “monstrous anomaly” and “place apart” from the rest of Scotland in ‘The Glasgow Novel’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Scottish Literature*, ed. by Gerrard Carruthers and Liam McIlvanney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 217-232 (p. 217).

¹⁸ Douglas Dunn, ‘Divergent Scottishness: William Boyd, Alan Massie, Ronald Frame’, in *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies*, ed. by Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), pp. 149-69 (p. 150).

¹⁹ Christopher Whyte, ‘Imagining the City: The Glasgow Novel’, in *Studies in Scottish Fiction: Twentieth Century*, ed. by Joachim Schwende and Horste Drescher (Frankfurt Am Main: Peter Lang, 1990), pp. 317-34 (p. 332).

²⁰ See, for example, James Campbell, ‘The Tree that Never Grew: Scottish Writers and Writing’, *The Antioch Review*, 43.3 (1995), 272-277; Liam McIlvanney, ‘The Glasgow Novel’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Scottish Literature*, ed. by Gerard Carruthers and Liam McIlvanney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 217-232. McIlvanney comments that by the 1980s “novels lamenting the absence of a viable tradition” in Glasgow writing “had themselves become a tradition of sorts”, p. 218.

One strand of locally focused literary criticism suggests that an enduring theme of postwar Glasgow fiction has been the difficulty of representing Glasgow in art or literature, given its despondent literary heritage. Certainly, a number of canonical Glasgow novels have been focalised through frustrated writers or artists, most notably Alexander Trocchi's *Cain's Book* (1960), Archie Hind's *The Dear Green Place* (1966) and Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* (1981). In *Glasgow Urban Writing and Postmodernism* (1992), Beat Witschi argues that the realist aspects of Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* retread a local literary tradition centred on a city which is "oppressive, claustrophobic, bleak, limiting" with an atmosphere of "failed living and disenchantment".²¹ Witschi goes on to offer that, "The best examples of this literary tradition are Edwin Muir's *Poor Tom* (1932), George Blake's *The Shipbuilders* (1935), and Edward Gaitens' *Dance of the Apprentices* (1948) and it reaches its zenith with the publication of Archie Hind's *The Dear Green Place* (1966)".²² By the 1980s, Witschi suggests, this mode of fiction was "stale, sterile and in need of renewal".²³ Douglas Gifford also argues that *Lanark's* great achievement was to "make virtue out of necessity" and build "local and hitherto restricting images, which limited novelists of real ability" into "exaggerated images of sterility and decay" with wider cultural relevance.²⁴ Similarly, Cairns Craig hones in on Hind's protagonist's description of Glasgow as a city whose "literature was dumb or in exile", drawing comparisons with Gray's *Lanark* and its central character's fixation with Glasgow's cultural limitations.²⁵ Importantly, that frequently quoted passage from *The Dear Green Place* also centres on the contrast between Glasgow's cultural life and industrial pre-eminence: "A city's whose talents were all outward and acquisitive", with "its poetry a dull struggle in obscurity", "its theatres unsupported" but with "foundries, steelworks [...] factories, ships" and

²¹ Beat Witschi, *Glasgow Urban Writing and Postmodernism: A Study of Alasdair Gray's Fiction* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991), p. 112.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Douglas Gifford, 'Scottish Fiction 1980-1981: The Importance of Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 8 (1983), 210–52 (p. 230).

²⁵ Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 34.

“great industrial inventive exploits” which “seemed to give it all a kind of charm, a feeling of energy and promise”.²⁶

Critical work, of course, continues to interrogate the hold Glasgow’s industrial identity and postindustrial experience has had upon so much of the city’s cultural life well into the twenty-first century, and how it can be negotiated long after the “foundries, steelworks” and “ships” which so captivated Hind’s narrator had closed.²⁷ Alan Bissett’s article, ‘The ‘New Weegies’, for example, argues that many of Glasgow’s contemporary novels maintain some “continuities” with the literary heritage of Glasgow’s industrial past, and some novelists remain “aligned to the ethos of industrial socialism” while inhabiting a very different urban context: “keen to preserve and develop the tradition of formal innovation and political engagement initiated by the twentieth-century novel while also, of necessity, having to reach beyond it”.²⁸ Also considering the influence of “industrial history and the urban Glasgow demotic” on local writing, Suhayl Saadi has discussed the concern in his own literary work with stylistic “transfiguration”: combining representations of the urban contemporary with “surreal or fantastical” aspects so that “the narrative is not held-down like a mediocre punk-rock song in some circular depressing workerist ethic”.²⁹ Some contemporary Scottish writers have consciously attempted to disassociate their own literary concerns from the preoccupation with the “workerist ethic” thought to inhabit Glasgow writing.³⁰ For example, Aaron Kelly observes that Irvine Welsh has been “keen to distinguish his work from the West Coast workerist tradition”.³¹ In interview, Welsh has offered that:

A lot of the Glasgow writers are concerned with work and the alienation from work and now you’ve got a generation who’ve grown up with the dole queue

²⁶ Archie Hind, *The Dear Green Place: And Fur Sadie* (1966) (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2011), p. 228.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Alan Bissett, ‘The ‘New Weegies: The Glasgow Novel in the Twenty-First Century’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Literature*, ed. by Berthold Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 59-67, (p. 60).

²⁹ Suhayl Saadi, in interview with Sophie Erskine, ‘a new literary form is born: an interview with suhayl saadi’, *3:AM Magazine*, 4 August, 2009
<<http://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/a-new-literary-form-is-born-an-interview-with-suhayl-saadi/>> [accessed 16 February 2015].

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Aaron Kelly, *Irvine Welsh* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 84.

[...] they know that work's a pile of shit. Because of the industry in Glasgow there's a kind of machismo about work – that dignity of labour thing. Many of the older Glasgow writers are aligned to industrial socialism. I think work is a horrible thing. People should avoid it at all costs.³²

For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to emphasise that the cluster of *künstlerromans* produced by Trocchi, Hind and Gray all have focal characters who are almost obsessively concerned with questioning the norms of occupational cultures in a city characterised by its industrial history. They defy familial and social expectations of industrious paid labour, instead beginning to articulate and express their own controversial forms of commitment to artistic practice. In this way these Glasgow writers, from the early 1960s onwards, contributed to challenging that “kind of machismo about work – that dignity of labour thing.”³³ In Alexander Trocchi's countercultural writing, for instance, focal characters express their disdain for the veneration of paid labour. In *Cain's Book* the voluntarily ‘exiled’ Glaswegian Joe Necchi recalls the degree to which industrial occupational values permeated family life, though no one worked outside the family home. He grew up painfully aware of the guilt and shame his father felt about his unemployment. As an adolescent he felt “Sermons on the sanctity of hard work, and there were many such sermons, were offensive”.³⁴ Necchi reflects that such an overwhelming emphasis on the importance of work “in the land of the industrious Scot caused me, forcedly, to dissimulate” as he grew up.³⁵ Growing a little older, he was to be embarrassed by his father's attempts to disguise his own lack of occupation, presenting him to friends and acquaintances as a successful professional, ending social encounters by affect to “usher me away, solicitous of my non-existent affairs.”³⁶ Years later Necchi remained detached from, and almost numb to, exhibitions of industrious labour, describing himself as “like a Martian; slightly puzzled, fundamentally disinterested” in the appearance or practice of work.³⁷ When an acquaintance who is a soap

³² Elizabeth Young, ‘Blood on the Tracks’, *The Guardian*, 14 August 1993, p. 33. Qtd. in Aaron Kelly, *Irvine Welsh*, p. 84.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Alexander Trocchi, *Cain's Book* (1960) (London: John Calder, 1993), p. 248.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

salesman lightheartedly implores him to “Get that book written”, his reaction is one of puzzlement and mild disgust:

‘As though that were my fucking raison d’etre!’

“Your what?”

“I mean I didn’t say to him: ‘Get that soap sold,’ did I?”³⁸

In other Glasgow novels of the period which contend with the ethics of creative practice, less confident working class characters struggle with the lack of legitimacy accorded to creative work *as* work. Approaching the stage when he is expected to commit to a path for employment, technical instruction or further study, *Lanark*’s focal character, Duncan Thaw, complains that people “Think you can be an artist in your spare time, though no-one expects you to be a spare-time dustman, engineer, lawyer or brain surgeon.”³⁹ Similarly, despite the intense effort Mat Craig, the frustrated writer in Hind’s *The Dear Green Place*, expends on literary efforts to represent Glasgow, he cannot escape the feeling that there was “something slightly immoral in earning money when it wasn’t really working [...] The fact that he wanted to do it precluded it from being defined as work”.⁴⁰ Ultimately, Hind goes even further than Gray in presenting and challenging an analysis of creative practice as contingent on surplus value, as Mat expounds upon capital as the “crystallisation of man’s labours” and a “work of art” the “crystallisation of a man’s experience – like a piece of capital”.⁴¹

I have set out these explorations of authorial anxiety because ambitious local writing so often strove to portray the frustrations working class authors and artists encountered in achieving (or transcending or transgressing) social permission to do creative work. Moreover, given that these novels are so invested in representing the city’s cultural heritage and aesthetic qualities, it might be thought that local writers may have found something to celebrate in Glasgow’s turn towards culture-led regeneration in the 1990s. However, as Moira Burgess rightly suggests in her survey

³⁸ Ibid., p. 163.

³⁹ Alasdair Gray, *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (1981) (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2002), p. 221.

⁴⁰ Archie Hind, *Dear Green Place*, p. 59.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 48.

of Glasgow's literary history, the city's authors, on the whole, seemed to show little interest in supporting boosterist discourse which celebrated Glasgow's cultural institutions and promoted "the New Glasgow" as a city of revitalised confidence.⁴² Burgess notes that "no such feel-good factor" is mirrored in Glasgow writing of the 1980s.⁴³ In fact, "a number of writers, indeed, their voices growing stronger in the Year of Culture 1990 – target the 'New' Glasgow idea with furious satire and polemic".⁴⁴ Burgess that argues writers were more concerned with the evidence that Glasgow's social and economic problems were "multiplying rather than decreasing on the journey through the Thatcherite eighties" and "Promoters of the New Glasgow notion should really have wondered why the most thoughtful Glasgow writers, when they weren't decrying it, found it totally irrelevant to their concerns".⁴⁵

The "thoughtful" writers Burgess refers to - who were "decrying" the new urban image envisioned for Glasgow in the run up to the 1990 Year of Culture celebrations - principally coalesced around the Workers City group. This number of activists, including a number of prominent local writers as well as journalists and researchers, protested against public investment in the celebrations and the political and economic dimensions of the Festival's underlying urban strategy. That local writers were comparatively keen to criticise the Festival, or else "found it totally irrelevant to their concerns" was a real obstacle for Festival organisers, who found both Glasgow's literary legacy and its contemporary literary communities difficult to negotiate.⁴⁶ Peter Kravitz, then editor at Polygon and *The Edinburgh Review*, recalled that when a journalist asked a member of the Festivals Office why so few writers were taking part in the 1990 cultural programme, their reply was that "The writers were too difficult to work with."⁴⁷ Similarly, Andrew O'Hagan has detailed the frustration of festival organisers with James Kelman and Alasdair Gray's

⁴² Moira Burgess, *Imagine a City Glasgow in Fiction* (Argyll: Argyll Publishing, 1998), p. 262.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Peter Kravitz, 'Introduction', in *The Picador Book of Contemporary Scottish Fiction*, ed. by Peter Kravitz (London: Picador, 1997; 1999), pp. xi-xxxvi (p. xxx).

reluctance to participate in the festival.⁴⁸ Due, in part, to these hostilities, there has been a lingering perception that writers had very little involvement with the events of 1990s. Consequently, even such a major shift in local cultural policy has not been extensively addressed in terms of its long-term import for local writing, and literary criticism has not been a particularly prominent mode of inquiry into the social and cultural consequences of so-called ‘culture-led regeneration’. Yet, I would suggest that Glasgow’s literary legacy was, if not in itself a significant motivation for the Festival and wider regeneration strategy, at the least an enduring and affective distillation of the city’s difficult industrial identity.

Decades on from 1990, the City Council’s own retrospective account of Glasgow’s urban transformation told of the need to shake off the city’s association with slum housing, stating bluntly that: “The idea behind Glasgow’s Miles Better was that before Glasgow could start its economic and physical regeneration, it had to shed its ‘no mean city image’.”⁴⁹ That phrase is inseparable from the 1935 novel, *No Mean City: A Story of the Glasgow Slums*: a collaboration between Gorbals’ resident, Alexander McArthur, and the journalist, Herbert Kingsley Long. The novel offered a relentlessly bleak account of violence and squalor in tenements thick with “stench and vermin and overcrowding”.⁵⁰ *No Mean City* was a strong commercial success and ongoing media controversy around the book helped to establish it, as Sylvia Bruce-Wunder puts it, as the “paradigmatic Glasgow novel” whose “themes of violence and poverty...have characterised many Glasgow fictions ever since, nourishing a tenacious image of hard men, mean streets and gangs.”⁵¹ The novel was certainly taken as emblematic of Glasgow’s negative reputation by political figures like Pat Lally, who complained that *No Mean City* “besmirched the image of

⁴⁸ Andrew O’Hagan, ‘The Paranoid Sublime’, *London Review of Books*, 26 May 1994, pp. 8-9 (p. 8).

⁴⁹ Glasgow City Council, ‘Glasgow’s Cultural Renaissance: 1980 – 1990’, Glasgow City Council webpages, (2005) qtd. in Chang-Bin Lee, ‘An Investigation into the Interrelationship between Tourism and Cultural Policy in the Discourse of Urban Regeneration: Case Studies in Birmingham and Liverpool’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Birmingham, 2007), p. 313.

⁵⁰ Alexander McArthur and H. Kingsley Long, *No Mean City* (1935) (Reading: Corgi, 1957), p. 22.

⁵¹ Sylvia Bryce-Wunder, ‘Of Hard Men and Hairies: No Mean City and Modern Scottish Urban Fiction’, *Scottish Studies Review*, 4.1 (2003), 112–25 (p. 122).

the area and of the city”.⁵² Around the 1990s, Lally attempted to downplay the novel’s relevance to Glasgow’s cultural history. He fought against against proposals to erect a plaque or statue to memorialise the book or author in 1991, and was reported to have said that the novel was “the worst possible advertisement Glasgow can have at a time when the city is striving to live down its evil and undeserved reputation”.⁵³ Lally was said to have declared that, “this man McArthur did neither Glasgow nor the Gorbals any favour by writing this book and we will certainly not be doing anything to remember him”.⁵⁴ Tellingly, Lally stressed that “the book *No Mean City* generally drew the wrong kind of attention to the city and we needed something to make the world aware of what we were and what we were trying to be”.⁵⁵ These statements clearly indicate that Glasgow’s political leaders found little value in local literature which “drew the wrong kind of attention to the city”.⁵⁶

Local literature and cultural policy

The hostile attitude senior political figures like Lally harboured towards Glasgow’s local fiction indicates the uneasy relationship between the formation of strategic cultural policy in 1980s and 1990s Glasgow, and the city’s literary legacy. Culture-led regeneration efforts aimed to leverage aspects of Glasgow’s arts and heritage sectors for commercial gain, while its sensational and radical literary histories were a threat to the urban image carefully cultivated for the ‘new’ Glasgow, potentially disincentivising inward investment. From this standpoint, one of the broader aims of

⁵² Pat Lally, qtd. in Dave Graham, ‘Glasgow Fights No Mean City Tag, 75 Years On’, *Reuters*, 5 January 2010 <<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-glasgow/glasgow-fights-no-mean-city-tag-75-years-on-idUKTRE6042N520100105>> [accessed 3 March 2014].

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Pat Lally, qtd. in Alan Bold, ‘Not the Whole Truth, but a Truly Brutal Reality’, *The Herald*, 17 July 1993 <http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/12729557.Not_the_whole_truth_but_a_truly_brutal_reality/> [accessed 5 March 2014]. In own his assessment here of the novel’s relationship to Glasgow’s reputation, Alan Bold concludes, “The only answer to the question begged by *No Mean City* is to attempt an alternative as Glasgow did in 1990 as a City of Culture. Without the enduring image of *No Mean City* I doubt if the citizens would have made such an effort.”

⁵⁵ Iain Lundy, ‘The Man Who Took Glasgow to the World’, *Evening Times*, 2 June 2008 <http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/news/12851211.The_man_who_took_Glasgow_to_the_world/> [accessed 5 March 2014].

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

this thesis is to interrogate the uncomfortable relationship between literary practice (including critical practice) and urban cultural policy-making. Until relatively recently there typically been little confluence between cultural policy studies and literary criticism as disciplines.⁵⁷ When the relationship between cultural policy and literary production has been examined in a Scottish context, it has typically been through a national lens.⁵⁸ In ‘Researching the Social Impact of the Arts: Literature, Fiction and the Novel’, Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett suggest that reluctance to examine relationships between contemporary literature and trends in cultural policy stems in part from the fact that “literature sits uneasily in the main systems for classifying the arts”.⁵⁹ More particularly, cultural policy studies as a discipline has developed in tandem with the growth of ‘impact studies’ intended to gauge the contribution cultural spending makes to economies and communities. Given the economic rationale presented for ‘investment’ in the arts, “arts impact research assessment” has generally centered on cultural forms “that are more heavily

⁵⁷ One of the earliest attempts to offer a detailed examination of the relationship between local writing and cultural policy in the context of place-making appears to be Stewart Glover’s doctoral thesis on literature from and about Queensland, Australia, ‘Literature and Cultural Policy Studies’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Queensland, 2005).

⁵⁸ For example, in ‘Voyages of Intent: Literature and Cultural Politics in Post-devolution Scotland’, Gavin Wallace considers the “position of the nation’s literature within the new political establishment” and, largely focusing on Scotland’s publishing sector, outlines initiatives led by the Scottish Arts Council and compares state support for the sector with the “Canadian model” of targeted investment. In *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Literature*, ed. by Berthold Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 17–27 (p. 17). More recently, following Creative Scotland’s ‘Literature and Publishing Sector Review’ in 2015, the author Kirsty Gunn criticised the report’s statement that the forthcoming Cultural Strategy for Scotland would be “a strategy rooted in, and of, Scotland’s people and places”. Though part of Gunn’s response to the strategy addressed concerns around relating new funding for literary work to social outcomes, it was largely arranged against the “unofficial politicising” of Scottish literature and discussion of the “characteristics” of Scottish writing. Subsequent media coverage and discussion followed similar lines. Kirsty Gunn, ‘Controlling agenda threatens Scotland’s Culture’, *The Scotsman*, 9 April 2016 <<https://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/controlling-agenda-threatens-scotland-s-culture-1-4095589>> [accessed 3 February 2018]. See also, Kirsty Gunn, *Notes Towards a National Literature* (Edinburgh: Saltire Society, 2016); and Leonie Bell, ‘Foreword’, ‘Literature and Publishing Sector Review: Final Report’ (Creative Scotland and Nordicity in Association with Drew Wylie, 2015) <http://www.creativescotland.com/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/31950/Creative-Scotland-Literature-and-Publishing-Sector-Review-Nordicity-2015-CIRC.pdf> [accessed 20 August 2015], p. 1.

⁵⁹ Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett, ‘Researching the Social Impact of the Arts: Literature, Fiction and the Novel’, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 15.1 (2009), 17–33 (p. 17).

subsidized from public funds – such as the visual and performing arts, as a direct result of the advocacy agenda that has dominated this area of inquiry.”⁶⁰ As Belfiore and Bennett observe, ‘impact studies’ have typically sought to demonstrate that public funding for the arts is “worthwhile” on an economic or social basis and “have not, on the whole, been produced in the spirit of scholarly enquiry, but more in advocacy by those wishing to advance specific institutional interests”.⁶¹ As this thesis will explore, the economic rationale presented in support of cultural investment has largely shifted away from emphasizing the potential of cultural spending to act as a catalyst for local economies (the mode of cultural policy making that predominated in 1990s Glasgow). Yet, even in discourses around the benefits of cultural spending which stress the capacity of cultural participation to foster social cohesion and wellbeing, “Research into the social impacts of the arts” has mainly concentrated on the “experiences” of those who “engage with the arts”.⁶² Within this framework, Belfiore and Bennett point out, “The objection might be made that the novel does not feature strongly in contemporary discourses about the impact of the arts and so makes a poor choice as a case study.”⁶³ In more recent years, however, as Chapter Three will examine, the therapeutic potential of literary activities – from reading to creative writing - has become a renewed area of interest. The focus of this thesis, however, is distinctive in that it does not focus on the “experience” of readers in an attempt to quantify or illustrate the benefits of cultural participation. Rather, it seeks to illuminate specific connections between the local, social and material context of literary activity in Glasgow with specific developments in local cultural policy in the context of urban regeneration.

Moreover, as Stuart Glover suggests in his study of the relationship between cultural policy and literary production in Queensland, Australia, there is reason to be wary of relying too heavily on “policy texts” in the process of such interdisciplinary work.⁶⁴ Arguing that cultural policy studies has largely neglected “the “literary” as an object of interest” while having “co-opted literature studies’ textual methods”,

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., p. 19.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Stuart Glover, ‘Literature and Cultural Policy Studies’, p. 44.

often relying on “the textual artifact – that is, the policy document” to organise discourses, Glover calls for greater attention “to the processes of policy formation”.⁶⁵ Glover argues that a sustained “focus on policy texts has ablated approaches to policy” which emphasise process, organisational culture, “low level administrative arrangements and politics as forms of governance”.⁶⁶ It might be thought that critical work which does take “the “literary” as an object of interest” for cultural policy studies might be particularly susceptible to such reliance on textual methods, given the textual basis of the cultural form it is exploring.⁶⁷ Furthermore, as Glover observes, “The “churn” of policy work – the conversation inside government, and between government and stakeholders – remains comparatively opaque and difficult for university-situated cultural policy scholars to access for analysis.”⁶⁸ To that end, my own research has been enriched by an AHRC policy internship with the Scottish Parliament Information Centre.⁶⁹ Conducting policy research and analysis within Parliament afforded me greater insight into the “churn” of policy making in Scotland, most particularly, the duration of policy making; the process of stakeholder engagement in the course of policy development; the factors supporting or challenging academic engagement with the development or scrutiny of policy; relationships between national and local government; aspirations for cross-portfolio approaches to policy; and a more pragmatic understanding of the role of national policy frameworks and local community planning agreements as factors which support local policy decisions.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Stuart Glover, ‘Literature and Cultural Policy Studies’, pp. 5, 37. Glover traces the root of this methodological tendency to cultural policy studies’ development from British cultural studies

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, ‘Literature and Cultural Policy Studies’, p. 44.

⁶⁹ This three-month policy internship supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council ran from April to June 2016.

⁷⁰ I refer here to the Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework and National Outcomes, and to the Single Outcome Agreements or Outcome Improvement Plans which have been developed and agreed by local authorities. Scottish Government, *National Performance Framework* (Edinburgh: Scottish Government, 2016). For an early discussion of the import of such frameworks for cultural policy making see Joanne Orr, ‘Instrumental or intrinsic? Cultural policy in Scotland since devolution’, *Cultural Trends*, 17.4 (2008), 309-316. The Scottish Government is currently in the process of revising its National Outcomes and reviewing the National Performance Framework. For an overview of this process and

This research placement also afforded an overview of emerging policy directions in health and social care which were pertinent to my own research, particularly growing support for ‘cultural prescribing’ and ‘social prescribing’ as a mainstream part of the health service. Such approaches posit cultural engagement (or local social activities) as therapeutic; seek to address social determinants of health by encouraging health service staff to refer patients to creative, cultural or social programmes, and advocate closer connections between health services, the third sector and cultural facilities.⁷¹ That emphasis on working across institutions is indicative of the way in which cultural policy formation is, increasingly, shaped by priorities for other public services and, as the final chapter of this thesis will explore, remains concerned with addressing the consequences of deindustrialisation. Accordingly, this thesis is attenuated to the relationship between cultural policy, changing narratives of urban regeneration, and broader change to the delivery and governance of public services. This approach is necessarily interdisciplinary and integrates a range of policy discourses. Nevertheless, it endeavours to resist a ‘textual’ approach to cultural policy by rooting its analysis in specific, local, literary case studies, and drawing on interviews, records and documentary materials which evidence the process of policy making, and reflect on the challenges of community orientated creative work. In doing so, it aims to afford consideration of wider priorities often attached to cultural work in places which are undergoing urban change.

The ‘search for space’ in literary texts

The critical distance between cultural policy studies and literary analysis is not the only disciplinary gap to present an obstacle to this thesis’ methods. As Jonathan

draft outcomes see Ishani Erasmus, *National Outcomes Consultation 2018*, SPICe Briefing (Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament, 2018) <<https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/ResearchBriefings/Report/2018/4/12/National-Outcomes-Consultation-2018>> [accessed 8 May 2018].

⁷¹ Social prescribing seeks to address the psychological factors and social circumstances which impact patients’ health by referring patients on to non-medical sources of support. In Scotland this approach will primarily be facilitated by ‘community link workers’ in General Practice so that GPs may ‘refer’ patients to local social groups, cultural activities, and other sources of community support. See NHS Health Scotland, *Social Prescribing for Mental Health: Guidance Paper* (Edinburgh, NHS Health Scotland, 2016).

Charley reflects in ‘Time, Space and Narrative’, the argument that the stylistic form and narrative trajectory of urban fiction is quite directly influenced by urban change has been made repeatedly throughout twentieth-century literary criticism.

Considering some of the conclusions Franco Moretti draws in his influential *Atlas of the European Novel 1800 – 1900* (1998), Charley remarks that it “seems somehow obvious ‘that locality serves as the starting point for the creative imagination’ and that ‘without a certain kind of space, a certain kind of story is simply impossible’”.⁷²

Yet while, since the advent of the ‘spatial turn’ in the humanities, literary critics have keenly employed theoretical insights from branches of urban sociology or post-marxist geography in analysis of fiction, other disciplines have exhibited less enthusiasm for drawing on literary analysis rooted in specific, local texts.⁷³

Ultimately, this disjunction between literary criticism and urban analysis can be traced back to Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1974), where Lefebvre remarks that:

Clearly, literary authors have written much of relevance, especially descriptions of places and sites. But what criteria would make certain texts more relevant than others?...The problem is that any search for space in literary texts will find it everywhere and in every guise: enclosed, described, projected, dreamt of, speculated about. What texts can be considered special enough to provide the basis for a ‘textual’ analysis?⁷⁴

⁷² Jonathan Charley, ‘Time, Space and Narrative: reflections on architecture, literature and modernity’, in *Writing the Modern City: Literature, Architecture, Modernity*, ed. by Sarah Edwards and Johnathan Charley (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 1-18 (p. 10).

⁷³ The ‘spatial turn’ is taken to indicate the intense shift in inquiry into the production and experience of space across social sciences and cultural studies, clustered first around philosophical work produced in the 1960s and 1970s which attended to social production of space as well as its psychological dimensions (notably Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space* (1964) and Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1974)). In the 1980s and 1990s such lines of inquiry permeated disciplines. For an overview of the trajectory of such literary research see, Alexander Beaumont, ‘Literary Studies after the Spatial Turn’, *Journal of Urban Cultural Studies*, 3.1 (2016), 395-305; *The Routledge Handbook of Literature and Space*, ed. by Robert Tally Jr (London; New York: Routledge, 2017). For further particular discussion of interpretations of Lefebvre’s analysis in branches of the humanities see Łukasz Stanek, Christian Schmid and Ákos Moravánsky, eds, *Urban Revolution Now: Lefebvre in Social Research and Architecture* (London: Ashgate, 2014); and Michael Edema Leary-Ohwin, ‘Introduction’, in *Exploring the Production of Urban Space: Differential space in three post-industrial cities* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2016), pp. 1-40.

⁷⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1974) (Hoboken: Wiley, 1992), p. 14.

Accordingly, when fictional texts are used as points of reference in sociological analysis, they can often be deployed to contribute a sense of ‘local colour’ to a wide ranging analysis, and are therefore treated fairly uncritically as a form of historical or social evidence. There are a number of influential works of urban sociology which advance more ambitious readings of contemporary texts as sources illuminating the experience and process of urban transformation, but nonetheless place an emphasis on fiction’s limitations. For example, in *Landscapes of Power*, Sharon Zukin looks to Henry James to give her reader a sense of nineteenth-century New York’s cosmopolitanism and draws on the postmodern fiction of Updike, Don DeLillo and Jay McInerney to convey the “inner landscape” of urban transformation and the impact on economic and social change on postmodern cities.⁷⁵ In the postmodern novels Zukin cites, characters mediate and move between urban areas in different modes and stages of postindustrial change: between working class landscapes “formerly of production and now of devastation” to gentrified areas characterised as “landscapes of consumption” which “appropriate artefacts of the past”.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, Zukin remains insistent that “we owe our clearest map of structural change not to novelists or literary critics, but to architects and designers.”⁷⁷

Even sociological work in the interdisciplinary field of new working-class studies, which deliberately reaches from a wide range of methods and cultural sources, including oral history, song and popular culture has had relatively limited engagement with literary texts until recently, particularly in the UK.⁷⁸ For instance, Alice Mah’s multifocal analysis of industrial decline, *Industrial Ruination, Community and Place* (2012) opens up the possibility of using literary texts to decode the meaning and impact of urban change for people living in deindustrialised urban landscapes. Drawing on David Harvey’s *Spaces of Hope* (2000), Mah stresses

⁷⁵ Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (1991) (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), p. 27.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37. The understanding of postmodernism articulated in this thesis is aligned with Frederic Jameson’s articulation of the collapse of interpretative depth and diminished sense of teleology in *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁷⁸ Critical work focused on the experience of deindustrialisation in North American cities includes Sherry Lee Linkon’s examination of working class literature. See in particular Sherry Lee Linkon, *The Half-Life of Deindustrialisation: Working Class Writing About Economic Restructuring* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018).

the “role of imagination in shaping places” and proposes that “Imagining change and reinventing place are important theoretical and practical acts for people who live within landscapes of industrial ruination and urban decline, as they help people to enter into dialogue with one another and identify challenges and constraints while seeking alternatives and possibilities”.⁷⁹ Mah thereby not only indicates that literary sources may make a significant contribution to understanding the process of urban change, but can play a role in mediating and facilitating change. Nor does Mah present the view that creative representations of urban space necessarily have a positive valence: emphasising the capacity of “negative imaginaries” to “stigmatize places of industrial decline” and thereby “contribute to their continued socio-economic isolation and exclusion”.⁸⁰ In particular, Mah cites “Dickens’ grim portrayal of nineteenth-century working-class London” among “classic examples of negative imagined places”.⁸¹ Yet, tellingly Mah does not incorporate literary sources in her own blend of visual, spatial and ethnographic methods to “read social and spatial landscapes of industrial ruination as a lived process that is linked to wider socio-economic processes of deindustrialisation”.⁸² In Mah’s study of deindustrialisation, the invitation to incorporate literary analysis in a multidisciplinary understanding of the social and cultural meaning of postindustrial urban change is extended, and its potential importance is stressed, but not acted upon on a local level.⁸³

I argue that the longstanding theoretical disjunction between literary work and urban sociology has hampered analysis of contemporary urban change and, in particular, the role that literary representations of urban space have played in the urban regeneration of UK cities since intensive investment in so-called ‘culture-led’ regeneration began in the 1980s and 1990s. Though the relationship between urban regeneration and creative practice has been explored extensively from a range of

⁷⁹ Alice Mah, *Industrial Ruination, Community and Place* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), pp. 175-176.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁸³ Mah’s subsequent study, *Port Cities and Global Legacies* does go further in incorporating literary sources within its multidisciplinary scope, including comparative analysis of noir fiction from Marseille and New Orleans. *Port Cities and Global Legacies: Urban Identity, Waterfront Work and Radicalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

perspectives, literary work is far more rarely considered in this urban context, nor it is typically addressed as part of broader creative economy frameworks.⁸⁴ To be more precise, though literary critics often incorporate insights from urban sociology and geography in discussions of representations of urban space within texts, the role that literary texts and literary practices play in influencing urban change is less considered. When the impact of creative work is considered in terms on an area's local economy, focus often falls narrowly on the economic potential and local consequences of literary tourism.⁸⁵

Moreover, though Zukin's statement that we "owe our clearest map of structural change not to novelists or literary critics, but to architect and designers" seems uncontroversial, it may be helpful to question how "structural change" might be defined.⁸⁶ Certainly, "architects and designers" are directly responsible for demonstrable changes in the built environment itself, but "structural change" surely also encompasses the political, bureaucratic and economic manoeuvres and discourses which precede design and construction? As Peter Clandfield has argued in his analysis of architectural form and crime fiction, literary texts have the capacity to expose the "nonneutrality" of the discourses and processes which shape urban space.⁸⁷ Here, Clandfield draws on David Harvey's observation that the organisation

⁸⁴ For instance, inarguably influential works such as Richard Florida's *Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) (New York: Basic Books, 2004), which popularised an understanding of creative practice as a catalyst for localised urban economic growth, largely predicated on domestic property values, is not attenuated to literary creativity. Sharon Zukin, whose work approaches urban transformation from an entirely different political and theoretical standpoint often forms her analysis around visible signs of urban change engendered by creative practice. See *The Cultures of Cities* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995) and more recently, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Policy orientated examinations of the creative economy also tend to neglect literary practice, focusing more on creative work which receives more significant state subsidy, for a recent such example see, David Hesmondhalgh, Kate Oakley, David Lee and Melissa Nisbett, *Culture, Economy and Politics: The Case of New Labour* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

⁸⁵ For discussion of the development of literary tourism in Britain see Nicola Watson, *The Literary Tourist* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).

⁸⁶ Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, p. 39.

⁸⁷ Peter Clandfield draws on David Harvey's construal of the "nonneutrality" of the creation of urban space in 'Architectural Crimes and Architectural Solutions', in *Writing the Modern City*, pp. 108-126 (p.108). See also Peter Clandfield and Christian Lloyd, 'Redevelopment Fiction: architecture, town planning and unhomeliness', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Literature*, ed. by Berthold Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 124-131.

and use of space is not always readily questioned when the power that regulates it is concealed or normalised. In more extreme situations, such as “gross gerrymandering of political boundaries”, “corruption within a system of planning permissions” the “power to shape space” becomes evident.⁸⁸ It is therefore all the more important to attend to the relationship between literary work and urban regeneration because literary work has a particular capacity to engage with, and influence, the discourses which bound, shape and underlie urban change due to its textual nature.

Aspects of two previous literary studies, both intensely focused on urban change in particular US cities, offer potential models for this locally rooted examination of literary representations of deindustrialisation and urban transformation: Carlo Rotella’s *October Cities: The Redevelopment of Urban Literature* and Catalina Neculai’s more recent work, *Urban Space and Late Twentieth Century New York Fiction*.⁸⁹ Carlo Rotella has been one of relatively few literary critics to quietly inform construals of the cultural meaning of deindustrialisation in the early twenty-first century.⁹⁰ *October Cities* developed coterminously with burgeoning interest in the cultural conditions of deindustrialisation, though it does not draw directly from the emergent body of new working-class studies scholarship.⁹¹ Rather, *October Cities* examines the social and cultural dimensions of deindustrialisation through an intricate examination of postwar urban change in three major urban cities - Chicago, Philadelphia and New

⁸⁸ David Harvey, ‘Money, Time, Space and the City’ (1985), in *The Urban Experience* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1989), pp. 165-199, p. 187. Moreover, Harvey suggests, it is because the power to shape space is so crucial to maintaining power that “those who have the professional and intellectual skills to shape space materially and effectively – engineers, architects, planners and so on – can themselves acquire a certain power and convert their specialized knowledge into financial benefit”, p. 187. The term nonneutrality also has a specific Marxist inflection in Harvey’s work, indicating the relational nature of space.

⁸⁹ Carlo Rotella, *October Cities: The Redevelopment of Urban Literature* (London and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998); Catalina Neculai, *Urban Space and Late Twentieth-Century New York Writing* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

⁹⁰ Rotella’s later monograph, *Good With Their Hands: Boxers, Bluesmen and Other Characters from the Rustbelt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) is cited more frequently in this literature. It is referenced, for example, in James Rhodes’ ‘Youngstown’s ‘Ghost’? Memory, Identity and Deindustrialisation’, *International Labour and Working-Class History*, 84 (2013), 55-77.

⁹¹ By 2005 new working-class studies had developed to the degree that it could sustain an introductory collection, *New Working-class Studies*, ed. by John Russo and Sherry Lee Linkon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

York - and detailed topographic analysis of their literature. Rotella's discussion of literary Chicago is of particular interest to this thesis' methods, since he seeks to demonstrate how modes of urban sociology which were emerging in that city intertwined with the city's literature. Rotella not only drives at the underlying confluences between sociological and literary approaches to writing the city, but addresses more political dimensions of urban writing. His chapters on Chicago demonstrate how certain Chicago writers not only sought to convey the economic anxiety and disruption deindustrialisation caused, but also portrayed deindustrialisation as a threat to a local literary culture which protected and preserved understanding of the city's leftist history. As the first chapter of this thesis will indicate, it is possible to draw parallels with the threat many of Glasgow's leftist writers believed culture-led regeneration posed to the city's radical identity in the 1990s. *October Cities* also offers a prospective model for exploring the literary dimensions of urban change in Glasgow because Rotella's overarching argument is that urban affect is shaped as much by the literary heritage of cities as by their material aspects. Taking a pragmatic view of the apparent disjunction between material space and textual representation (the difficult question Lefebvre poses: "What texts can be considered special enough to provide the basis for a 'textual' analysis?"⁹²) Rotella offers that "cities of feeling" which are "not imagined from scratch, tend to descend from two sources":⁹³

One is texts, since writers read one another (...) assemble repertoires and influences, repeat and revise. The other source is "cities of fact", material places assembled from brick and steel and stone [...] Cities of feeling, then, are shaped by the flow of language, image, and ideas; cities of fact by the flow of capital, materials and people. And each, of course, is shaped by the other. On the one hand, cities of fact are everywhere shaped by acts of imagination: redevelopment plans, speeches, newspaper stories, conversations, music, novels, and poems create cities of feeling that help guide people in their encounters with the city of fact. These texts affect material life.⁹⁴

⁹² Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1974) (Hoboken: Wiley, 1992), p. 14.

⁹³ Carlo Rotella, *October Cities*, p. 4.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

The dynamic Rotella schematises here between the “city of fact” and the “city of feeling” typifies much literary criticism which attempts to locate contours between the material form of cities and their literary dimensions. Common too, to critical or reflective writing on architecture or urbanism interested in tracing the affective qualities of city life. Jonathan Raban, for example, opens his reflective account of urban experience, *Soft City*, with the claim that, “The city as we imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare, is as real, maybe more real than the hard city one can locate on maps and statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture”.⁹⁵ A range of poetic and practical terms are used to suggest the relationship between textual spaces and material spaces, reaching towards an understanding of how they interact: approaching, as Richard Lehan puts it in *The City in Literature* (1998), “the symbiosis between literary and urban text”.⁹⁶ Or indicate a less direct relationship, as James Donald does in *Imagining the Modern City* (1999) whereby the “traffic between urban fabric, representation and imagination fuzzies up the epistemological and ontological distinctions and, in doing so, produced the city between, the imagined city where we actually live”.⁹⁷

Taking it as given that literary texts “do affect material life” by virtue of their dissemination and influence on urban lives, Rotella goes on to examine literary portrays of ghettoization and urban decay in the landscapes of mid-century fiction in precise detail. He traces points of contact, resistance and reciprocity between the bodies of literary work portraying these cities and the contemporary built environment and economic conditions they reflect. What is particularly relevant to this thesis’ lines of inquiry is that in examining literary representations of urban transition, Rotella demonstrates that the postindustrial city or the postindustrial novel is not shaped by a definitive transition from industrial to postindustrial conditions. Rather, for Rotella, the postindustrial city is characterised by “persistent relics of the industrial city”.⁹⁸ These “persistent relics” may be physical aspects of the built environment or literary traces of an industrial era:

⁹⁵ Jonathan Raban, *Soft City* (1974) (London: Picador, 2008), p. 2.

⁹⁶ Richard Lehan, *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1998), p. xv.

⁹⁷ James Donald, *Imagining the Modern City* (London: Athlone, 1999), p. 10.

⁹⁸ Carlo Rotella, *October Cities*, p. 322

This is a story of persistence as much as it is of succession. In the city of fact, elements of the industrial city can still be discerned, underlying and poking through the fabric of the postindustrial landscape. Factory loft buildings have been converted to new uses or left to decay, immigrant-ethnic urban villages have been completely transformed by ghettoization or gentrification, somewhere near a new waterfront esplanade one can usually find the old docks. In the city of feeling, the reader finds that, despite the advent of new genres of writing and the new cohorts of urban intellectuals, there are recurring character types (e.g., violent young men, writers in crisis), narrative strategies (family sagas, stories of decline), and thematic concerns, (racial conflict, the pervasive threat posed by urban transformation to a familiar way of life) that join the postindustrial literature to the industrial. This study, then, tells a story of literary change over time driven by a mix of persistences and transformations discernible in both the city of fact and the city of feeling.⁹⁹

As Chapter One of this thesis will explore, the dynamic Rotella indicates here: with both the urban fabric and urban imaginary of North American deindustrialised cities caught between the relics of an industrial past and uncertain futures, living, as it were, within a process of ruination rather than among ruins, may also be related to Glasgow.¹⁰⁰ This thesis, however, is not to be content with ‘fuzzying up’ the borders between the material and the imagined city. My hope is that by circumscribing my analysis to particular modes of urban change, in one city with a distinctive tradition of literary engagement, I will be able to offer specific case studies showing a more direct point of confluence between urban writing and urban change.

In this regard, Catalina Neculai’s 2014 study, *Urban Space and Late Twentieth Century New York*, is a promising model. Neculai offers an in-depth examination of New York urban literature from the 1970s fiscal crisis onwards. Taking direct issue with Lefebvre’s assessment of the irreconcilable divide between urban space and textual analysis, Neculai holds that:

two complementary critical gestures appear to be necessary: developing suitable ways in which the findings of human and urban geography can be brought to bear effectively upon the (re)production of space in fictional writing; and demonstrating that the literary imaginary may contribute to the

⁹⁹ Carlo Rotella, *October Cities*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰⁰ Following Alice Mah’s cognate emphasis on ruination as a lived process in *Industrial Ruination, Community and Place*, p. 151.

knowledge of space and place, and to the reform of and adjustment of socio-spatial practices themselves.¹⁰¹

To address the second, more challenging, critical agenda and demonstrate that “the literary imagination may contribute to the knowledge of space and place” and ultimately influence “socio-spatial practices themselves”, Neculai proposes that “urban fiction” should be considered a form of urban ethnography and consequently goes on to delimit the scope of such fiction.

Neculai does not only suggest that “urban fiction” might be considered a form of urban ethnography, but argues that literary critics, as well as writers, can contribute to “demonstrating that the literary imaginary may contribute to the knowledge of space and place” by developing “literary ethnographies of urban space and community places in the manner of anthropological ‘thick’ description”.¹⁰² The body of *Urban Space and Late Twentieth Century New York Literature* is a study in this method, offering a textured analysis of literary representations of the impact of the finance, insurance and real estate sectors in 1970s and 1980s New York, and literary work by writers who were involved in community opposition to gentrification. But more particularly, Neculai draws on David Harvey’s phrasing “the urbanization of consciousness” in order to argue that a cognate “urbanization of literary writing” can be discerned in that period.¹⁰³ Neculai suggests that political and economic crisis in New York and corresponding urban transformation gave rise to an “urbanization of literary consciousness” in the city as writers became more alert to the relationship between urban change and transformations in capital (such as the impact of the aforementioned FIRE economy on New York’s urban landscape).¹⁰⁴ Neculai argues that “writers showed enhanced awareness of these urban transformation through their writing and, she stresses, “more importantly” an urgent understanding that individuals are “agents of change” in the city - “voluntary urban actors and stakeholders”.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Catalina Neculai, *Urban Space and Late Twentieth Century New York Fiction*, p. 22.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Consequently, in delimiting her focus, Neculai makes it clear that her methods relate to this “urbanization of literary writing” and that her research interest lies with “authentic narratives of the urban” - distinguishing this mode of writing from “merely local” “stories from the city”.¹⁰⁶ By “authentic narratives of the urban” Neculai can be taken to mean texts which “engage with the conflicting relations and struggles over the meaning and function of space.”¹⁰⁷

Defining urban literature, locating community

Neculai’s definition of urbanized writing or “authentic narratives of the urban” has some appeal for my own study of Glasgow’s literature. It appears useful in the regard that it offers a very precise construal of urban literary writing which, at first, seems readily applicable to this thesis’ interests in local literature exploring material and social manifestations of urban transformation. However, Neculai’s exacting definition of urbanized writing appears overly restrictive to me (as does the correspondingly narrow application of her ambitious methodology) and the emphasis it places on urban ‘authenticity’ is questionable. There seems to be no transparent way to distinguish ‘mere’ ‘stories from the city’ from ‘authentic narratives of the urban’. It is certainly not clear what level of urban ‘awareness’ a given text or author should have to demonstrate to qualify as ‘authentic’. Nor is it clear why broader varieties of literary texts, which Neculai denigrates as ‘mere’ stories from the city should be excluded from the “literary imaginary” and so contributing, as Neculai puts it, to “the knowledge of space and place”.¹⁰⁸ A range of genre fiction, from nostalgic historical novels (which make up a considerable part of Glasgow’s fictional representation) to detective fiction (a mainstay of Glasgow fiction) may contribute to a critical understanding of urban change in the city. Not least because the form of detective fiction is so closely tied to the development of working-class fiction and is deeply related to working class autobiography, and is therefore likely to be of particular relevance to critical work with an interest in the relationship between

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 22.

urban literary work and class.¹⁰⁹ Altogether, Neculai's exacting definition of 'authentic narratives of the urban' threatens to focus too stringently on contemporary realist fiction, potentially to the exclusion of popular genre fiction or more stylistically experimental literary work. Although this thesis does not explore examples of genre fiction from Glasgow in detail, it would be discomfiting to adopt a working definition of literature which excluded such work in principle.

A more convincing approach to sociological literary analysis is advanced in Sarah Brouillette's work on literary production and urban change. In *Literature and the Creative Economy*, Brouillette relates the values advanced by the creative economy – specifically by New Labour era cultural policy with its attendant investment in the urban regeneration of postindustrial urban spaces – to new modes of literary practice and new construals of literary work. Deftly, Brouillette links the cultural capital and social values attributed to authors and literary figures to transformations of work within the knowledge economy, within the labour market beyond. Brouillette is not concerned with particular qualities of literary texts so much as the changing forms of literary work and the way in which literature may be utilized to add commercial value to urban spaces. Most relevant to the focus of this thesis is Brouillette's identification of the 'writer-consultant' figure, commissioned to lead participatory work as part of public art projects. The second chapter of this thesis draws much from that analysis, but grounds that approach in the historical and cultural context of Glasgow's literature and the specificities of urban change in that city.

Moreover, Brouillette's sociological perspective is also valuable because her later critical work directly addresses the fact that conceptions of the 'literary' are clearly also shaped by cultural policy making and notions of artistic value which cannot be extricated from economic frameworks – however much individual readers or writers may wish otherwise.¹¹⁰ In their analysis of Bourdieu's 1983 essay 'The

¹⁰⁹ For further discussion of the relationship between working class fiction, working class autobiography, and the consumption of crime fiction and detective fiction see Ken Worpole, *Dockers and Detectives* (London: Verso, 1983) and Ian Haywood, *Working Class Fiction* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1997).

¹¹⁰ For a fuller discussion of the relationship between literary prestige and high-level cultural policy making see, as well as Brouillette's *Literature and the Creative Economy*, 'Unesco and the Book in the Developing World', *Representations*, 127.1 (2014), pp. 33-34;

Field of Cultural Capital', Sarah Brouillette and Christopher Doody venture that "while the literary has so often symbolised" a "historically shifting but nevertheless persistent division between art and commerce" they would certainly "be hard pressed to find a scholar of literature who would maintain that the literary is a transcendent space of pure imagination [...] unfettered by the constraints of...enterprise".¹¹¹ If literary work is considered in terms of a cultural industry, it cannot quite be seen to occupy the privileged ethnographic space Neculai might reserve for it.

Accordingly, this thesis does not seek to delimit the literary in a particularly narrow way: either in terms of its forms or function. It attempts to take a more inclusive approach to the range of texts that might be considered urban literature, and it is particularly interested in broadening analysis of the relationship between urban regeneration and local writing in Glasgow beyond the work of well-known authors and poets such as Alasdair Gray and Edwin Morgan. It is invested in directing critical attention to lesser-known literary texts and more ephemeral publications which were produced in the course of or in response to urban regeneration efforts over the past three or four decades. More marginal literary work I have chosen to highlight in the course of my research includes novels, but more often poems, short stories and essays: this reflects the kind of literary output which is more typical of writers' groups, writing competitions, participatory literary projects and also of authors at the outset of their publishing careers. Nonetheless it is evident that novelistic texts and stylistically similar narrative fiction comprise the majority of literary work offered up for analysis here. Moreover, most of the literary texts explored in detail are expressly concerned with the aesthetic representation and political economy of urban regeneration. This is not because I subscribe to the view that writing offering a fine grained, realist description of contemporary urban change is necessarily more 'authentically urban' than experimental literature, fantasy novels or genre fiction. Rather it is because these texts either offer direct attempts to expose the "non-neutrality" of urban space, as Peter Clandfield puts it, by making conflicts

Postcolonial Writers in the Global Marketplace (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007) and Sarah Brouillette and Christopher Doody, 'The Literary as a Cultural Industry', in *The Routledge Companion to the Cultural Industries*, ed. by Kate Oakley and Justin O'Connor (London: Routledge, 2015).

¹¹¹ Brouillette and Doody, p. 100.

and contradictions over the symbolic or practical use or control of urban space more legible, or because the texts concerned are invested in negotiating and containing such conflict in an aesthetic form which can tolerate multiple perspectives and contradictions.¹¹² At points, this thesis does incorporate some analysis of other forms of writing and modes of performance, such as theatre, speeches at events, policy documents and other submissions made in response to consultations or participatory work, but these are to contextualise and support analysis of the key literary forms described above.

My analysis of Glasgow literature in the context of urban regeneration has a chronological thrust as well as a spatial focus, and of particular relevance to my discussion of literary production in the 1980s and 1990s is work published by the Third Eye Centre (which facilitated creative relationships among a wide range of creative practitioners); the critical essays and grassroots fiction published by Clydeside Press (which was strongly associated with the Workers City group); and the arts magazine *Variant*. Other Glasgow fiction centred in the early chapters of this study was well supported by the publishers Canongate, Polygon and Picador. Luath Press has played a significant role in the development of participatory fiction by publishing the first novel in the UK to be commissioned and funded by a housing agency: Alison Irvine's 2011 novel, *This Road is Red*. The role Freight Books took in publishing elaborately designed works of creative writing, criticism and photography focused on Glasgow's changing urban landscape is also notable – including Chris Leslie's *Disappearing Glasgow* and Recollective's interdisciplinary project, *Nothing is Lost*. Since Freight Books collapsed in 2017 some of the work it had published is no longer easy to access.

This thesis, however, also follows Brouillette in seeking to broaden analysis of literary work beyond the production of literary texts and the participation in literary activities which directly support publishing and marketing. It considers the changing role of literary labour in the context of urban regeneration and the creative economy, identifying emerging modes of facilitatory work and creative consultations

¹¹² Peter Clandfield, 'Architectural Crimes and Architectural Solutions', in *Writing the Modern City: Literature, Architecture, Modernity*, ed. by Sarah Edwards and Johnathan Charley (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 108–26 (p. 108).

which are beginning to influence conceptions of authorial identity. It is also attentive to pressures upon writers to take part in literary work with a therapeutic dimension. These new forms of literary labour are the primary concern of Chapter Two of this thesis. As most of these emergent modes of literary work involve collaborating with communities and, I argue, have some genesis in the cultural politics of Glasgow's Culture Year, it is helpful, at this point, to set out some of the key terms this thesis negotiates in its discussion of community arts, participatory arts and the politics of community engagement.

In a thoughtful essay on the politics of representation at work in managing Glasgow's major cultural institutions, and the sense of personal responsibility at stake, Mark O'Neill, Director of Research and Policy at Glasgow Life, reflects that there are inevitably "numerous contradictions and conflicts" inhabiting Glasgow's "imagined community".¹¹³ These may encompass "social and economic class, gender, ethnicity, religion, denomination, neighbourhood, sexual orientation and education" but also "endemic social problems of poor health, domestic and street violence and alcohol and drug abuse".¹¹⁴ The range of social, economic, and embodied forms of difference O'Neill alludes to indicates how difficult it is to imagine one constitutive community without such "contradictions and conflicts" let alone Glasgow's population of "600 000 people".¹¹⁵ They also demonstrate the variety of ways in which class may intersect with race, gender, sexuality and indicate that cultural representations of the city are always at least partial and subjective, if not aiming to perform in some degree by harmonizing differences or obfuscating certain histories. O'Neill turns to the import that acknowledging the diversity and complexity of Glasgow's 'communities' had for his understanding of protests against Glasgow's Year of Culture, led by the Workers City group. This collection of protestors, including notable local writers, attacked what they perceived as the sanitised, commodified representation of Glasgow's working class history on offer as part of the cultural exhibitions and celebrations in 1990. The "attacks on museums management" and the "1990 programme" came in particular, O'Neill felt, from "a

¹¹³ Mark O'Neill 'Museums and Identity in Glasgow', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 12.1 (2006), p. 29-48 (p. 29).

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

‘workerist’ perspective, which portrayed a cohesive male-dominated white working-class community as the core of the authentic Glasgow”.¹¹⁶ Despite its very limited constituency, O’Neill suggests, and his disagreement with their homogenous presentation of the city’s working-class identity, their protests “made clear that, far from being the reflection of a single establishment view, museums were sites for competition for control of the public expression of the city’s identity/ies”.¹¹⁷

As O’Neill indicates, the Workers City group did identify the city’s cultural institutions as key sites for struggle, given that the city’s mode of economic regeneration at that time was predicated on developing an appealing new image for the city, by investing in its cultural institutions. They perceived that some ground for political conflict had shifted from the factory floor to other types of urban space. Yet in attempting to occupy this new terrain, aspects of the Workers City group’s campaign arguably appealed to the social and political force of occupational communities and harboured anachronistic notions of the city’s industrial past. As literary work explored throughout the body of this thesis demonstrates, cultural work or analyses which explores a sense of nostalgia for an idealised collective community in some earlier era of Glasgow’s urban development would continually find itself frustrated. Moreover, As O’Neill pointed out, the group presented an entirely narrow and unrealistically “cohesive male-dominated, white” representation of working-class community.¹¹⁸

It is often observed that there is good reason to become suspicious whenever the term ‘community’ is invoked. Too often it still harbours appeals to an organic conception of community life, or at least of people cosily bounded by geography, occupation or family ties – if not all three and then more. In the cultural policy and urban policy discourses of the period this thesis is concerned with, the term is also used throughout much of the 1980s and 1990s as a demographic shorthand for people who might be a priority for ‘outreach’ activities, who may even be described as ‘hard to reach’ or were otherwise the subject of strategies concerned with ‘inclusion’. More recently, the rhetoric of community development and community empowerment in Scotland demonstrates a belated appreciation of the fact that the

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 42.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 34.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

constituencies of people community development initiatives seek to bring together, or at least collaborate with, are often no form of conventional community at all. Rather, recent modes of policy making are concerned with the fact that there is little readily apparent social capital within the communities in apparent need of ‘development’ and ‘empowerment’. Certainly, the term community is fiercely contested but blandly ubiquitous. This thesis takes a pragmatic approach to negotiating the term throughout the following chapters. I accept the strategic invocation of a ‘local community’ in order to discuss the social consequences of urban change in a particular area, and acknowledge (though hopefully do not invite) the risk of fostering the false impression that people within or around it necessarily share a great deal in terms of identity or perspectives. Parts of this thesis which are directly concerned with the social and cultural politics of community arts, community engagement, participatory arts and community development and empowerment tend to use the terminology suggested by the artist or participants.

It will also become evident that one of the undercurrents working through this thesis is the changing nature of participatory cultural work in the UK: from the politicised mode of community education and community development which was so prevalent in Scotland from the 1970s into the 1980s, to the notion of “participatory arts” which emerged in the 1990s.¹¹⁹ This trajectory is helpfully illuminated by François Matarasso in his essay ‘All in this together: The depoliticisation of community art in Britain, 1970-2010’, which outlines the way in which community arts in the 1970s both developed from “the artistic, social and political experimentation of the late 1960s” and “alongside the much bigger, more mature and more theoretically sophisticated community development movement”.¹²⁰ Community development, Matarasso notes, aimed to work in accordance with a community’s “own judgement” in what “would constitute an improvement” in their circumstances.¹²¹ In Britain, community development workers were “active in the

¹¹⁹ For a sustained discussion of community education in Scotland and its import for local literary work see Gerri Kirkwood and Colin Kirkwood, *Living Adult Education: Freire in Scotland* (1989) (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2011).

¹²⁰ François Matarasso, ‘All in this together: The depoliticisation of community art in Britain, 1970-2010’, in *Community, Art, Power: Essays from ICAF 2011*, ed. by Eugene Van Ervan (Rotterdam: 2013), p. 217-18.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p.218.

creation of support of tenants' organisations, women's groups and similar grassroots organisations" throughout the 1970s.¹²² The "key difference" between community art and "participatory arts" was the latter's focus on "individuals rather than communities" and its "depoliticised response to their situation".¹²³ My later reading of collaborative literary work suggests that the depoliticised context of participatory art has made it more possible for collaborative narrative projects to be turned to commercial ends or used, more indirectly, to manage people's sentiments and attitudes to urban regeneration.

I would, however, want to guard against the impression that all participatory creative projects are necessarily 'depoliticised'. In order, then, to highlight the potential for collaborative work to support political and social change it is helpful to offer a brief discussion of the capacities of participatory action research in the context of the arts. While the term participatory arts may be used to refer to a wide range of creative practices delivered by or in collaboration with people and communities, encompassing work which may have a therapeutic dimension, or carry political aspirations, or function as a form of 'outreach', participatory action research is more stringently defined. Most broadly, it is a qualitative research method which incorporates aspects of participatory research and action research - which seeks to draw on its findings in order to support and create social change. As with other modes of participatory research, it not a form of outreach but keys value to intensive collaboration and participation and works against creating or reinforcing hierarchies between researchers and participants. It is important to acknowledge that advocates for participatory action research argue that this method of knowledge production can therefore "avoid some of the potential inequalities in the researcher/participant relationship" and "address a more holistic model of social justice".¹²⁴ It is, as Mary Brydon Miller and Patricia Maguire put it, "an openly and unapologetically political

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Maggie O'Neill, Philip A. Woods and Mark Webster, 'New Arrivals: Participatory Action Research, Imagined Communities and "Visions" of social justice', *Social Justice*, 32.1 (2005), pp. 75-88 (p.75).

approach to knowledge creation through and for action”.¹²⁵ This mode of research has found much productive ground in health and education research as well as in the arts. In the context of the arts in particular, participatory action research may have the capacity to merge the function of participatory art as a generative tool for research, with its potential to effect social change in the course of the research process (by developing new relationships and capacities among participant/researchers) as well as through the aesthetic and social impact of the artwork produced. I have highlighted distinctions between the broad scope of participatory arts and the distinctive ethical concerns of participatory action research in order to contextualise this thesis’ concern that some modes of collaborative literary work explored in Chapter Two and Three harbour a dangerous compensatory function: that creative engagement work is substituted for community engagement work, and individuals and communities are invited to invest in form of community storytelling which revisits and reimagines an area’s past but offers little opportunity to influence its future. It is suggested, in these chapters’ discussion of collaborative research and participatory arts in Glasgow’s Red Road Flats, that the function of collaborative literary work as a form of ‘salvage ethnography’ may be legitimised and enabled by sociological and historical work previously led by academic researchers as part of the broader Red Road Cultural Project. I have foregrounded the “unapologetically political approach” of participatory action research in order to stress that much ongoing research in urban communities such as Red Road work expressly against perceived hierarchies between researchers and participants, and directly against the notion that researchers or practitioners should be perceived as ‘disinterested’ figures. In doing so, I also hope to emphasise that much participatory art and research works towards objectives which are no less ambitious or political than those of earlier community arts workers, though the context and discourses surrounding that work have necessarily shifted.

Had the examination of literary production and urban change offered by this thesis considered a broader geographical territory and longer period, it would have been better able to reflect the creative trajectory and political parameters of

¹²⁵ Mary Brydon-Miller and Patricia Maguire, ‘Participatory Action Research: contributions to the development of practitioner enquiry in education, *Educational Action Research*, 17.1 (2009), pp. 79-93 (p. 79).

community art in Scotland. It could have encompassed the influence of artists such as Richard Demarco, who was a particularly active part of Edinburgh's arts scene, and the importance of grassroots work in communities like Craigmillar and Pilton. Similarly, as this thesis is focused on literary work centred on the production, discussion and reception of texts, it has not offered an examination of influential community theatre groups like 7:84 who were integral to the community arts movement in the UK. Such scope would have allowed for a more detailed engagement with relevant creative movements and so explored the genesis of and contrast between terminology around community engagement more fully. As I hope this thesis will demonstrate, there are advantages to constraining its focus to literary representations from and of one particular city. It allows for closer connections to be drawn between particular examples of economic change, urban transformation and literary production. But one consequence of basing this study within a smaller creative community and narrower economic context is that more slippage is encountered in the way that creative practitioners adopt and use terminology. As observed in this thesis' final chapter, practitioners whose creative attention is focused on developing work with communities can feel frustrated by or "cautious" towards the "debate for new definitions" about the work they are leading.¹²⁶ That is the view offered by the photographer Iseult Timmermans who has led work with migrant communities based in high-rise housing for numerous years. Reflecting that she has heard artists reject the term "community artist" "indignantly" and insist that they are a "socially engaged artist", Timmermans cautions against entering into "crazy frictions" about terminology.¹²⁷ Yet, saliently, Timmermans also observes that insisting on more contemporary terms to describe creative work led with local communities or particular groups can "unintentionally further discredit" the "invalidated history" of community arts which can become a term artists try to "dissociate themselves from because it doesn't have enough value in the art world".¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Iseult Timmermans, in interview with Kirsten McAllister, 'The Creative Margins of Glasgow: Process-Based Art, Asylum Seekers and Housing Estates', *West Coast Line*, 68 (2011), 132-149 (p. 148).

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

Reflecting such slippage between terms in the local context of creative practitioners of various disciplines and intellectual backgrounds, working with a range of local groups, this wording used in this thesis to describe such creative work will tend to try and adopt that used by the practitioner, administrator or community in discussion. This not only strikes me as the most pragmatic way of addressing such terminological slippage, but it also offers to acknowledge the social or political tenor of the work they were involved with. Where this thesis does discuss the import of such contemporary, collective creative work without specific reference to a particular project it will tend to use the term participatory arts. This will not, I hope, contribute to the tendency to marginalise and devalue the term community arts, which Timmermans is rightly alert to. It is intended to better reflect the sense of periodicity now connoted by past instances of community art, to respect the particular political ethos which often characterised it, and also to distinguish participatory arts from more recent approaches to community development in Scotland's policy discourse, as explored in detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

The remainder of this introduction will outline the key cultural contexts and key literary works explored in each chapter of the thesis, beginning with James Kelman's mode of creative practice and defiant brand of political engagement.

'Claiming your portion of space': representations of urban regeneration in Glasgow writing¹²⁹

Among literary critics with a focus on writing from Glasgow, Johnny Rodger and Mitch Miller's work on the intersections between James Kelman's creative practice and political engagement affords an important starting point for this study. In *The Red Cockatoo: James Kelman and the Art of Commitment* (2011) Rodger and Miller offer a comprehensive analysis of the impact that events in the late 1980s and early 1990s had on Kelman's direction as a writer and broader literary career.¹³⁰ This inquiry is developed in their later articles, 'The Writer as Tactician: James Kelman's

¹²⁹ James Kelman, 'Even in Communal Pitches', in *Greyhounds for Breakfast* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1987), pp. 181-84. J.D. Macarthur took this phrase as the title for his 2007 study of Kelman's short fiction, *Claiming your portion of space: a study of the short stories of James Kelman* (Tokyo: Hokuseido, 2007).

¹³⁰ Mitch Miller and Johnny Rodger, *The Red Cockatoo: James Kelman and the Art of Commitment* (Dingwall: Sandstone Press, 2011).

Everyday Practice' (2012), and 'Strange Currencies: Margaret Thatcher and James Kelman as Two Faces of the Globalization Coin' (2013).¹³¹ In this work they examine the concomitancy of Kelman's engagement with local political campaigns against the privatization of Glasgow Green (a historically and politically significant public space in the centre of the city) and related urban fiction with the ideological roots of neoliberalism in the UK under Margaret Thatcher's government. Rodger and Miller counter the notion (advanced by writers including Andrew O'Hagan and commentators who were sceptical about the Workers City movement's aims) that Kelman's objections to Glasgow's Year of Culture and, indeed, wider political concerns explored in his literary writing were anachronistic.¹³² Drawing from critical approaches to transformations of urban space from David Harvey and Manuel Castells, Rodger and Miller illustrate that the Workers City groups' campaigns, and indeed, many of Kelman's literary works, were fundamentally concerned with "seeking the right to consume the city in their own way and to construct collective representations and images of the city as they saw fit."¹³³

As Rodger and Miller's work indicates, the concerns of much of Kelman's work in this brief period, and the tactics instantiated by the oppositional Workers City group relate closely to the neoliberal political framework which came to predominate in the UK. Rodger and Miller first focus their critical approach to neoliberalism in terms of Keith Joseph's monetarist economic policy, indicating its roots in the 1973 oil crisis and consequential attempts to stimulate economic growth. The term, however, is generally used more casually to denote contractions in state spending, accompanied by the tendency to deregulate industries and an apparent political confidence in the benefits of competition. In critical work focused on British literature in this period the term is often effectively used interchangeably with Thatcherism. This thesis, however, is interested in the way in which cultural industries developed in a neoliberal policy context extending beyond the Thatcher

¹³¹ Johnny Rodger, 'The Writer as Tactician: James' Kelman's Everyday Practice', *Scottish Literary Review*, 4.1 (2012), 151–68; Mitch Miller and Johnny Rodger, 'Strange Currencies: Margaret Thatcher and James Kelman as Two Faces of the Globalisation Coin', *Scottish Affairs*, 83.1 (2013), 71–90.

¹³² See for example, Andrew O'Hagan, 'Scotland's Fine Mess', *The Guardian*, 23 July 1994, pp. 24–26, 28 (p. 26).

