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- 5 R. L. Stevenson, *A Child's Garden of Verses* (London: Penguin Books, 1952), p. 116.
- 6 D. Denisoff, 'Pleasurable subjectivities and temporal conflation in Stevenson's aesthetics', *Journal of Stevenson Studies*, 4 (2007), pp. 227–46, (p. 238).
- 7 R. L. Stevenson, *An Inland Voyage* (London: C. Kegan Paul & Co, 1878), p. 145.
- 8 O. S. Buckton, 'Reanimating Stevenson's Corpus', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 55, 1 (Jun., 2000), pp. 22–58, (p. 45).
- 9 R. L. Stevenson, 'Crabbed Age and Youth', in *Virginibus Puerisque and other Papers* (London: C. Kegan Paul & Co, 1881), p. 97.
- 10 R. L. Stevenson, *Travels With a Donkey in the Cévennes* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1916), p. 115.
- 11 R. L. Stevenson, 'Fontainebleau: Villages Communities of Painters', in *Across The Plains* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1892). First published in two parts in the *Magazine of Art* 7, May 1884.
- 12 R. L. Stevenson, 'Gentlemen', in *Scribner's Magazine* III, (January–June 1888), pp. 635–40 (p. 635).
- 13 R. L. Stevenson, 'Health and Mountains', in *Essays of Travel* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1905), pp. 214–15.
- 14 R. L. Stevenson, 'Ordered South', in *Virginibus Puerisque and other Papers* (London: C. Kegan Paul & Co, 1881), pp. 137–64.
- 15 R. L. Stevenson, 'Davos in Winter', in *Essays of Travel* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1905), pp. 210–11.
- 16 R. L. Stevenson, 'Pastoral', in *The Works of R. L. Stevenson*, vol. 1 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1894), p. 145.
- 17 R. L. Stevenson, 'A Mountain Town in France', in *The Works of R. L. Stevenson*, vol. 21 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1896), p. 226.
- 18 R. L. Stevenson, 'Talk and Talkers, 1', in *The Works of R. L. Stevenson*, vol. 1 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1894), p. 181.
- 19 R. L. Stevenson, 'Lay Morals', in *The Works of R. L. Stevenson*, vol. 21 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1896), p. 346.
- 20 A. C. Colley, *Victorians in the Mountains: Sinking the Sublime* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 210.
- 21 R. L. Stevenson, *Catriona* (London: Cassell, 1893), p. v.
- 22 We might be reminded here also of Joseph Conrad and the desire he expressed to return to his early years: 'when I launched my first paper boats in the days of my literary childhood.' (Preface to *The Shorter Tales of Joseph Conrad* quoted by Nathalie Jaëck, 'Conrad's and Stevenson's Logbooks and 'Paperboats': Attempts in Textual Wreckage', in *Stevenson and Conrad: Writers of Land and Sea*, ed. by Linda Dryden (Texas: Texas Tech University Press, 2009), pp. 39–51.
- 23 R. L. Stevenson, *Records of a Family of Engineers* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1912), p. 85.
- 24 K. White, *The Wanderer and his Charts: Exploring the Fields of Vagrant Thought and Vagabond Beauty. Essays on Cultural Renewal* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2004), p. 58.

9. Freedom and subservience in Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Sunset Song*

PHILIPPE LAPLACE

O thou who lived for Freedom when the Night
Had hardly yet begun: when little light
Blinded the eyes of men and dawntime seemed
So fair and faint – a foolish dream half-dreamed!

(*Gibbon 2001: 185*)

Sunset Song, the first novel of the trilogy *A Scots Quair*, has enjoyed a wide readership and general esteem in Scotland and throughout the world, in spite of its linguistic difficulties and its abrasive social and political stand-points. Voted 'the best Scottish book of all time' in 2005 in a survey backed by BBC Scotland, it is undoubtedly *the* novel (along with *Cloud Howe* and *Grey Granite*, the subsequent two novels of the trilogy) which gave the thirty-two-year-old Anarcho-Marxist James Leslie Mitchell – Lewis Grassic Gibbon's real name – his nearly iconic status in the Scottish Literary Renaissance. The so-called English novels written by Mitchell are not as well-known – *Spartacus* where the desire for freedom is of course at the heart of the novel and maybe *Stained Radiance* are the exceptions – whereas he has remained famous and celebrated for the work he produced as Lewis Grassic Gibbon – namely a collection of essays with Hugh MacDiarmid, some short stories and *A Scots Quair* which he set in his home region, the Mearns in Kincardineshire.

