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Jonathan Murray

Alliteration, America and Authorship: the Television Drama of John Byrne

Abstract

Creative polymath John Byrne enjoys a secure and substantial international reputation within the graphic and theatrical arts, and as a seminal figure within late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century Scottish culture. Yet Byrne's sustained engagement with screenwriting and screen directing practices between the late 1980s and late 1990s constitutes a critically under-examined aspect of his career to date. Moreover, such neglect is also symptomatic of a wider lack of attention paid to television within the study of modern Scottish culture. This article casts light on an important aspect of, and period within, Byrne's creativity to date. In doing so, it also seeks to offer an illustrative demonstration of television drama's relevance to the questions of changing identity politics – national, subnational, and supranational – that have dominated Scottish Cultural Studies in recent decades. The article achieves those aims through extended textual analysis of Byrne's two best-known screen works, the television series *Tutti Frutti* (1987) and *Your Cheatin' Heart* (1990). It identifies and discusses a range of common thematic preoccupations: the influence of American culture within post-Second World War Scotland, changing patterns of Scottish gender identities – and authorial approaches – intense linguistic experimentation, and use of popular cultural intertexts to impart narrative structure and substance shared by the two works. In this way, the article establishes both some of the idiosyncratic defining terms of Byrne's televisual practice and some of the reasons why these have rendered him such an important figure within Scottish culture since the late 1970s.

Keywords

John Byrne; *Tutti Frutti*; *Your Cheatin' Heart*; television drama; Scottish culture; American cultural influence; popular music

Introduction

John Byrne is a seminal late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century Scottish cultural figure, his *oeuvre* arguably unmatched locally in terms of its polymathic and prolific qualities. A successful visual artist since the 1960s, Byrne's portraiture was presented in a major retrospective, 'Sitting Ducks', at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in 2014; his graphic practice also forms the central subject of a 2011 book-length study.¹ Byrne has written eighteen plays (including several adaptations of classic Russian literature) since his 1977 theatrical debut, *Writer's Cramp*. His best-known stage works, the three plays that constitute his *Slab Boys Trilogy*,² are regularly identified as transformative examples of modern Scottish theatre. For one prominent local critic, 'something absolutely new was born' within Byrne's stage practice: 'a sense of a future that could be both Scottish and modern... a sense of Scottishness robust and inclusive enough to absorb all the stuff of modernity and still... be its recognisable self'.³ But despite these facts, perplexingly little is written about a period in Byrne's career between 1986 and 1997 during which he wrote and/or directed no fewer than six major television commissions. These were: *Tutti Frutti* (tx. March 3– April 7, 1987); *Normal Service* (tx. February 2, 1988); *Arena: Byrne About Byrne* (tx. April 1, 1988); *Your Cheatin'*

Heart (tx. October 11–November 18 1990); *Boswell and Johnson's Tour of the Western Isles* (tx. October 27, 1993); and a Channel 4-funded feature film version of *The Slab Boys* (1997). During the decade in which he made these works, Byrne temporarily seemed to see screenwriting and directing as his creativity's dominant conduit.⁴

Byrne's screen work is not entirely overlooked, critically speaking. Several critical overviews of modern Scottish culture acknowledge those texts' creative innovation and local cultural significance. They do so, moreover, in ways indicative of many of the current essay's central preoccupations. Contemporary encounters between Scottish and American cultural identities and traditions loom large, for example. Byrne regularly presents himself as someone 'weaned on American culture through comic books, films and records',⁵ and Alan Riach judges that 'the appropriation of American popular culture was most fruitful in Scottish television drama in the 1980s and 1990s in... *Tutti Frutti* and *Your Cheatin' Heart*'.⁶ In what follows below, Byrne's screen work is also presented as notably experimental, linguistically, tonally and structurally speaking. He argues against 'this idea that something that's a comedy is somehow empty and something that's a drama has to be solemn... life is a combination of the two... drama should reflect this'.⁷ Existing criticism understands and enlightens this aspect of Byrne's writing practice when it notes the latter's 'delight in language and wit'⁸ and its 'highly idiomatic use of the vernacular with use of literary English, technical terms, jargon and malapropisms, and visual humour'.⁹ Finally, a progressive critique of dominant late-twentieth-century Scottish gender identities renders much of Byrne's television as art 'in which the identity, predicament and emotional potential of the Scottish male have been re-imagined'.¹⁰

This article discusses *Tutti Frutti* and *Your Cheatin' Heart* in relation to these three analytical priorities, and uses a combination of authorial discourse, contemporary press response and scholarly literature to do so. Academic commentary is surprisingly scarce on the ground for an artist contemporaneously identified as 'the television man of the eighties surge of Scottish writing'.¹¹ Only three extended scholarly analyses of Byrne's screen career have appeared to date.¹² This represents a missed opportunity on at least three fronts. Passing over the screen component of Byrne's career results in compromised understanding of an *oeuvre* presented by its creator as an assemblage of mutually informing works created across different media: 'people often ask me if there's any conflict... between my being a painter and a writer... to me the two things are complementary'.¹³ Secondly, Byrne justly describes himself as 'an infiltrator... I'd rather cajole people into enjoying something... till afterwards they think, "That was a bit more than I thought at first"'.¹⁴ His screenwriting's structural and tonal idiosyncrasy and ambition are so complex as to require extended consideration in order to be fully appreciated. Finally, relative neglect of Byrne's screen career also reflects the absence within modern Scottish cultural studies of a substantial critical literature surrounding television's place as one of the 'primary media through which the transformation of Scotland' since the late 1970s 'has been creatively addressed and conveyed to audiences'.¹⁵

Tutti Frutti

Tutti Frutti examines the effects of time's passage on rock 'n' roll's promise of perpetually heightened and transformative youthful motion and emotion. Unsuccessful artist Danny McGlone

(Robbie Coltrane) returns to his native Glasgow for the funeral of his brother, Big Jazza (also played by Coltrane), lead singer of faded, middle-aged Scottish rock 'n' roll band The Majestics. Jazza's death through drink-driving complicates plans for a Scottish tour to mark the 25th anniversary of the band's sole charting single. The tour goes ahead, however, when unscrupulous band manager, Eddie Clockerty (Richard Wilson), hits on the idea of replacing Jazza with Danny. The difficulties of being a new member of a dysfunctional combo overshadowed by egotistical lead guitarist Vincent Diver (Maurice Roëves) are further complicated by Danny's falling in love with Suzi Kettles (Emma Thompson), a fellow student from his time at The Glasgow School of Art. As the tour lurches from crisis to crisis – a BBC journalist plans an unsympathetic television exposé, Vincent is trapped between the incompatible wishes of his wife, Noreen (Anne Kidd), and much younger lover, Glenna (Fiona Chalmers), Glenna eventually kills herself – Suzi also joins the band. The Majestics somehow make it to the tour's climactic show, but Vincent commits suicide there by setting fire to himself onstage.