¹³³ Mitch Miller and Johnny Rodger, 'Strange Currencies', p. 87.

era, often in tandem with urban regeneration initiatives. Moreover, as Chapter Two and Three will go on to explore, the import of neoliberalism now reaches beyond far beyond fiscal policy or state spending. As critics like Sarah Brouillette and Angela McRobbie have argued, the creative economy discourse which permeated so much of the production and management of cultural work in the UK effectively furthered a “soft neoliberalism”, which presented qualities related to competition and deregulation as internal, even moral, values and celebrated notions of flexibility, entrepreneurialism (and, lately, resilience) in individuals. While this thesis certainly has an interest in addressing the impact of the contraction of state support for public services and the arts in Glasgow, and the capacities outsourced to the private sector and voluntary sector, it is equally interested in the emotional and aspirational dimensions of “soft neoliberalism” and the way in which related creative work has been used to manage urban change.¹³⁴

Accordingly, each of this thesis’ chapters will build from the insight that political conflict and struggles over value have shifted, in the aftermath of deindustrialisation, from the factory floor. Other forms of urban space have now become strategically important to the use, consumption and presentation of the city. Each chapter will therefore explore one of three distinct types of urban space: cultural spaces, domestic spaces and public spaces. The chapters are also organised chronologically, allowing this spatially orientated analysis of urban and literary transformation to address different phases of urban regeneration in Glasgow: from the early emergence of Glasgow’s culture led regeneration strategy in the 1980s and

¹³⁴Angela McRobbie, ‘Rethinking Creative Economy as a Radical Enterprise’, *Variant*, 41 (2011), pp. 32-33 (p. 32).; originally presented as a paper at the CCA in 2010, the arguments McRobbie offered in this *Variant* article were subsequently developed in *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries* (London: Polity, 2015). In relation to discussion of the internalisation of neoliberal values, Mark Fisher’s articulation of capitalist realism also offers an important framework for considering the capacity of literary work to offer politically effective critique, and challenge the way in which marketization has permeated public life. Fisher insists that one of neoliberalism’s aims has been to “eliminate the very category of value in the ethical sense”, making it less possible for literary work to function, as Joshua Clover and Christopher Nealon put it, as a “repository for ‘social’ values” which “stands outside economic determination”. Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is there no alternative?* (London: Zero Books, 2009), p. 16; Joshua Clover and Christopher Nealon, ‘Literary and Economic Value’, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*, June 20 <<https://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.123>> [accessed 20 September 2018].

1990s; new phases of municipal demolition and housing-led regeneration in the 1990s and 2000s; and the city's continuing appetite for event-based regeneration, as exemplified by the Commonwealth Games in 2014. In Glasgow, the Games coincided with a turn in the rhetoric of regeneration: towards the 'legacy' of regeneration, its perceived health benefits, and, in particular, its capacity to foster social capital and community 'resilience'. The structure of these chapters is intended to combine a temporal and spatial analysis of the city's economy of literary production.

Chapter One examines the early emergence of Glasgow's culture-led regeneration strategy. It opens out the context of deindustrialisation and urban regeneration by considering how Glasgow's pursuit of a culture-led regeneration strategy, and its controversial year as the European Capital of Culture in 1990, enacted a neoliberal response to industrial decline, and intersected with contemporary debates about the capacity of municipal leaderships to challenge national economic policy. It begins its literary analysis by countering the prevalent perception that local writers had little engagement with the 1990 Festival of Culture. It argues that the modes of political and literary resistance pursued by high profile authors associated with the Workers City protest group, including Alasdair Gray, James Kelman and Tom Leonard, has obscured the degree to which writers did contribute to events in 1990. While considering a wide range of authors, texts and literary events, this chapter focuses primarily on four literary 'case studies': two publications and two events, which reveal more complex contours in the relationship between literary practice and urban change in the period. Considering the big-budget literary exhibition, *The Words and the Stones*, the varied community writing festival, *Writing Together*, a community writing competition organised by the Scotia Bar and a souvenir publication produced by the Festivals Office, I demonstrate that modes of resistance to the political and social impact of regeneration were more mixed than often imagined. I argue, however, through an extended examination of Kelman's critical essays, that the enduring perception that local writers were hostile to the events of 1990 - and able to critique the economic politics of the Festival from an ethical remove - is bound up with distinctive notions of literary authenticity.

Building on the examination of literary autonomy and authenticity established in the previous chapter, Chapter Two argues that while municipal leaders may have sought the assistance of local writers to promote the city's new, postindustrial image and contribute to boosterist discourse, literary labour has since been mobilised in subtler ways. Turning from an examination of cultural spaces to domestic spaces, this chapter argues that, increasingly, regeneration agencies, local authorities and cultural bodies are involving authors and literary work in the course of specific, local regeneration projects. I advance this analysis by considering an early participatory literary project led by the think-tank Demos *Glasgow 2020* (2003), and the first collaborative novel funded by a housing agency in the UK: Alison Irvine's *This Road is Red* (2011), which memorialises the social history of the Red Road flats before their demolition in 2014 by eliciting and collating oral histories and intimate recollections from residents.¹³⁵

Drawing on aspects of Sarah Brouillette's work, I argue that this mode of literary labour positions writers as creative facilitators, valued for their integrity and creative autonomy but deeply involved in the social process of urban regeneration. I contend that this type of literary engagement carries significant risks for communities and authors alike. I suggest that funding Irvine's literary work, and related cultural projects, may be intended to demonstrate that municipal bodies have developed a more sensitive approach to urban regeneration than was afforded to communities in the past. However, though this form of 'socially engaged' fiction may be intended to foster more inclusive, democratic approaches to writing urban space, it may carry a dangerous compensatory function: affording residents creative space to represent an area's past but few opportunities to influence its future. In order to problematize the ethical implications of this mode of literary facilitation, I consider a contrasting approach to writing socially engaged fiction developed in Ross Raisin's novel *Waterline* (2011).¹³⁶ I then suggest that the collaborative ethic and aesthetic of community-based literary projects can be co-opted by commercial concerns in the context of gentrification by examining a Glasgow based property

¹³⁵ Gerry Hassan, Melissa Mean, and Charlie Tims, *The Dreaming City: Glasgow 2020 and the Power of Mass Imagination* (London: Demos, 2007); Alison Irvine, *This Road Is Red* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2011).

¹³⁶ Ross Raisin, *Waterline* (London: Viking, 2011).

management company's advertising strategy in 2016, which employed poetic language as part of a campaign projecting a sense of community identity.

Chapter Three shifts the thesis' focus from domestic to public spaces and considers the relationship between literary practice and community development more directly. It is principally concerned with literary texts and projects which examine contested public spaces, particularly in the context of the 2014 Commonwealth Games, and Alison's Irvine collaborative project, *Nothing is Lost* (2015) forms its central case study.¹³⁷ It argues that literary work has the capacity to make concealed conflicts over the ownership, use and management of public space legible. Building on the previous chapter's observation that emergent modes of literary facilitation are related to notions of social capital, this chapter is also concerned with how the rhetoric of regeneration has shifted over past decades. It observes that by the mid-2000s boosterist narratives centred on the capacity for culture-led regeneration to act as a catalyst for local economy growth ostensibly began to give way to narratives portraying representation as means to public health improvement, by fostering 'social capital' and developing 'community resilience' – a tendency exemplified by claims made for the public health benefits of the Commonwealth Games and the 'legacy' of regeneration in the East End of the city.¹³⁸

This chapter makes the case that the promotion of cultural engagement engagement as a means for public health improvement cannot simply be understood as a reaction to the inequities of the polarising creative economy framework pursued in Glasgow in the 1980s and 1990s, but as a correlative to it - bound up with changing conceptions of work and leisure in the postindustrial city. Attending to recent developments in local and national cultural policy, this chapter argues that increasing requirements upon publicly funded literary or cultural work to demonstrate benefits to community health stem from asset based approaches to community development: once concerned with the ownership and use of public land,

¹³⁷ Mitch Miller, Alison Irvine, and Chris Leslie, *Nothing Is Lost* (Glasgow: Freight, 2015).

¹³⁸ Mark Boyle and George Hughes, 'The Politics of the Representation of the Real: Discourses from the Left on Glasgow's Role as European City of Culture, 1990', *Area*, 23:3 (1991), 217-288; Maria Feeney and Chik Collins, 'Tea in the Pot: Building 'social Capital' or a 'Great Good Place' in Govan', Report 3 (University of the West of Scotland-Oxfam Partnership, 2015).

space and resources but increasingly associated with personal qualities and psychosocial attributes such as ‘resilience’. In so doing, this chapter extends the bounds of Brouillette’s analysis of the ‘writer-consultant’ figure beyond the political economy of urban space, by considering in greater depth how literary participation has been positioned as a therapeutic tool and a means to foster social capital and ‘resilience’ in the context of austerity. It develops its argument by first considering literary writing concerned with the defence of a particular community asset, notably Ben Obler’s novel *Javascotia* (2009) set partly in the Pollok Free State: a protest camp established to prevent the sale of part of a public park and the development of a motorway.¹³⁹ It then examines transitions in the conception of community assets by considering a range of contemporary literary projects expressly concerned with the therapeutic capacity of literary work: ‘Representing Dennistoun’, a 2012 participatory research project with a literary dimension; ‘The Power of Story’, training delivered for NHS staff by The Village Storytelling Centre in 2016; and Donny O’Rourke’s poetic work for Maryhill Health Centre, which was commissioned by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and funded by Creative Scotland in 2016.

¹³⁹ Benjamin Obler, *Javascotia* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2009).

Chapter One - *The Words and the Stones*: Urban fiction and culture-led regeneration in 1990s Glasgow

Reflecting on cultural representations of working class life in Scotland in the aftermath of deindustrialisation, Andrew O'Hagan considers the role "Glasgow's reign as European City of Culture" in 1990 played as a point of creative and political conflict among local writers.¹ "Artists", O'Hagan reflects, "split into factions all over the place".² Though, as part of the cultural programme "the city had brought an international cast of writers" to Glasgow "for a celebration of literature" which included local authors and poets such as Edwin Morgan, Festival organisers remained frustrated that many of "the better writers – who we may as well call James Kelman, Alasdair Gray, Tom Leonard, among others – wouldn't join in on the song".³ They "would have nothing to do" with the "£50 million jamboree, led by the municipal council" set on "ridding the city once and forever of its razor-slashing, wife-battering, whisky-guzzling image".⁴ This chapter considers why writers' support for Glasgow's arts festivals and broader culture-led regeneration strategy splintered as it did in the run up to 1990 and beyond; how aspects of Glasgow's literary culture influenced cultural regeneration in the period; and the consequences literary responses to the festival have had for the reception and interpretation of Glasgow's refashioned postindustrial identity.

In his foreword to his essay collection, *Some Recent Attacks*, Kelman recalls joining a picket to protest the opening of one of the festival's flagship exhibitions, *The Words and the Stones* (later renamed *Glasgow's Glasgow*) which, as far as Kelman was concerned, "seemed to sum up the rotten core of the Culture Year".⁵ Eventually

¹ Andrew O'Hagan, 'Scotland's Fine Mess', *The Guardian*, Weekend, 23 July 1994, pp. 24-26, 28 (p. 26).

² Ibid.

³ Andrew O'Hagan, 'The Paranoid Sublime', *London Review of Books*, 26 May 1994, pp. 8-9 (p. 8).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ James Kelman, 'Foreword', *Some Recent Attacks: Essays Cultural and Political* (Stirling: AK Press, 1992), pp. 1-4 (p. 1).

the group “broke for a pint and were interviewed by a guy from *The Spectator* who couldn’t believe his luck – half a dozen of the picket had turned out to be writers”.⁶ Such high-profile schisms fostered the perception that writers generally had little involvement with the festival. In fact, many local writers did work within the context of the festival. *The Words and the Stones* was originally conceived as a literary exhibition: exploring the relationship between urban writing and urban form, and a range of notable local writers and critics contributed to its curation. The major literary festival, O’Hagan refers to, *Writing Together*, brought writers of international standing including Chinua Achebe and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o to Glasgow at “great cost”, to lead literary events and critical discussion centred on the relationship between writing and community, as part of a programme incorporating established Scottish authors and local writers’ groups.⁷ O’Hagan described the atmosphere at a key *Writing Together* event, Edwin Morgan’s reading and lecture at the Royal Academy of Music and Drama held in honour of his birthday, as “one of co-operation and tolerance, of a general openness to other people’s language and idioms”.⁸ Yet, “over the other side of the city centre [...] there gathered a crowd of Glaswegians who considered themselves no less interested in ‘international’ voices, but who considered themselves out of step with Glasgow’s celebrations.”⁹ The writers leading such oppositional gatherings, Kelman, Gray and Leonard, “called the official festival a sham, they felt it had nothing to do with the true culture of the area’s citizens, that it was an exercise in tourism and exploitation.”¹⁰

O’Hagan’s comments here stress the disparity between the prestigious space hosting the official festival event, in a generous, cosmopolitan atmosphere, and the determinedly marginal nature of events led by the Workers City group – a collection of writers, researchers and campaigners who coalesced in resistance to Glasgow’s year as European City of Culture. This protest group argued that the city’s culture-led regeneration strategy aimed to gentrify Glasgow’s city-centre and enable the privatisation of cultural facilities and public spaces. Local authors affiliated with the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Andrew O’Hagan, ‘Scotland’s Fine Mess’, p. 26.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

group include, as O'Hagan notes, some of Glasgow's best known leftist writers: James Kelman, Alasdair Gray and Tom Leonard. When literary critics and urban geographers alike have examined the way in which writers responded to Glasgow's Year of Culture, discussion has typically centred on this dissenting group. Their writing and actions are examined in, for example, Mark Boyle and George Hughes, 'The politics of representation of the 'real': discourses from the left on Glasgow's role as European City of Culture';¹¹ Franco Bianchini and Michael Parkinson, *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: the West European Experience*;¹² and Gerry Mooney, 'Cultural Policy as Urban Transformation? Critical Reflections on Glasgow, European City of Culture, 1990'.¹³ Much of such critical work appraises the influence the Year of Culture had on Glasgow's cultural landscape, and some emphasises the range and diversity of festival programming - counter to the Workers City group's insistence that the event was largely elitist and offered little to most residents. Peter Booth and Robin Boyle, for instance, suggest that the criticism levied by Workers City "needs to be seen in the context of an extensive community events programme that attracted widespread support during 1990", encompassing over "five hundred exhibitions, local gala days and theatrical events" which "brought the year of Culture closer to the public" and "especially into the peripheral public sector housing schemes".¹⁴

Consequently, some more recent analyses of the long-term trajectory of culture-led regeneration in Glasgow, such as Louise Johnson's *Cultural Capitals: Revaluing the Arts, Remaking Urban Spaces*, dismiss the Workers City group as a "host of notables with considerable amounts of embodied cultural capital" who may

¹¹ Mark Boyle and George Hughes, 'The Politics of the Representation of 'The Real': Discourses from the Left on Glasgow's Role as European City of Culture', *Area*, 23 (1991), 217–28.

¹² Franco Bianchini and Michael Parkinson, *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: The West European Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

¹³ Gerry Mooney, 'Cultural Policy as Urban Transformation? Critical Reflections on Glasgow, European City of Culture 1990', *Local Economy*, 19.4 (2004), 327–40.

¹⁴ Peter Booth and Robin Boyle, 'See Glasgow, see Culture', in *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: The West European Experience*, ed. by Franco Bianchini and Michael Parkinson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 21-47.

have been “an important sample of the local arts community” but were “not representative of the wider Glasgow population”.¹⁵

It is the case that the community programme funded by the Festivals Office supported a range of smaller scale creative projects, performances and publications with a literary dimension, beyond major events and exhibitions. For example, the Easthall Theatre Group’s play *Dampbusters* (1990) which focused on the issue of damp housing in Drumchapel, was funded directly by the Festivals Office, as was Fablevision’s new work *The Monster that Ate Balornock* (1990).¹⁶¹⁷ Meanwhile, other literary projects were certainly engendered by the Festival though they did not exactly grow easily under its auspices or find it straightforward to access funding. Glasgow Women’s Library is a particularly important example of an independent cultural institution which developed in the course of 1990. Now permanently situated in a former Carnegie Library in Bridgeton, Glasgow Women’s Library led on from Women in Profile, an arts organisation and research network established in 1987. Adele Patrick, Women’s Library co-founder, lifelong learning and creative development manager, explains “the announcement that Glasgow was going to be City of Culture 1990” was a “trigger” which mobilised women’s cultural organising. This was not because organisers thought that it would deliver resources, but rather because “We were cynical enough to think that it might not be a pluralistic celebration” and saw the need to ensure that women’s art and culture was represented.¹⁸ However Women in Profile’s activity at this time did more than to diversify representation. Women in Profile “actually took on premises during 1990” which led to “particular constituencies of women...using the physical space almost as a locus for information exchange” and as many of the women who got involved with the “series of events” organised by Women in Profile “had no real history of work in women’s organisations” this period of cultural activity found Patrick and others “reflecting on what we wanted to evolve out that”.¹⁹ Patrick’s comments in

¹⁵ Louise Johnson, *Cultural Capitals: Revaluating the Arts, Remaking Urban Spaces* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), p. 102.

¹⁶ Easthall Theatre Group, *Dampbusters* (various performances, Glasgow, 1990).

¹⁷ Fablevision, *The Monster that Ate Balornock* (various performances, Glasgow, 1990).

¹⁸ Adele Patrick, qtd. in ‘Women Still in Profile – Variant Round Table Discussion’, *Variant* 19.2 (2004), 7-9 (p. 7).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

this discussion certainly demonstrate that the concern that Glasgow's Year of Culture "might not be a pluralistic celebration" was shared by many artists and cultural workers beyond the Workers City group. However, Women in Profile's concerns with representation went beyond Workers City's emphasis on class and urban space, and Women in Profile's creative and political priorities would not have been advanced by that group's uncompromisingly oppositional stance and polemical posture. It is important to stress the difference in the approach adopted by Women in Profile which saw Patrick and others attempt to leverage the energy and resources of the Festival for more radical ends, despite the fact that their projects and objectives did not necessarily sit easily with the Festival Office's priorities for funding.

In a contemporary overview of Women in Profile's activities, and those of other women's groups, for *Variant*, Lorna Waite suggests that at least some projects led by women's organisations failed to secure financial support because they did not contribute to positive perceptions of Glasgow. Waite notes that, "The History of Women's Aid exhibition" remained "unfunded due to the 'negative image' of Culture it presents", indicating the assessment that the exhibition delivered a 'negative image' was issued as part of a decision about funding - emphasising that there were genuine institutional and financial barriers to mounting more radical work in 1990.²⁰ Moreover, as Waite reflects, even funding successfully garnered by most artists, organisers and community groups would be fleeting. Having set out the position that the development of groups like Women in Profile "can be seen as a direct response to the exclusion of many women in the realm of culture" and the potential to "represent and promote work by women during 1990 and beyond", Waite points out the efforts organisers made to develop long-term resources: "By concentrating on the importance of future agendas, the need for continuity is stressed, a pertinent issue in Glasgow given the impermanence of increased funding to the arts via City of Culture."²¹ In doing so, Waite highlights the degree of risk involved in directing creative and political energy towards a short-term festival in the hope of engendering more productive ground for long-term activity:

²⁰ Lorna Waite, 'Women in Profile: Glasgow 1990s Women's Season', *Variant*, 8 (1990), pp. 17-18 (p. 17). Waite writes here on behalf of Women in Profile.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17-18.

The money available this year will not be available next year. The cross-fertilisation of information and organisational resources which will be an inevitable result of the conferences, exhibitions, discussions, writing groups, and the function of the resource centre [...] point to a possibility of a strong foundation for women's cultural work in Scotland. If the opportunity provided by the Year of Culture enables the beginning of women's attainment of a higher visibility and radical presence within Scottish culture, then the irony is worthwhile.²²

Waite sets out a largely positive view of the potential gains to be made by using the additional funds for cultural work and the renewed focus on the sector to establish generative creative networks for women's art and cultural organising. Nevertheless, Waite is also extremely alert to the politics of compromise and the prospect that intensive organising and artistic production may not, in the end, prove "worthwhile" – especially when such work to strengthen the diversity of cultural representation and production in Glasgow was undertaken in spite of, and not due to, the remit and focus of the Year of Culture's principle programme.

As well as being a catalyst for many creative networks, events and incipient institutions, Glasgow's year as the European Capital of Culture has had a long literary legacy – acting as a spur for, or backdrop to, a range of new writing. Glasgow's Culture Year has been explored in multiple literary forms and, decades on, it continues to be interrogated by local writers. From Tom Leonard's satirical poem, 'A Handy Form for Artists in use in connection with the city of Culture' (1989) to Ben Obler's more recent novel *Javascotia* (2009) the city's year as the European Capital of Culture has been the subject of a local strain of comic writing.²³ Leonard's 'Handy Form for Artists' pilloried the bureaucratic discourse artists would be compelled to negotiate in order to secure financial support for their work by setting out a pro-forma response for artists to use in response to the festival organisers' "invitation*/commission*" to "participate*/contribute*/display*/write an

²² Ibid., p. 18.

²³ Tom Leonard, 'A Handy Form for Artists for use in connection with the City of Culture', in *Two member's monologues; and, A Handy Form for Artists for use in connection with the City of Culture* (Glasgow: Edward Polin Press, 1989), pp. 5-7; Benjamin Obler, *Javascotia* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2009). Chris Hannan's contemporary production 'The Evil-Doers' is particularly notable for its darkly comic portrayal of the unprincipled character 'Danny Glasgow', a self-styled 'cultural entrepreneur' who poses as a tour guide for visitors seeking entertainment in the Capital of Culture. Chris Hannan, *The Evil-Doers and the Baby: Two Plays* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1991);

article”.²⁴ Leonard’s poem exaggerates the conventions of the most impersonal bureaucratic correspondence, with each asterisk denoting an opportunity to “delete if inapplicable” and an obelisk directing the respondent to “insert other if necessary”.²⁵ Such instructions are neatly footnoted and the poem also plays with typographical convention and textual ephemerality by including dotted lines, stitched up either side of the poem’s body, suggesting the respondent ought to clip the little form out and send it away - the very first line of the poem reading “*Date as postmark*”.²⁶ The suggested pro-forma responses all offer reasons for declining to participate – these range from objections to the events’ sponsors, to the view that “any participating artist, work of art, or event will appear within the programme as an exemplification” of the City of Culture, a “rightwing tourist slogan”. Even “critical or “left-wing” works within the programme will function as “the antibodies necessary to keep the body politic healthy – which it most certainly isn’t”.²⁷

In this brief poem then, published in advance of the Culture Year, Leonard seems to invert the bureaucratic structures and discourse of professional arts administration in order to highlight the hidden labour which subtends exhibited or published creative work – the period of internal rationalisation which precedes even the process of applying for funds, setting out a project’s creative rationale, and aligning that work in terms of the artistic and political context of an umbrella event. Yet the apparently playful form of Leonard’s poem is arched, and it emphasises the injurious politics of compromise which organisers such as Women in Profile ultimately took on in order to realise women’s work in an inhospitable context – hoping that the political energy of that work would not be absorbed “within the programme as an exemplification” of the City of Culture’s aims, or simply function as tolerable “healthy” dissent.

²⁴ Tom Leonard, ‘A Handy Form for Artists’, p. 6. In many respects, Leonard’s 1989 poem builds on an earlier poem on a similar theme, ‘Mr Chesty Burns the Fried Bread’ (1983). This pamphlet parodied the use of the popular Mr Happy figure from Rodger Hargreaves Mr. Men series in the logo for ‘Glasgow’s Miles Better’ marketing campaign in the mid-80s. In this wry pamphlet, originally circulated to friends, Leonard contrasts the uniformly jolly cartoon character with respiratory problems and other health concerns all too common to Glasgow residents. Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland (NLS), Tom Leonard Acc. 13151/4.

²⁵ Tom Leonard, ‘A Handy Form for Artists’, p. 7.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 6-7.

While Leonard poised early to attack the parameters of engagement between artists and the Year of Culture, a number of comic novels and short stories followed closely in the wake of the Festival, not least Jeff Torrington's kaleidoscopic novel, *Swing Hammer Swing!* which examines the social cost of urban change in the Gorbals.²⁸ Like Leonard, Torrington was associated with the Workers City movement, and as well as excoriating the parameters of urban regeneration in his critical writing, Torrington's creative work offered lively criticism of the rational for – and limits of – orchestrated municipal cultural celebration. Ultimately, Torrington's portrayal of the newfound scope for Glasgow's heritage industry in *Swing Hammer Swing!* suggests that institutional attempts to represent working class culture are content to sanitise and constrain it in order to repackage it for touristic consumption. While Torrington's Tam Clay is deeply familiar with the Gorbals, allowing Torrington to consider various phases and transitions of urban transformation in one, shifting, novelistic landscape, much new writing which explored urban change in this period often did so by means of an outsider figure – typically a man returning to the city after a period of absence.

One such example is Andy Paterson, returning from prison in Carl MacDougall's 1993 novel, *The Lights Below*, to find Possil further devastated by the slow injuries of deindustrialisation. Andy discovers little optimism in the attempt to reinvent Glasgow as a “new city” and “emerging place” where “Consumerism's victory over manufacture promoted a tourism and conference centre” but no supporting investment in the city's infrastructure.²⁹ The city, Andy reflects, “having incorporated the loss of manufacture” was now “sponging the tourists” and “having been destroyed and regenerated so many times” merely “survived and persisted, replicating itself in the image of itself with the same name”.³⁰ Examples of more comic writing take (in some contrast to the lone male returner to the city) a focal character who develops a fraudulent performance, for the benefit of tourists or cultural organisers. For instance, Mark Smith's 1992 novel *Masel* is centred on an amateur musician mistakenly invited to headline a major festival event who

²⁸ Jeff Torrington, *Swing Hammer Swing!*

²⁹ Carl MacDougall, *The Lights Below* (London: Secker and Warburg, 2003), p. 118.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 183-184.

maintains the charade in order to safeguard the responsible administrator's job in the Festival Office.³¹

Despite the range of literary work which was developed under the auspices of Glasgow's Year of Culture – or was inspired in reaction to it – far less critical attention has generally been paid to the literary dimensions of Glasgow's cultural festivals and image-building exercises in the 1980s and 1990s than to design-led practices, events and performances. Certainly, some studies such as Sarah Lowndes' *Social Sculpture* have touched on points of confluence between support for literary work in Glasgow and patterns of cultural investment and artistic efforts which shaped the city's emergent identity as a creative centre.³² In particular, Lowndes offers a valuable assessment of the confluence between literary and artistic communities in the context of the DIY ethos manifest in aspects of Glasgow's 1980s arts scene. Lowndes points out that activity related to the Transmission gallery included a great deal of cross-over between literary and artistic work, with the artist Billy Clark co-ordinating readings titled, 'Transmission Goes Verbal', in 1986 with contributions from James Kelman and Tom Leonard.³³ On the whole, Lowndes offers, "The level of visual art activity in the city" at that time "was matched by a literary renaissance" much of which "emanated" from cultural venues with a countercultural inflection, such as the Third Eye Centre and Transmission, as well as "the magazines *Variant*, *Here & Now* and *The Edinburgh Review*".³⁴ Like the cultural production and ethos stimulated by Transmission, *Variant* "represented a strand of thought" which was at odds with the economic aims and cultural priorities of the "Thatcher years" and was "was decidedly unpopular with Timothy Mason, the conservative Scottish Arts director".³⁵ In this way, Lowndes indicates, there was a need for creative practitioners with aligning political and aesthetic concerns to use

³¹ Mark Smith, *Masel* (Glasgow: Taranis Books, 1992).

³² Sarah Lowndes, *Social Sculpture: The Rise of the Glasgow Art Scene* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2010).

³³ Sarah Lowndes, p. 94.

³⁴ Sarah Lowndes, p.90.

³⁵ *Ibid.* Lowndes notes that Mason was particularly "perplexed and irritated" by the non-hierarchical, collective approach to co-ordinating activity at Transmission, not least the committee's "steadfast refusal to appoint an administrator" which, the artist and critical Malcolm Dickson explained was indicative of the "voluntary nature" of that arts space, "fundamentally different in kind from those based on a hierarchy of paid administrators 'doing a job'". Qtd in Lowndes, p. 90.

available local resources to mutual common benefit, in the context of a more hostile national cultural agenda, and Glasgow's fluid arts community supported much literary work.³⁶ Creative networks like these helped to foster subsequent initiatives such as the Free University, which comprised a network of writers, researchers, artists and educators. This cross-section of participants, which involved Alasdair Gray and James Kelman, was active from 1987 onwards, largely meeting at the Transmission Gallery and various locations around Glasgow's West End. The Free University, as later aspects of this thesis explore, provided intellectual and political ground for resistance to manifestations of Glasgow's culture-led redevelopment strategy in the late 1980s.

Though, as Lowndes' work indicates, there are advantages to considering literary activity in terms of broader creative networks, more detailed literary analysis of writers' portrayal of culture-led regeneration in the period is typically presented in the context of single-author studies of James Kelman or Alasdair Gray.³⁷ Particularly thorough accounts of the relevance of Glasgow's cultural festivals and urban regeneration strategies to these author's work have previously been offered by Eilidh Whiteford on Alasdair Gray (1997); and Simon Kövesi on James Kelman (2007).³⁸ These two authors, in particular, certainly present a substantial body of literary work critiquing the economic rationale for culture-led regeneration in and around 1990 and the aesthetic dimensions of the new urban image cultivated for the city. Kelman's critical essays must be central to any analysis of writers' engagement with the cultural politics of regeneration in the period. Of Gray's novels, *Lanark*

³⁶ More recently, Lowndes has expanded her examination of the confluences between local arts, music and publishing scenes in *The DIY Movement in Art, Music and Publishing: Subjugated Knowledges* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

³⁷ See, for example, Mario Díaz Martínez's delineation of the historiographical import of Gray's portrayal of the cultural controversies of the 1990s in *Poor Things* in, 'Dissecting Glasgow: Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things*', *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, 41 (2000), 117-131; Neil Rhind's offers a robust assessment of the relevance of 1990 to Gray's work in, 'A Portrait of Bella Caledonia: Reading National Allegory in Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things*', *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, 8 (2011) <<http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/issue8/rhind.pdf>> [accessed 11 December 2015].

³⁸ Eilidh Whiteford, 'Political histories, politicized spaces: discourses of power in the fiction of Alasdair Gray' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 1997); Simon Kövesi, *James Kelman* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

(1984), *Something Leather* (1990), and *Poor Things* (1992) are of particular relevance to such discussion.³⁹

Lanark was published some time before Glasgow's municipal body and private partners had fully articulated a local economic strategy predicated on investing in and marketing the city's cultural resources. It is notable that this novel's dystopian portrayal of economic competition between cities prefigures political and cultural debates concerning the market orientated nature of culture-led regeneration later in the decade, as well as anxieties around the paucity of funding available for municipal development.⁴⁰ Gray's 1990 novel, *Something Leather*, offers one of the most direct and sustained literary acts of engagement with the aesthetic and cultural politics of Glasgow's Culture Year.⁴¹ One chapter of *Something Leather*, titled 'Culture Capitalism' offers an extended examination of inner-city gentrification and artistic value in the course of an expository discussion between an artist who is exhibiting in Glasgow as part of the 1990 festival, their art dealer, and their aspiring publicist. Its pointed observations on sandblasted tenements and "old warehouses being turned into luxury flats and shopping malls and a variety of very decent foreign restaurants" have fairly often formed a focus for critical assessments of Gray's writing on urban change.⁴² Apart from its most direct critique of "The European Cultcha Capital notion" and its commercial potential for Glasgow (since "Commercially speaking cultcha and tourism a the same thing") the novel is also notable for its eerie portrayal of contingent commercial exchanges in the city.⁴³ Its opening chapter presents an aspirational customer finding, quite unexpectedly, that the business they ordered bespoke leather goods from had disappeared: shops they had visited had "been pulled down weeks ago" and nobody had "been in there for years".⁴⁴ They find only the desolate, disordered landscape familiar to cities which

³⁹ Alasdair Gray, *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (1981) (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2002); *Something Leather* (London: Cape, 1990); *Poor Things* (London: Bloomsbury, 1992).

³⁹ Alasdair Gray, *Something Leather* (London: Cape, 1990).

⁴⁰ Alasdair Gray, *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (1981) (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2002).

⁴¹ Alasdair Gray, *Something Leather* (London: Cape, 1990).

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 172. See, for example, For instance Stephen Bernstein's discussion of the novel in *Alasdair Gray* (London: Associate University Press, 1999).

⁴³ Alasdair Gray, *Something Leather*, p. 173.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.16.

are subject to demolition and ruination: the “cracked pavement between the loan office and the betting shop”, a “space of reddish brick-strewn gravel”.⁴⁵

These ghostly images of urban redevelopment find a counterpoint in other characters’ enthusiasm for regeneration: their desire to erase the most desperate elements of street commerce and put those trading on discarded items, “cracked shoes”, “last year’s calendar” and “Hawf deid flooers” “somewha wha we can’t see them. The city plannas will pull this place down eventually, oh *God* make it soon.”⁴⁶ Commerce in *Something Leather* has an discomfoting chronology: the luxurious urban environment which regeneration promises seems very distant, while the goods offered up for immediate exchange are already worn out, outdated - half-dead. *Something Leather* has been criticised as “an incoherent novel with a hurried, unfinished air”, and it would be difficult to deliver convincing defence of its overall narrative structure or stylistic integrity.⁴⁷ However, its publication in 1990 did allow it to mount a timely critique of the regeneration agenda dominating strategic plans and cultural spending in Glasgow at the time.

Published not long after the events of Glasgow’s Culture Year had passed *Poor Things* offers a more ambitious, intricately structured literary exploration of the city’s urban history. Where *Something Leather*’s impressions of urban change could be ghostly, *Poor Things* is gothic. Its methods are historiographic, and so, though its narrative is centred on the late Victorian city the novel is also, as Eilidh Whiteford has argued, “to a large extent concerned with the representation of the city of Glasgow during its year as the European City of Culture”.⁴⁸ The relationship between myth making and historical recuperation in the novel’s Victorian narratives and the contemporary city is emphasised by the metafictional elements of the novel, so characteristic of Gray’s fiction. The introduction to *Poor Things* alleges that the tales discovered inside were “salvaged” by the “local historian Michael Donnelly” during the 1970s in the course of his efforts to rescue works of art and design and “all sorts of historical documents” from “buildings scheduled for demolition in

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 182-83.

⁴⁷ Karina Westerman, ‘That Dear Green Place Rewritten’, in *The State of the Union: Scotland 1707-2007*, ed. by Jørgen Sevaldsen and Jens Rahbeck Rasmussen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2007), pp. 117-128 (p. 125).

⁴⁸ Eilidh Whiteford, p. 177.

Glasgow”.⁴⁹ At that time tenements across the city were being razed to be replaced by “multistorey housing blocks and a continually expanding motorway system”.⁵⁰ The novel details that Donnelly’s salvage work was directed by Elspeth King, curator of the “local history museum on Glasgow Green” in order to “acquire and preserve evidence of local culture that was being hustled into the past”.⁵¹ The names of those people and institutions given, of course, correspond to Glasgow’s People’s Palace, where Alasdair Gray had once been employed as a ‘city recorder’ and Elspeth King had been curator, assisted by Michael Donnelly, until controversial changes were made to the management of cultural institutions in the city in the run-up to 1990.⁵² These episodes, covered extensively by the local press, became known as the ‘Elspeth King affair’. Dispute over the management of the People’s Palace, and other exhibitions representing the city’s working class history, became a synecdoche for contests over the direction of cultural investment and the controversies surrounding the Year of Culture as a whole. By foregrounding such recent controversies in the introduction to a perplexing Victorian tale, and stressing chance discovery of the “book and letter” therein, Gray indicates how subject our understanding of Glasgow’s history is to contemporary curatorial decisions and revisionist narratives.

The brief outline of Gray’s novelistic engagement with the controversies of Glasgow’s culture year offered here provides some indication of the depth of literary activity exploring urban transformation in and around 1990. Similarly, the productive relationships between local authors and artists alluded to earlier suggest something of the breadth of literary work in that context of urban change. Yet critical accounts of oppositional cultural responses to Glasgow’s festivals have predominantly focused on the media interventions and demonstrations led by the Workers City group – particularly the acrimonious exchanges between cultural figures and members of the Festival Unit or District Council which featured in the local and national press – and often the ‘Elspeth King affair’ in particular. Such

⁴⁹ Alasdair Gray, *Poor Things*, p. iv.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Gray was employed as a ‘city recorder’ at the People’s Palace from 1977 to 1978, painting and sketching Glasgow residents and scenes of urban change during this period of development.

assessments of the reception of Glasgow's cultural Festivals have not, for the most part, primarily been concerned with the literary or cultural output of the Workers City group, or writers associated with it. Some more recent critical work focused on Kelman redresses this balance: in *The Red Cockatoo: James Kelman and the Art of Commitment*, Johnny Rodger and Mitch Miller offer a comprehensive analysis of the impact cultural events in the late 1980s and early 1990s had on Kelman's direction as a writer and his broader literary career.⁵³ Their study considers Kelman's involvement with two contrasting 'grassroots' initiatives: the Workers City group and the Free University. It focuses on Kelman's central role as an organiser of the Self-Determination and Power conference, which took place in the Pierce Institute in Govan in January 1990, where Noam Chomsky spoke with George Davie and brought together a wide range of critics, activists and artists exploring issues of class, race and political autonomy. Here, Rodger and Miller argue that the political framework underlying cultural regeneration in 1980s Glasgow, and the events of Glasgow 1990 had an instrumental effect on Kelman's literary career, asking: "Would Kelman's outpouring of critical works been quite so concentrated, so meaningful and so engaging without the red-rag focus provided by this gaudy doll?"⁵⁴ In 'The Writer as Tactician: James Kelman's Everyday Practice', Roger further develops his analysis of Kelman's approach to writing urban space, and in 'Strange Currencies: Margaret Thatcher and James Kelman as Two Faces of the Globalization Coin', Miller and Rodger relate Kelman's spatial politics more directly to neoliberal conditions.⁵⁵ These articles analyse the concomitancy of Kelman's engagement with local political campaigns against the privatization of Glasgow Green and related urban fiction with the ideological roots of neoliberalism in the UK under Thatcher.

It should also be noted that there has since been some renewed interest in the oppositional tactics practiced by the Workers City group and others protesting

⁵³ Mitch Miller and Johnny Rodger, *The Red Cockatoo: James Kelman and the Art of Commitment* (Dingwall: Sandstone Press, 2011).

⁵⁴ Mitch Miller and Johnny Rodger, *The Red Cockatoo*, p. 96.

⁵⁵ Johnny Rodger, 'The Writer as Tactician: James Kelman's Everyday Practice', *Scottish Literary Review*, 4.1 (2012), 151–68; Mitch Miller and Johnny Rodger, 'Strange Currencies: Margaret Thatcher and James Kelman as Two Faces of the Globalisation Coin', *Scottish Affairs* 83 (2013), 71–90.

Glasgow's City of Culture celebrations due to controversial urban regeneration initiatives associated with Glasgow's 2014 Commonwealth Games. The practice-led research network, the Strickland Distribution, and the Spirit of Revolt archival project republished the Workers City group's catalogue online and promoted discussion of their work in contemporary campaigns against gentrification and privatization.⁵⁶

Overall, however, as indicated, there has been far less critical investment in the relationship between Glasgow's changing postindustrial urban image and the city's literature than the city's visual and performing arts. This chapter now takes up that concern directly. Exploring reciprocal relationships between urban transformation and literary representation, this chapter questions how Glasgow's culture-led regeneration strategy influenced the development of local literature in the period and how, in turn, local writing shaped aspects of the formation and reception of that strategy. Three related lines of enquiry subtend this concern. This chapter therefore seeks to examine how culture-led regeneration processes shaped contemporary literary representations of Glasgow, as writers portrayed Glasgow's changing urban image directly in their literary work and responded to urban transformation in their wider practice as local writers. It also considers how the social and material production of local literature, including support for Glasgow's literary culture, was influenced by specific culture-led regeneration initiatives and the broader cultural policy frameworks steering them. It is equally concerned with how Glasgow's contemporary literature and literary culture, in turn, influenced the development and reception of culture-led regeneration processes in Glasgow and thereby played a part in shaping Glasgow's postindustrial identity.

To achieve this, this chapter moves towards a case-study approach, examining four specific points of literary engagement with Glasgow's Year of Culture – two major events, *The Words and the Stones* and *Writing Together* and two lesser-known publications, *1990: The Book* and *A Spiel Amang Us*.⁵⁷ To

⁵⁶ For example, the Strickland Distribution curated and displayed Workers City texts and images in the Transmission Gallery as part of the 'Knowledge is Never Neutral' series from 2012 onwards, and held film screenings and discussions focused on the Workers City group's protests at the CCA in September 2016.

⁵⁷ *A Spiel Amang Us: Glasgow people writing: the Scotia Bar Writers Prize*, ed. by Brendan McLaughlin (Edinburgh, Mainstream: 1990).

contextualise these case studies, the chapter begins with a more thorough discussion of the political and economic context which shaped the early emergence of Glasgow’s culture-led regeneration strategy – which was pitched as a means of expanding the city’s tourism sector and service economy in response of deindustrialisation. This chapter draws on the seam of earlier critical writing concerned with Gray and Kelman’s political engagement, and particularly upon Miller and Rodger’s insights into Kelman’s political and creative response to neoliberalism in this period of intense contest over Glasgow’s civic spaces and cultural representations. As with Miller and Rodger’s analysis, this chapter challenges O’Hagan’s view that Kelman’s work and, by extension, the literary interests of the Workers City group, represents “priorities from another time, a time when working-class people worried about trade unions and over time, demarcation and the futility of the work that they did [...] the not-so-far-off days when hating your job and fucking off to Australia were the two biggest preoccupations you had.”⁵⁸ My approach differs from previous critical accounts of writers’ engagement with the events of 1990, in that it is not focused on the creative trajectory of one particular author and encompasses a broader range of literary sources. By incorporating a wider selection of literary texts, events and projects in the period I do not only hope to demonstrate that local writing both influenced and was influenced by Glasgow’s trajectory of culture-led regeneration, but also that strong criticism of this economic strategy and the political assumptions which surrounded it, was by no means limited to the small group of authors dismissed as “well-heeled” “professional whingers” by the city’s leadership.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ O’Hagan, ‘Scotland’s Fine Mess’ and ‘The Paranoid Sublime’. In *Disappearing Men*, Carole Jones draws somewhat similar conclusions, rejecting the view that Kelman’s fiction is “nostalgic for a disappearing working-class tradition and culture at the expense of dealing with recent social changes”. Jones, however, proposes that “Kelman’s writing chronicles the transition from the one social mode to the other” and is “caught between the working class of the past and the dispossession of O’Hagan’s present”. Though Jones argues that this reflective position opens up new modes of subjectivity and potentially “liberatory discourse” it does not read the same political potential in Kelman’s approach to writing postindustrial space as Miller and Rodger’s analysis suggests. Carole Jones, *Disappearing Men: Gender Disorientation in Scottish Fiction 1979-1999* (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 33-34.

⁵⁹ Qtd. in James Kelman, ‘A Storm in the Palace’, *New Statesman and Society*, 3 August 1990, pp. 32-33 (p. 33).

The first case study considers the development and reception of *Glasgow's Glasgow*: a flagship exhibition was initially intended to showcase the city's literature, and titled *The Words and the Stones*. Many high profile writers and literary critics were involved in the project.⁶⁰ However, the focus on this challenging curatorial concept was soon lost and the exhibition became a flashpoint for controversy, protested by authors involved with the Workers City movement. Drawing on archival sources, I suggest that this venture's literary origins were obscured by protests and media interventions led by the Workers City group and, consequently, this exhibition's trajectory reinforced the impression that writers had little input into the scope of Glasgow's Year of Culture Festival. However, many other aspects of Glasgow's Culture Year had a literary focus. This chapter's second case study concerns *Writing Together*. Despite the range of high profile international writers who contributed to this literary festival, the events are not well documented and rarely features in contemporary accounts of 1990:⁶¹ either in evaluations which stressed the breadth of cultural programming that year, or in leftist critiques of the Festival. Nor is it addressed in much retrospective analysis of this phase of Glasgow's cultural history. *Writing Together* is mentioned in one essay in the Workers City anthology, *The Reckoning* (1990), but its author Norman Bissell complains that even these "worthwhile" events were "centred at Glasgow University and the Arches" and "in spite of the many thousands of pounds spent bringing many excellent writers from all over the world to Glasgow, for the most part remained within the confines of the literary establishment with little living connection with the new vital forces among writers and their audience in an around the city".⁶² However, a closer look at *Writing Together*'s programme reveals a more complex picture. Drawing on archival sources (including correspondence between the key organiser,

⁶⁰ For instance, Edwin Morgan addressed key literary festival events; Liz Lochhead produced fresh dramatic work; as well as presenting new work many literary figures were also involved in the organisation and preparation of events and exhibitions, for example, Angus Calder was the principal organiser of *Writing Together*; while Hamish Whyte and Douglas Gifford offered their expertise to *The Words and the Stones*.

⁶¹ Contributors to *Writing Together* included Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Ama Ata Aidoo, Shirley Lim, Archie Weller, as well as authors of popular fiction in the UK such as Sue Townsend.

⁶² Norman Bissell, 'Glasgow's Miles... Out', in *The Reckoning: Public Loss Private Gain: Workers City*, ed. by Farquhar McLay, (Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 1990), pp. 66-72 (pp. 69-70).

Angus Calder, and community organisation and international authors) and discussion with Barbara Orton, who led Glasgow 1990's Communities Programme, this case study suggests the charge that *Writing Together* largely “remained within the confines of the literary establishment” is somewhat dubious.⁶³ The programme attempted to develop a strong focus on community involvement and its aspirations are evidence of the way in which the tenacious, politicised ethos of community arts movements struggled to persist within a boosterist regeneration framework.

The third case study considers an overtly boosterist literary initiative: *1990: The Book* a souvenir companion piece for the official Festival comprising an array of personal reflections from civic leaders and local personalities on Glasgow's changing urban identity. However, despite the publication's enthusiastic tone and position as a marketing tool for the city, it does incorporate personal and literary writing which reflects critically on Glasgow's urban transformation. This study focuses on Edwin Morgan's contribution of four commissioned poems which form a sonnet sequence exploring the social implications and cultural meaning of urban regeneration. Though Morgan was far more inclined to co-operate with Festival organisers than other high profile writers at the time, his poetry and reflections express ambivalence about Glasgow's contemporary urban renewal exercises. His sonnet sequence here emphasises, as writing associated with the Workers City movement did, the disparity between concentrated investment in cultural events and facilities and the neglect of the city's peripheral social housing stock – condemning this degree of sociospatial inequality as both morally unacceptable and politically dangerous.

The final case study, in contrast to *1990: The Book*, focuses on *A Spiel Amang Us* (1990) a little-known anthology of stories published in the course of a creative writing competition initiated by the Scotia Bar in 1989, inviting entries on ‘The Art and Politics of Living in Scotland’. The Scotia Bar was strongly associated with the Workers City movement and was an informal hub for protest activities in and around 1990. This publication can be read as an example of a literary project which rejected the official Festival's reliance on established cultural figures and celebrity voices to interpret Glasgow's new image. Instead, *A Spiel Amang Us* foregrounds new writing which challenges boosterist rhetoric, focusing on the

⁶³ Ibid.

feelings of loss and alienation urban transformation can intensify in the context of deindustrialisation. The production of this anthology contradicts the view that the Workers City group comprised a select, cultural elite whose views were far removed from the communities they purported to represent.

‘How did such a notoriously filthy hole become such a shining light?’: The development of Glasgow’s culture-led regeneration strategy⁶⁴

In a pointed exchange in *Something Leather*, Alasdair Gray’s 1990 novel exploring the erosion and commodification of working class culture as Glasgow’s urban image changed, an art dealer requests that a cultural fixer “tell me about the European Culcha Capital thing [...] Why Glasgow? How was such a notoriously filthy hole become such a shining light. Is it an advertising stunt?”⁶⁵ The view that the decision to award Glasgow the title of European Capital of Culture reflected less on the city’s cultural prestige than the competition’s potential as a place marketing tool has been reflected by many cultural historians and urban researchers. Glasgow’s award was considered a sharp turning point in the trajectory of this competition and, more broadly, in the purpose of high profile cultural celebrations. As Jim McGuigan put it, the competition had previously been “a means of celebrating universally acknowledged great cities” such as Athens, Florence and Paris. Then, in “1990 it was Glasgow in the West of Scotland. Glasgow? If it had been Edinburgh or London nobody would have been surprised, but Glasgow?” The competition was no longer “about honouring what already existed; it had become something new, about regeneration.”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Alasdair Gray, *Something Leather* (London: Cape, 1990) p. 171.

⁶⁵ Ibid. Alasdair Gray’s orthography. While the term commodification is used generally to denote the point at which any good, service or property is made available for trade, it may be more helpfully articulated here in terms of commercialisation – particularly a tendency to appropriate and repurpose items or images associated with working class occupations, leisure activities or domestic spaces for sale to more affluent, middle class consumers as decorative artefacts. In the context of class structuring, the term commodification is sometimes used in preference to commercialisation because it indicates that the use value of the object in question is altered or inhibited by such appropriation.

⁶⁶ Jim McGuigan, ‘Neo-liberalism, Culture and policy’, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 11.3 (2006), 229-241 (p. 239).

Decades on, Glasgow's Year of Culture in 1990 is also still widely regarded as a turning point in the city's postindustrial trajectory. As one of the first European cities to adopt a sustained culture-led regeneration strategy, Glasgow was (at least before the 2008 economic downturn) regularly touted as an exemplar of postindustrial transformation - emerging from economic decline and industrial decay to become "the paradigmatic creative city".⁶⁷ The City Council's own account of Glasgow's recent history boasted of its transition from an "inward-looking, post-industrial slump, to a confident, outward-looking economically regenerated destination city".⁶⁸ Relating Glasgow's literary legacy to that confident trajectory and the "thrilling international stage" the 1990 Festival offered local artists, the Council's copy concluded: "No longer could the character Kenneth McAlpin in Alasdair Gray's seminal novel "Lanark" dare to say that: "imaginatively Glasgow exists as a music hall song and a few bad novels – for that's all we've given to the world".⁶⁹ The history, however, of Glasgow's culture-led regeneration strategy stretches back far further than 1990 and is fundamentally related to the long-term impact of deindustrialisation and the consequences of post-war planning policy.

The response of local artists and authors is also much more complex than Glasgow City Council's account indicates. Alasdair Gray who, while drafting *Lanark*, had hoped to show that Glasgow held "material as rich as Dickens found in London, James Joyce in Dublin, or Munch in Oslo, or Van Gough in Arles" found himself protesting the European competition and its supposed significance for Glasgow's artistic life.⁷⁰ Fifteen years later, the City Council positioned that

⁶⁷ Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt, 'Misguided Loyalties', in *Conflict, Community, Culture: A Critical Analysis of Culture-led Regeneration* (2013) <<https://shiftyparadigms.wordpress.com/reports/misguided-loyalties-derry-as-uk-city-of-culture-2013/>> [accessed 4 June 2015].

⁶⁸ 'Cultural Renaissance' Glasgow City Council (2005), qtd. in Alan Bissett, 'The 'New Weegies': The Glasgow Novel in the Twenty-first Century', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Literature*, ed. by Berthold Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 59-67 (p. 71).

⁶⁹ Glasgow City Council, 'Cultural Renaissance' (2005), qtd. in Rodge Glass, *Alasdair Gray: A Secretary's Biography* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), p. 212. Though Glasgow City Council's text attributes this quotation to McAlpin, this statement in *Lanark* is made by the novel's central character. In his biography, Glass also remarks that Gray's hostility to the Festival "didn't stop officials using Alasdair's name when when they wished to make Glasgow look like a place where talents happily grew", p. 212.

⁷⁰ Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland (NLS), Alasdair Gray, Acc. 13021/8.

frequently cited passage from *Lanark* as a symbol of Glasgow's cultural transformation despite Gray's public opposition to the Festival: complexly explored in his literary writing and expressed bluntly in his interactions with officials and the press. In her overview of the Glasgow novel, Moira Burgess also reflects that, for the most part, Glasgow's authors showed little interest in producing work that chimed with boosterist copy. Burgess notes that "no such feel-good factor" is mirrored in Glasgow writing of the 1980s".⁷¹ In fact, "a number of writers, indeed – their voices growing stronger in the Year of Culture 1990 – target the 'New' Glasgow idea with furious satire and polemic". Rather, Burgess argues, local writers were more occupied with the evidence that Glasgow's social and economic problems were "multiplying rather than decreasing on the journey through the Thatcherite eighties".⁷² The following section of this chapter therefore sets out some of the economic and political factors subtending the attempt to position Glasgow as a vibrant "regenerated destination city", which were at the root of many writers' hostility to the celebrations. It is then suggested that Glasgow's literary legacy was also perceived by officials as an obstacle to regeneration.

The active development of Glasgow's culture led-regeneration strategy can be traced back to the 1970s when public-partnerships began to coalesce around specific urban areas and interests. In the 1980s, figures in local government and business interest groups looked to cities like Baltimore and Pittsburgh, which had invested heavily in waterfront regeneration programmes, and the influential place branding campaign developed for an urban resurgence in New York.⁷³ 'Maverick developers' like Baltimore's James Rouse were invited to develop a festival site for the city, and the US-based consultancy McKinsey and Co was commissioned to review the city's cultural resources and outline the "economic potential" of Glasgow city centre. A brace of such consultancy reports and strategic reviews were

⁷¹ Moira Burgess, *Imagine a City: Glasgow in Fiction* (Argyll: Argyll Publishing, 1998), pp. 262-63.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 263.

⁷³ Michael Kelly, then Glasgow's Lord Provost, had been impressed by the "I Love New York" campaign developed in the late 1970s. For further discussion of the Baltimore and Pittsburgh model of redevelopment in West Central Scotland see Robin Boyle, 'Private Sector Urban Regeneration: the Scottish Experience', in *Regenerating the Cities: The UK Crisis and the US Experience*, ed. by Michael Parkinson, Bernard Foley and Dennis Judd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 74-92 (p. 81).

commissioned from the mid-1980s onwards.⁷⁴ Milestones in the public cultivation of Glasgow's new urban image are well known: the determinedly cheerful 'Glasgow's Miles Better' marketing campaign, launched in 1983; the opening of the Burrell Collection in 1983; the UK national Garden Festival, hosted in 1988; and the year of celebrations to mark the city's status as the European City of Culture in 1990.

Much of this effort led from the perception that deindustrialisation had decimated Glasgow's economic base and put its capacity as a centre for manufacturing and other heavy industry entirely beyond repair. It was determined that Glasgow's economic future now hinged on its ability to attract inward investment, repositioning itself as a destination for business travel, tourism, and expanding its service economy. This strategy was predicated on transforming the city's image, and Glasgow's Year as the European City of Culture was envisioned as a major boon to the city's international reputation. Promotional material from the 1990 City of Culture Festival's Office put these aims bluntly:

Glasgow's days as a great industrial city are over. Sad as this may seem, its consequences are clear: set out to become a great post-industrial city. Glasgow's post-industrial future will stem in large part from its civic heritage and cultural wealth... With Glasgow perceived as a great City of Culture, we can expect arts related tourism to grow, and with that comes jobs.⁷⁵

The director of the Greater Glasgow Tourist Board was blunter still about the intention to redress negative perceptions of the city, stating: "The importance of

⁷⁴ Including the 1984 McKinsey report commissioned to forecast the scope for increased revenues from tourism and business travel in Glasgow, and the architect Gordon Cullen's design proposals for redeveloping Glasgow City Centre's build environment. Parts of both reports were published together by Glasgow District Council in *The Potential of Glasgow City Centre* in 1985. The Myerscough report, *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Glasgow* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1988) was commissioned by Glasgow District Council in order to deliver an overview of the city's cultural resources in light of Myerscough's UK-wide study, *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1988). Later reports included further work by Myerscough reporting on developments in Glasgow's cultural infrastructure after the Year of Culture, *Monitoring Glasgow 1990* (Glasgow: Glasgow City Council, 1991), and the Comedia Report, *Making the Most of Glasgow's Cultural Assets: The Creative City and its Cultural Economy* (Glasgow: Comedia for Glasgow Development Agency, 1991), commissioned by the Glasgow Development Agency – a quango established in 1990 as part of Scottish Enterprise and which succeeded Glasgow Action.

⁷⁵ *Glasgow 1990: The Book: the authorised tour of the cultural capital of Europe* (Glasgow: William Collins for Glasgow District Council, 1990), p. 20.

Glasgow 1990 is that it delivers Glasgow to an external international audience and kills off once and for all the idea of Glasgow as an industrial slum.”⁷⁶ Glasgow’s Lord Provost, Pat Lally delivered unstinting statements on the local authority’s approach to the award, declaring, “we are going to use the title to maximum advantage – we are going to milk it for all it is worth. We are using the title to open up employment opportunities, in cultural industries and in tourism. We have succeeded in attracting £2 billion worth of investment to Glasgow; we need more and 1990 will help us get it”.⁷⁷

As well as considering the impetus to draw on early examples of urban regeneration in the US, and to understand the conditions and pressures local governments were facing at that time, the strategy must also be read in the long-term context of post-war urban planning in Scotland. In the 1960s, regional and national strategic responses to deindustrialisation saw Glasgow become the site of one of the largest slum-clearance programmes in Europe. The Scottish Development Department’s 1963 White Paper, *Central Scotland: A Plan for Development and Growth* advanced the view that the economic and social damage deindustrialisation had visited on Glasgow was irreversible.⁷⁸ So from then on, investment would be cultivated in fresh ‘growth points’: new towns which would attract modern industries and house the ‘overspill’ from Glasgow, as its overcrowded slum housing was razed away. More recently, commentators have asserted that the decision to ‘decant’ large numbers of workers from Glasgow was not simply based on housing needs, but also represented an attempt to bypass Glasgow’s historical association with a radical political tradition. Chik Collins and Iain Levitt argue that as well as facilitating a policy of managed decline in Glasgow, this emphasis on investment in new towns attempted to “realign industrial politics” in much of Scotland:

The new industries with new (less abrasive and authoritarian employers) and new working practices would alter the old alignments of power, identity and

⁷⁶ Eddie Friel, Director of Greater Glasgow Tourist Board, *Good Morning Scotland*, BBC Radio Scotland, 3 August 1990, qtd. in Mark Boyle, ‘The Cultural Politics of Glasgow, European City of Culture: Making Sense of the Role of the Local State in Urban Regeneration’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1992), p. 217.

⁷⁷ Pat Lally, ‘Into the 21st Century’, *New Statesman and Society*, 7 September 1990, p. 22.

⁷⁸ Scottish Development Department, *Central Scotland: A Programme for Development and Growth* (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1963).

politics which had given rise to ‘Red Clydeside’ and ‘to some industrialists in the south’ thinking of Scotland ‘as a place of industrial unrest in which they would place a factory only with reluctance’.⁷⁹

Predictably, decades of deindustrialisation combined with a process of managed decline whereby many working-age citizens were ‘remobilised’ elsewhere, and investment and resources were diverted from Glasgow had an injurious effect on the city. Glasgow’s population continued to fall, and the loss of many skilled workers and their families was particularly damaging. It is against this backdrop that plans to leverage cultural investment as a catalyst for economic growth began to gather pace. Urban strategists in the 1980s also thought of Glasgow’s industrial legacy and political heritage as a disincentive to new investment: their proposed solution, however, was to cultivate a new urban image for the city.

In part, this strategy was adopted because local authorities and planners felt they had very limited scope to respond to difficult local economic conditions. Mark O’Neill, currently the head of policy and research at Glasgow Life (Glasgow City Council’s arms-length organisation for culture and sport), and a leading member of the Festival Office during 1990, points out that the UK Conservative Government from 1979 onwards had “reduced the powers of local authorities radically”.⁸⁰ O’Neill argues that “culture was one of the few areas where local authorities could take action because there was no regulation and that was really important”.⁸¹ This reduced scope for action made the prospect of bidding for international cultural programmes particularly appealing.⁸² Given these restricted circumstances, Mark O’Neill suggests that while Glasgow’s Year of Culture raised difficult emotions and awkward responses, the Year of Culture may have provided a useful focal point for people’s apprehensions for the city’s future and frustrations about its past:

⁷⁹ Chik Collins and Iain Levitt, ‘The ‘Modernisation’ of Scotland and its Impact on Glasgow, 1955-1979: Unwanted Side Effects’ and Vulnerabilities’, *Scottish Affairs*, 25.3 (2016), 294-316 (p. 299).

⁸⁰ Mark O’Neill, in interview with Fabien Jeannier, ‘The Dear Green Place: Régénération urbaine, rédefinition identitaire et polarization spatiale à Glasgow – 1979-1990’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Université Lumière – Lyon II, 2012), p. 470.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² In 1990 the European Capital of Culture was due to be awarded to a UK city, and it was not practicable for London to develop a bid, largely due to the abolition of Greater London Council. Other UK cities therefore found they were in a stronger position to be selected that would otherwise have been the case.

My understanding looking back was that Glasgow was changing its identity from being a heavy industry city to a post-industrial city. It involved a huge sense of loss and people were angry and hurt. There was a mourning. There were talks about the stages of mourning: shock, anger acceptance. You could almost see that happening. That would have happened whether the Year of Culture had happened or not and maybe it was good that the Year of Culture gave us a focus and people worried [about it could] have a debate and express the anger, as a therapeutic model of understanding it.⁸³

In 1990, another key figure in the Festival Office, Robert Palmer, took a similar perspective, emphasising the inevitability of change and the need to acknowledge that transition:

from my point of view you can't look backwards, you really have to look forwards. You've got to look at the changing base of Glasgow's industries. I mean Glasgow is, or is hoping to become a post-industrial city. That's a very complicated notion because then you have to create a whole new base for employment. You can't live in the hope that those old days will return again. Where thirteen ships a day will be built on the Clyde and steam locomotives will continue to emerge from locomotive works in Springburn. That is in the past and you have to think of the present and the future.⁸⁴

However, the notion that Glasgow's Culture Year was a bittersweet but ultimately benign process has to be tempered by recent findings from the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH). In a paper reviewing the so-called 'Glasgow Effect' (the high level of excess mortality in Scotland) researchers suggest that Glasgow's Year of Culture likely compounded the inequality and disadvantage rived by deindustrialisation, rather than relieving it. GCPH's study considered a range of factors potentially underlying premature mortality, drawing on on comparisons with cities such as Liverpool, Manchester and Belfast (which also experienced rapid deindustrialisation and high levels of urban deprivation). The study suggests that urban redevelopment initiatives in Glasgow and West Central Scotland made people more, not less, vulnerable to the long term effects of deindustrialisation and deprivation. The paper highlights the injurious effects of Scottish Office regional policy – as efforts to attract industry to new towns in Scotland and relocate young skilled workers from failing urban centres to these future 'engines of growth'

⁸³ Fabien Jeannier, 'The Dear Green Place', p. 470.

⁸⁴ Robert Palmer, *Third Ear*, BBC Radio 3, 3 October 1990, qtd. in Mark Boyle, 'The Cultural Politics of Glasgow, European City of Culture', p. 225.

inevitably damaged Glasgow's remaining communities and fragile economy. This national policy was coupled with wide scale urban redevelopment within Glasgow, which tended to produce more peripheral housing estates that were both larger, and of poorer quality than in cities such as Liverpool, Manchester and Belfast. The subsequent level of investment in maintenance and repair of the city's social housing stock was also much lower.

Importantly, the GCPH's analysis of post-war urban change and its long term impact on population health extends its scope from the well-known narratives of urban displacement in the 1950s and 1960s, emphasising the influence local economic policies in the 1980s and after had on public health and wellbeing. The authors state that the "early prioritisation of inner-city gentrification and commercial development" in Glasgow "potentially exacerbated the damaging impacts of UK policy on what was already a vulnerable population".⁸⁵ Contrasting political decision making in Glasgow with attitudes in Liverpool, the authors note that Liverpool's local government consistently challenged the Conservative administration throughout the 1980s, and not only countered the direction of national economic policies by capping rent increases and investing in social housing but set a political tone which "entailed considerable mobilisation and and political participation among the city's residents".⁸⁶ A defiant local government stimulated public debate and "an opportunity to experience collective action, political voice and, with that, feelings of community power and efficacy."⁸⁷ In the authors' view, these factors "conferred protective effects" on Liverpool's citizens, providing some degree of removal from the impact of neoliberal economic policies but also building social capital in the city. In contrast, Glasgow's political administration had, barring a few brief periods of disruption, held power for political generations. In the view of GCPH's researchers, its leaders were "politically adapted to working in a conciliatory manner with central government" and "ill-disposed" to challenging Government policy "overtly through politicisation of the city population and even

⁸⁵ David Walsh, Gerry McCartney, Chik Collins, Martin Taulbut and G. David Batty, 'History, politics and vulnerability: explaining excess mortality in Scotland and Glasgow' (Glasgow: Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2016), p. 8.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 47.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

more so where it was seeking to attract investors to a city with an unwanted historic ‘Red Clydeside’ reputation”.⁸⁸ The local economic strategy they developed was predicated on rehabilitating the city’s negative reputation, and leant heavily on partnerships with the private sector.⁸⁹

Boosting the city’s image and attracting private capital investment to the city centre led to what some have called a “dual urban policy ‘with “high budget, high profile retail, and property development in the city centre” but “much lower resourced and very limited mitigation and management of poverty, and an intensifying social crisis in the city’s poorer areas, principally in the peripheral estates””.⁹⁰ The GCPH authors agree that these areas became “politically disarmed” and rather than bolstering social and economic resources in the most deprived areas, Glasgow’s political leaders seem to have led “an on-going process of managing and manipulating communities in ways which compounded their problems and led, perhaps, to even more damaging outcomes –breaking down fragile bonds of community and turning frustration into something rather more dangerous”.⁹¹ Many of Glasgow’s local writers shared exactly these concerns, and various literary responses to Glasgow’s cultural festivals strongly criticized the sociospatial inequalities that would be reinforced by this pattern of investment.

Art, Subsidy and the Politics of Culture City

James Kelman described Glasgow’s Year as the European Capital of Culture as a “classic example of the exploitation of arts and artists”.⁹² In an address to students at Glasgow’s School of Art, Kelman argued that, by the mid-1990s, public discussion of Glasgow’s ‘Culture Year’ remained preoccupied with the degree to which it had

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 210-11.

⁸⁹ For further discussion of public-private partnerships facilitated by the Scottish Development Agency, and support for Glasgow Action in the mid-1980s see Robin Boyle, ‘Private Sector Urban Regeneration: The Scottish Experience’.

⁹⁰ David Walsh, and others, ‘History, politics and vulnerability’, p. 49.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 50.

