

‘Def-i-nitely back’: subversion of Kailyard and Clydeside in *Charles Endell Esquire*

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Abstract

This article examines a significant, but neglected, Glasgow-set STV drama serial from 1979, *Charles Endell Esquire*. The article examines the way in which *Charles Endell Esquire* exploits and subverts classic tropes of Scottish identity in order to construct a liminal narrative and generic space between comedy and drama, subverting the stereotypical models of Kailyard and Clydesideism. Using the idea of ‘place-myth’, the article examines the ways in which the series’ use of location filming sets up a structuring paradigm between tradition and modernity within the city of Glasgow, and between gritty urban Glasgow Clydesideism and the rural Kailyard of the Scottish countryside.

Keywords: STV, Glasgow, Scotland, television drama, kailyard, Clydeside, *Charles Endell Esq*

Much scholarship has criticised the tendency of screen representations of Scotland to draw on a narrow range of modes: tartanry, Kailyard, and Clydesideism.¹ This article examines a significant but neglected Glasgow-set Scottish Television (STV) drama serial from 1979, *Charles Endell Esquire*. Taking a textual approach, the article examines the way in which *Charles Endell Esquire* exploits and subverts classic tropes of Scottish identity in order to construct a liminal narrative and generic space. That space is located between comedy and drama, subverting the stereotypical national representational models of Kailyard and Clydesideism. The Glasgow of

Charles Endell Esquire is a liminal space insofar as the trope of the Glasgow “hard man” is comically subverted and deconstructed by featuring protagonists who are highly unsatisfactory at fulfilling this stereotype. Using Rob Shields’ idea of ‘place-myth’,² the article examines the ways in which the series’ use of location filming sets up a structuring paradigm between tradition and modernity within the city of Glasgow, and also between gritty urban Glasgow-set Clydesideism and the rural Kailyard mode associated with the lowland Scottish countryside. The article draws attention to the importance of regional identity as a key component of this hybrid comedy-drama, but also suggests that the representation of a historically specific regionality was instrumental, both culturally and institutionally speaking, in *Charles Endell Esquire*’s relatively swift cancellation.

Tim Edensor argues for the importance of symbolic representations of national identity in visual culture and calls for a critical focus on everyday popular culture and its role in reflecting and constructing national and regional identities.³ The circulation of visual discourses (in particular, representations of iconic local landscapes) in domestic media such as television is central to this process of identity formation. As Jane Sillars points out, ‘television drama provides a means to examine what visions of the nation circulate internally and externally, and how dominant discourses can be reproduced or reworked’.⁴ She also notes that ‘ITV’s regional structure prompted greater emphasis on representing the geographical variety of British life’,⁵ in terms of the creation of a nationwide network of regional broadcasting franchise-holders. However, as John Cook argues, television drama is an expensive form of narrative and visual representation and thus often falls back on familiar images of a given local place or culture rather than developing new and challenging visions of such things.

Cook notes, for example, that much televisual representation of Scotland in the 1970s revolved around crime and ‘had a kind of hard-boiled quality’.⁶ In one sense such representations offered a refreshing change from romanticised tartanry and Kailyard stereotypes, but:

these hard-boiled images, with their sub-film noir excitement and their playing-up to ‘no mean city’ images of Glasgow to gain acceptance from network audiences, can be seen to have had their own inherent weaknesses and limitations from the very start: a masculinist discourse of urban hardness and violence which critics would later come to associate with some of the more negative aspects of ‘Clydesideism’.⁷

Cook’s argument here illustrates a wider phenomenon, namely, the tendency of critics to divide the history of Scottish television drama into broad discursive tendencies and traditions associated with the representational modes of tartanry, kailyard and Clydesideism. While these categories will be deployed more fully in the textual analyses that follow, this article also aims to show how close examination of obscure television case studies can prove fruitful in adding nuance to the broad contours of the existing critical models generally used to navigate the history of Scottish moving image cultures. To demonstrate the limitations of those models, the article surveys the place of historical research into archival Scottish television, and the methodological issues involved with this approach.

The original research for this article was connected with the 2015 ‘Television Drama: The Forgotten, the Lost and the Neglected’ conference at Royal Holloway University. There is a range of ways in which television can be ‘lost, forgotten or neglected’, and one of these includes academic neglect. There currently exists, for example, a paucity of scholarly work on Scottish television drama. BBC English

Regions Drama has attracted scholarly research because of the former's commitment to portraying regional identities.⁸ Granada television has been studied as a "quality" commercial broadcaster.⁹ But otherwise, regional (i.e. non-London-based) television is largely outwith the critical canon. The drama output of both independent television and the BBC's regional centres is under-represented in scholarship. McDowell examines the politics of broadcasting in Scotland, but with little focus on drama.¹⁰ Scottish television does not merit a chapter in Johnson and Turnock's *ITV Cultures*.¹¹ Other accounts feature limited coverage of television drama within wider Scottish media contexts, and display a tendency to focus on the traditionally "serious" canon of social realism.¹² More research is therefore needed on regional television's heterogeneous production practices and representations of Scottish place and culture.

