

**A New Home in the World: Scottish  
Devolution, Nomadic Writing, and  
Supranational Citizenship in  
Julie Bertagna's *Exodus* and *Zenith***  
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In *The Modern Scottish Novel* Cairns Craig identifies narrative as a chief driving force in forging the historical trajectory of a nation's collective psyche. He says, "the imagination is the medium through which the nation's past is valued, and through which the nation's values are collected, recollected and projected into the future" (Craig 10). Craig comments not only on the mutual narrative imbrication of individual and communal lives, but also on the willingness of individuals to give the welfare of the nation priority over their own personal interests, to the extent of seeing their own life-story assimilated into the narrative of the nation: "People would act and would sacrifice themselves for the *national* good in ways that they would never act or sacrifice themselves for purely personal ends," Craig writes, "because the narrative of the nation and the narrative of their own existence are imaginatively intertwined" (10). He concludes by stressing the crucial necessity for any people or nation to be in possession of a historical narrative lest they risk losing themselves "in the expectation or the angst of knowing that the future will be necessarily different from the present" (11). In order to sustain a viable, identity-bearing present-past-future continuum a nation needs a communal story "by which a possible route towards that future can be charted without loss of continuity with a founding past" (Craig 11).

Although Craig's comments were originally made with reference to adult fiction, his statements apply equally to contemporary writing for children, especially the young-adult fiction that engages more or less explicitly with post-devolution Scottish cultural politics and the impact devolution has inevitably had, and is continuing to have, on Scotland's project of forging a national identity. In this article I intend to demon-

strate the ways Scottish children's author Julie Bertagna's novels *Exodus* (2002) and *Zenith* (2007) offer an exploration of post-devolution Scotland's nascent potential for devising a new kind of national self-determination through the medium of young-adult fiction. Dramatizing Craig's vision of individuals acting for a sense of "national good" (10), Bertagna's 15-year-old heroine Mara Bell's destiny becomes fused with her people's. Conceived as the two parts of an ecological dystopia, Bertagna's novels express a particularly urgent need for "continuity with a founding past" (11) to counteract the traumatic presence of a New World in which the past has undergone "a culture of erasure" (Craig 19). Put differently, Bertagna's characters are on a mission to discover a link between their people's past and their own present predicament in order to create Scotland's future story. They chart "a possible route towards that future" in order "to find a new home in the world," which exists beyond insulating borders as a hybrid supranational world (*Exodus* 14).

Bertagna's characters exceed Craig's notion of people sacrificing themselves for the nation's well-being; indeed, they go beyond national frontiers to embrace what I will call supranational citizenship in an attempt to discover and accept the diversity and commonality of all humanity. Bertagna's portrayal of her imaginary Caledonia's future citizens mirrors the preoccupations of politicians in the new Holyrood Parliament debating changes to post-devolution Scottish social and cultural policy. Michael O'Neill says in *Devolution and British Politics*, far removed from a regressively nationalist dynamic, devolution is now seen "as entirely consistent with a hybrid liberal-progressive variant of social democracy ... receptive to new postmodern concerns about identity politics and cultural pluralism" (O'Neill 80–81). In O'Neill's view, Scottish devolution has introduced "a more cosmopolitan or prismatic concept of citizenship indicat[ive of] a new political climate" (368). *Exodus* imagines the nation as a cosmopolitan community insofar as Mara's people must recognize and tolerate cultural diversity in order to build a home for themselves that exceeds narrowly nationalist forms of allegiance and instead participates in a wider pluralistically organized world. In clear concurrence with O'Neill's view that in "pursu[ing] membership of such a supranational entity as the EU ... [d]evolution in Scotland has opened

up new channels of influence and opportunity for Scotland in Europe” (104–5), Bertagna’s novels insist that, in terms of citizenship, “your future lies somewhere else in the world” (*Exodus* 12). For both Bertagna and O’Neill it is imperative that post-devolution Scotland should take the opportunity to open up its borders within an outward-looking inclusive Europe and, indeed, wider globalization as a whole, reflecting also Eleanor Bell’s stance that “it is important that we now view Scotland and Scottishness as, in part, the products of globalism, multiculturalism and consumerism in order to see that we are now ‘somewhere else entirely’” (89). According to Kwame Anthony Appiah, cosmopolitan communication is absolutely vital in an ever-shrinking world which ‘is getting more crowded’ (xix). In this light, then, it seems to be no mere coincidence that one of Bertagna’s major thematic concerns is the effect of demographic pressure on global geophysical depletion.

*Exodus* is a futuristic eco-novel set in a dystopian Glasgow, now submerged due to the flooding caused by accelerated climate change. In this “new political climate” the conventional male hero is superseded by a heroine, whose personal destiny is identical with her responsibility to save the nation. Any sense of future in this world is extremely fragile, and the burden of cultural self-preservation lies entirely with the new generation who must heed the mistakes of the past in order to move forward. Central to this change is Mara’s pressing desire that her small-island community of Wing, which is threatened by receding shorelines, “find a new home in the world” (*Exodus* 14). Her own vision and self-assurance must be strong enough to overcome her community’s fear that there may not be anywhere else to go. Like different nationalist and supranational visions of post-devolution Scotland, Bertagna’s premise is starkly polarized: without change the nation will drown in the rising sea, and only a willingness to look beyond its borders will allow the Scottish nation to survive.

On her travels, which are set both in the corporeal world and the figurative realm of cyberspace, Mara encounters a number of different cultures that help her expand her own intellectual horizons and carry her new knowledge forward to lay the foundations of a hybrid state. “[Mara] is looking at the world with eyes wide open,” writes Bertagna, “and she is almost sure that there is something out there. A New World, a haven

above the seas. A future” (*Exodus* 53). In this futuristic world virtual reality is a forum for the individual to connect with others in order to transcend incapacitating regional isolation and envision the revolutionary liberty of a future, for “*in cyberspace there are no rules, no limits. Anything might happen ... the Weave is wild and savage*” (*Exodus* 27–8). In her cyber novel *The Powerbook* Jeanette Winterson takes a similar view of the World Wide Web, describing it as a place where “I can’t take my body through space and time, but I can send my mind, and use the stories ... to tumble me out in a place not yet existing—my future” (53). In a homologous twist, Mara first encounters her future partner Fox (his cyber name)/David (his real name) in the Weave, where only their minds and stories can meet. Through her relationship with Fox/David she discovers unknown territory, and it is the Weave that allows the two young people to forge a relationship that is mutually beneficial. Like Alice’s descent down the rabbit-hole, Mara falls from a crumbling cyber bridge “*into dark, unknown regions of cyberspace. She has fallen right out of the Weave*” (*Exodus* 29). In discovering an uncharted alien space on the outer rim of the familiar, Mara and Fox are able to utilize the gap to exchange knowledge and stories about their own cultures: “This is not the Weave. This is the unknown ... like something out of a fairy tale” (31). Preconceived notions of reality are irrevocably altered as they begin to learn about alternative cultures: “*How does a cyberfox know about real-world,*” Mara asks Fox, “*are you real?*” (32–33). The in-between crevices of cyberspace allow the young people to interact in radically new ways and move towards a cosmopolitan culture of *internationalism* not unlike that envisaged by Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*, who suggests that such empowering in-between spaces arise from *international diversity*. In Bertagna’s novel cyberspace allows for spatial interconnections to open up between characters previously ignorant of the existence of other cultures.