The novelist famously wrote shortly before his death: 'I hate capitalism; all my books are explicit or implicit propaganda.'¹ The first two volumes of *A Scots Quair* reflect Gibbon's main concerns about society and the burden imposed by capitalist values upon farmers and farming communities before turning his attention towards workers in the final volume. This chapter considers how the theme of freedom, and its necessary component,

subservience, can be studied in the first novel of the trilogy. We will consider what freedom meant from a personal and artistic point of view before studying Gibbon's characters and their confrontation with freedom and subservience through Gramsci's notion of contradictory consciousness: we will also consider how Gibbon cleverly handled the demotic and turned it into a compelling narratological device in order to articulate his characters' ideological dispositions. We will finally see how Gibbon expressed the basic dichotomy freedom/subservience through the image of the Land. This will give us the necessary paradigm in order to understand how successfully his ideology is developed in *Sunset Song*.

Personal and narrative freedom for Grassic Gibbon

The first element one should note is that *Sunset Song* meant narrative distance and freedom for James Leslie Mitchell. Using a pseudonym made up of his mother's maiden name and an adaptation of her first name – Liliass Grassic Gibbon – gave him the possibility to separate this new fictional work from the previous English novels he had so far published. He could write a novel about Scotland and more particularly about his homeland, the Mearns, and leave little doubts as to his origin and identity. The genuine Scottish voice he adopted also gave him the opportunity of 'crying out louder'. This new local and authentic voice allowed him to be heard not only as a genuine Scottish novelist in *Sunset Song* and in the short stories he thereafter wrote, but also in the essays he published with MacDiarmid where he bitterly attacks the Scottish Nationalists, challenges the artistic conceptions of his fellow Scottish writers of the Literary Renaissance and denounces the dismal conditions experienced by the working-class in Glasgow.² The English Mitchell and the Scottish Gibbon went on to publish the incredible number of nine books in the following two years until the highly prolific author's untimely death at the age of thirty-four shortly after the publication of *Grey Granite*.

Not only did *Sunset Song* mean personal distance and freedom for Mitchell under his Scottish persona, but the novel also had more comprehensive and literary side effects by allowing him to clearly mark a break with popular Scottish writing: it meant artistic freedom and a clear

split from traditional narrative voices and discourse in Scotland at the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth centuries. The Kailyard had in a way imprisoned Scotland into a very particular and restrictive representation. Mitchell uses traditional Kailyard motifs in *Sunset Song* but only to distort them to suit his own narratological agenda and to proclaim the release from a restrictive standard. The protagonist is a female and the death of her mother and brothers is not turned into the emotional or pathetic scenes the reader could have expected, but they mark the end of an era for the young girl: she is then flung into the world of adults, full of dangers and devoid of the innocence and naiveté she has so far tried to enjoy:

It was not mother only that died with the twins, something died in your heart and went down with her to lie in Kinraddie kirkyard – the child in your heart died then, the bairn that believed the hills were made for its play, every road set fair with its warning posts, hands ready to snatch you back from the brink of danger when the play grew over-rough. That died, and the Chris of the books and the dreams died with it, or you folded them up in their paper of tissue and laid them away by the dark, quiet corpse that was your childhood. (63–64)³

Neither is the protagonist's family as genteel as it would have been expected in a standard Kailyard novel: Chris's mother committed filicide, then suicide, in order to avoid a sixth pregnancy. Life in the village is beset with malice and gossip which Gibbon refers to with a word from the Doric dialect spoken in the Mearns *clai*k, as if to stress the very local distinctiveness of a universal mode of communication and distortion. *Sunset Song* is therefore to be considered as a sarcastic reaction to a traditional literary feature that had constricted literary expression for so long in Scotland.