Within the critical landscape outlined above, research on ITV has been neglected for various reasons that arise from ITV's complex historical position as a commercial public service broadcaster with a regionally federated structure. Johnson and Turnock suggest three reasons for this neglect of ITV. Firstly, the BBC is regarded as 'the elder statesman and "true" advocate of public service broadcasting;' as a consequence. 'ITV has perhaps been seen as less of a "Cinderella" institution and more of an "ugly sister"... characterized by controversy, acrimonious debate and anxiety'.¹³ Secondly, there is the fact of conflict between ITV's commercial funding and its public service remit. ITV has often been understood not as a producer of "quality" programmes but of popular forms such as quizzes, light entertainment and action adventure series: 'This is in contrast to the broader tendency to associate those programmes that have received "serious" academic and critical attention with the BBC'.¹⁴ Within the critically influential myth of the BBC's 1960s-'70s social realist

Golden Age, ITV's "quality" programming of the period is seen as an exception rather than the rule. Thirdly, access to archive material (both actual programmes and paper records) is an issue. There are limits to the availability of historical programmes to view and institutional record keeping has been haphazard. The ITV network's structure means that archives are regionally dispersed and when companies lose their franchises they often dispose of their collections. Since 1993, the ITV Network Centre has kept an archive of papers but the availability and fate of this holding is uncertain at the time of writing. John McVie, Media Coordinator at STV, admits that:

In terms of archive paperwork, we have been left with a poor legacy at STV and there is very little paperwork in existence prior to the last 15 years. This can make researching archive programming very difficult and a lot of the knowledge we've gathered has been through talking to former employees, researchers, and information from sources such as the BFI.¹⁵

Given the various issues discussed above, STV is triply marginalised by the academy: firstly, as a commercial broadcaster; secondly, as a regional one; and, thirdly, as a non-English entity: much of the scholarship on regional "British" television drama has really meant regional *English* television drama.¹⁶

By way of response to this state of affairs, this article examines a relatively obscure but arguably significant 1970s STV drama, *Charles Endell Esquire* (1979). *Charles Endell Esquire* was produced as a spin-off of London Weekend Television (LWT)'s *Budgie* (1971-72), created by Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall and produced by Verity Lambert and Rex Firkin. Starring Adam Faith as the eponymous Ronald 'Budgie' Bird, this tale of a chirpy cockney petty criminal veered between comedy and drama and featured a florid performance from Iain Cuthbertson as Budgie's

sometime boss, Charlie Endell, a crooked Soho club owner and porn baron. The character of Endell was resurrected by STV in a six-part 1979 series in which he leaves prison and returns to Glasgow. The STV series attracted some of commercial television's most respected writers of the time. Developed by Robert Banks Stewart, the series also had scripts by Bill Craig, Terence Feely, Alistair Bell and Jeremy Burnham. The producer was Rex Firkin, who had produced network dramas such as *Manhunt* (LWT 1970), *Within These Walls* (LWT 1974-78), *Upstairs Downstairs* (LWT 1971-75) and *Bouquet of Barbed Wire* (LWT 1976), and who had also executive produced the original *Budgie*. Directors were Gerry Mill, David Andrews and Clarke Tait.

The series' premise is that Charles Endell returns to Glasgow after seven years in prison following the collapse of his Soho porn empire. Endell's driving licence is still being held by the authorities so he enlists a driver, the hapless Hamish 'Worldwide' MacIntyre (Tony Osoba). The series comprised six episodes: *Glasgow Belongs to Me* (written by Robert Banks Stewart), *As One Door Closes Another Slams In Your Face* (Bill Craig), *Slaughter on Piano Street* (Robert Banks Stewart), *The Moon Shines Bright On Charlie Endell* (Terence Feely), *Stuff Me A Flamingo* (Alistair Bell), and *If You Can't Join 'Em, Beat 'Em* (Jeremy Burnham). Each of the episodes features a different business venture for Endell, usually illegal or at the edge of legality: an insurance scam involving the faked destruction of a valuable painting; attempts to use then-new VHS domestic video cassette technology to distribute pornography; promoting a terrible punk rock group; running a fixed Spot the Ball competition; making moonshine in the country; running an illicit sauna and massage parlour. The overall series story arc involves Endell's attempt to find out whether his

crooked lawyer, Archibald Telfer, has faked his own death and Charlie's territorial rivalry with Glasgow crime kingpin, Alistair Vint.