In *Exodus* Mara’s generation’s lives are thwarted by the devastating irresponsibility of their forefathers:

In the scorching hot summers of the ’30s and ’40s the oceans rose faster than anyone ever expected. All the predictions had

been wrong. And all the political agreements that were supposed to prevent global warming had long fallen through. ... Suddenly it was all too late. Great floods struck, all over the world. ... Governments began to collapse everywhere. Economies crashed and everything that held society together started to fall apart. (195)

This description offers a terse warning to myopic environmental politics in an increasingly globalized world that will depend upon neighborly collaboration among all nations to sustain ecological balance. In Mara's world civilization's thin veneer has "started to fall apart" and is all too easily swept away like the receding landscape. In Bertagna's vision the preservation of national interests has been achieved at the expense of common supranational denominators. As former Vice-President of the United States Al Gore argues throughout *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), it is fatally fallacious to continue thinking exclusively in terms of one's own national interests; ultimately, a nation's political accomplishments and success must be assessed by its impact upon the global environment. In *Zenith*, Bertagna's sequel, we witness Mara and her generation judging their ancestors' culpability: "They knew. They could've done something but they didn't. They knew. They didn't think about the future, did they? They never thought about us" (206–7). With constant reference to our own contemporary debates on global ecology, international politics and an uncertain future, Bertagna positions her readers into confronting the harrowing consequences of unthinking self-centeredness and political apathy head on.

I would like to suggest that Bertagna's young-adult texts motivate a future generation to identify with the collective responsibility of educating themselves and others. In this respect Bertagna's novels are pivotal to Scotland's new post-devolution order where "the nation state is everywhere in the process of being reformed and even reimagined" (O'Neill 367). Her novels are Bertagna's contribution to Scotland's imaginative process of nation-building as she encourages her readers actively to participate in a future Scotland that as yet stands a very good chance of surmounting narrow or stereotyping modes of national self-identification.

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*Exodus* and *Zenith* show how Scotland's devolved terrain engenders new spatial possibilities. Here, a democratic, pluralist fusion of individual views suggests that the next generation's politics will have more balanced foundations. This political dimension of Bertagna's work corresponds with John Stephens's view that:

Writing for children is usually purposeful, its intention being to foster in the child reader a positive apperception of some socio-cultural values which ... are shared by author and audience. These values include contemporary morality and ethics, a sense of what is valuable in the culture's past ... and aspirations about the present and future. (Stephens 3)

According to Bertagna's representation the old patriarchal society's response to cataclysmic disaster consisted of building insular neo-states—the “New World sky cities” (*Exodus* 195)—whose phallic architectural excesses towered high above the drowned earth. These arrogant monolithic structures became the totemic symbols of an elitist caste system that only admitted those deemed suitable and left the rest of society to rot in the polluted waters of the Netherworld. The walls surrounding New Mungo (the sky city built to replace Glasgow) metaphorically denote the border dividing the privileged from society's abject and dispensable who are described as “the vile, rotting stench” and “a heaving mass of humanity” that “clings like a fungus to the huge wall” (*Exodus* 66). Enraged by this injustice and systematic dehumanization, Fox acknowledges that “*this* is what [this] world does. Kills children like vermin when they get in the way” (*Zenith* 281). As she breaks out of the Netherworld and into the world of elitist privilege, Mara begins to question how people manage to live in the sterile environment of New Mungo. “Are the people of the sky city so bedazzled by their glittering New World that they can't see beyond it to the human catastrophe right outside their wall” (*Exodus* 72), she wonders. “Do they not know what is happening? But somebody knows, because somebody built that city wall” (*Exodus* 72). Eventually, the outward-looking supranational citizens of Scotland's future, led by Mara and her sky-city lover, Fox, disrupt New Mungo's dystopian world to allow a hopeful future to emerge.

Clearly, while couched in futuristic language, Bertagna's representation is designed to indict the role of our own contemporary geopolitics in bringing about the particular ecological dilemmas of Mara's future world.

Reflecting our contemporary world's global intolerance for asylum seekers and refugees, Bertagna demonstrates nationalist hegemonies at work. She also underscores the destructiveness of the nationalist myths of sovereign control and self-reliance. While individual countries continue to monitor their borders, it is clear that if each country fails to think beyond its margins and contribute to a global effort at cutting carbon emissions, then all humanity may potentially wind up as climate refugees, similar to those languishing outside New Mungo's closed imperial fortress. In *Cosmopolitan Vision* Ulrich Beck identifies the importance of a "cosmopolitan Europe" as a necessity against what he terms "world risk society" (Beck 176). "If governments and peoples continue to confine themselves to hermetic national spaces" rather than engaging in the dialogue of cosmopolitan cooperation to overcome global risks he argues, "then ever more countries and cultures will sink into chaos and decline" (176–7). Like the inhabitants of Mara's Wing, the people of the world inhabited by Bertagna's readers could be accused of turning "[their] thoughts away from the outside world ... never looking beyond these [individual borders]," despite being aware of the "great meltdown of the ice at the poles" (*Exodus* 13). Political self-isolation takes the risk of resulting in the dystopian nightmare of New Mungo, "which builds its empire out of such cruelty and decides its citizens are the only true human beings in the world" (*Exodus* 192). Put differently, "everyone else was regarded as an alien, an outcast, [as] all the imagination and energy of the citizens of the New World turned inward" (196). By contrast, Mara shifts identity from self to other by relocating herself from her island home to a refugee camp outside the gates of New Mungo. The Weave, which voices distressing and broken transmissions from a drowned earth, ensures that the reader is never too far removed from current concerns, such as the actual real-life threat of a global refugee crisis: "... all countries must stabilize emissions of carbon dioxide ... can't wait, must act ... flooded Earth would be an alien planet...the end of civi-

lization ... how long have we got?" (*Zenith* 206). Chillingly, Fox refers to this particular signal as being "a hundred years ago, Mara. It's history" (206), thus producing a detail that identifies Bertagna's twenty-first-century readership's immediate real-life present with Mara and Fox's textual past, a past that may have a textual but not necessarily a real-life future. In *Zenith* we hear Bertagna's future citizens freely use the term "dubya," meaning *idiot*. Speaking etymologically, this term dates from our own present where it has discursive currency as an irreverent polemical epithet for United States President George W. ["dubya"] Bush.

