

THE
EDINBURGH HISTORY OF
SCOTTISH LITERATURE
VOLUME 3

Modern Transformations:
New Identities (from 1918)

Period and General Editor: Ian Brown
Co-editors: Thomas Owen Clancy, Susan Manning
and Murray Pittock

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Modern Transformations: New Identities (from 1918)

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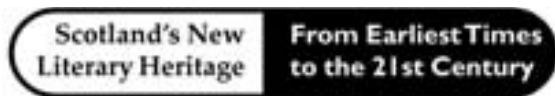
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Preface

Ian Brown, Thomas Owen Clancy, Susan Manning and
Murray Pittock

The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature is conceived and produced as a single entity. In consultation with the publishers, the editors have sought to present it in three volumes. This is done for practical reasons. Each volume is in itself of some substance. To publish all three in one volume might have produced an unwieldy and inaccessible tome, not so much weighty as burdensome.

The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature in three volumes then is, yet, a single work. Each editor has taken prime responsibility for an individual period: Thomas Owen Clancy for up to 1314, Murray Pittock for 1314–1707, Susan Manning for 1707–1918 and Ian Brown for 1918 onwards. Nonetheless, it is the essence of our editorial process that every chapter has been considered by all editors. In other words, the conception and shaping of this *History* aims to avoid false time divisions, and to promulgate the understanding that Scottish literature is a continuous and multi-channelled entity from its beginnings – presumably well before the first remnants that survive from the first millennium – till the present moment. Similarly, it has sought to include, and give adequate representation to, wide varieties of Scottish literature, including that in Gaelic, Latin, Norse, Welsh and French as well as the Scots and English most commonly in the past associated with the term ‘Scottish literature’. It also includes, as appropriate, oral and performance literature and diaspora literatures and writers. Scottish literature is best understood as an inclusive, not an exclusive, term. This is a theme, both of intellectual discourse and architectonic structure, of *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature*.

In preparing this *History*, the editors have sought at all times to marry the most up-to-date and rigorous scholarship with the avoidance of a distracting reference apparatus unsuited to the needs of the general reader. Each of the following chapters is, the editors hope, marked by both a high degree of accessibility and straightforward readability, and also by reliability and the intellectual rigour that comes from commanding knowledge gracefully worn. It is in pursuit of this aim of a balance of deep scholarship and ease of access that the three-volume format has been adopted. Although of course it is entirely possible for an individual reader to choose to focus her or his study on the volume that most closely meets immediate needs or interests, each volume will be most rewarding when read in the context and light of the other two.

Readers of volumes two and three are therefore recommended to bear in mind the matters raised in the Introduction which opens volume one. This contains two chapters considering the nature and study of Scottish literature, one prepared by the editors, the other by Cairns Craig. Volume one continues with the first two periods of the *History*, up to 1314 and 1314–1707. Volume Two contains the period 1707–1918. Volume three contains the period from 1918 onwards. Each volume has its own index and list of contributors and so can be read as a coherent whole. The editors, however, make no apology for the

fact that each volume contains material that relates to years beyond its explicit period or for the many cross-references between volumes that are required for a full understanding of the material under discussion. Many necessary cross-references between volumes demonstrate the power of the continuity of Scotland's literature. This is a strength of these volumes, and an essential premise of their underlying argument.

This volume, in common with the other two, has within its period sections a standard structure. Each period has introductory chapters providing a historical, a geographic and a linguistic context to the period's literature. There is also a fourth introductory chapter in all but the first period concerned with the international reception and literary impact of Scottish literature. Such a chapter does not exist for the earliest period because during that period so much of the literature under discussion is shared between the developing Scottish literary tradition and others. From 1314 on, as more coherent and conscious traditions of Scottish literature develop, so it is more possible to discern and trace their international impact. The chapters in this *History* relating to this impact offer, for the first time, a coherent picture, based on objective measures of levels of translation, of the powerful impression made by Scottish literature on other cultures. This grew discernibly over the centuries, but began with some *éclat* with the enormously important writings of Duns Scotus and, later, the often-underrated impact of George Buchanan on wider European culture, particularly the dramaturgic development of writing for the modern European stage. In each period, following these introductory chapters, a variety of distinguished experts addresses aspects of Scottish literature in a series of chapters; some focus on the work of individual writers; more consider the varieties of interaction of writers with one another and with their cultural contexts.

Taken as a whole, these volumes offer the most extensive, the most various and the most inclusive history of Scottish literature available to date.

Changing Cultures: The History of Scotland since 1918

Richard Finlay

This chapter will concentrate on a number of key themes that have featured prominently in the history of twentieth-century Scottish society and, as such, have been reflected in much of the literature of the nation. First, the theme of economic change will be examined as Scottish society has been profoundly influenced by the depression of the interwar years, the managed economy of the post-1945 era and de-industrialisation at the end of the twentieth century. At the most basic level, this is an important issue as it directly affected the quality of life experienced by most Scots. Work in the male-dominated heavy industries, economic depression, poverty and unemployment, to name a few, have featured extensively in the literature of the nation. Such issues have had a profound impact on the development of Scotland's political culture and this forms the subject of our second theme. Class conflict is omni-present in Scottish fiction since 1918 and has been responsible for much of the depiction of Scotland as a gritty, working-class nation. The period was one of social and economic upheaval, but this shaped the experiences of men and women differently and the issue of gender will form the basis of our third theme. The fact that much of the literature of the twentieth century has had a male voice has deflected attention away from the distinctive experience of women and this gender imbalance is now being addressed by a generation of female writers. Finally, in a volume examining *Scottish* literature, attention will turn to questions regarding culture and national identity.

Economic change

In spite of Hugh MacDiarmid's strictures that he did not give a damn about economics, the mixed fortunes of the Scottish economy have had the single biggest impact on the lives of most Scots in the twentieth century. At the risk of overgeneralisation, it can be said that the history of the twentieth-century Scottish economy has been dominated by the single issue of its transformation from one that was characteristic of the nineteenth century into one that was characteristic of the twentieth. Indeed, it might be said that Scotland almost skipped a century, in that its nineteenth-century economic relics (the traditional heavy industries of coal, steel, shipbuilding and engineering) soldiered on well past their sell-by date late into the twentieth century, only to be replaced by the service-sector economy that is more characteristic of the twenty-first century. Stalwarts of the economy of the twentieth century (the petrol engine, the motor car, the mass-produced consumer durables, aircraft, super-tankers and the like) were not produced to any great extent in Scotland. In

many respects, if the nineteenth century was one of Scottish economic triumph, the twentieth century was one of missed opportunity and failure.

The end of the Great War witnessed a transformation in the fortunes of the Scottish economy. An increasingly unstable world economy dried up demand for the traditional capital investment goods, such as ships, locomotives and engineering plant. This had a knock-on effect, hitting the coal and steel industries, which depended on the industries that produced these goods. In many respects the economy was like a house of cards, with demand from the international economy as the key prop in the centre of the stack. Once demand was gone, the rest of the economy would fall down as support for its elements collapsed. There were other problems too. The rise of Asian competition had a dramatic impact on the textile industries and changed political boundaries in Europe meant that the eastern European market for coal and herring were lost. Unlike the economies of the south of England, Germany and North America, Scottish industrialists stood fast, resolutely believing that things would pick up. There was no diversification into the new light industries that mass-produced consumer goods. The Scottish economy worked at under-capacity during the interwar era and things were made worse by the impact of the Great Depression in 1929. Companies moved their headquarters south, businesses amalgamated for protection and unemployment kept on rising. Some 400,000 were out of work in the early 1930s and contemporaries estimated that the scourge of unemployment affected one Scot out of three. Things improved only as a result of rearmament in the late 1930s as the heavy industries were re-flated to produce the materials of war. Yet, as most experts knew, the heart of the problem was an over-reliance on these industries and not enough diversification in the economy.

The rhetoric of 'homes for heroes' was never realised after 1918. A royal commission of 1917 had recommended that there was an immediate need for about a third of a million new homes to tackle Scotland's endemic overcrowding. The statistics make for shocking reading. Overcrowding was six times greater than England and infant mortality rates a third higher. Poor housing was seen as the single biggest factor in contributing to the nation's health problems. In spite of the 1924 Housing Act, passed by the minority Labour government, new building failed to keep pace with dilapidation of old stock. The economic climate of the interwar era did not help. Unemployment was the single largest factor in accounting for endemic poverty. Even before the impact of the Great Depression, it was estimated that there were 100,000 men who were surplus to labour requirements in the western central belt. Statistical national averages do little to convey the reality of unemployment. Its impact was concentrated and industrial towns such as Motherwell, Coatbridge and Airdrie were likely to experience levels as high as two-thirds. Areas with high rates of unemployment had high local government rates, limiting available money to tackle the social problems. Government cut-backs, likewise, affected housing and social provision. On the eve of the Second World War, a quarter of a million Scots were still dependent on poor relief.

The advent of 'total' war in 1939 offered a way out of the endemic social and economic problems that had plagued Scottish society. A revolution in economic thinking now placed government intervention at the centre of economic policy. Whereas the orthodoxy had been that government could do little to stave off the impact of market conditions, the war had demonstrated that the economy could be 'commanded' to regulate production and ensure the maintenance of full employment. In an endeavour to mobilise the population, politicians increasingly argued that 'never again' would there be a return to the days of high unemployment when the 'Guilty Men', who had also appeased the fascist dictators, stood

idly by, wringing their hands. This new political idealism was formally enshrined in the Beveridge Report of 1942, which called for the creation of the Welfare State to look after citizens from the cradle to the grave. The opportunities afforded by wartime planning were seized by the Scottish Secretary of State from 1941 to 1945, Thomas Johnston, who was eager to use state planning and regulation to tackle the twin problems of poor social conditions and too little diversification in the economy. Such ambitions were enshrined in the Clyde Valley Plan of 1947 written by Sir Patrick Abercrombie.

Yet, as often happens, the plans were not fulfilled in the post-war era. The heavy industries continued to flourish in the late 1940s and 1950s as a result of the demand created by the reconstruction of mainland Europe. Few cared, as there was full employment. Although slower to make an impact, the Welfare State increased housing provision and provided better health and educational care. The impact of government intervention became a staple of Scottish political faith and the period from the end of the Second World War to the mid-1960s was the high-point of belief in the Union with England. Yet, the hoped-for reconstruction of the Scottish economy failed to materialise. Comparatively, the traditional heavy industries were uncompetitive, and new industry failed to materialise without considerable government subsidy. Scottish economic productivity, wages and standards of living failed to keep pace with the rest of the United Kingdom. The more the economy failed, the greater the expectation that government would rectify the situation. Public expenditure was some 20 per cent higher north of the border by the late 1960s. Economic planning was increasingly compromised by political expediency as politicians sought to influence government expenditure to maximise political gain. The following examples help to make the point. The Conservative administrations of the 1950s were obsessed with meeting housing targets and, as a result, pushed through extensive tower block building programmes because this was the cheapest way to re-house the maximum number of people in the shortest time. The Labour governments of the 1960s pushed for the creation of an aluminium smelter and a paper mill in the Highlands, even though their economic prospects were not good. Likewise, the decision to bring car manufacturing to Scotland was done more for political than economic reasons. Successive governments poured money into the mining, steel and shipbuilding industries, even though most were clearly established as economic 'lame ducks'.

By the mid-1970s, levels of government intervention were no longer sustainable and coincided with a global economic crisis that followed on from the Arab–Israeli War of 1973. With an older industrial structure, a greater dependency on branch plant manufacturing and an underdeveloped service sector, the Scottish economy was ill-prepared to deal with the symptoms of the 'British disease' that plagued the economy in the seventies. Rising inflation and interest rates, chronic industrial unrest, government deficits and mounting unemployment all took their toll. When the Conservative government took power in 1979 with the pledge that it would roll back the frontiers of the state, the Scottish economy was precariously dependent on government support. Worse still, it coincided with another downturn in the economy. Removing the buffers of state support meant that the traditional industries that had characterised much of Scottish life since the mid-nineteenth century, such as steel, coal, shipping and heavy engineering, withered in the cold climate of the unregulated free market. In the early 1980s, Scotland experienced a rate of de-industrialisation that was similar to eastern European societies following the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1992.

By the early 1990s, Scottish society had been transformed. Its economy was led by the service sector, with banking and insurance emerging as two key giants. Tourism,

petrochemicals and electronics completed the transformation. This change was not achieved without social cost. The 1980s witnessed high unemployment and low wages, and there emerged a so-called 'underclass', those who did not fit in with the new economy. Marginalised in large council estates and largely dependent on social security, this group evolved into a sort of society within society. For the majority, however, the period witnessed increased prosperity. Home ownership increased from one-third to two-thirds and by the mid-1990s Scotland was on the European Union average for most socio-economic indicators.

Political culture

The effect of such economic and social turmoil during the twentieth century had its impact on politics. The First World War fatally wounded the mighty Liberal Party, which had dominated Scottish politics before 1914. The rise of politics based on class was a consequence of growing tensions that had been unleashed during the war. Inflation and government control put pressure on workers who increasingly resorted to their own efforts to seek redress of social and economic grievances. The Rent Strike of 1915 resulted in a freeze of rents for the duration of the war and had been inspired by a popular revolt against the activities of rapacious landlords. It demonstrated to the working class that it could bring about change by its own efforts. Industrial militancy plagued the Clyde munitions works and government endeavours at regulation and control were cack-handed. Liberal claims to represent the interests of the worker took a further blow when they entered into a coalition government with the Tories in 1915. There was an increasing perception that the government was in favour of the bosses rather than the workers. The suppression of the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916 further compounded problems for the Liberal Party as the Catholic community, mostly of Irish descent, abandoned the Liberals, whose former pledges in favour of Irish home rule now seemed hollow. The Labour Party and the trade unions were growing in strength. The outbreak of the Russian Revolution and increased workers' militancy at home caused a realignment on the right of politics. Just as the working class became more militant so did the middle class. The hard-line Tories appeared a better prospect for the defence of property than the wishy-washy Liberals. By 1924, after the Liberals had supported a Minority Labour administration, much to the chagrin of the middle class, Scottish politics was polarised between a working-class Labour Party and a middle-class Tory Party. The Liberals were squeezed out of the middle.

Class conflict was exacerbated by the economic situation in interwar Scotland. The dislocation in the international economy meant that endemic unemployment was a feature of the traditional industries. The early 1920s witnessed unemployment riots over benefits and in 1926 class war broke out during the General Strike. Riots hit Glasgow, Dundee, Edinburgh and Aberdeen, but the most bitter conflict was seen in the mining villages of Fife. In many respects, it is possible to characterise Scottish society between the wars as one divided politically between a working-class, urban and west-central belt and small-town, rural and traditional Scotland. Of the two, it was the latter that had most political success. The impact of the Great Depression witnessed the collapse of the Labour Party as the leadership and a chunk of the minority administration went off to form the National Government with the Tories and Liberals in 1931. Politically, Labour collapsed, but this was due more to the impact of the electoral system than a decline in the popular vote. The first-past-the-post system worked to the advantage of the National Government: in the

general election of 1935, even though Labour was able to win 41.8 per cent of the popular vote, this was not reflected in the number of seats won.

The legacy of the thirties as the 'Devil's Decade' was one that would long endure in Scottish political memory. The National Government's response to the economic crisis was that there was little that could be done and that things would only improve once the international economy picked up. Time and time again, politicians of all hues expressed their frustration with the government's seeming impotence to tackle the endemic social and economic problems that plagued Scottish society. This was changed with the impact of the Second World War and the revolution in thinking as to the role of the state in social and economic regulation. The demands of what was now seen as 'Total War' meant that government had to command all aspects of economy and society. It was not long before many began to ask if the government could regulate on this kind of scale to defeat the fascist dictatorships, why not do the same in peacetime to deal with unemployment, poor housing, bad health and poverty, which were just as great a social evil?

The wartime political consensus was based on the premise that the state would use its powers to regulate the economy and intervene in social policy to guarantee the welfare of all citizens from the cradle to the grave. In Scotland, such a shift in attitude was especially welcome, given that there was much for the state to do in terms of regulating the economy. Up until the Thatcher governments of the 1980s, the template of Scottish political success was determined by how much the respective political parties could screw out of the British state with votes going to the highest offer. Not surprisingly, when it came to the advocacy of a welfarist and interventionist programme, the left seemed the natural party and Labour began to pull ahead of the Tories in the mid-1960s, although the first-past-the-post electoral system distorted Labour's lead in terms of the number of seats won. It was when Westminster was perceived as failing to deliver the goods in 1967 and the mid-1970s that the vote for the SNP increased. In many respects the issue of Scottish devolution in the seventies was part and parcel of a series of crises that engulfed the Labour government of 1974–9. Labour analysis of the rise of nationalism was predicated on the assumption that it was driven by social and economic discontent. Indeed, the Scottish Secretary of State, Willie Ross, often used the threat of an upsurge in nationalism as a means to wring greater concessions from the Cabinet. The solution to the rise of the SNP, it was believed, was to rectify the social and economic problems that fuelled the discontent in the first place. Once this was achieved, it was argued, the nationalist vote would evaporate. This tenet of political faith began to run into problems in the mid-seventies. First, government intervention was not proving adequate as long-standing problems still dogged the Scottish economy. Second, there was a major balance of payments crisis in 1976 when Britain went effectively bankrupt. An international loan was predicated on a commitment from government to cut public expenditure and balance the books. This meant that the old policy of throwing money at Scottish problems came to an end and there was a need for a new policy to tackle the rise of the SNP.

Devolution was essentially a makeshift policy, although there were those in the Labour Party and the Trade Unions who had been committed to it for some time. The Royal Commission on the Constitution under Lord Kilbrandon's chairmanship had reported in favour of constitutional change in 1973 and he later played a role in the 'Yes' campaign, chairing its launch on 26 January 1978. Without the resources to rectify the social and economic problems which were believed to be the fundamental cause of nationalist discontent, the creation of an assembly that would give greater power to the Scots, but stopped short of independence, was believed to be the most pragmatic solution available. Evidence

that protest was the main force driving the SNP vote can be found in the fiasco surrounding the devolution referendum of 1979. What it showed was that the Scots were divided fairly evenly on the issue of greater autonomy. The result was a three-way split between those who did not vote, those in favour and those against. It was not a ringing endorsement and the scheme collapsed in bitter acrimony between the SNP and the Labour government. In the general election of 1979, the Conservatives were returned under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher and the SNP vote collapsed. Anti-Conservatism emerged as the dominant theme of Scottish politics in the eighties and nineties. The Tory commitment to the free market and hostility to state intervention meant that the corporatist structures holding up much of Scottish society took a pounding. The Conservatives were blamed for the nation's economic woes and this manifested itself in consistent swings against the party at subsequent general elections. Also, the electorate had learned to use tactical voting as a means to oust Tory MPs, who were reduced to a rump in the general election of 1987. One other result of the use of tactical voting was to enhance the Labour and the Liberal Democrat presence.

Conservative unpopularity north of the border had little impact on the party's political fortune as it was buoyed up by an overall British majority. Repeated rejection in Scotland did little to change Conservative policy and it reached its nadir in 1988 with the introduction of the Poll Tax one year ahead of the rest of the United Kingdom. This indifference to the electoral opinion of the Scots hatched a new political phrase, 'the Democratic Deficit'. No matter how Scotland voted, it was argued, it would not change the fact of an overall Conservative British majority. It was in response to this seeming political impotence that home rule emerged as a means to circumvent the imposition of unpopular Tory policies. The establishment of the Scottish Constitutional Convention in 1989 as an umbrella organisation brought together the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties, together with local government, the Churches and the trade unions, to act as a representative forum for the popular expression of the demand for the creation of a Scottish parliament. The SNP refused to participate on the grounds that it was hopeful that Conservative obstinacy on the issue would polarise the electorate into making a choice between independence or Tory-dominated Unionism. The Convention laid down the template for the future Scottish parliament and resolved contentious issues such as the use of proportional representation and a greater role for women. Following the election of a landslide Labour government, in September 1997 the Scots voted overwhelmingly in a referendum for their own parliament with tax-raising powers. Following the Scotland Act of 1998, the parliament was convened (or as Winifred Ewing, chairing its first meeting, put it, 're-convened') in July 1999 and moved into its own building at Holyrood in 2004. Like many public buildings, it had run over budget and was delayed, but praise for its architectural qualities has been fulsome and surely deserved. Both the Parliament's formal opening in 1999, with Sheena Wellington's iconic singing of Burns's 'A man's a man for a' that', in which those present joined, and the new building's opening ceremony, highlighted by music from several Scottish traditions and Liz Lochhead's reading of Edwin Morgan's specially written poem, uplifted the public imagination.

The issue of gender

Of all the great changes that have affected Scottish society, perhaps the greatest has been within the personal realm of family life and between men and women. Men and women

were constructed for the best part of the century, that is to say that they were conspicuously moulded into being 'men' and 'women'. This started from birth, with different attitudes adopted to the upbringing of boys and girls. Children born in the early part of the century entered into an unforgiving and hard world. Infant mortality rates remained shockingly high at about one in thirteen for most of the interwar period; a third higher than England and Wales and twice as high as the Netherlands. There was a cross-class consensus on the issue of gender conditioning. Working-class boys would be expected to enter a world of work that was hard, masculine and unforgiving to those of a 'sensitive' disposition. Middle-class boys would be expected to grow up as tough leaders of working-class roughs who would need a firm hand. Extensive beating was an effective way to remove awkward sensitivities and instil discipline and the Scottish language is well endowed with a lexicon of child-beating: *leathering*, *hammering*, *skelping*, *tanning*, *hiding* and *battering*, to name a few. A 'successful' marriage was what most parents wished for their daughter and the acquisition of the necessary feminine skills to attract a suitor were deemed a priority. Domestic skills for working-class girls and exaggerated femininity for the middle class were the norm. On entering the workplace, notions of masculinity were ruthlessly enforced and carried on after work in the pub and at the football match. Scotland's overcrowded housing did not help matters either, with most men desperate to escape from the domestic environment. Women, on the other hand, had their gender identity reinforced by the communal nature of much of the child-rearing and housework. Apart from courting, it is true to say that men and women did not spend much private time together.

The nineteenth-century notion of the division of responsibilities between men and women survived most of the traumatic changes of the twentieth century. The idea that men worked to support their family persisted throughout the Great Depression, with many unemployed men believing their masculinity was compromised and refusing to undertake part-time or unskilled work on the basis that it was demeaning. Furthermore, it was expected that in spite of men being idle, it was still the role of women to do the domestic work and, often, take on part-time work on the basis that it was not as demeaning for women. Mothers emerged starkly at the bottom of the family hierarchy during the Depression, often sacrificing their own welfare to put fathers and children first. Medical records show that women were more likely to suffer from stress and anaemia than men, suggesting that in terms of the toll taken on family life as a result of the Depression it was women who suffered the most. The limited advances that were made in the workplace during the First World War were cancelled out fairly rapidly. Trade unionists argued that the employment of women kept men out of a job and were used by employers on account of low pay, both of which, it was claimed, were detrimental to family life. The marriage bar existed in teaching and the civil service, denying married women the opportunity of advancement and promotion. Also, the family hierarchy was extended into the workplace. Most people worked locally, so that many worked with family and neighbours and the menfolk were able to use pressure in the home to ensure that the patriarchal hierarchy was unofficially enforced in the workplace.

The Second World War once again opened up opportunities for women as a result of labour shortage, but this was not carried on to any great extent after 1945. Rather, there was an increase in the amount of unskilled and part-time work available to women, which grew faster as a proportion of the workforce and eventually overtook men's by the end of the century. Changes in the economy provided more employment avenues for women. The growth in the service sector, retailing, branch-plant manufacture and social services demanded the labour of women. Yet, much of this work was for secretarial, unskilled

assembly work and was often part-time. Evidence of the fact that talented women believed there was a dearth of opportunities in Scotland is to be found in the heavy rates of emigration for professional women. Sexist attitudes were ingrained in popular workplace culture. Even in the late 1960s, family planning clinics were not registered in many local-authority directories.

Family life experienced fundamental changes in the post-war period. Increasing social and geographical mobility sounded the death-knell for the extended family as children moved away from parents. Contraception compressed the child-rearing years for women and most children grew up with siblings who were born within a few years of themselves. Divorce began to increase rapidly from the mid-1970s onwards and in the 1980s single-parent (usually female) families became increasingly prevalent. Without doubt, the opportunities available to women at the end of the twentieth century were much greater than at the beginning. Yet, although the position of women has improved over the course of the twentieth century, it is important to remember that it has also improved for men. The key issue is the question of relative improvement. In politics, there are a greater number of women, although this was a late development. In top private-sector jobs, senior civil-service positions and academia, women still lag behind men in terms of promotion. On a more mundane note, for all the endeavours of the Sex Discrimination Act, average pay for women is still less than men. In large part, this is due to the fact that most women workers are still employed in unskilled, low-paid, part-time work.

Conclusion

It would be a mistake to regard the history of twentieth-century Scotland as one in which the rise of political nationalism is a dominant theme. Rather, nationalism makes sporadic appearances and only becomes significant as the century draws to a close. Yet, with the advent of the Parliament in Edinburgh, there is a tendency to see the history of the last hundred years leading to its establishment as a culmination. Ideas of Scottishness, and, for that matter too, Britishness, were subject to competing claims. The nineteenth-century idea of 'Unionist Nationalism' held that the Union was a partnership of equals between Scotland and England and stressed the role the Scots had played in the development of the British state and Empire. After the war, many of the tenets of this belief were brought into sharp relief and seemed to have lost their relevance in a more democratic society dominated by class divisions. Militarism was no longer as popular following the carnage of the First World War, emigration was a source of concern as population fell and the workshop of empire was in chaos. Increasingly, politicians told the Scots that they were dependent on the English for economic survival.

It was in response to this crisis of identity that the writers of the Scottish Renaissance of the interwar years tried to recast Scottish identity and culture into a mould that was more applicable to the modern age. They wanted to address the big political issues of the day and were inspired by developments in other parts of the world. The couthy image of 'Kailyard' Scotland, they argued, should be replaced with something more vibrant and alive, rather than a pastiche of a shortbread tin. While leaving a successful artistic legacy, the Renaissance had little impact on altering contemporary attitudes to Scottish identity. Much of their plea for a revitalised Scottish culture fell on deaf ears. The role of the British state in improving the standard of living in the period after 1945 was crucial in bolstering a sense of British identity in Scotland. The Second World War had witnessed the extensive

use of government propaganda to shore up British identity and the fact that half a million Scots were integrated with other individuals from the United Kingdom in the armed forces helped reinforce a sense of Britishness. The English were no longer stereotypes or caricatures, but serving comrades, and the fact that many Scots were stationed in England helped to introduce them to their fellow-countrymen and -women. The resentment of the 1930s gave way to sympathy as the prosperous south was heavily bombed during the war and made for a sort of atonement for the preferential treatment the area received from government. Radio and cinema, and from the 1950s television, further helped to promote a sense of Britishness. Only the press in Scotland retained a measure of autonomy, although devolved broadcasting from the late 1960s helped promote a greater Scottish presence on the airwaves.

Traditional forms of community culture gave way to one that was increasingly global, commercial and individualistic in the post-1945 era, although the trend started earlier as the growth in cinema and spectator football demonstrates. The break-up of the inner-city tenements and the displacement of large swathes of the population to the new towns or the new city estates meant that traditional social relations began to break down and different ones were formed in the new environment. Distance meant that families no longer kept the same degree of personal contact, the hustle and bustle of the tenement gave way to the soulless estates where social amenities were in short supply. The advent of consumerism meant that individuals became the main focus of recreation. There were more things, and more money to buy goods for yourself. Society began to atomise as families stopped mixing with other families, and instead, stayed at home watching TV or going out in the car. Better housing conditions meant that teenage daughters and sons could withdraw into their own space of the bedroom, where their own consumerism of fashion and music held sway. The traditional seaside towns lost custom as the holiday-maker moved abroad to sunnier climes.

Scottish moral certainties began to change as well. The Churches lost many of their social functions as they were passed over to the Welfare State. Church-going went into decline from the 1960s, with Protestant desertion rates higher than Catholic. Sectarianism lost much of its institutional support as the nationalised industries and the multinationals displaced the traditional industries that had employed discrimination in employment. The growth of local government and the rise in educational opportunity meant that Catholics were able to advance up the social scale without hindrance. Yet, bigotry retained its hold over significant elements of the community and, although increasingly ritualised at football matches, this did not make it less offensive. Scotland did not experience extensive non-European immigration, giving rise to the popular assertion that the Scots were more tolerant than the English because of a comparative absence of racism north of the border. Yet, the low figures reflect not so much Scotland's racial tolerance, but, rather, the small number of its immigrants.

The period from the late 1960s witnessed a remarkable growth in what might be called the re-discovery of Scotland that gathered pace towards the end of the century. In part, this was speeded up by the failure of devolution in 1979, which led many to turn to culture as an avenue for the expression of Scottishness, rather than politics as that was associated with failure. The experience of the Thatcher years, in which Britishness took on an increasingly Little Englander guise, exacerbated this process. Scottish literature expanded and was more confident. Scottish studies became more prevalent in the universities and Scottish issues gained a higher media profile. Changes in culture married with the political climate to propel the cause of home rule as the Scots chose to present themselves as a

civic society in contrast to the rampant individualism that characterised much of Tory Britain in the eighties and nineties. In this development, culture played an important part.

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Notes on a Small Country: Scotland's Geography since 1918

Hayden Lorimer

For the two decades following the Great War, Scotland's geography was characterised by uncertainty, even struggle. Land protest re-ignited in the Highlands. In the Lowlands, industrial unrest, fomented by the internationalism of Marxist-Leninism, centred on the shipyards of 'Red Clydeside'. Scotland's homes were not fit for heroes: diseases still killed 100 infants in every 1,000 live births. Only after a second global conflict was this geography to be fundamentally altered. From 1947, the emergence of widespread state welfarism allowed the reconstruction of Scotland's urban environment, while new institutions and structural change reconfigured the organisation and management of the countryside. Technological advance and improvements to the overall standard of life mean that many Scots today will find it difficult to identify with the experiences of their grandparents. Although familiar trends rooted in regional and social inequality endure, the accelerated condition of everyday life that seems to characterise globalised society produces new geographies in, and of, Scotland.

Although the look of the countryside has remained relatively unaltered, there have been pronounced changes in Scotland's geographies of resource use, land-utilisation and land-ownership since 1918. True, agriculture still works its traditional heartlands: farmers grow arable crops on fertile soil in the eastern Lowlands and Fife; livestock graze fields on the mixed farms of Perthshire, the north-east, and south-west. True too, that swathes of the country's north and west continue to be run as 'traditional' sporting estates, given over to leisure with gun and rod. Beneath such regional and local continuities lie more widespread shifts in the structure and control of the rural economy, and their impacts on rural society. The most significant trend has been the rise to prominence of state authorities, and latterly non-governmental organisations, as agents affecting the rural geography of Scotland.

The state's willingness to intervene in aspects of land management was first signalled with the establishment of the Forestry Commission in 1919. Treeless deer forests covered 3.4 million acres in the Highlands, and were the focus of trenchant criticism from those seeking resource redistribution. Trees offered one plausible alternative. Charged with creating a domestic timber resource, the Forestry Commission took immediate advantage of a depressed land market and the impact of death duties on the landed classes to secure substantial tracts of plantable land. By 1931, with holdings exceeding 500,000 acres, it had become the largest single landowner in the country. In subsequent decades the forestry industry achieved its economic objectives by introducing large-scale commercial afforestation and timber-extraction techniques. The policy of blanket conifer planting – popular in the 1960s and 1970s and applied with some abandon in areas such as Argyll

and Galloway – was heavily criticised for its negative aesthetic impact. More positively, the Commission was quick to recognise the amenity value of trees, and the possibilities for extending its organisational remit into nature conservation.

The emergence of the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board in 1943 signalled a preparedness to nationalise the country's natural resources for energy production. From as early as 1896 opportunistic developers had taken advantage of plentiful water supply and steep relief to develop hydro-electric schemes connected to industrial plants in Foyers, Kinlochleven and Fort William. It was only in the political climate of national planning and economic reconstruction that systematic programmes of water-power developments were approved by Westminster. During the 1950s and 1960s lochs were dammed, glens flooded and river courses altered in over a hundred water power projects that stretched from the Mull of Kintyre to the Shetland Isles. The impact of 'the hydro' was not simply to change the face of the land. The provision of electricity to remote, rural communities altered irrevocably the rhythm and routine of social life. Yet, the failure to regenerate rural economies through hydro-electric power is an equally telling political legacy.

The state's record of intervention over the redistribution of the nation's land is similarly chequered. Feudalism has proven to be a remarkably durable system of land-ownership. The prospect of land-reform legislation was not seriously entertained until Scotland's constitutional landscape was itself reconfigured in 1998. Eighty years earlier, servicemen returning from the Great War to the Highlands and Islands – where hunger for land, and congestion on it, was greatest – expected a radical programme to settle claims first made in 1912. Instead they encountered bureaucratic delay. Despite an increased budget and new powers of purchase, the Board of Agriculture for Scotland secured relatively little productive land for new owners. This inaction, combined with landowners' continued intransigence, represented a blunt message for several thousands: out-migration was the only practical option. Scots followed well-established routes by sea to North America and Canada in particular, and over land to Glasgow. The geography of the absentee landowner, a consistent target of criticism, today has a more uncertain future. Community buy-outs by resident populations, sometimes in partnership with charitable organisations like the John Muir Trust, are shifting the balance of power. The example first set by the crofters of Assynt in 1993 has since been followed by purchases on the islands of Eigg, Gigha and Harris. The formation of national institutions for environmental management reflects a broader awareness of the state's role in the conservation of land and water resources. The protection of floral and faunal diversity is evident in the work of Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency. Their multiple designations of landscape have led variously to the creation of National Scenic Areas, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Nature Reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and in 2002 to Scotland's first National Park – Loch Lomond and the Trossachs.

Throughout the twentieth century, Scottish farming laboured at a low ebb. Between the wars, increased foreign competition reduced profits and the mechanisation of agricultural processes rendered large numbers of the workforce redundant. A short boom prompted by enforced self-subsistence during the Second World War could not mask long-term patterns of decline. Later decades were characterised by an increasing reliance on state support and, since 1973, substantial financial subsidies from the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy. With the North Sea fishing industry likewise subject to European regulation, the primary sector of the economy now accounts for less than 10 per cent of Scotland's workforce. In Scotland's modern agri-business, farmers work to intensive and flexible systems of cultivation and husbandry, directly answerable to multinational

supermarket chains. A downturn in farm incomes by as much as 40 per cent in the last decade, and the prospect of further widespread subsidy reform, reveal an industry in crisis. If farm diversification into luxury products, organic foods and energy production offers new prospects, the future of the Scottish countryside is increasingly based around post-productive economics. Stewardship schemes offer farmers and crofters financial reward for maintaining a treasured rural aesthetic. Such impacts are social too. Local geographies of custom, celebration and identity still exist – most notably in the Borders and north-east – but now have reduced claims to importance and declining levels of participation. Depopulation is endemic in some geographically remote communities. Hill farmers are recognised as a social group especially vulnerable to mental ill-health. Yet, more positively, the last thirty years have seen a population influx into traditional ‘farming towns’: city commuters, tele-workers, second-home owners, retirees, and those seeking an ‘alternative lifestyle’ all now populate the countryside.

Across the course of this period, more Scots could claim to know the geography of rural Scotland better. For a youthful interwar generation, geographical knowledge was very often the product of first-hand experience. Non-working weekends and annual leave presented the working classes with new opportunities to escape the urban sprawl of the central belt and explore the upland areas on its fringes. A modern transport network and new bus services were the motors for this mass movement. Cycling and hiking were a popular means to connect together the hostels run by the Scottish Youth Hostel Association. Established as a means to provide cheap and basic accommodation in remote locations, the SYHA network of 57 hostels had spread as far afield as the north-west Highlands by the mid-1940s. Each hostel provided a base for activities ranging from hill-walking and mountaineering to field-science and bird-watching. The provision of official camping facilities was one of the chief reasons for the Forestry Commission's establishment of National Forest Parks in Argyll, the Trossachs, Galloway and Glenmore. Meanwhile, among the less conventional rock-climbing community, greater freedoms were enjoyed in the secret camps and rough howffs scattered across the southern Highlands.

This broad social movement was at once radical and regulatory. For activists, outdoor recreation was an expression of class politics and inalienable public access rights. For moralists, it was an effective means to impose a model of responsible and informed citizenship among visitors to rural Scotland. New membership organisations like the National Trust for Scotland, the Association for the Preservation of Scotland, and the Saltire Society were instrumental in shaping a collective sense of belonging, responsibility and patriotism. Founded on a combined ethic of public voluntarism and patrician benevolence, Scotland's new civic establishment advanced a significant, modern project: one of architectural and landscape conservation. In the Trust's case, high-profile interwar campaigns securing ownership of specific areas (Glencoe), monuments (Glenfinnan) and buildings (a Hebridean blackhouse) were an acknowledgement that the nation's geography was worth protecting as it became vulnerable to change. In subsequent decades, the purchase of physical and cultural landscapes pieced together an influential narrative of the nation for the nation. Visiting these iconic landmarks has long been a favourite of the respectable day-tripping family. Trust membership, which peaked at 110,000 in the 1980s, might itself be read as a tangible expression of Scots' appetite for getting to know their small country. By the 1950s a short annual holiday was a treat that the average working family could reasonably expect. Geographies of domestic tourism centred on seaside towns and holiday camps. More affluent families went mobile, motor-ing with a caravan in tow.

The representation of Scotland's geography in print has been of considerable significance too. During the 1930s, travelogues and holiday reminiscences flourished as a pulp genre, and confirmed an imaginative geography of the nation centring on the Highlands and the Hebrides. Alisdair Alpin Macgregor and Mary Ethel Muir Donaldson were notable contributors, writing paeans for a distinctive people and proud cultural tradition about to enter a 'Celtic Twilight'. The master among the travel writers was H. V. Morton. *In Search of Scotland* (1928) and *In Scotland Again* (1933) transported the armchair tourist and nostalgic expatriate on gentle odysseys along the byways of a romanticised old country. The advent of regional and national guidebooks presented opportunity for authoritative reports on life and landscape. The most popular – from the Batsford publishing house – combined the public's appetite for geographical description with social commentary. Texts like *The Face of Scotland* (1934) and *The Heart of Scotland* (1938) were hugely popular. The interwar years saw the emergence of an altogether more high-minded and politicised literary movement that also found inspiration in rural landscapes and communities. Among the novelists and poets who came to be known, collectively, as 'the Renaissance' were committed, if unconventional, geographical commentators. For Neil Gunn, Hugh MacDiarmid, Lewis Grassie Gibbon, Naomi Mitchison, Fionn MacColla and Sorley MacLean, the vitality of rural life was both intellectual stimulus and political project. Novels, poems, reviews and essays spoke of the tyranny of industrial capitalism, and proclaimed land and language as twin resources for a revival in national fortunes. With socialist, communist and nationalist ideologies in collision, achieving unity of vision (far less collective action) was always unlikely. The *literati* fired few sparks of activism, and changed little in working lives, but in iconic works like *Sunset Song* (1932) and *The Lost Glen* (1932) crafted important depictions of changing regional geographies.

Geographical enquiry itself professionalised. The establishment of teaching positions at the universities of Edinburgh (1908), Glasgow (1909), Aberdeen (1919) and St Andrews (1935) led to the formation of academic departments. Scotland's geography departments instituted their own programmes of regional survey: Glasgow was instrumental in documenting and mapping crofting land use in the Hebrides during the 1950s; Aberdeen was responsible for an exhaustive survey of beaches in the north of Scotland during the 1970s. In his *West Highland Survey* (1945), Frank Fraser-Darling offered some of the most provocative research on Scotland's geography from an ecological perspective.

The period was also one of increased visual literacy. For those less inclined to read, Scotland's geography was rendered visible – and increasingly colourful – in illustrated magazines, in film and on television. As local and national newspaper editors fastened on to the sales potential of the front-page beauty spot and the wall calendar of views, *The Scots Magazine* became an established home for simple photo-essays depicting Scotland's scenic splendour. Certain photographers secured public profile through their work. Long before Colin Prior and Colin Baxter made wilderness a coffee-table aesthetic, the work of Robert Adam complemented written appreciations of river, ben and glen. The popularity of W. A. Poucher's mountain photography – which spanned five decades – began in his *Scotland through the Lens* (1938). By the 1950s, the availability of cheap, portable cameras meant that framing landscape and sharing travel experience was an activity for all.

For many Scots the moving image held still greater appeal. Cinema took Scotland – or certain imagined geographies of it anyway – to *Brigadoon*, plied it with *Whisky Galore!*, pursued it up *The 39 Steps*, searched for a *Local Hero* before finally finding one in *Braveheart*. The Films of Scotland Committee, brainchild of documentarist John Grierson, produced a range of short promotional films. Most relayed an up-beat message, focusing on different

aspects of working lives, land use, industrial change and technological advance across the country. The advent of the television age, and Scots' own love affair with the 'box', brought similar subject matter into the home. From 1976, in *Weir's Way* a veteran of the interwar outdoor scene took his audience on tours of remote mainland reaches and island archipelagos. *The Munro Show* – Muriel Gray's lively 1991 guide to Scotland's highest mountains and to hill-walking – inspired many into active participation. The goal of bagging all 284 mountain summits over 3000ft is now a modern recreational phenomenon. Claims to know the nation's geography are now made credible by many pairs of calloused feet.

Whereas key changes to the rural realm were broadly structural and managerial in character, Scotland's built environment was drastically altered during the twentieth century. In 1918, the housing stock in all four major cities and the largest burghs was commonly of the poorest quality. In the slum dwellings of Glasgow conditions were catastrophic. Outside the 'single-end', industrial pollution made life only a little less hazardous. Bad health, poor diet, alcoholism, high rates of infant mortality and a relatively short life expectancy were common characteristics in a geography of deprivation without rival across Europe. Wartime promises of 'homes for heroes' were slow to materialise as bricks and mortar. Local authority 'social housing', built to an expensive cottage design, represented a positive start but could only meet the needs of a few. In 1911, 12.8 per cent of dwellings had only one room. In 1936, 44 per cent of dwellings still had only one or two rooms; almost half of the population had no access to a fixed bath, and over a third still shared a WC. In his *Scottish Journey* (1934), which took in Gorbals slums and depression-hit Lanarkshire towns, the poet and essayist Edwin Muir traded only in home truths: his harsh appraisal of the nation's urban condition was a sobering antidote to H. V. Morton's giddy sentimentalism.

Muir's travelogue was equally an exposé of economic deterioration. Scotland's industrial geography of proud regional specialisation – engineering and shipbuilding on Clydeside, jute in Dundee, cotton thread in Paisley, linen and coal in Fife, coal in the Lothians, wool production and textiles in the Borders – was to become its crucial weakness. The same global market that had made Scotland wealthy took advantage after 1918 of its structural frailties. Government-sponsored overcapacity, increased foreign competition, the return of the gold standard at pre-war rates, the growth of protectionism and new possibilities for product substitution posed serious problems for an export-orientated economy. Localised recession outlived the Great Depression of 1926 and resulted in an economic blight that required fresh approaches to job creation. The state's recognition of specific needs – most immediately in Fife, Lanarkshire and Ayrshire – was reflected in the 1934 Special Areas Act, a pioneering step towards regional economic planning. By channelling assistance, investment and support into unemployment 'black-spots', government sought to boost economic growth. If the areas in receipt reaped short-term dividends, rearmament and the war effort allowed their embattled heavy industries and manufacturing base a longer reprieve. Geographies of the workplace also changed. New managerial and organisational regimes shifted the traditionally male, skilled workforce into increasingly unskilled jobs, while the employment of women radically altered the occupational profile.

Occurring alongside urban change and population movement, economic restructuring and the relocation of industry affected the social fabric of the population for decades to come. Following the Second World War, a full-scale state-led response to the chronic housing crisis was a simple matter of necessity. Slum eradication was matched by new programmes of housing construction and an acceptance that compulsory re-housing would be necessary. During the 1950s and 1960s over 250,000 dwellings were demolished. The

Welfare State, in the shape of Scotland's local authorities, created a replacement housing stock. In Glasgow, where entire districts had been condemned, vast municipal estates – Drumchapel, Pollok, Easterhouse and Castlemilk – arose on the edge of the city. In central belt towns like Airdrie, Kilsyth and Coatbridge, council houses made up over 80 per cent of the housing stock. New building reached skywards and extended landwards. Throughout the 1960s, high-rise developments were the planners' preferred remedy for the housing shortage: one in five new dwellings constructed between 1945 and 1972 was in a building over six storeys high. Yet too often housing schemes and tower blocks were poorly conceived. They lacked appropriate amenities, services and proper transport connections to the city, and soon showed signs of physical deterioration. Difficult living conditions created a familiar atmosphere of alienation and disenchantment. Despite refurbishment and the occasional 'patch-up', those that remain are awkward emblems of social and architectural failure.

After estates and tower blocks, new towns were the third component in Scotland's changing urban geography. East Kilbride (1947), Glenrothes (1948), Cumbernauld (1955), Livingston (1962) and Irvine (1969) were built according to the experimental social ideals of modern planning theory. New residents, many from Glasgow's 'overspill', inhabited a world far removed from the enforced sociality of tenement life. Andrew O'Hagan's *The Missing* (2000) conveys, for example, the unsettling artificiality of new towns and the associated problems in re-creating 'community'. Changes to residential design prompted a new domestic geography where family life was increasingly a private affair, and improved living standards allowed for the consumption of mass-produced goods and aspirations of car ownership. By the 1970s Scotland's residential geography had been socialised: the state housed 57 per cent of the population.

New towns, identified as growth poles, were the setting for radical transformations in industrial geography: based on light engineering, electronics, and food and drink processing; organised around the Fordist production techniques of the branch plant economy; supported by the Scottish Development Department; but directed by foreign companies. Strategic economic needs were carefully wedded to planning legislation and the evolution of regulatory controls. The arrival of American and Japanese electronics multinationals in the central belt during the 1980s led to a much-heralded but short-lived boom in 'Silicon Glen'. Regional aid also extended to the Highlands proper with the formation of the Highlands and Islands Development Board. In the 1970s, the north-east economy enjoyed unexpected economic prosperity following the discovery of North Sea oil. Centring on Aberdeen but extending as far north as the Shetlands, the oil industry swept a determinedly provincial region into global circuits of capital. Further south, the Ravenscraig steelworks, Monklands coalfield and Linwood car-plant laboured on as bastions of trade unionism, shopfloor militancy and industrial dispute. Yet by the time of Jeff Torrington's *The Devil's Carousel* (1996) such industrial worlds were only remembered places. The 'new' manufacturing industries have lasted a little longer, albeit they have been hit first by recession and then intense competition from cheaper labour markets in the developing world.

Scotland's current workforce reveals a spectrum from blue to white-collar employment. The service sector – leisure, tourism, financial and retail services – now dominates. Between 1982 and 2002, the manufacturing share in employment dropped from 23 per cent to 12.5 per cent. During the same period, jobs in services increased from 65 per cent to 79 per cent. Female participation rate in the economy has risen from 32 per cent in 1921 to 66 per cent in 2003, even if gendered wage differentials remain. Much work is now an

office-based, and technology-centred, experience. It may be argued that there has been in recent decades an absence of entrepreneurial habits in Scotland. In any case, business formation (measured by VAT registered business per 10,000 of population) is much higher on the east than the west coast. In today's Scotland, few goods are produced, but innumerable services provided. Whether this creates a new version of skilled labour in an information-based society is still to be revealed. Those mobile professionals attracted by Edinburgh's new clustering of finance industries are evidently not the same as the 45,000 people who front the same banking and telecommunications interests in dispersed call centres. The footloose business ethos that celebrates corporate de-centring to the Western Isles, Kinlochleven or Bathgate – securing a cheap, non-unionised workforce – can all too hastily take the same jobs to India or eastern Europe.

Whatever messages are drawn from this economic transformation, Scotland's workforce is today an ageing one. The national population, having totalled 4.7 million in 1911, peaked at 5.23 million in 1971. Since then, figures have followed a gradual decline to 5.05 million in 2001 – the lowest total since the 1950s. Projections based on recent demographic trends suggest that the figure will have dropped to 4.8 million by 2026. Population decline has been most acutely felt in marginal areas: the Western Isles experienced a drop of 50 per cent between 1911 and 1971. And yet localised patterns of growth have also emerged: in-migration to Skye during the 1990s resulted in one of the fastest-growing population rates in Britain. Births, which numbered 131,000 annually before the Great War, fell to around 90,000 during the economic hardship of the 1930s, rallied to 104,000 by 1964, then slowly dropped to 51,000 in 2001, the lowest total since records began in 1855. Scottish women today have fewer children and do so later in life. Scotland's death rate reveals persistent problems of ill-health. Between the 1920s and 1980s, the annual figure was consistent around 65,000. The current total of 57,000 outnumbers births, and in relative terms ranks among the highest in the European Union. Cancer and heart disease remain the most common cause of death. In statistical terms emigration, rather than immigration, dominated the demography of the period. Until the 1960s the Commonwealth countries played host to thousands of Scots on the move; after this, employment opportunities in England acted as a persistent pull-factor. Levels of immigration, though small in number, have made a qualitative difference, creating a more multi-cultural society.

Building upon the influx of Irish-born from the late eighteenth century and east European from the late nineteenth century, twentieth-century Scotland marks the first period when non-European ethnic groupings settled in considerable numbers. Migrants from the Indian sub-continent were numerous enough in the 1920s for small communities to emerge in Edinburgh and Glasgow. The end of British rule in 1947 and social disruption caused by territorial reorganisation in the north of India prompted more widespread economic migration. A predominantly Muslim migrant population continued to grow during the 1950s and 1960s with the promise of employment in British industries affected by acute shortages in the domestic labour market. Pakistanis, the most numerous group to take up the immigration invitation, found employment in Dundee's jute mills and, along with Indians, on the bus and train systems run by Glasgow Corporation. Public acceptance of this willing labour force was by no means universal. Casual racism and prejudice encountered in the Scottish workplace forced many Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi migrants into independent business, most often in the small-scale retail trade. It is from these difficult beginnings that a now influential constituency in today's west of Scotland business community emerged. Meanwhile, the country's first settled Chinese community developed

in Glasgow around 1960. Their arrival was prompted, in large measure, by the collapse of the agricultural economy in the New People's Republic of China. Following a route established by many Pakistani migrants, workers from the rural New Territories of Hong Kong first arrived in English cities before electing to move north in search of fresh business opportunities. Restaurants were an especially successful venture tempting further arrivals from urban Hong Kong and district. More Chinese and Vietnamese people arrived in the wake of the Vietnam War, a movement signalling the continuance of an established geography of refuge in Scotland as well as one of economic migrancy.

The persecution and forced movement of Jews by fascist regimes in continental Europe led to new arrivals in Edinburgh and Glasgow during the 1930s. There they joined those who had fled religious and political discrimination in Russia and eastern Europe in the last years of the nineteenth century. The tight-knit Jewish communities that formed close to the industrial areas of the two cities would later disperse into the suburbs and more widely across Scotland. The Second World War and its aftermath resulted in further waves of refugees and 'displaced persons' from eastern Europe. The most numerous were Poles, many of them single servicemen. The Polish Resettlement Act of 1947 was formal recognition of their contribution to the Allied war effort and secured employment in the building and mining industries where labour shortages had been identified. Many Polish refugees established themselves as independent businessmen – laundrette-owners, watchmakers, jewellers, cobblers and grocers – and married 'native' Scots. In the small Border towns where many would eventually settle, Polish social clubs continue to function. Political upheaval and repression in Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda and Chile brought smaller waves of African, Asian East African and South American refugees to Scotland.

In the twenty-first century, local humanitarian challenges are being set for Scottish society in its acceptance of refugees from different ethnic conflicts across the globe. Housing estates in Glasgow and Edinburgh are very often a first base in the new lives of Bosnian, Iranian, Kurdish, Pakistani, Kosovan, Iraqi, Algerian, Sudanese, Afghan and Somalian exiles, though perhaps not yet 'home'. These international flows of people also speak of dual geographies: for the Muslim woman in *The Translator* by Leila Aboulela (1999) identity as an exile exists in both Aberdeen and Khartoum. More settled minority communities are represented by the second- and third-generation Asian-Scots who work as doctors, nurses and teachers.

A better knowledge of other cultures has also been prompted through events that focus on national celebration. Scotland has become increasingly adept at, and increasingly reliant on, staging versions of itself. This geography of spectacle and performance – where national and civic identities are self-consciously put on display – inspired the 1938 Empire Exhibition hosted by Glasgow in Bellahouston Park. Revealingly, in this celebration of industrial prowess, technological innovation and modernist design, the most popular attraction was 'An Clachan', a mock-up of a Highland township. Here, casts of Gaels hired to dress in native costume and demonstrate rural crafts foreshadowed trends in contemporary heritage developments where the past is always 'historic', where identity is invariably 'traditional' and both are always on show. An Clachan confirmed the potential for creating a recognisable Scottish culture that could be marketed as a brand. That image matters most in the competition to attract visitors is a lesson that has been learnt in a variety of quarters. Whatever the reality of experience, whisky, castles, heather and tartan remain the currency that Scotland's tourist industry seems happiest to trade in.

Since 1938 when Glasgow took centre stage, the urban environment has presented more specific challenges for civic 'boosterists'. The slow economic shift from industrial

production to cultural consumption has resulted in an extended crisis of identity for Scotland's cities. Place promotion campaigns have emerged as an important means to push through programmes of physical regeneration, and to change public perceptions. Different cities have effected various strategies in selling Scotland to outside audiences. The continuing expansion of the Edinburgh International Arts Festival and Fringe continues to offer annual occasion for capital celebrations. The success of this 'flagship' event, and the need to launch extensive urban regeneration initiatives led to Glasgow variously exhibiting itself as Garden Festival City in 1988, European City of Culture in 1990, UK City of Architecture and Design in 1999, and the high visibility 'Glasgow's Miles Better' campaign, 1984–1990. Dundee has followed suit with its waterfront redevelopments and rebranding as 'City of Discovery'. In Edinburgh, the most obvious imprint of constitutional change is a new architecture of nationhood. The Scottish Parliament, located in Holyrood, and the Museum of Scotland are its signature buildings, while the administrative headquarters of devolved government are a focal point for extensive commercial and residential developments along the Leith waterfront.

Rather than being directed by city councils and urban planners, these regeneration projects are increasingly reliant on the private sector. Service provision and new housing are financed through entrepreneurial opportunism, corporate capital or partnership agreements with the public sector. With each reinvestment programme, relics of the manufacturing base are either removed or given a post-industrial makeover. Consequently, new urban landscapes are dominated by retail, leisure and tourist spaces. The art gallery, museum, specialist shopping mall, sports stadium complex and concert hall are today's indicators of cultural vitality and economic prosperity. In the face of global and domestic competition, Scotland now promises fashionable 'city-break' destinations for urban escapism and lifestyle experiences. In Glasgow's case, this transformation can be sold as an economic success story: this former 'Second City of Empire' today ranks as fourth favourite location to visit in Britain, and the most important retailing centre outside London.

For a significant proportion of Scotland's urban population, changes to external image and urban fabric have not brought any appreciable improvement in quality of life. Complex social geographies of poverty and inequality – long familiar to urban Scotland – have certainly not disappeared. Deprived localities exist in all major settlements, with the most chronic social conditions experienced in areas of Dundee, Glasgow and its industrial satellites. In close proximity to the bustle of city-centre enterprise lie excluded estates where living is expensive yet residents lack access to basic services, and anything other than staple foodstuffs. Misuse of alcohol and drugs, theft and a fear of violent crime are connected to high levels of mental ill-health. Lone parents, older people and victims of racial harassment are among the most vulnerable.

If these precarious conditions for living have become apparent to more Scots through the grim fiction of James Kelman and of Irvine Welsh, statistics drawn from indicators of poverty and social exclusion make for no less uncomfortable reading. The widening income gulf between the majority of 'haves' and a sizeable minority of 'have-nots' can be variously demonstrated. Almost 25 per cent of Scotland's population live below the low-income threshold. At least one-third of children live in households where social security benefits are the main source of income. The result is one of the highest child poverty rates in Europe. According to the 2002 New Policy Institute report *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion in Scotland*, published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, no work had then been secured for at least three years in 210,000 working-age households: even for many

employed, short-term, low-status and poorly paid jobs are the only option. Homelessness is a growing problem, and one not exclusive to urban areas. Over 46,000 households live in temporary or insecure accommodation. If all this constitutes unwelcome change in the geographies of social class – captured in the polarisation between a widening middle class and a stranded ‘underclass’ – then ensuring its disappearance through policies for greater social justice is one of most important challenges facing contemporary Scotland.

So where stands Scotland’s geography now? Having secured self-government what notes might best summarise the condition of this small country in our increasingly globalised world? Cultural distinctiveness is commonly understood to be an early victim in this age of accelerated inter-connection. The uniform quality of Scotland’s retail landscapes and the consumptive lifestyles of Scots might render this argument persuasive. But identities do not simply disappear: they are constantly being forged anew. Today, geographers recognise how global circuits of capital, information and culture are locally experienced as both the same and different. Thus, contemporary Scotland is a place of complex geographies: some parts imagined, some parts remembered and some parts real. Two examples hint at this open-ended and diffuse geography. Thousands of people (many in North America) claim personal allegiance to Scotland. Very often this is on the basis of only loose ancestral affiliation, sometimes only through a claimed spiritual connection with the idea of Scotland. Meanwhile, the conservation of Scotland’s landscape – so consistently a staple of doughty Scots’ campaigning – has extended to the restoration of past environments that are argued to be more ‘natural’ and ‘national’. Species reintroduction and habitat prioritisation are taking the intensive management of landscape into a highly contested terrain, in just the same way as Tartan Day proclaims Scottishness on the world stage. Scotland’s new geographies are as local – and as global – as anywhere else.

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Resistance to Monolinguality: The Languages of Scotland since 1918

Wilson McLeod and Jeremy Smith

It is both fashionable and true to assert that present-day Scotland is a multicultural entity. Since natural languages – shared social tools – do not exist independently of the social organisations which produce them, this characteristic of modern society has, of course, linguistic implications. A wide range of languages is now to be found in the great conurbations of the central belt, brought by different groups of immigrants over the last century, from Italian to Urdu to Cantonese to Kurdish, but the dominant languages remain those which have existed in Scotland for much longer. Of these, the language that has a claim to be the longest established is the Celtic variety, Gaelic, which will be discussed further below. The most socially salient linguistic varieties currently existing in Scotland, however, derive ultimately from Old English, otherwise known as Anglo-Saxon. A variety of Anglo-Saxon, Old Anglian, was spoken by these invading peoples from the seventh century onwards in what is now south-eastern Scotland. Over the centuries other varieties derived from Anglo-Saxon, alongside distinct languages such as Norse (the language of Viking invaders), French, Latin, Gaelic and Flemish, interacted to a greater or lesser extent with this Old Anglian material to produce, by the late eighteenth century, the modern configuration. Three such varieties are usually distinguished in present-day Scotland: Scots, Scottish Standard English (SSE), and English of the kinds spoken in England (sometimes, rather oddly, referred to as ‘Anglo-English’). The last of these is spoken by English immigrants and some members of the Scottish aristocracy; more importantly, however, it is also encountered through UK-wide radio and television. This electronic presence within the speech community is now known to have a greater effect on the other varieties than has perhaps been recognised hitherto by linguists.

Scots and Scottish Standard English are, nonetheless, more socially significant than Anglo-English. ‘Scots’ is the term used for the traditional urban and rural dialects of Lowland Scotland and such regions as Caithness, Orkney and Shetland, with distinctive characteristics in all levels of language: accent, grammar and vocabulary. Scots speakers typically retain pronunciations which have disappeared in England (e.g. undiphthongised pronunciations of *now*, *cow* etc., retention of the fricative consonant in *night*), and have distinctive grammatical constructions (e.g. *went* as a past participle, patterns of negation such as *she isnae leaving*) and vocabulary (e.g. *thole* ‘endure’, *bairn* and *wean* ‘child’). Some usages are of course shared with other varieties of English and may even be derived from Scots’ influence on them. Thus Scots *youse* ‘you (pl.)’ is also characteristic of New York English; traces of the ‘Scottish Vowel-Length Rule’, which means that there is a length-distinction in Scottish accents between, for example, the vowel in *greed*

(short) and in *agreed* (long), are also found in some Northern Irish usage; and Scottish owners of slave-plantations have given *crabbit* 'angry' to present-day Jamaican English. In the late Middle Ages, Scots was elaborated, that is available for most registers of language from court to kailyard, but it lost its overt prestige from the seventeenth century onwards as a result of extralinguistic, historical developments. Its current situation is complex; having considerable covert prestige in its own speech communities, Scots continues, like all living languages, to evolve.

'Scottish Standard English' (SSE) was first described by scholars during the eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment, when it was seen as a 'refined' form of Scottish speech, purged of allegedly crude Scotticisms. SSE is sometimes defined as 'Standard English with a Scottish accent'. This definition is broadly correct. Although there are some distinctive grammatical and lexical features (e.g. *needs done* for 'Anglo-English' *needs doing*; *outwith* in many places where Anglo-English speakers use *outside* or *beyond*), SSE is largely indistinguishable, but for these categories, from the Standard English used by high-prestige speakers in England, especially in written form. Yet, even official documents use SSE forms and constructions (e.g. *depute* for 'Anglo-English' *deputy*; *furth of* for *beyond*, as in *permission for study furth of Glasgow*). However, the SSE-accent is distinctively Scottish, albeit modified somewhat in the direction of the 'Received Pronunciation' characteristic of middle-class Anglo-English speakers. Thus, for instance, speakers of SSE (like Scots) operate the Scottish Vowel-Length Rule referred to above (distinguishing the stressed vowels in such pairs as *greed*: *agreed*, *mean*: *seize*), and rhyme the pair *good*: *food*, but (like Anglo-English speakers) use a diphthong in words such as *now*, *cow*.

These varieties form not a set of discrete categories, but rather a continuum of usages. Many Scottish speakers – especially those whose social ties to their particular communities are weaker – will switch from Scots to Scottish English depending on the social situation in which they find themselves. Many, of course, cannot; a recent notable court case saw a Scots-speaker being ruled in contempt because of a failure to shift to a form of SSE deemed appropriate for the occasion (he said *Aye* instead of *Yes*). But it is notable that middle-class speakers in particular, a group notoriously mobile in social terms, feel the centripetal pull of overtly prestigious 'polite' SSE and covertly prestigious 'broad' Scots, and often 'code-switch' between the two, becoming more or less 'broad' in the use of Scots. Derrick McClure has made an interesting distinction between 'dense' and 'thin' usage of Scots features along the SSE-Scots cline, and this useful terminology chimes well with current views on linguistic categorisation, where forms and varieties are seen in 'more-or-less' rather than 'either-or' terms.

It will be fairly clear from the discussion so far that the linguistic relationship between Scots and English is a complex one, reflecting the complicated, dynamic, conflicted and nuanced nature of social relationships. Whether one speaks Scots or English seems to be a matter of opinion, often with a political significance. The government has declined to include questions concerning Scots on the census, although questions concerning Gaelic ability have been asked from 1881 onwards. It is thus very hard to produce any satisfactory statistics about the relative numbers of speakers of Scots and SSE. Indeed, a clear-cut and straightforward Scots/English division, a model which some might find ideologically satisfying in terms of 'purity', is simply not to be had; there are, instead, good arguments that the search for such purity is misplaced.

Meantime, the situation of Gaelic, the longest-established language in Scotland, has become increasingly contradictory. Today all Gaelic speakers are also fluent in English, and almost all children acquire both languages in infancy; language shift from Gaelic to English

has now reached all parts of the *Gàidhealtachd*, even the strongest island communities where Gaelic was the normal language of all generations until very recently. However, at the same time, through a process of changing policies and changing attitudes in the later twentieth century, Gaelic has come to enjoy greater status and institutional recognition than ever before, in education, media and public life. Following a long campaign, the Scottish Executive in 2004 introduced legislation to 'secure the status of Gaelic as an official language of Scotland'. Gaelic remains far from secure, however, and the signs of death are still more perceptible than any signs of health.

Demographic decline in speakers of Gaelic has continued almost unabated over the last eight decades, with the speech community contracting by nearly two-thirds, although the rate of decline has been slowed; and this diminished pool of speakers makes less intensive use of the language than earlier generations. In 1921, the number of Gaelic speakers stood at 158,779 (3.3 per cent of the Scottish population), with some 9,829 monoglots. It was already a minority language in most Highland parishes; in parts of the Black Isle, Kintyre and Highland Perthshire, the Gaelic-speaking population had dropped below 10 per cent, while much of Easter Ross, Badenoch and Strathspey had dropped below a quarter. On the other hand, most of the mainland to the north and west of the Great Glen, to say nothing of the islands, remained well over 75 per cent Gaelic-speaking. Ten parishes, mostly in Skye and the Western Isles, stood at over 90 per cent, with Applecross, at 91 per cent, being the strongest Gaelic area on the mainland. By 1971, however, no parish reached the 90 per cent threshold, no mainland parish had a Gaelic-speaking majority, and the number of Gaelic monoglots had dropped below 500.

Language shift began to affect different areas at different times, reaching mainland districts before the islands, south and east before north and west. Although detailed local studies are lacking, the dynamics of the process were generally quite similar: in many cases, there seems to have been a 'tipping point' at which parents in a particular locality stopped socialising their children through Gaelic, so that few children born after a certain point acquired Gaelic in the home, and the language slowly passed out of community use. In some areas, the First World War was the watershed, in others the hardship of the interwar Depression, in others the Second World War; in the Western Isles, the last redoubt of the language, English began to make serious inroads from the 1970s onwards, ironically just as language revitalisation efforts in the islands were gathering momentum.

The 2001 census showed 58,652 Gaelic speakers in Scotland, a mere 1.2 per cent of the national population, down from 65,978 in 1991 (1.35 per cent) and 88,415 (1.7 per cent) in 1971. In the Western Isles, the figure stood at 59.8 per cent, but most of the rural areas returned more than 70 per cent and some districts more than 80 per cent. Outwith the Western Isles, the only parish with a Gaelic-speaking majority (55.7 per cent) was Kilmuir in north-eastern Skye. On the mainland, Lochalsh (at 20.1 per cent) was the only parish where even one-fifth of the population was recorded as Gaelic speakers. The overall rate of decline has now slowed considerably, however, and for the first time the proportion of Gaelic speakers among younger age groups has begun to increase. This trend reflects the impact of Gaelic-medium education rather than a reversal of language shift within the home, but is unquestionably a positive development all the same. As Gaelic has declined within the *Gàidhealtachd*, fewer and fewer Gaelic speakers live in traditional Gaelic-speaking communities and the Gaelic population has become increasingly national in its distribution: in 1921, almost 80 per cent of Scotland's Gaelic speakers lived in the traditional Highland counties, but by 2001 this proportion had dropped to 55 per cent.

Increasingly, then, efforts to promote and revitalise Gaelic, most notably through Gaelic-medium education, are Scotland-wide in scope, and the role of the urban Gaelic communities is recognised as being increasingly important.

Due to the traditionally marginal role of Gaelic in the educational system, literacy levels in Gaelic are low. According to the 2001 census, only 67 per cent of Gaelic speakers could read Gaelic and only 53 per cent could write it; comparable levels of English literacy among the Gaelic-speaking population are probably near 99 per cent. Even so, many of those who can read and/or write Gaelic put these skills to use relatively rarely; the quantity and range of material published in Gaelic (particularly writing of an informal, 'low-register' variety) remains highly limited, although information technology, including the Internet and e-mail, may be increasing the importance, and diversity, of written Gaelic.

As already indicated, over the course of the twentieth century, the Gaelic-speaking community became increasingly bilingual, educated in and surrounded by varieties of English, and by the end of the period many 'native speakers' of Gaelic could be better understood as English-dominant bilinguals. The linguistic role of the Gaelic churches, the traditional bastion of formal, high-register Gaelic, including abstract and intellectual discourse, has diminished a great deal in recent decades (not least since the use of Gaelic as a language of the pulpit has steadily contracted). Many Gaelic speakers lack confidence in using the language, especially in formal settings, although the ongoing expansion of Gaelic-medium education and the professionalisation of the 'Gaelic economy' may work to ameliorate this. Learners of the language have become more prominent, even if they still form only a relatively small proportion (perhaps 10 per cent) of the overall speech community. These diverse sociolinguistic developments, paralleled in the interaction of Scots, SSE and Anglo-English, have had significant consequences for the Gaelic language itself. Borrowings of terminology and idiom from English have been an important feature of Gaelic for several centuries, but with universal fluency in English and the ubiquity of English-dominated mass media the rate of their introduction has accelerated considerably. In addition, Gaelic speakers make much use of 'code-switching', moving between Gaelic and English or Scots, within a single conversation for clarification or rhetorical effect. The impact of English/Scots phonology (especially in a west-central Scotland variant) has become increasingly evident in the Gaelic of younger speakers, 'native' and learner alike.

Unlike many other languages large and small, Gaelic has never had a language academy or central body charged with corpus planning, the formal linguistic development of the language. Language reference books (dictionaries, grammars, style books and so on) are sparse and less than fully adequate. There have been efforts to standardise Gaelic orthography, but the absence of an agreed prescriptive grammar that accords with acceptable contemporary usage leaves many speakers uncertain as to what is 'right' and what is 'wrong'. In the absence of any specialist body responsible for the development of new terminology, many new words and expressions come into the language through the broadcast media and the schools. Lack of planning and systematicity means that some of these coinages are illogical or imprecise, and some speakers feel alienated by such 'new Gaelic'.

Given the interesting complexity of linguistic relationships in twentieth-century Scotland, it is no surprise that Scottish authors have found themselves attracted to engagement with language. As is well known, authors are 'found artists'; just as Picasso could make a bull's head from a bicycle saddle and a set of handlebars, so authors use the materials available to them – that is, language – for the effects they wish to achieve. *Inventio*, as the medievals knew, is a matter of discovery, not of originality. Some writers indeed, like Christopher Whyte, who are Gaelic-learners, have then come to write in that language as

well as English, so extending their artistic range of expression, while some Gaelic first speakers work, as Iain Crichton Smith did, in both Gaelic and SSE. The Scots/SSE/Anglo-English continuum can meantime be taken as comprising a key set of choices available for selection. With the important proviso that authors needed to develop written-mode methods for representing spoken-mode varieties, it is possible to describe their outputs in relation to this continuum. The 'Scottish literary canon' can, besides Gaelic, comprehend all these voices, from the Scots of James Kelman to the SSE of Muriel Spark, with various urban and rural varieties, in various modulated forms, in between (e.g. Grassie Gibbon). Not only Kelman, but also such writers as Tom Leonard, Edwin Morgan and Matthew Fitt, to name only three, have explored the use of Scots in postmodern, experimental and linguistically subtle ways. Indeed, John Corbett, who is interested in the interface between Scottish literature and the languages of Scotland, has made an important point which has an application for those interested in questions of canonicity:

Some linguists might argue that 'Scottish' is a 'fuzzy semantic category'; that is, at its centre there is a clear set of characteristics, but there are also grey areas at the periphery, as some of these characteristics are compromised.

Perhaps the best-known attempt to engage with the 'linguistic turn' in Scottish literature of the twentieth century was the so-called 'Lallans movement' primarily in poetry, associated with Hugh MacDiarmid, and later Sydney Goodsir Smith and others. Lallans (= Lowlands) was an attempt to produce an elaborated version of Scots, available for every register in the same way that Scots had been used in the late Middle Ages. At the same time, of course, Joe Corrie was developing the use of colloquial Fife-based Scots in drama and, slightly later, Robert McLellan developed his own synthetic Scots based on the Lanarkshire dialect for his drama and prose writing. It is no coincidence that MacDiarmid looked back explicitly to the medieval court poet William Dunbar, rather than the eighteenth century; Dunbar wrote at a time when the range of registers available for Scots was much less restricted. Lallans could be seen as a 'top-down' language-planning initiative, rather like the Occitanian movement in France or the Nynorsk movement in Norway. (It may also be related to the same contemporary idealistic impulse as that which produced the 'artificial' languages such as Esperanto or Volapuk, though these latter were visualised as having a more purely internationalist, communicative function.)

Lallans, sometimes described by its creators (non-pejoratively) as 'plastic Scots', was explicitly created in the same way as Nynorsk: a congeries of features (mostly lexical) were brought together from various dialects of Scots, and a special writing system, based on medieval usage, was devised to reflect it. Lallans remains a culturally significant force in present-day Scotland, with support not only from such enthusiasts as the members of the Scots Language Society but also (more sporadically) from certain political parties: for instance, the Scottish National Party published a Lallans version of its manifesto for the general election of 2002. However, despite the best endeavours of its supporters, Lallans has not become the standard language of Lowland Scotland, and it seems unlikely that it will; it is simply too abstract in social terms. It begins with, rather than results in, literary expression. It is significant that, for the Lallans enthusiast like Neil MacCallum, poet and past Preses of the Scots Language Society, it is seen as something to be taught by means of a literary canon in the absence of a 'significant body of published literary work in specific Scottish dialects, with the exception of the rather special case of Shetlandic and to a lesser extent that of Buchan or Northeast Scots'.

However, Lallans should not be seen as the only option available for literary selection. In the second half of the nineteenth century, for instance, appeared a vigorous ephemeral literature in Scots expressed in a wave of (largely) city-based newspapers with a working-class – by implication Scots-speaking – readership: *The Dundee Weekly News*, *The North Briton*, *The People's Journal*, *The Northern Figaro*, *The Aberdeen Weekly Free Press*, *The Glasgow Weekly Mail*, *The Caithness Times*. Such material offers a useful counterweight to contemporary 'Kailyard' writings, which are usually seen as offering a middle-class – by implication English-speaking – readership a comforting picture of Scottish existence expressed in attractively quaint language. The 'penny newspaper' attempted to give a (necessarily formalised) written reflection of working-class speech; many of the writers came from the social groups for whom they largely – though not solely – wrote. Interestingly, these writers often wrote consistently in Scots, whereas the use of Scots, it is usually asserted, was largely 'ghetto-ised' in the speech of working-class or peasant characters in the writings of, say, Galt, Scott or Stevenson. (Of course, this contrast is an oversimplification; Scott's representation of Scots in *The Antiquary* and Stevenson's in *Weir of Hermiston*, for instance, are significant and subtle attempts at capturing a historically situated linguistic difference in which high-status authority figures spoke Scots.)

Attempts to 'de-ghetto-ise' (an ugly if useful expression) these varieties have been made, though usually as top-down initiatives. The Scots Language Resource Centre, for instance, has made valiant attempts to raise the cultural profile of Scots varieties; Scots is now taught as a distinctive subject in the ancient universities, encouraged by the completion (and appearance on-line) of the great historical dictionaries, *The Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* and *The Scots National Dictionary*; and – perhaps the development with the widest impact – there has been a surge of interest in Scots in schools, evidenced by, for example, the development of a resource for schoolchildren, *The Kist*. Interest in Scots is often, if rather inconsistently, expressed in more popular publication in print media – the publication of Michael Munro's celebration of Glasgow demotic, *The Patter*, is a notable achievement – and on radio and television (e.g. the 2005 BBC programme, *Voices*). From the 1950s on, however, a number of television drama and comedy programmes have been broadcast in varieties of Scots. Often highly popular, these have ranged from adaptations of the Para Handy tales to versions of *Sunset Song* and from linguistically aware sketches like Stanley Baxter's *Parliamo Glasgow*, to such later successes in the 1980s and 1990s as Rab C. Nesbitt and *The High Life*. There is no sign of decline in the marketability of such programmes in Scots not only within Scotland but to a wider audience.

Questions of language-use and literary selection for Scots and SSE were often, then, seen in the twentieth century chiefly as a matter of cultural politics and literary or artistic priorities. Following the First World War, and arguably up to the late 1960s and the Highlands and Islands Development Board's initial steps, however, the 'Gaelic question' was generally understood as part of the broader 'Highland problem' and effectively subsumed within overarching plans and proposals for Highland development. Stemming the loss of Gaelic was understood primarily in terms of population retention – ensuring that (Gaelic-speaking) Highlanders had economic opportunities at home that would allow them to remain rather than become economic migrants. Some commentators, such as the Rev. T. M. Murchison, presented, from the 1930s onwards, a vision of a reinvigorated *Gàidhealtachd*, with renewed confidence in and loyalty to Gaelic language and culture. Others, including the authors of the Hilleary Report (1938) and the Taylor Report (1954), seemed little preoccupied with the Gaelic question, ignoring the steady progress of language shift; not a few quite openly declared Gaelic an outdated irrelevance and an obstacle to regional development.

By the later 1960s, the ground had begun to shift, and a programmatic, language-focused revitalisation of Gaelic was beginning in earnest. In a sense, this revitalisation movement, sometimes described as the ‘Gaelic renaissance’, reached back to the revivalism of the late nineteenth century. It had clear antecedents in the Scottish Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s, when Hugh MacDiarmid and others, besides developing Lallans, began the work of relocating Gaelic from the margin to the centre of Scottish culture and identity. Although the artistic and academic achievements of the interwar period were certainly significant, there was little practical initiative on behalf of the language during this era, when language shift, driven by economic depression and concomitant demoralisation, was biting hard. The ‘Gaelic renaissance’ of the late twentieth century was plainly rooted in the international ‘ethnic revival’ that began in the 1960s, the flowering of small-nation nationalisms, reasserted ethnic identities and minority languages, a phenomenon most obviously manifested in Scotland in the rise of the Scottish National Party from 1967 onwards. This Gaelic renaissance is paralleled from 1970 on by the surge in dramatic and, then, prose writing in Scots.

Although such movements cannot be precisely dated, 1974 stands out as a year of great significance. Following local government reorganisation, the Gaelic heartland of the Western Isles received a distinct administrative authority for the first time: the Gaelic title *Comhairle nan Eilean*, ‘Council of the Isles’, was chosen, a bilingual policy for the *Comhairle* was approved, and a bilingual project was put in place for the islands’ schools. Coincidentally, that year also saw the establishment of *Sabhal Mòr Ostaig*, the all-Gaelic college in Skye.

The growth of Gaelic education has been central to the recent revitalisation of Gaelic. Although the Education Act of 1918 had required education authorities in Gaelic-speaking areas to make ‘reasonable provision’ for the teaching of Gaelic, actual delivery remained very limited until the early 1960s, when Inverness-shire Council began a small-scale bilingual initiative in its island schools. The systematic Western Isles Bilingual Project of 1975–82 led on to full-scale Gaelic-medium education, which began in Glasgow and Inverness in 1985. Today, over 2,000 primary pupils in sixty schools across Scotland – in Lowland towns and cities as well as in the traditional *Gàidhealtachd* – are receiving their education through the medium of Gaelic; some children come from Gaelic-speaking homes, but a majority learn the language through immersion. Glasgow has been the pioneer, having opened the first all-Gaelic primary in 1999 and now proceeding with plans to create a full six-year all-Gaelic secondary from 2006 onwards. Four-year degree courses taught entirely through Gaelic are now available at *Sabhal Mòr Ostaig* and *Lews Castle College* in Stornoway. For any silver linings, though, the clouds remain dark: there is a chronic shortage of teachers, expansion of the secondary sector has been extremely slow, some education authorities remain unenthusiastic, and, even in the Western Isles, English-medium education remains the default option, followed by three-quarters of pupils.

Gaelic broadcasting began in 1923, but remained minimal in scale until the 1970s; since then, progress has been considerable. From 1985 onwards, the Gaelic radio service, *BBC Radio nan Gaidheal*, has steadily increased the amount of hours broadcast and broadened its geographical range. Programming now exceeds sixty hours per week and is accessible not only to the great majority of the Gaelic-speaking population but to the great majority of the Scottish population as a whole. Gaelic television grew rapidly in the wake of the Broadcasting Act of 1990, which established a special public fund, currently worth £8.5 million annually, so that some 350 hours of programming are broadcast each year. Recent years have seen stagnation, however: funding has not been increased to reflect inflation,

and proposals to establish a dedicated Gaelic television channel are caught in a post-devolution no-man's-land between Westminster and Holyrood.

Above and beyond concrete development initiatives, the 'Gaelic renaissance' can also be perceived at a more general, intangible level, as a wide range of public and private organisations in Scotland have taken steps to accommodate the use of Gaelic in ways that would have until recently been quite unknown. The Scottish Executive and many other public bodies produce a range of official publications in Gaelic; the Scottish Parliament is fitted with bilingual English–Gaelic signs and accommodates the use of Gaelic in debates and the work of committees, even if the proportion of business conducted through Gaelic is minuscule.

Since the mid-1990s Gaelic organisations, concerned that the achievements of recent decades lack a secure foundation and overarching structure, and depend entirely upon the whim of politicians, have pressed the government to enact language legislation. The successes of the Welsh language movement, underpinned by the Welsh Language Acts of 1967 and 1993, have been a crucial inspiration. After a drawn-out process of deliberation and consultation, the Scottish Executive responded by establishing an official Gaelic development agency, *Bòrd na Gàidhlig*, and introducing a Gaelic Language Bill into Parliament, which was passed unanimously in April 2005. The new Gaelic Language Act requires, among other things, that all public bodies in Scotland develop Gaelic language plans if requested to do so by *Bòrd na Gàidhlig*. It remains far from clear how the Act will be interpreted and implemented, however, and whether it will meaningfully improve the sociolinguistic position of Gaelic.

The position of Scots is somewhat less developed in this respect though both Gaelic and Scots are recognised by the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages and covered by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, ratified by the UK government in 2001. Although both languages are named in the Charter by the UK government as languages to be protected, Scots does not have equal status with Gaelic. The recognition of Scots only extends to Part II of the Charter, which is very general, while the recognition for Gaelic extends to Part III as well, which involves a number of specific practical commitments in the fields of education, law, administration, media and culture. This is to some extent paradoxical, an impression reinforced by the position of Ulster Scots. As a result of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement of 1998, The Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch was formed, alongside Foras na Gaeilge for the Irish language in 1999. Despite these moves, Scots and Ulster Scots have not yet been allowed equal status with the two Celtic languages.

Scholarship and research

Alongside literary and other artistic achievements, there has been significant progress in Gaelic-related scholarship, but great gaps remain. The number of researchers working in the field has always been low, largely because the Scottish educational system (not excepting its universities) leaves the overwhelming majority of Scots entirely ignorant of the language, and, arguably, indifferent to its importance.

The literary triumphs of the interwar period were paralleled by important academic initiatives, including the establishment of the journal *Scottish Gaelic Studies* in 1926 and, in 1934, of the Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, whose series now extends to nineteen volumes. Ground-breaking work in the collection of Gaelic folk songs and lore in the 1930s was followed by the comprehensive fieldwork of the Irish Folklore Commission and the School of

Scottish Studies, founded in 1949. The importance of the quarterly *Gairm*, which ran from 1952 to 2002, is hard to overstate; not only did it function as midwife to the Gaelic short story, it encouraged a range of critical, analytical and technical writing in Gaelic that was immensely valuable for the development of the language. Nevertheless, Gaelic literature and culture remain seriously under-researched; strikingly, only one monograph has ever been published on *any* Gaelic writer (and that in Irish rather than Gaelic or English!).

Linguistic work has also blossomed, although much remains to be done here as well. The central achievement was the publication in 1997 of the *Survey of the Gaelic Dialects of Scotland*, based on fieldwork from 1949 onwards at 207 places throughout the *Gàidhealtachd*; there have also been detailed dialect studies of the Gaelic of Lewis, Barra, Skye, Wester Ross, East Sutherland, East Perthshire and Islay. Since the early 1970s, research and scholarship on Gaelic have reached out beyond literature and language to take in work by sociologists, sociolinguists, anthropologists, geographers, educationalists, economists and legal experts, even if many historians and social scientists writing about the *Gàidhealtachd* remain trapped in a monolingual mindset.