⁹² James Kelman, ‘And the Judges Said’, in *And the Judges Said...* (London: Secker & Warburg, 2002), pp. 37-55 (p. 35).

refashioned the city's urban image.⁹³ The Festival had been memorialised as “that strange time our ayn wee city of Glasgow made it on to the international map” and “Anything is justified because of that. Look at the publicity the city got”.⁹⁴

Moreover, Kelman's address suggested that the cultural memory of Glasgow 1990 continued to efface the ‘exploitation’ of artistic work: focusing on how Glasgow's new urban image was promoted was a barrier to “serious study” of its production. Consequently, though “it was only a few years ago”, the Festival had become a “legend, a kind of mythical thing, mythical in the sense that it is not open to analysis, not available for critical examination, not then and not now. If you attempt such a thing you get called a boring spoilsport.”⁹⁵ The many critical essays Kelman produced in this period represented his own attempt to advance “serious study” of the Festival's cultural politics and open up events in 1990s Glasgow to “critical examination”.

As Johnny Rodger and Mitch Miller established in *The Red Cockatoo*, Kelman's essays form part of a wide range of critical and political work Kelman was leading around the time of Glasgow's cultural festivals. From public criticism of the management of Glasgow's cultural institutions, to work supporting the Clydeside Action on Asbestosis Group, to collaboration with the International Book Fair of Radical Black and Third World Books, Kelman was involved with multiple literary and political campaigns.⁹⁶ Similarly, critical examinations of Kelman's creative trajectory, such as Simon Kövesi's *James Kelman* (2007), have detailed Kelman's public conflicts with local politicians and Festival officials in and around the 1990s. Here, I wish to focus specifically on Kelman's view that Glasgow's culture-led urban regeneration strategy was predicated on the “exploitation of arts and artists” and the values or attitudes Kelman advocated as a defence against such ‘exploitation’ in a cluster of critical essays, particularly: ‘Arts and Subsidy, and some Politics of

⁹³ Ibid., ‘And the judges said’ is based on a lecture Kelman delivered at Glasgow School of Art in 1996.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Rodger and Miller note the peak in Kelman's critical activity around 1990 and ask whether Kelman's prolific output in that period was catalysed by Glasgow's place branding campaigns, “Would Kelman's outpouring of critical works have been quite so concentrated, so meaningful and so engaging without the red-rag focus provided by this gaudy doll...?”, *The Red Cockatoo*, p. 96.

Culture City' (1990); 'Art and Subsidy and the Continuing Politics of Culture City' (1992); 'Artists and Value' (1992); 'The Importance of Glasgow in My Work' (1992); 'And the Judges said' (2002); and 'Storm in the Palace' (2002).

Examining these essays, I trace Kelman's keen awareness of the incipient creative economy framework being advanced within the context of private sector investment and restricted public sector spending in Glasgow. Kelman was relentlessly critical of the drive to 'sell' Glasgow and use artistic work to market the city in new ways while neglecting the city's periphery and its public housing while privatizing or commercialising important facets of the city's public space. Kelman was fundamentally suspicious of any financial or governmental interests presented as allied to the arts. His core objection to Glasgow's culture led regeneration strategy was encapsulated in his 1992 essay, 'Art and Subsidy, and the Continuing Politics of Culture City' as with "assumption that a partnership already exists between the arts and big business and that such a partnership is 'healthy'. It suggests a heady mixture of high principles coupled with 'sound' business sense".⁹⁷ Moreover, Kelman perceived an attempt to dissociate the process of artistic labour from the value of artistic work in the course of Glasgow's cultural Festivals. He takes particular issue with the notion of a "cultural workforce" a term he claims to have first encountered "in the summer of 1990" and takes to refer to "to those who administer public funding and/or private sponsorship for 'arts initiatives' and gives rise to the peculiar notion that without such a workforce culture would not exist properly".⁹⁸ Kelman's antipathy to the term may have been prompted in part by a hostile exchange in the press which saw Neil Wallace (then deputy Director of Glasgow's 1990 Festival of Culture) describe Workers City's protests against the Festival as "as pathetic, factless, plank-walking anti 1990s-ism" which was "an embarrassment to our this city and all of its cultural workforce".⁹⁹ Wallace's anxiety that Workers City's activities would create negative publicity for Glasgow's Festival and undermine the work of those planning and promoting events is clear. Kelman's criticism of the

⁹⁷ James Kelman, 'Art and Subsidy and the Continuing Politics of Culture City', *Some Recent Attacks* (Stirling: AK Press, 1992), pp. 27-36 (p. 27).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁹⁹ Qtd. in James Kelman, 'Storm in the Palace', *New Statesman and Society*, 3 August 1990, pp. 32-33.

term “cultural workforce” demonstrates comparable hostility to an expanding cadre of professional work related to funding, promoting and marketing art and the city’s new image. However, Kelman also locates an attempt to estrange the value of artistic work from the value of artistic labour. He puts this view particularly bluntly in his 1996 essay, ‘And the Judges Said’, claiming that during 1990 “it was precisely art as the product of individual people that was being highjacked and ripped off so mightily”.¹⁰⁰ Kelman senses that an expanding tier of professional roles in the sector distances artists from control over their work and practices. Moreover, Kelman describes a deep ambivalence on the part of cultural directors (such as Neil Wallace), political actors and institutions towards ‘the arts’ and artists: equally enthusiastic about their economic potential and resentful of artists’ apparent detachment from commercial concerns. Kelman portrays “the authorities” imagining artists “luxuriate in their perpetual infancy, their rosy-hued idealism” while ‘cultural-workers’ “enter bravely into the real world, the world of the everyday, the world of compromise and necessity”.¹⁰¹

In this way, aspects of Kelman’s contemporary analysis of ‘cultural subsidy’ in 1990s Glasgow prefigure more recent critiques of the postindustrial creative economy advanced by literary critics including Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy* and Jasper Bernes, *The Work of Art in the Age of Deindustrialization* (2017), which Chapter Two of this thesis will explore in greater detail.¹⁰² Brouillette reflects that “Creative work tends to be figured contradictorily by creative-economy rhetoric, as at once newly valuable to capitalism and romantically honourable and free”.¹⁰³ It is precisely this contradiction that many of Kelman’s essays on 1990s Glasgow interrogate. ‘And the Judges Said...’ comments on the sense of excitement running through official Festival discourse, celebrating the prospect of economic growth through investment in the arts, but remarks that the Festival was “a classic exercise in respect of how art and artists are regarded by the

¹⁰⁰ James Kelman, ‘And the judges said...’, p. 37.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 36.

¹⁰² Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014; Jasper Bernes, *The Work of Art in the Age of Deindustrialization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017).

¹⁰³ Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 4.

authorities, a mixture of contempt, distrust and fear”.¹⁰⁴ Kelman’s essays explore the complexities of compromise in this context, often returning to the practical choices and challenges artists are faced with in order to produce work: the temptation to “try for a compromise [...] do the hack stuff and trust the money earned ‘buys’ time for more meaningful work in the future”.¹⁰⁵ Ultimately, however, Kelman concludes that “anyone who relies on the private sector for the economic means to create art, and continues to believe they are in control of the situation, is very naïve indeed”.¹⁰⁶

Nor is Kelman more amenable to public funding for work, or attempting to negotiate such compromise by directing funds towards community arts. His essays are fairly scathing of the position that leading community-based creative work might be a worthwhile compromise, or a valuable tactic to counter an overarching neoliberal cultural strategy. In ‘Art, Subsidy and some Politics of Culture City’, Kelman comes close to dismissing “so-called ‘community art’ as a “necessary part” of an “elitist myth” whereby artistic value is determined by “society’s upper orders”.¹⁰⁷ This essay is characteristically pessimistic about both the purpose of community arts projects and the value attributed to the art created:

A case will be advanced...for what is euphemistically termed ‘community art’, i.e. the art of the ‘workshop’ variety; apart from administrative and material costs it is produced for next to nothing and helps keep idle hands at work – thus groups of teenagers trying to survive on no-money per week are given a tin of dulux and told to paint their fence, or maybe pensioners are asked to write their memoirs which are eventually photocopied and stapled together, then dumped into the shredder when the next administration takes over.¹⁰⁸

Kelman’s position in these essays is unyielding, there is no openness to compromise by responding either to community or commercial interests. Instead, his essays advocate particular values, including creative autonomy, integrity, and political independence, as key to a writer’s value and identity. Yet strangely, decades on, the values Kelman keys as integral to resisting accommodation and compromise have been repositioned as qualities which allow writers to facilitate participatory literary

¹⁰⁴ James Kelman, ‘And the judges said...’, p. 37.

¹⁰⁵ James Kelman, ‘Art, Subsidy and the Continuing Politics of Culture City’, p. 30.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.35.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 31.

projects in specific urban localities. I will now outline in more detail key aspects of Kelman's defence of literary autonomy, the dangers he perceived in compromise in the context of 1990s Glasgow, and consider the role the city's cultural Festival played in transposing those values in later years.

As examined earlier in this chapter there has been an enduring perception that local writers were "too difficult to work with" for Festival organisers in 1990. This is despite the fact that a wide range of literary projects were associated with Glasgow 1990. It is broadly indicative of the particular status accorded to politically resistant writing, and more specifically reflects the leading role certain local writers played in critiquing conceptions of the creative economy advanced in the 1990s. During 1990 and after, writers with varying degrees of involvement with the official Festival criticised underinvestment in the city's social housing severely. Highlighting the condition of social housing served as a corrective to boosterist discourse promulgated by civic authorities to celebrate Glasgow's new, cosmopolitan image, and promote its future as a destination for discretionary business travel. A range of tactics were adopted to achieve this. Kelman, among other writers, simply refused to participate in the official Festival and instead pursued direct acts of protest and led vocal opposition in the press, while also developing their own literary critiques of contemporary culture-led regeneration. Kelman received considerable criticism for this stance. For example, as previously noted, Andrew O'Hagan, indicated that writers involved with Workers City were beholden to anachronistic concerns: to a "workerist passion", to "the ranter's belief in improvement by mere utterance" which seemed "strangely out of place" decades after intense periods of industrial conflict in the West of Scotland had passed.¹⁰⁹ Workers City's "programme", O'Hagan suggested, "assumed old patterns of recovery" which were not only out of step with Glasgow's contemporary economic situation but failed to reflect how cultural conceptions of class and local identity had changed.¹¹⁰ O'Hagan suggests that, 'A generation has now come of age that cannot stamp to a workerist vision of togetherness and solidarity since they've never known any work. They've not been

¹⁰⁹ Andrew O'Hagan, 'Scotland's Fine Mess', p. 25.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

‘out of work’: they are part of a growing generation who have never known what it is to expect work.”¹¹¹

O’Hagan’s misgivings around Kelman’s lack of attenuation to political and cultural change in Glasgow are not isolated to Kelman’s work as a critic and activist around 1990. He also related these observations to Kelman’s fiction and charges that Kelman’s novels are stubbornly preoccupied with the political perspectives and emotional experience of one particular generation:

Kelman brings to his writing priorities from another time, a time when working-class people worried over trade unions and over time demarcation and the futility of the work that they did. He mostly writes about a quite particular man of his own generation, someone who grows detached, gets disaffected [...] He’s a person who remembers the not-so-far-off days when hating your job and fucking off to Australia were the two biggest preoccupations you had.¹¹²

Kelman’s fiction, in O’Hagan’s view, does little to convey more contemporary consequences of deindustrialisation – “The growth of AIDS...the run of repossessions, the gangsterism” – nor how the experience of younger generations has been shaped by the erosion of “priorities from another time”: “The experience of people who never expect to work again, of people, indeed, who leave school never having known what it’s like to expect a job – these are people for whom Kelman’s workerist lament might seem idealistic and even alien in its modes of regret”.¹¹³

Certainly, as Aaron Kelly observes, Kelman’s fiction has “always been driven by the inequalities of late capitalism, the disruption of traditional working-class solidarities, and an attendant loss of meaning from the world, its events and institutions.”¹¹⁴ Yet this is not at all to say that those concerns are anachronistic to contemporary political and cultural conditions. Nor is it the case that the characters in Kelman’s work can grow comfortably “detached” or escape to a more satisfactory home by “fucking off to Australia” or anywhere else.¹¹⁵ Rather, Kelly demonstrates

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Andrew O’Hagan, ‘The Paranoid Sublime’, pp. 8-9 (pp. 8-9).

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Aaron Kelly, ‘James Kelman and the Deterritorialisation of Power’, in Berthold Schoene ed., *Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 175-83 (p. 178).

¹¹⁵ Andrew O’Hagan, ‘The Paranoid Sublime’, pp. 8-9.

that Kelman's exactly textured writing explores the "micropolitical codes" of particular places and interrogates their subtending forces, realising a "stringent confrontation with power in all its forms".¹¹⁶ Further, as Johnny Rodger and Mitch Miller have stressed in *The Red Cockatoo*, and argued more explicitly still in 'Strange Currencies: Margaret Thatcher and James Kelman as Two Faces of the Globalisation Coin' (2013), Kelman's fiction, criticism and political practice can also be read as an incipient cultural response to the new mode of urban management emerging in the aftermath of deindustrialisation. Rodger and Miller argue that cultural movements Kelman was closely associated with, such as Workers City, recognised the need to counter a fundamentally neoliberal mode of policy making with "new forms of social movement to defend citizens, their jobs, houses, culture and cities in an age of globalised capital".¹¹⁷ Crucially, they understood that the terrain of political conflict had shifted in the aftermath of deindustrialisation – away from the factory floor. It was necessary then, for protest groups like Workers City, to turn "away from production issues" and so they "concentrated on consumption" with "their share and use of the city" becoming a "principle concern".¹¹⁸ Ultimately, they too "abandoned attempts at supporting production-side economics for a cultivation of demand" and "campaigned for their own stake in urban space".¹¹⁹ Therefore, Rodger and Miller argue, though James Kelman was "typically characterised in terms of being an 'old lefty' – as writing and campaigning solely on behalf of those victims of an era of heavy industry, and standing up for the rights of the proletariat in defence of the 'captains of industry'", his literary and critical work was acutely responsive to the contemporary politics of urban transformation.¹²⁰ Altogether, Rodger and Miller make the case that Kelman's involvement with the Workers City group helped to constitute a "self consciously urban movement" which operated "at a local level" was "politically self-managed" and was not only involved in the "promotion of the politics of identity and culture, but also in the archaeology of that cultural identity in the very urban and civic fabric of society".¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Aaron Kelly, 'James Kelman and the Deterritorialisation of Power', p. 183.

¹¹⁷ Mitch Miller and Johnny Rodger, 'Strange Currencies', p. 74.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

While O'Hagan reads Kelman's recalcitrance as a failure to recognise how deindustrialisation currently affected the lives of people in Glasgow and acknowledge that the scope of the city's social problems had shifted, Kelman's refusal to participate in the Festival and his focus on the events' underlying economic context can be interpreted as a contribution to newer modes of social organising. As Rodger and Miller point out, Kelman's activities in these instances, and wider protest led by the Workers City group was no longer concerned with "supporting production-side economics".¹²² Indeed, their movement was not "involved in producing, nor campaigning for the production of, anything".¹²³ Rather, Kelman and others involved with the protests: "thought through and and carried out a series of tactical mobilisations – as seen here in their high-profile campaigns at Glasgow Green and the People's Palace Museum – which sought the right to *consume* the city in their own way and to construct collective images and representations of the city as they saw fit."¹²⁴ Other well-known local writers took a different approach. Edwin Morgan and Liz Lochhead, for example, were prepared to participate in aspects of the cultural celebrations yet used their platforms as speakers and contributors to key Festival publications to emphasise the contrast between concentrated spending on cultural events and facilities in the city centre with the relative lack of spending on social housing, particularly on the peripheries of the city. For instance, Morgan used the prime space made available to him in the front and back matter of the souvenir publication *Glasgow 1990: The Book* to eviscerate the city's evident sociospatial inequalities and deliver a rejoinder to the city's administration: "Castlemilk, Drumchapel, Easterhouse, Pollok – / they must be seen to, do you hear?"¹²⁵

Other writers and organisers focused on directing Festival funds to areas like Castlemilk and Easterhouse, and the state of housing was often the subject of community led cultural work. In the course of the Festival various creative projects were developed as part of locally-driven campaigns for urgent investment in local

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 87.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Edwin Morgan, 'The Future', in *Glasgow 1990: The Book: the authorised tour of the cultural capital of Europe* (Glasgow: William Collins for Glasgow District Council, 1990), back matter.

housing. Some were expressly intended to publicise specific aspects of disrepair. For instance, Easthall Theatre Group led from Easthall Residents Association in Easterhouse: who had coordinated a long running campaign against damp housing and secured six thousand pounds in funding from Glasgow's Festivals programme to develop and stage a play highlighting the issue. The play *Dampbusters* (1990) was principally scripted by the housing activist Cathy McCormack and developed with a wider group of local residents. It criticised the council for its lack of action, and challenged spending on the City of Culture Festival given the condition of social housing.¹²⁶ The play toured around various community venues and one contemporary review praised its comic scenes, though it noted that the play presented some of the "didacticism you might expect of a campaigning show".¹²⁷ It highlighted confrontational exchanges between council officials and residents who lived with the consequences of damp and were critical of the Festival, including the line, "I've got more culture growing in this house than you're likely to experience in a lifetime".¹²⁸ The review reflects that:

‘Dampbusters’ inevitably poses questions about the attitudes underlying the Year of Culture – questions that are even more urgent coming from those on the periphery of the City’s cultural activities. Not only is Easterhall Theatre Group [sic] demanding greater participation in political decision-making but, by its efforts, demanding also a recognition of the part that it plays in the real culture of the city.¹²⁹

Yet while productions like *Dampbusters* used Festival resources in order to make that demand for "greater participation in political-decision making" more forceful they did not always receive clear "recognition" for this role. During 1990, visible community participation in the Festival was also used as evidence to advance other objectives related to regeneration. Consequently, even the work of groups like Easthall Theatre Group, who were fundamentally opposed to the Year of Culture's spending priorities could be represented as evidence of the Festival's success.

¹²⁶ Cathy McCormack maintained her community activism beyond the early 1990s, bringing her locally rooted campaign far wider than Easthall and the Residents Association succeeded in securing EU funding for a solar power demonstration project for the housing scheme.

¹²⁷ Tom Maguire, 'Review – Dampbusters', *The List*, 28 September 1990, p. 52. The review noted scenes in "the City's council chamber where the councillors are damningly portrayed as a mix between tea party chimps and an all-boys club".

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

As Mark Boyle has previously outlined, representatives of Glasgow District Council and the Festivals Office adopted various responses to criticism of such concentrated spending on cultural facilities and events when so many aspects of the city's fabric were in disrepair. Boyle also illustrates the role the Workers City group played in amplifying that criticism. For instance, James Kelman took part in an STV news debate concerned with the cost of the Festival, and in print Workers City member Norman Bissell shared "exaggerated figures" on the outlay for high profile events and also drew upon other "Public Sector expenditure which was not from the 1990 budget (£6 million for the new Concert Hall), and privately funded events" to "promote the idea that a large amount of money was being spent on cultural events".¹³⁰ Stances adopted by the Festivals Office and Glasgow District Council chiefly fell, Mark Boyle observes, into three categories. One strategy was to insist that officials were constrained by the particular funding arrangements put in place to support the Festival, which ruled out any possibility of diverting Festival funds to other priorities, like housing, regardless of the level of need. Nor was there any question of diverting other resources to the 'Culture Year' celebrations. This position allowed Council representatives to appear entirely sympathetic to public criticism of the Festival, with Pat Lally insisting he was "frustrated beyond belief" that "even if the council did not spend one single penny" of those funds "on arts and culture, we would not be allowed to spend an extra penny on housing repairs or curing dampness".¹³¹ Ultimately, this argument located responsibility for the allocation of funds with regulations governing local government spending and sidestepped more politicised discussion of local priorities. The second, perhaps less common, approach was to minimise one-off public investment in the Festival in comparison to general spending on cultural facilities and also in terms of the scale of investment that would be needed to resolve substantial housing problems. The third strategy was to continue to justify cultural spending as an investment which would stimulate the local economy, attract further capital and lead to employment opportunities.

¹³⁰ Mark Boyle, 'The Cultural Politics of Glasgow, European City of Culture', p. 346.

¹³¹ Pat Lally, *Glasgow Herald*, 30 June 1990, qtd. in Mark Boyle, 'The Cultural Politics of Glasgow, European City of Culture', p. 348.

As Boyle observes, none of these arguments went unchallenged and, notably, members of the Easthall Theatre Group were among who contested the Council's position that spending regulations prevented further investment in urging housing needs. One member of the group felt insistent that if the Council "were more determined", if they "were more concerned about people's health and the people of Glasgow, they could have done it [...] They could have bent the rules a bit if they wanted".¹³² Another critic of the Festival argued that while "the council were indeed legally bound to spend this money on culture, they could have reduced Poll Tax bills by the amount which the event cost, thereby leaving they money in the pockets of the people most in need".¹³³ Elsewhere, in Kelman's critical essays, cultural spending was also linked to the Poll Tax and, Kelman insinuated, the budget for Glasgow 1990 would be sliced away elsewhere. In his 1992 essay, 'Art and Subsidy and the Continuing Politics of Culture City', Kelman warns:

Over the coming years the cost of this P.R. exercise will have repercussions for the ordinary cultural life of the city. The money had to come from somewhere. Major cuts have already taken place in those areas precisely concerned with art and culture. The public funding of libraries, art galleries and museums, swimming baths, public parks and public halls; are all being cut dramatically, and the people fighting the poll-tax are taking the blame.¹³⁴

In this one critical paragraph, Kelman links spending on the Festival to forthcoming cuts across Glasgow's cultural and recreational facilities as a whole; to the defence of local public spaces; and to Glasgow District Council's administration of the unpopular poll tax.¹³⁵ Certainly, in 1991, the poll tax charged was increased partly on the basis that the number of 'non payers' was expected to rise. The Workers City

¹³² Qtd. in Mark Boyle, 'The Cultural Politics of Glasgow, European City of Culture', p. 353.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 354.

¹³⁴ James Kelman, 'Art, Subsidy and the Continuing Politics of Culture City', p. 32.

¹³⁵ It is some indication of the strength of local feeling against the charge that elements of Glasgow's Year of Culture provided a platform for acts of poll tax resistance. For example, an artist's residence working with community groups in Woodlands culminated with burning a Poll Tax 'Wicker Man', which saw Poll Tax forms attached to a giant wicker sculpture and ceremonially burnt in a public park. Mark Boyle, 'The Cultural Politics of Glasgow, European City of Culture', p. 305.

group took the opportunity to link that increase directly to overspending on the 1990 Festival.¹³⁶

For Kelman then, due to the deep economic and political factors which subtended the cultural Festival as a whole, there was no clear, strategic gain in participating in the official Festival or in attempting to divert its specific resources towards alternative ends. Yet various community groups did make concerted efforts to take control of at least some of the funds, facilities and opportunities the Festival afforded, and use them to pursue their own creative, political or social objectives. In many cases, community groups attempted to exercise those resources while maintaining a critical stance towards the Festival as a whole, or at least the reinvention of Glasgow's postindustrial urban image. Some groups, like Easthall Theatre Group, even used those funds to mount a creative critique of that refashioned image. For instance, Cranhill Arts Project also used Festival Office resources to draw attention to widespread inadequacies with local housing and extensive difficulties with damp, and criticised "cosmetic" housing improvements.¹³⁷ However, subsequent assessments of the cultural impact or community reach of Glasgow's Year of Culture rarely considered the artistic content of community productions closely, less still if they were performance based, or focused on delivering an event or workshops.¹³⁸ Consequently, exercises intended to gauge the degree to which the Festival managed to 'reach' beyond the city centre and municipal institutions did not typically capture the nature of that community involvement or the attitude participants had towards the Festival's wider objectives

¹³⁶ This suspicion aligns with a broad seam of criticism toward the local authority which runs through Kelman's essays: that Glasgow District Council was a fundamentally managerial entity, committed to administering neoliberal economic policies in the aftermath of deindustrialisation. In 'Art, Subsidy and the Continuing Politics of Culture City', for example, James Kelman criticises the lack of protective and defensive action on the part of Glasgow's municipal leaders: "Instead of attacking the national government they attack the people", p. 32.

¹³⁷ Cranhill Arts Project developed exhibitions of photography during the year of culture, with £30 000 of funding from the Festivals Office. The principle exhibition *The Glaswegian Exhibition*, was held in retail spaces in Glasgow city centre as well as community centres in housing schemes, including Easterhouse and Drumchapel, and work was also exhibited in British Consulates. For further details see Mark Boyle, 'The Cultural Politics of Glasgow, European City of Culture', p. 387.

¹³⁸ For example, John Myerscough, *Monitoring Glasgow 1990* (Glasgow: Glasgow City Council, 1991) details expenditure on community events, alongside attendance statistics, but at no point addresses the content or direction of community productions.

and tone. This lacuna was perhaps made somewhat more likely by the asset-driven approach fostered by community arts development in previous decades (since the strategic focus of a community arts project was often not necessarily the cultural production or product developed, but rather opportunities to build political capacity and support social transformation). The potential for difficulty in this regard, and in the context of regeneration in particular, is illustrated by a contemporary article in a local newspaper which, as Mark Boyle puts it, “set out to dismiss the idea that the City of Culture Event had not ‘touched’ the ordinary Glaswegian” and then “used the ‘Dampbusters’ project as a key example of the way the City of Culture event had managed to work itself down into grass roots Glasgow” despite the play’s searing criticism of the Festival.¹³⁹ Given that members of the Easthall Theatre Group had attempted to command Festival resources to deliver their highly politicised and distinctly local critique of cultural spending and the lack of investment in pressing material disrepair, many found their inclusion in an article commending the Festival’s successful community reach galling.

Kelman’s essays do not typically draw on specific, local examples of community based cultural work such as Easthall Theatre Group, and instead advance a very broad critique of the dangers of creative accommodation to external political or commercial priorities. His essays do, however, highlight key concerns both with seemingly pragmatic approaches which lead to compromise, and with more idealistic attempts to turn funding towards more radical ends. Kelman portrays the Festival Office and local authority as frustrated by uncooperative artists, while they work diligently to promote the city - “showing all you artists up for the bunch of arty wankers you really are”.¹⁴⁰ He also suggests that cultural promoters attempted to strike a more conciliatory tone:

There was another approach to artists, this one was utilitarian; it appealed to both our sensibilities and to our reasonableness. Ok, the politicians and paid arts administration, the so called cultural workforce, might make mistakes and but it’s well intentioned and in the interests of everybody, and come on for christ sake nobody’s perfect. We all know how crass it all is but play along, don’t rock the boat, you might get something out of it, some kind of

¹³⁹ Mark Boyle discusses an article on community participation in the festival in the *Evening Times*, ‘The Cultural Politics of Glasgow, European City of Culture’, p. 322.

¹⁴⁰ James Kelman, ‘And the judges said’, p. 36.

commission maybe, a chocolate biscuit, a year's supply even, who knows, if not now in the long run, and if you don't maybe some other artists will, you might even know some of them.¹⁴¹

This approach presupposed artists' willingness to "show solidarity with the politicians and arts administration" for their own personal interests or "the best interests of the city itself".¹⁴² Noting that, "in this utilitarian argument art had nothing to do with it, art was kept out of it", Kelman reflects, "Never mind that it was precisely art as the product of individual people that was being hijacked and ripped off so mightily".¹⁴³ Kelman believes that this economic framework involves an attempt to "separate not only living artists from society but art itself".¹⁴⁴ If Kelman is opposed to such an instrumental approaches to artistic work, it should be noted that he does not advocate a wholly abstract, aesthetic notion of value. As he reflects in his essay, 'The Importance of Glasgow in My Work', "I don't subscribe *easily* to the 'art for art's sake' perspective [...] But there is a sense in which I do subscribe to it".¹⁴⁵ That is not to say that Kelman's view of artistic value is not somewhat idealistic in its aspirations— in his essay 'Artists and Value' he states that, "Roughly speaking the process of art is an aid to the purification of society".¹⁴⁶ Rather than sanctioning a particular form of collaboration, or suggest that one instrumental approach is more beneficial for others, Kelman cautions against the abstraction of artistic work from the life and labour of artists, "by human beings, by people" and reflects on the importance of biography.¹⁴⁷ In 'Artists and Value', he simply asks, "How do we tell if an artist has value?" and reflects that "We don't [...] We can tell if a *person* has value. And that value is moral if we want to be moral. Or monetary, if we want it to be monetary".¹⁴⁸ In 'The Importance of Glasgow in my Work', Kelman explains simply that "being an artist comes second to being a person", that artistic work is indivisible from the life of the artist, and that his broad

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid., pp. 36-37.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ James Kelman, 'The Importance of Glasgow in My Work', in *Some Recent Attacks*, pp. 78-84 (p. 79).

¹⁴⁶ James Kelman, 'Artists and Value', in *Some Recent Attacks*, pp. 5-15 (p. 13).

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁴⁸ James Kelman, 'Artists and Value', p. 12.

definition of artistic work encompasses any “project or other” an artist is committed to, including instances when “the ‘project’ the artist is committed to is social or political change”.¹⁴⁹ In terms of creative practice, “commitment” demands a willingness to “acknowledge” the “existence” of “censorship and participation” where it exists and to resist “external constraints” of forms which would force an artist “into compromise, to an extent that leads to a position which is ultimately dishonest”.¹⁵⁰ For Kelman, then, artistic work is indivisible from the life of the artist and has a moral value in so far as the people it portrays are “witnessed as individuals” in all their specificity.¹⁵¹

In this selection of critical writing, Kelman repeatedly advocates creative autonomy, authenticity and the capacity to act as an honest witness. These are values Kelman presents as core to his own artistic practice in his critical writing, and provided a ground for his refusal to support any aspect of Glasgow’s Culture Year, which Kelman clearly perceived as a threat to the creative independence of artists in the city. Later, the second chapter of this thesis will suggest that the very same capacities – the ability to act as a reliable witness, perceived distance from commercial interests and a commitment to creative independence – are increasingly positioned as qualities which make writers, in particular, well placed to act as witnesses and mediators of urban restructuring. As the subsequent chapter of this thesis will demonstrate, writers hold some distinctive appeal for housing authorities, developers and regeneration agencies to work with. The degree of creative autonomy and independence writers are often associated with, or presumed to enjoy has, it seems made them useful to situate within communities living through a period of urban regeneration, tasked with producing a creative record of residents’ experiences. That Kelman articulated such politically resistant values so fully and definitively in the early 1990s, only for that sense of autonomy and creative independence to be deployed in the strategic production of literary work by arts organisations and developers in later decades demonstrates how definitive this period was in shaping new relationships between urban writing and urban change.

¹⁴⁹ James Kelman, ‘The Importance of Glasgow in my work’, p. 79.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-91.

¹⁵¹ James Kelman, ‘Artists and Value’, p. 14.

As suggested in the introduction to this thesis, the overlapping relationship between cultural policy making and academic analysis of culture-led regeneration in the early 1990s means that early omission of the relationship between local literary writing and culture-led regeneration in Glasgow was effectively written into cultural policy studies as a discipline. As the opening of this chapter also stressed, though many writers in Glasgow did participate in Glasgow's Year of Culture and contribute to events and publications, writers were, as noted previously, broadly considered "too difficult to work with". This impression obscured the body of literary work that was developed in the course of the festival from critical consideration. Later analyses of the economic and cultural impact of Glasgow's year as the Capital of Culture omitted references to literary activity, beyond immediate activities in local publishing companies: a method which neglected the variety of literary events that took place in the course of the festival, and failed to take account of the period of time required to develop and publish literary work.¹⁵² As many of the consultants and 'cultural brokers' who developed and analysed the culture-led development strategies implemented in Glasgow also straddled academic careers and advanced influential accounts of the creative economy, this oversight of local literature and economies of literary production, I argue, became embedded into later research.¹⁵³ Decades on, analysis which focused on "soft indicators such as media and personal discourses as an approach to measuring cultural impacts and legacies" of Glasgow's Year of Culture included systematic study of press coverage but still no reference to high profile literary work which emerged in the aftermath of the event, such as Alasdair Gray's Whitbread Award winning novel *Poor Things* (1992).¹⁵⁴ The following case studies seek to redress this imbalance. In attending to a range of lesser-known and, in some cases, marginal writing, I hope to demonstrate that literary engagement with Glasgow's Year of Culture took many forms. While some writers were far more supportive of the overall aims of the cultural festival than the

¹⁵² This approach is evidenced in, for example, John Myerscough's report, *Monitoring Glasgow 1990* (Glasgow: Glasgow City Council, 1991).

¹⁵³ For further discussion on the intertwined development of cultural policy as a strategic practice and as a discipline see Louise Johnson, *Cultural Capitals: Revaluating the Arts, Remaking Urban Spaces* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2015).

¹⁵⁴ Beatriz García, 'Deconstructing the City of Culture: The Long-Term Cultural Legacies of Glasgow 1990', *Urban Studies*, 42.5-6 (2005), 841–68 (p. 841).

impression formed by the Workers City group, these case studies also show that there was more than one mode of literary resistance at work.

The Words and the Stones

Few projects developed during Glasgow's Year of Culture were as controversial as *The Words and the Stones*: the major exhibition renamed *Glasgow's Glasgow* when organisers realised its acronym would be *T.W.A.T.S.* Rebranding did not save it from criticism - by the time *Glasgow's Glasgow* opened, it offered a fairly anodyne exhibition of Glasgow's history at great cost. Alasdair Gray later recounted his opposition to this exhibition, describing how:

In 1988 I, Tom Leonard and Philip Hobsbaum were invited to meet the organisers of an exhibition planned for the Glasgow Culture Capital year [...] Glasgow, despite the splendid renovations, still had the remains of a bad reputation, and the exhibition was intended to counteract this. It would be financed by Glasgow District Council and be called *The Words and the Stones* because Glasgow contained so many beautiful buildings and fine writers.¹⁵⁵

Asked for their advice, Gray declares that he had “none to give” since “Glasgow’s best civic architecture this century had been good pre-war housing schemes built as a result of the Wheatley Acts – how could the District Council celebrate its achievements as a public landlord while selling its best housing stock to private buyers”.¹⁵⁶ Tom Leonard reportedly said that “what outsiders thought of Glasgow was *their* problem, not his”.¹⁵⁷ So, Gray quickly establishes a contrast between historical investment in durable social housing and spending on temporary cultural celebrations in 1990. Ultimately, spending and losses related to this project reached £4.6 million.¹⁵⁸ Visitor numbers were far lower than projected - it has been estimated that 1.2 million people would visit, but only around 500,000 attended and

¹⁵⁵ Alasdair Gray, ‘Introduction’ to Jack Withers, *A Real Glasgow Archipelago* (Argyll: Argyll Publishing, 1993), pp. 11-21, (p. 18).

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ £3.5 million had been provided in capital investment to renovate the exhibition space which, critics argued, far outstripped the level of financial support on offer for other projects. For further discussion of investigations the local authority led into the project’s financial management, see Mark Boyle, ‘The Cultural Politics of Glasgow, European City of Culture’.

mostly when the entrance fee had been reduced from £4 to £1. It is clear from internal progress reports on the project that the decision to charge for entrance had been made at an early stage. This move was highly controversial, and received fairly widespread criticism in the press as well as quarters of the city's cultural sector. Many felt it reneged on the understanding that Glasgow's civic museums and galleries would maintain free entry, and some were suspicious that charging for this exhibition augured the general introduction of entrance fees for Glasgow's museums. The controversy surrounding this high level of capital investment, coupled with the decision to charge for public entry, is emblematic of wider concerns about the Year of Culture in the context of the economic and political climate of the late 1980s: that the festival excluded low income citizens from civic life and was a vehicle for the privatisation of public space.

Glasgow's Glasgow's organisers had initially envisaged a conceptually challenging exhibition exploring the relationship between literary representations of Glasgow and the urban environment. An outline of this literary exhibition first appears in a letter from the architect, Douglas Clelland to the publicist Harry Diamond. Clelland makes the case for an exhibition on the scale of a European biennale, but focused on local writing:

What [...] is different about this suggestion, is the challenge of the concept itself. Previous exhibitions have not really attempted to synthesize the 'invisible' city of literature (*The Words*) with the 'visible' city of architecture and urban space (*The Stones*). In the past, books and objects have been set out like dead leather with little or no association for the visitor with drawings, models or photographs. The challenge inherent in the proposed idea is to do justice to the people and history of Glasgow by composing a series of twelve spaces constructed today and notable in their own terms, which synthesize the 'inner' and 'outer' urban experience of the city.¹⁵⁹

Clelland's ambition seems to have been to combine the representational qualities of urban literature with representations of urban space, unifying them in the reader and viewer's experience. From the very beginning of the exhibition's development, there was a wish to combine textual and material culture.

¹⁵⁹ Letter from Douglas Clelland to Harry Diamond, qtd. in *Glasgow's Glasgow: The Words and the Stones*, ed. by Carl MacDougall, (Glasgow: The Words and the Stones, 1990), p. 6.

Although there is a perception that high profile writers were not particularly involved with Glasgow 1990's key events, a number of local writers and literary figures did become closely involved with *The Words and the Stones*. While Alasdair Gray and Tom Leonard rejected invitations to lead aspects of the exhibition, other writers were very involved with the project. The author Carl MacDougall was a Director of the exhibition and played a key role in shaping its overall direction. MacDougall coordinated a range of subject experts from the arts and humanities to inform research and curatorial practice, including critics and experts including Joe Fisher; Cordelia Oliver; Angus Calder; David Daiches; Douglas Gifford; Edwin Morgan; Hamish Whyte; Andy Arnold; and Eleanor Harris. These posts were offered as paid appointments, with fees of £50 per half day session.¹⁶⁰ However, as Clelland had noted, the exhibition's curatorial focus on literature would be challenging to realise. An organisational progress report shows how the proposition began to change:

While the Exhibition should bear comparison with its European precedents, it should primarily exhibit the unique story of Glasgow. This can be achieved by relating language to the physical city. This idea, to utilize the performance arts to represent the way Glasgow uses language and the visual arts and cultural artefacts to represent the spaces and buildings of the city itself will be an Exhibition which 'lives'...¹⁶¹

This optimistic statement strayed from the original intention to "synthesize the 'invisible' city of literature...with the 'visible city of architecture and urban space'".¹⁶² The Exhibition still aimed to exhibit the "story" of Glasgow by "relating language to the physical city", but this was now to be achieved through "the performance arts": diverting curatorial focus from bridging representational relationships between textual portrayals of urban space and material spaces. A more general exploration of "the way Glasgow uses language" suggests an emphasis on the dramatic and the demotic.

¹⁶⁰ Equivalent to just over £100 today.

¹⁶¹ Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Writing Together, Acc. 10391/10, 'Progress Report, 'The Words and the Stones'.

¹⁶² Letter from Douglas Clelland to Harry Diamond, qtd. in *Glasgow's Glasgow: The Words and the Stones*, p. 6.

Another statement on the exhibition's progress explained that it 'will attempt to achieve an interaction between the performance and the visual arts and an interaction between texts and speech...and the physical city.'¹⁶³ Organisers proposed "a range of events which will address the "Words" side of the concept. These events will inhabit the Exposition which is designed as a "City Landscape". Events were to include "A *Glasgow Cycle* of commissioned theatrical performances...created by Glasgow writers" delivered as "a two hour performance by small, but notable theatre groups from Britain created on a collaborative basis, from our research material and through their interpretations. They will be directed by a notable European Director."¹⁶⁴ In addition to theatre produced by "notable" groups and directors, "seven Glasgow performers will be retained [...] to entertain and inform the public by theatrically exploring the meanings of the Exposition".¹⁶⁵ By this point, emphasis had clearly shifted away from interrogating the relationship between textual representation and urban space towards live performance and interpretive theatre. Organisers also wished to produce a book, "*Glasgow: The Words and the Stones*" to "encapsulate the aims of the Exposition", comprising "illustrations, drawings, cartoons, quotations" as well as "'commentaries' on Glasgow from celebrated European writers".¹⁶⁶ The publication was realised, edited by MacDougall, who also produced much of the copy, and it contained a range of personal reflections on the city, largely from local figures and critics rather than "celebrated European writers", illustrations and other snippets as well as new critical writing on the city's history.¹⁶⁷ A fee of £50 was allowed per insert. Though the publication makes an interesting contribution to writing about Glasgow in this period of transition, it has to be said that producing a souvenir book to "encapsulate the aims of the Exposition" is a counterintuitive way to try and "synthesize" literary and material representations of the city within an exhibition space.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ Edinburgh, NLS, Writing Together, Acc. 10391/10, 'Statement, March 1989', 'Progress Report, 'The Words and the Stones'.

¹⁶⁴ Letter from Douglas Clelland to Harry Diamond, qtd. in *Glasgow's Glasgow: The Words and the Stones*, p. 6.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

Constructing a coherent narrative for the exhibition and foregrounding the city's literary history was also proving challenging. A few months later, the exhibition's panel of literary experts (including Angus Calder, Douglas Gifford, Tom Lawrie, Jan MacDonald and Hamish Whyte) met to "review our position and intentions about the "Words" aspect of the Exposition".¹⁶⁹ They would employ an Artistic Director to co-ordinate theatrical performers who "would inhabit the entire Exposition, infiltrating throughout the various "Arches" with a number of small performances".¹⁷⁰ The panel also discussed some of the difficulties in planning interpretative theatre. The exhibition's eventual layout was not so much a "city landscape" as a series of themed collections, arranged in geographical quadrants. An internal prospectus described the arrangement as "Glasgow within Glasgow", an analogy of the city itself".¹⁷¹ Few critics found the curation convincing. One description commented on its "selfconsciously chaotic, collage-like presentation."¹⁷² The panel of experts also noted that, as developments stood, the exhibition had "a density" of artefacts in some areas "and a dearth in others, especially the East End of the city, which mirrors the landscape itself".¹⁷³ There was clearly an anxiety that the East End of Glasgow lacked a varied social and cultural history to exhibit, and the panel "discussed how this sector of the exhibition could look and the ways in which a theatrical representation could be helpful in a landscape of red blaes and stark images."¹⁷⁴

Aspects of the minutes and other internal communications along the exhibition organisers and advisors indicate further misgivings. Progress reports commenting on plans for themed sections of the exhibition do show that some areas of Glasgow were lavishly represented, but turning towards the East of the exhibition, the principle themes would be "heavy industry, textile industries, and violence".¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁹ Edinburgh, NLS, Writing Together, Acc. 10391/10, 'Resume of Meeting, Monday 15 May 1989'.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Miles Glendinning, Ranald MacInnes, and Aonghus MacKechnie, *A History of Scottish Architecture: From the Renaissance to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), p. 490.

¹⁷³ Edinburgh, NLS, Writing Together, Acc. 10391/10, 'Resume of Meeting, Monday 15 May 1989'.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

The “theme of violence” was principally to be portrayed in arches representing “two of the most famous districts for gang fighting...Bridgeton and the Calton...In some ways this may be a more challenging theme as it has few three dimensional artefacts apart from crude, cheap weapons”.¹⁷⁶ Considering representing what had been densely populated areas with little more than “crude, cheap weapons” shows an astonishing disregard for working class material culture beyond industrial history. The “theme of violence” could not have been given much consideration in the area themed around ‘Colonisation’ as ‘slavery’ was dropped from the list of exhibition subjects.¹⁷⁷ The elision of slavery from the planned exhibition is entirely indicative of *Glasgow’s Glasgow’s* tendency to offer up an incredibly partial, sanitized perspectives on the city’s social and economic history. It is, moreover, another example of the way in which, as Michael Morris puts it, Scotland’s “colonial past remains largely outside the national narrative”.¹⁷⁸ In fact this archival evidence demonstrates that Scotland’s colonial past was actively excluded from some cultural representations of civic life when it did threaten to appear. In his analysis of the “profound amnesia” of the Georgian era in the cultural memory of Glasgow, Craig Lamont reflects on some observations made by Mark O’Neill, the Director of Policy and Research at Glasgow Life, on the long hold Victorian industrial culture had on the city’s cultural imagination.¹⁷⁹ Lamont summates that “the city has been intrinsically involved in dictating imperial values on to the public as a sort of erasure of its social problems, rendering everything that came before the Victorian period as a sort of tributary flowing into the all-powerful Clyde of the shipbuilding era”.¹⁸⁰ The *Glasgow’s Glasgow* exhibition exemplifies that disposition – rendering the history of slavery completely absent while mounting a technologically inflected celebration of the city’s industrial past and global influence.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Michael Morris, ‘Atlantic Archipelagos: A Cultural History of Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World, c1740-1833’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 2013), p. 12.

¹⁷⁹ Craig Lamont, ‘Georgian Glasgow: the city remembered through literature, objects and cultural memory theory’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 2015), p. 32.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 264.

Nor was the exhibition any more attenuated to representing diverse contributions to the city's current cultural life and recent social history. The archives do not evidence serious discussion of representing minorities or migrant communities and there was also slight representation of the contribution women had made to Glasgow's history and culture. In an effort to counter the apparent lack of focus on women's lives and work, there was to be one area which celebrated the contribution women had made to civic life but, as the resume of one meeting notes, "balancing this positive side to the theme is the image of prostitution of Blythswood square and the new wave subject of AIDS and its effects on relationships in the future".¹⁸¹ Not only then, was the economic, cultural and social history of women in Glasgow to be confined to one discrete 'quadrant' within the entire exhibition but it was felt necessary to balance its "positive side" with what sound - from the tone of these minutes - like alarmist, stigmatizing materials on sexual health.

While the image of Glasgow envisaged by this exhibition remained narrow, it is also telling that the plans for subject themes and artefacts in each zone did not include any reference to literature from or about that area of Glasgow. The original ambition to integrate Glasgow's literary heritage into the exhibition space was no longer a curatorial priority. It was left to the theatre productions and promenade performances to bring a narrative dimension into the exhibition. Yet though the renovated venue did include a small theatre, the overall layout of the space and format of the programme suggests that theatre and performance was a marginal aspect of the exhibition as a whole.

Ultimately, however, it was the exhibition's theatrical element which led to long-term future use of the redeveloped space. When the temporary exhibition left the space vacant, Andy Arnold developed plans to use it and, as part of 1991's *Mayfest*, staged a cabaret performance based on the anthology of Glasgow poems, *Noise and Smoky Breath*.¹⁸² Arnold eventually went on to reopen the space on a permanent basis as a venue for experimental theatre. It grew into an artistically and commercially robust mixed-purpose venue, *The Arches*, which hosted a range of

¹⁸¹ Edinburgh, NLS, Writing Together, Acc. 10391/10, 'Resume of Meeting, Monday 15 May 1989'.

¹⁸² *Noise and Smoky Breath: An Illustrated Anthology of Glasgow Poems 1900-1983*, ed. by Hamish Whyte (Glasgow: Third Eye Centre and Ltd and Glasgow District Libraries, 1983).

performance forms from high-risk commercial theatre to live music until its controversial closure in 2015. It is significant that the *Mayfest* performance which marked the postindustrial site's transition from a prestige exhibition to an enduring experimental arts venue, was based on that anthology. *Noise and Smoky Breath* was published by the Third Eye Centre, a crucial locus for for experimental arts with a countercultural inflection. Its first artistic director was Tom McGrath: a key literary figure who expressed broad support for new directions in cultural investment in Glasgow in the 80s and 90s, and who had the credibility to act as an informal intermediary between institutions, bringing bring resources within reach of incipient creative projects. Under Chris Carrell's direction, the Third Eye Centre maintained a dynamic publishing wing, developing projects with Scottish authors and international writers, and hosted a discerning bookshop. Hamish Whyte edited this collection, drawing together a range of poetic voices exploring urban change in Glasgow. It opens with, and takes its title from, Alexander Smith's poem 'Glasgow' (1857) - an early response to the city's increasingly industrial identity.¹⁸³ It moves on chronologically: exploring Glasgow's industrial energy in the early twentieth century, giving way to gap-sites and rubble round post-war redevelopments, and into nostalgic or wistful reflections on the city's past and future. Images of the city are arranged throughout the anthology: sketches, paintings and photographs from artists and photographers including Muirhead Bone, Stanley Spencer, Oscar Marzaroli and Joan Eardley.¹⁸⁴ Their layout prompts comparisons between the representational qualities of urban poetry and visual portrays of the city through the twentieth century. A section from Alasdair Gray's 1964 painting, *Cowcaddens* takes the front page, and is reproduced in full as an insert on the back: its twisting, multiple perspectives on a muted cityscape an indication of the anthology's range and tone.

Andy Arnold's cabaret "wove the poems into a single piece of theatre" and set the direction for much of the theatre that would be produced in *The Arches*.¹⁸⁵ In

¹⁸³ Alexander Smith, 'Glasgow' (1857), in *Noise and Smoky Breath*, pp. 7-10.

¹⁸⁴ The scope of this poetry anthology and its attenuation to poetry and photography with similar aesthetic preoccupations is indicative of the productive creative interchange between local writers, artists and publishers in the 1980s, as Sarah Lowndes has argued in *Social Sculpture*.

¹⁸⁵ Andy Arnold, 'Burns in Spate', *The Herald*, 29 May 2004

<<https://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/books/burns-in-spate-1-532973>> [accessed 22

comparison with visual arts, exhibition spaces, and other event based cultural forms, Glasgow's literature has not always been seen to have played an instrumental role in shaping the city's postindustrial identity and urban form but this site's transformation was subtended by Glasgow's literary culture. Its move from disuse, to a temporary exhibition space, to a popular contemporary arts centre was initiated by the impetus to explore the relationship between the city's literary history and its urban form. The resultant exhibition was shaped by a number of local writers and literary historians, though it ultimately became a flashpoint for controversy with protests against it led by authors associated with the Workers City group. Writers' long-term involvement with other cultural institutions and creative networks in Glasgow made projects like *Noise and Smoky Breath* possible. This poetic drama, exploring deindustrialisation and urban change in Glasgow, laid the ground for decades of local, radical theatre in *The Arches*.

Writing Together

The other principle literary programme during Glasgow's Culture Year, *Writing Together*, attempted to set out with some radical aims of its own. Its objective was to bring local writers and audiences together with a range of high profile international authors including a Chinua Achebe, Ngūgĩ wa Thiong'o and Ama Ata Aidoo. *Writing Together* was co-ordinated by the Festival Unit and arranged in three instalments over eighteen months and incorporated sessions of workshops, conferences and book readings. Like other aspects of Glasgow 1990's cultural programme, it received some criticism for being too centralised and remote from potential participants. In 'Glasgow's Miles...Out', an essay in *The Reckoning* (1990), Workers City group's follow-up to their 1988 anthology, Norman Bissell complained that, "the 1990 'Writing Together' events, centred at Glasgow University and the Arches, in spite of the many thousands of pounds spent bringing many excellent writers from all over the world to Glasgow, for the most part remained

February 2014]. Arnold next staged Tony Harrison's *v.* (a narrative poem interrogating local identity in the context of the 1984-85 miners' strike) with a cast of long-term unemployed workers.

within the confines of the literary establishment with little living connection with the new vital forces among writers and their audience in and around the city”.¹⁸⁶

Certainly, *Writing Together* events were co-ordinated in conjunction with universities and literary organisations, academically orientated publications and critical voices. Angus Calder, an influential literary critic and cultural historian was pivotal to *Writing Together*, and the festival involved many well-known Glasgow based writers such as Edwin Morgan, Janice Galloway, Liz Lochhead and Jackie Kay, as well as prominent Scottish critics and researchers. A special issue of the literary journal *Chapman* was committed to the festival, featuring new writing from many of the authors present.¹⁸⁷ The perception that *Writing Together* was organised under the auspices of the city’s universities and literary critics may also have been reinforced by the fact that the festival employed an administrative assistant and was able to base their office at Glasgow University.¹⁸⁸

However, when the cultural programme that Glasgow City Council’s Festival Unit funded and ultimately oversaw is examined in detail, a more complex picture emerges. Norman Bissell’s charge that the festival largely “remained within the confines of the literary establishment” is dubious. *Writing Together* included author visits to over sixty schools in the area, and talks and workshops hosted in locations as varied as George Square, the Tramway, Cranhill Community Project, Barlinnie Special Unit and Castlemilk Writers Group. Moreover, the literary festival’s organisers had collaborated with Strathclyde Community Relations Council (SCRC) from the outset, which was the main umbrella organisation leading equal opportunities and anti-racism work at the time and included representatives from a wide range of groups. Links were also made with the Workers Educational Association, the Scottish International Labour Council, and the Scottish Committee for Anti-Apartheid.

Writing Together’s lead organiser was initially Barbara Orton, the Festival Unit’s Communities Officer. Orton’s background was in community development

¹⁸⁶ Norman Bissell, ‘Glasgow’s Miles...Out’, in *The Reckoning: Public Loss Private Gain: Workers City*, ed. by Farquhar McLay, (Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 1990), pp. 66-72 (p. 70).

¹⁸⁷ *Writing Together: An International Anthology – Chapman Magazine*, ed. by Joy Hendry, *Chapman*, 61/2 (1990).

¹⁸⁸ Edinburgh, NLS, *Writing Together*, Acc. 10391/4.

and she brought over a decade of experience working in communities in the East of Scotland to the Festival Unit. She had been employed by the Pilton Community Association as an arts worker in the early 1980s, and as well as developing a range of arts programmes, supported a range of local activists' campaigns and community initiatives such as playschemes.¹⁸⁹ She later organised festivals and arts events in Muirhouse and Craigmillar. As Communities Officer, her brief was, as she puts it, to “to organise and co-ordinate the community part of the Festival”, to “integrate the community into the festivities” and “celebrate Glasgow as a City of Culture”.¹⁹⁰ However, her own professional intentions extended far beyond building local community audiences and promoting accessibility. Orton saw her role as having three key components. The first was to develop community involvement with the Year of Culture celebrations, but Orton did not define ‘community’ involvement narrowly and stresses, “my vision was to connect with *other* communities *locally*, around the world”.¹⁹¹ That outward looking, transnational mode of community involvement formed part of the Cultural Programme as Orton was “encouraging other Culture Cities” who had previously hosted the Festival, and other groups “to come to Glasgow and join in the celebrations at a *community* level”.¹⁹² Her second objective was to bring the capacity building aspects of community arts work to Glasgow’s Year of Culture, stating that she wanted to “get beyond stunts [...] “I wanted to set up structures, or sow the seeds for structures that would continue events after 1990” and would help build “a legacy of community organisation...and I knew how to do that”.¹⁹³ For Orton, this meant helping communities access Festival funding to develop and deliver the events they wanted. Decisions about funding approval did not focus on “making any judgements about whether an event was good or not”, but, Orton says, on whether applicants were able to manage the event and show a reasonable degree of organisation and a sense of value for money.¹⁹⁴ The third aspect of her role was to “build up really big events” in order to “bring people

¹⁸⁹ North Edinburgh Social History Group, *Never Give Up: A community’s fight for social justice* (Coventry: Community Development Journal, 2011), p. 30.

¹⁹⁰ Barbara Orton, in conversation, Glasgow, 25 July 2016.

¹⁹¹ Ibid. Emphasis mine.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

together [...] to do something they couldn't do themselves", perhaps multiple events coalescing around a wider theme, or on a scale which made "some sort of splash – we had to do that".¹⁹⁵

Writing Together was one of those 'bigger splash' community events, involving multiple events and venues and organised around an inclusive theme.¹⁹⁶ Orton's intention with *Writing Together* was to develop a literary festival which connected local communities in Glasgow directly to local communities elsewhere, including former Cities of Culture. She also wished to bring other people to Glasgow to take part in the Festival "on a community level".¹⁹⁷ The high profile writers that were invited to participate were not simply selected due to their global stature, but because they were authors of worldwide renown who were also "community writers". Orton reflects that writers like Chinua Achebe and Ama Ata Aidoo had "something special that made them work" in this context, because their writing was expressly concerned with interrogating ideas about community, or because the authors split their time between working in very cosmopolitan contexts as lecturers and writers, and community activism. The aim was not only to bring internationally awarded authors to speak in "big status halls" but also into local communities which, Orton felt, the invited writers were excited about. The billing also included bestselling writers, such as Sue Townsend, whose work was incredibly popular but, Orton thought, still represented some aspect of "a peoples' perspective [...] "they weren't the Martin Amises of this world".¹⁹⁸ Programming a writing festival took Orton's experience in community arts in a slightly different direction since in Scotland writers who wanted to be involved in community arts in the 1970s and 1980s typically directed their efforts within community theatre.

Writing Together may have succeeded on a number of own Orton's measures, but developing the festival was not straightforward, and it is apparent that at points these events damaged some relationships between communities, stimulated conflict over funding and resources and effectively marginalised some of the minority and

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Others included *Raring to Go* - a festival aimed at older people and the first Glasgow Mela which was held in the Tramway.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

migrant communities that organisers had aimed to represent. It is telling that the internal nickname for the project came to be ‘Fighting Together’ due to a general and persistent level of conflict among organisers and participants. Orton has indicated that conflict was an aspect of arts organising that Orton had come to understand and even expect due to her extensive experience in community development. In this context, her role was made more difficult by the fact that many of Glasgow’s high profile writers wanted nothing to do with this - or any other - project related to the Glasgow 1990 Festival. Many community groups were not inclined to be receptive either, and Orton experienced a reasonable degree of hostility based on the perception that she represented the Council and the Council’s wider interests. Despite the fact that one of Orton’s own principle objectives was to push Festival funds out to community groups, and use the Year of Culture as an opportunity to draw on temporary resources to build community capacity, many were unwelcoming “because I was the council, I was that 1990 group who were going ‘top down’”.¹⁹⁹

Orton recalls that she approached Angus Calder to lead much of *Writing Together* as she knew him from her previous work in Edinburgh and admired the perspective of his influential work of social history *The People’s War* (1969). She understood that Calder was well connected to literary networks through universities, and also had good relationships with a range of African writers, since he had been involved in organising the Commonwealth Writers Conference which ran alongside Edinburgh’s Commonwealth Games in 1986. By selling the Conference’s archive to the National Library the organisers raised £500. They used this sum to fund a series of poetry readings titled *Rum and Scotch* at the 1987 Edinburgh Book Festival. Some records suggest a slightly fuzzier path of development: unclear about the degree to which the *Writing Together* was initiated by the Festivals Office or more gradually developed from a broader range of incipient initiatives. One letter from the SCRC states that, “A proposal for an International Festival of Writing was put to the Festival’s Unit in 1988 by Strathclyde Community Relations Council, it was combined with a number of other writing proposals and finally emerged as “Writing Together” who held a very successful trailer event in September 1989.”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Edinburgh, NLS, *Writing Together*, Acc. 10191/1, Letter from Strathclyde Community Relations Council.

Elsewhere, a letter from Angus Calder in the middle of 1989 notes “a brave little meeting in the People’s Palace last winter [...] where the project of which I enclose details was born. We’ve now got (at last) funding assured by Glasgow 1990 and are hastily trying to pull the act together”.²⁰¹ At least one memo was sent directly from Barbara Orton to Angus Calder as early as January 1989, but financing, it seems, took longer to confirm and the Festivals Unit did not fund *Writing Together* in its entirety.

Records show that Angus Calder spent considerable efforts securing support for writers’ travel expenses, including grants from the Arts Council of Great Britain, the British Council and the Pakistan High Commission. Under Calder’s direction, there was a markedly egalitarian approach to speakers’ fees. As Calder put it, “One principle we’ve adopted is that Scottish writers will get the same as imported stars”, with fees and expenses all paid at a flat rate.²⁰² This principle not only put emerging local writers on the same footing as high profile authors, but made *Writing Together* a genuine source of income as well as a site for collaboration for new writers. Calder also took the view that local universities should be involved in planning and organising the event, and with several parties co-ordinating the programme there were some tensions around the direction of the Festival.

The first *Writing Together* events took place between the 1st and 4th of September, largely hosted in Glasgow University and the Moir Hall at the Mitchell Theatre. The programme’s main sessions were themed around aspects of identity, including ‘The Writer and Language’ with an address from Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o and response from Edwin Morgan;²⁰³ ‘The Writer and Class’ with Sue Townsend and a response from the Castlemilk Writers Workshop; ‘The Writer and Gender’ with Shirley Lim and responses from Liz Lochhead and Ama Ata Aidoo. Other events included readings at the Phoenix Theatre in Barlinnie Special Unit.

The next instalment took place between the 3rd and 8th April 1990. Titled ‘From Glasgow to Saturn’, in Edwin Morgan’s honour, the festival programme states that it “celebrates the 70th birthday of Glasgow poet Edwin Morgan, and continues to

²⁰¹ Edinburgh, NLS, *Writing Together*, Acc. 10391/1, Letter from Angus Calder to Janey Buchan MEP, 11 July 1989.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ Kamau Braithwaite was programmed but did not appear at the festival.

explore and discuss the crucial, and now topical issues of nationhood, race, gender, class and culture”.²⁰⁴ Key events clustered around this occasion, including Morgan’s celebratory lecture ‘Saturn and Other Rings’ at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in the city centre. As the wording on the programme suggests, there was some degree of friction around the scope of the Festival. This part of *Writing Together* was perhaps the most strongly orientated towards an academic audience or, as Bissell put it, a “literary establishment”.²⁰⁵ Orton recalls that negotiating internal conflict among critics and researchers was not necessarily any less difficult than conflicts among community arts groups, where resources were scarce and opportunities were comparatively rare. The general approach was that organisers at universities would have space to develop their own programme within the overall festival. The programme for April reflects some balance between *Writing Together*’s core objectives and other literary interests. There was a series of day long talks and readings on ‘Race, gender and class’ in fiction, poetry and drama. For example, one session on Race, Gender and Class in Drama was led by Ama Ata Aidoo, Harwarnt Bains, Peter Arnott and Ngūgĩ wa Thiong’o. Up to twenty international writers visited from a wide range of countries including Sudan, St Kitts and Malaysia and more than twenty-five writers based in Scotland were represented. Access to these core day time events were ticketed and charged at up to £5 per day.²⁰⁶ Evening events included themed poetry evenings and an ‘Indian Mushaira’. Other aspects of the programme at Glasgow University appear to have focused more particularly on local writing than on exploring cross cutting themes, with sessions themed around ‘Glasgow Drama’, ‘Glasgow Song’ and ‘Glasgow Fiction and Poetry’ led by writers and critics such as Tom McGrath, David Hutchison, Douglas Gifford and Edwin Morgan.

Events elsewhere included readings hosted by local writers groups in Maryhill Central Halls and the Cranhill Community Project, performances at Barlinne and “Special Events for Glasgow’s Asian, Chinese and Italian Communities”.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ Writing Together, festival programme, *From Glasgow to Saturn: Writing Together: An International Festival of Writing, Glasgow April 3rd-8th* (1990).

²⁰⁵ Norman Bissell, ‘Glasgow’s Miles...Out’, p. 70.

²⁰⁶ Equivalent to around £10 today. *Writing Together*, festival programme (April, 1990).

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

Amnesty International also programmed public readings in George Square, where local and visiting authors would read work by writers who were in detention. While the core programme in April was clearly based at Glasgow University, other events did attempt to offer some degree balance to the programme both in terms of content and accessibility. Nevertheless, tensions remained. Shortly after April's programme, Angus Calder wrote to Maggie Chetty of the SCRC relaying some of the difficulties the festival had and the "complaints by Scottish writers" he had received about *Writing Together's* emphasis on gender, race and class. Calder concludes, "I'm clearer and clearer that consciousness of the *Writing Together* issues in Scotland is extremely uneven" and expressed frustration that one well established local writer "clearly couldn't see how the themes related to him and his work. I don't know how one orients such people freshly without trying to involve them, and risking failure."²⁰⁸

The final part of the festival took place between the 9th and 23rd of September 1990. Many of the events were situated within *Glasgow's Glasgow*, which, given the controversy surrounding the exhibition space, may have contributed to the perception that *Writing Together* was very much within the mainstream of 1990s programming. Angus Calder had written to Douglas Clelland in July, 1989 asking if *Writing Together* could be 'in residence' in the *The Words and the Stones* space in September.²⁰⁹ Clelland replied immediately:

This makes wonderful reading and we would be delighted to host the September 1990 period. I shall do all that I can with Carl [MacDougall], Andy Arnold, our Artistic Director, and Eleanor Harris, our Events Co-ordinator to integrate your ideas in with our programme. I shall keep you informed of how this dovetailing will develop, but take it from me, with Carl and I strongly supporting this initiative, I am sure we will all benefit from your exciting plans.²¹⁰

Quite apart from the view that writers were barely involved with the Year of Culture, or that little scope was afforded to literary events, this letter between two organisers shows that there was some real enthusiasm for showcasing literary work, eagerness

²⁰⁸ NLS, *Writing Together*, Acc. 10391/1, Letter from Angus Calder to Maggy Chetty, 25 April 1990.

²⁰⁹ NLS, Acc. 10391/10, Letter from Angus Calder to Douglas Clelland, 10 July 1989.

²¹⁰ NLS, Acc. 10391/10, Letter from Douglas Clelland to Angus Calder, 13 July 1989.

to build creative relationships, and willingness to accommodate other programmes. However, *The Words and the Stones* gradually departed from its initial focus on local literature, and by the time *Writing Together* took place in September 1990, *Glasgow's Glasgow* delivered a fairly anodyne exhibition at great cost, and had been the centre of much controversy, including spirited public criticism and a protest led by many of the writers associated with the Workers City group. The setting was loaded, and indeed, in one letter to Alison Miller of the Castlemilk Writers Workshop, Calder noted that some had “ideological objections” to using the site.²¹¹

Though many of *Writing Together's* September events were anchored in *Glasgow's Glasgow* the programme as a whole was not particularly centralised. This instalment leaned far less heavily on lectures and seminars than the programme in spring, focusing much more on visits to schools and public libraries. Local writers' groups had more prominence in the programme, and it included a day-long seminar, ‘How to Get Published’ for “all aspiring writers” at Maryhill Community Central Halls.²¹² There were generally more community led events, for example, in collaboration with the Ghana Welfare Association, Annex Writers Group, the Unemployed Workers Centre in Milton and the Govanhill Neighbourhood Centre. Admission to most events was free. As though to make the range of literary voices and venues as apparent as possible the back page of the programme arranges the details of ‘The Authors’ and ‘Venues’, including addresses and postcodes, on an otherwise blank space. Some larger scale events included “a seminar on equality, literacy and race for teachers” organised by the SCRC.²¹³ A forum titled ‘Voices from the Margin’ was billed as “Bringing themes of the festival together in one Comprehensive discussion” on the “variety of experience which literature makes available within and between communities” and the “power of literature to express another reality and to promote understanding”.²¹⁴ There were also talks and readings by Miroslav Holub and Duo Duo at the School of Art and a ‘multicultural mushaira’ at the Tramway.²¹⁵

²¹¹ NLS, *Writing Together*, Acc. 10391/5, Letter from Angus Calder to Alison Miller, 2 February 1990.

²¹² *Writing Together*, festival programme (September 1990).