John Cook describes STV's contribution to Scottish television drama until 1979 as 'patchy'.¹⁷ The company's most recent significant production had been an adaptation of Muriel Spark's novel *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (STV 1978). Because TV drama representations of contemporary Scotland were few and far between, as well as being significant in its portrayal of Glasgow, *Charles Endell Esquire* was a major undertaking for STV. The series was recorded on multi-camera videotape at STV studios in Cowcaddens, with exterior location filming taking place around Glasgow and its environs. Writer Robert Banks Stewart remembers the genesis of the series:

STV's Bryan Izzard, then Head of Entertainment, approached me, because as well as having directed an episode written by me of *New Scotland Yard* ... he knew me as a writer of several episodes of *Sutherland's Law* [1973–79] for BBC, which also starred Iain Cuthbertson – I believe that Iain plumped for me to launch *Endell*. It was Bryan Izzard's idea to bring Charlie Endell back in his own series, and Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall, the creators and writers of *Budgie*, didn't feel they knew enough about Glasgow to take on the idea.¹⁸

Banks Stewart's comment about local knowledge of Glasgow raises the issue of the sense of place evoked in *Charles Endell Esquire*. Edward Relph suggests that three components make up a sense of place: material topography; activities taking place there; and meanings generated by those component elements: 'physical settings, activities, and meanings are always interrelated'.¹⁹ Objective visualisation of a town would consist of images of buildings and human activities. Subjectively, however,

such phenomena ‘are beautiful or ugly, useful or hindrances, home, factory, enjoyable, alienating; in short they are meaningful’.²⁰ Consumption of place is subjective, filtered through the gap between topographical signifiers and cultural signifieds.

Rob Shields defines the process of social spatialisation as ‘the ongoing conjunction of the spatial at the level of the social imaginary (collective mythologies, presuppositions) as well as interventions in the landscape (for example, the built environment)’.²¹ Place, then, is constituted through both physical landscape and place-myth; the interaction between these in turn creates place-images. Place-myths are cyclically reinforced, both materially and ideologically speaking, through the circulation of images and the restructuring of physical space. The ideological significance of this approach is expressed methodologically in Shields’ analysis not of physical sites, but of their intertextual representations: advertising materials, fictional depictions, media images and so on. As an illustrative example of the distinction, the picturesque “Highland myth” obscured social upheaval in 19th century Scotland.²² In turn, a range of always already constructed discursive positions associated with the myth are perpetuated in media representations of Scotland.²³ Place-myths and sense of place were important in the development of *Charles Endell Esquire*. As Banks Stewart’s comments above illustrate, the significance of Glasgow’s culture, geography and landscape is clearly central to the series, as is reflected in its use of location filming as well as its extensive cast of well-known Scottish actors including Annie Ross, Russell Hunter and Rikki Fulton. Iain Cuthbertson was a well-known face on British television, having recently completed five series of *Sutherland’s Law* for the BBC, played a memorable villain in *Children of the Stones* (HTV 1977) and

guested in high-profile shows such as *Survivors* (BBC 1977), *Doctor Who* (BBC 1978) and *The Duchess of Duke Street* (BBC 1977).

A Sense of Place: Glasgow in the Global Imaginary

As well as casting Scottish actors, *Charles Endell Esquire* drew on a range of existing place-myths associated with Glasgow – principally Clydesideism. John Caughie argues that the myth of Clydesideism explored the crisis of working-class masculinity after the decline of Glasgow’s ship-building and manufacturing industries.²⁴ Key to the myth is Alexander MacArthur and Herbert Kingsley Long’s influential 1935 Gorbals slum-set novel, *No Mean City*, which focused on gangland Razor Kings and investigated tropes of damaged urban masculinity, the Glasgow hard man and industrial labour and trade unionism. *No Mean City* casts a long shadow over Glasgow’s place in the global imaginary, with later place-myths of the city frequently characterising it as ‘the murder capital of Europe’.²⁵ But reading place synchronically can offer a more nuanced account. Ian Spring charts Glasgow’s transition from Victorian slums through to the “New Glasgow”, a largely artificial marketing construct brought about by the shift from a manufacturing socioeconomic model to a consumerist one, and identifies 1982 as the year when the New Glasgow place-myth gained truly significant traction.²⁶ Similarly, Blain and Burnett identify two discursive identities of Glasgow: “the pejorative Glasgow of multiple deprivation and crime... myths of the menace of the Gorbals and the post-war housing estates [and, alternatively,] the postmodern city of service sector growth and cultural charms... [a] Glasgow of progressive municipal development and investment in education and the arts’.²⁷

In *Charles Endell Esquire's* opening episode, *Glasgow Belongs to Me*, location filming allows an exploration of some visual signifiers of the city that engage some of the place-myths alluded to above. Arriving back in Glasgow, Endell is seen in long shot crossing the 19th-century South Portland Street Suspension Bridge. As the camera explores Glasgow, choice of location and framings convey the city's liminality at a point of historical transition. A dusky pink/orange sunrise surrounds Endell with a romantic haze – literally rose-tinting the city, albeit the rather murky quality of the 16mm film insert dilutes the romantic effect. Charlie is framed amongst Georgian and Victorian buildings and shot from below to connote his sense of power and authority. But a reaction shot of his face and a point-of-view shot of the sight of modern tower blocks and concrete multi-storey car parks conveys disapproval: Glasgow has changed since he was last there and he does not like this. Such contemporary buildings and structures are what Marc Augé calls 'non-places': alienating and anonymous sites of modernity such as hotels, shopping centres or railway stations that represent the implacable spread of global capital.²⁸ Modernity's acceleration, industrialisation and homogenisation of place result in placelessness and the loss of local specificity.²⁹