As regards Scots, there have been major academic achievements: the completion of the great lexicographical projects already mentioned has been succeeded by a new on-line resource, *The Dictionary of the Scots Language*, with much enhanced functionality. Spin-offs from these projects have included the best-selling *Concise Scots Dictionary* and the *Scots Thesaurus*, and the foundation of a new linked entity, Scottish Language Dictionaries, is an important cultural initiative which has received considerable attention (subscribers are encouraged to sponsor a Scots word!). Dialectology has also a distinguished track-record; the Scots element of the *Linguistic Survey of Scotland* was started at the same time as the parallel Gaelic component, and has resulted in the appearance of very significant dialect atlases. Individual varieties of Scots, notably the Doric of the north-east, have attracted substantial attention, notably (and understandably) in Aberdeen. Historical atlases of Scots are also under way, notably in the Edinburgh Institute for Historical Dialectology. Important historical surveys have also appeared, of which perhaps the most notable are the *Edinburgh History of the Scots Language* (1997) and the relevant chapters of the *Cambridge History of the English Language* (1992–2001) (the appearance of Scots in the latter is of course significant). There are also important historical sections in the *Edinburgh Companion to Scots* (2003). Major electronic resources currently under development include the Glasgow SCOTS Corpus, which includes a good deal of modern material, and Scots – because of the complexity of its situation and its long historical record – continues to attract attention from a wide variety of linguists. Some of the most interesting recent work, for instance, has been carried out by Ronald Macaulay, whose *Language, Social Class and Education: A Glasgow Study* (1977) is a pioneering study of language attitudes to Glaswegian usage and has been followed up by many other scholars. The academic study of Scots is, therefore, in a healthy condition.

The current ‘state of Scots’ in the community served by academia, however, remains harder to assess. Scots has been seen as a threatened national treasure (as in McClure’s splendidly polemical *Why Scots Matters* (1988; rev. edn, 1997), for instance), but Scots retains a key role in national life. Burns Suppers may indeed be problematic cultural institutions, but their persistence as the one accepted common national party-opportunity (apart from Hogmanay) is surely a signal that the Scots language has a cultural presence, a kind of overt as well as covert status. There is – despite some traditional attitudes – nothing intrinsically ‘lazy’ or ‘quaint’ about Scots usage. Languages are not independent of their speakers; it seems likely that Scots will be valued when its speakers are valued and (perhaps more important) see social value and reward in using it.

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The International Reception and Literary Impact of Scottish Literature of the Period since 1918

Paul Barnaby and Tom Hubbard

Introduction

This chapter reviews the international reception of Scottish writers and assesses their role and impact in the development of world literature. It focuses primarily, but not exclusively, on writers who are perceived as Scots abroad and thus directly contribute to foreign images of Scottish writing and culture. For brevity's sake, it adopts a relatively narrow definition of literature as poetry, fiction and drama, touching only briefly upon philosophy, political science, theology and historiography. While Scottish literature has often had a significant impact in non-literary art forms – for example, Ossian and Scott were both highly influential on music and opera – this chapter is inevitably focused on Scottish literature's literary impact. The chapter concentrates on reception in non-English-speaking areas, the emphasis falling upon Europe.

1918 to 1945

The international reception of twentieth-century Scottish writers must, of course, be assessed primarily by the extent of translation: there is little existing research indicating their direct impact on other literatures.

The most striking phenomenon of the interwar years is the failure of the Scottish Literary Renaissance to reach an international audience. The often-cited 1924 article by Hugh MacDiarmid's French friend Denis Saurat, 'Le Groupe de la Renaissance écossaise' in *Revue anglo-américaine*, awakened little interest. Besides four poems translated by Saurat in the *Scottish Chapbook* (August 1923), MacDiarmid remained untranslated until after 1945. None of his poetic peers, in Scots, English, or Gaelic, was translated at all. Only four translations of Neil M. Gunn appeared: *Morning Tide* in Spanish (1933), German (1938), and Dutch (1941), and *Butcher's Broom* in German alone (1937). A Czech version of *Spartacus* (1936) was the only translation of Lewis Grassie Gibbon/James Leslie Mitchell. The lighter fiction of Linklater and Compton Mackenzie had greater success, particularly in Scandinavia, but was not linked abroad to a wider, distinctively Scottish literary movement. Only Joe Corrie, published in Russian, Yiddish and Irish, achieved an authentic

international profile. He was located, however, within an international current of socially and politically committed dramatists, rather than the Scots revival, and most frequently compared to Sean O'Casey.

How to account for such indifference to a movement that sought to return Scottish literature to the mainstream of European writing? Perhaps its rhetoric appeared largely incomprehensible abroad. If there was any pre-existing image of Scottish literature, it was as a culturally nationalist movement, from Ossian through Burns to Scott, itself setting a blueprint for other cultural and literary revivals. The Victorian literary trends against which the Renaissance reacted had limited European diffusion. The sub-Burnsian verse that MacDiarmid deplored found no translators, while Burns himself was largely in Europe a late nineteenth-century discovery. The Kailyard, meanwhile, may have appeared rather less parochial to European eyes. Its gently humorous regional realism was the staple diet of the late nineteenth-century middlebrow European reader. Earlier writers adopted by the Renaissance as models, particularly Dunbar, were unknown in Europe. For many, then, the Renaissance may have seemed to echo the cultural nationalism of other post-Union Scottish writers at the risk of appearing anachronistic and politically suspect in the modernist, internationalist context of the 1930s. Also significant is the absence of any cultural body to promote Scottish literature abroad. Renaissance writings were largely published by London-based houses with no vested interest in disseminating Scottish writing as such.

Writers who *were* widely translated in the interwar years include the humorists J. Storer Clouston, Ian Hay, James C. Welsh, and the novelist who became the most translated twentieth-century Scot: A. J. Cronin. Cronin is customarily dismissed as a sentimentalist, but his work, largely out of print in Britain, has been continually reprinted abroad for over seventy years. Such unusual longevity in a 'popular novelist' is itself a cultural phenomenon worthy of study. European critics, moreover, have taken Cronin's earliest work more seriously than their Scottish peers. *The Citadel* (1937), translated into thirty-seven languages, is regularly republished as a 'modern classic', prefaced by writers of Michel Tournier's stature. One might usefully investigate how Cronin may have spoken to an international readership, particularly in the years following the Second World War, more directly than his Renaissance contemporaries.

1945 to 1970

The immediate post-war years saw the novelists Tom Hanlin, Neil Paterson and Bruce Marshall translated in Cronin's wake, but little growth of interest in the Renaissance. MacDiarmid was widely translated in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and (post-1956) Hungary. Clearly, the Marxist rather than the nationalist attracted Soviet bloc translators who remained indifferent to MacDiarmid's poetic peers. In the west, MacDiarmid was translated only in Brittany, where the group associated with the journal *Al Liamm* became the first foreign cultural revivalists to draw inspiration from the Scottish Renaissance. Quick to see that the movement embraced all three languages of Scotland, Breton nationalists also made the first translations from Gaelic into a language other than English, Scots, or Latin, rendering poems by George Campbell Hay (1948), Sorley MacLean (1950) and Derick S. Thomson (1958). Per Denez, translator of MacDiarmid and MacLean, also tackled Douglas Young, the only twentieth-century Scots poet besides MacDiarmid translated anywhere before the 1970s. Regrettably, adoption by Breton

nationalists may well have damaged the Renaissance elsewhere in France and western Europe. Many of *Al Liamm*'s contributors were notorious collaborators and Nazi sympathisers. Denez's 1943 treatise, *Le Corps de l'homme*, declared that 'whites are the fairest and most intelligent of all humans'. Yann Kerlann, Campbell Hay's translator, wrote a marching song for a Breton division of the SS. Elsewhere in the west, the most widely translated poet of the 1940s and 1950s was Edwin Muir, well-known in Europe through his British Council work and one of the few Scots regularly featured in British contemporary verse anthologies.

If the Renaissance itself remained untranslated, its promotion of a revised Scottish canon was beginning to take effect. Scottish classics first translated in the post-war years include *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (French: 1948; German: 1951; Italian: 1952), *The House with the Green Shutters* (Serbo-Croat: 1956) and *The Kingis Quair* (French: 1967). Increasingly, European anthologies of English language or world poetry included early Scottish writers, such as Barbour, Drummond and Mark Alexander Boyd in German, and Dunbar in Hungarian. In Italy, Sergio Rossi translated copious extracts in a monograph on Henryson (1955) and edited an anthology of the makars in the original Scots (*I chauceriani scozzesi*, 1964).

The 1960s saw the first foreign collections by living Scottish poets since 1841. Selected poems by Muir appeared in French (1968) and Japanese (1969). In 1964, Kenneth White's first volume *En toute candeur* appeared in facing English and French text (supplied by the eminent translator Pierre Leyris). White would subsequently become Scotland's most translated twentieth-century poet, attracting major writers like H. C. ten Berge in the Netherlands and Nikolai Kunchev in Bulgaria. While critical of much contemporary Scottish writing, White has proved an important literary ambassador, overseeing the first French translations of George Mackay Brown, Norman MacCaig, and the later MacDiarmid, and the first French attempts to survey a distinctly Scottish twentieth-century poetic tradition. Further evidence of revived interest in English-language Scottish poetry was provided by the first translations in periodicals of Edwin Morgan, Hamish Henderson and George MacBeth (Hungary), Gael Turnbull (West Germany), and Ian Hamilton Finlay (Czechoslovakia).

The first foreign anthology of MacDiarmid's verse appeared in East Germany in 1969. MacDiarmid's tireless advocacy of his Renaissance contemporaries finally bore fruit in Hungarian and East German translations of *The Scots Quair* (1960 and 1970) and Russian translations of Joe Corrie and Alexander Reid (1959 and 1960). At the height of the Cold War, however, MacDiarmid's political shadow appears to have hindered the Renaissance's western reception.

The 1960s also saw the first foreign editions of Scotland's most-translated post-war literary novelist, Muriel Spark. Her work has appeared in twenty-nine languages and has enjoyed uninterrupted commercial and critical success. Translators include such figures as Árpád Göncz, former dissident and first freely elected President of Hungary. None of her contemporaries has achieved a comparable international profile. Robin Jenkins and George Friel remain substantially untranslated to this day. James Kennaway attracted posthumous attention in Germany and Czechoslovakia. Only Alan Sharp was immediately translated into French, German, Danish, Italian and Swedish. It is questionable, however, how far these writers were perceived as culturally Scottish. Spark, in particular, is seldom identified as a Scot, appearing to date in only one foreign anthology of Scottish writing, Paola Splendore's 1997 *Rose di Scozia*.

1970 onwards

The renewed international visibility of Scottish writing began in the 1970s, with the first three translated anthologies since 1846. The first, *La nuova poesia scozzese*, emerged from contacts between Duncan Glen, editor of *Akros*, and the Sicilian *Antigruppo* (which rejected avant-garde experimentation for verse rooted in personal experience and couched in a simple, direct style). These led to a Scottish issue of the journal *Trapani nuova* in 1974, followed in 1975 by a Sicilian edition of *Akros*. Finally, in 1976, the *Antigruppo* published the anthology, charting the Scots Renaissance from MacDiarmid to Donald Campbell. Presented as a gesture of solidarity between two peripheral regions, the volume defines Scottish poetry as poetry in Scots, the sole language in which, according to editors Duncan Glen and Nat Scammacca, Scots can express ‘deep emotions’.

The same identification of Scottish and Scots is made in the slim Iranian anthology *Shi'r-i ijtimā'i* (1977), featuring translations from MacDiarmid, Joe Corrie, William Soutar, Ian Campbell and the co-editor Alan Bold. Again, it emerged from personal contacts, this time between Bold and Hūshang Bākhtari. Unsurprisingly, given subsequent political developments, *Shi'r-i ijtimā'i* failed to stir wider Iranian interest. The final anthology of the 1970s, the Georgian T'amar Erist'avi's *Sotlandiéri poezia* (1979), tracing the Scottish tradition from Barbour onwards, is the only one to present it as multilingual. It takes its lead from MacDiarmid's *Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry* (1940) in featuring not only Scots, English and Gaelic verse, but George Buchanan's and Arthur Johnstoun's Latin poetry. Erist'avi, however, updates the *Golden Treasury* by including a much wider choice of twentieth-century Gaelic and English verse (the latter controversially omitted by MacDiarmid). *Sotlandiéri poezia* stands alongside Thomas Owen Clancy's 1998 *The Triumph Tree* as the most linguistically inclusive anthology of Scottish verse published anywhere. The Gaelic selections are from poets like Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair, Dugald Buchanan and Duncan Ban Macintyre, under-represented in any Scottish precedent. Erist'avi, who in 1959 published the first Georgian Burns anthology, is one of the rare foreign Burns enthusiasts inspired to explore Scottish writing further.

Erist'avi's translations from Gaelic were only the second into a non-Celtic or non-British language. The first, a selection from Derick Thomson/Ruaraidh MacThòmais, appeared in the Florentine journal *Il Bimestre* in 1972. The following year saw the surprisingly belated first published translation from Scottish into Irish Gaelic: Breandán Ó Doibhlin's versions of Sorley MacLean. The first Welsh translations of MacLean and Thomson were made by John Stoddart in 1978–9.

If there was growing recognition of contemporary Scots and Gaelic verse, younger Scottish poets working in English were rarely perceived as belonging to a multilingual Scottish literary culture. Throughout the 1970s, figures like Edwin Morgan, Gael Turnbull, George MacBeth, Alan Jackson, Tom McGrath, Alan Bold, Robin Fulton and D. M. Black were translated as part of a pan-British cultural movement (embracing Pop, Protest, and Concrete Poetry). Thus the Spanish *Antología de la poesía inglesa contemporánea* (1975) and the Italian *Giovani poeti inglesi* (1976) both feature a high percentage of Scots but make little or no reference to their Scottishness.

The 1970s was a barren period for the international reception of Scottish fiction. Besides a Slovak translation of *A Scots Quair* (1978), the most striking phenomenon was the rediscovery of David Lindsay's *A Voyage to Arcturus*, possibly sparked by Colin Wilson's interest. Translations appeared in French, German (both 1975), Dutch (1976) and Japanese

(1980). Otherwise, Scottish genre writing – Alistair MacLean’s thrillers (translated into thirty-nine languages), Dorothy Dunnett’s historical novels, George MacDonald Fraser’s Flashman stories, the detective fiction of William McIlvanney, Michael Innes and Helen MacInnes – was widely published abroad. By dint of subject matter, some, like Dunnett and McIlvanney, were more widely perceived as Scots than more ‘literary’ novelists like Shena Mackay, Sheila Macleod, Chaim Bermant, J. B. Pick and Gordon Williams. An exception was George Mackay Brown, whose Swedish publisher highlighted the Orcadian themes of *A Calendar of Love* (1975) and *Greenvoe* (1977).

The BOSLIT project, which records only published translations, cannot gauge the extent of international interest in the 1970s theatre revival, as few staged translations or adaptations reach book form. Rare published translations include C. P. Taylor’s *Love Story* and John McGrath’s *Bakke’s Night of Fame* in Norway (1970 and 1973), a Swiss–German version of Tom Gallacher’s *Revival* (date uncertain), and Robert David MacDonald’s *Camille* and *Chinchilla* in West Germany (1976 and 1978). Since 1945, the German-speaking world has proved most receptive to Scottish drama. James Bridie was widely translated in the post-war years and inspired a 1977 West-German monograph, Michael Nentwich’s *Der schottische Shaw*. Robert David MacDonald, a great advocate of German theatre as co-Director of Glasgow Citizen’s Theatre, established links which saw his own works translated and successfully staged in West Germany.

A number of Scottish classics were first translated in the 1970s, including the *Kingis Quair* and John Home’s *Douglas* (both 1979) in Japan. Noritada Nabeshima, translator of the former, subsequently tackled Henryson’s *Moral Fabillis* (1986). Posthumous international interest in C. S. Lewis may lie behind the discovery of his acknowledged master George MacDonald, whose *Lilith* appeared in Dutch (1974), Japanese (1976) and German (1977) and *Phantastes* in Dutch (1974) and Italian (1977). In the 1980s, updated translations of MacDonald’s realist fiction were published in West Germany.

Revival of international interest in Scottish writing continued apace in the 1980s. Five more anthologies were published. In West Germany, Rolf Blaeser’s *Licht im Nebel* (1982) charted Scottish verse from Tom the Rhymer to Iain Crichton Smith, covering the English, Scots and Gaelic traditions. Although a specialist in the twentieth-century Renaissance – he completed the first foreign Ph.D. on the movement (Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt, 1958) – Blaeser selected much nineteenth-century verse, largely from *The Scottish Minstrel*. Anthologies of contemporary Gaelic short fiction were published in both Brittany and Ireland. *Danevellou gouezeleg a Vro Skos* (1984) was compiled and translated by Mikael Madeg, one of Brittany’s most versatile and influential writers. Colm Ó Baoill’s *Feoil an gheimhridh* was suggested by Breandán Ó Doibhlin, translator of Sorley MacLean. Twentieth-century Gaelic verse, meanwhile, was surveyed in John Stoddart’s Welsh anthology *Cerddi Gaelleg cyfoes* (1985). Finally, in *ha-Shoshan ha-katan lavan* (1988) the major Hebrew poet Yair Hurvitz offered personal selections from MacDiarmid, Muir, MacCaig, Mackay Brown and Iain Crichton Smith. Regrettably, however varied or linguistically inclusive the selections, these anthologies uniformly neglected Scottish women’s writing. Of the eight anthologies published in the 1970s and 1980s, only *Licht im Nebel* includes a woman: the little-known Ada Nelson.

Equally significant was the unprecedented number of special Scottish issues of European journals: *In’hui* (France, 1980), *Literatura na świecie* (Poland, 1982), *Revue svetovej literatúry* (Slovakia, 1982), *Equivalencias* (Spain, 1982), *Le Hangar éphémère* (France, 1985), *Artus* (France, 1986), *Brèves* (France, 1986), *Mostovi* (Serbia, 1987), *Y Traethodydd* (Wales, 1988) and *Innti* (Ireland, 1988). These generally reflected the multilingualism of

contemporary Scottish writing more accurately than the monograph anthologies. Scottish–English verse was at last recognised as integral to the Scottish tradition, with generous selections from MacCaig, Mackay Brown, Crichton Smith and, among younger writers, Douglas Dunn and Stewart Conn. Gaelic was represented in the French, Polish and Slovak journals by well-established figures: MacLean, Thomson and Crichton Smith. The Welsh and Irish journals, however, introduced a new generation: Domhnall MacAmlaigh, Aonghas MacNeacail, Maoilios M. Caimbeul, William Neill, Màiri NicGumaraid and Meg Bateman. MacDiarmid, whose western European reception is substantially posthumous, features in all but one of the poetry selections. Otherwise, strikingly few writers in Scots are featured, Robert Garioch in *In'huì* and Sydney Goodsir Smith, Douglas Young and Alexander Scott in *Revue svetovej literatúry*. The younger Scots writers anthologised in *La nuova poesia scozzese* found little fortune outside Sicily.

The journal anthologies also acknowledged the flowering of the short story. *Brèves* and *Mostovi* exclusively featured short fiction, while *Literatura na świecie*, *Revue svetovej literatúry* and *Le Hangar éphémère* presented fiction alongside verse. The most anthologised figures were Alasdair Gray, whose European reception began via his shorter fiction, and the poet-narrators Dunn, Mackay Brown and Crichton Smith.

A major factor in this remarkable upturn in Scottish writing's international fortunes was its increasing institutional visibility. New bodies joined the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish PEN in seeking foreign readerships: Centres for Scottish Studies in Grenoble, France (founded 1979), and Germersheim, Germany (founded 1981), the Edinburgh International Book Festival (founded 1983), and the Scottish Poetry Library (founded 1984). Equally, the internationalist approach of journals like *Akros*, *Chapman*, *Lines*, *New Edinburgh Review* and the newly emerging *Cencrastus* (founded 1979) encouraged reciprocal translation of Scottish writing in foreign journals. Equally important was the explosion in British-published anthologies of Scottish writing: the *Oxford Book of Scottish Verse* (1966), *A Book of Scottish Verse* (1967), *Penguin Book of Scottish Verse* (1970), *Akros Anthology of Scottish Poetry, 1965–1970* (1970), *Contemporary Scottish Verse, 1959–1969* (1970), *The Ring of Words* (1970), *Voices of our Kind* (1971), *Twelve Modern Scottish Poets* (1971), *Modern Scots Verse, 1922–1977* (1978), and *The Poetry of Scotland* (1979). Translators drew most heavily, however, on the third and fourth editions of Maurice Lindsay's *Modern Scottish Poetry* (1976 and 1986). Lindsay played a vital role in establishing the modern Renaissance as a trilingual movement, in which Muir, MacDiarmid and MacLean belonged to a unified, if multi-stranded, literary culture. Finally, one must applaud the energy and passion of prolific individual translators like Andrzej Szuba and Piotr Sommer (Poland), Enzo Bonventre and Andrea Fabbri (Italy), Serge Baudot (France) and Rolf Blaeser (Germany).

The 1980s also saw five volumes devoted to individual Scottish poets. Masaru Victor Ôtake translated *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* into Japanese (1981), and Yair Hurvitz prepared a Hebrew anthology of MacDiarmid (1983). Andrzej Szuba compiled a Polish anthology of George Mackay Brown's poetry (1989) and the Dutch poet Willem van Toorn published two selections from W. S. Graham, a writer seldom identified abroad as Scottish.

It might seem odd that poetry should dominate international perceptions of Scottish writing in a decade which saw the rebirth of the novel. Yet most poems translated in the 1980s dated from the period 1955–70 and represent the belated discovery of long-established writers. The contemporary novel, meantime, suffered continued neglect. Gray's *Lanark*, the landmark novel of the decade, was translated only in Sweden (1983); 1982, *Janine* was translated into Dutch (1988) and German (1989). James Kelman and

Agnes Owens were untranslated. Given that these writers received critical acclaim throughout the English-speaking world, and that their English contemporaries – Ian McEwan, Julian Barnes, Kazuo Ishiguro, Martin Amis – were translated immediately, foreign publishers appear to have been peculiarly wary of Scottish writing. Although *The Antiquary*, *Guy Mannering*, or *Annals of the Parish* had objectively presented greater linguistic and contextual difficulties, contemporary Scottish fiction was seen to resist translation and intercultural transfer.

Exceptions included William Boyd, translated into twelve languages, and Iain (M.) Banks, translated into six. Neither, though, was perceived as Scottish by foreign publishers. Strikingly, although both, particularly Boyd, are skilled short-story writers, neither featured in translated selections of Scottish short fiction. Given the commercial appeal of their names, one must conclude that anthologists did not identify them as Scots. Other international successes were Allan Massie as a historical novelist and Martin Millar, who was translated into Swedish, Danish, Dutch, Finnish and French, paving the way for the ‘Chemical Generation’ of the 1990s.

In the 1980s, too, an unprecedented number of Scottish dramas were translated. Most successful were two analyses of Nazism: C. P. Taylor’s *Good*, published in Dutch, German and Norwegian (all 1983), and Robert David MacDonald’s *Summit Conference*, published in Hebrew (1985), Norwegian, Spanish (both 1986) and French (1987). An anthology of John McGrath’s work with 7:84 appeared in West Germany (1985), as did Tom McGrath’s *Animal* (1985) and Iain Heggie’s *A Wholly Healthy Glasgow* (1989).

In the 1990s and early years of the new century, Scottish writing achieved an international profile unparalleled since Scott’s day. No fewer than fifteen anthologies of Scottish writing appeared: the verse collections *Six poètes écossais* (France, 1991), *Poeti della Scozia contemporanea* (Italy, 1992), *In the Face of Eternity/Sucelice vjecnosti* (Croatia, 1993), *Seguendo la traccia* (Italy, 1997), *Kapu a tengerhez /A Gateway to the Sea* (Hungary, 1998), *La Comète d’Halcyon* (Belgium, 1998), *Ve znaku bodlák* (Czech Republic, 2001), and *Sprach der Ton zum Töpfer* (Germany, 2005); the short-story collections *Scozia controluce* (Italy, 1995), *Rose di Scozia* (Italy, 1997), *Acidi scozzesi* (Italy, 1998: a translation of the Rebel Inc. anthology *Children of Albion Rovers*), *Marilynre varva* (Hungary, 1998) and *Glas* (Slovenia, 2002); and the drama anthology *Antologija suvremene skotske drame* (Croatia, 1999). Both verse and prose figure in *Hoots Mon!* (1995), an anthology accompanying a Hungarian festival of Scottish literature.

Of the eight verse anthologies, five present a monolingual vision of Scottish writing. *Six poètes écossais* and *Kapu a tengerhez* feature only English-language verse and *Seguendo la traccia* only Scots. *Sucelice vjecnosti* and *Sprach der Ton zum Töpfer* are the first anthologies of Gaelic literature translated into a non-Celtic or non-British tongue. Only Serge Baudot and Stewart Conn, editors of *Six poètes écossais*, claim to have chosen the most vital, authentic linguistic tradition. They argue that the media-driven spread of English has distanced Scots from everyday discourse and thwarted hopes for a Gaelic revival, rendering both artificial literary media. Other anthologists justify their choice on grounds ranging from the cultural-political (fear lest an elided tradition be further marginalised in a trilingual anthology), to the pragmatic (publishers’ policy, use of the anthology within a language curriculum), to the subjective (individual taste, linguistic knowledge, or links with Scottish writers). The remaining three anthologies represent all three languages of Scotland. As, however, over two-thirds of the selections in each are from English, they perhaps vindicate those who believe that Scots and Gaelic are better served by monolingual anthologies.

Six poètes écossais, *Poeti della Scozia contemporanea* and *Kapu a tengerhez* feature writing dating from the 1950s to the 1980s, drawing heavily from MacCaig, Morgan, Dunn and Crichton Smith. The others focus on the 1980s and 1990s, adopting both source material and ideological framework from the home-grown anthologies *The New Makars* (1991) and *Dream State* (1994). There is no unanimity on the major contemporary figures, but Carol Ann Duffy, Kathleen Jamie, Robert Crawford, Don Paterson, Sheena Blackhall, Kate Armstrong, Raymond Vettese, Aonghas MacNeacail, Maoilios M. Caimbeul and Christopher Whyte all feature prominently. As these names suggest, the male bias of earlier anthologies is largely overcome. The selections in two anthologies, *Sucelice vjecnosti* and *Seguendo la traccia*, are exactly divided between the sexes.

Of the short-story collections, *Scozia controluce* highlights the fantastic element in twentieth-century writing from Grassie Gibbon to Gray, including little-translated figures like Fionn MacColla, George Friel and Jessie Kesson. The other anthologies focus on the contemporary and urban. *Rose di Scozia* features only women writers: Muriel Spark, A. L. Kennedy, Sylvia Pearson, Agnes Owens, Janice Galloway and Candia McWilliam. All but Pearson feature in the other two anthologies, as do Kelman, Gray, Alan Warner and Ron Butlin. Ian Brown's *Antologija suvremene skotske drame*, translated by Ksenija Horvat, is the first anthology of Scottish drama in translation, including work by Bill Bryden, Liz Lochhead, John Clifford, Rona Munro and Stephen Greenhorn.

BOSLIT has recorded an astonishing twenty-five Scottish issues of foreign-language journals since 1990. The territories covered are France (1991, 1992, 1995, 1996, 1999), Italy (1991 (two issues), 1995, 1998, 1999), Germany (1991, 1999, 2001), Chuvashia (1991), Croatia (1992), Ukraine (1993), the Czech Republic (1995), Poland (1995, 1998), Hungary, Sweden, Switzerland (all 1996), Argentina (1999), Austria (2002) and the Netherlands (2004). Twenty are devoted to poetry, four to poetry and prose, and one to prose alone. While it is difficult to detect common threads, recent anthologists are generally less inclined to link contemporary developments with the Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s. Indeed, writing in Scots is relatively neglected, with MacDiarmid featured in only five of the journal selections. Morgan, MacCaig, Mackay Brown, Crichton Smith and Dunn are more often presented as triggering a contemporary revival. Unlike the 1980s, many younger writers appear, most frequently Jackie Kay, Jamie, Duffy, Bateman, Don Paterson and John Burnside. Two older but hitherto neglected writers, Liz Lochhead and Tom Leonard, are finally translated. The popularity of Kay and Duffy combines with that of Irvine Welsh and the 'Chemical Generation' to allay fears that demotic writing is untranslatable. Previously, the 'democratic' nature of much Scottish writing hindered its reception in literary cultures which have traditionally maintained a greater distance from the spoken language. (One anthologist told the present authors that his publishers had so misunderstood Lochhead's fundamental seriousness as to veto her inclusion as too 'light-weight'.) While contemporary writing is increasingly privileged, the Italian journal *In forma di parole* presented an overview of Scottish writing from the makars to MacCaig, including rarely translated figures like Robert Fergusson and Thomas Pringle.

Three journals devote special numbers to Gaelic verse. The selections in *Republika* (Zagreb, 1992) and *Literamus* (Trier, 2001) are essentially appetisers for the anthologies *Sucelice vjecnosti* and *Sprach der Ton zum Töpfer*. Exceptionally, Corinna Krause, translator of the latter, works directly from Gaelic. It remains customary to work from an English intermediary, like Peter Waterhouse and Elmar Schenkel when translating Sorley MacLean and Iain Crichton Smith for *Schreibheft* (Essen, 1999). Gaelic writing also features prominently in two German anthologies of contemporary Celtic literature. *Und*

suchte meine Zunge ab nach Worten (1996) contains selections from MacLean, Crichton Smith, MacAmhlaigh, Bateman, NicGumaraid, Anne C. Frater and Rody Gorman. *Keltische Sprachinseln* (2001) includes MacNeacail and Derick Thomson. Two centuries, then, after spearheading European Ossianism, German writers are finally pioneering the translation of contemporary Gaelic.

Equally, Scottish writing is more prominently represented in international anthologies of British, English-language, or world literature. The Czech anthology of contemporary British women poets, *Setkáni na Welwyn Street* (1996) features Duffy, Kay and Maud Sulter. Perhaps most prestigiously, the multi-volume Belgian anthology *Patrimoine littéraire européen* (1995) represents Scotland through Barbour, Blind Harry, Dunbar, Henryson, Douglas, and Lindsay. The translator, Jean-Jacques Blanchot, subsequently published the first French anthology of Dunbar (2003).

The past fifteen years have also seen an unprecedented number of books devoted to individual Scottish poets. Dunn has been published in German (1991), Esperanto (Brazil, 1995), Norwegian and Polish (both 1999); Mackay Brown in Icelandic (1998) and German (1998, 2001), White in Bulgarian (1995), Italian (1996, 2001), and Basque (1997), MacDiarmid in Danish (1992) and Italian (1996, 2000), Neill in Danish (1998) and Italian (1999), Frank Kuppner in Danish (1996) and Norwegian (1998), Duffy and Jamie in German (1996, 1999), Burnside and Whyte in Catalan (1997, 2000), MacCaig and Robin Robertson in Italian (1995 and 2002), Morgan, Kay and Lochhead in Polish (1990, 1998, and 1998), Fulton in Swedish (1996), Crawford in Norwegian (2001), Butlin in Spanish (2002), and Soutar in Viennese dialect (1998: a rare exception to the rule of translating Scots into a national linguistic standard). A new development is the translation of individual collections rather than selections from various works: Dunn's *Elegies* (German, 1991) and *Terry Street* (Esperanto, 1995, and Polish, 1999), Kuppner's *Intelligent Observation of Naked Women* (Danish, 1996), Robin Robertson's *Painted Field* (Italian, 2002), Crawford's *Spirit Machines* (Norwegian, 2001). Two earlier long poems have received their first translations: James ('B.V.') Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night* into German (Switzerland, 1992) and Barbour's *The Bruce* into Spanish (1998).

These poetry collections were published in response to an essentially fiction-driven vogue for Scottish writing. The early 1990s saw Alasdair Gray's belated European breakthrough, achieved not with *Lanark* but with *Poor Things*, translated into French (1993), Italian (1994), Russian (1995), Spanish, German (both 1996), Polish (1997), and Greek (2001). *Lanark* was finally translated into Spanish (1990), Serbo-Croat (Bosnia, 1991) and German (1992), but required the *Trainspotting*-effect to be translated into French (2000), Portuguese (Brazil, 2001) and Czech (2002). Kelman, conversely, struggled to find translators. Even his Booker-winning *How Late it Was, How Late* appeared only in Dutch (1996) and Norwegian (1997). Again only in the early twenty-first century did *The Busconductor Hines* and *A Disaffection* appear in French.

The stimulus for renewed international interest was unquestionably Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993), aided by Danny Boyle's 1996 film version. Translated into eighteen languages, *Trainspotting* achieved greater popular and critical success than any work generally recognised as Scottish since the Waverley novels. Subsequent works traveled almost equally well, and the Welsh-endorsed 'Chemical Generation' became international hot property. Alan Warner benefited first with translations of *Morvern Callar* into Dutch, Spanish (1997), French, German, Italian (1998), and Swedish (1999). The title of the Italian translation *Rave Girl* and subtitle of the Dutch *Kind van de Raves* ('Child of the Raves') reveal the intended public. Subsequently, Duncan McLean's *Bunker Man* was

translated into French (2001), Laura Hird's *Nail* into Italian (1999), French (2001), and German (2003) and her *Born Free* into German (2001), Finnish, Polish and Spanish (2002). The anthology *Disco Biscuits*, featuring Warner, Welsh, Kevin Williamson and Martin Millar was translated into French and Italian (both 1998). New editions appeared of Alexander Trocchi, hailed as forefather to the new generation: *Young Adam* in France, Germany (1997), Spain (2000) and Italy (2003) and *Cain's Book* in Bulgaria (1998), Germany (1999) and Spain (2000).

Gradually, publishing interest extended beyond the Chemical Generation. The turn of the century saw translations of A. L. Kennedy, Ali Smith, John Burnside, Jackie Kay, Andrew Crumey, Alice Thompson, James Robertson, Andrew O'Hagan and Margaret Elphinstone. Ian Rankin matched Welsh's commercial success and created a demand for 'tartan noir', leading to the translation of Christopher Brookmyre, Val McDermid and Louise Welsh. Foreign publishers increasingly market Scottish novels as Scottish even when they lack easily recognisable 'Scottish content'. Significantly, French and Italian publishers have begun to indicate that translations are made from *Scottish* rather than *British English*.

The growing popularity of Scottish writing has extended to drama. It has fared particularly well in Croatia, where, in addition to the anthology discussed above, works by Donald Campbell, Ann Marie di Mambro and Ian Brown have been performed on national radio. At one point in 2001, three Scottish plays were being staged concurrently in Zagreb: Greenhorn's *Passing Places*, Mike Cullen's *Anna Weiss* and Harry Gibson's *Trainspotting* adaptation. The most successful of the younger dramatists are David Harrower and David Greig, both translated into of the order of twenty languages at the time of writing. Also widely performed abroad are Liz Lochhead, John Clifford and Gregory Burke.

Irvine Welsh's success, of course, is not solely responsible for fostering translation of Scottish writing across all genres, but it has created a climate in which institutions and individuals with a longstanding interest in Scottish literature and enterprising publishers like Métaillié (who have published Kelman, Gray, Trocchi, Burnside, James Robertson, and the first French translation of *Sunset Song*) are able to promote both contemporary and classic Scottish writing. Welsh has also helped break down perceptions that Scottish writing is too linguistically difficult or culturally specific to present a worthwhile risk for foreign publishers.

It is well, however, to strike a note of caution. As there are few available statistics on sales of post-Welsh translations, it remains possible that foreign interest is a passing fashion. It may be instructive to look back to the 1820s when much Scottish writing was translated in Scott's wake but had little lasting impact on international writing or reading tastes. Equally, recent anthologies and journal selections often present a reductive view of Scottish writing, monologic, if not monolingual. It is often presented as one of the 'new' national literatures of post-Cold War or post-Maastricht Europe. Postcolonial theory alerts anthologists to Scottish writers' ambivalent relationship to a cultural 'centre', but too often they present a militant culture resisting a crudely caricatured English hegemony. Ossian's ghost still haunts some anthologies: Scottish writers follow 'hidden tracks' and seek a 'light in the mist', preserving linguistic roots and racial memory. Verse, moreover, is often published by small presses with limited diffusion, intended for essentially academic audiences, and, particularly in the case of Scots, poorly translated and inexpertly reviewed. Finally, contemporary Scottish writing is largely yet to travel outside Europe or the English-speaking world.

Nonetheless, Scottish literature presently enjoys greater international prestige than at any time since the early nineteenth century. Not only are contemporary writers being translated – and translated as Scots – but long untranslated classics of Scottish writing from the makars to Grassie Gibbon are finally finding an international audience.

[For details of all translations mentioned in this chapter, consult the on-line Bibliography of Scottish Literature in Translation (BOSLIT): at <<http://www.nls.uk/catalogues/resources/index.html>> (accessed August 2005).]

Further reading

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- Poggi, Valentina and Margaret Rose (eds) (2000), *A Theatre that Matters: Twentieth-Century Scottish Drama and Theatre*, Milan: Unicopli [Specifically: Ksenija Horvat, 'Transpositions and Transformations: Translating Scots into Croatian for the Stage', pp. 135–44, and Emanuela Rossini, 'National Identity in Contemporary Scottish Theatre and the Challenge for the Italian Translator', pp. 145–55.]

The Criticism of Scottish Literature: Tradition, Decline and Renovation

Cairns Craig

Two studies key to twentieth-century Scottish literary criticism form prologue and epilogue to the Scottish Literary Renaissance movement. The prologue is G. Gregory Smith's *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919), from which Hugh MacDiarmid drew a central inspiration of Renaissance ideology – the notion of Scottish literature as inherently 'a zigzag of contradictions' between the realistic and the fantastic, a dialectic Smith characterised as 'the Caledonian antiszygy'. MacDiarmid was also indebted to Smith's earlier *Specimens of Middle Scots* (1902) for his notion that Scottish poetry needed to get 'Back to Dunbar'. Smith argued that Dunbar's late medieval Scots was 'more exclusively than any companion phase in the languages of north-west Europe, the special affair of literary habit, as distinguished from spoken dialect', thereby endowing MacDiarmid's 'synthetic Scots' with classical precedent. From 1922 onwards, MacDiarmid used Smith for historical and literary justification for his own programme of making the revival of writing in Scots central to modern Scottish literature. The epilogue is Edwin Muir's *Scott and Scotland: The Predicament of the Scottish Writer* (1936), which effectively ended the literary revival by attacking both Smith's valuation of the antiszygetical, and MacDiarmid's belief in Scots' revitalising effects. Against Smith, Muir argued that Scottish fantasy poetry is 'the ideal expression of the dichotomy which has been Scotland's ruin both in politics and literature'. Against MacDiarmid, he insisted that the Irish Literary Revival had adopted the correct response to dealing with a modern national literature:

Irish nationality cannot be said to be any less intense than ours; but Ireland produced a national literature not by clinging to Irish dialect but by adopting English and making it into a language fit for all its purposes.

Although, for Muir, MacDiarmid would remain 'a figure like Burns – an exceptional case, that is to say, an arbitrary apparition of the national genius', W. B. Yeats was producing a poetry that 'belongs to English literature' while, at the same time, belonging 'to Irish literature pre-eminently and essentially'. MacDiarmid, of course, disagreed, but the very violence of his response – accusing Muir of 'continuance of the nineteenth-century traitor attitude of Scots Literature' and of glorifying Scott, whose novels are the 'paralysing ideology of defeatism in Scotland' – demonstrates the power of Muir's challenge to the whole Renaissance project.

Muir's 1936 interpretation of Smith had, however, been anticipated in 1919 by T. S. Eliot, the American poet recently resident in London. In a review provocatively entitled, 'Was there a Scottish Literature?', Eliot argued that what Smith's work actually proved was not the essential character of a specifically Scottish literature but the fact that 'Scottish literature falls into several periods, and that these periods are related not so much to each other as to corresponding periods of English literature.' Like Muir, Eliot believed Smith's book did not support MacDiarmid's belief in an independent Scottish literature: rather, by 'throwing in its luck with English', Scottish literature 'has not only much greater chance of survival, but contributes important elements of strength to complete the English'. Eliot's reading accurately reflects the tendency of Smith's work: despite its effort to untangle 'persisting traits', it admits that

the literary historian finds, as he passes from Hume to Sir Walter, it is increasingly difficult to segregate his 'Scottish' writers, and that he has often no better excuse for a label than the accident of birth or residence.

Smith's account of Scottish writers from Ramsay to Scott discovers their significance to lie in the 'contribution by Scotland to the Romantic stir' which was to come to dominate English literature. For Smith, in short, Scottish writing's importance lies in its influence on English and European literature – especially on Romanticism – rather than on its contribution to the evolution of a specifically Scottish canon.

From their very different starting points, Smith's and Muir's analyses both insist that Scottish literature has no autonomous significance. What separates them is the increasingly negative estimation of Scottish authors' actual achievements. For Smith, Burns and Scott remain great writers: Burns 'recovered the true "race" of northern literature' and thereby 'from the springs of experience, so national or even local, replenished the common cisterns of Poetry'; Scott 'gave not only to English but to the world's literature the Historical Novel' and gave it 'a place of dignity'. This view continued to be asserted throughout the period. Herbert Grierson, Professor first at Aberdeen and then Edinburgh, could wax lyrical on the achievements of Scotland's major literary figures:

Burns is the most fiery star in the heaven of Scottish letters, radiating laughter and love. Carlyle is a splendid erratic star, a comet with a glittering tail, who, like other comets will return from time to time to startle and delight us. But Scott is the largest and most beneficent luminary. He has built the golden bridge that will for ever connect the Scotland of to-day with the Scotland of the past.

For Muir, however, Scott was an unresolved problem: 'men of Scott's enormous genius have rarely Scott's faults'. This could only be explained by accounting for the problem of Scotland itself:

I was forced to account for the hiatus in Scott's endowment by considering the environment in which he lived, by invoking the fact – if the reader will agree it is one – that he spent most of his days in a hiatus, in a country, that is to say which was neither a nation nor a province, and had, instead of a centre, a blank, an Edinburgh, in the middle of it.

For Smith, Scottish literature had survived and, in a few cases, succeeded, despite the fact that 'the promise of its combined moods is not generously fulfilled, except in a few

instances'. For Muir, however, the story of Scottish literature was one of lack of fulfilment: Scott was both typical of the Scottish writer and 'an exact reflection of his predicament' for 'what traditional virtue his work possessed was at second hand, and derived mainly from English literature'. Ironically, MacDiarmid's desire for a revitalisation of Scots led to a similar judgement on Burns, whose language he saw as decline from Dunbar's standards, and whose life was a 'tragedy' because 'he was a great poet who lived in an age and under circumstances hopelessly uncongenial to the exercise of his art'. To MacDiarmid, Burns is as problematic as Scott to Muir. In consequence, Scottish literature's story is one of decline from the great achievements of the late medieval makars, through the ballads and folk literature, to the point where Burns and Scott had become, as in Edwin Muir's 'Scotland 1941', 'sham bards of a sham nation'.

This disconsolate account of 1920s and 1930s Scottish literature contrasts radically with Scottish literary criticism's achievements in the period before the First World War. In 1903, for instance, J. H. Millar published his monumental 700-page *A Literary History of Scotland*. It had been able to draw for its account of pre-Reformation Scottish writing on a century's scholarly endeavour, recovering and republishing the works of the earlier Scottish poets, culminating in the formation of the Scottish Text Society in 1882 and the publication of scholarly editions of Henryson, Dunbar and Lindsay. Millar was also able to draw on increasingly well-informed criticism that claimed to identify what was distinctive in the literature and culture of Scotland. John M. Ross's *Scottish History and Literature: To the Period of the Reformation* (1884), Hugh Walker's *Three Centuries of Scottish Literature* (1892), T. F. Henderson's *Scottish Vernacular Literature* (1900) and G. Gregory Smith's own *Specimens of Middle Scots* (1902) had all aimed to elucidate Scottish literature's 'interdependence, even in prosody, from its earliest beginnings down to Burns and his immediate successors'. In addition, to support the inclusion of theologians, philosophers and historians as integral contributors to the national literature, Millar could draw on more general works on the Scottish intellectual tradition. These included James McCosh's *The Scottish Philosophy* (1875), Andrew Seth's *Scottish Philosophy: A Comparison of the Scottish and German Answers to Hume* (1890) and Henry Grey Graham's *Scottish Men of Letters in the Eighteenth Century* (1901), as well as specific studies such as P. Hume Brown's *Life of John Knox* (1895), John Rae's *Life of Adam Smith* (1895), and W. R. Scott's *Francis Hutcheson* (1900). This wealth of critical discussion was itself justification for Millar's optimistic outlook on the nation's cultural future. If he could foresee no possibility of 'a revival of the old Scots tongue as a medium of expression for serious thought in prose' or even poetry, he could envisage novelists reaping 'a fairly substantial reward' for 'working a new and rich vein of character and manners' among Scots speakers. Given that only Hume, Burns and Scott were 'unquestionably entitled to a place in the very first rank' of world literature, they had nonetheless been part of a culture sometimes 'characterised by extraordinary productiveness in almost every department of writing', so that there was 'little need for nervous apprehension that what is best and greatest in our literature will be forgotten by anybody whose remembrance is worth having'.

Millar's work exudes a cultural security that can rely both on an infrastructure of scholarly work and on the expectation of future achievement; Muir's criticism, by contrast, is the product of a period in which, both economically and culturally, it seemed impossible to sustain a literary career in Scotland. Scotland, for Muir, cannot aspire to be one of the 'nations that have some historical function in the general development of civilisation'. Rather, it was one of the 'hypothetical units, units which remain in a condition of

unchanging suspended potentiality [. . .] half within the world of life and half outside it'. In contrast to Millar's rich continuity of cultural endeavour, Muir found all but a cultural desert, a place where, in words he quotes from George Blake's *The Heart of Scotland* (1934), Scottish people 'sit, curiously complacent, amid the ruins of their own civilisation, such as it is'. It would be easy to ascribe this difference to the transformation of Scotland between 1903 and 1936: from a society at the very forefront of industrial development in the world's most powerful empire to one traumatised by its First World War losses – far greater, proportionately, than England's; from the industrial powerhouse of empire to the decimation of its major industries in the post-war Depression – much more severe and long-lasting than in the south of England. Further, from being a major centre of British publishing, able to support a community of writers, it had become a place in which it was impossible for a writer to earn a living. It was, in Muir's words, 'a country slowly dying without having awakened to the fact'. The death was sufficiently imminent to rouse the Church of Scotland to claim that in the face of mass Irish immigration it had 'to stand fast for what men rightly call their dearest – their nationality and their traditions'.

However terrifying poor Irish people were to institutional Scotland, the Irish literary example intensified Scotland's post-war crises by its riches rather than by its poverty. William Power noted in *Literature and Oatmeal* that 'the intensity and significance of these [Irish] movements' had no corresponding Scottish equivalent. MacDiarmid sought to justify his use of Scots by arguing 'the moral resemblance – between Jamieson's *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*' – despite the fact that Jamieson's dictionary had originally been published in 1808. Muir insisted that Ireland's national literature emerged 'not by clinging to Irish dialect but by adopting English'. Ireland's literary success – prefiguring or accompanying its achievement of independence in 1922 – made Scotland, by contrast, a dependency culture. To cultural nationalists, like William Power, who believed that 'Scotland was the first nation in the world to assert in war and in explicit words the full principle of free nationhood as it is understood to-day', Scotland's failure to fulfil or redeem its free nationhood undermined its literary past as effectively as failure to integrate itself into English literature had done for Muir:

To be balked of the full harvest of what had been sown in the eighteenth century was almost as great a misfortune for Scotland as the destruction of her Middle Scots culture for the latter part of the sixteenth century; for the Romanticism of the Scott era contained the seeds of its own destruction, if not of Scotland's.

For both Muir and Power, Scotland's decline could be traced to 'a lack of national solidarity and of the sense of national continuity': Walter Scott's Tory Unionism had corrupted the national will to independence that Irish writers had inspired in their people.

What made such comparisons possible was not merely Scotland's apparent paucity of great modernist writers: it was the collapse of a whole conception of English literature to which Scottish writers like Hume, Burns and Scott were central. In this, Scots vernacular had operated, through journals such as *Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine*, as the second language of the Empire. That centrality can be seen in the essays of George Saintsbury, Professor of Rhetoric at the University of Edinburgh, and one of the most famous late nineteenth-century English literary critics. The collected edition of his essays (1923) reveals the ways in which English literature had become infused with Scottish content. Volume one begins with essays on Crabbe, Hogg, Sydney Smith, Jeffrey and

Hazlitt, the Scottish writers framed by English contemporaries, and includes pieces on 'Miss Ferrier' and on 'English war songs' as exemplified by the work of the Scottish poet, Thomas Campbell. Volume two starts with an essay on Lockhart, son-in-law and biographer of Scott, and volume three opens with a long discussion of 'The Historical Novel', to which Scott is central. In his essay on Hogg, Saintsbury declares:

Scotch, as a language, has grand accommodations; it has richer vowels and a more varied and musical arrangement of consonants than English, while it falls not much short of English in freedom from that mere monotony which besets the richly-vowelled continental languages.

'English literature' had been constructed as a narrative to which Scotland was integral, if not indeed central. In part, this is because the very origins of the discipline of English literature lay in the need for Scotsmen, after the Union, to be trained in English, with the consequence that it was in the Scottish universities that the traditional discipline of 'rhetoric' was extended to include first, in the eighteenth century, 'belles lettres' and then, in the nineteenth, 'English Literature'. By the 1920s, however, English Literature was establishing itself as a discipline in major English universities, and Scottish writers were increasingly marginalised as writing in Scots became irrelevant to the 'organic' development of modern English. In the canon of the founding figures of modern English criticism, T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis, Scottish writers have no place. Eliot's *Selected Essays* has nothing to say about any Scottish author, and Scott appears only in a footnote to F. R. Leavis's *The Great Tradition* (1948), in which he is described as 'primarily a kind of inspired folk-lorist, qualified to have done in fiction something analogous to the ballad-opera'.

Fundamental to this new discipline of English as it emerged in the 1920s was the concept of 'tradition', as defined initially by T. S. Eliot's 1919 essay, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', and developed in England by F. R. Leavis's *Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry* (1936) and the United States by Cleanth Brooks's *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (1939). 'Tradition' operated both as a tool of criticism – to understand a writer was to understand the tradition to which his or her writings contributed – and as the thread by which the narrative of literary history as embodiment of a national consciousness could be held together: 'every nation', as Eliot put it, 'every race, has not only its own creative, but its own critical turn of mind'. As Robert Crawford has pointed out, Eliot developed his notion of tradition partly in response to reviewing Smith's *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* and finding there precisely an example of the *failure* of tradition. For Eliot, a tradition requires 'not only a corpus of writings and writers in one language' but the sense that the writers are the expression of a single, national mind, one 'which is a greater, finer, more positive, more comprehensive mind than the mind of any period'. Whatever the achievements of individual Scottish writers, their works do not form – in Smith's account – expressions of such a continuously evolving national mind, so that from the very inception of modern literary criticism, Scotland stands as the negative against which the positive values of 'tradition' can be defined. Thus F. R. Leavis uses Walter Scott as the negative of his 'great tradition', since Scott 'not having the creative writer's interest in literature . . . made no serious attempt to work out his own form and break away from the bad tradition of the eighteenth-century romance'. Muir's account of Scott's failure is based precisely on reducing the literary tradition in Scotland to those 'few disconnected figures', incapable of constituting a single, national mind.

Muir was not alone among Scottish critics in adopting the Eliot–Leavis view of ‘tradition’ and applying it negatively to Scotland. John Speirs’s *The Scots Literary Tradition* (1940), which began as a series of articles in *Scrutiny*, the journal founded by Leavis, approached major writers in Scots by testing them against the Leavisite standard of the quality of their language, ‘both locally and as a cumulative organic whole’. Speirs’s aim was to reveal potentialities in early Scots poetry that were missing in conceptions of poetry as they had developed in nineteenth-century Romanticism – a regular target of Leavisite indignation. But, rather than challenging contemporary notions of poetry in English, his analysis demonstrated the inevitable degeneration of poetry in Scots: Dunbar’s is ‘a poetry that is medieval and European and at the same time Scots’, while Burns is ‘provincial in comparison’ – not because of Burns’s own character but because ‘the Scotland of Burns no longer formed part of the European background’. Hugh MacDiarmid meantime ‘is a forlorn and isolated figure, the European background having vanished, and Scotland with it’. For Speirs, the loss of contact between poetry and ‘living speech’ makes poetry like Dunbar’s impossible in the twentieth century, while the Scottish novel tradition is unfortunately vitiated by Scott’s influence, ‘who had no profound psychological or moral insight’.

David Craig’s *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People, 1680–1830* (1961) also derives from Leavisite sources – Q. D. Leavis’s work on reading publics rather than F. R. Leavis’s concern with organic traditions. Its argument is that it is impossible for a country as small as Scotland to have ‘a mature, “all round” literature’, and therefore, even in dealing with Scotland’s greatest writers, Burns and Scott, ‘it lapses and fallings short that we have to account for as much as achieved first-rate work’. The ‘tradition’ was never healthy, and any proper ‘critical sense of the 18th century would have seen that some sort of disintegration was already visible even in the best Scots poetry’ because Scottish culture’s disintegration was ‘historically inevitable’. Craig’s argument starts with the ‘failure of Augustan Edinburgh to bring forth anything distinctive or fine in the imaginative way’, a position tenable only if one restricts ‘imaginative’ to what is now called ‘creative writing’ – neglecting historical, philosophical or critical writing – and presupposes neither Burns nor Scott represent great achievements of the imagination. Craig’s argument is founded in a notion of ‘tradition’ which assumes that literature as a whole, as well as each successful work within it, can be tested by the criterion of whether or not it forms an organic unity. Since this unity is revealed at the level of language, the fact that Burns and Scott write not only in Scots and English, but by *mixing* Scots and English, necessarily means their work will fail the test of organic unity. The failure of Scottish literature was inevitable, and the purpose of criticism is to analyse the causes and consequences of that failure. Formerly integral to the English literary tradition, Scotland becomes the negation of all tradition.

The antithetical role Scotland thus plays in modern criticism’s development is compounded by the fact that ‘tradition’ was used within this critical orthodoxy to give special significance to those moments when traditions failed, and to the psychological and cultural consequences that followed from breaches of historical continuity. Eliot, most famously, explained an apparent ‘dissociation of sensibility’ in England in the sixteenth century as a consequence of the rise of Puritanism. Founded on Knoxian Calvinism and its Puritan heritage, Scotland was an even more likely example of a culture where the imposition of the new religion broke traditional patterns with such rigour that, in Edwin Muir’s words, ‘the mind is divorced from the feelings’, leaving only ‘simple irresponsible feeling side by side with arid intellect’. For Speirs, too, ‘the fanatical theological and

political divisions and controversies' of seventeenth-century Scotland had the result of 'in some way fragmenting the Scottish mind'. As Willa Muir put it in *Mrs Grundy in Scotland* (1936):

We cannot but assume that the Lowland Scots must have possessed at one time a blend of social and religious culture similar to what they were now denouncing so fiercely in the Highlands, and that this savage repression of 'pagan' fiddling, singing, dancing, and story-telling had been directed first against themselves.

The Reformation, to the Muirs, 'was a kind of spiritual strychnine of which Scotland took an overdose'.

By contrast, Hugh Walker, writing in the 1890s, could praise Scottish literature's contribution to the achievements of the Reformation – 'the support which the Reformation received from literature was of prime importance' – and could treat Knox himself as a major contributor to the Scottish literary tradition:

the author of one of the most memorable books that kingdom has ever given to the world, a book which ought to take a high place even in the rich literature which the sixteenth century added to the English tongue.

T. F. Henderson, equally, saw in Knox's *History of the Reformation* 'the record of that conflict, a record so sincere, thorough, and complete, that it is one of the most interesting human documents in literature'. By the 1920s and 1930s, however, Knox could be presented only as literature's destroyer. For William Power, 'Mary and Knox disintegrated Scotland, and carried out the first stage of the provincializing process.' For Gregory Smith, Puritanism had produced the 'benumbed and empty years of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' because 'in Scotland alone it gripped with a strange relentless rigour'. For Edwin Muir, 'almost every Scotsman of first-rate mind, except Carlyle, has reacted against Knox's influence and the influence of his seventeenth-century successors'. That Scottish literature since the Reformation had struggled into existence in a hostile environment antipathetic to the creative imagination became a founding principle of historical criticism in Scotland. Even David Craig, who defends Knox's followers against David Hume's aspersions, finds Calvinism simply the expression of a deeper antipathy to the imagination:

if we read the literature, in the light of Eliot's ideas of the subtle and the crude, we find that what is happening is not so much censorship or suppression as the bringing out, by Calvinism, into full potency of a native trait which itself tended to thwart or curtail imagination.

If, for Gregory Smith, Scottish literature was defined by its antisyzygetical swithering from realism to fantasy, that division was translated by later criticism into the opposition between a repressive Calvinism for which imagination had no significance in the 'real' world, and escapist romanticism glorying in sentimental evasion of the real. If the Scottish tradition had been broken by the Reformation, it was not re-established by the literary revivalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, since this, according to the critics, was vitiated from the beginning by an antiquarian concern for a past recalled only in order to escape from the degradation of the modern world. Romanticism in Scotland is not presented as the reconnection of mind and feeling in the full power of the creative imagination. It is the

imagination's retreat from reality into an alternative world in which, as Muir writes of Scott, it will 'make even carnage pleasing and picturesque'. It is in terms of these oppositions that Muir, for instance, characterises the failings of Robert Louis Stevenson. He argues Stevenson was brought up in a culture where it was universally accepted that 'story-telling was an idle occupation'. To conceal the lack of real content in his fiction, he focuses on language and style. As a result, his 'phrases become mere flimsy decoration [. . .] the characters, the setting, everything shrinks into decoration'. For William Power, too, modern Scotland is trapped between Calvinism and Romanticism: 'we have broken out of our pseudo-Calvinistic jail [but] we are still, as a people, in the meshes of touristic pseudo-Romanticism'. For David Craig, 'as the country grew into a modern town-centred nation, Scottish fiction recoiled, immersing itself in the country ways which the sensitive soul [. . .] could use to gratify his nostalgia for that homely, rural past'. With whatever generosity the work of contemporary writers might be met, it was assumed that successful art had to oppose rather than fulfil Scottish culture's potentialities.

It is important to recognise that this surging critique of Scottish culture's failure was part of the general attack by literary modernists throughout the western world on the degradation of modern industrial culture. Eliot's attack on modern, industrial England, the Fugitive poets' on urban America and Yeats's on middle-class Ireland were only a few of such 'myths' of historical fall from a world in which poetry was integral to an organic community to one in which art had been cast out from a mechanised society. The extremity with which this was enacted in Scotland, the loss of any sense of possible reconnection with the broken tradition, was perhaps directly proportional to the fact that Scotland, by 1914, had become the most industrialised and urbanised country in the world.

It was against industrial degradation and the decay of Scottish tradition that a revitalised Celticism, inspired in part by the Irish example, came to play a crucial role in Scottish criticism. The original Scottish 'renaissance' movement of the 1890s, led by the polymath scientist, ecologist and geographer Patrick Geddes, had attempted to reorient Scotland towards its Celtic inheritance as an alternative to industrial modernity. Through the work of Fiona Macleod – the literary persona of William Sharp – Scotland had played an important role in the development of the Celticism which had been so productive in Ireland. As Yeats noted in his diary: 'we were all under the shadow of the Fiona myth'. By setting Scottish culture in the longer history of Celtic civilisation, critics like William Power attempted to defuse the destructive division of Scotland into two entirely alien cultures. This had been the burden of the influential nineteenth-century race theories of Robert Knox, who believed that 'the Caledonian Celt of *Scotland* appears a race as distinct from the Lowland Saxon of the same country, as any two races can possibly be: as negro from American; Hottentot from Caffre; Esquimaux from Saxon'; all of which allowed him to insist that 'the Caledonian Celtic race, not Scotland, fell at Culloden'. Even Millar's *Literary History of Scotland* assumes that his subject is 'the language of that part of Scotland which [. . .] is no other than the language of the North of England', a language founded upon 'the all but complete expulsion of Celtic culture and the Celtic system' from Lowland Scotland. Gregory Smith is no less dismissive of the influence of Celtic culture on Scots. For Power, by contrast, 'Gaelic has had a far bigger and longer run in Scotland than Scots or English' and, consequently, 'Teutonic speech is still a comparative upstart.' It is this Celtic culture, rather than the culture of the medieval makars, that was finally repressed by 'the cold alien shadow of Calvin'. It nonetheless holds hope of recovery from that alien shadow, since what distinguishes the Celt is that 'he has an ideal, a plan of life, transcending the mere means and apparatus of living'.

MacDiarmid was to take up this pan-Celticism in the 1930s. Neil Gunn reminded readers that 'Gaelic literature was in its flower centuries before the beginnings of English literature' and prophesied that 'the Gael will come again'. Celticism linked all of the arts in Scotland in the 1930s and 1940s, providing not only the inspiration of much of J. D. Fergusson's most influential paintings but the inspiration of his partner Margaret Morris's founding of the Celtic ballet in 1940. Fergusson's own account of *Modern Scottish Painting* (1943) was a clarion call for a revitalised Scotland built on Celtic foundations, foundations which could be better understood because of works such as George Bain's *Celtic Art: The Methods of Construction* (1951). In literary criticism this 're-celticising' of Scottish culture emerged in *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (1958), by a German scholar, Kurt Wittig. Wittig argued that the apparent division of Highland and Lowland, Celt and Saxon, ignored the fact that 'though he is largely unaware of it, the staunch Lowlander carries on his back a Gaelic biological and linguistic heritage', and that both traditions shared in the expression of an 'underlying, essentially Scottish conception of beauty'.

Wittig's analysis of pre-Reformation poetry in Scots not only insists on its closeness to Gaelic but asserts a continuity of identity which allows us to see in the poetry of Dunbar 'a strong family likeness' with the work of the Celtic revivalists in Ireland and Wales in the late nineteenth century. They have a 'demonic quality' which is 'conspicuous in Burns's work' and 'also crops up extensively in Gaelic poetry'. Formal qualities of Scots poetry are attributed by Wittig to an ear attuned to Gaelic verse structures –

It can scarcely be doubted that internal rhyme came into Scots poetry from medieval Latin, French, and English poetry; but doubtless this was because it satisfied the needs of a public that had in some measure inherited the aesthetic values of Gaelic poetry

– so that characteristic features of poetry in Scots are 'still more strikingly characteristic of Scottish Gaelic poetry'. For Wittig, the reunification of the Scottish tradition is possible by resisting the temptation to see Burns and Scott as offshoots of English literature:

the respects in which Burns adds to the eighteenth-century tradition, and in which he comes nearest to the Makars, are those which lean towards the Celtic conception of poetry.

Meanwhile Scott's work is best viewed through the later achievements of the Irish Revival in the works of Lady Gregory and John Millington Synge. Significantly, Wittig chooses to conclude with the work of Neil Gunn, all of whose 'strength, his vision, his style come from his people, from the Scottish tradition, from the Gaelic past but he applies them to the crucial questions of our time'. In its Celtic influences Wittig finds a unifying theme that can bind Scots, Gaelic and English together again into a creative – rather than destructive – tradition of a single Scottish literature.

To many later critics, Wittig's presentation of Scottish culture's homogeneity represented a serious oversimplification, guilty on the one hand of 'essentialism' – the false belief that there must be one core referent for the word 'Scottish' – and on the other of creating his unified tradition by exclusion – ignoring, for instance, Scottish poetry written in Latin. But most of the major anthologies and histories of Scottish literature written since the 1950s have followed both Wittig's criticism and the example of Hugh MacDiarmid's *Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry* (1940) in seeing Gaelic writing as integral to whatever might constitute Scottish literature. Further, such anthologies as Thomas Owen Clancy's *The*

Triumph Tree: Scotland's Earliest Poetry, AD 550–1350 (1998) have sought to push back the origins of Scottish poetry beyond even the earliest Gaelic works. In place of the search for a single unified 'tradition', they have accepted that Scotland is a place of many traditions, quite at odds with the defining concept of literary criticism in English from the 1920s to the 1960s. The emergence of alternative critical perspectives since then, as well as the emergence of new literatures in English in parts of the world where no unified tradition is imaginable, has taken Scottish criticism out of the straitjacket which trapped much of it from the 1920s till the 1960s.

Indeed, if one looks at the role, for instance, of women writers, the development of what was supposedly a more professional and objective criticism in the 1920s actually ignored much that had been included in the simpler, 'baggy monster' conception of pre-war literary criticism. Chapter X of J. H. Millar's *Literary History of Scotland*, 'The Nineteenth Century: 1801–48', opens by stressing the new importance of women writers – Anne McVicar (Mrs Grant of Laggan), Elizabeth Hamilton and Susan Ferrier – whom many would have believed unacknowledged till more recent times, and his chapter on 'The Victorian Era: 1848–1880' gives extensive space to the work of Margaret Oliphant. Equally, Millar assumes literature to include not only the works of historians and philosophers but sermons and theological writings. By contrast, the failure of literary criticism in Scotland after 1918 to engage with the intellectual traditions of the country is striking. T. S. Eliot notes that Gregory Smith might

have made a study of the Scotch mind. Such a study might have great interest on its own account, but at all events it is not part of Mr Gregory Smith's intention [since] he barely mentions the names of Hume and Reid.

These philosophers are equally absent from Muir's discussions and if Power believes that they must be 'given a central place, and literature itself [. . .] dealt with as if it were an extended expression of philosophy', his actual analysis hardly fulfils this claim, despite a chapter on Carlyle which insists that 'Carlyle has meant and means more to Scotland than any other writer save Burns'. In David Craig's *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People*, Hume plays the role, so often assigned to him, of Scottish culture's destroyer, not only by his rigorous pruning of 'Scotticisms', but because 'he does not fully understand either his country's history or its present state', and 'ignores the popular movement behind the Reformation'. Hume's *philosophy* – and, indeed, Reid's – plays no part in the Scottish *people's* story or of Scottish literature's development. This lack of engagement with the country's intellectual traditions not only shrinks Scottish writing's corpus but also isolates individual writers from one another, deracinating them from their general intellectual milieu. For such criticism 'the Scotch mind' has all but disappeared – but only because it has been entirely ignored.

On the one side, therefore, one might argue that the 'failed' tradition of Scottish culture as it appears in the criticism of this period was actually the failure of the critics to engage with Scottish culture in sufficient breadth to have any adequate notion of its completeness or richness. There was indeed a powerful and continuing tradition but they failed to find it or to describe it accurately. On the other, one might argue that Gregory Smith's 'anti-szygy' was, ironically, closer to the truth: that the problem of Scottish literature in the modern age has been the assumption that literary creativity is only possible in the context of a unified and coherent cultural tradition. Perhaps disunity, conflict and contradiction are not only just as creative for any national culture, but are much more typically the

condition in which the majority of the human race struggle to express themselves. Only the overwhelming power of empire could construct the illusion of the unified culture on which England congratulated itself in the era when modern literary study was founded. As far as literary criticism was concerned, Edwin Muir may have been right when he suggested that 'Scotland will probably linger in limbo as long as the British Empire lasts.' He could hardly have foreseen how brief that imperial reign would be.

Further reading

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Literature and the Screen Media since 1908

Richard Butt

‘What I do is to read a story only once, and if I like the basic idea, I just forget all about the book and start to create cinema’ (Alfred Hitchcock in an interview with François Truffaut)

The classics: 1908–20

By 1908 the emerging Hollywood film industry and national film industries elsewhere were primarily storytelling industries. In their search for ready-made narratives, filmmakers turned, as they continue to turn, to literature. Adaptation was, and remains, a comparatively safe option in an industry that has always been conservative in its business strategies. Film distributors were attracted to the relative ease of marketing titles that audiences were already familiar with, while particular production companies, notably Famous Players–Lasky Corporation, increasingly turned to the classics for their stories and the theatres for their actors. This not only allowed them to differentiate themselves from the pulp-fiction specialists, it also conveyed an aura of quality to their films. This was an essential commodity from this period onwards as exhibitors sought to attract a wealthier and more discerning audience. This chapter charts the history of the adaptation of Scottish literature for the cinema and television screen, and how the shifting pattern of which authors are selected for adaptation impacts on the dominant, residual and emergent ways in which Scotland is represented.

Over a quarter of the films produced in or about Scotland before 1920 are literary adaptations, and, with the exception of *Macbeth*, these adaptations are based on the work of just three Scottish authors. The first in Europe was Itala Film’s adaptation in 1910 of Sir Walter Scott’s *The Bride of Lammermoor* (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), following Vitagraph’s 1909 adaptations of the same novel and of *Kenilworth*. Edison, the other major US company during this period, followed suit the same year with adaptations of *Lochinvar*, from Canto V of Scott’s ‘Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field’, and *The Imp of the Bottle*, their version of Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Bottle Imp*. In 1910 Wrench Films, a small British production company, made *The Duality of Man*. The film was a short version of Stevenson’s ‘shilling shocker’ *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, the first of twenty-three adaptations of the tale for cinema. The same year Nordisk Films Kompagni released their version of the tale, *Den Skaebnesvangre Opfindelse* (1910), the final scene revealing that the entire film was only a nightmare from which Jekyll now awakes; such conservative revisionism is common in the history of literary adaptation. Stevenson’s novel is not only the most frequently adapted work of Scottish literature in world cinema, it is probably the third

most adapted of any works of literature, falling just behind *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. While the novel's length, small cast, tight plotting, Victorian London setting and correspondence to the cinematic conventions of the horror genre render it readily adaptable for cinema, it must also be the novel's thematic interest in moral duality and the unconscious which has attracted filmmakers as diverse as poetic realist Jean Renoir (*Le Testament du Dr Cordelier*, 1959), Hammer Studio auteur Terence Fisher (*The Two Faces of Dr Jekyll*, 1960) and British veteran Stephen Frears (*Mary Reilly*, 1996).

The first British three-reel feature was United Films' 1911 adaptation of Scott's *Rob Roy*, directed by Arthur Vivian and shot in Aberfoyle and a Glasgow film studio. Subsequent versions of the legend, including the 1953 Disney adaptation and Alan Sharp's revisionist 1995 adaptation, do not credit Scott as their source material. Nevertheless, the impact of Scott's novel on the legend of the eponymous hero is such that all subsequent screen versions of the tale draw at least implicitly on his picturesque version of the Scottish Highlands. Scott's poem *The Lady of the Lake* (1810) was adapted by Vitagraph in 1912, and again in 1928 by Michael Balcon for Gainsborough. There were no further adaptations until 1992, when Werner Herzog directed Gioacchino Rossini's opera *La Donna del Lago*, which draws on Scott's poem for the libretto. Scott's adventure novel *Ivanhoe* was adapted by US and UK companies in 1913, and his Edinburgh based proto-melodrama *The Heart of Midlothian*, on both sides of the Atlantic in 1914 (as *A Woman's Triumph* in the US Famous Players production). A 1966 BBC dramatisation was to be the only other screen adaptation of what is regarded by many as his best novel. *The Fair Maid of Perth* received its only film adaptations in 1923 and 1926, while *Waverley, or 'Tis Sixty Years Since* has never been adapted for the big screen. Nevertheless, Scott's literary representation of Scotland has, from the earliest days of film, been a powerful influence on the imaginative geography of the country for the international film industry.

Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, first released by Edison in 1912, meantime, has been adapted for the cinema twenty times. As with other Stevenson novels, these vary in the emphasis given to either the novel's spectacularly located adventure narrative or the rite of passage of its young protagonist. Edison was also the first to adapt Stevenson's *Kidnapped* for the screen, directed by Alan Crosland in 1917. As with all adaptations of novel-length narratives, particularly in this period when feature-length films still only ran to three or four reels, Crossland is necessarily selective in his interpretation of Scott's tale. Nonetheless, critics welcomed the accuracy of his version, reinforcing the developing Scott-influenced romantic view of 'Scotland' as Highlands. This applauded fidelity was in stark contrast to the reception of the 1938 version directed by Alfred L. Werker and Otto Preminger for 20th Century Fox, described by Scott Allen Nollen as 'A failure on almost every level [that] vies with MGM's *Trouble for Two* [the 1936 version of *The Suicide Club*] as the worst Stevenson adaptation of Hollywood's golden age.'

During the 1910s theatrical texts became a popular source of literary adaptation, the transposition from stage to screen technically less challenging for screenwriters than that from the novel. *Shipwrecked* (1913) was the first of six adaptations of J. M. Barrie's play *The Admirable Crichton*, including the 1919 Famous Players–Lasky *Male and Female* directed by Cecil B. de Mille and starring Gloria Swanson. Other UK adaptations of his social comedies followed, with screen versions of *What Every Woman Knows* in 1917 and *The Twelve Pound Look* in 1920. Barrie himself had adapted *The Little Minister* for the stage in 1897, and its success in America probably explains why there were five adaptations by the US majors over a scant seven-year period, beginning with Vitagraph's 1913 production directed by and starring James Young. The best-known adaptation of the novel, however,

was also to be the last for cinema. RKO's 1934 adaptation starring Katharine Hepburn was a critical and box-office failure, although Hepburn went on to star in RKO's adaptation of Barrie's *Quality Street* just three years later. Cinema provided a steady source of income for Barrie, and the 1920s and 1930s saw many of his other plays adapted for the screen, something that must have influenced his own writing practices in his later career. Famous Players–Lasky were most significant, producing *Half an Hour* in 1920 (and again in 1930), *What Every Woman Knows*, *Sentimental Tommy* and *The Little Minister* in 1921, *A Kiss for Cinderella* (1925), and *Seven Days Leave* (1930), an adaptation of *The Old Lady Shows her Medals* starring Gary Cooper as the Canadian Black Watch Soldier. Lasky were also responsible for the first adaptation, in 1924, of *Peter Pan, or the Boy Who Never Grew Up*. The 1953 Walt Disney animated version, and its re-release on video and DVD and associated merchandising, has ensured that Barrie's story has remained in the popular imagination.

The Scott, Stevenson and Barrie adaptations highlight two features in the history of the relationship between Scottish literature and the screen: the centrality of Scotland's literary 'classics' to screen adaptation; and the role of film (and later television) in contributing to the internationalisation of Scottish literature. The three writers account for all the adaptations of Scottish literature until 1922, with most of their work adapted at least once during this period, and for the majority of adaptations of Scottish literature thereafter, totalling in excess of one hundred and fifty film releases. Almost all their prodigious output has been adapted for film or television, and many novels, plays or poems have been adapted numerous times. National film industries across the globe have turned to Scottish literature, particularly these three authors, finding subjects in their narratives that could be reworked to serve their own national concerns. While the majority of adaptations were made by the USA, UK and Europe, non-European, non-anglophone cinemas have also contributed. Examples include China's Lianhua Film Company's version of Barrie's *The Admirable Crichton*, *Dao Zi Ren Qu* (1936); Russia's *Chernaya Streia* (1985), an adaptation of Stevenson's *The Black Arrow*; *Vereskovi Myod* (1974) the only adaptation of his verse 'Heather Ale: a Galloway Legend' (1890); adaptations of *Dr Jekyll* and *Treasure Island*; and Gorky Studio's adaptation of Scott's *The Talisman*, *Richard Lvinoe Serdce* (1992). But as already noted for Scott, the influence of these authors on the audio-visual media extends beyond specific adaptations of their literature. Their representation of Scotland's rural and urban landscapes, their introduction of particular Scottish character types, and their narrative explorations of psychological dualism, religious repression and the role of socialisation in the construction of class have had a reproductive power within and beyond Scotland's borders.

An early notable adaptation of literature with a Scottish subject not written by a Scottish author is, of course, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, first produced by US Vitagraph in 1908. Europe followed with Italian (1909, Italy Cines), French (1910, Pathe), British (1911, Co-operative Cinematograph Company) and German (1914, Film Industrie Gesellschaft) productions completed over the next five years. To date there have been twenty-five cinematic adaptations of the play, including the work of auteurs Orson Welles (1948), Akira Kurosawa (*Kumonosu-Jo/Throne of Blood*, 1957), and Roman Polanski (1971). As one of the most adapted literary texts in the history of world cinema, *Macbeth* has maintained the cinematic association of Scottish political and cultural history with violent feuding and Celtic practices, contributing to what Malcolm Chapman (1978) described as 'the Gaelic vision of Scottish culture', the predominantly Highland face that Scotland has turned to the international audience, a face which is congruent with the adaptations of Scott, Stevenson and Barrie, despite the ambivalence of those authors themselves to the political and social systems they represent.

Popular fiction: 1920s–1950s

In 1916 British film pioneer Cecil M. Hepworth directed Helen Mathers's popular novel *Comin' thro' the Rye* for his Hepworth Film Manufacturing Company. Its success proved that the international audience for stories with a Scottish setting was not limited to the classics and US and UK production companies turned to the work of other contemporary popular writers. In 1919 Maurice Tourneur shot Cecil Raleigh and Henry Hamilton's play *The White Heather* for Famous Players–Lasky, directing the dramatic underwater climax in a diving suit at the bottom of San Pedro harbour. W. P. Kellino directed Sarah Macnaughtan's novel *The Fortune of Christina McNab* (1921) before turning to Scott's *Rob Roy* (1922) and *Young Lochinvar* (1924), and Castleton Knight directed *The Plaything* (1929) adapted from Arthur Black's revenge drama *Life is Pretty Much the Same* for British International Pictures. Hepworth remade *Comin' thro' the Rye* in 1923. The film's notably high production values, seen in the attention to the period detail of costume and setting, and its nostalgic celebration of a pastoral past establish it as the first of a long line of British heritage films.

The first Scottish writer, aside from Scott, Stevenson and Barrie, to have his work adapted for cinema was John Joy Bell. Bell's Wee MacGregor stories, originally serialised in the *Glasgow Evening Times*, had their first screen release in *The Wee MacGregor's Sweet-Heart* (1922), adapted from the short stories *Oh Christina* and *Courting Christina*. Four more of Bell's working-class character comedies were adapted for the cinema in the 1920s; *Dancing Days* (1926), *Thou Fool* (1926), *Beyond London Lights* (1928) and *Thread o' Scarlet* (1938). This reflected the popularity of his work among the public and also established contemporary working-class Glasgow comedies as being as saleable film commodities as the classic historical dramas. *Their Night Out* (1933) adapted from George Arthurs's comedy play, and *Till the Bell Rings* (1933), Graham Moffatt's film version of his own play, both draw on this tradition of Scots comic characters while lacking the detailed *mise-en-scène* of Bell's original stories.

Early Scott and Stevenson adaptations worked well within a generic regime in which adventure narratives were consistently popular and the novels of John Buchan bear all this genre's conventions, particularly their reluctant, but romantically minded, heroes drawn into daring adventures in carefully crafted Scottish landscape. It is, therefore, surprising that only three of his novels were adapted for the cinema. The first of these was *Huntingtower* (1927), directed by George Pearson. Sir Harry Lauder stars as Dickson McCunn, the retired Glaswegian grocer who, with the help of the Gorbals Die Hards, rescues a White Russian princess from her imprisonment by the Bolsheviks in Huntingtower in the Borders. Alfred Hitchcock, a great admirer of Buchan's novels, considered adapting *Greenmantle* before making *The 39 Steps* (1935), one of the most successful films of his British career. Hitchcock's approach to adaptation was ruthless: the director cuts and adds scenes at will (the scenes with John Laurie's jealous Highland crofter and with Mr Memory are unique to the film). Hitchcock's trope of an innocent man pursued by both villains and police is typical of the filmmaker's oeuvre. He acknowledges, however, Buchan as 'a strong influence' on his filmmaking, particularly 'his understatement of highly dramatic ideas' and what Truffaut describes as 'a thoroughly casual approach to the plausible'. All these features are so central to contemporary Hollywood filmmaking that his discussion of his adaptation is a lesson in filmmaking itself:

What I like in *The 39 Steps* are the swift transitions. Robert Donat [playing Hannay] decides to go to the police to tell them that the man with the missing finger tried to kill him and how

the bible [which belonged to the jealous crofter] saved his life, but they don't believe him and suddenly he finds himself in handcuffs. How will he get out of them? The camera moves across the street and we see Donat, still handcuffed, through the window that is suddenly shattered to bits. A moment later he runs into a Salvation Army parade and he falls in step. Next, he ducks into an alley that leads him straight to a conference hall. Someone says 'Thank heaven, our speaker has arrived', and he is hustled on to a platform where he has to improvise an election speech.

Hitchcock's narrative economy, influenced by Buchan's novelistic technique, remains a central feature of contemporary Hollywood cinema. The film also demonstrates that adaptation is more than just the transposition of plot and dialogue from page to screen. In a departure from the novel, for instance, Hitchcock has Donat handcuffed to Madeleine Carroll, the handcuffs serving as both a dramatic device and a metaphor for marriage.

Two years after Pearson's adaptation of *Huntingtower*, John Ford directed *The Black Watch* (1929), based on Talbot Mundy's adventure novel *King of the Kyber Rifles*. Henceforth, there were a series of adventure novel adaptations that, while not always penned by Scottish authors, featured Scottish characters or a Scottish setting and drew on the conventions established by Scott, Stevenson and, now, Buchan. These include: *Flame in the Heather* (1935) from Esson Maule's Jacobite adventure novel *The Fiery Cross*; the Highland Regiment's Sergeant Macduff in *Wee Willie Winkie* (1937), John Ford's adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's Indian frontier period drama; and *The Spy in Black* (1939), the Powell and Pressburger version of J. Storer Clouston's 1917 thriller set and shot around Scapa Flow and the Orkneys.

A. J. Cronin and Compton Mackenzie were the other popular Scottish authors of the first half of the twentieth century whose work was adapted for the big screen. Nine of the fourteen filmed adaptations of Cronin's work were produced by major studios. Particularly notable are the 1938 version of *The Citadel* directed by King Vidor, Carol Reed's *The Stars Look Down* (1939), and *Tere Mere Sapne* (1971), an Indian adaptation of *The Citadel* directed by and starring Vijay Anand. Despite their diverse settings beyond Scotland's borders, all these films develop the vision of industrialisation initiated by the Highland and Glaswegian adaptations already discussed. Mackenzie's novels, however, had been adapted for the screen as early as 1916, when George Irving directed a US production of *The Ballet Girl*, based on the best-selling *Carnival*. But this film, along with the George Cukor's *Sylvia Scarlett* (1936) with Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant, and the UK production of *Sinister Street* (1922), belongs to the period before Mackenzie moved to Scotland, helped found what became the Scottish National Party and produced his Highland comedies. Alexander Mackendrick's 1949 Ealing adaptation of one of these novels, *Whisky Galore!*, was particularly influential on subsequent representations of Scotland on the screen. Moreover, like Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps* and Robert Wise's 1945 version of Stevenson's *The Body Snatcher* with Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi for RKO, the Mackenzie/Mackendrick 'collaboration' is one in which both authorial voices work together rather than against each other. This critical and popular success, however, maintained rather than challenged the marginalisation of Mackenzie's more serious literary projects.

Based on the true life story of the sinking of the SS *Politician*, *Whisky Galore!*'s whimsical narrative is driven by the conflicting values embodied in the film's characters; the free-spirited, rebellious islanders and the bureaucratic and authoritative mainlanders. While this structural opposition is at the heart of many of the Ealing comedies, it is given a particular dimension in this and subsequent Scottish films where the canny Celts consistently

outwit their non-Celtic Anglo-American opponents. This is evident in the 1950s adaptations *Laxdale Hall* (1952), one of three adaptations of Eric Linklater's novels, *Trouble in the Glen* (1954) from Maurice Walsh's story, and the other Ealing-style Mackenzie adaptation *Rockets Galore!* (1958). In Mackendrick's *The Maggie* (1954), undoubtedly influenced by Neil Munro's Para Handy tales, this is displayed through the opposing values of the captain and crew of the puffer and American businessman Calvin B. Marshall. Opposing values of tradition and modernity, intuition and rationality, community and individuality, and kindness and ruthlessness are played out across the film's narrative. Marshall is first constructed in opposition to the crew, and humiliated as a consequence of that opposition, then reconstructed within Celtic values, signified by his acceptance at the Gaelic-speaking blind centenarian's ceilidh.