Tutti Frutti was contemporarily lauded in Scotland and the wider United Kingdom. Local commentators welcomed '[BBC Scotland's] most ambitious project ever',¹⁶ a work 'bidding fair to become the best thing BBC Scotland has ever done'.¹⁷ Many London-based television critics praised the medium's 'most unexpected hit of 1987'.¹⁸ This initial perception of the series' remarkable creative accomplishment and cultural significance has endured since. Academic criticism sees *Tutti Frutti* as an unusually innovative and influential work of Scottish television drama on multiple fronts. Echoing contemporaneous popular press response,¹⁹ some scholars praise *Tutti Frutti's* unusual tonal complexity and discern a combination of 'various generic elements, comic and tragic' that bypasses 'the resolutely realistic conventions one might associate with television drama in Scotland'.²⁰ Others emphasize the series' progressive representation of late-twentieth-century Scottish gender identities, 'expos[ing] the failings of certain traditional conceptions of masculinity in order to bury the stereotype of the Scottish "hard man" once and for all'.²¹ Finally, *Tutti Frutti* is also regularly cited as an especially insightful and innovative investigation of American popular culture's pronounced influence within post-Second World War Scotland. Byrne's work is widely seen to exemplify 'the interaction of local and international popular cultures and the manifold creativity and misunderstandings such interaction fosters'.²²

As well as forming the backbone for analysis of *Tutti Frutti*, these themes also suggest taking a bifurcated critical approach towards the series: both a pioneering Scottish television drama *and* a pioneering television drama that cannot be reduced to its Scottishness. Consideration of the series' production background tends towards the same conclusion. On one hand, *Tutti Frutti* possessed an intimate relation to its local cultural and production contexts. Andy Park, the series' producer, saw Byrne as 'a writer whose work is known to be properly Scottish' and *Tutti Frutti* as 'the logical flowering of a frustration within BBC Scotland'²³ regarding the limited nature of contemporary opportunities to create networked television drama from a Scottish base. Moreover, the series was personally commissioned by Bill Bryden, Head of TV Drama at BBC Scotland since April 1984.²⁴ Contemporary press and later critical accounts present Bryden's brief as involving 'foster[ing] homegrown talent'²⁵ and 'establish[ing] Scotland as a power base for writers'.²⁶ Recalling The Poets, a Scottish rock 'n' roll band who scored a single UK Top 10 hit in 1962, Bryden suggested to Byrne that the latter write a series about an ageing Scottish group still gigging quarter-of-a-century after

their fleeting moment of fame.²⁷ Byrne accepted that premise and wrote a full script in just eight weeks.²⁸ Bryden's commissioning of *Tutti Frutti* should also be understood in the context of his broader attempt to enhance Scottish-produced television drama's prominence across the UK network. Between October 1987 and May 1988, BBC Scotland spent £1.5m on television drama. Most prominently, Bryden commissioned seven one-off dramas for a new network strand titled 'The Play on One'. Contemporary trade press described the strand as 'a successor to "Play for Today"', and no fewer than five out of the first seven entries in it were Scottish-written, including *Normal Service*, Byrne's adaptation of his 1979 theatre play of the same name.²⁹ Against such locally specific considerations, however, Byrne's authorial emphases should also be acknowledged. He stressed the extent to which *Tutti Frutti* developed in ways different from Bryden's original series idea and undefined by any wider local institutional agenda: 'I never wrote an outline of the story or anything. It just unfolded as I wrote it'.³⁰ Most importantly of all, Byrne claims that he 'didn't at all see [*Tutti Frutti*] as a clear opportunity to take a specifically Scottish theme to a wider audience. I just saw it as a wonderful opportunity to write six hours of TV film about a bunch of people of my generation who grew up with rock 'n' roll'.³¹ With such assertions in mind, non-nationally specific considerations should also play a part within discussion of this series.

Tutti Frutti's tonal and structural idiosyncrasy is often noted. The main sources of the series' 'carnavalesque quality'³² are multiple. Firstly, there is its self-consciously leisurely narrative pacing. What Byrne described retrospectively as 'the chance to do a bit of meandering'³³ has been noted by popular³⁴ and academic³⁵ critics alike. The series' opening shot is symptomatic in this regard. A long take tilts and pans through several sights (long grass, a funeral cortege, a grey cityscape) before arriving at its primary destination, an open grave. In taking palpably overlong to expose the viewer to its ultimate object, a symbol of masculine self-destruction (the waiting grave is Big Jazza's), this shot functions as a self-conscious microcosm of the entire series' narrative arc: a six-hour story of chance, conflict and confusion that climaxes in Vincent's self-immolation as The Majestics' tour ends. All but one of *Tutti Frutti's* other episodes also commence with a long shot. This recurring example of director Tony Smith's 'absurd juxtaposition of muted naturalism punctuated by moments of visual excess'³⁶ complements Byrne's rejection of what the latter termed 'a formula pace which assumes we are all mindless junkies needing an event or interlude every ten seconds... I took [*Tutti Frutti*] differently'.³⁷ While the series displays sympathy towards certain aspects of classic rock 'n' roll, the genre's celebration of speed as sensation, exemplified in the ideal of the three-minute pop single, is not one of them.

But while slow, *Tutti Frutti's* it is anything but static. As Ian Bell notes, 'the pace of the series seems slow... because Byrne is building a series of dramas... to do with a group of people who lost their place in the world'.³⁸ Byrne describes writing *Tutti Frutti* as a process in which unexpected interventions by others (his fictional protagonists) repeatedly breached the integrity of a personal space-cum-possession (his real-life writing practice) in productive ways: 'characters unfolded despite me rather than because of me'³⁹ and were 'saying, "No, we're not going to do that"'.⁴⁰ This private experience became reified within the series' public content and accounts for the work's cross-fertilization of intensely comic and tragic elements, or, as Byrne describes it, 'it's funny in the way

that life is funny – in other words, it's not... when it's happening'.⁴¹ Specifically, the motif of unforeseen and/or uncontrollable transformative interventions recurs across a number of different surfaces and spaces. Some of the latter – sartorial space, public and/or professional space – are often associated with comic affect. Others – domestic space, corporeal space – are aligned more with tragedy and pain. Many instances of all forms of spatial disruption, however, are impregnated with both qualities.

Tutti Frutti's repeated transgression of its characters' much-prized sartorial integrity reflects the extent to which protagonists 'are determinedly surrounded by things: clothes, shoes, furnishings, decor define their existence'.⁴² Danny accidentally stains what Suzi describes as her 'good shirt' with fried food during their first day out together. This comically presages both his immature heedlessness and the affectionately combative nature of his eventual relationship with Suzi. Vincent's embarrassed inability to carry off the oversized, pastel-coloured lumber jacket that Glenna knits as a love token mocks his immaturity (the jacket looks like gigantic infant apparel) and consequent tendency to be overwhelmed by the sincerity of her naïve love for him. *Tutti Frutti's* insertion of unlooked-for complications into a range of public and professional spaces is comparably comic. The nondescript bus stop into which Big Jazza crashes and dies becomes, in the hyperbolic words of the journalist making an exposé about The Majestics, a 'rock 'n' roll shrine' on a par with Jim Morrison's grave. A regional radio phone-in slot to promote one of the band's gigs is excruciatingly derailed when a female caller accuses one member of impregnating and abandoning her mother when The Majestics were last in town some quarter-of-a-century before. Much of episode five is given over to chaotic attempts to cut an anniversary single release in a recording studio with faulty talkback equipment and insufficient space to house all the playing musicians.

Alternatively, numerous ruptures of domestic and corporeal space foreground *Tutti Frutti's* darker elements. Episode one introduces the incongruously neat flat that Vincent shares with Glenna. He warns his bandmates against making 'wan mark oan' on the beige carpet that symbolizes his self-serving attempt at adulterous domesticity. By episode 5, however, the now-suicidal Glenna stubs cigarettes out all over that surface. Similarly, Suzi's West End flat initially seems an attractive synthesis of tasteful antique physical comforts and emancipated modern social consciousness ('what you see is one of everything: there hasn't been a guy for some time', she says). It is later revealed to house something far more compromised, however. Suzi's estranged, abusive, and hitherto unrevealed husband pays an unexpected visit and sexually assaults her in the living room. Finally, painful and/or perilous injury inflicted on characters' bodies often symbolizes their self-destructive impulses or the damaging ones of people close to them. Big Jazza dies while driving under the influence; Suzi is raped; Glenna commits suicide and Noreen attempts it; Vincent repeatedly injures himself (putting his head through Eddie's glass office door) or is injured by others (stabbed by the radio phone-in caller who thinks he is her father). *Tutti Frutti's* final scene is the most comprehensive, because climactic, synthesis of all these dramatic strategies. Vincent's suicide by sousing himself with vodka and then lighting it is simultaneously comic – he drunkenly struggles with his malfunctioning cigarette lighter – and tragic: the desperate act of a man forced to confront the inadequacy of his long-term machismo. It is also an unexpected rupture of all the spatial orders

discussed above: sartorial (Vincent torches a prized biker jacket); public-cum-professional (he does so during a Majestics gig); domestic (he bereaves his bandmates); and corporeal (he takes his life in a horrific way). The fact that *Tutti Frutti's* opening and concluding scenes each in their respective way function so well as microcosmic distillations of the whole series' tonal approach and thematic content – the former suggests what is to come, the latter re-summarizes what has just been – is indicative of a notably ambitious and accomplished work.