New Mungo was created by Fox's grandfather Caledon, and in Caledon's world everything is artifice as Mara learns when she infiltrates it from her own world below: "She looks at the pond with clear eyes. The fish are fake and swim in electronic circles... It's all a false enchantment" (*Exodus* 227). This passage mentions "the bell," "the fish," "the tree and its bird," all of which feature as heraldic emblems in the city's coat of arms (*Exodus* 227). Their "fake" status emphasizes the existential hollowness at New Mungo's core: it is a distorted, parodic masquerade of the original Glasgow. In this saccharine environment the inhabitants breathe manufactured air and consume processed food, a "bland fodder that parodies the real food of the old world" (247). *Exodus* signals a communal desire to overcome the claustrophobic insularity of the patriarch's monovision and relocate Scottish society into an outward-looking hybrid world of inclusion, where it can be "*Free at last!*" (335). Caledon, himself, of course, is a deliberate masculinist distortion of "Caledonia," Scotland's traditional, wildly romanticized self-designation. In Bertagna's representation, Caledon's heroic dream—culminating in a megalomania that "filled him with a ruthlessness that turned his heart to stone" (194)—becomes everybody else's nightmare.

Bertagna also incorporates a number of conspicuous intertextual references that associate New Mungo, Glasgow's artificially-engineered Siamese twin, with Charles Dickens's famous *Tale of Two Cities*. These references work as a reminder of the bipolarity of Scotland's collective psyche, the portrayal of which has developed into a distinct tradition within Scottish literature. Douglas Gifford and in his co-authors point out in *Scottish Literature*, there is "a school of Scottish fiction which



has its own particular and almost obsessive preoccupation with divided self and divided family within divided community and nation” (Gifford et. al. 327). According to Gifford, this literary tradition reflects “older Scotland in tension with the new” (327), a Caledonian antisyzygy whose “recurrent symbolic patterning of opposites clearly expressed dualism deeply felt and long-lasting in Scottish culture” (328). Although Bertagna paints a bleak picture of such gothic duality, there remains positive potential: in her view, beyond dislocation lies the redemptive promise of relocation. This potential is embodied in the coupling of Mara and Fox as masculine/feminine doppelgangers whose androgynous complementation helps recharge their nation’s self-constitutive powers. In a most shrewd representational move Bertagna utilizes what has traditionally been seen as a negative motif of cultural division in order to conjure an image of contemporary harmony, thereby mobilizing Scotland forward. There are two possible envisionings of the story of Scotland and global climate change. Bertagna’s reference to Dickens’s *Tale of Two Cities* reminds us of these two diametrically opposed possibilities: either “*far and wide lay a ruined country, yielding nothing but desolation ... I see the evil of this time and of the previous time of which this is the natural birth*”, or “*I see a beautiful city and a brilliant people rising from this abyss!*” (*Zenith* 276–77).

Through her twinned characters, Mara and Fox, Bertagna dismantles the patriarchal Caledon/Caledonia binary in favor of androgynous balance; in the process, she redirects Scottishness away from nationalist isolation towards a supranational inclusionism: “We all have to open our eyes now and look beyond this godforsaken place at the edge of the Earth” (*Exodus* 9). Fox, who epitomizes this new supranationalism, describes himself as “*a child of the world*” (*Exodus* 330). It is clear, then, that future Scotland’s destination cannot be New Mungo; instead, the people—however diverse and internally divided—must relocate into (quite literally) a different climate zone, receptive to starting a new Scottish narrative of the nation which will overwrite Caledon’s parochial mindset. Post-devolution Scotland’s hitherto rigidly territorial borders dissolve as Mara leads the people to Greenland, a supranational(ist) realm, whose name, we are told, translates as “the land of the people”

(*Exodus* 178). This land, previously untouched by politics, “could ... be the key to their future” (*Exodus* 145). Bertagna’s literary vision finds a promising counterpart in the principle of Scotland’s newly devolved Parliament whose legitimacy, in Alice Brown and her co-authors’ terms, “derives from this expression of popular will, and gives added force to the belief that in Scotland sovereignty resides in the people and not in the crown” (Brown et. al. 230). Though an ordinary girl from among the common people, Mara shakes New Mungo’s foundations to the core with her struggle to rebuild the nation as embedded within a global network of justice and equality, just as post-devolution Scotland strives to accommodate and serve the needs of its diverse citizenship within both Europe and the world at large.

The people’s exodus to Greenland is inspired by Mara’s reading of “the fragment of a book” which “has set her imagination ablaze” (*Exodus* 145). Bertagna thus emphasizes the crucial significance of storytelling, and the sense of a national literary tradition, for informing political action in the present, concurring with Craig’s view that it is communal narration that forges the nation. Hope for a positive future is garnered from the old traditions of the people: “*Read the story of the past/Ponder its lessons -/And think not to leave/Without lifting up your heart*” (*Exodus* 203). It is no accident that Mara discovers an inscription of this wisdom in Glasgow University’s submerged library. The importance of telling stories forms part of the very ethos of Bertagna’s novels and solidly anchors fiction within a past/present/future continuum of Scottish cultural history:

What happened is like one of those legends in the books you used to read on the island. ... I’m going to tell everyone so that one day, when we find land, the story will live on in the world and the people who come after us will know how they came to be free. And maybe, somehow, our story will help them to be strong in their lives. (*Exodus* 334)

Bereft of tradition, the citizens of New Mungo are denied any meaningful sense of selfhood and communal belonging: individuals, like the state as a whole, are left without an authoritative repertoire of stories that might

inspire their conscious and politically engaged shaping of the future. Stories have become obsolete, as Mara discovers when she fails to find a “once upon a time” with which to soothe herself. One of the problems of Caledon’s brave new sky-world is that it ignores its heritage, having systematically erased the past: “The past is banished. It’s been deleted. All everyone ever thinks of is here and now” (*Exodus* 262). Reverting the process of history’s deletion like some kind of redundant computer file, Fox manages to rally the people by disseminating stories he has collected and stored on the Weave: “It’s about infecting the present with the past and—with luck—changing the future” (*Exodus* 284). This mingling of past, present and future that Fox’s actions set in motion gives rise to a communal assembly of individuals suddenly aware of their societal role and belonging. Unlike Fox and Mara’s synergetic vision of the future, the synthetically cleansed community of New Mungo epitomizes what Craig has called the traditional “Scottish ‘predicament’”:

the total elision of the evidence of the past and its replacement by a novelty so radical that it is impossible for the individual to relate to it his or her personal memories. And impossible, therefore, for that environment to be ‘related’ as a coherent narrative. The constant erasure of one Scotland by another makes Scotland unrelatable, unnarratable (21).