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

Other records indicate that *Writing Together's* organisers had long term objectives for supporting minority writing in Scotland. As one letter from Calder to Bashir Maan comments, "it is hoped that *Writing Together* will help to develop some long term resources for writing and publishing within the Strathclyde ethnic minority communities. It is also hoped that we can encourage a wider network of contacts between writers of different background in Scotland and abroad".²¹⁶ The writing festival also contributed to "a multicultural book fair" and further conferences for teachers.²¹⁷ But written correspondence shows that relationships could be tense, and the atmosphere of this festival was not eased by the controversy surrounding Salman Rushdie's recent publications, which ran high in the press. One letter concerning an event hinted that it was difficult to put together suitably 'neutral' participants in a panel for a Glasgow-based audience.²¹⁸ The degree of inexperience arts organisers in Glasgow had of working with more diverse communities is evidenced by the fact that the second instalment of *Writing Together* had originally been scheduled for May which did not take account of Ramadan and so dates had to be moved at a later stage. Individual and institutional relationships also showed strain. After the first instalment of *Writing Together*, Usha Brown, who been asked at short notice to replace Bikhu Parekh as a key speaker, wrote to Calder stressing that her session had been completely omitted from Calder's report of the event to Glasgow 1990's Festival Unit:

There is a certain irony in the report referring to the lack of a British Asian presence and the intention to target 'newly arrived communities' in that the only contributor not considered worthy of mention is a black woman (of Indian origin) living in Scotland [...] As a black woman I am used both to such 'strategic silence' and the invisibility of my contributions. I did not, however, expect it to occur in a Festival which had its themes as Race, Gender and Class...²¹⁹

²¹⁶ NLS, *Writing Together*, Acc. 10391/3, Letter from Angus Calder to Bashir Maan, Community Relations Council, 25 April 1990.

²¹⁷ *Writing Together*, festival programme (September 1990).

²¹⁸ NLS, *Writing Together*, Acc. 10391/3, Letter from Angus Calder to Maggie Chetty, 8 February 1989.

²¹⁹ NLS, *Writing Together*, Acc. 10391/3, Letter from Usha Brown to Angus Calder, 29 October 1989.

Calder replied, promising Brown that the omission was accidental and owed to the report being prepared at short notice. He stressed that he found it “ – please forgive me – rather bizarre to be accused of ‘strategic silence’ over your contribution to *Writing Together* when my chief motive for being involved in the project has been concern over race as an issue in Scotland.”²²⁰ Brown was unconvinced, and felt Calder had chosen to “veil the replacement of Dr Parekh by a non-celebrity”, suggesting that “You may find it bizarre to be accused of ‘strategic silence’ and you obviously do not like it, but that is what you have practiced, however elegantly.”²²¹ Other participants took strong positions on the omission of Usha Brown’s contribution from the programme. Alison Miller of the Workers Educational Association took the view that Calder should have resigned over the omission, “an insult compounded by the implication that Kole Omotoso had taken over instead of her”, and wrote to state that the Workers Educational Association would pull out of the writing festival: “We find the incident with Usha paradigmatic of your whole attitude, one characterised by a strong attachment to hierarchies of importance. It is not an attitude which we could be associated with and still retain any credibility in the areas in which we work”.²²² Miller goes on to address disagreement over format of a previous event with the Castlemilk Writers Workshop, “If the session had been conducted as you had wanted, the Castlemilk participants would have been relegated to a subordinate role befitting their lesser importance, while the major writer was treated with due deference”.²²³

These exchanges show something of the difficulties that organisers encountered in reconciling their objectives, and the range of attenuation to the dynamics of race, class and power at work throughout the event. *Writing Together* was a festival where the tenacious ethos of community arts movements rubbed up against Glasgow 1990s boosterist framework, and also the more academic end of a literary culture which, perhaps, felt quite distinct from either mode of cultural

²²⁰ NLS, *Writing Together*, Acc. 10391/3, Letter from Angus Calder to Usha Brown, 14 November 1989.

²²¹ NLS, *Writing Together*, Acc. 10391/3, Letter from Usha Brown to Angus Calder, 26 November 1989.

²²² NLS, *Writing Together*, Acc 10391/3, Letter from Alison Miller to Angus Calder, 8 March 1990.

²²³ *Ibid.*

politics. Its organisers' evidenced a commitment to programming events in partnership with a wide range of community organisations and in venues outside the city centre. However, Orton and Calder were poorly equipped to carry out such sensitive work with minority groups and migrant communities. Not only did Calder lack experience of community arts work but Orton's own community arts expertise had been rooted in quite different settings, principally suburban housing schemes whose residents had different priorities to those which emerged in the course of *Writing Together*. Moreover, Orton was co-ordinating a wide range of other community programmes and festivals, and could hardly provide the support the project would have needed in order to plan work in collaboration with communities in a more satisfactory and meaningful way.

Despite these shortcomings, the varied programming *Writing Together* did manage to produce clearly troubles the view that the Festivals Unit simply focused on cultural initiatives which would enhance the city's international profile or attract discretionary spending. That is not to say that these were not key aims for Glasgow's Year of Culture – there is ample evidence that the strategy as whole aimed to reposition Glasgow's image and economy, but that there were professionals involved with the cultural programme who wanted to redirect resources and decisions directly to local communities.

Still, a decade later, the failure of the *Writing Together* festival to engender any real long term support for resources for minority writers or migrant communities was evidenced by the efforts Suhyal Saadi took to establish Pollokshield Writers Group in 1999. Saadi secured a Millenium Commission Award in order to support this work, and was able to involve a number of established local writers and artists to develop work with the those beginning to write. Saadi has since reflected:

When I started writing, about ten years ago, there seemed to be no Black writers in Glasgow; actually, there were a few, but I had no way of knowing that, or any way of knowing how to go about knowing it. I felt that a similar writer who was beginning to try to write now, ought to be able to leap that hurdle more adroitly than I, and so I set it up, partly as a way of 'seeding' a network and also for a sense of solidarity. Why is that important? I grew up in Glasgow in the 1970's, when racism in all social classes was totally naked and untrammelled. This can lead to a real sense of alienation and a fragmentation of the personality, with all the negative consequences stemming thereof [...] It's important to combat that process, to centre oneself.

Saadi has been glad to stress a number of literary projects which followed the Pollockshield Writers Group, including the Community Relations Council Poetry Competition, also in 1999, the ‘multicultural anthology’ of poetry, *Wish I Was Here*, published in 2000. He also emphasises the positive impact the writing group had on the creative development of writers involved, including Sheila Puri who went on to publish poetry and short stories.

Certainly, the room Saadi found to initiate new work indicates that projects like *Writing Together* had fairly little long term impact. In fact, it has been noted that when Liverpool went on to bid for the City of Culture accolade just over decade later, its bid “the World in One City” was explicitly marketed as a celebration of multiculturalism, and the comparative “absence of this trope from Glasgow” was made even clearer.²²⁴ As Tim Bunnell put it, “Liverpool’s bid suggested space for minority ethnic groups and ‘communities’ that had not existed during Glasgow’s time as European Capital of Culture”.²²⁵

In the immediate context of 1990, the Workers City group had also criticised the Year of Culture for catering only to an elite, and presenting a homogenised view of the city:

unaware that for over a century Glasgow has been a city not of one cultures but of many cultures. Successive generations of Scots, Irish, Gaelic, Jewish, Indian, Pakistani, Polish, Caribbean, Chinese, African and other people have come to live and work in Glasgow [...] Those who came joined a huge class of people who had to struggle just to survive and who developed a rich tradition of struggle for economic, social, political and cultural change²²⁶

Yet, however successfully, *Writing Together* had aimed to showcase minority writing in Glasgow, together with giving a platform to authors and writers’ groups from working class communities. In his essay, Bissell did note “some of the other worthwhile events” such as “the Glasgow Mela, Women in Profile and Sechaba”.²²⁷ From 1990 onwards, the Mela became an enduring fixture in Glasgow’s cultural

²²⁴ Tim Bunnell, *From World City to the World in One City: Liverpool through Malay Lives* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2016), p. 176.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

²²⁶ Norman Bissell, ‘Glasgow’s Miles...Out’, p. 67.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

calendar. *Women in Profile*, as discussed previously, was a crucial nexus for women's writing, art and activism, developing into the Glasgow Women's Library which opened in Garnethill in 1991 and, after growing through several subsequent locations, is now permanently housed in a former Carnegie Library in Bridgeton. Sechaba was an anti-racist, anti-apartheid festival and conference which ran for five days. As well as the conference in the City Halls and City Chambers, there was a varied programme of political speakers (including Govan Mbeki), exhibitions, cinema theatre and literary events (including a talk and reading from Morgane Serote) at venues including the Pearce Institute in Govan, Toryglen Community Halls, Knightswood Youth Club and Drumchapel Unemployed Workers Centre. A new anthology of writing from South Africa and Scotland, *The End of the Regime?* was also intended to mark the festival.²²⁸ It is, however, important to note that while the very limited mention of the Sechaba festival in contemporary press accounts, in surveys of cultural activity in 1990, or in ephemera tends to portray the programme in a positive light, the South African novelist Zoë Wicomb's recollection of Sechaba stresses that its discussion and performances offered audiences "the hallowed spectacle of musicians with drums and dancers scantily clad in animal skins".²²⁹ In particular, Wicomb criticises the way in which this "phenomenon of cultural expression" was framed in Glasgow, where musicians and dancers were "sedately applauded by white trade unionists and A.N.C. officials in four-piece suits" and "a Scottish clansman followed with kilt and bagpipes, suggesting an equivalence in the national appeal to tradition".²³⁰

Though this range of programming may challenge the view that Glasgow's Year of Culture was narrow or homogenous, Bissell insists that Glasgow 1990s organisers had no real commitment to making the wider cultural programme successful for participants or audiences, asserting that these events "suffered from timing problems, events overkill and Festivals Unit bad planning" but "To the 1990

²²⁸ *The End of a Regime?: An Anthology of Scottish South African Writing Against Apartheid*, ed. by Brian Filling and Susan Stuart (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1991).

²²⁹ Zoë Wicomb, 'Tracing the Path from National to Official Culture, in *Race, Nation Translation: South African Essays, 1990-2013*, ed. by Zoë Wicomb and Andrew Van Der Vlies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), pp. 37-53 (p. 38).

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

PR industry this didn't seem to matter as long as it was there in the glossy brochures and could be shown to potential business 'relocators'".²³¹ Bissell also argues that the Festival Unit merely took advantage of Glasgow's existing creative strengths: "Cultural activities of diverse kinds have been developing for many years in and around the city of Glasgow, mostly pioneered by unsung heroines and heroes who received little recognition, never mind money".²³² In his view:

The cultural cowboys of the Festivals Unit have tried to incorporate as many of the ongoing artistic developments as they could under the 1990 umbrella by means of limited amounts of funding.

To their credit some groups and individuals have refused to 'take the money' and have survived and flourished anyway.²³³

Viewed retrospectively, the development of Glasgow 1990's key literary festival, *Writing Together*, demonstrates that there were two principle means of resisting the 'top down' nature of Glasgow's culture-led development strategy, both at work during Glasgow's Culture Year. One approach, as practiced by Festival Unit staff like Barbara Orton was to use the funds available for cultural programming in a tactical way, persisting with community arts approaches and pushing resources out into communities - not to provide capital investment or try to develop a particular institution, but to bring together different community interests and develop local capacities. The other approach, demonstrated by writers such as Kelman and activists like the Workers City group was to refuse any engagement on those terms, responding and writing on a purely oppositional basis. Both these approaches, in fact, were intended to resist the commodification of working class culture.

Later, various literary responses to the year-long festival adopted another approach to literary resistance by taking a more satirical look at grandiose civic ambitions and anxieties about cultural authenticity.²³⁴ Similarly, newspaper cartoonists had been quick to poke fun at cultural pretensions from early on in the festival and the comic strip *Electric Soup* produced several spikey editions on the

²³¹ Norman Bissell, 'Glasgow's Miles...Out', p. 70.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 69.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

²³⁴ See for example Mark Smith's comic novel, *Masel* (Glasgow: Taranis Books, 1992).

Year of Culture.²³⁵ Ian McGinness's novel *Bannock* (1990) sees an otherwise unremarkable town try to profit from an invented cultural heritage.²³⁶ Mark Smith's comic novel, *Masel* (1992) is an irreverent take on Glasgow's Year of Culture, following "an American folk music expert and self-confessed failure as a performing musician" mistakenly invited by Glasgow District Council to deliver a headline festival performance.²³⁷ Jeff Torrington's *Swing Hammer Swing!* had been in draft form for many years but was published in 1992, and, though it was set in the 1960s, includes many comments on the commodification of working class culture which chime with critiques of Glasgow's Culture Year. In one passage, the owner of a dilapidated cinema begins sketching out plans to persuade the Lord Provost to preserve the building as "The Gorbals House of History' ... a powerful cultural magnet" featuring historical artefacts ("mugs, jugs and wally dugs") and "living tableau".²³⁸ It is difficult not to draw comparisons with *Glasgow's Glasgow's* range of memorabilia and street theatre, and Torrington goes on to send up the merchandising potential of the 'Gorbals House of History', with "wee model slums that tinkled 'I Belong Tae Glaesga' when their roofs were raised" and other such "megasignificant" trinkets.²³⁹ *Swing Hammer Swing!* suggests that the postindustrial heritage industry offers social history up for cultural consumption, diminishing and containing radical legacies. Ian Spring's reflective essays on Glasgow's new urban identity, *Phantom Village: the Myth of the New Glasgow* (1990) draw similar conclusions:

What we can expect to emerge from the fertile soup of culture year may only be Glasgow reproducing itself in miniature [...] enthusiasts can now buy small porcelain tenements, genuinely crafted, detached and glazed in pastel shades [...] And the next stage, the paper tenement, which you make yourself

²³⁵ Special issues of the comic titled, *Kultchir Boak* (Glasgow: Electric Soup Press, 1990) eviscerated the pretensions of the 'Culture Year'. For further discussion of cartoons and comic writing on the Festival, see Matthew Reason, 'Cartoons and the European City of Culture', in *Urban Mindscapes of Europe*, ed. by Godela Weiss-Sussex and Franco Bianchini (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 179-196.

²³⁶ Ian McGinness, *Bannock: A Novel* (Glasgow: Polygon, 1990).

²³⁷ Mark Smith, *Masel*, back matter.

²³⁸ Jeff Torrington, *Swing Hammer Swing!* (Glasgow: Secker and Warburg, 1992), p. 376.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 376-77.

(and therefore has some value as a craft object) sniping out as you go, if you fancy, your own paper inhabitants.²⁴⁰

For Spring, the Year of Culture combined enthusiasm for commercial opportunity with the desire to redefine Glasgow's identity – marketing the city's industrial past and domestic history in a way that is kitsch and containable. It is this sense of commodification, more than any other aspect of Glasgow's culture-led regeneration strategy, that campaigners like the Workers City group railed against, and it is a key theme in related literature of protest.

The following two case studies examine two books which respond very differently to the impetus to commodify aspects of the city's social and cultural history. *Phantom Village* had its roots in an essay Spring wrote for the Scotia Bar Writers Prize, published in the resultant anthology *A Spiel Amang Us: Glasgow People Writing* (1990). The Scotia Bar was a hub for writers involved with the Workers City campaign, and *A Spiel Amang Us* contains a variety of oppositional fiction, troubling the ownership of Glasgow's new urban identity, and the political aims of community art. In contrast, I also look at one of the most commercial publications related to the Festival - the souvenir book produced for Glasgow's Culture Year.

1990: The Book

1990: The Book is an occasional publication commissioned by the Festivals Office. It featured essays and sketches from notable local personalities, including cultural figures such as Tom McGrath, Elaine C Smith, Jimmy Reid, Cliff Hanley and Bill Forsyth. Its pages are split between these personal reflections, advertisements and images of the city. The extent to which writers and editors involved in the project made room for critical opinions and dissenting views on the Year of Culture is somewhat surprising. Notes of discord run through the publication and many of the critical voices included in the official Festival publications do not simply question the representational validity of Glasgow's new postindustrial urban image,

²⁴⁰ Ian Spring, *Phantom Village: The Myth of the New Glasgow* (Glasgow: Polygon, 1990), p. 142.

but go on to make very pointed criticism of the ideological basis for market-driven approaches to cultural investment, and its limitations. No elements of the book, however, are as challenging as the occasional poems commissioned from Edwin Morgan.

The Book contained four original poems by Morgan. Two of these, ‘George Square’ and ‘The Future’ are given particular prominence as the frontispiece and back page of the book, demarcating the publication as a cultural object of some ambition not merely an institutional record or kitsch souvenir. These are not poems which have received particularly detailed consideration as part of Morgan’s published work. All are clearly written in response to particular events in 1990’s cultural calendar: they are all arranged as sonnets, illustrated and typeset with care, with a colour palate which relates to the themes of the poems or corresponds with the overall design and branding of the Festival; and, most significantly, their position in the book forms a thematic sequence. The frontispiece opens the text with a celebratory sonnet, inaugurating the year with a presentation of Hogmanay celebrations in George Square. The page design pushes the sonnet into the very centre of the page – hemming it into an irregular square in the centre of the page, surrounded by pictures of celebrity contributors to the book, creating the visual aspect of a crowd. The poem suggests a sense of commonality and anticipation in the city made possible by popular tradition, while also foregrounding spectacular new technologies used to stage the celebrations – the “burst of lasers” in the square, which would have been a novel element in civic celebrations at the turn of the decade.²⁴¹ This detail in Morgan’s poem chimes with the presentation of spectacular contemporary technology (and in particular audiovisual technology) in other texts, cultural representations and events relating to Festival celebrations and cultural activities. Much Festival press material, for example, highlights the use of cutting-edge technology in exhibitions or performances and relates this technological prestige to Glasgow’s history as a city of industry: overlaying the transformation of deindustrialised spaces into venues for cultural or commercial consumption with an

²⁴¹ Edwin Morgan, ‘George Square’, in *Glasgow 1990: The Book: the authorised tour of the cultural capital of Europe* (Glasgow: William Collins for Glasgow District Council, 1990), front matter.

attempt to present Glasgow as hospitable to technological innovation.²⁴² Morgan's presentation of points of confluence in the city (its "Crowds and bridges and starry waterway") and celebration of light, "blowing a great brazier to life" is extended in the next poem, 'The Ship'. Reflecting on Glasgow's shipbuilding heritage 'The Ship' recalls the public celebration of ship launches, with vessels "baptized with bands, bottles, shouts, caps in the air", and the collaborative construction of "Glasgow craftwork" – the "pride of the bright sparks/ you see flashing their messages/ to the seagoing ages".²⁴³ Related imagery appears in the following poem, 'The Lanterns', written to mark a lantern parade taking part in October: a community art and crafts event co-ordinated by the community artists' group Welfare State International.²⁴⁴ Presenting the parade of lanterns as a "procession/ from the outlands to the procession", or a single lantern, "bobbing, swaying [...] hung from the Finnieston crane", links back to the imagery built around "sparks" and "fireworks" in the previous two poems: while the suggestion of a bright lantern hanging from the Finnieston crane also recalls images relating to George Wylie's site-specific sculpture 'The Straw Locomotive' (1987).²⁴⁵

Read in the order published, then, it is clear that the occasional poems commissioned for the Festival Unit's key commercial publication are not merely copy-friendly verses, but form a defined sonnet sequence with shared imagery evoking Glasgow's industrial history and experience of deindustrialisation. The

²⁴² The Press Pack for the large scale exhibition 'Glasgow's Glasgow' for example, makes frequent reference to the cutting-edge technical specification of the audio-equipment used in the event space, and the event flyer includes the opportunity to "Fly through the city on a computer" in its key list of 'Things To Do'. Edinburgh, NLS, Writing Together, Acc.10391/10. Industrial companies also feature heavily in the event's list of sponsors. Aspects of this technological focus are reflected in other literary works concerning the city of culture. For instance, the plot of Mark Smith's *Masel* (1993) centers on the focal character's capacity to 'fake' a cutting edge laser show as part of a live music performance – emphasizing the novel and spectacular aspects of Glasgow's Culture Year as well as raising questions about the value heaped on notions of 'authenticity'.

²⁴³ Edwin Morgan, 'The Ship', in *Glasgow 1990*, p. 91.

²⁴⁴ The lantern festival, 'All Lit Up' was the culmination of an eighteen-month residency for Welfare State International, with the largest-scale procession in Europe.

²⁴⁵ Wylie's sculpture project for Mayfest 1987 saw a full size replica of a locomotive in straw taken from the site in Springburn once occupied by the locomotive factory, Hyde Park Works, following the route locomotives would have been hauled along in order to be shipped, and suspended from the Finnieston crane during the Festival. It was then taken back to the former site of Hyde Park Works and ceremonially burned.

poems raise linked questions about the nature of community celebration in a postindustrial context. Read in sequence, the sonnet closing the book, ‘The Future’, presents a decisive shift in tone from the previous three poems, and offers an angry rejoinder to any reader convinced by the lively new urban image for Glasgow presented throughout the book: “Castlemilk, Drumchapel, Easterhouse, Pollok – / they must be seen to, do you hear? Put up/ your pleasure-domes over bones of the poor”.²⁴⁶ The sudden cut from the previous sonnet’s atmospheric autumnal lantern parades running “from the outlands to the centre” of the city – back to suburban housing estates emphasizes the visual impact of cultural regeneration in the inner city and the lack of investment in peripheral domestic spaces. In Morgan’s *Writing Together* lecture, he suggested that “the 1990s are going to be the age of the periphery” and his poems for *1990: The Book* contrast a joyful, even magical city centre with the city’s neglected margins.²⁴⁷ Of Glasgow’s high-profile writers, Morgan was one of the most enthusiastic about the opportunities cultural investment offered. However, his closing poem in this publication boldly warns against focusing excessive energy on temporary attractions in the city centre. Like writers associated with the Workers City movement, Morgan ultimately stresses a lack of investment in the city’s peripheral housing schemes as a rejoinder to boosterist discourse championing cultural spending in the city centre. Morgan’s 1990 sonnet sequence concludes with an optimistic image of a more universal approach to cultural ownership, housing and work:

Good God what a city for all citizens
 our city-state could be, will be,
 must be, when everyone’s set free
 from the ghetto and the grind, and culture
 is ours, rim, spoke and centre
 revolving in joy and energy²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Edwin Morgan, ‘The Future’, in *Glasgow 1990: The Book*, back matter.

²⁴⁷ Edwin Morgan, ‘Saturn and other Rings’, *Chapman*, 64 (1991), 1-10 (p. 10).

²⁴⁸ Edwin Morgan, ‘The Future’.

A Spiel Amang Us: The Scotia Bar Writers' Prize

Contrast between the centre and the periphery of the city also shapes much of the fiction in *A Spiel Amang Us* (1990).²⁴⁹ Several short stories in this anthology of fiction from the Scotia Bar Writers' Prize use the iconography of Glasgow's shipbuilding industry to mark geographical and temporal boundaries, and the contrast between 'regenerated' cultural spaces in the city centre and peripheral housing schemes. This literary prize opened up an opportunity for non-published writers to express their views on the cultural politics of 1990. In the social and political context of 1990, the Scotia Bar was very closely associated with the Workers City movement and was a frequent meeting place for many of the writers, critics and other cultural figures involved with opposition to Glasgow's cultural Festival. The bar's owner Brendan McLaughlin, who initiated the competition, was a key member of the Workers City group, and had previously been more broadly involved with protest movements and folk music in Glasgow. In the years that followed, McLaughlin remained involved with other locally based campaigns, particularly Clydeside Action on Asbestos. It should be said that McLaughlin's intense involvement with Workers City protest activities had been no barrier to his enjoyment of *Writing Together* events co-organised by the Workers Educational Association in September 1989. McLaughlin wrote with fondness for the ambitious range of the event, "Rarely do we have the opportunity to debate with leading writers from so many countries on the problems of language, class, race, gender, and nationalism"; for readings in the Scotia Bar from "Bernard McClaverty, Sue Townsend and Archie Weller"; and that it was "a treat to have a pint with the readers and other such writers as Chinua Achebe and Ngūgī wa Thiong'o".²⁵⁰ In opposition to the rather over simplified picture sketched out in many accounts of the Workers City group and their hostility to Glasgow's cultural program, it seems that pivotal members of the group such as McLaughlin were not always fiercely partisan when they were sympathetic to the aims and scope of particular events. The Scotia Bar's

²⁴⁹ *A Spiel Amang Us: Glasgow people writing: the Scotia Bar Writers Prize*, ed. by Brendan McLaughlin (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1990).

²⁵⁰ Brendan McLaughlin, 'Festival of Writing', *The Herald*, Letters, 9 September 1989, p. 8.

writing prize is another such case. Though it drew to some extent on the Scotia Bar's status as a hotbed of dissent, a prize giving event was also organised in the City Chambers, aligning the project to some degree with the ceremonial civic aspect of more high profile 1990 events. It also made use of local celebrities and other well-known figures and competition judges, including Billy Connelly, the actors Mark McManus, Katy Murphy, Elaine C. Smith, and the *Herald* journalist Jack McLean. It leant, too, on celebrity endorsement to market the published anthology.

Launched in 1989, the theme set for the competition was 'The Art and Politics of Living in Scotland': broad enough to invite a wide range of creative responses but worded topically enough to elicit reflection on the events of 1990. Over five hundred submissions were received. The prize-giving event in the City Chambers offered a five-hundred pound cash prize for each winner in the fiction and non-fiction categories, and two-hundred and fifty pounds for each runner up. Twenty-four essays or short stories were subsequently published as *A Spiel Amang Us: Glasgow People Writing* (1990) with the support of the Scottish Arts Council. Some of the work published was later developed in fuller pieces of writing. The non-fiction prize went to Ian Spring whose essay 'New Glasgow Style' became the basis for his reflective work on urban regeneration and the cultural politics of nostalgia in Glasgow, *Phantom Village* (1990), one of the most nuanced pieces of writing on Glasgow's changing urban character to emerge over 1990.²⁵¹ Detailed analysis of the political frameworks and policy decisions subtending the Year of culture was not limited to academic discourse either. Though, at the time of publication Ian Spring was lecturing in Media and Cultural Studies in Queen Margaret College and Sylvia Ross, recently graduated from Strathclyde University, had clearly been engaged in research related to community development in housing schemes. However, for these essays to be published through the Scotia Bar's writing prize indicates the degree of appetite for this form of critical discourse around the Culture Year, questioning the boosterist copy in the press.

Many of the published short stories convey abandoned or depopulate housing schemes on the outskirts of the city, in contrast to Glasgow's reimagined industrial

²⁵¹ Ian Spring, 'New Glasgow Style', in *A Spiel Amang Us: Glasgow people writing: the Scotia Bar Writers Prize*, ed. by Brendan McLaughlin (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1990), pp. 32-40.

structures. For instance, In John McGarrigle's entry, 'A Day in the Beergarden', an unemployed group of friends spend the day drinking in the open land around a suburban housing scheme: "From over their vantage point on the hill they could see the large cranes of Glasgow's dockland lying derelict and redundant in the distance."²⁵² The urban landscape echoes their unemployment, and the still cranes at the centre of the city become totems for stagnation and inertia. In Alison Prince's submission, a humiliated character hears mocking laughter spread "through the streets and tower blocks, away past the motionless cranes at the Clyde's edge and out across Scotland."²⁵³ Both these moments of reflection present the city's horizon as broad, empty and silent, all drawn towards the "motionless" "derelict and redundant cranes".²⁵⁴ Remoteness and isolation characterises much of the fiction in the anthology. Frances Connor's short story explores one woman's loneliness in the "depopulated and neglected area of Townglen".²⁵⁵ In contrast, Frances Broni's short story, 'A Glasgow Requiem' surveys memories of industrial decline in a working class riverside area, focusing on the sense of collective experience and emotional proximity characterising an occupational community. Decades later, when the shipbuilding industry had abandoned the area:

All about here, a massive clean-up operation was taking place – although the city fathers preferred the grander title of 'cultural upsurge' – and now gleaming red sandstone and luxury riverside dwellings were the order of the day [...] Some of the old guard, like John, had hated and despised those who seemed hell-bent on dancing on the graves of Glasgow's shipbuilding industry. And for a long time, she had too. But now, John was gone and all she had left were memories of those times when the children had been small and her world began and ended with three square miles of packed tenement buildings and giant cruise liners that were built with pride by men who would never sail in them.²⁵⁶

Not all fiction published in *A Spiel Amang Us* addressed its political themes with subtlety: like Broni's work many of the short stories published here point very directly at structural economic issues underlying Glasgow's decline and supposed

²⁵² John McGarrigle, 'A Day in the Beergarden', in *A Spiel Amang Us*, pp. 147-151 (p. 150).

²⁵³ Alison Prince, 'The Anarchy Hut', in *A Spiel Amang Us*, pp. 165-171 (p. 171).

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Frances Connor, 'Seedlings', in *A Spiel Amang Us*, pp. 92-96 (p. 92).

²⁵⁶ Frances Broni, 'A Glasgow Requiem', in *A Spiel Amang Us*, pp. 67-76 (p. 76).

revival, humanising the huge discrepancies in power which shaped, and reshaped people's experience of the city.

The importance of this mode of literary work is undermined by historical accounts of Glasgow's regeneration programme which dismiss the Workers City Group as "self-appointed spokespersons of working-class culture [...] a loose collection of left-orientated local artists and celebrities [...] a host of notables with considerable amounts of embodied cultural capital" who were "not representative of the wider Glasgow population but clearly an important sample of the local arts community".²⁵⁷ As well-known authors who had won or were on the cusp of winning several major literary prizes between them, and would go on, in the following decade, to jointly hold professorships in Creative Writing at Glasgow University, Leonard, Kelman and Gray could reasonably be considered to occupy comfortable positions in Glasgow's cultural establishment (whether or not the authors would feel individually comfortable with that judgement is another matter).²⁵⁸ Yet to dismiss all the voices involved with the Workers City group – or other channels of dissent – as bearing false representation of working class culture seems a far too narrow a judgement. While established writers certainly played a leading role in the Workers City group, many of the people involved with its activities did not hold any particularly distinguished status in Glasgow's cultural or civic life. Considering a broader range of cultural outputs related to Glasgow's culture-led regeneration programme reveals that a range of voices were interested in critiquing its aims and methods. The range of writing in *A Spiel Among Us*, and the complex criticism the anthology offers of the Year of Culture's economic objectives and ideological assumptions demonstrates that critique was by no means limited to the voices of distinguished writers (or to "well-heeled" "professional whingers" as Pat Lally dismissed them).²⁵⁹ A publication like this also counters Colin Williams'

²⁵⁷ See Louise Johnson, *Cultural Capitals: Revaluating the Arts, Remaking Urban Spaces* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), p. 102.

²⁵⁸ James Kelman won the James Tait Black Memorial prize in 1989 for his novel *A Disaffection* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1989) the Booker Prize in 1994 for *How Late It Was, How Late* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1994), Alasdair Gray won the Whitbread Prize for his 1992 novel *Poor Things* (London: Bloomsbury, 1992).

²⁵⁹ James Kelman, 'Storm in the Palace: Summer 1990', in *The Reckoning*, pp. 50-55, (p. 52).

retrospective reading of the festival, which suggested that “it is telling that Workers’ City has broken up and that many of its protagonists now praise the developments that have taken place”.²⁶⁰ It is not, in fact, surprising that the Workers City group disbanded in the early 1990s since its principle purpose had been to critique the development and events in Glasgow’s cultural regeneration calendar from the Garden Festival to the Year of Culture. Although the group dissolved, many of its members remained intensely involved with projects related to the underlying ideological thrust of the Workers City Group, or which drew on the cultural networks Workers City activity had bolstered: from the Clydeside Action on Asbestos Campaign to *West Coast Magazine*. Williams is right that in the long-term some of the cultural infrastructure established in the late 1980s and 1990 left a much more positive legacy than the most embittered polemics against it would have envisaged. Yet if the long-term gains and shortcomings of Glasgow 1990 deserve to be reappraised, then so too does the less tangible legacy of radical protest groups like Workers City, which developed channels of political discourse outwith formal spheres.

Conclusion: The literary legacy of Glasgow’s ‘Culture Year’

In the introduction to this thesis, I suggested that urban writing is not considered intertwined with the development and reception of urban regeneration programmes in the same way as visual or event based cultural forms have been. Over the 1980s and 1990s, those funding and planning arts-led regeneration initiatives have not tended to incorporate writers and literary projects into their programmes to the same extent as artists, performers, museums and galleries. Consequently, reciprocities between urban writing and urban change in the context of culture-led regeneration or municipally-driven arts activities have received less critical attention than more heavily funded cultural forms. That critical omission is exacerbated by the perception that the relationship between textual representation and urban space is more diffuse, less tangible, than for other cultural forms. Writing is not generally

²⁶⁰ Colin Williams, *Consumer Services and Economic Development* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), p. 157.

considered as site-specific as art forms which involve embodied participation or rely on a proximity to a particular market.

This chapter has demonstrated that writers were, in fact, closely involved in various aspects of Glasgow's intense period of culture-led regeneration in the 1990s. It is certainly true that literary initiatives did not receive a proportionate share of cultural investment in the run-up to 1990 and after. From a strategic point of view, most efforts were focused on infrastructure projects and mass audience events. However, Glasgow's Year as the European Capital of Culture did have a significant impact on local writing. A wide range of Glasgow fiction reflected, criticized and satirised the city's political priorities and changing urban environment. What I have also aimed to show in this chapter is that Glasgow's local literature did not simply portray the city's changing urban identity in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but also influenced the development and reception of cultural regeneration initiatives in that period. Local writers took opportunities to shape the direction of the Year of Culture. Conversely, authors including James Kelman, Alasdair Gray, Tom Leonard and others affiliated with the Workers City group adopted a deliberately oppositional stance, on ideological grounds. I explored the Workers City group's commitment to interrogating the political basis and social consequences of urban regeneration, and the cultivation of exclusionary cultural and commercial spaces in the city centre in the context of deindustrialisation. Considering, in particular, James Kelman's emphasis on safeguarding both creative independence for writers and access to the city. As Mark Boyle has stressed, whatever the limitations of the Workers City group's actions, their efforts "did crystallize a number of concerns which were becoming central to the political climate of the times".²⁶¹ They not only questioned the wider benefits of private investment in the city, and led protest against the privatization of public space but focused uncompromisingly on the contrast between high levels of investment in the city centre and the poor quality of housing in Glasgow's peripheral estates. Their intractable approach no doubt contributed to the perception that "too difficult to work with" and so had little involvement with the

²⁶¹ Mark Boyle, Christopher Williams, and Gareth Rice, 'The Spatialities of Actually Existing Neoliberalism in Glasgow, 1977 to present', *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 90.4 (2008), 313-325 (p. 317).

festival.²⁶² Yet a wide range of writers were involved with developing aspects of the Festival programme and played key roles in shaping the outlook and priorities of various events. Protest led by high profile leftist writers signalled their refusal to be dissuaded from critiquing the Festival's long term economic strategy in order to benefit from temporary funding and resources. However, their wholesale repudiation of the Festival and its cultural events failed to recognise other oppositional tactics which were also at work around 1990: including the efforts some writers, artists and practitioners were making to maintain a participatory, community arts approach in difficult circumstances.

Nevertheless, decades later, comprehensive research by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health indicates that that the injurious economic and social effects of deindustrialisation were compounded by regional development policies in the 1970s, and later "exacerbated" by Glasgow's early experimentation with city-centre focused regeneration strategies in the 80s and 90s.²⁶³ At the time, political figures argued that investing heavily in culture and tourism was a necessary response to deindustrialisation, and this view was defended by many in the cultural sector. Glasgow's historical reputation as a fulcrum for industrial action and political dissent was a seemingly significant factor in a local economic strategy which sought to reverse Glasgow's depopulation trend and rehabilitate the city's 'negative reputation'. The city's municipal leadership and commercial interests were now "seeking to attract investors to a city with an unwanted historic 'Red Clydeside' reputation".²⁶⁴ Boosting the city's image and attracting private capital to the city centre led to a "dual urban policy" with "high budget, high profile retail, and property development in the city centre" but "much lower resources and very limited mitigation and management of poverty, and an intensifying social crisis in the city's poorer areas, principally in the peripheral estates".²⁶⁵ The Glasgow Centre for Population Health's analysis strongly suggests that the long-term effects of such socio-spatial inequality are still borne out in Glasgow's high levels of excess

²⁶² Peter Kravitz, 'Introduction', in *The Picador Book of Contemporary Scottish Fiction*, ed. by Peter Kravitz (London: Picador, 1997; 1999), pp. xi-xxxvi (p. xxx).

²⁶³ David Walsh and others, 'History, Politics, Vulnerability and Excess Mortality', (Glasgow: Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2016), p. 47.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.213.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

mortality and health inequalities. The city's culture-led regeneration strategy may have boosted aspects of the city's economy and played a part in developing a more robust, respected cultural sector. Yet, for the most part, promised economic and social benefits did not materialise for Glasgow's citizens.

As well as demonstrating that writers responded to and influenced the events of 1990 through their contemporary literary production, work with communities, roles within cultural institutions and their own political engagement, I also hoped to show that local writing influenced the long-term reception and understanding of culture-led regeneration in 1990s Glasgow. Local fiction has played a significant part in shaping the meaning and memory of Glasgow's City of Culture status. Literary festivals and events did have an immediate and short-term impact on Glasgow's cultural sector: giving emerging local writers a platform among renowned international authors, boosting literary journalism, and diversifying opportunities to work in the sector through editorial work and in events management. Yet little other than souvenir publications like *1990: The Book, The Words and the Stones*, a special issue of *Chapman*, ephemera, and press cuttings record their contributions, making for a disparate group of texts which have never been prominently cited. Certainly, most critical history of Glasgow's Culture Year shows little awareness of even large-scale literary events like *Writing Together*, or the literary origins of *Glasgow's Glasgow*. However, decades later, literary work which subverted official narratives and boosterist discourse through oppositional, defiant critical and creative writing, has had a more enduring influence on the interpretation of Glasgow's Year of Culture than literary projects and texts developed in collaboration with Festival organisers. In particular, Kelman, Gray and Leonard's hostility to the Festival is well documented. This is partly due to the success the Workers City group had in generating adverse press coverage of the Festival. Some involved in the cultural sector at the time maintain that much of the supposed controversy around aspects of Glasgow 1990 was largely a spat played out in the press, and did not reflect public feeling or the ethos of the sector at the time.

I would also suggest that oppositional literature and critical writing has had an enduring influence on the cultural meaning of Glasgow's City of Culture status precisely because their textual representations of urban change offer an alternative

cultural history which could be widely disseminated and took a lasting form. Novels interrogating Glasgow's changing postindustrial identity offer a subjective reading of the city in transition, making the effects of urban change on residents personal and palpable. They may incorporate passages and perspectives explicitly questioning the political framework which underpins cultural investment, and juxtapose historical accounts of the city with images and details which establish a sense of veracity and immediacy. Moreover, novels like *Something Leather* and *Poor Things* form part of a prestigious author's catalogue, and as such were much more readily incorporated into an established stream of literary criticism. *Poor Things* became an even more prominent publication when it won the Whitbread Novel and Guardian Fiction prize in 1992. Similarly, Kelman's critical work covering local identity, artistic value and economic policy, as explored in *Some Recent Attacks* (1992) received more widespread critical attention following his Booker Prize win in 1994. Literary texts by less well known authors, such as Jeff Torrington's *Swing Hammer Swing* and Ian Spring's *Phantom Village* may have received less publicity, but still sit more easily within an existing framework of cultural analysis than souvenir books and literary ephemera. By now there is a great disparity in the availability of access to literary texts which critiqued the Festival, and documentary records of literary events held under the Festival's auspices, only some of which were collected and archived. Overall, these literary representations of Glasgow's Culture Year offer highly focalised narratives of urban change, which portray the consequences of regeneration with greater intimacy than collected writing related to cultural festivals can afford. This chapter's examination of the way in which literary writing influences narratives of urban regeneration also suggests that when writers have been instrumental in leading campaigns to preserve public space, or memorialise an aspect of urban history, those efforts have benefitted from a perception that writers and authors have a particular degree of creative independence which affords the campaign a sense of credibility, and even moral authority.

The following chapters of this thesis go on to interrogate these findings in literary constructions of postindustrial Glasgow in later decades. This chapter has argued that writers who were opposed to Glasgow's culture-led regeneration strategy in the late 1980s and early 1990s focused their attention on the local authority's lack

of investment in social housing, in contrast to increased private investment in city centre properties. This juxtaposition can be read as a response to deindustrialisation, displacing contests over the organisation of workplaces and disputes over labour, and moving towards a newer form of urban social moment, which prioritised the defence of public spaces, symbolic representations of place, and (as I emphasise in the following chapter) housing. While this chapter has focused on the representation and use of Glasgow's cultural spaces and resources, Chapter Two turns directly to literary representations of housing in Glasgow in the context of urban restructuring and deindustrialisation. Chapter Three focuses on literary representations of contests over public spaces and shared places for leisure: considering their changing meaning in the context of shifting conceptions of work and leisure. In so doing, it further interrogates the relationship between cultural investment and inequalities in health and wellbeing. I consider the way in which literary work, research projects and local authority-led cultural strategies seek to use literary labour as a means of strengthening social capital in particular local communities, and present qualitative evidence about specific places and people to policy makers and investors. As the following two chapters will explore, the notions of authorial independence and commercial disinterest examined in this chapter have, in many ways, become part of the process of urban restructuring.

Overall, this chapter sought to develop a broader understanding of the range of literary responses to Glasgow's year as the European Capital of Culture, highlighting that a number of writers and arts organisers attempted to use Festival funding, publications and events for a wide range of purposes. Some focused on subverting the strategic goals of the official Festival and undermine aspirational images of the city. Others were more concerned with directing resources towards local communities or under-represented groups. Despite the findings of the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, it is important not to disregard or minimise the potential social and cultural value of these tactical, and politicised, responses to Glasgow's cultural regeneration strategy. In particular, it would be difficult to disaggregate the potential benefits of a community arts inspired approach to cultural work in a specific local area from the broader context of the boosterist regeneration strategy which made resources and funds available.

Chapter Two - ‘Built for community’: Housing regeneration and literary participation¹

The previous chapter explored literary portrayals of urban regeneration during Glasgow’s year as the European Capital of Culture in 1990. It argued that while many authors were involved with Glasgow’s cultural festivals, the 1990s were also an important period of literary resistance to culture-led regeneration strategies which deepened sociospatial inequalities, as writers from James Kelman and Edwin Morgan to local writers’ groups stressed the lack of investment in the city’s social housing as a corrective to boosterist discourse.² In tandem with deindustrialisation, Glasgow’s postwar programmes of slum clearance and its “multi-storey crash drive” made it the “shock city of the modern housing revolution”.³ The social and aesthetic impact that these waves of redevelopment and regeneration have had on the city has been an enduring theme in its literature, centring especially on anxieties around the loss of community identity and its relationship with architectural form.⁴ Ian Spring summed up such collective preoccupation with the social meaning and cultural identity of domestic spaces in his reflective account of the city’s changing urban identity, *Phantom Village* (1990), offering that, “Arguably, the history of housing in Glasgow is the history of Glasgow”.⁵ Accordingly, this chapter turns directly to

¹ Andrew O’Hagan, ‘Higher Hopes’, *The Guardian*, 13 March 1999 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/1999/mar/13/costabookaward.features>> [accessed 25 February 2015].

² See for example, Kelman’s essays, particularly ‘Art, Subsidy and some politics of Culture City’, in *The Reckoning: Public Loss Private Gain: Workers City*, ed. by Farquhar McLay, (Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 1990), pp. 126-33; Edwin Morgan’s sonnet sequence in *Glasgow 1990: The Book: the authorised tour of the cultural capital of Europe* (Glasgow: William Collins for Glasgow District Council, 1990), front matter, pp. 91, 100, back matter; and Easthall Theatre Association’s play *Dampbusters* (1990).

³ Miles Glendinning and Stefan Muthesius, *Tower Block: Modern Public Housing in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 156.

⁴ The 1983 poetry anthology, *Noise and Smoky Breath*, gives some indication of the range of local writing concerned with demolition and the disappearance of domestic spaces, setting poems among urban art and photography documenting Glasgow’s urban transformation throughout the twentieth century. *Noise and Smoky Breath: An Illustrated Anthology of Glasgow Poems*, ed. by Hamish Whyte (Glasgow: Third Eye Centre, 1983).

⁵ Ian Spring, *Phantom Village: The Myth of the New Glasgow* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990), p. 48.

literary representations of social housing and working class spaces in the context of regeneration since the 1990s - as Glasgow embarked on another phase of demolition: tearing down municipal towerblocks on the outskirts of the city. Its central argument is that Glasgow's urban history and literary legacy have made it an important locus for an emergent mode of literary labour, which places writers in the very midst of the spatial politics of urban regeneration.

While civic bodies and cultural institutions may have sought the work of local writers during the 1980s and 1990s to help promote the city's new, creative postindustrial image, literary labour is now being mobilised in subtler ways. Increasingly, regeneration agencies, local authorities and cultural bodies are involving authors and literary work in the course of specific, local regeneration projects. Community-orientated literary work bears similarities to socially engaged public art, but what is distinctive about this literary practice is that it is predicated on forms of cultural capital which seem particular to writers: their perceived detachment from the commercial and institutional interests at play in regeneration projects which makes them well placed to witness and record residents' experiences; their capacity to craft coherent narratives from disparate experiences of urban regeneration; their ability to interpret and mediate the cultural meaning of urban transformation to a range of audiences, and produce (perhaps in the form of a novel) an aesthetic object with a high degree of cultural value, which is both a social and material record of the regeneration process.

I argue that this mode of literary work entails significant risks for authors and communities alike, and this chapter will illuminate the political and creative conflicts inherent in collaborative literary projects. In particular, I argue that participatory literary endeavours including Demos's 2004 project, *Glasgow 2020* and Alison Irvine's substantial work of socially engaged fiction *This Road is Red* (2011), are intended to foster more inclusive, democratic approaches to writing urban space, yet may carry a dangerous compensatory function: encouraging residents to reimagine and represent the past and future of their communities but offering people few opportunities to influence the course of urban regeneration.⁶ I suggest that

⁶ Charlie Tims, Gerry Hassan and Melissa Mean, *The Dreaming City: Glasgow 2020 and the Power of Mass Imagination* (London: Demos, 2007); Alison Irvine, *This Road is Red* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2011).

facilitatory work can be expected to play a greater role in authors' professional careers in future, and consider how it may influence the public function of local writers, as community-based cultural work is increasingly presented as offering a therapeutic function, or means of building social capital, in a context of austerity when cultural funding is expected to deliver multiple outcomes and local health and social care services are also under pressure.

I frame my discussion of socially engaged approaches to writing regeneration by returning briefly to the cultural politics of 1990s Glasgow, considering Kelman's critical writing on the "politics of subsidy" for the arts.⁷ Kelman was intensely suspicious of cultural subsidy and of "community arts", and in Glasgow's cultural festivals he discerned an attempt to dissociate the value of artistic work from the process of artistic labour. Kelman strongly advocated safeguarding artists' creative autonomy and political independence. However, this chapter will demonstrate that it is precisely the notion of creative autonomy and authenticity which have been subtly repositioned as qualities which can help writers to foster cultural value and social capital in areas undergoing regeneration. This chapter then develops its analysis of socially engaged approaches to writing place by way of four case studies. The first focuses on *Glasgow 2020*: a "mass public imagination experiment" initiated by the think tank Demos in 2004.⁸ Considering the promises of culture-led regeneration "increasingly spent", Demos criticised a top-down institutional approach to planning and policy making and identified a "lack of faith in traditional processes of consultation and engagement" as a barrier to more democratic urban policy development.⁹ Advocating the "power of story" to "create a new mental map" of the city, Demos led "story creation workshops", creative writing competitions and commissioned short stories to "provoke thinking about the future across the whole city".¹⁰ Reflecting on the project's methodology and published fiction, I suggest that *Glasgow 2020* was an important forerunner to collective approaches to writing urban fiction in the context of regeneration. I argue that while the project's ambition to

⁷ James Kelman, 'Art, subsidy and some politics of culture city', in *The Reckoning*, pp. 126-33.

⁸ Charlie Tims, Gerry Hassan and Melissa Mean, *The Dreaming City*, p. 80.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 61.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, back matter.

foster a more democratic approach to urban change seems benign, its methods hold a dangerous compensatory function: *Glasgow 2020* promotes an alternative textual form of civic engagement which presents literary practice as a form of good citizenship, but does not offer residents any clear opportunities to influence urban change.

The chapter's following, and central, case study considers the purposes to which literary engagement is now being put in the context of a specific urban regeneration project. Alison Irvine's *This Road is Red* (2011) is the first novel to be funded by a housing agency anywhere in the UK, and conveys the social history of the multi-story Red Road flats in Balornock, memorialising the views and experiences of residents in the period leading up to the flats' demolition. Irvine's novel was commissioned as part of a broader Red Road Cultural Project and, I argue, must be read as part of a wider effort on the part of Glasgow Housing Agency, Glasgow City Council and other local actors to signal a more sensitive and consultative approach to the social impact of regeneration than was evident in previous eras of redevelopment, and to counter the perception that high rise developments lacked a sense of community. However, the brief was ethically fraught and the announcement that the Red Road flats would be demolished, live, as part of the Commonwealth Games opening ceremony underlined the literary project's representational hazards. Drawing on Sarah Brouillette's construal of the 'writer-consultant' in *Literature and the Creative Economy* (2014), I delineate some of the risks this mode of literary labour entails for authors and communities and consider how Irvine negotiated these creative and ethical challenges.¹¹ Irvine was tasked with leading literary engagement in a community in the midst of transformation: recording residents' experiences as a form of 'salvage ethnography' but, in so doing, was arguably also positioned as a creative facilitator, mediating the regeneration process.¹² I consider the impact this form of literary engagement has on the public function of local writers, and on contemporary narrative techniques used to represent urban change. Moreover, I suggest that funding literary work gives

¹¹ Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 161.

regeneration agencies considerable ability to shape the cultural memory of regeneration, and imbues their projects with cultural capital.

The subsequent case study focuses on a novel which represents a contrasting approach to writing socially engaged fiction and the politics of narrative representation. Published in the same year as Irvine's novel, Ross Raisin's *Waterline* (2011) portrays the most marginalised facet of the UK's housing system – street homelessness – in the context of deindustrialisation in Glasgow.¹³ *Waterline* was not developed with institutional support, but Raisin drew on research with local campaign groups such as Clydeside Action on Asbestos, as well as his personal involvement with the homelessness charity sector. As his research progressed “the political motivation to draw attention to homelessness” in the context of austerity became an increasingly important part of his work.¹⁴ I argue that Raisin's political motivation and narrative technique offers an effective challenge to the notion (observed in the critical reception of Irvine's work) that contemporary urban writing should strive to represent “a whole community” or “place itself”. Peter Clandfield, for example, suggests that Irvine's work represents a new “multifocal, multimodal” method for writing urban space which de-emphasises the author's “individual vision” and sees them become a “convenor” or “organizer of the work, rather than creator or architect”.¹⁵ Similarly, in his introduction to *This Road is Red's* 2015 reprint, Willy Maley praises Irvine's gift for bringing “whole communities” to life.¹⁶ Raisin rejects the perspective that literary writing can “give a voice” to any community as “ostracising” and insists that “it is by giving a whole and complex portrait of a person that you give an effective politics to your writing”.¹⁷ Drawing comparisons with Kelman's approach to writing urban space, I examine the implications of Raisin's ethical stance, its import for changing perceptions of the public function of literary writing and how it illuminates the difference between writing which is

¹³ Ross Raisin, *Waterline* (London: Viking, 2011).

¹⁴ Ross Raisin, ‘Author Interview’, *Foyles* <<http://www.foyles.co.uk/ross-raisin>> [accessed 22 June 2016].

¹⁵ Peter Clandfield, ‘Red Road Re-visions’, *Writing Visual Culture*, 6 (2015), 91-120 (p. 91).

¹⁶ Willy Maley, ‘Foreword: This Book Must Be Read’, in Alison Irvine, *This Road is Red* (2011) (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2015), pp. 1-4 (p. 4).

¹⁷ Ross Raisin, ‘Author Statement’, *British Council* <<https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/ross-raisin>> [accessed 22 June 2016].

politically engaged and writing which is ‘socially engaged’ by virtue of its institutional support, methods and objectives.

This chapter’s final case study turns to another of the potential risks of ‘socially engaged’ literary work, considering how the “multifocal” aesthetic and collaborative ethic of community-based literary projects can be co-opted by more commercial interests in the context of gentrification.¹⁸ I examine a series of poems which appeared on advertising spaces on Glasgow’s public transport network in 2016, resembling aspects of the civic advertising campaign ‘People Make Glasgow’ which was heavily promoted in the run up to the Commonwealth Games. These poems, however, were part of a local property management company’s advertising campaign and, I suggest, indicate the way in which the aura of authenticity and creativity promoted by publicly subsidised literary work can be used to market specific urban locations to the benefit of private owners.

Literary Labour and the Creative Economy

There is increasing critical interest in the relationship between literary practice and the creative economy. As I have suggested earlier in this thesis, the role that literary texts and activities can play in the transformation of postindustrial urban space has been comparatively overlooked due to a strong focus on visual arts, the museum sector, and performance based practices in cultural policy studies, urban geography and the grey literature (comprising policy reports, impact studies, and research outputs from national governments, local authorities and cultural institutions themselves). However, a number of literary critics have advanced analysis suggesting that values attributed to writers and literary practice have been important to the development of the creative economy framework. In *Literature and the Creative Economy*, Sarah Brouillette examines a range of British urban literature in the context of the ‘creative-economy’, considering how “creative-economy discourse dovetails importantly with neoliberalism, conceived as a set of shifting practices whose net effect is to erode public welfare, valorise private property and free

¹⁸ Peter Clandfield, ‘Red Road Re-visions’, p. 91.

markets” and position government as a facilitator of neoliberal policy.¹⁹ Within the creative-economy framework incipient in Conservative cultural-policy during the 1980s, and advanced increasingly assertively throughout the New Labour government, Brouillette points to:

the presentation of artists as models of contentedly flexible and self-managed workers, the treatment of training in and exposure to art as a pathway to social inclusion, use of the presence of culture and cultural institutions to increase property values, and support for cultural diversity as a means of growing cultural markets and fostering an inclusive society of active cultural consumers.²⁰

Tracing such “presentation of artists” back through the post-war era Brouillette indicates that “in several social science and policy fields the cultural worker was constructed as a model, flexible self-manager, committed to introspection, self-expression and self-direction.”²¹ In particular, Brouillette contends that “long-standing ideas about literature and literary writers have informed creative-economy policy making and the discourses that have arisen with it” and stresses that “creative economy-frameworks, informed by management theory” drew upon “mainly US-based social scientific observation of writers’ working lives”.²² More recently, in *The Work of Art in the Age of Deindustrialization*, a study of the aestheticization of literary labour in experimental American poetry in the 1960s and 1970s, Jasper Bernes reaches towards some similar conclusions.²³ Bernes finds that poetic portrayals of creative work in experimental writing in that period explored a fluidity between the workday, labour time and domestic labour, and had an emphasis on collaborative, participative and interactive work, which “laid some of the foundations for the new work relations which became dominant in the 1980s”.²⁴ So, Bernes suggests, the emergence of some key aspects of postindustrial working conditions

¹⁹ Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 5.

²³ Jasper Bernes, *The Work of Art in the Age of Deindustrialization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017).

²⁴ Jasper Bernes, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Deindustrialization’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2010), p. 2.

“depended on a subtle transmutation of the critical intentions and imaginings of the poets, artists and theorists of the late 1960 and 1970s.”²⁵

Considering the use of “culture as an aid to gentrification” in more recent years, Brouillette suggests that cultural projects are becoming more frequently positioned by local authorities and regeneration agencies as a means to commemorate the cultural history of an area, manage community involvement with the process of change and, simultaneously, cultivate an aura of cultural prestige for redevelopment projects.²⁶ Brouillette bases her analysis on a number of urban public engagement projects which have had a literary element including: writing classes and workshops led by the London based cultural organisation Spread the Word in the run up to the 2012 Olympic Games; and Urban Words (“the first organisation to call itself a literary consultancy”) led by the author Sarah Butler whom Brouillette identifies as “the major figure encouraging writers to consider working as consultants and providing developers with reasons to hire writers in these roles”;²⁷ Glasgow 2020 (a ‘mass imagination project’ led by Demos in Glasgow); Design for London; and a project funded by Rotherham District Council to revitalize a disused high street storefront in 2009.²⁸ Such modes of site specific literary labour offer writers necessary income, institutional support, and the opportunity to develop richly textured portrayals of communities living in, and through, a time of transformation. However, as Brouillette observes, the process can also place authors in highly contested positions, recording the lived experience of displaced residents while necessarily lending cultural meaning and aesthetic value to controversial urban redevelopment projects. Outlining some of the “very new purposes to which the aspiration and training to write are currently being put”, Brouillette suggests that writers generally work with developers in two ways:²⁹

the first can be deemed a poetic function and has some precedent, as they contribute words for public art to feature in new or revitalised structures; the

²⁵ Jasper Bernes, *The Work of Art in the Age of Deindustrialization*, p. 149.

²⁶ Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 11.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

²⁸ Though many of Brouillette’s examples are drawn from literary projects taking place in London, her analysis is presented in terms of rapid urban change and subtending cultural policy contexts in the UK as a whole, rather than a more particular urban context, and is relatively synchronic in its scope.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

second function is a newer one as they focus on narrative, as they facilitate public story telling about a region's history, present character, and possible futures before finding creative ways to convey the gist of what they have gathered for the public to read and for developers to consider and, at times, implement.³⁰

Brouillette suggests that “involving a writer” in a redevelopment initiative may appeal to developers “eager to address local residents’ concerns about building projects and eager to present their work as enlightened by the public interest”.³¹ Writers may be interested in such work for a variety reasons. Some writers, Brouillette believes, “are genuinely committed to the work of urban renewal and see themselves as helping democratize the process”.³² Others may be motivated by the brute fact that “remuneration for more traditional writing for publication is poor and unpredictable” while “they are aware of the funding opportunities, tied to government investment in the idea of culture-led urban renewal, for artists committed to have a measurable impact”.³³ Or writers may “see commissions” and the degree of collaboration they involve with the public (and other cultural practitioners) as providing “source material and opportunity to develop their own literary writing”.³⁴ The dangers inherent in this practice, Brouillette argues, include that:

artists and other cultural workers will now deliberately position their own labour as worthy of government funding and corporate sponsorship precisely because of its capacity to add economic value to space. Writers’ desire or willingness to imagine they have a marketable skill, to position creative writing as a public service available for commission, and training in writing as a means of investment in the self, should be conceived in relation to this broader tendency.³⁵

As this chapter will detail, there has been a significant shift towards incorporating writers’ work as part of a broader regeneration agenda in Glasgow. In comparison with some of the fairly hostile relationships between writers, local authority figures and agencies involved in regeneration which were manifest in Glasgow in and

³⁰ Ibid., p. 155.

³¹ Ibid., p. 154.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 158.

around the 1990s, various writers have been very willing to work collaboratively in the context of specific urban regeneration projects. Whether developing original literary work or narrative projects with communities, these commissions do not simply entail greater opportunity to develop produce new work reflecting the outcomes of regeneration, but employ writers' skills directly in the process and management of urban change. Considering a range of small scale projects commissioned by property developers or public bodies, which task writers with working with local residents to produce literary work relating to regeneration, Brouillette reflects on functions the "writer-consultant" may attempt to fill. Their work may strive to represent a "kind of salvage ethnography", recording the experiences and perspectives of urban communities before they are transformed by regeneration.³⁶ Writers may even have a more optimistic view of their role in the process, as they interview residents, lead workshops, and encourage people to reflect on the meaning of that social change. Brouillette points to statements from consultancies using creative writing techniques which envision "developers who will be responsive to what the writer produces after consultation is completed [...] that the community will "feel empowered" to be part of the place's new future".³⁷ Consequently, when working in this mode, "the literary author is not imagined as a singular voice of indignant opposition but as an expertly trained recorder of and vehicle for expression of the voices of those affected by the regeneration agenda".³⁸ If, however, the "writer's role" in such commissions is to discuss the development with the public and "help individuals reconcile themselves to it by voicing their concerns, their critiques, and complaints" then this mode of work may also carry a dangerous compensatory function.³⁹ Brouillette suggests:

The writer's skills are valued not because they offer the opportunity to repair breaches and bring conflicting parties together but precisely because their routine practice leads to emphasis on how rifts cannot be breached, how the distance between points of view cannot be traversed. Hence, never far from view is the mainstream regeneration agenda to which the writers is meant to

³⁶ Ibid., p. 161.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 157.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 163.

offer not a help but an alternative, in the form of a compensating outlet through which a local community can voice its concerns.⁴⁰

This represents a significant shift from the role many high profile writers sought to play in earlier eras of culture-led regeneration in Glasgow, which was very much as “a singular voice of indignant opposition”.⁴¹ This change is partly due, as Brouillette indicates, to a structure of funding for creative practice which has become more habitually linked to local economic priorities and urban restructuring since the 1990s, providing writers more direct and indirect financial and professional opportunities by engaging in such work. Similarly, it is also related to the broader promulgation of the creative economy, the promotion of values such as flexibility and self-management, and emphasis on intrinsic, rather than financial reward for work. These tendencies reinforce notions of creative practitioners as an “ideal type” of worker, and one well positioned to lead mediatory work with fragile communities.

The gulf between writers’ response to culture-led regeneration in 1990s Glasgow and contemporary urban regeneration projects may seem very wide, as many local writers critiqued that model of cultural investment fiercely in the 1990s. However, I would argue that the critical stance adopted by high profile writers to Glasgow’s 1990s Festival, as the voice “of indignant opposition”, actually played some part in precipitating this later shift. The events of Glasgow 1990 had so distanced writers from the strategic aims of culture-led regeneration and creative economy discourse, that writers were - and to some degree still are - considered further removed from the material concerns and economic stakes in urban regeneration initiatives than other artists. The perception that writers are economically disinterested in regeneration, and are able to approach work with local communities with less institutional baggage than, for instance, visual artists or museum workers, has contributed to the growth of contemporary literary consultancy work by repositioning the values Kelman advocated – authenticity and creative autonomy – as professional assets. In this way, Glasgow has not only been an important historical locus for the emergence of culture-led regeneration, but for understanding the current role of writers in facilitating and interpreting contemporary

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 157.

urban restructuring. The following case study considers how the anti-authority stance and artistic values Kelman emphasised came to be positioned as qualities which could help mediate the process of regeneration.

Glasgow 2020: An Exercise in Mass Imagination

The Dreaming City: Glasgow 2020 was a large scale creative consultation project which set out from the basis that discussions about Glasgow's future were "dominated by institutional voices" and attempted to stimulate an alternative kind of public discussion about regeneration in the twenty-first century.⁴² This project represented a clear shift from regeneration tropes which had dominated the city's development in previous decades, and, I argue, was an important forerunner to later collective approaches to writing urban space in the context of regeneration. Billed as an exercise in "mass imagination", the project was devised and delivered by the think tank Demos. It should be stressed that, at that time, Demos was considered to play a strong, ongoing role in New Labour policy development and in particular with the Blairite wing of policy and research.⁴³ Its core team in Glasgow included the prominent local journalist and writer Gerry Hassan. Research began in 2004, arguably after the height of New Labour cultural policy, and shortly after 'iconic' cultural institutions the Sage and The Public opened or began construction.⁴⁴ Its final report was published in 2007, a decade into the New Labour government and not long before the financial crash of 2008, and subsequent programme of austerity which was expected to reconfigure the UK's cultural policy landscape.

The 2007 report held that the "dominant formula of city-boosterism and culture-led regeneration is increasingly spent".⁴⁵ In fact it advanced many of Workers City's earlier criticisms of culture-led regeneration in Glasgow: that it was overly institutional, alienating writers and residents from their creative experience of

⁴² Gerry Hassan, Melissa Mean, and Charlie Tims, *The Dreaming City*, p. 50.

⁴³ For further discussion of Demos' influence on Third Way political thought and the view that public involvement was vital to both economic innovation and public service reform in a post-industrial context see Charles Thorpe, 'Participation as Post-Fordist Politics: Demos, New Labour and Science Policy', *Minerva*, 48.4 (2010), 389-411.

⁴⁴ The Sage is based in Gateshead and The Public in West Bromwich.

⁴⁵ Gerry Hassan, Melissa Mean and Charlie Tims, *The Dreaming City*, p. 22.

the city; that it failed to deliver promised ‘trickle-down’ economic benefits in any meaningful way. One passage in the final report, titled, ‘The Limits of the Cultural Arms Race’, criticised the “relentless positive rhetoric of the booster city” the “the constant proclamations of success...justified on the basis that they benefit the city”, and remarks that “What felt radical when [Glasgow] embarked on the city boosterism path in the late 1980s and early 1990s, now feels derivative and is delivering diminishing returns. When every city has commissioned a celebrity architect and pedestrianised a cultural quarter, distinctiveness gets reduced to a formula”.⁴⁶

Demos cited a “lack of faith in traditional processes of consultation and engagement” and excessively bureaucratic discourses and processes as barriers to more democratic forms of place making.⁴⁷ It defines cloistered discussions about the city’s future in markedly textual terms, arguing that, “Glasgow’s official future can be understood in three dimensions: *content*, *style*, and *authorship*. In other words, *what* gets said, *how* it gets said and *who* gets to say it.”⁴⁸ So, starting from the premise that civic horizon-scanning strategies and urban redevelopment consultation processes were too schematic, too undemocratic and too technocratic, Demos delivered a range of workshops, creative writing competitions, and creative consultations in order to record alternative visions of, and priorities for, the city’s future. The initiative’s final report advances the argument that the level of disconnection between bureaucratic or corporate development strategies and everyday public life reinforces a discursively rigid and conceptually narrow framework for future planning:

In Glasgow we find the official future is told by a spidery organogram of institutions in a web of strategy documents, development plans, mission statements and conference speeches, and woven through every subject area from health to Glasgow’s bid to host the 2014 Commonwealth Games. While not completely unified or uniform, Glasgow’s institutional voices are imbued with a common tone, language and content, and all point in the same direction.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 35.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 61.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 49.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Restricting future development plans within such professional parameters, the report argues, diminishes the range of future possibilities. Moreover, the report does not only hold that the discursive remove of “strategy documents” or “development plans” from public discussion is, in itself disempowering. Simply participating in the process of imagining alternative local futures, the argument runs, has the capacity to inspire affective change in peoples’ experience of their city. Having set out the view that discussions about Glasgow’s future were “dominated by institutional voices” the project turned towards stimulating an alternative form of conversation. Though not an exclusively literary project, *Glasgow 2020* shaped itself around the “power of story” to “create a new mental map of Glasgow” and, in addition to “story creation workshops” solicited creative writing to “contribute towards the reimagining of Glasgow and the articulation of a non-institutional view of the city”.⁵⁰ Producing and collating creative writing, then, was envisaged as a means of developing a “non-institutional” counternarrative to the “executive summaries” or “policy prospectuses” that guide urban redevelopment initiatives.⁵¹

While the intent to foster a more democratic approach to urban decision making seems admirable, the project’s methods also carry dangers. In particular, its focus on the ‘power of story’ risks involving residents in an alternative narrative, which is more immediately involving than the regeneration discourse that dominated 1990s Glasgow, or standard planning consultations, but does not offer any distinct avenues to influence material urban change. Second, it presents self-actualization as the basis for fostering social capital and building better cities, and positions writing and storytelling as a means of self-actualization. Third, its emphasis on “mass story telling” and “mass imagination” advocates a participatory form but is ambivalent about distinguishing literary work from the output of focus groups and consultation exercises. Aspects of the project’s final report reinforce a hierarchical attitude to creative practice, however, the broad thrust of its argument around mass storytelling, quite purposefully, does little to distinguish creative texts from personal reflections. This approach elides the stylistic qualities and aesthetic intentions of local fiction. Moreover, it presumes that literary writing can and should be employed as a tool to

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 81.