Tutti Frutti's tonal complexity also stems from the series' interest in local gender identities and the types of intimate interpersonal relationships these typically encourage or prevent. Byrne argues that: 'I knew I was going against the grain of Scottish TV writing at the time, which was very macho and all about violence... I was determined to write such good parts for women'.⁴³ In *Tutti Frutti*, therefore, patriarchy is figured as a state within which love, to quote the titles of two classic songs The Majestics play at length during different episode climaxes, 'hurts' (episode 5) and 'is strange' (episode 4). These ideas are articulated through parental as well as sexual metaphors and motifs. For Adrienne Scullion, 'the idea and image of the mother is a central theme... most of the women [characters]... are to be understood in... substantive relation to motherhood'.⁴⁴ This notion is introduced as early (and reiteratively) as the series' opening title sequence. A split screen motif advertises two main character clusters and narrative threads: Danny and Suzi (potential heterosexual romance) and The Majestics (actual homosocial dysfunction). Suzi's self-possession, compared with the men surrounding her, is inferred visually. She is the only character allowed to simultaneously inhabit both sides of the split screen in isolation; slow motion fetishizes her act of combing a 1950s-inspired quiff and turning up a leather jacket's collar. Heard alongside such sights, and increasingly so as the series' narrative unfolds, the lyrics of the song 'Tutti Frutti' ('I got a gal named Sue/She knows just what to do') come to seem less like rock 'n' roll innuendo and more a masculine supplication to qualities of feminine maturity and capability.

Lost or surrogate mothers then proliferate throughout the series. Episode 1's opening funeral scene flags the overarching direction of travel. It includes a close shot of Danny's mother's gravestone, makes clear that his ties with family and friends were broken when she died, and reveals that Eddie broke news of her death to Big Jazza while the latter performed 'That's Alright, Mama' onstage. Later, the final episode posits a possible traumatic origin for Danny's self-protective bluster when he recalls the day 'when ma maw drapped deid at the kitchen table'. A shot of a Statue of Liberty-themed light fitting introduces his visit to the cocktail bar where Suzi comes back into his life; a renaissance painting of Madonna and Child forms the opening shot of their subsequent first day out together. Suzi's quasi-maternal solicitude, taking in homeless Danny and then leaving her job to support him on the road, is echoed across the series. Eddie's personal assistant, Janice Toner (Katy Murphy), keeps his business afloat by negotiating an extension to an overdue tax demand and notes that 'he's wae me, ah'm no wae him'. Glenna pays for the flat she and Vincent share. Noreen is a district nurse. She also all-too-accurately understands the damagingly unequal nature of Glenna and Vincent's relationship: 'she didnae do herself in because she lost a kid, she did herself in because she found one: *you*'.

Noreen's remark neatly summarizes the corollary of *Tutti Frutti's* preferred way of constructing its female characters. Patriarchy obliges women to assume self-denying maturity (the reason they act and/or can be understood as maternal figures) because it simultaneously indulges men in self-centred immaturity (the reason they act and/or can be understood as overgrown children).⁴⁵ It is no accident that The Majestics' sole hit single is a cover of Chuck Berry's 'Almost Grown'. Danny self-pityingly describes himself to Suzi as 'an orphan'. The playroom of band member Bomba (Stuart McGugan)'s young children becomes a comically incongruous but symbolically apposite location for regular band practices. Playground-style fisticuffs break out between The Majestics there and in several other locations. These are men who prefer to see themselves as surrounded by 'dolls', the series' most frequently employed synonym for 'woman' and a derogation all band members utter at some point. But this is not so in the way those characters like to think. Their rhetoric's self-congratulatory, Runyonesque fantasy of masculine urban swagger is far less emotionally insightful or convincing than the final episode's tragicomic sight of an unmanned Vincent clutching for comfort one of the children's dolls with which the now-deceased Glenna had decorated their home.

Tutti Frutti's gender politics are clearly progressive. But the conclusions to draw from them are ambiguous. For Vicky Featherstone, 'the Majestics are representative of a certain kind of working-class Scottish male... the question is whether or not they're going to be able to reinvent themselves'.⁴⁶ Bryne leaves that question open. While his series is inarguably a 'repudiation'⁴⁷ of the ossified Scottish 'Hard Man' stereotype, it is less clear whether it discerns the existence of 'a fundamentally new image of Scottish masculinity'⁴⁸ able to take that stereotype's place. If 'Vincent is the most complex character',⁴⁹ this is because he feels the problematic nature of the Hard Man act (he describes it as 'playing the same old riffs to the same old riff-raff in the same clubs') without believing that he can become a different kind of male (hence, his ultimate suicide). Danny forms a mirror image of Vincent's dilemma. Bravado leads him to see himself as more modern than his bandmates. Yet that optimism blinds him to the Hard Man attributes he shares with them. Like them, he describes women (including Suzi to her face) as 'dolls'. Like them, he is prepared to defend the idea of The Majestics as a patriarchal conclave, lashing out at the prospect of a 'genetically unsound person' like Suzi being allowed to join the band. The central point about her response to that outburst – 'the mask slips... you're exactly the same as the rest of them' – is that viewers never know if it proves right. *Tutti Frutti's* final sound is elegantly teasing in this regard. It quotes and subverts a signature sound from rock 'n' roll iconography: an unidentified woman screams during a gig. That cry, however, expresses horror at a grotesque spectacle (burning Vincent) rather than pleasure at a grooving one (Vincent burning it up). *Tutti Frutti* thus suggests that contemporary Scotland is a society within which a form of masculinity that once pleased itself and others now pleases both no longer. But no comprehensively realized alternative to it stands ready in the wings.

If *Tutti Frutti's* liberal use of the epithet 'doll' reflects contemporary Scotland's patriarchal characteristics, it is also suggestive of that society's remarkable collective embrace of mid-century American popular culture. *Tutti Frutti's* characters 'live with an absurd intensity in some other time and through someone else's identity'⁵⁰ because they long 'for emotional, psychological and even literal release from the limitations of... Scottish culture'.⁵¹ Many protagonists possess transatlantic affiliations: Danny has lived in New York, Suzi has worked in the city, band roadie Dennis (Ron

Donachie) visits family there. Characters also routinely fabricate or flaunt such links: Eddie's office displays a photograph of him with Frank Sinatra, Vincent cherishes his 'good Yankee braces', everyday speech is adorned with Americanisms like 'vamoose' and 'palooka'. Finally, characters employ, seemingly instinctually, American reference points to interpret or articulate their personal identities and those of others. Vincent's relationship with much younger Glenna provokes Bomba to compare the former to Jerry Lee Lewis; Danny reifies his own romantic troubles into something 'like what Sinatra had to go through in *The Man with the Golden Arm*'.