Caledon’s crowd of atomized citizens live their lives in perpetual homeostatic monotony, leading comfortably uneventful lives uninformed by their original heritage of cultural diversity and political reflection, suggesting that “perhaps luxury means little when there’s no real freedom in the world” (*Exodus* 237). In Bertagna’s fiction, an unnarratable Scotland is built upon patriarchal dislocations that negate any sense of identity. Her remedy is to incorporate the lessons of the past into the present and re-aggregate Scotland’s future within an intertextual abundance of supranational narration. As it transpires, Mara herself incorporates a perfect fusion of past, present and future: she is “the image of Thenew” (*Exodus* 116), who is the mother of St. Mungo, the patron saint of Glasgow.

But Mara is not the only one in Bertagna’s novels who is aware of her heritage, the people’s communal history, and the value of storytelling; so

are the “Treenesters” whom she befriends. The Treenesters are a group of characters who display a remarkably rooted collective consciousness, renaming themselves after areas of the original Glasgow, such as “Gorbals” and “Candleriggs.” Their perpetuation of a living oral tradition maintains Glasgow’s memory and legacy for future generations. As they explain, “stories are the world’s heartbeat. That’s what keeps us all alive” (*Exodus* 127). Eking out an existence on the lower peripheries of exclusivist New Mungo, the Treenesters come to constitute a pivotal metaphor within Bertagna’s vision as they are likened to “a bunch of walking place names, the living limbs of the lost city” (132). Through contact with them Mara learns how to retrieve, envisage and forge a viable link between her people’s cultural heritage and a viable future. The Treenesters live in symbiotic harmony with nature, unlike Caledon who has exploited nature’s resources for a ruthlessly anthropocentric survival of the fittest. The Treenesters teach Mara to respect the planet: “We do not kill trees ... Tree-killing is a terrible crime.... What if I chopped one of your limbs off? Tree killing is part of the story of the world’s drowning” (172–3). As she discovers the interconnectedness of nature’s multitude of resources, Mara is able to link the story of the community of Wing to that of global destruction: “There weren’t any trees on my island.... Wing did have trees once. Lots. The roots of them made peat in the Earth and we used peat for our fires. Long ago, Wing was all forest” (173). Finally, Fox confirms for Mara that “the worldwide extinction of the trees was one of the things that contributed to the floods” (295).

It is the Treenesters’ profound respect for nature, as well as their similarity to a Northern tribe she reads about that inspires Mara to envisage relocating Scotland to an Arctic “land of the people”:

*The Athapaskans, she reads, are a mobile people who inhabit the huge, mountainous boreal forests of the Arctic Circle, one of the emptiest, most forgotten places on Earth. They have not devastated the natural world around them as so-called civilized societies have, but have co-existed in fine balance with the land and its animals for thousands of And that’s almost all there is. The rest of the paper fragment is torn ... the Athapaskans have fired her imag-*

ination because they sound as if they are natural relations to the Treenesters. (154).

In a world decimated by rapid climate change, Mara learns that her unthinking and in itself perfectly innocuous maneuver to stoke the fire with a tree branch is precisely the type of behavior that led humanity to its current impasse. Gorbals's warning that "human beings burned up the power of the Earth, not just the trees but so much of the goodness of the planet that the world grew hot and the great ice mountains melted and flooded the lands" prompts Mara's sudden realization that "our ancestors stole our future" (174). Since Mara's access to ancestral storytelling remains partial due to the fragmentariness of her sources, she must rely on her own "fired imagination" to mobilize the palimpsestic remnants of her people's heritage to think up the future and act on her intuition. Unauthorized and, especially as a female, debarred from interfering with the phallographic scripts of Father Caledon(ia), she resolves to set herself free by taking the initiative and presenting her people with a new story. Bertagna's depiction of the Arctic as a vast icy wilderness resounds with Rosi Braidotti's evocation of the desert as "a gigantic map of signs for those who know how to read them, for those who can sing their way through the wilderness" (Braidotti 17) in *Nomadic Subjects*. *Exodus* appears to comply perfectly with Braidotti's idea of "nomadic writing" which, rather than heeding social constraints, "longs instead for the desert: areas of silence, in between the official cacophonies, in a flirt with radical nonbelonging and outsideness" (16). Accordingly, in Bertagna's fiction the Arctic's blank canvas—"one of the emptiest, most forgotten places on Earth" (*Exodus* 154)—could be said to "open up in-between spaces where new forms of political subjectivity can be explored" (Braidotti 7). Such a stark silent landscape also provides an ideal trope for uncharted "new forms" of citizenship to emerge outwith the bounds of geopolitical mapping.

It is in this immense silence of the desert also that Bertagna discovers a blank canvas on which to record her own contribution to the as-yet-untold story of post-devolution Scotland by abandoning masculinist territorialism for the "outsideness" of a fluid nomad-

