



Research Article

Citation: Gölcük Mirza, Pelin. “A Heideggerian Approach to Female Scottish Identities in Nat McCleary’s *Thrown*.” *Overtones* 4 (2025): 1-8.

Received: 12 August 2024

Accepted: 13 December 2024

Corresponding Author: Pelin Gölcük Mirza, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters, Karabük University, Türkiye.

ORCID: 0000-0003-3808-5065

A Heideggerian Approach to Female Scottish Identities in Nat McCleary’s *Thrown*

Pelin Gölcük Mirza 

Abstract: This article explores the representation of female Scottish identities in Nat McCleary’s play *Thrown* through the lens of Heidegger’s concept of “thrownness” in *Time and Being*, which aligns with the title of the play (174). Premiered in 2023 at the Edinburgh International Festival, *Thrown* portrays the ideological and existential struggles of five Scottish women who, despite their diverse backgrounds, are united by their Scottish heritage and gender. Heidegger’s notion of “thrownness”, which signifies human existence’s situatedness within a specific context, provides a theoretical framework to analyse the characters’ struggles with their identities and the societal expectations imposed upon them. The play delves into the navigation of female/Scottish identity within the constraints of their thrownness, by revealing the complex interplay between individual agency and predetermined life conditions. Depicting their journey of self-discovery and fulfilment, *Thrown* profoundly explores the existential dilemma of being trapped between the desire for freedom and the awareness of existential limitations. Within this light, the main aim of this article is to illuminate how McCleary’s representation of Scotland’s cultural, historical, and environmental contexts varies among the characters by shedding light on the complex dynamics of identity formation in contemporary Scottish society.

Keywords: Nat McCleary, *Thrown*, Heidegger, thrownness, Scotland, identity, freedom, finitude

Introduction

Nat McCleary’s *Thrown* (2023) premiered at Victoria Hall, Dunblane, and was subsequently performed at the Traverse Theatre during the 2023 Edinburgh International Festival under the direction of Johnny McKnight. This production, staged by the National Theatre of Scotland, drew significant attention and became one of the well-received national plays of the festival. McCleary describes *Thrown* on the *YouTube* channel of the *National Theatre of Scotland* as “an attempt to do a deep dive into the reality of difficult conversations, of finding a sense of belonging and unity when you disagree fundamentally with the people that you are trying to engage with or belong to” (n.p.). Given this definition, the play exhibits interpersonal and societal tensions on stage by emphasizing the individual challenges in achieving team unity, which eventually evolves into Scottish female solidarity despite the substantial differences among the characters. It invites the audience to consider how Scottish society is eroding fundamental human virtues such as tolerance, curiosity, and empathy while also calling for an

This article is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.



*Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0)

egalitarian mindset in contemporary Scotland. Through the metaphor of backhold wrestling in folkloric Highland Games, the play portrays Scotland as a battleground where female characters tussle with societal and ideological problems. Therefore, it reflects McCleary's assertion that the "beauty of disagreement" is being uncompromised (2024, n.p.).

The play is performed by five women of diverse backgrounds and ages, who are metaphorically and literally engaged in the traditional backhold wrestling in Scotland. Each character in the play is driven by different motivations to join the team which reverberate their backgrounds and personal aspirations. Chantelle, a white young woman from a working-class background, is motivated by the hope of achieving online fame and easy financial gain. Jo, who has a Black-Scottish hybrid identity, joins primarily to support her oldest friend, Chantelle. Imogen, a Black woman, views the team as an opportunity to reconnect with her Scottish heritage following her move from London. Helen, a middle-aged white woman, is inspired by the chance to explore something new and different in life. Leading the group is Pamela, a white androgynous individual, whose determination and confidence mask her inner struggles with identity and self-perception. These characters are presented as those who have distanced themselves from their own existences with their personas shaped by societal impositions and ideologies. The stereotypes, labels, high standards, expectations, and prejudices imposed on them push them into conflict with one another. However, through meaningful dialogues, and even monologues in direct address to the audience, each character has to face their own existence, identity, and physical body. This confrontation ultimately encourages the characters to understand what sort of society they have been thrown/born into.