Tutti Frutti sees such behaviour as symptomatic of collective cultural identity rather than individual eccentricity. In one of the series' blackest ironies, the fact that characters ply their respective trades in Scotland dictates that personal/professional engagements with Americana that may start as compensatory fantasy morph into crippling fate. Suzi works as a cocktail waitress because enough locals wish to drink in an establishment serving 'Tuscaloosa Sunsets' and 'Boston Stranglers' on the menu. Eddie's emporium, Manhattan Casuals, sells worn-out American clothing and defective local replicas because a credulous native clientele deems them cool. The Majestics are compelled to re-play the same antique hits because a sufficient number of Scots want to turn back the clock in order to rock around it yet again. Strikingly, however, *Tutti Frutti* seeks to share, rather than separate itself from, this aspect of characters' sensibility and situation. Multiple quotations and transpositions from US popular culture define narrative content and structure, rendering the series 'a sustained investigation of many of the conventions of Scottish identity negotiated through American influences'.⁵² The lyrics of classic rock 'n' roll underscore often unspoken emotional states; sending The Majestics out on a nationwide anniversary tour allows their travails to be presented as a Scottish variant on the road movie;⁵³ the band's incomprehension whenever visiting a part of the country outside their native Glasgow works as a deliberately bathetic invocation of the Western film's genre's Garden/Wilderness binary.⁵⁴

As well as depicting contemporary Scotland as stars-and-stripes-struck, *Tutti Frutti* also diagnoses many of that mentality's national cultural causes and/or consequences. Chief among these is the idea of Scottish identity as a paradoxical phenomenon. The experience of being Scottish is understood as one in which Scottishness feels peripheral to experience. Byrne himself, for example, presents *Tutti Frutti* as a portrait of a nation simultaneously native and foreign, known and unknown (or perhaps better, known *as* unknown) by him: 'I had never been to any of those places. I deliberately... planned the tour to places I didn't know, and let my imagination run riot'.⁵⁵ In their felt distance from aspects of Scotland as in their felt closeness to aspects of America, creator and characters share a sensibility. Majestics member Fud (Jake D'Arcy) thinks Pittenweem is a brand of baby food, not a Scottish fishing village; Vincent fails to recognize (let alone understand) the Gaelic language into which a children's television programme has been redubbed; Janice is relieved to learn that the television exposé on The Majestics will be broadcast on BBC Scotland (*Tutti Frutti*'s commissioning parent): 'ah thought the way ye were talkin', it wis gonnae be seen by millions'.

As well as offering a diagnostic depiction of an America-obsessed, self-alienated contemporary Scottish culture, *Tutti Frutti* also explores how to turn that phenomenon into a source of creative

potential. During episode 1, Danny confesses to the yawning gulf between the myth of America and the actuality of his time living there, concluding that ‘Glasgow, I love you’. His ability to, in Byrne’s words, ‘admit to himself that mythic America was indeed just that... and that he was much better off embracing his homeland’⁵⁶ exposes him to the potentially redemptive influence of Suzi, a woman for whom ‘New York doesn’t hold the same magic... it once did’. Several critics note how Suzi and the contemporarily regenerated/regenerative local urban spaces with which she is associated – art school, art gallery, wine bar, West End bohemia – exemplify the contemporarily prevalent sociocultural discourse of “‘new Glasgow” as a more modern and cosmopolitan city’⁵⁷ capable of nurturing its population both creatively and socially. Ultimately, *Tutti Frutti* proposes congruous approaches to the cross-cultural and romantic forms of attraction and cohabitation that the series explores. Both should be entered into as mutually respectful, non-hierarchical, and continually evolving processes. It is wrong to see them instead as oppressively competitive encounters that must result in a permanent victor. Episode 5’s central comic set-piece, the chaotic recording session for The Majestics’ anniversary single, exemplifies the series’ overarching line of thought in this regard. A meeting between artists defined by a heterogeneous mix of American and Scottish musical allegiances is fruitful precisely because fraught. What ultimately emerges is an exuberant, idiosyncratic example of cultural creole—much like *Tutti Frutti* itself.

Your Cheatin’ Heart

Shot with a £2.5m budget and on location in Glasgow during winter 1989/1990,⁵⁸ *Your Cheatin’ Heart* narrates a consistently comic, but increasingly tragic, story of Caledonian cowboys ranging across the Greater Glasgow conurbation. American Western mythology’s masculine associations are corralled to serve a narrative about Scottish maternal experience: the series’ surreal opening titles immediately frame Cissie Crouch (Tilda Swinton), a retired Country and Western singer and recovering alcoholic, as *Your Cheatin’ Heart*’s central character. Cissie reels from and tries to reverse two recent intimate losses. Her infant son has been taken into care before the series’ narrative starts; the boy’s father, C&W musician Dorwood Crouch (Kevin McMonagle), is wrongfully imprisoned for cocaine trafficking. Cissie recruits hapless Glaswegian restaurant critic Frank McClusky (John Gordon Sinclair) to uncover the real dealers, who turn out to be violent, Elvis Presley-obsessed Fraser Boyle (Ken Stott), a former bandmate of Dorwood’s and former schoolmate of Frank’s, and David Cole (Guy Gregory), the African-American boss of the US soul-food-themed yuppie restaurant in which Cissie waitresses. Cissie and Frank’s investigations expose them to a motley gaggle of Glaswegian gangsters and C&W aficionados, most prominently, taxi firm employees-cum-singing cowgirl duo Billie McPhail (Katy Murphy) and Jolene Jowett (Eddi Reader). *Your Cheatin’ Heart* ends on a deliberately unresolved, downbeat note. No main character achieves their central goals. Cissie loses Dorwood, who flees the country on a fake passport, and fails to recover her son; smitten Frank fails to start a relationship with Cissie; Fraser’s drug-dealing network is largely destroyed; professional musical success stubbornly eludes Billie and Jolene.

Although not as exceptionally acclaimed as *Tutti Frutti*, *Your Cheatin’ Heart* was received respectfully by contemporary press critics. Some pronounced it ‘the best drama series of the year’,⁵⁹ with positive comparisons made to Dennis Potter’s *The Singing Detective* (1986), another seminal popular music-themed 1980s British television drama.⁶⁰ Moreover, numerous commentators also welcomed

Your Cheatin' Heart as a more structurally classical piece of television screenwriting than *Tutti Frutti* had been.⁶¹ Byrne himself argued that '*Tutti Frutti* was a slightly meandering ragbag of dead ends and cul-de-sacs, whereas this is a strongly driven narrative. I wrote *Tutti Frutti* in eight weeks. *Your Cheatin' Heart* took eight months'.⁶² The significantly extended scripting period Byrne flags may help explain another major keynote in contemporary press response to *Your Cheatin' Heart*: celebration of the remarkable linguistic individuality and exuberance of the series' dialogue, 'a highly ornamented vernacular style, delivered at huge speed'.⁶³

As with *Tutti Frutti*, the terms of initial popular critical responses to *Your Cheatin' Heart* continue to inform subsequent scholarly analyses. For many of the latter, the marked prominence of C&W music and iconography is most significant, 'Byrne's greatest achievement' being 'the way in which he conveys the essential hybridity of [the Glasgow C&W] cultural scene... [a] surreal Scottish-American interface'.⁶⁴ In such analyses, a work like *Your Cheatin' Heart* helpfully exemplifies the material existence and creative and cultural possibilities of a 'double movement [that] is an essential expression of contemporary Scottish culture... it is in the local dialogue of... alien things that its unique contemporary creativity is generated'.⁶⁵ Another thread of academic commentary celebrates instead *Your Cheatin' Heart's* linguistic experimentation and, in particular, the series' sustained, culturally authentic engagement with the expressive priorities and possibilities of lowland Scots as a living language. Byrne's use of language, Willy Maley argues, 'speaks volumes for the class and country that nurtured him... a linguistic borderland where the Scots brogue stomps along to the southern twang of American slang, [and] nobody sings or spells the way they speak'.⁶⁶ Equally important, however, is a key theme of *Your Cheatin' Heart* less intensively examined within either contemporary press or later critical literature: the series' emphasis on Scottish female identity and experience.⁶⁷ Alexandra Howson proposes that Byrne's work 'engage[s] in explorations of working class experience, but without consigning women to symbolic categories or pushing them into peripheral locations'.⁶⁸ Further exploration of this aspect of *Your Cheatin' Heart* picks up on a central aspect of the series that Byrne was at pains to emphasize publicly even before his work reached British television screens. Noting that he had 'wanted to write a play about women rather than men',⁶⁹ Byrne variously represented *Your Cheatin' Heart* as a story 'about a woman... left on her own',⁷⁰ 'six days in the life of Cissie Crouch... not meant to be a funny subject'⁷¹, and *Tutti Frutti's* daughter, rather than son, 'on the grounds that it features such a high proportion of women players'.⁷²