Chris Guthrie is the highly endearing protagonist of the trilogy and we follow her life, from adolescence to womanhood, in search of emancipation, freedom and fulfillment, these three words underlying her personal objectives. She is keen, as a young woman, to gain her own autonomy far from

the spiritual and moral coercion exerted by religion and by the villagers' traditional values. But her freedom is also attained on a more personal and intimate level. *Sunset Song* could indeed be read as a *Bildungsroman*, a *Bildungsroman* being, according to a definition (Buckley 1974: viii): 'the novel of youth, the novel of education, of apprenticeship, of adolescence, of initiation, even the life-novel'. However, the main protagonist's gender does not correspond to the traditional features of a genre whose plots, themes and motifs are usually male-centred through education and self-achievement. Catherine Carswell had in Scotland already used the thematic features of the *Bildungsroman* for a female character in her 1920 novel set in Glasgow, *Open the Door!* However *Sunset Song* has the particularity of being written from a male point of view, albeit very sympathetic to the plight of women, and is also set in a rural community where cultural and educational opportunities are highly restricted.

Chris, from a very first age, is torn between her love for the land and her community and her desire to study to become a schoolteacher. The English Chris and the Scottish Chris, as she says, toy with her feelings and her emotions. She realises the vacuity of her life in the Kinraddie community: '[...] suddenly Chris hated the lot, the English Chris came back in her skin a minute, she saw them the yokels and clowns everlasting, dull-brained and crude' (85). However, contrary to what would have been expected in any *Bildungsroman* – even in a female *Bildungsroman* – she decides not to pursue her education after her father's death. Despite her resentful feelings for the dullness and the passivity of her fellow-villagers, she feels irresistibly drawn to the land and it is that land that will provide her with the education and understanding of life she seeks, and not the books she would have read at college.

Sea and sky and the folk who wrote and fought and were learned,
teaching and saying and praying, they lasted but as a breath, a mist
of fog in the hills, but the land was forever, it moved and changed
below you, but was forever, you were close to it and it to you, not at
a bleak remove it held you and hurted you. And she had thought to
leave it all! (119)

The Scottish Chris got the better of her. Gibbon therefore used the motifs of two major literary genres in his novel, the typically Scottish Kailyard and the traditional *Bildungsroman*, but only to diverge from what would have been the expected conclusions in both cases. His novel is distinctly different from previous fictional accounts of life in a village which could, from the outside, resemble any of those described in a traditional nineteenth-century Scottish novel. Gibbon therefore asserts his individuality and his refusal to belong to any well-trodden literary current.

There are numerous ways in which Chris Guthrie is entrapped in the small Kinraddie community, but her body is her first prison. Women, at the beginning of the twentieth century – especially in a rural Presbyterian environment – did not enjoy equal treatment with men and were often confined to demeaning tasks: 'If only she'd been born a boy she'd never had such hatings vexing her, she'd have ploughed up parks and seen to their draining, lived and lived, gone up the hills a shepherd and never had to scunner herself with the making of beds or the scouring of pots.' She however concludes: 'But neither would she ever have had Ewan hold her as last night he had' (41). As many critics noticed, Chris witnesses her physical evolution from adolescence to womanhood by staring at her naked reflection in a full-length mirror. These unavoidable changes reflect a physical emancipation she cannot express easily and which her father regards as shameful from a public point of view. On the other hand, John Guthrie clearly expresses his incestuous desire for his daughter, using religion as the excuse which would give him permission to sexually abuse his daughter. John Guthrie is a man Gibbon is keen to present as a rebel in front of social hierarchy, somebody hating the ruling class. He is however prisoner of a dogmatic system of thinking which has corrupted his idiolect – he often quotes from the Bible and sings hymns – and which has perverted his nature. Religion has still a strong grip and influence on people in spite of their social inclinations.

But a worse thing came as that slow September dragged to its end,
a thing she would never tell a soul, festering away in a closet of her
mind the memory lay, it would die sometime, everything died, love

and hate; fainter and fainter it had grown this year till but half she believed it a fancy, those evening fancies when father lay with the red in his face and his eyes on her, whispering and whispering at her, the harvest in his blood, whispering her to come to him, they'd done it in the Old Testament times, whispering *You're my flesh and blood, I can do with you what I will, come to me, Chris, do you hear?* (108)

The very word freedom or the adjective free do not appear very often in the novel: only one time for 'freedom' in *Sunset Song* and three times altogether in *A Scots Quair*. However Chris uses it in two occasions after what one could see as the tragic events in her life: namely the death of her father and her husband's departure for the war. Both men have imprisoned Chris into what could appear as restricted stereotypical roles and their leaving is undoubtedly perceived as a welcome liberation and release for Chris: 'But Chris walked *free* and uncaring, soon as the burial was over she'd be *free* as never in her life she'd been, she lifted her face to the blow of the wet September wind and the world that was *free* to her' (114, my italics). Language and Gibbon's *écriture* are also keys to the understanding of the novel and to the social and political message it conveys.