Narrative setting, visual framing, and acting performance therefore set up an introductory structuring tension between tradition and progress, between the city's industrial past and its transitional, post-industrial present. The city is a palimpsest, as all cities are, and it is in transition from nineteenth-century certainties to twentieth-century uncertainties. The Victorian Glasgow of heavy industry and working-class masculinity, the Second City of Empire, is giving way to consumer capitalism, a service economy and white collar jobs. The early part of Episode One of *Charles*

Endell Esquire conveys this through the shots of modern office blocks and shopping centres that counterpoint the nineteenth-century buildings. Spring's emerging place-myth of the New Glasgow is therefore mobilised in tension with earlier visual discourses of Glasgow. The layering of different forms of architecture within this urban space makes the city liminal, multivalent and unsettling.

Subverting *No Mean City*

Charles Endell Esquire's late-1970s Glasgow setting offered the series scope throughout for the development of a further tension between urban noir *No Mean City* narratives and their comic subversion within a generically liminal frame. For Jane Sillars, Clydesideism 'renders Glasgow as a tough, uncompromising, urban sprawl; deformed by the experiences of industrialization, yet united by a sense of working-class community, which is nonetheless rigorously controlled by codes of masculinity and femininity'.³⁰ The figure of the Glasgow hard man is central to this mode. However, Charlie's bewildered assistant Hamish is a constant disappointment to his employer and generally avoids involvement in hazardous schemes. While Charlie claims that his 'dark-complected minder... will die for me upon command', Hamish tends to shy from or bungle physical action or violence. In Episode Two, Charlie encounters an assailant and urges: 'Take him. Hamish!' Hamish steps out of shot to do so, and then instantly staggers back in, looking stricken. In Episode Five, Charlie shouts to Hamish: 'Upon my command, on the count of three, break his other leg!', but no such event occurs. When Charlie is set upon by real gangsters in Episode Five, Hamish avoids the fight, preferring to read his comic and later claiming that he'd 'got

to the good bit'. In ways such as these, Hamish's character critiques the dominance of the hard man trope in much other Scottish fiction.

A running juxtaposition with hard man Alastair Vint (played relatively straight by comedian Rikki Fulton) and Vint's men foregrounds the conventional model of Glasgow gangster masculinity against which Charlie and his team are constantly compared and found wanting. Vint and his men represent classic urban Glasgow machismo in order to serve as a structuring paradigm that highlights Charlie and Hamish's inadequacy. The staging of physical fights throughout the series is cartoonish: the camera cuts away from scenes of violence, jump-cutting to bruised or bandaged faces, or cutting to exterior shots with sound effects of struggle played over the top, without showing the actual pain being inflicted. Charlie's schemes often blow up in his face quite literally, further comically deconstructing the Glasgow hard man archetype and subverting stereotypes of masculine Clydesideism. In Episode Three, Charlie is taken away by the menacing Vint, but rather than being executed, he is merely abandoned in his underwear in a dumper truck. Furthermore, Charlie is regularly kept in line by his friend Dixie (Annie Ross), who lets him stay in the attic of her dance hall and constantly encourages him to keep out of trouble, as well as his glamorous, female, English-accented probation officer, Kate Moncrieff (Rohan McCullough). These elements of the series further challenge and undermine locally specific stereotypes of masculine authority. Ultimately, *Charles Endell Esquire* both replays and ridicules contemporarily dominant Glasgow hard man stereotypes. In this, the series anticipates the thematic remit of a much better-remembered Scottish TV drama, John Byrne's *Tutti Frutti* (BBC 1987), which also, albeit some years later, 'offered a powerful metaphorical destruction of the dominant figure of the Glasgow

hard man, imploding within his own machismo'.³¹

The Moon Shines Bright on Charlie Endell

Turning to other relevant representational considerations, Episode Four of the series, *The Moon Shines Bright on Charlie Endell*, is worth exploring because it features a large proportion of location filming, thereby drawing attention to national identity expressed through sense of place. This episode also extends the series' visual vocabulary by leaving Glasgow's mean streets and visiting instead a traditional rural location. A structuring paradigm is therefore set up in this episode between the urban Glasgow of Clydesideism and the Kailyard (cabbage patch) setting of the isolated rural locale. In doing so, *The Moon Shines Bright on Charlie Endell* enables itself to make playful and extensive use of a diverse range of conventional place-myths and screen tropes of Scottish identity.