Like *Tutti Frutti*, contemporaneous response to *Your Cheatin' Heart* highlighted American popular cultural influences: 'almost everyone... is dominated by some chosen or imposed fantasy of American popular culture'.⁷³ Most obviously, *Your Cheatin' Heart* showcases Country and Western music and culture's pronounced cultural presence within modern-day Glasgow. Byrne presented his work as 'born out of' the 'great songs that had a very profound influence on me while I was growing up',⁷⁴ and some observers therefore conclude that his 'plot was no more than the excuse for the long irony of... the Scots' love affair with Country and the West'.⁷⁵ But *Your Cheatin' Heart's* engagement-cum-exploration of transatlantic cultural influence is considerably more complex. Firstly, there is the latter's cross-generic nature. The sheer amount, ornate nature and rapid-fire delivery of the series' scripted dialogue, not to mention the high proportion of it performed within

Cissie and Frank's fissiparous relationship, recalls mid-twentieth century Screwball comedy.⁷⁶ Additionally, both Byrne – 'it was conceived to look like a Scottish *Maltese Falcon*'⁷⁷ – and director Michael Whyte – 'you perhaps sense some echoes of... a distanced American look, like in a Forties B movie'⁷⁸ – publicly acknowledged their debts to Film Noir. The burst nose Frank receives in episode one turns him into a bathetic Scottish version of the similarly scarred Jake Gittes (Jack Nicolson) in *Chinatown* (1974). More generally, Cissie's hiring of Frank to investigate a nocturnal urban underworld without divulging all her motivations for doing so reflects the classic Noir narrative set-up *par excellence*. In order to fully appreciate the intensity of mid-century Americana's influence over *Your Cheatin' Heart*, 'of all Byrne's dramatic work... the most overburdened with the iconography and the music of American popular culture',⁷⁹ one must acknowledge its breadth.

Observing that textual phenomenon also begs an interpretation of its detailed workings and putative national-allegorical symbolism. For Duncan Petrie, 'Byrne's achievement is to indicate the ways in which creative appropriation... provides his drama and its characters with a new and meaningful sense of identity'.⁸⁰ Both *Tutti Frutti* and *Your Cheatin' Heart* certainly develop and profit from creatively ingenious strategies of cross-cultural creole and hybridization. But *Tutti Frutti* is significantly more willing at plot level than its successor to depict characters engaged in, or at least exposed to the possibility of, similarly transformative processes within their lives. At best, *Your Cheatin' Heart*'s protagonists' engagement with C&W constitutes a process of potential cross-cultural restitution, rather than evolution. Byrne noted his sense of C&W as a form of diasporic Scottish culture revisiting native shores: 'we exported all those Scottish and Irish songs... that's why we recognise it so clearly when it comes back to us'.⁸¹ Jolene's impromptu onstage duet with touring American country star Jim Bob O'May (Guy Mitchell), a final-episode set-piece scene, therefore proves joyous for reasons other than the excellence of its execution. An American and a Scottish actor – both better known in real life as professional musicians – harmonize on a Country classic, the Bellamy Brothers' 'Let Your Love Flow'. As they do so, one overarching sense of loss embodied in the Hank Williams masterpiece that gifts *Your Cheatin' Heart* both a title and a theme tune is momentarily reversed. In addition to their universally accessible expression of the pain caused by romantic abandonment, Williams' lyrics take on locally specific resonance because of the context within which Byrne employs them. They become readable as a lament that crystallizes contemporary Scottish cultural disappointment at the heedlessness of a globally visible, part-Scottish-created American cultural tradition and identity that shows little interest in or knowledge of its historic roots. During Jolene and Jim Bob's moment together at the mic, *Your Cheatin' Heart* fleetingly countenances the possibility of a contemporary (re)encounter between Scottish and American cultures that might be understood, to quote another seminal twentieth-century US roots musician, as a profoundly restorative experience of Bringing It All Back Home.

Ultimately, however, an analogous encounter with her lost son is just what *Your Cheatin' Heart*'s conclusion pointedly denies Cissie. In the series' final shot, she walks alone, away from camera, pausing only to leave behind a once-cherished guitar on the ground. Ending as it does with a melancholy image of familial reunion longed-for but unachieved, *Your Cheatin' Heart* invites itself to be read as a work of observant, but consequently pessimistic, national cultural commentary. Cissie gives up guitar-slinging for good because she is forced to realize that her and other characters'

American *amour fou* is an 'increasingly desperate, and even hysterical, escapist fantasy'⁸² that fails to meaningfully transform either their lives or the society within which those are lived. None, as noted in the plot summary above, achieve their respective goals by *Your Cheatin' Heart's* close. Byrne noted his desire to explore a 'complete underworld that had no connections with any cultural roots other than country music and cowboy wear',⁸³ arguing that many Scots 'walk about in cowboy boots... in their heads, they think they're cowboys'.⁸⁴ A society so enamoured of one specific set of outside influences exposes itself, the series frequently suggests, to the dangers of deracination and self-delusion. The intensity of Scottish love for all things American has the potential to be culturally self-restricting and/or redundant. The name of the US-themed restaurant in which Cissie works (Bar L) is also the local nickname of the Glaswegian jail (Barlinnie) where Dorwood is imprisoned. The seafood wholesale business Elvis-obsessed Fraser runs as cover for drug dealing dictates that he spends much of the narrative driving a delivery van. Its contents suggest the compromised nature of his identity – like what he seemingly sells, Fraser is a fish out of water. The local newspaper Frank writes for is called *The Echo*. Through arch – but successively reiterated – details such as these, *Your Cheatin' Heart* concedes, albeit affectionately, that its creator's native culture possesses a capacity to reduce itself to a naïve provincial replication of a transatlantic something and somewhere else.

Your Cheatin' Heart's choice and treatment of narrative setting appears to qualify *Tutti Frutti's* optimism regarding the possibilities inherent in contemporary Scottish-American cultural encounters. On a different textual level, however, the new series arguably displayed even more self-confidence in this regard than did its predecessor. For Cairns Craig, 'Byrne's forte' as a writer is a systematically engineered and enjoyed 'play of misunderstandings... the simplest spoken sentence is always... subject to creative misinterpretation by its recipient'.⁸⁵ In *Tutti Frutti*, for example, well-meaning directions to the bus stop where Big Jazza died ('you can't miss it') are mistaken as a black joke regarding the manner of his demise. Yet what *Tutti Frutti* packaged as a series of memorable individual comic moments *Your Cheatin' Heart* then reified into the foundational condition for all forms of linguistic interaction: 'miscommunication, in which the medium becomes a barrier to the message' constitutes the series' 'fundamental mode'.⁸⁶ Indeed, Byrne flagged *Your Cheatin' Heart's* self-asserted status as a language-based creative artefact by stressing the 'authentic words that I used' in constructing the work's distinctive Scots/Stateride urban argot: 'if you're not speaking your own language in your work, what's the point?'⁸⁷ Taken in isolation, much of *what* Byrne writes, story-wise, may be understood as a critique of a peculiarly Scottish cultural malaise, namely, near-complete coca-colonization. *How* Byrne writes, however, suggests something different. The idiosyncratic way in which he develops his plot, and characters' skilful exploitation of varied linguistic resources within it (Scots, Standard English, US slang and French are all employed), work to suggest that some of contemporary Scottish cultural identity's defining characteristics may be shared with other national counterparts, while others are in fact highly positive and locally particular in nature.