The power and adaptability of this trope is shown in a film like *The Battle of the Sexes* (1959), a sentimental Scottish version of the James Thurber short story 'The Catbird Seat'. Although filmed after the closure of the Ealing Studios, it was directed by *Whisky Galore!*'s co-editor and second unit director Charles Crichton and starred a number of Ealing regulars. Peter Sellers plays Mr Martin, a mild-mannered middle-aged clerk at the 'House of MacPherson', an Edinburgh firm that has turned out tweed the same way for decades. The heir to the House brings in a dynamic female American efficiency expert with 'new-fangled ideas' who installs the latest devices, including intercoms and noisy adding machines, and ultimately threatens to lead the firm to the mass-production of synthetic tweed. Comedy is generated by Martin's attempts to sabotage her mechanistic approach which threatens his sense of heritage and authenticity. This is only fitting for a firm whose namesake is the fabricator of the Ossianic legends, James MacPherson, a reference ironically repeated in the persona of the African Rev. MacPherson in *Local Hero* (1983). *The Battle of the Sexes* develops many of the Ealing polarities, partly by mapping them on to the gender conflict between Sellers and the American. It is striking that, by the late 1950s, the tropes established by the films discussed in the previous paragraph were so powerfully established that the most appropriate way to adapt an American short story with such themes seemed to be to translate it into the post-Ealing Scottish mode.

Another British studio that turned to literature with a Scottish setting was Gainsborough, adapting Geoffrey Kerr's theatrical crime thriller *Cottage to Let* (1941) and L. A. G. Strong's *The Brothers* (1947). In both films, as in the Mackendrick comedies and *The Battle of the Sexes*, it is the arrival of an outsider that precipitates the conflict at the heart of the narrative, but while the conflicting values remain the same, Ealing whimsy is exchanged for Gainsborough melodrama. In *The Brothers*, for instance, the values of community, religion and tradition that Patricia Roc's convent-raised Glaswegian orphan encounters upon her arrival on the Isle of Skye are responsible for a repression and cruelty resolved not through the incorporation of the outsider, but through murder, suicide and execution. Nonetheless, this narrative structure continues to persist in screen representations of the Highlands and Islands up until the present.

Meantime, an alternative industrial version of Scotland was on offer post-Cronin in the adaptations of Clydeside novels of George Blake: *The Shipbuilders* (1943) and *Floodtide* (1949). Yet these have also been seen by some commentators as providing just as mythologised a view of Scotland as the 'Scotland/Highland' comedies in their nostalgic representation of a once great industrial city. Even the film version of Robert McLeish's *The Gorbals Story* (1950) abandons the play's thesis that there is ultimately no escape from the depressed social conditions south of the river as Russell Hunter's Johnny narrates his own story from the comfortable vantage point of the West End.

Two other contemporary Scottish authors whose work was adapted for the screen were Neil Gunn and James Bridie. Despite the inspiration of documentary pioneer John Grierson, Gunn's *The Silver Darlings* (1947) received a mixed reception, while the adaptations of Bridie's *The Sleeping Clergyman* (as *Flesh and Blood*, 1951) and *What Say They?* (as *You're Only Young Twice*, 1952) were critical failures. From the 1950s on the number of films produced annually steadily diminished. This was partly due to the end of the studio system: Hollywood majors, having been forced to sell their theatre chains that had provided a guaranteed outlet, steadily decreased their own production in favour of supplying finance and studio facilities to independents. Partly, also, cinema faced new forms of competition for the public's leisure time, particularly from television.

Television – the classic serial

In 1953 Errol Flynn starred as Jamie in a swashbuckling adaptation of Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae*. Critics at the time saw Flynn's involvement as contributing to the 'corruption' of the literary original. Yet, the film was entirely authentic in its working of the generic conventions of the classic adventure series that was now firmly established by the arrival of television, and in its romantic representation of Scotland. After the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's 1949 *Kidnapped* version, adapted classic serials became a staple part of the television industries' quality drama production. The series format typically provided double the screen time of a feature film, allowing screenwriters to work within the kind of story arcs that typify both serialised original and chaptered book, but it was the combination of visibly high production values with the literary capital of the source material that made this an exportable phenomenon. The literary canon again lent its authority to a screen medium trying to establish its cultural legitimacy and, in the adaptation of Scottish literature, the Scott–Stevenson–Barrie triumvirate again dominated the early years of this process.

Kidnapped is typical in this regard. Following the 1948 Canadian version, CBS produced one in 1951, with a further six-part adaptation in 1956. In the same year the BBC produced its own version with John Laurie as Ebenezer, followed by animated television versions in 1973 on CBS, and in 1975 in New Zealand. French television saw a 1978 mini-series of four ninety-minute episodes that covered both *Kidnapped* and its sequel, *Catriona*, while BBC Scotland made its own indigenous version in 1980 and CBS returned to the novel in 1995. In 2005 the BBC again returned, though somewhat approximately, to *Kidnapped*, this time, like the earlier French version, drawing also on *Catriona*. Scott's *Ivanhoe* received similar if less extensive treatment. The first television production was Screen Gems Television series for Columbia and Sony in 1958, starring Roger Moore in the thirty-nine thirty-minute episodes directed by Lance Comfort; although the episodes were free-standing adventures, the characters were clearly derived from Scott. The BBC made a ten-part adaptation in 1970, a CBS TV movie followed in 1982, and another BBC six-part adaptation in 1997. Of Scott's works, only the adventure novels receive this sort of televisual attention. Barrie's work also features in television adaptations, the majority produced by the BBC who presented its first Barrie play, *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals*, in 1937, followed by *Shall We Join the Ladies?* and *Mary Rose* in 1939. Following the war, there was a further spate of productions in the 1950s, but after the 1975 BBC *The Little Minister*, *Peter Pan* is the only Barrie work to continue to be adapted for film or television.

Stevenson, Scott and Barrie, then, dominated the selection of Scottish literary sources for the young film and television industries. Like other cultural and educational institutions, film and television contribute to the constitution of a literary canon; a piece of literature is adapted because it is part of this canon and, because it is adapted, it maintains its status in the canon. However, these two media can also challenge the internal hierarchies of that canon or even reconstitute them in their privileging of those authors and works they choose to adapt. In terms of Scottish literature, these three authors were privileged at first over others and, of their novels, with the notable exception of *Jekyll and Hyde*, the historical adventure stories were preferred. Such privileging, then, foregrounds a vision of Scotland for later film and television that is conditioned by a vision of 'Scotland' shaped by the earlier oligopoly. This is not to say that this vision cannot be revised or even reside as other visions emerge, but it must be revised in relation to this established and privileged vision. This preference and privileging is also indicative of the relative conservatism of both media when it comes to investment and commissioning. Risk and innovation are rare commodities when it comes to a major feature film or television series. Commercial television's arrival in the UK in 1955, however, resulted in a competitive television environment in which paternalism gave way to populism, and cultural legitimacy was now more carefully balanced by commercial expediency. One consequence of this was that adaptations of popular fiction increasingly featured in television schedules, appearing to combine some modified cultural legitimacy with the kind of audience size required by advertisers and those looking to justify the licence fee's continuation.

The BBC sitcom *Para Handy – Master Mariner* (1959–60) is an example of this practice, as well as the tendency to seek the cultural legitimacy of the literary source by aiming for some form of fidelity to it. In this case, while the stories were rewritten in the present, the location filming on the Clyde coast – which unusually comprised much of the shooting on the six episodes – took place where Neil Munro has set his original stories. Similar attention was given to the selection of the puffer itself. This series' success ensured a follow-up sitcom, *The Vital Spark* (1965). A fifty-minute one-off special was made as part of BBC Scotland's 50th anniversary celebrations in 1973, again featuring some of the original cast and crew, its success ensuring a third six-part (colour) series in 1974 on BBC2. Inevitably, Munro's stories returned to the small screen in 1994 in the BBC's *The Tales of Para Handy*. The success of *Para Handy*, particularly the appeal of its representation of rural Scotland, surely contributed to the BBC's decision to produce *Dr Finlay's Casebook* (1962–71), the hugely popular long-running television series based on A. J. Cronin's novel *The Citadel* and his autobiography, *Adventures in Two Worlds*. Like *Para Handy*, a relatively large amount of the programme was shot on location and *Dr Finlay* similarly returned to television in a new series in the 1990s (1993–6).

Diversity and departure: 1960s–present

From the 1960s, although such novels as Stevenson's *Kidnapped* remained attractive to filmmakers, Disney producing a version in 1960 and Delbert Mann directing Jack Pulman's script, combining *Kidnapped* itself and its sequel *Catriona*, in 1971, cinema differentiated itself from television by diversifying its literary source material. In the early sixties, this included romantic comedies such as: *The Bridal Path* (1959), based on Nigel Tranter's Hebridean comic novel; *Don't Bother to Knock* (1961), adapted from Cliff Hanley's novel about a philandering Edinburgh estate agent *Love from Everybody*; *The Amorous Prawn*

(1962), in which Anthony Kimmins directed an adaptation of his own comic play; and *The Fast Lady* (1962), an adaptation of Keble Howard's romantic comedy. It also included children's films such as *Greyfriars Bobby* (1961), the Walt Disney adaptation of Eleanor Atkinson's Edinburgh-based sentimental drama; *Three Lives of Thomasina* (1964), another Disney adaptation, this time of a Paul Gallico novel set in Scotland in 1912, and a Children's Film Foundation production of *Flash the Sheepdog* (1967), based on Kathleen Fidler's novel. At either end of the decade Ronald Neame directed *Tunes of Glory* (1960), based on James Kennaway's novel, and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1969), based on Muriel Spark's novel, both film melodramas depicting the dynamics of social authority and repression and its impact on the central characters' sense of self. Kennaway, who moved professionally between the worlds of literature and film, had two further adaptations of his work: *Country Dance* (1970), and the Oscar-winning short *The Dollar Bottom* (1981).

The 1960s also saw film adaptations of two of the most commercially successful Scottish-born writers of the 1950s, Alistair MacLean and Ian Fleming. Both produced best-selling spy adventure-thrillers which while having little, if anything, to say about Scotland, follow clearly in the Scott–Stevenson–Buchan tradition of historical adventure and spy novels. Beginning with *The Guns of Navarone* (1961), fourteen of MacLean's novels have been adapted for the screen. Of the eighteen Fleming adaptations, beginning with the release of *Dr No* (1962), only United Artists' adaptation of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang: The Magical Car* (1968) is not part of the continuing Bond franchise.

In the 1970s the BBC adapted a broad range of Scottish literature for the small screen. BBC Scotland produced Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Sunset Song* in 1971 and adaptations of the other two novels in the trilogy, *Cloud Howe* (1982) and *Grey Granite* (1983). In 1971 again, the corporation travelled to Orkney and to the work of George Mackay Brown, filming three of the stories from his *A Time to Keep* collection, 'A Time to Keep', 'The Whaler's Return' and 'Celia' for the 'Play for Today' series. Another of his stories, 'The Privilege', was made into a short film in 1983. A number of the other notable BBC adaptations of the 1970s were directed by John Mackenzie. Following work with Ken Loach and Tony Garnett at the Corporation in the 1960s, Mackenzie went on to direct 7:84 Theatre Company's own production of John McGrath's *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* (1974), ensuring the film version maintained the Brechtian spirit of the original. He followed this by directing Peter McDougall's Scottish trilogy – *Just Another Saturday* (1975), *The Elephant's Graveyard* (1976) and *Just a Boy's Game* (1979) – for BBC2's 'Play for Today', all three exploring crises in Scottish masculinity against a backdrop of sectarian violence, gangland mythology and post-industrial decline. Mackenzie returned to Scotland and another McDougall script to again challenge cinematic convention with *A Sense of Freedom* (1979), adapted for Scottish Television from Glasgow hard man Jimmy Boyle's autobiography.

The cycle of decline and recovery that characterised the financial health of British cinema in the twentieth century reached a trough in the early 1980s with cinema admissions, which had been diminishing since the peak of 1.6 billion in 1950, reaching an all time low of 54 million in 1982. Government support of the industry effectively ceased, and an ever-decreasing percentage of the few British films that were produced actually made it on to the screen, very few of these Scottish. Pessimism in the industry was arguably matched by an inferiorist discourse in writing on Scottish cinema, particularly evident in *Scotch Reels* (1982), a collection of essays on the representation of Scotland published to coincide with the 'Scotch Reels' event at the 1982 Edinburgh Film Festival. Various authors argued that the militarist romanticism and parochial nostalgia of tartanry and

Kailyard occupied the same dominant position in the screen image of Scotland that they allegedly occupied in Scottish literature in the nineteenth century. The empirical and theoretical weaknesses of this argument have been articulated elsewhere, but the *Scotch Reels*' assessment of the political and cultural consequences of the romantic appropriation of Scotland was probably most significant in its very precipitation of a critical debate about the screen representation of Scotland. And it is certainly the case that the kinds of literature that have been adapted for the moving image to some extent determine the ways in which Scotland has been represented on the screen. In film and television, it is the particular representations of Scotland of Scott, Stevenson and Barrie that constituted an oligopoly in the earlier years of both media that was only later broken as other Scottish literature was selected for adaptation and screen images of Scotland became increasingly diverse. However, it is not only that these other authors who thought differently about their country were largely ignored by the *Scotch Reels* critique, it is also that that account failed to recognise the complex dynamic of adaptation and representation that this chapter has attempted to articulate. Each successive adaptation is part of a process that continues to unfold across time, part of the evolution of the representation of Scotland and Scottish literature on screen.

Cinematic adaptations south of the border in the 1980s were dominated by the model of Merchant Ivory's lavish heritage versions of E. M. Forster's novels, but Scottish films turned to more recent literature. Yet, in the decade of Thatcherism, even they looked back to an earlier era, though retaining the rural realism of their literary sources. Director Michael Radford ensured that Jessie Kesson's work received the attention Scottish women's writing had rarely received on the screen with his adaptations of her novels, the autobiographical *The White Bird Passes* (1958) and the 1944-set *Another Time, Another Place* (1983). The 1940s were also the setting for *Venus Peter* (1989), the adaptation of Christopher Rush's novel *A Twelvemonth and a Day* (1985), set in the Orkneys. Only the 1990 adaptation of William McIlvanney's 1985 novel, *The Big Man*, spoke directly, as the McDougall/Mackenzie television dramas had done for the 1970s, about the urban reality of the decade. The story of an out-of-work miner lured into bare-knuckle fighting by Billy Connolly's criminal businessman is an effective representation of the post-industrial depression and enterprise ideology of the period.

Compton Mackenzie's influence on screen drama continues, but is also challenged. In 1983, Bill Forsyth's Ealing-esque *Local Hero*, while an original screenplay, worked within the narrative tropes established by Mackenzie, while marking the emergence of an ironic sentimentalism in the representation of Scottish rural communities that has become a central feature of subsequent television adaptations. Indeed, from the mid-1990s onwards, Mackenzie and crime dominated the small screen. *Hamish Macbeth* (1995–7) was a three-season crime drama series starring Robert Carlyle as a laid-back pot-smoking romantically entangled policeman in the village of Lochdubh. Based on the novels by M. C. Beaton, the representation of Scotland in the adaptations again draws on the myth established by Mackenzie and Ealing, but like *Local Hero* its employment of that myth is both ironic and humorous. Compton Mackenzie is directly adapted for television in BBC Scotland's comedy drama *Monarch of the Glen* (2000–), in its sixth series at time of writing. *The Crow Road* (1996) was a four-part adaptation of Ian Banks's family mystery saga. Writer Brian Elsley and director Gavin Millar also wrote and directed the feature film *Complicity* (2000), another Banks adaptation. Where, however, the television series had been critically well received, the film suffered from its inability to reproduce its novel's switching between first- and second-person narrator. In 2000, Clerkenwell Films produced *Black and*

Blue (2000), a two-hour television film of Ian Rankin's Inspector Rebus novel. The same company followed this with adaptations of the Rebus novels *The Hanging Garden*, *Dead Souls* and *Mortal Causes*, and Christopher Brookmyre's comedy thriller *Quite Ugly One Morning* in 2004. In later Rankin adaptations, Ken Stott plays Rebus.

Film in this period, then, drew on a more diverse range of contemporary, as well as classic, Scottish literature, and in doing so looked beyond British filmmaking practices to either Hollywood or European cinema. Alan Sharp's adaptation for Michael Caton-Jones of *Rob Roy* (1995) found resonances that combined elements of post-Scott romantic Highland drama with Sharp's experience as a Scottish screenwriter of Hollywood Westerns. Randall Wallace's screenplay for Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* (1995) drew on Blind Harry's *Wallace* in a manner that rivalled the medieval source in wild caricature, exaggeration and improbability. The screen versions of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels from 2001 on made a major contribution to the economic health of the domestic film industry with their combination of British locations and actors with industry standard computer-generated imagery. Meanwhile, three other adaptations – Danny Boyle's energetic adaptation of Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1996), Lynne Ramsay's poetic reworking of Alan Warner's *Morvern Callar* (2002) and David Mackenzie's evocation of the morally ambiguous existentialism of Alexander Trocchi's 1954 novel *Young Adam* (2003) – mark a break, however temporary, from the dominant paradigms within which 'Scotland' has often been represented. Moreover, in their diverse relationships with the aesthetics of European art-house film, they also challenge the classical system of storytelling that still dominates US and UK filmmaking. In doing so, they remind us that adaptation is a translation between two languages. The variety of Scottish literature has ensured that this translation, often also between one time and another, has been productive and enduring. Moreover, these recent examples suggest that, while for much of its history Scottish screen adaptation has had to make its way in relation to the narrative hegemony established by the early adaptations of the literary canon, Scottish filmmaking has now evolved to the point where it can deal creatively with a wide range of literary originals through an increasingly wide range of aesthetic strategies.

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Material Culture in Modern Scotland

Murray Pittock

Material culture and consumer culture are arguably symbiotic in their importance to modern western society in general, and thus to Scotland in particular. The eighteenth century was the first century which produced a middle-class market, fed by imports, colonialism and the better capitalisation of trade, sustained by the importance of show in dress, transport or possession as a mark of wealth and status, and communicated by the growth in the provincial press, up to 40 per cent of which consisted of advertising. Such a market was much more developed in England than Scotland, due to the poverty and politico-military tensions which gripped the country up to 1760: nonetheless, it had a presence here also.

The nineteenth century developed this market hugely through mass production, and through the development of stereotypical artefacts linked to particular people and places, which grew together with railways and modern hotels just as canals had helped sustain the material culture of the previous century. In the Victorian dimension of material culture, Scotland was not a laggard but an innovator, being arguably the first nation to locate itself not only by but through artefacts: chief among these being the kilt, which had transformed itself from illegal symbol of Jacobitism to visible sign of Scottish nationality between 1780 and 1820. Jacobitism itself had drawn on older patriot historiographical traditions, and the army of 1745 had been uniformed in the kilt irrespective of origin; after Waterloo, this history was domesticated as the localised signification of a stereotypical self. In this, Scotland was an avatar of what was to be one of the key developments of the Victorian period: the intensifying use of mass-produced souvenirs or images of locality as a shorthand means of expressing the variegated imperial localisms of the steadily growing British Empire, with the Queen's image as a kind of metanarrative which bound together with affection and pride these otherwise all too commercial renditions of an economic superstructure resting on the basis of military power.

Thomas Richards, in his influential study of *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England* (1990), has argued that images of the Crown and its empire reached a new level of realised intensity in the marketplace at the time of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee of 1897, where the flood of souvenirs symbolising the fragmentary images of colonialism locked securely within the circuit of the Crown were part of a process whereby the numinosity of royal authority was presented as reified. (Interestingly, 'jewel in the crown' metaphors to describe British possessions (including Scotland and Ireland!) seem to date from this period). Richards memorably describes this process as the transformation of charisma into kitsch, the latter being the massification of the former. It is a theoretical model which works in

surprising places: for example, the Wolfe Tone Centenary of 1898 in Ireland can be read in terms of a metaphysical claim for the purity of physical force Republicanism being supported by the reassuringly accessible located kitsch of the thirty-two counties, with Belfast jewellery being made from the chips left over from the Wolfe Tone foundation stone, and even centenary bicycles being produced.

In Scotland, it can be argued that the importance of material culture to the country's sense of self in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been undertheorised by comparison. The tendency has been simply to disassociate the country from its material representation in mass production. Tartan in particular and Scottish souvenirs in general have come to be seen as presenting a damaging 'myth', either to be corrected by a tirade about authenticity or to be diluted in the postmodernist florilegia of the twentieth-century collection in the Museum of Scotland. This acknowledges the importance of Scottish material culture, but dilutes it into international consumer culture (the Saab convertible and other exhibits) in order, perhaps, to avoid having to confront the difficulties attendant on presenting Scotland in 'tartan' terms, something which has generated enormous cultural resistance in the last twenty-five years. Clearly, Richards's notion of a material culture of representation as reified charisma has limitations where there is cultural resistance to the notion of stereotypical selfhood. This resistance has had a great deal of publicity in Scotland, although it is arguable that the anti-tartan cultural commentators have displayed a mixture of a modernist disdain for the mass market and a post-modernist stress on Scottish material cultural representation as composed of 'invented' traditions, which is itself contradictory, and far from as cutting edge as it sometimes represents itself. For example, Hugh Trevor-Roper's claim that the philabeg, or short kilt, was an English invention was an accusation first advanced in 1785, not in 1983, when *The Invention of Tradition* was published, two years after Barbara and Ian Murray Grigor's 'Scotch Myths' exhibition. Scotland's own brand of postmodernity is not to be so simply analysed. More rigorous theoretical models, such as the cultural materialist model pioneered by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, with its fourfold stress on historical context, theoretical method, political commitment and textual analysis would allow us to acknowledge the historicity of Scottish material self-representation. Using it, we would identify the tartan's legitimate inheritance as the sign of an old, traditional, patriotic Scotland; we would acknowledge the cultural critique of a mass market in such material culture put forward by writers such as Richards; and we could explore the politicisation of such culture in the interest of preserving a localist middle-class hegemony (see below), described by Tom Nairn in *After Britain* (2000) as 'the pickle jar' and more approvingly unfolded by Lindsay Paterson in *The Autonomy of Modern Scotland* (1994), before turning to the modes of symbolic representation in the reproduction of such culture. Only in the last of these is the playful destabilisation of postmodernism visible: but the extent of its playfulness is controlled by the other three elements. Understanding Scottish material culture is not a simple matter of polarities, authenticity/myth, actuality/invention: the complex context in which material culture itself operates renders such either/or models inoperable, as this chapter will demonstrate.

One of the distinctive features of the reified charisma of Scottish material culture has been its closeness to canonical Scottish literature, particularly that of the Romantic period. Sir Walter Scott's novels lent their names to railway stations, railway engines and passenger boats among others, the master of romance lending an air of imaginative prestige to the mundane products of the industrial age, which in romanticising them also domesticated them. At the same time, images from Scott transformed themselves as representational

in Scottish culture: the stag which appears at the beginning of *The Lady of the Lake* reappearing as Landseer's *Monarch of the Glen* in a movement from the picturesque to literary representation and back to painterly use, which was symptomatic of the wider use of Scott by Scottish art and tourism generally, particularly in the case of Loch Katrine and the Trossachs, which experienced exponential growth following their celebration in the poem. Queen Victoria's Highlands themselves were largely Scott's Highlands, not those of the *Gàidhealtachd* in the north and west. As John Morrison has demonstrated, Highland scenes portrayed by Romantic painters (many of whom were influenced by Scott) tend to be free of local inhabitants, ready for the tourist gaze or 'Queen's View' as it is expressed in modern heritage parlance. In many ways, the symbiosis of the picturesque and a landscape empty of everything but Scottish wildlife proved to be prophetic: by 1912, almost 3 million acres of Scottish land fit for cultivation was under deer, ready to be the prey of neo-Fingalian hunters in season. Scotland was becoming a place where the wealthy could relive the roles of Scott's or Macpherson's heroes in a theme park in which people were often no longer to be found. Within the houses of the gentry, game souvenirs, from antlers to salmon, symbolised the nature of Scottishness in these terms: among the most baroque is the chair made entirely from antlers at Blair Castle.

If Scott was the Wizard of the North, whose fiction and poetry massively influenced the representation of Scotland as a whole in artistic and material terms, then Burns was the ploughboy of the south-west, the lad o pairts whose rise into middle-class respectability without losing touch with his roots was paradigmatic for the nineteenth-century Scot of professional rank but humbler origins (as Richard Finlay has argued), just as his left-wing humanitarianism was to be in the twentieth. Burnsiana was widely commodified in the nineteenth century as a marker of locality and local produce. If Scott's country was Scotland, Burns's country was Ayrshire and the small towns and good farmland of the south-west as far down as Dumfries. The development of the Burns Supper itself re-enacted Burns's social progress: homely food presented in an atmosphere of predominantly bourgeois formality, a middle-class male celebration, which while seldom less than respectable itself, paid due tribute in its toasts to Rab the Ranter as a 'lad o pairts' in more than one sense and embedded the ritualised 'The Toast to the Lassies', a combination of admiration for women and (mock?) misogyny.

Despite the variety of the creative imagination in the work of world artists such as Scott and Burns, their influence was realised largely stereotypically, with Scottish self-representation appearing as a décor of fixed signification, with tartan, the pipes, Mauchline ware, picture postcards and horn-handled walking sticks alike operating within very narrow bounds of form and context: often these were male, military, rural, sporting or closely bound up (as in tartans linked to families) with social snobbery. The Sobieski Stuarts' *Vestiarum Scoticum* of 1842 was a textile *Temora*, which fictively linked tartans to clans in a way we still inherit. Manufacture began to spread far beyond the kilt into tartan décor and accessories. Rugs appeared by the 1840s, and snuff boxes, tea caddies, spectacle and card cases and wooden buttons added to the torrent of tartan materials which reified the original signifier of valour into a supply of kitsch. Nor was this kitsch a matter of material charisma only; the very traditions of a tartan identity were also being emplaced in a specialised language of imperial achievement which stressed the role of the kilted Scot as a domesticated primitive whose conformist example could be extended to the subsequent incorporation of an entire empire into British domestic space.

Malt whisky has had considerable difficulties growing its world market because it is so closely associated with this kind of stereotypical Scottishness, one intensely resistant to

contemporary issues of gender, diversity or youth culture. In recent years, following the cult status acquired by the fundamentally commercial French Appellation system, attempts have been made to glamorise the subtleties of malt, often revisioning 'Highland' images, as in the filmed advertisements for Glenfiddich featuring a stag bringing transcendent mystery to a Mediterranean street or the selling of Glenmorangie as the 'Glen of Tranquillity'. Whisky's incorporation in fiction or film, for example in Compton Mackenzie/Alexander Mackendrick's *Whisky Galore!* (1949) and Bill Forsyth's *Local Hero* (1983), has, nonetheless, tended to reinforce its association with a conservative and inward-looking identitarian 'Scottishness' rather than otherwise. The very success of the material culture of nineteenth-century Scotland has helped to destroy its reputation in the twentieth, particularly after 1945. Lower-class urban Scottish representation is associated with accent, lifestyle and humour, but not with material representation: from Camp Coffee to Scott's Porage Oats, the branding of Scots through what they wear or do is bound up with images of masculine leisure rather than work. Even ceilidhs themselves, ostensibly a classless activity, are linked to this world: the world of Scottish-branded leisure is both that of material culture and shares its implicit exclusivity. The return of the kilt as widespread dress on social occasions after 1980 has borne out this longstanding trend to a degree: the formal 'Prince Charlie' (the equivalent of black tie, and up to some £600 to buy as a full outfit) being the dominant dress form, not the much cheaper varieties. As in the 1822 guide on the precise nature of Highland dress, accuracy in the 'Prince Charlie' remains important, and solecisms or reinterpretations of it are much rarer than in other combinations of more or less formal clothing. Scottish material culture for formal wear often remains narrow and conformist, if not to the same extent that it once did.

That said, as use of the kilt in less formal contexts has grown, a much wider variety of interpretations of the dress has been evident, and much of the use of tartan and other stereotypically Scottish dress in wider Scottish culture is aware of being self-referential, down to the 'See You Jimmy' hat and the various knowingly mocking yet celebratory garbs of the Tartan Army. Even the leisured kilted figures used to advertise Scottish produce have been revisited as icons of that predominant contemporary leisure activity, not Highland Games or dancing, but sex and sexual politics. Kilts can now be as much for looking up, having fall off, suggesting cross-dressing or celebrating gender ambiguity as they are symbols of Scottish manhood at play in the older sense. The same innovation that has led to a variety of designer kilts – some well designed, some not – has also led to the appropriation of the kilt, for example in the black leather miniaturised form featured in recent Gay Pride marches. Yet tartan, virility and the power of the male body were key to Scottish material culture historically also. In the middle of the eighteenth century, David Morier's *An Incident in the Rebellion of 1745* depicted the hairy, heavy thighs of kilted Scots in comparison to slimshanked English redcoats: one clansman has a knee suggestively raised above a slipping garment, even after being injured or killed. What Scotsmen wear under their kilts is a question rooted in the representation of tartan and its wearers for hundreds of years, from Hanoverian propaganda about Scottish sexual lawlessness to the central plot-line of *Carry on up the Khyber* (1968).

On a different level, recent art work by Calum Colvin exemplifies, and thematises, this kind of play with tradition. His extraordinary transformative sequence of Ossian images exhibited at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in 2003, and subsequently taken on tour, combined iconic objects (frequently in ruined or decayed form) with literary, cultural and painterly allusions to create – in the words of the exhibition catalogue – 'an ironic, problematic and challenging commentary on modern Scotland'. These accumulated

material 'fragments' of Scottish kitsch objects, along with a fabricated detritus of ruination, are assembled into a series of *tableaux morts*, lit from different angles, photographed and then digitally manipulated to further dematerialise the represented objects. The exhibition confronted viewers with their voyeuristic relation to 'Scottish tradition'. Its sharpest commentary on Scots' tendency to reify and then live out their own self-denigrating myths appears in the *Twa Dogs*, which combines visual images from Burns and Ossian (the Blind Bard) with the iconography of Rangers–Celtic rivalry in a domesticated fifties' fireside 'landscape' that challenges viewers with the 'divided self' or Caledonian antiszyzygy in material form.

Yet an examination of the stock of an on-line shop such as Scottish Touch: Highland Supplies and Gift Shop shows that the older model is by no means obsolete, particularly in the tourist trade. Kilts, trews, football and rugby tops, silly sporrans, the sgian dubh, kilt pins (usually in the form of a weapon), belt buckles, plaid brooches, toy Scotsmen (drunk or playing the pipes), Highland cows, Nessie, wall clocks (a mix of Charles Rennie Mockintosh (sic), clan plaques and tartan), quaichs, and mugs with the Lion Rampant, the Saltire, tartan and hairy pipers all provide a predominantly masculinised and militarised environment which continues to exemplify the values of late nineteenth-century imperial localism. Tourist shops in the capital overwhelmingly bear out this pattern of stock and market expectation. The 'About Scotland' page of the 2005 VisitScotland website is titled 'Proud Nation': portraying tartan and a clan badge, the text stresses the nation's 'turbulent past': 'Ancestral Scotland', with a ruined (apparently) Arbroath Abbey, is depicted at the foot of the page. Its site in turn invites you to 'walk in the footsteps of the clans'.

Scottish material culture has a major role in influencing how Scots see themselves and how the world sees them. It deserves more thorough analysis than it has received: it is too popular, too powerful, influential and deep-seated to be dismissed as a 'Scotch myth'. What it is can be analysed in various ways, as this short chapter has argued: when it is thus examined, the extent of its power appears, but it remains associated with a problematic approach to contemporary reality. It is not a lie or false consciousness, but is there a different problem in its celebratory anaphora, one that reveals its anxieties as well as its power? Middle-class male localism has spoken in the same way in Scotland for a long time; does its modern playfulness abolish its power?

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Sir James Frazer and Marian McNeill

Robert Fraser

The Scottish tradition of writing concerning belief, custom and myth, of which Sir James Frazer and Marian McNeill form part, is long, challenging and connected. Fully to appreciate its vitality one would have to burrow deep into the Scottish Enlightenment – at least as far back as the remarks about polytheism and monotheism in David Hume’s ‘The Natural History of Religion’ from his *Four Dissertations* of 1757. In the nineteenth century two tributaries fed this ample firth. Jurisprudence, a traditional cornerstone of legal study, encouraged Scots to consider the Roman – and ultimately the pre-classical – roots of their own laws. At much the same time Higher Biblical Criticism, a valuable aid to scriptural exegesis, encouraged front-ranking scholars, particularly those in touch with recent developments in Germany, to investigate the Semitic sub-soil underlying the Christian scriptures.

Once these topics were subjected to comparative analysis, one feature became obvious. Empirical and historical enquiries designed to set national institutions on a firm footing were destabilising the entire structure. There are two dramatic instances of this paradox. In 1865, in his book *Primitive Marriage*, the Edinburgh jurist John Ferguson McLennan delved into the foundations of the marriage contract. Polygamy, polyandry and bride capture is what he found, as far distant as Ceylon. In the 1880s William Robertson Smith, a rising star of biblical studies, produced a series of articles and a book setting the books of the Old Testament in an anthropological context. His reward for weakening the authority of the Pentateuch was a lengthy legal trial, followed by rude expulsion from his post at the Free Church Academy in Aberdeen. Both of these thinkers had a marked effect on perhaps the greatest single beneficiary of the tradition: the magisterially productive James George Frazer (1854–1941), whose multi-volume work *The Golden Bough* would set a standard of comprehensiveness for decades to come. In his turn Frazer influenced the Scottish nationalist and folklorist Florence Marian McNeill (1885–1973), in whom the entire exercise turned charmingly on its head. Her work *The Silver Bough* aimed for – and mostly evinced – precisely the faith in the integrity and uniqueness of national culture her predecessors had shown to be impossible.

James George Frazer was born in Glasgow on New Year’s Day 1854, son of a stationer and his well-born bookish wife. Following one line of descent, his father’s people were Bannatynes, and it was a paternal great-uncle, Ninian Bannatyne, private chaplain to the Marquis of Bute, who at the Great Disruption of 1843 had walked second in the column that quitted the Great Assembly. Daniel Frazer, the anthropologist’s father, had inherited the Free Church allegiance, in a benevolent form of which the boy grew up in Helensburgh. He had been intended for the law, but was sent first to Glasgow University,

where he distinguished himself, reading widely in Latin, metaphysics and natural science. A classical scholarship then took him to Trinity College, Cambridge, where on and off he remained for the rest of his long life.

A meticulous classicist and eventual translator of Pausanias (1895), Frazer's interests slowly gravitated towards philosophy – he wrote his fellowship dissertation on Plato – and thence to the growing field of custom and belief. His influences were many, but two of them were Scots. From McLennan he derived a concern with totemism, family structures and social mores. Robertson Smith, who during Frazer's early years as a college fellow arrived in Cambridge in the wake of the Aberdeen debacle, introduced him to ideas about sacrament and sacrifice that were to inform his work deeply. It was Smith in his capacity as co-editor of the ninth *Encyclopaedia Britannica* who commissioned from the young don an essay on totemism which was to expand into a short book of the subject (1887) and eventually into the much more extensive *Totemism and Exogamy* (1910). Frazer's other contribution to the *Britannica*, an essay on taboo – a Polynesian term domesticated by McLennan – would, after many chances and changes, grow into successive editions of *The Golden Bough*.

Several streams in Scottish thought meet in this impressive and enjoyable book. To his early upbringing, Frazer owed an interest in religion and legends. From his early exposure to the legacy of the Scottish Enlightenment at Glasgow he took a breadth of vision, an openness of outlook, and a decent scepticism about every purported creed. His epistemology, established in the extensive third edition (1906–15) of *The Golden Bough*, is, moreover, essentially Humean. Like Hume, he considers personal conviction on most matters to be unstable. In 1900, for example, he established a tripartite, evolutionary division between magic, religion and science, but felt obliged in his closing pages of his book to state that, in the very long run, science is as insecure as the other two. Whilst magic and religion were both suspect – and the latter often a disguise for the former – Frazer nonetheless recognises their motive or emotive power. This is nowhere truer than when, amid the burgeoning forest of his examples, his subject matter is Scottish. 'Thus,' he states of harvest rites and their associated legends, 'if the prototype of Demeter is the Corn-mother of Germany, the prototype of Persephone is the Harvest-maiden which, autumn after autumn, is still made from the last sheaf in the braes of Balquhider.' His main sources for animal sacraments are Egyptian and Semitic; yet he pauses to describe the men dressed in cowhides once beaten every Hogmanay around the houses of St Kilda. These instances poured in from his reading, but they also well up from oral history, even from memory. He had seen the *Cailleach*, the Auld Wife or Corn-mother, in the fields of the Highlands, after all.

Yet, if the canvas reaches towards Fraserburgh, its initial focus is Rome. Characteristically Frazer begins with a quibble, from which he extrudes a quest. The bough of the work's title, Virgil's 'aureus [. . .] ramus', is the frond carried by Aeneas to guide him through the underworld in search of his dead father Anchises. Typically, Frazer argues tangentially, following not so much Virgil's account of this episode in the sixth book of *The Aeneid* as the work of the scholiast Servius, a fourth-century Virgilian commentator. Servius had identified the golden bough with a branch broken by runaway slaves claiming the title of Rex Nemorensis, King or High Priest of the ancient lakeside shrine of Diana at Nemi, twelve miles to the south-east of Rome. The snapping of this frond was a signal to the incumbent priest to resist in single combat. But why, Frazer puzzled, should this contest take place at all, and why in an oak grove? The enquiry leads him on a grand tour of analogous customs: in Africa, Australia and Mexico, and among the Celtic druids. It finally convinces him – if not altogether us – that the branch was a sprig of mistletoe, the duel an

attempt to revive nature through sympathetic magic, and the trees in the shrine embodiments of regal or semi-divine power.

The Golden Bough appeared in three quite different editions. The first, of two volumes in 1890, sent shock waves through the *fin-de-siècle*. In a letter to his friend and publisher George Macmillan, Frazer admitted that one of his intentions in writing had been to destabilise the exclusivity of the Christian revelation, to which, however, the text makes no open allusion. The second edition of 1900, in three volumes, amplified his examples and introduced explicit parallels between pagan sacraments of various kinds and the crucifixion of Christ. The parallels were questionable in themselves, and proved irritating to Frazer's fellow-Scottish folklorist Andrew Lang, who attacked them in the *Fortnightly Review*. The thirteen volumes of the third edition took nine years (1906–15) to complete and included, among other diversions, a greatly expanded treatment of the oriental cults of Adonis, Attis and Osiris. The sections on Christianity, however, had coyly retreated to an appendix; in the abridgement of the work made jointly by Frazer and his French wife in 1922, they nowhere appear.

Frazer's other published works are equally prolix and include studies of the worship of the dead (1913–24) and myths of the origin of fire (1930), as well as translations and editions of Apollodorus (1921) and Ovid's *Fasti* (1929). The vista stretches out, yet seems constantly to hark back to a nexus of anxiety and wonderment few of his critics have adequately placed. His style inflects into Scots rarely, yet a hint of locality shadows all that he does. Whether Frazer's gaze is trained on Greece, which he visited twice (1890 and 1895), or on Egypt or Lebanon, where he had never set foot, he looks with a certain displaced empathy and nostalgia. His writing was once genuinely popular and sells well in abridgement to this day, since even at his most severe he writes with mystery mingled with amusement. His prose, posture and wit are all Gibbonian; he can even rise to a sort of solemn farce. Yet through it all run a pertinacity, narrative zest and earthiness worthy of Conan Doyle.

The designation 'folklorist' sits uneasily on Frazer and, in view of the neglect of his work by the profession that developed following the career of his one-time protégé Bronislaw Malinowski, 'social anthropologist' also hardly fits. 'Comparative anthropology' is really his field, or perhaps the intellectual history of the popular mind. He possessed, moreover, relatively little curiosity about extant customs, unless a direct line of descent could be traced back to ancient originals. Revivals, and the organisation needed to sustain them, were matters of indifference to him, as were festivals and holidays of late date. Indeed he managed to write tens of pages on English mid-winter fires without mentioning Guy Fawkes, and to deal with Caledonian jollifications in January without reference to Burns Night. The modern industrial world was not to his taste; on being appointed to the first Chair of Social Anthropology in the University of Liverpool in 1910, he fled the city within a year, never to return.

The rite that most engaged his attention, as piles of notebooks kept in the British Library and at Trinity still attest, was work. He thought nothing of putting in an eighteen-hour day, and it was attention to duty rather than irreverence that caused him, when dining in college, to arrive promptly after the Latin Grace. During the 1920s he and Lady Frazer scoured Europe seeking a cure for his failing eyesight. Finally, in 1930, as Lady Frazer listened to one of his meticulously scripted addresses through an ear trumpet, he was struck blind at a banquet for the Royal Literary Fund. After this crisis he was dependent for the remaining eleven years of his life on the services of his Scottish amanuensis and first biographer, R. Angus Downie.

Faultlessly printed by the Edinburgh firm, 'my old friends R. and R. Clark', and widely disseminated by Macmillan – with both of whom he enjoyed a long and warm

association – Frazer’s works stimulated a renewed interest in myth and folklore in, and well beyond, Scotland. It can be detected in the novels of John Buchan, Naomi Mitchison and Mary Renault as surely as in the poetry of Eliot and Pound. A renewed interest in myth and folklore encountered a political orientation in Florence Marian McNeill, quite different from Frazer’s guarded Asquithian liberalism, as well as a temperament more sociable, practical and patriotic than his own. McNeill was the daughter of a Free Church (after 1900, United Free Church) minister who had trained in medicine in Glasgow before preaching in Holm West in Orkney. In her semi-autobiographical only novel, *The Road Home* (1932), she movingly describes a particular kind of sheltered Orcadian childhood, the ‘lovely midsummer nights, when the gloaming melted into the dawn’, Scandinavian rather than Celtic affinities, and her fear of the local witch ‘who lived half-way up the hill behind the Manse’. She was raised on Scots songs and ballads: Thomas the Rhymer and his elfin queen, the Bonny Earl o’ Moray, Annie Laurie. The memory haunted her work.

Like Frazer, she attended Glasgow University, which she left temporarily in 1908 for reasons of health, eventually graduating in 1912. During and immediately after the Great War, she worked and led a ‘gaberlunzie life’ in Germany, France and London. Her first published book, a slender historical guide to Iona, showed complete devotion to national traditions. She settled in Edinburgh in 1920, where she worked on the *Scottish National Dictionary* and, after the formation of the Scottish National Party in 1928, became briefly its Vice-President, serving alongside the ‘uncrowned King of the Scots’, the florid half-Hispanic Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham. In *The Silver Bough*, she describes Graham officiating at the annual midsummer celebrations of the battle of Bannockburn. The anniversary of this famous victory, she remarks,

is celebrated in no spirit of hostility [. . .] and it is always emphasized that the militant policy of the party is directed not against England but against a system of government which subordinates a smaller nation to a large one and, the Party contests, is the root of the economic and cultural decay which threatens the Scottish nation.

Her next two books were culinary and, indeed, ethnic recipes steam through much of her later work. Her novel (1932) is by way of a manifesto and act of reconciliation with the past. It describes the personal development of one Morag MacNeal, a young woman not unlike its author, who after years of wartime desolation and a disappointing love affair, casts her lot in the Inner Hebrides with a former student friend, Ian Macrae. As her aunt informs her in advance, he

dreams of nothing else than the re-birth of a nation that once upon a time sent her scholars and churchmen to civilise Europe [. . .] I warn you, you will be moved – and may be carried away.

Thereafter, McNeill’s writing is that of a committed, but in no sense fanatical, cultural nationalist. Her principal opportunity arrived when she agreed with William MacLaren MacLennan, printer to the SNP, for his firm to bring out four volumes on Scottish folklore and seasonal customs. On roughish paper, their endnotes erratic, they appeared from 240, Hope Street, Glasgow, between 1957 and 1968 under the general title *The Silver Bough*. The first offered a panoramic background; the second and third a calendar of Caledonian festivals betwixt Candlemas and Yule; the fourth a guide to local festivities.

McNeill is always eloquent and informed; she is, however, stronger on detail and context than interpretation. From *Balder the Beautiful*, the final part of the third edition of Frazer's masterpiece, she takes the theory that the Celts, a pastoral people, honoured Beltane and Hogmanay, important dates for the shepherd, rather than the agriculturally significant equinoxes honoured in Europe by the husbandman. In drawing these distinctions, though, she brings to the fore notions of 'nation' and 'race' that had been not so much repugnant to Frazer's scheme as irrelevant to his unfolding canvas of the general human mind.

Her treatment of her central myth is typical. In Ossianic tradition the Silver Bough, a branch from an apple tree in blossom, was the favour given by the Queen of the Fairies to the mortal man whose company she desired at a feast held every seven years. McNeill's sources are the Ballad of Tam Lin and the Irish *Voyage of Bran*. The allusion and the work it heads are therefore intensely local in scope, offering as the author concedes, 'no more than a sturdy spray [. . .] to a country in search of its roots'. Some roots, some spray.

Thus, while Frazer's Scottishness is an aspect of his universality, McNeill's implied universalism is a facet of her Scottishness. For Frazer, Gaelic tradition illustrates grand themes of custom and belief; McNeill admits such schemes principally to gloss the vivid remnants she tabulates, both geographically and seasonally, throughout the Islands, Highlands and Lowlands. Where Frazer's golden bough is a sleuth's clue, McNeill's apple twig is an epitome: one fact among many. He is spinning a yarn where she is providing a compendium for the curious, with such useful hints as how to construct a turnip lantern.

McNeill in fact offers few theoretical hypotheses of her own, and is less adept than the Cambridge magus at disguising incompatibilities between vegetal, solar, Euhemerist and other sorts of theory that feature in both of their work. Her vigour and appeal lie in her informality, and in the intermittent glimpses her writing affords of a connected Scottish cultural history. A daughter of the manse even at her most emancipated, she is also religiously sentimental where Frazer is not, and far more susceptible to mystical, or quasi-occult, explanations. It is no coincidence that her first book, the illustrated guide to Iona, is a heartfelt tribute to St Columba, drawing extensively on Adomnán's *Life* and the then recent work of Fiona Macleod (William Sharp). Her rendition in *The Silver Bough* of Frazer's tripartite scheme of man's intellectual progress runs thus: 'Magic, alchemy and science form a direct sequence.' Thus she misses out his middle term – religion – protecting by this devout sleight of hand the faith of Saints Ninian and Columba from sceptical and prying eyes.

McNeill's personality is exceptionally attractive: ardent, business-like and modest. She is notably informative, for example, on the severity with which, until a generation before her book appeared, the Presbyterian authorities had regarded Yuletide. Though lacking Frazer's capacity for mischief, she celebrates the jollity and resourcefulness of the populace, even as she depicts their Puritanism. It is on reading her, for example, that we recognise why Frazer, scion of the Free Kirk for all his rationality, toiled yearly at his desk right through Christmas Day.

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Hugh MacDiarmid

Alan Riach

Hugh MacDiarmid was the pseudonym of Christopher Murray Grieve (1892–1978), born in the little town of Langholm in Dumfriesshire, twelve miles or so from the Scottish border with England. The sense of the Borders, the contested land held in dispute between opposed nations, runs through his life's work as a poet and cultural catalyst, actively engaged with practicalities on a daily basis and bristling with lusty, aggressively idealist energies. He wrote voluminously in poetry and prose, including literary, political and cultural essays, discursive critical books of autobiography and biographical sketches of neglected Scottish historical characters, topographical studies of the islands of Scotland, experimental modernist fiction and more traditional, sometimes supernatural, stories. The range of his work in verse includes lyric poetry, extended poetic sequences organised by symbol and theme, translations from a variety of European languages (including work by Bertolt Brecht, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Alexander Blok, Harry Martinson and the European Symbolists), intensely searching philosophical poetry, verse-squibs and doggerel, and finally an endlessly playful and exhilarating poem intended to encompass all his concerns with poetry, the arts, language and human forms of expression in all cultural and social articulation. This was published in various stages of composition as *The Kind of Poetry I Want* and *In Memoriam James Joyce* (subtitled, *From a Vision of World Language*). Here he explores the relation between free experimentation with language and ideas and the authority of values and ideals in social and artistic form. The scale of ambition is daunting and to many readers he remains a scary proposition. Yet his vigour and verbal felicity keep his work engaging and attractive at almost any point of entry. He willingly says things most people leave unspoken. Opening any of his books anywhere is guaranteed to prompt delight, anger, shock, assent, puzzlement or wonder and, for anyone not incapable, to provoke a healthy appetite for both arts and sciences. He excites the intrinsic optimism of curiosity.

MacDiarmid is significant in three ways: for the poetry he wrote, for his cultural provocation and political stimulation, and for his multi-faceted biography. All these aspects of his life's work are visible to an extent that was inconceivable before the systematic gathering and republication of his writing which began in 1992. During his lifetime, his work was often difficult to find and scattered in small-press, ephemeral or fugitive publications. Only with the publication of his *Complete Poems* in two volumes in 1978, the year of his death, and Alan Bold's biography in 1988, did the shape of a great career begin to become clear. But the range and sheer quantity of his critical writing, his experimentations in prose fiction, the depth of biographical understanding provided by his personal letters, all had to wait till the twenty-first century before becoming fully available. His poetic career may be described according to the books he published in his lifetime but careful research reveals

how arbitrary some of these publications were, compared to his published intentions regarding the organisation of poetic sequences in the 1930s and later. New reading may reinstate those priorities and redefine the shape of that career.

MacDiarmid began writing in English, lyrical poems from strange perspectives. A Roman soldier whose complicity in the killing of Christ leads him to glut his guilt in sex with a prostitute; a luminous, surreal vision of the universe as an incomprehensible song (of scattered notes) or tree (of wind-blown leaves) held in the mind of an unknowable God; a depiction of a Scottish landscape, high hills and tough grass, a see-sawing wind and concrete meaning struggling to form itself between the abstractions of eternity and oblivion; the gaunt, emaciated faces from El Greco's paintings held in the collection of an obese financier – all these weird, eerie images and sensations begin to open up a world of original imagination characterised by the end of an era of historical time. In 'A Last Song' the idea of 'Time' is presented as a broken column and the withered wreaths of human – and divine – aspiration are decaying around its ruin.

The English in which these poems are written is unusual enough; yet the poems which immediately follow, short, intense lyrics in Scots, using packed-tight phrases of amazing imagistic compression – little sticks of gelignite – begin to instate a quality of human sympathy that counterpoints the inhuman or non-terrestrial aspect of the cosmic vision they also hold forth. In 'The Watergaw' an indistinct rainbow is described as possessing 'a chitterin' licht' – an image which evokes a shivery coldness through a word onomatopoeically representing the sound of chattering teeth. The image is bodily yet also visual, both visceral and objectified. In 'The Bonnie Broukit Bairn' the central image is Dickensian: a neglected child looks in through a window at a party where rich people are parading their exotic, brightly coloured clothes and the poet's judgement is that the child's tears are worth more than all the rich crowd put together. In 'Empty Vessel' a young woman is seen singing in grief for her lost child and without sentimentalising the tragedy the implication comes through that the inhuman facts of the cosmos – winds, planets, light from the sun – are never as piercingly sweet or humanly caring as that young woman's song. In 'Sea-Serpent' the whole phenomenon of a universe which the Newtonian imagination had mapped is seen in the greater context of the absent plan for it God might have had, if He had not abandoned it to the secular loneliness of the twentieth century. Half a century after Darwin, two decades after Nietzsche, MacDiarmid's Godless universe is a disappointingly cold and lonely place where human habitation, enquiry and expression provide the essential warmth and the only consolation worth struggling to foster and encourage. If the First World War signified the end of imperial expansion as a philosophical ideal, the whole Victorian era had led to it. For MacDiarmid, as these poems imply, there is an urge to find value, a yearning for the hope of assurance in matters of worth, a quest for authority and understanding. This sense of desire, this quest for hope, reaches out of the despair of the epoch's unprecedented devastation and into both the social world of shared values in daily life and the individual spiritual world of the desert, the loneliness of space or the barrenness of depopulated landscapes, the wilderness.

MacDiarmid published two volumes of these Scots lyrics of astonishing intensity and freshness, stocked with ideas, ego, sharp focus and unpredicted perspectives, linguistically invigorating, lastingly strange and haunting: *Sangschaw* (or, 'Song-Fest', 1925) and *Penny Wheep* (or, ironically, 'Weak Beer', 1926). Though *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926) was a book-length poem of 2,685 lines, it is largely made up of many shorter lyrics, of varying intensity and thematic connection. Indeed, in 1962 MacDiarmid supplied separate titles for individual sections and although this was deemed unsuccessful, interrupting the

work's liquid flow, its moments of ebb and swirling eddies, its pages of tidal rise, it alerts us to its own structural ambiguity. Despite its 'gallimaufry', or mixed-bag nature, there is a coherent symbolism to the poem.

Although the opening line rejects literal interpretation of the ironic title (the poem begins, 'I amna fou' – or, 'I am not drunk' – a momentary bathos of contradiction), still, its speaker is a man, self-determined, limited and sometimes crudely masculine, yet also poignantly self-aware, sympathetic and helpless, at times infantile, at times boyish, sometimes displaying the aggressive chauvinism of youthful male vigour, sometimes the maturity of an adult understanding about that which cannot be altered or avoided. The focus of his vision is Scotland's national symbol, a barbed weed, a gruesome plant of the wilderness. This presents the idea of Scotland as cliché or popular-culture caricature, such as that satirised by the Victorian artist and postcard-designer Martin Anderson, well-known as 'Cynicus', who produced a famous image of a thistle-shaped man as a Scottish national 'character'. But it also offers the idea of Scotland as a nation of violently wasted potential. This in turn derives from the immediate aftermath of the First World War but it draws hope from the contemporary revolutionary struggles in Russia and Ireland – socialist and republican nationalist, anti-imperialist movements. MacDiarmid's quest to find a world of human values in an inhuman universe emerges spiritually from the early lyrics but draws deeply on the political context of the modern world. In this configuration, the symbolism of the poem provides coordinates that come and go in dream-like, moonlit movement. The predominant symbols are clear: the man (representing both male physicality, the animal fact of masculinity, as well as common – human – recognition of spiritual mystery and hope), the thistle (both Scotland as national entity and a symbol of wasted human potential), the woman (both Jean, the man's wife and partner, and the 'silken lady' or idealised, unobtainable feminine, somehow present within the masculine identity while equally defined by otherness from it) and the moon (reflected light, transformative, unreliable). However, no balanced structure sustains the poem: it moves like a bagatelle of enquiries, a long conversation on themes that need to be explored more than resolved. In the end, the opening tiredness has been transformed into exuberance, the energy subsumed in dark, extended rumination leading to a recognition of epochal change in the global conflicts of the early twentieth century. Finally, exhaustion leads the man to declare he will take all the issues raised in the poem 'to avizandum' – that is, they remain open questions: he will defer closure. Yet in the course of the poem the reader has encountered such a range of styles, forms of address, pitch and tone, that the value of such an experience of engagement is affirmed even through its difficulty and demands.

The word 'circumjacent', meaning beside or surrounding, provides the infinitive verb in the title of MacDiarmid's next book-length collection, *To Circumjack Cencrastus* (1930), where Cencrastus is the mythological snake which encircles the world with its tail in its mouth. One version of the myth has it that, after looking on the world, the snake put its tail in its mouth to keep itself from laughing at the absurdity of it all, so MacDiarmid's title offers both promise and challenge. This poem will seek to get the better of, to encompass (to 'circumjack') the serpent of mythology, religion, legend, superstructural history or all human ideology that comes from and surrounds the world and all its peoples. No longer does the symbolism connect specifically to the nation or the idea of national identity, but it links back to MacDiarmid's childhood, where, in Langholm, his native place, there was a path through woods called the Curly Snake (which stands as the poem's subtitle). Personal, quasi-autobiographical references and mythological, universal resonances were being brought together in a new departure and the Gaelic world is seen as an essential spiritual resource.

It is still possible to see the continuities developing from the earlier work but the poem does not cohere in its imagery as *A Drunk Man* does. There is a banal, theatrical narrative in *A Drunk Man* which evokes the return journey of Burns's 'Tam o' Shanter'. In this, an intoxicated man on his way home at night pauses before a series of supernatural visions before attempting to escape them and get back to mundane reality, the light of day and his wife. In *A Drunk Man*, the individual lyrics, translations, thematic leaps from unquantified sexual energies to the predictable facts of reproduction, from hiccups and vomit to world war, all participate in a crazily well-oiled, loose-jointed, jerkily progressive unfolding. By contrast, *Cencrastus* seems to hold individual poems, translations, meditations, unexplained references and obscure allusions, in a broken kaleidoscope of uncoordinated patterns. The imagery seems to break apart tectonically. On the one hand, the gravitational pull of an encompassing vision which contains and comprehends a vast amount of book learning and, on the other hand, a reliance on personal experience and images from boyhood seem too opposed and powerful to stabilise themselves. Both *A Drunk Man* and *Cencrastus* might benefit, and reach a broader readership, after judicious selection. Every crisis in art, however, is a crisis of form. In the early 1930s, MacDiarmid's work went through just such a crisis. While it is possible to describe it as it was published, it is more revealing to unstitch it a little and reconstitute the work his imagination was assembling, from the published texts and from rediscovered poems in manuscripts in the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh.

The poems collected in *First Hymn to Lenin* (1931), *Scots Unbound* (1932), *Stony Limits* (1934) and *Second Hymn to Lenin* (1935) and many poems from manuscript (a selection was published in *The Revolutionary Art of the Future* in 2003) record three distinct engagements in MacDiarmid's work at this time. First, the poems he was arranging as part of a sequence entitled *Clann Albann* (meaning, the Children of Scotland) included a substantial body of work evoking, describing and commenting on aspects of his native place. Particular locations around Langholm, particular memories and senses of boyhood wonder, exploration and discovery, are beautifully encountered in poems like 'Whuchulls' or 'By Wauchopside' or 'Water Music' and 'Tarras'. Second, there are the overtly political poems, not only the 'Hymns' to Lenin but also 'The Seamless Garment' which takes the form of an address to a cousin, a mill-worker. Here the speaker attempts to explain how the political aspiration of Lenin and the coherent organisation of the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke are similar to the sense of quality the mill-worker knows in the context of his own job, when the machinery is running efficiently, relations between people, machines and products attuned and alienation transcended. The local reference to the mill at Langholm enhances the poem's immediacy and the temptation to condescend is prevented by the conviction of kinship and family connection. The idea that Lenin, Rilke and the mill-worker could be equally well satisfied when their work goes well might seem forced (because it idealises the conditions of work in the mill). Yet, the poem carries the conviction that the mill-worker, Rilke and Lenin all know equally well what they are striving for (if not what they always achieve). These explicitly political poems were also intended to form part of *Clann Albann*. The third engagement in the poems of these books is with the austere world of Shetland, the archipelago of islands in the North Sea to which MacDiarmid moved in 1933 and which was his home till 1942. Living on the island of Whalsay, in poverty and intellectual isolation, MacDiarmid confronted his own personal desert and long dark night of loneliness and pushed his spiritual enquiry to its furthest reaches in 'On a Raised Beach' (published in *Stony Limits and Other Poems*, 1934), a key poem in modern literature and the central poem of MacDiarmid's career.

'On a Raised Beach' begins famously with a verse-paragraph of apparently incomprehensible words, including lithogenesis, lochia, carpolite, chatoyant, celadon, corbeau, cadrans, catasta, bricole, eburnation, energumen and so on. After the initial shock, attentive reading discovers a handful of immediately understandable words, which, when connected in the sentence-structure, offer a simple meaning: 'Stones [. . .] I study you [. . .] and like a blind man run / My fingers over you [. . .] stones'. There is a leap of interpretation: the obscure vocabulary represents the obscure and difficult meaning contained in the stones. The poet, with all the specialist language at his command, remains like a blind man trying out the sense of touch to get closer to this meaning. The reader experiences the difficulty and urgency in this quest at first hand through his or her attempt to understand the words themselves. This is entirely possible – a glossary is provided in the *Selected Poems* – but there is no short-cut, and even once the meanings of the words are understood, the paragraph resolves into a series of questions prompting the poem's exploration over 410 densely argued lines and through eleven carefully structured paragraphs. The first, sixth and eleventh of these paragraphs (first, middle and last) use similarly obscure vocabulary, thereby marking the design of an arch. Each of the other paragraphs extends to various lengths in wonderfully rhetorical, passionately committed argument, vivified by tones of black humour and irony, some wicked puns and brilliant imagery. The main theme of the poem is deadly serious: the quest for authoritative human values in a world of absolute materialism. The secular, Godless universe is confronted by an individual whose reality is shaped by language. The second paragraph begins: 'Deep conviction or preference can seldom / Find direct terms in which to express itself' which helps explain the first paragraph's opening gambit and the difficulties of the poem to follow.

The raised beach holds forth the image of permanence and inhumanity: the stones are no more than themselves, yet they also carry the symbolic authority of geologic time, a scale or perspective that dwarfs humankind. But this is a *raised* beach, an arc of stones which over time has itself moved away from the coastline to higher up the shore. Even geology is impermanent, moving, and in its own way, mortal. In this crucible of meaning and uncertainty, MacDiarmid's enquiry moves between the extremes of personal responsibility and social value, from the helplessness of detached intellectuals to the apparently unreachable motives of 'the mob'. In the end he concludes that whatever the individual circumstance and history, the observation that human mortality is necessarily part of something greater concurs with materialism as it does with tragedy and needs no recourse to religion. If, however, mortality confers value on life, it remains inherently a human responsibility to recover value from human degradation, social injustice or theft, 'to get a life worth having'. This involves engaged social and political struggle against deprivation, notwithstanding all individual isolations. For 'in death, unlike life, we lose nothing that is truly ours'.

As a poem (for it is more than an essay in philosophy), 'On a Raised Beach' is deeply refreshing and moving, bringing the haunting landscape of the Shetland Islands and the image of the isolated poet into a common human context. It is as engaged as T. S. Eliot, in the *Four Quartets*, with mysteries and conviction, and as subtle in its control of argument and affirmation. If ultimately, like Eliot, MacDiarmid's resolution lies in trust, it is more convincing than Eliot's because it is earthed and bound to material realities. Having experienced such realities as fetters and constraints – just as the reader has to deal with the frustrations of the opening paragraph – the poem finally struggles through to an earned sense of these difficult realities as sources of provision, of energy and support. There is more of the transcendent in Eliot of course, but there is no lack of magic in MacDiarmid.

Political urgencies, however, prompted an immediate response to the South African poet Roy Campbell, who was famous in the late 1930s for flamboyant and Hemingway-like extrovert enthusiasms. Unlike Hemingway, during the Spanish Civil War, Campbell's loyalties were firmly on the pro-Franco side with the fascists. MacDiarmid took instant offence at his poem *Flowering Rifle*, responding in 1939 with a long poem called *The Battle Continues* (which remained unpublished till 1957). This is one of the great hate-poems (Ezra Pound's *Hell Cantos* are close). No human sympathy subtracts from the speed, edge and concentration of MacDiarmid's vilification. Campbell is described as 'the hero of a penny novelette / With the brain of a boy scout' and his priorities are those of the regime of the soldier – strict regimentation and regularity – and the consequent extinction – murder – of anything that does not fit in. MacDiarmid's positive alternative is to propose that the value and purpose of all the arts is movement towards greater differentiation of values and desires and motives and ends, holding them, from moment to moment, in a changing but stable equilibrium.

That would describe the context and dynamics of the unfolding work MacDiarmid began to write – or, assemble – in the late 1930s (though parts of it come from the 1920s), which he hoped might form the longest poem in English ever written. This was published in chunks in the autobiography *Lucky Poet* (1943), especially in the chapter, 'The Kind of Poetry I Want' (a different selection was published as a book with that title in 1961). Then more was collected and shaped into a substantial book with its own internal coherence, *In Memoriam James Joyce* (1955). This poetry is hardly a unified 'poem' but its forms of address allow us to describe three kinds of pitch. There is the elegiac eulogy to Joyce, Yeats 'and others who are dead' but who continue to contribute through their art to the richest resources of human self-knowledge and expression. There is the joking, loving address to Valda, the poet's second wife, whose scathing humour and mockery of complacency and smug self-satisfaction chimed with the poet's distrust of the seductiveness of comfort. Yet, the most evident pitch in the poetry is a tirelessly playful and various listing of metaphors and similes for poetry itself, which MacDiarmid defines as 'human existence come to life'. This suggests an inexhaustible catalogue of life's most vivid and exhilarating examples of achievement in any field of activity – from writing, art, cinema and music, to wrestling, photography, botany and all the sciences.

The poetry is essentially a lively, dancing, exhausting celebration of life's abundance, as if the great later nineteenth-century encyclopaedias of specialist knowledge – not only the *Britannica* or Frazer's *Golden Bough* but such popular Victorian and Edwardian editions as *Marvels of the Universe*, *Races of the World*, *Wonders of the World* – had been shredded and their contents re-installed by new technology and different (evolved) political priorities. In these poems MacDiarmid goes back beyond the Victorian drive towards encyclopedic knowledge to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment yearning for the most immense codification, categorisation and rationalisation of all knowledge, languages and forms of articulation in the human and non-human universe. But he drives this purpose and yearning forward into a postmodern world in which the oppressions of imperial authority are countered by postcolonial resistances, where languages, peoples and differences can be explored and celebrated on many levels simultaneously. Nevertheless, MacDiarmid's work is still directed, not by agnostic deferral, helplessness or neutrality, but by political preference and choice. Nothing like these poems exists really. They might be read in a constellation with other long or epic poems of the twentieth century like Pound's *Cantos*, William Carlos Williams's *Paterson*, Louis Zukovsky's *A*, Charles Olson's *Maximus Poems*, Nazim Hikmet's *Human Landscapes*, Vladimir Mayakovsky's *Vladimir Illyich Lenin*

or in the context of artistic experiments from the modern movement through to contemporary pluralism. But all such comparisons highlight the differences between such works rather than the similarities.

The key transitional moment of perception in the modern movement might loosely be described as the moment of cubism. Then, perspectives endorsed by the hierarchical authority of imperial power were shattered and re-formed in the knowledge that there is always more than one story to be told, more than one point of view. That moment continues to inform – to whatever degree of self-consciousness – subsequent art. MacDiarmid understood this moment profoundly, intuitively, and worked to develop the new forms it made possible. This healthy propensity to self-extension went alongside a tendency to be unafraid of tactical prioritisation. The aggressive idealism evident in his early years as a journalist, socialist town councillor and Justice of the Peace could engage him in everyday matters of politics while his poetry might take him on searching journeys of remorseless introspection. The publication of MacDiarmid's *Collected Poems* (first in America, in 1962) marked the beginning of a wider recognition that continues to grow. This began to reveal something of the shape and variety of his work, from the fragmented seafaring quasi-narrative poem 'The Wreck of the *Swan*', published in the slim volume *A Kist of Whistles* in 1947, to 'Old Wife in High Spirits', a riotous evocation of an elderly woman who abandons pious propriety to indulge in alcohol and anger in a city pub, allowing MacDiarmid to affirm the extremes of self-articulation in preference to the crippling silence of polite convention. 'Tam o' the Wilds and the Many-Faced Mystery' describes the life of a working man who rejects popular media and daily inanities to become a massively well-informed autodidact, teaching himself all about nature in its multitude of forms, through wide but selective reading and close observation of actual things. MacDiarmid's dedication of the poem to William Soutar is a salutation whose warmth and respect should never be denied.

MacDiarmid was not only a major twentieth-century poet but also a cultural provocateur and catalyst. He was the driving force in the Scottish Renaissance movement of the 1920s, when national self-determination became a cultural priority. In 1926, he declared that the Scottish Renaissance was 'a propaganda of ideas'. The ideas involved immediate experience of the modern movement in the arts and how it might be made to flourish in Scottish terms. He declared that it would be 'utterly wrong to make the term "Scottish" synonymous with any fixed literary forms or to attempt to confine it'. In other words, he wanted a distinctive national culture of non-prescriptive self-expression, free but not directionless. He set out

to increase the number of Scots who are vitally interested in literature and cultural issues; to counter the academic or merely professional tendencies which fossilise the intellectual interests of most well-educated people even; and, above all, to stimulate actual art-production to a maximum.

The Irish Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney has endorsed MacDiarmid's success in this regard. Heaney writes:

There is a demonstrable link between MacDiarmid's act of cultural resistance in the 1920s and the literary self-possession of writers such as Alasdair Gray, Tom Leonard, Liz Lochhead and James Kelman in the 1980s and 1990s. He prepared the ground for a Scottish literature that would be self-critical and experimental in relation to its own inherited forms and idioms, but one that would also be stimulated by developments elsewhere in world literature.

There are three ways in which MacDiarmid – or at that time, C. M. Grieve – pushed in this direction. One was producing the poems themselves. The second was writing innumerable articles for syndicated publication in newspapers and journals, from local daily and weekly press publications throughout Scotland to highly charged intellectual journals like A. R. Orage's *The New Age* in London. The third was to edit a series of three poetry anthologies, *Northern Numbers*. In these he published established figures like John Buchan and Donald A. Mackenzie (a leader of Burns circles) alongside younger, more radical poets newly returned from the First World War, writing about inner-city squalor, the unemployed and prostitutes, rather than soft-focus descriptions of the far-off Hebrides and cosy beloved ancestral homes. In the third anthology he brought together twenty contributors: ten men, ten women, demonstrating equal rights for sexual self-expression in a gesture fifty years ahead of its time. The continuities from MacDiarmid to contemporary work in Scottish literature, indeed, should be clear. The major re-evaluations of Scotland's music, art, national history appearing in the 1980s, 1990s and into this century and new readings of Scottish literature by scholars such as Cairns Craig, Douglas Gifford, Duncan MacMillan, Dorothy McMillan, John Purser, Marshall Walker, Roderick Watson are also the fruits of MacDiarmid's 1920s Renaissance.

Any assessment of his achievement must also consider the story of his life, the cost to his own well-being, which he paid and at times inflicted on others. This is most fully represented in his personal letters. They are often polemical: one letter spurns the mere possibility of an honour from his native town, and is signed, 'Yours, with scorn and contempt.' Or there is a devastating reply to someone who had sent him some poems for comment:

You asked for my frank opinion and I therefore give it. Your trouble is largely due to an utterly false idea of the nature and functions of poetry, evidenced in the atrocious hooey of many of your notes – e.g., 'I have reached forth on my own and have written down the words of the Muse as she spoke them to me.' What makes you entertain that utterly false idea is a radical defect of your own nature.

There is also a much more complex and deeply personal story. *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid*, edited by Alan Bold (1984), collects MacDiarmid's communications with authors and artists in Scotland and internationally, from T. S. Eliot to Edwin Morgan. *The New Selected Letters*, edited by Dorian Grieve, Owen Dudley Edwards and Alan Riach (2001), brings together the biography of a family man, a man who cared profoundly about his parents, uncles, aunts, and the old Scotland they came from, whose relationship with his brother was fraught, friendly, strained, and ultimately finished off by a kind of jealousy of paternal and adult status. Most crucially, these are the letters of a man who idolised his first wife, Peggy, and was almost ruined by her desertion of him and all he had hoped for, when she took with her their two children and denied him access.

That event significantly enriches our understanding of what MacDiarmid thought Edwin Muir betrayed in 1936, when, from an influential position, Muir denied MacDiarmid's achievements in writing in Scots and dismissed MacDiarmid's hopes for a linguistically distinctive, revived Scottish literature. MacDiarmid spurned Muir's friendship and scorned his judgement, but the cost was immense. The letters that follow Peggy's rejection compulsively reveal the depths into which MacDiarmid – or rather, his much more vulnerable begetter, Chris Grieve – was plunged. Many of them come from the hardest extreme of agonised isolation. Terrible breakdown is part of his story.

There is another tidal movement that comes in, first in the letters to Valda, his second wife, and then to their young son Michael. The groundswell of these letters builds and reconstitutes a treasury of loyalty and hope. Later, when MacDiarmid is reconciled with his children by his first marriage, the story moves to an end in which the emotional violence of the 1930s can be seen in the full perspective of a long lifetime (he died in his 87th year). The letters also recount the struggles to publish his intractable epic poetry in the middle of the Second World War and his tours of east European countries in the 1950s and 1960s. Important correspondence with friends, publishers and political associates is collected alongside quick notes and telegraphs pinpointing MacDiarmid's whereabouts and movements as he undertakes innumerable public literary and political engagements. The story of a truly myriad-minded, multi-faceted, enormously intricate man emerges in detail and depth.

Every life crosses countless stories but MacDiarmid's touched more than any comparable twentieth-century figure. He met Joseph Conrad and was friendly with Yeats, Eliot and Pound. He knew and worked for Keir Hardie in 1911 and was reviewing William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens and D. H. Lawrence in the 1920s. He publicly denounced Philip Larkin's critical judgement but enjoyed the drinks he had with Dylan Thomas, Graham Greene and Sean O'Casey. Allen Ginsberg and Yevgeni Yevtushenko visited him at his cottage near Biggar (now a museum-home to writers-in-residence). He was a founder-member of the National Party of Scotland in 1928 and in 1964 he stood as a Communist candidate against the then Conservative Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home in the farming constituency of Kinross and West Perthshire. In 1992, on the BBC radio programme *Kaleidoscope*, Joy Hendry, publisher, poet, editor, said that MacDiarmid was: 'The most important single figure in Scottish life in the twentieth century.' The fashionable novelist Irvine Welsh has commented that he was: 'A symbol of all that's perfectly hideous in Scotland.' MacDiarmid might be found where such extremes meet.

Further reading

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Edwin and Willa Muir: Scottish, European and Gender Journeys, 1918–69

Margery Palmer McCulloch

When they met in Glasgow in 1918, Edwin Muir and Willa Anderson had both experienced success in their respective fields. Willa had graduated with a first-class degree in Classics from St Andrews University in 1910 and after postgraduate study in educational psychology at Bedford College, London, had obtained the post of Vice-Principal and lecturer in a London college for girls. Edwin had, as he described it in *An Autobiography* (1954), ‘climbed out’ of the difficult Glasgow years resulting from his family’s disastrous emigration from Orkney to mainland Scotland early in the century, had educated himself through Guild Socialism and the influential *New Age* edited by A. R. Orage, and was himself now a contributor to the periodical. His collection of aphorisms, *We Moderns* (1918), written originally for the *New Age*, had just been published in book form when he met Willa, who encouraged him to move to London, where he obtained work as assistant to Orage. Later she was a supportive partner when a contract with the American *Freeman* magazine enabled them to make the first of many sojourns in Europe; and when the *Freeman* ceased publication, she provided an income by teaching at A. S. Neill’s experimental schools at Hellerau and on the Sonntagsberg. It was during this first stay in Europe that the Muirs, but especially Willa, acquired the fluency in German that led to their later work as translators.

This chapter will discuss the achievements of both Muirs in the context of Scottish, European and gender issues, beginning with Edwin’s criticism and poetry of the interwar period and their joint translation work, and ending with a consideration of Willa’s fiction and other writings.

Early criticism and poetry, and the beginning of translation

Although Edwin Muir is now recognised primarily as poet, his reputation was initially made as a critic of the modern period. Writing of his work in *Contemporary Scottish Studies* (1926), C. M. Grieve described him as ‘a critic incontestably in the first flight of contemporary critics of *welt-literatur*’ and lamented that there was no literary periodical in Scotland to host his criticism.

Muir later rejected *We Moderns* for its excessive Nietzschean influence. Yet this series of witty short essays, written under the pseudonym ‘Edward Moore’, catches the new spirit of

a world which was already in the process of change before the outbreak of the First World War. It also positions Muir as a critic of modernity in a way which anticipates much of his later criticism and poetry. Muir was hostile to what he called 'the cult of modernity', to being 'enslaved to the present'. On the other hand, he was no cultural Canute. His heroes were the thinkers and writers who had challenged stultified traditions in the nineteenth century and thus opened the doors to change: European writers such as Heine, Goethe, Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky and Ibsen. For Muir, Dostoyevsky was 'a great psychologist', one who 'depicted the subconscious as conscious'. What troubled him, however, was that in the modern age these earlier achievements appeared to have been belittled, with 'freedom' now being reinterpreted as 'freedom from' mundane problems as opposed to a deeper 'emancipation'. Similarly, he was unsympathetic to what he called 'realism' in art. Despite his Guild Socialism and the humanist concern for the individual life that remained a characteristic quality of all his writing, he rejected the idea that art should be preoccupied with mundane topics such as 'the marriage question' or 'bad housing'. Instead, he pointed to ancient Greek drama and its concern with the 'eternal problem'. This attraction to myth and symbol as a source of probing the deeper meanings of human existence was to be a consistent feature of Muir's future poetry.

On the other hand, Nietzsche's influence did not remain long with Muir but provided a temporary philosophy with which to overcome personal suffering. Nor, unlike C. M. Grieve/Hugh MacDiarmid and, in the 1930s, Leslie Mitchell/Lewis Grassie Gibbon, did he feel the need to continue with a pseudonym or *alter ego* through which to present differing facets of his work and personality. As poet, critic, novelist and philosopher, Muir's writing, although often complex in idea, is remarkably consistent in its focus and expression. Indeed, in several of his early Nietzschean aphorisms, it is MacDiarmid's more rooted affinity with Nietzsche which is evoked, especially as found throughout *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* and in the *Cencrastus* poet's insistence that 'the eternal evil's no'/Tragedy, but the absence o't'. Similarly, Muir's quotation from Janko Lavrin in his *Freeman* essay on Dostoyevsky concerning the Russian writer's 'capacity to "experience two opposite feelings at one and the same time"' parallels the insistence on being 'whaur/Extremes meet' which became a characteristic feature of MacDiarmid's poetry and ideological positions.

Muir's criticism in *We Moderns*, the *Freeman* articles on European writers collected in *Latitudes* (1924) and his 1926 *Transition* essays on contemporary English-language writers is important for its illustration of the influences at work in the discourse on modernity, and for its demonstration of the important role of the periodical press in the dissemination of ideas and information about new artistic movements. *The New Age* under Orage was especially important for autodidacts such as Muir and MacDiarmid and its influence underpinned the determinedly modern and European-oriented agenda of the Scottish interwar literary revival; as did also the example of T. S. Eliot's *Criterion*.

Their departure for Prague and Dresden in 1921 enabled the Muirs to develop at first hand this previous print acquaintance with European culture and enabled Edwin in particular to further the interest in German poetry which had begun when he read Heine in the small Canterbury Poets series during his difficult Glasgow years. It was during this first European journey that he became acquainted with the poetry of Hölderlin and began himself to write poetry. In *We Moderns* he had insisted on the importance of leisure in human life, and especially in the life of the artist. Now, in Prague: 'It was the first time since I was fourteen that I had known what it was to have time for thinking and daydreaming [. . .] I began to learn the visible world all over again.'

Muir's *First Poems* were published in 1925 by Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press. Many of these early poems are unresolved and eclectic in style. Nonetheless, they are interesting for their laying bare of Muir's psychological struggle to regain a connection with a past suppressed through suffering and for the dream poems which resulted from his experience of Jungian psychoanalysis in London before he left for Europe. They are also interesting for the influence of German poetry on theme and imagery. Muir's 'The Lost Land', for example, relates to Goethe's 'Kennst du das Land', a poem which he considered held the essence of the sense of *Sehnsucht* found in German Romantic literature: that idealised longing or yearning for the unattainable which Rainer Maria Rilke characterised in his poem 'Das ist die Sehnsucht' as 'wohnen im Gewoge/Und keine Heimat haben in der Zeit' ('That is what longing is: to live in a state of flux/and have no homeland in the world of Time'). 'Childhood', meanwhile, has an affinity not only with Blake and Wordsworth but also with Hölderlin's 'Da ich ein Knabe war'. Later the poetry and prose of Rilke and the fiction of Kafka were also to become influential in his work as poet.

The Muirs returned to Britain in July 1924, by which time they had obtained a commission to translate three of Gerhart Hauptmann's plays into English. From then until the outbreak of the Second World War, their principal income was derived from translation from the German, including the fiction of Kafka and Hermann Broch's important trilogy, *Die Schlafwandler*, published as *The Sleepwalkers* in 1932. This disturbing work anticipated the disintegration of Europe which in 1938 brought Broch himself as a refugee from Nazi Germany to the Muirs' home in St Andrews. In her memoir *Belonging* (1968), Willa describes their approach to their joint translations:

It was simple enough. We divided the book in two, Edwin translated one half and I the other, then we went over each other's translation as with a fine-tooth comb. By the time we had finished the going-over and put the two halves together the translation was like a seamless garment, for we both loved the sinuous flexibility of Kafka's style – very unlike classical German – and dealt with it in the self-same way.

From the specificity of these comments on Kafka's style and from other comments in *Belonging* and in her letters and journal, it is clear that Willa was a principal partner in their translation activity and the one responsible for keeping translation deadlines. She describes how 'when a translation had to be finished in a hurry or proofs corrected against a deadline' she worked 'at furious speed late at night into the small hours, after the vibrations of the day had died down [. . .] hearing the birds sing at dawn and tumbling into bed for a few hours' sleep after breakfast'. In an uncharacteristically aggrieved outburst in her journal entry for 20 August 1953 – a time when she was suffering ill-health during Edwin's wardenship of Newbattle Abbey College – she wrote:

I am a better translator than he is. The whole current of patriarchal society is set against this fact, however and sweeps it into oblivion, simply because I did not insist on shouting aloud: 'Most of this translation, especially Kafka, has been done by ME. Edwin only helped.' And every time Edwin was referred to as THE translator, I was too proud to say anything; and Edwin himself felt it would be undignified to speak up, I suppose. So that now, especially since my break-down in the middle of the war, I am left without a shred of literary reputation. [. . .] And yet, and yet, I want to be acknowledged.

Willa's claim to be acknowledged as translator is justified also by the success of the translations from German she undertook alone under the pseudonym of Agnes Neill Scott. In a publicity leaflet, Arnold Bennett said of her translation of Hans Carossa's *A Roumanian Diary* (1929): 'I know of no better translation from the German than hers. It is to be praised unreservedly.' Equally important are Hermann Broch's comments in a letter to her about *The Sleepwalkers*, quoted by Peter Butter in *Edwin Muir: Centenary Assessments* (1990): 'The translation is wonderful [. . .] I am quite delighted with it and utterly in your debt. [. . .] Oh Willa, my dear, you ought always to write in German, it is wonderful, and if ever you were to write a book in German, you would earn a great deal of money by it.'

The Muirs and Scotland: a 'difficult land'

To some extent, their respective Orkney and Shetland backgrounds brought Edwin and Willa Muir to feel like 'displaced persons' in mainland Scotland. In *Belonging*, Willa, her parents Shetlanders, describes her childhood insecurity as older girls mocked the Shetland dialect her family still spoke in their home in Montrose – an experience which may have encouraged her facility with languages – while Edwin's relationship with what he called 'his second country' in the 1958 *Listener* article 'Nooks of Scotland' was consistently equivocal. He wrote from Menton in 1927 that he felt 'rather detached' from MacDiarmid's nationalist agenda 'because after all I'm not Scotch, I'm an Orkneyman, a good Scandinavian'. Yet in the first version of his autobiography, *The Story and the Fable* (1940), remembering his earlier stay in Prague and the friendliness with which the playwright Karl Čapek was acknowledged by the townspeople, he commented that 'this warm easygoing contact could only have been possible in a comparatively small town, and it was the first thing that made me wish that Edinburgh might become a similar place and that Scotland might become a nation again'. However, his residence in St Andrews between 1935 and 1942 and his Wardenship of Newbattle Abbey College from 1950 to 1955 were both unhappy experiences. Significantly, the wish 'that Scotland might become a nation again' was excised from the revised version of the autobiography published in 1954.

Although he had contributed occasional items to the periodicals edited by Grieve/MacDiarmid in the early 1920s, it was during the 1930s that Edwin Muir became more closely involved with Scottish affairs. His prose writings are to be found principally in the articles and reviews he wrote for the *Modern Scot* and *Outlook*, the *London Bookman*, *Listener* and *Spectator*, and in the books *Scottish Journey* (1935) and *Scott and Scotland* (1936). Both books are pessimistic, the former concluding that 'the real obstacle to the making of a nation out of Scotland [. . .] is, in fact, Scotland'. *Scott and Scotland's* comments about the *unviability* of the Scots language for literary purposes and its insistence that an ambitious writer must adopt not only the English language but the English tradition caused a breach with MacDiarmid that was never healed. Its equally illogical claim that, as a consequence of the language problem, 'Scotsmen feel in one language and think in another' has proved a frustratingly difficult 'theory' to dislodge from later twentieth-century Scottish criticism.