Ideological discourses

a) Vološinov's analysis of ideological discourse

Gibbon's use of italics for dialogue, a point which the *TLS* reviewer held against the author,⁴ means that the narrative flows unhampered by any of the standard punctuation marks for dialogue. The reader moves spontaneously from the narrator's point of view to the characters'. This is, for example, a passage in which Gibbon's genuine concern for Scots is made obvious through Long Rob's statement:

But Rob was just saying what a shame it was that folk should be shamed nowadays to speak Scotch – or they called it Scots if they did, the split-tongued sourocks! [...] And Rob said *You can tell me, man, what's the English for sotter, or greip, or smore, or pleiter, gloaming*

or glunching or well-kenspeckled? And if you said gloaming was sunset you'd fair be a liar; and you're hardly that, Mr Gordon.

But Gordon was real decent and reasonable, *You can't help it, Rob. If folk are to get on in the world nowadays, away from the ploughshafts and out of the pleiter, they must use the English, orra though it be.* And Chae cried out that was right enough, and God! Who could you blame? And a fair bit breeze got up about it all, every soul in the parlour seemed speaking at once; [...] (156)

Gibbon reveals his characters' ideological bias through their dialogue and thoughts and through the voice of the community, not through the heterodiegetic narrator's interventions. Ideology is inextricably linked to language and to the characters' rhetoric in *The Scots Quair*. Gibbon's narrative technique may be likened to what the Marxist philosopher of language Valentin Vološinov concluded about language and its ideological construction and functions.

Vološinov – a member of the so-called Bakhtin circle – developed his linguistic theories in two books first published in 1927 and 1929. Language, according to the Russian formalist, should be studied in a global social context, and not as single utterances. The first characteristic of language is that it is ideological and that it cannot be defined or analysed otherwise. It is certainly not, as Saussure had previously declared, part of a more complicated sign-system involving the accidental combination of a *signified* and a *signifier* whose relation to the sign was therefore purely arbitrary.⁵ Diachronicity was also a necessary tool to achieve a good understanding of the ideological make-up of words. Words reflect the speaker's social standpoint which will be opposed to, confirmed or challenged by other ideological markers and positions in any discussion.

An example, related to sacred vocabulary, is provided early in *Sunset Song* by Chris's brother, Will. Having heard the word 'Jehovah' used so cogently by the Minister in church, Will decides to call his new horse by that name. John Guthrie, having heard Will utter the word, strikes him and then snaps at him: 'And mind, my mannie, if I ever hear you again take your Maker's name in vain, if I ever hear you use that word again, I'll libb you.

Mind that. I'll libb you like a lamb'. (30) The word is nonetheless also used out of context by Chris's mum a week later while taunting John Guthrie's concern about calling a doctor, the subtext being Guthrie's thoughts about birth control: 'Don't worry about that. No doubt your friend Jehovah will see to it all. Father seemed to freeze up, then, his face grew black, he said never a word, and Chris had wondered at that, [...]' (29).

The person listening processes the message according to his or her ideological system of thought before replying, still according to his or her ideological system of thought. John Guthrie's idiolect is based on the Bible and his speech, whether he tells his wife that he does not agree with any form of birth control, strikes his son for having pronounced a sacred word or begs his daughter for incestuous relationships, reflects his commitment – or his submissiveness – to the Presbyterian dogma. Guthrie's language is not a structure of thought that can be considered analytically outside his social background and Kinraddie – as most rural communities at the time – is clearly imbued with religious language and imagery. As Vološinov expresses it,

Language reflects, not subjective, psychological vacillations, but stable social interrelationships among speakers. Various linguistic forms of these interrelationships, and various modifications of these forms, prevail in different languages at different periods of time within different social groups and under the effect of different contextual aims. What this attests to is the relative strength or weakness of those tendencies in the social interorientation of a community of speakers, of which the given linguistic forms themselves are stabilized and age-old crystallizations.⁶

Chris Guthrie herself cannot get rid of this religious language and often uses mystical and allegorical vocabulary to describe the Standing Stones above Kinraddie and the land where she seeks comfort.