ism. Mara's embarkation on a nomadic lifestyle is an act of political defiance insofar as "the nomadic state has the potential for positive renaming, for opening up new possibilities for life and thought, especially for women and, even more specifically, for female feminists" (Braidotti 8). As "nomadic subjects are capable of freeing the activity of thinking from the hold of phallogocentric dogmatism" (8), Bertagna's spatial wilderness allows her creativity to roam unfettered. As she explains, "my imagination is just drawn there ... it's an unexplored place. So it was somewhere for my imagination to roam ... that imaginative space" (McCulloch "Interview" n.pag). Similarly, in *The Idea of North* (which Bertagna has read) Peter Davidson traces literature's fascination with this possibly unlikeliest of imaginative terrains "as a place of purification, an escape from the limitations of civilization" (Davidson 21). The north appears as a politically and culturally unencumbered, supranational space, as "always a shifting idea, always relative" (Davidson 8) or, as Barry Lopez puts it, "part of the allure of the Arctic has always been the very imprecision of its borders" (282). In addition to its permeable borders, in the Arctic there is also room for new, malleable identities to emerge. Like the Athapaskans, Mara's followers become "*a mobile people*" (*Exodus* 154), loosening their national-territorialist ties in consigning their destiny to nomadic migration. To Bertagna, nomadism not only enables Mara's disparate clan to unite in a common cause, but also bears the promise of generating a wholesome ecobalance. Tapping into current debates and anxieties regarding ecological and ethno-political emergencies, Bertagna's writing is positioned at a crucial crossroads in the mapping of western culture. She utilizes the imaginative space of fiction to envisage alternative futures within the world as a post-apocalyptic fluid seascape that transcends national divisions in an outward journey of nomadic relocation to an as-yet-uncharted wilderness. Mara's "nomadic subjects" challenge Caledon's "phallogocentric dogmatism" by choosing homelessness over easy conformity (Braidotti 8). "Returning thought to its freedom" (8), as Braidotti puts it, these traveling people resist being fixed by state control, even though such a stance is bound to cause considerable uncertainty and discomfort. By moving as a new

nomadic nation towards unknown horizons they create a state of spatial synergy that defies enclosed geopolitical settlement.

Bertagna's dispossessed Treenesters form a matriarchal society led by the elderly Candleriggs, old enough to have lived through the devastation wrought by global warming. In her own words she describes herself as "the last woman of a generation of Earth people who no longer exist" (*Exodus* 322). Highly critical of New Mungo's selection of "what it judged to be the best of human beings" (196), Candleriggs vehemently opposes the pursuit of knowledge. Glasgow University's books are blamed for Caledon's phallogocentric regime: "Learning was the fuel that made his dream possible. Learning took him too far beyond the real world, far beyond his true self" (194), Candleriggs explains. "If it wasn't for the ideas that he found in its books there would be no bars between our world and the sky, no wall to trap us inside and the others outside, no police to steal slaves to build that empire in the sky" (194). Despite her fierce opposition to patriarchal control over nature, advocating that "you should stick to the natural gifts of the Earth" (109), Candleriggs's views are ultimately as myopic as her archival Caledon's. Her outlook is regressively conservative and static, and blatantly at odds with Mara's championing of mobility. In *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* Val Plumwood dismantles the allure of feminist fictions about "women liv[ing] at peace with themselves and with the natural world" that fashion pastoral simplicity into a universal panacea against "the power of technology and of military and economic force" (7). The portrayal of Candleriggs, who has secured what looks like peace and tranquility for her people, is Bertagna's critique of such stories about wise women "surviving against the hostile intent of men" (Plumwood 7). Candleriggs's people have failed to set themselves free and continue to live under continual threat from New Mungo's police with their "military and technological might" (*Exodus* 290). Like Plumwood, Bertagna indicts the shortcomings of an ecofeminist perspective which ultimately leaves women disenfranchised and deprived of real-political agency, forcing them back to the peripheries of a primordial earth-mother existence. This is precisely the "beleaguered" living hell that Candleriggs presides over, her people tenaciously grip-

ping the edge of a lost world, “clinging to a storm-tossed tree in a drowned world” (*Exodus* 290).

Plumwood warns that an uncritical ecofeminism may inadvertently supplant women’s citizenship rights with an essentialist gynocentric apoliticism, while truistically reminding “us all” of the need to balance “culture and technology” (7–8) with nature. Bertagna avoids the fallacy of traveling backward to the vision of a pristine world born out of the rejection of culture and technology in favor of life in an “enchanted forest” (*Exodus* 290). Rather, she envisages a harmony where nature, culture, science and technology together assist humanity in shaping a future free of destructive anthropocentrism and respectful of the planet’s resources. Bertagna has asserted, “you can’t get away from technology; it’s what you do with it. If you reject all ideas and progress, you end up extinct” (McCulloch “Interview” n.pag). It is exactly this fate of extinction that awaits Candleriggs due to her technophobic fear of knowledge. In *Zenith* Bertagna tells her readers that “with so much lost under the ocean, knowledge is the most precious thing in the world” (83). Candleriggs’s hostility to the university library’s “books ... full of poison” (*Exodus* 158) is clearly not a view shared by her creator. On the contrary, in Bertagna’s view “stories are the world’s heartbeat. That’s what keeps us all alive” (*Exodus* 127). In the end it is “books full of ideas and stories” (*Exodus* 153) from which Mara retrieves the knowledge required to release and relocate her people. Far from dispensing with science, then, the outcome of Bertagna’s novels is dependent on harnessing past knowledge to unlock the future. Plumwood cites “the problem of how to reintegrate nature and culture across the great western division between them and of how to give a positive value to what has been traditionally devalued and excluded as nature *without* simply reversing values and rejecting the sphere of culture” (10–11), and this is precisely also what is at stake in *Exodus*.

Importantly, Caledon, “the Grand Father of All,” is not only Candleriggs’s polar antagonist, he is also her former lover (288). As she explains, although he is clearly ingenious, his inspirational hopes for a fantastical future for humanity quickly deteriorate into megalomaniacal delusion and totalitarianist misery:



Cal believed we should leave Earth and our problems behind, that we could be reborn as creatures of the sky. Human angels, that's what he said we'd be. It seemed such a brilliant dream at first but it soon turned into a nightmare ... his dream had filled him with a ruthlessness that turned his heart to stone. (*Exodus* 193–94)

Cal's phallogocentric regime leaves no space for dissent, so he "*threw Candleriggs out of the New World when she rebelled against the cruel empire it had become*" (263). He is the creator of a "reborn" race and, as such, Cal's New World treatment of his obstreperous lover is strongly reminiscent of God's expulsion of Satan from Paradise. For Candleriggs "became a rebel," and she remembers that "there were others like me. ... We formed a revolutionary group" (197). Like a fallen angel, she is cast from the sky city down into the Netherworld. Bertagna uses lines from Dante's *Inferno* as an epigraph to the section in which Mara encounters Candleriggs, underscoring that she is indeed in hell: "Desolate, Mara paddles through the dark waters of the netherworld that lies under New Mungo" (96). In the Netherworld Mara must witness the abject misery of human suffering and degradation, becoming herself part of the "netherworld grime" (203). But while Mara benefits from Candleriggs's wisdom by learning of New Mungo's dark history, she must ultimately advance the journey of her people beyond Candleriggs's paralyzing recalcitrance.