Muir's pessimism about Scotland and its literature may well have been in part related to the difficulties he was experiencing with his own poetry. This was still unresolved, obsessed with themes of stationary and mythical journeys and with the attempt to negate both the biblical Fall and the futility of human time. In addition, his linguistic medium

and literary influences were English and it may well be that MacDiarmid's insistence on Scots added to existing insecurity about his future as a poet in Scotland. Muir's admiration for Eliot the critic may also have led him to be oversusceptible to his argument that 'the basis for one literature is one language' and to transfer ideas about the dissociation of sensibility in English literature between Donne and Browning from 'The Metaphysical Poets' to the Scottish situation.

Willia Muir attributed the 'uncharacteristic acerbity' of *Scott and Scotland* to Edwin's unhappiness in St Andrews and her own two essays of 1936, 'Women in Scotland' and the extended *Mrs Grundy in Scotland*, show a disillusionment with Scotland which resonates with her fictional *Mrs Ritchie* (1933): 'Mrs MacGrundy is a negative, thwarted perversion of what might have been or might yet become a genuine national consciousness'. Edwin's unease about Scots as a literary language had been expressed, however, as early as 1923 in 'A Note on the Scottish Ballads' and repeated in essays on Stevenson and 'Literature in Scotland' in the early 1930s:

that Scots will ever be used again as an independent language capable of fulfilling all the purposes of poetry and prose is, I should think, very doubtful.

His *Scott and Scotland* position was therefore not a new one. What is surprising is that neither Muir nor MacDiarmid, nor Grassie Gibbon in his 1934 essay 'Literary Lights', seemed able to acknowledge the diversity of language-use actually practised in Scotland at that time, both in literature and daily life, something that in our own time has become a strength in Scottish poetry.

It is regrettable that responses to Muir's Scottish criticism have been so dominated by the *Scott and Scotland* quarrel, for his writings on Scottish literature and society contribute much to an understanding of Scotland's achievements as well as its problems. He was one of the earliest commentators on MacDiarmid's poetry, recognising that 'the real originality of "Hugh MacDiarmid" [sic] is that he employs Scots as any other poet might employ English or French: that is, to express anything which a modern writer might have to say'. He also recognised the significant new direction of the writers of the inter-war period who 'address themselves first of all to a Scottish audience, and not incidentally, as their predecessors did'. Muir's Scottish criticism extends beyond the literary to the social and economic condition of the country. Depopulation and the post-industrial landscape are key themes in reviews, his novel *Poor Tom* (1932) and *Scottish Journey* (1935) as well as his autobiography, which is more often praised for its timeless evocation of an Orkney childhood. Although Muir's poetry has less to say directly about Scotland, implicitly his life-long exploration of the nature and effect of Scottish Calvinism was a central influence.

Time and war and history: Edwin Muir's later poetry

There is general agreement that Muir's poetry found a new maturity from *The Narrow Place* (1943) onwards. For Neil M. Gunn, reviewing the collection in *The Scots Magazine* on publication, 'his work [. . .] has caught a flame from the fire that is burning the world'. Critics such as Peter Butter and Elizabeth Hubermann have ascribed the new direction to his rediscovered Christianity during Willa's illness in 1939. This, however, would not account for the stylistic maturity and new thematic directions which are more likely to have resulted

from his long apprenticeship as writer and, in particular, from the writing of his autobiographical novels and his autobiography. These despatched the psychological ghosts of his unhappy youth and freed his imagination to look outwards. As he wrote in the *Scots Magazine* article 'Yesterday's Mirror' (1940):

And suddenly I felt that now my autobiography was finished, I could really write my autobiography. I had cleared up a few things in my mind.

In his autobiography, Muir points to the 'three mysteries' which 'possess' human minds:

where we came from, where we are going, and, since we are not alone, but members of a countless family, how we should live with one another.

While the visionary is always an important element in his poetry, from the 1940s onwards it is that mystery of 'how we should live with one another' (a 'mystery' underpinned by his Orkney background and by the socialist beliefs he shared with MacDiarmid and Gibbon) which becomes increasingly compelling, explored through myth and symbol as well as more directly, and seen as a recurring human dilemma which winds its way 'through the day and time and war and history'. Thus the Second World War and the continuing effects of the First World War provide the context for war poems in *The Narrow Place* and *The Voyage* (1946). In 'The Refugees', the emphasis is on our communal responsibility and the contrary self-interest which allows human beings to turn aside from the disasters of others, while 'The River' points to the futility and destructiveness of war where

The disciplined soldiers come to conquer nothing,
March upon emptiness and do not know
Why all is dead and life has hidden itself.

The story of Troy becomes a metaphor to suggest both the psychological and social ill-effects of war and the positive faithfulness of those who wait for a return that cannot be guaranteed. The dominant communication of these wartime collections is of our common fate and the need to 'shape here a new philosophy' to counter 'rejection bred by rejection/Breeding rejection'.

Muir's appointment as Director of the British Institute in post-war Prague brought new preoccupations, or perhaps old ones in new guises. In 1934, his essay 'Bolshevism and Calvinism' had brought together his hostility to what he saw as the denial of individual human worth in Scottish Calvinism and a similar rejection of the individual life in the new 'religion' of communist Russia. Now, in Prague, he saw this rejection in operation as the Czechs, after a brief moment of freedom, moved from oppression by Nazi Germany into the control of a communist system. *The Labyrinth* collection of 1949 took its impulse from his response to that experience, the imagery and rhythms of its title poem enacting a Kafkaesque psychological drama of disorientation and constriction. Determinist scenarios are found in poems such as 'The Interrogation', 'The Way' and 'The Usurpers'; and in 'Oedipus', where Greek myth, through the power of its gods, joins Calvinism and Bolshevism as a system hostile to self-determination. The persistence of the human spirit in the face of evil, while it still has its place, is less in evidence in this dark collection. Although, as he argued in *We Moderns*, Muir did not

believe that art should deal with topical problems, as a poet he was very responsive to the situations in which he found himself, although he seldom dealt with these explicitly. His move from Prague to the British Council Institute in Rome in 1949 had therefore a corresponding influence on the themes of his poetry. He wrote to Joseph Chiari:

You feel the gods (including the last and greatest of them) have all been here, and are still present in a sense in the places where they once were. It has brought very palpably to my mind the theme of Incarnation [. . .] Edinburgh I love, but in Edinburgh you never come upon anything that brings the thought of Incarnation to your mind, and here you do so often, and quite unexpectedly.

One Foot in Eden (1956), his final collection, focuses significantly on reconciliation and the power of human love, qualities threatened by two world wars and political oppression. Biblical and Greek myth provides the poetic vehicle in many of these poems. In 'Orpheus' Dream' it is the power of love which leaves Pluto with 'the poor ghost of Eurydice'. Meanwhile, in 'Telemachos Remembers', the grown-up son of Penelope and Odysseus looks back on his mother's weaving and unweaving amid the disorder of his father's absence and now realises that 'she wove into her fears/Pride and fidelity and love'. Instead of trying to negate the biblical Fall as in so much of his early poetry, in poems such as 'Adam's Dream' and 'One Foot in Eden' Muir celebrates *human* life:

What had Eden ever to say
Of hope and faith and pity and love
[. . .]
Strange blessings never in Paradise
Fall from these beclouded skies.

On the other hand, this new mood of reconciliation does not ignore the darker side of human experience. Both 'The Horses' from *One Foot in Eden* and the later 'After a Hypothetical War' employ in a contrasting way the metaphor of nuclear war to point to the choices before us. Both imply the necessity of a return to cooperative and spiritual values in opposition to the enslavement to technology that ultimately produced the atom bomb. 'The Last War' is also preoccupied with war and collective responsibility, exploring a situation in which there is

no place at all for bravery [. . .]
No way to save
By our own death the young that they might die
Sometime a different death.

In this poem, 'the articulate breath' has become 'the lexicon of a dream' and the greatest pain is the knowledge that, as in the earlier 'The Refugees', we are ourselves responsible for the disaster:

Because we could not wait
To untwist the twisted smile and make it straight.

Edwin Muir has too often been presented as an unworldly visionary, with the symbolism of the biblical Fall emphasised at the expense of his preoccupation with the theme of how we live together in this 'single, disunited world'. Yet, as these late poems and the related prose writings in *Essays on Literature and Society* (1949) and *The Estate of Poetry* (Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, Harvard University, 1955–6; published, 1962) show, he is a writer who continues to be relevant into our own uncertain times.

Willa Muir and the woman question

Willa Muir's first published work was the extended essay *Women: An Inquiry*, brought out by the Hogarth Press in 1925. For readers who come to *An Inquiry* via their admiration for her novel *Imagined Corners* (1931), the essay is a puzzling work, showing none of the deeper exploration of social and psychological constructions of female identity played out in the novel. Its stated aim is 'to find a conception of womanhood as something essentially different from manhood' and to discover if 'the creative work of women is different in kind from the creative work of men'. Such an aim is not unusual for its period when women were increasingly attempting to redefine their social and personal identities. In *A Room of One's Own* (1929), for example, Virginia Woolf asked not only for education, personal space and £500 a year, but also for a prose style that would allow her to write as a woman:

the weight, the pace, the stride of a man's mind are too unlike her own for her to lift anything substantial from him successfully.

There is 'no common sentence ready for her use'. Catherine Carswell wrote to Florence (Marian) McNeill in 1928:

But for a woman or any being whose nature it is to live through the emotions, clarity of mind can only be got by taking the natural order. And I do think many of us thinking and educated women of this age – go against our natures by striving to *force* ourselves to deal first through the intellect, living too much with ideas and not sufficiently trusting to the truths that would come to us through the deeper sensual and emotional channels.

Like Carswell, Willa Muir also emphasises the importance of the 'unconscious' in her essay, but this quickly hardens into a general proposition that the function of *all* women is to channel the creative energies of their unconscious being into motherhood and 'the making of human beings', while men occupy themselves as conscious form givers in the public world: 'men will create systems of philosophy or government, while women are creating individual human beings'. Her perception here is of different but complementary roles and capacities. Yet, what is surprising to a later audience, especially from an author who had already achieved high academic distinction, is the absence of any objective examination of the 'nature or nurture' argument, or of the biological, social, religious and educational factors which have restricted women's activities throughout the centuries, so conditioning their own view of their role. A credible explanation for this obsession with motherhood is provided by Willa in contemporaneous correspondence with Florence McNeill which shows that she was negotiating for a gynaecological appointment at the Royal Free Hospital for Women in London when she suffered an

unexpected miscarriage. 'Think of it,' she wrote to McNeill in January 1926, 'I had no idea that I was pregnant. [. . .] No wonder I was brooding about the bearing of children.' She continues:

It is established that there is no displacement, & I may live in hope that it may be all right next time. Why I have had no conception until now neither he [her doctor] nor anyone can tell me.

The 'next time' arrived in 1927, when the Muirs' son Gavin was born in late October. By this time also, Willa had completed half of *Imagined Corners*, begun during a second European sojourn in St Tropez and Menton, where she and Edwin had gone in 1926 with a commission to translate Feuchtwanger's *Jew Süß*. As a result of complications arising from her son's birth, her new mothering responsibilities and her taxing responsibility as keeper of translation deadlines, it was not until 1931 that her novel was finally completed and published.

Women's lives are at the centre of *Imagined Corners*, which also offers a sharp critique of Scottish small-town mores through its ironic presentation of the milieu in which its characters operate. The plot provides an interesting variation on the nineteenth-century novel of female development in that its heroine Elizabeth, a young, inexperienced university graduate, finds that her journey to self-discovery begins *after* marriage, as opposed to ending in marriage. It is therefore more truly a transformation of the *Bildungsroman* form for female purposes than is, for example, Carswell's *Open the Door!* of 1920, which, more conventionally, ends in marriage after a series of sexual and social adventures. *Imagined Corners* is notable for its intellectual speculation and scientific and psychological imagery, its exploration of the operation of time and memory in human lives and its ironic narrative style which encourages the reader to view Elizabeth's struggles to conform to social expectations with a sceptical although not unsympathetic eye. Her emotional nature – 'But if I don't believe what I feel [. . .] what *am* I to believe?' – is reminiscent of the earlier essay's insistence on the irrational, unconscious power of women; in the novel, however, Elizabeth's confused emotions are counterpointed by the creation of her namesake Lizzie, half-sister to her husband, who had shocked Calderwick twenty years previously by eloping to Europe with a married man. She has now returned as Elise, the elegant widow of a German professor, in the hope of measuring the distance she has travelled in the intervening years. The dramatic interplay of these three Elizabeths allows an acute probing of a woman's sense of self at different stages of her life, while it also demonstrates the author's awareness of the writings of Bergson and Jung in relation to duration and memory and the significance and interpretation of dreams. The novel is recognisably positioned in the context of the new intellectual ideas of the time. What is surprising, however, given its emphasis in her earlier essay, is the absence of motherhood in the plot. All the principal female characters are childless and the one mother in the novel is presented caustically. In addition, the presentation of the lives of several minor unmarried female characters demonstrates the damage done to 'superfluous women' in a society where, as she had previously argued, marriage and motherhood is considered the essential female role.

In contrast, mothering is at the centre of Willa's second novel, *Mrs Ritchie* (1933). What we have here, however, is a perversion of the mothering role in the creation of a Calvinistic mother who uses her power as moral guardian to destroy her family. The book is a compelling document of a Nietzschean 'will to power'. Yet, while the detail of the novel is principally concerned with Annie Ritchie's ruthless rule as wife and mother, the source of the

obsessive cruelty portrayed is not especially feminist in nature. Instead, the Calvinist idea of the Elect and the Damned has somehow entered into Annie's unconscious mind – perhaps in the same way as Willa believed it had entered into Edwin's as a child in Orkney – and she intuits that her lowly class and gender serve to separate her from the power which resides in being the Chosen of God. The process of the narrative shows how Annie sets out in calculated manner to achieve her desired status through the only worldly route open to her: marriage and motherhood; and how, that initial goal achieved, she then destroys her family through her ruthless preparation of them to face Judgement Day. Unlike *Imagined Corners*, it would be difficult to characterise this novel as a proto-feminist text.

Mrs *Ritchie* was criticised by some contemporary reviewers as being like a psychological case study. Yet, one could argue that the interesting case study here is not Annie Ritchie, but her author. What could have brought about such a reversal of the idealistic scenario of *Women: An Inquiry* (1925)? One happening was Willa Muir's experience of actual motherhood, with a traumatic birth followed by the struggle to look after the child while continuing to satisfy the relentless demands of translation commitments. Willa had earlier stressed the importance to women of the *unconscious* life, and it may well have been that unconscious life that took control and created Mrs Ritchie in protest against the impossible workload the author was carrying. Perhaps the implicit realisation that she could not successfully carry out the role of 'creating individual human beings' in the conditions under which she had to live her life led her imagination to externalise her fears through the creation of a monster mother who trapped her family in a woman-made prison. In a terrible turn of fate, worthy of the Greek tragedy advocated by Edwin in *We Moderns*, after the book's publication its fictional scenario was partially enacted in reality when the Muirs' young son was knocked down while running away from the woman engaged to look after him. Her obsession with the devil and hellfire had terrified the boy into flight. Willa's comments on how she blamed herself for the accident and on her need to keep her distress from Edwin suggest how she may have operated in difficult times throughout their marriage: 'I kept my sense of guilt under cover [. . .] and so began preparing an inward sump of self-accusation and grief.' The Muirs' marriage has often been presented as a union of the confident, 'masculine' Willa and the retiring Edwin who allowed his wife to dominate their relationship; and is unkindly characterised as such in Wyndham Lewis's *The Apes of God* (1930) and in the caricature by Barbara Niven published in the September–November issue of *The Voice of Scotland* in 1938. Yet a careful reading of Willa's writings, especially her letters and other unpublished material, shows this to be far from the case. She was in fact the insecure one, often uncertain of her own personal attractiveness and anxious to retain Edwin's affections. She was aware of the importance of his work as poet yet aware too that she had within her unfulfilled talents and ambitions and frustrated that her intellectual capacities were so often ignored in social intercourse because women, like children, should be seen but not heard. In contrast, Edwin, however gentle he might outwardly seem, had an inner core of self-determination that allowed him to pursue his chosen path.

'What I meant to be': Willa Muir's final years

Perhaps inevitably, this chapter has given more space to the greater range of Edwin Muir's writing than to that of Willa. Fate, however, gave Willa a second chance to be 'what I meant to be' (as she wrote in a poem to Edwin for his sixtieth birthday). After his death in 1959, and despite painful arthritis, she set herself to write the book on the ballads for

which he had received a grant from the Bollingen Foundation. *Living with Ballads* (1965) was the result, a very different book from Edwin's more philosophical writings on the ballads, but one which puts oral tradition and singing, including the children's singing games she played as a child, at the heart of the transmission of the ballads. *Belonging* (1968), her memoir of her life with Edwin, followed. This is a complementary book to his autobiography, for, as in the splendid letters she wrote to friends throughout her life, Willa has the capacity to bring the living as opposed to the philosophical moment before the reader. She allows the personal to interact with the discussion of ideas, thus opening up situations and places in new ways. The book is also in many ways her own autobiography, bringing her perspectives to their life together. It (implicitly) shows how much unpaid work she put into the various assignments taken on by Edwin, acting as a kind of honorary ambassador in Europe and later at Harvard and as an additional pair of educational and counselling hands in the difficult Newbattle years. Her last book, a small collection of poems, *Jingles and Laconics* (1969), was published a year before her death, and sent to friends with the comment that she was 'no' deid yet'. These late books, together with her lively intelligent letters, her fiction, translations and essays, offer a distinctive and significant contribution to the Muirs' important literary partnership.

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‘To Get Leave to Live’: Negotiating Regional Identity in the Literature of North-East Scotland

Alison Lumsden

The phrase ‘north-east writing’, like any other that defines regional identity, in fact carries with it not only geographical markers, but a host of cultural signifiers. These imply something of the distinct character of the region and its relationship to the literature that is both produced in it and, in turn, itself helps define it. For K. D. M. Snell, for example, a region’s literature is defined not only in terms of geography and topography, but also in terms of the ‘features distinguishing the life, social relations, customs, language, dialect, or other aspects of the culture of that area and its people’. Further, one of the parameters we must take into account when speaking about a regional identity is a temporal one: cultural identities are not static but are located in time. Two features that have been crucial to this identity in the north-east are its association with ‘the land’ and its sense of its own distinctiveness mediated through ‘the Doric’, the range of related Scots dialects used in north-east Scotland. ‘The land is of the essence of the north-east imagination,’ writes David Hewitt. He concludes that, while these signifiers are problematic and bear a vexed relationship to actual experience of the region, ‘A rural land, speaking the Doric’ remains ‘the identifying image of north-east Scotland in the mind of its writers [. . .] an image that is more powerful than the facts.’

This chapter, then, is concerned with the writers of what to many is the high point of north-east literature, the 1920s and 1930s. It will consider the work of writers such as Lewis Grassie Gibbon, Nan Shepherd and Willa Muir. It will explore the ways in which their work not only helped shape the cultural identity of the north-east, but also played a crucial part in a wider negotiation of how Scotland in general was to shape its cultural parameters in the light of a reawakened sense of nationhood. In particular it will explore their work in relation to those two potentially problematic signifiers of north-east identity, language and landscape.

It is, of course, impossible to discuss the question of language in north-east writing of the 1920s and 1930s without setting it within the wider framework of the Scottish Renaissance movement and the debate on the future of Scots language as a potentially literary medium fuelled by Hugh MacDiarmid. Indeed, it is partly by virtue of its pivotal role in this debate that writing of the north-east takes so crucial a place in the negotiation of Scottish literary identity that was emerging at that time. This debate has already been well documented, but it is probably worth reiterating its terms before going on to look in more detail at the literary responses to it by several north-east writers.

Crucial to this debate was the fact that by the end of the nineteenth century there was already a well-established interest in vernacular poetry in the north-east and the beginnings of a tradition of vernacular writing. Violet Jacob (1863–1946), for example, born in the House of Dun near Montrose, was already well established within this tradition at the opening of the twentieth century. While Jacob was to spend her life travelling widely she wrote poetry (*Songs of Angus*, 1915) in a Scots which drew on a carefully observed version of north-east dialect and which located itself within an oral ballad and folk-song tradition. Equally, her novels *The Interloper* (1904) and more famously *Flemington* (1911) drew imaginatively on features of north-east identity, the latter negotiating the north-east's troubled, but sometimes overlooked, relationship to Jacobitism, and depicting north-east Scots in its dialogue. Jacob's work was to be admired by Charles Murray, himself a crucial figure in the north-east vernacular revival. It was also promoted by Hugh MacDiarmid, who published it in *Northern Numbers*. Yet, in some respects, Jacob's use of north-east Scots was the antithesis of MacDiarmid's future synthesising project for, as Carol Anderson has observed in Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan's *A History of Scottish Women's Writing* (1997), her work

draws strongly on the oral and folk traditions, her language reflecting the continued strength of local dialect in North-east Scotland, a region rich in folk song and balladry.

For Anderson, therefore, Jacob's work is grounded in the local, its use of Scots intimately tied to the region of its origins.

A similarly problematic relationship to the regional is also evident in the work of another north-east writer of the early twentieth century, Marion Angus (1865–1946). While Angus, too, was to move in and out of the north-east, her work reflects a grounding in the region. In the course of the 1920s Angus was to publish several collections of verse, mostly in the vernacular, and was to meet with the hesitant approval of MacDiarmid. However, Colin Milton in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB), while recognising that her work 'marked a break with the exhausted post-Burns tradition, and anticipated the work of [. . .] Grieve', also acknowledges that she herself did not have a high opinion of the poet and his synthetic project. Her complex relationship to the north-east is also evident in the fact that, while Christopher Whyte in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing* recognises that her poetry looks inward rather than outward, concerning itself with 'inner psychological vocabulary', Nan Shepherd acknowledged her work's essentially regional nature by suggesting that it helped her to re-imagine her own locale.

These early writers of the twentieth century, then, were significant in paving the way in the vernacular tradition, their ambivalent position on the linguistic relationship between region and nation often pre-empting later events. Perhaps as importantly, they embody a growing self-consciousness about the ways in which north-east Scots was distinct from other forms of the Scots language and a sense that this distinctiveness might be under threat. Similarly, the First World War provided both material for writing in this language with its strong folk tradition and a sense of threat to the very cultural diversity it supported.

While the resulting strength of north-east writing was such that even Hugh MacDiarmid was forced to admit that the vernacular revival had begun there and that this constituted a 'North-east Revival' of sorts, it was, paradoxically, the very regional nature of north-east writing that MacDiarmid objected to. MacDiarmid's project was, of course, essentially an

international one: it aimed to regain the position of Scots literature in a European context, rather than as a provincial adjunct of English literature. For this to take place, however, a new Scots had to be forged, one which looked back to some 'purer' age of Scots poetry before the corruption of it in the wake of the Union, and this language rewrought for contemporary poetry.

For MacDiarmid, then, the very regional nature of north-east Scots was a sign of the degeneracy of Scots. He was to reject it as the foundation of any long-lasting revival for Scottish writing in his usual vigorous and outspoken style in a series of articles and correspondences carried out in the pages of *The Scottish Educational Journal*. MacDiarmid's attack on north-east Scots was launched in two directions. On the one hand he attacked individual poets such as Charles Murray, but at the same time he constructed a less subjective, and more intellectually grounded, argument against the suitability of north-east Scots as the basis for a vernacular revival *per se*. MacDiarmid's objection to north-east writing with regard to individual poets lies in a belief that the full potential of Doric has not been exploited because of the limited aspirations and poetic achievements of those who have written in it. The north-east revival was plagued, he argued, by 'a mental parochialism, a constitutional incomprehension and hatred of culture'.

It would be easy to dismiss these comments as both arrogant and downright unfair, at least in the case of Charles Murray. However, MacDiarmid's venom does in fact hint at a problem which is inherent in all regional literature, not only that of the north-east: the fact that the regional is, almost by definition, constantly haunted by the tendency towards parochialism. Moreover, when regionalism is mediated through language, it is also, perhaps inescapably, vexed by the potential for nostalgia; dialect is, at least in Scotland as it is currently constituted, in many cases linked with a language of childhood and thus inescapably with a past that is both historical and personal. It is, then, difficult for the writer to use dialect effectually while simultaneously escaping the taint of such nostalgia. The writer who chooses a regional dialect as his or her medium faces a difficult balancing act in writing about local experience without demeaning it. Not all writers of the north-east have, of course, managed this equally successfully.

It is the essential regionalism of Doric which also lies behind MacDiarmid's less subjective and more rigorous criticism of it as the basis for a Scots language literary revival. The debate is between a Scots revival based in a regional, spoken language – a language and orthography based on 'the actual pronunciation of old people' as MacDiarmid rather scathingly puts it – and a 'synthetic' or synthesising Scots which draws eclectically from all periods and all regions, 'an artificially and quite arbitrarily contrived "generalised" Scots' to use MacDiarmid's own description.

As one might expect this debate caused much controversy in the north-east and prompted a vigorous correspondence. One position was that north-east Scots represented a noble remnant of a national language, while others opposed Grieve's synthetic project calling it unscholarly and inartistic linguistic blundering. More privately, in the midst of this controversy Nan Shepherd wrote to Alexander Keith, the assistant editor of the *Aberdeen Press & Journal*, on 26 November 1926 praising him for an article he had written in opposition to Grieve:

Folk who set up arbitrary standards and condemn all who don't conform to them require a few stabs to bring them to sanity; though, to judge from his plaintive remark that all his critics except you appreciate his efforts, the gentleman seems to have too tough a hide for the stabs to be very effectual. He's fair clorted wi' conceit.

Shepherd's characteristically intelligent comment reminds us that what is really of interest to us here is the way in which north-east writers of the following decade responded to the gauntlet thrown down by Grieve and, more significantly, the effect which this debate had upon their own practice.

For some writers such as Edwin and Willa Muir (the latter of whom was from Montrose, but whose parents were Shetlanders) the debate was less about what kind of Scots to choose, but whether writing in Scots was in any way a valid project. In 1936 in *Scott and Scotland* Edwin Muir was famously to conclude that Scottish literature was punctuated by a series of failures and that MacDiarmid's project had in itself failed precisely because the 'linguistic division means that Scotsmen feel in one language and think in another'. Willa Muir's *Imagined Corners* (1931) is set in the fictional north-east town of Calderwick and it correspondingly sets up an interesting dialectic in its use of north-east Scots. This is evident in the following exchange:

Hector smiled upon her.

'You used to like me well enough,' he added.

'I liked you owre weel, Heck Shand, and fine you kened it, and you were for flinging me awa' like an auld glove, and that's the truth of it. But you'll no' get the chance to do it again.'

'Bell, as sure's death, you'll not be the worse of it if you come out and meet me to-night.'

'It's owre cauld, and wet forbye; this is no' the middle o' summer.'

'Bring an umbrella, and I'll see that you're not cold.'

He was grinning now.

Here, the contrast between Hector's use of English and Bell's use of north-east Scots is highlighted as their phrases pick up on each other and are 'translated' from one speaker to the next: "'You used to like me *well enough*'", "'I liked you *owre weel*'"; "'you'll *no*' get the chance"; "'You'll *not* be the worse"; "'It's *owre cauld*'"; "'I'll see that you're not *cold*'" (author's emphases). The implication is clear: while parochial, ill-educated and easily duped characters such as Bell may speak in Scots, the educated, wealthy and manipulative like Hector Shand (he is here trying to persuade Bell to run off with him to Singapore leaving his wife behind) speak in standard English. More significantly, Muir's doubled heroines Elise and Elizabeth, who eventually triumphantly escape the constraints of Calderwick, speak in standard English throughout; their use of English figured as a marker of their ability to escape the petty-minded parochialism which is embodied in Muir's fictional north-east.

Not all north-east writers were, of course, to have so negative a response to their native dialect, or their native region for that matter. Most famously in *A Scots Quair* (1932–4) Lewis Grassie Gibbon made it his proclaimed project to find a way of capturing something of the rhythms of his native tongue in his narrative methods, seemingly aligning himself with those who supported the north-east vernacular. In his essay 'Literary Lights' Gibbon explores the relationship between Scots language and the work of Scottish writers. There is, he argues, an 'essential foreignness' in the English writing of many Scottish writers, a foreignness which he had attempted to circumvent in the *Quair* by adopting, as he outlines in his famous note to the text, a language which

import[s] into his pages some score or so untranslatable words and idioms – untranslatable except in their context and setting [and which echoes] the rhythms and cadence of the kindred speech that his peasants speak.

The effect which he achieves by these strategies has been much discussed and is represented metaphorically by those passages in *Sunset Song* (1932) where Chris Guthrie compares the dual nature of her personality:

The weary pleiter of the land and its life while you waited for rain or thaw! [. . .] Father said that the salt of the earth were the folk that drove a straight drill and never looked back, but she was no more than ploughed land still, the furrows went criss and cross, you wanted this and you wanted that, books and the fineness of them no more than an empty gabble sometimes, and then the sharn and the snapping that sickened you and drove you back to books.

The dichotomy which Chris expresses between two ways of life is also a linguistic dichotomy, one not only explored here but enacted in the switch in the density of Scots within the passage.

Gibbon's 'score or so untranslatable words' and his adoption of the 'rhythms and cadence' of Scots is, however, in many ways a sleight of hand. As Gibbon himself identifies, he doesn't really adopt north-east Scots as his idiom, but, rather, puts enough of Scots into his novel to capture the sense that he has done so. As John Corbett has argued in his essay in Margery Palmer McCulloch and Sarah M. Dunnigan's *A Flame in the Mearns* (2003), it is something of a myth to consider that 'Gibbon's literary prose is a naturalistic, or even a literary form of broad, north-east Scots'. He continues:

Gibbon was clearly at pains to distinguish his prose style from both the 'authentic' transcribed speech of the Mearns, and from such a literary 'Braid Scots' as was then being practised in poetry by Hugh MacDiarmid.

The result is a prose which, as Corbett concludes, perhaps owes more on balance to the eclecticism of MacDiarmid than the north-east vernacular revival. His argument is worth quoting at length:

The vocabulary in *Sunset Song* is idiosyncratically eclectic [. . .] such words as *brave* ('braw'; 'handsome'), and *childe* ('chie!'; 'young man') are given the spelling of the cognate English term, even when these spellings evoke a different sense or a poetic archaism. Also archaic are the spellings of *meikle* ('muckle'; 'great') and *quean* ('quine'; 'young girl'). *Queans* appears in this spelling in Burns's 'Tam o' Shanter' (l.151) [. . .] In short, Gibbon's use of vocabulary adapts for English prose the synthetic approach to Scots poetry favoured by his friend, MacDiarmid: some archaic Scots and English items are mingled with general Scots terms, as well as a few regionalisms from different localities, though mainly north-eastern.

Corbett's argument is convincing and is a reminder that Gibbon's intention was not to offer 'an authentic recreation of the spoken Scots of Angus' but, rather, simply to give 'an *impression* of Scots speech'. While Gibbon announces an intention to capture Scots in his prose style then, and his work has in many ways come to epitomise 'the speak of the Mearns', his relationship to the vernacular may be more complex than this would imply. The work of his female counterpart Nan Shepherd, however, is, at least on the face of it, far more firmly grounded in the spoken Scots of the north-east.

Unlike Gibbon, Nan Shepherd spent her long life living in her native West Cults, attending the University of Aberdeen, and later working as a lecturer in Aberdeen College

of Education. She was also a life-long admirer of Charles Murray and edited a collection of his poetry in 1969. As her comments quoted earlier show, she was also sceptical about MacDiarmid's use of synthetic Scots. Commenting on her own practices, on the other hand, Shepherd implies an understanding of Scots that lies far more in her own direct experience. She states (in a text to be found at NLS, Ms 27443, f.59r), 'Whenever a suitable dialect word offers itself in a piece of description or narrative I use it without hesitation.' This is, indeed, the effect that is created in her prose as the following passage from her first novel *The Quarry Wood* (1928) illustrates:

'Birstled, lassie,' said Geordie, coming out with a great roar of laughter at the mispronunciation. 'Ay, ay, I mind fine. You were aye the ane for the birstled bits oot o' the pots.'
 'An' mony's the skilpin' ye didna get for't,' said Emmeline.
 'I know. Marty got half of my skilpings and scoldings, I think.'
 'Weel, weel,' said Geordie benignly, 'she's been skilpit the richt gait ony road – she can mak grand packin' till a hen. We'll hae a bittie mair o't, lassie, jist to help awa' wi't, like.'

As this short excerpt demonstrates, Shepherd's Scots is far more markedly north-east in its origins than Gibbon's, and the spelling of several of the words ('oot', 'mony', 'mair', for example) implies a conscious effort to render the pronunciation of the north-east. Interestingly too, while Scots may only be used occasionally in the narrative here ('birstled', for example), Gillian Carter has drawn attention to the fact that Shepherd's narrative voice in fact 'modulates between Scots and English'. In contrast to Muir's work, here it is the outsider, Dussie, with her mispronunciation, that is the figure of fun, not Geordie or Emmeline, who are wholly at home in their linguistic medium.

While Shepherd's work is grounded in the linguistic idioms of the north-east, however, this is not to suggest that she was not aware of the wider debates within which her work is located. Shepherd was, in fact, herself fascinated by the possibilities made available through a wide range of Scots. Shepherd's unease with MacDiarmid lay not in a dislike of his poetry but in a distrust of the synthesising nature of his project. 'It's a grand thing to get leave to live,' states Geordie in *The Quarry Wood*, expressing the importance of tolerance and the right to live your own life in your own way in the rural community. Such impulses, it could be argued, also offer a negotiation of the importance of the regional above the national, the local above a cultural synthesis.

This negotiation is in fact a crucial aspect of north-east fiction in this period for it articulates a wider exploration of the relationship between the regional and the national which is inscribed within it. The definition of 'regional' is itself problematic, for it to some extent depends upon perspective. To many readers Scotland itself may be seen as a region, while from within Scotland the distinct identity of the north-east (or indeed other areas of the country) sets it apart from the rest of Scotland. In its very difference, however, the role of regional literature is also vexed, for such distinctiveness raises issues of the relationship between text and audience. Whom, we might ask, is regional literature written for? And does its meaning change for those who reside outside its boundaries? Is it by definition always to some extent inward looking and potentially parochial? Equally, regional literature also raises questions about the relationships between region and nation; Snell suggests

[T]he 'regional novel' in many of its forms provides a focus for the study of readers' expectations about the locality or region *vis-à-vis* a wider area such as the nation state.

On the one hand, the idea of a literature which articulates the distinctiveness of a particular region within a nation might be seen to function as synecdoche, to offer a 'nation in miniature'. On the other, by emphasising difference, it might launch a challenge to essentialist definitions of nationhood which seek to construct national identity in terms of a bland homogeneity (an essentialist construction which the new Scotland may be guilty of promoting at the time of writing). By emphasising the diversity of regions within Scotland and by reinforcing the idea of a distinct north-east, the literature of this region in the Scottish Renaissance period can then potentially be seen to challenge the notion of any one unified Scotland (a concept reinforced by MacDiarmid's synthesising project). However, what is interesting about the best of north-east writing in this period is that it simultaneously resists parochialism, insisting, on the contrary, upon its relevance to wider aspects of experience beyond the parameters of its own boundaries.

Certainly, for Shepherd, such insistence on the significance of the regional did not go hand in hand with the 'mental parochialism' which MacDiarmid had seen as endemic in north-east writing. On the contrary, for Shepherd the regional was of interest not only for itself, but also for the ways in which it could be used to explore the whole range of human experience. Indeed, what is remarkable about not only Shepherd's work but the best of north-east writing during the Renaissance period is the ways in which, while it may be rooted in the regional, it simultaneously uses local experience as a site from which to move beyond the boundaries it inscribes. By this movement the work of Shepherd, Gibbon and Willa Muir not only explores the artistic potential available within the region itself but, by implication, explores the dynamic which exists between the regional and the national in a wider negotiation of cultural identity.

This two-way movement between the regional and that which normally lies beyond its boundaries can be seen in the ways in which these texts exploit the questions raised by regional experience to explore wider philosophical concerns. It is also manifested in the ways in which stylistically they look beyond the artistic parameters of traditional north-east writing. The work of Gibbon, Shepherd, Willa Muir and Neil Gunn is, today, often considered, if it is considered at all, only in the context of north-east writing, or perhaps at best, Scottish literature. While it is, of course, important to recognise its regional quality, to see it purely in this framework is itself a form of hermeneutic parochialism, which overlooks the connections it is making to wider artistic and philosophical contexts.

It is, of course, to say nothing new to recognise that *A Scots Quair*, with its experimentations in narrative voice and its exploration of the subjectivity of its central character, can sit happily not only in a north-east context, but also in that of modernism. Critics have also begun to recognise that the work of Willa Muir can also be read in this critical paradigm. *Imagined Corners*, with its shaping scientific metaphors and what Aileen Christianson describes as 'disparate [narrative] strands', incorporates both stylistic experimentation and a modernist tendency in its treatment of character. Christianson observes:

The main characters of the novel are shown as fragmented sites of conflict between competing selves constructed in contradictory ways by the demands of societal expectations, their unconscious worlds clashing in dreams with their conscious realities.

Similar artistic experimentation has also been recognised in the work of Neil Gunn. A novel such as *Highland River* (1937) demonstrated an interest in the fragmentary nature of experience, the lack of a unified subject, and an awareness of the shifting perspectives

which underpin the construction of human experience. While, then, the work of these writers might take as its locale the north-east, it takes the preoccupations of the modernist movement and maps them on to the regional experience. In turn, it extends the dialogue between the regional and the national beyond linguistic terms to explore the extent to which the regional may be a suitable site for the exploration of these wider philosophical and artistic concerns.

This is in fact foregrounded in Willa Muir's *Imagined Corners*, for the protagonist Elise Mütze takes back to Calderwick an understanding of continental philosophy which leads her to re-examine her home terrain through this European paradigm. Ultimately, and perhaps not surprisingly for Muir, Elise's conclusion is that the north-east Calderwick is too small-minded for the expanded philosophical consciousness she wishes to embrace. Nevertheless, she is to reject the parochialism of Calderwick via a narrative openness which captures something of the *élan vital* of the philosopher Henri Bergson, read by her *alter ego* in the novel, Elizabeth Shand. In *Imagined Corners*, therefore, the local is represented simultaneously as a site where such modernist philosophical concerns may be explored and one which must ultimately be rejected as incapable of sustaining such enquiry.

While such concerns are far less overtly foregrounded in Nan Shepherd's work, it too is underpinned by a philosophical framework and by an essentially modernist experimentalism. Shepherd was a life-long friend of the Scottish philosopher John Macmurray and her poems *In the Cairngorms* (1934) are dedicated to Macmurray and his wife. She was also widely read in philosophy and, interestingly, her notebooks, to be found at NLS Ms. 27440, also refer to Bergson; among definitions of various philosophical terms she notes the meaning of *élan vital*. Not surprisingly, this philosophical underpinning is also evident in her fiction. While her book on her experiences as a life-long hillwalker, *The Living Mountain* (1977), is informed by an interest in Buddhism, which she shares with her friend Neil Gunn, her fiction is, like Gibbon's and Muir's, characterised by modernist tendencies. *The Weatherhouse* (1930), for example, while firmly grounded in the community life of north-east Scotland, also explores the fragmentation of individual identity, the complex relationships between inner and outer experience and the ways in which such ruptures have become visible as a result of the experiences of the 1914–18 war.

Shepherd's final, and perhaps most innovative, novel, *A Pass in the Grampians* (1933), builds on this experimentation. There is, unfortunately, no room to detail all this novel's narrative and thematic complexities, but a flavour of its artistic and thematic impulses can be gauged by the fact that its themes include the construction of subjectivity, the implications of change, and the force of the past upon the present. These are thematic concerns inscribed within the novel's narrative methods as Shepherd moves in and out of the consciousness of her protagonist Jenny Kilgour:

She stood there, lids drooping [. . .]. She trembled there between two loves – the mountain grandeur of her grandfather's, and Dorabel's encroaching, tumultuous, cruel, endlessly altering ocean-love, musical till now as summer seas. If she is frail, she will be crushed between them, deformed for life through this her first battering by the elements. She is sweet, she is ardent, is she also strong?

This excerpt from *A Pass in the Grampians* also exemplifies, however, that the philosophical explorations that inform this novel are negotiated via the second signifying feature of north-east fiction: the land. All regional literature is, of course, to some extent,

intrinsically linked to locale and to the defining features of landscape within it. As David Hewitt suggests, however, in the psychology of the north-east, locale has, for a variety of sometimes questionable reasons, become more specifically related to the physicality of the land – the ‘enduring land’ as Chris Guthrie articulates it in the *Quair*.

Yet, despite a sense that this relationship to ‘the land’ is a key feature of north-east writing, what is interesting about many of the texts produced in the 1920s and 1930s is the relationship’s use, as here, partly as a metaphor through which to explore a dichotomy between the regional and what lies beyond. Repeatedly writers exploit a relationship with land and locale as a vehicle by which both to celebrate what may be seen as a shaping metaphor for the region, and to reflect upon the limitations inscribed within such regionalism. For Chris, of course, the land is also, as we have already seen, ‘the weary pleiter’, and in *Imagined Corners* regional locale is ultimately a place from which to escape: a parochial nightmare that is in itself limiting. In spite of the fact that Shepherd chose to live her life in the north-east and clearly loved her home, similar tensions between a love of land and locale and a desire to escape it are also at work in her texts. Exploring the developing consciousness of the young Jenny Kilgour, Shepherd enacts the dichotomy she faces between a love of her home region and recognition that she must escape it:

Jenny races on. Her young blood is bounding, filled with the cold intoxicating brilliance of a mountain October; and as she races on, and rings her bicycle bell from sheer exuberance of spirit, she knows it is the last year she will go carolling thus, with cold fingers and stinging cheeks, to meet the morning. This free clear life will end. She wants it to end – oh, God, she wants it to end. She loves it as her very life, she will praise it for ever as the only life worth having, but she must know the other. She must find a thousand answers to a thousand questions. She must get beyond the Pass.

Land and landscape in these texts, therefore, is not presented unequivocally, but is, on the contrary, also part of a wider debate upon the role of the regional, an exploration of both its attractions and its limitations.

In his introduction to *A Pass in the Grampians*, Roderick Watson writes, ‘Shepherd’s last novel returns to the questions of her first, which are questions about what you take and what you leave on such a journey.’ In many ways this is a statement that could be made equally about many texts produced in the north-east in this period: *A Scots Quair*, *Imagined Corners*, *Highland River*, for example, all explore both the attractions and the limitations of the region. Indeed, one of the defining features of literature of the north-east in the 1920s and 1930s might be said to be the uneasy relationship it expresses about the parameters of its own locale. This dis-ease enacts both the limitations of the regional, and a sense of what will be lost in its subsumation within a wider Scotland, a wider Britain, an international Europeanism. It is, indeed, this exploration of the role of the regional which makes the literature of the north-east in this period so fascinating. While grounded in debates about land and language, the best of north-east fiction never engages with these issues in a purely elegiac or nostalgic fashion. Rather, it uses these concerns to inform a wider debate about the construction of a national cultural consciousness and the place of the regional within it.

The writers of the Scottish Renaissance period have become, then, synonymous with north-east writing and to many critics mark the high-point of the region’s literary success. John R. Allan in the *Free Press and Journal* on 19 March 1946 lamented the lack of writers emulating Shepherd: ‘There are some grand stories to be written about the making of the

north-east.' Writing in 1995 David Hewitt again pondered the demise of the literature of the north-east, concluding that

the advent of the oil industry in North-east Scotland has not destroyed the Doric, nor its literature, nor traditional culture in the widest sense of the term. But it has contrived to make the traditional regional self-image, an agricultural society united by a distinctive way of expressing itself, seem irrelevant.

Hewitt's argument suggests that those very features which came to define north-east literature, language and land, have in a sense been the source of its demise, for they are no longer relevant for a modern north-east culture. If we accept, however, that at the heart of the work of writers like Grassie Gibbon, Muir and Shepherd there also lies a deeper question concerning the role of the regional in the construction of a national cultural identity, this debate is surely crucial to the conditions of contemporary Scottish experience. It is one in which the north-east, still distinct in its regional identity from the central belt, yet has a part to play. And, in spite of the achievements of writers like Grassie Gibbon and Shepherd, it is important to recognise that the writers of the 1920s and 1930s do not mark the end point of literature in the north-east. In many ways, of course, they were to provide inspiration for others. The meeting between Nan Shepherd and Jessie Kesson, for example, is now well documented. Kesson's own fiction, in texts such as *The White Bird Passes* (1958) and *Another Time, Another Place* (1983), offers a complex exploration of both the limitations and the positive aspects of north-east community, while her use of Scots continues and advances the linguistic possibilities opened up by her north-east precursors.

These linguistic possibilities are also explored by younger writers. Sheena Blackhall, for example, is the most successful of the poets writing in Doric today, and her work continues to explore the potential of this regional dialect. Her many collections of poems investigate the tensions between Doric and standard English, the role of the land in north-east culture and the vexed question of the perceived limitations of the local in its relationship to wider parameters. The interface between wider philosophical concerns and the regional explored in writers such as Shepherd is also investigated in the work of older poets. George Bruce in his poem 'On the Edge – the Broch', for example, writes in a dense north-east Scots which modulates with standard English to explore the parameters of human struggle and achievement. The poem explores whether 'the edge' lies in the personal and intellectual – the schoolbag full of learning which 'weighs one ton'; the communal and local – the struggle which a fishing community faces with the sea; or in an existential struggle which bridges and surpasses either of these conditions:

Not in the storm but in a calm night
and the stars shining down; the vast expanse
of waters, throws his thought back on fishermen.
He is in another world separated and isolated.
To live here is to live on the edge.

If, moreover, we accept the regional not as a marker of 'mental parochialism' but as one of cultural difference it is perhaps no surprise that some of the more interesting manifestations of north-east literature in recent years have been produced by those passing through it. Leila Aboulela's *The Translator* (1999), for example, describes the experiences of a young Sudanese widow working at the university, where the alienating atmosphere of an Aberdeen winter

becomes a metaphor for her grief and her cultural isolation. Peter Burnett's novel *The Machine Doctor* (2001), like its Renaissance precursors, exploits the linguistic diversity of the region, modulating between the corporate language of the city-council, the globalised 'techno-speak' of the communications industry and the remnants of an Aberdonian Scots. The result provides some keenly observed humour, but it also offers a contemporary update on the debate that pervades so much of regional literature: the tensions wrought by the meeting of the local with the global. As in earlier north-east literature, this debate is framed in linguistic terms; 'Local Doric!' ponders one character: 'slipshod construction, poor diction, elephantine local expression. The Doric will achieve nothing, only the retrograde. When it comes to building the future there will be no place for this local half-language.' In both these novels it is the distinctiveness of the north-east which is the basis of their theme, a recognition that philosophically, geographically and linguistically it is in many ways 'another country' and, consequently, to these outsiders to the region at least, full of artistic potential.

In *Devolving English Literature* (2nd edn, 2000), Robert Crawford observes:

The act of inscription is not a simple entry into the delocalised, pure medium of language; it is constantly, often deliberately, an act which speaks of its local origins, of points of departure never fully left behind.

The dichotomy which was played out in the 1920s and 1930s between MacDiarmid and the writers of the north-east was, similarly, one between a synthesised Scotland in Europe or one that bore witness in its literature to regional diversities. These are questions that are surely, more than ever, relevant for Scotland today. 'If [. . .] we ignore matters of local origin, then we perform an act of naïve cultural imperialism,' writes Crawford. Writing of the north-east, it is to be hoped, still has a role to play in ensuring that voices of 'local origin' do not go unheard.

(The letter from Nan Shepherd to Alexander Keith of 26 November 1926 is quoted with the kind permission of Special Libraries and Archives at the University of Aberdeen (manuscript Ms 3017/8/1/3, item 9). All references to manuscripts in the National Library of Scotland are quoted with the kind permission of the Keeper.)

Further reading

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Disorientation of Place, Time and ‘Scottishness’: Conan Doyle, Linklater, Gunn, Mackay Brown and Elphinstone

Ian Campbell

A key feature of the twentieth-century Scottish short story and novel has been the exploration of place and displacement, time and its slippage, the disorientation of assumptions about what is, and, within that, what it is to be ‘Scottish’. The writers discussed in this chapter have questioned the nature of certainty and the appearance of reality by creative investigation and transformation of ‘reality’ in descriptions of life – both explicitly Scottish and far beyond Scottish – that have gripped and expanded readers’ imaginations. Some like Arthur Conan Doyle have done so making use of central characters that are not conventionally Scottish, dislocating place and reality and displacing time. Others like Neil Gunn, Eric Linklater and George Mackay Brown have examined experience from a viewpoint shaped by their liminal standpoint, at the apparent fringe of the country, but engaged by fresh and centrally important insights. Meanwhile, Brown and Margaret Elphinstone have explored a variety of other times and places, so bringing new insights to the present. These novelists, by startling revision and re-visioning of the reader’s assumptions through their use of space and time, achieve a re-viewing of reality almost of that kind Bertolt Brecht sought theatrically through his *Verfremdungseffekt*, a sharpening and refocusing of insight by distancing perception from received opinion. Reality is elusive, beyond commonly accepted boundaries; it must be sought below apparent surfaces as it shifts and changes.

This chapter explores recurring themes in Scottish writing, without making extravagant claims for ‘typically Scottish’ themes or techniques. Such different authors as those discussed here, bringing different memory and life-experience to their country and their creative imagination, can be seen to write *about* Scotland even when their immediate subject matter may not be the country itself or the place of which they write far from Scotland – or from a conventional idea of Scotland in the public imagination. They range widely through Scotland’s past and present, to fantasy islands, from the comfortable inner regions of an imagined London to the almost unimaginable rigours of Canada when the Scots were settling the Lake country. Place and memory are inseparable and memory transforms place. Conan Doyle’s detective may operate from Baker Street, but his Scottish original operated much more prosaically in Edinburgh University and the literary models of Doyle’s youth produced popular books of mid-Victorian Edinburgh detection. However

overlaid the roots of the character of Holmes, Linklater's Juan in America or in China is someone whose personal identity remains intact whatever the assaults of new place, circumstance or people. When Mackay Brown's and Gunn's characters are in Glasgow or Edinburgh, their memories are in their home country and shape their perception of current 'reality'. Elphinstone's Canadian voyageurs make the reality of their present sufferings bearable by memories of their past and their roots. Yet, while weaker writers might make play to take the reader back to a distant, even a vanished, Scotland in preference to the reality of here and now, these authors make of Scotland in memory something much more challenging and successful in a literary sense.

To many, Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930) is a one-book or, at least, one-kind-of-book writer, creator of the marvellous Sherlock Holmes, who, since *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), consistently sold and sold. The intelligence and quickness of Sherlock and his extraordinary brother, highlighted by the slower wits of Watson, contrast with Holmes's nervous habits, his addiction, his abstracted musical talents, his extraordinary power over the rabble of street urchins he uses to help solve some of his cases. Holmes embodies sceptical rationality driven by underlying demons. Drawing freely (as he admitted) on his memories of his Edinburgh teacher-surgeon Dr Joseph Bell (to whom *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892), the first collection of Holmes stories, was dedicated), Conan Doyle created a whole new market for the detective story. Though a case may be made for the literary influence of Edgar Allan Poe's Auguste Dupin and Émile Gaboriau's Inspector Lecoq, Doyle is likely to have been influenced by two Edinburgh detective writers popular in his childhood and youth. One was James McLevy, retired Edinburgh police detective, whose memoirs formed a series beginning with *Romances of Crime* (1860) and *Curiosities of Crime in Edinburgh* (1861). The second was William Crawford Honeyman, writing under the name James McGovan, who produced a substantial sequence of short stories beginning with *Brought to Book* (1878). The very titles of their stories remind us of Doyle's: McLevy has, for example, 'The Dead Child's Leg' while McGovan has 'The Romance of a Real Cremona' and 'The Wrong Umbrella'. Both worked by observation rather than sensation and violence as later did Doyle (though Holmes was capable of violence when the need arose, killed off halfway through his career in a celebrated fight on the Reichenbach Falls, only to be resurrected by popular demand for further stories). The imaginative core of Holmes's London, then, lies in Edinburgh, but Doyle went far beyond his likely models. He fascinated readers with Holmes's preternaturally sharp vision, his lightning interpretation of signs too trivial for the commonplace reader, his ability (which he shared with his fictional brother as well as with real-life Joseph Bell) to sum a person up through clothes, through mannerism, through physical peculiarity. Here the truth lies not in appearance, but in understanding appearance: 'reality' constantly shifts, taking on different meanings as time passes. Watson's slow wits counterpoint the author's deft seeding of clues and misleading material. The explanation, when it comes, never ceases to work in the reader's mind: reality was what Holmes saw quickly; Watson more slowly; the reader more slowly still.

Yet there is more to Conan Doyle than these enormously successful Sherlock Holmes short stories. Holmes appeared again in longer novels like *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902) and Conan Doyle achieved a huge readership with the fantastic imagination displayed in *The Lost World* (1912), anticipating a modern fascination with the possible survival of prehistoric monsters in remote plateaux or islands. As in his historical novels like *The White Company* (1891) or the Brigadier Gerard series (1896, 1903), Conan Doyle explores different realities through shifting the potential and perspectives of time. Yet, he also threw himself into contemporary political affairs with *The Great Boer War* (1900), *The*

War in South Africa (1902), a *History of the British Campaign in France and Flanders* (1916–20) and, late in life, *The Wanderings of a Spiritualist* (1921) and *A History of Spiritualism* (1926). A man of unbounded interests, he was fascinated by many things – by pugilism, by the dubious conviction of Oscar Slater in 1909 (he fought bravely to have that injustice reversed), by Britain's treatment of its colonies and its involvement with contemporary Europe. Despite this, and an enormous public reputation, he failed to become a parliamentary figure, remaining a man of letters, very widely recognised, knighted in 1902, and dying with a worldwide reputation. His books capture something of the clubbable and safe atmosphere of privileged London at the turn of the century, but they do not take refuge in it. Underlying them are his perceptions, chiming closely with those of Robert Louis Stevenson, of the hidden realities of human behaviour, the double-faced nature of truth and the duality of personality. Doyle captures the threats to the seeming safe worlds he presented and the need for change that was to overtake them in his lifetime. Time and again, in both his Holmes stories and his novels, the results of imperial experience and colonisation have problematic – and often treacherous and disastrous – long-term effects.

Neil Gunn (1891–1973), long an enigma, much praised, not always read as much as the exceptional range of his fiction would encourage, also sought profounder insights through and beyond the mundane. A man who preferred to live on the outskirts of his Scotland (but not shy of showing the cities when he had to), he patterned his fiction again and again on repetitive themes – on the historical roots of the Highlands (Gaelic, Norse, Pictish), on the savagery of the Clearances and their many-generational aftermath, on the seemingly timeless scenery of the Highlands and the fascination of a sea which brought life in its herring shoals, and often death, to those who had to learn how to hunt the silver darlings. He was adept at fantasy, and wrote with real insight on time and perceptions of time that sometimes transcended the rational. Some of his characters (dark Mairi in *Butcher's Broom*, for example, and to some extent Kirsty in *The Silver Darlings*) have the gift of second sight, and many of his older characters a wisdom that dies with them. They epitomise a Scotland reaching out to a modernity it cannot understand, a brutal world that encompasses the First World War and its impact on both the lonely fishing villages of the north and the steadying influence of family loyalty that formerly transmitted over generations values beyond easy expression. Again, the reality exposed is that of change, the uncertainty of certainty.

Indeed, Gunn has been interestingly judged against the practice of Zen Buddhism, straining to find a fictive form that would be delicate enough to reflect the images of a Nature too fragile to be accounted for in modern science or modern language. Late in life he did nothing to discourage readers from seeing in him the Zen wish to penetrate the surface to see the miracle beneath, what he called memorably the *Atom of Delight* (1956). His most read work is a trio of novels set in the Highlands northwards of Inverness. *Butcher's Broom* (1934) is a Clearances book of real bite and anger. *Highland River* (1937) offers a semi-autobiographical account of a boy, then a growing man's search for the roots of his being and thought at the head of the local river. *The Silver Darlings* (1941) is a marvellous generational account of the crofting Highlanders cleared from their land, resettled by the sea, learning the hard way how to be fishermen and to understand Nature at its most savage as well as its most bountiful. Over all brood the remains of older civilisations, their brochs and their standing stones, and in the minds of the elders the fading memory of a past wisdom. Time changes reality; old realities prove evanescent.

Eric Linklater (1899–1974) is widely remembered as an Orcadian, even if many of his most memorable scenes are set in China, the USA, or Italy. His most enduring success has

been fiction set far from a Scotland that attracted him all his life, and led him to settle in Orkney before the Second World War, and Easter Ross after. An early lifetime of travel in the Far East and in the USA gave him a rich vein of experience. This he exploited with good humour in his autobiographical *Fanfare in a Tin Hat* (1970) and in the comic novels for which he is chiefly remembered: *Juan in America* (1931), after his experiences in Cornell and Berkeley, and *Private Angelo* (1946), after his wartime experience in Europe, particularly in Italy. The echo of Byron in the *Juan* of his titles (there were several *Juan* novels, none so successful as the one in *America*) is a clue as to their immediate attraction to an audience which had access to cheap paperbacks and which called for edition after edition. Like Don Juan, Linklater takes a sardonic, detached, witty view of the passing show, not the first British visitor to treat the United States in this way (and probably not the last), and certainly not offending Italian taste by the way in which he affectionately recalled (as Robert Garioch was later to do) the warmth and loyalty of those he met there, as well as satirising the more comic aspects of their society and politics. Linklater explored the fatuousness of mere social form, while responding positively to the value of human relationships in a transient world where old orders change.

George Mackay Brown (1921–96) was another Orcadian and, while he had many of Gunn's virtues as a writer, his point of focus was not the mainland of Caithness and Sutherland nor Linklater's cosmopolitanism, but Stromness in the Orkneys. Like Gunn, he could, when he wished, write of the cities but his imagination was at its most successful in the islands, looking out to sea and to the past for the Viking and the pre-Christian societies whose remains were still visible in his everyday countryside. To be part of Scotland in the sense of Lowland Scotland was never his ambition. He preferred the quiet orderly life of his Stromness flat and his writing routine (punctuated by occasional bouts of conviviality) to the distractions of the sorts of social and celebrity success that would doubtless have come with a move to the cities. A devout Roman Catholic, he saw in the succession of the seasons of the Church and of the natural world an order that is reflected in his fiction, 'a time to keep', unchanging, reassuring, yet (again the resemblance to Gunn) one which brings death as well as life, winter as well as spring. A great deal of his output in fiction and in verse is about that cycle of creation and destruction, seen as not threatening, but completely natural. For him, the surface must be transcended, the inner reality and rhythms of stasis and change shared.

Mackay Brown's themes may recur – not that this is negative criticism – but his range was surprisingly wide, the annual Christmas short story for *The Scotsman*, short journalism (*Under Binkie's Brae*, 1979), longer journalism, several volumes of verse, a splendid novel about the Cold War and its impact on the islands (*Greenvoe*, 1972), some near-fantasy work which uses time travel to explore the roots of our modern civilisation (*Time in a Red Coat*, 1984) and volume after volume of short stories of the highest quality (*A Time to Keep*, 1969, being an outstanding early example). There is a claustrophobic first impression to the stories particularly, the small town, the gossip, the clear view of the treeless islands where people see for miles and privacy is as rare as passion, where life is hard and people say little while they struggle to make a living. Yet, far from reducing the work to the merely local or the parochial, this spareness and pellucid apparent simplicity allows Mackay Brown to write about passion and involvement, life and death without sensational incident. The apparently trivial – the breaking of a fiddle which cuts the tie to hundreds of years of music and song, the coming of the telegram with the news of a son drowned thousands of miles away, the sobbing of an alcoholic woman trapped in a loveless house – expands into clear and often biting observation of humanity seen with all the clarity of life in the cities, maybe

with more. Shy and reticent in manner, Mackay Brown was above all an observer from a distance: the flow of published work was something eagerly awaited despite the apparently narrow range. Fittingly, the internationally important St Magnus Festival represents in Orkney today some kind of memorial to his lasting influence, a cultural manifestation that reflects the way he made the liminal central.

Margaret Elphinstone (b. 1948) continues to produce and shape multiple careers both as university teacher (a Chair at Strathclyde University) and a creative writer attracting more and more interest – and prizes. Her work – assured, attractive, innovative – has the attraction of rarely offering the same pleasures twice, though certain themes recur. These include interest in the historic and mythical past, the Norse and Scandinavian invasions and influences on Scotland, a perceptible interest in the fantastic, a strong feeling for nature (including a number of published books on plants and holistic (1987) and organic (1990) gardening). Elphinstone's characters often travel over huge distances: her world is one of expanding vision, an attempt to connect to a half-understood natural world, to understand the perplexities of human character in affection as well as in danger and stress. She has mastered the short story (*An Apple from a Tree*, 1991) and full-scale fantasy (*Hy Brasil*, 2002). *Voyageurs* (2003) is a confident and convincing excursion into those who explored and settled eastern Canada, the settlers who fought climate, indigenous people and misunderstanding at home to carve out lives in a really new world. Alone among the writers covered here, she offers the further challenge of an unguessable future: no two of her books have been quite alike, and the next may be something completely new always, though, searching the changing nature of reality through time and space.

Each of these authors has a particular approach to place. Place is, for example, constricted in geography and universal in application in the greatest work of Neil Gunn:

This is my corner of the Highlands, here my earliest memories were formed, and so, for better or worse, richer or poorer, I stick by it. It is the way the blood argues.

While *The Silver Darlings* has been rightly praised for the way in which it catches the seasonal rhythms of the herring fishery, its alternate triumphs and desolation, *Highland River* makes even more impact with a narrower geographical field. Yet it takes risks: its central character, Kenn, leaves the river, attends university, sees the world – but comes back to his river, to the challenge of moving upstream. This was a forbidden journey in youth, forbidden by family and society and even the gamekeepers, but in manhood a primeval urge must find the source, in a post-war world where so much certainty had been smashed in Europe. It is entirely in keeping with Gunn's emergent Zen-related beliefs that the place turns out to be nowhere and everywhere. The river in fact has no source, but rather a few insignificant gushing waterholes in a bog, where the water gathers for the long journey which will eventually form a proper river. The lesson Kenn learns about the elusive nature of significance is entirely apposite to this chapter's themes, and each writer considered here has attacked it from his or her own angle.

Mackay Brown's angle is particular, though the argument of particularity can be spread widely. Much of his 'place', lovingly re-remembered and re-created in his writing, will be as intensely private as the remoter parts of the north-east in Gunn's fiction. Mackay Brown's Orkney is unlikely to be visited by large numbers of his readers. Those curious, tree-less islands, the pellucid light, the sense of slowly decaying community, the linguistic differentness have to be imagined and he simply does not attempt to explain, to cajole the reader, to fill in the 'wider picture'. Brown and Gunn create a sense of place displaced, an

apparent public given that becomes both seemingly universal and subject to private realisation. There is no simple, essential or universal location for 'Scotland' nor are easy assumptions sustainable.

History, too, is under question. When it comes for Brown (who will often explain the centuries-old evolution of modern Scotland from Scandinavian and other roots), it is not the history of kings and battles, but of humble priests, or the glimpses of a wider world and a more serious battle from the limited vision of the local participant. Nowhere is this more vividly caught than in his perceptions of the Second World War (*A Time to Keep*) and the Cold War (*Greenvoe, Beside the Ocean of Time* (1994)). There the use of place is masterly: in *Greenvoe* the tunnelling of the hills to make listening posts or missile silos is as incomprehensible as the sound of Lord Haw-Haw's braying voice announcing the sinking of the *Ark Royal* in *A Time to Keep*, bemusing the islanders who can see for themselves the looming shadow of the boat, afloat and very much in action. Friend and foe, enemy and ally, these concepts are reduced to very peripheral things in this masterly contraction of place. The larger questions are those Mackay Brown foregrounds: loyalty, family, faith, work, survival in a difficult world. The fisherman and the farmers work to a timetable set millennia ago; the churches work to a calendar older than memory. Unlike T. S. Eliot's horrified 'birth, and copulation, and death' from *Sweeney Agonistes*, Mackay Brown's cycle of life and death is compressed into the distant place where the imperatives are those of harvest and fishing catch, childbirth and old age, weather, travel and safety.

Briefly the challenge of place could be said to be this. The writer has revisited the land of youth in memory often, reinforced memory and introduced both fresh memory and false memory. With maturity, comes the impression that the relationship to the land of memory and the adult land of here and now is clear, or at least comprehensible. Gunn's characters repeatedly try to 'understand' themselves and their predicaments in this way, and repeatedly fail, just as Mackay Brown's characters are content to achieve a partial understanding and acceptance rather than claim comprehension. Alongside MacDiarmid's raised beach, and Grassie Gibbon's final vision of Barmekin and Benachie in *Grey Granite* (1934), Mackay Brown's Orkney and Gunn's Highlands stand as places of mystery and challenge rather than final comprehension. To arrive is not to understand. No more do Margaret Elphinstone's voyageurs understand the land they are trying to settle. Conan Doyle's and Linklater's travellers find truth to be an elusive and sometimes illusory matter. For Doyle's Holmes, the scientific explains the illusions of 'reality', but does not comprehend the mysteries of motivation. All of the writers draw on their Scottish experience. Out of that complexity, none of these writers can, or would wish to, claim an intimate understanding of any simple truths, let alone the totality of Scotland. None can use Scotland to explain to the outside world questions of belief or nationality. This is a major step forward from the Kailyarders and those other Scottish authors who have chosen to make of Scotland-the-place a touchstone by which to measure themselves, others and other places. Significantly, the great majority of such authors look to a Scotland past, often comfortably within living memory, but safely past and so able to be summed up. Barrie's Kirriemuir is (he openly admits in the first pages of his 1889 *A Window in Thrums*) a village long dead and replaced by a more industrial modernity; Ian Maclaren's Drumtochty is a self-conscious hangover from an older Scotland, safely up the head of a glen and away from the burgeoning reality of the late Victorian lowlands. Readers are invited there for relief: readers of the authors that this chapter concerns are invited to localities that challenge their 'normality' in location, belief and time.

It has been suggested earlier that the idea of *time* has been behind the discussion of place, and, as has been argued, time and place are intimately woven together for the writers discussed here. For Conan Doyle, story after story hinges on the impact of past history on current reality. As the Standing Stones look over Grassic Gibbon's Kinraddie as a continual reminder of the history of the place, so the ruins of older civilisations are always to be found in Mackay Brown and Gunn, in Linklater's Orkney, in the imagined scenes of Norse invaders and sailors which enlivens Elphinstone's *The Sea Road* (2000). For all these writers, time is dynamic. Since Scott, certainly, readers have often been invited to regard Scotland as a place where either time stood still or the ruins of earlier civilisation were the picturesque adornment of glen and battlefield. The cottagers of Glenburnie occupy a lost world almost as fantastic as Conan Doyle's prehistoric monsters: the difference is that these are flesh and blood human beings trapped in an older time, untouched by 'progress' until Elizabeth Hamilton's narrator brings to them the advantages of English thrift and hygiene. Scott's first descriptions of country Scottish villages in *Waverley* have much the same quality, squalid, picturesque, but unbearably old-fashioned. Through Stevenson's fiction, through Buchan's, through the writers Douglas Brown attacked ferociously in *The House with the Green Shutters*, Scotland was a place where time either stood still or where progress had never made a start. The place of the analytic mind in Conan Doyle, the ferocity of Gunn's counter-attack to rose-tinted sentimentality, Linklater's quizzical modernity, all shatter conservative retrospection and problematise everyday experience. They make possible much of the fiction of the second half of the twentieth century, which establishes the existence of that majority of Scotland – the city-dwellers – and the reality of their daily lives.

The choice of novelists like Gunn and Mackay Brown at a time when urban realism was emerging as the dominant mode in Scottish fiction and, later, Elphinstone of a different strategy has proved highly successful. To choose the unfamiliar place where the pressures of time and fashion seem distant or irrelevant is to set up a continuous tension between the reader's time and place and the author's. It enables a reversal of the trick of comparison, so inviting when reading about a society trapped in the past. Again and again the authors are able to point to a calm and wisdom that comes with the out-of-the-way, an ability to read the seasons and the larger problems of life. Authors like Linklater who had experienced the metropolitan world of Europe and chose to live in Orkney and Easter Ross were making a statement that was not retreat, but a challenge to the conventional urbanised calibration by which measurements of quality of life, sophistication of outlook, ability to understand or make meaningful statements about contemporary society are made.

The varied work discussed in this chapter represents a realignment of Scottish writing. This has enriched the twentieth century's progressive excursions in modernism and postmodernism, realism, politically committed poetry, prose and drama, linguistic experimentation and the slowly growing commitment to serious and critical attention to Scottish, especially Highland, history, Gaelic culture, and the rescuing and critical evaluation of oral tradition. Writing on 'the periphery' – or from that periphery – becomes more than a personal credo from an author on *his or her* country. (In Doyle's case, the periphery paradoxically is metropolitan London re-imagined through a series of Edinburgh lenses.) Shifting the norm, the writer's assumption of normality for values which may seem distant or old-fashioned is a challenge to re-evaluate. In the world that Conan Doyle, Gunn, Linklater, Mackay Brown and Elphinstone inhabit, the unsettling sensation that the people and the societies described do not conform, and have no wish to conform, to the norms of reader expectation is allied to a growing sensation, that any expectation of

the reader must be questioned and refocused. It is hard to avoid a comparison with Edwin Muir's *An Autobiography* (1954) and its evocation of a vanished world – indeed the youth of his Orkney – with its description of a regained world which had something of the 'birdwings to fly free' he described in 'The Labyrinth'. Trapped in that maze, the poem evokes the sweaty nightmare of endlessly recurring doubt and despair until a moment's clarity, a vision gained through literature, gives the poet the means to fly free, to re-imagine place and reality. 'That', Muir affirmed at the end of the poem, 'was the real world: I have seen it once / and now will know it always'.

The authors discussed here see, in all its hardness and discomfort, the real world through their exploration of distant places and times, difficult conundra, fantasy, memory, times past and a Scotland remote from the majority experience. Even Sherlock Holmes, in far-off newly peripheral Baker Street, his personality split in an almost Stevensonian way between the rational and demonic, is using Conan Doyle's Edinburgh literary experience and medical training to teach readers how to read, to see evidence, to unlock the reality underlying surface experience. They might all say with Neil Gunn in the film made with George Bruce shortly before his death, with the serenity of someone who has learned to see, in and through the small foreground things, the larger truths literature can suggest, 'I fetch water; I break sticks; miracles happen.'

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Past and Present: Modern Scottish Historical Fiction

Colin Milton

In Allan Massie's *Nero's Heirs* (1999), the narrator, one of Tacitus' sources for the turbulent period which saw the end of Rome's first imperial dynasty, wonders what the great historian will make of his first-hand account of the confusion and conflict of the recent past. His conclusion is that he

will present men and women as if they [are] capable of being understood. There is no other way of writing history perhaps. It is the historian's impulse to make sense of what happens. But can the sense they create be true to experience? I think not. Does any man really understand even himself?

The implicit contrast is with the imaginative writer, who accepts that men and women are not in the end 'capable of being understood', and whose medium, fiction, is better able than history proper to capture their complex, contradictory and unpredictable natures. Even those powerful enough to shape (or reshape) the state, and who see themselves as 'making history', are rarely fully conscious of what they are doing. Indeed, as Octavius Caesar in an earlier Massie novel, *Augustus* (1986), realises, the ability to deceive oneself is a condition for success in politics since it is the basis of the ability to deceive others. Less psychologically acute than the novelist, the historian is often inclined to believe, with Massie's Tacitus, that 'character is fixed, so that what emerges at one stage in life was merely hidden before'. People are seen as simply not capable of significant change, and those who do seem to change thus reveal themselves as hypocrites.

In the tradition of historical fiction initiated by Scott, however, the focus is rarely on rulers like Augustus or on periods in which the will of a single powerful figure can direct historical events. The central figures in the post-Scott tradition are, in the main, ordinary, unexceptional individuals, who find themselves caught up in major historical events, usually without consciously choosing to become involved; initially at least, they lack understanding of the significance of what they are caught up in. The conflicts in which they find themselves embroiled are not the result of the personal ambitions of rulers, but of the more diffuse historical processes by which developed societies change and which, at particular junctures, create religious, social or political turmoil. In such polarised situations, otherwise uncommitted characters find themselves forced to take sides – while recognising, at the same time, that each of the contending parties represents values worth fighting for. Usually this awareness of alternative historical perspectives with their own kind of validity is limited by the personality and circumstances of the character; sometimes,

however, it is integral to the fictional point of view. Seen from the Northern Isles, as in the historical writing of the Orcadian George Mackay Brown for instance, Scottish history has a very different shape and character to that found in fictions based on the conventional grand narrative of state formation and consolidation against external enemies like Nigel Tranter's popular trilogy on the career of Robert the Bruce.

Fiction has the advantage over 'traditional' history of allowing writers to focus on the part played by 'ordinary' people in shaping events through their membership of groups representing historically significant causes, interests or principles. And if writers of historical fiction do not altogether reject the 'historian's impulse to make sense of what has happened', they do tend to make a different, and arguably more complex, kind of sense of it. The fictional characters who participate in 'historic' events usually fail to understand fully what they are taking part in; naturally, too, the groups they belong to are made up of individuals with different degrees of conviction, different reasons for supporting the cause and different ways of understanding it. Traditional literary-cum-historical categories are subverted, too, in such fictions. In them, the 'heroic' becomes dissociated from high rank and the military-aristocratic ethos; civil strife forces ordinary, unengaged people to take sides, and by placing 'unexceptional' individuals in exceptional circumstances elicits from them heroic responses, which in other circumstances they would not have thought themselves capable of. Self-discovery is, paradoxically, a consequence of *social* engagement, and the idea of the heroic is democratised.

Recent historical fiction has carried the process further. It has often focused on the experience of groups historically excluded from the political nation as defined in the Scott tradition – or on areas like the history of sexuality and sexual attitudes, which though profoundly important in human experience, have largely been ignored in the tradition. Simon Taylor's *Mortimer's Deep* (1992) is set in turbulent late twelfth-century Scotland. Yet, it is not the accelerating feudalisation of the country or the extent of English political influence in the 1170s and 1180s which is the main centre of interest, but changing theological attitudes to same-sex relationships, particularly as they affect monastic life. The focus is on the historical moment at which homosexuality, seen positively in the classical world, comes to be regarded in Christian Europe as literally devilish, a fundamental perversion of nature inspired by Satan, which must be denounced and punished. It is a moment that ushers in centuries of concealment and persecution for gay people and Taylor's perspective challenges the still-dominant idea that the history of human society has been marked by a slow but steady liberalisation of sexual attitudes. The nature of the subject helps shape the form of the work: an implausibly complete life-narrative imparted by an older monk, Michael, to a young visiting cleric, Martin, in successive 'episodes'. But the apparent awkwardness of the method underlines an important point about this particular kind of history. It has to be oral, since for Michael to write candidly about his emotional and sexual experiences would be too risky, and it has to be imparted secretly to a sympathetic hearer, who finds it compelling because it speaks to his own condition. As with the idea that there is an 'alternative' unwritten women's history, passed down from mother to daughter by word of mouth, so Taylor invokes the notion of a gay tradition transmitted, clandestinely, in a similar way from generation to generation.

In *Joseph Knight* (2003), James Robertson links a number of such 'hidden' histories – of gender, class and colour – by exploring the parallels between the situations of women, the 'lower' classes and the enslaved black African who gives the book its title. Robertson's first novel, *The Fanatic* (2000), drew on the tradition of multiple viewpoints exploited in Hogg's *Confessions* to portray the psyche of a seventeenth-century 'terrorist' James Mitchel, failed

assassin of Archbishop Sharp (the word is used of him, again subverting contemporary complacency about 'progress'). Similarly, *Joseph Knight* is in conversation with a notable earlier novel, Margaret Oliphant's *Kirsteen* (1890). In the latter, the main interest is on gender issues: in the heroine's struggle to escape from a repressive home life and a father who regards girls simply as encumbrances, and achieve economic and social independence. Her father, Drumcarro, a descendant of the great Douglasses, who has had to flee Scotland after being out in the '45, has partly repaired the family fortunes in the plantations of Jamaica – and has brought home with him the autocratic, domineering habits formed in his slave-driving days. In Robertson's novel, it is the curiosity of the Kirsteen-like daughter of Sir John Wedderburn about her father's West Indian past and in particular about his relationship with Joseph Knight, the black slave brought back as his personal servant, which initially drives the plot. Robertson ironises the emphasis in the patriotic historical tradition on the Scots as fighters for freedom through a dream experienced by the liberal-minded lawyer MacLaurin. Reliving a night in the tavern, he finds himself deaved by an 'ignoramus drunk on wine and patriotism' repeating the 'kind of sentiments many Scots found hard to resist' about the nation's history:

'Aye, sir, we've aye been hot for liberty. We focht for it against the English wi Wallace and Bruce, and we'll fecht for it against the French. It's in oor banes. Of course we'll fecht for the freedom o the Negroes, sir. We're Scotsmen. It's in oor banes.'

Incensed, MacLaurin roars back

'You've drunk yoursel half blin man. It's Scots that run the plantations [. . .] The place is rife wi us. Look at the names, ye blin beggar, and tell me I'm a liar. [. . .] The truth is, we're swimmin up tae oor mooths in the bluid o Africans, but when we tak some in the sugar has sae sweetened the taste that it disna scunner us.'

When Knight attempts, successfully, to gain his freedom through the Scottish courts, MacLaurin is one of the advocates representing him, but it is striking that during the hearing – and for all his previous life – Knight is always spoken for, and constructed by, others. We hear him directly only at the end of the book because it is only then that he has a voice of his own. Knight's situation is particularly hard, but not unique: his case follows by only a few years the freeing of Scotland's colliers and salters from chattel slavery.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the 'serious' novel turned inward. 'Real life' came to be identified with the complexities of individual consciousness and the intimacies of personal relationships rather than with public and social experience, and a new kind of literary figure, the artist-novelist emerged, whose task was to explore the inner life in all its subtleties and ramifications. The shift in taste, at least in what was thought of as the 'high' literary tradition, manifested itself in various ways. Critical attitudes to Scott, for instance, began to change, so that his work came to be seen as lacking the literary artistry and psychological depth appropriate to an adult readership and was increasingly adapted for younger readers. Ironically, at the same time, the tradition of historical romance, which had begun with *Waverley* in 1814, was undergoing vigorous revival. Stevenson was the key figure; an eloquent advocate of romance with an authority deriving from his reputation as a supreme storyteller, it was his example, above all, which inspired the enthusiasm for historical fiction which marked the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

The movement to promote romance was not simply an attempt to draw attention to the merits of the genre, however, or even a campaign to free the imagination from the constraints of 'realism'; it had a distinct ideological bias. Contemporary realism – whether psychological as in Henry James or social as in Émile Zola – was seen by many contemporary commentators as dangerous, encouraging, among other things, morbid self-examination and general 'unmanliness'. A diet of Jamesian realism (it was argued) would encourage solipsism and undermine the ability to act cooperatively; further, by encouraging fine analysis of motives, it would inhibit action and, ultimately, render the educated classes of Britain unfit for the exercise of imperial power. Zolaesque naturalism was seen as equally pernicious, concentrating as it did on the unsparing depiction of contemporary social problems without any balancing recognition of the positive achievements of the age. Adventure and romance, in contrast, celebrated courage and enterprise, and fostered a sense of the possibilities of life and a willingness to take risks to realise them. Such tales, historical or contemporary, formed in Martin Greene's phrase, 'the energising myth' of the spirit of exploration, discovery and conquest which, by the 1880s, had created an empire on which the sun never set. In this late Victorian dispute about the reading habits of the British public, nothing less than the Destiny of the Nation was at stake.

Historical romances were taken seriously by those late Victorian and Edwardian literary critics who wrote for the periodical and newspaper press, but not by contemporary writers influenced by the ideals of what came to be called literary modernism – or by their supporters in the academy. Indeed the reputation of the greatest writer of them, Walter Scott, was not fully rehabilitated in the English-speaking world until 1962, with the publication of the English translation of Lukács's 1937 study, *The Historical Novel*. Given Scott's central preoccupations, it is hardly surprising that he was neglected by modernist critics and had to be 'rediscovered' as a serious writer by a Hungarian Marxist. For Scott, the self is always a social creation, something constantly in the process of formation, rather than an inner 'core', which comes to light when 'external' social influences are thrown off. Individuals discover their identity in a social world in which 'reality' itself is always already socially determined, something Scott was acutely aware of since his main thematic preoccupation was the transition from pre-modern to modern society. This preoccupation was natural to a writer who was close in time and place to just such a transition: after 1746, the traditional social order of the Highlands was more or less rapidly replaced by another with markedly different characteristics. Marxists like Lukács tend to think of such transformations as a zero-sum game; Scott felt that they did not need to be. Scott was conscious of the admirable qualities of Highland society as well as of its 'backwardness' and violence. He sought to suggest through his fiction not only ways in which Highland virtues might be put to work in the new order (the martial traditions of the clans could be directed 'outward', for example, to protect Britain as a whole, rather than 'inward' against the Lowlands or rival clans). He also sought to show that Highland society's core values, attachment to principle, loyalty to locality, kin and chief, could be absorbed with benefit into the new, mercantile society. The change was a relatively rapid one: the 1746 Disarming Act was repealed in 1782 without a single opposing vote and by Scott's time the readiness of Lowlanders not only to admire the martial tradition of the Highlands, but to claim affiliation with it by wearing the tartan was well established.

In Scott's view, this dual inheritance equipped the Scots to make a unique contribution to an evolving British identity, one in which the creative tension between 'Highland' and 'Lowland' values would act as a dynamic principle. The idea of such an inheritance, at once dynamic and difficult, was one of Scott's abiding legacies to his literary successors,

informing in different ways the work of writers as diverse as Hogg, Stevenson and MacDiarmid. In fiction, the duality is sometimes presented as a radical division in the psyche of a single character, sometimes through paired characters who are both rivals and intimates. The 'Caledonian antiszygy' is a more abstract version of the same idea, but equally seen as distinguishing the Scots psyche from the English. Borrowed by C. M. Grieve/Hugh MacDiarmid from G. Gregory Smith's *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919), it became an important element in Grieve/MacDiarmid's propaganda for a Scottish Renaissance in the 1920s and 1930s.

Born in 1875, John Buchan belonged to the generation formed by historical romance, recalling in his autobiography that Stevenson in particular

was [. . .] a most potent influence over young men, especially Scottish university students. '[W]onderfully young at heart', he had the same antecedents that we had, and [. . .] thrilled as we did to those antecedents – the lights and glooms of Scottish history; the mixed heritage we drew from Covenanter and Cavalier.

Stevenson helped his young Scots readers to understand themselves as *Scots* (more accurately, perhaps, as male Scots); through his tales they were able to grasp imaginatively the nature and value of the 'mixed heritage' which had shaped them. Buchan's testimony helps to explain the importance attached to historical fiction in the period; and it accounts also for the fact that though he regarded himself as a serious historian, he did not view himself as a serious novelist except in tales with historical settings like *Midwinter* and *Witch Wood*. He dismissed his hugely successful stories of intrigue and espionage as mere 'shilling shockers', unworthy of critical attention. Unlike his older contemporary Conan Doyle, however, who came to resent the way in which his Sherlock Holmes stories overshadowed what he felt was his more 'serious' work as historical novelist and historian, Buchan invariably enjoyed writing them.

Buchan's early *John Burnet of Barns* (1898) is heavily dependent on Stevenson; in it, as in *The Master of Ballantrae*, the 'mixed inheritance' is split between two different characters, with the steady, scholarly, principled John contrasted with his wild, glamorous and unscrupulous soldier cousin Gilbert. Stevenson's influence is apparent too in the hints of *Jekyll and Hyde*, when it becomes clear that each cousin has the potentialities of the other in him. Despite his cousin's consistent treachery, John feels a constant sense of connection with him and, while affecting to despise the unglamorous John, Gilbert in fact resents his accomplishments, particularly his success in love. Stevenson is there too in the vivid evocation of the life of a hunted man in the border hills, the fate John suffers after his return to Scotland, having been falsely reported to the authorities as a Covenanter extremist.