Many critics downplay the idea of *Your Cheatin' Heart's* plot as a structurally substantive, thematically significant aspect of 'a drama series to be understood through osmosis rather than linear narrative'.⁸⁸ Yet both the series' storyline and its preferred manner of unfolding offer resonant articulations of the work's national cultural politics. 'Misunderstandings and coincidences propel [*Your Cheatin' Heart's*] plot'⁸⁹ in significant part via two ostentatious running motifs: communication

disrupted technically (compromised phone calls) or disrupted interpersonally (conversations between parties with clashing personal and interpretative agendas). On a functional level, these devices rationalize the series' increasingly tragicomic tone and ultimately downbeat conclusion: in a world where one never truly gets through to others, literally or figuratively speaking, it makes sense that no one gets what they want. But on a more discursive level, these motifs' prominence also suggests that if miscommunications and mistranslations mangle or morph interactions between individuals, the same applies by extension to interactions between entire cultures. Contemporary urban Scotland's obsession with Americana, for instance, is not simply (or even predominantly) a locally specific quandary or failure. Rather, it is, to some degree, an inevitable product of the structuring conditions within which *all* collective identities are formed.⁹⁰

In an illustrative example of *Your Cheatin' Heart's* thought in this regard, the series repeatedly presents human memory as intensely fallible: people routinely forget the essence of something or someone else. The entire work opens with an act of forgetting: Frank ('I'm positive it was about here someplace') cannot recall the location of the restaurant where he will first encounter Cissie and her problems, thus setting the story in train. Later, and despite uncovering the vital information recently and with difficulty, he forgets that which Cissie most wants to know: the name of the touring C&W band ('somebody somebody and the something somethings') through which Fraser is running drugs. If this is how individuals behave, then entire cultures and cultural mythologies also do, too. The discourses of the American West and Country and Western music, for example, evolve into forms increasingly disconnected from and different to their pre-modern Celtic cultural roots. Moreover, C&W-loving present-day Celts cannot fully appreciate that tenuousness because they also lose sight of their native culture's historical origins and traditions over time. In a richly symbolic narrative twist, for example, Scottish criminals self-sabotage their frantic attempt to locate a missing stash of cocaine. They instinctually over-fixate on the culturally contemporary (every inch of the glitzy Bar-L restaurant is searched exhaustively) without ever thinking to examine the contemporary's prior roots (the drugs are in fact hidden inside the neon signage of the business that previously occupied the Bar-L premises). *Your Cheatin' Heart* treats its interpersonal and intercultural plotlines and themes – 'affectionate jabs at our colonisation by America and our inability to communicate'⁹¹ – as symbiotic rather than separate things. The terms of 'our inability to communicate' are what in fact explain those of 'our colonisation by America', and vice versa.

Like *Your Cheatin' Heart's* plot, the series' spoken language is complexly and highly symbolic in national cultural terms. Three selected aspects of Byrne's linguistic experimentation illustrate both its technical energy and the discursively sustained, as well as instantaneously diverting, nature of its effects. Put simply, *Your Cheatin' Heart* is addicted to homophones (words that share a pronunciation but not a spelling and meaning), homonyms (words that share a pronunciation and spelling but not a meaning), and alliteration (the deliberate placing of words beginning with the same letter or sound in close proximity within an utterance). One or more of these devices complicate/make comic nearly every conversation depicted within the entire series. Homophones explain Billie and Jolene's inability, in episode one, to locate the restaurant Frank seeks: they look for a seafood establishment (sole food) rather than a US-themed one (Soul Food). Homonyms then accompany Frank and Billie's eventual arrival at that destination. A waitress asks if the pair is a

couple ('Are you together?) but Frank mistakes this for an attempt to gauge his subcultural self-confidence ('I'm always together... '60s patter's obviously back in'). Finally, Frank (a professional writer) always alliterates with alacrity: 'Crab makes crepes a feast of fun for Fifties freaks', 'the Kilwinning chapter of the kid-on cowpokes', and so on.

Homophone, homonym and alliteration's omnipresence within *Your Cheatin' Heart* may be explained by the fact that all three devices are microcosmic linguistic analogues of (and, consequently, potent linguistic vehicles for) a macrocosmic characteristic of Byrne's dramaturgy. Cairns Craig labels this quality 'displacemeant' [*sic*]: Byrne's plays 'depend on the disruption of our expectations of how things in the world occur in physical proximity to one another... spatial juxtapositions and disruptions are [their] vocabulary'.⁹² As concepts, homophone, homonym and alliteration all act as reminders that spoken and written words potentially form one order of the 'things' Craig cites. Written sentences and spoken utterances are spaces within which constituent elements may be arranged for effect in expected or unexpected ways. For that reason, these linguistic devices manage to articulate both the aesthetic preferences ('the stylisation of language for performance'⁹³) of Byrne's writing *and* its national cultural politics. Homophone and homonym demonstrate that distinctive phenomena that share certain structural materials may consequently be mistaken for each other in blameless, even pleasure-giving ways. And what goes for words also applies to ways of life. Many modern-day Scots see themselves as Clydebank cowboys, *Your Cheatin' Heart* argues, in part because historical overlaps between traditional Scottish and modern American cultural traditions makes that self-perception materially possible and intellectually comprehensible. This locally prevalent form of identity politics is never automatically or essentially a matter of individual and/or collective false consciousness – even though, as a character such as Fraser Boyle shows, it may prove so on certain levels and/or occasions. Moreover, if homophone and homonym demonstrate that pre-given proximity between different phenomena creates unexpected possibilities for (or effects on) anyone who experiences or employs those things, the idea of alliteration goes further yet. This is because it emphasizes the extent to which individuals can actively cultivate proximity between different phenomena – Craig's 'displacemeant', in other words – as part of complexly choreographed attempts at self-expression. Within such logic, the sparkling of rhinestone in a place like Johnstone may prove culturally innocuous in one pair of hands but culturally innovative in another. After all, the fact that Fraser's unexpected performance of Elvis's 'Heartbreak Hotel' makes us laugh does not subsequently prevent Cissie's unexpected performance of Nanci Griffith's 'From a Distance' from making us feel and think.

Finally, homophone, homonym and alliteration's combined running presence within *Your Cheatin' Heart* also reflects Byrne's optimistic view (and individual exemplification) of the distinctive linguistic abilities and potentialities of late-twentieth-century Scottish culture. The noticeable loquacity of the series' imagined Scotland ('most of the locals are inebriated solely by the exuberance of their own verbosity'⁹⁴) reflects a happy historical accident (the equivalent of a homophone or homonym). Post-1707 Scottish history's distinctive trajectory creates a present-day Anglophone society within which a linguistic triumvirate is readily accessible because regularly used: Standard English is flanked by both a surviving precursor (Scots) and an evolving progeny (colloquial Americanisms). Nonetheless, individual or communal eloquence only results from this if people show creative stamina and style in

constantly fording and fusing those historically and culturally distinctive linguistic streams (the equivalent of an alliterative act). Granted, the most immediately obvious conclusion to draw about *Your Cheatin' Heart's* language is that it is at home on the range. More fundamentally yet, however, it is also at home with the idea of ranging. Byrne's work emerges from, expresses and explores a national cultural linguistic microclimate within which locals confidently and elegantly traverse various Anglophone vocabularies and cultural traditions. In all of the above senses, Byrne's writing succeeds, as Cairns Craig frames matters, in presenting 'the mistranslations and displacements of language revealed [as] not mere coincidence of sounds but a[s] profound connections between words and [the] world'⁹⁵ depicted within his diegesis.