Caledon's dreams gave rise to a nightmarish world; yet, dreaming *per se* as the origin of creative agency and political initiative is of integral and indispensable importance to Bertagna's work. Fantasy and the imagination are not intrinsically abhorrent, although their corruption most certainly is. History is littered with the debris of utopias gone wrong. As Bertagna demonstrates, while capable of enlightening humanity and advancing its progress and development, dreams are equally prone to creating division and darkness. Caledon's eugenical dreams have resulted in widespread suffering, whereas Mara's dream will lead to liberation. Recognizing the vital role ideas have played in human history, Mara ponders "the golden names of long-gone people who dreamed up the

visions that took humankind from wooden clubs to space telescopes ... And finally to cities in the sky,” thinking also of “the wealth of dreams that lie abandoned among the pillared halls of the university” (151, 161). Bertagna shows humanity balancing on a precarious tightrope as she dramatizes both the utopian and dystopian potentialities of dreams. While “each of us is a new living dream,” ecological and political irresponsibility have rendered society “a living nightmare. ... The human dream’s all gone wrong” (175). The challenge posed by Bertagna’s fiction is to discern how to achieve equilibrium between our propensity for envisioning utopia and our less fortuitous (self-)destructive impulses. Recognizing the essential bipolarity of human wisdom, Mara has an epiphany, suddenly seeing “that the nature technology of the Treenesters must spill from the same well of ingenuity as that which made the New World” (151).

Fox realizes that the cosmos, which is a dream in itself while also hosting the dreams of human beings, could easily do without such a parasite:

*The universe is doing just fine, busy spinning its own dreams into infinity. It doesn't need him, doesn't need anyone at all. It doesn't matter to the universe whether a single human being exists on Earth or not. And yet—if he were not here the universe would be one pot of dreams poorer, one immeasurable jot of human energy weaker. The universe might not need Fox but it's good all the same that he's here, a child of the world, no more or less than a tree or a star. Now I'm skin and bone and dirt, he laughs. Now I'm real!*  
(330)

Fox realizes his full potential only after escaping from New Mungo when, no longer a mere computer simulation, he begins to revel in the DNA that links him to the very earthiness of life. Fox could be said to embrace his “feminine” connectedness with the universe rather than adopting a more stereotypically masculinist—that is, detached and aggressively controlling—stance towards it. His departure from patriarchal models of self-identification signals the need for all citizens to acknowledge and respect their interdependence with nature and the globe, echoing James

Lovelock's plea in *The Revenge of Gaia* "that we put our fears and our obsession with personal and tribal rights aside, and be brave enough to see that the real threat comes from the harm we do to the living Earth, of which we are a part and which is indeed our home" (Lovelock 14). While seemingly advocating an ecofeminist view, Fox's male impersonation of these allegedly "feminine" values in fact incorporates Plumwood's critique of exclusively feminist utopias while safeguarding also against Candleriggs's mistake of opting out of society instead of seeking politically active and responsible integration. Bertagna's vision shifts humanity from being a parasitic blight on the face of the Earth to generating a source of harmonious synergy: as "*a child of the world*" Fox realizes that his newfound "*human energy*" (330) springs from and depends upon Mother Earth, just as all children rely on their caregivers.

Bertagna's presentation of a balanced worldview is predicated not only on the abolition of territorialist demarcations but also other ideological constraints, such as those inscribed and perpetuated by traditional gender formations. Part of the world's problem is to be found in the centuries-old exclusivist favoring of male ability and the concomitant disregard for and suppression of female talentedness and genius:

Mara remembers what bothered her as she walked through the vast halls of the university, looking at the portraits of the golden names. There were no dreamswomen. Apart from the odd mythical figure or queen, not one of the golden names had belonged to a woman. All the great dreamers had been men. ... The women might have dreamed just as hard ... but their dreams had become all tangled up with the knit of ordinary life, with meal-making and baby care and nest-building. Yet wasn't little Clayslaps more wonderful than anything dreamed up by those golden names? (*Exodus* 169)

Acknowledging the indispensability of great visionary citizens for the progress of a nation, Mara recognizes that there need to be "dreamswomen" as well as men. She does recognize the importance of reproduction: "Women grow the living dreams ... A human being is the greatest creation of all. Each of us is a new living dream" (175). Accordingly,

she regards Clayslap, the Treenester baby, as a creative prodigy integral to the success of Scotland's future. Yet she challenges the perception that women ought not to contribute to the nation beyond the domestic sphere: "Mara wonders how many of the golden names in the great halls had dreamswomen as mothers—women who helped them find and follow a dream... And what about her own dream?" (170). In conspicuously Woolfian mode she looks back through her mothers but finds no trace of a female-authored legacy. She begins to recognize herself as a mould-breaking female creator emerging from the margins to redress the balance "of the missing women in the mosaic of creation" (175). Mara resolves that her new land of the people must be founded not only on supranational openness but also on androgynous inclusion. Notably, according to Tom Campbell, supranationalism holds the potential to work integratively not only between nations, but also within them, as it aims for the institutionalization of "a more pluralistic framework within which sub-nations, ethnic minorities, religious communities and indigenous peoples could have the opportunity to come more into their own" (n.pag). This pluralism would presumably also benefit women. In Bertagna's post-apocalyptic dystopia of broken wind-farms and solar panels, patriarchy itself is a relic of failure that must be discarded and overcome to secure a more wholesome new beginning for humankind.

However, until this imbalance within democratic representation can be rectified, Mara realizes that women, numbering over half of humankind, will continue to be erased from their own story. She also suspects that it is this erasure which is largely to blame for why "the human dream's all gone wrong. I can't believe there were no great dreamswomen in the whole history of the world" (175). Women have been silenced by the *history* of the world, and unless a remedy for this occlusion is found soon, so Bertagna asserts, the degradation of female humanity will continue and so will the harm already inflicted upon human progress as a whole due to this ideological asphyxiation of half of our human resources and potentialities. Mara comes face to face with the patriarchal monolithic 'I' which so enraged Woolf, and she resolves that Scotland can only achieve perfect self-fulfillment if it manages to transform itself

into a space within which pluralist equality can thrive. As *Exodus* amply demonstrates, it is not only women whose cultural creativity has been stifled, but innumerable marginalized groups have been categorically disenfranchised from the governance of a phallogocentric nation. Gorbals, Bertagna's working-class performance poet whose name is almost an anagram of *global*, observes, "there must have been many unknown men whose names and dreams are lost too" (175). In response, Mara begins to empathize not only with history's female, but also with its male casualties, for "with a stab of pain, [she] thinks of her father ... and all the unknown, ordinary men who farmed the land" (175). Still, Bertagna insists, the gender imbalance clearly outweighs segregation and disenfranchisement in terms of class, as it affects both rich and poor women alike. "[T]here are no women at all," Mara concludes (175). This absence has also been identified by the Holyrood parliamentarians among whom, according to Brown, "there is a strong consensus that the Scottish Parliament must be a different type of legislature, one which is accessible to women and others traditionally excluded from formal arenas of politics" (197).