By the time he came to write *Witch Wood* (1927), Buchan had outgrown Stevenson's influence and both subject and treatment are more reminiscent of Scott (Buchan published an English Association pamphlet on his fellow-Borderer in 1924 and a full-length critical study in 1932). David Sempill, the young minister at the centre of the action, is a more satisfactory creation than Burnet, embodying in his own person the 'mixed inheritance' of 'Covenanter and Cavalier'. He takes up his first charge in the village of Woodilee on the edge of a fragment of the ancient Caledonian Forest in 1644 at the time of the Solemn League and Covenant, when the power and ambitions of the Kirk are at their highest. The belief of the religious establishment that the Scots are a spiritually privileged, covenanted people, and so entitled to impose their 'truth' on the rest of the country, is ironically

juxtaposed to the undeveloped state of the country, the backwardness of traditional agriculture and the superstitions about disease and its treatment that make the outbreak of plague in Woodilee, described later in the novel, so devastating.

Sempill is a typical Scott 'hero', young, untried and with contrasting potentialities, his face giving signs of both the 'fighter and comforter'. Near the opening of the tale, he is linked quite literally with the Cavalier side in the war between King and Kirk through his meeting with three royalist soldiers whom he conducts to safety. One of the company is the royalist leader Montrose and, even before David finds out his identity, he recognises an unusual nobility, intelligence, tolerance and natural quality of leadership in him. Later, after the royalist defeat at Philiphaugh, he meets and gives shelter to one of the party, Mark Kerr. This is despite the occupation of the village by the Covenanters and the reprisals inflicted by the godly not just on the surviving 'malignants', but even on the women and children camp-followers of Montrose's troops. Mainly Irish Catholics, they are slaughtered without mercy in an episode which serves as a reminder of the savagery which stains the conventional triumphalist narrative of the victory of (Presbyterian) Liberty and True Religion in Scotland. It also has a contemporary reference and resonance in the context of the Kirk's involvement in the interwar years (with some nationalist groups) in exploiting anxieties that Scotland's Presbyterian, Protestant culture would be 'swamped' by Irish Catholic immigrants. The submission to the 1923 General Assembly of what Colin Kidd has described as a 'virulently nativist' Church and Nation Committee report and the success in the 1930s of John Cormack's Protestant Action were worrying indications of how much the attitudes portrayed in *Witch Wood* had survived into the twentieth century.

At the end, deprived of his charge, Buchan's hero leaves with Kerr for Bergen and the European wars of religion, the Cavalier now uppermost. As with Montrose himself, however, 'Cavalier' does not imply support for Divine Right absolutism or the religious authoritarianism of the Roman Catholic Church: Sempill will fight on the Protestant side, and in defence of toleration and the separation of the religious and civil powers.

Culturally speaking, Sempill embodies another, deeper 'mixed inheritance': a 'notable Grecian' while at college in Edinburgh, he recognises an essential continuity between pagan past and Christian present – something rejected by many fellow-Protestants. He sees the literature of Greece and Rome as 'part of that profounder beauty which embraced all earth and Heaven in the revelation of God'. It is an attitude that separates him from those who believe that nature and human nature alike are utterly corrupt; unlike them, Sempill 'had not ceased to be the humanist in becoming the evangelist'. Most of his fellow-ministers believe that the advance of Protestantism is part of a revolutionary change, a radical break with a corrupt past. Sempill's Erasmian outlook, on the other hand, is based on a recognition of cultural continuities which (though he would not consciously acknowledge it) are deeper than the religious or political arrangements of any age. Finding a Roman altar in a clearing in the wood, for instance, he experiences a sense of imaginative connection with the religious life of the past: 'He was scholar enough to feel the magic of this sudden window opened into the past', though, as minister, he is 'disquieted' by the discovery, which has 'violated' the woodland and 'ravished' its peace.

The connections between pagan past and Christian present turn out to be disturbingly close; the altar is still a focus for pagan rites practised by a group of villagers led by Chasehope, a prominent, apparently orthodox, Kirk elder. Buchan's description of the ceremonies synthesises classical, anthropological and Scottish materials. Orgiastic and promiscuously sexual in character, they are a kind of rural Scottish equivalent of the rites of Dionysus (Gilbert Murray, the great translator of Greek drama, had been Buchan's tutor

at Glasgow), with elements drawn from the kind of folk-sources used by Burns for 'Tam o' Shanter'. They take place on major Celtic festivals like Beltane, but also on the Holy Days of the pre-Reformation church calendar: Sempill comes upon the altar on the 'night of Rood-Mass', an occasion which he dismisses (if uneasily) as 'pagan and papistical folly'. His linking of paganism and papistry reflects, of course, a central element in the Reformers' attitude to Catholic beliefs and practices: these had to be swept away because they had been corrupted by the paganism encountered in the early spread of Christianity. It is a view which testifies, ironically, to the persistence of folk-beliefs and practices and the difficulties faced down the ages by those who have tried to suppress them. The association of the rites with the remnants of the ancient Caledonian forest indicates that they are expressions of something both very old and also thoroughly native.

This central element in Buchan's plot depends on an idea then current among folklorists and anthropologists (among them his friend Andrew Lang) that folk-beliefs and customs are 'survivals', fragmentary and often decayed remnants, of old belief-systems. Buchan couples with that another modern idea, this time from psychology, that if powerful natural impulses are repressed, they will issue in extreme and distorted forms. The Beltane orgy in the wood produces a crop of pregnancies and despite Sempill's concern for the girls involved, he can get no one to admit paternity. As the rationalist farmer Rieverslaw says to the minister

What do your Presbyteries and Assemblies or your godly ministers ken o' the things that are done in the mirk? [. . .] They set up what they ca' their discipline and they lowse the terrors o' Hell in sma' fauts like an aith, or profane talk on the Sabbath, or giein' the kirk the go-by, and they hale to the cutty-stool ilka lass that's ower kind to her jo. And what's the upshot? They drive the folk to their auld ways and turn them into hypocrites as weel as sinners.

And Calvinist ideas themselves can be socially dangerous; it is the conviction that he is one of the Elect that frees the elder Chasehope, power-seeking sensualist, and leader of the coven, from his inhibitions and allows him to manipulate and exploit his followers. Nature and instinct and the folk-beliefs and practices linked with them are not in themselves corrupt, however. The wood is also the site of the 'paradise' in which Sempill meets and falls in love with Katrine Yester, who, attired all in green, is closely identified with the beauty of the natural world. Through his experiences in Woodilee, Sempill becomes, in a phrase Buchan used of his hero Montrose, 'a modern man'; there is no place for him as yet in Scotland, and he must leave.

Like *Waverley*, *Midwinter* (1927) is set in 1745 and, like Scott, Buchan sees the Jacobite rebellion as a confrontation between a declining feudal ethos and the rising capitalist order (the Hanoverian General Oglethorpe, though a Tory, dismisses the Young Pretender as an irrelevance, 'a figure from an old chivalrous world'; the Jacobite agents, significantly, have code-names from the *Iliad*). Buchan's aim is to show as it were the other half of a story which usually focuses on Scotland and the Scots. Despite its English setting, *Midwinter* is also the story of how the natural supporters of the Stuarts, many of them Scots aristocrats with estates in both countries, have been thoroughly assimilated into the British elite. Beneficiaries of the power, wealth and stability of Hanoverian England, they are not prepared to risk them for a cause associated with the doctrine of Divine Right and the alien Gaelic culture of Bonny Prince Charlie's Highland and Irish supporters.

Like Scott's Edward Waverley, the hero Alistair MacLean is a stranger in a strange land, a Catholic Gaelic-speaking Highlander, travelling as an undercover Jacobite agent in the

English shires, where, although cultivated and widely travelled, he is astonished by the wealth, ease and comfort of those he hopes to recruit. In the great houses he visits, the only reminder of the feudal values and loyalties once central to the aristocratic owners is the family portraits. These heroic images may, as one character says of the family Vandykes, make the present generation 'feel small and dingy', but – as MacLean comes to realise – there is no chance that they will sacrifice 'bourgeois' comfort and security to recover their 'heroic' past.

Significantly, the double-agent who betrays the Jacobite cause is also a Scot, a Lowlander who defends his 'treachery' at the last as being for the benefit of his country. He says, 'with an odd earnestness, even a note of honesty', 'if I've laboured to put a spoke in the Chevalier's coach-wheels, it's because him and his wild caterans are like to play hell with my puir auld country'. It is an encounter during the Jacobite retreat through an English village with just such caterans, men of his own culture and country, that finally destroys Alistair's own heroic ideals:

[. . .] their ragged kilts buckled high on their bodies, their legs blue with cold, their shirts unspeakably foul and tattered [. . .] Each man carried plunder, one a kitchen clock slung on his back by a rope, another a brace of squalling hens, another some goodman's wrappascal [. . .]

So that was the end of the long song. Gone the velvet and steel of a great crusade, the honourable hopes, the chivalry and the high adventure, and what was left was this furtive banditti slinking through the mud like the riff-raff of a fair.

This is the squalid reality that lies behind not only this 'crusade', but all such ventures. It strips Alistair of his last illusions and aligns him with the 'naked men', the followers of the humanised nature-deity Midwinter who 'travel light, caring nothing for King or party or Church' and who therefore inhabit a different 'country' from those who do. He and his followers embody a particular kind of perspective – disinterested, scholarly, broadly anthropological – which recognises the social, political and religious arrangements even of one's own time and country as constructed and temporary. It is a view which reflects Buchan's own experience; his involvement in politics and in colonial administration in a time of war, revolution, of the breaking of nations and the dissolution of empires, made him sharply aware that states, social structures and systems of belief are constantly dissolving and re-forming. However, even while recognising their relative transience, it is a natural human impulse to value familiar traditions and institutions. The result is the kind of dual perspective Buchan's hero arrives at: at the end of the tale he returns to Scotland and to fight for a cause he no longer believes in, and knows is lost.

Buchan's best work is the product of a period, the 1920s and 1930s, which was marked by lively public debate about Scottish identity and Scottish culture, and which saw the emergence of political nationalism as a significant force with the formation of the National Party of Scotland in 1928. A capable Scots poet, Buchan was active in the movement promoted by the Vernacular Circle of London Burns Club to gain recognition for Lowland Scots at all levels in the Scottish education system and generally improve its standing. He became an MP in 1927, winning the Scottish Universities seat for the Conservative and Unionist Party, but Buchan belongs to the long tradition of what has been called 'Unionist nationalism', believing that 'every Scotsman should be a Scottish nationalist in the true sense'. He was active in a range of patriotic initiatives: arguing for the creation of a Scottish Office in Edinburgh, helping in the establishment of the National Library, campaigning for funds to improve the care and increase the accessibility of Scotland's public records.

Though convinced that the Union of 1707 had brought great and lasting benefits to Scotland, he believed, too, that if the majority of Scots wanted their own Parliament, it should be established. The year in which he was elected to Parliament was also the year in which *Witch Wood* and *Midwinter* were published. It was also that in which the concluding part of C. M. Grieve's analysis of contemporary Scottish culture (which had begun in June 1925 with an article on Buchan) was published in the *Scottish Educational Journal*. Grieve's assessment of Buchan's literary work – competent, craftsmanlike, entertaining but not much more – is judicious, but he is also seen as an ally in the effort to bring about a Scottish cultural renaissance. Some of his Scots poems were included in the first series of Grieve's *Northern Numbers*, volumes intended to showcase recent developments in poetry in Scotland, and Buchan's 1924 vernacular anthology *The Northern Muse* is recognised as an important contribution to the work of the movement.

Born in 1909, Nigel Tranter's outlook was shaped by the upsurge in national feeling between the wars; there is nothing of Buchan's relativism in his view of Scottish history. Like many nationalists his politics are grounded in a kind of teleology: 'national character' is a divine creation, different nations social and cultural embodiments of its various varieties. A revealing passage in the epilogue to *Nigel Tranter's Scotland* explains that

since recognisable human character will assuredly survive into eternity, so probably will national character, or some aspects of it. I do not believe that our Maker goes to a lot of trouble to make such things and then forgets or abandons them.

Tranter came late to fiction, beginning his career as a writer with studies of Scottish castles and fortified houses – an apprenticeship which left its mark on his fiction in which conscientious historical research is more apparent than stylistic grace or subtle characterisation. He turned to imaginative writing because he felt that it was the most effective medium for reaching a wide, and particularly a young, audience, who were ill-informed about their own culture because of its neglect in the education system and the media.

Tranter's most significant contribution to Scottish historical fiction is his trilogy on the career of Bruce – *The Steps to the Empty Throne* (1969), *The Path of the Hero King* (1970) and *The Price of the King's Peace* (1971) – followed by what might be described as the prequel, *The Wallace* (1975). Though grounded in extensive historical research, the trilogy is essentially a romance. It traces the career of Bruce from the deposition and humiliation of Balliol by Edward I in 1296 to Douglas's journey to Spain in 1330 with the king's heart – a postmortem fulfilment of Bruce's vow to go on a crusade. Tranter traces the events of the period with considerable fullness, though the history is simplified to foreground Bruce, who is given a much clearer consciousness of the historical significance of his actions from the outset than he could in fact have had. However, these strategies are justified by the novelist's need to find a clear narrative line through the tangled events of the time, and by his sense of their significance for the future of the country.

At the same time, this is clearly a modern nationalist reading of Scottish history: it conveys little sense of the motivations of medieval aristocrats and takes at face value the story told by the winning side. As a result, family, territorial and cultural clashes like that between Bruce and the Comyns, the Earls of Buchan, are presented as conflicts between patriots and English quislings. Bruce's own backslidings, in contrast, are treated sympathetically, often in ways which make his attitudes seem 'modern' and likely to appeal to contemporary readers: his submission to Edward in 1302, for instance, is excused by his overwhelming romantic passion for Elizabeth de Burgh. Bruce and his small group of

intimates are seen as proto-nationalists who can see the shape of the future nation. They recognise the latent aspirations of ordinary Scots and the potential of the different cultures and regions of the country to come together in a prosperous and peaceful whole – in other words, they are not unlike nationalist activists of the 1960s and 1970s. Those who resist the state-and-nation-building project – the northern supporters of the Comyns or the Galloway rebels in the south-west – stand for narrowly sectional, anti-national interests. For Tranter, as often for Grieve, such localism condemns Scottish culture to provincial status and, ‘objectively’ if not in conscious intention, plays into the hands of English imperialism. Tranter does not treat those who resist their incorporation into the evolving nation sympathetically. While Edward’s attempt to crush Scots resistance to a united English-dominated Britain is condemned as tyrannical, by a double standard familiar in nationalist thinking, the equally ruthless suppression of those who resist the creation of a united Scotland is presented simply a necessary stage in building the nation. The difference is, of course, that the coming into being of Scotland is, for Tranter, part of our Maker’s plan.

The titles of some of George Mackay Brown’s historical fictions – *Magnus* (1973), *Vinland* (1992) – and the place and personal names in his novels and short stories (Birsay, Egilsay, Rackwick; Thorfinn Ragnarson, Rolf Arvidson, Jorkel Hayforks) underline his distance, in every sense, from the kind of metropolitan historical perspective represented by Tranter. As an Orcadian, he understands Scotland and Scottish history differently, writing out of an experience and local identity often regarded as marginal, literally and metaphorically, to the main ‘national’ narrative. While its relationship to its bigger southern neighbour dominates the history of mainland Scotland, Orkney – like Shetland and Caithness – is linguistically and culturally part of the Scandinavian world. Incorporated into Scotland only in the late fifteenth century as a result of the King of Norway’s inability to meet a dowry payment, the fate of the Northern Isles vividly exemplifies the part played in the formation of nations by the accidental and unplanned – forces which have little place in Tranter’s kind of chronicle of conscious, divinely directed nation-building. A Catholic as well as an Orcadian, Mackay Brown is in fact doubly distanced from popular understanding of Scottish history, which is still rooted in an essentially Presbyterian–Protestant narrative. This is despite the fact that this narrative had been challenged before by Grieve and his Renaissance allies. These had developed between the wars a kind of imagined alternative history in which Scotland continued, potentially at least, to be culturally and theologically part of Catholic Europe (a ‘Catholic’ Europe which was, ironically, a product of the Counter-Reformation).

In *Beside the Ocean of Time* (1994), Mackay Brown uses one of several comic political arguments involving the men of the community to illustrate the failure of political nationalism to incorporate, or even recognise, the distinctiveness of the northern experience; the nationalist publican, MacTavish (an incomer from the central belt), speaks ‘at great length – too long most of the smithy-men thought – about the mighty nation Scotland had been before that disastrous union with England in 1707’ that left it ‘a poor oppressed nation’ (which nevertheless, MacTavish boasts, has produced an endless stream of great men and with an education system which is ‘the envy of the world’). Defining Scottish culture as a fusion of the two cultures and languages, Highland and Lowland, Gaelic and Lallans, the publican omits the Norse element entirely – despite being in Orkney. One of his hearers comments sardonically that

Orkney had never been a part of Scotland anyway till 1472 and then the Scots had fallen on the once powerful earldom of Orkney and batted on it like hoodie crows.

Here the invaders and oppressors from the south are the Scots, not the English. As Mackay Brown reminds us here, violence, exploitation and the marginalisation of local language, customs and traditions are inseparable from state formation; historical nations do not come into being through peaceful consensus.

If Tranter wants to reconnect anglicised Scots with their history through inspirational treatment of the hero of the Wars of Independence, Mackay Brown wants to assert the distinctiveness of Northern Isles history and culture against the hegemonic claims of the mainland narrative. He does it in part through his style and the treatment of his subjects. His spare, often sardonic prose is inspired by the Norse sagas and designed to convey a distinctive ethos and outlook derived from ancestors who combined a passion for chess and complex verse-forms with love of war and raiding. The implication is that the 'pre-Scots' history of Orkney retains a strong influence on how its people still regard the world.

Mackay Brown does deal with the pivotal event in Tranter's trilogy – the battle of Bannockburn – but *Beside the Ocean of Time* treats it in a thoroughly unconventional way which suggests its irrelevance or marginality to his own culture. It is the subject of one of the fantasies of the dreamy Orkney schoolboy on whom the tale is centred. The climax of his Scots history teacher's 'litany' of battles magnificently won or gloriously lost by the Scots, it becomes the subject of a farcical dream when the boy falls asleep listening to the nationalist publican in the smithy. In the dream he rides south from Caithness as squire to a Don Quixote-like knight called MacTavish, to fight at Bannockburn. When they arrive near the battlefield after various generally humiliating encounters along the way, the knight's horse collapses, MacTavish stumbles about in the dark in search of the Scottish army and Thorfinn goes to sleep. He wakes only when the battle is over to hear a passing troop of Scottish horse singing in unison the familiar passage from Barbour's *Brus*, 'Oh freedom is a noble thing/Freedom makes men to have lyking'. The fine sentiments have an ironic resonance in Orkney for, after its incorporation into Scotland, the Scots, and the Scots nobility in particular, often behaved in brutal and oppressive ways towards the native inhabitants – something which Mackay Brown often alludes to or illustrates in his fiction.

The central symbolic story of Mackay Brown's Orkney-centred history is of quite a different kind from the heroic legend of Bruce and reflects his Catholicism as much as his Orcadian-ness. Instead of a tale of victory against the odds in a great battle, it is a story of martyrdom from the *Orkneyinga saga* – the killing of the unworldly Earl Magnus at the instigation of his politically shrewd rival and kinsman Earl Hakon. Mackay Brown refers to the story of Saint Magnus in many of his novels and stories, retelling it at length in *Magnus*, a novel which moves in time and space, sometimes using the historical Dark Age setting in which the events actually took place, sometimes transposing it into contemporary terms. The story is seen in both religious and anthropological contexts. Magnus is a type of Christ, allowing himself to be sacrificed for the good of the community, but the idea of the sacrificial death which offers the best – of crop, beast, or human life – to the Divine is seen as common to all societies. In an audacious comparison, Mackay Brown links Christ's (and Magnus's) deaths to the Inca practice of human sacrifice. For Mackay Brown, this story is more fundamental in its reflection of the deepest relationships between men, nature and the divine, than any 'merely' political narrative.

Dorothy Dunnett, a near-contemporary of Mackay Brown (she was born two years after him, in 1923) could scarcely be more unlike him as a writer. Her work can best be described as highly coloured historical fantasy. It constantly draws attention to its own fictiveness through extravagantly complicated plots, witty and endlessly allusive dialogue and, in her

best-known six-novel series, the *Lymond Chronicles*, the presence of a hero, Francis Crawford of Lymond, who is a kind of sixteenth-century combination of d'Artagnan, James Bond and Oscar Wilde. (Significantly, too, in relation to the ludic character of Dunnett's fiction, all the novels in the series have titles related to the game of chess.)

The framework for Dunnett's *Lymond Chronicles* is the political history of the British Isles, continental Europe and Russia in the mid-sixteenth century, and many of the key historical figures of the time play a part in them. They also reflect, however, the Cold War era in which they were written in the atmosphere of secrecy, intrigue and occult causes which pervades them. They propose that the real events and characters of the time are connected in ways other than those generally accepted as historically factual. Crawford is instrumental, for instance, in ensuring that the infant Mary Queen of Scots escapes capture by the English; later, when she is a child at the French court, he foils repeated and increasingly ingenious attempts on her life by English agents. The concern, however, which links all six novels is the development of Lymond himself and his gradual and reluctant acknowledgement of his own emotional needs and of his relationship to his country.

Lymond is a Scot, but wears his nationality and feelings for his nation lightly; a master swordsman, wrestler, linguist, musician and hugely successful lover of both men and women, he moves in a world which in some ways resembles that of the Cold War era espionage novel. His lack of overt patriotic enthusiasm, his disillusionment with ideals, his recognition of the selfishness and manipulativeness of the powerful people he serves all link him with figures from the spy-fiction of the time like John le Carré's George Smiley. The *Lymond Chronicles* were written between 1962 and 1975, and it is significant that for much of the last, *Checkmate*, Lymond is obsessed with the idea of returning to the Russia of Ivan the Terrible and helping to bring it into the modern age. His experience of Russia and its autocratic ruler – and his movement from an optimistic sense that absolute power shrewdly guided can effect a revolutionary transformation in a backward country to (reluctant) disillusionment – is perhaps best seen as a kind of historical refraction of the response of many western intellectuals to the Russian Revolution and the rise of Stalin. And in the polarised world of Cold War politics and east–west stalemate it was perhaps natural to speculate on what might have happened if Russian history had taken a different turn in the early modern period.

Allan Massie is unusual among contemporary Scottish writers in being broadly Unionist and conservative in his sympathies. An interest in the situation of post-imperial Britain is one of the things which drew him to Roman history at the beginning of its imperial phase in an impressive quartet of novels published between 1986 and 1999. In them, he traces the final collapse of the Roman Republic and the establishment of imperial rule by the Julio-Claudians, with frequent allusions to contemporary and recent political and social history, often through deliberate and witty anachronism. Three of the four books take their titles from the names of the founders of the dynasty: *Caesar* (1993), *Augustus* (1986) and *Tiberius* (1990). The other significant figure in the succession, Claudius, is absent, having been the subject of two notable novels, *I, Claudius* (1934) and *Claudius the God* (1934) by Robert Graves. Massie's last volume, *Nero's Heirs* deals with the so-called 'Year of the Four Emperors', which ended with the victory of Vespasian and the establishment of a new dynasty, the Flavians. In using Roman history to illuminate the situation of present-day Britain, Massie is in distinguished company. During the imperial phase of British history, those, like Kipling, who were interested in the origins, present state and future prospects of the Empire, and in its world-historical 'meaning', often turned to the history of Rome – for of all the ancient empires, the Roman seemed most akin to the British. Like

his Victorian and Edwardian predecessors, Massie finds thinking about ancient Rome a good way of thinking about modern Britain.

The Rome that Massie portrays is at the beginning of its consciously imperial phase while Britain is at the end, but both these moments of historical transition throw up challenges which expose the inadequacies of established political elites, institutions and structures. Significantly, the quartet appeared during the period in post-war British political history dominated by the controversial figure of Margaret Thatcher, Britain's longest-serving twentieth-century prime minister (1979–90). In the first of the series, *Augustus*, the success of Julius Caesar's young nephew Octavius in exploiting his adoptive father's name (while privately expressing his contempt for him) and making himself emperor against apparently more established and formidable rivals is unexpected. It also partly mirrors Thatcher's surprise election to an office from which, under normal circumstances, her sex, social background and political philosophy would have excluded her.

Circumstances were not normal when she came to power, however. Frequent public-sector strikes during 1978–9 had created a widespread feeling in the country that the pursuit of sectional interests was damaging society as a whole, even creating, in *Augustus*' reminiscent words about the period after Caesar's assassination, a 'mood of a crumbling state, of an incipient revolution'. The issue of the difficult relationship between the ambitions of individuals and interest groups and the cohesion of society as a whole was as central to the turbulent period in which Massie's Caesar and Augustus ruled as it was to Britain in the 1970s and 1980s. *Augustus*, in particular, explores, through the emperor's own narrative, the contradictions and ambiguities inherent in the kind of 'radical' conservatism which Thatcher represented. For, as Massie shows, re-establishing a sense of the 'national interest' in post-civil war Rome paradoxically depended on the establishment of strong personal rule; traditional political structures and offices, though scrupulously retained, were largely emptied of substance. As Augustus puts it, 'things would have to change if we wanted them to stay the same'. He inaugurates a system in which, instead of being made by a group of patricians, political decisions are made by a single individual, rather as in Britain in the 1980s, an increasingly centralised and 'presidential' style of government developed, paradoxically in the name of preserving British traditions and institutions. The changes were a belated recognition that the established structures had proved inadequate in the face of a changed position in the world (as Dean Acheson, US Secretary of State from 1949 to 1953 later shrewdly remarked, post-war Britain had lost an empire, but not yet found a role), and of growing social and racial conflict internally, just as the institutions and values of the Republic proved inadequate in Rome's new situation.

If *Augustus* by implication makes a (qualified) case for the necessity of the Thatcher 'revolution', *Caesar*, written after her fall from power, offers a more sceptical view (though allowance has to be made for the fact that the narrator, Decimus Brutus, once a close friend and ally of Caesar's, becomes one of his assassins). In it, Cicero reports Caesar as having asserted that there is 'no such thing as society', a remark actually made by Thatcher, and usually taken as justifying aggressive individualism and a ruthless 'enterprise culture'. Massie's Caesar resembles her too in the fact that his main significance lies in the destabilising and dismantling of outmoded institutions and social relationships rather than in any positive achievement. And it is significant that his often-impressive ideas for improving social conditions in Rome and his belief that provincials should have the same rights as Romans are inextricably linked with his egotism and opportunism, his desire to impress and to create a sense of obligation. The portrayal of Caesar leaves us feeling, as we might in relation to Thatcher's political career, that inveterate radicalism in the end compromises

the central task of bringing outmoded social and political institutions into line with contemporary conditions. For all that, Caesar's literal assassination, like Thatcher's metaphorical one, represents the revenge of traditional elites that have even less to offer the necessary process of modernisation.

Neither in ancient Rome or modern Britain is the political crisis simply a matter of the inadequacy of traditional structures and values to a radically changed outside world. Like Rome, Britain changed the societies it colonised, often substantially, but in both cases, empire also changed the centre (the conservative Decimus Brutus remarks 'Every time I return to Rome, the city seems less itself'). Colonies influence mother countries more than a superficial assessment of power-relationships would suggest. Imperial powers become, perforce, multicultural societies, while their overseas activities help to create what the future Emperor Titus describes in the last novel in the series, *Nero's Heirs*, as a 'world economy' (both for Massie desirable, if problematic, effects of empire). The ambivalent response at the centre to this process is registered in the Roman response to the 'other' – Egypt, Asia, the east generally – which swings between xenophobic distaste and fascination, mirroring the ambivalence felt towards the culturally exotic in post-imperial British society. The Roman novels are full of examples of the cultural other acting as a screen on to which are projected those traits the dominant power wishes to deny in itself. The author of a popular history of the first Caesars, Massie's examples accurately reflect Roman attitudes particularly to Asia, and illustrate how long a history 'Orientalist' prejudices have in the west. After the endless murderous betrayals and broken promises of the last years of the Republic, for instance, the unreflectively patriotic Agrippa, Octavius' most effective general, denounces the Egyptians as 'incapable of loyalty by nature' – because they make promises which they do not intend to keep. Augustus himself criticises the Parthian kings for ruling in a way which is indistinguishable in all but name from the autocratic and dynastic regime he has established in Rome itself. (The implication is that Roman contact with the political systems of other countries has offered new models and helped to shape the contemporary politics of the city.) Occasionally Massie allows himself an oblique comment on the importance of such attitudes in British history; reflecting on Rome's need to control Armenia as a *cordon sanitaire* between the boundaries of the Empire and the formidable Parthians, Augustus characterises the Armenians as 'difficult, unruly, treacherous and xenophobic'. He adds that they 'are mostly Highlanders given to quarrels among themselves which are only momentarily stilled in the face of foreign invasion. The land is mountainous, bitterly cold in winter [. . .] swept by snow-laden winds'. The reference to the long-standing Lowland and English prejudices against the Scottish Highlanders which led to the destruction of much of traditional Gaelic culture is unmistakable.

Such references remind us that Massie is an influential columnist and reviewer commenting on contemporary cultural and political issues from a standpoint broadly in line with that implicit in the historical fiction. In addition to his journalism, Massie has contributed directly to the shape and direction of contemporary Scottish culture through his onetime membership of the Scottish Arts Council, service as a Trustee of the National Museums of Scotland and studies of notable Scottish-born writers like Byron and Spark. He supplied the introduction for the 1982 Polygon reprint of Muir's *Scott and Scotland* – a respectful but sharply analytical dissection of Muir's claims about language and tradition. His links with Scott (the writer who, for Massie, 'gave Scotland consciousness of its own history and nature') extend beyond his writing of historical fiction: he is on the Advisory Board of the Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels, itself a cultural institution in the making. The deep and longstanding sense of connection with Scott becomes explicit in

The Ragged Lion (1994), a fictional version of Scott's final memoirs. As in his other historical fictions, Massie here resists the postmodern rejection of notions of subjectivity and personality, fusing biography and fiction to re-create the inner life of his character and explore the relation of truth, reality and fiction, the interaction of life and art, and issues relating to authorship.

In the 1940s and 1950s, in the period when British rule overseas was being dismantled (or demolished), the Empire literally came home, with mass immigration from the colonies to Britain, and substantial communities different in language, religion and outlook from the established population grew up in the mother country. The visible presence of the 'other' in Britain's town and cities created significant social and cultural tensions and presented politicians and the native population with a challenge. This was whether to define British culture in terms of its predominant historical characteristics – that is as white, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant – or to adopt an open attitude to new influences. In *Nero's Heirs*, the last of Massie's novels, the future emperor Titus – like Buchan's Montrose a representative of the modern and forward-looking – expresses his admiration for the Jews, whose rebellion he has suppressed, describing them as 'a remarkable people'. He is fascinated above all by their devotion to an invisible God and their refusal to compromise their religious principles in obedience to the demands of the state. His admiration reflects Massie's own background, for no Scots writer can fail to be aware of the importance in Scottish history of such attitudes, as in the Old Testament inheritance of the Covenanters, with their integrity, independence and devotion to what they saw as the highest values. At the same time, Titus is repelled by the rigid monotheism of the Jews, their sense of superiority, and their intolerance of the beliefs of others, recognising the dangers such attitudes present to the developing multicultural society of the Empire. Here the divided Scottish inheritance of Scott and Buchan takes on a form and emphasis appropriate to the contemporary cultural situation – not so much Covenanter and Cavalier perhaps as Covenanter and Cosmopolitan.

Between Scott and Stevenson, of course, the context in which human history was understood changed dramatically. Increasingly from the mid-nineteenth century, even the very long stretches of historical time involved in the making of ancient nations like Scotland came to be seen against the unimaginably longer timescales of physics or geology. And in this 'cosmic' perspective, the whole of human history on the planet, never mind the histories of particular peoples or states, was no more than an insignificant moment in the life of a vast system indifferent to human needs and purposes. Modern scientific understanding is not always brought into relationship with history in this way, however. Buchan's *Midwinter* incorporates the larger perspective (though Buchan indicates, like MacDiarmid in 'The Bonnie Broukit Bairn', that it is not one which human beings can live their day-to-day lives by). Yet, writers like Tranter continue to hold to the kind of human-centred cosmos and providential view of ethnogenesis developed by Romantic thinkers like Herder in the late eighteenth century. The greatly extended sense of time and space which begins to make itself felt in European intellectual life from the 1840s also undermined claims that particular peoples, nations or cultures are exceptional, divinely favoured or inherently better than others, bringing a kind of anthropological awareness into historical fiction.

If historical fiction written in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth emphasises the history-making role of the 'ordinary' individual when he (and it is usually 'he') associates himself with his fellows in action, and tends to present that action as broadly 'progressive' in its social effects, the mood of more recent

historical fiction has been less optimistic. Public and social forces have given way to occult causes, to secrets and lies, conspiracies and betrayals. Writers working in the second half of the twentieth century, conscious of the rise of dictatorships, and of the pervasiveness of the 'management' of news and public opinion even in democratic states, have been less optimistic about the effects of mass politics and more aware of the power of modern media to act as agents of manipulation rather than liberation. Particularly in such a climate, historical novelists have an important role. Like the historical dramatists of Elizabethan times they can by indirections find directions out; by setting their narratives in the past, they help us to put our contemporary attitudes and allegiances aside for the moment, and explore the dilemmas of the present more freely.

Further reading

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Tradition and Modernity: Gaelic Bards in the Twentieth Century

Thomas A. McKean

Gaelic song-makers maintain a tradition of song as communication, composing on local issues and personalities with insight and verbal skill. This is despite two world wars, declining rural economies and populations, and dwindling numbers of Gaelic speakers. The professional clan bards are long gone, of course, but the twentieth-century song-poets perform similar social functions. How could the traditional maker of songs have a role to play in this unstable century? The answer lies in a demotic, social composing tradition that for centuries existed side by side with the formal productions of the professional poets, a tradition ultimately more connected with people's everyday, contemporary lives than the sometimes rarified compositions of the subsidised clan bards. (The terms song-maker, song-poet and bard, in its colloquial meaning, will be used interchangeably here.)

This chapter considers Gaelic song-making in its natural functional contexts, urban and rural, where it acts as a vital means of communication. Songs are assessed, by their intended audience, on how effective they are in the social setting of the *cèilidhean*, the house visits or small social gatherings for which they were created and sung. To emphasise the local and topical is not to devalue the songs' worth in purely literary terms, of course, and the songs are also undoubtedly judged on their diction, imagery and intelligence as well.

The key common factor between the songs of old and those of the twentieth-century song-poets is that songs get to the truth of the matter, as do their composers, who are considered tellers of truth by definition. Descending from this belief in the almost magical power of words and those who can manipulate them comes the social song-making tradition of our time. Gaelic culture has long placed a high premium on verbal dexterity, observation and quick wit, as a look at any collection of tongue twisters, proverbs and anecdotes will show. Local song-makers were requested, indeed expected, to make songs, both serious and satirical, for the local *cèilidhean*, songs of love and emotion, of local history, elegiac songs and biting satires that, without naming names, left no one in doubt as to who was being lampooned. Some locals would be wary of a bard lest he make a song about them, an echo of the tradition that an *aoir*, a satirical song or rhyme, could be socially damaging and, in extreme cases, cause physical ailments such as boils, perhaps through psychosomatic stress.

In the twentieth century, the unpaid, unofficial, but locally established song-poets were the *de facto* spokesmen and women for their communities. As such, they wielded considerable influence over their neighbours and over public opinion. In this context, topical song was, and to some extent still is, an essential element of expression seamlessly integrated with other forms. Around the world, song has long been a crucial part of everyday

communication, often employed when speech is, sometimes unconsciously, felt to be inadequate for conveying intense feelings. It must be remembered, too, that the currency of song ran through nearly every aspect of working life in Gaelic society – from milking to churning, from reaping to rowing, from spinning to waulking. Little wonder that song was considered simply another register of vocal communication in Highland society, whereas to mainstream western society a song performed in this social context, as opposed to between a (professional) performer and a (paying) audience, is well outside expected norms of daily social interaction. To most, it is an anomaly, while, to the twentieth-century song-poets and their communities, it is not. Only in recent decades has this long-standing emphasis on song and poetry as an everyday medium for emotional expression begun to break down.

All poetry may be said to reflect social issues and structures, but, to the older generations of Gael, a local song is, centrally, about the personal expression of emotion and the need to communicate. Song-making, singing and learning songs was such a part of daily life for many, so tied up with relationships, history and community, that it functioned on every level of that society. The study of context is, therefore, essential to any full understanding of the song-poet's perspective.

Gaelic poetry, probably in common with that of most of western Europe, exists on a seamless continuum joining the local, social creative traditions that are the subject of this chapter with more widely known and published literary 'art poetry'. A rigid, and unhelpful, division is often made between these two forms, traditional versus innovative, the product of amateur versus (semi-)professional, but, if a division is to be made, it is not in the form or meaning of the poetry itself, but in its intended use, the functional context in which it is performed. This poetry is meant to be sung in small, local, social gatherings formerly at the heart of Gaelic life, community-based whether in an urban or a rural township setting. This is not to say that innovative poetry meant to be printed and read has no relevance to Gaelic culture, simply to emphasise that it is day-to-day patterns of creation, coupled with immediate and topical use, that are the key concepts here.

This kind of song-making is often called *bàrdachd baile*, township poetry, or *bàrdachd coimhearsnachd*, community poetry, terms anathema to some due to connotations of parochialism. Certainly if these were descriptions of textual form, meaning, or function, 'township' or 'community' would constrain by insinuation the compositions' ability to speak to all of us, perhaps implying that the poets, or their subject matter, were somehow beneath our attention. But this narrow interpretation, an apparent by-product of the tradition-versus-innovation debate, overlooks the spirit of the two terms. We are on fairer ground if these terms describe songs and composers with a particular social role and function within their own culture group of local and regional affiliations, quite apart from the material's undoubted aesthetic and literary appeal. Once this is clear, one can start appreciating the tradition in its own terms, from within, as one must any cultural creation.

To examine the origins of twentieth-century social song-making, it is necessary to look briefly to the past. By the turn of the nineteenth century, protracted cultural destabilisation had left Gaelic culture unsure of itself, looking outward for appreciation and validation of its value, both social and artistic. The Education (Scotland) Act of 1872 had dismantled a nascent, church-led Gaelic-medium schooling system, leaving English-language education in a commanding position. The Clearances had decimated social structures and most Gaelic song-poetry of the time consists of hymns, romantic lyric songs along Lowland and English models, and nature poems. While beautiful and technically brilliant, these last compositions often speak in glowing terms of the pre-clearance

Highlands, ignoring true causes and responsibilities for the devastation. Part of this self-deception arises from a paternalism remaining in post-clan society, the eviction of certain 'trouble-makers', which ensured that no momentum for change built up, and in some areas the teachings of the Church which maintained that this world was no more than a vale of tears and song a mere vanity therein. Gaels' sense of their culture's value was under threat.

This mindset held sway throughout the major nineteenth-century emigrations and the potato famines of the 1840s. The middle of the century, however, brought a revitalisation of protest song as poets like Dr John MacLachlan of Rahoy and Uilleam MacDhùnleibhe (William Livingston) put a new spirit into their verse. For popularity and influence, however, the composer of the nineteenth century who undoubtedly stands out is Mary MacPherson, or Màiri Mhòr nan Òran (Big Mary of the Songs), as she is known throughout the Gaelic world. About nine thousand lines of her poetry (including stinging anti-landlord criticism, belying the common criticism that she was too deferential to the gentry) were noted down from her recitation by John Whyte and published in 1891. It was Màiri Mhòr, along with Livingston and others, who brought a keen edge of protest to anti-landlord songs and celebrations of crofters' resistance (for example, her 'Oran Beinn Lì' ('Song of Ben Lee'), celebrating the 'Battle of the Braes' in which women and children of the Braes, in Skye, deforced the sheriff officers, preventing them from issuing summonses to local crofters). Her significance, crucially, is not in innovative use of form, indeed her versification is quite traditional in structure, but rather her expression of a characteristic vivacity in a then-moribund song culture.

Filling this apparent relative void of vernacular poetic activity, an apparently new or at least reinvigorated tradition emerges: that of the community song-maker. Such composers were not, of course, a new development at all, but a perceived upswing in their activity can be traced to a number of causes. One is the emergence of Gaelic society from some of the repression and constraint of the nineteenth century; another, the absence of a strong formal tradition which might have overshadowed the work of these less-established local poets. Further, the establishment of the Mòd competitions in 1892 provided a more public platform for their material, while the emigration of large numbers of Gaelic speakers to cities such as Glasgow provided new synthetic communities in which the local poet's observation was welcome, and his work more likely to be collected and published (for example, Dòmhnall Ruadh (Phàislig) Mac an t-Saoir (Red(-haired) Donald MacIntyre of Paisley) in 1968).

In this period, the divergence of the tradition of innovation from that of social song-making might be said to begin. In a matter of decades, Sorley MacLean and others would evolve new aesthetics for Gaelic poetry, drawing energy from MacDiarmid's revitalisation of Scots verse. Most of the innovators retain a strong sense of the traditional poetry and song they experienced in their youth, instilling their work with a cultural depth and resonance beyond mere innovation for its own sake. Crucially, however, their work is divorced from the functional context of the cèilidh house in which the living community song tradition continued to evolve, only declining towards the end of the century as changing population and economic configurations have altered the environment on which its existence depends.

What makes people express themselves in song? For the song-poets, working within a society in which song is an accepted form of communication, it is a natural response, and the proper medium to use. A song-maker experiences life through a song-maker's eyes; reality is filtered through the aesthetic of art, with subjects chosen and experiences

acknowledged partly according to their suitability for a song. A good song must come close to the marrow of the subject, *brìgh a' rud*, and the truth is best served through composition. Expression in poetry, and to an extent popular song, is one of the few ways in modern western society that select people – those identified by the public or themselves as poets, song writers and other 'artists' – may still display raw, deep, undisguised emotion. Furthermore, poetic expression is generally considered in some way more visceral, direct and personal than expression in prose. This kind of emotional release is, therefore, usually socially acceptable only at events specifically arranged for such a purpose, poetry readings or concerts, for example, where the audience is predisposed to expect an intensity of emotional exposure and personal communication. The Gaelic local song-making tradition, however, is about the everyday expression of widely varying levels of emotion, not forgetting its basic function as entertainment, of course. The heightened register of song allows strong content to be conveyed within reassuring, formulaic textual and melodic constraints. The vision has its own internal logic, reference and validity, shaped by the tradition; the poet's individual vision revivifies the poetic process with each composition, reaffirming it as a living medium.

In social song-making, creativity, topicality, immediate function and process take precedence over innovation. Local song-poets (usually, but by no means exclusively, men) composed on the widest range of subjects: from domestic matters of courtship, or animal husbandry to political events of international importance; from local scenery to the coming of itinerant evangelists; from a First World War scarcity of tobacco to crofting work. Here is a typical example, extolling the virtues of the local pub, which includes a reflexive mention of the poet himself:

Bùth Dhòmhnail 'IcLeòid (Dòmhnall Mac an t-Saoir)

Ann am bùth Dhòmhaill 'IcLeòid bidh gach seòrs' innte cruinn
Thig o thaobh Abhainn Chluaidh 's cuid tha nuas às na glinn;
Bidh a' chàbraid cho cruaidh ann an cluasan do chinn
'S ged bhiodh bàrd ris gach gualainn dhìot 's fuaim ac' air seinn
Ann am bùth Dhòmhnail 'IcLeòid.

(Donald MacLeod's Pub (Donald MacIntyre)

In Donald MacLeod's pub folk of all sorts foregather
That come from the bank of the Clyde and down from the glens;
The babble's as loud in the ears of your head
As if you'd a poet at each shoulder singing his head off
In Donald MacLeod's pub.)

On a more serious note, Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna provides a devastating soldier's-eye view of trench warfare, simply but powerfully put:

Air an Somme (Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna)

An oidhche mus deach sinn a-null
Bha i drùidhteach a' sìleadh,
Bha mi fhéin 'nam laighe 'n cuil
'S thug mi sùil feadh nan gilleann.

*Ochan ì, ochan ì,
Tha sinn sgìth anns an ionad.
Ochan ì, ochan ì.*

Cuid 'nan suidhe 's cuid 'nan suain,
Cuid a' bruidhinn 's a' bruidhinn
Gun robh mhadainn gu bhith cruaidh –
'Saoil am buannaich sinn tilleadh?'

(On the Somme (Donald MacIntyre))

The night before we went over
It was pouring with rain,
I was lying in a corner
And I looked round the lads.

*Ochan ì, ochan ì,
We're tired of the place.
Ochan ì, ochan ì.*

Some sitting, some asleep,
Some dreaming and saying
That the morning would be hard –
'Think we'll manage to get back?')

Another common topic was weddings, an echo of the professional bards' work:

Òran Bainse (Teàrlach MacNimhein)

Bha sùil agam ri cuireadh fialaidh,
Gun rachadh m' iarraidh thun na banais
'S gum faighinn cearc le forc is sgian
Gu bhith ga h-ialladh – biadh ro bhlasta.

Gun do reamhraich mi 'n gèadh mòr
Le min phònair thàin a' Glaschu,
'S nan do chuir mi e gu margadh
Chuireadh e airgead dhomh am banca.

(Wedding Song (Charles MacNiven))

I expected a generous invitation,
That I'd be asked to the wedding,
That I'd get chicken with a fork and a knife
To pick it up with – delicious food.

So I fattened the big gander
With bean-meal got from Glasgow,

And if I'd sent it to market
I'd have money in the bank.)

The song-poets commonly employ hyperbole, creating mock-heroic situations out of daily experience, as with these songs on a First World War shortage of tobacco, and a mad bull:

Ho-ró tha mi fo smalan dheth (Iain Macneacail (An Sgiobair))

Ho-ró tha mi fo smalan dheth
'S mi 'n còmhnuidh air an allaban,
Falbh airson tombac' a chàch
'S th'e toirt mo chiall is m'aithne bhuam.
Ho-ró tha mi fo smalan dheth.

'S gun d'ràinig mi bùth Rosaich thall
'S ann labhair e gu crosda rium,
Gun dùirt e nach robh mìr 'san tìr dheth,
'S creidibh mi gun d'fh'osnaich mi.
Ho-ró tha mi fo smalan dheth.

(Ho-ró I'm Discouraged (John Nicolson (The Skipper))

Ho-ró I'm discouraged
As I perpetually wander aimlessly
Going after tobacco for others
And it's draining me senseless.

I reached Ross's shop over there;
He spoke crossly to me.
He said that there wasn't a bit of it in the country,
And believe me, I sighed.
Ho-ró I'm discouraged.)

An cuala sibh mu tharbh Bhràigh Ùige (Iain Macneacail (An Sgiobair))

An cuala sibh mu tharbh Bhràigh Ùige?
Gun do chaill e thùr, 's cha b' nàir' dha –
Theich a-mach e ris na gleanntan;
Cha do sheall e air crodh dàra.
Rinn e call air feadh na dùthcha,
Leagail is a' bùrach ghàrradh:
Shaltair e gach pòr o chasan;
Thug e 'n gaiseadh às a' bhuntàta [. . .]

'S go togarrach a dh'fhalbh na balaich,
'Sia-bhalais' is Eirdsidh Phàdruig;
Bha ann Dunnchadh Beag mo charaid,
A' Sagart 's Murchadh Dhòmhnail Mhàrtuinn –

H-uile fear le cabar daraich –
 Mach ri bealach air a shàillibh.
 Bha ad a' bòide fo an anail
 Gun dugte ri phrannadh air a chnàmhan [. . .]

(Did you hear about the bull of Uig Braes (John Nicolson (The Skipper))

Did you hear about the bull of Uig Braes?
 He lost his senses, and no matter –
 He escaped up to the glens;
 He did not even notice cows in heat.
 He caused destruction throughout the countryside,
 Laying low and uprooting garden dykes:
 He trod every crop beneath his feet;
 He knocked the blight out of the potatoes [. . .]

The boys went out so lively,
 'Oh Lord, laddie' [a nickname] and Peter's Archie;
 Wee Duncan, my friend, was there,
 'The Priest' and Martin's Donald's Murdo –
 Each one with an oak cudgel –
 Out to the pass after him.
 They were swearing under their breath
 That they'd give his bones a pounding [. . .])

With these examples, the nature of community song-making can be seen. Its subject matter can go far beyond the narrow confines of township, its defining criterion being not its subject matter, but rather its fundamental relationship with its intended, indeed essential, audience and its role in the community in and for which it is made. Indeed, such was the symbiotic expectation between song-maker and listener – the former for an audience, the latter for a summation and reflection on a local event – that people practically demanded songs on certain events. Equally, the song-maker felt inspired to compose on them (remembering, of course, that it is usually only a minority of the population as a whole that takes part in perpetuating any tradition).

Composing comes as second nature to the township poets and songs are, in the main, made quickly, often while the incident lampooned was still happening, as in this extract from Iain Macneacail's 'Nuair a thòisich iad ri bùidsearachd' (When They Started to Butcher):

Gur ann aig aon uair deug a's t-oidhche,
 Bha sinn cruinn an taigh an t-Saighdeir.
 Fhuair sinn gnìomh a bha glé oillteil:
 Toirt a' cheann bho rùda dha.
 Nuair a thòisich iad ri bùidsearachd.

('Twas at eleven o'clock at night,
 We were gathered in the Soldier's house.
 We got a task that was quite horrible:

Taking the head off a ram for him.
 When they started to butcher.)

Immediacy was expected of the makers and they, in turn, wanted to impress with their skills. What, then, were some of the catalysts that might elicit, or demand, a song, sometimes frivolous and funny, sometimes deep and moving? The most basic answer, a *chur seachad na tìde*, to pass the time, certainly addresses this central question for all societies need their recreations, but beneath this seemingly glib response lies a complex of function and meaning which takes us to the very heart of community. Naturally, every song is multi-layered and multi-functional, with interpretations ranging from the aesthetic to the functional-social. The breakdown that follows is, therefore, artificial, but at least gives some insight into different areas of the tradition. In general, the further down the list, the stronger the drive to produce the song and the more overt function it has as a response to personal or community need.

Probably the most commonly cited spur to composition is simply a *dhèanamh spòrs'*, to have fun, often at someone else's mild expense and, while this may seem an obvious, even trivial motivation, it is surely a key element in the smooth functioning of tightly knit communities. Part of this stimulus arises out of a song-maker's innate need to react – in song – to any occurrence out of the ordinary. They were expected to respond and were looked to for comment, but, just as surely, locals did not like to be caught out in one of these compositions. Some song-makers were occasionally threatened to prevent them satirising someone, or repeating a composition and, though such warnings were usually largely in fun, these stories demonstrate the sort of reaction a township poet's incisive satirical observation could evoke.

Most songs are made during or immediately after events of which the song-maker was a part and are about his or her own reactions to them. A few tell of events reported, not witnessed. As such, the songs encapsulate the bard's vision of what 'really happened' and are, therefore, a representation of truth. Compositions range from treatments of major historical events like the Clearances to humorous songs about local events/fiascos. These songs of reconstructed events emphasise the response function; they are the appropriate acknowledgement of an occurrence and, for the community, a marker of history and the passing of time. Sometimes a song would be made in answer to a direct question or pressing situation: the prospect of Sunday sailings to Stornoway, the coming of licensed public houses to a community, or, perhaps, the bard meeting a newly arrived landlord or minister. For obvious reasons, topical songs account for only a portion of the songs that survive today, but these were undoubtedly innumerable, most quickly outliving their immediate relevance and falling by the wayside. These 'occasional songs' are the fundamental type of the social song-making genre, pure song as response. All great song and poetry is response, to a great extent, arising in answer to particular needs, regardless of its place on the tradition-innovation spectrum. These compositions might arise out of a brief encounter at a *cèilidh*, be sung a few times and then forgotten, dating more quickly than songs on more eternal themes, or some contemporary 'art poetry', but reflecting social happening and emotional response. Like some bardic compositions of the past, they were made for particular formal events, then sung and discarded, their content too ephemeral for long-term survival. It is this quality which makes the songs impossible to separate from their function.

The very structure of songs of occasion points to their function as carriers of local news, particularly, for example, the almost ubiquitous opening line, paralleling the

English language ‘come-all-ye’/broadside tradition, *An cuala sibh mun . . .* (Did you hear about . . . ?). The phrase is even used in Ruairidh MacAoidh’s far-reaching ‘Òran na Caillich Bhuana’ (‘Song of the Harvest Cailleach’). The listener is invited to become an insider, a member of the audience rather than the subject of a song, or possibly the victim of a satire. Often, the formulaic opening is bracketed by a closing equivalent such as *Bidh mi niste co-dhùinadh . . .* (‘I will finish now . . .’) indicating to the audience that the song and the message contained therein are coming to an end. These features, though they may seem awkward in a written context, are typical of orally composed and transmitted songs found throughout Europe in whatever language tradition and they blend effortlessly into the material as it is performed. While songs of occasion are about issues and events, they are usually not narrative in the technical sense, but lyric in structure and type, borrowing and recomposing tunes, using a mix of old and new imagery and phraseology, often perceptive and striking, sometimes hackneyed. There is a story behind each song, of course, but its communication largely depends on the audience’s acquaintance with the incident and characters concerned. Narrative flow is important, but it is taken for granted rather than structurally displayed.

Often, a song-maker would be requested to make a song, which required little prompting, but this was no guarantee of a favourable composition and bards were sometimes chary of acceding to requests because of their fidelity to the truth. Occasionally a bard would feel unworthy of making a song to someone of higher status, but in the main, as in the case of a composer with anti-landlord sentiments, the song-poets saw the challenging of authority and reputation as one of their main roles in society. In either case, the fulfilment of the request was entirely up to the composer who would respond when and if the muse cooperated, with the theme and tenor of the song firmly in the poet’s hands.

At the heart of the congenital need to compose lies the inclination to respond to adversity through song. It is said that the great Skye poet Màiri Mhór first began to compose in response to an unjust accusation of theft: *’S e na dh’fhulaing mi de thamailt a thug mo bhàrdachd beò* (‘It’s the injustice I suffered that brought my poetry to life’). Song is seen as a fundamental and visceral response to misfortune and difficulty, resulting in satires of protest and revenge that, respectively, draw attention to a problem and call for some redress, and those which are spiteful, vengeful and not particularly interested in creating change. Many satires are humorous rather than critical and tend towards the mild public rebuke more than the boil-raising invective of historical tradition; yet, most villagers would nevertheless be wary of crossing the song-maker and risking a quick, witty, perhaps cutting, riposte. Very few of these satires are available in print or even recorded, as they are often still considered by composers and their relatives to be too socially sensitive for public exposure; this means that a great deal of clever versification with a key social function is unfortunately beyond our reach.

In the main, the lighter satires seem to be a way of exorcising some of the song-poet’s own embarrassment at being bested, or perhaps of treating one’s adversary to a small dose of the same. And yet this sort of complaint in song is a curiously humbling way to get even, as the details of the event become known to everyone through the composition itself. The process is, therefore, more of a catharsis and a laying to rest of a grievance than a real retribution or punishment. Such songs lead a multi-faceted life, fulfilling a community need for public censure and later living again as others sing them, innocent of direct responsibility for their content; at the very least, listening to satires could be cathartic. If the song was well made, its criticism was usually accepted as true,

very probably deserved, and at the very least entertaining. This first concept clearly harks back to earlier bardic-era ideas that if a satire were unjust, or went too far, it would lose efficacy or possibly rebound upon the composer. The song, crucially, not the song-maker, judges the guilty and exonerates, or at least by-passes, the innocent, while the song-maker is allowed a kind of diplomatic immunity for retaliatory songs in an echo of *leabhar nam bàrd*, the book of the bards, the legendary ledger granting latitude to recognised poets.

While satires and humorous songs were certainly a release for potentially damaging tensions in a small island community, the sometimes competitive exchanges of *aoir* were tempered by many other types of composition: songs of exile, of love, songs about local happenings or social gatherings, such as weddings, parties, or *fanks* (where the arduous work of sheep dipping was done communally). Most of these simply presented themselves to those with a turn of mind to composition, goaded on by the community's expectation of a song-response. For a natural song-maker, the songs were also enjoyable exercises in composition, making the song-poet a vernacular version of the court bard who would show off his highly trained abilities through challenging and rapid creation. In acting as a commentator on local events and people, the township poet actually functions more like one of the professional clan bards than one of a lyrical cast.

As for the process of composition itself, motion seems to be crucial – the partly extempore Gaelic waulking-song tradition is another domestic example – as it is for song-poets around the world. Songs were often made while working or walking outdoors, location – a sight, a smell – serving as a catalyst on both subconscious and conscious levels. Gaelic verse of practically any era demands rhythmic completeness and a controlled verse form out of which evocative melodies naturally arise; social song-poetry is no different. In general, traditional song-makers make new words to old tunes and song-forms extant in their community tradition (see, for example, nearly any Scottish or Irish collection or broadside, where texts are routinely preceded by the words *air fonn* (to the tune), followed by the name of a melody). That is not to say that new melodies are not created, but that they are usually not deliberately composed, instead growing organically from the interplay between sometimes complex rhythm and rhyme, without much in the way of conscious thought. Within the conventions of key and interval progression, the tune is practically fixed by the time the composer reaches the second line and, with some composers, melody can seem to derive from an almost tone-language-like connection with Gaelic assonance. (Naturally, a defining characteristic of traditional song is that each rendition features variation and change.)

That said, melodic originality is not a particularly important criterion, though listeners are aware of the impact of time and character of the singer's voice. Song-makers are judged primarily on the creation of lyrics. It is essential that texts are sung, but they are generally not assessed on melodic innovation or aesthetics, which can appear a more mysterious process than the creation of lyrics, largely due to our lack of a suitable vocabulary for discussing melody in great detail. In addition, the relationship between tune and the emotional pitch of the words is subjective; serious songs can also be purposely set to light-hearted melodies and vice versa, allowing them widely differing interpretations.

While the culture that gave rise to the twentieth-century song-poets nominally exists today, its social structures and communities do not. The changes set in train by the First World War, during which already weakened Highland communities were decimated, violently fractured the social continuities necessary to the survival of oral processes. The

practice of making song-poetry (though more and more often simply poetry) partly lives on throughout the *Gàidhealtachd*, but this is only half the story. Social song-making is a process of expression, which, like any work of art, is interpreted, filtered, altered through the life-experience of its audience, its receivers. Song-poetry needs its natural, preconditioned audience, for, through dialogue, response and redress, the tradition comes alive, acquires meaning and becomes a dynamic social art. Only through the process of exchange between two composers, or between composer and listener, does the tradition reach its apotheosis of function and meaning. This context, with rare and occasional exceptions, has virtually vanished from Highland life, leaving the tradition adrift, its constituent parts isolated and static, unable to achieve the forward movement of a creative, living tradition. So, *bàrdachd baile*, the poetry, survives, but the tradition, of its time and of its context, no longer does. As a barometer of 'traditional' Gaelic life, it must be said that while such continuities can and do live on in microcosm within family units and the occasional community, they have, by and large, ceased to exist as the norm throughout Gaelic-speaking communities today. What remains is a kind of remembered community, a shadowy place between memory and forgetting, where the imprint of tradition is revealed in a familiar chuckle, or sigh of appreciation at the remembered story of a song. Often, the songs themselves are not remembered, but rather outlines of them, feelings and impressions of what people experienced, or even simply heard about. Remembered community is the world of the past as it is held in present-day memory, a mental, almost imagined place peopled with recalled characters, events, and social interactions. It is not simply an idealised past, but a re-imagined one, a very real way people construct their experience, honouring it through the way they live today and revealing much about aspects of social interaction that were most valued and, by extension, those that are now missed.

These impressions are commonly made manifest through trigger-memories of a couplet, a verse, a song. There are song-makers whose compositions are well remembered, quoted, sung and listened to as objects in themselves, but there are also more peripheral recollections and meanings, a range of tangential information, at least one remove, even from the songs and their makers. Songs are a common point of reference and, where individual recollections differ, an oral verse or narrative can be a (relatively) fixed crossroads through which collective memory travels in narrating a particular event. Remembered community is at one further remove from such fully shared experiences. It draws on reputations recalled and provides texture for the facts and figures of more formally recorded history and anecdote. This, along with the valuable collections, books and recordings of township social song, is the legacy of the twentieth-century bards today.

Further reading

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Theatres, Writers and Society: Structures and Infrastructures of Theatre Provision in Twentieth- Century Scotland

David Hutchison

The last hundred years can be characterised as the age of the media. Regularly published newspapers may have existed since the eighteenth century, but the appearance of the mass circulation press in Britain is usually traced back to Harmsworth's *Daily Mail* achieving a circulation of one million copies in 1900, four years after its launch. The Lumière brothers' presentation of moving pictures in Paris in 1895 can be said to mark the inception of cinema. Station KDKA, which went on the air in 1920 in Pittsburgh, is generally regarded as the first regularly broadcasting radio station. Television stations followed in the mid-1930s, the BBC's service beginning daily transmissions in 1936. This essay's purpose is not, of course, to explore the processes through which the media came to be central to the social and political experience of modernity. What these developments show, though, is that early in the twentieth century live 'in the flesh' performances faced stiff competition from recorded performances on celluloid. This was clearly emphasised when music halls felt obliged to show short films alongside their regular diet of singers, comedians and magicians. The picture palaces that sprang up, often with exotic alluring names such as Alhambra, Odeon, La Scala, drew the working class away from music hall. In doing so, they offered a diet of fiction substantially composed of American material, in contrast to the indigenous nature of most music-hall fare. Although music hall as such died out, its traditions continued in the form of variety. This was rather more respectable than its progenitor, and less given to vulgarity and sexual innuendo, and so more attractive to audiences that now drew on the middle class as much as the working class.

Patrons had to leave their homes to visit the cinema, but no such effort was involved with broadcasting. An astonishing variety of material – music, drama, actuality – became accessible in the domestic environment. Cinema weathered the challenge of radio, but from the 1950s on television severely depleted its audiences, particularly with the introduction (in 1967 in the UK) of colour transmission. Colour television's seductive charms were no doubt enhanced by the increasing comfort of people's homes in the period after the Second World War. The cinema industry has survived by using a variety of strategies: making programmes for television; exploiting the potential of the domestic video recorder; constructing multiplexes with vast car parks. By the end of the twentieth century, however,

according to *Screen Finance* worldwide data, only 25 per cent of the Hollywood majors' income derived from cinema exhibition.

This has meant that theatre found itself in a very competitive market place in the twentieth century. People have a basic need for dramatic narratives, but theatre is no longer the dominant source of these. Furthermore, cinema and broadcasting have never really suffered the pernicious influence of class that has affected live drama so much in Britain. Many may feel that going to a particular kind of theatre is socially uncomfortable, but are unlikely to have similar feelings about cinema or broadcasting. They may avoid some kinds of television plays and films, but they do not abandon these media completely, for the range on offer encompasses all interests, taking subtle account of the relationship between class and taste.

Theatre, then, has had to struggle to sustain and distinguish itself, and in Scotland that struggle has been mounted on a rather insecure foundation. The allegedly baleful influence of the Reformed Church on the arts has been much debated. There can be no doubt, however, that from the late sixteenth century until the middle of the eighteenth century, while theatre and drama were flourishing in England, they were having a difficult time in Scotland. As late as 1764, a mob, roused to fury by a preacher, could incinerate a theatre in Glasgow. That event may nevertheless be regarded as one of the last gasps of intolerance, for John Home's *Douglas* had been premièred in Edinburgh eight years earlier and, despite opposition to its presentation from some church sources, it was a popular and critical success. In the nineteenth century, theatre became accepted as a normal part of civilised Scottish society. By 1900 there were thirty-two theatres in Scotland; by 1910, fifty-three. Of those, thirty-one were in the major cities, the remainder scattered throughout the country. Given the growing importance of cinema, a decline was inevitable: by 1920 there were forty-five theatres and by 1940 thirty-two (the figures for cinemas were 557 and 615 respectively). After the Second World War, the decline continued: by 1950 there were twenty-nine theatres; by 1970, only fifteen. At the close of the twentieth century, however, there were eighteen theatres in Scotland. This figure reflects a period when, for example, Glasgow's Theatre Royal and Edinburgh's Festival Theatre (formerly the Empire) came back into use, the Eden Court in Inverness was constructed, and the Tron in Glasgow opened, while replacement theatres were built in Dundee and Pitlochry. The figure of eighteen is actually misleading, for there are now numerous arts centres and multi-purpose venues, used by smaller-scale touring companies.

Seven of the eighteen support permanent or semi-permanent companies of actors putting on a variety of plays, while the others host a range of performances, some dramatic, some musical. What all, with the exception of Glasgow's Pavilion and Edinburgh's Playhouse, share is dependence for continued existence on subsidy from public funds, or outright public ownership. Commercially owned theatres continue to flourish in London, but a Scottish chain like Howard and Wyndham, which mid-century owned large houses in Glasgow and Edinburgh, has disappeared, its theatres municipalised. In the latter part of the twentieth century, therefore, even when commercially organised tours of drama or musicals from the south reached Scotland, as often as not they were to some degree dependent on public funds. Theatre in Scotland after 1950 would not have existed in the form it did without subsidy at all levels. Actors and other theatrical workers are trained at drama colleges in Glasgow and Edinburgh supported by the taxpayer (and kept alive when 'resting', as many are much of the time, by the same taxpayer). Buildings have been erected and maintained with substantial exchequer help, while ticket prices are lower than they would otherwise be as a direct consequence of direct grants made to theatres by central and

local government. Whatever form the Scottish National Theatre, now launched at the beginning of the twenty-first century, may finally take, one thing is certain: it exists courtesy of the taxpayer's generosity.

Theatre in Scotland has been inextricably linked with theatre south of the border for a very long time. Not only do English touring companies continue to visit venues regularly, with a much smaller traffic in the opposite direction, but creative and administrative personnel also constantly move back and forth. One notable, and healthy, characteristic of recent decades is that actors are less likely than before to feel obliged to lose their Scottish personas if their careers develop mainly in the south. The contrast between Ian Richardson and Bill Paterson, both alumni of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, illustrates this. Scottish theatres also draw constantly on the English repertoire in their programming, again with a smaller reverse flow.

The question raised by the unavoidable fact of cross-border traffic, and agonised over for much of the last century, is what Scottish theatre is actually for. Is its function to offer audiences an international repertoire of the best of world drama, be an extension of English theatre, or develop an indigenous dramatic tradition? Arguably, it is to do all three jobs. In a book such as this, anyone writing about Scottish theatre is expected to emphasise indigenous playwriting. This is perfectly proper, but not necessarily how theatre managements have always seen their role. Whether unsubsidised companies like the Masque Theatre (1928–33) and the Wilson Barrett Players (1941–55), which held sway in Edinburgh and Glasgow in the inter- and immediate post-war periods, or the subsidised reps of recent times, the commitment to indigenous drama has varied remarkably from management to management. One suspects audiences have varied just as much in their desire to see Scottish plays. It is the assumption of this writer, nonetheless, that as it is desirable to have a native tradition in the novel and poetry (and on the large and small screens), so it is to have a dramatic one. Yet, as Scottish television audiences would be unenthusiastic if all UK network programmes vanished, replaced by indigenous material, so the Scottish theatre audience is unlikely to take kindly to losing the opportunity to see English, Irish, American and European drama. Therein lies a difficulty. Theatre in England is so extensive, the audience so large, the native tradition so firmly established, there is no possibility that English playwrights of reasonable ability will fail to emerge and flourish. At least, there is no danger that the conditions that make their emergence possible will cease to exist. The situation in Scotland is rather different. For this reason, this chapter considers the links between certain key twentieth-century playwrights, based in Scotland and linked to particular Scottish companies.

The work of these writers is interesting in its own right. What is equally interesting is how they sought to bring their work to the public, how the Scottish theatrical infrastructure contributed to that process and how they moulded part of that infrastructure to facilitate performance of work by themselves and other native writers. This happened against a social and political context that has changed remarkably over a hundred years. The people of Scotland enjoyed a much higher standard of living at the end of the twentieth century than at the beginning, but the country's pre-eminence as a workshop of the world is a distant memory. Heavy industries have been largely replaced by a variety of service activities, oil and gas extraction and electronics factories, the vast majority owned by foot-loose international companies rather than indigenous capitalists. The physical landscape has changed with the economic changes, as have the nature of work and gender balance and disposition within the labour force. In and out of work, the role of women has been transformed beyond recognition, a revolutionary development with consequences for

how both genders see themselves economically and socially. Politically, Scotland has become left of centre (though not necessarily very radical) and the Conservative Party, which in 1955 could command just over 50 per cent of the popular vote, struggles to have its representatives elected to Westminster and to the newly established Scottish Parliament. This embodies the constitutional change that has seen Scotland move from its solidly Unionist position, through a period mid-century when political nationalism developed, but was very much outside the mainstream (whereas cultural nationalism was perfectly acceptable) to the radically different situation where the Scottish National Party became a serious political force and pressure for some form of devolution from several political groupings led to the 1998 Scotland Act. By then, cultural and political nationalism seemed to be marching, if not hand in hand, at least more closely together than had been the case thirty years previously.

The most significant dramatist to emerge in Scotland during the first half of the twentieth century was James Bridie (Osborne Henry Mavor) (1888–1951). Bridie, a doctor by profession, combined a successful career as a physician with playwriting, for which he finally abandoned the hospital wards. He was prolific with over thirty plays to his name. Of these, almost two-thirds were premièred in England, mainly London. In Scotland, the Scottish National Players, a semi-professional group based in Glasgow during the interwar period, presented four of his plays and towards the end of his career the Citizens' Theatre, in the founding of which Bridie played the major role, seven of his plays. Notwithstanding the Scottish National Players' premièring some of Bridie's early work, a company of that kind, organised on an insecure financial and artistic base, could not offer any writer the prospect of a decent living. In the Scotland of his day, Bridie had no option but to look elsewhere and he did so with considerable success. His work in the establishment of both the Citizens' and a drama college in Glasgow nonetheless testify to his belief that the Scottish theatrical infrastructure needed radical improvement, an improvement that, as he saw it, would benefit not only writers like him, but also the theatre-going public.

It is doubtful if Bridie suffered too much from having to write with his eye fixed on the English market. His imagination ranged widely. He was happy to take his subject matter from the Apocrypha, as in *Tobias and the Angel* (1930, Cambridge Festival Theatre) and *Susannah and the Elders* (1937, Duke of York's, London), and from classical mythology as in *The Queen's Comedy* (1950, Citizens' Theatre), as well as from contemporary Scotland. Yet his choice and dramatic treatment even of such themes arguably develops a Scottish perspective intrinsic in his approach to his topics, even including smugness and hypocrisy. Unlike his contemporary Robert McLellan (1907–85), who found his material almost exclusively in Scottish history, and used a slightly archaic form of Scots dialect, Bridie turned to his country's history relatively infrequently. When he employed Scots linguistic forms, he did so sparingly and with constant regard for the non-native auditor. To walk round Glasgow's West End, travel down the Clyde estuary to commuter towns such as Helensburgh, sail through the Kyles of Bute to Tighnabruaich and beyond is to gain a flavour of the comfortable way of life into which Bridie was born. This was of the prosperous industrial and commercial middle class with a substantial residence in town and another house, owned outright or rented, in a resort within two or so hours' travel from the city by train and steamer. According to Christopher Harvie's *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes* (1981), in 1913 three-quarters of a million tons of shipping were built on Clydeside, 100,000 tons more than were constructed in the whole of Germany. Bridie knew this milieu intimately and in several plays presents it effectively on the stage. As Christopher Small pointed out in *Scottish Theatre* (January 1971) there is something just a little smug about

the inhabitants of this world, and a certain philistinism too. Perhaps that is why Bridie's imagination seems to take flight most effectively when he leaves his own world behind, whether for the amusing whimsy of *Tobias and the Angel*, the sober analysis of lust and hypocrisy in *Susannah and the Elders* or the stoicism in the face of human suffering which suffuses *The Queen's Comedy*.

The report which led to the initiation of the Scottish National Theatre project at the beginning of the new millennium talked about the importance of the 'collective memory' of the Scottish theatre being embodied in the proposed new venture's repertoire. What is remarkable about Bridie is that at the end of the twentieth century his work seemed to have all but disappeared from the programming of Scottish theatres. This neglect is to some extent a matter of fashion, for there is little enthusiasm among contemporary audiences for the kind of rhetoric and philosophical speculation in which Bridie frequently engages. Yet, to a significant degree it represents a kind of amnesia, hard to justify, and perhaps only explicable by the dominance of working-class naturalism on Scottish stages in the final decades of the century.

Bridie's career began in the late 1920s, whereas Robert Kemp's (1908–67) commenced in the mid-1940s. By the time Kemp began writing for the theatre, the age of the subsidised reps was dawning, and his work was performed by several of these, in particular the Citizens' and the Gateway Theatre in Edinburgh. As Bridie was the chief protagonist in the establishment of the Glasgow venture, so Kemp played that role with the Gateway. This theatre was a refurbished cinema in the ownership of the Church of Scotland, and from 1946 occasional *ad hoc* performances were given by amateur and semi-professional companies. In 1953, at the prompting of the Church, Kemp was asked, along with the actors Tom Fleming and Lennox Milne, to form a professional company which was to provide repertory programmes for the next twelve years; the Gateway closed when the Edinburgh Civic Theatre opened in the Lyceum in 1965. Both the Citizens' under Bridie and the Gateway under Kemp (and his successors as chairman) emphasised indigenous work in their repertoires. Of the plays performed in the first eight seasons of the Citizens', over a third were Scottish premières or revivals. Over the twelve seasons of the Gateway Company, half of the plays were in that category, although the number of plays by Scots women writers presented in the two theatres did not reach double figures. To some extent, this emphasis on indigenous work only makes sense when seen in the context of the total bills of fare available in the country's two principal cities, which hosted tours from the south and the Wilson Barrett company's repertory programmes. Kemp's work, unsurprisingly, had regular exposure in the Gateway's repertoire, both original plays and adaptations, particularly those he made into Scots from Molière, *Let Wives Tak Tent*, its first fully professional performance in Glasgow (1948, Citizens') following its première at the Gateway earlier in the same year, and *The Laird o' Grippy* (1955, Gateway). In his own plays, Kemp is an effective writer whose themes are varied, although there is an emphasis on the historical and ecclesiastical, perhaps reflecting his own background as a son of the manse: John Knox and the 1843 Disruption of the Church of Scotland are among his subjects, as are Robert the Bruce and Robert Burns. *The Other Dear Charmer* (Citizens', 1951) is probably his best piece; in it, Kemp explores sympathetically the relationship between the poet and Mrs McLehose, and beyond that relationship the contrast between the Anglo-Scottish and Scottish folk traditions in art.

Kemp, who had limited success outside Scotland, might be regarded as one of the last of the bourgeois writers who predominated (with the exception of the powerful impact of Glasgow Unity Theatre and its writers, considered later) in Scottish theatre until the 1960s. New theatrical ventures had been initiated, most obviously the Traverse Theatre

in Edinburgh in 1963, initially as a club to avoid the attentions of the Lord Chamberlain (and fire regulations), and the Edinburgh Civic Theatre at the Royal Lyceum in 1965, taking over the role of the Gateway. In Glasgow, the Citizens' company opened the Close next door to the main theatre in 1965 and in 1969, with the arrival of Giles Havergal as artistic director, the Citizens' embarked on a process of transformation. This turned it from a traditional rep to a house, international in outlook and repertoire, in whose productions the visual element was always central and which looked in a different more spectacular, less proletarian direction than much of the Scottish theatre of the 1970s. Havergal formed a directing triumvirate with Philip Prowse, also a designer, and the 'house' playwright, Robert David MacDonald, who provided a series of successful plays – original, adaptations and translations – which enabled the company style to be displayed and celebrated. This work continued right through into the beginning of the twenty-first century. Meanwhile, in the 1970s, government funding increased, largely as a result of the initiatives of Jenny Lee, minister for the arts in Harold Wilson's Labour governments of the 1960s, a policy continued by the successor Conservative government of Edward Heath. Then, on the wider economic front in the 1970s, commercially exploitable quantities of oil and gas were discovered in the North Sea. The terms of political debate in the country were radically changed.

The proletarian emphasis did not come from nowhere. There was a suppressed tradition waiting to be drawn on. The Scottish National Players' repertoire emphasised the rural, whether Highland or Lowland. The industrial heartland made a very limited appearance, and the city of Glasgow featured somewhat infrequently. The Players did present a couple of one-act comedies by Joe Corrie (1894–1968), but the much more substantial *In Time o' Strife*, set during the 1926 miners' strike which led on to the General Strike of that year, was rejected by them, ostensibly on artistic grounds. This, however, has been contested by some observers, not least John McGrath, who saw the rejection as politically motivated and indicative of the Players' lack of interest in working-class life. *In Time o' Strife* was mounted by the amateur Bowhill Players in 1928 and toured Scotland with some success and was revived by 7:84 Scotland as part of its 1982 Clydebuilt season.

If Corrie can be regarded as Scotland's first proletarian dramatist, Glasgow Unity Theatre can be seen as its first radical theatre company. It was created in 1941 by several amateur groups in the city who took their cue from the Unity movement elsewhere in Britain in seeking a more left-wing orientation and working-class audiences. At the end of the war a professional company was formed to work alongside the amateur one, but after a few years, despite the innovative nature of its programming, financial problems led to its demise. Nonetheless, Unity's socially committed work was seen in London's West End in the late 1940s, including Robert McLeish's *The Gorbals Story* (Garrick, 1948) and Ena Lamont Stewart's *Starched Aprons* and *Men Should Weep* (both Embassy, 1948). Randall Stevenson has intriguingly argued that the proletarian emphasis in Unity's work not only pre-figures the similar work of later 'kitchen sink' dramatists in 1950s English theatre, but may even have contributed to its development. John McGrath, drawing on research by Linda Mackenney, berates Bridie for his alleged role in ensuring that Unity, a rival to Bridie's Citizens', did not receive funding from the Scottish committee of the recently established Arts Council. McGrath's own work in the 1970s and 1980s was with 7:84 Scotland, a touring company taking its cue, in similar fashion to Unity, from the English company of the same name, of which McGrath was a founder member. McGrath's voice is individual, but his insistence on analysing economic and social conditions, while at the same time offering an entertaining evening in the theatre, demonstrates affinity with the Unity project.

7:84's greatest success was *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* (1973), mixing agit-prop and hilarious sketches in order to link the Highland Clearances and the rush to exploit the North Sea. This formula proved successful in other pieces such as *Boom* (1974) and *The Game's a Bogey* (1974). In 1982, the Clydebuilt season was mounted in order to rescue several neglected plays, including a number originally presented by Unity, and to demonstrate that there was indeed a radical tradition in Scottish theatre.

The season proved financially calamitous and beyond the administrative resources of a small touring company; ensuing difficulties with the Scottish Arts Council culminated in McGrath's bitter resignation from 7:84 in 1987. When a company's output is so closely tied to the work of one individual, as was the case with 7:84 under McGrath, there are obvious dangers. The energy and commitment the company generated under his leadership nonetheless did much to make Scottish theatre exciting and socially relevant to audiences at a time when the question of 'how are we governed and for whom?' was very much on the agenda. McGrath continued to work with the Wildcat company, itself an off-shoot of 7:84 Scotland. Among his productions with it was *Border Warfare* (1989, Tramway, Glasgow), in which all of the techniques he had been developing were deployed, often to witty and telling effect, in an analysis of the evolution of the relationship between Scotland and England over several centuries.

Drama about the life of the working class came to dominate from the 1970s. When Bill Bryden was associate director at the Lyceum in Edinburgh he encouraged Roddy McMillan to write *The Bevellers* (1973), which, in its account of life in a glass-processing workshop, offers a bleak, if compelling, vision. He also presented his own pieces *Willie Rough* (1972) and *Benny Lynch* (1974), one an account of a strike in Greenock during the First World War, the other a poignant exploration of the life of the Glasgow boy who became fly-weight champion of the world in the 1930s. Much of this work has an air of nostalgia, for it depicts and sometimes celebrates a way of life based on hard manual labour that was contracting drastically in Scotland during the period of these plays' presentation. At the Traverse, under Chris Parr, director from 1975 until 1981, a remarkable range of dramas by writers such as Tom McGrath, Hector MacMillan, Donald Campbell and John Byrne was presented. Not all were proletarian: Campbell's *The Jesuit* (1976), for example, co-produced with an *ad hoc* company, explores the compulsions of martyrdom in post-Reformation Scotland, and McGrath's *Laurel and Hardy* (1976) takes the famous comedians and the relationship between art and reality as his subject. But, as at the Lyceum and elsewhere, working-class experience was being given an exposure on the main stages it had never enjoyed in Scotland. Sometimes these plays had an excessive naturalism of subject matter and style about them, but that was not always the case. The work of John Byrne, for example, such as *The Slab Boys* (1978) shows a delight in language and wit which was later put to remarkable effect in the television serial *Tutti Frutti* (1987). Byrne's characters are solidly working class – and for the most part from the Catholic Irish working class in the west of Scotland – but they use the popular culture of America, its films and music, to enrich and transcend their own worlds.

In fact the structures of theatre in Scotland throughout the twentieth century worked both through strong native traditions and openness to international influence. The specifically Scottish traditions were derived from a long precedent of popular theatre descended from many centuries of lively activity, where the focus was often primarily on performance rather than the primacy of a given text. External influences include the development of the Rep system in Scottish theatre. This followed the launch of the Rep movement on mainland Britain by Annie Horniman in Manchester at the 'Midland Theatre' (in fact, the

ballroom of the Midland Hotel) in September 1907. The success of this preliminary season led to her purchasing the Gaiety Theatre for her introductory season there in 1908, this in turn leading to Alfred Wareing's foundation of the Glasgow Rep (1909–14). Later reps were founded in several Scottish cities and towns, beginning with Perth in 1935. In more recent times, the influence of the Edinburgh Festivals should not be underestimated. Following a first-ever visit to Edinburgh in 1945 by the Comédie-Française, bringing productions of Molière's *Tartuffe* and *L'Impromptu de Versailles* (as well as *Phèdre* and *Le Barbier de Seville*), two years later, the Compagnie Jovet du Théâtre de l'Athénée, from Paris, appeared at the first Edinburgh International Festival. Of the two plays presented, one was Molière's *L'École des femmes*. By February of the next year, Kemp had premiered his version of this classic, *Let Wives Tak Tent*, discussed earlier in this chapter. The International Festival continued to provide stimulating material. The year 1968 saw, for example, Grotowski's *Acropolis* and 1971 André Gregory's *Alice in Wonderland*. Other visiting artists over the years have included Ellen Stewart with her La Mama Company, Ninagawa and Peter Stein. Meantime the Fringe Festival has provided an abundance of international material to support the development of new theatrical ideas and writing and in turn has provided a base for much new Scottish writing for theatre. Central to this function since its foundation in 1963 has been the Traverse Theatre.

The Traverse has been for most of the period since its inception a writers' theatre. Under Chris Parr, as noted above, the emphasis was firmly on indigenous dramatists. By the end of the century that emphasis was still there, but the repertoire drew more widely on world theatre, particularly during the weeks of the Edinburgh Festival, when a bewildering array of material was presented. As far as Scottish writing was concerned, more female voices were being heard at the Traverse and elsewhere, as writers like Rona Munro, Marcella Evaristi, Sue Glover and Liz Lochhead established reputations for themselves. Of these, Lochhead is the most prolific and most prominent. She is comfortable in material drawn from Scottish history, for example in *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987, Communicado), a re-telling of the oft-dramatised story as distinctive for its use of modern linguistic forms as for its attempts to suggest parallels with contemporary Scottish life. She is equally at ease with the mores of the 'New Glasgow' in *Perfect Days* (Traverse, 1998), which focuses on the sexual and personal tensions in the life of modern Scottish women.