Another major feature introduced by Gibbon in *Sunset Song* is his use of dialect and how he weaves the voice of the community into a chorus to the main events. The frequent use of the pronoun *You* by Chris or by the

folk voice also creates a closeness between characters and readers and can be taken as a generic use or a self-referent use according to the context. The community, often referred to as 'the body' in *Sunset Song*, is given a voice through a shapeless and nameless comment punctuating the villagers' life. Vološinov also studied the third person narrative voice mainly in German and French literatures, but the general conclusions he reaches may also be used for Gibbon. He saw it as an authorial device in order to introduce reflections and attitudes which would have been impossible to convey by other means of discourse.⁷ Gibbon of course used this device all through the novel as a negative comment, the reflection and gossip and envy – the *cleik* – of the community. This is the community's interior monologue, instable and unreliable as the narrator tells us:

About what happened after that some told one thing and some another and some told both together. [...] you couldn't believe every lie you heard. [...] Most of the story till then was maybe but guessing, ill-natured guessing at that, but the porter at the Bridge of Dunn, a good twenty miles south of Fordoun, swore to the rest. (83)

The voice of the community adopts paradoxical viewpoints depending on the situation and the current social reaction expected from them. It is certainly not reliable because of its hyperbolic nature and its tendency to transform the information to suit the preconception of the audience. The minister and his drunken or sexual antics, for instance, cause great mirth in the village, but nearly everybody attends the Sunday service and steadfastly follows the minister's instructions, whatever they may be. The minister's passionate calls for joining the War, his anti-German rhetoric and his casting out of Long Rob as a pro-German pacifist certainly influence the Kinraddie community's behaviour. Gibbon wants to show that the Church of Scotland, the Kirk, has taken a firm grip on the Scottish rural communities. Its hegemony is total, influencing the way people speak and what people do and think. The only solution to release them from this ideological domination is cultural and comprehensive: individual reactions are bound to come to nothing. The Kirk, as an institution, needs to be denounced for the

dogmatic veil it imposes on society. As a novelist and as a propagandist, Gibbon clearly saw that this was one of his missions and that he, as a novelist, had to contribute to the denunciation of the cultural and intellectual hegemony the Kirk had exercised for so long in Scotland. People, even though aware of some of the ministers' malpractice were too apprehensive to clash openly with the institution. It remained an innocent subject of general amusement but not of serious critical analysis.

b) Gramsci's 'Contradictory Consciousness'

This paradoxical attitude can be linked to what the Italian Marxist critic and activist Antonio Gramsci called 'contradictory consciousness' when he studied the ideologies of the working-class in Italy. Even if Gramsci mostly disregarded farming communities, as he insisted that they did not have a clear conception of the class system, his visions are nonetheless relevant to Kinraddie which Gibbon saw as the forerunner of *Grey Granite's* working-class society. As the narrator tells us, Kinraddie's traditional farm-workers are the last of an old order which will all have disappeared by the end of the First World War, replaced by a new breed of manual workers. The farm-workers, as part of a fundamentally peasant economy, therefore, belong to a class system soon defunct because of the arrival of new machines and new values.

Gramsci observed that on the one hand the working-class consideration and language were aimed at class struggle and revolt: they were conscious of their fate and alienation and of the need to change society and the social apparatus. But on the other hand there was a blind respect and agreement with rules and values that were part of inherited traditions, or which had been decreed by the omnipotent ruling-class and which people did not dare question, even they clearly went against their own living and working conditions.⁸ Both contradictory sentiments – this rebellious spirit and the acceptance of their domination – coexisted and had to be taken into account when considering the consciousness, views and discourse of working-class people.

As we have seen before, religion can clearly be part of this 'contradictory consciousness'. On the one hand ministers are mocked for their indecent

behaviour while on the other hand, what they represent and their ideological stance are uncritically accepted by most of the community.