Your Cheatin' Heart's suggestion of a polyglot Scottish culture's progressive potential is exemplified in the series' own subversive appropriation of a pronouncedly masculine and nostalgic mythology, that of the American West, to tell a story about unhappy contemporary experiences of motherhood. If, as one character suggests, Cissie is 'a Patsy Cline lookalike', then *Your Cheatin' Heart's* opening title sequence constitutes, to coin the words of Cline's famous hit, the 'sweet dreams of you' that endlessly torture a guilty mother separated from her child and unable to 'forget the past and start my life anew'. Articulated with increasing emphasis as the series progresses, this latter idea provides *Your Cheatin' Heart* with a profound emotional anchorage. Multiple details underscore the work's maternal theme. The series' very first shot (a head-and-shoulders portrait of a mournful Cissie wearing a retro-styled pastiche of an American convict uniform) swiftly advances one inference – contemporary Scottish fantasies of 'America' sometimes imprison, rather than free, the fantasist – while revealing another only with hindsight – Cissie is confined by forms of longing, maternal as well as mythological.

More generally, a major way in which Byrne, in his own words, 'use[s] the country and western thing as a way of maintaining the discipline of the plot'⁹⁶ relates to *Your Cheatin' Heart's* subtle and serial recasting of the titular Hank Williams classic as a parable of maternal guilt. Though numerous C&W staples are played or performed once during the series, 'Your Cheatin' Heart' is heard no fewer than five times (or eleven, if one counts the opening title sequence). The track's first and last appearances emphasize the song's unspoken resonance for Cissie. She projects into it an abandoned child's all-too-accurate prayer that a parent the infant thinks has absconded comes to feel the unending pain of isolation and guilt: 'When tears come down like falling rain/You'll toss around and call my name'. Thus, the song's initial diegetic appearance occurs during a scene where Frank finds a family photograph of Cissie and her son. Similarly, its valedictory one (an extra-diegetic imposition of Jim Bob O'May's singing over a shot of Cissie and Frank sitting on a beachside bench) suggests the cost of unresolved maternal trauma. The camera tracks right to Cissie in isolation and then back to left to reveal Frank gone: loss of one relationship (her son) has overwhelmed the possibility of finding another (with Frank).

Your Cheatin' Heart's use of costume – Byrne noted his 'absolutely crystal-clear vision of how the characters should look'⁹⁷ – also functions as a suggestive articulation of the work's gender politics. Most obviously, perhaps, characters' collective obsession with American-inspired garments and

looks acknowledges gender identity's performative nature – something that one puts on daily, both physically and psychologically speaking. More subtly, however, Byrne's use of costume also suggests that for the most part (Jolene is a conspicuous exception to this rule) men are more inclined than women to use clothing and its associated identities in rigidly self-defensive, un-self-critical ways. Cissie notes, for example, that Dorwood and Fraser's first fatal meeting occurred when both were working as deep sea divers in the North Sea – one of the very few places where the idea of men's privileging of the idea of specific clothing forms as impenetrable armour against an implacably hostile environment actually makes sense. Even Frank, the work's most sympathetic male figure, is culpable here. Billie immediately senses the compensatory nature of his Bogart-style trench coat, which instead of Noir cool creates the bathetic impression of 'a boy scout in a bell tent'. Frank also senses this, protesting that his inexplicable love for the filthy garment has 'nothing to do with it being a security blanket, it's a very practical garment'. But he is ultimately unable to follow self-critical suspicion through to its logical conclusion. His last appearance in the series sees him remark ruefully on the loss of his coat, rather than his loss of Cissie. In contrast, she is much more willing to change clothes (and their associated identities) in order to protect herself and others. Selfishly, she has no compunction about loaning Dorwood's C&W gear to Frank in order to further the latter's investigations: 'we're trying to infiltrate a closed community... what do you think I put you into camouflage for?' Selflessly, she offers up her own clothes to keep a freezing Dorwood warm during his prison escape. He, however, displays what *Your Cheatin' Heart* understands as quintessential masculine inflexibility in refusing to countenance the idea of any change to his dress or the potential address his clothing extends to others: 'this is a lassie's jacket... they'll crucify me'. In this aspect as in multiple others, *Your Cheatin' Heart* works both as an acutely reflective social observation of particular form of American cultural influence within present-day Scotland *and* as a work that drives depiction of that cross-cultural encounter down any number of ingeniously divined thematic trails.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to identify, and explain some of the sources of, the pronounced creative ingenuity and idiosyncrasy of John Byrne's television writing. It has also tried to suggest a range of reasons why, both at the level of textual form and narrative content, *Tutti Frutti* and *Your Cheatin' Heart* constitute highly suggestive artworks within modern Scottish cultural history. The reasons why these works have been relatively overlooked within scholarship to date are multiple and, in some cases, circumstantial. Neither *Tutti Frutti* (2009) nor *Your Cheatin' Heart* (2015) were commercially available on video or DVD until over two decades after their respective original transmissions, a state of affairs that Byrne professed not to understand or control.⁹⁸ Secondly, despite their contemporary popular cultural prominence and critical success, these two works did not lay the foundations for a substantial longer-term screen career on Byrne's part. Several television drama projects – one on the Glencoe massacre,⁹⁹ two other on Scottish country dance music and African-American music¹⁰⁰ – described by Byrne in the late 1980s as either envisaged or in process did not ultimately materialize. With regard to the Scottish country dance project, Byrne noted in the early 2000s that 'there was a change of regime among the powers that be so it never happened'.¹⁰¹ Presumably, he refers here to Bill Bryden's August 1993 departure from the Drama Head role at BBC Scotland, with Andrea Calderwood filling the post the following year. *Boswell and Johnson's Tour of the Western Isles*, Byrne's final project for the BBC, broadcast in October 1993, during the interregnum between Bryden and Calderwood's respective tenures. A one-off feature-length drama, it conspicuously failed

to replicate either the critical or popular success of *Tutti Frutti* or *Your Cheatin' Heart*; neither did Byrne's final screen project to date, the Channel 4-funded 1997 feature film adaptation of *The Slab Boys*. By 2006, Byrne was prepared to profess publicly that he had 'no desire to write for television or film now'.¹⁰²

In addition to such considerations, however, critical neglect of Byrne also stems from a persistent scholarly neglect of television's cultural and socio-political significance within post-Second World War Scottish life. While a fair number of single-author monographs exist on the closely related subject of Scottish cinema, for example, no equivalent has yet been published on the substantially order and fuller textual corpus that is local television drama. In that sense, *Tutti Frutti* and *Your Cheatin' Heart* already start from a disadvantaged position, canonically speaking, by virtue of their medium of production and dissemination. Additionally, these series have perhaps also failed to attract the academic scrutiny they deserve because, as the analysis above has suggested, their national cultural politics are characteristically advanced by oblique rather than programmatic means. While their creator has asserted his long-term, self-conscious avoidance of 'didactic stuff'¹⁰³ and literal-minded contemporaneity ('I have no understanding of today at all'¹⁰⁴) in the majority of his screen and stage writing, this essay has attempted to show both why and how *Tutti Frutti* and *Your Cheatin' Heart* represent important, ingenious and insightful works of modern Scottish national cultural commentary. That being so, these series and their creator's wider screenwriting and directing practices more generally still await, and would handsomely reward, further collective discussion and debate.

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¹ See Byrne, Brown and Lawson, *Sitting Ducks*; Hewison, *John Byrne*.

² The plays in question are: *The Slab Boys* (1978); *Cuttin' a Rug* (1979); *Still Life* (1982).

³ Macmillan, 'Interview: John Byrne', 41.

⁴ Baginsky, 'A Painter in His Own Write'.

⁵ Lahr, 'Loving games', 265.

⁶ Riach, *Representing Scotland*, 201.

⁷ Preston, 'Jock 'n' roll'.

⁸ Hutchison, 'Theatres, Writers and Society', 148.

⁹ Scullion, 'Byrne and The Bogie Man', 214.