The most prolific and successful of the younger generation of Scottish dramatists is David Greig. He has combined working with the Suspect Culture company, which he co-founded with actor and director Graham Eatough, and writing for a range of other companies north and south of the border, including the Traverse and Paines Plough. His subject matter ranges widely. Sometimes he will tackle a social issue, such as the life-corroding drabness of working-class post-war housing, as in *The Architect* (1996, Traverse), or the different aspirations of a varied range of Scots for the future, as in *Caledonia Dreaming* (1997, 7:84 Scotland). At other times he is drawn to the very mixed consequences of the upheavals in recent years in central Europe, as in *Stalinland* (1992, Suspect Culture) and *Europe* (1994, Traverse). Sometimes too he will create drama out of apparently unrelated material as in *The cosmonaut's last message to the woman he once loved in the former Soviet Union* (1999, Paines Plough). In all of his work there is a combination of sharply written dialogue and an interest in ideas; in Greig one is very aware of a postmodern sensibility, seeking to link together disparate material sometimes in a kind of mosaic or collage. He is a playwright who always engages the audience's intellect, though not always their emotions.

In a curious way Greig recalls the writer discussed earliest in this chapter, James Bridie. His dialogue is clearly very different from Bridie's, far leaner and more sparse, while he

has much more explicit sexual activity on stage than Bridie ever had or would have wished to have. Yet, like Bridie, Greig ranges the world in search of his subject matter, is interested in ideas, has based himself in Scotland and taken a major role in establishing a theatrical company, and has sought, and achieved, critical success both inside and outside of Scotland.

The reshaped Scottish theatrical infrastructure has offered David Greig and a number of other writers the opportunity to develop as dramatists, something that earlier structures could not offer Bridie in the pre-war period. It would be foolish, however, to imagine that it is possible for more than a handful of playwrights to make a tolerable living in the country, even if they seek international exposure for their work. The home base remains too underdeveloped for that, even when the opportunities in radio, television and, to a lesser extent, film are taken into account. Whether that base is likely to grow substantially beyond its present size remains an open question.

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Cultural Catalysts: Sorley MacLean and George Campbell Hay

Christopher Whyte

On the morning of Thursday, 26 September 1940, Sorley MacLean left Edinburgh for Catterick Camp in Yorkshire. There he was to train as a member of the Signal Corps, though more than a year would pass before the poet left for active service in North Africa in December 1941. On the Tuesday before Christmas 1939, MacLean had received a letter which, he claimed in a letter to Douglas Young (30 March 1942), 'meant for me the end of my period of great activity in poetry'. In it the Scottish woman with whom he had renewed acquaintance in spring 1939, and who was to be designated in a rejected dedication of *Dàin do Eimhir agus Dàin eile (Poems to Eimhir and Other Poems)* merely by the initials 'A.M', would appear to have confessed that she could never be his wife in the fullest sense of the word, and that his love for her was therefore doomed to frustration.

That the period from spring 1939 till the end of that year had been one of 'great activity in poetry' is beyond doubt. By May, MacLean had written Part I and half of Part II of his long political poem 'An Cuilithionn' ('The Cuillin'). The remainder was written in November and early December, producing a draft that ran to seven parts and over 1,600 lines. It is hard to determine the point at which his love poems moved from being isolated annotations, prompted by a sensation or an experience, and became instead items in a sequence whose final dimensions and configuration would only gradually become clear to the poet. But this may well have happened when four lyrics were jotted down in September, bringing the total to eight. It was definitely the case by early December. When the fateful letter arrived, there were twenty-seven lyrics in all, and a further nine were written practically within a day of receiving it.

The break induced by the letter was neither as abrupt nor as final as MacLean implies. His love sequence eventually ran to sixty items plus a closing 'Dimitto', while the major poems 'Craobh nan Teud' ('The Tree of Strings'), which he dedicated to George Campbell Hay, and 'Coilltean Ratharsair' ('The Woods of Raasay'), of which he entrusted the only copy to Douglas Young the day before his departure, had still to be written. The poet was wounded a total of three times during the North Africa campaign, most seriously at El Alamein, where, on 2 November 1942, a mine exploded close to him. We have no record of how he reacted to the bracing comment, in a letter from Hay dated 13 March 1943, that 'it's certainly tough to run athwart a land-mine as you did; but there's worse'. MacLean spent the next nine months in different military hospitals. In the desert he had learned the truth about the Scottish woman's behaviour, and filled a notebook with bitter poems concerning his own foolishness which remain largely unpublished. The experience gained

at the front would issue in a series of war poems marked by dignity, resolute courage and very masculine compassion, one at least of which, ‘Curaidhean’ (‘Heroes’), required two decades of maturation before reaching its final form. The high points of MacLean’s later work, his meditation on the Clearances, named ‘Hallraig’ after a deserted township on the east coast of his native island Raasay, and the elegy for his brother, the eminent folklorist Calum I. MacLean, achieved publication in 1954 and 1970 respectively. Nevertheless, the period between spring 1939 and spring 1940 was undoubtedly an *annus mirabilis* where MacLean’s poetry is concerned. And during that period there was regular contact between him and George Campbell Hay.

As much can be gleaned from Hay’s letters to Douglas Young, poet and translator, classics lecturer and nationalist leader. The night before MacLean departed southwards ‘fo chòta truagh an rìgh’ (‘beneath the king’s wretched coat’) a group of friends gathered in an Edinburgh pub to give him a traditional send-off. Hay was of their number, as he explains to Young four days later:

I was present at Sorley’s farewell festivities in a pub. Hector MacIver, his brother John, Garioch and others were there, and who turned up but young Prof. Watson, which not every professor would have done. Then we went to the *New Alliance* rooms and slew a bottle of whisky.

That Hay was enthusiastic about MacLean’s work emerges from these remarks, appended to a letter written early in February 1940, which he instructed Young to make whatever use he wished of:

Mr MacLean’s achievement in striking out on what is practically a new line in Scottish Gaelic poetry is noteworthy. He has avoided our continual lyricism, which at present looks like becoming as maudlin as the Lowland lyric once was. [. . .] Nor [. . .] has he wandered off into a drawing room Tìr nan Òg at the heels of the Clàrsach Society and the Kennedy Frasers. [. . .] Mr MacLean has his feet on the real earth. He sees it as the Via Dolorosa of the common people of Europe, and for them he speaks out of a full heart – the eviction time refugees of Long nan Daoine, Martaraich Ghleann Dàl, the Asturias (whom we forget to our shame and harm) [. . .] Livingston was another who wanted something more than lyric verse, in his case to celebrate the deeds of our ancestors and his honest hatred of the English. For his purpose he evolved a kind of irregular *vers libre* which is not wholly pleasing, and we often sigh for the Livingston of ‘Fios thun a’ bhàird’. But the *caoineadh* measure of *17 Poems* is the simple, native medium which is needed for sustained expression, and Mr MacLean handles it with skill and assurance.

Hay’s assessment implies a high degree of familiarity, not just with MacLean’s recent poems, which circulated in manuscript and were in part copied by Hay into his own notebooks, but also with the kind of debates to which these had given rise. MacLean disagreed with Young’s description of his favoured metre as a kind of ‘sprung rhythm’ and, though acknowledging a degree of similarity, insisted that he had become acquainted with the metrics of Islay poet William Livingston (1808–70) only after beginning work on ‘The Cuillin’. His impatience with the Celtic revivalists and what he saw as their wilful distortions of his own native traditions emerged in a vicious epigram about Marjory Kennedy Fraser, one of the items Hay took a copy of, as well as in lines from Part I of ‘The Cuillin’

where the Celtic Twilight is associated with the emptiness of the ruins in a cleared landscape:

Chì mi bailtean bha 'm Bràigh Aoineart
fo thaomadh frainich 'nan aibhnichean;
's chì mi Feasgar fann nan Gàidheal,
lias frainich bhuidhe ruigheachd nèimhe.

(I see townships that were in Brae Eynort/ rivers with the pouring of bracken,/ and I see the faint Twilight of the Gaels,/ with its glimmer of bracken reaching heaven.)

The miners of Asturias, the crushing of whose revolt in late 1934 made civil war inevitable in Spain, enter 'The Cuillin' at the very point where MacLean took the poem up again after six months' interruption. With the benefit of hindsight one can discern Hay's poetry as being animated by a very different spirit from MacLean's. Yet he was able to fix on at least one powerful element their work shares, profound indignation at the suffering inflicted on the mass of ordinary men and women by incompetent and corrupt governors. Comments in a letter to Young dated 19 December 1941, made in anticipation of the publication of MacLean's love sequence, give a more passionate and intimate assessment of the older poet's work:

The publication of his poems is a sweet smile of Fortune on Scotland, and they will be the first live Gaelic to appear since ages past. It may mean a lot for Gaelic itself for the life in these poems is hot enough to break up even the thick casing of dead ice that has lain over Gaelic literature so long.

The view Hay takes of his own production, in a letter to MacLean dated 28 December 1943, is much more sober. If a wilful and energetic breaking with tradition characterises MacLean's poetry and accounts for much of its power, he does not feel this to be his own case:

Doubts assail me at times as to whether $\frac{3}{4}$ of my stuff is worth publishing. A lot of it may be bonny verse, but is not new or significant. Yet, I'm not going to pretend I'm not pleased at the thought of seeing it in print.

The two men came from strikingly different backgrounds. MacLean was one of a family of seven children, his father a tailor whose distant forebears had moved to Raasay from North Uist. His father's mother, a Matheson from Braes, had a rich store of traditional song, while his father and two of his father's sisters, Peigi and Flora, were all talented singers. On his mother's side of the family, 'two brothers were pipers, two others were singers, one a bard, and one sister a very good singer'. MacLean was educated at the local primary school and at Portree High School and, though history was a major enthusiasm, chose neither that nor Celtic as the subject he would graduate in, but English Literature, with a view to the employment prospects this might open up. Hay's father was a minister and a novelist, John MacDougall Hay, whose one major achievement *Gillespie* (1914) belongs to the anti-Kailyard or naturalist phase in early twentieth-century Scottish fiction, a fascinating and, in its way, strikingly original calque on George Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901). The Briston featured in the novel is a thinly camouflaged portrait of Tarbert Loch Fyne, where Hay spent the first years of his life and where he picked up

residual local Gaelic from the fishermen and two unmarried aunts. Hay's father died when he was only five. He was educated at Fettes College, Edinburgh, and his experience of boarding school on the English model, the social milieu from which many of his fellows came, and the social expectations deriving from such an education could hardly have contrasted more with MacLean's humbler circumstances. In a letter to Young probably written in July 1941, he comments that 'life in the khaki hordes is startlingly like life at a boarding school, except it's not so bad', adding, with reference to his own incarceration for resisting conscription, that 'It's also like life at Saughton [sic] jail Midlothian, only more exhausting.' After an undistinguished career at Oxford University, which he left with a third-class degree in Classics, Hay returned north, living mainly with his mother in Edinburgh. While MacLean embarked on a career as a schoolmaster, first in Portree, then in Tobermory on Mull, Hay worked only sporadically, taking advantage of his skills in Gaelic and as a lexicographer. Though MacLean's fascination with and passionate sympathies for the international socialist movement made him a communist sympathiser, his views were shared primarily with a circle of friends, while Hay had ardent and regular contacts with nationalist activists. Their first meeting should probably be dated subsequent to MacLean's coming south in January 1939 to take up a post at Boroughmuir High School in Edinburgh.

MacLean grew up in a community where Gaelic was in everyday use, alongside both Scots and English. His father and his mother's brother Alexander Nicolson, author of a history of Skye, engaged in discussions on finer points of grammar and vocabulary and about the appreciation of Gaelic poetry of the great eighteenth-century flowering. He also heard and was influenced by the wonderfully eloquent preaching of ministers and elders from the Free Presbyterian Church at the communion ceremonies which brought together speakers from a range of localities, each with his own personal and linguistic peculiarities. Gaelic was Hay's second language, one in which he developed a nearly encyclopedic expertise where vocabulary was concerned, aided in part by an excellent training in the philology of the classical languages, something he and MacLean shared.

The actual poetic praxis of the two relates to this linguistic background in a manner that can seem paradoxical. MacLean's poetry, in the period before 1943, is characterised by repeated effects of breakage, in the sense that elements are introduced into a Gaelic discourse which are alien to it, wrenching it into the modern world in a wilful dislocation which can also be read as a deliberate *effet de réel*. On the one hand, MacLean was able to do this because, though his education and formation meant he was both bilingual and bicultural, there could be no questioning his credentials as a member of a dwindling and beleaguered linguistic community. On the other, the effects of breakage he induces link him to English literary modernism, in its impatience and disillusionment both with past traditions and with the established canon, and its suspicion of the linguistic and poetic medium it had inherited from the previous century. In line with this affiliation, there are clear traces of European Decadentist poetry, and of the gentler inheritance of the Symbolists, throughout MacLean's work of the pre-war and wartime periods. Similar echoes are to be found in the poetry of the man whose spirit more than that of any other bar Shakespeare hovers over the love sequence, namely William Butler Yeats. On a more pragmatic level, MacLean achieves at least two ends with his effects of breakage, as in the following lines from 'The Cuillin':

's ged bhiodh Beul-àth-nan Tri Allt
mar a' Bholga làn is mall,

leanadh sgrìachail a' Chuilithinn
ri mo chluasan 'n duilighinn.

(and though the Confluence-of-the-Three Burns were/ like the Volga full and slow,/ the
screeching of the Cuillin would follow/ my ears with its anguish.)

Throughout this poem, by drawing on his intimate knowledge of local topography and history, and of the men and women who shaped it, in part gleaned from oral narrative rather than from books, MacLean is eager to relate the 'microworld' of Skye and Raasay, to the 'macroworld' of social injustice and revolutionary endeavour in France, Russia and China. Thus, while a fording place known only to a few people swells so much as to rival the Volga, the cry of the evictors is not blotted out from the speaker's hearing, but persists. Yet, and this is more strikingly evident in the love sequence, MacLean's use of breakage, his eschewal of any seamless Gaelic homogeneity, also aims to re-enfranchise a marginalised language and the associated cultural products within the larger European context. At the conclusion of XX he sets the eighteenth-century song writer William Ross alongside Yeats and Aleksandr Blok, as if the three belonged naturally together, when he longs to write

dàintean luathghaireach gun shireadh,
doimhne, fìnealta, le mire,
dàintean sam fàighte singilt'
buadhan an trìùir 's iad fillte,
dàintean sam faicte chrois
bh' air Yeats is Blok is Uilleam Ros.

(exultant poems without seeking,/ deep, elegant and layful,/ poems where would be united/
the plaited qualities of that threesome, poems were one would see the cross/ borne by Yeats
and Blok and William Ross.)

At times such effects are more subtle, as in XIII, superficially a very Gaelic item whose deployment of the topos of the *domna soiseubeuda*, or 'composite woman', in fact derives from Provençal poetry through the medium of Ezra Pound.

Hay, on the other hand, engages in a stubborn and determined stylisation which aims at conferring on his poetry a sheen of self-consistency. MacLean's work was instrumental in finally divorcing poetry from song within the tradition. Indeed, native speakers can still respond to his poetry by asking in perplexity how it could possibly be sung! Hay confided to Young, in a letter of 1 February 1939, that

When I come across a Gaelic poem I like I naturally hunt for the tune. If I can't find it I start singing the poem or delivering (*gabhail*) it in a singing voice. Finally a tune emerges, and I sing it over till I have it in my memory. Later I consider it as dispassionately as possible.

He shows a consistent interest in inherited metrics, so that one is tempted to speak of a movement 'back into' Gaelic which characterises Hay's contradictory relationship to modernity. Such a trajectory necessarily has in it elements of the self-willed, even the solipsistic, concerned as it is with what 'ought to have been' or what 'ought to be'. One could even speak of a 're-Gaelicisation' in his exquisite – at times excessive – deployment of vowel harmony in a poem such as 'Siubhal a' *Choire*' ('The Voyaging of the *Corrie*'). That

this was an ingrained tendency is clear from ‘An Ciùran Ceòban Ceò’ (‘The Smirry Drizzle of Mist’), whose word music grows so dense as it progresses that the closing stanza ends up being something of a tongue-twister:

Bha na cìothan ceathaich chiùranaich, 's iad dùmhail, dlùth, gun ghlòir,
 gu cagarsach, gu cùbhraidh, tais, ùr, gun ghuth, gun cheòl,
 a' snàmh mu mhill is stùcan, 's a' dùnadh mu gach còs.
 Bha tlàths is tlachd a' tùirling anns a' chiùran cheòban cheò.

(The showers of drizzly mist came closely down, all soundless,/ whispering and fragrant, soft and fresh, without voice or melody,/ they floated about hilltops and cliffs and closed in about every hollow./ Gentleness and pleasure were drifting down in the smirry drizzle of mist.)

The lines are a splendid example of how the signifier, as Valéry might have put it, refuses to be displaced for the sake of the signified, how the sound of the words can almost, but never quite, become an end in itself. One certainly has the impression that, when it came to choosing which words would figure, phonetic considerations competed powerfully with semantic. Focusing on and praising natural phenomena in a distinctively west-coast setting, this is a supremely ‘Gaelic’ poem. One only has to think of how Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair, in ‘Allt an t-Siùcair’, or Duncan Ban Macintyre, in ‘Beinn Dorain’ or ‘Òran Coire Cheathaich’ similarly celebrated topographical elements, without averting any urge towards transcendence. Dating from 1969, and so relatively late in the poet’s career, ‘An Ciùran Ceòban Ceò’ is, however, what Hay called ‘a Gaelic counterpart’ to ‘The Smoky Smirr o Rain’, one of his own poems in Scots, which Byrne dates tentatively to 1947.

A poem so apparently indebted to tradition, then, in fact started its life in a different language. Hay’s stylisation, his urge and aspiration towards a wholeness and a harmony he so longed for, is profoundly modern because it can never be satisfied. He neither possesses it, nor can he hope to attain it other than through a wilful craftsmanship which is itself unnatural, artificial and artful. While still a student, MacLean had come

to realize that my English verse, which was mostly imitative of Eliot and Pound, was over-sophisticated, over-self-conscious, and that what I had written in Gaelic was better in the sense that it was more myself.

The agenda behind this declaration is straightforward. English is an alien tongue. Writing in it involves a slavishness to alien models and is moreover characterised by too high a degree of artificiality, whereas Gaelic can, for MacLean, represent a return to the authentic, to what ‘he’ truly ‘is’. It would be impossible to characterise Hay’s career in such terms. His enthusiastic self-projection into Gaelic demanded duplication, issuing at times in problematic sallies into composing in French, Italian and even Norwegian. His own poetry ranges across three languages, least successful in the idiom which was ‘naturally’ his, most successful in the most ‘artificial’, willed and acquired, namely Gaelic. Few readers of his poetry would demur with such a hierarchy. His only non-Gaelic collection, *Wind on Loch Fyne* (1948), has a section of translations at least as long as that containing the original poems, followed by work in French and Norwegian. He did not disdain to feature contemporary Croatian poets thanks to an Italian anthology picked up on war service, thus demonstrating that ‘authenticity’, in any commonly accepted sense, was not one of his

concerns. No fewer than seven items in the English and Scots section of the volume have Gaelic titles, and this sense of subsidiarity is borne out by the versification in this section, which shows a fondness for three-syllable feet and for rhyming polysyllables that at times recalls James Clarence Mangan. In other words, behind these poems, however illusory it may be, one is intended to perceive the rhythms and the melody of another language, and that language is Gaelic.

There can be little argument that the appropriate framework within which to view Hay's work, to apprehend his own specific brand of 'linguistic homelessness' (the phrase has heretofore been applied to Kafka) would be a postcolonial one. His encounter with Arabic North Africa, and the fragmentary extended poem which issued from that, *Mochtâr is Dùghall* (*Mokhtâr and Dougall*), and which languished among Hay's papers until Derick Thomson learned of its existence at the start of the 1980s, demand to be read in the context of an analysis of the imperial enterprise, and of its effects on colonised communities, around the time the whole mechanism was starting to come apart, and when therefore its operations became visible and more easily representable. A letter to Sorley MacLean dated 16 June 1943 demonstrates beyond any doubt that it was the hybridity and multifariousness of the world he discovered in North Africa that most enchanted Hay:

There is such a variety of people and peoples here, samples from all the nationalities of the Western Mediterranean. There are a great many types among the Arabs themselves, from the country and hill ones in brown burnouses with plenty of manners and dignity to the ones that have let themselves be tampered with overmuch – the smart ones in lounge suits and fezzes; the grandees swathed in fine white robes with estates and a balance in the Banque d'Algérie; the proletarianised, the most wretched type of humanity I've seen yet, dressed in their conglomerations of rags and sacking and with their unexpected sense of humour and their lice. There [are] also the fat white Mozabite shopkeepers, who look as if they'd [been] kept in a cupboard among mothballs for the first 15 years of their life. There are instances of superimposed 'cultural' strata – such as the docker who abstains from drink for Koranic reasons, knocks off about 4pm to perform his ablutions and pray, and who knows about Popeye the Sailor man, Fred Astaire and tap dancing, cowboys [. . .] and God knows what other bric-à-brac. [. . .] I kill what spare time falls to me by swimming and learning Arabic and Italian, also by trying to fathom what is at the back of the minds of the French here.

However doctrinaire his nationalism may have been on the surface, and despite the judgement implicit in the phrase 'tampered with overmuch', it is the collision of cultures in a single community and of contradictory elements from different cultures within a single individual that kindles his imagination.

One could argue that the subjugation of a community identified by language or by race produces, in Hay's view, alongside inevitable assimilation to the occupying power, an ability to select and combine cultural material in an eclectic fashion that re-creates new levels of difference, levels that cannot be made sense of exclusively in terms of the relations between a dominant group and an oppressed one. He returns to the point in a letter to Douglas Young which reached the latter on 3 June 1944:

I can't imagine a more cosmopolitan place than the seaboard of North Africa. You have to study people individually and figure out what they are. I've got the length of being able to tell a Kayble from an 'Arab' by looking and listening, and a Frenchman of recent Italian extraction from a Frenchman, and a Spaniard from a Maltese, but that's only the fringes. The

questions of Sicily, Calabria, Bass'Italia, Alt'Italia, Piemonte & cet [sic] also arise. The variety of people is endless in fact, a thing that you don't need to leave Scotland to discover.

It would be facile as well as inaccurate to imply that Hay recognised features of North African society which were familiar to him in Scotland, or that Arab society helped him to solidify and deepen his sense of a Gaelic identity. Rather what emerges here is the ethic of difference which powers so much of Hay's poetry, a bringing together of opposed qualities or characters which, like two electric terminals, provoke a spark of understanding, of humour, sympathy or excitement, encapsulating what it means for Hay to be alive. The ethic can easily be detected in 'Clann Adhaimh' ('Adam's Clan'), in 'Atman', in 'Priosan Da Fhèin an Duine?' ('Man His Own Prison?') or in 'Meftah Bâbkum es-Sabar?' In the latter poem, it underpins the contrast between the prone submissiveness to fate attributed to the Arabic world and Hay's augury for Gaelic culture, with its implicit polemic against the Celtic Twilight:

Iarraibh gàire, gean is mìghean,
càirdeas, nàimhdeas, tlachd is mìothlachd –
iarraibh faileas fìor ar n-inntinn.

(Ask for laughter, and cheerful and angry moods,/ friendship, enmity, pleasure and displeasure./ Ask for the true reflection of our mind.)

In that poem it is fair to say that the 'other' community is appropriated and reified in subservience to a discourse about the 'home' community. The same does not hold true for *Mochtàr is Dùghall*. One can only guess at the probable architecture of this poem, had it been completed. Hay's remark in a letter to Young dated 7 March 1939 that

I have never succeeded in planning anything sustained, and if I ever do produce an offspring of any length it will have to come of its own sweet will, unplanned [. . .]

implies that he may well have groped his way forward without developing any overall notion of the structure (though Byrne prints a draft outline for the Dougall section). Of the 1,273 surviving lines, 998 are devoted to the Arabic soldier, his family and his forebears. While it is tempting to suggest that Dougall would have received parallel coverage, resulting in a diptych with claims to symmetry, this must remain a conjecture. What makes the Arabic sections so impressive is Hay's unspoken assumption that Gaelic possesses all the resources needed for a convincing portrayal of a very different society. Different, but also similar. Hay's correspondence shows him constantly seeking analogues for Scotland in the phenomena he encountered during his war service. He tells MacLean in a letter dated 13 March 1943 that he has 'my chanter with me but no reeds. However I bought a cane flute from an Arab wean, which proves to have almost exactly the chanter scale', while a letter that reached Young on 26 December 1944 relates how

Last Sunday I met an Italian piper with his pipes, but he was hurrying to a wedding and I was hobbling back to the billets so I only had time for a glance and a couple of words. The drones and chanter are brown, and the drones are belltopped (very wide bells) and all clasped together instead of spreading like ours. I'm on the lookout for him again.

The Arab section deals in turn with Mokhtâr's great-grandfather, grandfather and father, paying deliberate attention to culture in its vertical and diachronic, rather than horizontal and synchronic manifestation. It would be feasible to read Gaelic analogues into each figure. Ahmad could correspond to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with armed resistance to the assimilating power still feasible, and Omar to the Victorian period, when individuals and elements in Gaelic society participated enthusiastically in the possibilities for commerce and exploitation opened up by the imperial enterprise. Obayd's otherworldly, quietistic approach could mirror the spiritual involution of Gaelic-speaking society associated with social trauma and the evangelical revival. Omar's first-person narrative is a gripping adventure story of truly Stevensonian power, saved from superficiality by its delicate attention to issues of cultural difference and adaptation. What persuades the leader of the Tuareg brigands to release the Arab he has captured, along with a portion of their merchandise, is a gift of mint tea misinterpreted as goat's milk:

'Is math an gobhar a shil a leithid,
ge b' e càite no cò leis e'

(Good is the goat that gave such milk,/ wherever it might be and whoever might own it)

MacLean's long poem 'The Cuillin' exists in two competing versions, a 1939 manuscript of 1,623 lines (revised and trimmed down over the next two years in view of a publication which never materialised) and a 1,209 abridgement, arguably a different poem, which forms the second section in MacLean's 1989 collected volume. This complex textual history, along with the thoroughly deprecating attitude MacLean later assumed (the published version comprises 'what I think tolerable of it'), has made 'The Cuillin' very much the Cinderella of MacLean's work. Repeated gestures in the direction of a literary modernism familiar to readers of English throughout the world, along with its explicit rejection of political engagement in favour of love and unrequited passion, have rendered the love sequence palatable and approachable in a way 'The Cuillin', with its dogmatic commitment to international socialism and its brooding, unsettling symbolism of marshland and peak, is not. Yet it is possible to discern in the later version a choreography, a marshalling of different kinds of movement which has distinctive originality, cohesion and power. It ranges from the wrestling of the speaker's body with the mountain in his initial ascent, through the ghoulish dance of the ghosts of the evictors upon the pinnacles, the sinking movement associated with the marsh of Maraulin and the exultant prancing of the stallion (itself a geological formation) from peak to peak in Part V, to the irresistible upward movement of the Cuillin themselves 'ag éirigh air taobh eile duilghe' (rising on the other side of sorrow). The latter, indeed, permeates the entire poem. As well as a degree of personal invective very much in the spirit of the poem's dedicatees (Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair and Hugh MacDiarmid), the 1939 version offers a greater degree of lyrical contrast, not least a splendid pibroch movement of 112 lines preceding the final peroration. Circulated among MacLean's Edinburgh acquaintances in Gaelic and English typescript, 'The Cuillin' provoked contrasting reactions. George Davie christened it 'a rant', while Robin Lorimer recommended the excision of several passages to avoid giving unnecessary offence. Hay, however, in a letter to MacLean dated August 1943, considered 'your "long rant" a lot more important than anything of mine' and felt it should be 'next on the list' for publication after the *Dàin do Eimhir*.

MacLean's war poetry has a persistent grimness of tone. The generous tribute to a physically insignificant Englishman of 'Curaidhean', or the surmise that the young German soldier lying dead in 'Glaic a' Bhàis' ('Death Valley') must have been one

air an dream
bu mhotha, dhiùbh-san

a threòraicheadh bho thòisich àl
gun deòin gu buaireadh
agus bruillean cuthaich gach blàir
air sgàth uachdaran

(of the greater/ band of those// led, from the beginning of generations,/ unwillingly to the trial. and mad delirium of every war/ for the sake of rulers?)

cannot lighten the overall sense of a predicament where all these men are entrapped, one from which death, whether heroic or not, constitutes the only exit route. MacLean has time for leisurely inspection of an opponent's corpse or, in the horrific 'Latha Foghair' ('An Autumn Day'), to contemplate throughout an autumn day six dead comrades

rag-mharbh – is reòta mur b' e 'n teas –
mar gum b'ann a fuireach ri fios.

(dead and stiff – and frozen were it not for the heat –/ as if they were waiting for a message.)

Such bodily presence, and involvement, with the concomitant vulnerability, is alien to Hay's treatment of the conflict. His most successful – and deservedly celebrated – war poem, though entitled 'Bisearta' ('Bizerta') after the Tunisian town, probably incorporates memories of an air-raid witnessed in Edinburgh (letter to Young postmarked 30 September 1940):

On three nights bombs have fallen pretty near here. At 5 on Sunday morn I woke to see the sky to S-West bright with parachute flares. Then in some minutes the big bird began to lay its eggs – several, including incendiaries in the old-world village below the bridge. They abolished three tenements and set a distillery on fire. The burning whisky was running out over the street, which was a ghastly crime. There was a vast and beautiful orange lowe over the sky till after break of day, and the griosach smouldered all day long. Even in bed the smoke stung my nostrils.

Many elements of the North African poem are already present in this passage: an eerie sense of detachment, the defamiliarising of destructive energy by means of metaphor and a bemused, even chilling assessment of the aesthetic qualities of the distant spectacle. Though the central section of Hay's 'Bisearta' issues in passionate advocacy, it transports the suffering of individual human beings on to a general and theoretical plane, with an implied inevitability that reinforces the speaker's role of passive onlooker:

Is cò a-nochd tha 'g atach
am Bàs a theachd gu grad 'nan cainntibh uile,
no a' spàirn measg chlach is shailthean
air bhàinidh a' gairm air cobhair is nach cluinnear?

Cò a-nochd a phàigheas
seann chis àbhaisteach na fala cumant?

(And who tonight are beseeching/ Death to come quickly in all their tongues,/ or are
struggling among stones and beams,/ crying in frenzy for help, and are not heard?/ Who
tonight is paying/ the old accustomed tax of common blood?)

This of course mimics Hay's own attitude. MacLean's dogged, grudging acknowledgement of the need for self-immolation was alien to Hay, who, throughout his period of service, was restricted to clerical and educational duties, never facing the possibility of injury in the front line. He may well have remained faithful to the view, expressed in a letter to Young of 15 May 1939, that

from the Nationalist's and from the genuine left wing point of view the enemy is between here and the Channel, and needs more careful watching every day.

Hay's career as a writer was tragically interrupted by a nervous breakdown suffered in Kavalla, northern Greece in late May or early June 1946, from which he never fully recovered. The reasons behind MacLean's diminished productivity in the post-war years were of a more humdrum nature. He had never been attracted by the notion of the full-time, professional poet and, if his duties as teacher and then headmaster left little space for the germ of a poem to take seed and sprout, the social integration and concomitant respectability made of him a very different creature from the tormented, passionate young man who had set off for the front convinced that he would die.

Though the revival of interest in MacLean's work that came about in the 1970s and 1980s brought him a recognition he richly deserved, it was not free of the distortion and simplification so often attendant on such homage. While the fact that later publications of his work almost without exception featured complete facing English versions by the poet himself won MacLean a new and much broader audience, it tended to deflect attention from the original, obscuring the degree to which his work had emerged as a challenge to Gaelic tradition, rather than a celebration of it. Insofar as MacLean was held to represent an ill-defined Gaelic authenticity for a public with no direct experience of the language, this also eclipsed the achievements of the *bàird bhaile*, or 'village poets', who had continued to work with inherited song metres, producing poems that attained a popularity within the language community MacLean's could never hope for. Appreciation of his work was disfigured by a sentimental socialism only really possible in a country such as Scotland, deprived for nearly three centuries of any effective political forum. Moreover, by recasting and abridging 'The Cuillin', and dismembering the love sequence, items from which later appeared as individual lyrics without explicit reference to one another, MacLean succeeded in refashioning both his output and his poetic persona in a way that has still to be the object of adequate study.

Hay's poetry, which deserves to be considerably better known, has suffered from the lack of a heroic personal narrative, a poeticised biography such as underpins MacLean's love lyrics. Its 'literariness', evident in his splendid Gaelic renderings of Petrarch sonnets, demands a complex range of skills from both readers and critics. He proved triumphantly that it is possible to write poems of lasting value in an acquired language, a fact that loses much of its surprising quality when seen in the context of the Romanian poems of Paul Celan, for example, or the Slovene France Prešeren's early output in German. His

achievement undermines popular perceptions of Gaelic writing as ‘old’, ‘originary’, ‘genuine’ or ‘unsullied’, in turn rendering evaluation of it difficult. Moreover, his consistent trilingualism (constellated by not always successful or grammatical sallies into French or Italian, to mention only two of the other languages Hay attempted) defuses notions of the implicit ‘naturalness’ of poetic discourse, of the poet’s unmediated access to his or her ‘own’ language, which even today the reading public is slow to relinquish.

MacLean’s day arrived some three decades ago, and there is no reason to think that he ever could or should be dislodged from the position he then attained. One can only hope that Hay’s day will also arrive, accompanied by a deepening and increasing complexity and sophistication in our exegesis of Gaelic poetry, of which hopeful harbingers are to be seen today in various quarters.

[Letters may be consulted in the National Library of Scotland: MacLean’s to Young at Acc.6419 Box 38b; Hay’s to MacLean in Ms 25934; Hay’s to Young in Acc 6419 Box 38a.]

Further reading

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Living with the Double Tongue: Modern Poetry in Scots

Roderick Watson

One of the main drivers of the modern Scottish Literary Renaissance was the need to establish cultural difference from what was perceived as the English tradition – to make room for one’s own, so to speak. In this regard Hugh MacDiarmid’s resistance to the hegemony of standard English has been of immense importance to twentieth-century Scottish writing – even for those writers such as Tom Leonard and James Kelman who would disagree with his political nationalism. More than that, MacDiarmid’s case was a seminal one in the development of all literatures in English, and his essay on ‘English Ascendancy in British Literature’, first published in Eliot’s *The Criterion* in July 1931, is a key document in the early history of postcolonial studies. Nor would Kelman and Leonard be out of sympathy with the case it makes for difference, plurality and so-called ‘marginal’ utterance.

By the 1930s MacDiarmid’s claims for a trilingual Scotland were well established and the case for linguistic and cultural pluralism has been upheld with increasing sophistication ever since. The use of a plural title for the magazine *Scotlands* in 1994 is a case in point. So is the slowly growing recognition since then that ‘Scottish’ literature might even be written in languages other than English, Gaelic or Scots, as it is, for example, in the polyglot Urdu/Glaswegian demotic in Suhayl Saadi’s 2004 novel *Psychoraag*. In fact the critical impact made by Tom Leonard, James Kelman, Irvine Welsh, Duncan McLean, Gordon Legge and others has led more recent Scottish writers to embrace a linguistically diverse and strikingly oral energy in their work with even more enthusiasm. These include Alan Bissett (*Boy Racers*, 2001), Des Dillon (*Itchycooblue*, 1999), Anne Donovan (*Buddha Da*, 2002), Matthew Fitt (*But n Ben A-Go-Go*, 2000) and Saadi himself. Such energy seems to be celebrated for its own sake, rather than as part of any overtly nation-defining agenda.

Nevertheless, questions of language and identity still haunt the work of contemporary Scottish writers. One might even argue that the linguistic pluralism inherent in Scottish cultural identity – in the continuing interplay between Scots, English and Gaelic – has made writers especially sensitive to how subjectivity is simultaneously constructed and undone in the precisions and imprecisions of language and in the tangled translations and transitions (and the political and social complexities) between utterance and reception. Such questions, however, are less likely today to be framed in terms of a national identity or as part of a literary enterprise claiming continuity with and the revivification of an ancient literary tradition. If identity is an issue among contemporary Scottish writers, it is more likely now to be a matter of personal, political, sexual or existential being. Thus for example, Liz Lochhead’s ironic, hilarious and painful engagement with the experience of being a woman in Scotland has been followed by similar explorations in the work of Magi

Gibson, Janice Galloway, Jackie Kay, Kathleen Jamie and Meg Bateman, who share a very contemporary sense of belonging and not belonging – often predicated on questions of race, class or sexual orientation. Poets who left Scotland when they were young, like Kate Clanchy and Carol Ann Duffy also reflect on a borderline sense of ‘Scottish’ identity in terms that open up much larger questions about the unstable and liminal nature of identity itself. ‘All childhood is an emigration’, as Carol Ann Duffy puts it in her poem ‘Originally’, remembering that her family moved to England when she was five years old.

Do I only think
I lost a river, culture, speech, sense of first space
and the right place? Now. *Where do you come from?*
strangers ask. *Originally?* And I hesitate.

Origins are notoriously untraceable, but issues of ideological and political hegemony cannot be escaped when a poet chooses to write in Scots or Gaelic in the face of cultural productions almost exclusively dominated by forms of English. An even more complex picture emerges in the case of those poets who are not native speakers, but who choose to learn the language in order to find a voice for themselves. This is the experience, for example, of fine Gaelic poets such as Fearghas MacFhionnlaigh, Christopher Whyte, Meg Bateman, Rody Gorman, Peadar Morgan and the late Alasdair Barden. Such writing acts may have local roots, but their relevance is much wider in that they also embody a political decision (conscious or otherwise) to commit to a form of expression that speaks on behalf of all cultural minorities in an act of resistance to the increasingly global domination of English. There may be a more intimate motivation, too, whereby the shift to another language has also led to an untying of the tongue. This is a way of being creatively ‘carried over’ which is much more profound than any matter of simple translation, as with Sydney Goodsir Smith, for example, who was born of English parents in New Zealand and educated at Oxford, and yet somehow could only find his most necessary expressive outlet in Braid Scots. It is language, after all, that creates the subject, not vice versa, and to write in Gaelic or Scots (given that the medium is also the message) is to commit to a vision of self and the world that is simultaneously assertive and provisional, even perhaps embattled, and always already under threat of neglect, erasure or even extinction. And for some writers this has been like coming home.

When C. M. Grieve took up arms on behalf of Scots in his ‘Theory of Scots Letters’ in *The Scottish Chapbook* in the early months of 1923, he was especially keen to align the project with English, Irish and European modernism. He cited James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Mallarmé, Proust and Dostoyevsky, and arguing that the only reason for using Scots would be to press forward ‘the experimental exploitation of the unexplored possibilities of Vernacular expression’. It was in this spirit that MacDiarmid’s early lyrics, not to mention *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926), generated the first and perhaps the most striking examples of ‘demotic modernism’ in Scots. In *Devolving English Literature* (1992), Robert Crawford has written well on the creative contribution made by so-called ‘provincial’ writers to early modernism. He cites the demotic practice of, among others, Eliot, Joyce, Pound and MacDiarmid along with the later ‘Barbarian’ sympathies of Douglas Dunn. But the particular and problematic role played by the Scots language in this evolution is worthy of still further study.

In MacDiarmid’s early lyrics, the ethnographically specific folk expressions from Jamieson’s *Dictionary* meet with a modernist and expressionist intensity whose perspectives

link the utterly local with the cosmic – the stackyard lit by lightning. The final effect of this memorable combination is very similar to the literary and linguistic effects that Viktor Shklovsky and the Russian Formalists called *ostranenie*, ‘estrangement’ or ‘defamiliarisation’. An early reviewer (24 March 1927) for the *Times Literary Supplement* was not slow to identify these tendencies in *Penny Wheep* (1926):

While the new volume contains nothing quite so good as the best things in *Sangschaw*, it has, on the whole, the same merits – an unusual sense of the movement and changing aspects of the earth in its diurnal round, a gift for seeing familiar things from new angles and illuminating poignant situations by flashes of imaginative insight. [. . .] But there are the old faults too – pretentiousness, bravado, an affected robustness, not to say coarseness, of taste, a penchant for ugly words and subjects, and that over-emphasis which has been the bane of Scottish literature from the first.

For all its limitations, this review’s distaste for ‘coarseness’, not to mention ‘ugly words and subjects’, encapsulates a crucial insight into what has been, in effect, the historical role of Scots in the wider ideological context of English literature. This role has been especially marked in the last century, when the interrelationship between Scots and English has been a significant factor in how literary Scots has come to be used as a creative medium. It was precisely this quality that MacDiarmid evoked in his ‘Theory of Scots Letters’ in a more than familiar passage:

We have been enormously struck by the resemblance – the moral resemblance – between Jamieson’s Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language and James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. A *vis comica* that has not yet been liberated lies bound by desuetude and misappreciation in the recesses of the Doric: and its potential uprising would be no less prodigious, uncontrollable, and utterly at variance with conventional morality than was Joyce’s tremendous outpouring.

The poem ‘Gairmscoile’ (from that ‘coarse’ collection *Penny Wheep*) goes still further and argues a directly Freudian case for Scots as a language which has particular access to the primal drives of the unconscious:

[. . .] On the rumgunschoch sides o’ hills forgotten	=rough, rocky
Life hears beasts rowtin’ that it deemed extinct,	=roaring
And, sudden, on the hapless cities linked	
In canny civilisation’s canty dance	=prudent; neat
Poor herds o’ heich-skeich monsters, misbegotten,	=irresponsible
[. . .] Streets clear afore the scarnoch advance:	=tumultuous
Frae every winnock skimmerin’ een keek oot	=window; eyes
To see what camsteerie cast-offs are about.	=riotous

MacDiarmid’s early propaganda presupposes a uniquely ‘Scottish’ psyche that only the Scots language can express, but no contemporary critic would support such an essentialist position in the face of our understanding that language constructs subjectivity rather than vice versa. As a matter of cultural history, however, there is no doubt that the evolution of Scots has led to an ever-closer association between that tongue and a world of folk experience and Rabelaisian energy. One might trace this back to the carnivalia of the *Christis Kirk on the Green* tradition carried forward (not without a conscious backward eye on that

tradition of course) by Fergusson and Burns. So in this respect, at least, MacDiarmid's hopes that Scots might be a good medium for a 'prodigious' and 'uncontrollable' *vis comica* are not inappropriate.

Like so many postcolonial cultural movements in subsequent decades, the Scottish Literary Renaissance of the 1920s was keen to challenge, or even to reverse, old perceptions of the relationship between the so-called centre and the periphery. From a Eurocentric perspective, MacDiarmid aligned Scotland's case with Landsmaal in Norway, with the Belgian literary revival ('soyons nous-mêmes!') and with the Russian Slavophiles – all determined to show that supposedly 'peripheral' 'backward' cultures could contribute something radically new (but also something authentically grounded in the folk) to what were coming to be talked about (after Nietzsche and Spengler) as the oversophisticated, creatively bankrupt cultures of the west. Much influenced by Gregory Smith in his 1919 book, *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence*, MacDiarmid argued that the Scots language has special access to a spirit – suppressed by an Anglo-Scots educational system and 'polite' society – that is much akin to the spirit of *Ulysses* and its avant-garde exploration of states of modern consciousness and (most notoriously) female sexuality and the gross body. The same 'prodigious' impulse can be identified in the poetry of Goodsir Smith and Tom Leonard, or in W. N. Herbert's *Cabaret McGonagall* and Irvine Welsh's fiction.

But this is not simply a question of Scottish literary history alone, which is to say an ideological construct born out of canon formation. Nor is it in any way an essentialist proof of some Scottish penchant for the physical as was once argued by both Gregory Smith and MacDiarmid. On the contrary, the unseen partner in this construction of 'Scottishness' is in fact another conception of 'Englishness'. Indeed, it can be argued that from the late eighteenth century to modern times the literary role of Scots has been to act as English's 'other', analogous to what Freud would call the return of the repressed – in this case the socially, canonically and linguistically repressed. So the Rabelaisian explosion of *A Drunk Man* (or indeed of Joyce's *Ulysses*) derives from the co-existence and the collision of different cultural positions, different points of view, different canons, different registers and different dialects, many of which have indeed been repressed by the hegemony of standard English and the social and economic side-effects of modern-day education and publishing. (Tom Leonard makes a similar point from a more political perspective about the repressive powers of the conventional literary canon in the introduction to his 1990 anthology *Radical Renfrew*.)

Looked at in this light, the modern Renaissance of literary Scots and its contemporary manifestations are no less than a replaying of that 'victory over linguistic dogmatism' ascribed to the fifteenth-century Renaissance by Bakhtin in *Rabelais and his World* (1965; translated into English, 1968). This victory can only be properly achieved, according to him, in a multilingual world and most especially in the linguistic borders *between* languages:

a complex intersection of languages, dialects, idioms, and jargons [. . .] the new consciousness was born not in a perfected and fixed linguistic system but at the intersection of many languages and at the point of their most intense interorientation and struggle.

Bakhtin is the Russian Formalist critic above all others who was concerned with the social and ideological implications of how language actually operates in the power relationships between its users. His work began in the 1920s with a study of Rabelais which argued that the obscenity, vulgarity and licensed misrule of peasant festivals and carnivals (something of which can be found in Rabelais' writing) was no less than a form of revolt, or an

expression of freedom against the singular rule and the strict order and proprieties of church and state. He sees language use as a form of dialogue or even contestation that generates liberating energy. So it is the Bakhtinian ‘interorientation’ of Scots and English together that generates the energy that MacDiarmid admired, rather than it being the sole and unique property of Scots alone, as the poet wanted to believe. And of course within modern Scots itself there is another level of interorientation and the multiplicity that Bakhtin admired, made manifest in a wealth of dialects, different registers, hybrid expressions and rhymes which sometimes draw on the Scots and sometimes on the English form of the same word. Indeed, modern Scots has declared a victory over ‘linguistic dogmatism’ even within its own territory, for although a common style sheet for its orthography was drawn up at Douglas Young’s meeting with fellow-poets in Edinburgh in 1947, and another at the School of Scottish Studies in 1985, many creative users of Scots have continued to spell it in their own very different ways.

This is not surprising, perhaps, since linguistic fluidity has come to be especially associated with oral expression, or rather a literature of direct address, from the epistles of Burns to the overtly Rabelaisian role adopted in Sydney Goodsir Smith’s poetry, which could be said to be another, more sensual, version of MacDiarmid’s ‘drunk man’ persona. The Drunk Man’s intoxication, like Goodsir Smith’s celebration of a meths drinker, revisits the tired stereotypes of Scottishness to celebrate a Dionysian release of the creative imagination completely at odds with convention, not just in moral terms, and not just in the rapid changes of mood, register, genre and focus that so characterise the poem, but also in technical terms, in how that language is presented and spelled to recapture its essentially oral delivery.

It seems very likely that this linguistic freedom – as originally celebrated by MacDiarmid, Goodsir Smith and indeed by Joyce himself – does indeed stem from what Bakhtin saw as ‘the ability to see one’s own media from the outside, that is, through the eyes of other idioms’, the other idioms in this case being an awareness of the often uneasy and sometimes highly creative relationship between established English modes of expression and the by-comparison ‘marginal’, because largely oral status of Scots, Gaelic and Anglo-Scots. In Scots-language poetry, the subaltern can indeed speak (to borrow the concept from post-colonial theory and ‘subaltern studies’) for this is an expressive area that has not lost the common touch, even as it recognises that such utterance is simultaneously liberated and marginalised (even ghettoised) as a small part of an already small genre and expressive sphere. Not surprisingly, perhaps, this realisation is simultaneously highly creative and highly unstable.

Such tensions are at the heart of Sydney Goodsir Smith’s poetry and the persona he adopts as a writer. But the use of Scots in poetry is not simply a question of affecting to speak in a too-often despised ‘voice of the people’. Goodsir Smith, after all, was not a native speaker of Scots, but if this were no more than an affectation on his part the poetry would not survive or convince in the way that it does. The real achievement of the polyphonic, heteroglossial, even ventriloquial aspect of Smith’s work is how it realises (in every sense of the word) the fluidity of *all* expression and the final instability of all writing when it shares space with the spoken word. In *Under the Eildon Tree*, in Elegy 5, the persona of the poet himself is introduced, like Oblomov, lying in bed in the middle of the day:

Here I ligg, Sydney Slugabed Godless Smith, =lie
The Smith, the Faber, ποιητής and Makar,

And Oblomov has nocht to learn me,	=teach
Auld Oblomov has nocht on me	
Liggan my lane in bed at nune	
Gantan at grey December haar,	=gaping; mist
A cauld, scummie, hauf-drunk cup o' tea	
At my bed-side,	
Luntan Virginia fags	=lighting
– The new world thus I haud in fief	
And levie kyndlie tribute. Black men slave	
Aneth a distant sun to mak for me	
Cheroots at hauf-a-croon the box.	
Wi ase on the sheets, ase on the cod,	=ash; pillow
And crumbs of toast under my bum,	
Scrievan the last great coronach	=Gaelic lament
O' the westren flickeran bourgeois world.	
<i>Eheu fugaces!</i>	
<i>Lacrimae rerum!</i>	
<i>Nil nisi et caetera ex cathedra</i>	
<i>Requiescat</i> up your jumper.	

This is good irreverent fun, but the passage is more disruptive than it may seem at first. Most noticeably of course, it shamelessly adopts the status of the self-consciously 'Bohemian' writer. But it also mocks that status by recognising the unexamined privileges by which he is free to write. It might even suggest that the freedom to write his last lament for the western world is actually subsidised by the bourgeois imperialist capitalism he affects to despise: 'Black men slave/Aneth a distant sun [. . .]' Lines such as these simultaneously assert and ironise all claims to authorial power and 'seriousness'. The literary reference to the hero of Goncharov's novel claims a certain intellectual breadth that is immediately contradicted, by the boast 'has nocht to learn me'. The Latin tags at the end claim classical authority but also despise that authority. Even so, the fragments do speak a kind of truth. 'Alas the years go flying by'; 'the tears of things', and 'speak nothing but good of the dead', all relate to passing time, age and fading powers. Popes and authors might speak *ex cathedra*, but this author cannot complete any of these phrases, and the only thing that comes from his throne is 'Nothing unless', 'etc' and '*Requiescat*' (the first word of an epitaph), followed by the colloquial vulgarity 'up your jumper'.

There is more at stake here than just Rabelaisian vulgarity. What the fluidity of this discourse finally has to do with is not so much the 'unspeakable' as the 'unsayable', or perhaps the 'unwritable'. For speech is where we have the last word. No written text can withstand the spoken aside, or the parodic voice, or being taken out of context. MacDiarmid catches exactly this deflationary tone in *A Drunk Man* . . . "Let there be licht," said God, and there was / A little'. Scots excels at such effects, in the spirit of David Craig's 'reductive idiom'.

Among the poets of the 'second generation' of the modern literary Renaissance it is Robert Garioch who dedicates himself most conclusively to a largely oral utterance. He can write in literary forms reminiscent of the Makars, of course, but for the most part his poetry is distinguished by its relaxed and colloquial Scots – a form that was to be followed in turn by Duncan Glen, William Neill and Alastair Mackie, especially in the latter's underrated *Back-Green Odyssey and Other Poems*, published in 1980. Garioch's demotic focus was apparent from the very first in the little 1940 collection *17 Poems for 6d* that he

shared with Somhairle MacGill-Eain (whose Gaelic poems appeared in the volume without any English translation).

Shote! Here's the polis,
The Gayfield polis,
An thull pi'iz in the nick fir
Playin fi'baw in the street!

This poem, like a number of others in the collection, draws on the marginal world of street culture evoked by counting and skipping rhymes – none of which would ever be in danger of claiming canonical status. It is also reminiscent of the vernacular verse tradition and of William Soutar's bairn rhymes. Soutar's famous remark (in a letter to MacDiarmid) that 'if the Doric is to come back alive it will come on a cock-horse' understood the linguistic importance of early exposure, and in fact his first publication in Scots was a collection of poems for children (*Seeds in the Wind*, 1933). But Soutar disapproved of MacDiarmid's linguistic eclecticism, and by comparison prefers to use his own Perthshire dialect to write poems that derive from and describe a more traditional society – sheltered, coherent and unitary. From mother's tongue in the nursery to the haunted hills and holms of rural tradition, it is not surprising that so many of Soutar's finest poems and ballads should express feelings of longing and Edenic loss. Garioch's muse has a ruder and more urban vision, closer to the social and linguistic melting pot of the street.

Recalling the genesis of 'Fi'baw' in *As I Remember*, Garioch described his impatience at the poems in English being written by his fellow-students:

I reacted by presenting 'Fi'baw in the Street' glottal stops and all. I thought I was being rude, but it was well received. Mr Murison's *Guid Scots Tongue* tells us how Allan Ramsay's work was one of reaction. I regard mine as a small part of that reaction, which has never quite ceased since Ramsay began it, sometime about 1720.

The marginal and hence contestatory status of spoken Scots could not be put more clearly, although urban Scots was itself despised by many Scottish scholars, including Murison, at the time. Nevertheless, Robert Garioch's achievement is to have produced a substantial body of subtle and moving poetry in a dense but relaxed and wholly colloquial utterance. The opening lines of 'Lesson' offer a good example:

I tuik it in ma heid to gae downbye Leith Docks,
eftir how monie years? I cannae mind,
binna jist coming aff the ship frae Aiberdeen,
Saint Sunniva? Thae boats haena made that run for years.

Yet the poem contains references to Robert Louis Stevenson and his family, to Stendhal and Tchaikovsky, and it ends by invoking Apollinaire's poem '*Un Phantôme de nuées*' from *Calligrammes*. At the same time the amazingly catarrhal effects of 'Heard in the Cougate' make their own case for the gross body and the 'rudest' sound poetry – yet these are also contained within the structure of a sonnet, that most canonical of forms:

Whu's aa thae fflagpoles ffur in Princes Street?
Chwoich! Ptt! Hechyuch! Ab-boannie cairry-on.

Seez-owre the wa'er. Whu' the deevil's thon
Inaidie, heh?"

Garioch's implicit challenge to those who would confuse poetry with social class is entirely in keeping with the spirit of Tom Leonard's work and his consistent determination to politicise matters of literary value, and subject. Leonard aligns himself with William Carlos Williams in the struggle to find fresh and subtle expression in the kinetics and phonetics of words on the page and to liberate these words from the sounds, rhythms and expectations of conventional verse and standard English. Leonard goes still further, however, in seeking to validate the urban demotic speech of the west of Scotland in lines whose content and form challenge the expectations (and the unacknowledged assumptions) of the average reader and all questions of 'taste':

ma lungz iz fuckt
bronchitis again
thi smoakin

lookit
same awl spiht
yella ngreen

van goghs palate
paintn sunflowers

The results can be subtle as well as brutal and sometimes both at the same time as in that telling but almost wholly visual shift from 'palette' to 'palate'. The distinguishing closing effect in many of these poems, however, is that of sudden dismissal or abandonment in the same complex spirit as Goodsir Smith's *'Requiescat up your jumper'*, but more challenging, more aggressive.

Leonard's use of urban demotic, along with contemporary practitioners Donald Campbell, Carl MacDougall and Stephen Mulrine, was prefigured by Ian Hamilton Finlay in his 1961 collection *Glasgow beasts, an a burd, haw, an inseks, an, aw, a fush*, and echoed in poems such as Margaret Hamilton's 'Lament for a Lost Dinner Ticket'. These look back to an older vernacular tradition of verses such as Mrs M. C. Smith's 'The Boy in the Train'. (It should be noted in passing, however, that Leonard's poetry scarcely ever uses what could be called dialectal forms, and the lexical content of his lines is predominantly English with a strong west of Scotland accent – further estranged by an often wittily structured phonetic transcription.) But the crucial difference between these poets and Leonard is the latter's political position, which is evident in every line he writes, not least in his furiously Foucauldian opposition to what he sees as the inherently ideological role of the educational system. In the 'Introduction' to *Radical Renfrew*, he observes:

The important word is code. To understand Literature is to understand a code, and the teacher is the person trained to possess the code that Literature is in. This has to be accepted unconditionally, as it is the sole basis of the teacher's power to grade pupils' responses. A piece of writing that does not acknowledge the code that the teacher has been trained to possess, cannot be accepted as Literature: for such writing deprives the teacher of the only basis of his

power of assessment. This applies even when the 'canon' has been enlarged to 'allow' some writing about, for instance, working-class lives.

This is Garioch's poetry of 'reaction' with a vengeance, and Leonard's example has been hugely influential in the subsequent burgeoning of demotic writing and the celebration of Bakhtinian carnival and the gross body that has been such a marked feature of Scottish literature – particularly in prose – since the 1990s.

It is no accident either that some of Leonard's work in English explores the possibilities of sound poetry and concrete poetry. In his 1976 essay on William Carlos Williams ('The Locust Tree in Flower and why it had Difficulty Flowering in Britain') Leonard aligns himself with the experimental writing of Ian Hamilton Finlay and Bob Cobbing. Both of these, like MacDiarmid himself, have pursued what, in *Intimate Voices* (1995), he sees as a life-long process of 'deliberately and constantly ignoring the boundaries of what would be considered "correct" lexis for poetry'. With Joyce, Pound and MacDiarmid in mind once more, it can indeed be argued that this willingness to repossess the canon by dispossessing the English language (or vice versa) is the mark of writers who have felt themselves to be coming from the cultural margins. The use of a heteroglossial Scots (with words from different registers, dialects and even different languages), or a demotically accented Scottish voice, has proved to be particularly effective in this regard.

The contemporary poets who seem to be the latest successors to this aspect of MacDiarmid and Goodsir Smith's complex and ground-breaking use of Scots are Robert Crawford, Richard Price, W. N. Herbert and David Kinloch, whose work in this vein first appeared in the magazine *Gairfish* (edited by Herbert and Price), as well as in the issues of *VERSE* (edited by Crawford and Price along with Henry Hart and David Kinloch), during the late 1980s and early 1990s. In an article written for the little magazine *interference* (published in Oxford) Richard Price identified Kinloch, Crawford and Herbert (along with Peter McCarey and Alan Riach, who mostly write in English) as a group 'who, for the sake of a name, one might call the Scottish Informationists'.

Self-appointed 'schools' must be approached with caution and indeed Price himself had reservations about the label whose moment may already have passed, but these Scots-using poets did share some common ground. Price points out that they all 'have been or still are "exiles" from Scotland, Crawford and Herbert in Oxford, Kinloch in Paris and Salford, McCarey in Geneva and Riach in New Zealand'. One could speculate on the extent to which this distancing perspective might have influenced them. This again is reminiscent of Bakhtin's point about 'the ability to see one's own media from the outside, that is, through the eyes of other idioms' and indeed Kinloch is an academic whose profession is French language and literature. In the years since Price's article was written, at least three of them have come home. The point nonetheless remains that at a crucial time in their development these writers shared something of Herbert's experience, as he put it in Daniel O'Rourke's *Dream State* (1994), that 'being Scottish in England was the discovery of suppressed contrasts'.

Price goes on to note that they are all holders of doctorates and argues that:

their poetry is an intellectual poetry not seen from new poets in Scotland for a very long time. They write in English and in Scots—indeed Kinloch's recent poetry is marked out by its habituation of the filament between the two. Languages talking to languages is itself a shared theme. When they write in Scots, they do so in a spectrum that runs from the elegiac to the combative, often with a cognisance and a celebration of the very artificiality of the Scots they use.

The point is well made and, indeed, a number of other poets have come to feel equally at home in both English and Scots. Most notable, perhaps, is Kathleen Jamie, whose collections *The Queen of Sheba* (1994) and *Jizzen* (1999) both make modest but effective use of a colloquial Scots utterance close to the speech of her childhood – linked to place and class – without claiming any wider national or linguistic agenda. Indeed, poems in English such as ‘Mr and Mrs Scotland Are Dead’ offer a subtle comment, simultaneously loving and scathing, about our cultural capacity for nostalgia. Jamie has acknowledged in her travel book *The Golden Peak* (1993), revised as *Among Muslims* (2002), that time spent living with women in northern Pakistan allowed her to revisit and also to re-recognise the culture of her Scottish grandmother – seeing one’s culture from the outside once again. Some poets have continued to write mainly in Scots but many others, like Edwin Morgan, Robert Crawford and Liz Lochhead, can turn to it as the occasion demands. Thankfully, the days are over when Duncan Glen could accuse Norman MacCaig of cultural defection for writing in English.

‘Informationism’ has not caught on as a critical term, but what Price sees as ‘language as a field of play’ and its relation to orthodoxy is relevant here and helps describe something of what links at least Crawford, Herbert and Kinloch in their use of Scots. If MacDiarmid and Goodsir Smith began with colloquial Scots and the speaking voice in their work (even if their material was derived from the dictionary) these poets seem to have invoked the dictionary from the very start. Yet the ‘demotic’ is still there, for, in Herbert’s case especially, the poetry shows another phonetic rewriting of oral Scots, closer this time to the street speak of Dundee. He describes his position in Daniel O’Rourke’s anthology *Dream State*:

So I write in both English and Scots. In each of these I could be accused of lying. In Scots I pretend that my basic speech – Dundonian – hasn’t been atrophied by cultural neglect, and still has access to the broad vocabulary of the Scots dictionary. This creates the language of a quasi-fictional country, one which offers a critique of the present status of ‘Scotland’.

As a matter of fact, dictionary access to that ‘broad vocabulary’ brought him to embrace the most obscure terms and to create the most estranging neologisms, only to ‘explain’ them with parodically pedantic English glosses. This is the ‘lie’ in action, a kind of double lie, which Herbert refers to as ‘the forked tongue’ in a phrase reminiscent of MacDiarmid’s old complaint about ‘the dooble tongue – guid Scots wi’ English a’ hamstrung’, except that Herbert argues for both sides of this doubleness. In the introduction to his 1994 collection *Forked Tongue*, he notes ‘I don’t want to choose between them; I want both prongs of the fork. Aren’t we continually hopping registers like socially-challenged crickets? My motto is *And not Or.*’ Linguistic ‘forking’ is especially evident in the volume shared between Crawford and Herbert: *Sharawaggi: Poems in Scots* (1990). To those more used to the natural flow of spoken Scots the aesthetic effect of these poems is strange – rather akin to Brecht’s alienation effect – deliberately rigidified, artificial and (in a medium so long associated with the apparently natural ‘presence’ of direct address and the familiar speaking voice) curiously disturbing.

Such work (and Crawford and Herbert have gone on to do different things) has exploited ‘linguistic difference’ with a much more knowing air than ever MacDiarmid and Smith did. If Scottish identity is associated with the Scots language, these poems serve to problematise that identity (or to reassert it under the sign of irony) and then to problematise the nature of language itself. This is a creative position fully aware of

post-structuralist and postmodern paradigms of subjectivity, aware of the arbitrariness of the sign, the hybridity of modern culture and the constructed nature of all 'identity'.

So the forked or double tongue does not just challenge English, but foregrounds the very nature of language itself – our conventionally comfortable assumptions that the practices of reading and writing are somehow 'transparent' and unmediated by the medium through which they operate. In such poetry the illusion of a single speaking presence has been replaced by a self-conscious linguistic construction, as if the poet has indeed swallowed, or been swallowed by, a dictionary. And yet paradoxically the final message is still one of ram-stam energy, heteroglossia and the unpredictably creative spirit to be found in the mouths and lives of 'ootlanders' and 'bauchles'. (In this respect it is firmly within the 'Christis Kirk' tradition, and reminiscent once more of Goodsir Smith's 'The Grace of God and the Meth-Drinker' or MacDiarmid's 'Old Wife in High Spirits'.)

Nevertheless, Herbert does recognise the artificial nature of the exercise and, although his work is based on his native dialect, he does not, like Tom Leonard, seek to reproduce the phonetic authenticity of colloquial speech. In the introduction to *Forked Tongue*, Herbert notes that his poetry in Scots:

could have been a kind of New Demotic verse; boiling the idiolect down to something I'm able to say in a pub. But that would be a poetry that's afraid of getting beaten up. Most of my Scots, to be blunt, gets the shit kicked out of it. I don't stay 'true' to how thi Peopul speak: I search dictionaries for gorgeous defunct fragments; I make things up. I think that's the poet's task: to invent new ways of saying that are beautiful even after they've had the shit kicked out of them.

And it is in this challenging context that the Sharawaggi poets re-examine the relationship between language and national identity. Less persuaded by the cultural agenda of the modern literary Renaissance and all too aware of the many clichés of Scottishness that have gone before, they are yet still compelled to make that mark of difference and to make it via the mother tongue – or perhaps more accurately, as Kathleen Jamie puts it in *The Queen of Sheba*, the grannies' tongue.

To this end David Kinloch foregrounds Scots and its uneasy interface with English (echoing MacDiarmid's debt to Jamieson's *Dictionary*) by including specific acts of homage to that particular boneyard of unexpectedly fertile words. And the persona he chooses for his *Dustie-fute* poems is the ancient one of poet as jongleur, or dustie-fute (pedlar or wandering mountebank), or rintherout (vagrant). In these poems he speaks of (and for) 'the strange revenge sometimes taken by secret or suppressed languages' – the very agenda which makes his own poems so rewarding, if difficult, to read. The poet's homosexuality is an additional locus from which he feels the need to speak (and to speak in Scots) on behalf of those too often cast as 'ootlanders'.

Does the 'auld alliance' of words and things stand a chance among the traffic and pimps in the Publicis Saint-Germain? For it's not as if *dustie-fute* were my familiar. I could easily confuse *dustie-fute* with *elfmill* which is the sound made by a worm in the timber of a house, supposed by the vulgar to be preternatural. These words are as foreign as the city they have parachuted into, dead words slipping on the sill of the living metropolis. They are extremes that touch like dangerous wires and the only hope for them, for us, is the space they inhabit, a room veering between dilettantism and dynamite. Old Scots words, big French city and in between

abysmal me: *ane merchand or creamer, quha hes no certain dwelling place, quhair the dust may be dicht fra hes feete or schone.*

The 'Dustie-fute' sequence of poems is not just about old words, as Kinloch explained in *Dream State*:

nor is it simply a poem about the difficulty for many writers of my generation who would like to write Scots more fluently than they are able. These unexpected, boisterous words become in the course of the poem a kind of metaphor for the queer and wonderful tongue that is dying prematurely in the mouths of young men killed off by Aids.

What is it like to live and to die as a gay man in Scotland in the 1990s? What is it like to be in love, to be responsible and find that love and responsibility dishonoured by many who surround you? What is it like to want to write a poetry that orchestrates a range of competing voices and textures in the belief that only in this way can you do justice to the complex emotions and ideas such questions provoke? These are some of the questions my poems are trying to ask.

It is the special history of the Scots language that has made writers so culturally alert to the co-existing differences (and the disparities in power) between it and English, between what is said (and how we write) and what is written (and how we speak), and when and in what genre we do one and not the other. Yet the modern world (not just the metropolitan world of London) is ruled by what is written and – at least in prose – what is written is most likely to be formal English. So there is a generic and not just a specific cultural insecurity at the heart of Scots, not least in an already embattled, but still self-consciously oral, genre such as poetry. The same struggle can also be seen in those creative writers dedicated to the use of 'black' English. Yet the voice still offers an extraordinary immediacy, a fluidity, an evasiveness, a capacity for endless revision and relativity, and in this respect the speech act is a metaphor for the creative act itself – that magic of continual making, unspooling, coming out of . . . somewhere. Perhaps this is a model for the nature of poetry itself – the literary form more than any other which attends to and comments on, and is mystified by, its own becoming. And the 'strangeness' of Scots in particular can be seen to foreground the oddness of all language use and casts deconstructive doubt on the possibility of ever achieving any full or final translation into stable meaning. After all, are not all acts of poetry, when looked at in this light, transrational acts 'against' the very concept of linguistic equivalence?

So MacDiarmid's notion of the 'double tongue' as a hindrance must be re-identified as an asset. The real 'doubling' in Scots stems from its closeness to English, and from what, over the years, has become the sociolinguistic and cultural inseparability of the two languages by way of a need to constantly re-invent and restate their mutually defining differences. In the cause of productive unsettlement, the double tongue has become the 'forked tongue' – a creative and potentially subversive 'other', with an inbuilt sense of *ostranenie*, of hybridity and of being foreign to ourselves even as we speak or write most intimately.

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Monsters and Goddesses: Culture Re-energised in the Poetry of Ruaraidh MacThòmais and Aonghas MacNeacail

Michel Byrne

In lyric LV of his *Dàin do Eimhir*, composed in 1940, Somhairle MacGill-Eain momentarily questioned the relevance of creating literature in a ‘dying tongue’ in such critical times. Partly because of MacLean’s achievement, the value of literary endeavour in Gaelic has rarely been questioned since, and fifty years later, reflecting on his biculturalism against the background of another murderous conflict, Ruaraidh MacThòmais would make a very different point. His two languages have been as trees in a garden, like co-existing neighbours, ‘ag èaladh, ach a’ leantainn ri an gnè fhèin’ (‘encroaching, but keeping their own identity’) – may the day never come, when ‘nì iad Sarajevo dhe m’ inntinn’ (‘they turn my mind into a Sarajevo’) (‘Dà Chànan’ (‘Two Languages’)). Yet as the Gaelic world has moved towards a much less balanced bilingualism than that experienced by MacGill-Eain or MacThòmais, poets need to find fresh resolve to continue cultivating their art in a language which is denied the space to flex itself fully in all directions, and in which they know their audience to be less than fully literate. It is no surprise that for the younger Aonghas MacNeacail, the situation seems more confused, as he swims ‘anns an eabar ghleadhrach/ eadar freumhaichean/ mo dhà chànan’ (‘in the clangorous mud/ between the roots/ of my two languages’) (‘An Tùr Caillte’ (‘The Lost Tower/Sanity Lost’)). Yet Gaelic writers have used their varying experiences, as MacThòmais put it in 1982, of being ‘between two countries [and] between two tongues’ creatively, to nourish new currents in poetry, and the contributions of MacThòmais and MacNeacail, in careers spanning sixty-five and thirty-five years respectively, have been two of the most remarkable.

As well as being one of Gaeldom’s most influential poets, Ruaraidh MacThòmais (Derick Thomson, born 1921) has made his mark on Scotland as a prolific scholar and as a pioneering force in Gaelic publishing. Born and brought up in a comfortably bilingual household in the Bayble peninsula of Lewis, he studied at the universities of Aberdeen, Cambridge and Bangor (and served three years in the RAF), before embarking on an academic career which would see him holding the Chair of Celtic at Glasgow University for almost thirty years. After his retirement in 1991 he continued editing *Gairm* (the eclectic Gaelic quarterly he had co-founded in 1952) until its final 200th issue in 2002.

MacThòmais started composing in the late 1930s and there is much in his first collection, *An Dealbh Briste* (The Broken Picture, 1951) – diction, themes and references, as

well as a direct tribute – to suggest that MacGill-Eain's example was an important spur to his early writing. Some political rhetoric also points to the influence of George Campbell Hay, but MacThòmais had completely abandoned this didactic register by the 1950s. It is also clear that by 1951 he had elaborated his own distinctive voice, with the strong characteristics of his later work already apparent – linguistic dexterity and metrical versatility, a calm, colloquial register, an unusual mix of intellectualism and physicality, the vivid deployment of memories, and a deep identification with Gaelic history and the culture of Lewis.

Natural images abound (though the city is present too), but melancholic memory and portraits of decay and loss seem to dominate. In 'Clais' ('Ditch'), the poet contemplates a ditch now closed with grass, which he remembers once digging with unspecified company, and remarks: 'tha cuimhne 'am mar a dh'fhàg na spaidean/ srianag dhubh air a' ghlasaich,/ is O! chridhe, tha cuimhne 'am/ mar a dh'fhàg an oidhche ud/ srianag dhubh air mo chuimhne' ('I remember how the spades left/ a black streak on the greensward,/ and O! heart, I remember/ how that night left/ a black streak on my memory'). Rather like MacDiarmid's 'Watergaw', 'Clais' retains its mystery by withholding as much as it recalls. The poem from which the book title is taken, 'A chionn's gu bheil' (poet's translation: 'Since the picture is broken'), builds up image after image of loss beyond the poet's control, suggesting something more pervasive and irretrievable than a love interest. The object of memory and loss is more explicit in the carefully paced quest narrative 'An Tobar' ('The Well'), still one of MacThòmais's most haunting works. The first verse succeeds as a complete poetic statement on the diminishment of old age, masterfully evoked in the correlation of the grass-choked well and the old woman: 'chunnaic mi 'n raineach a' fàs mu thobar a sùilean/ 's ga fhalach bho shireadh 's bho rùintean' ('I saw the bracken growing round the well of her eyes, and hiding it from seeking and from desires'); but each subsequent verse adds new depth, until we realise that the poet's holy grail is not youth, but a self-assured traditional culture now lost to younger generations.

Beyond a deep cultural malaise is the more personal wrench of voluntary exile from a place and way of life of crucial rootedness. We find this ambivalence first explored in 'Fàgail Leòdhais, 1949' ('Leaving Lewis, 1949'), a longish but clearly layered piece, and probably the first non-comic treatment of plane travel in Gaelic poetry. The poem moves from physical experience (take-off and ascent through the clouds) and emotional tension (not wishing to leave or to stay) to personal metaphor and then to political allegory. Although the symbolism may not be original, the opening description is wonderfully skilful, as is the unforgettable image of a mind paralysed by the fear of 'sluic-adhair a' bhròin' ('sorrow's air-pockets').

In his second collection *Eadar Samhradh is Foghar* (Between Summer and Autumn, 1967), MacThòmais, now in his mid-forties, continued exploring the themes of attachment to a dying culture, ambivalence, loss and regret, while honing his skill in physicality of image and the resonant phrase, and developing a new ironic register (replacing the slightly hectoring tone of some earlier political writing). Metrically, free verse now dominates his writing, and his talent for balancing vehicle and tenor is even more marked: again and again a vivid image and its ulterior meaning hold each other in magnetised suspension, neither gaining full supremacy in the reader's mind. Themed sections offer signposts to the poet's symbolism: Heather Isle (Lewis), the Scottish *Gàidhealtachd*, more distant horizons (including Glasgow and Budapest), 'Wild Liquorice' (intimate memories and the passing of time), and a final *in memoriam* section.

Throughout, MacThòmais deploys a native symbolism which avoids obscurantism or obviousness, whether it be the snowdrift of 'Anns a' Bhalbh Mhadainn' ('In the mute

morning/'Sheep'), the road of 'An Rathad', the dying lark of 'Uiseag' ('Lark'), the liquorice nodules of 'Lus a' Chorracha-Mille' ('Wild Liquorice'), the pool of 'Geodha air Chùl na Grèine' ('A geo in the sun's shelter'), the salt and gutting-knives of 'Clann-nighean an Sgadain' ('The herring-girls'), or the nailed planks of 'Cisteachan-laighe' ('Coffins'). His work is made attractively accessible by the sensuousness with which he initiates reflection, what he has called the 'data-bank of sense images' from childhood which trigger so much of his poetry. In 'Cisteachan-laighe', for example – both a superbly constructed meditation on death, childhood solipsism and adult perception, and a chilling indictment of the education system's corrosion of Gaelic identity – the stream of reflections is set in motion by the smell of sawdust outside a Glasgow joiner's shop. It is always simplistic to infer literary lines of influence and cause-and-effect, but it is difficult not to attribute the easy acceptance of free verse and allegorical imagery among younger Gaelic poets to the seductiveness of MacThòmais's work.

MacThòmais may have sensed that his poetic persona was in danger of being overtaken by melancholic pessimism and by the backward look to the past, and that artistic growth would be difficult if this was not addressed. At any rate, within three years a new collection had appeared, *An Rathad Cian* (The Distant Road, 1970), in the poet's own words in Maurice Lindsay's *As I Remember* (1979), 'a celebration of Lewis and a farewell to it'. A cycle of fifty-six mostly short poems dedicated to the poet's recently deceased mother and to his native island, *An Rathad Cian* was entirely given over to exploring the poet's relationship to his island. This was not simply the ever-changing Hebridean island to which he would never permanently return, but the location of lost youth, the repository of a disappearing culture, and an overwhelming imaginative obsession. In the opening poem, 'An Uilebheist' ('The monster'), the addressee emerges from a green sea to be worshipped in a marvellous litany of love and pain (its aural magic only hinted at in translation). In the final, fifty-sixth, poem, the poet emerges from the idol's temple, satiated, chastened, exorcised of his obsession and ready to continue life's journey. Between these portals, the monster is drawn into dialogue as lover, as mother, as standing-stone, loom and boat, and Lewis is conjured and addressed through its history, its successive religions, its birds, cliffs and moorlands, boyhood memories and brilliantly realised portraits of individual islanders. Lewis is at once multi-faceted reality and multi-valent metaphor: after the 'example and caption technique' of much of his previous work, the imagery of this sequence, as Christopher Whyte observes, 'now vehicles a whole series of tenors, competing with one another in importance and interrelatedness'.

Some of the poems have established themselves independently in the modern canon, like poem 6 "Bùrn is Mòine 's Coirc" ("Water and Peats and Oats"), with its classic summation of the exile's predicament: 'An cridhe ri bacan, car ma char aig an fheist/ 's i fàs goirid,/ 's an inntinn saor' ('The heart at the tethering post, round upon round of the rope,/ till it grows short,/ and the mind free'); or poem 18, 'Am Bodach-Ròcais' ('The Scarecrow'), a brilliantly concise dramatisation of evangelical Calvinism's spread and its effects on Highland culture. Yet, all the poems gain from being read in their context in the sequence, receptive to echoes from preceding items and generating new patterns after them. The middle point (so far) in a long and rich artistic journey, *An Rathad Cian* remains an outstanding achievement, a work of endless enticement and subtlety, and the most extraordinary homage to place in Gaelic literature.

Partly because of the popularity of some of the poems from these collections, and their exposure by the bilingual 1976 anthology *Nua-bhàrdachd Ghàidhlig / Modern Scottish Gaelic Poems*, the theme MacThòmais is chiefly associated with is the difficult relationship of

the exile to his or her native place. This risks narrowing the richness of MacThòmais' symbolism and belies the variety of directions his poetry has taken over five decades. Yet, it is true that no other Gaelic poet has explored the theme in such depth or developed such an extensive poetic vocabulary for treating it without resorting to cliché. Indeed when the later MacThòmais returns to the theme – as in the clutch of Lewis-centred poems in the later 1977 *Saorsa agus an Iolaire* – he can sound as if he is imitating his own work.

An Rathad Cian does seem to have liberated MacThòmais. He does not forswear the backward glance, though aware of the dangers of retrospection. In 'Ged a Thillinn A-nis' ('Even were I to Return Now'), remembering the injunction to Lot's wife not to look back (in the Book of Genesis), the poet insists 'an dèidh sin, an dèidh sin,/ tha mi gu bhith na mo charragh-cuimhne' ('nevertheless, nevertheless,/ I am going to be a memorial-pillar'), for memory nourishes him 'anns an uaimh dhorch seo/ a' feitheamh tilleadh mara' ('in this dark cave,/ awaiting the turning of the tide'). Memory carries redemptive power, but, as in MacGill-Eain's 'Hallaig', the perception of a lost world recoverable only by memory is both salutary and pessimistic. Since individual memory itself is so short-lasting, hope relies on a fragile continuum of remembrance through the ages, a willed chain of attempted recalling, which in 'Ged a Thillinn A-nis' ('Even were I to Return Now'), remembering places responsibilities on the writer: 'Iongantach 's ga bheil i/ cha bhi a' chuimhne buan:/ falmhaichear an claigeann/ 's thèid na meamranan dealain gu neo-ni,/ [. . .] nas lugha na gum mair na strìochagan/ air a' phàipear a thàinig às an t-seann choille' ('Strange as it is/ the memory doesn't last:/ the brain is emptied/ and the electronic membranes come to nothing,/ [. . .] unless the scratchings last/ on the paper that came from the ancient forest').

Nevertheless, he is able to look in new directions after *An Rathad Cian*, confronting the dreams and realities of an oil-rich Scotland in the 1970s, for example, or the multicultural complexities of Glasgow in the 1980s. He retained its barer style, its harder edge, to address his new themes, with increased humour, irony, occasional withering sarcasm, and an aural playfulness which he sometimes succeeded in re-creating in English.

Saorsa agus an Iolaire (Freedom and the Eagle, 1977) was written during the dramatic rise of political nationalism in Scotland. While the public figure and editor of *Gairm* clearly pinned his colours to the SNP mast, the poet adopted a more sceptical, more philosophically challenging stance, probing rather than giving easy answers to issues of identity. More than ever his poetry deserved to be known by a wider audience, as he cast an intelligent, critical but committed Gaelic eye on Scottish society. The collection confirmed the poetic sequence as MacThòmais's favoured mode for exploring complex issues or characterisations. Questions of identity, history and politics are dealt with in 'An Iolaire' ('The Eagle', a colonising image introduced in *An Rathad Cian*), and in 'An Crann' (a semantic Aladdin's cave, well suited to powering an extended sequence: 'plough/ cross/ saltire/ harp-key/ ballot'). Meanwhile, 'An Turas' ('The Journey') portrayed alcoholic degeneration and spiritual crisis, and 'An Tobar' ('The Well') was a cryptic return to face ghosts of the past.

Sequences allowed the poet easy morphing of symbols, greater rhythmic flexibility and a wide range of tone from lyricism and reflection, to irony, anger and humour, all within a unifying framework. For a poet who has made a recurrent rhetorical device of 'ach an dèidh sin', 'air a shon sin' – 'but for all that', 'and yet' – it is probably relevant that the form also allows limitless qualification. Sequences continued to appear in the 1990s collections. *Smeur an Dòchais / Bramble of Hope* (1991) offered a series of cameos of Glasgow life (real and surreal) in 'Air Stràidean Ghlaschu' ('On Glasgow Streets'), and a defiant portrait of

old age in 'Gormshùil' ('Blue-eye'), while the poet's latest book to date, the Perthshire-inspired *Meall Garbh / The Rugged Mountain* (1995), included two sequences on cultural history.

Back in the 1930s, with his powerful lyrics 'Ban-Ghaidheal' ('A Highland Woman') and 'Calbharaigh' ('Calvary'), Somhairle MacGill-Eain had kickstarted a strong anti-clerical strain among modernist, Protestant-reared poets. MacThòmais's wilfully ecumenical use of religious imagery in *An Rathad Cian* suggested that his attacks on Highland Calvinism were not anti-religious. In *Saorsa agus an Iolaire*, an accusation of self-righteousness and parochialism could even be made with disarming humour ('Leòdhas as t-Samhradh' ('Lewis in Summer')). There the poet praised the clarity of the Lewis sky for offering unparalleled access to the Creator: 'chan eil feum air feallsanachd/ far an dean thu chùis le do phros-baig' ('no need for philosophy/ when you can make do with binoculars'). A degree of resolution is found in the 1980 sequence 'Àirc a' Choimhcheangail' ('The Ark of the Covenant'), a dialogue and agreement-to-differ with Lewisian religious tradition. Similar understanding is later found in a moving and gently humorous tribute to psalm-singing 'Ma Gheibh Mi Chaidh a Ghlòir' ('If I ever make it to Heaven'), but no indulgence is shown towards the 'diseased mind' of a fire-and-brimstone Glasgow preacher in 'Tein'-èibhinn' ('Bonfire').

MacThòmais' longevity as an active, publishing poet allows the tracing of arcs of personal and poetic growth in his work. This is encouraged by the poet's own willingness to refer back to previous poems and themes, whether within a collection, most obviously in *An Rathad Cian*, or between collections. Connective images from one book to the next suggest that we are resuming a still ongoing story. There is pleasure and excitement in discovering the poet reworking the image of one of his most accessible early poems 'An Tobar' ('The Well') into a much more elusive sequence, or wittily adding items in 1991 to his earlier 'Àirc a' Choimhcheangail'. At times the leap of memory and perception, across years and texts, is dizzying: when one short poem begins 'Is gann gu faca mi Hòl am bliadhna,/ bha e air fàs cho beag' ('I hardly noticed Hol this year,/ it has become so small a hill'), the acquainted reader is taken back thirty years to MacThòmais's longest single poem, 'Mu Chrìochan Hòl' ('In the Vicinity of Hol') and the almost shocking discrepancy – from some 120 lines of rich description and dense metrics to a bare, near-casual fifteen lines – in itself bears out the point made in the later piece about age and change. More powerful still is the way 'Aig Cuirm-chiùil Leòdhais 's na Hearadh, 1987' ('At the Lewis and Harris concert, 1987') draws us back into the intoxication of *An Rathad Cian*, so that we experience a literary nostalgia to mirror the poet's own enticement by the siren of Gaelic song: 'Thàine tu mach às an dorchadas a-rithist,/ do shliasaidean mìne ga mo shùghadh a-steach' ('You emerged from the darkness again,/ your smooth thighs drawing me in').