Plumwood, like Bertagna, argues for a fusion of masculine and feminine potentialities that will bring about a powerful synergy bound to benefit both humanity and the planet in their entirety. What has been going wrong more or less continually since the Enlightenment is, as Plumwood explains, that "reason in the western tradition has been constructed as the privileged domain of the master, who has conceived nature as a wife or subordinate other" (3). The myopic one-sidedness and deeply ingrained sexist exclusivity of purely masculinist reason is likely to lead to global self-destruction and, as Bertagna never fails to point out, it must and can be remedied by a less segregational and more symbiotic relationship between men and women, as well as nature and technology. Thus, the ultimate success of Mara's mission depends on her union with Fox, whose masculinity is notably far less polarized than customary among his people. Mara acknowledges that "*I can't do this on my own*" (*Exodus* 253). Their union culminates in the conception of their baby Lily, who connotes the peaceful equilibrium that will supplant Scotland's traditional duality with a healthy balance of self/other.

Despite the starkly heteronormative undertones of Bertagna's symbolism in this context, the representational polyvalence of Lily's birth remains beyond question as she is intended to embody the hopes of a *whole* generation whose future has been relocated by to an entirely new sphere and "climate." Mara's generation can only reach this "land of the people" by practicing true democracy. Analogically speaking, post-devolution Scotland can only fulfill its potential and flourish if it starts cultivating a cosmopolitan democracy. Just as Bertagna's people simultaneously rediscover themselves as a sovereign nation, grab hold of their democratic power, and learn to adjust their political practice to a new global outlook, so Scotland's newly devolved Parliament is predicated on the premise "that in Scotland sovereignty resides in the people and not in the crown" (Brown et. al. 230).

Mara is a strong heroine, but her status as a young woman inevitably pits her individual story against a whole generic tradition of male heroic-quest narratives. Unsurprisingly, therefore, without any female role models to look up to or model herself after, Mara suffers moments of acute self-doubt, which threaten to entrap her in familial myths of patriarchal femininity and thus seriously imperil her mission:

*Maybe I could get out of this. Maybe I could persuade Fox to forget it all. We could let the cyberflood come and do nothing. We could live together and have a nice, snug life here in the New World. Why do I have to be the big heroine? Why me? I don't want it to be me. I'm too scared. I'm just an ordinary girl and all I want is an ordinary life. It's not up to me to save the world. (Exodus 303–4).*

Mara must struggle hard against her phallogocentric interpellation into an "ordinary," strictly feminine role within society. What saves her is the strength she summons from remembering her late mother's words of faith and confidence: "*I believe in you*" (304). She remembers, too, all those women whose lives have been erased from history and thereby creates her own female tradition more or less *ex nihilo*. Recalling their stories Mara is able not only to gather resolve, but also to start rewriting history by retrieving these forgotten women's cultural contributions and achievements: "She thinks of Granny Mary, who fought so hard

in her youth to build a future when it seemed there was none.... She thinks of Candleriggs, then of Thenew ... all of them salvaged a future out of the wreckage of their young lives" (304). Bertagna situates her heroine in deliberate opposition to naturalized gender formations, enabling her young-adult readers to identify with a strong female character in the hope that they will carry this identification out into the world. As Margery Hourihan points out in *Deconstructing the Hero*, "stories which restrict girls and women to limited domestic roles ... carry a powerful, though passive, ideological message," adding that "children's literature does not exist in isolation and its significance cannot be properly appreciated unless it is explored in the broader cultural context" (Hourihan 4–5). Bertagna's fiction challenges the myths of female domesticity by showing how the paralyzing stronghold of feminine passivity over a young woman's imagination can be broken, making it possible to conceive of and create a strong, active female leader.

Like so many other feminist critics Hourihan links the dominance of white, male heroes in western narrative, including children's fiction, to the anthropocentric exploitation of the planet's resources, asserting that the stories a culture tells itself about the world do exert a significant influence on political and socio-economic practice. "Progress and development have led to the exhaustion and pollution of many of the planet's resources," Hourihan writes, which—in her view—is a very good reason for "considering the hero story from a non-traditional perspective, for questioning the values it inscribes" (7). *Exodus* must be regarded as an ethically informed and politically responsible text that focuses quite purposely not on the public-school hero of boys' adventure stories, but on the ordinary girl capable of rewriting her destiny and, by doing so, re-envisioning the future of her people as well. This is yet another respect in which Mara can be linked by analogy to post-devolution Scotland. Both young woman and newly emancipated nation are emerging from their categorical disenfranchisement by western patriarchal politics by shaping a new approach to global politics and paying heed to Hourihan's imperative that "it is time to tell new stories" (8).

In *Questioning Scotland* Eleanor Bell shows that under the deconstructive influence of postmodernism much contemporary Scottish fiction

has broken with Scotland's nationalist tradition of writing and become "self-conscious about nationhood in ways that constantly move away from the transcendental; de-stabilising and deferring national possibilities, by pointing to issues of the ethical and what lies beyond conventional, stereotypical notions" (99). Bertagna is no exception here. Her literary vision, too, disrupts narrative conventions that serve to reassert and consolidate the nation by opening up what Bell refers to as "this intermediary space of potential re-articulation of identity ... associated here with an ethical imperative" (99). A good example of Bertagna's deconstructive subversion can be found in her portrayal of the Treenesters, who see Mara as the savior of Scotland's future and liken her to Thenew, the mother of Glasgow's patron saint, Mungo. Yet again accentuating the important role storytelling plays in aiding identification, Candleriggs urges Mara to "look at this story in the stone. It shows a fish with a ring, a bell, a bird and a tree.... This is the story we live by.... Now that you are here it must begin, because Thenew is the key to the whole story. And you are the image of Thenew" (*Exodus* 116). Linking Mara to the heraldic images in the coat-of-arms of Thenew's city effectively renders her if not the key itself, then the key-holder, to a "promised" or intended Scotland not only capable of acknowledging the cultural achievements of its female citizens, but dependent on them for its self-fulfillment.