Moreover, Scotland itself, as depicted in the play, is a place whose language and identity have been stigmatized, transformed and fragmented over time. This national marginalization, from historical perspective, is mainly due to its perceived economic and cultural subordination to England in the aftermath of the Union of Parliaments in 1707¹. Andrew Fletcher, a key figure of debates on the union of England and Scotland, views this union as a legal forfeit for the Scottish people, intentionally established by England to keep them in perpetual subjugation and under English control (Robertson, n.p.). This historical context of instability and conflict in Scotland is reflected in the play and the tension of complexities in Scotland's past situates the characters in a difficult predicament which causes a profound deadlock for each of them. Although the title of the play is associated with backhold wrestling as a physical movement, being thrown to the ground, it also contextually draws parallelism with Martin Heidegger's concept of "thrownness" (Geworfenheit), which describes the human condition of being thrust into existence by an unknown power in a random place without any guidance or purpose (Cowles 6; Heidegger 174; Withy 2). Within this light, this article will explore how these women, unprepared for Scotland's socio-cultural and economic complexities, find themselves trapped between their desire for freedom and their awareness of existential limitations in their journey of self-discovery and fulfillment.

Thrown to the Existence

Martin Heidegger introduces the concept of "thrownness" within his exposition of Being-in-the-World, or Dasein, in his seminal work *Being and Time* (2001). Dasein, derived from the German term meaning "Being there", signifies human existence or presence in the world (Heidegger 28). Heidegger holds the view that thrownness embodies the knowledge and acceptance of Dasein's innate randomness and contingency. This condition of thrownness includes all of the annoyances, pains, and obligations that people are forced to accept due to social norms, familial ties, or external obligations. These predetermined conditions are what Katherine Withy refers to as "situatedness" of human kind (62). Thrownness, in this sense, is an existential condition that refers to the fundamental path in which human beings find themselves inserted into the world without their volition. Heidegger posits that human existence is situated within a specific context, which he terms as Dasein's "Being-in-the-World" (53). This concept underpins that individuals are thrown into a pre-existing set of circumstances, environments, and historical contexts that profoundly shape their experiences and identities.

Despite its ambiguity, Heidegger uses thrownness to illustrate the pre-given nature of human existence. Thrownness signifies that individuals are delivered over to their Being, subject to the "facticity" of their existence

¹ The historical aspect of national marginalization has been traced in further detail in works such as *Scottish Literature: An Introduction* (2022) by Alan Riach and *Contemporary Scottish Literature: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (2009) by Matt McGuire.

(Heidegger 174) (emphasis original). This facticity refers to the concrete details and conditions of one's life, including cultural norms, societal structures, and historical events, which are not chosen but must be navigated. Heidegger articulates this by stating that "[a]n entity of the character of Dasein is its 'there' in such a way that, whether explicitly or not, it finds itself [sich befindet] in its thrownness" (174). This implies that human beings are always already in a world that has shaped them before they become aware of it. This thrownness into a world is a central aspect of the human condition, where individuals are continuously interacting with and being influenced by their surroundings. However, Heidegger does not regard humans as merely passive recipients of their circumstances. According to Withy, Heidegger emphasizes the active role of individuals in interpreting and making sense of their thrownness instead (62). This interpretation and understanding of one's thrownness involve an existential engagement with the world where individuals recognize their limitations.

Furthermore, thrownness is closely related to Heidegger's idea of "facticity", which refers to the aspects of existence that are given and unavoidable. Although the conditions into which a human being is thrown at birth are not within their control, Heidegger does not adopt an entirely pessimistic or deterministic stance. Despite these given conditions, Heidegger argues that individuals have the capacity to transcend their facticity through what he calls "projection" or rather the process "of one's own Being-towards-onself 'into something else'" (Heidegger 162). Projection involves envisioning and striving toward future possibilities that are not dictated solely by one's past or present conditions. This capacity for projection highlights the dynamic interplay between freedom and limitation in human existence. From this and other aspects, Heidegger's concept of thrownness encapsulates the dual nature of human existence: Being thrust into a world of pre-existing conditions and simultaneously possessing the capacity for self-understanding and projection beyond those conditions. It highlights the tension between determinism and freedom, past and future, and the continuous process of becoming within the constraints of one's facticity. This complex interplay is central in understanding the existential condition of human kind and the profound challenges and possibilities in identity formation.