The traditional farming life of the community – in a way a traditional Kailyard feature – is shattered with the arrival of an international event which sends the whole community into chaos: the First World War. Ewan Tavendale, despite his position as a farmer which could exempt him from military service, decides to enlist in 1916. Grassic Gibbon's harsh condemnation of the army is somehow surprising given that he had spent ten years serving in the British army, even if he was careful to note that he did it only in order to earn some money and to get the financial stability he needed.⁹ Anyway, just as his knowledge of farming toil cannot be doubted, the descriptions of the army also bear an authentic stamp.

The army has clearly transformed Ewan Tavendale: from the kind, even sweet, man who married Chris Guthrie, he has become, once he returns from the town barracks, a coarse drunkard who has no qualms about sexually abusing his wife, telling her about his sexual prowess with prostitutes and screaming at their child. This image is far from any First World War hero imagery.

The only characters who, in Gramsci's words would not have this contradictory consciousness and would not be torn between respect for the authority and social class, are Long Rob of the Mill and, to a certain extent, Chae Strachan. From the start Long Rob clearly opposes the Kirk, which he never attends, and Gibbon is keen to define him by his intellectual readings and his philosophical positions. Long Rob is, according to Gramsci's definitions, an 'organic intellectual', that is to say, even if his education and profession have no connection with the intellectual sphere, he is deeply committed to the evolution of society:¹⁰ his aspirations are related to social class and to the improvement of the conditions of living for Kinraddie's farm-workers. Chae Strachan is a more ambivalent character who, in spite of his Marxist political leanings and his clear advocacy of class struggle, does not manage to keep away from the Kirk or from the ruling class's authority. Chae's 'excitement' (186, 191) about the War leads him to enlist amongst the first. Long Rob resists far longer and it is only when his anti-war position is untenable in the community that he finally resigns himself to

enlisting. Gibbon's conclusion seems pretty bleak: it is impossible, in a rural community like Kinraddie, to oppose the cultural hegemony of church and state. Evolution – or Revolution – will come from the outside.

c) Freedom and subservience: the Land as a pharmakon

The land – so central a theme in the novel – is seen as a comfort and a blessing for Chris – this is where she finds relief and happiness and her personal motto all through the trilogy concerns the everlasting presence of the land, a true beacon which has survived and endured through all personal, human and social upheaval and will for ever remain. But the land, or more precisely toiling the land, that is to say farming, is also seen as a tormentor, and this ambivalent image is common to many of the *Sunset Song* characters who revel in the land but who are also enslaved by farming activities. Chris discovers this after her father's death when she has to do all the physical tasks he used to do. Her only solution is to hire somebody to relieve her of the physically exhausting farmwork.

I would suggest that the land, in *Sunset Song*, has assumed the role of a *Pharmakon*. The *Pharmakon* is, according to Plato's *Phaedrus*, a substance – what we would now call a drug – which can save and kill: small doses will cure people whereas an overdose will kill or harm somebody. It is of course to be taken metaphorically as two-dimensional or as a binary opposition. There is no such thing as a legal or illegal substance in *Sunset Song*, but the Land, present in all discourse and in the narrative fabric of the novel, can be likened to a *Pharmakon*.

So hurt and dazed, she turned to the land, close to it and the smell of it, kind and kind it was, it didn't rise up and torment your heart, you could keep at peace with the land if you gave it your heart and hands, tended it and slaved for it, it was wild and a tyrant, but it was not cruel. (230)

It epitomises this dichotomy between freedom and subservience which the characters of *Sunset Song* illustrate through their actions and their conceptions about the land. Jacques Derrida constructed a close-reading

of Plato's *Pharmakon* by highlighting this dichotomy; he analysed the ambivalent features of this metaphorical substance by drawing a parallel between spoken and written discourses; this is, after all, the basic subject of Plato's *Phaedrus*. Plato wants to highlight the specificity and the significance of the spoken language, what Derrida calls the Logos – which stands for speech, logic, reason¹² – and its superiority over written language. In *Sunset Song*, spoken language also takes a significant part of the narrative structure due to Gibbon's idiosyncratic linguistic approach.