⁵¹ Ibid.

promote civic engagement and improve public services. Together, these aspects of *Glasgow 2020* subtly present writing local fiction as a model form of citizenship. In so doing, the collaborative research project happens to tug on the values and knowledges Kelman espoused in defence of literary autonomy – personal understanding of a community; a desire to act as a reliable and truthful witness; respect for creative independence and a non-hierarchical understanding of artistic value – and draws on these qualities to advocate a collaborative approach to interpreting regeneration.

One of the principle barriers to Demos' presentation of a 'non-institutional' view of regeneration in Glasgow is that Demos is itself an institution: an institution established precisely in order to foster a greater degree of political engagement and civic participation. To this end, *Glasgow 2020* is less of a bottom-up, anti-institutional experiment focused on Glasgow and more like a direct extension of Demos' own strategy for boosting civic participation. Another obstacle to the project's stated aims and methods is that while a wide range of 'story-gathering' exercises were held: such as a 'Creative Carriage' on the Glasgow to Edinburgh Train; a 'floating office' boat on the Clyde and a "futures festival called the 'Big Dream'" at Kelvingrove Museum", the project still replicated some of the attachment to institutional authority it sought to subvert, by selecting, as a forum for a short-story competition, the competitive Masters Creative Writing Programme at Glasgow University. This was paired with a creative writing competition advertised in a local newspaper, *The Evening Times*, but this dual approach to encouraging creative writing from Glasgow's residents reinforces hierarchies in creative practice. These divisions are also emphasised in the selection of short stories chosen for publication in the project's final report, with a brief contextual paragraph at the close of each story summing up the author's university affiliation or participation with the festival, and prizewinning status. For instance, it is noted that a short story by the local author, Anne Donovan "was written in response to a Glasgow 2020 event involving BBC Scotland journalists and staff" whereas another short story by John Daly, "was written directly as a result of John's experience facilitating a number of Glasgow 2020 events".⁵² It is added that, "His life story from the Govan shipyards to someone

⁵² Ibid., pp. 111, 122.

drawn to questions about philosophy and change mirrored the city's wider experience".⁵³ The project's final report frames the short stories included by describing the "importance of story" as a way to:

contribute to the reimagining of Glasgow and the articulation of a non-institutional view of the city, and to further the understanding and practice of futures literacy [...] The stories cannot be squeezed into executive summaries or policy prospectuses. This is a world that has to be entered, experienced and inhabited."⁵⁴

Though this introductory statement seems intended to value the narrative perspective offered in the short stories which follow, it highlights the fact that there is no easy point of contact between the "non-institutional view of the city" *Glasgow 2020* purports to foster and the "executive summaries or policy prospectuses" which gradually direct the process of material urban change. As Sarah Brouillette has also noted, "how the people of Glasgow might become "co-creators" of their future city, are questions studiously avoided in this report".⁵⁵ Suggesting that, perhaps, "to ask them in a serious way would be to admit to all the flaws in the project's effort to valorize public storytelling as a conduit to a better future", Brouillette suggests that an "unstated and unexplored awareness of the problem of the ineffectiveness of the project" may inform "the entire way it is presented".⁵⁶ Some years on from the project, one of its principle organisers, Charlie Tims, gives a blunter assessment still:

If we didn't know exactly where we were going we knew what we were against – policy documents that obscured the future in technocratic language, politicians who hid behind them and a determinism that the future was no longer something that could be discussed or shaped by politics, values and culture as other uncontrollable forces – markets, globalisation and so on – would take care of it

[...]

Read as a consultation exercise *Glasgow 2020* was always going to fail. Although we had a go at it, the aim was not to accurately represent what a representative sample of people in Glasgow felt about the future of the city, but rather, to illuminate and draw attention to a whole area of life that we

⁵³ Ibid., p. 122.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 81.

⁵⁵ Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 168.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 168-69.

perceived to be ‘missing’ – namely an ongoing public dialogue, led by civic leaders, about the future of Glasgow.⁵⁷

The city’s civic leaders did not welcome this form of dialogue. When the final report was published, it was met with the following assessment from an unnamed spokesperson for Glasgow City Council: “Bizarre would be a charitable way to describe some of the report’s conclusions. What on earth is meaningless nonsense such as ‘assemblies of hope’, ‘alchemists’ or ‘mass imaginings’”.⁵⁸ In contrast to the project’s figurative language, the spokesperson stated: “Regeneration in Glasgow has meant new homes, schools, and leisure facilities in every community”.⁵⁹

It is certainly true that the potential points of confluence between this mode of “mass imagination” and conventional consultation procedures appears limited, and that this project risks routing peoples’ civic engagement into a channel which may be more creative and more approachable but does little to effect change. What is even more concerning is that it fails to task “civic leaders” with developing more genuinely democratic and accessible consultation procedures. It is in this way that *Glasgow 2020* carries a dangerous compensatory function. An alternative reading I have suggested of the project’s aspirations is that it presents storytelling as a route to self-actualisation and a conduit to building social capital. One passage from the final report asserts:

Individuals have the power to shape their environments effectively and responsibly, but too often are paralysed by fear about how to manage change. The concept of futures literacy is based on the premise that by enabling people to create and consider a range of alternative futures in a safe but challenging way, we can get ourselves ‘unstuck’ from the assumptions we hold about the present and find the confidence to act in the here and now. It is fundamentally tied to notions of having capacity and confidence in the present, and a belief in human agency. It is about democratizing the present and the future through opening up authorship...⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Charlie Tims, ‘Glasgow 2020: What was the point?’, *Charlie Tims*, personal webpages <<https://charlietims.wordpress.com/2012/12/29/glasgow-2020-what-was-the-point/>> [accessed 4 June 2016].

⁵⁸ BBC, ‘Think tank attacks city’s rebirth’, *BBC News*, 22 May 2007 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/glasgow_and_west/6681419.stm> [accessed 4 June 2016].

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Gerry Hassan, Melissa Mean and Charlie Tims, *The Dreaming City*, p. 80.

Glasgow 2020 therefore presents storytelling as a model form of citizenship: resisting institutional narratives and developing individual agency in order to “shape their environments effectively and responsibly”, “manage change” and realise “agency”.⁶¹ *Glasgow 2020* was an experimental project for Demos. It followed the full swing of New Labour cultural policy, when intensive culture-led regeneration programmes centering on heavy capital investment were seen to have run their course, but creative economy discourse had become established throughout public discourse and ingrained in urban life. It presented a compensatory form of civic engagement but, more subtly, presented story telling as a model form of citizenship which encouraged a personal sense of moral responsibility for the future. The following case study considers how the function of public story telling in the context of urban regeneration has developed a decade later.

‘High rises are the bones of a city’: Tower blocks and urban memory in Glasgow fiction⁶²

This chapter’s principle case study offers a detailed examination of the social production of Alison Irvine’s collaborative novel, *This Road is Red* (2011) considering how the production of local literature has been shaped by the process of urban regeneration in Glasgow, and how a newly emergent form of literary labour influences perceptions of urban transformation. The Red Road Flats were a cluster of eight multi-storey tower blocks (six point blocks and two wide ‘slabs’) in Barlornock in the East End of Glasgow. Construction of these steel-framed concrete blocks began in 1964 and they first opened to residents in 1966.⁶³ In 2005, Glasgow City Council announced that the blocks would be demolished, and the area would be regenerated. Irvine’s *This Road is Red*, which explores the flats’ social history, is the first novel to be directly funded by a housing agency in the UK. It was developed

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Alison Irvine, *This Road is Red*, p. 302.

⁶³ For a detailed overview of the local planning context and political environment that shaped Red Road see Miles Glendinning and Stefan Muthesius, ‘Give the People Homes! Scotland’s Housing Blitzkrieg’ in *Tower Block: Modern Public Housing in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 220-246.

under the auspices of a broader Red Road Cultural Project and Legacy Project, involving organisations including Glasgow Museums, the studio and collaborative arts programme, Streetlevel Photoworks, Impact Arts, the University of Edinburgh, and Glasgow Life (the arms-length cultural body managing cultural institutions and recreational services on behalf of Glasgow City Council). These organizations are among many local groups who worked with residents to produce social histories and cultural representations of life in the flats before they were demolished.⁶⁴ I argue that, as part of this broader Cultural Project, Irvine's work is indicative of an important shift in institutional attitudes to regeneration. To contextualize this case study, I set Irvine's collaborative novel within the literary history of urban regeneration in Glasgow: a history which is transfixed by "nostalgic anxiety" for idealized urban communities.⁶⁵ The social production of *This Road Is Red* indicates, and in my view is directly intended to indicate, that local authorities and regeneration agencies in Glasgow have developed a more reflective attitude to urban transformation than was evident in previous decades, and, by commissioning bespoke literary work, are signaling openness to participatory approaches to managing the meaning of social housing's cultural history. However, like earlier forms of participatory 'storytelling', collaborative novels may also hold a dangerous compensatory function.

The import of local public funding and professional support for the social and material production of Irvine's novel is clearly signalled in *This Road is Red*'s paratextual material. 'A Word from the Red Road Flats Cultural Project' outlines that the project aimed to "develop and deliver a range of historical and art programmes for current and former residents of Red Road (...) and to commemorate the end of an era in Glasgow's history".⁶⁶ At once, then, this statement indicates the

⁶⁴ The focus of the Legacy Project was to "collect items and people's experiences that will be an honest record of the Red Road Flats [...] inspiring community involvement through outreach during the collecting process". Glasgow Museums, 'Glasgow's Red Road Cultural and Legacy Project'

<<https://web.archive.org/web/20110703083319/http://www.lemproject.eu:80/in-focus/other-related-projects/glasgow2019s-red-road-cultural-and-legacy-project>> [accessed 1 June 2017].

⁶⁵ Andrew Blaikie, *The Scots Imagination and Modern Memory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 213.

⁶⁶ 'A Word from the Red Road Flats Cultural Project', in Alison Irvine, *This Road is Red*, front matter.

joint purposes of the ‘cultural project’: to “deliver” cultural activities or experiences for people who live or lived in these particular buildings, and to memorialise an “era” in Glasgow’s history, indicating here the novel’s import for the city as a whole, not just this particular development in Barlonock, in the city’s east end. The note goes on to reflect that “As much of Red Road’s significance is attributed to its size, the programmes undertaken have focused on people’s memories, stories and photographs”.⁶⁷ Here, the funders’ comment expresses an intention to shift the regeneration project’s cultural aspects away from striking visual representations, instead focusing more on intimate, domestic details and personal records. Rather than emphasizing the scale of the high rise buildings themselves, it foregrounds the narratives of those who lived within them. The note summarizes *This Road is Red*’s position in relation to this wider cultural project by explaining that: “The aim of the project is to capture the full story of Red Road’s fifty-year life. We hope this book with help keep Red Road alive for years to come”.⁶⁸ The novel, then, is also positioned as a site of literary memory – as a medium for recollective narratives and as an object attesting to their cultural and historical resonance.

Irvine won a tender offered by Glasgow Housing Agency as part of the Red Road Flats Cultural Project and explains that “my initial brief when I began working with Glasgow Life” was to “document the experiences of tenants from the Red Road Flats from the 1960s to the present day”.⁶⁹ Irvine spent close to two years researching *This Road is Red*, leading interviews with past and present residents of the flats, and accumulating a range of individual stories and memories which she reworked into her novel. In her afterword, Irvine describes stories within the novel as “largely true”, noting that she had, “In some instances”, “amalgamated characters and invented new ones or altered stories for the sake of the narrative. I wanted to be as truthful as I could to the stories I was told, but I was aware too that I was writing fiction”.⁷⁰ The author’s comment indicates an intention to balance fidelity to “the stories I was told” with narrative direction.⁷¹ The novel was launched at Glasgow’s

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Irvine, 'Afterword', *This Road is Red*, p. 307.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

literary festival *Aye Write!* In 2011, at a well-attended event in the main reading hall of the Mitchell Library, with an audience including current and former Red Road residents, and representatives from many institutions working with the Cultural Project and Legacy Project. The launch embedded the novel entirely within the reflexive context of this local urban regeneration programme, and Irvine's work was introduced by David Fletcher, Glasgow Housing Association's Assistant Director of Regeneration, who discussed plans to invest £60 million in the area over a decade and framed the regeneration process as "the birth of a new neighbourhood in North Glasgow".⁷² Fletcher was equally keen to stress GHA's recognition that "regeneration is only partly about buildings", emphasising the importance of the Red Road Flats Cultural Project, and work like Irvine's in negotiating the area's history, and future.⁷³ The tone of Fletcher's speech strongly indicated GHA's determination to demonstrate a more nuanced approach to urban regeneration than was evident in the 1980s and 1990s.

Fletcher's reflections are pertinent because *This Road is Red* was developed as Glasgow Housing Agency embarked on the city's latest phase of urban regeneration: flattening the edges of Glasgow's skyline by demolishing much of the city's remaining multi-storey public housing. A PR statement from the City Council set those intentions out boldly:

The skyline of Glasgow is set to be radically transformed, as swathes of high rise tower blocks make way for thousands of new homes across the city. Glasgow is enjoying a real renaissance. We're delivering on better housing and we have regained our sense of ambition. This is an announcement that looks to the future and we are determined we will not repeat the mistakes of the past.⁷⁴

The "mistakes of the past" have been central to the cultural identity of housing in Glasgow for many generations. Chris Leslie, the photographer and filmmaker Alison Irvine began collaborating with during her residency at Red Road, has spent much of the last decade documenting the images and histories of Glasgow's half-

⁷² David Fletcher, presentation at *This Road is Red* book launch, *Aye Write!*, Mitchell Library, Glasgow, 11 March 2011.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Glasgow City Council, Press Release 'Glasgow poised for a £96 million housing revolution', (2006), qtd. in Chris Leslie, *Disappearing Glasgow* (Edinburgh: Freight, 2016), p. 3.

demolished municipal high-rises. Leslie foregrounds that statement from Glasgow City Council in his photo series *Disappearing Glasgow* (2016), reflecting on Glasgow's latest 'urban renaissance': "Since 2006 over thirty per cent of Glasgow's tower blocks have been demolished. Entire communities have disappeared as Glasgow embarks on its latest orgy of demolition, a 'solution' that has been so prevalent in the city's history."⁷⁵ Glasgow has been shaped and reshaped by successive waves of demolition: from Victorian slum clearances, to grand post-war urban redevelopment plans, destroying swathes of dilapidated tenement housing, to the current campaign to flatten the edges of Glasgow's skyline – erasing multi-storey public housing and the utopian shadows they cast. Each phase of demolition as vigorous and unstinting as the last in an apparent compulsion on the part of Glasgow's planners to erase evidence of previous generations' mistakes. As Leslie outlines, "in the previous round of mass demolition in the 1960s and 70s, tens of thousands of Glaswegians were decanted from slums into new schemes" but "by the turn of the twenty first century the solution has become the problem".⁷⁶ While "the humble wrecking ball" had been replaced with multi-million pound demolition contracts [...] secured demolition zones and the demolition spectacles that all the community are invited to watch" the "simple ethos of "knock-em-down and build-em-back-up-again" remains the same."⁷⁷

In the face of such constant change, the City Council's commitment to radical transformation, its insistence on its own 'sense of ambition' and concomitant determination that "we will not repeat the mistakes of the past" is beyond hubristic.⁷⁸ The illustrator and critic, Mitch Miller, with whom Leslie and Irvine lead interdisciplinary work with, is blunter still on the city's insatiable desire for

⁷⁵ Chris Leslie, *Disappearing Glasgow*, p. 3.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid. The perception that Glasgow has experienced a prolonged, and seemingly perpetual state of renewal is a common theme of local literature and criticism. Taking a more relaxed view of the city's apparently habitual change, Edwin Morgan suggests that such transformation reflects a "kind of "do it" spirit' in the city, "You put up things and maybe you regret it but, but you've done it anyway. You maybe pull them down ten years later but there's a go-getting spirit in Glasgow [...] If you're going to make mistakes, make them big mistakes, then recover and do something else". In interview with Kasia Boddy, (1998) qtd. in Kasia Boddy, 'Edwin Morgan's adventures in Calamerica', *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 13.1 (2000), 177-194 (p. 178).

⁷⁸ Glasgow City Council, 'Glasgow poised for a £96 million housing revolution'.

transformation, and the contemporary campaign to tear down municipal tower blocks:

Our city has really been very good at bold ideas, big, massive gestures, one after the other, reinventions, rebirths, regenerations, renaissances, rebrandings. We gesture, gesticulate and gyrate like no other. It's a repeating pattern, an addition to spectacular history that, if Glasgow were a person, would have put it in therapy, jail or intensive care years ago.⁷⁹

Meanwhile, in contrast to GHA's programme of demolition, new high-rise flats continue to cluster around the Clyde: part of Glasgow's stuttering 'riverside regeneration'.⁸⁰ In 2011, the architectural critic Owen Hatherley reflected that some of these high rises already looked anachronistic. Even their marketing material appeared dated, like the "'gh2o' brochure" which "shows an American Psycho fantasy of spotless interiors and hard bodies" and now "seems an artefact from a bygone pre-crunch age".⁸¹ The entrance to the Glasgow Harbour development, isolated from densely populated Partick by an expressway, is marked by "the obligatory crass and inept public art - an angel made of steel shards "representing Glasgow's regeneration" – Across the river, some shipyards still cling on doggedly as something other than an ornament".⁸² As Kirsteen Paton reflects in her study of gentrification in Partick, these "beacons of modernity" are "the prospective high rises of the future, only this time round the landlords are private owners, not the local authority".⁸³ Recently, more new high rise housing has appeared along the river in the form of purpose built student accommodation - a sector of the housing market

⁷⁹ Mitch Miller, 'On Simple Prospects, Red Road and Spectacular History, Part One', 9, April 2014 <<http://www.dialectograms.com/on-simple-prospects-red-road-and-spectacular-history-part-one/>> [accessed 16 May 2016].

⁸⁰ Though in other cities in the UK where housing is under even greater pressure, post-war "council houses have gone vintage; council houses in inner London are the new lofts, to be boasted about and fitted with salvaged Bakelite and Formica by the trendiest of their new inhabitants. In addition to all the other indignities the poorest of the poor in London suffer, they now have an extra one, the implication that they never saw the potential". James Meek, 'Where will we live', *London Review of Books*, 36, 9 January 2014, pp. 7-17 <<https://www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n01/james-meek/where-will-we-live>> [accessed 20 February 2014].

⁸¹ Owen Hatherley, *A Guide to the New Ruins of Great Britain* (London: Verso, 2011), p. 193.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 193-194.

⁸³ Kirsteen Paton, *Gentrification: A Working Class Perspective* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2014), p. 6.

which expanded generally across the UK with a rapid influx of private overseas investment. The contrast between Glasgow's municipal drive to obliterate most of its multi-storey public housing and planners' equal eagerness to facilitate new high density private waterfront developments indicates the contradictions at play in a city still very much negotiating its postindustrial identity.

Literary representations of this cycle of ruination and regeneration articulate changing attitudes to urban regeneration and complex attachments to domestic spaces which have long since disappeared. In his opening comments to the audience at the launch of *This Road is Red*, the literary critic Willy Maley contemplated Glasgow's persistent commitment to regeneration, and residents' difficulty relating to sites of childhood memory, like schools and dwellings which have been demolished. Maley reflected that "I must be one of many working class Glaswegians who can only point to a piece of wasteground now and say, 'That's where my life was turned around'".⁸⁴ Maley also associates largescale postwar urban transformation with "chronic disrespect for local communities" and dwells on the estranging effect demolition has had on residents' emotional topography.⁸⁵ Conveying this complex cycle of ruination and regeneration which continues to shape Glasgow has been a central concern for many of the city's writers. In a well-known essay for Oscar Marzaroli's photobook, *Shades of Grey: Glasgow 1956-86*, William McIlvanney reflects on the atmosphere and aesthetics of Basil Spence's modernist Queen Elizabeth Square flats in the Gorbals. For McIlvanney felt, as many commentators did, that post-war redevelopment had led to an irreversible erosion of local identity:

A lot of the old tenements were hardly fit to live in but they did have a strong sense of community. Changes had to be made but they were frequently made by people who seemed to have the imagination of a soldier ant. Mainly, what had been fairly coherent communities were either shipped out to housing schemes like penal colonies on the edges of the city or incarcerated in high-rise flats. Presumably they had committed being working class.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Willy Maley, Book Launch, *Aye Write!*, Mitchell Library, Glasgow, 11 March 2011 and Maley, 'Foreword: This Book Must Be Read', p. 1.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ William McIlvanney, 'Where Greta Garbo wouldn't have been alone', in Oscar Marzaroli, *Shades of Grey: Glasgow, 1956-1987* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1987), pp. 19-36 (p. 21).

McIlvanney's assessment of the cultural damage redevelopment visited upon local communities, while also providing major material improvements to the quality and safety of family housing, holds with fairly widespread opinion by the 1980s. McIlvanney goes on to reflect that "the malignant implication" behind the view that the material condition of housing was the only aspect that mattered "was that there was no such thing as a working-class culture and, therefore, nothing would be lost by thoughtlessly unstitching a fabric of a way of life put together over generations".⁸⁷ Similarly, the novelist Jeff Torrington presents the sense that communities had been expunged by a technocratic and paternalistic local authority in his novel *Swing Hammer Swing!* (1992). Torrington's book offers a granular account of life in the half-demolished tenement housing in the Gorbals in the 1960s and, of the residences that had disappeared the narrator reflects, "Housing planners had taken up their slum-erasers and rubbed out their people who'd lived there."⁸⁸

The close association McIlvanney draws between the social structure and form of tenement housing and working class culture in Glasgow is a trope of Glasgow fiction and cultural criticism. For example, in *Scots Imagination and Modern Memory* (2012), Andrew Blaikie goes so far as to say that "Glasgow's urban imaginary centres on the tenement and its aftermath in ways that stretch far beyond aesthetics".⁸⁹ Blaikie's analysis is guided by Ian Spring's reflective writing on Glasgow's changing urban identity in the 1990s, in *Phantom Village* which interrogates the cultural mythology of the Glasgow tenement, questioning the "potent narrative that informs all Glaswegians of their collective tenement experience. It is that tenement life was the essence of the collective community".⁹⁰ Blaikie concludes that postwar generation saw "structures of feeling...erased along with their physical setting" this "dispersal heralding the end of community. The social framework ensuring transmission of values on to the next generation was dismantled".⁹¹ Consequently, Blaikie reads in contemporary Glasgow fiction and photography a "nostalgic anxiety", nothing that "if there is a Glasgow gaze it is recursive and tends

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Jeff Torrington, *Swing Hammer Swing!* (London: Random House, 1992), p. 9.

⁸⁹ Andrew Blaikie, *The Scots Imagination and Modern Memory*, p. 211.

⁹⁰ Ian Spring, p. 27, qtd. in Blaikie, *The Scots Imagination and Modern Memory*, p. 211.

⁹¹ Andrew Blaikie, *The Scots Imagination and Modern Memory*, p. 212.

to look backwards”.⁹² This is a reading of the social consequences of postwar regeneration which gathered force in the decades that followed, in a range of disciplines from urban geography, to public public health and cultural history.

The suspicion that high rise living would be a failed experiment had already begun to set in by the late 1960s. Local fiction speculated on dystopian ends. Hugh C Rae’s, *Night Pillow* (1967), for example, describes the lights in modern high rise flats at night giving the effect of “a vast computer, winking and shuttering out its inhuman formula, balancing time and space and capital in neat economy”.⁹³ Yet their modernity is unimpressive to a number of the novel’s characters, who reflect that they would “like t’see them in twenty years”, or that “In five years – he’d give it five years the whole place would be falling round their ears like a lim”.⁹⁴ In 1966 – almost two years before the Red Road flats were finally completed – Pearl Jephcott secured funding for her research on the social dimensions of high rise housing, *Homes in High Flats* (1971), which took Glasgow’s Red Road flats as a principle case study.⁹⁵

Yet now that Glasgow has undertaken another wave of demolition, razing its municipal tower blocks, new clusters of sociological research and cultural history are increasingly querying the generalised view that postwar housing lacked the strong sense of community associated with tenements. A recent oral history research programme examining ‘Housing, everyday life and wellbeing’ in postwar Glasgow’ questioned the ‘influential narrative’ that slum clearance and rebuilding programmes in the period precipitated the “destruction of communities” and “social displacement”.⁹⁶ Analysing the experience of high rise residents, it found a more mixed picture of the social aspect of high rise life. Some study participants strongly countered the narrative that local communities, were irreversibly ruptured by moving to high rise housing, considering the very many cases where families and neighbours

⁹² Ibid., p. 215.

⁹³ Hugh C Rae, *Night Pillow* (London: Anthony Blonde, 1967), p. 26.

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 28, 76.

⁹⁵ Pearl Jephcott and Hilary Robinson, *Homes in High Flats: some of the human problems involved in multi-storey housing* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1971).

⁹⁶ Glasgow University, Housing, everyday life and wellbeing over the long term in Glasgow 1950 – 1975, ‘About the project’ <<http://glasgowhousing.academicblogs.co.uk/about-us/>> [accessed 05 December 2017].

had purposefully been rehoused near each other. Others felt that their sense of living in a coherent community did come to suffer, but that this change was less due to being rehoused initially, and that social problems arose later when patterns of tenancies changed in the 1970s and signs of poor investment and a lack of maintenance began to impact residents. Alison Irvine's novel, which draws on aspects of the ethics and methods of oral history can be considered in the context of such recent sociological investigation into the place attachment residents feel for high rise housing, even (or particularly) when those high rises have become challenging domestic spaces. Literary projects like Irvine's, however, have the potential to go beyond exploring the social nature of urban restructuring and changing senses of community, by querying aesthetic and affective aspects of place attachment, and the relationship between this phase of demolition and the city's layered history of redevelopment and regeneration. While the cultural narrative that the strong sense of community associated with the tenement was ruptured by postwar redevelopment is still a dominant one, it must be asked whether, given the critical and cultural attention the recent phase of high rise demolition has received, "Glasgow's urban imaginary", or "nostalgic anxiety" really does still "centre on the tenement"? The following paragraphs provide a brief introduction to select literary portrayals of high rise demolition, before considering Irvine's work in more detail.

Earlier Glasgow novels have interrogated the impact that the demolition of high rise housing has had on subsequent generations' place attachment and emotional topography. Now, and in decades to come, residents may not even be able to "point to a piece of wasteground" to indicate a site of relevance.⁹⁷ Childhood bedrooms, the first flats of young adulthood and former family homes may have been located twenty floors up in the air, with no markers or memorials to put in place once buildings have been demolished. Andrew O'Hagan's novel, *Our Fathers* (1999), explores an ambivalent attachment to high rise housing - with some nostalgia for the utopian promises of the post war period and mingled with embarrassment around its decline.⁹⁸ O'Hagan has noted that he was always drawn to writing a novel concerned with the "British tower block" and its "strangely reflective skin",

⁹⁷ Willy Maley, 'Foreword: This Book Must Be Read', p. 1.

⁹⁸ Andrew O'Hagan, *Our Fathers* (1999) (London: Faber and Faber, 2004).

wondering what their symbolic tension between modernity and decline would mean for the generation who “grew up in the air”.⁹⁹ Though attached to the ambition of the post-war housing drive, and determination that towers would offer people “a good view of the world they have left behind, with a renewed sense of community”, O’Hagan ultimately demurs to the view that “the British tower blocks were built for community. They worked for solitude”.¹⁰⁰

O’Hagan’s novel is largely set in Irvine, one of the new towns envisaged as a growth engine for new industries in Scotland, housing ‘overspill’ from Glasgow’s slum clearance programmes. It examines the fate of post war high rise housing in the West of Scotland through the strained relationship between the novel’s narrator, Jamie, and his grandfather, Hugh Bawn, a David Gibson-like figure: zealous about the capacity of modern housing to improve the life and health of working class citizens but inexacting about technical quality.¹⁰¹ One key passage, however, focuses on the demolition of Basil Spence’s Queen Elizabeth flats in the Gorbals which took place in 1993. It was to be the largest controlled explosion in Europe since the Second World War and, in the time leading up to the demolition, it was read as a culturally significant event. The urban geographer Nick Fyfe has compared the status Basil Spence’s blocks held in Glasgow, and the cultural meaning of their demolition, with Charles Jencks’ view that demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe housing complex in St Louis marked the “symbolic end of modernism in architecture”.¹⁰² So, the demolition of Basil Spence’s flats were seen by some as presaging the end of modernism in Scottish housing design. The local press and local authorities encouraged an excitable spectator atmosphere at the demolition itself. An essay by Phil McPhee in the earliest, *Workers City* anthology concluded that it was a relief for Glasgow District Council to demolish the problematic building, and hinted that

⁹⁹ Andrew O’Hagan, ‘Higher Hopes’.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ David Gibson was an Independent Labour Party Councillor who led a ‘crusade’ against inner city slum housing and national plans to house ‘overspill’ in new towns. Gibson was determined to build high density housing in land within Glasgow’s boundaries and pushed for permission to build quickly on gap-sites. For an account of Gibson’s career and influence on Glasgow’s postwar housing landscape, see Miles Glendinning and Stefan Muthesius, *Tower Block*, pp. 220-246.

¹⁰² Nick Fyfe, ‘Contested Visions of a Modern City: Planning and Poetry in Post War Glasgow’ *Environment and Planning A*, 28.3 (1996), pp. 387-403 (p. 402).

encouraging a carnival atmosphere around the event was an attempt to diffuse and distract blame for what had become “a monument to corruption, stupidity and bad planning”.¹⁰³ Phil McPhee’s essay reflects that “it was pathetic to read of and see pictures in the paper and T.V. of councillors at the site of the demolition celebrating champagne-style the removal of evidence of their crass stupidity and greed. A friend remarked at the time, “It’s a pity the buggers weren’t inside the buildings”.¹⁰⁴

The demolition, however, did not go to plan. Several spectators were injured by debris, and one onlooker, Helen Tinney was killed. Concluding their history of high-rise housing in the UK, Glendinning and Muthesius reflect on the possible consequences of those tragic events, and whether they may have “dealt a fatal blow to that most conspicuous ritual of anti-Modernism – the demolition of towerblocks as public theatre” presaging “a more general change in the demand for ever more theatrical slogans and gestures, and the emergence of a new preference for reflective evaluation?”¹⁰⁵ The local authority did put restrictions on demolitions in following years, with no crowds encouraged and most demolitions taking place at night to prevent spectators. In terms of working towards more reflective evaluation upon the social and cultural meaning of high-rise demolition, locally rooted literature, including O’Hagan’s *Our Fathers* has led that process. The novel gives some indication of the atmosphere on the day of the demolition in the Gorbals, the “buzz” and “hoopla” and public spectacle involved in detonating buildings “as if the hours that passed inside meant nothing much, as if they ever happened”.¹⁰⁶ The reader is offered a flavour of the bombastic press coverage (“An era will end in Glasgow this morning”), the excitable crowds and the media presence at the demolition site.¹⁰⁷ O’Hagan indicates the shift in the sense of civic purpose among municipal leaders, no longer dominated by zealous Councillors like Jamie’s grandfather Hugh, who worked relentlessly to build high density housing. Instead, the narrator notices “a silver helium airship over the city centre” which “flew on a high string from the City

¹⁰³ Phil McPhee, ‘Hutchie E - A Monument to Corruption, Stupidity and Bad Planning’, in *Workers City: The Real Glasgow Stands Up* (Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 1988), pp. 47 – 48 (p. 47).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁵ Miles Glendinning and Stefan Muthesius, *Tower Block*, p. 327.

¹⁰⁶ Andrew O’Hagan, *Our Fathers*, pp. 193-94.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

Chambers.”¹⁰⁸ Reflecting on the ephemeral structure - its form an echo of modernity - tethered, pointlessly, to the seat of municipal power, Jamie admits, “I don’t know what it was doing up there. It was the sort of thing they did now [...] I suppose it was meant to make people feel they were living in a good place”.¹⁰⁹

Jamie’s reflections on the demolition in the Gorbals that day are not triumphalistic, and nor are they nostalgic – but they do have an elegiac quality. The narrator allows himself to dwell on “the sadness you feel when a house comes down”, but his response is not concerned with any kind of architectural sublime.¹¹⁰ His own thoughts relate to the domestic memories of residents, and the difficulty they might have making sense of those memories in the long-term - trying to retain them within the visual frame of the city they live in when those spaces have been completely obliterated:

You feel for the people who lived there. All those sitting rooms and painted walls, gone in an instant, as if the hours that passed inside meant nothing much, as if they never happened. The shape of those rooms will always remain in the minds of those who lived there. People will grow up with a memory of their high view over Glasgow. They’ll remember the sounds of the elevators, the lights down below; the cupboards; the bathroom, the small of the carpets. They’ll know that they once lived high in the Gorbals. The thought of the rooms will bring back conversations, the theme-tunes of television shows: they’ll remind them of parties and arguments and pain. And above all that they will bring back innocence: a memory of the day-to-day; a time when the rooms felt modern and good, when no one imagined their obliteration. The people went into those towers with hope: life will always be like this, they thought. But what they thought came down with the rubble too. They lived in those rooms, but will never see them again. They are gone.¹¹¹

Here, O’Hagan focuses on the contrast between the haptic qualities of personal memory, the remembered space that some have considered the basis of a shared community, and the total erasure of vertical space.¹¹² Some moments after the blast,

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 200.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Andrew Blaikie, for example, cites Pierre Nora’s reflection in ‘Between memory and history: *les lieux de mémoire*’, that there are “sites of memory” because there are no longer “real environments of memory”. Blaikie emphasises that a “defining consciousness of remembered community” can be “used to repopulate imaginatively streets that have long

Jamie notices that “Over the Gorbals the smoke climbing up the wreckage was met with the everyday spew of the Polmadie furnace, the ascending fumes twisting there, a double helix, and drifting out to the nothing above.”¹¹³ Drawing comparison with a “double helix”, O’Hagan gestures to the intergenerational bonds between Jamie and his grandfather, and the interlocking cultural understanding of different urban generations, who used, redesigned and rebuilt the same spaces. Demolishing a tower block does not, however, appear to preserve aspects of the previous generations’ efforts, design or wishes for local people. A demolished tower block does not, for instance, leave negative space between other buildings, like a gap-site among tenement blocks. In earlier Glasgow fiction, James Kelman has explored the sense of historical depth and urban texture revealed by gap-sites and the tenement demolition process. In *The Busconductor Hines*, the narrator, Robert reflects upon the “delicate absence” gap-sites create: emptiness where “a hunner years ago it was a brand spanking new section whose brightly white sandstone was quarried in Aberdeen perhaps, carted down by rail, the labourers and masons singing”.¹¹⁴ In this case, the slow stages of demolition make the historical process of urban construction more visible, and Kelman highlights that it can make the labour of those involved more tangible.

Other Glasgow fiction which portrays the demolition of high-rises also examines the emotional difficulties provoked by the lack of visual markers for demolished flats, and the absence of such haptic historical traces. For instance, Alison Miller’s novel *Demo* (2005) portrays a crowd gathered to watch the demolition of a high-rise. The novel’s focal character, Clare, describes the nervous excitement in the crowd. Details such as two people “dancing, arm in arm, both with a can a lager in the other hand, singing. *Start spreading the news [...] I want to be a part of it, New York, New York*” contribute to undercutting the sense of post-war ambition that encouraged planners to build steel-framed skyscrapers in Glasgow’s gap-sites.¹¹⁵ The demolition itself is anticlimactic, “a crack and a low rumble, and

been bulldozed”, *The Scots Imagination and Modern Memory*, p. 223. Cf Pierre Nora, ‘Between memory and history’, *Representations* 26.1 (1989), pp. 7-24 (p. 7).

¹¹³ Andrew O’Hagan, *Our Fathers*, p. 192.

¹¹⁴ James Kelman, *The Bus Conductor Hines* (1984) (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1985; 1987), p. 160.

¹¹⁵ Alison Miller, *Demo* (2005) (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 220.

the tower kinda sinks down on itself; grey dust billows at the sides low down”¹¹⁶
 Then, after the “whole thing collapses in slow motion into a pile a rubble”, Claire
 hears a woman desperate for a bit of the rubble to keep:¹¹⁷

A memento. I reared my family in they flats. Four weans. My youngest
 boy’s in the army. Last time he was hame on leave, he says, Ma. I want a
 brick fae our house when they knock the flats down [...] He broke intay the
 flats and went out to our old house and he chipped away the plaster in the
 livin room; scraped away at it till he was down to the bare concrete. An then
 he taen a paintbrush and some paint and he wrote his name on it in big letters:
 ALAN. He says, Ma, I’m going back for that concrete block. Find out where
 they take the rubble.¹¹⁸

Here, Miller presents witnesses’ desire to possess some part of the flats’ material.
 Intimate, secret spaces are carved out within high density housing, and Miller’s
 characters wish them to be palpable.

This Road is Red: ‘Voices that speak of and from the place itself’

Irvine’s novel shares O’Hagan and Miller’s emphasis upon characters’ attenuation to
 the haptic and affective qualities of particular domestic spaces.¹¹⁹ *This Road Is Red*
 is a portmanteau novel and Irvine makes neighbours of the individual narratives she
 developed from the experiences of previous residents. Towards the end of the novel,
 these stories are nestled close together, with many of the characters revisiting the
 blocks, which are slowly being evacuated and prepared for demolition. Irvine
 recounts the visit of one emotional resident, who “makes sure he finds their
 windows: it’s important to see the actual windows on the actual buildings”; “That’s
 mine, he says, as he, like Ricky finds his windows on floor six”.¹²⁰ Other characters,
 like Kate, identify their old flats from more of a distance:

Kat drives back to Glasgow on the M77. She loves the view of Glasgow as
 the motorway crests the edge of the city before it crosses the Clyde. She sees
 all the high rises and she sees Red Road. She picks out the building that is

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 223.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 223-24.

¹¹⁹

¹²⁰ Alison Irvine, *This Road is Red*, p. 302.

Ten Red Road and says that's mine. High rises are the bones of a city, she believes, and her own bones were shaped by living there, she knows.¹²¹

Irvine's novel indicates the importance that attachment to domestic spaces has for individuals' experience of the urban landscape, the autobiographical geography that is inscribed around and within every city. In this way, commemorative work like *This Road is Red*, and the broader Red Road Flats Cultural and Legacy projects may appear to demonstrate that hoped-for "preference for reflective evaluation", simply by acknowledging residents' attachments to their present or past homes, and the complexities of memorialising individual homes in highrises when their demolition leaves no trace of the space they once occupied.¹²² David Fletcher's address at *This Road is Red*'s launch also indicates a willingness to plan and manage regeneration projects with a broader view. His statement that "regeneration is only partly about buildings" does not only reflect the need to take a more sensitive approach towards an area's past, but the wish to build social capital in an area as well as providing material investment in new buildings.¹²³ In the context of the history of housing in Glasgow, this attenuation to social capital and attachment to place does mark a shift away from a persistent tendency to blame social problems on architectural structures, a thread of architectural determinism that has run through decades of planning policy in the city, and also through strands of Glasgow's crime fiction.¹²⁴

Having spent almost two years researching *This Road is Red*, leading interviews with past and present residents of the flats, and accumulating a range of individual stories and memories, Irvine began reworking these narratives into a

¹²¹ Ibid., pp. 302-303.

¹²² Miles Glendinning and Stefan Muthesius, *Tower Block*, p. 327.

¹²³ David Fletcher, presentation at *This Road is Red* book launch, *Aye Write!*, Mitchell Library, Glasgow, 11 March 2011.

¹²⁴ In, for example, Hugh C Rae's *Night Pillow*, as previously discussed. Though William McIlvanney expresses the resolute view that modernist high-rises represent penal architecture (in 'Where Greta Garbo wouldn't have been alone') his fictional work certainly offers a robust rejoinder to the most extreme conclusions of architectural determinism. Notably, in a frequently cited passage from his 1977 novel *Laidlaw*, the eponymous detective, while visiting Drumchapel, reflects that Glasgow's housing schemes are "terrible" places, "architectural dumps where they unload people like slurry. Penal architecture" while stressing that the people who live there are "terribly impressive". He concludes that "Glasgow people have to be nice people. Otherwise they would have burned the place to the ground years ago". McIlvanney, *Laidlaw* (London: Coronet Books, Hodder and Staughton, 1977), p. 32.

novel. After stressing the documentary origins of the project, the novel's afterword ends with the statement that, "If I'd interviewed a completely different set of people I'm sure I would have had a different book as these are only some of the stories to come out of Red Road. There are plenty more".¹²⁵ This concluding observation strikes a matter-of-fact tone, and the centrality of those individual narratives to the novel's structure and form is also clearly and simply foregrounded in the book's opening acknowledgements. Irvine thanks her interviewees for "their willingness to go over the tiny details of their experiences" which "gave me such rich material to work with".¹²⁶ The names of thirty individual contributors are listed in a column (presumably by design, there is one named interviewee for every habitable floor of the tallest of the tower blocks) followed by acknowledgements to those employed by or involved with organisations including Glasgow Life, the Scottish Refugee Council and Impact Arts. Altogether, the paratextual material framing Irvine's narrative stresses the documentary perspective the project began with, foregrounds the contribution of named individuals, and indicates that the novel is a medium for "some of the stories" which have "come out of Red Road", suggesting that the buildings are a storehouse for stories, which the work of the author is to unearth through a kind of contemporary archeology. In an interview in 2009, Jonny Howes, then the community action team officer for Glasgow Life who commissioned *This Road is Red* and managed aspects of the cultural project lays similar emphasis on the documentary quality of this cultural work. Howes locates particular value in the fact that the project records a process of historical transition, noting that, "People usually have to document the history of an area after the event... what we're doing is capturing it while it is still alive".¹²⁷ Howes and Irvine's presentations of the project both frame the novel as a form of salvage ethnography, documenting, recording or 'capturing' peoples' lived experiences of high rise living in Balornock before it disappears. Importantly, however, Irvine's final statement about the novel's source stories, "There are plenty more", also works against a sense of completion, titling

¹²⁵ Alison Irvine, *This Road is Red*, p. 307.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 9.

¹²⁷ Jonny Howes, qtd. in Sheila Hamilton, 'Red Roads in the sky', *Evening Times*, 15 October 2009

<http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/news/12845918.Red_Roads__in_the_sky__> [accessed 7 November 2016].

against any notion that the novel purports to represent the development's history or cultural meaning in totality. In a later piece on the novel for the Scottish Book Trust, Irvine is more emphatic about the very partial perspective the novel provides, and that she acknowledged this selectivity from the outset of the project:

I decided not to treat the book as 'The History of the Red Road Flats' which began to scare the life out of me, but simply, as a retelling of the stories of the people I'd interviewed. That way, I didn't have to obsess about making sure I'd written about every single aspect of Red Road or every single significant event, because that would have been impossible. I just attempted to be as true as I could to what I'd been told. I focused on the wee details of people's stories, thinking that if I got the small things right, it would make the bigger picture more accurate.¹²⁸

In interview, Irvine explained that her original proposal, which was accepted and commissioned by Jonny Howes at Glasgow Life, was to "write about seven interconnected short stories - and I had more in mind - of those ghostwritten David Mitchell types, where the stories were quite fleshed out. There might be the tiniest links from one to the other, so I had that as a structure in my head".¹²⁹ However, as the project progressed, Irvine found that "the material" came in quite a different form, since during the interviews she led "often the stories people told me were quite concise, quite short, or else - if you weren't going to be concise - it would be their whole life stories - and you'd write the whole book on them, without anyone else".¹³⁰ Discovering that the interview process did not generally elicit personal narratives which would readily become short stories, but rather a whole life trajectory punctuated by "concise" events, Irvine found the writing process "became more complex for me than what I'd originally intended" and felt the novel had to draw together "smaller" "vignettes...that linked up".¹³¹

Speaking at the 2011 Edinburgh Book Festival following the novel's nomination for the Festival's Newton First Book Award, Irvine indicated that she felt

¹²⁸ Alison Irvine, 'Alison Irvine: On writing This Road Is Red', *Scottish Book Trust*, webpages (2011) <<http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/blog/teens-young-people/2011/06/alison-irvine-this-road-is-red>> [accessed 3 June 2012].

¹²⁹ Alison Irvine, in conversation, 8 September 2011.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

“overwhelmed by what I said I could do on the bid for the project”.¹³² Elsewhere she has described the “enormity of what I’d said I was able to do, which was to write the lives of the people who had lived in the flats from the sixties to the present day – but that’s thousands.”¹³³ She had always disregarded the possibility of writing the novel from the perspective of one focal character, or “trying to create an everyman tenant, because there’s no such thing”, and while she did “merge some characters” in order to shape the novel’s narrative, Irvine maintains that the novel essentially comprises “all true stories [...] with a bit of tweaking and adjusting”, and “crossed that gap” between fiction and testimony “by including some of my interview transcripts in the book. Fiction but with a little bit of the real thing in there”.¹³⁴ The resulting novel progresses chronologically, from Red Road’s construction to the beginning of the scheme’s demolition, and its interlocking narratives are also interspersed with quotations from the interview transcripts. Though Irvine does not discuss her interview process as a form or extension of oral history methods, in terms of its form and genre, *This Road is Red* could be viewed in line with other novelistic work which, Ariella van Luyn suggests “blurs the boundaries between historically verifiable information and fiction”.¹³⁵ Drawing comparisons between a range of authors who transpose oral history interviews into their novels, van Luyn notes a “lack of deep theoretical discussion around the task of transforming oral histories into fiction.”¹³⁶ Considering the lack of interrogation this practice has received, van Luyn acknowledges that it is, of course commonplace for authors to draw on a wide range of historical and source material while researching their writing. However, while many “fiction writers draw on interviews and archival material” clearly “not all of them feel so tied to this material that they disclose its influence on their work”.¹³⁷ By including direct excerpts from transcripts, Irvine foregrounds the material and social construction of the novel, presenting the narrative as a

¹³² Alison Irvine, ‘Robert Douglas and Alison Irvine’, Edinburgh International Book Festival, 29 August 2011.

¹³³ Alison Irvine, ‘Alison Irvine: On writing *This Road Is Red*’.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Ariella van Luyn, ‘Artful life stories: Enriching creative writing practice through oral history’, *Text*, 17.1 (2013), 1-17 (p. 1).

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

collaborative process, which intertwines many voices and - in the absence of a principle focal character or direct commentary – may appear to decenter the author’s perspective.

In interview with the illustrator Mitch Miller, who began to work closely with Alison Irvine as the Red Road Cultural Project developed, one of the Project’s commissioners expresses the view that Alison’s literary work was “a fantastic way of doing community engagement” which was “less about the writing and more about community engagement”.¹³⁸ They consider that the novel “put those people’s voices in a way which linked to the housing project”.¹³⁹ For those responsible for the Cultural Project, then, there was value in participatory literary work which was “less about the writing” itself. Peter Clandfield reads new possibilities for social critique in *This Road is Red*’s attempt to blend individual residents’ narratives into one novelistic form, praising Irvine’s “multifocal, multimodal methods” which shifts emphasis away from “the author’s individual vision” and “can be credited with helping to inspire a new kind of novel”.¹⁴⁰ Clandfield calls this “new kind of novel” “geo-centered” rather than “ego-centered”, indicating a process wherein the “author becomes collator, convener, organizer of the work rather than creator or architect”.¹⁴¹ Yet, there are serious aesthetic and ethical concerns in positioning an author as “collator, convener [or] organizer of the work”, not least when the material being ‘convened’ is drawn from the testimony of people living in, and through, a period of controversial urban transformation. Moreover, presuming that the author’s voice has been decentered through a collaborative writing process attributes a kind of stylistic transparency to the author’s writing, and accords an unusually high degree of trust in an objective or disinterested authorial perspective. Again, presumptions about authorial fidelity and transparency are problematic when a collaborative novel like *This Road is Red* attempts to “give an insight into” life in the scheme.

Though approaching this matter from quite different critical positions, Willy Maley and Peter Clandfield have both suggested that the multifocal perspectives in

¹³⁸ Mitch Miller, ‘Commissioner Interview: Commissioner 2’, 18 August 2012, ‘An Unruly Parliament of Lines: The Dialectogram as process and artefact of social engagement’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Glasgow School of Art, 2016), pp. 1-10 (p. 6).

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Peter Clandfield, ‘Red Road Re-visions’, p. 91.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 101.

place in *This Road is Red* are less partial, less subjective and less limited than the intimate portrayals of the psychological effects of urban space in tightly focalized first person novels such as Kelman's and Galloway's. In his foreword to the reprint of Irvine's novel, Maley gestures to the "ironic epigraph" to F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, "life is much more successfully looked at from a single window" and suggests that "too often our authors take this at face value" and "fail to give us" more "communal perspectives".¹⁴² Praising *This Road is Red* as a "model of multi-storey narration", Maley complains that he has "never understood why so many working-class authors write in a detached manner as though they live in bungalows".¹⁴³ Maley goes on to suggest that "Where writers like Kelman and Gray give us individual consciousness, single window through which to view the world, Alison Irvine has a gift for bringing whole communities to life".¹⁴⁴ However, as Nicola Wilson points out:

There are problematic issues at stake in looking into a home that is not one's own. This is true with regard to individual memory (as in the adult looking back on the working-class home of childhood) as well as the 'outside' observer or reader 'looking in'. What the geographer Derek Gregory terms the 'predicament of positionality' haunts any study of working-class writing and interior space, and this has obvious ramifications when considering how working-class houses have historically been positioned as less private than those of the middle classes and generally more open to witness, to visiting and critique.¹⁴⁵

Irvine was clearly acutely attenuated to these ethical concerns throughout and beyond the writing process. In interview, Irvine explains that the tendering process was the impetus for the project and while she would certainly have been interested in writing a novel about the cultural and social history of the development outside the scope of the Glasgow Life's Cultural Project "I think I wouldn't have known that you could, if you see what I mean", so the starting point for the literary work "was definitely the fact that there were opportunities".¹⁴⁶ The wider Cultural Project then, provided the opportunity to develop a literary work alongside a cultural engagement

¹⁴² Willy Maley, 'Foreword: This book must be read', p. 3.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Nicola Wilson, *Home in British Working-Class Fiction* (London: Ashgate, 2016), p. 195.

¹⁴⁶ Alison Irvine, in conversation.

programme, offering creative practitioners institutional support to work with local residents, and financial support for the work. However, Irvine was also keen to stress that she had worked in the area previously, and as recently as the year before, leading writing workshops: “It was a podcasting project for Anker Productions” with “asylum seeker teenagers. And I did it with a fellow writer, and I really enjoyed it – loved it. Actually, one of the girls that’s in the book [*This Road is Red*], I met her through the podcasting project”.¹⁴⁷ With a background in teaching creative writing, and leading drama workshops, Irvine already had professional experience working in the area and relationships with residents which fed into the novel. Irvine also emphasizes the importance she placed on “not wanting to parachute in and parachute out” explaining that:

what I was doing was quite different to a traditional community project because I wasn’t asking them to write their stories – and you could argue that that’s what I should have been doing, but I wasn’t. So therefore I didn’t have to...there wasn’t that level of engagement that you needed to have and then keep up, and all that – although I kept in touch with quite a lot of the people.¹⁴⁸

Irvine then, is clear about the need to demonstrate commitment to the project and not “parachute in and parachute out” and also raises the possibility that the focus of a creative writing project in this contested site of urban regeneration could or should have been on developing and publishing residents’ own stories – “you could argue that’s what I should have been doing”. However, Irvine takes a clear view that the novel “was a different kind of project” which did not demand an equivalent degree of sustained engagement with participants.

Commenting on the degree of engagement that residents did have with her own literary project and with the wider Red Road Cultural Project, and on Glasgow Life and Glasgow Housing Association’s aspirations for the project, Irvine reflects:

I think they wanted to feel that members of the community got to have their say in the demolition and all the archiving that’s going on around it. And to a certain extent that worked – because there were a few members that did. But in terms of the thousands of people that passed through...not everyone did. But maybe they liked the fact that [Irvine’s commissioned work] it’s find of

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

‘faction’...I tried not to stray too far from what people had told me. And they [Glasgow Life] were quite good really, because even the negative stuff they were quite happy with, and so were GHA, they got behind the book once they’d read it.¹⁴⁹

Although the novel presents a multifocal perspective, Irvine stresses here that it is a very partial record of the experience of residents. From the “thousands of people that passed through” Red Road, “a few members” contributed to the novel cultural project. However, Irvine clearly attributes a genuine desire for community engagement to Glasgow Life, and a willingness to voice and publish “negative” views and experiences of the flats, both on the part of the cultural organization leading the creative work, and on the housing agency. Irvine did note though, that while there were no particular restrictions placed on her as an author or on residents contributing to the project, GHA staff were subject to some more direction in their engagement with the cultural project. Irvine states that GHA:

had given the concierges a bit of a warning – say what you like but you’re not allowed to say anything which is derogatory or which would...what’s the word... *implicate* GHA in any of your stories. So to a certain extent they did cap what could be told – and they were fair about that, the concierges. I’m sure there was other stuff that they could have told me, but they didn’t. So that was the only kind of censorship [...] I mean, I’ll never know whether people censored what they said to me because I wasn’t from the area, had a different accent. Or whether they embellished [stories]. Either that, or they were just completely straight down the line. So it’s interesting, and that’s the sort of job I was doing...I’ll never know.¹⁵⁰

Irvine then, is clear that there was at least some degree of institutional “censorship” on the part of GHA towards its direct employees, and that the concierges were direct and “fair” about that restriction. While Irvine does imply that this was a reasonably minor constraint, it is relevant that concierges did have a particular overview of activities in the flats which would not be available to individual residents, and an organizational relationship with the housing association and council which makes this restriction relevant to a social history of the flats. This detail about the novel’s social construction highlights the dangers in assuming that a novel of this kind can represent a disinterested or impartial cultural record of place. No matter how

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

attenuated the author or creative practitioner might be to the ethical concerns of the project, professional restrictions may be externally imposed in the course of the research or writing process which are not foregrounded in the final text. Moreover, as Irvine also reflects, regardless of formal restrictions on the project, it is difficult to determine “whether people censored what they said to me because I wasn’t from the area, or had a different accent”.¹⁵¹ A key difficulty in construing *This Road is Red* as a collective piece of writing or “geo-centred novel”, whereby the author is “collator, convener, organizer” of the text is that it attributes fidelity and consistency to the ‘convening’ author, but honesty and historical fidelity on the part of contributors as well.¹⁵² Irvine is also forthright about the degree to which she was willing to adapt source material, commenting that “I suppose in a mercenary sense I was looking for stuff that had drama in it, and so I was looking for story-arcs and stuff” which may have come from “big events” in the lives of residents and the history of the flats, but also from “the really small events as well”.¹⁵³ In terms of making ethical judgements about whether or not to include an event or detail in the novel, Irvine states that she approached the source material first in terms of “what makes a good story and *then* I did the morality check”, noting that “there were a couple” of cases she was less certain about whether or not to include.¹⁵⁴ For example, “I justified putting in the death of the boy on the pylon. I mean – that was someone’s son. And I justified that by thinking, well, that was a really common cause to death in the 70s. I mean, I remember being warned about playing on electric pylons, so...”.¹⁵⁵ In other instances, Irvine was surprised by the details of finished stories that participants objected to. For example, one interviewee was unhappy about a brief moment in a longer story based on her experience where she needed to go to the bathroom. For Irvine, then, the writing process involved a process of ethical revision, and a need to bear a certain sense of propriety, as well as historical fidelity, in mind.

Irvine was also conscious about potential criticism of her role and perspective as an outsider. Stating that she “worried a lot” about the ethical implications of the

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Peter Clandfield, ‘Red Road Re-visions’, p. 101.

¹⁵³ Alison Irvine, in conversation.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

project, “about how to represent the flats over so many years [...] it felt enormous, what I said I could do”.¹⁵⁶ In addition to the historical weight of the task and “the fact that someone might say, “Well, no. I lived there, and I didn’t have that experience”, Irvine was also concerned that her work might be criticized on the basis of her accent and background: “Oh, what’s an English girl doing writing about Glasgow, you know”.¹⁵⁷ Irvine is tempted to minimize this as her “own paranoia”, but also notes that someone once “said something really funny. It was said in a really harmless way, but I was reading at a bookgroup in Springburn Library” and someone at the reading asked, “So...you’re from Essex, and that’s quite well to do, isn’t it, that’s quite posh...So what was it about Red Road that attracted you? Was it that you wanted to see another way of life?”.¹⁵⁸ Irvine gestures that some questions about her motivations for pursuing the project might have a “fair point”, but “it certainly wasn’t poverty tourism or anything like that. I just saw potential for stories. But people snipe. People say what they like. I suppose that’s why I wanted to make it was good as I could and still...put my stamp on it.”¹⁵⁹

More hostile views on Irvine’s involvement with the project on the basis of her background have since been voiced. In the first edition of a new literary magazine, *thi wurd*, the magazine’s editor, local writer Alan McMunnigall comments on the *This Road is Red* in the context of the Red Road Cultural Project. McMunnigall argues that “when economically-deprived communities are rendered in fiction it is often the case that these accounts are written by ‘approved outsiders’ who sanitise the culture, misrepresent it and make it palatable to a readership that is also outwith the culture”.¹⁶⁰ McMunnigall asserts that community engagement projects offer an easy route to published work, suggesting, “All the author is required to do is to interview some local residents and then set her imagination to work” and casts the published novel as “an offensive misrepresentation of a culture, a cosy denial of reality” and even “colonial and patronising and wrong on every level”.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Alan McMunnigall, ‘Introduction’, *thi wurd*, 1 (2012)

<<http://www.thi-wurd.com/issue1intro.html>> [accessed 11 November 2016].

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

McMunnigall's principle line of argument is that municipally-led projects afford an already privileged voice further opportunities to develop their work, by drawing on the voices and experiences of others. At the same time, McMunnigall argues, more authentic accounts of working class spaces are suppressed, since writers with less social capital are excluded from similar opportunities for publication. McMunnigall goes on to reflect that "Maybe some day I'll read a great fictional representation of the Red Road from someone who actually grew up and lived there [...] imagine there is a writer in the Red Road at this very moment who has written about their own community from within that culture [and who] despairs at finding a place where their work will be read fairly and without prejudice".¹⁶² However, as Irvine had pointed out in 2011, "there actually have been books that have come out of direct experience", including a book written about one woman's own book "experience as an asylum seeker" and asking - "why didn't her book get the attention it deserved"?¹⁶³ Irvine overtly questions why it seems to "take someone, some British person, to tell other people's stories for Red Road to get on the radar. It is interesting."¹⁶⁴ Irvine also stresses that "I want people to write their own stories", and in public talks and critical commentaries is keen to direct people towards other short stories and personal experiences published online as part of the broader Cultural Project.¹⁶⁵

As well as approaching these ethical considerations about community engagement in an open and consistent way, Irvine is also open about the instrumental role that institutional funding and support played in the novel's construction and publication. Irvine is forthright about the fact having the "machinery of Glasgow Life behind me was amazing".¹⁶⁶ The cultural body was instrumental in getting the novel published – Irvine states that the Glasgow Life officer co-ordinating the project "practically acted as my agent" sending "proposals and sample chapters around to

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Alison Irvine, in conversation.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Alison Irvine, 'Robert Douglas and Alison Irvine', Edinburgh International Book Festival, 29 August 2011.

¹⁶⁶ Alison Irvine, in conversation.

publishers”.¹⁶⁷ Unusually for a debut novel, Luath press “committed to it based on a couple of chapters”.¹⁶⁸

However, despite Irvine’s very positive appraisal of the institutional support provided by Glasgow Life and GHA around the novel’s development and publication, and Irvine’s impression that there was a genuine desire to produce a respectful and reflexive commemoration of the Red Road flats, engaging residents, the ethical hazards in developing such collective work with institutional support became apparent when, in 2014, it was proposed that the Red Road flats would be demolished, live, as the dramatic highpoint of Glasgow’s Commonwealth Games opening ceremony: a “bold and dramatic statement of intent from a city focused on regeneration and a positive future for its people”.¹⁶⁹ The illustrator Mitch Miller strongly criticised the decision, arguing that “the spectacle undoes the legacy of the Red Road Flats Cultural Project and its ethic of care and respect”, commenting that the project “had to deal with considerable internal contradictions, multiple stakeholders and complex material, and to my (biased) mind, pulled a lot of it off.”¹⁷⁰ Miller regrets that “despite lip service” to that ethic of care, the City Council appears “happy to ditch everything good and honourable in the undertaking for the sake of the *wow factor*”.¹⁷¹ From a more personal perspective, as a cultural practitioner who worked closely with residents, Miller admits:

Also – and this is really selfish of me here – I feel the Games have made a liar of me. I bargained my way into concierge station, front rooms, North Glasgow boozers and kitchens on the promise that I would not stitch people up and show some respect. Retrospectively, I am become the vanguard of a colonising force that took all of this history, experience and nuance as their property, then sold it back to us as spectacle.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Glasgow 2014, Press release, ‘Dramatic End of Red Road Creates Bold Symbol for Games’ Celebration of City Rebirth’ (2014) <<http://www.glasgow2014.com/media-centre/press-releases/dramatic-end-red-road-creates-bold-symbol-games-celebration-city-rebirth>> [accessed 7 November 2016].

¹⁷⁰ Mitch Miller, ‘On Simple Prospects, Red Road, and Spectacular History, Part Two’, *Dialectograms*, 9 April 2014 <<http://www.dialectograms.com/on-simple-prospects-red-road-and-spectacular-history-part-two/>> [accessed 7 November 2016].

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

Like Miller, Irvine contributed to various interventions against the proposed spectacle in the press, and later, in her professional blog reflected that:

I have very much bitten the hand that feeds me by speaking out against the idea of using the demolition of five of the Red Road blocks as part of the 2014 Commonwealth Games opening ceremony.¹⁷³

Irvine explores the decision and its relationship with her creative work by stressing that, “I’m not an expert in housing or regeneration or social policy” but:

I’m trying to understand the decision within the parameters of what I feel I can talk about with confidence, namely theatre and the symbolism of including the demolition in the opening ceremony, and the idea of legacy and the importance of recording the inevitable contradictions and complexities of a place such as Red Road with its varied history and its thousands of inhabitants.¹⁷⁴

Irvine contrasts this with the “Brilliant and brave arts project management” she experienced working with Glasgow Life, stressing that in “my initial conversations with those who commissioned me, it was made clear I could write what I found. I didn’t have to censor anything, pay lip service to the GHA or to Glasgow City Council and I wrote with freedom”.¹⁷⁵ Again, Irvine acknowledges that, “Obviously, I came to Red Road with my own liberal prejudices and there will be things I’ve got wrong and aspects of Red Road life that I didn’t cover, such as parts of my interviewees stories that I didn’t include either for arbitrary reasons like they didn’t work for my narrative arc, or simply that I liked other stories better”.¹⁷⁶ However, Irvine fundamentally argued that the Red Road Flats Project “managed to hold” multiple contradictions and that she thinks the “community was engaged in this process”.¹⁷⁷ Irvine contrasts this sharply with the range of cultural work around the Commonwealth Games and the opening ceremony itself:

Has the community been engaged in forming the narrative or the opening ceremony? I don’t know. It’s a simplistic question about a complex artistic process. Projects like the National Theatre of Scotland’s Tin Forest aim to engage people in the telling of their stories because these participants are the experts in their lives and their city and it’s up to the artists funnelling all these

¹⁷³ Alison Irvine, ‘Red Road Flats’, *Alison Irvine: Wordpress*, April 5 2014 <<https://alisonirvine.wordpress.com/2014/04/05/137/>> [accessed 9 November 2017].

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

ideas and opinions to keep that truth intact [...] I didn't think that my work on Red Road would intersect so violently with my new Commonwealth Games project, my collaborators and I having decided to focus our exploration on the East End of Glasgow [...] but now I must reconsider my work in light of this most recent of 'cultural interventions' and just hope that Glasgow Life still considers me for future commissions.¹⁷⁸

While media interventions that Irvine led (and those of other creative professionals who had experience working with local residents of Red Road) played an important part in reversing plans to stage that spectacle, the relationship between creative practitioners and local authorities in this context is far from straightforward. Regardless of the quality of the working relationships between writers and artists and the local authority or housing agency's wider engagement team, the tenor and impact of any creative project in this vein can be retrospectively transformed by a single decision on the part of the regeneration body. With this risk in mind, it is concerning that Irvine concludes her reflections on the matter with the "hope that Glasgow Life still considers me for future commissions".¹⁷⁹ As Brouillette has argued, literary consultancy work of this type carries the risk that writers involved in it will come to accord their reputation for professional expertise in working with publics greater value than the need for creative autonomy and freedom from institutional prejudice. Irvine's professional trajectory following *This Road is Red* also speaks to these concerns. Irvine went on to develop *Nothing is Lost* (2015), a multidisciplinary project related to the Commonwealth Games. The following chapter of this thesis examines the nature of that creative project and its relationship to recreational space in greater detail, but here, I discuss the trajectory of Irvine's professional development because the conclusions that may be drawn from this process are pertinent to this chapter's particular concerns with local frameworks of literary labour.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

Literary facilitation and participation: ‘the ethics of being an artist in such contexts is complex’¹⁸⁰

Irvine continued to work closely with the illustrator, author and critic Mitch Miller, and the filmmaker and photographer Chris Leslie to document urban change in parts of the East End of Glasgow. Their next multidisciplinary residency would explore urban regeneration linked to the 2014 Commonwealth Games. Again, the residency was funded by Glasgow Life, and reflecting on the creative and ethical tensions inherent in leading a creative project funded by the organisations co-ordinating parts of the Games and planning regeneration projects Mitch Miller writes:

We came to this task replete with our own conflicts and contradictions; not least that the artists’ residency was itself supported by Glasgow Life, a major player in the organisation of the main event. That didn’t stop us speaking out – about, for example, the ludicrous proposal to demolish the Red Road Flats for the opening ceremony – but make no mistake, the ethics of being an artist in such contexts is complex. You have to take care, have to balance the desire to prevent unwelcome ties and restrictions with seizing the opportunity to actually make work, and offer comment.¹⁸¹

One key conflict to negotiate, I argue, is the moral and economic value placed on a writer’s capacity to act as a facilitator. Brouillette suggests that writers who are keen to foreground the problematic consequences of urban regeneration projects “tend to position the writer’s engagement with the public as a means of witnessing the community’s own opposition to the development process and of attempting to record its histories as a kind of salvage ethnography.”¹⁸² Such a historical record is undoubtedly valuable, but a potential ethical concern is that this mode of community engagement can end up functioning as a substitute for substantive engagement with the planning process itself, or even other forms of community work. Moreover, as Brouillette has indicated, participatory literary work exploring sites of regeneration may not be welcomed by developers and housing authorities so much because writers’ skills “offer the opportunity to repair breaches and bring conflicting parties

¹⁸⁰ Mitch Miller, ‘The Dialectographer’s Bulletin 3: Nothing is Lost’, *Dialectograms*, 15 August 2015
<<http://www.dialectograms.com/the-dialectographers-bulletin-3-nothing-is-lost/>> [accessed 14 November 2017].