One direction taken in the 1990s has been towards a more clipped, hermetic symbolism, and MacThòmais himself has remarked on the barer texture of his mature work. 'Nuair a dh'fhairich mi 'n toiseach' ('When I first noticed') claims that his poetry has acquired a harder edge through experiencing life rather than 'eavesdropping' on it, and 'tha cho math a dhèanamh/ mar a thà e,/ geur no milis' ('it's as well to make it/ as it is,/ sharp or sweet'). The poet may occasionally yearn for easier, younger times when words would surprise him, like butterflies flying in from the garden ('An Uinneag a' Dùnadh' ('The Window Closing')), but if life has closed in on him and on his art, the commitment persists: 'siùbh-laidh/ an ceòl aig astar fhèin,/ ach leanaidh mi' ('the music will move at its own pace, but I will follow').

Twenty years younger than MacThòmais, the Skye-born poet Aonghas MacNeacail did not experience the relaxed additive bilingualism of the Lewisman's childhood, but recalls instead the warping, truncating impact of an entirely English-medium schooling on his previously monolingual Gaelic psyche and the devaluing of his native language and culture throughout the 'deformative years' of his formal education. This he writes of in 'Rage against the dying of' in *Chapman* (1983). Thus denied 'an entire lexical geography', his literary beginnings, unsurprisingly, were in English, as a mature entrant into higher education in the late 1960s at Glasgow University. By 1970, however, he had started composing in his mother tongue, following a two-year period as writer-in-residence at the new Gaelic college in Skye. Then he read avidly on Celtic and Gaelic history and, as he observes in *A Writers Ceilidh for Neil Gunn* (1991), 'began to put together fragments of the myth and lore which underlay my language, and my being'.

While MacThòmais militated for Gaelic through his academic and publishing activities, MacNeacail emerged as a journalistic *enfant terrible*, castigating fellow-Gaels for their failure to fight their corner and promoting the recognition of Gaelic to the wider Scottish (and later international) public. This combatant spirit may seem incongruous with the delicacy of much of his poetry, but the reclaiming of his heritage against the odds has been an essential motivation in his literary career. At the heart of his writing, though often transformed into celebration, is the anger of the dispossessed. Even his graphical idiosyncracies – rejection of upper-case letters, minimalist punctuation and visual gapping of lines to indicate speech cadences – which may initially have seemed self-consciously hip, can be read as a defiant salute to the orality which had for so long maintained Gaelic culture.

In a similarly oral mode, his first Gaelic collection, *An seachnadh agus dàin eile / The avoiding and other poems* (1986), opens on a boldly rhetorical note, as the bardic 'holy fool' commands: 'amhairc is éisd rium' ('observe and listen'). There is a mature confidence to the entire volume: MacNeacail had in fact been publishing in Gaelic since 1969 (his first piece being a tribute to the murdered Martin Luther King). In carefully paced *vers libre* he uses rural and coastal images to speak of complex relations and states of mind. The short lyric, 'an aimhreit' ('the contention') re-energises referents familiar from the Hebridean song tradition (island, kyle, cormorant) into vibrant metaphors for domestic dispute and reconciliation. 'nuair a phòg sinn a' chiad uair' ('when we kissed for the first time') very effectively treats of loss of communication in terms of Hebridean land economy, releasing both personal and political resonances: 'fhuair thu do chrait fhéin/ agus mise mo chrait-sa// [. . .]// cha robh càil ach mo chuid-sa [. . .]// chun a' chùil-chinn, a luaidh/ chun a' chùil-chinn/ air buailtean an roinnidh/ feuchamaid a-rithist' ('you got a croft of your own/ and i got a croft// [. . .]// there was nothing but *what's mine* [. . .]// to the common-land, my love/ to the common-land/ on the folds of sharing/ let us try again'). The allegorical 'ghabh mi tamall aig tobar a' chràidh' ('i spent a while at the well of pain') startles with its image of 'cìobair nan creuchd' ('the herdsman of wounds'), his flocks 'air chall/ am measg preasan gàire, fiùrain sòigh' ('astray/ among laughter bushes, pleasure shrubs'). In using crofting images in new symbolic discourse, MacNeacail frees himself from the limitations of Gaelic's rural associations without turning his back on that aspect of his culture. His nature imagery also allows him to maintain affinities with older literary models, while evading all their thematic and metrical constraints. Thus 'an eilid bhàn' ('the white hind') carries resonances of eighteenth-century nature poetry (as well as of MacLean and Hay) but its opening evocation of landscape turns into an

increasingly anxious, complex love lyric (to a person, to poetry, to Gaelic culture?), ending on a disturbing note of violence:

chan e do chniadachd a tha dhìth orra
 ach an t-sealg
 an t-sealg is
 a' bhuille sgoilteach
 o m'eilid bhàn

(it is not your caresses they want/ but the hunt/ the hunt and/ the gutting blow/ o my white hind')

The use of tradition goes further, however. MacNeacail repeatedly invokes myth and ritual from a distant past (some of it having survived through folklore into his own childhood): Beltane, Caltane (Hogmanay), the triad of sustenance (fish, deer and wood), the triune mother goddess, the salmon of wisdom. Whereas MacThòmais's poetic imagination was fuelled by memories of a more culturally secure society half a lifetime ago, MacNeacail's verse asks us to think back centuries, reappropriating a collective 'tribal' memory. 'Treubh' and 'dream' (tribe, clan) are perhaps the most recurrent collective nouns in his poetic vocabulary. Equally recurrent are references to dance, as celebration and as assertion, such as 'dèan dannsa dèan dannsa/ 's e obair th'ann a bhith dannsa' ('be dancing be dancing/ it is work to be dancing') (in 'tha gàidhlig beò' ('gaelic is alive')), or: 'hear us sing our gaelic anthems/ [. . .] watch the way we dance defiance' (in the choral suite *Tuath gu Deas / North to South, a Folk Prepared*, 1999). One of his most recurrent techniques is incantatory repetition, giving his verse a mantric ritualistic quality, but he can also deploy it with dark irony to denounce the manipulative rituals of a modern goddess cult in 'marilyn monroe'.

The restless metamorphoses in air, earth and water undergone by the speaker in the quest poem *Sireadh bradain sicir / Seeking wise salmon* (1983) combine Gaelic and Native American folklore. This is an enduring interest: *An Seachnadh* closes with translations of Native American verses, and MacNeacail again turns to aboriginal America in the later sequence 'bun, geugan, duilleag' ('roots, branches, leaves'), which weaves together the histories of Gael, Amerindian and Hokkaido Hainu (in *A Writers Ceilidh for Neil Gunn*). He finds parallels between Gael and Native American in their attachment to ancestral land and in their recent history of dispossession. He also finds affinities with Japanese culture, such as concern for nature, and in Zen Buddhism glimpses the world-view of pre-Christian Gaelic society. MacNeacail's wilfully selective presentation of Gaelic culture 'eadar eachdraidh is uirsgeul' ('between fact and fable') ('gàidheal san eòrp' ('a gael in Europe)), whether by design or intuition, impacts on specific 'New Age' sensitivities of a late twentieth-century non-Gaelic audience and offers Gaels themselves alternative readings of their identity. It has been suggested by Christopher Whyte in *Modern Scottish Poetry* (2004) that his strategy carries risks, but it seems a plausible one for the age (comparable to MacLean's and Hay's own efforts to find post-imperial terms of reference for Gaelic experience), as well as a poetically fruitful one.

At its best, it imparts a strong numinous quality to his verse. The poet's personal experience, for example, of searching for his identity and for a language with which to speak of it is turned into a mythic narrative in the beautifully cadenced 'thug thu dhomh samhradh' ('you gave me summer'). The speaker struggles through a bitter winter in which 'chaidh teanga na treubha balbh' ('the tribe's tongue went dumb'), until met by an addressee 'mar

lasair bhllàth ròis as an domhan' ('like the flame of a rose-blossom out of the universe') who gives him summer and is only then identified as 'mo chànan bheag sheang/ [. . .] mo ghaol àrsaidh òg' ('my small slender language/ [. . .] my young ancient love'). Mystery dominates too in another poem of winter, the sixteen-part sequence 'an cathadh mòr' ('the great snowbattle', 1984). MacNeacail's powers of imagery and rhythm, of aural and visual pacing, and his gift, identified by Whyte, for 'an unforgettable line to build a poem around', are all beautifully brought into play in evocations of landscape and intimations of personal and mythic memories. The blizzard is at once 'plangaid' and 'brat-sith' ('blanket' and 'flag of truce'), and 'murtair geal' ('white murderer'), and from vastness to tiny detail, descriptive cameos ensure that the physicality of the smothering snowstorm is never lost while deeper currents surface and recede in the poem: love, death, myth, communication. The poem offers no certainty of interpretation: it is wonderfully elusive and restless, impossible to grasp entirely even after repeated readings, and the deceptive snowscape becomes a metaphor for the written poem and for language itself.

Though often strongly allusive, MacNeacail's voice can sometimes be much more direct. In the title piece of his second Gaelic collection, 'oideachadh ceart' ('a proper schooling', 1996), a string of vivid anecdotes pay tribute to popular memory as the source of cultural and political education, with an insistent refrain 'cha b'eachdraidh ach cuimhne' ('it wasn't history, but memory'). Dedicated to two postcolonial poets (Caribbean John Agard and Malawian dissident Jack Mapanje), the poem draws on the rhythmic qualities of both rap and waulking song to celebrate a proscribed history of resistance in the poet's own native Uig and point an accusing finger at a colonising educational system. By the time the speaker himself is being processed through that system (in MacNeacail's case the 1950s), cultural resilience is worn down and the future is ominous: 'ged a bha a' chuimhne fhathast/ fo thughadh snigheach,/ bha sglèat nan dearbhadh/ fo fhasgadh sglèat/ agus a-muigh/ bha gaoth a' glaothaich' ('though memory remained/ under a leaking thatch,/ the schoolroom slate/ had slates for shelter/ and outside/ a wind was crying').

MacNeacail has blamed the cultural violence perpetrated on him as a boy not only on the external agency of the education system, but also on the Free Kirk's acquiescence in his community, arguing in *A Writers Ceilidh for Neil Gunn* that it actively 'sought to annihilate any trace of their own culture and traditions'. Whereas, however, MacThòmais engages the modernist *bête noire* of Highland Protestantism in a poetic dialogue (and his Bayble compatriot Iain Crichton Smith gives it prominent negative figuration in his work), MacNeacail simply ignores it, as if to demonstrate the possibility of dreaming a Gaelic culture without the Kirk (or indeed any organised religion). He closes *Oideachadh ceart agus dàin eile*, however, with an ecological anthem composed in the iambic quatrains of the Gaelic Psalms (or their English models). The poem is rich in alliteration and assonance, but the blunt avoidance of regular end-rhyme between couplets emphasises that the use of religious tradition is on the poet's own terms. When one considers how embedded the religious Christian sensibility still is in Gaelic society, MacNeacail's open promotion of post-religious ethics and imagery is courageous and ultimately more liberating than the anti-clerical outbursts (however eloquent) of his predecessors.

Given the disapproval of secular art in his home culture, there is also something refreshing in MacNeacail's enthusiastic experimentation with other media. His very first Gaelic publications were collaborations with graphic artist Simon Fraser; he has written Gaelic opera libretti for composers Alasdair Nicolson (*Sgàthach*, 1997) and Bill Sweeney (*An Turus / The Journey*, 1998) and lyrics in Gaelic, Scots and English for a choral piece by Andy Thorburn, *Tuath gu Deas / North to South, a Folk Prepared* (1999); other experiments

have taken him into theatre, film and television. This artistic (and linguistic) ecumenism, along with his fashioning of a modern lyrical idiom and his bold re-energising of myth make him a vital presence in Scottish poetry.

The increased awareness of Gaelic in the arts in Scotland since the 1980s – the cachet, even, bestowed by writing in the language – has helped younger poets find exposure for their work. Nonetheless, poets of the stature of MacThòmais and MacNeacail are still short-changed by their decision to write in their maternal tongue, as they seem to hit a glass ceiling of recognition in Scottish arts. MacNeacail has written assiduously since *Oideachadh ceart* . . . won him the Stakis Scottish Writer of the Year Award in 1997, but the resultant collection ‘Laoidh an Donuis Òig / Hymn to a Young Demon’ still languishes unpublished. The now octogenarian MacThòmais, who has been described by John MacInnes as ‘very much a poet of all Scotland [. . . who] sees the world through Gaelic-Scots eyes’, would be a fitting laureate Bàrd beside the nation’s makar Edwin Morgan, yet his work is little known outside the Gaelic community. As long as Gaelic remains marginalised as an exotic but ultimately dispensable appendage to Scottish life, the astonishing persistence of these two major poets in engaging with their craft and with Scottish society through their mother tongue commands deep admiration.

Further reading

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Old Country, New Dreams: Scottish Poetry since the 1970s

Eleanor Bell

In twentieth-century Scottish literary criticism, it has been commonplace to equate literature with the 'state' of the country, so that literature has been a tool for expressing the political condition at any given time. This of course was especially relevant leading up to the 1979 referendum, a topic which many poets including Edwin Morgan, and Robert Crawford have referred to in their work. Many Scottish poets at this time, and also leading up to the more recent referendum in 1997, were on the one hand very much involved with Scottish concerns in a self-conscious way, and on the other quite determined to ensure that their work was also not going to be viewed as merely reflecting these more pragmatic issues. While this tension between literature and the political has obviously engaged many contemporary poets, there has also been a clear rejection of any intrinsic organic national project lying at the heart of this. Contemporary Scottish poetry therefore is often characterised by this seemingly paradoxical position between belonging and non-belonging, between familiarity and estrangement in an attempt to get beyond such binary reductions.

Beginning with the importance of Edwin Morgan, this chapter will look back at some of the central figures in Scottish poetry over recent decades, reflecting also on the main critical debates that have emerged surrounding these writers and their works. By looking at other poets writing in the early 1970s such as Ian Hamilton Finlay and Tom Leonard, it will go on to consider some of the main cultural and political strands that have emerged in contemporary Scottish poetry. Moving into the twenty-first century, and by examining the importance of the *Dream State* anthology first published in 1994 and re-published in 2002, the extent to which contemporary poetry in post-Devolution Scotland can now be linked to a national or, perhaps, post-national agenda will be considered.

It would be impossible to write on the subject of contemporary Scottish poetry without acknowledging the importance of Edwin Morgan to the genre. Born in 1920, he is often cited as the most famous poet living in Scotland today. Nominated Poet Laureate of Glasgow in 1999, in 2004, following lobbying by Alan MacGillivray, the President of ASLS, together with other Council members for the Poet for Scotland position, one which Alan Riach, head of Scottish literature at Glasgow University, also helped to deliver, Morgan was appointed to this role by the Scottish Executive. Morgan is well known for his many different kinds of poetry. These include, among others, translation, concrete, emergent (stemming from concrete poetry, yet having to be read from top to bottom in order to see the 'emerging' message), instamatic (based on 'snapshot' moments and the influence of Polaroid photography) and science fiction. While Morgan has often focused on Scotland in his work, Glasgow in particular, the range of content in his work is as varied as his forms.

In this way Morgan has constantly challenged the very nature of Scottishness and identity in his work. He is a writer who has always remained open to the possibilities of new technologies and how such innovations might reshape our present as well as future worlds. Such experimentation with Scottishness can be found throughout his work in collections such as *From Glasgow to Saturn* (1973), *Glasgow Sonnets* (1972), *Hold Hands among the Atoms* (1991), *Sonnets from Scotland* (1984) and *Virtual and Other Realities* (1997).

Morgan, alongside other poets of his generation including Gael Turnbull, Maurice Lindsay, D. M. Black and Alan Jackson, has often cited the 1960s as a major source of inspiration – with the beginnings of space exploration, new forms of musical experimentation, the growth of counter-cultural forms and the importance of the Beat writers representing some of the most influential cultural developments. For Morgan, this was also a period of change in Scottish literary studies. It was a time of international developments that challenged the often-introverted nature of the discipline. Here it is worth recalling the famous 1962 Edinburgh Festival debate between Hugh MacDiarmid and Alexander Trocchi on nationalism and cosmopolitanism where MacDiarmid branded Trocchi ‘cosmopolitan scum’ and Trocchi responded that MacDiarmid’s views were akin to ‘stale porridge’. The debate concerned the extent to which Scottish literature needed to expand its conceptual boundaries, ideas also mentioned by Morgan in his 1962 essay, ‘The Beatnik in the Kailyard’. In this, Morgan reveals an anti-traditional stance, commenting

I think it is clear that the language problem, the problem of Scottishness, has proved something of an incubus, and the fact that it is a real and unavoidable incubus (shake it off and you leave scars and puncture marks) makes it all the more difficult for the Scottish writer to develop integrally.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to suggest that Morgan is purely interested in getting beyond issues of Scottishness in his poetry, and he has been keen to admit his nationalist sympathies, albeit with a lower case ‘n’. Such concerns are readily seen, for example, in *Sonnets from Scotland*, a collection much engaged with a pervasive sense of crisis in Scottish politics. Poems such as ‘On Jupiter’, while presenting Scotland in an otherworldly light, also reveal a culture in desperate straits (‘Any gods there, if they had made the thing in play, were gone’). While such science-fictional allegories of the nation may serve to estrange the reader, they do so in a way that simultaneously invokes national reflection. This is also evident in poems such as ‘Post-Referendum’ (‘No no, it will not do, it will not be. I tell you you must leave your land alone’). While Morgan’s Scottish poems often express bitterness at the state of the culture (*Glasgow Sonnets* (1972) is especially relevant here), this is often achieved in a playful and experimental way that then establishes a continual tension between Scottishness and beyond, between familiarity and other realms.

Parallels have often been made between the work of Edwin Morgan and Ian Hamilton Finlay, usually drawing attention to their shared involvement in international developments in concrete poetry in the 1960s. In 1960 Finlay published *The Dancers Inherit the Party*, and from 1962 to 1967 edited the magazine *Poor.Old.Tired.Horse*, a publication very much promoting experimental aesthetics, both within Scotland and at an international level. In collections such as *Poems to Hear and See* (1971), Finlay began to experiment with concrete poetry, aesthetics and sound. It is perhaps this interest in the unconventional and with intertextual layering that led to his creation of Stonypath, or ‘Little Sparta’ as it has come to be known, the garden he developed with his wife in Lanarkshire. Finlay became well known as a ‘poet-gardener’, and Little Sparta is well known in international

art circles for its concern with nature, sculpture, classical art, poem-objects and the avant-garde. Finlay therefore often experimented with tradition and modernity in quite unique ways. While in his early career he had many positive connections with MacDiarmid (MacDiarmid, for example, was best man at Finlay's first wedding in 1948), these dissipated as his work became increasingly experimental. In a letter in 1965, MacDiarmid wrote:

[Finlay's work] has nothing in common with what down the centuries, despite all changes, has been termed 'poetry' [. . .] I am utterly unwilling to have any poems of mine included in an anthology in which any of Finlay's productions are also included.

Finlay's continual attraction towards the avant-garde, therefore, much like Trocchi's, led him to a form of internal exile from the Scottish literary tradition, a reluctance to be subsumed within its apparently constricting boundaries, while ironically living within them. When asked about his place within this tradition, Finlay commented, 'I feel on the edge as regards the Scottish scene, but as regards the world I feel in the centre. I seem on the edge because I'm in the centre.' While Finlay did finally reconcile with MacDiarmid, he remained peculiarly at the margins of the Scottish tradition, but well respected in art and poetry circles throughout the rest of the world.

Another poet well known for his experimentation with language and sound, also clearly influenced by Finlay, is Tom Leonard. Leonard's *Six Glasgow Poems*, published in 1968 (re-published in *Intimate Voices: Selected Work, 1965–1983*, 1984) in many respects reveals a debt to Finlay's earlier 1961 collection *Glasgow beasts, an a burd, haw, an inseks, an, aw, a fush* in which he experiments with dialect in written phonetic form. One direct engagement with Finlay appears in Leonard's 'The Miracle of the Burd and the Fishes' ('thirz a loat merr fish in thi sea'). It was this new way of thinking about written Glaswegian speech that Leonard clearly drew inspiration from in his preoccupation with representing the demotic in often surprising ways, reminding the reader of the importance of non-standard forms of language, raising issues of hegemony and the political at the same time. One of his most famous poems, 'The 6 O'Clock News', expresses this provocatively ('if/a toktabout/the trooth/lik wanna yoo/scruff yi/widny thingk/it wuz troo'). Consequently, Leonard has become well known for his comment that 'all living language is sacred', and, much like his contemporaries James Kelman and William McIlvanney, has been actively involved in representing working-class voices, which, he argues, would otherwise be absent from the canon. This is perhaps particularly obvious in *Radical Renfrew*, the collection of poetry he edited while working as writer-in-residence at Paisley Library, an anthology of archived works from Renfrewshire dating from 1789 to 1914. He begins the anthology with the axiom: 'Any society is a society in conflict, and any anthology of a society's poetry that does not reflect this, is a lie.' Interestingly, for Leonard the political continually eclipses the importance of the national, and the former has therefore permeated his poetry and other published works including *Situations Theoretical and Contemporary* (1986) and *Reports from the Present* (1994).

The complex debates surrounding language and national identity, the lack of a single common language, have permeated much twentieth-century Scottish criticism, whether in terms of the Renaissance MacDiarmid advocated, the struggle to maintain Gaelic or Scots voices, or the need to introduce more diasporic voices into the canon. As a minority language within Scotland, and a literature with strong links to an oral rather than written tradition, one of the major issues facing Gaelic literature is its lack of dissemination. In various ways, poets such as Derick Thomson (Ruaraidh MacThòmais) and George

Campbell Hay (Deòrsa Mac Iain Deòrsa) have tried to address this. Born in 1921, Thomson grew up in the island of Lewis and from 1963 to 1991 was Professor of Celtic at Glasgow University. He founded and edited the Gaelic magazine *Gairm* until 2002, as well as publishing an English–Gaelic dictionary in 1981 and *A Companion to Gaelic Poetry* (1983, 1994). Campbell Hay (1915–84) published poetry in Gaelic, English and Scots, and was well known for his poetry translations from other European literatures into Gaelic.

One of the most major figures in recent Gaelic poetry is, of course, Iain Crichton Smith (Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn) (1929–98). For Crichton Smith, who was brought up in the same village as Thomson on Lewis, in a Gaelic-speaking community, there is a recurring tension between Gaelic and English, especially as much contemporary Gaelic poetry has struggled to emerge from this difficult terrain. In his early poetry, Crichton Smith often wrote very bitterly about the influence of the Free Kirk of Scotland, seeing it as restrictive of individual freedom, commenting:

It's an interesting thing as far as Gaelic poetry is concerned, this century, that most of it has come from the Protestant islands to the North. And I associate Lewis with an austerity both in religion and in landscape which acts as a kind of honing for what I'm doing. It's almost as if in these islands to the North, you have to fight, in a way, to create poetry.

In his article 'Real People in a Real Place', in *Towards the Human* (1986), Crichton Smith goes on to state that this generated a deep sense of crisis within him:

I recall with a sense of injustice my own fragmented life, the choices I had to make when I didn't realise that I was making them, the losses I endured before I well knew that I was enduring them, the contradictions I was involved in before I knew they existed. And I know that my own life has been a snake pit of contradictions, because of an accident of geography and a hostile history.

Crichton Smith, who published in both languages, therefore very much focuses on the difficulty of belonging, a sense of acute inner exile, and yet the need to continually negotiate his sense of place. This struggle is readily found in collections such as *Thistles and Roses* (1961) and *The Law and the Grace* (1965). Yet, throughout, there is also a defence of Gaelic, a view expressed in 'Shall Gaelic Die?':

He who loses his language loses his world. The
Highlander who loses his language loses his world
The space ship that goes astray among planets loses
the world

One of Crichton Smith's earliest influences was the Gaelic poet Sorley MacLean (Somhairle MacGill-Eain), and especially his cycle of love lyrics, *Dàin do Eimhir/Poems to Eimhir*. For Crichton Smith, these poems were liberatory, encouraging connections with wider modernist aesthetics, and transformed his perceptions of Gaelic. Sorley MacLean (1911–96) was born on the Island of Raasay and was writing poetry in Gaelic from the 1930s, although these only began to be translated in the 1970s (Crichton Smith translated *Dàin do Eimhir* in 1971). MacLean has also been a major influence on many contemporary Scottish poets, in particular the writer and critic Christopher Whyte, who was joint-winner of the National Library of Scotland/Saltire Society Research Book of the Year

Award for his edited edition and critical commentary of *Dàin do Eimhir* in 2002. Despite learning the language in adulthood, Whyte has nonetheless become a central figure in Gaelic literature and the author of two important collections of poetry, *Uirsgeul/Myth* in 1991 and *An Tràth Duilich/The Difficult Time* in 2002, the latter published only in Gaelic.

Another poet who has learned Gaelic as a second language is Meg Bateman (born 1959). In her poetry Bateman often deals with female experience, of themes of love, loss and desire in quite autobiographical ways, as evidenced in her 1997 collection *Aotromachd agus dàin eile/Lightness and Other Poems*. Bateman currently teaches at Sabhal Mor Ostaig, the Gaelic College in Skye, and is actively involved in raising the cultural profile of the language, in translating Gaelic poetry into English so that it might reach a wider audience. One of her colleagues at Sabhal Mor Ostaig, Rody Gorman, is another contemporary Gaelic poet, whose first language is Irish Gaelic, but who has lived in Scotland since 1986, and started writing in Scottish Gaelic in 1994. Acknowledging that 'Generally speaking [. . .] the world of Gaelic poetry is not in a healthy state, and the opportunities for publication are really limited', Gorman has been keen to establish links between Scottish and Irish Gaelic in order to encourage more outlets for publication.

Embodying a language that has often been concerned with displacement – linguistically, literally and psychologically – Gaelic poetry has often explored exile in various manifestations. Consequently, there have been deep anxieties surrounding the possible continuation of the language as a poetic medium. However, simultaneously, there has also been a growing confidence in contemporary Gaelic, with poets such as Aonghas MacNeacail and William Neill expressing this optimism. This generation includes Maoilios Caimbeul/Myles Campbell, Catriona NicGumaraid/Catriona Montgomery and Fearghas MacFhionnlaigh. While some critics have questioned the extent to which the Gaelic language, with its roots in the oral tradition, can represent modernity and change, many younger poets have embraced this challenge, exploring intersections between past traditions and the future anterior. Addressing these issues are poets such as Kevin MacNeil (*Love and Zen in the Outer Hebrides*, 1998), and Anne Frater (*Fo'n t-Slige/Under the Shell*, 1995).

The poet, singer and folklorist Hamish Henderson (1919–2002) was also much involved in connecting art and the oral tradition. In his active engagement with recording traditional music and culture, Henderson has often been associated with generating a folk revival in Scotland. As a socialist and internationalist, he also had some famous 'flytings' with MacDiarmid surrounding the status of folk studies in the national culture. While his well-known war poetry was published in 1947 (*Ballads of War*) and 1948 (*Elegies for the Dead in Cyrenaica*) respectively, his *Collected Poems and Songs* only appeared in 2000.

The debates surrounding Scots as a literary language have at times been volatile, with some critics contesting the extent to which Scots can be regarded as a language rather than a series of geographically varying dialects. However, as academic linguists such as Derrick McClure and John Corbett have pointed out, the use of Scots, in all its diversity, nonetheless continues to have a strong presence in the national literature. While the west of Scotland vernacular found in the work of poets such as Tom Leonard, Stephen Mulrine and Janet Paisley often works on the reader through confronting her or him with the local voice in often surprising, unpredictable ways, seeking to establish forms of linguistic self-confidence in the colloquial idiom, other writers seek to explore Scots from very different perspectives. Robert Alan Jamieson, for example, reflects the customs and oral tradition and dialect of his native Shetland (Sjetlin), as well as also writing in English and Scots. Jamieson, like the Orcadian writer George Mackay Brown before him, is therefore often concerned with the remoteness of past worlds that also somehow connect with the present,

bringing tradition alive in this way. Brown was often engaged with the sagas, myths and the oral tradition, in direct contradistinction to the development of industrialism, the horrors he associated with it (and in this respect there is a clear connection with the work of Edwin Muir, a fellow-Orcadian, and also Brown's former teacher at Newbattle College in the 1950s). Although not preoccupied with the use of Scots in his work, the poet and novelist Andrew Greig is also based in Orkney, with a similar respect for past traditions. Greig, who is also known for his writing on climbing and mountaineering, reflected in his collection *Men on Ice* (1977), has nonetheless suggested that he wants to move 'away from naturalism and the physical world to the emotional and mental worlds behind the everyday' in his work. The poet and dramatist George Gunn (*On the Rigs*, 1995; *Whins*, 1996), based in Thurso, has also defended his northern position, suggesting that 'Caithness may be in the far north of Scotland but for me it is the centre of my cultural world. I passionately believe that the local is the universal.'

Building on MacDiarmid's project to revitalise Scottish culture through language, and on the use of Scots in the work of other poets such as Robert Garioch, Douglas Young, Maurice Lindsay, Sydney Goodsir Smith, William Soutar, Duncan Glen, Tom Scott, Alastair Mackie and George Bruce, several contemporary Scottish poets have been very much active in continuing this legacy, consciously or unconsciously. A strong, pervasive strand in much contemporary writing in Scots has therefore been to reconnect simultaneously with the cultural and political aims of the Renaissance period and yet also to reflect the idiosyncrasies of Scots usage in the contemporary world. While MacDiarmid may have been interested in developing a form of Scots that would in some ways reflect the Scottish 'psyche', for contemporary poets writing in Scots the medium has often been less about promoting identity in cultural nationalist ways than in expressing the power of the local, individual voice and a celebration of linguistic and cultural diversity. This can be seen in the work of poets who often choose to write in Scots, such as Alan Bold, Roderick Watson, W. N. Herbert and Matthew Fitt, as well as those writing in Doric, from the north-east of Scotland, such as Sheena Blackhall and Flora Garry.

In his use of Scots, the Fife poet Tom Hubbard has been keen to build on international connections established during the interwar Renaissance, establishing firmer historical and political parallels with other modern, often small, nations. Hubbard, in his lecture tours, his involvement with Scottish PEN and in collaborative projects such as BOSLIT (Bibliography of Scottish Literature in Translation), has therefore been active in raising the profile of Scots language and literature in an international context. In her *A Drunk Wumman Sittin oan a Thistle* (1997), Liz Niven also engages with the legacy of the Renaissance, yet from a more playful feminist perspective, echoing MacDiarmid's drunk man, yet inverting traditional gender stereotypes ('Tae be a wumman – an tae hae aw men's equal richts/Nae harder job tae wumman is in sight'). Her debt to MacDiarmid is also visible in the title of the publishing press she established in 1996: 'Watergaw'. What connects these poets, therefore, is the need to internationalise Scots, to establish wider, cross-cultural, cross-national links. This imperative is at the heart of Niven's 2001 collection *Stravaigin*, the notion of Scots as wanderers, both at home and abroad. Much contemporary poetry in Scots has been preoccupied with this wandering figure, and there are often interesting political reasons for this.

The role of the stravaiger has therefore permeated much of contemporary Scottish poetry, whether in terms of Scots poets choosing to live abroad, such as Kenneth White and Alasdair Reid, or returning home, with many writers choosing to do so in the last few decades, including Douglas Dunn, John Burnside, Kathleen Jamie, Alan Riach,

Robert Crawford and Don Paterson. The extent to which this parallels a renewed sense of political and cultural confidence, a contemporary renaissance, will be considered towards the end of this chapter. It is intriguing, however, to reflect on the importance of exile here, of Scotland and Scottishness often depicted in an alienating light, as this is a theme common to many of the poets mentioned above and examined from different contexts. These complexities of homecoming can be found, for example, in Burnside's 'Out of Exile' ('But what we recognise is what we bring'), and the potential falseness of national belonging ('identity/ to be assumed like tartan') in 'Exile's Return', both appearing in the 1988 collection, *The Hoop*. Such themes are also found in Douglas Dunn's 'Renfrewshire Traveller' ('Have I come back?!/I am Scots, a tartan tin box/Of shortbread in a delicatessen of cheddars').

In his *Dustie-fute* (1992), David Kinloch adopts the 'dustie-fute', 'the old Scots word for a troubadour or jongleur, juggler or merchant', as a means of sending this figure off into the contemporary world, one that is often alienating:

Dustie-fute, a stranger, equivalent to *fairand-man*, at a loss in the empty soul of his ancestors' beautiful language and in the soulless city of his compeers living in the 21st century now and scoffing at his medieval wares.

Scotland in an international context also prevails throughout Kinloch's poetry in other collections such as *Paris-Forfar* (1994) and *Un Tour d'Écosse* (2001). While Kinloch is the grandson of William Jeffrey, a contemporary of MacDiarmid's and associated with the literary Renaissance, Kinloch has a much more playful and self-conscious vision of traditional Scottish concepts.

This difficult cross-over between tradition and modernity was one of the aims of *Dream State*, first published in 1994 and edited by Donny O'Rourke. In his 'Introduction' to this seminal anthology, O'Rourke highlights many of the shared concerns of the poets in this collection – the need to map Scotland in some way often appearing. A criticism applied to *Dream State* was that O'Rourke had deliberately only chosen poems and poets that engaged with Scottishness. This charge he reflects on in the second (2002) edition. He states

Some reviewers felt I had slewed my selection in favour of 'state of the nation' poems, and maybe I did. The times required it. Scotland's artists did more than its politicians to dream up a new Scotland. A chasm became a cusp. I'd be pleased and proud that *Dream State* wasn't just a record of, or set of hopes for, a better Scotland but a contribution to it.

Interestingly, the need to map Scottishness was at the forefront of this collection, yet the negotiations of place in the anthology are often multi-faceted and, therefore, contradict the notion at the same time. In this respect, there is both a debt to the earlier Renaissance period and a need to transgress this sense of a coherent cultural or national project.

One poet who clearly works at this intersection of tradition and modernity is Robert Crawford, currently also Professor of Modern Scottish Literature at the University of St Andrews. Much of Crawford's poetry explores Scottishness in a self-reflexive manner in an attempt to come to terms with the ways in which the nation is currently evolving, taking into account rapid developments in technology, globalism and the impact of postmodernity. In some respects following in the footsteps of Edwin Morgan, Crawford juxtaposes elements of Scottishness in surprising, often quite zany ways, in order to defamiliarise

and provoke his reader. In his poem 'Alba Einstein', for example, he playfully toys with the reader, questioning his or her loyalty to the notion of a national tradition at any cost:

When proof of Einstein's Glaswegian birth
 First hit the media everything else was dropped: Logie Baird,
 Dundee
 painters, David Hume – all
 Got the big E.

In Crawford's Scottish poetry, there is often a sense of multitudinous Scotlands, of a post-industrial landscape under constant revision ('Circuitry's electronic tartan', 'Your cities are superlattices, heterojunctive/Graphed from the air, your cropmarked farmlands/Are epitaxies of tweed'). It is important to also stress Crawford's connection with Scots language in his poetry (such as *Sharawaggi*, which he published with the Dundonian poet W. N. Herbert in 1990). In their postmodern engagement in technology and change, poems such as 'Fur thi Muse o Synthesis' and 'Ghetto-Blastir' present a strong challenge to national introversion, highlighting the need for open-ended visions of nationhood, viewing the nation as a 'land crammed with intimate expanses'.

This interest in expanding Scottish conceptual boundaries has been at the heart of work by many other contemporary Scottish poets. In his brief introduction to his own work in *Dream State*, Richard Price explains some of the reasons for this:

In the early 1990s I was part of a loose grouping of poets I called 'The Informationists': Robert Crawford, W. N. Herbert, David Kinloch, Peter McCarey, myself, and Alan Riach. One of the ideas of Informationism was to rewire the new of the everyday to itself: to cross wires, to hot wire, to short-circuit. By this I mean to engage with the new worlds and jargon of 'the information society'; to find poetic analogies in form as well as content to technological invention and global discourse.

While more involved with recognisable natural worlds than postmodern simulacra, there is nonetheless also a deep concern with interiority in the work of Norman MacCaig (1910–96), who in some sense spans the literary Renaissance and contemporary poetry. MacCaig's work is not overly associated with themes of Scottishness, and his work tends to examine objects and ideas in a more metaphysical, introspective light. In his early career, alongside other Scottish poets of his generation including J. F. Hendry, G. S. Fraser, Burns Singer, W. S. Graham, Ruthven Todd and Hamish Henderson, MacCaig was associated with the Apocalypse movement of the late 1930s and early 1940s, yet went on to reject this sense of a collective project. While MacCaig was good friends with MacDiarmid, and many well-known poets associated with the Renaissance, in some ways he remained an outsider figure in his reluctance to be categorised. Reflecting on his relationship with these poets, MacCaig observed

And for a while they despised and rejected me, of course, because I write in English [. . .] But of course, when they got to know me and found that I was tall, handsome, rich and could sing in tune, they decided I wasn't so bad after all and Douglas Young invented a phrase, he said 'It's a pity Norman doesn't write in Scots but he's got a Scots accent of the mind.' Whatever that means.

MacCaig's poetry often meditates on Scottish scenes, usually in bizarre, humorous ways that then defamiliarise the object/image in question, leading to insights at a deeper, existential level. Resisting any simplistic identification with Scottishness, MacCaig has labelled himself a 'Zen Calvinist', a tongue-in-cheek remark that nonetheless aptly applies to much of his work. MacCaig was well known for his annual retreats from his home in Edinburgh to north-west Scotland and many of his poems are based on observations made during this time, often studies of animals and natural settings. In his poem, 'Summer Farm', for example, the reader is introduced to a typical scene ('Straws like tame lightnings lie about the grass') and encouraged to view this as something crazy ('A hen stares at nothing with one eye/ Then picks it up'). We are then introduced to the speaker ('I lie, not thinking, in the cool, soft grass,/ Afraid of where a thought might take me -'), who is then overwhelmed by the complexities of this apparent nothingness ('Self under self, a pile of selves I stand'), which transforms into an acute moment of self-realisation ('Farm within farm, and in the centre, me'). In a similar way to Alan Spence, a writer who has been more explicit about his interest in Zen Buddhism and contemplative meditation in his work *Plop!* (1970), *Glasgow Zen* (1981) and *Seasons of the Heart* (2000), throughout his poetry MacCaig continually returns to these moments of intense insight.

Douglas Dunn is another poet who avoids easy categorisations of Scottishness and national identity in his work. In his 1983 article, 'The Predicament of Scottish Poetry', Dunn considers the extent to which Scottish poets feel they must address issues of the national, stating that only a few writers in recent decades have managed to escape this bind. He writes, 'the younger writer can be forgiven if he or she seeks sanctuary among "characteristics"'. Yet, it is only 'a strong talent which breaks free of that temptation in Scottish writing – MacCaig, Morgan, Smith [. . .]'. While Scotland and Scottishness do permeate Dunn's poetry (*Barbarians*, 1979; *St Kilda's Parliament*, 1981; *Northlight*, 1988), they by no means saturate his work, and he often moves away from them completely (*Elegies*, 1985; *Dante's Drumkit*, 1993; *The Donkey's Ears*, 2000). Dunn published his first collection *Terry Street* in 1969, when he was a university librarian working alongside Philip Larkin. He moved back to Scotland in 1984, where he is currently Professor of English at the University of St Andrews.

Born eight years before Dunn, in 1936, Stewart Conn was awarded the title of Edinburgh Makar (Poet Laureate of Edinburgh) from 2002 to 2005 by Edinburgh City Council. It was during this time that he produced his collection *Ghosts at Cockcrow* (2005). Born in Ayrshire, Conn has reflected this part of Scotland in collections such as *In the Blood* (1995), as well as publishing many other volumes, including *In the Kibble Palace* (1987), *Luncheon of the Boating Party* (1992), *Stolen Light* (1999) and *Distances: A Personal Evocation of People and Places* (2001). Three years later, in 2005, the title of Edinburgh Makar was awarded to Valerie Gillies, an Edinburgh-based poet who was also brought up in the south of Scotland, and who was educated in both Edinburgh and India. Gillies is known for her collaborative projects with visual artists and musicians in collections such as *Tweed Journey* (1989), *The Chanter's Tune* (1990) and *Men and Beasts* (2000). In 2005 she was awarded a Creative Scotland award for a project involving ancient springs and wells, to be published as *The Spring Teller*, in this respect perhaps revealing a debt to the earlier work of poet and critic Kathleen Raine (*Defending Ancient Springs*, 1985). In her objectives, Gillies stated that she wanted to experiment with form and metre, with the rhythms and sounds of water, thereby hopefully establishing a new kind of poetics for Scotland in the process.

This engagement with the natural world and ecology is found in the work of Tom Pow, such as his *Landscape and Legacies*, published in 2003, and also in the work of John Burnside and Kathleen Jamie. In his personal introduction to his poetry in *Dream State* Burnside comments,

I think poetry imagines, at the same time as it observes, a world. The world I imagine and observe begins with 'the natural', proceeds by exploring the lines we draw between ourselves and that world [. . .] and ends in asking questions about dwelling, that is, about ecology.

Such themes can be found throughout much of his poetry, including *Common Knowledge* (1991), *A Normal Skin* (1997) and *The Light Trap* (2002). In 2001, Jamie was also given a Creative Scotland award in order to work on her collection *The Tree House* (2004). This book, which went on to win the Forward Prize for Poetry in its publication year, examined the interface between human and animal worlds, also reflecting on the changing nature of landscape:

the land we inhabit opens to
 reveal
 the stain of ancient settlements
 plague pits where we'd lay
 fibre optic cables.

Jamie has often been interested in the juxtaposition of traditional and modern environments in this way, and this can be found in poems such as 'Mr and Mrs Scotland are Dead', where a tension between quaint, idyllic notions of Scottishness are brought into sharp relief with the notion that such visions of identity must now be consigned to history. This interrogation of national tradition is also evident in the poem 'Arraheids', also from the 1994 collection *The Queen of Sheba*. In this poem we are invited to reflect on museum artefacts, the 'arraheids' (or arrowheads), from an alternative, matriarchal vision of Scottish history. In this poem the arrowheads manifest into unsettling, sharp tongues, repressive voices from the past ('fur they cannae keep frae muttering') in order to reprimand the reader ('ye *arenae here to wonder, whae dae ye think ye ur?*').

Such female revisioning of traditional, patriarchal Scottish culture is found throughout Jamie's work, perhaps most obviously in poems such as 'The Queen of Sheba' and 'Wee Wifey' ('I have a demon and her name is/ WEE WIFEY'), as well as in her travel writings based on journeys to northern Pakistan, Tibet and China, published as *Among Muslims* in 2002. Such feminist concerns, whether overt or covert, are found in the work of several contemporary poets, including Liz Lochhead, Dilys Rose, Carol Anne Duffy (who was said to be a strong candidate to become the first-ever female Poet Laureate, after the death of Ted Hughes in 1999), Jackie Kay and Maud Sulter. However, it is perhaps Liz Lochhead who is most famous for her feminist interrogations and critiques of Scottish culture. In collections such as *Memo for Spring* (1972), *The Grimm Sisters* (1981), *Dreaming Frankenstein* (1985) and *Bagpipe Muzak* (1991), Lochhead inverts traditional myths and fairytales, challenging cultural preconceptions and female stereotypes, often in a playful, ironic manner. This bitter humour can be found in poems such as 'Almost Miss Scotland', where the speaker wearing her 'Miss Garthamlock sash' at the beauty pageant has a sudden realisation of her own subjugation. Rather than instigating a 'bacchanalian Revenge of the Barbie Dolls', she then decides to leave quietly, stating that 'the theory of feminism's aw very well/ But yiv got tae

see it fur yirsel'. The need for female emancipation and self-realisation characterises much of Lochhead's poetry, and she has often commented on the place of women in Scottish culture, stating

at the moment I know that I don't like this macho Scottish culture, but I also know that I want to stay here and negotiate it. This place of darkness I acknowledge mine; this small dark country. I can't whinge about it if I don't talk back to it, if I don't have a go.

Many critics have paid tribute to Lochhead's inspirational role in Scottish literature, and it could be argued that she has subsequently paved the way for many younger writers, such as Kate Clanchy and Angela McSeveney, to positively assert female autonomy in their poetry.

The theme of masculinity has recently been investigated by poets such as Frank Kuppner (*The Intelligent Observation of Naked Women*, 1987), Robert Crawford (*Masculinities*, 1996) and Don Paterson (*Nil Nil*, 1993). Yet while earlier writers such as William McIlvanney in novels and Bill Bryden in plays explored masculinity from a west of Scotland, stereotypical perspective, in the work of these younger writers gender becomes a much more awkward, tendentious affair. In their reflections on gender and place, masculinity and belonging, these poets therefore move towards a new questioning of territory. In Kuppner's work – *Everything is Strange* (1994), *Second Best Moments in Chinese History* (1997), *A God's Breakfast* (2004), for example – there is often an involvement with transience, of fleeting thoughts and unplanned actions perplexing the speaker, revealing the strangeness of identity and the everyday world.

In terms of raising the cultural profile of Scottish poetry in recent years, the success of the Scottish Poetry Library, established in 1984 by poet Tessa Ransford, is pivotal, as is the research conducted on neglected Scottish women poets by critics such as Dorothy McMillan and Douglas Gifford. Yet the extent to which the movement away from national introspection, towards a new-found self-confidence, has been aided by the movement towards devolution in Scotland remains a contentious issue. Undoubtedly, many poets have been drawn to recent political developments in their work, often in a bid to express a Scotland very much in transition. In his 'A Nest of Boxes for the Opening of the Scottish Parliament' in 1999, for example, Iain Bamforth presents an eclectic list of cultural paraphernalia that simultaneously depict, yet transcend, concepts of the nation ('things as guarantors of belonging,/truly remarkable things,/facts unfurling, quite unremarkable things'). Bamforth is a resident of Strasbourg, and many other contemporary poets have also chosen to be based abroad (Robin Fulton in Norway, Peter McCarey in Switzerland), or even just south of the border (George MacBeth, W. N. Herbert, Carol Anne Duffy, Jackie Kay, Richard Price, Robin Robertson). In many ways the issue of 'Scottishness', so prevalent in the 1970s and the 1980s, has now become less of a centripetal force. Whereas the poet Kenneth White, with his concerns with intellectual nomadism, has long advocated this notion of the wandering Scot, there is now a clear pattern of geographical drift, the sense that Scottishness and cosmopolitan identities may more than happily co-exist, that this in fact is their natural state.

In the 1980s in Scotland, there were many fierce debates surrounding the political and cultural representation of Scottishness. An apposite example would be the disagreements surrounding the 'Scotch Myths' exhibition, organised by Barbara and Murray Grigor, in which they sought to highlight the often kitsch, consumerist manifestations of national identity in popular culture, such as tartanry. For many critics, this exposition sought to

undermine national identity at a time when there was a perceived need to assimilate rather than deconstruct a sense of the national. Only twenty years later, however, things seemed to have changed dramatically. As writer and critic Christopher Whyte has pointed out, one of the main recurring problems with Scottish literary studies is the need for this national 'litmus test', the continual need to verify texts in terms of their Scottishness rather than their literary merit. If critics have often been keen to assert the national tradition in this way, then one of the tasks for the contemporary poet has been to resist this territorialisation, continually to inject a sense of dislocation into these visions of the national paradigm. This is not to suggest that literature has been working in direct reaction to criticism, rather, it would seem, it has often been pushing ahead, oblivious or otherwise to its categorisations.

Such innovative developments are obvious in projects such as *The Dark Horse*, the Scottish–American poetry magazine founded by poet Gerry Cambridge in 1995, and in the pocketbook series edited by Alec Finlay (son of Ian Hamilton Finlay). While working in an interdisciplinary way, engaging with the visual arts, literature and other media, often veering towards the avant-garde, the pocketbook series has played a useful role in opening out the contemporary nature of belonging in Scotland and beyond. One of the most popular, *Without Day: Proposals for a New Scottish Parliament* (co-edited with John Burnside), dealt with the subject in an experimental way, drawing attention to a multiplicity of aspirations for the political potential symbolised by the new building, the accompanying CD providing recordings of public opinion from around Scotland. This central focus on diversity was also at the heart of *Wish I was here: A Multicultural Anthology* (co-edited with Kevin MacNeil). While seeking to reflect the diversity of ethnic and linguistic identities in modern Scotland this anthology contained work by poets including Leila Aboulela, Gerrie Fellows, Jackie Kay, Suhayl Saadi and Christopher Whyte. Whether these volumes reflect a newly found sense of national confidence or whether they exist to dismantle established perceptions of Scottishness is left to the reader to decide. What emerges, however, is that, at least in terms of much contemporary poetry, the sense of a Scottish cringe that has haunted the discipline for so many generations has now been consigned to history. Recent poetry, it seems, has in this way acted as a catalyst for new visions of Scottishness that resist old stereotypes and easy assimilation.

That this is so is marked by the place given to poetry in recent major national events. During the opening ceremony for the Scottish Parliament in 1999, Tom Fleming read Iain Crichton Smith's poem 'The Beginning of a New Song' in honour of the event ('Let our three-voiced country/ sing in a new world'). To mark the official opening of the new Parliament building at Holyrood in 2004, Edwin Morgan wrote 'Open the Doors!', ('Open the doors! Light of the day shine in; light of the /mind, shine out!'), which was read by Liz Lochhead. Contemporary poets have played a prominent recent role in both public and political life. In doing so, they have helped to generate a much-needed sense of optimism and aspiration about the future direction of Scottish identity. In their being asked to play this role, the prominent place of poetry in contemporary public as well as literary discourse in Scotland has been celebrated.

Further reading

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The Lost Boys and Girls of Scottish Children's Fiction

Maureen A. Farrell

'But where do you live mostly now?'

'With the lost boys.'

'Who are they?'

'They are the children who fall out of their perambulators when the nurse is looking the other way. If they are not claimed in seven days they are sent far away to Neverland to defray expenses.'

(Peter Pan)

Rather in the manner of the children who fall out of their prams, Scottish children's literature has been unclaimed by either the Scottish literature community or by the children's literature community. English children's literature is hailed as having a long and distinguished history, yet Scottish authors and their work have been in the vanguard of the developments that have brought children's literature to its present flourishing state. The troubled history of what constitutes children's literature and the difficulties of arriving at consensus over what is meant by the term childhood have been discussed at length in other forums. This chapter will consider some contemporary fiction by Scottish authors, set in Scotland or displaying perspectives, attitudes or values recognisably rooted in Scottish culture for children and young people up to the age of sixteen.

There have been, to date, two acknowledged 'golden ages' in children's literature in the English-speaking world: the first from about 1860 till 1914 and the second from the mid-1950s till the 1970s. Striking by their absence from the published lists of authors and works stemming from these times are Scottish names and titles. Yet the Scots who were writing for children in the first 'golden age' include R. L. Stevenson, George MacDonald, Andrew Lang, J. M. Barrie, S. R. Crockett, John Buchan, Kenneth Grahame, R. M. Ballantyne and Ian Maclaren. Naomi Mitchison, Eric Linklater, Mollie Hunter and Joan Lingard are only a few of the Scots writing for children from the 1950s on. Current publication data indicate that there have been more and better books written for children in the last thirty years than in the previous four hundred and there is a very strong Scots presence, perhaps more than ever before in this literature. It is important, nonetheless, to contextualise the ways in which children's literature has developed in the twentieth century by briefly considering some key events from the previous century in which Scottish writers played central roles.

Historically, one of the primary purposes of literature for children has always been didactic. Initially books for children were for religious instruction, then for the proper formation of manners, morals and behaviour. Only after the publication of the work of Locke and then

Rousseau did child-centred literature really begin to flourish and a lighter tone start to emerge. Even then, however, it was thought preferable to avoid the use of imagery because children were considered to have only literal ideas and to be lacking in imagination. In response to a comment made by Sir Walter Scott that for children 'all play of the imagination is discouraged', Catherine Sinclair wrote *Holiday House* (1839) and brought about the first of the changes characteristic of Victorian children's literature. The children in her book were naughty, noisy, disobedient and adventurous, and they *played*. They were indulged by adults in a way that had not previously been seen and were entertained by imaginative and original fairytales told by their uncle within the text, which helped to pave the way for the explosion in the fantasy genre for children that was to come. The importance of this book in the history of children's literature cannot be overestimated. It was written with the intention of changing the quality and kind of reading supplied for young people.

Other key events involving Scots writers include the foundation of the magazine *Good Words for the Young* in 1868, which was edited for many years by George MacDonald. *At the back of the North Wind* (1871) was first published here and the pressure to fill its pages produced much of MacDonald's best work for children. *The Princess and the Goblin*, *The Lost Princess* and *The Princess and the Curdie* were all serialised here along with other, more realistic, fictions. Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), also first published in serial form in this magazine, was totally liberated from any didactic purpose. It rode roughshod over what had previously been the rules for children's writing. In this adventure tale, Long John Silver is a much less obvious villain, displaying some heroic qualities. The boundaries between good and bad, black and white became blurred, yet the text is written with great sensitivity to the narrative needs of its young audience. Andrew Lang, meantime, edited a highly influential series of fairy and folktales, beginning with *The Blue Fairy Book* in 1889. He followed this in 1890 with an original fairytale of some humour and distinction, *Prince Prigio*. These books furnished readers with a wealth of classic fairytales and reintroduced many traditional stories. The first performance of J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* was in 1904 and it first appeared in book form in 1911, and, although it may be argued that the quality of the book is not comparable to the play, it has become one of children's literature's 'classic' texts. Another 'classic' text is *The Wind in the Willows* by Edinburgh-born Kenneth Grahame, first published in 1908. The large and distinguished Scottish contribution to writing for children might suggest that the concept of childhood in Scotland was significantly different from elsewhere, or perhaps it was that the Scots placed books and reading high on the educational agenda.

As far back as the sixteenth century John Knox had envisaged a school in every parish and by the beginning of the nineteenth century most of the Scottish Lowlands had made the transition to written culture, though this was not the case for Highland communities. Schooling was made compulsory for Scottish children aged between five and thirteen in 1872 and the 1918 Education (Scotland) Act raised the school leaving age to fifteen, restricted employment for schoolchildren and brought Catholic schools into the state sector. Standards of literacy might have been expected to be high, but the concept of children's reading for pleasure was not widespread at the time. Education extended literacy down the social scale and cheaper publishing costs expanded the market and improved the quality of popular reading material. Publishing for children reflected economic and demographic growth as well as a society more responsive and sensitive to children's needs. Children began to be allowed to choose books and their choices included, among others, adventure stories, school stories, fantasy and fairytales, family and historical stories. Explicit moral lessons in children's fiction were rapidly becoming outmoded and the

insistent moralising of Victorian fiction for children had, by the end of the nineteenth century, become a standing joke and an obvious target for parody.

It might then be supposed that the period immediately following the Great War was a time of growth for children's literature. However, this was not the case. The 1920s was a backward-looking time with a lack of interest in children's books, particularly in Scotland. Very few Scottish children's novels survive from that period and those that do usually did not start off as children's books. John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915) was originally published for adults, but fulfils all the generic features of the children's adventure story, a structure that can be seen to have existed in earlier examples such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *Kidnapped* (1886): the blending of the probable with the extraordinary, the excitement of danger and the unexpected; the 'normal' hero from an ordinary background; the extraordinary event that sends the hero off on a quest usually with a faithful companion; the building of suspense to a great climax; the survival of the hero, usually with a reward and the achievement of greater wisdom, knowledge or maturity. This patriotic espionage tale is set immediately before the First World War and features the hero Richard Hannay finding a murdered man in his London flat. Pursued by the police and foreign spies, he flees to Scotland to work out the significance of the victim's notebook and of the mysterious 'thirty-nine steps'. As in such an example as *Kidnapped*, the heroes and villains are clear enough without being stereotypical and the complex plot is carefully organised with a sensitive feeling for place.

This clear structure reassures younger readers while still offering linguistic and structural challenges. The format inspired other writers over the generations, for example, Alan Temperley's *Murdo's War* (1988), an adventure story set in Caithness in 1943. With his father serving in the war, Murdo helps his family by working with Hector, a sometime fisherman and smuggler. They undertake a job supposedly moving vital new engine parts, but Murdo discovers they are guns and grenades destined for a covert German invasion of Britain. The boy escapes, intent on passing the vital information to the police or army. There follows a deadly hunt across some of Scotland's harshest terrain, from Strathy Point to Helmsdale in the depths of winter. The long pursuit is clearly reminiscent of the chases across the moors in *Kidnapped* and *The Thirty-Nine Steps*.

In *Huntingtower* (1922) Buchan introduced an unlikely hero in the recently retired grocer Dickson McCunn, ably assisted by the Gorbals Die-Hards, led by the resourceful Dougal. They are a group of adolescents, too poor to join the official Boy Scouts of the time. The boys seek adventure and find it in the remote coastal village of Dalquharter, where, along with McCunn, they attempt to rescue from captivity and the dark forces of Bolshevism a Russian princess, her companion and her treasure. For the modern child reader, the narrative is a little dated, but the plot is well organised and exciting and the themes of heroism, cooperation and loyalty remain relevant. There is convincing use of Scots language (Buchan, of course, wrote fine poetry in Scots) and the setting in time and place is expertly created. There seems, too, to be a privileging of middle- and upper-class values, while the Gorbals Die-Hards aspire to the qualities displayed by the 'official' Boy Scouts.

One of the distinctive features of Scottish children's literature makes an appearance here – Scottish children's unusual awareness of and reaction to politics. The Die-Hards march to such songs as, 'Class-conscious are we, and class-conscious wull be, Till our fit's on the neck of the Boorjoyzee', learned by one of their members at a socialist Sunday school. Without, perhaps, completely understanding the meaning of what they are singing and clearly on the side of law and order, the fact that one of their number attends a socialist

Sunday school illustrates an aspect of Scottish children's literature that appears again and again especially in the post-Second World War fiction of authors like Naomi Mitchison, Mollie Hunter, Theresa Breslin, Catherine Forde and Julie Bertagna. In Scottish children's books, the young people are expected to be aware of politics; they are expected to be aware of world events and they are expected to want to work for the good of the community and not just for individual gain. Children's fiction expresses with particular clarity society's sense of itself, its structures and the justification of its structures. Juvenile fiction's didactic nature, even when unintentional, can delineate or illustrate for children their place in society, even as it encourages them to question it. The depiction of such role models in Scotland's fiction may be subtly influencing its young people about the characteristics encouraged by Scottish society.

With schools playing such a central role in children's lives it is hardly surprising that it should have inspired a specific literary genre for children. Public-school settings have dominated this genre, yet only a small proportion, certainly well under 5 per cent, of the population attended them during the period under discussion. Scottish writers, with the exception of Dorita Fairlie Bruce, who wrote a series of school stories with Scottish settings, have never supported the genre particularly strongly. The most famous of her books are the nine 'Dimsie' books published between 1921 and 1942, of which only two have Scottish settings. The stories follow Dimsie (Daphne Isabel Maitland) from a ten-year-old Junior to popular head girl. These books are famous for the 'Anti-Soppists', a group of six girls acting for the good of the school. The six 'Springdale' books are the most obviously Scottish school stories, set in the little seaside resort of 'Redchurch', undoubtedly modelled on Largs. Springdale, though, is a more typically English public school with six 'houses' and a complex prefect system. Bruce's school stories are more concentrated on the intrinsic themes offered by the boarding school as a small society of girls, than those of other writers. Her plots are skilfully built around the relationships between girls of the same or different ages: friendships, rivalries and conflicts. Teachers and lessons play relatively small parts. 'Outside' adventures and mysteries are well integrated in the central plots and were often inspired by her interest in history, local legend and archaeology. Unlike some of her English counterparts, Bruce's books have never been re-published in paperback editions and 1980s editions of the 'Dimsie' stories were very heavily updated, removing the books from their original period. This may account for their apparent loss of popularity.

The appeal of the 'boarding-school story' seemed to be in decline till the advent of the phenomenally successful *Harry Potter* books. J. K. Rowling, their author, moved to Edinburgh in 1994, where, in order to escape a cold flat and to save money, she wrote in cafés. The Scottish Arts Council supported her in completing her first published book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* which was rejected by nine publishers before being picked up by Bloomsbury, and the rest is history. With the publication in 2005 of the penultimate book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Rowling's sales have topped the £300 million mark.

The decision to locate the *Harry Potter* books in a boarding-school setting removes him to a world with its own rules, standards and logic, even beyond that of his world of magic. He attends Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, most probably located somewhere in Scotland – the Hogwarts Express leaves from King's Cross station and travels northwards for a long time. There the main characters, Harry and his friends, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, interact mainly with their peers and without parental intervention. Harry emerges from a Cinderella existence with his aunt and uncle Dursley and bullying cousin Dudley, where he has been kept completely in the dark about his history

and heritage, to begin training as a wizard. He learns quickly, after arriving at Hogwarts, that he has a central role in the ongoing battle with Voldemort, or 'He Who Must Not Be Named'.

The books blend classic fairytale elements and mischievous humour. The fictional school provides an enclosed world, where the chivalric code of honour, loyalty and fairness always wins through, but only after severe trial and bringing new knowledge and worldly wisdom to the heroes. The books are witty, ironic and self-referential. Each is structured as a quest ending in a struggle between evil and good and forms part of an overarching structure throughout the series of a larger quest involving a longer-term struggle between world-views and sets of values. As the characters grow, they come to have to deal with issues of awakening sexuality and of bereavement and their conflict comes to seem to parallel a wider world of ideological, even post-9/11, conflict where conceptions of 'good' and 'evil' are morally complex and mutually incomprehending. They also seem at the end of book six about to leave the school's enclosed world to face wider conflict in the world at large as young people on the brink of adulthood, without the support of their school headmaster guru, Dumbledore, killed at the end of this book.

These books have been dubbed the first 'postmodern school stories', but still maintain the wholesomeness and appeal of their predecessors. Critical opinion is, however, divided. For some, Rowling's work is acknowledged as inventive, humorous, ironically self-aware of the conventions it employs, plot-driven and suspenseful. For others, the books are slight, old-fashioned and derivative. They certainly share many elements of children's classics, but can seem formulaic. The villain Voldemort may have 'gone to the dark side' – and the links with the *Star Wars* films are obvious from time to time – but he might not be considered a great villain in the way that Long John Silver is. Silver is doubly frightening precisely because he is charming and not obviously evil; Voldemort is bad through and through, with no redeeming qualities and, somehow, less frightening as a result.

The *Harry Potter* books are not issues books; there are no drugs, alcohol or sexual activity. Rowling herself has called them 'an antidote to all the grim books'. Unlike magic realism, which ultimately never allows readers to exercise their capacity to believe the unbelievable against the evidence of reality, Rowling writes realistic magicalism, which preserves the discontinuity between fantasy and reality. She pays homage to the magical leaps of the imagination. In that sense, she offers a link to another area of strength in Scottish children's fiction, fantasy writing, one of its greatest post-war publishing strengths. This was perhaps an immediate consequence of the implications of nuclear weapons, the growth of the media, the decline in British power, better education, changes in family life, new political importance of the young and the advent of the age of consumerism, all making an impact on children's fiction after the Second World War. For Scottish children's fiction, like its adult counterpart, the fantasy genre has always been a distinctive and vibrant area. The reshaping of older tales of myth and legend have become commonplace, and the retellings often challenge or subvert previously dominant values and attitudes.

Scottish children's fiction has covered the full gamut of fantasy 'types', from allegorical fantasy to witchcraft and sorcery. Texts include the reworking of ballads such as Tam Lin and Thomas the Rhymer in Naomi Mitchison's *The Big House* (1950) and Diana Wynne Jones's *Fire and Hemlock* (1985). The device of shape-shifting is used to great effect in *The Bodach* (1970) and *A Stranger Came Ashore* (1975) by Mollie Hunter as well as in Susan Cooper's *The Boggart* (1993) and *The Boggart and the Monster* (1998) and in several of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books. These shape-shifters find their modern visual equivalent in contemporary cinema in such more or less contemporaneous films

as *Terminator* (1984) and *Total Recall* (1990), but in Mollie Hunter's work, for example, the parallel reality is the Celtic 'otherworld', peopled by creatures that are either natural, but are thought to have supernatural powers such as the seal, or those whose form and substance is only apparent, who have no physical existence in our world, such as the kelpie. Hunter replays Celtic legends in the world of modern Scotland and this may suggest that perspectives in magic and the supernatural are needed to articulate an unfamiliar modern world.

Such themes have had a lasting presence in Scottish children's literature of the period under discussion. Eric Linklater's Carnegie Award-winning *The Wind on the Moon* (1944) exemplifies an earlier, wartime, magic adventure fantasy where ordinary people gain special powers. Dinah and Dorinda Palfrey delight in being naughty and their talent for trouble increases when they discover they have magical powers. The girls' adventures include turning into kangaroos and freeing captive animals; they culminate in rescuing their father, who is being held captive in a faraway castle dungeon in an enemy country. Given its publication date, it can be assumed that the parallels of escaping the terrors of war, the display of high spirits, grit and determination and the ability to overcome evil in the form of an enemy were deliberately woven into the narrative and that children would recognise its significance. In this century, Gillian Arbuthnott has published two novels *The Chaos Clock* (2003) and *The Chaos Quest* (2004) that illustrate a contemporary working of time fantasies. These books, of the modern *fin-de-siècle* period, are set in the new Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, where time is becoming unstuck and the past is breaking loose. The child protagonists have to assist in the war between the Lords of Chaos and the Guardians of Time, centred round the Millennium Clock supposedly exhibited in the museum since the New Year. Typical of more recent fantasy, children are presented with a dystopian world, rather than Linklater's wartime disruption, where they are called to save the world when adults cannot.

In Susan Price's *The Sterkarm Handshake* (1998), winner of the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize, and *A Sterkarm Kiss* (2003), the boundaries of fantasy and science fiction become blurred. Set in the Borders, the central idea is that a twenty-first-century company has developed a Time Tube that can take them back to a resource-rich age ripe for twenty-first-century plunder of unpolluted resources. The natives are regarded as amusing savages while the sixteenth-century characters regard the 'Elves', who bring them magic in the form of 'Aspirin' and watches, as mischievous beings who are worthy of being tricked. These books for young adult readers sketch a Borders landscape that is harsh and unfamiliar where reiving, strategic marriages and death are the norm. The twenty-first century is depicted as unscrupulous, immoral and grasping and willing to rape the sixteenth century for resources that present society has failed to protect. These books offer a critique of the way we live now and engage with such issues as the needs of the individual against the needs of the community as well as considering the advantages and disadvantages of technology.

Such themes are continued in Julie Bertagna's *Exodus* (2003), an ambitious fable of global warming and catastrophic flooding set in 2100. Mara, the heroine, realises that her destiny is to save her community from the sea and slavery. She persuades them to leave their dwindling island and seek the sky cities intended to protect the people from extinction. What they find are boat refugees, reminiscent of contemporary 'Fortress Europe', the horrors of a sunken Glasgow and the gleaming dystopic world of New Mungo. Like many young-adult texts, this one is predicated on the discovery of a society where the suffering of some allows for the pleasure, comfort and expectations of others. The essentially

pedagogic genre of dystopian fiction reverses the hierarchy where real children and young adults are at the bottom and presents the protagonists with the means, dispositions and values to be the salvation of their society.

Contrasting with the fantasy genre, there has been huge growth in realistic fiction for children post-1945. Realistic fiction deals with the problems children face at a time of physical, psychological, intellectual and emotional maturation. Scots writers excel in this area as shown by the work of, among others, Mollie Hunter in *A Sound of Chariots* (1972); Joan Lingard in the 'Kevin and Sadie' novels of the 1970s; Catherine Forde's *Fat Boy Swim* (2003), *Skarrs* (2004) and *The Drowning Pond* (2005); Theresa Breslin's *Simon's Challenge* (1988), *Whispers in the Graveyard* (1994, Carnegie Medal Winner), *Saskia's Journey* (2004) and *Divided City* (2005); Julie Bertagna's *The Spark Gap* (1996) and *Soundtrack* (1999), and Catherine McPhail's *Run, Zan, Run* (1994) and *Roxy's Baby* (2005). These books deal with issues from bullying to sectarianism, body image to ecological disaster. Their settings range from the completely urban to the rural Highlands and all points in between and include passionate political statements and compassionate descriptions of contemporary Scottish children's lives. They offer a blend of contemporary realism and deeply rooted myth and legend and display an awareness of generational differences as well as a keen sense of history. Language shifts between Scots Standard English and colloquial, dialectal slang. An honest and, hopefully, accurate picture of a truly diverse Scotland is beginning to emerge. In common with their adult counterparts, many of these novels use the device of music as a means of organising and contextualising events. The music covers a wide range, anything from Hoagy Carmichael to James MacMillan's *The Confession of Isabel Gowdie* (1990) and serves as an additional commentary on the cultural lives and experiences of the protagonists.

One of the increasing numbers of writers from elsewhere who have made their home in Scotland is Anne Fine, Children's Laureate (2001–3). Among other things, her career before becoming a writer includes teaching English at a girls' secondary school and in an Edinburgh jail. An author of both children's and adult's fiction, she is best known for her insightful depiction of contemporary family life. Fine blends realism and humour to address serious themes in works considered both funny and thought-provoking. In her books, she considers issues such as the effects of divorce and ageing as well as the importance of tolerance and respect in relationships. Several of her books also include philosophical discussions and subplots centring on topics such as famine relief, stereotyping and the nature of truth. One of her books with the most obvious connection to Scotland is Carnegie Medal-winner *Goggle-Eyes* (1989). A comic tale told in flashback, it is the story of how Kitty learns to accept her divorced mother's boyfriend Gerald, whom she dubs 'Goggle-Eyes' because of the way he stares at her mother's legs. Kitty uses her experience to console her classmate Helen, who is experiencing a similar situation. The gentle anti-nuclear subplot never overshadows the theme of acceptance in relationships. Some of the funniest moments in the book describe in detail the particularly British form of anarchy engaged in by polite opponents of nuclear weapons who are escorted by an even more polite police force to isolated, rural, nuclear facilities for a demonstration. It takes Gerald's sharply sceptical commentary to highlight the ridiculousness of the situation:

'Why go to out of the way holes where only sheep can see you? It's crazy' he scolds. I didn't answer that one. I've often thought myself that the sheep in the West of Scotland must be the most politically informed sheep in the world.

The stance adopted, the reductive idiom and preoccupation with social responsibility and values demonstrated in much of Fine's work fit well into previously existing Scottish themes and values.

Scotland also has a long tradition of illustrated children's books, everything from the comics published by D. C. Thomson, including the world's longest running comic, *The Dandy*, first published in December 1937, to prize-winning children's picture-books from writer/illustrators such as Debbi Gliori, Julia Donaldson and Mairi Hedderwick. The Dundee firm of D. C. Thomson rose to become the main competitor of the much larger London based Amalgamated Press with their 'Big Five' boys' weekly story papers: *The Adventure* (1921), *The Rover* and *The Wizard* (1922), *The Skipper* (1930) and *The Hotspur* (1933). These papers included comic strips as fillers, but originally included only illustrations for the titles and key scenes in adventure stories. The first comic was *The Rover Midget Comic* given away free in *The Rover* in 1933. The 'Big Five' changed to comic form much later.

In 1935, managing editor R. D. Low informed comic artist Dudley Watkins that he planned to introduce two new comic strips, *The Broons* and *Oor Wullie*. Watkins, a highly talented young veteran of *The Adventure*, *The Rover* and *The Wizard*, told his wife that he thought the job 'would probably last a few weeks'. In March 1936, *The Sunday Post* launched a comic supplement entitled *The Fun Section* including *The Broons* and *Oor Wullie*; they continue to this day. Low wrote all the original scripts, setting the balance of surreal detail and narrative, humour and insight, while Watkins drew the cartoons until, later, he was responsible for both creative aspects until his death in 1969. Then, for seven years, old strips were recycled until new artists and writers were found to create fresh strips in the Watkins mould. *Oor Wullie* follows the adventures and misadventures of a small boy of eight or nine years, with spiky blond hair and black dungarees. He gets into trouble with his teachers and the local bobby, plays truant with his gang, breaks windows (*usually* by accident), fights the local bullies, torments 'softies' and 'swots' – gently anticipating the later (from 1951), wilder, Denis the Menace – eats huge quantities of sweets and food and studiously avoids the romantic attentions of the local girls. Every episode begins and ends with Wullie sitting on his trademark upturned metal bucket. He is a young Lord of Misrule who embodies values of irreverence, friendship and fairness. *The Broons* is a domestic comedy-cum-soap-opera about a large argumentative but close-knit family, Maw, Paw and their eight offspring ranging from adults in their twenties down to the Bairn, a toddler. The family, including Granpaw, live in an upstairs tenement flat at No. 10 Glebe Street in an unspecified Scottish city. Each member of the family has distinctive character traits and the strip presents a warm-hearted, and even surreal, picture of Scottish urban life – a 'comic Kailyard'. Both strips are written in broad Scots and were instant hits.

The success of the strips encouraged D. C. Thomson to launch a weekly comic to be sold throughout the whole of Britain, not just Scotland. On 4 December 1937, *The Dandy* was published including 'Our Gang', 'Smarty Grandpa' and 'Desperate Dan'. This was one of Watkins's most famous characters, a rough, tough, bad-tempered cowboy, strong enough to carry his horse on his back. He soon mellowed into an amiable, if not too bright, character, gifted with super-human strength and invulnerability. Barrel-chested and lantern-jawed, he was so tough he had to use a blow torch to shave and his favourite meal consists of cow pie – basically an entire cow in a giant pie dish, tail hanging over the edge, horns protruding through the pastry crust. *The Dandy*'s immediate success prompted Thomson to release *The Beano Comic* (1938), whose characters included 'Lord Snooty and his Pals', and *The Magic Comic* (1939). The outbreak of the war later that year brought restrictions on paper supplies that meant fortnightly publication for *The Beano* and *The Dandy* and quiet

expiry for *The Magic*. Both these comics continue to flourish in the twenty-first century along with their *Sunday Post* cousins and Oor Wullie is as much an icon in modern Scotland as his more recent counterpart Harry Potter.

In a similar way Mairi Hedderwick's creation Katie Morag has captured the affection of children in and furth of Scotland. The first in the series, *Katie Morag Delivers the Mail*, was published in 1984 and was immediately seized upon as an excellent example of non-sexist children's fiction, mainly because of the dungaree-wearing, tractor-fixing Grannie Island. (Katie Morag's other grannie is known as Grannie Mainland and is a much more conventional, feminine character.) The stories are set on the fictional island of Struay, loosely based on the real island of Coll, and the author-illustrator's attention to detail in both text and illustration has reputedly resulted in travel agents being asked by anxious travellers how to get to Struay. These clever picture books tackle relevant contemporary issues such as the impact on island life and the environment of new building development, as in *Katie Morag and the New Pier* (1994), in an accessible way for young readers. Without direct comment, the books allow children to consider an island way of life and the differences in experience and values between mainland and island, urban and rural. Hedderwick is also extremely skilled at capturing and conveying incidents which are common experiences for children in any community or family group while still remaining true to the recognisable experiences rooted in Scottish culture.

A chapter of this length can only indicate some of the developments in Scottish children's fiction. Consideration of historical fiction or the contentious issue of language variety and use are among the obvious omissions. And the problem is that there are few other resources available offering consideration of all aspects of Scottish children's literature. In June 2005, a parliamentary cross-party group on Scottish writing and publishing was launched and manifestos for writers and publishers were presented. Central to both of these documents was the emphasis on the need for Scottish writing to have a greater prominence in schools. But there is more to it than this. Rather than simply being a subject of study in schools, Scottish children's fiction currently offers a robust and confident corpus of work that presents creative, imaginative and culturally distinctive material, capable of commercial success and strong enough to conquer both national and global markets. Scottish children's fiction has perhaps finally come of age.

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The Human and Textual Condition: Muriel Spark's Narratives

Margaret Elphinstone

The first volume of Muriel Spark's autobiography, *Curriculum Vitae*, was published in 1992, when Spark had been an internationally acclaimed writer for over forty years. It was received with great interest because her work was so widely known, but also because Spark had always cultivated an extremely private life. Now and then she had emerged from Tuscan seclusion to give prestigious interviews, but otherwise she remained inaccessible to the wider public. The first published volume of autobiography can be read as commentary on forty years' work, and partial answer to forty years' public speculation. It also employs idiosyncratic narrative and linguistic strategies familiar to devotees of Spark's fiction. Her intentions in writing *Curriculum Vitae* are stated at the beginning:

So many strange and erroneous accounts of parts of my life have been written since I became well known, that I felt it time to put the record straight.

The tone eerily echoes the earlier style of Miss Jean Brodie's prime.

This similarity in tone alerts the reader to ironic possibilities in the non-fiction text as well as in the fiction. In *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* there is tension between the narrator's omniscient voice and the principal character's unreliable assertions, mediated through the detached narrative voice. In *Curriculum Vitae* the tension is between authoritative narrator assembling evidence of the past in the present moment of writing and present self linked intimately and subjectively to her past self through memory. On the whole the narrative voice is coolly detached. Yet, when Spark comes to the campaign against her as editor of the *Poetry Society Journal* in London, and the public misrepresentations of Derek Stanford, her erstwhile collaborator and close friend, the bitterness exhibited by the present narrator – so many years after the event – is still palpable. However, she fastidiously refrains from indiscriminate re-primation. The emphasis laid upon *fact* – objective truth – typifies all Spark's work. In her fiction, and in talking and writing about her fiction, she continually refers to the equivocal relationship between narrative, in all its forms, and material facts. The relationship between language and objective truth is destabilised by questioning the power of words to record truths. It is consonant with Spark's questioning of words' integrity to reflect facts that the authority for the autobiography is upheld by external evidence at all points. She reiterates that facts have been checked with independent witnesses, and that documentary evidence supports all assertions based on the vagaries of memory or the bias of personal experience:

After leaving the Poetry Society I became aware of the value of documentary evidence, both as a means of personal defence against inaccuracies and as an aid to one's own memory.

Consequently, since 1949 I have thrown away practically nothing on paper. Almost every letter I have received, every note I have made, every cheque book, every book of accounts, every appointments book, lists of names and addresses, my correspondence with publishers and agents throughout the world, with income tax accountants, lawyers, turf accountants (I like racing when in England) – all and everything, I have conserved in a vast archive.

(The National Library of Scotland now holds much of this ‘vast archive’.)

There is another voice at work in *Curriculum Vitae*. Chapter 1 begins with memories – fragmented, arbitrary, intimate, individual:

Bread came from Howden’s, the shop above the ovens where it was made. The pavement outside the shop was warm, and hot air steamed out of a grating near the door [. . .]

Yet, the book does not begin with these early memories: it begins with an introduction, framing the story to follow. Spark is a public figure, and she writes, she says, *because* she is a public figure. Her autobiography is presented as a public document, written by a well-known novelist at the height of her career, with the expressed intention of putting the record straight about her own life. The autobiographical genre raises expectations that the narrator will reveal private thoughts and feelings about her younger self, but Spark often seems to conceal rather than reveal. She evokes many personal memories, and describes and comments upon hair-raising episodes from her past life. The narrative voice, however, refuses to allow the reader into more private space: Spark’s personal relationship with her son, for example, is outside the remit of the text, and the photograph of mother and toddler in the early 1940s is more revealingly personal than the written text.

Like the novels, the autobiography resists subjective emotion as a source of narrative authority. In Spark’s fictions, emotions are demonstrably unreliable indicators of objective truths. Indeed, she shows how the authority of narrative itself is spurious: in a 1961 interview, *My Conversion*, she calls her novels ‘a pack of lies’. In her novels there is an absolute, undisputed authority, that of God, but the irony of her writing is that such authority is not available to any human being. Spark does not abandon this sense of irony in moving from fiction to autobiography. The autobiography uses subtle shifts of narrative point of view, as do the fictions. Like Jane Austen, Spark can shift from close identification with the character – in this case her past self – to an omniscient stance far removed from subjective perceptions. This autobiographical writing is by a mistress of fiction and, therefore, narrative technique.

The autobiography leaves off after the publication of Spark’s first two novels, *The Comforters* (1957) and *Robinson* (1958). These follow her reception into the Anglican, then the Roman Catholic, Church in 1953 and 1954 respectively. Although her novels’ tenor developed throughout her long career, her prose style is always distinctive. The economy of style, the wit and irony, the precision of every statement, the avoidance of any kind of verbosity, remain quintessential. Sparing with figures of speech, when she does use an image she makes it work fully, whether in poetry or prose. Her poetry exhibits tautness in form and style that embodies the verbal economy she advocates. This economy is carried over into her novels with a stringency more usually associated with poetic rather than prose forms. The very slimness of nearly all the novels is indicative of Spark’s prose style. Her fictions have been honed to essentials, all possible meanings extracted from every telling word and phrase. She says in her autobiography she thinks of herself as a poet and, although she has mainly written in prose since 1954, her work retains a poetic

intensity precisely because of this sparing use of words and images, the pared-down quality of all her writing.

Spark's poetry is distinguished by attention to form, using traditional forms as diverse as ballad and villanelle, but always innovative: there is never the slightest sense of pastiche. Her *Collected Poems* (1967) experiment with new wine strikingly contained in old bottles. The extended narrative poem, 'The Ballad of the Fanfarlo' (a subject which clearly fascinated Spark, and reappears in her fiction) uses ballad form together with modernist images reminiscent of Eliot. The effect is paradoxical: the poem shows the timelessness of the modern, and the modernity with which the unchanging human condition can be represented. The rhythm, repetitions, uncompromising, often violent, motifs of ballad are transposed to an urban setting, infusing the modern world with a markedly Scottish energy which dispels any sense of ennui:

And they shall rip you breast from back
 And ask your white bone
 If you are born of a German father
 And a Chilean mother brown,

They shall rip you lung and lights
 And ask of your brown marrow
 If you are come from the fever bed
 Of the dancing Fanfarlo.

Other intertextual motifs pervade Spark's poetry, continually drawing the reader's attention to the possibilities and limitations of form and medium. *Tour of London* asks precisely the same questions as those communicated in the visual arts:

Why is she sitting at half-past ten
 Reading a book alone in London?

Stringent examination of modes of representation is crucial to Spark's writing; her explorations of form and medium, in all genres, exhibit deep concern with underlying truths that lie beyond all forms. Her poetry demonstrates that no art form can answer the questions it raises, while paradoxically telling its own truths as clearly and searchingly as possible.

Besides economy of language, Spark's fictions exhibit a high degree of ambiguity, using puns and paradoxes to extend and subvert possible meanings. Her method is oblique: the style may be deceptively straightforward, but meanings are complex, multiple and endlessly deferred. Rodney Edgecombe has described Spark's novels as 'expanded epigrams', insofar as they exhibit the 'elegant incompleteness' of epigram form. This type of word play gives Spark's texts an irreducible quality. They are also highly self-reflexive: in novel after novel, though most notably in *The Comforters* (1957) and *Loitering with Intent* (1981) she writes novels about writing novels. Her examination of the activity and status of the author of a work of fiction is always within the paradigms of the Catholic novel. Her religious impulse led to both her conversions and her surrendering control only to God. For her, like her older contemporaries Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene, the authority of the Catholic Church, and the God worshipped by that Church, informs fiction absolutely as it informs real life. This does not make it any easier to access a single, definitive meaning, because the ways of God are inscrutable, beyond earthly comprehension, but all Spark's fiction

acknowledges divine authority: God is final arbiter and judge of all human action. This authority, sometimes implicit, sometimes overt, informs her exploration of the nature of good and evil, however nihilistic the analysis may at first appear. Her writing is sharply intellectual; at its coldest one can understand Malcolm Bradbury's accusation that Spark is a 'cruel' writer. Emotion is remarkable in her fictions by its absence. Characters are viewed ironically, often from great authorial distance, and motives, actions and resolutions examined acutely, but with no excess of emotional sympathy. The fictions at their sparest are intellectual puzzles rather than emotionally engaging.

Up until the late 1960s, however, the novels are witty and the tone is light, although the issues are intensely serious. These are the years of *Memento Mori* (1959), *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960), *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), and *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963). *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, probably best known of her fictions, is also the most overtly Scottish, not only in setting, but as a direct descendant of *Holy Willie's Prayer* and *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Spark too exposes Calvinism to rigorous scrutiny, for example when Sandy sets out to discover exactly how Miss Brodie has held her own little band of Elect, her chosen girls, so tightly enthralled.