À peine plus loin, Socrate compare à une drogue (*pharmakon*) les textes écrits que Phèdre a apportés avec lui. Ce *pharmakon*, cette 'médecine', ce philtre, à la fois remède et poison, s'introduit déjà dans le corps du discours avec toute son ambivalence. Ce charme, cette vertu de fascination, cette puissance d'envoûtement peuvent être – tour à tour ou simultanément – bénéfiques et maléfiques. Le *pharmakon* serait une *substance*, avec tout ce que ce mot pourra connoter, en fait de matière aux vertus occultes, de profondeur cryptée refusant son ambivalence à l'analyse [...]. (Derrida 2004: 264)¹²

(Only a little further on, Socrates compares the written texts *Phaedrus* has brought along to a drug (*pharmakon*). This *pharmakon*, this 'medicine', this philtre, which acts as both remedy and poison, already introduces itself into the body of the discourse with all its ambivalence. This charm, this spellbinding virtue, this power of fascination, can be – alternately or simultaneously – beneficent or maleficent. The *pharmakon* would be a *substance*, with all that that word can connote in terms of matter with occult virtues, cryptic depths refusing to submit their ambivalence to analysis [...].)¹³

The land – considered in its physical, metaphysical and metaphorical senses – is a source of pleasure and pain for Chris. This is first of all where she finds relief and joy; Gibbon is careful to turn her visits to the Standing Stones which overlook Kinraddie into a pilgrimage and a mystical experience for her. But the land is also the very source of her hardship. This is

the land the English Chris wants to leave, with its coarse creatures and language. This is a land of hardship and toil where Chris has to fight to overcome people's prejudice. This is also the land whose wind, smell and memory come to haunt Ewan Tavendale while fighting in France and which drive him to desert and lead him to the firing squad.

Conclusion

Gibbon's conclusions are grim: as the newly appointed minister Robert Colquhoun declares that the old farming world is dead (1999: 256), replaced by another world comprising proceeds and profit. Religion has been phased out but subservience to other masters has already started. And this is what Gibbon, as a 'revolutionary writer' (2001: 738), is keen to point out. Indeed, the First World War has not been a tragedy for all the inhabitants of Kinraddie: some have clearly made money and intend to carry on. Subservience, albeit to a new form of servility – monetary obsession – seems to have gained the upper hand in the 'tormented place' (1) that is Kinraddie; this will be the subject explored by Gibbon in the last two novels of his trilogy. The Land, this *pharmakon* which held the Kinraddie community together and between which the Kinraddie folk had to try to find their own way, has become the latest victim of the new spirit blown by the profiteers. Not only did the old Scots way of working farms die, but the ideologists who embodied expectancy for society are also dead: Chae and Long Rob have finally succumbed to social pressure and social coercion and were killed in the trenches. Only Chris is left, widowed but free: free to abandon her life on the farm and free to love, even if she resigns herself to marrying once again, so conforming to one of society's standard patriarchal rules.

Notes

- 1 James Leslie Mitchell, *The Left Review*, 1.5 (February 1935), p. 180.
- 2 Lewis Grassie Gibbon, *Smeddum: A Lewis Grassie Gibbon Anthology*. Edited and Introduced by Valentina Bold (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2001), pp. 1–169.
- 3 Quotations are taken from Lewis Grassie Gibbon, *Sunset Song*, ed. with an intro. by Tom Crawford (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1999).
- 4 *The Times Literary Supplement* 1601, October 6, 1932, p. 713.
- 5 Valentin Nikolaevich Vološinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (New York and London: Seminar Press, 1973), pp. 59–63.

- 6 Vološinov, p. 118.
- 7 Vološinov, pp. 131–32.
- 8 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Edited and translated by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Elecbook, 1999), p. 641.
- 9 Ian S. Munro, *Leslie Mitchell: Lewis Grassie Gibbon* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), pp. 32, 56.
- 10 Gramsci, pp. 142–47.
- 11 Barbara Johnson, 'Translator's Introduction', in Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*. Translated, with an Introduction and Additional Notes by Barbara Johnson (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p. ix.
- 12 Jacques Derrida, 'La pharmacie de Platon', in Platon, *Phèdre*. Traduction inédite, introduction et notes par Luc Bisson (Paris: Flammarion, 2004), p. 264.
- 13 Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', trans. Johnson (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p. 73.