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 161.

together” when views against changes are strong but, rather, because literary work is tolerant of the kind of contradictions and tensions that Miller and Irvine have indicated in their creative work.¹⁸³ Writers’ “routine practice”, Brouillette argues:

leads to emphasis on how rifts cannot be breached, how the distance between points of view cannot be traversed. Hence, never far from view is the mainstream regeneration agenda to which the writer is meant to offer not a help but an alternative, in the form of a compensating outlet through which a local community can voice its concerns.¹⁸⁴

Irvine’s reflections on her own creative process chime with aspects of this analysis, when she considers having “bitten the hand that feeds me” by “speaking out” against demolishing the flats as part of the Commonwealth Games opening ceremony.¹⁸⁵

Irvine recalls that:

Each person I spoke to had conflicting things to say about the flats. There were no-rose tinted glasses but nor were there tales of complete misery. The woman who was afraid for her children when they came across drunk men in the lifts reminisced about days spent on the grass with other families [...] The elderly women who couldn’t wait to move out and have a front door and a back door said she missed the neighbourliness of life in her high rise.¹⁸⁶

Irvine expressed some qualified satisfaction that her project “managed to hold all those contradictions”, noting that those she had mentioned “were just the personal ones – I haven’t touched upon Glasgow City Council’s housing policy, or the physical state of the flats and the surrounding amenities, the social factors...”.¹⁸⁷ Yet whether participatory literary work is figured as a form of “witnessing the community’s own opposition to the development process” or a way of exploring the complexities and contradictions among attitudes to regeneration, the potential for this form of creative engagement to become a “compensating outlet” remains. In the particular case of the Red Road Cultural Project, it is notable that in interview with Mitch Miller, one of the Project’s commissioners remarked that organisers eventually “merged” arts projects with the “community engagement group” because

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 164.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Alison Irvine, ‘Red Road Flats’.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

“literally the only community engagement” being done was “through art work and classes” and “activities with children”.¹⁸⁸

Furthermore, this model of funding for creative or literary projects may tend to emphasise writers’ facilitation skills over and above their final literary output, and not only encourages writers to think about their role professional development as a ‘writer-consultant’ but, increasingly, to fold the commission based nature of this creative work into broader consultative work. Again, in the context of Red Road, it is pertinent that project staff saw particular value in literary work which was “less about the writing and more about community engagement”.¹⁸⁹ It is also apposite to consider, in the light of this new designation for literary skill, David Harvey’s observation that since the power to shape space is so crucial to the maintenance and exercise of power, “those who have the professional and intellectual skills to shape space materially and effectively – architects, planners and so on – can themselves acquire a certain power and convert their specialized knowledge into financial benefit”.¹⁹⁰ Authors who can demonstrate experience in such valued community engagement work may perhaps find that their “specialized knowledge” and skills in this area may also place them in demand, due their ability to influence the development of urban regeneration projects and thereby shape space. Crucially, whether or not literary work representing communities experiencing urban change attempts to expose the “nonneutrality” of urban space by making conflicts and contradictions more legible, or whether it contains and delimits that conflict in an aesthetic form which can tolerate contradiction, the compensatory possibility of that work remains.¹⁹¹

There is some evidence that the development and promotion of “specialized knowledge” and expertise in community engagement has become increasingly

¹⁸⁸ Mitch Miller, ‘Commissioner Interview: Commissioner Two’, Appendix, ‘An Unruly Parliament of Lines: The Dialectogram as process and artefact of social engagement’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Glasgow School of Art, 2016), p. 2.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 1.

¹⁹⁰ David Harvey, (1985) ‘Money, Time, Space and the City’, in *The Urban Experience* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1989), pp. 165-100 (p. 187).

¹⁹¹ Peter Clandfield, ‘Architectural Crimes and Architectural Solutions’, in *Writing the Modern City: Literature, Architecture, Modernity*, ed. by Sarah Edwards and Johnathan Charley (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 108–26 (p. 108).

important to Irvine, Miller and Leslie's professional trajectory.¹⁹² They each submitted separate bids for independent creative work as part of the Red Road cultural project, and, as their residencies overlapped, found that they collaborated well together. As a result, they submitted a joint bid to the Commonwealth Games Cultural Programme for a multidisciplinary project, using their individual creative perspectives to explore different aspects of environmental and social change in the same area. Recently, the trio have established themselves as a practice called "Recollective". This title does not only seem to stress their status as an artist collective: producing work together in a shared and sustained but self-managed practice, but reflects aspects of their work which rely on collecting and collating fragments of a community's perspectives and experiences – the curatorial nature of socially-engaged art. It also speaks to the environmental context of their work – the splintered and confused landscapes of urban regeneration and the scraps of vivid colour and warmth that can be found in a disorientating setting. Chris Leslie's photographs of emptied or demolished domestic spaces, for example, often feature such bright patches, like tattered paper on exposed walls, shocks of colour amidst grey rubble. The title also calls to mind the work of other current artists' collectives like Assemble, the group of architects and designers who won the 2015 Turner Prize for their collaborative urban design projects including Granby Four Streets, which saw the collective work alongside a community trust to renovate a group of terraced houses in Liverpool, and Baltic Street Adventure Playground: a recreational space in the style of a post-war adventure playground in Dalmarnock in the East End of Glasgow. Baltic Street was originally commissioned as part of the 2014 Commonwealth Games cultural programme and this site was also documented and portrayed in *Nothing is Lost*, Irvine, Miller and Leslie's Commonwealth Games residency. Most clearly, however, the name relates to the group's focus on the nature of memory – the relationship between individual stories and communal memory, perceptions of place and accounts of change, the everyday memory work that living in urban transition entails, and the historiographical nature of socially-engaged art in fragile communities.

¹⁹² David Harvey, 'Money, Time, Space and the City', p. 187.

Their copy describes a “Recollective project” as an “exacting, sensitive and comprehensive study of a place and its people [...] We use photography, film, illustration and creative non-fiction to produce thought-provoking, high-quality art about real lives. Borrowing techniques from ethnography, oral history and social documentary and mixing these with each artist’s expertise”.¹⁹³ Yet Irvine’s *This Road is Red* is an intricately structured novel. Using the term “creative non-fiction” to describe this kind of project emphasises the authenticity of individual narratives rather than the novel’s form and this notion is developed in the following description of Irvine’s writing: “Alison weaves stories from intensive research. She teases out stories, testimonies, moments, follows networks of friends, relatives and acquaintances. In her spare but textured prose the characters speak in select, but eloquent voices that speak from, and of the place itself”.¹⁹⁴ While Irvine is very much portrayed as eliciting and selecting narrative strands and skeins of social history, her individual authorial style minimized in this description – to the extent that stories are presented as authentic representations of “the place itself”.¹⁹⁵ Framing the group’s work in this way advertises their capacity to act as conduits for storytelling, and their skill in managing this process.

Increasingly, the group appear to have taken on commissions which reflect this consultative role. Mitch Miller describes his position leading a curatorial project with Glasgow museums as an “artist-facilitator”.¹⁹⁶ Some recent commissions Recollective have accepted appear to steer their practice further towards creative consultancy. For instance, ‘A New Chapter’, a project undertaken on behalf of Paisley Central Library, is described as a “Creative Visioning process” which saw the collective “engage borrowers, young people, locals and staff” with potential redesigns of the facility.¹⁹⁷ Each of the collective took their own approach to the brief: Irvine worked with the library’s younger users to develop ‘microfictions’

¹⁹³ Recollective, ‘About Us’, *Recollective* (2016)

<<http://www.recollective.org.uk/about-us/>> [accessed 14 November 2017].

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Recollective, ‘A New Chapter: Creative Visioning for Paisley Library’, *Recollective* <http://www.recollective.org.uk/portfolio_page/creative-visioning/> [accessed 5 January 2018].

portraying their experience of reading, and experimental wordplay exploring what libraries mean to them. However, the project's final output was a thirty-two page report, including site photographs and illustrations, not particularly distinct in form or scope from the typical content and structure of outputs from research and consultation led by creative agencies. One of the ethical and artistic risks inhabiting commission based work funded by developers and associated cultural institutions is that the practitioner transfers more of their attention and resources towards facilitation and, as their experience and reputation develops, so do related opportunities in the public and private sector. If commissions begin to omit the production of a significant creative work following the consultation process, or seek a particular range of outcomes, then there is less and less distinction between the practice of 'artist-facilitators' and creative consultants in a branding or design agency. Despite the risk that residencies or consultancy opportunities like these may privilege writers' facilitation skills over and above their literary output, key organisations in the sector have not only acknowledged that contractual work of this nature is becoming an increasingly important aspect of writers' professional development, but have also signalled that they expect to support more collaborative work in the future. For example, Creative Scotland's 2015 'Literature and Publishing Sector Review' emphasises that "over a third" of writers surveyed "participated in public events in educational or community/wellbeing settings".¹⁹⁸ The review also stated that a "clear gap" had been identified in the provision of training for writers "working with vulnerable people in the area of participatory arts, such as in hospitals, prisons and care settings".¹⁹⁹ Moreover, the Review recommended that literary institutions should "demonstrate the value of and uses for Scottish literature to advance the aims and ambitions of other sectors".²⁰⁰

Alison Irvine's novel, *This Road Is Red* is the most developed example of a locally rooted literary project, which was afforded a relatively long period for research and development and was related, very specifically to a particular residential site. Since Irvine's novel was published in 2011, there have been a range

¹⁹⁸ Creative Scotland, 'Literature and Publishing Sector Review: Final Report' (Nordicity in association with Drew Wylie, 2015), p. 47.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 38.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

of literary projects (or projects with a literary dimension) in and around Glasgow with similar objectives. For example, ‘A View from Here’ (2013), an arts and heritage project examining the demolition of Glasgow’s high rise housing and the “shared and disparate experiences of refugees, migrants and local Scots who live there”.²⁰¹ ‘Glasgow Film Theatre’s ‘For All’ Project’ (2016), an engagement project, commissioning nine writers to develop literary responses to the cinema and the “notion of ‘equality’”, with Irvine facilitating a series of workshops and capturing the audiences’ response to these short narratives in a subsequent creative text.²⁰² In 2017, Irvine had been working with a social prescribing project, Restart, a mental health project which provides referred participants with peer support, cultural activities and therapeutic activities. Participants showcased their work in *Aye Write’s* community engagement festival in 2017. No summary of ongoing work is likely to reflect numerous community projects which may have been proposed but did not reach development. For example, Irvine and Howe approached Woodlands Community Council with an interest in developing a novel about that area of the city, but ultimately the council felt unable to commit time to the project.²⁰³

Elsewhere, a wide range of projects which draw upon writers’ engagement and facilitation skills is now apparent. For example, Sarah Butler, “writer, literature consultant and project manager” whom Brouillette considers “the major figure encouraging writers to consider working as consultants and providing developers with reasons to hire writers in these roles”, was recently awarded Arts Council England Funding to work with Justlife, a Manchester based charity supporting people “close to the streets”, during 2017.²⁰⁴ Participants will be working with a

²⁰¹ Scottish Refugee Council, ‘A View from Here’, *Centre for Contemporary Arts* <<http://www.cca-glasgow.com/film/gramnet--a-view-from-here--the-faces-of-our-european-cities>> [accessed 13 December 2017].

²⁰² Alison Irvine, ‘Glasgow Film Theatre’s ‘For All’ Project’, 11 June 2016, *Scottish Book Trust* <<http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/blog/writing/2013/09/glasgow-film-theatres-for-all-project>> [accessed 13 December 2017].

²⁰³ Woodlands Community Council, *Minutes of Meeting*, 2 December 2013 <<http://www.woodsideonline.org.uk/download/approved-minutes-december-2013/>> [accessed 5 January 2018].

²⁰⁴ Sarah Brouillette, p. 159; Sarah Butler, ‘Urban Words Home’, *Urban Words* <<http://www.urbanwords.org.uk>> [accessed 17 December 2017]; Sarah Butler, ‘Urban Words Home’, *Urban Words* <<http://www.urbanwords.org.uk>> [accessed 17 December 2017].

photographer who will “document their experiences of unsupported temporary accommodation” and Butler will be writing a “novella inspired by their stories and experiences”.²⁰⁵ I have set out these examples of participatory literary work in order to indicate the growing impetus for writers to locate their work in this burgeoning sector, and indicate the tendency for literary facilitation to be geared, in particular, towards working alongside people with vulnerabilities in insecure urban environments. The following section of this chapter turns to an examination of the novelist Ross Raisin’s literary work and critical interventions in this area.

Waterline

Ross Raisin’s postindustrial Glasgow novel, *Waterline*, published in the same year as *This Road is Red* is an important counterpoint to collaborative approaches to writing urban space.²⁰⁶ *Waterline*, examines domestic precarity and urban homelessness, the most vulnerable fringes of the UK housing system, and is a politically charged novel which sets street homelessness within the historical and social context of deindustrialisation in Glasgow. The novel was not developed with institutional support, but Raisin drew on his personal involvement with the homelessness charity sector while developing the book, as well as documentary research he undertook with local campaign groups such as Clydeside Action on Asbestos. As his research progressed “the political motivation to draw attention to homelessness” in the context of austerity became an important aspect of his work.²⁰⁷ I suggest that Raisin’s novel illuminates some key differences between writing which is politically engaged and writing which is considered ‘socially engaged’ due to the funding structures and institutions that support it.

Waterline’s narrative largely centres on its focal character’s experience living homeless on the streets of London. However, it introduces Mick, a former shipbuilder in Glasgow, at home and grieving for his wife who died from plural

²⁰⁵ Sarah Butler, ‘Telling Stories of Temporary Housing’, *Urban Words*, 21 December 2016 <<http://www.urbanwords.org.uk/2016/12/telling-stories-of-temporary-housing/>> [accessed 17 December 2017].

²⁰⁶ Ross Raisin, *Waterline* (London: Viking, 2011).

²⁰⁷ Ross Raisin, ‘Author Interview’, *Foyles* <<http://www.foyles.co.uk/ross-raisin>> [accessed 22 June 2016].

mesolithioma due, Mick knows, to washing his asbestos covered overalls. Long after her funeral, Mick dreams of her, “A great big dump of washing in front of her [...] lifting a pair of overalls down the pile”, but could not bring himself to go down the “justice and compensation route”.²⁰⁸ In interview, Raisin is clear that he wished to open the novel in West Central Scotland, and that he was “especially interested to make the connection between homelessness and de-industrialisation”.²⁰⁹

to think about the long-term (governmental) effects of taking away a heartbeat of a community, where that community has been built around heavy industry such as Mick’s community in Glasgow. What happens to the way that people interact with each other, indeed even to the way in which they judge and value themselves, when they are told that their way of life, and the way of life of their ancestors, is worthless? There is of course not a direct correlation between these things and homelessness, but Mick is in many ways a very ‘normal’ homeless person, and these things are part of the fabric of his life, and part of his detachment from society.²¹⁰

Imagery early in the novel prompts comparisons between Mick’s bereavement and the closure of the shipyards, which happened many decades previously – such as the funeral cards in Mick’s living room, “pinned up spruce as launch bunting around a ship”.²¹¹ Mick also directly likens the intractable nature of his wife’s illness to the damage of deindustrialisation, “Once it was in, it was in, like Thatcher”.²¹² As Raisin commented in interview, the “more subtle, social bereavement of deindustrialisation [...] the effect of the decline of shipbuilding” is the background to Mick’s isolating experience. Detached from what was left of his life, Mick loses his grasp on his routine, his finances, until alone and bereft in London.

Raisin contrasts Mick’s bitter experience of industrial decay with local sites which represent the city’s ambivalent transition towards a postindustrial economy. His aspirational relatives are cheered by the new shopping centre near the river, with its “great M&S” and “dry ski slope”, and the “Very modern...new apartments at

²⁰⁸ Ross Raisin, *Waterline*, pp. 117, 36.

²⁰⁹ Ross Raisin, in interview, *End Homelessness*, 10 April 2012 <<https://peoplesadvocacycouncil.wordpress.com/2014/05/11/7901/>> [accessed 19 June 2013].

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ross Raisin, *Waterline*, p. 1.

²¹² Ibid., p. 48.

Glasgow Harbour”.²¹³ “About time”, they declare, that “they made some more use out of all those dead areas along the river”. “There’s no point”, they argue “leaving it all to decay like it has been. Those cranes, and the berths all crumbling. It’s not safe, for one thing.”²¹⁴ Emphasising the aesthetic direction of these new developments, with expansive retail spaces and ‘apartments’ in the style of an American waterfront regeneration project, Raisin presents the ex-shipyard worker reflecting on the Titan crane:

Turned into a visitor centre...lit up pink and red at night [...] The last he knew, they were talking about putting a restaurant in the jib and making it revolve [...] It was part of a project to represent the industrial heritage of the area. A revolving pink restaurant. You’ve got to wonder how they dream these things up. And see the view? That’s one thing for starters they’ll have to change. All very well getting the full panorama but if all you’re looking out on is a puddled wasteland every direction – gangs of weans playing football and smoking, pigeons roosting and crapping over the rusted fabrication sheds...²¹⁵

Mick’s wry reflections on attempts to “represent the industrial heritage of the area” are clearly marked by the view that regeneration efforts would focus on repurposing buildings and infrastructure with a “gritty”, “industrial” aesthetic, showcasing them as new spaces for consumption, yet doing little for the surrounding landscape of ruination, or the “gangs of weans” that play within it.²¹⁶

Carefully setting out the social and cultural conditions which led to Mick’s homelessness, not simply in terms of Mick’s immediate economic or social circumstances, but in relation to an entire community, is integral to Raisin’s intentions. Raisin is clear that “homelessness is rarely tackled in English fiction (and if it is, it isn’t always tackled well)”.²¹⁷ Raisin also stated that “it does feel necessary to write about it, especially now [...] when government cuts to public spending are going to see an increase [in homelessness] at the same time as massive cuts are being made to spending on the homelessness sector.”²¹⁸ By setting the first portion of the

²¹³ Ibid., p. 13

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ross Raisin, ‘Author Interview’, *Foyles* <<http://www.foyles.co.uk/ross-raisin>> [accessed 22 June 2016].

²¹⁸ Ibid.

novel in Glasgow, and emphasising the long-term social and economic effects of deindustrialisation, Raisin is able to reflect the geographically uneven impact of deindustrialisation and welfare reform. As Christina Beatty and Steve Fothergill have demonstrated, the regions of the UK which will bear the greatest impact of welfare reform, as well as cuts to spending on services supporting vulnerable people, such as the homelessness sector, mirror the areas which were most damaged by deindustrialisation.²¹⁹ This resonant setting allows Raisin to draw stronger parallels supporting his novel's potential to "draw attention to homelessness" in an overtly politicised way, which is not focused on individual experience but considers the role the homelessness sector plays, and relates its vulnerabilities to broader and deeper economic threats.²²⁰

Moreover, in Raisin's view that "it is by giving a whole and complex portrait of a person that you give an effective politics to your writing".²²¹ Raisin stresses that:

I have never experienced homelessness myself, and so have been very careful never to express the idea, either in my writing or by talking about my writing, that I am giving a voice to people who have experienced homelessness [...] If I am giving a voice to anyone it is to a character, a person, who I have imagined with the same care and thoughtfulness that I would any of my fictional characters.²²²

Raisin's insistence that his work does not "give a voice to people who have experienced homelessness" contrasts with the growing tendency for writers to lead commissioned work with vulnerable or marginalised groups in the spirit of advocacy, or to blend oral history research methods with fiction development. Raisin is adamant that:

²¹⁹ Christina Beatty and Steve Fothergill, 'The Uneven Impact of Welfare Reform: The Financial Losses to Place and People', (Sheffield Hallam University; Joseph Rowntree Foundation; Oxfam, 2016); see also, Christina Beatty and Steve Fothergill, 'Jobs, Welfare and Austerity: How the Destruction of Industrial Britain Casts a Shadow over Present-Day Public Finances' (Sheffield Hallam University Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, 2004).

²²⁰ Ross Raisin, 'Author Interview', *Foyles*.

²²¹ Ross Raisin, 'Author Statement', *British Council*

<<https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/ross-raisin>> [accessed 22 June 2016].

²²² *Ibid.*

I didn't try to pretend that I could research homelessness. I did feel a responsibility to be involved in the homeless charity sector, and talk to, and get to know people who have known homelessness. This is something I have been doing for a number of years now, in running a writing group in a hostel. Never for research, or material, but for the enjoyment of it, as much as anything else.²²³

As noted, Raisin did draw on documentary research with Clydeside Action on Asbestos and clearly discloses this influence. In terms of the distinction that Ariella van Luyn draws between “transforming histories into fiction” and “drawing on interviews and archival material” it seems apparent that Raisin used archival material and social experience to inform the novel’s development, rather than to shape its voice or structure.²²⁴ Not only does Raisin reject the potentially extractive dynamic of researching homelessness, he also insists that attempting to “give a voice” to a community relies upon a diminishing dynamic:

By saying you are giving a voice to people you are immediately ostracising them yourself. You are saying, in effect, that they don't have a voice of their own - but here I come with my 'literary' novel to save the day [...] It is by giving a whole and complex portrait of a person that you give an effective politics to your writing.²²⁵

Committing to the aesthetic and ethical importance of developing the distinctive perspective of a literary character, Raisin presents a significant challenge to the notion that working collaboratively represents a less hierarchical and more democratic mode of creative production. It also challenges the underlying assumption (evident in Peter Clandfield’s assessment of Irvine’s fiction as “multimodal”) that participatory practice and developing an unobtrusive literary style allows an author to represent a “whole community” or “a place itself”. In this way, Raisin’s approach to crafting a “whole and complex portrait of a person” and refusal to marginalise any community by attempting to give “a voice to people” is comparable to the sense of artistic commitment Kelman lays out in his critical essays and enacts in his literary work. Raisin’s comments question critical comfort with the

²²³ Ibid..

²²⁴ Ariella van Luyn, ‘Artful life stories: Enriching creative writing practice through oral history’, p. 1.

²²⁵ Ross Raisin, ‘Author Statement’, *British Council*.

possibility that literary work can “bring whole communities to life”, and recall Kelman’s stance on narrative fidelity.²²⁶

While this conversation about literary value and representation is focused on narrative form, the relationship between contemporary urban writing and regeneration is complicated by the fact that polyphonic collaborative work is incentivised by current arrangements for cultural funding. Funded opportunities to facilitate work with specific groups offer writers periods of relative stability, a more easily defined structure for researching, producing and publicising work, as well as the social rewards related to working with communities and other creative practitioners. With a single outcome agreement in place between national Government and local authorities, local funding for cultural work is often closely related to other local priorities. Preferences for joint bids and matched funding; the increasing investment in co-production as an academic research method and mode of policy development in government, are all factors which can all indirectly contribute to the diminishment of financial support available to writers who would pursue a novel in Raisin or Kelman’s vein. Notably, Bridget Fowler has recently advanced a critique of the public funding of cultural production, considering in particular the role that public funding played in supporting working class writers in Glasgow.²²⁷ Taking a Bourdieusian approach (as does Sarah Brouillette), Fowler examines funds disbursed by the Scottish Arts Council to three writers from the “restricted literary field” whose work attained a high profile since the 1970s: James Kelman, Alasdair Gray and Liz Lochhead.²²⁸ Fowler observes that both Gray and Kelman acknowledged that their financial “successes depended on who was on the Scottish Arts Council literature panel”, though Kelman expressed some reservations about the “potential control of artists’ projects” which may come with funding.²²⁹ Fowler

²²⁶ Kelman and Raisin’s attitude toward narrative representation might also be considered in light of Randall Stevenson’s observation that the “private, inner consciousness favoured by modernist writers” represented “that last room of one’s own in which interior monologue or stream of consciousness could escape or restructure some of the stresses of modernity”. ‘Greenwich Meanings: Clocks and Things in Modernist and Postmodernist Fiction’, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 30 (2000), pp.124-136, (p. 134).

²²⁷ Bridget Fowler, ‘Pierre Bourdieu: the State, the Enlightenment and the Scottish Literary Field’, in *Bourdieusian Prospects*, ed., by Lisa Adkins, Caragh Brosnan and Steven Threadgold (London; New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 71 – 90.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

makes that case that material assistance from the Arts Council did not only play an important role in supporting these writers' immediate costs, but also "served as a form of social recognition: the symbolic capital which comes from public recognition of their status – at a crucial stage – as autonomous 'authors'".²³⁰ Placing further emphasis on the importance of 'engagement' work and the capacity of literary activity to "advance the ambitions of other sectors" may not only erode the availability of funds to support 'autonomous' projects but may also have a more diffuse impact on the perception that the practice of fiction writing is of social value if not consciously and deliberately embedded in a social context. As well as reducing potential support for self-directed novels which do not carry responsibilities to particular groups, favouring participatory literary work also carries another danger for local communities, as explored in the following case study.

Weareglasgow

This chapter's final case study considers series of poems which appeared briefly on advertising spaces in Glasgow's public transport system in February 2016. In a chunky white font on a vibrant pink background, the poster poems were generally composed in rhyming couplets, and principally focused on local travel and homecoming. They were headed with one word titles summing up their sentimental focus: 'Friends'; 'Smile'; 'Home'; 'Cuddle'; 'You'. Their phrasing is straightforward, and they move between descriptions of emotional transition and sentimental peaks: "All the worries and woes of life/ seem to vanish",²³¹ "Incredible feelings of joy soaring oh so tall",²³² "My soul is clean, my soul is free/The energy within is marching to an upbeat tune",²³³ occasionally marked by a formal register or slightly archaic phrasing: "Our hearts are heavy, they dawn but a frown".²³⁴ The poems themselves are unattributed – other than to the web address and hashtag at the foot of each poster – "weareglasgow.com #weareglasgow". As a passenger, my own

²³⁰ Ibid., p. 84.

²³¹ Scott Hume, 'Smile', displayed on the SPT underground network, Spring 2016.

²³² Scott Hume, 'Friend', displayed on the SPT underground network, Spring 2016.

²³³ Scott Hume, 'Smile'.

²³⁴ Scott Hume, 'Cuddle', displayed on the SPT underground network, Spring 2016.

initial impression was that the posters' striking pink ground, the hashtag and the website signalled a connection to the 'People Make Glasgow' civic branding campaign which had been heavily promoted in the run up to the 2014 Commonwealth Games. The campaign was launched in 2013 by Glasgow City Council Marketing Bureau (GCCMB) and was a key element in the city's corporate image before the games. At first glance, these poems appeared to form part of this wider marketing campaign. Or, as it is not uncommon for urban transport networks to commit advertising space to artistic projects or literary work, they might form part of a cultural project. The subway operator, Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT) had previously hosted and part-funded a 'poet in residence' between 2009 and 2010. It did appear though that the very earnest, sentimental quality of the poetry jarred a little with expectations of poetry that might be displayed as part of a literary residency or public art project. Given the emphasis that the GCCMB's People Make Glasgow campaign appears to place on making public participation a visible element of the brand, and the prominence of the 'weareglasgow' hashtag on the posters, the unsigned posters might appear to be part of public competition or other participatory project. However, among the other bright pink posters was one in the same colours, font and style which did not bear a poem, but an advert for a local property management company. Infiniti Properties: 'Buying, Renting, Selling, Investing – We Know Glasgow – Because We Are Glasgow'".

This advertising campaign is indicative of the way in which site-specific writing can be pressed into service of gentrification and used to market urban localities both by projecting a literary voice which reads as authentic or personal, and emulating an atmosphere of community collaboration. Infiniti Properties worked with Pocapoc, a Glasgow-based creative agency, on a rebranding campaign from 2012 onwards. In conversation, both the managing director of Infiniti Properties, Scott Hume, and Sacha Mason, the lead designer at Pocapoc, initiated discussion of GCCMB's People Make Glasgow campaign, and were keen to stress that Infiniti's brand "weareglasgow" and its signature pink colour were developed long before GCCMB's People Make Glasgow Campaign emerged.²³⁵ Sacha expressed some

²³⁵ I spoke in conversation with Hume and Mason on separate occasions on 3 March 2016, Hume discussed registering the campaign domain name in 2012, over a year before the

frustration with the visibility of the People Make Glasgow brand, particularly that it shared the same tone of pink. Both Sacha and Scott demonstrated some concern that the highly visible nature of Infiniti's current poetry campaign, which features a series of subway poems, as well as putting the poems on taxi flip seats, might prompt people to conclude that they were copying, or using, the People Make Glasgow brand opportunistically, but were ultimately content that the fact that the rebrand dated from 2012 should dispel any concern.

Having established that Infiniti's domain, brand and colour palate predated the launch of the People Make Glasgow campaign, both Hume and Mason moved on to discuss the progress of the rebrand and the decision to use poetry as a key part of the marketing campaign. All of the featured poems were written by Infiniti's owner and manager – Scott Hume. Two poems ('You' and 'Home') were written specifically for the taxi flip seats, but, Scott and Sacha both stated that the three other poems in the campaign had been written long before they appeared in Glasgow's subway in 2016. Sacha mentioned that one was 'tweaked' a little, but otherwise the poems appear in the format in which they were written. Infiniti's use of poetry in their formal marketing also dates from 2012, when the office moved from Bath Street to Argyll Street in Finnieston – a location which Scott felt was more reflective of Infiniti's image. A poem was printed on the back of a flyer, just to "say hello" and "liven up" the otherwise unused space. Scott had also been in the habit of using poetry to "liven up" the company's internal communications, and would usually, for example, send a poem out to his staff every Friday afternoon, to sign off an email reviewing progress that week.²³⁶ Staff could also expect Scott to write "a wee poem" from greeting cards or other occasions. Sacha and Scott had also discussed using one of Scott's poems to shape the office's external branding – displaying it permanently on the office's floor-to-ceiling glass windows – the poem would be a radical change from the frontage of most estate agents and letting agencies, typically cluttered with property boards.²³⁷ Scott eventually decided against this because it would be "too much" – that he would feel uncomfortable with permanently

People Make Glasgow campaign was launched and at Pocapoc's offices Sacha showed proofs and property boards which had used the familiar bright pink in the past.

²³⁶ Scott Hume, in conversation, 3 March 2016.

²³⁷ Ibid.

displaying his poetry as an integral part of the business' frontage in such a high impact way – and that, while he knew his poems were “out there” in a city-wide marketing campaign – he didn't very much want to see them, or be reminded that they were in public circulation.²³⁸

At that point, beyond the poetry campaign, Infiniti's other marketing strategies are focused on building a sense of community, through, for example an incipient social media platform integrated with their estate agency website. Hume had also commissioned films and original photography, not to showcase individual properties on Infiniti's books, but to “document five local communities each month”.²³⁹ Explaining why he chose to use poetry as part of his most recent marketing exercise, Hume suggested that the poems were a way of avoiding ‘the hard sell’. Instead they offered “gentle ice breaker” “a barrier breakdown”, and he was pleased by the decision to spend on what he construed as uplifting messages rather than traditional advertising, comparing the poems to “motivational quotes”, and suggesting that he'd like to have more cheering messages around “you could have things on the pavement – it could be that kind of washable graffiti”.²⁴⁰ In fact Hume regards the ‘weareglasgow’ campaign as “a bit of altruism, it's my city” and an attempt to help engender enthusiastic attachment to place.²⁴¹ The simple structure and somewhat clichéd imagery of the poems themselves lend themselves to this end. As Sarah Brouillette observes, “aesthetic authenticity” is “indexed to” what we read as genuine.²⁴² Certainly, on social media, many people read the poems as “very sweet” or welcomed “a bit of mindfulness on the subway”. Others clearly associated the campaign with civic marketing, tweeting the hashtag weareglasgow alongside peoplemakeglasgow. An optimistic reading of this episode could find Hume's intentions heartening. Nevertheless, this literary marketing campaign, perhaps inadvertently, invokes the ethos of collaborative creative projects and the civic aesthetic promoted by public investment in Glasgow's arts.

²³⁸ Scott Hume, in conversation, Glasgow, 3 March 2016.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 172.

Conclusion - An ‘ethic of care and respect’: Literary participation in a post-regeneration era

This chapter has examined the emergence of participatory literary work, arguing that Glasgow has been an important locus for this new mode of literary production and highlighting factors which have favoured this literary practice. Contributing to an original literary text which explores an area’s social history and examines conflicts among residents, developers and other parties may carry various benefits for individuals and communities. As this chapter has noted, local authorities, regeneration agencies and cultural institutions emphasise the capacity of creative work to build social capital. While aspects of this tendency are problematic, specifically the way in which theories of social capital ‘responsibilise’ individuals and communities for economic and social problems, the benefit that creative work can bring in terms of helping people to establish new relationships, develop new skills, and reflect on change are not in doubt. What is more concerning is that this mode of literary facilitation may carry a compensatory function, by offering people an opportunity to influence representations of places and communities without providing any clear route to influence their future.

Finally, I wish to suggest that the emergence of the author-facilitator in the context of financial austerity is not coincidental. In the introduction to this thesis I suggested that the cultural meaning of postindustrial cultural complexes reads very differently following the financial crisis of 2008 and the decade of economic austerity that soon followed. As Zoe Thompson argues in *Urban Constellations: Spaces of Cultural Regeneration in Post-Industrial Britain* (2014) the “‘iconic’” architecture of Britain’s postindustrial cities were a “self-conscious attempt to produce a symbolic shift in the urban skyline, and a new identity for faded or forgotten cityscapes” but now might be read as a reification of the “hopeless hopefulness of it all” and provoke “melancholia”.²⁴³ Various urban theorists have proposed that the UK has long been in a ‘post-regeneration’ period. Certainly, in Glasgow there is broad evidence that neither the local authority, nor investors, nor

²⁴³ Zoe Thompson, *Urban Constellations: Spaces of Cultural Regeneration in Post-Industrial Britain* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 4, 2.

partnership organisations have much appetite to spend heavily on significant new cultural institutions. On a national level, Architecture and Design Scotland’s ‘Stalled Spaces’ initiative indicates the degree to which the financial crisis ruptured the trajectories of urban regeneration programmes across the country. Closer to the city’s creative roots, Test Unit’s 2017 project ‘Occupying the Post-industrial City’ sets out its blunt prospectus: “as demand for space changes, we need to explore processes that are less capital intensive and quicker to respond to people and change”.²⁴⁴ Test Unit presents itself as a responsive, ethical organisation which “aims to nurture a relationship between people and place through building capacity to initiate grass-roots projects and placing culture, people and education at the heart of regeneration”.²⁴⁵ Again, an ethic of care and nurture is invoked and the organisation seems to focus building social capital rather prestigious, visible regeneration projects. It is in this context that we have seen the rise of the literary consultant or writer-facilitator. Literary projects, after all, are responsive, they are not “capital intensive”, and they are not necessarily orientated towards making an obvious visual impression on an urban space. In this chapter, I have highlighted some ethical concerns related to this mode of literary work, particularly that writers may struggle to balance the political and economic interests of funders and partners with the wish of local communities, and perhaps their own desires, to pursue more radical objectives through ‘socially-engaged’ practice. In the following chapter I will explore, in more detail, the view that collaborative literary work can accommodate a therapeutic function and that contemporary urban writing has a role to play in current regeneration strategies which are presented as a means to public health improvement.

²⁴⁴ Agile City, ‘2017 - Occupying the Post-Industrial City’, *Agile-City* (2017) <<http://agile-city.com/test-unit/2017-occupying/>> [accessed 11 February 2018].

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

Chapter Three - ‘Our imagination needs exercise’: Public space, public health and literary engagement¹

Late in 2017, Glasgow City Council announced an intention to “install” an artist in every community to “improve health, wellbeing and quality of life”.² This approach is a strong indication of how embedded the view that cultural engagement will foster community health has become among policy makers, and of the need to query its basis. A year earlier, the relationship between locally rooted creative practice and Glasgow’s legacy of public health problems briefly became a headline issue when the artist Ellie Harrison invoked the city’s level of ‘excess mortality’ or, the ‘Glasgow Effect’ to name her ‘action-research’ project, awarded £15,000 from Creative Scotland to allow her to remain in Glasgow for a year and lead ‘sustainable practice’.³ In defence of the project, Harrison stated that she had been drawn to live and work in the city due to the so-called ‘Glasgow Miracle’: ‘That’s the story that tells you that there’s been a post-industrial renaissance in this city, we’re a city of culture, we have international art stars and that is raising the living standards of everyone in the city’.⁴ Harrison countered, “It’s not happening. It’s just creating more polarization and division” and argued the project was “an opportunity for me to find out more about why Glasgow has the worst health inequalities in the whole of western Europe but also, more importantly, for me to invest my time, energy and skills to try and improve the situation for the poorest people in the city”.⁵ Certainly, as previous chapters of this thesis explored, research into factors underlying excess

¹ Alasdair Gray, *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (1981) (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2002), p. 243.

² Phil Miller, ‘Twenty artists to be installed across Glasgow to boost cultural presence’, *Evening Times*, 13 September 2017, <http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/news/15530807.20_artists_to_be_installed_across_Glasgow_to_boost_cultural_presence/> [accessed 15 September 2017].

³ John Jeffay, ‘Creative Scotland Bosses defend £15k ‘Glasgow Effect’ Project’, *The Scotsman*, 28 August 2017 <<https://www.scotsman.com/regions/glasgow-strathclyde/creative-scotland-bosses-defend-15k-glasgow-effect-project-1-454426>> [accessed 15 September 2017].

⁴ Ellie Harrison, qtd. in ‘Glasgow Effect Artist ‘used anger’ to fuel work’, *BBC News*, 6 January 2017 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-38530606>> [accessed 10 February 2017].

⁵ Ibid.

mortality in Scotland has indicated that culture-led regeneration programmes in the 1980s and 1990s exacerbated socio-spatial inequalities and worsened Glasgow's health inequalities.⁶ Yet Harrison's statement also figures artistic practice as a palliative to the apparently injurious effects of cultural investment, and the nature of the project suggests that the presence of a creative practitioner among the "poorest people in the city" can only "improve the situation".⁷

This chapter examines these entangled notions through a literary lens, focusing specifically on literary representations of public space in postindustrial Glasgow.⁸ Previous chapters have contended that deindustrialisation saw the terrain of political resistance shift from the factory floor to the defence of urban space, with cultural institutions and public housing becoming key sites of conflict. I argued that literary portrayals of Glasgow which are explicitly concerned with the relationship between the city's economic status and cultural identity followed a similar shift, interrogating the cultural meaning of Glasgow's changing urban image and playing a part in its production through textual representations of cultural and domestic spaces. This chapter develops that analysis, considering how local works of fiction have portrayed contests over public space in recent decades, and how perceptions of work and leisure have altered in the aftermath of deindustrialisation. I suggest that an overall shift can be discerned in strategic approaches to the arts in Glasgow: from the attempt to position the arts as a catalyst for job creation and economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s to envisioning cultural engagement as a means to mitigate the health inequalities resulting from poverty, unemployment, poor housing and local services. This change in emphasis is also evident in discourses concerning urban regeneration more broadly. By the mid-2000s, boosterist narratives which centred on the potential for culture-led regeneration to act as a catalyst for local economic

⁶ David Walsh, Gerry McCartney, Chik Collins, Martin Taulbut, G. David Batty, 'History, politics and vulnerability: explaining excess mortality in Scotland and Glasgow' (Glasgow: Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2016).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Its scope is set by the broadly accepted definition of public space, not limited to land or facilities which are publicly owned, but any space or place which is generally accessible to the public. For discussion of the development of the concept of public space in Europe and distinctions between ownership and use in determining public space see Daniel Moeckli, *Exclusion from Public Space: A Comparative Constitutional Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

activity had begun to give way to a less assertively commercial narrative - one which portrayed regeneration as a means to public health improvement. Rhetoric shifted from 'attracting capital investment' to 'building social capital' and developing 'resilience'.⁹ Rather than developing strategies which respond to the economic impact of deindustrialisation by incentivizing an inward flow of international capital, regeneration discourses are increasingly concerned with managing urban transformation by preparing communities to weather disinvestment and economic shock - and efforts to improve community health are a key aspect of this approach.

In many respects, renewing an emphasis on the social impact of cultural activity, and their potential benefits for public health, seems a positive response to the consequences of cultural boosterism and its narrow focus on the economic benefits of investment in the arts. As the previous two chapters have discussed, there is now ample evidence that culture-led regeneration in 1980s and 1990s Glasgow exacerbated the city's sociospatial inequalities and reinforced differences in health and wellbeing across communities. Promoting the arts as a means of public health improvement; prioritising the contribution culture can make to people's everyday enjoyment; and, most importantly, attempting to invest cultural resources more equitably across the city, may all represent a very welcome attempt to redress some of those consequences, rejecting an emphasis on short-term financial gains to be leveraged from the arts. Yet, I will suggest that the developing narrative which confidently positions cultural engagement as a means for public health improvement risks retreading some of the missteps made in the past. As in the run up to Glasgow's Year of Culture, increasingly bold claims have been made for the 'transformative' power of the arts. While in this case, 'transformation' relates to community health rather than Glasgow's global image or commercial potential, the effect, as in the 1990s, is often thought due to culture's capacity to create more positive images of a place, bolster community pride and instil confidence. Crucially, in attempting to mitigate the experience of ill-health, deprivation or social exclusion

⁹ Mark Boyle and George Hughes, 'The Politics of the Representation of the Real: Discourses from the Left on Glasgow's Role as European City of Culture, 1990', *Area*, 23.3 (1991), 217-288; Maria Feeney and Chik Collins, 'Tea in the Pot? Building 'social capital' or a 'great good place' in Govan?', Report 3 (University of the West Coast of Scotland-Oxfam Partnership, 2015).

this approach, like earlier avenues of cultural strategy, principally aims to attenuate the long-term effects of deindustrialisation rather than supporting more strategic (and necessarily political) responses to contemporary urban inequalities.

The need to consider how urban literary practice will be affected by strategic efforts to link cultural spending to demonstrable health benefits is becoming more pressing, given the growing impetus around that work. As well as local moves to improve public health through artistic practice, such as Glasgow City Council's initiative detailed above, there are significant policy developments progressing on a national level, particularly as a new Culture Strategy for Scotland is being produced.¹⁰ There are clear indications that relating cultural activity to healthcare objectives will be an important aspect of that renewed approach to cultural spending. Research developed in the course of policy formation in the higher education sector and national Government already sets out such parameters. Most particularly the Arts and Humanities Research Council's 'Cultural Value Project' which sought to "capture" the "elusive" value of culture (beyond the immediate economic impact of cultural investment) including the "role of small scale arts in generating healthy urban communities" and "the contribution of arts and culture to addressing key health challenges such as mental health, an aging population and dementia";¹¹ and research commissioned for the Westminster All Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing.¹² Such UK-wide, cross-sector work can be related specifically to the ongoing development of Scotland's new Creative Strategy and existing policy frameworks guiding cultural investment on a local level in Glasgow. As in earlier eras of community arts and culture-led regeneration, these research

¹⁰ Scottish Parliament, Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Health Inequalities, Minutes of Meeting, 7 December 2017, 'A Cultural Strategy for Scotland', pp. 3-6 <http://www.parliament.scot/CrossPartyGroups/Session5CrossPartyGroup/Minutes/HI_20171207.pdf> [accessed 1 February 2018].

¹¹ For an overview of this project and its outputs see Geoffrey Crossick and Patrycja Kaszynska, 'Understanding the value of arts and culture: the AHRC Cultural Value Project', AHRC (2016) <<https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/publications/cultural-value-project-final-report/>> [accessed 5 January 2017].

¹² All Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, Inquiry Report, *The Arts for Health and Wellbeing – Second Edition* (2017) <http://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf> [accessed 1 February 2018].

frameworks and directions in cultural policy are often not constructed with literature in mind. However, as this chapter will demonstrate through its case studies, these policy agendas shape the funding arrangements and outcomes to which community based literary work must, perhaps increasingly, respond.

This chapter also draws on political sociology focused on recent local transformations in community development. In particular, it develops from Akwugo Emejulu's work on community activism in Glasgow, which is contextualised by the city's "rich history of trade union and community activism twinned with its poor health outcomes".¹³ It also considers related critical public health perspectives, including Lynne Friedli's analysis of the relationship between public health strategies and welfare reform.¹⁴ In doing so, this chapter will demonstrate that emergent cultural policy frameworks in Glasgow and, increasingly, in Scotland, are predicated on an "asset based" approach to social policy formation. Asset based community development is often presented as a less stigmatizing mode of social policy than so-called 'deficit' models of social capital, since it seeks to focus on the collective resources present within a given community – rather than emphasising factors a community is thought to 'lack'. Yet it may also represent, as Mary Anne MacLeod and Akwugo Emejulu put it, "neoliberalism with a community face".¹⁵ Critics of asset based approaches argue that they carry dangers of responsabilising individuals for their social and economic circumstances; diffusing political responses to inequity through participatory engagement; and preparing communities for the contraction of local services.

Through my discussion of literary representations of contests over public space in Glasgow, I argue that there is an inherent conflict in the view that cultural engagement can improve health and wellbeing due to culture's capacity as a means

¹³ Mary Anne MacLeod and Akwugo Emejulu, 'Neoliberalism with a Community Face? A Critical Analysis of Asset-Based Community Redevelopment', *Journal of Community Practice*, 22.4 (2014), 430-450, (p. 433).

¹⁴ Lynne Friedli and Robert Steam, 'Positive affect as coercive strategy: conditionality, activation and the role of psychology in UK government workfare programmes', *British Medical Journal: Critical Medical Humanities*, 41.1 (2015), 40-47; Lynne Friedli, 'Always Look on the Bright Side: The rise of asset based approaches in Scotland', *Scottish Anti Poverty Review*, 14 (2011/12), 11-14; Lynne Friedli, 'What We've Tried Hasn't Worked: the politics of asset based public health', *Critical Public Health*, 23.2 (2013), 131-145.

¹⁵ Mary Anne MacLeod and Akwugo Emejulu, 'Neoliberalism with a Community Face?'

for individual or collective exploration of autonomy or self-determination and the attempt to realise improved health outcomes through the prescriptive application of cultural engagement.¹⁶ Following a case study approach, I develop this analysis by first considering Ben Obler's novel, *Javascotia* (2009) – one of a slender number of creative works exploring the Pollok Free State: a protest camp established in 1994 as part of determined campaign against the sale of part of a public park in the southside of Glasgow. In common with other cities with a deep legacy of heavy industry, many of Glasgow's parks are the result of efforts in earlier eras to improve public health.¹⁷ There is also strong local consciousness of land considered “gifted to the people”, and the legal history of Glasgow's public spaces is often invoked in public disputes over their use – such as Workers City's campaign against the sale of part of Glasgow Green in the early 1990s. In its novelistic account of the protest camp established in Pollok Park in 1994 as an act of resistance to the development of the M77 motorway, *Javascotia* considers the relationship between globalisation, the development of suburban private housing in the 1990s, and this local campaign to determine community rights over public space. Pollok Free State has been described as a characteristic manifestation of “postmodern politics” which established an “imagined community of resistance”.¹⁸ However, I consider Obler's work in the context of marginal writing and cultural work advocating urban land reform, and the later development of community empowerment work such as the GalGael Trust which led, quite directly, from such activism in the 1990s. I argue that lightly historiographical aspects of Obler's novel make discontinuities in competing versions of the city's history legible, and in so doing, highlights the importance of

¹⁶ In Scotland at least, the extent of a ‘prescriptive’ approach is evidenced by the intention to mainstream ‘social prescribing’, including cultural activities, as a health intervention throughout primary care services. As noted previously, this approach will be supported on a national basis, leading from pilot schemes which placed ‘community link workers’ in General Practice so that GPs can ‘refer’ patients to local social groups, cultural activities, and other sources of community support rather than offering a conventional ‘prescription’.

¹⁷ Irene Maver has extensively discussed the role of public health campaigners in establishing Glasgow's public parks, including in ‘Glasgow's public parks and the community, 1850-1914: a case in Scottish Civic interventionism’, *Urban History*, 25.3 (1998), 323-347.

¹⁸ Paul Routledge, ‘The Imagineering of Resistance: Pollok Free State and the Practice of Postmodern Politics’, *Transactions of the British Institute of Geographers*, 22.3 (1997), 359-376.

textual authority and local knowledge to disputes over public space. Obler's work also dramatically foregrounds fundamental oppositions between autonomous action and representative democracy as means for establishing rights to public space. Yet I also suggest that the construction of Oblen's narrative occludes the central role that local residents played in establishing the protest camp, and the importance their attachment to that particular community asset had to the development of the 'autonomous' Free State. The question of what a community 'asset' is understood to be, and its relationship to access or control of public space, is fundamental to critical readings of asset based community development, and to my analysis of developing intersections between cultural policy and narratives of public health. As Lynne Friedli observes, so-called asset-based approaches to public health in Scotland have drifted away from a focus on community spaces or even material resources towards a looser notion of "valuing individual and collective psycho-social attributes".¹⁹

In this way, I argue, asset based community development and, more particularly, the promotion of cultural engagement as a means of building social capital and developing personal 'resilience' in the long aftermath of deindustrialisation should be considered in tandem with the rise of the 'creative economy' as a means of urban restructuring and related transformation of the labour market. I consider this claim in light of Angela McRobbie's analysis of the creative economy: in particular that the "soft neoliberalism" exacted by the 'creative economy' and its veneration of creative autonomy, unending 'flexibility', professional satisfaction and individual success was, in fact, "laying the groundwork for the transformation of work" far more broadly.²⁰ Discussing urban precarity, McRobbie suggests that the values furthered by the creative economy were transposed across other sectors, effectively becoming a means of labour reform eroding the security of much work, blurring the boundaries between work and recreation and, at the same time, imposing an "ideal neoliberal dream" upon civic space which reinforced the "power and presence of the middle class" leading,

¹⁹ Lynne Friedli, 'What We've Tried Hasn't Worked', p. 12.

²⁰ Angela McRobbie, 'Rethinking Creative Economy as a Radical Enterprise', *Variant*, 41 (2011), pp. 32-33 (p. 32).; originally presented as a paper at the CCA in 2010, the arguments McRobbie offered in this *Variant* article were subsequently developed in *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries* (London: Polity, 2015).

effectively to the “eviction” of “municipal socialism” as emphasis on “tackling urban social inequalities is replaced by images of leisure activities”.²¹

The promotion of cultural engagement as a means for public health improvement can therefore be understood not so much as a reaction to the inequities of the polarising creative economy framework pursued in Glasgow in the 1980s and 1990s, but as a correlative to it - bound up with changing conceptions of work in the postindustrial city. Techniques and strategies developed to manage the productivity, satisfaction and self-worth of workers in the postindustrial economy are increasingly employed to manage people who are *not* in work; to reshape public space as well as the workplace; and demand productivity from leisure. Interrogating cultural interventions aimed at public health improvement therefore means questioning how conceptions of work and leisure have shifted in the postindustrial city and how unemployment has been increasingly positioned both as a public health crisis and a question of personal responsibility.

This chapter therefore goes on to consider how contemporary Glasgow fiction reflects and influences these changing discourses about regeneration. I argue that just as arts organisations and practitioners developed an “advocacy agenda” around the economic potential of the arts in the 1980s and 1990s, cultural bodies and artists may also accommodate their practices to these emergent national and local public health priorities. As with earlier phases of urban redevelopment, most critical attention to date has centred on the contribution that cultural attendance can make to public health. Similarly, as previous chapters of this thesis observed, it is not always readily apparent how literary work sits within emergent or established cultural policy frameworks. Nevertheless, it is to those criteria that writers and literary organisations must, increasingly, respond to access limited public or institutional funding available to develop new literary work.

For this reason alone, it is important to question the influence strategic relationships and shared outcomes between cultural organisations and the health and social care sector may have on the professional and creative trajectory of local writers, and the character of local literary writing. As the previous chapter of this thesis indicated, and this chapter will further explore, there is a growing impetus for

²¹ Angela McRobbie, *Be Creative*, pp. 49-50.

writers and artists to facilitate creative work with communities and lead creative consultancy projects, as evidenced by collaborative work from Alison Irvine, Mitch Miller and Chris Leslie. The previous chapter of this thesis also observed that Creative Scotland's Literature and Publishing Sector Review set out the aspiration for cultural work to support other public sector priorities. Ultimately, the review recommended that literary institutions should "demonstrate the value and uses for Scottish literature to advance the aims and ambitions of other sectors" and "challenges Scottish literature to elevate its game and forge stronger partnerships with Scottish institutions with education, health and well-being mandates".²² The publication of this review, and ongoing development of the new Cultural Strategy for Scotland, has already sparked some discussion among writers in the press as to whether the "reach and impact" of literary work should be the "first and foremost objectives for our writers".²³ There is, however, a risk that discussion concerning the changing nature of literary labour may be subsumed by debates concerned with cultural nationalism.

At the same time, various other strands of research have also renewed interest in the capacity of literature to improve individual health, wellbeing and social understanding. New directions in medical humanities have provided ground for interdisciplinary literary work in the field of narrative medicine, the history of the emotions, renewed research on bibliotherapy.²⁴ However, these modes of enquiry are less explicitly related to urban change and the efforts cultural policy makers have made over the past decade to align cultural spending with other goals in the context

²² Creative Scotland, 'Literature and Publishing Sector Review: Final Report' (Creative Scotland and Nordicity in Association with Drew Wylie, 2015) <http://www.creativescotland.com/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/31950/Creative-Scotland-Literature-and-Publishing-Sector-Review-Nordicity-2015-CIRC.pdf> [accessed 20 August 2015] pp. 94, 111.

²³ Kirsty Gunn, 'Controlling agenda threatens Scotland's Culture', *The Scotsman*, 9 April 2016, <<https://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/controlling-agenda-threatens-scotland-s-culture-1-4095589>> [accessed 3 February 2018]. See also, Kirsty Gunn, *Notes Towards a National Literature* (Edinburgh: Saltire Society, 2016).

²⁴ These fields encompass a wide range of work, for an overview of select areas see, for example, *Medicine, Health and the Arts: Approaches to the Medical Humanities*, ed. by Victoria Bates, Alan Bleakley and Sam Goodman (London: Routledge, 2014); Josie Billington, *Is Literature Healthy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Debbie McCulliss, 'Bibliotherapy: Historical and Research Perspectives', *Journal of Poetry Therapy* 25.1 (2012), 23-38; *The Principles and Practice of Narrative Medicine*, ed. by Rita Charon, Sayantani DasGupta, Nellie Herman, and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

of fiscal austerity. Accordingly, this chapter examines the role literary engagement has played in more recent phases of Glasgow's urban regeneration, advocated as a means of fostering social capital in communities and promoting notions of emotional resilience. Glasgow is a signal case in this regard, as efforts to promote the therapeutic potential of cultural participation have aligned with Glasgow bidding for and hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2014. Substantial claims were made for the "positive legacy" the Games would build in terms of regeneration and public health improvement. A sizeable cultural programme accompanied the Games and, following discussion of *Javascotia*, this chapter then focuses on Alison Irvine's collaborative work *Nothing Is Lost* (2016): one in a small cluster of literary projects developed under the auspices of the Games.²⁵ As in *This Road is Red* (2011), *Nothing is Lost* draws upon interviews with local residents in Glasgow's East End and Games volunteers to consider the role Festivals and regeneration exercises can play in changing people's perception of their localities. However, unlike Irvine's earlier novel, *Nothing Is Lost* is marked by more distinctive narrative incursions questioning changes in the use and value of public space in the East End of Glasgow and specific municipal decisions around the sale of land. I argue that an important aspect of Irvine's later work is that it foregrounds aspects of the text's material and social production, not least the direct funding Irvine received from the Commonwealth Games programme.

Finally, this chapter examines the relationship between local health and social care services and literary projects. I first establish the critical context and funding landscape supporting closer links between health and social care services and literary work. I go on to consider the implications of a collaborative literary project 'Representing Dennistoun' which explored the impact that literary representations and other cultural narratives about an area had on residents' sense of community identity and health. Shifting from considering forms of literary participation concerned with community identity to more individualized modes of expression and

²⁵ Other literary projects developed under the auspices of the Games have included the National Theatre of Scotland's participatory work *The Tin Forest* (2014), which explores Glasgow's postindustrial identity and advocates civic storytelling, and The Empire Café (2014), a temporary public space and literary festival which drew on literary texts and performance to foreground the history of colonialism and its contemporary impacts.

engagement, I then discuss work led by the The Village Storytelling Centre, a community arts organisation in Pollok, in the context of NHS Services. Finally, I offer a brief discussion of a poem by Donny O'Rourke, commissioned and funded by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and Creative Scotland, for a new health centre in Maryhill. These case studies are used to illuminate the combined influence of national policy frameworks, and the long shift towards a social model of health upon local cultural policy making and literary production in a postindustrial context.

Moreover, as I hope this chapter will demonstrate, literary texts can make unseen conflicts over the ownership and use of public assets legible, and frame the dynamics of power which shape and constrain a right to public space in the city. As representations of shared urban space in their own right, it has even been proposed that “narratives” should be considered as “assets” themselves. This chapter will go on to examine the claim made by the participatory research project, ‘Representing Dennistoun’, that “narratives of place are cultural assets providing communities with a compass in times of uncertainty or rapid change”.²⁶ However, within the framework I have suggested for critiquing an assets based approach to cultural participation, the most pressing contest is not necessarily over how literary portrayals of urban space are consumed or experienced but who is able to access them, produce them, and benefit from their production.

Javascotia

Ben Obler's *Javascotia* (2009) was marketed as a satirical novel, following the misadventures of a mid-Atlantic market research executive ostensibly dispatched by the multinational coffee shop franchise ‘Burbacks’ to scout out potential locations for new venues in a distinctly uncosmopolitan version of 1990s Glasgow.²⁷ Obler's novel, however, is one of few cultural works to offer a detailed portrayal of the Pollok Free State: a protest camp established in Pollok Park in 1994 as an act of

²⁶ Representing Dennistoun, ‘Cultural Representations of Glasgow & its East End’, *Representing Communities* <<http://representingcommunities.co.uk/dennistoun/2014/07/11/nobody-imagines-living-here-cultural-representations-of-glasgow-and-its-east-end/>> [accessed 21 March 2018].

²⁷ Benjamin Obler, *Javascotia* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2009).

physical, political and environmental resistance to the development of the M77 motorway. Suggesting that this novel has been an overlooked cultural representation of urban activism in 1990s Glasgow, I examine the unlikely account this novel offers of the Pollok Free State protest through the eyes of an inexperienced American market researcher who becomes embroiled in local activism. I consider the ways in which Obler relates the political and cultural meaning of the Pollok Free State to Glasgow's history of regeneration, its radical legacy, the contemporary impact of globalisation and the inequalities enacted in speculative housebuilding in the suburbs of the city. I argue that Obler's novel foregrounds tensions between three competing modes of governing public space: corporate restructuring of public space for commercial purposes; municipal management of public space by local authorities; and the defence of public space on a community level. In Obler's work, the interrelation of these modes of governance is underlined by his portrayal of a large scale protest march from George Square (the public square by Glasgow's City Chambers, the civic centrepiece) to the protest camp at Pollok Free state: the march is later co-opted in the marketing material for the US coffee chain.

The protest camp at Pollok Park in the 1990s was not the first instance of community resistance to development in that space. The M77 motorway was first proposed in the course of post-war redevelopment in Glasgow. *A Highway Plan for Glasgow* (1965) set out network of motorways which would "define the city into understandable units each with its own identity" making it "possible for the citizen to experience what the City means, how it functions and what it symbolises".²⁸ Aspects of this utopian vision were realised, but the M77 was not constructed continuously, and when further development was planned in the 1970s, public opposition to the plan to build on part of Pollok Park began to arise. Pollok Park was originally a private estate in the south of the city, which was opened to the public in a conservation agreement when the estate's owner, John Stirling Maxwell, helped found the National Trust for Scotland in the 1930s. The land was subsequently

²⁸ Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick and Partners, *Report on A Highway Plan for Glasgow* (Glasgow: Glasgow Corporation, 1965), qtd. in Oliver Wainright, 'Glasgow faces up to a reality of a divided Commonwealth Games legacy', *The Guardian*, Cities, 3 March 2014 <<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/mar/03/glasgow-faces-reality-commonwealth-games>> [accessed 10 December 2017].

gifted to Glasgow Corporation in 1966 by his daughter, Anne Maxwell. In the early 1990s, when Wimpy was contracted to begin clearance work on the seven-mile stretch of park the motorway would cut through, protest coalesced. This led to a protest camp, established in June 1994 and occupied until March 1995, incorporating local protestors, environmental groups including Earth First!, and activists from protest camps elsewhere in the UK. Issuing a ‘declaration of independence’, protestors declared the camp a Free State and issued passports, stating that the “threat to our environment and liberty by this road and legislation is incompatible with sustainable environmental use and any notion of democracy”.²⁹

Eventually, protestors were evicted from the Pollok Free State protest camp and the motorway was developed as planned. In that regard, the protest actions were a failure, but various local political and cultural figures have suggested that the Pollok Free State was influential in their subsequent creative and social concerns. Colin MacLeod, who initially led the protest, went on to establish the GalGael Trust in Govan - a learning community which practices traditional boat building skills. GalGael’s approach shares many aspects of Paulo Freire’s concept of popular education: often working alongside people who feel marginalised by long term unemployment, or problem drug or alcohol use. The writer Alasdair McIntosh, who was also involved with the protests in Pollok, has described the role the Free State played in GalGael’s development as a response to deindustrialisation, and the ideological continuities this urban protest movement had with campaigns for land reform in Scotland’s highlands and islands.³⁰ In other political directions, the former Scottish Socialist Party MSP Rosie Kane has told of the formative role the Pollok Free State played in her development as an activist and campaigner, as a local resident for whom the park had been a childhood playground. Kane reflects that:

I had kinda stumbled on the early days of the protests against the M77 which was about to cut a swathe through the park we played in as children, our

²⁹ Paul Routledge, ‘The Imagineering of Resistance’, p.367. Similar tactics had been employed in the course of other protest movements in 1990’s Glasgow, including around Glasgow’s Year of Culture, when a group of campaigners in Easterhouse declared Lochend independent, proclaiming that they would remain “steadfast in our constant battle against authority” and issuing visitors “from the neighbouring city state of Glasgow” visitors passports, ‘Passport to Lochend’, *The Keelie*, 3, July 1990, p. 2.

³⁰ Alasdair McIntosh, ‘The Gal-Gael Peoples of Scotland: On Tradition Re-bearing, Recovery of Place and Making Identity Anew’, *Cenrastus*, 56 (1997), 6-15.

bluebell woods, the huge trees we climbed, our big chance to see nature – our wee bit – where we lived. I had learned whilst on the M77 protest that my parents had not been consulted despite the fact that they lived near the route and they would be hugely impacted by the road's introduction. My shallow investigations revealed that they had a wee opportunity in the 60's to respond but only if they had read the right paper at the right time, I think bringing up 5 kids on poverty pay may well have robbed them of the luxury of getting involved in a process that would affect those 5 kids. But there it was, the big democratic deficit.³¹

Kane's comments suggest that while the protest that coalesced around the camp can easily be read in terms of environmental activism, the Free State also represented a deferred protest against the paternalistic nature of post-war redevelopment. As Kane notes, redevelopment plans in the 1960s afforded local residents few opportunities to influence processes and, moreover, possibilities for people to respond even to limited consultation are practically restricted by their means, working patterns and caring responsibilities. A generation later, local residents not only protested against the planned development but addressed municipal disregard for residents in previous decades. Similarly, at the time of the protest, architectural historian Gavin Stamp stressed:

Councillors have conceded the errors they made with tower blocks and are now pulling them down [...] they have failed to learn the lesson that motorways are not a good way of getting people in and out of cities. Glasgow planners are dinosaurs who still believe it is right to smash roads through the centre of cities, wrapping our environment with concrete. The policy is insane.³²

Thus the revived plan to develop the M77 is seen as an anachronistic and misguided attempt to further an outdated vision for postindustrial Glasgow, already being dismantled elsewhere.

More recently, the researcher and filmmaker Simon Yuill adapted documentary footage of the protest camp for a film, *Given to the People* (2008),

³¹ Rosie Kane, 'The Road to Nowhere' *Bella Caledonia*, 27 June 2011 <<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2011/06/27/the-road-to-nowhere/>> [accessed 24 January 2016]

³² Gavin Stamp, qtd. in John Arlidge, 'Scots vow to win Britain's 'last motorway battle'', *Independent*, 19 February 1995 <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/scots-vow-to-win-britains-last-motorway-battle-1573782.html>> [accessed 1 December 2016].

commissioned for the 2008 Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art. Yuill has reflected that “A lot of people in Glasgow know about Pollok Free State, but it’s not officially acknowledged”.³³ Certainly, relatively little has been written about the Free State from a historical or sociological perspective, and the existing sociological literature tends to focus on media representation of the protest and how the Free State related to other anti-motorway protests and ecological activism more generally in the UK.³⁴ Less consideration has been given to the protest in terms of Glasgow’s social history - as a response to deindustrialisation and the relative failures of post-war redevelopment – or in the context of nascent campaigns to reconceptualise public ownership of public space. As one of the few cultural works to focus on the social and political meaning of the Pollok Free State, *Javascotia* has been a critically neglected cultural representation of 1990s activism, and Obler’s work can be related to marginal writing advocating land reform and considerations of how literary networks have influenced and portrayed radical ideas about the use and ownership of public space.

Javascotia was Obler’s debut novel. He began drafting the work while studying creative writing on Glasgow University’s MA programme and aspects of the book draw on Obler’s own time in Glasgow, including his earlier experiences as an undergraduate exchange student from Minnesota in Glasgow in 1994. Obler has described how his initial, mild cultural estrangement became focused on the lack of coffee shops, compared to Minneapolis, and in his novel “the absence of good coffee comes to symbolise being an American abroad”.³⁵ Accordingly, many early reviews of Obler’s novel focused on the “prosaic observations” about Scottish phrases, Glaswegian accents and local habits which abound in the novel, and perhaps this stylistic aspect of Obler’s early work hampered critical attention to its extended

³³ Simon Yuill, qtd. in Neil Cooper, ‘Simon Yuill: Fields, Factories, Workshops’, *The List*, 3 August 2010, p. 124.