Thrown to Scotland

In *Thrown*, Nat McCleary presents five characters, Jo Buchanan, Chantelle Watson, Pamela Clark, Imogen Ngwenya, and Helen Macleod, who embody the physical and existential aspects of thrownness. The play manifests their struggles to fit into a society that marginalizes them based on gender, class, and race. These characters are brought together by the playwright in the context of the Highland Games, a traditional Scottish event. McCleary introduces her characters with specific criteria at the outset, including gender, ethnic background, class, weight, age, and personality traits. Within the framework of Heidegger's philosophy, these characters are arbitrarily thrown into the world, specifically into Scotland, as their place of origin, without any guidance or reason. This concept is depicted in the play by withholding explanations from the audience regarding how and why these women are selected and team up for wrestling in the Highland Games. The ground on which they wrestle is not merely a physical space; it constitutes a symbolic arena which is rich with historical, cultural, and socio-economic significance. In line with this, the sweat, conflict, and struggle to capture a sense of belonging to Scotland, chosen by the creator/playwright, lead Helen to the realization that: "That patch of grass that you fight on. That land. It's just a random bit of ground in a random field" (McCleary I. iix. 73). Helen's remark contrasts sharply with Jo's assertion of the land's profound historical and emotional significance. Jo responds, "[t]hat is, until you stand on it, and your bare feet feel it. You feel it. The energy of history. The story of past fights, past struggles, past victories" (I. iix. 73). This difference in remarks highlights the tension between the characters' arbitrary placement in the moment and their subsequent experience of being overwhelmed by imposed identities, legacies, ideologies, and struggles. The juxtaposition between Helen's perception of the land as a random, insignificant space and Jo's view of it as a site imbued with deep, existential meaning puts the emphasis on the play's exploration of the tension between the superficial and profound understandings of place and identity.

Nonetheless, although the randomness involved in the concept of being thrown is beyond the choice and will of the individual, it is not a destination in a person's life journey. As Katherine Withy states, "[t]o be thrown" is rather "to have a starting-point, somewhere we are located" (62). Therefore, Scotland represents a starting point of those athletes in the play, and it turns out to be "facticity" of the characters in Heidegger's term, since "[t]he facticity of Dasein is meant to capture the 'fact' of our existence: 'that' we are" (Cowles 18). Just as Heidegger's concept of facticity implies an undeniable and unchosen starting point, being born and existing in Scotland is an

inescapable fact for these women. Even though they have serious conflicts and hatreds within the group, the characters cannot leave the team. They have a special bond with the team which becomes a microcosm of Scotland where there is no exit or escape for the characters. While this might initially seem negative, as it chains the characters to one place, it also has a positive aspect. The team functions as an ultimate leveller of all discrepancies and evokes a sense of belonging. This positive effect is observed when they hear music, such as Bonnie Tyler's "Total Eclipse of the Heart" (McCleary I. i. 58). At that moment, the tensivity among the characters turns out to be team solidarity and enthusiasm. This camaraderie later develops into a deeper sense of national and cultural solidarity, especially among the Scottish women in the play. Helen expresses this feeling as "nice to be connected to family, tradition" (I. i. 58). This sense of belonging and cultural unity draws parallelism with Benedict Anderson's term "imagined community" which Richard Zumkhawala-Cook uses to argue that "nations depend on an unrelenting fiction of wholeness and unity, to maintain a 'self' that is at once different from other nations and sovereign in its own identity" (13). This argument, when bearing the characters' constant separation but ultimate striving for unity in mind, illustrates how Scotland's (female) characters are connected to an existential thread to the society that roots both their existence and their personalities in it. This is confirmed by the self-affirmation of Pamela, the team's coach, who grounds the team members in their shared reality with a simple declaration that "[w]e're here" (I. i. 59). All things considered, these moments show how personal and national identities are shaped by collective experiences and cultural narratives that bridge individual differences.