Critically reviled for its parochialism and insularity, literary Kailyard is widely asserted to offer 'sentimentalised tales of small town life, told by the moral guardians of such communities' simple inhabitants – the minister or the dominie'.³² Colin McArthur explains that kailyard traditions in cinema typically pit a group of couthy locals, loveable rural eccentrics, against a range of figures and forces associated with modernity.³³ Kailyard film:

revolves around the dramatic intrusion of the modern world into small, rural Highland and Island communities. Modernity takes the form of unwelcome intruders, representing the forces of the state, the law, big business and the city, who invariably get their comeuppance at the hands of the wily locals.³⁴

In general, however, the space of Kailyard is also often seen as functional and oppressive:

The significance of the Kailyard is of nature civilized to the point of banality, a place of toil which is still only capable of producing the barest sustenance, a location bereft of beauty or pleasure. Just as the ground demands labour to prevent it running to seed, so Kailyard's inhabitants are subject to harsh moral and social surveillance.³⁵

Recalling the wider series' complex relation to the discourses of Clydesideism, *The Moon Shines Bright on Charlie Endell* offers both an extension of and a challenge to existing Kailyard representations. Charlie decides to make moonshine and sell counterfeit whisky in Glasgow's pubs. He sets up an illicit still in a remote farm croft, regarded with great suspicion by a nosy neighbour. Posing as a research scientist ('Doctor Endell – PhD not MD'), Charlie enjoys much talk of 'hydroponic horticulture' and the 'extramural arm of the Faculty of Agronomy at Glasgow University', generating a friction between the shabby exterior of the run-down croft and the alleged scientific modernity of the activities taking place within it. Illicit whisky is a trope of Kailyard Scottish films such as *The Brothers* (1947) and *Whisky Galore!* (1949), and this scenario leads to much byplay around *Whisky Galore!*-type signifiers: investigation by the excise men, avoiding prying neighbours, smuggling whisky and its ingredients, and so on. In a subversion of the usual Kailyard form, however, the episode adopts the point of view of the outsiders, Charlie and his assistants, enabling the audience to see the stereotypical figure of the couthy kailyarder from a different perspective.

This tension between rural and urban, historical kailyard and modern city, is figured through the episode's use of location filming. In an early sequence set inside a car travelling through the centre of Glasgow, the camera pans (slightly unsteadily)

away from the characters to explore the urban landscape's motorways, bridges, and concrete flyovers. This sequence signals a visual contrast between urban modernity and the rural *Whisky Galore!* caper of the illicit still and its croft and bothy. In contrast to the destabilising, hand-held, mobile shots of the city, in the rural location many of the compositions are static long shots, allowing the viewer to take in the visual pleasures of the picturesque, yet wintry, Scottish landscape. These shifts in visual style expose the underlying tensions between competing representational traditions that stress respectively the "no mean city" grit of Glasgow and the bucolic, touristic heritage of the Scottish countryside. Moreover, despite the whimsy of the episode's plot, it allows for some engagement with contemporary social and economic realities. In constructing the still Hamish proves to be a useful engineer, and remarks 'Aye, ye learn a few things on the Clyde'. This offers a sly comment on the decline of Scottish heavy industry, particularly shipbuilding on the Clyde, the crisis of 'Clydesidesm' and the way traditionally masculine skills were already by the late 1970s being displaced onto the heritage industry, via tourist-friendly jobs like whisky production. The illicit still, then, is a metonym for increasingly destabilising landscapes of post-industrial capitalism, the replacement of Scotland's heavy industry by service and heritage industries, and a postmodern concern with surfaces and simulations: Charlie's whisky label, 'Glen Endell', refers not to a real place but to himself, drawing attention to the constructed nature of the Scotland represented to tourists and through the mass media.

Scripted dialogue in *The Moon Shines Bright on Charlie Endell* also works to counterpoint and subvert the kailyard tradition. When Charlie's team arrives at the bothy where they will set up their still, and over wide shots of the rural Scottish

landscape, Charlie can be heard on the soundtrack laying out his target markets: ‘There’s the rigs: those oil rig lads are so thirsty they’d knock back paint stripper if they didn’t consider it a girls’ drink’. Over a long shot of the croft and its outbuildings in the distance, Charlie’s voiceover continues: ‘That over there is about to become the engine, the powerhouse, the nuclear centre of our bid for the stars ... the barn and the bothy. I’ve leased them for a nominal sum ... The only fly in the ointment’s a Mrs McTeague – the nosy old faggot who lives in the cottage.’ Again and again, the episode draws attention to the gap between fantasy and reality: the grandiosity of Charlie’s plans and aspirations and the disappointing reality of his station in life and the outcome of his schemes. Similarly, fantasy kailyard Scotland, with its byres, bothies and wide shots of rugged rural landscapes, is a vast disappointment and Charlie’s assistants are deeply unimpressed. Mention of the oil rigs evokes the way in which North Sea oil was one of the few heavy industries still in operation in Scotland in 1979. Charlie’s elaborate language, his experiment in hydroponic horticulture, his apparatus, his fake title counterpoint, but fail to transform, the drab rural setting. This is no *Whisky Galore!*-style comic couthiness, but a grim byre with an upside-down wheelbarrow watched over by the ‘nosy old faggot’ next door. As Endell’s assistant Janet, dragged reluctantly from the relative comfort of Glasgow city centre, says: ‘It stinks. This is the glowing nuclear heart, is it?’ Rural Scotland offers no *Brigadoon*-like idyll, nor new industrial technologies: it is a snowy, smelly, run-down dump.