³⁴ See, for example, Ben Seel, ‘Strategies of Resistance at the Pollok Free State Protest Camp’, in *Contemporary Environmental Politics: From Margins to Mainstream*, ed. by Piers Stephens, John Barry and Andrew Dobson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006) pp. 114-137; Paul Routledge, ‘The Imagineering of Resistance’; Daniel Donnelly, ‘Anti-Roads Protests, the Community and the Police’, *The Police Journal: Theory, Practice, Principles*, 69.3 (1996), 207-15; Fabian Frenzel, ‘The Politics of Mobility: some insights from the study of protest camps’, in *New Mobilities Regimes in the Art and Social Sciences*, ed. by Susanne Witzgall and Gerlinde Vogl (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 225-236.

³⁵ David Pollok, ‘Review – Benjamin Obler, *Javascotia*’, *The List*, 19 March 2009, p. 30.

examination of political protest.³⁶ Similarly, many other reviews are concerned with the novel's interest in cosmopolitan consumption, indicating disappointment that "the very many aspects that made it seem so promising as a literary debut – a novel about coffee! In Glasgow! With sexy art students! – are, in fact, amongst its most negligible qualities".³⁷

Obler introduces the reader to a tired and gritty Glasgow, recorded eagerly by Mel, once an aspiring photographer from Chicago, who believes he has escaped his long stretch of underemployment in being hired for a market research company, and despatched on a reconnaissance mission for the global coffee chain 'Burbacks'. Mel feels equally burdened by the expectation of supplying pictures of "rolling landscapes and highland lasses" for his relatives.³⁸ Instead, he finds a city suffering from "post-industrial whiplash that had ingrained a hopelessness so deep there was no point rushing to disappointment".³⁹ He documents city-centre buildings with "boarded-up windows like patched eyes. Buildings with SPACE TO LET signs [...] Gothic or Victorian or Edwardian or completely modern tenement flats – whatever they were. Not exactly picture-postcard stuff, but I felt justified. What else could I photograph? This is all there was."⁴⁰ Later, Obler layers those first impressions of urban dilapidation more explicitly with the context of urban regeneration in the 1990s, and the attempt to revivify the city's image while capitalizing on its grungy edge. Mel reflects on the contrast between the "bumpy maroon of clean sandstone" and "sootblack walls" as evidence of "the erasure its industrial past. The shedding, via sandblaster, of its dirt-poor skin".⁴¹

Though Mel believes his fieldwork in Glasgow is commercially important, it later transpires that his employers purposely sent their inexperienced researcher to a city they believed would be a poor prospect. "Glasgow was never meant to be a test

³⁶ Francesca Segal, 'Review – Javascotia', *The Observer*, Fiction, 19 April 2009, <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/apr/19/debut-novel-fiction-javascotia-obler>> [accessed 2 December 2016].

³⁷ Tom Bonnicks, 'One more cup of coffee', *Glasgow Guardian*, 16 June 2009 <<https://glasgowguardian.co.uk/2009/06/16/one-more-cup-of-coffee/>> [accessed 2 December 2016]

³⁸ Ben Obler, *Javascotia*, p. 21.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

group”: if the US chain was to expand in the UK, it would be in London first, and if anywhere in Scotland then “more cosmopolitan. Wealthier. Shinier. Big tourist destination” Edinburgh.⁴² After all, Mel’s mid-Western manager reflects, “Who Goes to Glasgow? It’s like Philly without the cheesesteaks”.⁴³ Yet, as the novel draws together observations on the transformation on public space and its plot points converge, it transpires that Mel’s unconsidered involvement in the Pollok Free State protest hit the headlines in the US, and that media attention meant Burbacks saw distinct advantages in aligning their brand with this postindustrial city. Glasgow, as Burbacks saw it, “was going to be the next ‘it’ town. Like Seattle and its music scene. ‘And, hell, Burback’s started in Tacoma- another rainy port town! It’ll be like starting in their UK sister city! It’s a no-brainer.”⁴⁴ Obler therefore situates the novel in a interstitial period when Glasgow’s edgy postindustrial commercial potential was becoming visible to a keen eyed outsider like Mel, but not readily recognised elsewhere, nor necessarily evident to people living in the city.

The itinerant nature of Mel’s market research work, taking him from café to café, developing field notes on Glasgow’s insipid coffee scene, absorbing the atmosphere and demographics of Glasgow’s informal public spaces and assessing their potential for investment is, in many ways, an ideal frame for reflecting on urban regeneration in 1990s Glasgow, and conflicts over public space. Mel’s mode of work clearly reflects facets of the ‘creative economy’ as described by Angela McRobbie. Neither his time nor place of work are circumscribed and his consumption of the city melds with his commercial role: walking down a busy street, he is “strolling through what could be considered my office”.⁴⁵ Later, as Mel describes his business in Glasgow he “downplayed the nature of ‘work’ not specifying that ‘looking for somewhere to work’ meant a café”.⁴⁶ In fact, Mel’s position as a market researcher exemplifies the way in which, McRobbie suggests, the creative economy transposes intensified “creative values associated with the idealised career in arts and cultural worlds” across other sectors.⁴⁷ Consequently,

⁴² Ibid., p. 413.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 142-43.

⁴⁷ Angela McRobbie, *Be Creative*, p. 44.

“The everyday life of the coffee bar-cocktail lounge or local fashion boutique begins to take in the qualities of the knowledge economy, with the workforce not just embodying the attentive values now required of service sector employees, but also acting as experts, guides and connoisseurs.”⁴⁸ Mel’s own background as a photographer, and his commitment to undertaking an “unpaid internship at a photographer’s studio” despite the “long hours, no concrete career opportunity and no pay” lays the ground for the novel’s exploration of the intersection between creative activity and postindustrial commercial work.⁴⁹ Mel is keenly aware that the expansion of a chain like Burbacks will further blur the boundaries between work and leisurely consumption for others, encouraging customers to treat those coffee shops as workspaces, projecting an atmosphere of creativity and relaxed sociability while simultaneously signalling urgency - the need for caffeine fuelled productivity and the visible rejection of rest.

However, Obler’s initial presentation of the novel’s urban context is quickly interrupted by the first signs of demonstrations against the motorway. Mel catches sight of a rooftop protest while familiarising himself with the city-centre, walking up to Bath Street, “which I had read in a *Let’s Go Britain* was the most polluted intersection in the UK”.⁵⁰ Through haphazard asides like these to local newspapers and guidebooks, Obler layers the narrator’s observations on the city’s spaces with commentary highlighting the novel’s subtending themes. In this case, the protest is established as a matter of public health:

A banner read, ‘No M77’ [...] it was some kind of protest, though what the M77 was, I had no idea. Maybe it was one of those European test-market birth-control devices...⁵¹

Mel then spots the name “WIMPY” in bold letters on building and wonders, “Was this the fast-food burger-chain headquarters? Maybe M77 was a chemical they were putting in the meat”.⁵² The opaque reference to medical licensing subtly underlines the connection Obler draws between protest and public health. Joining a small, but

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Benjamin Obler, *Javascotia*, p. 234.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 20.

⁵² Ibid.

growing crowd to watch proceedings, Mel sees “A girl, one story up, perched on an overhang, awkwardly angling her torso streetwards, trying to display the message on her T-shirt: LABOUR LAND THIEVES” and “placards up in the air” reading “No M77” and “HANDS OFF POLLOK PARK”.⁵³ Very quickly then, the novel establishes the interjection of protests against the motorway into public space in the city-centre; the context of urban air pollution; the sentiment that developers were encroaching on Pollok Park; and resentment towards the local political administration. Serendipitously, Mel helps a protester who had slipped from a ledge, and comes to know her, a student at Glasgow School of Art, and her friend Ruaridh:

the guy on the roof, the unofficial godfather of the Scottish sect of EarthFirst!, a US-born environmental group with branches growing in Europe. Over the years, Ruaridh had campaigned around campus, vigilantly rounding up troops, hiring transit vans and driving around the country to protests, chaining himself to trees and cranes and bulldozers and encouraging others to do so as well.⁵⁴

Nicole explains, “He’s made himself known, thah’s fer sure. Was on TV and in the papers and all for the Twyford Down protest. Tha’ was the M3 Motorway. Tha’s the only one that actually got stopped”.⁵⁵ She reveals that his father “was the director of a bank in Edinburgh and held the *Daily Mirror*’s ranking of fifty-fifth richest person in the UK”.⁵⁶ Mel gathers that Ruaridh’s family background “gave him a comprehension of big money, its power and sway, that the average tree-hugger lacked”, thereby shaping his strategic approach to protests.⁵⁷ One of Ruaridh’s favoured modes of campaigning was to draw crowds and media publicity in order to escalate the security costs around commercial negotiations, driving contractors to pull out of bidding for developments.

Mel outlines the context of the current protest Nicole and Ruaridh were co-ordinating, explaining that “the M77 thing” had “started back in 1939, when a wealthy Scottish Land owner, Sir John Maxwell, had given to the people of Glasgow a large piece of undeveloped land [...] on the condition that it remain so –

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 50.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 51

⁵⁷ Ibid.

undeveloped. It was only a half-dozen square miles or so of grass and words, but such a thing was rare then in the congestion of post-industrial Glasgow, and even rarer now as urban sprawl gobbled up the Clyde Valley”.⁵⁸ Nicole recounts that the land had been protected by the ‘Maxwell agreement’, but when the “house and the estate” was given to the city of Glasgow, ‘Within twenty years, they cashed in sellin’ the land to Strathclyde Region. The first’ thing they did was to get a waiver from the National Trust, permission to build on its like, no problem. On it, through, over, under, however they fancied. 1988, Ah think it was, they puh in their first plans”.⁵⁹

As a factual introduction to the M77 protests, Obler’s novelistic account is mixed. Aspects of its gloss on the park’s importance to the urban landscape are confused, the narrator suggests that the recreational space was a welcome gift to the “post-industrial” city in the 1930s (and while the city’s principle industries at that time were certainly in severe decline, the transposition of that term does not fit well with the novel’s interest Glasgow’s 1990s postindustrial regeneration and ambivalence to globalisation). As an organising structure for the novel, introducing a character with an establishment background and a sociable friend allows this ‘fish-out-of-water’ narrator to be drawn into the world of protest. However, it does decenter the role that people who were local to Pollok Park played in initiating the protest itself. Obler’s novel generally omits characters based on central real-life figures such as Colin MacLeod from the early parts of the narrative. In fact, for much of the novel Colin, the Pollok “birdman’s” only presence is as “The invisible man who stirred in the tree”.⁶⁰ In Obler’s novel, the effort and leadership local residents demonstrated in establishing this protest camp is effectively minimised by the narrative’s focus on an affluent student activist. Moreover, as Paul Routledge relates in ‘The Imagineering of Resistance: Pollok Free State - Postmodern Politics’ (1997), it is clear that some considerable tensions emerged between environmental activists aligned, as Obler’s character Ruaridh is, with Earth First! and campaigners from the local community.

Routledge, who participated in the campaign for ten months, has argued that the Pollok Free State represented a “postmodern community of resistance”, bringing

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 54.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 160.

together campaigners from a disparate range of groups and backgrounds in a “heterogeneous affinity”.⁶¹ Drawing on Zygmunt Bauman’s notion of tribal politics, Routledge suggests that the Pollok Free State allowed people to enact a form of imagined community, not keyed to a particular local identity and, to some degree, not restricted to a particular geographical place.⁶² Belonging to the protest, Routledge finds, did not centre on “an ‘identity’, rather it represented a collectivity based upon the processing of differences through symbolic and direct action”.⁶³ However, the “differences” however, between “heterogenous” groups of protestors were significant. Routledge observed that the environmental campaign group Earth First! “had an ambiguous relationship with Pollok Free State”.⁶⁴ Earth First! was the principle organisation providing crucial financial and material resources to support the camp, but most of the activists involved in Earth First! were not intimately involved in the day-to-day occupation of the site. Many, like the character Ruaridh in Obler’s novel, were involved in a wider range of activism and were also students or employed elsewhere.

In contrast, Routledge notes, the “permanent members” of the Free State camp “were all unemployed, some long term, and had chosen unemployment as a deliberate strategy of ‘dropping out’ against what they perceived as an environmentally and politically unjust system”.⁶⁵ However, the fact that local residents formed the mainstay of the permanent protest was vitally important in winning public support for the Pollok Free State’s objective. As one contractor hired

⁶¹ Paul Routledge, ‘The Imagineering of Resistance’, p. 360.

⁶² Bauman construes tribal politics as practices which symbolise people’s voluntary commitment to an imagined community which, Bauman believes are “typically de-territorialized” and do not “rely on the strength of neighbourly bonds”. *Intimations of Postmodernity* (1991) (London, New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 198. Routledge’s use of Bauman’s notion of tribal politics examines the de-territorialisation of practice in Pollok through news media and protesters’ attempt to foreground affinities with other environmental movements. Similarly, as this chapter later notes, Alasdair McIntosh emphasises conceptual affinities between this postindustrial urban protest movement and campaigns for environmental protection in rural sites from the Outer Hebrides to North America. I, however, will contend that emphasising aspects of the Free State which might represent an imagined community risks marginalising the importance of “neighbourly bonds” in maintaining the protest and managing its after effects, it also underplays the importance of a right to the contested land itself.

⁶³ Paul Routledge, ‘The Imagineering of Resistance’, p. 365.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 367.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 366.

by Wimpy to fell trees and expedite the development's progress explained to the press:

Before I went up there [...] I thought that the demonstrators were environmental nutters from Europe. But they are not. Most of them are from this part of the city – schoolchildren, young people, old people. I listened to what they were saying and saw the extent of what was proposed and I just thought 'Wait a minute. This is wrong'.⁶⁶

Obler's novel bypasses these dynamics, and in so doing neglects the opportunity to explore the nature of unemployment in Glasgow as a factor that subtended protest movements like the Pollok Free State. Contemporary activist accounts of the protest camp highlight that "Pollok formed one of the centres of the anti-poll tax movement" in Scotland.⁶⁷ Later writing on the formation direct action environmental protests in the 1990, also points out that "the connection between the anti-poll tax and anti-roads protest was quite direct" in Pollok, "where a community that had mobilised to resist the poll tax later did much to sustain the Pollok Free State protest camp".⁶⁸ Given the continuities between local anti-poll tax movements and the Pollok Free State, the protest camp against the motorway can be regarded as another instance of community mobilisation which drew heavily on the resources of unemployed people able, and willing, to maintain the physical occupation of the camp and delay the construction of the motorway for almost a year. Again, as a participating protestor, Paul Routledge's impression was that many of the unemployed people maintaining the Free State had "chosen" unemployment as a strategic decision to 'drop out' of an "environmentally and politically unjust system. This expression of agency complexifies the symbolic meaning of unemployment both as a form of protest and as a contribution to the resource and capacity communities have to protest. In Routledge's account of the Pollok Free State, unemployment is presented not as a consequence of a lack of work, or even as symptomatic of a dismantled occupational community, but as an alternative – even an ethical alternative – to a coercive labour market.

⁶⁶ Qtd. in John Arlidge, 'Scots vow to win Britain's 'last motorway battle'.

⁶⁷ Earth First! 'Pollok Free State Lives On!', *Do or Die*, 5 (1996) 7-10, (p. 7).

⁶⁸ Christopher Rootes, 'Environmental Protest in Britain 1998 – 1997', in *Direct Action in British Environmentalism*, ed. by Brian Doherty, Matthew Pearson and Benjamin Seel (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 25-61 (p. 48).

In this way, the Pollok Free State marks part of an important shift in postindustrial protest since it focused directly on the occupation and formation of public space, and intervention in the processes that shape it. Importantly, the Free State was an attempt to safeguard space for unconstrained public leisure and protect public health, and by putting wellbeing and recreation at the centre of their efforts the Pollok Free State did a little to disrupt the alignment between community mobilisation and narratives about deindustrialisation which emphasised the moral imperatives behind sustaining stable employment. Accordingly, the Pollok Free State can be considered in terms of a tendency to begin to challenge presentations of unemployment as a public health crisis, and it highlighted the role unpaid labour plays in sustaining communities and helping to effect social change.

Though Obler's novel is not entirely attenuated to the community politics that sustained the protest, his literary work does bring legalistic aspects of the dispute into focus, and emphasises that the protest was not solely concerned with the environmental impact of the motorway but, equally, with the principles of community ownership and the limitations of representative democracy. In one monologue Ruaridh rails against the inequalities the M77 development exacerbates, complaining that the council:

voted to sell off our ancestral lands. Why? So's wealthy suburbanites can drive into the city quicker and do their jobs. The city they dohn dare live in themselves for fear of their lives. That's why they live out here and beyond – Eastwood, Newton Mearns. Naturally, they vote in favour of demolishing parkland to get themselves home safer and quicker. This is a Tory stronghold, ya know [...] the safest Conservative seat in the whole of Sco'land.⁶⁹

Certainly, protestors at the time argued that the local communities who would be most affected by the development, Pollok and Corkehill, had some of the lowest rates of car ownership in Western Europe.⁷⁰ The motorway offered no transport advantages to most local residents who may have used the parkland for recreation, and only promised fairly marginal gains in transport times for people travelling from the suburbs and nearby towns. Critics of the development also pointed out that

⁶⁹ Benjamin Obler, *Javascotia*, p. 142.

⁷⁰ Earth First!, 'Pollok Free State Lives On', p. 7.

predominantly working class areas like Pollok had been key sites of anti-poll tax resistance in Glasgow, and opposition to the M77 can be read as an offshoot from resentment of housing inequalities. In this way, the protest can be interpreted as part of the legacy of ‘overspill’ policies, which actively resettled workers and families in new towns and suburbs beyond Glasgow, deliberately exacerbating the city’s industrial decline.⁷¹ As the capacity to build was legally restricted within the city, commercial companies scaled up construction outside the city’s edges. Obler’s novel is alert to this context, and portrays the emotions and priorities of protesters as equally concerned with historical injustices in housing and urban planning as with the current use and environmental protection of parkland. In this regard, Obler elicits an awareness that this park was a community asset, and that multiple generations felt its importance. Protest was also directed at the contractor, Wimpy, beyond the camp in Pollok Park itself. Activist magazines noted that as tensions between protestors, contracted security, and the police escalated, “Attention has switched from the construction site to Wimpey Homes, a subsidiary of the same company, and where their minimal profit margins are made. Show homes make an easy target for occupations and a series of homes have spontaneously combusted recently.”⁷² Obler’s novel also reflects how protest was transferred to the volume housebuilding industry, as Ruaridh boasts of, “How they – he, as founder of Pollok Free State, and the members of Earth First! – have put out literature [...] calling for boycotts. Don’t buy Wimpy homes, don’t build with Wimpy materials. They’re Fascists”⁷³.

Complaints about the “Eastwood MP” in the novel also parallel the increasingly alarming approach of Allan Stewart, the Conservative MP for Eastwood at the time of the protests. Eventually, Stewart confronted protestors with a pick axe, was found guilty of a breach of the peace and forced to resign from his government position. A relative and a friend were also found guilty of illegally possessing

⁷¹ Chik Collins and Ian Levitt, ‘The ‘Modernisation’ of Scotland and its impact on Glasgow, 1955-1979: ‘Unwanted Side Effects’ and Vulnerabilities’, *Scottish Affairs*, 25.3 (2016), 294-316.

⁷² Earth First!, ‘Pollok Free State Lives On!’, p. 7.

⁷³ Benjamin Obler, *Javascotia*, p.149.

loaded air pistols in the same incident.⁷⁴ The scene is dramatized in detail in the novel, beginning with a “shouting match” with the MP, Douglas, “calling Ruaridh a ‘self-appointed guardian of the public’ and reminding him of the democratic process, that the city council had approved the roads building.”⁷⁵ Countering this, Ruaridh declared “the M77 wasn’t in the people’s interest and, furthermore, the elected representatives were crooks. Had they followed the EU guidelines? Had they done an environmental-impact study?”⁷⁶ The fictionalised stand-off between the MP and the “self-appointed guardian of the public” dramatizes an underlying conflict between principles of representative democracy and direct approaches to the appropriation of public space in a community context, interspersed with appeals to external authority such as “EU guidelines” and the mechanics of legislative authority – each speaker ridiculing, but also demonstrating understanding of the other’s assumed remit. The novel’s principle concerns are with such dramatic conflicts within the protest: the clash between representative democracy and direct action, and the relationship between 1990s counterculture and attempts to commercialise a postindustrial city.

As a work of fiction which was marketed in terms of its take on Glasgow’s increasingly cosmopolitan self-identity, readers may have expected Obler’s portrayal on the political and cultural meaning of the Pollok Free State to focus, instead, on aspects of the experimental camp which have been interpreted as a postmodern political phenomenon. One reading of the Free State is that while the protest certainly centred on a territory, the protest camp did not represent a community in a strictly geographical or identity-bound sense. This argument is developed most fully by Paul Routledge in ‘The Imagineering of Resistance’ who proposes that the protest “effected” its politics “through the creation of an imagined community”, represented by the form of the camp (“tree houses”, the sculptural adaptation of burnt out cars in a “Carhenge” structure, “carved totems”) and was highly mediated due to the degree of press and public attention.⁷⁷ Routledge suggests that such “temporary, communal,

⁷⁴ John Arlidge, ‘Tory MP fined 200 pounds for waving pickaxe’, *Independent*, 11 September 1995 <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/tory-mp-fined-pounds-200-for-waving-pickaxe-1600654.html>> [accessed 1 December 2016].

⁷⁵ Benjamin Obler, *Javascotia*, p. 166.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Paul Routledge, ‘The Imagineering of Resistance’, p. 373.

spaces of resistance” is maintained by the “symbolically manifested commitment of its members” and cannot be sustained by “neighbourly bonds or intensity of reciprocal exchange”.⁷⁸ At points, this argument runs close to claiming that the campaign against the motorway itself was only a ‘catalyst’ for a more ‘symbolic’ kind of campaign which, ultimately, did not relate solely to one particular place. Yet, as Routledge acknowledges, there are tensions underlying such interpretations of the camp’s ‘symbolic’ function. Colin MacLeod, who initiated the camp, was both a member of “Earth First! and Pollok resident” and that his camp first acted as “a visible symbol of resistance to the motorway”.⁷⁹ Routledge notes MacLeod’s emphatic view that the camp is a “*message* man, to the community around here. We know we are being watched by people, so we want to get their attention, let them know what we are trying to protect”.⁸⁰ This suggests that Macleod’s first concerns were with the camp’s visible impact on the local community and the land they were “trying to protect” rather than, as Routledge goes on to argue, that “the Free State served to announce to a local, and indeed, national audience, the existence of practicing alternative culture”.⁸¹

Some related marginal creative work has explored the nexus between the right to space, particularly local governance of land, and emerging construals of community identity. For example, Alasdair McIntosh’s essay, ‘On the Gal-Gael Peoples of Scotland: On Tradition Re-bearing, Recovery of Place and Making Identity Anew’ considers poetic work which “developed out of Glasgow’s M77 motorway protest at Pollok and the confluence that formed with other events”.⁸² In terms of this “confluence with other events”, McIntosh explicitly relates the Pollok protest to “Scottish land reform, specifically on the Isle of Eigg” and campaigns against quarrying on the Isle of Harris.⁸³ Altogether, McIntosh remarks that collective attempts to protect land from such development “calls for new and inclusive understandings of what it means to be “indigenous”” which, for McIntosh,

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Paul Routledge, ‘The Imagineering of Resistance’, p. 365.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 370.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Alastair McIntosh, ‘The Gal-Gael Peoples of Scotland: On Tradition Re-bearing, Recovery of Place and Making Identity Anew’, *Cenrastus*, 56 (1997) 6-15.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 6.

can be construed as “multi-ethnic and postmodern”: not invested in a recovery of fixed identity or genealogy but recovery of “near lost-traditions”.⁸⁴ Accordingly, McIntosh describes himself as the “narrator” not “author” of the following poem which “grew out of many sessions round the fire at Pollok” with ideas contributed by “multiple” people.⁸⁵ The poem layers mention of protests including the Govan Rent Strikes, “strong women/resisting landlord’s factor”, “non-lethal direct action Crofter’s War, and the Timex strike”. Between discussion of rural dispossession it speaks of people who “languish lost/in concrete jungles/post-industrial/redundancy” and also attempts to draw parallels between people people “Protesting motorways in Glasgow” and those “Refuting superquarry mountain destruction” in the Hebrides”.⁸⁶ McIntosh positions the Pollok Free State as a “multi-ethnic and postmodern” space, but his construal of the postmodern aspect of that protest movement differs greatly from readings of the Free State as a phenomenon which decentred place and tradition.

Experimental forms of community education were certainly integral to the camp. The Free University, the participatory network of researchers, artists and educators, which was active from 1987 onwards and, as noted previously, involved local writers and literary figures including James Kelman, Peter Kravitz and Alasdair Gray, had a sustained presence at the camp and developed activities for campaigners and local residents. Yet for many local people the principal context was over this key community asset - the land itself - and not necessarily the experimental way in which the land was being occupied. The Pollok Free State, therefore, allowed for a radical form of participation in so far as that work contributed to establishing and maintaining control of a particular piece of public space. Others have emphasised that, regardless of the fact that the camp was cleared away and the motorway developed as planned, the protest had a lasting impact on their politics and motivation to lead similar campaigns to safeguard community spaces. As Alastair McIntosh details in the foreword to his poem, the Pollok Free State led Colin McLeod to establish the Gal Gael Trust, involving people in traditional boatbuilding craftwork as a response to the local impact of deindustrialisation. Elsewhere, Laura-

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Jane Nolan has discussed the connection between the occupation of the Kinning Park Complex in the late 1990s and contemporary campaigns against “locally unwanted landuse” such as the Pollok Free State, which some of the Complex’s users had been involved in.⁸⁷

Over the following years, however, the notion that collective community efforts to maintain or protect public space have a beneficial impact on people’s wellbeing, esteem and sense of agency has been pulled in some divergent directions. On a legislative level, land reform in Scotland has furthered the ability of many communities to have greater role in the governance of land. More recently, the 2015 Community Empowerment Act is intended to give community bodies more opportunity to own or control land or community buildings and, crucially, amends earlier land reform legislation - extending the community right to buy to urban parts of Scotland. Coterminously, small funds and pilot projects supporting participatory budgeting in some communities have given limited numbers of people greater decision over investment priorities in their areas. However, as the researcher and filmmaker Simon Yuill has cautioned, there is reason to be wary of transposing approaches to community empowerment which have benefitted people in rural areas to urban settings. As Yuill argues, “one of the key distinctions” between rural and urban community buyouts is that “whereas rural buyouts largely are based within communities buying land that is privately owned and bringing it to a form of public ownership, urban buyouts are usually based around buying property that is publicly owned already but putting it into non-council management”.⁸⁸ Yuill observes that there is a serious “contradiction” bound up in urban ‘community buyouts’, “because basically you have the public raising funds to buy a public building to put it in public ownership and yet the building is public in the first place. So rather than being a solution to the problems of poor governance within councils or solution to the problems of the mismanagement of finances...they’re really symptomatic of it...and

⁸⁷ Laura-Jane Nolan, ‘Space, politics and community: the case of the Kinning Park complex’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 2015), p. 89.

⁸⁸ Simon Yuill, ‘The Uncommonality of the Commons’, Glasgow, 31 August 2013 <http://www.lipparosa.org/essays/uncommonality_of_the_commons.pdf> [accessed 10 December 2017], p. 17.

community buyouts in a sense are complicit with the privatisation of public resources”.⁸⁹

Moreover, in other policy discourses the perception that community empowerment is in itself a means of tackling inequality and poverty has developed in a way that often shifts focus away from the control of specific public spaces or community resources.⁹⁰ Political sociologists such as Akwugo Emejulu and critical public health researchers including Lynne Friedli, have described how “asset based community development” gained traction in public health discourse and local authority priorities in Scotland, and began to drift from a clear emphasis on local community assets towards emphasising notions of community relationships and reciprocal trust which are not dissimilar to theorizations of social capital. The previous chapter of this thesis argued that cultural engagement projects which form part of urban regeneration programmes can be regarded in terms of efforts to develop residents’ ‘social capital’, and considered the view that assessments of ‘social capital’ further a ‘deficit model’ of local communities: focusing on qualities communities are perceived to lack and presenting that lack as a reason for, rather than indication of, an area’s economic predicament or social problems. By the beginning of this decade, the language of asset based community development had become ingrained in many facets of policy making in local administration and, indeed, Scotland’s Government proudly signalled that they “promote an assets, rather than a deficits, approach, to tackling poverty and inequality”.⁹¹ The Scottish Government explains “this means building the capacity of individuals, families and communities to manage better in the long-term, moving from welfare to wellbeing and from dependency to self determination”.⁹² Thus the language of “self

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ This is evidenced particularly in national policy documents focused on tackling poverty but can also be seen in growing local policy discussions and strategic work centred on community ‘resilience’ in Glasgow, which has been furthered by the Rockefeller Foundation’s ‘Resilient Cities’ programme. For a critical reading of Glasgow’s ‘resilience strategy’ and its relationship to the Commonwealth Games see Tom Slater, ‘Rent Gaps’, in *Handbook of Gentrification Studies*, ed. by Loretta Lees and Martin Philips (London: Edward Elgar, 2018), pp. 119-33.

⁹¹ Scottish Government, *Tackling Child Poverty in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Scottish Government, 2010), p. 11.

⁹² Scottish Government, *Equally Well Review* (Edinburgh: Scottish Government, 2010), p. 5 qtd. in *Tackling Child Poverty in Scotland*, pp. 11-12.

determination” is invoked as a mode of self-management: a healthy alternative to welfare dependency. Elsewhere, the Scottish Government suggests, “Assets approaches invite individuals and communities to take control of managing positive changes to their circumstances by co-producing the interventions by which they can be supported out of poverty”.⁹³ Here, the language of ‘self determination’ has shifted to ‘co-production’ and ‘assets’ have given way to ‘interventions’. I suggest that the rhetoric of asset based community development subsumed notions of self determination into mode of consultation. The argument that people should “manage positive changes to their circumstances” by “co-producing” interventions manages both to responsabilise individuals for their “circumstances” while construing individual responsibility as a good in itself, and to lessen the responsibility of political administrations for managing people’s circumstances “better in the long term”. Moreover, as Lynne Friedli points out in her analysis of assets based approaches to community development in public health, “typically, the primary focus is on valuing individual and collective psycho-social attributes”.⁹⁴ Scotland’s former Chief Medical Officer, Professor Harry Burns, has been a central advocate for an assets based approach to public health, as a way of approaching the psycho-social problems Burns sees as symptomatic of the long term effects of deindustrialisation, with the loss of skilled work and occupational communities eroding people’s “cultural identity”.⁹⁵ Reflecting that “Where traditional communities lose their traditional cultural anchors [...] They all find the same things happening – increasing mortality from alcohol, drugs, violence [...] The answer is to rediscover a sense of purpose and self-esteem”.⁹⁶

Yet, within the broader context of neoliberal service reform, and particularly at a time of imposed fiscal austerity, the rhetoric of asset based community development can also present a positive rationale for the contraction of services. In fieldwork with community workers and civil servants, Mary Anne MacLeod and

⁹³ Scottish Government, *Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland* (Edinburgh: Scottish Government, 2011), p. 9.

⁹⁴ Lynne Friedli, ‘What We’ve Tried Hasn’t Worked’, p. 132.

⁹⁵ Harry Burns, qtd. in Lucy Ash, ‘Why is Glasgow the UK’s sickest city?’, *BBC News Magazine*, 5 June 2014 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-27309446>> [accessed 13 October 2015].

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Akwugo Emejulu identify competing ideas about the purpose of asset based community development, with one public health official describing how asset based approaches attempt to turn the existing model of health service provision “on its head” so that rather than regarding health services as a “place to be fixed or have an issue or a problem addressed”, responsibilities are placed “back on the individual [...] It’s about trying to take away dependency on services”.⁹⁷ Consequently, MacLeod and Emejulu argue, the promotion of asset based approaches to tackling social problems can be read in terms of distrust for the state, and rather than giving communities greater control of existing assets or facilities, can ultimately lead to the diminishment of public services. The central question in assessing the progressivity of an assets based approach is, simply, what the assets in question are, or, as Lynne Friedli puts it “Who owns the public squares?”.⁹⁸

The remaining parts of this chapter consider how socially engaged forms of local literature relate to notions of asset based community development around the time of Glasgow’s Commonwealth Games: when regeneration was increasingly presented as a palliative to public health problems. Yet, I will argue, as well as being employed by local authorities and institutions with a role in policy formation to extend and develop approaches to community development, local literature continues to be a vital way of making contests over public space legible. The following section focuses on *Nothing is Lost* (2014), a literary project developed in the course of the Commonwealth Games which is keenly attenuated to the use, transfer and loss of public spaces and community facilities in the East End of Glasgow, in the course of regeneration efforts for the Games.

‘Who owns the public squares’? Asset based approaches to community development and Glasgow’s 2014 Commonwealth Games

The language of “community empowerment” and its apparent health benefits would be repeatedly invoked in Glasgow’s bid for the Commonwealth Games, and the run-

⁹⁷ Mary Anne MacLeod and Akwugo Emejulu, ‘Neoliberalism with a Community Face?’, pp. 4, 44.

⁹⁸ Lynne Friedli, ‘Always look on the bright side: the rise of assets based approaches in Scotland’, *Scottish Anti-Poverty Review*, 14 (2011/12), 11-15 (p. 14).

up to their celebration in 2014. Glasgow City Council argued that the Games would secure a “positive legacy” for generations to come, “inspiring everyone to get more active and take part in sport” - improving public health and tackling Glasgow’s persistent reputation as the ‘sick man of Europe’.⁹⁹ Alongside investment in sports infrastructure, regeneration initiatives running alongside the Games would focus on the “temporary use of vacant and under-utilised land”, in the process, “fostering community empowerment throughout the city”.¹⁰⁰ Yet, public discussion of the Games was characterised by a certain degree of scepticism. In contrast to the regeneration narratives which permeated 1990s Glasgow (though they were fiercely contested and defended) there was a some feeling of fatigue inhabiting analysis of the Glasgow’s latest ‘transformation’ and cultural responses to the 2014 Games were somewhat muted. However, a broad range of cultural work was supported: including participatory dramatic and narrative work by the National Theatre of Scotland; a temporary literary festival space, ‘The Empire Café’, developed by the local novelist Louise Welsh in partnership with other creative sectors; and new multidisciplinary work by Alison Irvine, Mitch Miller and Chris Leslie. As detailed in the previous chapter, Irvine, Miller and Leslie built on the productive creative relationship they had developed in the course of their artist residencies at the Red Road Flats in the earlier part of the decade. Maintaining their creative interest in the representation and cultural politics of urban regeneration in Glasgow, they went on to submit a joint bid for a creative project, funded by the Commonwealth Games cultural programme. Their work culminated in *Nothing is Lost*: a multidisciplinary exploration of urban change in Glasgow’s East End, which was intended to be extensively ‘regenerated’ in the course of the Games. The following section delineates the context of the 2014 Games and the shift they entailed in Glasgow’s history of regeneration before turning back to analysis of this related literary work.

Glasgow’s bid for the Commonwealth Games began to develop over a decade before the city hosted the event in 2014. Tracing the genesis of the bid back beyond documentary sources, Paul Salisbury suggests that the impetus to take the Games to

⁹⁹ Glasgow City Council, *Beyond 2014: The Glasgow 2014 Legacy Story for People, Business and Communities* (Glasgow: Glasgow City Council, 2014), p. 8.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Glasgow arose when Scotland's then First Minister, Jack McConnell, attended the Commonwealth Games in Manchester. Salisbury suggests that the First Minister had a "predisposition in favour of events" and even hazards that he, "and his fledgling Scottish Government", wished for a "flagship project to express Scottish identity and this coincided with the timing of the bid."¹⁰¹ Though this claim is somewhat speculative, that the development of the Games, over time, became closely aligned with national policy objectives suggests that this event did represent a different mode of regeneration for Glasgow. Unlike earlier phases of urban regeneration and touristic events, the bid for the Games had not been spearheaded by groups of 'entrepreneurial' local actors, but rather, was informally initiated on a national level, then strongly supported and funded by national Government.¹⁰² Furthermore, the rhetoric around the Games came to set representations of the city in the context of wider national aspirations. Indeed, one member of Glasgow's organizing committee commented that the move to bring the Games to the East End was fairly "opportunistic".¹⁰³ The bid was seen to "fit within a long term plan for the East End of the city, you know, deindustrialisation and all of that" but neither the bid or the event emerged as the end point of a locally planned process or specific community demands.¹⁰⁴ Rather, people had "wanted to see regeneration in the East End for many years" and it was thought "that if we had this sporting event here then we could achieve that so much faster".¹⁰⁵ The Games seemed to offer a catalyst for a regeneration programme which had already been broadly accepted.

However, there was a need for a stronger, and more compelling narrative to coalesce around the bid if it was to be successful. The narrative that did develop was significantly influenced by the priorities of the International Olympic Committee and the London 2012 Olympics, which were "the first global sporting event where the notion of legacy had to be articulated in the bid".¹⁰⁶ Glasgow's 2007 bid document

¹⁰¹ Paul Salisbury, 'An analysis of Glasgow's decision to bid for the 2014 Commonwealth Games', *Sport in Society*, 20.12 (2017), 1870-1887 (p. 1880).

¹⁰² Eighty percent of the core costs of the Games were to be met by the Scottish Executive.

¹⁰³ Paul Salisbury, 'An analysis of Glasgow's decision to bid for the 2014 Commonwealth Games', p. 1879.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Robert Rodgeron, 'Redefining temporal notions of event legacy: lessons from Glasgow's Commonwealth Games', *Annals of Leisure Research*, 19.4 (2016), 497-518 (p. 499).

emphasised that the Commonwealth Games would enhance “the long term perception of the city as a tourist destination and location for further investment” and, building on Glasgow’s significant history of urban change, claimed that the Games would provide “the platform for telling that story to a wide audience.”¹⁰⁷ It stressed the “opportunities for self-development through volunteering” the Games would provide.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, it frames, as “key objectives”, “improving the health of our population particularly around physical activity, smoking control and the prevention of obesity”.¹⁰⁹ These measures, in turn, will “contribute also to overall levels of confidence, wellbeing and mental health.”¹¹⁰ These bold claims for the public health benefits of the Games were to resonate in policy discourse and become amplified in the media.

In 2007, when Glasgow’s bid was confirmed as successful, the then First Minister enthusiastically welcomed the opportunity to “inspire people to take up a sport or embrace a healthier lifestyle”.¹¹¹ The focus on the Games’ public health benefits only grew as the Government’s 2008 consultation paper, ‘Glasgow 2014 – Delivering a Lasting Legacy for All’, sought to align legacy planning for the Games with the Scottish Government’s ‘strategic objectives’ and national outcomes including: “we live longer, healthier lives” and “we have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their actions and how they affect others”.¹¹² Proposed actions and incentives included developing “opportunities to improve people’s health, to help get people into work”; to “inspire a whole new generation to take up sport, to be physically active, and to live healthier lifestyles”, and using “the Games as a catalyst to encourage people to be more physically active”.¹¹³ This stage in Glasgow’s regeneration, then, was explicitly

¹⁰⁷ Commonwealth Games Council for Scotland, *People, Place, Passion: Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games Candidate City File* (Edinburgh: Commonwealth Games Council for Scotland, 2007), p. 11.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Alex Salmond, qtd. in Lawrence Booth, ‘Glasgow to Host 2014 Commonwealth Games’, *The Guardian*, 9 November 2007 <<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2007/nov/09/lawrencebooth>> [accessed 11 March 2018].

¹¹² Scottish Government, *Glasgow 2014 – Delivering a lasting legacy for Scotland: A Consultation Paper* (Edinburgh: Scottish Government, 2008), pp. 32, 43.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 21, 32.

linked to national public health objectives and on a local level, the Games were framed as “the opportunity to turn a particularly blighted bit of Glasgow into a stunning area of the city”.¹¹⁴ However, even early research focused on the Games presumed legacy took a markedly sceptical view. For instance, Gerry McCartney’s analysis of the potential public health impact of the Games suggested that, as a catalyst for regeneration, Glasgow’s Commonwealth Games appeared “very similar to tried and tested mechanisms used over many decades in the West of Scotland” in an attempt to improve health and social conditions.¹¹⁵ McCartney argued, it “is difficult to see what is different about the plans for the 2014 Games” in terms of sports participation and “volunteer recruitment” that might “generate a different result”.¹¹⁶ Therefore, McCartney concludes, “the 2014 Games are unlikely to be an effective health improvement, and are unlikely to generate the plethora of social and economic benefits that pepper the bid document and legacy plans”.¹¹⁷ In a retrospective account of the Games’ development which emphasised its differences from previous regeneration efforts in the city, Linda Christie (who had been appointed as Legacy Manager for the Games), details the “extensive engagement process of communities and local organisations” which helped to define and plan the Games’ anticipated legacy.¹¹⁸ Christie stresses that there was an “inclusive dimension” to the Games which would not “have been achieved if left to the market or to the traditional forms of mega-event delivery mechanism”.¹¹⁹ Yet though there may have been concerted efforts to involve local residents in legacy planning, it seems clear that initial expectations around the Games’ impact on public health had been already set on a national level.

A small but significant strain of critical commentary and notional protest did coalesce closer to the Games. One forum for protest which achieved a reasonable

¹¹⁴ Stewart Maxwell, MSP for the West of Scotland, in, Scottish Parliament, *Official Report*, 30 April 2008 (Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament).

¹¹⁵ Gerry McCartney, ‘How will the Commonwealth Games impact on Glasgow’s health, and how will we know?’ (unpublished MD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2010), p. 16.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Linda Christie and Mike Danson, ‘Glasgow’s Post-Entrepreneurial Approach to 2014 CWG Legacy’, in *New Perspectives on Research, Policy and Practice in Public Entrepreneurship*, ed. by Joyce Liddle (Bingley: Emerald, 2016), pp. 147-72 (p. 159).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

public profile was ‘Glasgow Games Monitor 2014’. This local campaign extended the tone and focus of a longer running ‘Games Monitor’ initiative, which collated critical commentary and documentary research highlighting the social impact of the Olympic Games. Essays and commentary from ‘Games Monitor’ expressed concern that the mega-event was a tool to precipitate gentrification, manipulate property values and generate related streams of profit. ‘Glasgow Games Monitor’ presented itself as an activist group, critiquing the notion of legacy, and querying the public benefit of spending on the Games. The group’s researchers contrasted high levels of capital investment in Games facilities with a long term tendency to disinvest in local sports facilities, including the decision to close popular venues such as the Govanhill Baths which was met with a long-running community campaign. As well as collating commentary on the Games and Glasgow’s uncomfortable history of regeneration, the group hosted public talks and film screenings in city centre pubs and arts spaces, often screening documentaries which recalled controversies around Glasgow’s status as the European City of Culture in 1990, and examined the deeper context of deindustrialisation in the West Coast of Scotland. Like the Workers City movement, the group published and distributed a free local paper, *The East End Eye* which focused on controversies around the regeneration initiative and drew overt comparisons with the condition of social housing in the city. Similarly, a parallel may be drawn between the way in which protests against the Poll Tax provided ground for resistance to culture led regeneration in the 1990s, and the anger around contemporary financial penalties levied on some social housing tenants, which were presented as a context for criticising limited investment in new social housing stock as part of the Games.¹²⁰ These cuts to housing benefit became popularly known as the ‘bedroom tax’ and there were wide concerns that they would have a disproportionate impact on people with disabilities.¹²¹ In this light, and in the broader context of welfare reform, the decision to select the international IT

¹²⁰ These charges, termed the “removal of the spare room subsidy” in legislation, were introduced by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and imposed reductions to tenants’ housing benefit in cases where their household was deemed to have more than the minimum number of required bedrooms.

¹²¹ See, for example, Scottish Government, *Updated Evidence on the Number of Households Affected by the Housing Benefit Under Occupation Penalty* (Edinburgh: Scottish Government, 2013).

company Atos, as one of the Games' official sponsors drew some particularly severe criticism, since one of its divisions was contracted by the Department for Work and Pensions to carry out work capability assessments for people with illnesses and disabilities who received or applied for social security support.¹²² Critics of the Games also made efforts to draw attention to instances where public spaces used by local community groups and residents with vulnerabilities were directly threatened by regeneration plans: in particular, the controversial decision to close and demolish the Accord Centre, a day facility in Dalmarnock for adults with learning disabilities in order to situate coach parking for the Games.¹²³

Again, local authors James Kelman and Alasdair Gray contributed to events highlighting the sociospatial injustice they felt was evident in the regeneration process, including 'Glasgow's Dirty Laundry', a protest event held on Glasgow Green in 2013. Glasgow's Dirty Laundry saw messages of protest displayed on bedsheets hung from washing lines, recalling the way in which Glasgow Green's use as a site of protest and public space was historically enmeshed with its use as a place for domestic work, as memorialised in photography and local writing.¹²⁴ In interview for a film covering Glasgow's Dirty Laundry, Kelman voices criticism that "the day centre out there" in Dalmarnock was "closed in order to make way for a car park...for a temporary thing".¹²⁵ Kelman specifically recalls the fact that the local authority had previously attempted to "sell off" parts of Glasgow Green around

¹²² The significance of Atos as an official sponsor is discussed, for instance, in Robert Armour, 'Will there be a lasting Commonwealth Games legacy?', *Third Force News*, 25 July 2014 <<http://thirdforcenews.org.uk/features/will-there-be-a-lasting-commonwealth-games-legacy/>> [accessed 14 October 2015].

¹²³ Glasgow Games Monitor, 'Interview with East End Carers/Save the Accord', 30 July 2014 <<http://gamesmonitor2014.org/interview-with-east-end-carerssave-the-accord/>> [accessed 14 October 2015]. For further analysis of local residents' experience of urban change in the East End of Glasgow at this time, including former users of the Accord Centre, see Gerry Mooney, Vicki McCall and Kirsteen Paton, 'Exploring the use of large sporting events in the post-crash, post-welfare city: A 'legacy' of increasing insecurity?', *Local Economy*, 30.8 (2015), 910-214 (p. 14).

¹²⁴ Edwin Morgan's well-known poem, 'Glasgow Green', for example, presents images of domestic and family life in public view, in its closing picture of women who "sit in the Green/ and rock their prams as the sheets/ blow and whip in the sunlight.", in *Collected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1990), pp. 168-69 (p. 169).

¹²⁵ James Kelman, in interview with Liam Young, *Glasgow's Dirty Laundry*, online video recording, dir. by Jack Archer (A Thousand Flowers, 2013) <<http://gamesmonitor2014.org/documentation-of-glasgows-dirty-laundry-event/>> [accessed 14 October 2015].

1990.¹²⁶ He also takes the view that controversies concerning the use of local public spaces and the investment of new funds were “very reminiscent of what happened in the City of Culture Year” when, as Kelman saw it, “all the money was channelled into events and so forth” that “appeared to be national or international in outlook” while local facilities were placed under greater financial and operational pressure.¹²⁷ His principle criticism of Glasgow’s local authorities in this case, as in 1990, was that ‘the Council’ “are supposed to be representative of a political position” and that “traditionally” a Labour Council “was supposed to take on” issues like “welfare, housing and benefits for the community” on “*behalf* of the people that they represent”.¹²⁸ He argues that when social support is “attacked by national Government, people expect the Labour Party, Labour Councils, to stand against it, and not to act as the managers on behalf of - a kind of right-wing, sort of policy”.¹²⁹ Alasdair Gray supported Kelman’s critical stance on the ‘managerial role’ of local authorities, complaining that it should be possible for “the Glasgow Labour Party” to “alright, implement...” regressive changes “but to also to privately, or openly demonstrate and argue against them”.¹³⁰ The authors’ comments here are very similar to the critique Kelman advances upon local authorities, and what he perceives as their increasingly managerial nature, in his essays in and around 1990. In, for example, ‘Some Recent Attacks on the Rights of the People’, he questions the veneration of professionalism as an absence of local or personal interest which could “prejudice ‘tough’ decisions that have to be made in the interest in ‘strong’ and ‘efficient’ management” and decries elected representatives’ “pride in their ‘unbiased and objective’ motives, their capacity to perform the requisite ‘cost-cutting exercises’ with supreme efficiency”.¹³¹

Though some protest activities and critical commentators such as Kelman and Gray attempted to place the Games in the broader context of welfare reform, and

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Alasdair Gray, Ibid. Here, Gray speaks exclusively of “Westminster Laws”, the context for this has perhaps been set by Kelman’s earlier comments which are associated with social security support.

¹³¹ James Kelman, ‘Some Recent Attacks on the Rights of the People’, in *Some Recent Attacks: Essays Cultural and Political* (Stirling: AK Press, 1992), pp. 37-45 (p. 40).

moreover, to evoke radical aspects of protests against earlier large-scale regeneration projects in Glasgow, they left relatively little mark on the progress of events at the time. As Paul Salisbury reflects, such criticism emerged too late to make any substantial difference to the planning of the Games, with most key decisions about the event having been taken years previously.¹³² Moreover, in interview with Salisbury, the leader of a prominent opposition group in the Council at the time offered that there was little in terms of public protest against the plans because “most Glaswegians take the attitude that the council will do what they like and there’s not much point in opposing these things”.¹³³ In any case, regardless of whether local residents were generally opposed to Games’ or with particular aspects of the regeneration programme, there are evident tensions inhabiting the City Council and Games Committee’s efforts to develop a meaningful programme of local engagement, since engagement activities called on local residents and communities to determine their response to an event which had largely already been planned, funded and was in the process of delivery.

Nothing is Lost

Among the creative and collaborative works developed in the course of the Commonwealth Games, and which may be considered in light of the Committee’s engagement and outreach work, Alison Irvine, Mitch Miller and Chris Leslie’s multidisciplinary collaboration offers a particularly valuable examination of the tensions between the language of community empowerment and the experience of urban change in the East End of Glasgow. When set against claims for the long-term legacy the Games were to establish, it is pertinent to note that the Games’ cultural programme chiefly followed a festival format, comprising a range of one-off screenings and very short run theatrical performances. In fact, Irvine, Miller and Leslie’s *Nothing is Lost* (their project was originally titled ‘The Winning City’) is one of few commissioned texts which provides a lasting, detailed analysis of the Games’ local impact. While Irvine’s writing in *Nothing is Lost* has clear conceptual

¹³² Paul Salisbury, ‘The Imagineering of Resistance’, p. 1883.

¹³³ Ibid.

and formal continuities with *This Road is Red*, it marks a break from Irvine's previous approach to writing urban space in a number of meaningful ways. In particular, I argue, Irvine's later writing hones in on the disparity between the rhetoric of community empowerment which surrounded regeneration plans leading up to the games, and the temporary, contingent nature of many recreational projects developed for the communities in question. If the Commonwealth Games were an example of 'asset based community development', many "assets" were themselves often taken out of public use or ownership. *Nothing is Lost* is extremely attentive to the sale, exchange or transfer of public spaces in the East End of Glasgow. Irvine consistently emphasises the ephemeral nature of public spaces created for the Commonwealth Games, set against the long-term, often permanent impact regeneration would have on domestic spaces and other well used public spaces. In one short story focused on the Baltic street adventure playground, an interviewee complains that two important public spaces – a community centre and a playpark – were removed to make way for a transport hub, to allow access for coaches carrying athletes and spectators to stadium venues. He regrets that "they've left the community with virtually nothing. The only thing they had was one shop and that's it".¹³⁴ Work developed co-terminously by Chris Leslie includes documentary film charting the forced sale of privately owned tenement housing in the East End, to make way for discrete regeneration projects.

Nothing is Lost is presented as a "box set" of books: 'words' by Alison Irvine, photographs by Chris Leslie and dialectograms by Mitch Miller, with 'nothing', 'is', 'lost' scrawled across their front, resembling graffiti Leslie had pictured in the East End's lanes and alleyways.¹³⁵ The collection is housed in a simple cardboard box, not dissimilar to card boxes to archival storage, a nod to the project's documentary focus: recording and retaining memories, images and impressions of the city's East End. The artists have described the project's archival nature, suggesting that they "gathered stories and sought out images from the places

¹³⁴ Alison Irvine, 'Words', *Nothing is Lost* (Edinburgh: Freight, 2015), p. 35.

¹³⁵ *Nothing is Lost*'s publisher, Freight, won the principle prize in the 2016 Scottish Design Awards, and a craft publishing award, for the creative presentation of these texts.

changed by the Games, those largely untouched, and those left behind”.¹³⁶ Alison Irvine has expanded on those methods, mentioning that, “in a recent email, prospecting for work” she offered that “our skills lie in unearthing little-known or untold stories about Glasgow the city and its people, and our strengths lie in the fact that we interpret our research in a variety of artistic forms giving a rich, comprehensive and multi-layered view of our subjects.”¹³⁷ A “more informal summing-up” of the group’s practice, Irvine suggests:

would include the fact that we all benefit from that shared experience, both artistically and socially. We share ideas, hunches, tip-offs, photographs, interview transcripts, anxieties [...] We share family, friends, contacts – anyone who could contribute to our projects. And we share the impending deadline [...] Because, ultimately, after all the research, it’s just each of us on our own, getting our ideas down and making them work.¹³⁸

As the creators present it, then, *Nothing is Lost*, like *This Road is Red* and other artistic work created in the course of the Red Road Cultural Project, can be read as a form of “salvage ethnography”: recording and preserving the views and experiences of residents before they are dispersed to other parts of the city, or a local area is significantly transformed.¹³⁹ Irvine also presents the “collective” as a creative community, with common “shared experience” and links between “family, friends” and “contacts”, who form the ground for their creative research. However, I would suggest that Irvine’s comments also indicate that the collective’s way of working is guided by the nature of bidding for work with external agencies. Together, Irvine, Miller and Leslie work on a contracted basis, which informs their presentation as artists (to describe their “skills” and “strengths” Irvine quotes text composed while “prospecting for work”) and constrains the structure of their creative practice: working to “the impending deadline” determined by another body. Their work occupies, then, an intermediate space between self-directed creative practice (“ultimately, after all the research, it’s just us on our own, getting our ideas down and making them work”) and contracted research, with the flexibility to develop work

¹³⁶ Alison Irvine, Mitch Miller and Chris Leslie, ‘My process: nothing is lost’, *This is Central Station* <<http://thisiscentralstation.com/my-process/my-process-nothing-is-lost/>> [accessed 10 March 2017].

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 161.

from “hunches, tip offs”, “family, friends, contacts” rather than following a prescribed method.¹⁴⁰

As with the Red Road Cultural Project, Irvine develops her literary work from interviews with local residents and workers. Though this approach was indicated in *This Road is Red's* paratextual material, it was structured as a portmanteau novel: its multiple chapters each closely focused on a naturalistically presented character, minimising narrative presence. In promotional material, Irvine has summarised her narrative style as “spare but textured prose” wherein “the characters speak in select, but eloquent voices that speak from, and of the place itself”.¹⁴¹ However, in *Nothing is Lost*, an overarching narrative voice is more present and Irvine also draws attention to her creative research method throughout. Comments from her text’s outset: “we talk about the plans to transform the derelict site into a park in time from the Commonwealth Games”,¹⁴² “when I ask them about the history of gangs in the area” highlight Irvine’s role as researcher and interviewer as well as author, foregrounding the project’s methods throughout the finalised narrative.¹⁴³ This narrative mode also affords Irvine the ability to give the reader insight into her own preconceptions about the area and the Games’ impact on local residents, as characters’ responses often work against the thrust of Irvine’s questions. As well as presenting Irvine’s interactions with residents and local workers forthrightly, and emphasising the interview process which informed the work, Irvine also structures the narrative with direct observations on residents’ experience and reflections: commenting, for example that one character “has more issue with the fact that the council has promised the land to a developer”,¹⁴⁴ “I now understand his reluctance”.¹⁴⁵

Further, while the depiction of high rise housing in Balornock in *This Road is Red* remained tightly focalised through individual characters, Irvine portrays areas of the east end from a more detached perspective in *Nothing is Lost*. Introducing

¹⁴⁰ Alison Irvine, Mitch Miller and Chris Leslie, ‘My process: nothing is lost’.

¹⁴¹ Recollective, ‘Recollective, About Us’ *Recollective* <<http://www.recollective.org.uk/about-us/>> [accessed 10 March 2018].

¹⁴² Alison Irvine, ‘Words’, *Nothing is Lost*, p. 11.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

readers to a project in The Bridge, a community arts facility in Easterhouse, the narrator describes the workshop participants practicing by a picture window and maps out the surrounding urban environment, then moves further beyond - following sight lines and drawing the reader's attention to peripheral transport routes:

They work in the studio in the bright light thrown from its huge glass window. From here you can see the old brick Shandwick shopping centre, the McDonalds and the car park. You can watch the buses decant the last of their passengers then begin again as they turn left on to Westerhouse Road. You can see the expanse of grass that stretches up to Garthamlock where the new houses stand.¹⁴⁶

This description, tracking out from the light-filled studio to open space on the edge of new housing developments, is indicative of the cartographic approach Irvine takes to portraying aspects of the city. Like Irvine's open reflections on her research methods and creative process throughout the narrative, the mode of descriptive writing in these short stories aims towards transparency: sketching out key sites and thoroughfares from an aerial perspective, and pausing on viewpoints and reflected images. Befitting the project's archival quality, *Nothing is Lost* not only delineates the urban landscape precisely, but details changes in the land's use and ownership, charting shifting claims over urban assets and also interrogating the motivations and assumptions which drove urban change. Irvine frequently provides context for various figures playing a part in reshaping the local built environment: "We've heard that Turner Prize winning artist Jim Lambie will design the park. He's the man who makes designs with coloured strips. He's based in Glasgow";¹⁴⁷ "Assemble have a track record in creating public spaces; a café and performance space beneath a London flyover, a cinema made inside the disused frame of a petrol station"¹⁴⁸ Moreover, at points the stories' narrator goes further and offers more overt reflections on urban change in the area. Altogether, this narrative guidance allows Irvine to sketch connections between regeneration in the East End of Glasgow and wider tendencies in urban design and culture.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 36.

For instance, as Irvine emphasises, the design group, Assemble, who led plans for the Baltic Street playground, have been focused on “creating public spaces” which contrast the haphazard or ephemeral qualities of communal urban space with once grand works of urban infrastructure, like flyovers, or symbols of urban modernity like derelict city centre petrol stations. Inner city transport infrastructure once carried, like other large scale or every day sites of production, an implicit cultural meaning Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott have referred to as an “aura of permanence”: an aesthetic projection of durability and constancy.¹⁴⁹ Assemble’s “visibly handmade” cinema was intended to indicate the “potential for reusing the 4,000 empty petrol stations in the UK”.¹⁵⁰ As the journalist Jez Smadja has noted, petrol stations, once both an integral part of city centre transport infrastructure and edgeland of the night-time economy, now “with their wasteful use of real estate and their industrial whiff of hydrocarbons, are relegated to an older city operating system”.¹⁵¹ By foregrounding Assemble’s “track record” in this way, Irvine helps to position Baltic Street’s aesthetic relationship with other ephemeral urban projects: temporary public spaces with a postindustrial character, taking up ‘residency’ in sites most people are trying to pass through, and not make homely.

At other points, Irvine draws clear connections between her research in the East End and previous work as part of the Red Road Flats cultural project. Irvine speaks with one woman who is describing her experience applying for and being allocated a new house, developed as part of the regeneration efforts in Dalmarnock. The interviewee tells her that she was interviewed as part of the process, and Irvine reflects:

You had an interview? I ask her, and I’m cast back immediately to the stories I’ve been told about getting a house at the Red Road Flats in the 1960s.
What was it like? I ask her. ‘Well, they stipulated three things. You had to

¹⁴⁹ Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott, *Beyond the Ruins: the Meanings of Deindustrialisation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003) p. 4.

¹⁵⁰ Assemble, ‘The Cineroleum’, *Assemble* <http://assemblestudio.co.uk/?page_id=2> [accessed 10 March 2017].

¹⁵¹ Jez Smadja, ‘Requiem for the petrol station’, *The Guardian*, Cities, 10 July 2014 <<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/jul/10/requiem-for-the-petrol-station>> [accessed 23 September 2016].

be working. You couldn't have any antisocial behaviour orders, no ASBOs.' She can't remember the first thing.¹⁵²

Drawing such marked connections between her previous creative work with high rise residents and current project in the East End allows Irvine to delineate parallels between rehousing residents in the context of redevelopment in the 1960s and regeneration in the present day. In recent years there has been much media discussion of post-war urban development, and relatively popular narrative histories such as Lynsey Hanley's *Estates: an intimate history* (2007), which have reinforced a perception that modernist housing embodied aspects of a paternalistic culture that had long since passed: where social respectability was considered a reasonable means of selection for good quality housing.¹⁵³ Irvine's literary work pauses on the fact that such selection criteria were currently in force: that prestigious new housing was being allocated according to people's employment status, civil behaviour records and other such conditions. Irvine locates a sense of aspiration and civic ambition similar to the atmosphere residents of Red Road recalled when the multi-storey flats were first tenanted. Irvine comments that, "It's a brand new community they're creating" in Dalmarnock, "and it's brimming with the hope and optimism to rival any Red Road or new scheme".¹⁵⁴ Speaking with new residents, Irvine finds "Hopes are high and faith put firmly in the promises from regeneration agencies and councils".¹⁵⁵ Yet, despite these reflections of aspiration, Irvine's comments on the "hope and optimism" of residents are complicated by the context of her cultural work on Red Road, which described how tenants' trust in local authorities faded, and tolerance between neighbours was strained.

The critical scope of Irvine's narrative voice in *Nothing is Lost*, then, makes historical dynamics of power between residents and local authorities more apparent. In particular, in *Nothing is Lost*, Irvine is exacting about the transactions upon land

¹⁵² Alison Irvine, *Nothing is Lost*, p. 56.

¹⁵³ Lynsey Hanley, *Estates: An Intimate History* (London: Granta, 2007). For further discussion of social assessments for housing in Glasgow see, for example, Sean Damer, *From Moorepark to 'Wine Alley': The rise and fall of a Glasgow Housing Scheme* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989); Chik Collins and Ian Levitt, 'The 'Modernisation' of Scotland and its Impact on Glasgow, 1955-1979: 'Unwanted Side Effects' and Vulnerabilities', *Scottish Affairs*, 25.3 (2016), 294-316.

¹⁵⁴ Alison Irvine, *Nothing is Lost*, p. 56.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

which underlie the regeneration enterprise: putting questions about the sale and use value of public land at the centre of this cultural exploration of urban change. In the book's opening short story, Irvine examines the conditions that supported the development of the Barrowlands Park, noting that one interviewee takes "issue with the fact that the council has promised the land to a developer" and that "within a few years, the new park will be the site of flats or retail units. The council says the park was always temporary".¹⁵⁶ Under these conditions, the efforts to construct new public recreational space, involving the high profile visual artist, Jim Lambie, seem more cynical. The park was initially developed with 'Stalled Spaces' funding, as part of the Calton Barras Action Plan, aimed towards "creating a healthier and more sustainable neighbourhood through a place-making approach and enhancing access to employment opportunities, green space, local facilities and services".¹⁵⁷ It is unclear, then, why the local authority should be so insistent on the park's temporary status given the priorities in that action plan.

In a later short story, titled, 'Land', Irvine details the contest over showpeople's yards in Dalmarnock. Irvine explains that, "In South and Central Dalmarnock, the regeneration agency identified twenty-six yards that were on land needed for the area's development and regeneration – its vision of housing, retail units and industrial sites to flood opportunity and vibrancy to an area with many of its buildings pulled down for the Games".¹⁵⁸ Consequently, many showpeople "living on the sites in the East End that were once passed over, unwanted, available to buy at a relatively low cost, or next to contaminated land" now find they are on "hot property, land that Clyde Gateway is keen to regenerate and sell".¹⁵⁹ A particular difficulty for local showpeople, pressured by the rising value of previously low cost land, is that, in the past, they would have toured with fairground rides for much of the year, and would "pay their landlord a nominal rent during the summer to keep their space on the site" for the winter.¹⁶⁰ Yet, with the sites rising in value, and

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 26-27.

¹⁵⁷ Glasgow City Council, 'Council Report Provides Update on the Calton Barras Action Plan', Glasgow City Council, 21 November 2017
<<https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=21869>> [accessed 22 January 2018].

¹⁵⁸ Alison Irvine, *Nothing is Lost*, p. 64.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 65.

at the same time, many showpeople touring less, people living on the site would be disinclined to “pay full annual rental for a piece of land only used for a short time of the year”. Irvine’s interviewee remarks, “now that we’ve all settled this way, this is the income for the landlord and you can’t blame the landlord for wanting to make their money”.¹⁶¹ As longstanding rental arrangements are jeopardised, Irvine reflects on how showpeople were invited to form part of the temporary recreational spaces around the Commonwealth Games. One family Irvine spoke with was “invited to run their roll-a-penny stall on Glasgow Green during the Commonwealth Games” but “chose not to” as the “rents asked for each pitch were too expensive and they were loath to lose their places in other fairs just to attend a one-off event”.¹⁶²

The final short story in the collection, ‘When the Circuits Came to Town’, considers the meaning the Commonwealth Games had for a small group of young people in Easterhouse, who took part in the Games’ opening ceremony. The young people Alison Irvine interviewed in the course of researching this story had workshopped, choreographed and performed a dance routine as part of the event. They were also young people Irvine was familiar with, since they had worked with her on a National Youth Theatre Project, gathering oral histories from people living in the area and subsequently developing a play based on those stories.¹⁶³ As with other stories in the collection, this brief narrative also interrogates the ephemeral nature of Games spaces, and contrasts recreational, Festival-like environments with the long term pattern of urban restructuring which accompanied deindustrialisation, and permanent changes the Games would make to residential communities. The narrative notes that the young people were part of a “front forward, shiny show with a festival feel” which gave an “effervescent flavour of Glasgow and Scotland”.¹⁶⁴ Irvine’s interviews highlight that these young performers were personally and historically aware of the area’s industrial past, and had a strong sense of the cultural

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁶³ The oral history project, ‘Now Your Turn, Glasgow’ was funded by £50,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund and further funding was made available to develop a play, *Generations* (2014) based on the material developed. STV, ‘Meet young actors capturing Easterhouse memories’ <<http://glasgow.stv.tv/articles/296068-easterhouse-bafta-film-national-youth-theatre-show-generations/>> [accessed 15 March 2018].

¹⁶⁴ Alison Irvine, *Nothing is Lost*, p. 88.

meaning of that industrial heritage. Reflecting on a “nod to city’s shipbuilding history in the form of a boat” in one part of the ceremony, one performer suggested it was, “kind of nice. When people in my area were growing up we were always told about John Brown’s shipyard down at Singer. That’s what we were known for, shipbuilding. And it was just sort of nice to see that in the show because it really reminded me of where I’m from”.¹⁶⁵ The performer’s muted praise for the decision to incorporate gestures to shipbuilding in the event indicates that notions of authenticity, permanence and value are still attached to the area’s industrial history, transmitted through generations. Irvine’s description of the performance’s tone also suggests that this notion of permanence contrasts with the superficial, or “shiny”, “effervescent” celebration of place delivered for the Games’ audience.