Understanding how the representation of Scotland's cultural, historical and environmental contexts varies between individuals is crucial to illuminate the complex dynamics underlying the interpersonal conflicts between female athletes. McCleary's representation of Scotland is indeed quite ambiguous. Throughout the play, she persistently includes stereotypical symbols of Scottish heritage such as haggis, kilts, tartan, legacy, Gaelic, and Scots. These cultural markers, however, are presented in a hyperbolic and almost caricatured manner, transforming them into inflated symbols that detach them from their authentic origins. Therefore, despite McCleary's attempts to familiarise the characters with their existence and their state of being thrown by using cultural symbols of the places from which Dasein is thrown, these exaggerated symbolic repetitions create a disconnection between the characters and Scotland. This detachment is epitomized by the exaggerated contender names like "Tartan Terror" and "The Haggis Horror" which Chantelle describes as "OUT OF CONTROL!" (I. i. 5). The repeated invocation of terror evokes an overwhelming sense of oppressive fear. By amplifying these symbols to the point of absurdity, McCleary explicitly satirizes the reduction of a rich, multifaceted culture to mere marketable icons which are devoid of their historical and existential significance. It highlights the commodification and superficial engagement with cultural heritage by reflecting the characters' struggle to reconcile their authentic identities with these imposed, commercialized versions. This kind of political stance that McCleary adopts in the play can be considered as a deadlock of cultural/historical heritage within the postmodern context. Zumkhawala-Cook explains this complexity by referring to Scottish culture and heritage through the following lines:

Not exactly culture and not exactly history, heritage describes a privately experienced affective link to past communities mediated both by bloodlines and a consumer relationship to the symbolic artifacts of a previous society. In other words, in heritage we see the particularly postmodern construction of difference and identity as individually administered and self-fashioned, imagining itself separate from contemporary local practical human relationships. "Finding one's roots" through genealogical studies, stories of patriarchal family traditions, or participating in cultural festivals may seem harmless in themselves, but in practice they propose an exclusivist version of cultural subjectivity that can disregard the historical realities of power and privilege that have made, and continue to make, these identities possible in everyday life. (24)

McCleary's *Thrown* delves into the themes of heritage in a way that reflects the postmodern identity construction described in the given quotation. The play explores how individuals connect to the past, not simply as a matter of culture or history, but as a complex link to the past communities, shaped by both familial ties and national icons. Through the characters' interactions with traditional Scottish practices such as backhold wrestling, the selling of cultural food like haggis, wearing kilts and tartans, and their encounters with a fierce audience, McCleary highlights the dichotomy between celebrating heritage and confronting the exclusivist and reductionist tendencies it can foster. When approaching to the play through the lens of Heidegger's thrownness, this fosters the complexities of identity formation in a world of imposed cultural narratives and commercialized heritage. The tension between the characters' superficial engagement with their cultural symbols and their deeper existential

search for authenticity reveals the play's sceptical stance on national pride and the playwright's comment on the reductionist approach to cultural identity.

In *Thrown*, McCleary, while repetitively incorporating cultural symbols, deliberately distances her characters from rigid or stereotypical definitions of Scottish national identity. This approach facilitates a more dynamic conceptualization of Scottishness. The play illustrates that being born in Scotland and participating in the Highland Games is an element of the characters' experiences and yet it does not fully define their identities. The women in the play are categorized as part of the registration process for the games, which serves as a catalyst for the recognition of their tangible, socially classified existences. The derogatory labels used by the audience of the Highland Games such as "Paki lover", "doormat", "lesbo," "virgin", "half-caste", "posh bitch", "pathetic", "Scottish", "not Scottish", "gold digger", "gobby", "typical woman" focus the attention on the diverse physicality and political engagement of these women (McCleary I. xxi. 31). These slurs, hence, highlight the political and cultural variety within Scotland which, challenge the notion of a singular Scottish identity. The exchange between Imogen and Jo further illustrates the satirical comment of monolithic perceptions of Scottishness:

IMOGEN. I still can't believe we almost doubled the number of female wrestlers.
 JO. Aye, I thought there would be more of us.
 IMOGEN. I thought there would be more of 'us' too.
 JO. I didn't.
 IMOGEN. All Scotland can't be that white surely? (I. xxv. 36)

This dialogue accentuates the play's broader thematic exploration, wherein the characters' expectations are subverted by revealing the multiplicity of identities and experiences that constitute contemporary Scottishness. The reference to "white Scotland" interrogates the racial and cultural assumptions tied to national identity, thereby emphasizing the play's stance on the homogenization of Scottish identity.