Charlie’s plans go awry when his gangster rivals plant a bomb in the croft to kill him. Although nobody is hurt, the explosion blows up his still and destroys the evidence just as the police arrive. Again, there is a comedic subversion of kailyard conventions. Any notion of Mrs McTeague as couthy and genteel is terminally

subverted with her final line: ‘Hydroponic horticulture... ma grannie’s arse!’ In fact, this secondary protagonist may be seen as a deliberately inserted example of anti-kailyard, a dissenting Scottish representational tradition that involves a violent rejection of the smallness and marginality of the kailyard world and which, Jane Sillars argues, manifests a complex amalgam of emotions – ‘nostalgia and shame, longing and disgust’³⁶ – for that world and all it symbolises. In its temporary shift from an urban to a rural setting, *Charles Endell Esquire* engages the anti-kailyard tradition’s fascination with the representational trope of ‘the repressive and negative underbelly of the small Scottish community’.³⁷ Assessed as a whole, then, *Charles Endell Esquire* engages playfully with a range of stereotypical tropes of Scottish national identity, and offers deconstructions of both Clydeside and Kailyard that prefigure more acclaimed, later Scottish TV dramas such as *Tutti Frutti*. However, due to a combination of circumstances, the programme’s first series of six episodes was also to be its last.

The Rise and Fall of *Charles Endell Esquire*

The making of *Charles Endell Esquire* was a troubled affair, with production interrupted by the 1979 ITV technicians’ strike. The strike lasted from 10 August until 22 October 1979, took ITV off the air for several months, and disrupted production of a number of shows. Two episodes of *Charles Endell Esquire* were broadcast as originally planned in summer 1979, but the strike delayed transmission of the rest of the series until 1980. STV staff director David Andrews, who directed Episode Four, remembers:

There was a preliminary strike I think which was a local strike, and I wrote a memo which I copied to all the directors. It was an actual plea to keep the production going, because it was a big showcase for STV, and if it didn't go out, because of the strike, it was going to do the company a lot of damage.³⁸

The 'showcase' significance of the series for STV is clear. The company had secured a national broadcast slot and *Charles Endell Esquire* was seen as a prestige production that could put STV on the map as a supplier of networked drama. However, when the series returned in 1980 after the strike, its original primetime network slot had been lost. Robert Banks Stewart remembers how:

During the strike period until October, Rex Firkin and directors Gerry Mill and David Andrews continued to work in their offices at STV in Cowcaddens on pre-production of scheduled further episodes. It is said that strikers called them "scabs" and that at least one director threw a typewriter through a window in his rage at the strikers' attitude towards them. The typewriter crashed down several floors into a well at the STV building. The management were secretly pleased by this spontaneous gesture, but officially not pleased because they wanted agreement with the unions.³⁹

While the strike certainly harmed *Charles Endell Esquire*'s fortunes, it seems that other factors also determined its limited run. Director David Andrews claims that STV considered the series too expensive.⁴⁰ Somewhat bizarrely, the series itself seems to have made a reflexive comment on the conditions of its own production, referencing STV Executive Producer, Bryan Izzard, and Programme Controller, Gus Macdonald, within its diegesis. Banks Stewart suggests that:

[Gus Macdonald] was extremely peeved at a scene in episode three, *Slaughter on Piano Street*, in which Charlie Endell came to try and sell a young pop group, was rebuffed by a 'Mr Izzard' and came out of the STV building at Cowcaddens and started kicking the tyres of a sleek Jaguar with the registration "STV 1", Gus's personal, chauffeur-driven car. I swear I never wrote that scene.⁴¹

Banks Stewart also claims that there were less personalised institutional reasons for the lack of a second series:

I don't think that the eventual decision to not do another series was due to the budget... I was told that Gus Macdonald... and the STV Board felt that Endell brought no credit to Glasgow, with its seamy hero, local gangsters and low-life stories.⁴²

In addition to internal STV politics, then, wider contemporary currents of social change and urban regeneration perhaps entailed that *Charles Endell Esquire*'s focus on the seamy side of Glasgow did not fit into the developing discourse of New Glasgow described earlier.