It is important to note that one of Bertagna's acknowledged sources for *Exodus* is Elspeth King's *The Hidden History of Glasgow's Women: The Thenew Factor*, in which the latter observes that "taking into consideration the history of violence against women in the west of Scotland ... it seems in retrospect entirely appropriate that the mother of Glasgow's patron saint should have suffered rape and violence, and have been homeless at the time of his birth" (King 18). Not only does Mara take after Thenew in her physical appearance, her life follows the same trajectory: Mara, too, is pregnant, homeless, and in search of a home for her child, even though Mara's child—possibly indicating the rise of a new post-patriarchal value system—is born female. By presenting Mara with the symbols of the brutalized Mother Glasgow, the Treenesters equip her with a role model she can aspire to, yet also—more importantly—with a female foundation myth in urgent need of radical re-envisioning. While



she does not feel uncomfortably defined by their “stone-telling,” it does have an enduring impact on her. Instead of continuing to reject her destiny as the people’s savior, she now appears keen to work on fulfilling it: “Now the thought of the ancient stone face that mirrors her own no longer makes Mara shiver; now the idea of it sends a wild-powered current surging through her” (*Exodus* 122). The heroine’s new-found resolve and self-confidence of course also mirror post-devolution Scotland’s new political self-assertion. By recounting the nation’s foundation myth Bertagna identifies post-devolution Scotland as a member of the global community and an active contributor to a new, hopefully fairer, more just and less oppressive world order. In Bertagna’s vision Scotland volunteers to share ecological responsibility for climate change; only once this has been accomplished can Mara arrive at a place where “the green patch of trees make her feel she is home, at last” (*Zenith* 321).

Mara’s traumatic journey signposts a cyclical return “home” while simultaneously transporting the people to a new location. The people are supranational citizens of the future composed of a multiplicity of identities, several of whom, newly arrived in the “land of the people,” ponder the changes in their identity and cultural disposition. As one of them muses, “the pirate in him was snuffed out ... He can’t be a gypsea now either because he’s landed. So who am I? What am I now?” (*Zenith* 317). Or, as others wonder, “who are we if we’re not Treenesters any more? Who are we now?” (*Zenith* 320). Bertagna’s future Scots are undergoing a process of radical national reassemblage which affects their sense of citizenship, cultural belonging, and self-identification. At one point Mara goes as far as to declare that “we sound like aliens,” while another character commenting on their new home observes that “it *looks* like another planet ... Or the moon” (*Zenith* 320). Pertinently, similar sentiments abound within real-life political debates on post-devolution Scotland. O’Neill, for example, describes devolution in terms that are uncannily reminiscent of Bertagna’s literary vision as he finds contemporary Scotland subject to “unprecedented change for sure, a journey without a reliable map” (366).

At the end of their journey Mara’s people find themselves irrevocably changed despite successfully carrying forward their ancestral legacy. The

new image of Mara herself is conveyed to us via a fractured mirror, again mixing memory with unforeseeable, mysterious change: “Eyes like midnight, Dad used to say, but there’s an indefinable darkness that was never there before” (*Zenith* 256). In fulfilling her destiny Mara has matured into an unpredictable multi-faceted character. Importantly, Bertagna’s future Scots reach their new home in spring, the season of rebirth, after spending the dark winter months enclosed in a cave, described as “the dark innards of Earth” (214). Just as Mara’s baby is growing inside her mother, the people lie dormant in this moist warm space until it is time to emerge into the world. Bertagna’s description of this emergence is unequivocal in its allusiveness:

The tunnel presses in on all sides.... She begins to slide her body around the curve of the bend, to push herself forward limb by limb. Before she knows it, Gorbals and Pollock are pulling her out at the other end. Gasping and sweating... They have made it through! (268)

Their rebirth allows the people to start afresh, free of the shackles of patriarchal norms and armed with the knowledge of their forefathers’ mistakes. Once again there are poignant parallels to the hope expressed for post-devolution Scotland by cultural critics and political commentators. O’Neill envisages Scottish citizenship as “embrac[ing] all the composite nations, ethnicities and creeds of these islands ... in the development of multi-layered identity” (369), while in *Remaking the Union* Howard Elcock and Michael Keating conceive of Scotland’s new self-government as “a search for civic community, for new principles of solidarity, and a mechanism for retaining social cohesion in the face of the disintegrative effects of the global market” (Elcock and Keating 3–4). Meanwhile, in *Zenith* the character of Gorbals reassures a group of refugees that they are “not shut out of the world, dying outside the city wall. And you’re not ratkins any more.... We are all people now. People of the free world on the way to our home” (*Zenith* 96–97). The overall impression is that social cohesion thrives on a politics of balance and communal integration rather than one-sided domination or subjugation of the environment. As Bertagna demonstrates in her portrayal of both Candlerigg’s

and Caledon's failures, a polarized society cannot sustain itself; rather, a balance between masculine and feminine principles, as well as science and nature, must be reached. Similar perceptions and sentiments circulate within post-devolution Scotland's emergent politics as, for example, indicated by Brown's plea for a more pronounced gender balance in parliamentary representation: "A new legislature with more women ... will be more conducive for men as well as women and will ultimately provide a more effective and participatory democracy making better decisions for the whole of Scottish society" (Brown 198). Bertagna's literary envisioning of Mara's new world in a faraway "land of the people" bears a striking resemblance to the kind of cosmopolitan future of justice and equal rights post-devolution Scotland has set out to build for itself.

Bertagna's writing is markedly fluid and exudes an almost metafictional awareness of its own open-endedness; it also reflects Bertagna's view on how the story of the nation ought to be told, taking my investigation back to where it began: "If things aren't tied up then there's energy there," she says. "Scotland is in transition, I suppose that must inform your imagination and ... I am writing about characters who are all in transition" (McCulloch n.pag). Intent on making a statement about ideal post-devolution nationhood, Bertagna's young-adult fiction resists borders and neat endings, achieving what Braidotti refers to as "nomadic writing" insofar as "nomadism consists not so much in being homeless, as in being capable of recreating your home everywhere" (16). Devolution is a process, not an event, and "nobody knows what lies on the path of their journey until it happens" (*Zenith* 116). Bertagna defuses persistent threats of territorialist nationalism by initiating a process of nomadic relocation of the people. Scotland is not fixed; it evolves and shifts with its people's journeys.

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