¹⁰ Petrie, *Contemporary Scottish Fictions*, 52.

¹¹ Hebert, 'Write 'em'.

¹² See Craig, 'Displacemeants'; Hebert, '*Tutti Frutti*'; Scullion, 'Byrne and The Bogie Man'.

¹³ Byrne, quoted in Preston, 'Jock 'n' roll'; see also Bredin, 'Byrne's night'.

¹⁴ Byrne, quoted in Hebert, 'Write 'em'.

¹⁵ Petrie, *Contemporary Scottish Fictions*, 2.

¹⁶ Brennan, 'Return of the Geriatric Rockers'.

¹⁷ Bell, '*Tutti Frutti*'.

¹⁸ Barrowclough, 'A passion for *Tutti Frutti*'.

¹⁹ See, for example, Hebert, 'Write 'em'; Morris, 'Here's to Good Old Rock 'n' Roll'; Stephen, '*Tutti Frutti*'; Stoddart, 'Boys from the Macblack Stuff'.

²⁰ Scullion, 'Byrne and The Bogie Man', 224; see also Hebert, '*Tutti Frutti*'; Hewison, *John Byrne*, 67-68; Petrie, *Contemporary Scottish Fictions*, 56.

²¹ Petrie, *Contemporary Scottish Fictions*, 57; see also Bicket, 'Fictional Scotland'; Cook, 'Three Ring Circus', 115-16; Scullion, 'Byrne and The Bogie Man'.

²² Brown, 'Staging the nation', 288; see also Hutchison, 'Theatres, Writers and Society', 148; Riach, *Representing Scotland*, 201; Scullion, 'Byrne and The Bogie Man'; Watson, *The Literature of Scotland*, 148.

²³ Byrne, quoted in Brennan, 'Return of the Geriatric Rockers'.

²⁴ Hebert, '*Tutti Frutti*', 178-80.

²⁵ Preston, 'Jock 'n' Roll'.

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²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Brennan, 'Return of the Geriatric Rockers'.

²⁹ Taylor, 'Scotland Aims for BBC Record'.

³⁰ Byrne, quoted in Preston, 'Jock 'n' Roll'.

³¹ Byrne, quoted in Hebert, '*Tutti Frutti*', 192.

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- ³² Angelini, 'Tutti Frutti'.
- ³³ Byrne quoted in Dawson Scott, 'Never Too Old To'.
- ³⁴ See, for example, Dunkley, 'Tutti Frutti'; Kretzmer, 'Robbie Carves a New Cult'; Last, 'Glaswegian Rock'; Lawson, 'Singing in the Pain'; Oldfield, 'It's only Rock and Roll'.
- ³⁵ Morgan, 'Bridie and Byrne'.
- ³⁶ Petrie, *Contemporary Scottish Fictions*, 57.
- ³⁷ Byrne, quoted in Dinwoodie, 'Rock 'n' Role-playing'.
- ³⁸ Bell, 'Man in the Bacofail Suit'.
- ³⁹ Byrne, quoted in Barrowclough, 'A passion for Tutti Frutti'.
- ⁴⁰ Byrne, quoted in Preston, 'Jock 'n' Roll'.
- ⁴¹ Byrne, quoted in Young, 'Now Mr Tutti Frutti'.
- ⁴² Craig, 'Displacemeants'.
- ⁴³ Byrne, quoted in Smurthwaite, 'Fruity Future'.
- ⁴⁴ Scullion, 'Byrne and The Bogie Man', 221.
- ⁴⁵ See, for example, Bell, 'Man in the Bacofail Suit'; Oldfield, 'It's only rock and roll'.
- ⁴⁶ Featherstone, quoted in Smurthwaite, 'Fruity Future'.
- ⁴⁷ Cook, 'Three Ring Circus', 115.
- ⁴⁸ Petrie, *Contemporary Scottish Fictions*, 59.
- ⁴⁹ Hebert, 'Tutti Frutti', 186; see also Cook, 'Three Ring Circus', 115; Scullion, 'Byrne and The Bogie Man', 221.
- ⁵⁰ Craig, 'The haunted heart'.
- ⁵¹ Scullion, 'Byrne and The Bogie Man', 224.
- ⁵² *Ibid*, 223.
- ⁵³ Hewison, *John Byrne*, 68.
- ⁵⁴ Scullion, 'Byrne and The Bogie Man', 222.
- ⁵⁵ Byrne, quoted in Dawson Scott, 'Never Too Old To'; see also Smurthwaite, 'Fruity Future'.
- ⁵⁶ Hebert, 'Tutti Frutti', 194.
- ⁵⁷ Petrie, *Contemporary Scottish Fictions*, 60; see also Bell – Man in the Bacofail Suit; Hook, 'Glasgow renaissance'; McCallum, 'A tale of two Cities'; Oldfield, 'It's only Rock and Roll'.
- ⁵⁸ See De Pellette, 'Country Cocktail'; Hewison, 72.
- ⁵⁹ Coren, 'Urban Cowboys'.
- ⁶⁰ See, for example, Coren, 'Urban Cowboys'; Hebert, 'Write 'em'; Last, 'Anyone Speak Byrne?'
- ⁶¹ See, for example, Hebert, 'Green Grow'; Stoddart, 'Your Cheatin' Heart'.
- ⁶² Byrne, quoted in Sandall, 'Pardners in Crime', 8.
- ⁶³ Last, 'Anyone Speak Byrne?' See also Banks-Smith, 'Oot, oot'; Billen, 'Wild at Heart'; Coren, 'Urban Cowboys'; Hebert, 'Green Grow'; Jackson, 'Giving it the Verbals'; Marriott, 'No Cheatin'.
- ⁶⁴ Petrie, *Contemporary Scottish Fictions*, 199.
- ⁶⁵ Craig, 'The Haunted Heart'; see also Craig, 'Displacemeants'; Hewison, *John Byrne*, 72; Howson, 'No Gods', 45; Scullion, 'Byrne and The Bogie Man'; Watson, *The Literature of Scotland*, 184.
- ⁶⁶ Maley, 'Border Warfare'; see also Craig, 'The Haunted Heart', Craig, 'Displacemeants'; Corbett, 'Scots, English and Community Languages', 28–29; Cormack, 'Spoken Scots', 123–24.
- ⁶⁷ Phillips, 'Stand by your Clan'.
- ⁶⁸ Howson, 'No Gods', 46.
- ⁶⁹ Byrne, quoted in Sandall, 'Pardners in Crime', 8.
- ⁷⁰ Byrne, quoted in Garner, 'Rootie Tootie', 46.
- ⁷¹ Byrne, quoted in Billen, 'Wild at Heart', 35.
- ⁷² Byrne, quoted in Bell, 'Wrong Man of Letters'.
- ⁷³ Jackson, 'Giving it the Verbals'.
- ⁷⁴ Byrne, quoted in Sandall, 'Pardners in Crime', 8.
- ⁷⁵ Hebert, 'Garbled in the Gorbals'.
- ⁷⁶ Jackson, 'Giving it the Verbals'.
- ⁷⁷ Byrne, quoted in Sandall, 'Pardners in Crime', 8.
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- ⁷⁹ Scullion, 'Byrne and The Bogie Man', 224.
- ⁸⁰ Petrie, *Contemporary Scottish Fictions*, 204-5.
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- ⁸² Scullion, 'Byrne and The Bogie Man', 224.

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- ⁸³ Byrne, quoted in Sandall, 'Pardners in Crime', 8.
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- ⁸⁹ Billen, 'Wild at Heart', 35.
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- ¹⁰¹ Byrne, quoted in Smurthwaite, 'Fruity Future'.
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- ¹⁰³ Byrne, quoted in Woddis, 'Provincial Russia'.
- ¹⁰⁴ Byrne, quoted in Gritten, 'Slab Man', 12.