Similarly, the technological and aesthetic shift within British television drama production at the time, away from multi-camera studio video and towards 16mm filming may also have had some effect on *Charles Endell Esquire*'s fortunes. In the context of late 1970s British television culture, *Charles Endell Esquire* has much in common with the successful Euston Films paradigm. Euston was an offshoot of Thames TV and made television drama series shot entirely on film, such as the hard-hitting police series *The Sweeney* (1975-78). Verity Lambert, then Head of Drama at Thames, had a policy to generate distinctive drama for the network in which the idea of sense of place offered distinction, both in terms of difference from competition but also bestowing status on particular works. Lambert explained:

I felt that the companies that seemed to be the most successful at that time with drama – companies like Granada – had a very strong regional feel about their drama. So I decided to look upon London as a region – and a very rich region because it has so

many different strata in it ... it was to try and give some identity to [dramas produced at or for Thames at that time].⁴³

The first episode of Euston Films' London-based comedy-drama *Minder* (1979-94) was shown in late October 1979, the week after the ITV technicians' strike ended. *Endell* is strongly reminiscent of *Minder* in some ways: its hybrid comedy-drama generic and tonal identity and its central narrative device of an aspirational petty criminal with a younger, but not always sympathetic minder. Furthermore, in a broadcasting landscape increasingly shifting towards using location shooting as a way to depict local specificity, the sense of place evoked by using Glasgow so extensively and explicitly in *Endell* is reminiscent of the importance of regional settings for better-known contemporaneous crime series like *Shoestring* (BBC 1979-80) and *Bergerac* (1981-1991).

Yet while *Charles Endell Esquire* would seem to fit the Euston paradigm – a comedy drama with a strong regional sense of place – it was not revived by STV. The loss of the original network slot dissipated the serial's momentum. Instead, producer Robert Love moved from Thames to become STV Head of Drama in late 1979 and took STV's drama production in a new direction. John Cook identifies 1980 as an *annus mirabilis* for STV drama: the broadcaster produced a high-profile adaptation of Jimmy Boyle's autobiography, *A Sense of Freedom*, contributed half the budget to Bill Forsyth's *Gregory's Girl*, and commissioned 33 single television plays for a local STV audience. Interviewed in 2011, Robert Love noted how:

At the end of the '70s the regional companies like STV had begun to have ambitions to... contribute to the network. Originally most of these companies were set up simply to do regional programmes... the budgets didn't allow them to do anything very

ambitious in the drama field. But STV along with two or three other bigger regional companies wanted a slice of the network and STV decided it was drama that would give them that entrée. So they asked me to come and set up a drama department, here in Glasgow.⁴⁴

Love identifies a then acute tension between producing drama with a strong local identity and the requirements of making nationally accessible work for the general ITV audience:

With network drama... we had to do something that was going to appeal to the UK audience as a whole... Nevertheless we were conscious that most of the things we did should reflect Scotland and Scottish life in some ways, you know, so it was a balancing act, really: of doing something that had a sense of place, but which on the other hand had a wide enough appeal for it to appeal to the UK audience as a whole.⁴⁵

One of STV's biggest successes in this regard is the crime drama *Taggart* (1983-2010). *Taggart* was originally made in STV's multi-camera video studio, but later moved to all-film production:

What it [film] gave us really was the ability to make Glasgow another significant element in the story. I mean the fact that to the UK audience, the network audience in general, Glasgow was rather an exotic place. It looked so different from England, the average English city, you know.⁴⁶

A significant international commercial success, *Taggart* casts a long shadow over STV drama production and mediated representation of Scotland. Ian Spring notes how the series' title sequence relates the 'craggy, lined face of Taggart' to the 'equally harsh background of the city landscape', concluding that 'Taggart is Glasgow'.⁴⁷ Both criminals and detective fulfil the established hard man image and thereby conform to the Clydesideism mode through connection of character to place-

myth. However, for Duncan Petrie, *Taggart* ‘helped to establish a new image of Glasgow as a vibrant, heterogeneous modern city, a space defined as much by culture as heavy industry, populated by different ethnic as well as socio-economic groups’.⁴⁸ Jane Sillars argues that over its lengthy run, the series adapted to reflect social change in the New Glasgow, such as ‘the tensions between [the city’s] industrial past and an increasingly service-driven economy’ and the ‘divisions between those living in the affluent ‘new’ Glasgow and those whose material lives remain untouched by the city’s vaunted transformation’.⁴⁹

In the process, nonetheless, many critics also suggest that much was lost in terms of the potential scope of Scottish television drama. *Taggart* and STV’s long-running soap, *Take the High Road* (1980-2003), dominated the company’s drama output for decades. O’Donnell describes the soap, with its picturesque rural setting, as ‘a long-running televisual version of the Kailyard... closely aligned with the discourse of Tartanry which works essentially to offer a romanticized representation of Scotland to a mainly non-Scottish audience’.⁵⁰ In the commercially driven broadcasting ecology of the post-late 1970s period, then, the success of *Taggart* and its imitators have been seen, as John Cook puts it, to ‘denote a basic conservatism; a narrowing of the range of drama produced in response to the commercial imperatives acting on the broadcaster [such as STV]’. In Cook’s view:

Here, there was a sense that in the transformations of the previous ten years to a much more commercially driven environment, something had been lost; that now, there was far greater reliance on the tried and trusted formula which could sell to the widest possible international market, rather than anything of greater risk or expense that nevertheless might contribute something of cultural value to the local Scots audience.⁵¹

For Cook, after the *annus mirabilis* of 1980 STV’s range narrowed to focus largely on

detective series. Arguably, STV's drama output post-1980 contracted to engagement with a limited range of tropes of Scotland, delimited by tartanry and, particularly, kailyard and Clydesideism. *Charles Endell Esquire* indicated the potential for subversive, whimsical, and occasionally surreal approaches to myths of national identity, albeit still functioning within the well-worn and arguably parochial constraints of Kailyard and Clydesideism. But that potential diversity was (and, perhaps, remains) largely closed down by the success of particular popular genres within an increasingly competitive broadcasting economy.