The huge gap in the perception of Scotland is also made explicit particularly when the characters go to buy kilts for the competition. Almost every character reacts differently to these symbolic clothes, which can be considered sacred icons for some nationalist groups. While Imogen, Jo, and Chantelle, as representatives of the new generation, point to the expense or banality of kilts, Helen, who comes from an older generation, reminds the girls of the historical oppression of Scottish identity and asks: "Did you know that the Act of Proscription in 1746 made kilt-wearing punishable by death" (McCleary I. ii. 60). The Act of Proscription of 1746 that Helen refers to in the play was historically introduced by England in the aftermath of the Jacobite defeat at the Battle of Culloden. Through the given act, it was intended to suppress Highland culture and prevent further rebellion. Therefore, the legislation banned the wearing of traditional Highland dress, including tartans, kilts, shoulder belt, which were viewed as official attire of Jacobite identity since "[n]othing considered outwardly Highland could be visible" (White 46). By erasing the visibility of highlanders, the act not only stripped them of their cultural identity but also sought to assimilate them into British culture. McCleary's *Thrown* harmonizes these historical realities with contemporary attitudes by demonstrating how national symbols, such as a kilt, carry different meanings across generations. Within this context, this reminder of Helen's indicates how when you were born as well as where you were born influences one's perception of Scotland as well as one's identity. Here, even though these symbols represent the devotion and sacrifices made in the past for independence and freedom as reflected by Helen, the new generation views them differently. As a response to Helen's statement, Imogen says, "Only back then, Helen?" (I. ii. 60). She hereby reminds Helen that the value judgements of the past and today's living conditions are not the same. Born into a capitalist system, the new generation is inclined to perceive these symbols as ordinary products of industrialization. Their spiritual value has diminished, and those cloths are now considered as commodities or as a part of the capitalist production mechanism rather than a special element of identity. This diversity reflects the dynamic and evolving nature of Scottish history, as each wrestler is depicted as being thrown into a different Scotland. Thus, each character comes to represent a different era of Scotland, showcasing the broad spectrum of identities within a single national context. This interplay between individual experiences and collective identity underscores the complexity of defining what it means to be Scottish in contemporary society. Thus, each character comes to assume a different Scotland and represents a different age of Scotland.

Another significant aspect of thrownness is that it determines the scope of possibilities available to Dasein. As Darshan Cowles argues, "[o]ur thrownness limits our projection, in that our project remains tied to or grounded in it. We already find ourselves in a particular way, and this in some way determines the possibilities we project

into, the possibilities that we are” (32). This projection is interpreted by Witty as freedom but even in this case freedom is bounded by the circumstances of where people are thrown to (61). In line with Heideggerian account, the play reinforces political factors such as race, class, and historical background in identity formation. At its core, the play revolves around the contentions of privilege by portraying how unequal opportunities lead to unfair systems. By connecting this within the context of an Anglo-centric, class-conscious, and male-dominated Scottish society, the play illustrates how privilege supports social inequalities and worsens the struggles of people who are marginalized because of their race, gender, and/or class. The three characters in the play, Imogen, Chantelle, and Jo, navigate their identities within the constraints of their thrownness and inherited opportunities in Scotland. Imogen, of African origin and upper-class Scottish, grapples with the dualities of being black and rich. Chantelle, a working-class Caucasian Scottish female, aspires to rise above her status and become an influencer, yet her identity is deeply rooted in racial pride most probably due to her desire to be superior among her friends, but particularly superior to her black teammate, Imogen. Indeed, she is not blind or unaware of hegemonic relations between races and classes as she suffers a lot from the lack of opportunity. Despite humiliating Imogen’s blackness, she discloses her sense of world within the following words: “‘More than one kind of privilege.’ Don’t I fucking know it. But only one kind matters these days.” (McCleary 40) Thus, their jealousy invites the audience to ponder on the concept of privilege and its intersectionality. Imogen also humiliates Chantelle due to her economic superiority but acknowledges that,

Money talks, but don’t kid yourself that you’ll like what it says. I’m sorry people are poor. I am sorry black people are poor. But I’ll always be black first, rich second. At least people are racist to your face when you are poor. It’s worse watching them swallow it, choke it down when they realise what you bank. But I was born Scottish. Being Scottish, that comes for free. Money shuts the fuck up. (I. xiv. 53)