Yet, while most stories on the collection remain focused on the contrast between temporary Games spaces and long term changes in the use of local spaces, to interrogate the notion of ‘legacy’ (the watchword throughout most coverage of the Games’ social effects), this short story considers the Games’ legacy in terms of the event’s effect on the experiences and social relationships of this group of young performers. Their response to the Games suggests that young people in Easterhouse were invigorated by the international celebration, and these particular performers, “Thirteen young people of Now Your Turn, Easterhouse, got as close to the Commonwealth Games as any official, any dignitary, and media person, anyone from Glasgow.”¹⁶⁶ At this point, *Nothing Is Lost*, seems to turn away from the method it has employed to probe the long-term value of the Commonwealth Games to question whether the legacy of the Games, or any festival or cultural event, ought to be documented in terms of material urban change, or quantified by numbers of attendees, visitors, jobs created or similar measures. In closing, this short story considers whether the Games long-term legacy may occupy a subtler, residual space in the memories and attitudes of people who were a part of it. So, Irvine asks more directly, whether the Games have been good for Glasgow:

it’s too early to say. Perhaps at this stage we can only ask if it has been good for the individuals and it has been good for these Easterhouse girls, sitting in the sunshine on the grass outside the Bridge where they come for their

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 95.

weekly open access drama workshop, where their lives will carry on after the summer, fortified with memories, enriched, sustained.¹⁶⁷

Such an emphasis on personal experiences (“*at this stage we can only ask if it has been good for the individuals*”) aligns with the emphasis on developing social capital and developing personal attributes which subtended broad approaches to regeneration in Scotland at that time. While Irvine’s writing has taken a more forensic approach to positive claims about urban regeneration in the East End, examining the ownership, sale and use of land, *Nothing Is Lost* still demonstrates a tolerance for the Games’ capacity to engender enthusiasm, optimism and confidence despite the precarious position many public ‘assets’ have been placed in through this process.

‘Cultural assets’, literary work and wellbeing

The need to consider contemporary literary practices in the context of efforts to link urban regeneration and associated cultural activity to demonstrable health benefits is becoming more pressing. Following the Commonwealth Games, strategic impetus continues to gather. A new national Cultural Strategy for Scotland is in development, and there are clear indications that relating cultural activity to healthcare objectives will be a key aspect of a refreshed approach to cultural spending. At a recent meeting of the Scottish Parliament’s Cross Party Group on Health Inequalities, Leonie Bell, Director of Arts and Engagement at Creative Scotland (then seconded to the Scottish Government to lead on the forthcoming strategy) indicated that this work would “position culture as a strategic force” in Scotland’s future, and ambitions to become a more “socially just”, “greener”, “thriving” society.¹⁶⁸ Accordingly, cultural work may be positioned to help improve the “built environment” and a greater emphasis may be expected upon “art therapy”, with “artists and performers” working in many healthcare environments, as well as newer “approaches to support medical treatment” for “some health conditions” and

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁶⁸ Leonie Bell, ‘A Cultural Strategy for Scotland’, Presentation to the Cross Party Group on Health Inequalities, Scottish Parliament, 7 December 2017.

broader work to foster “physical, mental” and “community health”.¹⁶⁹ Referring to central current elements of Government health policy, particularly the Chief Medical Officer’s ‘realistic medicine’ agenda, Bell suggested that there may be a tendency to “overmedicate” in mainstream health services, and cultural work to “support medical care” may be a way to alleviate reliance on pharmaceutical support.¹⁷⁰ Pointing to evidence that people who participate in culture are less likely to report having poor health, (though acknowledging difficulties in aggregating the evidence base for the health benefits of cultural engagement) Bell indicated that work should be undertaken to develop “long-term strategic relationships between culture and health” on institutional and local levels”.¹⁷¹ Aspects of that work, Bell hinted, may mean taking “the community empowerment bill as far as it can go”.¹⁷²

The research base policy makers are likely to draw upon in developing this strategy is outlined in the All Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing’s 2017 report, *The Arts for Health and Wellbeing*. This work is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, Wellcome Trust and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, and has been supported by third sector arts organisations, universities and the Royal Society for Public Health. The report reflects strong strands of research into the relationship between arts and health which have become more robust over the past decade, including, for example, the growing prominence of medical humanities, alongside quantitative approaches to the impact of given cultural interventions on wellbeing. Similarly, the report considers emergent moves in health and social care policy which lend themselves to this focus, such as the development of social prescribing. The report also heavily references the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s Cultural Value Project, which aimed to identify more “rigorous” understanding of the value of the arts and culture. In many respects, this research initiative represented a response to many years of policy discourse which emphasised the economic potential of investment in the arts. The Cultural Value Project attempted to transcend polarising debates about the suitability of ‘instrumentalist’ approaches to cultural spending and advocacy of the ‘intrinsic’ value of the arts by

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

describing the contributions cultural activities make across a variety of social domains. This shift reflects one made in many other areas of public policy which have seen discussion of the social benefits of public spending made less on the basis of price or cost and, increasingly, on ‘value for money’ grounds: stressing the potential savings that might be made if a particular approach could be taken at an earlier stage.

The final part of this chapter considers projects which give an indication of the shape and purpose of ‘strategic relationships between culture and health’ and illuminate the development of this trajectory. The first cultural project I consider here is ‘Representing Dennistoun’: a research project which formed part of a UK-wide study, ‘Representing Communities’ funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s Communities, Cultures, Health and Wellbeing Grant and initiated in 2012. The focus of this project was to “establish how community representations produced through creative-arts practices (eg story-telling, performance, visual art) can be used as forms of evidence to inform health-related policy and service development”.¹⁷³ The rationale for the project included that, “Official representations of places with poor health are partial, usually negative and top-down. Participatory Creative arts can provide a co-produced space to illuminate the everyday contexts through which people strive to maintain good health and wellbeing.”¹⁷⁴ Dennistoun, in the East End of Glasgow, was chosen as a key site due to its postindustrial status, which has seen it “adapt to changes in Glasgow’s global role, from engine room and “second city” of Empire, through economic and social decline and being tagged, “sick man of Europe” to an uncertain present of mixed fortunes” where the “gains of regeneration” have not been “distributed equally across the city’s inhabitants”.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Representing Communities, ‘Representing Communities, enabling change’, *Representing Communities* <<http://representingcommunities.co.uk>> [accessed 20 March 2018].

¹⁷⁴ Representing Communities, ‘Representing Communities, Developing the creative power of people to improve health and wellbeing’, *Representing Communities* <<https://connected-communities.org/index.php/project/representing-communities-developing-the-creative-power-of-people-to-improve-health-and-well-being/>> [accessed 20 March 2018].

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. The other principle locations featured in this study are ‘Butetown’ in Cardiff, North Methyr (described as a ‘post-industrial hinterland’), Hodge Hill in Birmingham and Cromarty in Highland.

Representing Dennistoun probes the relationship between narrative, place and urban change in the context of deindustrialisation and, in that regard, shares broad interests with this thesis. The project's initial reflections on the interactions between narrative representations of a place and a community's perceptions of that place suggest that:

Some communities suffer from having their stories written from them by others, sometimes well-meaning, sometimes not, that leaves many aspirations ignored and unfulfilled. The strengths and resources of such places, which can be used to forge a positive future, can go unrecognised and unsupported if negative representations created by others are not corrected.¹⁷⁶

There is not only an implication that narratives which do not represent aspects of a place in a positive light can damage a community's prospects, but also a suggestion that people find "having their stories written for them by others" alienating and disempowering. An accompanying, implicit suggestion is that negative narratives about a given place are more likely to be imposed by external "others" than people living there – who know its "strengths and resources".¹⁷⁷ The researchers go further still and hypothesize that "narratives of place are cultural assets".¹⁷⁸ Given the complexities in relating textual representations of place to material urban space (outlined in the introduction to this thesis) it is somewhat unconventional to consider 'narratives of place' as 'cultural assets' keyed to a specific location. The term 'cultural assets' is more commonly used in relation to 'cultural mapping': a method to support cultural planning by identifying cultural amenities in a given area.¹⁷⁹ Clearly, literary representations do not sit easily within this kind of audit of an area's cultural resources. Moreover, suggesting that 'narratives of place' are 'assets' raises questions around who creates, controls, uses or owns those assets.

Representing Dennistoun's interest in the capacity of representations of place to help "forge a positive future" for an urban community can be informed by Alice

¹⁷⁶ Representing Communities, 'Cultural Representations of Glasgow and its East End', *Representing Communities* <<http://representingcommunities.co.uk/dennistoun/2014/07/11/nobody-imagines-living-here-cultural-representations-of-glasgow-and-its-east-end/>> [accessed 21 March 2018].

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ For an overview of cultural mapping since the 1990s see David Lee and Abigail Gilmore, 'Mapping cultural assets and evaluating significance: theory, methodology and practice', *Cultural Trends*, 21.1 (2012), 3-28.

Mah's perspective on the role of the 'urban imaginary'. In *Industrial Ruination, Community and Place* (2012), Mah concludes that, "The role of the imagination is crucial for shaping urban development trajectories. Ways of imagining change, futures, and cities directly affect people's lives in both positive and negative ways".¹⁸⁰ Citing "Dickens' grim portrayal of nineteenth century working-class London and *Bladerunner's* dystopian futuristic vision of Los Angeles" as "classic examples of negative imagined places" (175), Mah suggests that negative 'imaginaries' of places which have experienced deindustrialisation reinforce "existing problems of socio-economic deprivation and exclusion".¹⁸¹ Arguing that "there is a stigma attached to industrial decline" Mah makes the case that stigma can be compounded by "The negative perceptions and imaginaries of people who live outside" those places.¹⁸² Mah's own analysis of such urban landscapes considers "industrial ruination as a lived process" – trying to move away from a conception of deindustrialisation as a bounded condition or historical event and emphasising the experience of people living through urban change. Often, change does not seem sequential in a landscape which incorporates (as Carlo Rotella puts it in his reading of postindustrial literature) "persistent relics of the industrial city" alongside varied new developments.

Similarly, Mark Crinson and Paul Tyrer have argued that the term postindustrial does not necessarily reflect "epochal change" in cities when "urban time is not like a line, as architectural historians often would have it" but a process of "constant if erratic transformations".¹⁸³ Touching on Bourdieu's discussion of 'problem suburbs', Mah suggests that "Popular imaginaries of old industrial places are often based on prejudices and stereotypes which have little to do with present lived experiences and social realities".¹⁸⁴ Representations of place can become static in comparison to the experience of local urban change and persistent "negative

¹⁸⁰ Alice Mah, *Industrial Ruination, Community and Place* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), p. 193.

¹⁸¹ Alice Mah, pp.175-176.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 193

¹⁸³ Mark Crinson and Paul Tyrer, 'Clocking-off in Ancotes: time and remembrance in the post-industrial city' in *Urban Memory: History and Amnesia in the Modern City*, ed. by Mark Crinson (Routledge: London and New York, 2005), pp. 49-74.

¹⁸⁴ Alice Mah, *Industrial Ruination*, p. 176.

imaginaries” can further “stigmatize places of industrial decline” and entrench social damage.

On a more local level, much work has considered the relationship between negative media representations of places in Glasgow and the experiences of communities. For example, Sean Damer’s research from the late 1980s onwards interrogated the impact of media representations on specific housing schemes in *From Moorepark to Wine Alley: Rise and Fall of a Glasgow Housing Scheme* (1989) and *Last Exit to Blackhill: The stigmatization of a Glasgow housing scheme* (1992), which also considered contrasting representations of the area in a community play, *Blackhill Born and Bred* (1990) developed with City of Culture community funds.¹⁸⁵ More recently, Ade Kearns, Oliver Kearns and Louise Keaton considered the influence of media coverage on Red Road and Sighthill in ‘Notorious Places: Image, Reputation, Stigma. The Role of Newspapers in Area Reputations for Social Housing Estates’¹⁸⁶ and the research project ‘Housing, Everyday Life and Wellbeing over the Long-term: Glasgow 1950-1975’ used oral history methods to interrogate received cultural narratives about community identity in postwar housing schemes. *Representing Dennistoun* shares aspects of these approaches but initially focuses on narrative representations of place, arguing that the “strengths and resources” of communities undergoing “rapid change” may “go unrecognised and unsupported if negative representations created by others are not corrected”.¹⁸⁷ First “collecting and analysing representations” of the East End and stratifying these into “eight typical representations of Glasgow”, the project then used literary and narrative methods to work with local residents to “explore and imagine narratives of its past, present and future for themselves”.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Sean Damer, *From Moorepark to ‘Wine Alley’: The rise and fall of a Glasgow Housing Scheme* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989); *Last Exit to Blackhill: The stigmatization of a Glasgow housing scheme* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, Centre for Housing Research, 1992).

¹⁸⁶ Ade Kearns, Olivia Kearns and Louise Lawson, ‘Notorious Places: Image, Reputation, Stigma. The Role of Newspapers in Area Reputations for Social Housing Estates’, *Housing Studies*, 28.4 (2012), 579-98.

¹⁸⁷ *Representing Dennistoun*, ‘Cultural Representations of Glasgow and its East End’.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Reflecting on the representations of the East End gathered in preliminary research, Claire McKechnie also hones in on the well-known passage on cultural representation from Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*:

Just as damaging is when a place has no story of itself. That is why the quote from Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*, spoken by the character Thaw that "nobody imagines living here" is so intriguing to the aims of Representing Dennistoun.

"When our imagination needs exercise we [...] visit London, Paris, Rome under the Caesars, the American West at the turn of the century, anywhere but here and now. Imaginatively Glasgow exists as a music-hall song and a few bad novels. That's all we've given to the outside world. It's all we've given to ourselves."¹⁸⁹

Though stressing that, "contrary to Thaw", the East End of Glasgow is "well imagined", quoting this passage and using it as a methodological frame for the project not only suggests that a lack of representation is "as damaging" to a place as negative or stigmatizing representations, but reinforces the impression that the East End of Glasgow is not perceived as "well imagined" despite the range of cultural representations that do exist. In this way, the sense of alienation Thaw felt from both transatlantic popular culture and European high culture from his childhood home in Riddrie may be extended to present day.¹⁹⁰ At the least, framing the project with that well known passage indicates how persistent the critical fixation with the legitimacy of cultural representations of Glasgow continues to be. The researchers accord with Cairns Craig's 1999 reading of the "cultural amnesia" indicated by Thaw's speech, that there is "evidence to suggest that Scottish culture has been represented as backward and unsophisticated, an unimaginative and unimagined subterrain".¹⁹¹ So setting out the project's aims and method, the researchers state:

Lanark is a very important book for Glasgow. In many ways, it signifies a response to this desire for something more than mere existence for Glasgow [...] If Thaw is correct that Glasgow is perceived as a real, rather than imagined city, and if this is an unhealthy truth, the novel goes some way

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Representing Dennistoun, 'Who, nowadays, is glad to just exist?': Glasgow's cultural legacy, *Representing Dennistoun* <<http://representingcommunities.co.uk/dennistoun/2015/02/23/who-nowadays-is-glad-just-to-exist-glasgows-cultural-legacy/>> [accessed 18 March 2018].

towards helping us think about the value of narrative and place in establishing spaces of wellbeing through arts practices and creativity.¹⁹²

Considering the negative influence of stigmatizing representations of a place upon community identity and an area's economic opportunities, Alice Mah reflects upon the generative potential of cultural representations, offering that:

Imagining change and reinventing place are important theoretical and practical acts for people who live within landscapes of industrial ruination and urban decline, as they help people enter into a dialogue with one another and identify challenges and constraints while seeking alternatives and possibilities.¹⁹³

Similarly, *Representing Dennistoun* sought to “support the community of Dennistoun to explore and imagine narratives of its past, present and future for themselves”, envisioning “narratives of place” as cultural assets” which can provide “communities with a compass in times of uncertainty or rapid change”.¹⁹⁴ The method is focused on the interaction between the area's cultural representations and urban fabric, cautioning against “making unnecessary binaries in thinking about Glasgow's cultural status as *either* real or imagined”:

Perhaps it is the combination of true-to-life descriptions of how things are perceived *and* innovative imaginings in literature, film and art that make Glasgow's cultural heritage so complex and interesting. Building on the existing cultural capital of Glasgow ‘Representing Dennistoun’ seeks to uncover local imaginings of what it means to be an East Ender in this “magnificent city”. We will use the official representations as a foil against which we can learn about new ways of understanding place, and then help develop people's existing knowledge and skills to reimagine and re-represent their lived experience of the East End. This way, people's imaginations and the reality of Glasgow may be more closely connected and more accurately represented.¹⁹⁵

Like Mah, the researchers position exploring and constructing narratives as important ‘theoretical and practical acts’. They also make more specific claims for the health and wellbeing benefits of such activity, “establishing spaces of wellbeing

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Alice Mah, *Industrial Ruination*, pp. 175-76.

¹⁹⁴ Representing Dennistoun, ‘Who, nowadays, is glad to just exist?’.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

through arts practices and creativity”.¹⁹⁶ In common with earlier narrative placemaking projects such as Demos’ ‘Glasgow 2020’ project, ‘Representing Dennistoun’ also suggests that “official representations” of the city can be used as a generative “foil” for local experiences and perceptions of the city. Discussing positive aspects of urban change in the area, which are not captured by “official representations” of place or “measurable through routinely collected health and wellbeing data”, the project’s researchers emphasise the “growth of community assets in the area”, particularly “an emergent cluster of community-facing arts and voluntary projects”.¹⁹⁷ The project’s researchers reflect that:

For some residents, these community resources will have made Dennistoun a ‘better’ place to live, increased social capital and opportunities for social participation. A new narrative of Dennistoun, as a creative, socially connected and resilient place has emerged in recent years. This narrative has not been imagined and enacted by urban planners or regeneration specialists but by clusters of community “visionaries”. Its example offers learning for other areas in the city where the limits of top-down regeneration appear to have been reached.¹⁹⁸

This account of urban change in the area emphasises the seemingly organic generation of new ‘community resources’: stressing that arts organisations such as “Impact Arts; Market Gallery; The Young Gallery; The Wasps Artists community” did not emerge within a “top-down regeneration” framework outlined by “urban planners or regeneration specialists”. Yet, this construal of “top-down regeneration” rests on a closely time bound and institutionally specific view of strategic regeneration efforts. Though new arts organisations and amenities in the area may not be the direct result of a given municipally driven strategy, the organisations noted in this passage still relate to the long history of arts-led regeneration efforts in Glasgow.¹⁹⁹ Moreover, the view that ‘top-down regeneration’ is equivalent to planning coordinated by local authorities minimizes the influence of other institutional direction in urban redevelopment and cultural policy, which may be less

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Representing Dennistoun, ‘Representing Dennistoun’.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Impact Arts, for example, was formally founded in 1994 and grew out of the ethos of cultural investment in the 1990s. The organisation works on a range of commissions with local authorities and housing associations. The Wasps Artists studios have a thirty-year history and a national presence as providers of studio space.

exacting but not necessarily less ‘top-down’ in structure. For example, the research agenda ‘Representing Dennistoun’ is affiliated with - the Connected Communities programme - is determined supra-institutionally by research councils and relates closely to the growing emphasis on co-production as a research method and the role of universities in building social capital and fostering urban change.²⁰⁰ To say that the “new narrative of Dennistoun” has emerged without structured efforts, through fortuitous “clusters” of “community “visionaries” belies other ‘top-down’ influences at play, not least that research project’s own role in reinforcing that “new narrative”. The project reinforces these domains by setting “official representations” of the city in contrast with emergent narratives reflecting newer perceptions of the area. Yet while Demos’ ‘Glasgow 2020’ contrasts ‘official versions’ of Glasgow’s future laid out in urban plans and policy documents with imaginative work, ‘Representing Dennistoun’ states that it would take existing imaginative representations of the city as a starting point, considering how original, local narratives about the city differ from conventionally published work.

In practice, this involved producing a number of community workshops and events to elicit creative work from local residents. These were principally organised by the community arts organisation *Impact Arts*. Examples of events include workshops which asked participants to write “monologues, characters and songs which are inspired by the people and the place” and envisioned a “utopian Dennistoun”, later performed as part of a “historically unreliable” walking tour of the area.²⁰¹ The ‘Connected Communities Festival’ involved residents from Milnbank Housing Association’s sheltered housing facility taking part in a range of creative

²⁰⁰ See, for example, Angie Hart, Alex Ntung, Juliette Millican, and others, ‘Community-university partnerships through communities of practice’, *Connected Communities* <<http://eprints.brighton.ac.uk/14336/>> [accessed 14 January 2018]. Elsewhere, Ian Hargreaves (whose work in this context focuses on the civic potential of ‘creative citizenship’ and who was appointed by then Prime Minister David Cameron to lead a commission on intellectual property, growth and innovation) has suggested that the Connected Communities agenda “emerged in 2010 in the wake of the formation of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Government”, in *The Creative Citizen Unbound: How Social Media and DIY Culture Contribute to Democracy, Communities and the Creative Economy*, ed. by Ian Hargreaves and John Hartley (Bristol: Policy Press, 2016), p. 16.

²⁰¹ Dennistoun Community Council, ‘Representing Dennistoun – A Utopian Dennistoun’, *Dennistoun Community Council* <<http://dennistouncc.org.uk/2016/05/15/representing-dennistoun-a-utopian-dennistoun/>> [accessed 23 March 2017].

activities at Dennistoun Library, exploring perceptions of the area. Other than performances during the project, such as the walking tour, and a number of short films and documentary videos, none of the creative works were published or otherwise made publicly available on a long-term basis. Reflecting on the project's outputs, the 'Representing Dennistoun' blog suggests that the cultural work produced in the course of the project can help to elicit a "deeper truth" about urban change in the area, not yet reflected in official statistics. Discussing a number of films made by local residents working with Impact Arts, Dr Pete Seaman, one of Representing Dennistoun's lead researchers notes that "policy makers have in these films a resource which can be used to ensure Dennistoun remains a thriving place".²⁰² Presenting the project's findings in 2016, Seaman and Claire Mckechnie-Mason focus on "using arts and creativity as evidence" to "inform health related policy", "service development" and "social action".²⁰³ Ultimately, then, these new cultural representations of Dennistoun are not aimed at other city residents, or intended for general cultural consumption, but for the professional view of policy makers. Producing narratives which reflect changing life in the city is used as an alternative form of consultation and tool for public engagement. While the project's blog may suggest that literary representations of place might be "community assets", the outcomes and structure of the project indicate that these assets primarily aid policy makers and service designers in community development.

The following case study further considers the use of literary methods and narrative techniques to develop resources and tools for policy makers and healthcare practitioners. In 2016, The Village Storytelling Centre, a community arts organisation based in Pollok, delivered training titled 'The Power of Story' as part of NHS Scotland's principle annual conference. I outline the social values articulated by the Centre and ethical conflicts encountered by practitioners before discussing 'The Power of Story' in detail. The Village Storytelling Centre was established in

²⁰² Pete Seaman, 'The Power of Representation', *Glasgow Centre for Population Health* (2016) <http://www.gcph.co.uk/latest/news/646_the_power_of_representation> [accessed 25 March 2017].

²⁰³ Pete Seaman and Claire Mckechnie-Mason, 'Using arts and creativity as evidence: Findings from Representing Dennistoun', Workshop presentation, Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 26 November 2016.

2000 and its activities are focused on promoting storytelling as a contemporary artform; co-ordinating a programme of storytelling workshops and events within the centre; and delivering outreach work with a range of community groups and partnership organisations. The remit the Centre has developed reflects aspects of the values and objectives related to an asset based approach to community development. The way in which the organisation describes its own role emphasises the capacity of storytelling in aiding self-development, for example, to “inspire and empower communities and people of all ages and backgrounds to achieve their full potential through narrative approaches that enable them to reflect on and reframe their own past and future stories” and to “increase” people’s “confidence and self-esteem fostering the belief that each of us has stories to tell and that they are worth hearing”.²⁰⁴ More targeted claims are also made about the Centre’s work in improving people’s “employability”. The Centre has also been cited as a ‘good practice case study’ in ‘capacity building’ and ‘enhancing social capital’.²⁰⁵ The initiative has worked with a range of organisations and groups to develop bespoke creative work, such as the anthology *What I do: Young Carers Voices* (2010), produced with Pollok Carers Centre. Sharing stories in this forum and publishing creative work in this context is envisioned as a form of advocacy.

Reflecting on his practice as a storyteller with the Centre in the early 2000s, the writer Liam Stewart considers tensions between the potential benefits of storytelling in terms of community activism and the professionalised role of a storyteller as an advocate or cultural intermediary. Stewart, who describes his involvement in community arts in previous decades, argues that the Storytelling Centre was able to “draw on the model of writers’ workshops, developed by writer and community activists in the early 1980s, particularly in working class

²⁰⁴ Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR), ‘Report of the Directors and Unaudited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2016 for The Village Storytelling Centre’, pp. 3-4.

²⁰⁵ By Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education (formerly an executive agency of the Scottish Government). See Andrew McDonald and Phil Denning ‘The Capacity Building Challenge: A Scottish Perspective’

<http://pascalobservatory.org/sites/default/files/capacity_building_challenge_0.pdf> [accessed 5 February 2018], p. 6.

communities undermined by the Thatcher government.”²⁰⁶ Stewart emphasises the role that local writers such as James Kelman played in the workshop movement and stresses that “The best writers workshops gave reaffirmation to people by helping them to develop writing skills and to find their own voices while articulating their feelings about their lives and concerns, existential, community or political”.²⁰⁷ While Stewart maintains that the Centre’s work was able to draw on aspects of this approach, he also recalls some discomfort he felt around his practice in 2003 when he was employed in Pollok to “meet and interview people in our local refugee and asylum-seeking community with a view to gathering traditional stories from their home countries”.²⁰⁸ Initially, he felt “some misgivings” about the project’s remit, concerned that people “would regard such a request as a distraction from their pressing need to focus on ways of convincing a hard-faced bureaucracy that their asylum claim should be accepted?”.²⁰⁹ Stewart also wondered whether the project’s work should be focused on “allowing” or “even encouraging” people to “talk about the traumatic experiences that had driven them into flight?”.²¹⁰ Ultimately, Stewart’s experience “gathering” stories reinforced his confidence in the therapeutic potential of storytelling. However, the sense of ethical hesitation he raises here indicates something of the tensions which must be negotiated in order to fulfil a specific professional remit, in contrast with the less directed approach he values in the writers’ workshop movement.

Discussing her practice as a photographer working with asylum seekers and refugees living in the Red Road Flats, Iseult Timmermans describes the “strong affinity” she feels “toward the history of community arts” and explains that she is “cautious of being too involved in the debate for new definitions” to describe creative work that involves wider communities.²¹¹ Timmermans suspects that

²⁰⁶ Liam Stewart, ‘Storytelling and the lives of asylum seekers’, *West Coast Line*, 68 (2011), 16-23 (p. 19). For further discussion of the writers’ workshop movement in 1980s Scotland see Gerri Kirkwood and Colin Kirkwood, *Living Adult Education: Freire in Scotland* (1989) (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2011).

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ Iseult Timmermans, in interview with Kirsten McAllister, ‘The Creative Margins of Glasgow: Process-Based Art, Asylum Seekers and Housing Estates’, *West Coast Line*, 68 (2011), 132-149 (p. 148).

looking for consensus on new definitions for this mode of work can “unintentionally further discredit an invalidated history rather than develop and evolve it”.²¹²

Reflecting that, “I have heard artists state indignantly, “I’m not a community artist, I’m a socially engaged artist”. So then we have these crazy frictions” and “what should be a proud history becomes something artists are trying to dissociate themselves from because it doesn’t have enough value in the art world.”²¹³

As Timmermans’ comments indicate, there are no clear chronological or organisational boundaries between ‘community arts’ and ‘socially engaged’ creative work. Not only is there simply slippage between terms, but the aims and ethos of the community arts movement has persisted across many years and various sites of work, with practitioners advancing similar objectives within different policy frameworks and economic contexts. For example, as the first chapter of this thesis illustrated, though Glasgow’s 1990 Year of Culture can be seen as instantiating a definitive shift away from community arts in Glasgow, and indeed, Scotland and the UK (by advancing a model of cultural investment as a means to economic growth) the ‘Community’ division of the Festivals Office operated differently. While the overall work of the Festivals Office was concerned with ‘rebranding’ the city and establishing cultural events of great scale the Community division drew directly on the experience of community arts workers. Those with a background in community development emphasised the importance of transferring Festival funds directly to existing community groups and working with those organisations to produce cultural work. Whether these local organisations had coalesced around childcare or housing, investing in ongoing activity was considered preferable to instigating new cultural initiatives in response to the Festival.

Yet, while the ethos of the community arts movement persisted and coexisted with other models of cultural work in different contexts, there are certainly key differences between the intent behind community arts projects in the 1970s and 1980s and contemporary modes of ‘socially engaged’ art. Fundamentally, community art and community development was committed to advancing radical social change. While the rhetoric around socially engaged art celebrates

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

“empowering” communities, building people’s “capacity” and “self-esteem” as well as strengthening social capital, it harbours an individualistic model of self-development (often aimed towards assimilating people within the labour market or unpaid economies of care). It also encourages participants to work in partnership with local service and agencies, in line with predetermined policy outcomes. However, I also take the position that beyond the ideological orientation of socially engaged art another important difference from earlier modes of community art lies in how expertise is positioned. As Gerri and Colin Kirkwood explain in their history of community education in Scotland, a key principle of many community arts and education initiatives was that expertise was transmitted, and participants could, in turn, take on the role of educator in subsequent projects.²¹⁴

In the domain of socially engaged art, however, expertise remains with the practitioner: with the facilitator, novelist or storyteller. In fact, as the second chapter of this thesis explored in its study of the Red Road Cultural Project, the more community-based commissions an artist or creative practitioner enters into, the more closely their expertise becomes associated with community engagement. Consequently, as expertise is tied to the ‘engaged’ artist, other people involved in creating the work in question, or representing the community in question, have diminished opportunities to take on the role of the facilitator, co-ordinator or advocate in turn. This amounts to a form of de-skilling in the practice of community art. Ultimately, participants may not develop distinctive skills but contribute to creating ‘resources’ for a professional audience.

Some of the work storytellers may be contracted for concentrates precisely on the needs of a professional audience: and often professionals working in the health and social care sector. One experienced storyteller describes work she led for “the NHS in Glasgow” with “a group of women who had been through psychiatric system.”²¹⁵ She explains that “the NHS wanted to consult with the women” and part of the focus of this work would be to help make the service more inclusive and responsive. They decided to lead the consultation process “differently” and she

²¹⁴ Gerri Kirkwood and Colin Kirkwood, *Living Adult Education*, pp. 133-38.

²¹⁵ In interview with Deborah Maxwell, in ‘Traditional storytelling in a digital world: the transformative power of storytelling across media’, (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Dundee, 2010), p. 87.

“went in as a storyteller and kind of group consultant, but using storytelling as a way of engaging with them and getting them to tell their story”.²¹⁶ While narrative techniques can be used by a “group consultant” in this context to encourage consulted patients to be more forthcoming about their views and experiences, narrative work has also been used to position different kinds of expertise within professional audiences, to make better use of available ‘resources’.

The ‘Power of Story’, a workshop delivered during NHS Scotland’s principle conference in June 2016 is a clear example of that resource orientated approach. In this conference setting, the ‘Power of Story’ was aimed at a range of NHS practitioners, officials from Scottish Government and local authorities, and staff and volunteers from third sector agencies, among other attendees. This session presented patient narratives as a resource for healthcare professionals by adopting the quantitative, improvement-driven language of healthcare policy and stressing that “shared stories are the original ‘data’ source”.²¹⁷ The session was intended to prompt healthcare workers to consider “how they can use story-gathering in their own work places to bring about transformational change in health and social care”.²¹⁸ The storyteller delivering the workshop presented participants with what is known in some storytelling and user-design research as a ‘scenario-based narrative’: a community midwife working in a busy healthcare setting, meeting new parents for a routine appointment. In his performance, he told a story which involved the midwife (feeling pressured and overworked) calling the attending couple from the clinic reception, hurrying along a corridor to an examination room and, with minimal delay, drawing a curtain around the pregnant woman and performing an ultrasound scan. The storyteller then encouraged participants to lead from this scenario by establishing characters for each of the actors in question: developing a backstory for each, considering how they would respond to different turning points in the scenario. Altogether, this exercise encouraged healthcare practitioners to use any available time which was not strictly clinical (such as, in this scenario, the walk between a

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ NHS Scotland, ‘Session Summary: The Power of Story’, 2016 NHSScotland Event Resources <<http://nhsscotlandevent.com/event/2016/a5-power-story>> [accessed 9 June 2017].

²¹⁸ Ibid.

clinic's reception and examination room) to draw out as much of a patients' narrative as possible. This was presented as a cost-neutral way of improving a patients' experience, by building trust with the practitioner and keeping the interaction from becoming too narrowly focused on clinical priorities.

The final literary work this chapter considers is a site-specific piece developed with the NHS. In 2015, the poet, critic and editor Donny O'Rourke, was commissioned by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde to produce original site-specific writing, to be inscribed in Maryhill's new community health care. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde secured seven thousand pounds of funding from Creative Scotland and National Lottery funds to support this work, which included "workshops, publications and performances inspired by the NHS" as well as realising Donny O'Rourke's site-specific poems 'Maryhill Medicants.'²¹⁹ At the outset of this thesis I established its driving interest in the capacity of literary work to shape urban space, and delineated key aspects of earlier critical approaches to theorizing reciprocal relationships between text and space. Inquiries have tended to focus, I suggested, on one of three areas: place-based literary tourism; the theoretical relationship between representational texts and space; and analysis of site-specific texts which are incorporated into the physical landscape. This thesis has taken a sociological approach and focused primarily on the capacity of literary activity to shape urban space by influencing the social process and cultural meaning of urban regeneration. However, I turn to this instance of NHS supported site-specific writing to conclude this chapter because the relationship O'Rourke's poem constructs between literary engagement and therapeutic work contrasts strongly with the intentions guiding much participatory literary work in a contemporary urban context. As this chapter has demonstrated, overarching policy contexts determining many aspects of the structure and focus of participatory creative work emphasise building social capital, resilience, and reducing reliance on statutory services. As critical scholarship such as Akwugo Emejulu's suggests, aspects of this 'assets-based'

²¹⁹ Creative Scotland, Open Project Funding Awards, January - February 2016, Dataset
 <<http://www.creativescotland.com/funding/latestinformation/awardslistings>> [accessed 19 January 2017].

approach to community development can represent ‘neoliberalism with a community face’: responsabilising vulnerable communities and individuals for their economic predicaments. Participatory cultural work in this context often makes claims for the health benefits of the arts, and can stress the capacity of creative work to cultivate psychosocial attributes which can aid in living with adversity.

O’Rourke, however, used the opportunity to shape the public face of a therapeutic space with a visible indictment of the socioeconomic roots of health inequalities. His ‘Maryhill Medicants’ poem is structured by three stanza headings: ‘Diagnosis’; ‘Prognosis’ and ‘Cure’; each introducing just a short couplet. In O’Rourke’s work, the subject of the ‘Diagnosis’ is societal ill, not an individual’s poor health or the pathologisation of a community. The opening couplet shares some aspects of the approaches to community development and health discussed in relation to other literary work earlier in this chapter, as the ‘Diagnosis’ reads “Lack of nurture, jobs and hope;/ The wherewithal and skills to cope”.²²⁰ The rest of the poem, however, takes a very different approach to the key community health factors identified here. Evoking the language of “solidarity”, the following couplet moves straight to the political issue of inequalities in life expectancy and ‘excess’ mortality in areas of deprivation in Scotland, asking, “In witness and solidarity will we stand idly by/While the poorest among us prematurely die”.²²¹ The final couplet concludes “Society’s ills radically treated/ Recovery successfully completed”.²²² For a work commissioned and displayed by a public body, O’Rourke’s poem is strikingly direct about the social problems it identifies. Moreover, it manages to insist on a collective response to systemic problems while resisting the ethos of social capital, as a publically funded cultural work incorporated into an urban regeneration project. As Maria Feeney and Chik Collins’ have suggested in their analysis of policy discourse which advocate building ‘social capital’ in areas undergoing regeneration, the notion of social capital is not only bound up with market ideology, but the term is also indicative of a discourse which often fails to be “practically meaningful for local communities”: it “actively hinders rather than helps the kind of discussion that needs

²²⁰ Donny O’Rourke, ‘Maryhill Medicants’, on-site, Maryhill Health Centre (2015).

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

to be had” and “kinds of action that need to be taken”.²²³ Feeney and Collins emphasise that such discussion should be more cognisant that “In confronting economic and social problems in the past, working class communities [...] elaborated a *language of their own* [...] both to analyse and understand their world, to envisage something better, and to organise and motivate themselves (and others) to work for change”.²²⁴ Reflecting specifically on the term ‘social capital’, Feeney and Collins conclude that:

When we look to that past, we find a language which expressed the need for, and spirit of, cohesive communities, strong network, mutual support, and reciprocity – often expressed as a kind of ‘ethic’ of *solidarity*. This language of solidarity fully appreciated the connection between economic development, strong communities, and the welfare of the people. But it was also a language which carried in it an understanding of how economic development had in the past failed to serve the welfare of the people, and of how it could be more generally damaging to the fabric of working class community life. It also appreciated the need for solidarity in addressing issues of power – not least the power of those who benefitted from economic development that simultaneously harmed working class communities.²²⁵

By evoking this “‘ethic’ of solidarity” so directly, O’Rourke’s poetic work foregrounds the social impact of deindustrialisation, which underlies the inequalities in life expectancy the poem confronts, while stressing the radical potential of collective agency. More particularly, this publicly funded site-specific work is notable because it makes no attempt to tell a ‘positive story’ about a particular place or community. The criticisms it levels are directed at “society’s ills” more broadly, and rather than being orientated to readers in a specific community, the “we” and “us” to which the poem directs itself is a subjectivity rendered absent in most participatory cultural work: the more affluent consumer, observer or decision maker. Moreover, the poem does not seek to draw attention to overlooked ‘assets’; to articulate an inviting sense of community; or use public space in a way which projects ‘vibrancy’ or welcomes visible urban change. On the contrary, O’Rourke’s poem presents an overwhelmingly negative view of present-day health inequalities,

²²³ Maria Feeney and Chik Collins, 'Tea in the Pot: Building 'social Capital' or a 'Great Good Place' in Govan', Report 3 (University of the West of Scotland-Oxfam Partnership, 2015), p. 18.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

with the optimism of ‘recovery’ located only in the ‘radical’ treatment of systemic social inequity.

Though the range of participatory or publicly funded site-specific literary work I have discussed at the close of this chapter is limited, I hope these case-studies illustrate some of the ways in which contemporary literary work is responding to the increasing overlap between cultural policy and health and social care policy. In this outcomes driven context, literary practitioners working with or alongside communities are ever more likely to be presented as experts in facilitation, interpretation and advocacy. Yet literary work involved in the creation of public spaces and development of public services also has the capacity to challenge and resist dominant approaches to regeneration and assumed narratives about communities by foregrounding other discourses.

Concluding Remarks: The politics of literary engagement

This central concern of this thesis has been the interplay between urban writing and urban space: it sought to demonstrate that policy making related to urban regeneration bears an influence on local literary production, and that, conversely, local literary cultures can impact policy and lead to urban change. Setting out the scope of literary activity and relevant realms of policy making in the introduction to this thesis, I indicated the need to avoid an overly textualist approach to policy. In a second-order city like Glasgow, there is often more to be learned from how policy is interpreted and implemented on a local level than from specific, high-level policy documents. Strategic publications too often set out broad aspirations for a sector or an approach while incorporating relatively little detail which might relate those ambitions to ongoing local activity. Accordingly, this thesis has focused on the local history of urban regeneration in Glasgow, and the shifting ways in which political administrations, public sector organisations and commercial interests have attempted to use cultural work in the pursuit of broader economic or social ends. Such a focus was also intended to side-step the tendency to interpret cultural policy making in Scotland from a cultural nationalist perspective. While literary criticism in Scotland may no longer be dominated by cultural nationalist paradigms it remains prone to them. Critical discussion of the relationship between cultural policy and Scottish literature is therefore all the more likely to become preoccupied with notions of nationhood – marginalising analysis of the relationship between literary production and changing local economies, identities and political priorities.

First addressing these concerns in the context of Glasgow's Year as the European Capital of Culture, I argued that Glasgow's literary legacy presented cultural planners and political administrators with both an impetus for and obstacle to refashioning the city's urban image. It was indicated that Glasgow's urban identity in the early 1980s was closely associated with the violence, slums and squalor portrayed in lurid fiction such as Alexander McArthur and Kingsley Long's 1935 novel, *No Mean City*. This was precisely the urban image local policy makers set out to change and, as the novelist Alan Bold reflected, "Without the enduring image of

No Mean City I doubt if the citizens would have made such an effort.”¹ Local political figures such as Pat Lally were adamant that the novel “drew the wrong kind of attention to the city” and fought down proposals to memorialise the novel or its author with a plaque or a statue in 1991.² Local conflict over the import of *No Mean City* for Glasgow towards the close of the twentieth century exemplifies the degree to which literary representation can contribute to “negative imaginaries” of place, as Alice Mah puts it.³ Literary representations, according to Mah, can “stigmatize places of industrial decline” and thereby “contribute to their continued socio-economic isolation and exclusion”.⁴ While Festival organisers were frustrated by the refusal of some high profile writers to participate in efforts to celebrate and market the city, new literary work was certainly inspired and provoked by this new direction in the city’s cultural and economic policy. Moreover, the protest and criticism mounted by the Workers City group did have an impact on the management of some of Glasgow’s key cultural institutions and public spaces long beyond 1990. The rhetoric and imagery developed by this protest group in the late 1980s has since been invoked by critics of Glasgow’s urban regeneration policies in the run-up to the 2014 Commonwealth Games. In such ways, the reception and interpretation of local literary texts and movements continue to influence the cultural memory of Glasgow’s 1990 celebrations.

The second chapter demonstrated how policy makers and institutions seeking to influence policy had since become more interested in using creative forms and, in particular, creative writing to negotiate the gap between the bureaucratic discourse of policy making and residents’ desires. Participatory projects like Demos’ *Glasgow2020* set out with the view that decades of top-town urban planning decisions in Glasgow had instilled a “lack of faith in traditional processes of consultation and engagement” and were a barrier to more democratic ways of

¹ Bold, Alan, ‘Not the Whole Truth, but a Truly Brutal Reality’, *The Herald*, 17 July 1993<http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/12729557.Not_the_whole_truth__but_a_truly_brutal_reality/> [accessed 5 March 2014]

² Iain Lundy, ‘The Man Who Took Glasgow to the World’, *Evening Times*, 2 June 2008 <http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/news/12851211.The_man_who_took_Glasgow_to_the_world/> [accessed 5 March 2014].

³ Alice Mah, *Industrial Ruination, Community and Place* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), pp. 176.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

organising urban space.⁵ Creative consultations like these engendered new writing from and about the city, and thus directly influenced literary production and representation in Glasgow. It is less clear, however, that such creative consultation exercises were more successful in actually allowing people to influence decisions than the maligned “traditional processes of consultation and engagement” and it was suggested that this new mode of urban storytelling could harbour a compensatory function.⁶

As Glasgow entered into a new phase of urban transformation - demolishing most of its socially rented high-rise housing - Glasgow Housing Agency declared they were “determined not to repeat the mistakes of the past”.⁷ This can be taken to mean the cultural and social consequences of paternalistic postwar planning and its “chronic disrespect for local communities”.⁸ It is significant that Glasgow Housing Agency and Glasgow Life chose to evidence their attenuation to the social and cultural history of areas like the Red Road flats by commissioning creative work to explore the experience of residents before they were demolished. It reflected the belief that “regeneration is only partly about buildings”.⁹ In this way, that shift in local urban regeneration policy had a direct impact on the city’s literature, funding a literary project later published as the novel *This Road is Red*. It also shaped the creative direction of the multidisciplinary trio of artists and writers, Alison Irvine, Mitch Miller and Chris Leslie, who went on to win further commissions from Glasgow Life, exploring the social impact and aesthetic representation of regeneration. Sarah Brouillette has suggested that having authors lead participatory narrative work in areas undergoing intensive urban change imbues those regeneration projects with a degree of cultural capital. The social and cultural capital cultivated by participatory work can have benefits for local residents, but it can also be exploited for more commercial ends: most particularly in areas experiencing

⁵ Ibid., pp. 22, 61.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Glasgow City Council, Press Release ‘Glasgow poised for a £96 million housing revolution’, (2006), qtd. in Chris Leslie, *Disappearing Glasgow* (Edinburgh: Freight, 2016), p. 3.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ David Fletcher, presentation at *This Road is Red* book launch, *Aye Write!*, Mitchell Library, Glasgow, 11 March 2011.

gentrification. This chapter gave an indication of how the ethos and aesthetic of participatory literary projects and community storytelling can be co-opted by commercial advertising, for example. In the case of Red Road, however, cultural prestige associated with the project helped to overturn the disrespectful decision to demolish the Red Road Flats live on-air as part of the Commonwealth Games opening ceremony. Writers and artists like Alison Irvine and Mitch Miller, whose creative work was seen as representative of the area's cultural and social history, were approached by the press to discuss the controversy and their opposition to the spectacle undoubtedly assisted efforts to stop it.

Hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2014 aligned with new directions in urban policy making, which construed urban regeneration as a means to public health improvement. The Games themselves, like other mega-events, were also accompanied by funding for arts programming which had a direct impact on the literary representation of the city, and on literary events. Publications and projects which stemmed directly from Games funding included, for example, Alison Irvine's *Nothing is Lost*; Louise Welsh's critical and literary examination of Scotland's relationship with the slave trade, *The Empire Café*, which also led to a new poetry anthology *Yonder Awa*; participatory storytelling projects run by National Theatre Scotland; and occasional poetry and events co-ordinated by the Scottish Poetry Library and Scottish Pen. The contemporaneous policy focus on health improvement, however, has influenced literary work in other ways. There is a growing tendency for arts organisations, public services and the third sector to support participatory literary projects with a therapeutic function. Similarly, a trajectory has emerged in high level education and research strategy to support participatory research which considers how narrative representations of place can support health and wellbeing, such as the 'Reimagining Dennistoun' project. Such research projects do lead directly to new writing, though typically very little of that output is ever published by mainstream publishers and often relatively little is made easily accessible. Some participatory narrative work may also be intended to produce a form of qualitative evidence, with the aim of influencing policy makers. In Glasgow, arts organisations such as the Village Storytelling Centre have helped to facilitate a number of such projects.

Therapeutic literary work with communities, or participatory story telling projects which seek to build social capital, or tackle stigma, may seem to sit comfortably within a national policy landscape which espouses community development. However the rhetoric of community development in Scotland is not unrelated to soft neoliberalism. National policy in Scotland has stressed the importance of community empowerment as a means to move people from “welfare to wellbeing”, emphasising the importance of “self-reliance” and the fiscal pressure to discourage “dependency” on services”.¹⁰ Though some modes of literary labour become increasingly related to this public policy agenda, this chapter also argued that literary texts can play an important role in exposing and exploring conflicts over public space, community resources - and the ideological clash between notions of self-determination and self-reliance within the discourse of community empowerment.

This thesis has examined literary constructions of urban territories – cultural spaces, domestic spaces and public spaces – which are not principally regarded as working environments, but realms of recreation, intimacy and leisure. This approach was chosen so as to advance analysis of the way in which the social consequences and cultural anxieties following from deindustrialisation have been displaced throughout urban space as the terrain of political conflict shifted from the factory floor. One of the initial aims of this thesis was to make a small contribution towards critical work which indicates the relevance of literature and fiction to new working-class studies and its multidisciplinary mode of inquiry upon the social and cultural meanings of deindustrialisation. Though scholars in this field are keen to caution against ‘smokestack nostalgia’ - and particularly uncritical attachment to resonant representations of industrial work and communities - perhaps not yet has enough been done to explore contemporary working class occupations, job losses and changing attitudes to employment in that long context. Though this thesis has not directly interrogated local literary representations of changing modes of work in a

¹⁰ Scottish Government, *Equally Well Review* (Edinburgh: Scottish Government, 2010), p. 5 qtd. in *Tackling Child Poverty in Scotland*, pp. 11-12.

postindustrial city, it has certainly attempted to indicate relationships between new literary forms and the transposition of “creative values” across the wider workplace.¹¹ It also intended to draw parallels between emergent modes of literary participation and contemporary political discourses which pathologise unemployment as “worklessness” and, increasingly, present cultural engagement as a means to overcome psychosocial “barriers” to employment. Further research exploring local literary representations of insecure work and, in particular, jobs within the “creative economy” and those with its imprint in the service sector will continue to enrich analysis of postindustrial urban writing.

In one provocative article reflecting on the “many kinds of underpaid working people” nevertheless considered unrepresentative of working class culture, the essayist Rebecca Solnit ventures that, “More Americans work in museums than coal, but coalminers are treated as sacred beings owed huge subsidies and the sacrifice of the climate, and museum workers – well, no-one is talking about their jobs as a totem of national identity.”¹² In the UK, too, questions have coalesced around the cultural and social impact of austerity-led cuts to the heritage sector in the earlier part of this decade, given that developing a local ‘heritage industry’ was so often presented as a palliative to economic decline and the erosion of distinctive industrial identities. Similarly, the novelist Ross Raisin, discussing the importance of deindustrialisation to his work at the 2012 Aye Write! Festival reflected on the fact that writers, artists and cultural commentators could readily draw on familiar tropes to memorialise the loss of industry, honouring people made redundant from emblematic working class jobs. Yet, in Raisin’s view, there is no equivalent cultural concern for people facing redundancy from service sector jobs as a result of recession, or losing modestly paid work in the course of public sector reform. The lack of creative and aesthetic engagement with precarious, low paid work and contemporary unemployment worried Raisin in 2012, as he anticipated further injury to economically vulnerable parts of the UK as a result of austerity.

¹¹ Angela McRobbie, *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), p. 44.

¹² ‘Rebecca Solnit: Whose Story (and Country) Is This?’, *Literary Hub*, 2018 <<https://lithub.com/rebecca-solnit-the-myth-of-real-america-just-wont-go-away/>> [accessed 1 March 2018].

Such concerns about the long-term consequences of austerity were certainly borne out by analysis of the geography of austerity by Christina Beatty and Steve Fothergill. Considering the local consequences of welfare reform across the UK, they stress that the impact of austerity has largely fallen on “communities in older industrial Britain” where higher numbers of people needed social security support as a direct consequence of deindustrialisation and were effectively “being meted out punishment in the form of welfare cuts for the destruction wrought to their industrial base” in earlier decades.¹³ Their analysis emphasises that there is a “continuous thread linking what happened to British industry in the 1980s [...] to what is happening on the ground in so many hard-pressed communities”.¹⁴

This thesis has attempted to contribute to making that “continuous thread” linking deindustrialisation to contemporary urban change more visible, by considering how literary representations of Glasgow have reflected, and been shaped by, cultural policy making and urban regeneration priorities in a postindustrial context. My hope is that this focus, centred as it is on Glasgow’s literature and the specificities of regeneration, may have suggested some approaches to literary sociology in other deindustrialised UK cities. There is also much scope for further work on the literary representation of unemployment in the context of austerity and welfare reform. Though research into recent representations of welfare in the media and popular culture is coalescing, this thesis has indicated that literary research has often played a very minor supporting role in such multidisciplinary modes of inquiry in the past.¹⁵ Jody Mason’s study of the literary history of unemployment in Canada, *Writing Unemployment: Worklessness, Mobility and Citizenship in Twentieth Century Canadian Literatures* would provide a useful model for similar work focused on British literature.¹⁶

¹³ Christina Beatty and Steve Fothergill, ‘Jobs, Welfare and Austerity: How the Destruction of Industrial Britain Casts a Shadow over Present-Day Public Finances’ (Sheffield: Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University, 2004), p. 3.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ See for example the interdisciplinary project ‘Welfare Imaginaries: Constructing Rhetoric, Realities and Resistance Over Time’

<<https://welfareimaginaries.wordpress.com/about-the-series/>> [accessed 10 March 2018].

¹⁶ Jody Mason, *Writing Unemployment: Worklessness, Mobility, and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century Canadian Literatures* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

The chronological thrust of this thesis has also discovered something of the changing role of universities in the context of cultural regeneration. Chapter One's analysis of the literary festival, *Writing Together*, indicated that while local universities were certainly very involved in the festival, faculty-led events were kept at a remove from the wider community-based programme. Correspondence and meeting minutes relating to the literary exhibition, *The Words and the Stones*, also demonstrate that while the input of esteemed local writers and critics was integral to the exhibition's development, they were sought for their historical expertise and judgement. They occupied an essentially curatorial position, contributing scholarly research to inform texts and publications, but had little involvement with the public-facing aspect of the programme.

Chapter Two saw significant shift in the role of academic research in this context. Its reading of literary work in sites of housing regeneration emphasised that the role of writers and artists as facilitators for collaborative projects in the Red Road housing scheme was supported by a much wider research programme in the area. The Red Road Flats Cultural Project incorporated novelistic work like Alison Irvine's, presaged by research led by Edinburgh University geographers who combined historical analysis of high rise housing with participatory curatorial work in partnership with Glasgow Life museums.¹⁷ Arguably, this academic research framework legitimises and enables the function of collaborative literary work as a form of "salvage ethnography", recording aspects of a discrete community's social and cultural history before the demolition of the site.¹⁸ Though site-specific sociological work partnered with local cultural institutions may operate in the context of reflexive, participatory engagement with communities it may, nonetheless, contribute to perceptions of the 'socially engaged' author as a disinterested figure, with creative autonomy and, yet, the capacity to approach the complex history of contested spaces in a non-partisan way. Chapter Three, however, suggested that the role of universities has shifted from presaging and facilitating creative work

¹⁷ Jane M Jacobs, Stephen Cairns, and Ignaz Strelbel, "'A Tall Storey...but, a Fact Just the Same": The Red Road Highrise as a Black Box', *Urban Studies*, 44.3 (2007), 609-629. <<http://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/1407>> [accessed 23 March 2015].

¹⁸ Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), p. 161.

exploring the experience of urban change to initiating collaborative work which is expressly intended to foster social capital and plays a reflexive role in the process of regeneration.

Finally, this thesis suggests the need for further and more varied critical enquiry on relationship between local literature and recent municipal politics. It has long been acknowledged that literary criticism in Scotland has often been “dominated by tradition inspired approaches” and needed to move beyond cultural nationalist frameworks.¹⁹ Incorporating perspectives from political and literary theory, exploring cosmopolitanism and new construals of local cultures would develop a more variegated understanding of changing expressions of community and place in literature. As the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence came into view, it is unsurprising that critical discussion of Scottish literature once again became “strongly conditioned by ongoing constitutional debate” - albeit with a pronounced interest in conceptions of civic nationalism and post-sovereignty.²⁰ In the wake of the referendum, scholars have once more begun, as Scott Hames put it, “to grapple with the problem of narrativizing devolution”.²¹ However, literary critics have largely remained engaged with the causes and consequences of devolution as it relates to the Scottish Parliament and notions of Scottish and British identity.²² There remains less critical interest, at least from a literary perspective, in the broader relationship between Scottish devolution and renewed political interest in localism: with the New Labour government promising a “new vision” and “new powers” for local authorities by 1998, and by 2006 advocating “double devolution” in England – transferring power from central to local government and further still to “citizens and

¹⁹ Eleanor Bell, *Questioning Scotland: Literature, Nationalism, Postmodernism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2004), p. 138.

²⁰ Scott Hames, ‘Narrating Devolution: Politics and/as Scottish Fiction’, *C21 Literature: Journal of 21st-Century Writings*, 5.2 (2017) <<https://doi.org/10.16995/c21.20>> [accessed 10 March 2018].

²¹ Ibid.

²² Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); Hywel Dix, *Postmodern Fiction and the Break-up of Britain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010); Michael Gardiner, *The Cultural Roots of British Devolution* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Kate Turner, ‘The Queer Moment: Post-Devolution Scottish Literature’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Westminster, 2017).

local communities”.²³ Nor has there been sustained critical engagement with the effects of Scottish legislation and policy interested in similar ends, such as post-devolution land reform and the Community Empowerment Acts. Admittedly, legislative approaches to localism and related policy may not seem immediately relevant to critics of urban literature. It is curious, however, that though various literary critics established the consensus that Scottish studies should explore changing conceptions of community and ‘the local’ more urgently, this impetus has not often translated into critical work directly concerned with the relationship between local writing and local democracy since devolution, and more specifically local government and new moves towards community empowerment.

This is perhaps for two reasons. The first is that many of the frameworks literary critics have drawn from in order to explore changing understanding of community and ‘the local’ tend to be more concerned with theoretical explorations of identity and representation in the context of globalisation than engagement with specific local political structures. The second is that work which is interested in opening out discourse about local political engagement and literary writing has often clustered around writers, particularly James Kelman, who “stand with the anti-parliamentarian left” and effectively advocate an anarchist or at least an anti-authoritarian position.²⁴ Kelman certainly rejects participating in representative democracy as “an endorsement of the apparatus”.²⁵ Critical analysis of the relationship between local writing and political engagement in Glasgow has been very much informed by Kelman’s approach to self-determination, and his mode of political activism which values taking local actions and mobilising local knowledges, insisting, “The first thing to acknowledge is what’s happening under your nose”.²⁶

²³ Tony Blair, *Leading the Way: A New Vision for Local Government* (Institute for Public Policy Research, 1998), p. 3; Matt Weaver, ‘More Power to the People, Urges Miliband’, *The Guardian*, 21 February 2006
<<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2006/feb/21/localgovernment.politics>> [accessed 17 February 2018].

²⁴ James Kelman, ‘In Conversation with Alasdair Gray’, 17th Edinburgh Radical Book Fair, Out of the Blue Drill Hall, Edinburgh, 23 October 2013.

²⁵ James Kelman, ‘Let the Wind Blow High Let the Wind Blow Low’, in *Some Recent Attacks: Essays Cultural and Political* (Stirling: AK Press, 1992), pp. 85–91, (p. 87).

²⁶ James Kelman, ‘Oppression and Solidarity’, in *Some Recent*, pp. 69–77, (p. 77).

This thesis too, took as its starting point, Kelman's political and creative resistance to the cultural politics of urban regeneration in the 1990s, and the perception that deindustrialisation had shifted the territory of political struggle from the workplace to representational spaces. But by extending my analysis of local writers' engagement with local political structures and policy contexts driving urban change beyond that intense period of creative and political action around 1990, I hope to have demonstrated that there is merit in exploring the impact local political priorities and policy making has on the production of literary writing - and writers' own terms of engagement with local authorities, cultural bodies and regeneration agencies. For as the impact of deindustrialisation saw cultural spaces, domestic spaces and public spaces - rather places of industrial production - become key sites of struggle, those spaces have subsequently been permeated by the creative economy, blurring boundaries between labour and leisure, thereby repositioning them as sites integral to the transformation of work. As Chapter Two of this thesis explored, notions of authorship played a significant part in advancing that process. Moreover, in recent years, new forms of collaborative writing have emerged in the context of community engagement and co-production, quietly driven by localist approaches to government. Further critical work could develop consideration of the relationship between so-called "double devolution", community empowerment and contemporary modes of literary labour. This territory may feel less emboldening than explorations of self-determination and creative practice, but it is significant since it is likely to play an increasingly important part in shaping the public role of writers. Contemporary community-orientated literary work should also be analysed in relation to, and perhaps as a counterpoint to, literature's place within the experience economy. Currently, the production and use of literary spaces appears to be pulling in two very different directions. Increasing demands are being placed upon municipal libraries to function as spaces of care, and to host a wider range of public services. At the same time, more temporary, commercial or exclusive literary spaces are being created in the course of book festivals and members' events, willing a revival of salon culture.

Most significantly, much can still be learned from the sustained critical interest there has been in urban writing and the municipal politics of post-war

redevelopment in the UK. This thesis, focused on Glasgow, has observed that writers from Alasdair Gray to Andrew O'Hagan, and many literary critics, including for example, Nicolas Fyfe, Peter Clandfield and Patrick Lloyd, have been invested in examining the relationship between urban change and the fine grain of post-war local politics. More specifically, by considering how literary texts can link individual urban incidents to more indirect "spatial and environmental injustice produced by the machinations of well-placed politically powerful people such as developers, architects, planners and politicians" literary criticism can play a role in revealing the "nonneutrality" of urban space, and the political and economic forces which shape it.²⁷ Again, similar authorial and critical attention was turned to the transformation of urban space in 1990s Glasgow. It is important that this focus is not lost. While advocates of localism in Scotland can point to the substantive rights afforded by the Community Empowerment Acts, it can also be argued that enthusiasm for localism effectively paved the way for David Cameron's 'Big Society' in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, which represented a "regressive dilution of local democracy" and saw state support "denuded in favour of market-led individualism" and further "subjectification of the charitable self".²⁸ Community-based literary practice should be further examined in this fiscal and affective context, since, as Chapter Three explored, it is often indirectly supported by a community development framework which emphasises developing social capital and 'resilience' in the face of economic adversity, and can aim to reduce people's use of more costly forms of state support.

Many steps have been taken to consider how new forms of localism and community empowerment are changing both urban spaces and access to different forms of creative activity in the context of neoliberalism. Again, drawing on examples from Glasgow, Laura-Jane Nolan's research on the spatial politics of the Kinning Park Complex examines tensions inherent in the campaign to occupy the building, and later take its management into the hands of the community, linking these efforts to wider policy contexts. As Nolan explains, initially, activists simply

²⁷ Peter Clandfield, 'Architectural Crimes and Architectural Solutions', in *Writing the Modern City: Literature, Architecture, Modernity*, ed. by Sarah Edwards and Johnathan Charley (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 108–26 (p. 108).

²⁸ Andrew Williams, Mark Goodwin, and Paul Cloke, 'Neoliberalism, Big Society, and Progressive Localism', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 46.12 (2014), 2798–2815 (p. 2798).

wanted to keep the Centre open and run by the council, “they did not intend to run a community centre, they just wanted a public service”.²⁹ Similar issues have been explored regarding the occupation of the Govanhill Baths.³⁰ In other fields, much critical work has attended to how spaces of care created by community engagement programmes in museums and other municipal cultural institutions have been impacted both by austerity and conflicting conceptions of localism.³¹ Despite the fact that Glasgow’s municipal libraries have been presented as potential spaces of care (and increasingly fulfil that role) neither critical work focused on the sociology of literature nor upon new directions in medical humanities has extensively explored the relationship between current political contexts and renewed interest in the therapeutic capacity of literary engagement. I would suggest that research around the health and wellbeing benefits of literary practice and literary engagement often remains constrained by an “advocacy agenda”.³² Further analysis of the relationship between therapeutic literary projects, local authority priorities and national policies would be welcome.³³

²⁹ Laura-Jane Nolan, ‘Space, politics and community: the case of the Kinning Park complex’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 2015), p. 62.

³⁰ See for example, Gerry Mooney and Nick Fyfe, ‘New Labour and Community Protests: the Case of the Govanhill Swimming Pool Campaign, Glasgow’, *Local Economy*, 21.2 (2006), 135-150; Ronan Paddison and Joanne Sharp, ‘Questioning the end of public space: Reclaiming control of local banal spaces’, *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 123.2 (2007), 87-106; and *United We Will Swim: 100 Years of Govanhill Baths*, ed. by Helen de Main, (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2015).

³¹ For example, Nuala Morse and Ealasaid Munro, ‘Museums’ Community Engagement Schemes, Austerity and Practices of Care in Two Local Museum Services’, *Social & Cultural Geography*, 19.3 (2018), 357–78.

³² To borrow Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett’s term, ‘Researching the Social Impact of the Arts: Literature, Fiction and the Novel’, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 15.1 (2009), 17–33 (p. 17).

³³ For example, the Public Library Improvement Fund now supports research and training intended to increase library staff’s understanding of health literacy and the management of long term health conditions in order to support library users. The promotion of libraries as spaces to improve health literacy may accord with the current Chief Medical Officer’s focus on improving health literacy in order to reduce unwanted medical interventions. The Scottish Government’s Health Literacy Action Plan states that “Library and information services have a key role to play” in its aims. See, Scottish Government, ‘Making it Easier: A Health Literacy Action Plan for Scotland 2017-2025 (Edinburgh: Scottish Government, 2017), p. 22 and Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland, ‘Promoting Health and Wellbeing through Public Libraries’, *Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland* <<https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/news/promoting-health-and-wellbeing-through-public-libraries/>> [accessed 15 March 2018].

The most pressing reason, however, for critics to attend to the relationship between local political structures, local fiction and literary activity must be the troubling decline in everyday reporting on local political matters. As researchers and senior editorial figures such as Emily Bell have stressed over the last decade, local media appears to have become increasingly “hollowed-out”.³⁴ A “decrease in the plurality of local news providers” and significant reductions in staff numbers within local news groups has raised concerns about a ‘democratic deficit’ as local public affairs are less closely monitored.³⁵ Most severely, Emily Bell links the erosion of robust local media to the public tragedy which befell Grenfell Tower in 2017, stating that “the failure of accountability reporting on local communities is obvious to anyone who cares to scour the archives”.³⁶ At the same time, reporters on housing have argued that the failure of relevant local authorities and their partner organisations to ensure the safety of residents and communicate appropriately was “an extreme example of the stripped back local government we now see across Britain. This is not just due to austerity hollowing out council accounts and making it impossible to deliver services, but also to a philosophical shift in the way councils operate”.³⁷ Critical work will never replace the democratic function of accountability reporting, but it can help to discover and determine the nature of that “philosophical shift’ in the meaning and function of local government. Attending to the representation of local politics in cultural work, and the role local authorities have in shaping cultural activity and representations of place, is one way towards better understanding barriers to local political engagement in a postindustrial context.

³⁴ Emily Bell, ‘Grenfell Reflects the Accountability Vacuum Left by Crumbling Local Press’, *The Guardian*, 25 June 2017 <<http://www.theguardian.com/media/media-blog/2017/jun/25/grenfell-reflects-the-accountability-vacuum-left-by-crumbling-local-press>> [accessed 4 March 2018].

³⁵ Gordon Ramsay and Martin Moore, *Monopolising Local News: Is There an Emerging Democratic Deficit in the UK Due to the Decline of Local Newspapers?* (Kings College London, Centre for the Study of Media, Communication and Power, 2016), p. 4.

³⁶ Emily Bell, ‘Grenfell Reflects the Accountability Vacuum Left by Crumbling Local Press’, *The Guardian*, 25 June 2017 <<https://www.theguardian.com/media/media-blog/2017/jun/25/grenfell-reflects-the-accountability-vacuum-left-by-crumbling-local-press>> [accessed 4 March 2018].

³⁷ Dawn Foster, ‘Grenfell Council’s Lack of Empathy Is an Extreme Example of Stripped-Back Local Government’, *The Guardian*, 10 November 2017, section Housing Network <<http://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2017/nov/10/grenfell-council-lack-empathy-local-government-austerity-britain>> [accessed 4 March 2018].

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