This article has argued for the importance of considering neglected television texts within the overall landscape of visual representations of national identity. It has attempted to do this by examining a relatively obscure Scottish television drama's working through of a series of binary oppositions relevant to representations of Scottish identity. *Charles Endell Esquire* uses its images of place to explore tensions between the urban and the rural, between tradition and modernity, and between the nineteenth-century Second City of Empire and the late-twentieth-century New Glasgow. The series playfully deconstructs the figure of the Scottish hard man and shows how generic liminality, in the form of comedy drama, can enable productive and transgressive border crossings between Kailyard and Clydesideism. In this sense, *Charles Endell Esquire* critiqued existing social roles by foregrounding the ambiguity around the fixedness of such roles at a point of rapid social change in Scotland. By drawing a neglected piece of television drama into engagement with broader and wider critical and screen industrial models, the interstices of the oppositions discussed above can offer some nuance to what otherwise might be reductive critical overviews and understandings of the histories of onscreen negotiations of Scottish identities.

Notes

- ¹ A long-running project started by McArthur, *Scotch Reels*.
- ² Shields, *Places on the Margin*.
- ³ Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, 65.
- ⁴ Sillars, 'Drama, Devolution and Dominant Representation', 246.
- ⁵ *Ibid*, 247.
- ⁶ Cook, 'Three Ring Circus', 111.
- ⁷ *Ibid*, 112.
- ⁸ See for example, Bignell, Lacey and Macmurrough-Kavanagh, *British Television Drama*; Mayne, 'Creative Commissioning'.
- ⁹ See, for example, Tulloch, *Television Drama*; Cooke, *A Sense of Place*.
- ¹⁰ McDowell, *The History of BBC Broadcasting in Scotland*.
- ¹¹ Johnson and Turnock, *ITV Cultures*.
- ¹² See *Ibid.*; Petrie, *Screening Scotland*; Petrie, *Contemporary Scottish Fictions*; Blain and Hutchison, *The Media in Scotland*.
- ¹³ Johnson and Turnock, *ITV Cultures*, 3.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁵ Personal communication with the author, 2014.
- ¹⁶ See Cooke, *A Sense of Place*.
- ¹⁷ Cook, 'Three Ring Circus', 111.
- ¹⁸ Scottish Television, 'Charles Endell Esquire'.
- ¹⁹ Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 48.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 47.
- ²¹ Shields, *Places on the Margin*, 31.
- ²² See for example, Chapman, *The Gaelic Vision in Scottish Culture*; Pringle, 'The privation of history'; Trevor-Roper, 'The Invention of Tradition'.
- ²³ See McArthur, 'Scotland and cinema'; McArthur, *Brigadoon, Braveheart and the Scots*; Martin-Jones, *Scotland: Global Cinema*.
- ²⁴ Caughie, 'Representing Scotland'.
- ²⁵ Blain and Burnett, 'A Cause Still Unwon', 8.
- ²⁶ Spring, *Phantom Village*.
- ²⁷ Blain and Burnett, 'A Cause Still Unwon', 8.
- ²⁸ Augé, *Non-places*.
- ²⁹ Relph, *Place and Placelessness*.
- ³⁰ Sillars, 'Drama, Devolution and Dominant Representations', 249-250.
- ³¹ Sillars, 'Drama, Devolution and Dominant Representations', 250.
- ³² Sillars, 'Admitting the Kailyard', 123.
- ³³ McArthur, 'Scotland and cinema', 47-9.
- ³⁴ Petrie, *Screening Scotland*, 3-4.
- ³⁵ Sillars, 'Admitting the Kailyard', 123.
- ³⁶ *Ibid*.
- ³⁷ Caughie, 'Representing Scotland', 5.
- ³⁸ Scottish Television, 'Charles Endell Esquire'.
- ³⁹ *Ibid*.

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- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
⁴¹ Ibid.
⁴² Ibid.
⁴³ Alvarado and Stewart, *Made for Television*, 85.
⁴⁴ Love, Robert, Interview with author.
⁴⁵ Ibid.
⁴⁶ Ibid.
⁴⁷ Spring, *Phantom Village*, 80.
⁴⁸ Petrie, *Screening Scotland*, 142.
⁴⁹ Sillars, 'Drama, Devolution and Dominant Representations', 250.
⁵⁰ O'Donnell, "'Nae Bevvying, Nae Skiving'", 126-127.
⁵¹ Cook, 'Three Ring Circus', 113.

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