The given excerpt highlights the persistent influence of race which comes from birth despite the earned wealth which reflects the struggles within a constrained framework of thrownness. In other words, the direct address of Imogen to the audience underscores the complex and enduring impact of race, which remains a defining element of identity regardless of acquired wealth. This tension between inherited racial identity and achieved socioeconomic status reflects the struggles within an existential framework of thrownness where one’s starting point in life is not a matter of choice but profoundly shapes one’s experiences. In line with this, Imogen articulates the double-edged sword of wealth as it intersects with race. While money may offer power and privilege, it cannot erase the racial identity that society often weaponizes against individuals, even as they climb the social ladder. Her remark “being Scottish, that comes for free” also lays bare the inescapable reality of racial identity with the assumed national identity (I. xiv. 53).

Jo, who is of African-Caucasian origin, is caught between Chantelle and Imogen’s worlds in the play. Chantelle and Imogen represent two conflicting identities or cultural expectations, both demanding Jo’s loyalty. This polarization takes a significant toll on Jo’s psychological well-being and how she perceives herself. Jo ultimately expresses her inner turmoil to the audience by describing this conflict as a “[t]ug of war. Two opposites. Dichotomy. No middle ground. [...] I wonder how long a rope can bear up under that before it snaps” (McCleary I. xxiv. 35). The vivid metaphor of a rope under strain symbolizes the internal and external pressures Jo faces, torn between two opposing identities in a binary world where she is constantly pulled in different directions. Jo’s dilemma holds the mirror to the audience to reflect the broader experience of individuals who navigate multiple identities, often without the comfort of a stable or reconciled sense of self. Her fear of the rope snapping suggests the potential for breakdown or crisis when the tension becomes unbearable. This anxiety discloses the existential struggle of belonging, the search for a middle ground that remains elusive, and the emotional burden of maintaining a balancing act between disparate worlds that rarely acknowledge the complexity of her identity.

Helen and Pamela, on the other hand, experience the frustrations of being female in a patriarchal society. Helen’s character, depicted as weak and vulnerable, and implied to have suffered domestic abuse, similarly represents the constraints and limitations imposed by a patriarchal society. Her avoidance of conflict, along with Pamela’s actions, can be seen as a mature acknowledgment of their thrownness or rather their acceptance of the circumstances into which they were born, while still grappling with the implications. Both characters embody a deep engagement with the societal expectations placed upon them and seek ways to push back or resist these pressures. Pamela is also at odds with biological determinism and presents gender dysphoria by using hormone

suppressive drugs. She reveals her distress in her silence during the team conversations and in her own monologue, she defines her own condition with the following lines:

PAMELA. The weigh in. Where, before you validated to compete, you step onto the scales and find out which group you fit into. Where something arbitrary determines how you are categorized. And categories are helpful things. Help us understand what something is. They bring order; prevent chaos and confusion, they bring control. And with control comes freedom. Safety. Peace. Peace of mind. Because there's no negotiation; no grey area, the parameters are set. It's black and white. Therefore, everyone can be easily categorized. And the scales can be trusted, right? Universally accepted, right? Fairness established, right? (McCleary I. xxi. 31)

According to Pamela, the process of stepping onto the scales, where an arbitrary measure determines one's category, parallels the way society enforces gender roles and expectations based on superficial criteria, such as biological determinism. Pamela's struggle with gender dysphoria and her use of hormone suppressive drugs reflects her resistance to being confined by these rigid categories, challenging the idea that one's identity must conform to predetermined societal norms.

Furthermore, as previously noted, the Heideggerian term *thrownness* represents merely the initial condition or starting point of an individual's existence. Following this initial state, Heidegger posits that the individual engages in the process of projection whereby they actively shape their future by envisioning and pursuing their aspirations, desires, and goals. This act involves a forward-looking orientation that transcends the constraints of one's initial circumstances and thereby allows the individual to create meaning and purpose in their life through the continuous unfolding of their potentialities. Nevertheless, the projection of identity into the future is a painful process because, after being thrown, the human being is constantly "absorbed" by the space where they are placed and is forced to grapple with things (Heidegger 146). Therefore, what matters for humankind is the process after being thrown. In the play, this existential struggle after being thrown is categorized and classified differently by each woman. The following excerpt articulates the potential risks and challenges each woman might experience, or has already experienced, after being thrown:

PAMELA. Fifth. The throw.
 JO. That moment of feeling in freefall. Out of control. Waiting to see who lands first. Waiting for a resolution.
 PAMELA: And the risks?
 HELEN. Personal injury
 IMOGEN. Disqualification.
 JO. Humiliation
 CHANTELLE. Failure
 PAMELA. The gain?
 ALL. Validation. (McCleary I. ii. 11)

Each response, as demonstrated by the quotation, encapsulates a different aspect of the human condition in the context of their existential and socio-cultural thrownness. For Jo, it is the fear of being humiliated or anxiety in making the wrong choice in showing her stance either with her white or her black side. Helen's mention of personal injury evokes the physical and emotional toll of grappling with male-oriented marital life. Imogen's concern with disqualification points to the fear of societal rejection and the harsh judgments imposed by external standards. Jo's mentioning of humiliation reflects the internalized fear of failure and the impact of societal expectations on self-worth. Chantelle's reference to failure captures the ultimate dread of not meeting the imposed standards and the internalized pressure to succeed. However, the unified response of "validation" as the gain signifies the collective yearning for acknowledgment and affirmation in the face of these existential challenges (McCleary I. ii. 11).

Conclusion

Thrown by McCleary demonstrates how Heidegger's concept of thrownness manifests through pre-existing conditions and societal expectations that profoundly shape one's understanding of self, choices, and path in life. The play reveals that personal agency and external thrown factors interact dynamically, continually influencing the characters' perceptions and actions over time. Despite sharing the commonality of being born in Scotland and participating in the Highland Games, the women in the play exhibit diverse reactions, experiences, and

engagements with the world. This diversity leads one to the idea that identity is not monolithic but rather a complex interplay of individual experiences and broader socio-historical contexts. Furthermore, each character's journey reflects the struggle to wrestle with the contradictions between their personal aspirations and the roles imposed upon them by society. The wrestling ground plays crucial role in the play in terms of theatrically denoting this existential struggle. It is a physical space where characters confront not only each other but also their own internal conflicts and societal expectations. Each character must grapple with the predetermined conditions of their existence while striving to assert her personal agency. In this sense, *Thrown* overall offers a profound exploration of the human condition by reflecting Heidegger's belief that thrownness is an inescapable aspect of existence. It emphasizes that while individuals are thrust into pre-existing conditions beyond their control, they also possess the capacity to navigate these conditions and shape their paths. The play encourages the audience to reflect on their own experiences of thrownness and consider how they, too, can find meaning and agency within the limitations of their circumstances. Thus, McCleary's *Thrown* serves both as a mirror and a lens, allowing us to see ourselves within the struggles of its characters and inspiring us to confront our own existential dilemmas with courage and insight.

Works Cited

- Cowles, Darshan. "Thrownness, Attunement, Attention: A Heideggerian Account of Responsibility." Doctoral Dissertation, University of Essex, 2017. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/151186163.pdf>. Accessed on 6 April 2024.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.
- McCleary, Nat. *Thrown*. London: Nick Hern Books, 2013.
- . "Thrown: Educational Portal: Nat McCleary." *National Theatre of Scotland*. YouTube, 2024. <https://youtube.com>. Accessed on 8 May 2024.
- McGuire, Matt. *Contemporary Scottish Literature: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Riach, Alan. *Scottish Literature: An Introduction*. Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2022.
- Robertson, John. "Andrew Fletcher's Vision of Union." in *Scotland and England 1286-1815*. Ed. Roger A. Mason. Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1987. n.p.
- White, Sandra. "Smugglers and Excisemen: The History of Whisky in Scotland, 1644 to 1823." M.A. Thesis, The University of Western Ontario, Canada. 2020. <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=9719&context=etd>. Accessed on 30 November 2024.
- Withy, Katherine. "Situation and Limitation: Making Sense of Heidegger on Thrownness." *European Journal of Philosophy* 22.1 (June 2011): 61-81. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-0378.2011.00471.x.
- Zumkhawala-Cook, Richard. *Scotland as We Know It: Representations of National Identity in Literature, Film and Popular Culture*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2008.