She thinks she is Providence, thought Sandy, she thinks she is the God of Calvin, she sees the beginning and the end.

Calvinism, Sandy discovers, like the fascism Miss Brodie openly espouses, requires loyalty from its particular Elect that requires repudiation of all other values, including the laws of God. Sandy, aged ten, realises she must not be kind to Mary McGregor because that would be disloyal to the group. In face of this kind of loyalty, perhaps Sandy's betrayal of Miss Brodie is just, but, if so, why can one not admire Sandy the betrayer, nor feel that Sandy, now Sister Helena, clutching the bars of her grille, represents liberation from the Brodie set? The reader ultimately cannot collude with Sandy's betrayal of Jean Brodie, because Miss Brodie, in spite of her monumental misjudgements ('Hitler was rather naughty') and sweeping misrepresentations, embodies a form of grace of her own, transfiguring the commonplace more emphatically than Sandy Stranger's treatise can ever hope to do. As Eunice Gardener concludes, 'She was an Edinburgh Festival of her own.' Moreover, only Sandy of all the group remains fixated on her erstwhile teacher: all she says to the man from Edinburgh who asks her what has influenced her life is 'There was a Miss Jean Brodie in her prime.' What Sandy, who has 'small eyes' and signally fails to walk like Sybil Thorndike, never sees, however, is that Miss Brodie's adherence to the transforming arts is not all fake. Miss Brodie, in Sandy's treatise's words, *does* transfigure the commonplace for her chosen girls, and this could have redeemed her if only she could have acknowledged a power greater than her own. The Church of Rome, the narrator tells us, 'possibly could have embraced, even while it disciplined, her soaring and diving spirit'. Miss Brodie, like Robert Wringhim before her, is betrayed by the controlling desires of Calvinism, manifested ironically enough in Sandy, who acts as final instrument of her repression.

The Mandelbaum Gate (1965) marks a break with Spark's earlier fiction. It is much longer, the tone darker, and an element of emotional engagement exists seldom found in her writing. Thereafter, she retreats from such involvement, and her next novel, *The Public Image* (1968), seems to signal a period of growing emotional detachment which eventually becomes markedly chilling. Here, twenty-four years before *Curriculum Vitae*, Spark interrogates the relationship between private self and public image, examining a woman, Annabel Christopher, who seems initially only to exist in the public sphere, in which she is set up,

framed, denigrated, and from which she finally chooses simply to walk away. The ending remains open, as Annabel finally faces the possibility of self-discovery, but, ironically, since a novel is a public forum, the heroine's acquisition of a personal life means she must walk off the written page into a private space where the reader necessarily cannot follow. The ending offers, but at the same time withholds, a seed of hope. Once off the page, Annabel may be redeemed, but until that point every character is condemned to act a script where they exist only as public images. Even so personal an act as a suicide is carefully played to an audience: Frederick Christopher stages his death as conclusion to a marriage script in which Annabel must play villainess. In the Italian film world's context, the Roman characters are well aware illusion is not reality: they have no difficulty identifying their own script as both chorus and admiring audience of the drama played before them. Only the very young fail to collude: the appalling child Gelda sullenly rejects her part in the admiring chorus and insists on the evidence of material facts: 'The actresses can make themselves cry, they have to learn how to do it.' Yet, Gelda too is playing a part, as *enfant terrible*. The only character to whom the script means nothing is Carl the baby, knowing no words and therefore largely immune to scripts and images. Hungry, sleepy or interested, he reflects these states without guile. Here is a suggestion that language acquisition – that moment of semi-otic split when the field of signs and the world of facts become separated – is the moment when acting starts. As soon as one can use words, it is possible – in fact inevitable – to lie. To be pre-linguistic, though, is not to be entirely pre-lapsarian: even Carl, however innocently, can play to his mother's script. If Annabel is to achieve any awareness of an inner self, it can only be through her spontaneous, loving relationship with her baby, running like a bass note through all the script's pretences.

Annabel Christopher, like Jean Brodie before, is a consummate actress, who requires an audience, and at the same time a character in a book, playing to her readers. This self-reflexive economy is embodied, as in all Spark's fiction, in the text's fabric, through stringent economy of form and style. Annabel, like Jean Brodie, is economical with the images that shape her script; both characters reflect the equally economical method of their author, reworking images and events through her inimitable method of flashback and flash-forward so that nothing in the text is extraneous, and absolutely nothing wasted. As Sandy Stranger discovers through her long study of Miss Brodie's narrative methods:

[. . .] it always seemed afterwards to Sandy that where there was a choice of various courses, the most economical was the best [. . .]

The informing principle of Annabel's narrative is herself, what she calls her 'career', as the informing principle of Jean Brodie's narrative is her self-image, her 'prime'. In both cases the narrator ironically exposes the paucity of these self-images by subverting and reversing their significance. The staging of a public life with oneself as heroine emerges as a symptom of spiritual death, but in the earlier novels this bleak conclusion is circumvented by a paradoxical sense of celebration of even the most self-absorbed script as an art form. Created seven years after Miss Brodie, Annabel Christopher lacks this literally saving grace. Her script loses any incipient pathos or beauty – although this would have been possible, for example, when, surrounded by her Roman neighbours, she acts out a wronged Madonna and child – in the stringent exposure of shallowness and self-interest. The scripted public image is irredeemable; salvation can only come by abandoning the public world.

The novels following *The Public Image* grow progressively darker in tone, until they read like blueprints of the extent of human wickedness and folly. There is a bold engagement with

evil, as exhibited in violent crime. The author is distant, and sometimes appears lacking empathy as much as the characters portrayed. *The Driver's Seat* (1970), *Not to Disturb* (1971), *The Abbess of Crewe* (1974), *The Only Problem* (1985) are among these chilling fictions, *Aiding and Abetting* (2000) a more recent example of this stark mode. *The Driver's Seat* is perhaps the most destabilising of all Spark's fictions. The distance between narrator and character is so distant that the narrator claims little knowledge of Lise at all, and the narration is often expressed as surmise: what seems the case rather than what is certain. Even Lise's name is used as sparingly as possible. She is the ultimate version of Spark's self-obsessed authors of their own scripts. Where Annabel has abandoned her inward life in favour of acting out her public image's script, Lise has literally scripted her own murder. This ultimate form of self-destruction is far more complex than suicide, demanding an inordinate degree of control over other human beings, whose autonomy must be violated in the interests of the protagonist's masochistic script. The murderer becomes victim; evil and innocence become disconcertingly reversed, but at the same time rigorously apportioned. The narrator invokes no empathy for Lise's state of loneliness and desolation, but recounts with clinical precision the steps she takes to accomplish her own murder, coercing Bill into the role of murderer. Ironically, in the moment of accomplishment Lise lacks control of her planned fate: rape played no part in her script. Her life and death represent a damned soul's ultimate failure: for Lise there seems no redemption. Nor has her fall narrative suspense, as Spark uses her usual method of time shift to show Lise's end pre-determined from the first page. *The Driver's Seat* is unsettling not least because it seems to expose the control-impulse so strongly evident through all Spark's oeuvre to self-scrutiny of a very controlled and controlling kind. It thereby exposes the paradox, perhaps to do with her religious impulse, that only to God – but therefore thank goodness for God – can one give up control.

Latterly, Spark more often reverted to the lighter tone, and less bleak vision, of earlier novels, without abandoning incisive exploration of what constitutes evil as well as good, and the vital importance of judging the distinction correctly in the face of all ambiguities. Implicit in her texts is God's ultimate authority, but that also predicates the power of a personified devil. Margaret, in *Symposium* (1990), is another equivocal figure, associated, like Spark's other Scottish heroine – or anti-heroine – Miss Jean Brodie, with more than a whiff of sulphur. Margaret's uncle Magnus trenchantly makes the connection between Margaret's Calvinist inheritance and her uncanny powers' frightening pragmatism:

'The fact remains that madness commonly takes the form of religious mania,' said Magnus, not in the least troubled by any thought that this might apply to himself. 'In fact,' he said, 'Margaret is a Murchie, Covenanting stock who refused to accept the rule of bishops. It is written in the scriptures, Samuel 9: 11, "According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do." Which you should meditate: Margaret might well be under divine orders [. . .]'

Margaret's uncanny powers' effect suggests her allegiance is diabolical; she is in this a darker version of Dougal in *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*. But, like Dougal, her more sinister traits are leavened by insouciance amounting to artistry. Although no one could describe her as 'an Edinburgh Festival on her own' she exhibits, along with her Uncle Magnus, affinity with an older, darker, manifestation of Scottish arts in her alignment with the Scottish ballads' supernatural world. Magnus certainly has wit on his side; like the Old Nick of Scottish folklore, his devilment is a mischievous art seeming far removed from the distilled, deliberate evil that motivates Lise in *The Driver's Seat*. Yet, the light tone is highly ambiguous: evil

cannot be disguised under the veneer of civilised wit. True to her Scottish origins, Margaret is recognised as 'a female Jekyll and Hyde'. Like Frederick in *The Public Image* and Lise in *The Driver's Seat*, Margaret scripts violent death, but she is far from suicidal: the uncanny deaths that occur in her proximity are staged for other characters. Nonetheless, Margaret is ultimately no more successful than Lise at coercing others to enact her script precisely. Hilda Damien does indeed die, but by a random coincidence that thwarts Margaret's carefully laid plans: 'From upstairs comes Margaret's wild cry: "It shouldn't have been till Sunday!"'

However rampant the powers of evil, in the end it cannot be the devil who writes the script. God is always present within Spark's texts, however implicitly. In her long textual engagement with the nature of good and evil, in text after text, the works of the devil were often brought into the foreground and subjected to intense scrutiny, but they were not allowed to triumph. The unsparing, highly intellectual appraisal of the human condition her texts represent is often frighteningly unsentimental, but never hopeless. Even in *The Driver's Seat*, where the desire to control others has become diabolical in its propensities, there is still, however ironically understated and rejected by the characters themselves, the possibility of resigning all human efforts to control, through faith in God. The irony of these very controlled texts is that they expose the limits of human beings' ability to control their world. The hope, expressed more or less explicitly within each text, is that there is, in spite of all the word play, and destabilising of paradigms, a divine principle upon which human beings can ultimately rely. Postmodernism informs Spark's texts in terms of self-reflexive wit, the exploitation of linguistic ambiguities and the subversion of conventional narrative techniques, but the texts are paradoxically affirmative as well as equivocal. Meaning is never simple, but it never dissolves into nothingness. Her texts encapsulate absolute certainties and infinite ambiguities in brilliant juxtaposition. As representations of the late twentieth-century world, they are as precise as they are elusive. Spark demonstrates again and again that words and narratives will lie, but that form and style, when used with integrity and great accuracy, can embody a very particular kind of truth.

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From Carswell to Kay: Aspects of Gender, the Novel and the Drama

Susanne Hagemann

The term 'gender' is both ubiquitous and elusive. A recent (2000) introductory book by David Glover and Cora Kaplan is entitled *Genders* rather than *Gender*, and the authors do not attempt a definition but refer to their central concept as 'a chameleon-like category, a name for a constantly changing phenomenon that can sometimes be more and also sometimes rather less than an identity'. The classical feminist distinction between biologically given sex and socially constructed gender has long been deconstructed by theorists such as Judith Butler. To complicate matters further, the use of gender is characterised by a structural asymmetry: even today, the term more often occurs in connection with femininity and homosexuality than with masculinity and heterosexuality. Gender, in other words, can connote marginality, since the prevalent perception of dominant groups as 'universally human' rather than specifically male or heterosexual has so far proved difficult to eradicate. While this asymmetry is perpetuated in the present chapter by the fact that female authors only have been selected for it, various versions of masculinity and femininity and various versions of sexuality dealt with in their works will be analysed. This chapter thus incorporates two strategies for countering marginalisation: the all-female remit follows the traditional rationale of making the marginalised (women writers) visible, whereas the present author's own decision to include the dominant norm (masculinity and heterosexuality) aims at depriving it of its pseudo-universal status.

Seven novelists and dramatists will be discussed: Catherine Carswell, Naomi Mitchison, Willa Muir, Ena Lamont Stewart, Sue Glover, Liz Lochhead and Jackie Kay. Their output spans the years from 1920 (when Carswell's *Open the Door!* was first published) to the present, and is formally, linguistically and thematically heterogeneous. Some aspects of gender that figure in their novels and plays will be surveyed. The survey will be structured thematically rather than chronologically or according to individual authors. It cannot, of course, claim to be fully representative of gender in Scottish twentieth-century writing, because it is based on texts by women only.

Gender is a comparatively recent issue in Scottish literary criticism. It is obviously true of all western cultures that women's writing and the theme of gender in literature precede the advent of feminist criticism; but Scotland lags behind in another, more significant way. While gender rose to prominence in Anglo-American criticism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in Scottish criticism this did not happen until the early 1990s. One of the main reasons, it has been argued, is the quest for Scottishness. The small-nation syndrome involved focusing on the quiddity of Scotland. The double marginalisation of writers who

were both Scots and women tended to be overlooked, and the gendering of men's and women's texts long remained outside Scotticist paradigms. This is not to say that gender and nation are mutually exclusive categories. For instance, in that quintessentially national movement, the Scottish Renaissance, male authors such as Hugh MacDiarmid and Neil Gunn in constructing Scotland celebrate masculinity; and the political, linguistic and thematic profile of a woman writer such as Naomi Mitchison is clearly relevant to the concerns of the movement. While it can be useful to speak of a tradition of Scottish women's writing, it also makes sense to introduce gender into readings of men's texts, and to revalue the contribution of women to male-dominated traditions.

Can elements of a women's tradition be identified in the seven authors selected for this chapter? It would be possible to suggest, for instance, that their fiction and plays problematise gender inequality. To do so, however, would distract attention from the complexity and flexibility of gendering processes in these texts. This chapter proceeds by discussing the literary construction of femininities and masculinities against the backdrop of inequality. The second part of the chapter will be devoted to the construction of sexualities and gendered bodies. Separating these two issues is of course a matter of structural convenience rather than thematic necessity.

If we distinguish between patriarchy as a form of oppression which discriminates against women and androcentrism as a male-centred world-view, many of the primary texts selected can be said to deal with patriarchy, but their world-view – not to be confused with the world-view of individual characters – tends to be, not androcentric, but gynocentric or neutral (though there are exceptions, such as Mitchison's *When We Become Men*, 1965). In other words, patriarchy tends to be critically examined rather than taken for granted. This involves a predominance of female protagonists, but a male protagonist does not necessarily imply androcentrism.

One of the most disturbing explorations of femininity and masculinity in a patriarchal context is Willa Muir's *Mrs Ritchie* (1933), a novel which paradigmatically illustrates a variety of aspects of gender which recur in Scottish twentieth-century women's writing. Annie Ritchie née Rattray becomes a monster by conforming to the stereotype of a good woman. She is highly intelligent, ambitious and energetic. Her dream of being a teacher, in which she is supported by the headmaster of her school, is shattered by her mother for reasons of class and gender: the family need her to earn money, and 'it's no' even as if you were a laddie'. After an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to achieve power in the playground, she turns to religion and domesticity, two socially approved domains for women, as an ersatz career. She thus fulfils the expectations of the guardians of decorum. As her Sunday-school teacher and future employer, Miss Julia Carnegie, puts it: 'To wish to become a domestic in some Christian family, what a proper ambition for a young, unprotected female!' Calvinism comes to function as a symbol of evil in Muir, as it does for several male authors of the Scottish Renaissance, but in *Mrs Ritchie*, the origin of evil is gender rather than religion.

Annie uses traditional gender roles to satisfy her desire for power. She begins by dominating her employer by her 'silent rectitude' and her mania for order in 'her' room, the parlour. When it is borne in on her that marriage is socially desirable for women, she acquires a husband, Johnny Ritchie, and proceeds to dominate him, in accordance with Miss Julia's dictum that the power of women consists in their influence over men. Her method of capturing Johnny consists in playing the sanctioned role of a weak, gentle woman in order to boost his sense of masculinity:

He began [. . .] to think more of himself, both as a man and a joiner, under the steady flow of her encouragement, for no decent man, when a woman invites him to cock himself up and push himself forward, refuses to credit himself with virility.

Johnny's masculinity, however, is far from stereotypical: he is shy, indecisive, kind and easily browbeaten by his wife. In fact, masculinity seems to be precarious in the novel as a whole. Annie's father drinks, as does her son, John Samuel – the latter being driven to despair by his experience of the 1914–18 war. War, a prototypically masculine activity, destroys men's bodies or minds, depriving them of their individuality and humanity. John Samuel's sister Sarah Annie concludes: 'We're just driven [. . .] all of us, laddies and lassies.' Even the headmaster of Annie's school suffers from some hidden fear which makes him reluctant to meet his young pupil's gaze. It may be no coincidence that Annie's husband and son die, whereas she herself and her daughter survive.

Annie draws strength from nineteenth-century middle-class concepts of femininity. She is meek in situations in which her culture accords power to men, for instance at church and in money matters. In those spheres defined as feminine, by contrast, she exerts her own power to the full, using women's confinement to the home to turn her house and especially her parlour into a (pseudo-)Christian fortress over which she rules as her God's deputy: an angel in the house whom her family perceive to be a devil. Silence, which can be routinely enforced on women in patriarchy, comes to serve as a tool with which Annie punishes her family and in particular her husband for what she considers offences. Patriarchy at one point appears to defeat her: when Johnny dies intestate, the house with which she has identified so strongly by law passes to his son rather than his wife, and John Samuel in his will leaves it to his sister rather than his mother. However, Annie quickly finds a new appropriately feminine pose, that of a mourner – possibly a mad mourner – for the two dead men whose lives she made miserable by her surfeit of feminine virtue.

There is a certain continuity between Annie and her daughter: Sarah Annie possesses some of 'the same dreadful force' as her mother, and fulfils her mother's former career dream by becoming a teacher. She thus completes her mother's movement from working class to middle class. In fleeting moments of solidarity, Sarah Annie, a feminist, thinks of Annie as 'the thwarted product of generations of masculine prejudice' and as 'a conscious individual' who refuses to be owned and used by a man. While Annie strives for power within patriarchy, Sarah Annie strives to overthrow patriarchy, becoming a suffragette and declaring that she does not wish to be 'beholden to any man' and will never marry. Spinsterhood, from being a humiliating fate, has turned into a freely chosen way of life.

Aspects of gender in *Mrs Ritchie* which are relevant to the construction of femininities and masculinities in other novels and plays range from domesticity to language and silence, from mother–daughter relationships to the precariousness of masculinity. The use of three groups of such issues will be discussed across the spectrum of the seven authors' works, namely gender and power, versions of masculinity, and the constructedness of gender.

Gendered power can take various forms: most obviously, personal power over individuals and institutional (for example, political, economic, religious, professional) power over groups of people. The two can be conjoined or dissociated. In *Mrs Ritchie*, Annie makes use of her personal power to contain her husband's potential institutional power (from his legal rights to his control of economic resources). The strategy succeeds at the cost of marital relations and, ultimately, Johnny's life. Marriages in which the husband combines personal and institutional power likewise tend to end either in death (for example, Mario Rasponi in Carswell's *Open the Door!*, 1920, and Andrew Shaw in Mitchison's *The Bull Calves*,

1947) or in disaster (the exile of Rachel, Lady Grange, in Glover's *The Straw Chair*, 1988). While Carswell's two novels emphasise the sensual pleasure which women can derive from feeling inferior to men and yielding to them, this pleasure is transient. Female protagonists appear to require either a pseudo-equal partnership, in which mutual personal power marginalises the husband's possible institutional power (Joanna Bannerman and Lawrence Urquhart in *Open the Door!*, Kirstie Haldane and William Macintosh in *The Bull Calves*, perhaps Isabel and Aneas Seton at the end of *The Straw Chair*), or no partner at all (Ellen Carstairs in Carswell's *The Camomile*, 1922, Elizabeth Shand at the end of Muir's *Imagined Corners*, 1931, Barbs Marshall in Lochhead's *Perfect Days*, 1998). The two versions of Stewart's play *Men Should Weep* illustrate the general pattern, which persists throughout the twentieth century: Maggie Morrison works from morning till night, looking after her unemployed husband, John, her seven children and her mother-in-law. In the first version (1947; originally entitled *Poor Men's Riches*) she is helpless against John's complete irresponsibility, and dies in childbirth. In the revised version (1976), she succeeds in humiliating him into respecting her wishes, and this version – more in tune with contemporary notions of women's empowerment – ends on a hopeful note for the family. Lily Gibb, Maggie's sister, who has remained single, is a survivor in both versions.

A manifestation of women's personal power – or, as some historians would argue, a substitute for personal power – which recurs in Mitchison's novels is witchcraft. Erif Der in *The Corn King and the Spring Queen* (1931) uses magic to harm and heal people. This is a form of power which, unlike that of the Spring Queen, does not derive from the Corn King's power and which belongs exclusively to women. In *The Bull Calves*, Kirstie's sister-in-law, Christian Shaw, is a witch, and Kirstie for a time believes that the witchcraft practised by herself killed her first husband, Andrew Shaw. If we turn to more recent texts, the power of witchcraft may be akin to that symbolised by Dracula in Lochhead's 1985 play, a many-faceted power which, for example, enables Mina Harker in the final scene to give orders to her male companions and to open the gates of Dracula's castle. Even in feminist texts, women's power can be associated with a sense of dread. This is not necessarily the case, however. In Kay's *Strawgirl* (2002), a novel for younger readers, the eponymous magical creature uses her power to help Molly 'Maybe' MacPherson deal with bullies and unscrupulous businessmen, and the atmosphere she creates is one of self-confidence and celebration. Personal power of a non-magical kind is demonstrated by the eponymous bondagers of Glover's acclaimed 1991 play. The bondagers, nineteenth-century female farm workers, are deliberately exploited by men: 'We need the women. Who else would do the work? . . . Women's work, for women's pay.' Yet, despite economic and sexual pressures, they manage to cope, to retain their dignity, and to derive some joy from their lives. Their power is over themselves rather than over others.

Institutional power of course does not belong exclusively to men. A number of texts, for instance, thematise the relationship between women and political power. Lochhead's play *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987) combines this issue with that of marriage. Mary seeks to reconcile political power with a love match; in fact, her statement 'I want to marry and begin my reign at last' indicates that she regards the latter as indispensable to the former. By contrast, her cousin Elizabeth realises that the two are actually incompatible: marriage would turn a queen into a 'mere' woman. Even in her love affair with Leicester, she keeps remembering her political role (and draws sexual excitement from it). Elizabeth succeeds as queen while Mary fails; but both are constrained by the tension between stereotyped femininity and power. (Outside the realm of politics, this tension is very evident in Stewart's *Starched Aprons*, 1945, where Sister Barton's 'frightening enjoyment of

power' contrasts starkly with traditional gender roles.) Mitchison's *Lobsters on the Agenda* (1952), set in a Highland village, shows women in politics continuing to struggle with a male atmosphere and male networks as late as the mid-twentieth century: 'he wouldn't vote for me . . . if there was anything in the shape of a man standing, even if it was straight out the gaol', comments district councillor Kate Snow on one of her constituents. By contrast, in Mitchison's *Early in Orcadia* (1987), set in prehistoric times, women as well as (more frequently) men can be rulers. In her science-fiction novel *Solution Three* (1975), power is shared equally between women and men, and the highest political office is held by a woman. Known societies in Europe are patriarchal; imagined societies need not be.

Most of the primary texts are set in recognisably patriarchal worlds. Such worlds confer power on men; but they do not confer secure identities. Masculinity is often precarious, even for full-blooded patriarchs. Mario Rasponi in Carswell's *Open the Door!* thinks that the proper place for his sexually desirable wife is a cage; but his frenzied possessiveness reveals his fundamental insecurity. In Muir's *Imagined Corners*, Hector Shand, for whose sake Elizabeth tries to transform herself into a 'noble wife', suffers from a strong sense of intellectual inferiority and tends to drown his sorrows in alcohol (not an uncommon procedure for male characters in the primary texts). Norman MacDonald in Mitchison's *Lobsters on the Agenda* refuses to accept a suggestion from two women that the Kirk Session should deal with a wrongdoer ('It's not for the women to say what we should do'), but his inactivity worries him until he has found another way of solving the problem. Alexander Selkirk, the protagonist of Glover's 'Crusoe' play *An Island in Largo* (1981), is an egocentric who pays no regard to the feelings of others (including his lover, Sophia Bruce), but his very egocentricity makes him an easy prey for a determined woman, Frances Candis. Patriarchy can be self-defeating in individual cases. However, it is women who are invariably harmed first, in these as in other texts from 1920 to the present. When Alec Grey in Glover's *The Seal Wife* (1980), out of sheer destructiveness, shoots a seal cow who the text suggests was his wife Rona, it is the woman who is hurt in a very direct way. Retaliation such as that practised by Medea in Lochhead's version of Euripides (2000) – brutal retaliation for Jason's callousness and egoism – is rare.

Besides facets of masculinity such as aggression, destructiveness, chauvinism and egocentrism, the primary texts construct masculinities which do not derive from patriarchal power. Some of these are still harmful to women: in Carswell's *Open the Door!*, Sholto Bannerman seems 'masterful' and 'warm') but is in fact emotionally empty and unable to satisfy his wife Juley sexually; and Louis Pender's insecurity and perennial distress make his affair with Joanna a painful experience for her. Male insecurity culminates in Ned Murray's madness (a stereotypically 'feminine' affliction) in Muir's *Imagined Corners*. Men can be indecisive (for instance Jonathan Harker in Lochhead's *Dracula*) or shy (James Scrymgeour in *Imagined Corners*). More importantly, some versions of masculinity can involve providing kindness and understanding: witness the empathy which William Macintosh and Patrick Haldane have with Kirstie in Mitchison's *The Bull Calves*, the widespread kindness of men, both homo- and heterosexuals, in Mitchison's *Solution Three*, or Brendan Boyle's supportiveness in Lochhead's *Perfect Days*. As these varied cases show, male kindness is compatible with, but not dependent on, sexual desire. Generally speaking, the primary texts, set as they mostly are in patriarchal societies, inevitably show (some) men exercising power over women in more or less obvious and more or less aggressive ways, but such power is not essential to the texts' multi-faceted concepts of masculinity.

There is one sense, however, in which power is indeed essential to masculinity. The term *masculinity* has so far been used to refer to all forms of behaviour and thought practised by

male characters. But the term can also serve to privilege one specific form, or set of forms, namely that considered suitable for males by a particular society. In this normative sense, masculinity, for most of the societies described in the primary texts, does involve power. Judith Butler has argued that gender is constituted by a '*stylized repetition of acts*' (italics in original): we become 'masculine' or 'feminine' by habitually behaving in a manner consistent with our society's norms for our gender. If gender is thus constructed, we must work to produce ourselves as gendered subjects, and we can destabilise gender by subverting the norms which constrain us.

This notion of masculinity or femininity as something to be actively achieved has come into prominence in literary criticism as a result of the rise of gender studies in the past two decades, but in the primary texts it goes back much further. It is implicit, as early as 1920, in Lawrence Urquhart's complaint, in Carswell's *Open the Door!*, that his mother 'drained' him of his 'manhood', and in the narrator's snide comment that in Joanna Bannerman and Bob Ranken's first kiss, 'all the virility . . . had been on her side'. In Carswell's *The Camomile*, Ellen Carstairs at one point toys with the idea of becoming 'a perfectly womanly woman', and lists things that make a woman 'unwomanly', ranging from 'lack of attention to one's person and appearance' to 'a desire to fight for oneself, or to be regarded – at times anyhow – not essentially as a woman but as a human being'. Ellen's fiancé wants her 'to be womanly, but not to go too far even in that direction': if perfect womanliness could be defined and achieved, it would be undesirable; the norm must necessarily be subverted. Unlike Ellen, Elizabeth in Muir's *Imagined Corners* does try to conform to what the narrator calls 'the self-made figure of the Noble Wife', a figure which personifies her society's precepts for femininity. However, no matter how hard she tries, she cannot achieve the projected result, namely making her husband happy. The breakdown of her marriage betokens the breakdown of the norm to which she has sought to conform. In Stewart's *Men Should Weep*, John Morrison invokes gender norms to justify his failing to do any housework: 'Tae Hell wi this Jessie business every time I'm oot o a job! I'm no turnin masel intae a bloomin skivvy! I'm a man!' But when his wife Maggie collapses, weeping hysterically from exhaustion and despair, he loses interest in normative masculinity and makes tea for the family.

In Mitchison's *Solution Three*, gender differences have virtually disappeared, perhaps as a result of the introduction of compulsory homosexuality. An even clearer example of the constructedness of gender can be found in Kay's novel *Trumpet* (1998), one of the key texts of the late twentieth century. Josephine Moore turns herself into a man, jazz trumpeter Joss Moody, without the aid of a surgeon. In his lifetime, the only person aware of his female anatomy is his wife, Millie. When the anatomical facts become public knowledge after his death, most people continue to use the masculine pronoun to refer to Joss. Even his adopted son Colman, profoundly shocked and angry at the discovery, continues to think of him as his father. Millie muses that she 'managed to be faithful, to never be interested in *another man*' (emphasis added). Joss was a man because he appeared to be one, because he successfully performed masculinity. Gender has far-reaching social implications, some of which have been discussed in this analysis of the literary construction of femininities and masculinities, but it has no stable basis.

The construction of sexualities and gendered bodies is no less complex than that of masculinities and femininities. In selecting a contemporary comedy, Lochhead's *Perfect Days*, to introduce this dimension of gender, it is not intended to suggest that recent texts are generally more optimistic than earlier ones, such as *Mrs Ritchie*. Nor is it claimed that sexuality is a new issue in Scottish women's writing.

The protagonist of *Perfect Days* is Barbs Marshall, a successful businesswoman who at the age of thirty-nine has developed an urgent longing for a child (though not for a permanent partner). The notion of a woman's biological destiny, foregrounded in Barbs's question 'Doesn't every woman want a pop at pregnancy before her womb goes pearshape?', seems disturbing, but it is counter-balanced by Barbs's hilarious search for a suitable father – or, in fact, any father. The various men she decides on fail to perform satisfactorily, for different reasons. Thus, one tells her that he has fallen in love with another woman, to whom he does not intend to be unfaithful; another is willing and able but has had a vasectomy and is therefore useless. Male procreative sexuality seems impossible to obtain. While initially reluctant to try artificial insemination ('Maybe I do not like to think of having to tell my baby its daddy is a wanker'), Barbs later decides to ask her gay friend (and employee) Brendan Boyle for sperm. He obliges, albeit with some difficulty ('Actually I didn't find it aw that easy to manage my Wee Fling to tell you the truth'). But as it subsequently turns out, in Brendan's case male sexuality poses yet another problem: he has an impossibly low sperm count. The mystery of how Barbs does get pregnant is not cleared up until after the birth of her daughter: Brendan's then partner, jealous of his prospect of fatherhood, substituted his own sperm for Brendan's. An explained miracle helps Barbs to fulfil her desire and her destiny.

The play explores a variety of connections between sexuality and procreation. In addition to trying for a baby with Brendan, Barbs has an affair with Grant Steel, in which she insists on double contraception – condoms and cap – either because, as she says, she does not want to 'trap' him or because she is socially ashamed of the relationship: he is thirteen years her junior and her friend Alice's son. Alice herself, twenty-six years before, avoided being trapped in the role of a teenage single mother by having Grant adopted. Another solution is chosen by Colette, the partner of Alice's brother Davie, Barbs's estranged husband: she decides to have her pregnancy terminated without consulting Davie. (Colette, incidentally, is even younger than Grant, while Davie is older than Barbs; but age difference in this case is gendered in accordance with social norms for sexual contact, and therefore not perceived as objectionable.) What the cases of Barbs, young Alice and Colette have in common is that the women have no full control over their pregnancies, and the biological fathers' role ends with insemination. This contrasts with middle-aged Alice's situation: she is now happily married with two daughters. The only responsible procreative partnership in the play, then, takes the form of marriage.

In addition to examining various heterosexual relationships, *Perfect Days* also touches on homosexuality, through the character of Brendan. Barbs at one point tells Brendan that he is 'totally a complete Nelly cliché'; he agrees, but suggests that this is one way of coping with the dual masculine myth of No Mean City and immigrant Irish Catholicism with which he grew up. Playing a role to perfection can be a form of parodic subversion. It does not, however, protect Brendan from overt homophobia, with which he is confronted more than once.

Both sexuality and everyday life in *Perfect Days* involve paying considerable attention to the beauty (or otherwise) of male and female bodies. Adjectives such as *gorgeous*, *handsome*, *attractive* recur in the stage directions as well as the dialogue. Good looks seem to be the central factor in selecting sexual partners. A positive attitude to the body and body care permeates the play. Barbs's being a celebrity hairdresser is particularly relevant in this context. The very first scene shows her cutting Alice's hair, and while her instructions to Alice might sound excessive ('just lift with the heel of your hand, roughen it up, just to give rootlift, then either a touch of wax, or – better – the totiest drop of freeze and shine

rubbed on your fingertips'), the focus is on the pleasure both of them derive from a good cut. Brendan first meets his partner, Cameron Binnie, the future father of Barbs's baby, in her salon, where Cameron has been sent by Barbs's mother, Sadie, as a 'birthday strip-pogram'. Again, the play does not emphasise the potentially demeaning character of stripping for a living, but the pleasure involved: the pleasure which Sadie hopes to provide, and which Barbs fails to get but Brendan does. The play casually shows, but does not critically explore, the ways in which gender constraints are inscribed on the body. Likewise, bodily disorders are not ignored but marginalised: thus, Brendan's and Cameron's AIDS tests are negative; and bulimia is distanced by being mentioned in a report about a Swedish princess in a women's magazine.

In summary, aspects of sexuality and the gendered body dealt with in *Perfect Days* range from heterosexual and homosexual desire to contraception and from the production and perception of gendered bodies to body care. In the following survey of texts, again the treatment of three groups of issues will be examined: male heterosexual bodies, homosexuality and female celibacy. (Celibacy is not an issue in *Perfect Days*, but plays a role in a number of other texts.)

The heterosexual male gaze at women's bodies has been much discussed by feminist critics. There is also a heterosexual female gaze at men's bodies, but unlike the male gaze, this does not usually express the gazer's social or sexual power. On the contrary, the female gaze can serve to confirm male power. This becomes particularly clear in texts from the interwar period. For Muir's Annie Ritchie, men's hirsuteness symbolises the devil, of whom she is afraid, and the devil is inextricably linked with sexuality. In Mitchison's *We Have Been Warned* (1935), the only parts of Idris Pritchard's body which Dione Galton explicitly remembers after he has raped her – the rape itself is not described in the published version – are 'his cruel hairy legs, his sharp knees'. In Carswell's *Open the Door!*, Joanna's pre-adolescent awareness of sexuality is likewise connected with male body hair, which she perceives 'with a pang of delicious horror'. As an adult, she discovers male beauty in Mario Rasponi, but his beauty involves power: 'Beautiful he was – fine – gem-like. Yet for all his delicate, glittering quality, more male than any other man she had yet seen.' In Muir's *Imagined Corners*, Elizabeth feels physically attracted by features of Hector's body such as 'the strength of his neck and shoulders', a strength which helps her to act the submissive wife. Erif Der's long look at Tarrik in the first part of Mitchison's *The Corn King and the Spring Queen* ('his strong, bare arms that had held her so firmly and yet so softly, and the dark curly hair in his armpits that smelt of hay and summer and sun') is related to her growing uneasiness about her magicking Tarrik – in other words, to a withdrawal of female power.

One of the rare instances of a woman's look signalling power over a man occurs in Mitchison's *The Bull Calves*, in William's tale of his life among American Indians. When he returns to his Indian wife from a ceremony in which her people have pierced his ears, 'she looked on; her eyes flicked at me the way a snake's tongue flicks. I saw she had known all the time and I accepted it, for there was nothing else to do.' Ohnawiyo's dominant position in this marriage corresponds with her aggressive-seeming glance at William's body. Similarly, when in Kay's *Trumpet* journalist Sophie Stones imagines Colman Moody's body ('I go over and over Colman in my mind. Strip him bare. Picture his back completely bare, his arse, his thighs, the inside of his thighs, his balls, his cock. All of him.'), this forms part of her attempt to retain her sense of superiority over him.

A more ambiguous case of imagining can be found in Mitchison's *Lobsters on the Agenda*. Young forester Roddy MacRimmon, who has been wrongly accused of being the father of

an illegitimate child, asks Kate Snow for her advice. On reading the letter he has received from the mother's lawyers, Kate feels as if 'she had suddenly seen Roddy stripped: stripped and handsome'. Roddy is present in this scene; his body, however, is distanced by the fact that while thinking of it she looks at the letter rather than at him. Kate is Roddy's social and situational superior, but her superiority does not translate itself into a gaze proper. In Glover's *The Bubble Boy* (1981), where the immune-deficient teenage protagonist, living as he does in a sterile bubble with constant monitoring and no privacy, cannot escape the gaze of the three doctors who look after him, it is the one woman doctor, Una, who realises how much he hates 'being gawped at', and tries to show respect for his body. Male bodies can thus be the site of overt or covert male superiority, but also – particularly in texts from the second half of the twentieth century – of a negotiation of more flexible female and male subject positions.

Homosexuality is explored in some detail by Mitchison and Kay. If we follow Michel Foucault's famous distinction between homosexual acts and 'the homosexual' as a type of person, then Mitchison's early, historical novels, such as *The Corn King and the Spring Queen* and *The Blood of the Martyrs* (1939), include references to (male) homosexual acts but – appropriately from a historical point of view – not to homosexuals as a category. The category is examined most obviously in the late science-fiction novel *Solution Three*, which creates a world in which homosexuality has been made mandatory as a means of population control, children being produced by cloning. With the adoption of Solution Three, overt human aggression has dropped. But the few remaining heterosexuals – 'deviants' – are subjected to massive pressure in the form of social disadvantages and humiliations. Towards the end of the novel, Solution Four, an acceptance of the need for difference, seems in sight. *Solution Three* can be read as a role-reversal novel; however, Sarah Lefanu has argued convincingly in 'Difference and Sexual Politics in Naomi Mitchison's *Solution Three*', in Jane L. Donawerth and Carol A. Kolmerten's *Utopian and Science Fiction by Women* (1994) that its main theme is not sexuality but the possibility or impossibility of a utopian state.

While Mitchison's most extensive exploration of homosexuality is set in the future, Kay (the youngest of the seven authors) focuses on the present. Her plays are particularly pertinent here, since the novel *Trumpet* foregrounds the social constructedness of gender rather than sexuality. *Chiaroscuro* (1986) deals with lesbianism in the context of 'race'. Four black women discuss racism and concepts of blackness, and the double difference involved in being black and a lesbian. The example of Yomi, who is black and homophobic, illustrates the complexities of marginalisation and oppression. The play is much concerned with naming and categorisation, and shows that names can be both restrictive (as in Opal's question: 'I've gone through my life taking on new things. Now all of a sudden I'm a black lesbian? What is that?') and liberating (as in Opal's demand: 'tell me what do you call her / a woman who loves another like her'). Kay's *Twice Over* (1988) is concerned with lesbianism and age. Cora and Maeve spent many years together without coming out. After Cora's death, her grand-daughter Evaki reads her papers and finds out about Maeve. Evaki and her friend Sharon are especially shocked by the idea of post-menopausal lesbianism: 'Queer grannies. What a laugh. Can you imagine two wrinkled up old ladies doing it together?' As in *Chiaroscuro* (and, of course, as in many postcolonial texts), marginality has several dimensions: in addition to sexuality and age, 'race' and ethnicity play a role, since Maeve is Irish and Evaki black. Characters cannot be defined by their sexuality alone.

In her famous essay, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence' in *Signs* (1980), Adrienne Rich argues that (female) homosexuality is not a discrete category but

part of what she calls the lesbian continuum, which includes all forms of female bonding. This concept is useful for interpreting texts such as Muir's *Imagined Corners*. When Elise takes Elizabeth to southern France at the end of the novel, after the breakdown of Elizabeth's marriage, a relationship other than friendship is vaguely suggested by Elise's reflection that she is returning home 'with a brand-new daughter, or sister, or wife, or whatever it was, having carried her off like a second Lochinvar', and by her friend Ilya's unanswered question: 'Well, my dear Elise, you have run away with her, you say? Have you then given up men?' It may be appropriate to regard Elise and Elizabeth as belonging to a lesbian continuum, rather than attempt to label their (possible future) sexuality. A different kind of continuum can be found in Lochhead's *Dracula*: Jennifer Harvie has suggested in 'Desire and Difference in Liz Lochhead's *Dracula*', in *Essays in Theatre* (1993), that in his relationship with Jonathan, the Count can be interpreted as homosexual or bisexual, and his 'demonic' sexuality is also closely linked with that of women. Sexualities in this text slide into one another.

The issue of female celibacy, finally, tends to be marginalised both in creative writing and in literary criticism. Celibates occur most frequently in texts by older writers – not surprisingly, given the way in which the social perception of women's sexuality has changed between 1920 and the present. Celibacy can be very differently evaluated from spinsterhood: for instance, in Muir's *Mrs Ritchie*, Annie perceives celibacy as spiritually desirable but spinsterhood as a social disgrace. Ellen in Carswell's *The Camomile* commits herself to spinsterhood but not necessarily to celibacy. Love-starved Edie in Stewart's *Towards Evening* (1975) is happy with celibacy but would have preferred marriage to spinsterhood.

Celibacy can be chosen or (more rarely) imposed. Among the choosers are Sarah Annie in *Mrs Ritchie* and Kate Snow in Mitchison's *Lobsters on the Agenda*. The chorus's unheeded advice to women in Lochhead's *Medea* is: 'the best hope for us? / celibacy'. Those who have celibacy imposed on them by circumstance include Rachel, Lady Grange, in Glover's *The Straw Chair*, through her exile on St Kilda, and minor characters such as Mrs Taylor in Mitchison's *We Have Been Warned*, who is simply unaware of other methods of birth control. For a considerable number of characters, from Sarah Murray in Muir's *Imagined Corners* to Peggy Taylor in Stewart's *Kind Milly* (1978), celibacy is a fact in no need of an explanation.

A few of the celibates are stereotypical 'old maids'. For instance, the Misses Carnegie in *Mrs Ritchie* seem to be objects of contempt not only for Annie but also for the narrator, who sneers at them with remarks such as 'Miss Julia's maternal duties, unhappily incapable of any but vicarious fulfilment, were supplied by the care of her Sunday-school class.' More frequently, however, celibates are powerful figures: self-assured, like Kate Snow and Peggy Taylor, or both disturbed and disturbing, like Miss Hepburn in Carswell's *The Camomile*. Miss Hepburn is prone to sudden rages and eventually goes mad, but she is also an inspiring English teacher who recognises where Ellen's true vocation lies, and encourages her strongly to write. Critics have mostly fought shy of celibacy as a source of female power, preferring to discuss other characters' multifarious sexual activities and to define celibacy as a lack. Among the various aspects of gender, this seems one of the most neglected.

In this chapter the multiplicity of forms which gender takes in novels and plays by seven twentieth-century women writers has been surveyed. Two of these writers, namely Lochhead and Kay, are also notable poets, and their poetry addresses gender themes in a vivid and striking manner. In the field of fiction and drama, many more canonical authors could have been discussed. In fiction, relevant names range from Nan Shepherd, Jessie Kesson and of course Muriel Spark, to a younger generation among whose best-known

representatives are Janice Galloway and A. L. Kennedy. In drama, authors such as Joan Ure, Marcella Evaristi and Rona Munro come to mind. The seven novelists and dramatists included here constitute a limited selection from a very wide field.

Inevitably, in this survey many aspects of gender have only been mentioned very briefly, or have been tacitly subsumed under related themes. The concern has not been to produce a grand narrative of gender from Carswell to Kay. In fact, from one point of view it can be argued that the texts analysed have little in common apart from the frequency of female protagonists and gynocentric perspectives in the context of patriarchal societies. More positively phrased, what becomes clear in this chapter is the sheer range not only of aspects of gender, but also of concrete manifestations of these aspects. The texts respond to patriarchy and androcentrism in divergent ways, constructing a variety of viable (and of unviable) subject positions for women and men. Femininities and masculinities, sexualities and gendered bodies are conceptually as well as grammatically plural in the primary texts taken as a whole, though not necessarily in each individual text. While gender is central to most characters' sense of self, its meaning is negotiable, and a number of texts actually show the process of negotiation.

This is of course stating the obvious, since our current theoretical paradigms prescribe the fluidity of gender. It may therefore be appropriate to conclude on a different note. In the work of these Scottish women, gender is indeed negotiable; however, what some texts appear to seek is not the joy of negotiation but an end to it: a stable balance between differently gendered characters, or between different strands of gendering within one character. Such a quest is ultimately utopian or dystopian; but then so is the notion of negotiation as pleasure.

Further reading

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The Autobiography in Scottish Gaelic

Meg Bateman

Many readers will be disappointed on first reading autobiographies in Gaelic if they anticipate material which is revealing of both the physical circumstances and the private, imaginative lives of their authors. While Gaelic autobiographies abound in the former detail, it is necessary to go to works of fiction for the latter. It would seem that just when the author of an autobiography might have something personal to say, the topic is quickly passed over, for the very reason that, in being personal, it is somehow irrelevant to the story of the general community. Christine Laennec has identified the subject of the Gaelic autobiography not as the author, but the author's community. She shows how European and American autobiographies, such as St Augustine's *Confessions* or Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, have led us to expect to be privy to the development and transformation of a remarkable individual through remarkable times. Because of the difference in emphasis in Gaelic autobiography, however, where the author is representative of, rather than exceptional to, the community, she suggests that such autobiography (both in Ireland and Scotland) should be identified as a sub-genre of autobiography proper.

The most marked example of the author side-stepping himself in such a way is *Buth Ailig* (Alec's Shop, 1998) by Dòmhnall Iain MacGillEathain. There, amid a host of witticisms made by members of the community and descriptions of the way things were done, the author is little more than a participating character, the eye that saw and the mind that remembered. There are certainly many examples of personal journeys in Gaelic literature. They exist in poetry, and also in traditional tales if a Jungian analysis is permitted (for example, the mythic growth of the hero who undergoes repeated trials, often involving burial and rebirth, before he eventually triumphs over life's difficulties). Poetry in the modern idiom is of course redolent with personal crisis and resolution, religious poetry often describes a process of personal transformation, and traditional song gives expression to the most intense of private emotion. So why does the Gaelic autobiography so studiously avoid the personal?

The answers lie both outside and within Gaelic culture. The need for autobiographies was observed from the outside and stimulated and financed by bodies who wanted to have the traditional way of life documented. This was particularly true in Ireland, where the *Gaeltacht* idyll formed part of the national identity and where reading matter in Irish was required for schools. The authors were working in the relatively new medium of written prose, and the agenda was not their own. Some had no previous literary experience and had neither the desire to make the private public, nor saw its relevance. Song was the

proper medium for expressing the personal and change in lifestyle was the matter in hand, not human emotion, which is seen as a constant, unchanging in its range of impact from generation to generation. It is important, too, to understand that *seanchas*, the conversational telling of anecdotes and stories with the explicit purpose of entertaining, is the general basis of the Gaelic autobiography. This means that on the page, tale follows tale with no analysis, introspection or even evocation of atmosphere. This can also be baffling to the reader coming to Gaelic autobiography with expectations of autobiography proper.

There are some dozen autobiographies written in Scottish Gaelic, and these can be categorised depending on whether they were recorded orally, or written by the author or by proxy, and whether they encompass entire lives or only the significant stages. The first distinction is much more than technical: the process of production defines whether the texture of the work is the rhythm of colloquial speech or polished sentences. It also influences the overall structure.

Our earliest Gaelic autobiography, *Saoghal an Treobhaiche* (The Ploughman's Life), was recorded by Aonghas Mac 'Ill Fhialain (Angus MacLellan) from S. Uist around 1960 and transcribed and translated by John Lorne Campbell as *The Furrow behind Me* (1961). The circumstances of Angus's life (1869–1966) emerge: the vulnerability of cotters who dare not complain if their landlords grazed the very land for which they were paying rent; land-hunger before the 1886 Act; typhus fever and poverty; the world of hiring fairs and bothies on the mainland, and his return to Uist, where his family eventually secured land in 1907. These are the details that may interest us today, but it should be noted that for Angus, the impetus behind each section is not so much the imparting of detail as the shaping of a humorous anecdote. His is not to analyse or demonstrate; his is the art of the storyteller, to present and entertain. The stories are couched in dialogue and action: characters emerge from their quick-fire speech rather than from description of their personalities or emotions. The stories are free flowing, very often given focus by some *bon mot*, a farcical situation, or the comeuppance of the vain. It may be interesting to consider the type of personality produced by Gaelic society. We infer from Angus's accounts that he was a skilful worker, well respected by his employers; he was dignified, and resented dishonesty in others or being exploited himself; he sided with the poor (as illustrated by his warning of the poachers he was meant to catch) and he avoided confrontational situations. His lack of awareness of the overall forces that were shaping his life may surprise us today, but intellectual analysis is not what lies behind *seanchas*; the intellectual endeavour was in remembering the detail and the skill at reduplicating dialogue.

It is also the skill of the storyteller, rather than the desire to record a fast-changing way of life, that shapes *Cailleach an Deacoin* (The Deacon's Wife, 1979), transcribed by Fionnlagh MacLeòid from recordings made of Murchadh MacMhathain. Indeed, in recounting something of his life, there is a distinct lack of veneration for the old ways – Murchadh's eye is for the comic. He describes the household on the Sabbath being like a concentration camp, and his father stopping his prayer mid-word to glare at a fidgeting child. He describes the cruelty of the little boys on their way to school, shinnying stones at hens, cats and dogs. He describes the stuff of folklore, the belief that a meteorite would appear when the herring entered the loch, and irreverently includes the quip made of an old woman seen seeking her share, 'Seo Dreug a' Sgadain a' tighinn' ('Here comes the Herring Meteorite'). He concludes the account of his youth by saying he would prefer to watch Bruce Forsyth than go back to the old days. His stage impersonations of *Cailleach an Deacoin* likewise sought out and savoured the comical in his society.

Suileabhan (Suilven, 1983) constitutes an account of the life of Iain MacLeòid (1889–1956) from Point, Lewis, whose nickname the book bears and which was ‘ghost-written’ by Calum MacFhearghais. MacFhearghais describes how he wrote the stories down in 1971, without the aid of a tape recorder, twenty years after he heard them from Suileabhan. Within the Gaelic tradition, this sort of memory is perfectly feasible and would seem to be supported by MacFhearghais’s 1983 statement:

S minig a chuala mi a ghàire air chùl mo mheanmna nuair a chuimhnichinn air na facail aige feir man a bhiodh iad a’ tighinn às a bheul.

(Often I heard his laughter at the back of my mind when I hit upon his words just as if they were coming out of his mouth.)

More so than in any other Gaelic autobiography, the stories are told about the subject himself in his energetic and self-destructive rush round the world. At fourteen he was drawn to the army for the sake of the smart uniform; later he worked on the Trans-Continental Railway in Canada, fished and trapped in Lake Manitoba, brought in the harvest on the prairie, worked the saw-mills in Labrador, became a down-and-out and a stone-breaker in Australia, a market gardener in Florida and a jailbird in Jacksonville before he returned to Lewis at forty-six to marry and live the happiest days of his life. Perhaps it is because these tales were told to friends that they are more revealing than autobiographies addressed an anonymous readership. *Suileabhan* specifically analyses his attitude to life and his resentment of anyone in authority as the result of a brutal schooling and an impoverished childhood. He describes how he has put his life in danger through drink, and how he turned his back on the promise of wealth and love in the Canadian wheat fields because of his longing for Lewis. However, these personal insights are only intermittent in what is primarily a portrait of a fluid community of migrant workers with a common need to make a living. There is camaraderie, a code of decency, and an etiquette for fighting and drinking. The language is oral, succinct and pithy, making its claim first and foremost on the visual imagination. Of stone-breaking in Australia he says,

Ma bha am biadh math, bha an obair cruaidh, agus cha robh idir a’ còrdadh ri luchd na mara a bha cleachdte ri oiteag fhionnar a’ chuain agus gluasad deic fiodha fon casan.

(If the food was good, the work was hard and did not accord at all with sailors used to the fresh sea breeze and a wooden deck moving below their feet.)

In stark contrast to the above oral autobiographies are those composed in writing to document a fast-changing way of life. Of these, the most interesting is *A’ Suathadh ri Iomadh Rubha* (Touching on Many Points/Rounding Many Headlands, 1973) by Aonghas Caimbeul, widely known as Am Puilean. The writing may be marred by an overtly schematic approach to structuring the detail, but it is shaped by a keen intelligence that constantly analyses Gaelic culture from within. His willingness to speak out is unusual in a Gaelic context; he is free from the reticence over opinions which leaves other autobiographies desperately bland (for example, Ealasaid Chaimbeul, *Air mo Chuairt* (On My Way, 1982) and Catriona NicNèill, *Mo Bhrògan Ùra* (My New Shoes, 1992)). Indeed, he describes the need for an independence of intellect in the name of humanity. Through a mixture of argument and humour, he criticises the foibles of his society and the tyranny of

school and church, which he fears have done irreparable damage to the cultural confidence of his people. He identifies how many bright children were ‘educated out’ of their culture:

Cha d’ fhuair mise leasan Gàidhlig sa sgoil riamh agus ’s e faireachadh a bha agad gun dh’ àlaich do chànan, d’ fhine is do dhualchas ann an treubhan ainreiteach, borb, aineolach agus ma bha dùil agad slighe shoirbheachail a dhèanamh san t-saoghal, gum b’ e do bhuanachd an ù-chuimhneachadh gu tur.

(I never got a single Gaelic lesson in school and you got the feeling that your language, your people and your culture were spawned among unruly, barbarous and ignorant tribes, and, if you intended making a success of life, it would be to your advantage to forget them completely.)

The education authorities, he says, presented Highland history as a process of civilising the Gael through anglicisation, and the demise of the Lordship of the Isles as the welcome end of the threat of Gaelic dominion in Scotland. He is critical of the Church’s obsession with sin:

’S ann a shaoileadh tu gun robh e [Sàtan] air imrich a thogail à uile cheàrnaidhean an t-saoghail, cho dripeil ’s a bha e cur a dhraoidheachd an gnìomh nar n-eileanan.

(You would think that Satan had deserted every other part of the world, so busy was he in our islands, putting his sorcery into action.)

He marvels at the number of Satan’s names and mocks the apparently arbitrary nature of the prohibitions concerning Sabbath-keeping.

Two autobiographies specifically handle the years of the Second World War. These are *Air Druim an Eich Sgiathaich* (Riding the Winged Horse, 1987) by Pòl Mac a’ Bhreatannaich (born Barra 1913), and *Fo Sgàil a’ Swastika* (In the Shadow of the Swastika, 1974) by Dòmhnall Iain MacDhòmhnail (born S. Uist 1919). A third book, *Luach na Saorsa* (The Price of Freedom, 1970), by Murchadh Moireach, takes the form of a diary. *Air Druim an Eich Sgiathaich* gives an account of a boy, desperate to see action before the war ends, who becomes a paratrooper dropped behind enemy lines and sees more than he would wish. The book is given shape by the events of the war, and its style is fast, vivid, and literary. There is much in the tone which is comparable to the other autobiographies: irony and humour, a tendency to move on quickly from tragedy, emotion described as that of the group rather than of the author, a deflection of attention from the self and of course from the author’s own acts of bravery. While Pòl saw the war as a paratrooper, Dòmhnall Iain MacDhòmhnail saw it as a prisoner. He describes a three-week forced march through Belgium and Holland, transportation by barge down the Rhine, stone-breaking and salt-mining. He describes what lay behind his numerous reckless attempts to escape:

Bha thu sealltainn le teicheadh gu robh spiorad na saorsa na bu luachmhoire na aon nì eile air talamh. Le teicheadh, bha thu, os cionn na h-uile, a’ dearbhadh dhut fhèin nach robh thu leagte ri bhith sàsaichte eadhon am braighdeanas comhfhurtail; gu robh de dhuinealas annad na dh’fhuiligeadh ainneart is cruadal air sgàth a’ cheartais.

(By escaping you were showing that the spirit of freedom was more precious than anything else on earth. By escaping, you were proving, above all to yourself, that you were not reconciled to

be content in captivity, however comfortable; that you were man enough to suffer tyranny and hardship for the sake of justice.)

He spends considerable time recounting funny incidents and witticisms among the prisoners, but unlike most of the other authors, he regularly makes reflective, even philosophical asides. He reflects on evil as a tree, growing in the centre of Europe, that needs to be rooted out before it spreads, and he asks if the war was ordained by the Devil or by God as a form of judgement. The language too is more figurative than other autobiographies. It is probably significant that Dòmhnall Iain was also a poet.

The final category of autobiography are those written to illustrate particular stages in people's lives. The earliest of these is Dùghall Bochanan's diary of his conversion, published outside this period in 1844. Tormod Calum Dòmhnallach recorded a medley of women's voices to give an account of the herring industry, *Clann-Nighean an Sgadam* (The Herring Girls, 1987). The breaks between individual informants are not marked, emphasising the communal nature of the experience, characterised as much by the fun of being away from home as by poor wages, pickle in cuts and biting winds. Aonghas Mac-a-Phì wrote *Cunnartan Cuain* (Sea Dangers, 1981), based on two shipwrecks in 1889 and 1943 off Duirinish in Skye. His great-grandfather was drowned in the first; from the wreck of the *Iurlana* from South America, his family and others received a welcome feed of corn beef and dehydrated mutton in the war years. Much detail of the people's life is included, and the accounts are full of drama and atmosphere. The models for this autobiography are adventure stories rather than *seanchas*.

In speaking of Irish *Gaeltacht* autobiographies, Gearóid Mac Eoin writes,

It is difficult to escape the impression that many people allowed their judgement of the literary value of these books to be influenced by their appreciation of their value as social documents and by nostalgia for a society which was passing away.

Are we to look at the Gaelic autobiographies as works of literature with all that that implies about artistry, self-conscious craftsmanship and self-reflexivity, or are they better analysed as ethnographies, local histories and memoranda, as pragmatic and expository prose? Arguments can be made on both sides, but it can be seen from the above that the best of the Gaelic 'autobiographies' express the best of the art of *seanchas* and the implicit values of Gaelic society. As an individual, representative of the community, the author is self-effacing and accepting of fate. A notion of personal tragedy does not seem to exist even in tragic circumstances. There is no sense of a unique individual being uniquely shaped by the vagaries of fate. This is an aspect of Romanticism by which Gaelic culture was largely untouched. Life is generally hard and it is the social duty of the individual to face it buoyantly. There is little of the reveling in poverty beloved of the writers of Irish autobiographies and ridiculed by Myles na gCopaleen in *An Béal Bocht* (The Poor Mouth). Meantime, another, and maybe the greatest, attribute of the genre is its record of the richness of the language in all its dialectal variation as spoken by a generation for whom Gaelic was the first language. Suileabhan describes himself being inexorably drawn to the unseen singer of a Gaelic song in the wheat of the Canadian prairie, and all the authors often return to the proverbs and songs of the language to express their strongest feeling.

There are novels and novellas in Gaelic, covering the same sort of *materia* as the autobiographies, but written resolutely in the third person, which deal with the imaginative aspect of that way of life so lacking in the autobiographies. The most outstanding example

is *Deireadh an Fhoghair* (The End of Autumn, 1979) by Tormod Caimbeul. The organic form of this masterpiece and its sinuous streams of consciousness allow it to produce a deeper and more integral understanding ofcrofting life than any autobiography with its emphasis on the social and the external. Other novels, such as Alasdair Caimbeul's *Am Fear Meadhanach* (The Man in the Middle, 1992), Tormod Calum Dòmhnallach's *An Sgàineadh* (The Rending, 1993), Màiri NicGumaraid's *Clann Iseabail* (Isabel's Family, 1993) and Aonghas Phàdraig Caimbeul's *An Oidhche mus do Sheòl Sinn* (The Night Before We Sailed, 2003) all deal very beautifully, in the guise of fiction, with the development of the individual. All give the impression of being, to some extent, autobiographical, but it would seem that the notion of writing personally and intensely about the self in Gaelic prose is antipathetic both to the medium and to Gaelic society.

Further reading

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Varieties of Voice and Changing Contexts: Robin Jenkins and Janice Galloway

Bernard Sellin

It is a sign of the vitality of modern Scottish literature that it is more difficult than ever to restrict it to neat definitions, categories or traditions. Instead we have individual voices expressing themselves with originality and growing self-confidence. Robin Jenkins and Janice Galloway are telling examples of such variety, writers who may not be typical figures but whose influence cannot be ignored. A strong commitment to the Scottish scene is not incompatible with a universality of themes and approach made all the more general as they find their roots in the moral conscience in Jenkins's case or in everyday experience in Galloway's.

Often regarded as a neglected writer, Robin Jenkins (1912–2005) strongly marked the contemporary literary scene. It is difficult to find a more constant author. His work covers the last fifty years, since the publication of his first novel, *So Gaily Sings the Lark*, in 1950. Few writers could compete with him not only in terms of production but also as regards seriousness of approach.

Born in 1912 in the small town of Flemington, near Cambuslang, John Robert Jenkins – his real name on his birth certificate – grew up in the tumultuous first half of the twentieth century, experiencing two world wars with acute sensitivity and a long, equally painful, economic depression in between. To some extent his father was a victim of the First World War: he did come back from war, but his health had been ruined and he died shortly after his return. Understandably, when the Second World War broke out Robin Jenkins was active among opponents to war. He became a conscientious objector and was to learn the meaning of determination, principles and values, a sense of moral rigour that he kept for the rest of his life. He had graduated from Glasgow University in 1936 and, after the war, resumed his position of teacher of English, something he was until retirement in 1972 and which he managed to combine with his ever-demanding absorption in his own writing. Between 1951 and 1974, he published, on average, one book every two years. In 1957, partly as a reaction against what he regarded as a deterioration in the social and cultural scene in Scotland, Jenkins went abroad and, for nearly eleven years, worked, mostly for the British Council, in Kabul (Afghanistan), Barcelona (Spain) and finally Sabah, Malaysia, then North Borneo. This was an opportunity to renew some of his themes, or at least to present them in a different context.

In interviews and several of his novels, he depicted his own reactions to the evolution of the modern world, a reaction marked by a growing sense of alienation, if not despair. In

this respect, it is difficult to exaggerate the influence of his early years. He himself has maintained that personality is already fixed by the age of seven or ten. The rest of life would then be just a confirmation, an expansion or a remodelling of features acquired in early years. For the writer, childhood and adolescence seem to have remained essential formative periods which were to produce a long-lasting interest in a few recurrent themes, among which are the intensity of family relationships, the vulnerability of children, the degrading aspect of poverty. These were supplemented by the encroaching materialism of the modern world, the absence of any satisfactory spiritual provision, and the frequent triumph of injustice and evil over merit and good intentions.

If there is a legitimate desire to classify literature and confine authors within categories, schools or traditions, then Jenkins must offer a hard case. 'The serious novelist in Scotland is very much on his own,' he once wrote, meaning that there is a lack of interest in serious writing among readers. We could also add that Jenkins seems very much on his own in modern fiction so difficult is it to connect him to any predecessor or contemporary writer, or to place him within any established literary tradition. He showed little interest in poetry. He came too late to be linked to the Scottish Literary Renaissance, though his life overlapped MacDiarmid's and Gunn's. He never tried to become the mouthpiece of a literary revival or express his political commitment. He showed unusual reluctance to state his views publicly and adopted Flaubert's position on the invisibility of the author. But he provides an essential link between a writer like George Douglas Brown and the present literary scene, extending, as it were, the anti-Kailyard current of looking truthfully at society, denouncing the prejudices of self and community alike and exposing the delusions of grandeur or religion. A dark, ironic author, his work might also be viewed in an international context which includes Graham Greene and William Golding in England, François Mauriac in France and perhaps Saul Bellow in the United States. All of these are haunted by the permanence of evil, the anxieties of conscience and the difficulties of redemption. As several critics have already underlined, although Jenkins is not a believer, most of his books have a religious aura which already appears in some of their very titles: *The Missionaries* (1957), *Some Kind of Grace* (1960), *The Holy Tree* (1969), *The Thistle and the Grail* (1954), *A Toast to the Lord* (1972). In many of them the impossibility of believing in any established church or god is made conspicuous and clashes with the equally pressing demand for spirituality in a world that is dramatically deprived of values such as charity, love, understanding and justice. In Jenkins's bleak world, fraud, arrogance and materialism often triumph over innocence, merit and fragility. Hence sharp variations in tone and method, combining humour and tragedy, hope and pessimism, mimesis and distortions of reality.

It is tempting to divide his work into three main phases, with the foreign novels representing a break in the continuity of the Scottish inspiration. However, this division is more convenient than satisfactory, as the last period does not really show any striking renewal of style, theme or technique, although the early novels seem to underline social pressures more clearly than the later ones. The foreign books make up a part which is easier to isolate and define, although their settings include countries as different as Spain, Malaysia and Afghanistan. Doubtless, this group of eight novels and one collection of short stories has been neglected by critics presumably because they did not find the same echoes in Scotland as the rest of the work. Only one of them has been reissued so far, *Dust on the Paw* (1961) – in 1986.

In many ways, these books could be taken as an extension of Jenkins's personal position, working abroad and writing about the experience. They also reflect his desire to establish

some distance between himself and Scotland at a time when he was increasingly dissatisfied with the evolution of society and the reaction of his own compatriots. On the one hand, he felt attraction and even pride for his country of origin. He insisted on the variety of cultural, social, linguistic features available to the novelist in Scotland, but, on the other hand, he could not conceal his sense of the limitations of the narrowness of the Scottish scene and a certain parochialism. Leaving Scotland and writing about foreign situations provided an opportunity to enter new territories and renew his themes, although, in the end, he came to realise that his travels were a mistake. 'I should have stayed at home and written more about Scotland,' he said later. 'You must write about the people you know best, and they are the ones you were born and brought up with.'

Few of the foreign books entirely break the Scottish connection since the expatriate Scot is usually at the core of the plot, providing either comedy or tensions when he attempts to adjust to a foreign culture. This he seldom understands, but, in the end, it serves as an eye-opener, when the character or the reader becomes aware of the limitations and prejudices which, by contrast, afflict European culture. The characteristic themes of the innocence of children, the perils of involvement, the humiliations of poverty, are easily transferred to this foreign setting. In the end, those who emerge with the greatest dignity are the characters who honestly try to bridge the cultural gap between east and west without any excessive idealism.

Jenkins's work is notoriously difficult to discuss as a whole, and so far most critics have found it easier to examine the novels separately. However, there is no doubt that variety of tone, of settings, of situations, even period, does not prevent a remarkable homogeneity of presentation.

Although he started writing after the Second World War, when experimental fiction was already popular, his approach is definitely traditional, avoiding narrative disruptions, complex time patterns or narratorial inventiveness. In terms of technique of presentation, his most innovative work remains *Fergus Lamont* (1979). This embraces many of the realities of twentieth-century Scotland and uses a double structure which enables the repented sinner to express himself and make allowance for the selfish arrogance of the first part of his life. The unreliable first-person narrator is complemented by the more balanced voice of the old man writing his memoirs, years after the events depicted. As is often the case with Jenkins, the novel ends ambiguously with a number of contradictory statements and situations which leave the reader in a state of perplexity. The book also gives substance to one of his characteristic figures, the arrogant selfish ruffian deprived of spiritual values and thus an easy target for the author's irony, a figure of speech which Jenkins favours, as it suits the complexities of human situations and the contradictions inherent in human life. Irony is also an apt mode of representation for two of his favourite human types: the innocent adult blinded by his own generosity – *The Changeling* (1958), *A Figure of Fun* (1974) – and the fraud – *A Very Scotch Affair* (1968), *Fergus Lamont* (1979). In either case, the contradictions inherent in irony are paralleled by the clashes between action and result, or appearance and reality.

A frequently used method of composition is to set the hero/heroine within a conflicting network of disagreement. Thus opposition becomes one of the main springs of plot construction and serves to underline the ambiguities and contradictions of human behaviour. Resorting frequently to the technique of multiple perspective and statements which tend to negate one another, Jenkins often leaves his reader, if not in the dark, at least in a state of uncertainty, with no clear moral conclusion. This could be applied to the endings of two of his best books, *The Cone-Gatherers* (1955) and *Fergus Lamont* (1979). In both of them,

hope and tragedy are mixed. Life is like that, Jenkins suggests. It does not provide comments or definite conclusions.

Although Jenkins writes in a realistic tradition of mimetic representation, this is complemented either by linguistic distortions or symbolic expansion. In the first case, it is not uncommon for a realistic description to be transformed into a surreal passage with a nightmarish quality when it comes to depicting the human world afflicted with, for example, poverty and spiritual vacuum. The effect is to make an ordinary scene suddenly menacing or distant, unrecognisable by the common standards of everyday life. An example would be the description of the Curdie family on their visit to their son at Rothesay in *The Changeling*. On another level, many of his plots are grafted on a symbolic thread which not only gives them coherence and continuity but often enhances the spiritual dimension or message. *The Missionaries* (1957) draws from the myth of Jason and the Argonauts. *The Thistle and the Grail* (1954) is an obvious ironic reference to the Holy Grail. In *A Very Scotch Affair* (1968) the unifying symbol is a small silver eagle stolen by the hero from a German uniform, which acts as a reminder of guilt.

Although many of Jenkins's books are dark, ending tragically, they are not devoid of humour. It is as if the author was also enjoying himself in the exposition of human follies. This is noticeable in some of his later books such as *Poor Angus* (2000) or *Childish Things* (2001), and the former reasserts that humour and tragedy are not necessarily incompatible, as several modern Scottish films also exemplify.

Janice Galloway's fiction – which is still in its early stage – is not as dark as Jenkins's although the theme of her first novel, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (1989), is a woman's depression following her companion's sudden death. Her second novel, *Foreign Parts*, was published in 1994. To these must be added, among various publications, a play, two collections of short stories, *Blood* (1991) and *Where You Find It* (1996), as well as a third novel, *Clara* (2002).

She shares with Jenkins the same blending of humour and tension, but her preoccupations and manner are closer to those of A. L. Kennedy or Alasdair Gray. She belongs to another generation, is aware of her position as a female writer and especially shows interest for the most innovative techniques of presentation, techniques which become appropriate to render the sense of fragmentation and the difficulties of adjusting to the modern world. Her originality is another sign of the current richness of Scottish literature, moving confidently towards unknown territories and unfettered by national identity.

When it came out in 1989, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* provoked great interest in Scotland and outside. It was not the subject, depression, in itself that appeared original, so much as the manner in which this was depicted. The book opens on a sentence 'I watch myself from the corner of the room', and this is indeed the sense that the book leaves: an intense, obsessive, feverish self-examination in which past and present intersect in a complex way as the heroine, Joy Stone, a school teacher, painfully plunges into the black pit of depression after her lover's accidental death before emerging from it in order to reconstruct herself and her own life.

From the opening page to the last, in which Joy is now seen watching the lights inside her flat, the book suggests the experience of a woman who is suddenly left on her own. (Her companion dies; her parents are dead; her best friend is away; her sister is much older and has little in common with her.) She can only question her own identity and watch herself losing grip over the surrounding world in spite of her attempts at order and neatness – for example her compulsion to make lists – in striking contrast with the erratic typographical presentation of much of the narrative.

To some extent the reader is also invited to reconstruct the context since information is scattered throughout the book in accordance with the random selectivity of consciousness, more than the usual order associated with an omniscient narrator. Galloway's deceptively neutral descriptive style (in this novel at least) excels in rendering the dissociation of personality from its human and physical surrounding and the follies of many social norms. This applies particularly to the routine practice of psychiatric institutions in passages which sometimes seem to parody the dialogues of the theatre of the absurd.

Galloway's second novel, *Foreign Parts*, shows the same high standards as the first, bearing evidence of the confidence of a Scottish author who can now write about the human experience in general with few references to Scotland. As in *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, individual identity seems more important than national characteristics. Driving along the roads of Normandy and the Loire valley, two women in their late thirties, are keen to discover the celebrated sites of northern France, but, in one sense, the book ends up by negating its very subject, the modern craze for sightseeing and holidays abroad. Scattered extracts from a tourist guide offer an ironic comment on Cassie's and Rona's holiday by bringing out the artificiality and superficiality of the tourist experience while questioning the meaning of their adventure. Cassie and Rona, Rona and Cassie: two women, two friends, deceptively presented as if they were interchangeable, away from home and the safety of known territories. As one of them states, 'I always think you can find out a lot about yourself away from home.' And home is also the focus of the opening page of the novel: a young girl, Cassie, running home, escaping from her mother's vigilance in an act of independence which is soon extended by two major discoveries – a boy's nudity and the news of her father's death. The main narrative, the journey, can be read as a metaphor of discovery and independence. Two often ineffectual women, far away from their home city, in a country with strange driving and eating habits, whose language they don't master. Does this trip make sense? The end is more positive than the doubts expressed at the beginning suggest. As the last scene indicates, laughter, assertiveness, communication and better understanding between the two friends now prevail. This progress is also suggested in the final metaphor of skiffers skimming lightly on the surface of water and thus defying gravity and loss. In the meantime, many questions have been asked and partly answered: about women's independence and capacity to manage by themselves, the value of art and architecture, the past, the perception of history, gender relations.

Although it is set in a present which can be defined, the narrative finds it very difficult to avoid a backward movement in time, thus mingling several layers of experience and providing a structure of echoes and contrasts which makes for the depth of the novel. This is achieved by Cassie's reviewing of her past holidays and former lovers, apparently as she goes through an album of photographs representing stages of her life from the age of seventeen to her late thirties. This creates a double structure which enables Galloway to present both past and present simultaneously, in a way reminiscent of *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, and suggest the evolution of personality.

Galloway's latest novel, *Clara* (2002), confirms her attraction for variety of themes and European culture in general. Her longest book to date was the product of some six years of research and writing. It is also her first attempt at some form of historical fiction, a fictionalised account of the life of the talented pianist and composer Clara Schumann, often neglected in the shadow of her famous husband, Robert. Although the choice may appear unexpected, there were reasons to draw Galloway to the story: love of music, a powerful theme of triumphant love in a context of oppositions and rejections, the challenge of bringing to life a wide range of characters within the constraints of the known facts of

history, the complex unbalanced personality of Robert Schumann, the confrontation between art and everyday realities, the perception of gender in the artistic field. These are some of the main lines of a novel dominated by the admirable figure of its heroine, whose strength and determination contrast with the weaker personality of her husband. At the same time, the book is told in a more traditional way than its predecessors, avoids experimental excess, and consequently confirms Galloway's rejection of stereotypes.

Not only do Robin Jenkins and Janice Galloway belong to different generations but their works also enable us to measure the evolution, flexibility and richness of modern Scottish fiction. Clearly, the familiar themes of the pressure of religion, the handicaps of poverty or the obsession of the Scottish identity are being superseded by more private questionings, on women's positions in society especially. Answering, as it were, Jenkins's complaint about the limitations of the Scottish scene, Galloway faces European culture confidently and draws from its diversity new inspiration and insights. They have in common the same interest in themes of loneliness and survival but, although both of them insist on endurance and the resources of the human mind in this struggle for survival, Jenkins's views may be bleaker and more ironic. With him determination is not a guarantee for success. Both represent two distinguished individual voices in modern Scottish fiction.

Further reading

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Breaking Boundaries: From Modern to Contemporary in Scottish Fiction

Douglas Gifford

Scottish fiction has been a highly successful and vital genre of Scottish literature since 1945, and certainly the most prolific and controversial. The fiction can very broadly be separated into two groups. In the immediately post-war period before 1980, writers tend overall to be deeply pessimistic and ironic regarding earlier romanticisation and distortion of Scotland's culture and history. After 1980, and while still containing a great deal of urban-centred dystopian scepticism, the fiction attempts a more positive vision of Scotland, increasingly working in new genres, mingling these in a determined contemporary eclecticism which simultaneously exploits older Scottish cultural and fictional traditions and breaks with them. It is tempting to see this change in confidence as somehow related to the 1979 Devolution referendum and the growing assertion of Scottish identity and its varieties that emerged almost in defiance of that quasi-democratic debacle. With this new confidence, Scottish fiction approached the millennium as a standard bearer for Scottish culture, arguably even supplying the most successful explorations of changing Scottish identities, in a rich variety of voices and genres. The new complexities in novelistic vision relate dynamically to the changes taking place in Scottish society at large, not only reacting to them, but influencing the framework of thought in which they took place.

This chapter will therefore consider the ways that the boundaries broken by Scottish fiction in the period under discussion reflect the breaking of wider boundaries and categories of received opinion in the culture itself. It will focus on two main things: outstanding achievements in some of the most interesting areas and sub-genres in which Scottish fiction has developed in the last fifty years, and some remarkable practitioners, relating their work to a new vision of the potential of both Scotland and its literature. The casual reader of modern Scottish fiction might well think that its exceptional achievements are found in its recurrent dystopian visions of its urban darkness, broken lives and criminality. The genres of the crime novel and the novel of multiple deprivation, drug abuse and existential despair, exemplified particularly in the fiction of Ian Rankin and Irvine Welsh respectively, have dominated media attention and readership. This has too often obscured the recognition that in the last few decades Scottish fiction has developed a huge range of voices and narratives which represent a similar range of diverse Scottish and international experience. It is easy to lose sight of this very diversity. Simple broad categorisations of the boundaries of Scotland and within Scottish society are unsustainable. To comprehend the range and change of post-war Scottish fiction necessitates a preliminary consideration of what happened to Scottish culture after the Second World War.

The change after 1945 from the values of Scottish writers of the period 1920–40, which has been called the modern Scottish Renaissance, is dramatic. The war made ideas of racial purity and the quest for roots seem untenable, given the appalling conclusions they had led to in Nazi Germany. Besides, with the majority of Scotland's population enduring in the increasingly depressed Lowlands with a rapidly eroding industrial base, there seemed small consolation and ironic irrelevance in notions of essential value and ultimate identity in remote Highland landscape, community and culture. A revolution in creative vision was required to match the cataclysmic changes revealed and brought about by war. Although several of the great Renaissance writers worked well into the post-war period, writers like Neil Gunn and Eric Linklater increasingly withdrew to a personal and metaphysical subject matter disconnected from post-war Scotland, in novels like *The Other Landscape* (1954) and *A Terrible Freedom* (1966) respectively. A few writers endeavored to continue the epic Renaissance tradition, in which Scotland's enduring qualities were found in symbolic central figures. In Naomi Mitchison's *The Bull Calves* (1947), for example, her post-war re-affirmation of identity with Scotland was presented through her fictional eighteenth-century and post-Culloden heroine-ancestor, Kirstie Haldane. A small, but significant, group of writers, including Ian Niall, David Toulmin, David Kerr Cameron, and more recently Christopher Rush, Colin Mackay, and, outstandingly, George Mackay Brown (considered later) continued to celebrate rural tradition.

These writers worked against the grain of post-war disillusion, however. Fionn MacColla's *And The Cock Crew* (1945) starkly rejected rural idealism and historical romanticisation. Edward Gaitens's *Dance of the Apprentices* (1948) became a dance of misery and death for its idealistic young protagonist of slum Glasgow, yearning for green places. J. F. Hendry's darkly poetic *Ferniebrae* (1947) presented a poignant evocation of Glasgow decline in its transformation of Springburn from green place to the birthplace of the world's railway locomotives. As the post-Depression, post-Holocaust world had changed and was blacker and bleaker than had been imagined, so Scottish writers developed a new bleak vision in which civilised order was seen as corroded. Galt, Hogg and Douglas Brown had been fore-runners of such desperate bitter insight, but, where often their focus was on the individual, now the very idea of settled society was in question.

This bleakness dominated much Scottish fiction in the next two decades. In 1947 Dorothy Haynes anticipated the ironies of Robin Jenkins's treatment of desolate small towns in *Winter's Traces*. More generally, the post-war mood of disillusion with Scotland's old order was summed up in J. D. Scott's *The End of an Old Song* (1954) and James Kennaway's *Household Ghosts* (1961), examining familial and sexual betrayal among Scottish landed gentry, ancient family disgraces haunting the present. Representatives of traditional Scottish respectability were now fair game in the hunt for scapegoats for Scotland's and, by implication, humanity's failures, as in Kennaway's earlier account of a declining Scottish military tradition, *Tunes of Glory* (1956). The sense of decline was reinforced by changes in the economic management and ownership of much of Scottish industry. After the First World War, although there were higher casualties than in the Second, there had been higher in-migration and overproduction by Scottish owned industry propped up by UK government orders. Now, the institution of nationalisation meant that large swathes of Scottish industry, while becoming publicly owned, also ceased to be managed from within Scotland. This loss of economic autonomy contributed to the post-war anomie.

It is the trajectory of Robin Jenkins's work, however, which best captures Scotland's post-war scepticism. *So Gaily Sings the Lark* (1950) sustained Renaissance values in telling how

a Lanarkshire miner finds fulfilment working in a Highland forest. *Happy for the Child* (1953), with its title mocking Kailyard sentiment, presents a much grimmer picture, an unremittingly pessimistic account of Scottish urban poverty. Thereafter, Jenkins went on to anatomise parents and sisters, teachers and middle-class employers as victims of their own prejudices and guilt in a long series of complex, morally ambiguous and often darkly mythopoeic novels including *The Cone Gatherers* (1955) and *The Changeling* (1958). He left Scotland in 1957 until 1968, teaching in Afghanistan, Spain and Borneo, and producing some of the earliest and best postcolonial fiction. Again, his work reflects and refracts the erosion of older, here colonial, values. Novels like *Dust on the Paw* (1961) and *The Holy Tree* (1969) mock British imperialism, its snobbish embassies and corrupt officials, with their habit of patronising natives and simmering religious tensions. These early examples of a modern Scottish writer working internationally and achieving a fresh imaginative expression, anticipate the later 'new internationalism' of contemporary Scottish writing, crossing the narrower boundaries of what was seen to concern the 'Scottish' novelist. After returning to Scotland, he resumed his pessimistic anatomisation of Scottish pretensions and hypocrisies with *A Would-Be Saint* (1978). Some kind of grace or hope, however, can now be discerned in the conclusions of some of the later novels like *Poverty Castle* (1991) or *Willie Hogg* (1993). His vision simultaneously is specific and transcends geographical or moral platitudes.

Kennaway and Jenkins satirise Scottish icons like teachers, ministers and soldiers. The most effective ironic and subtle deconstruction of Scottish teaching (and so, in a sense, of a traditional version of Scotland), however, came with Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961). Her eponymous teacher could be read as a new and necessary energy in teaching, or as a malign modern witch, her mythopoeic origins in an older and unwanted Scotland. In *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960), Spark presents a similarly ambiguous protagonist, Dougal Douglas, a vivacious and charismatic figure in dull suburban London society, but, like Brodie, having sinister characteristics. His dubious charisma and dangerous force of personality echo older and dark Scottish characteristics of split personality and demonic belief. The extensive critical treatment of Spark has arguably not recognised how much her fiction embodies a serious critique of the psychological complexity, and sometimes insularity, of the Scots in a post-war world of disintegrating values. In her work, the value of 'Scottishness' itself is deconstructed. Even when set well beyond Scotland, her fiction shows a Scottish preoccupation with the grotesque and surreal, while more recent novels like *Symposium* (1990) return to the themes of the early Scottish novels. 'In Scotland [. . .] people are more capable of perpetrating good or evil than anywhere else,' declaims wizard Magnus, and this assertion of moral polarisation would seem to sum up Spark's ambivalent view of her native country, all the more stark in the genocidal twentieth century. Yet, her fiction, however caustic about the Scottish (and human) condition and – like Jenkins's – sceptical regarding human perfectibility, has, perhaps because of this very trenchancy, had a positive influence in liberating contemporary Scottish fiction from traditional form and genre.

Given this, it is salutary to recall that Alexander Trocchi's *Young Adam* was published as early as 1954. This and his other work like *Cain's Book* (1960) anticipate the alienated protagonists of the later urban pessimists by fifteen years. He himself was close to a number of Beat writers, while the transatlantic pessimism of James Baldwin and his generation of American authors found echoes in Scotland. In the fiction of Archie Hind, Alan Sharp and William McIlvanney, the Scottish novel, while perpetuating the negativism of Gaitens and Hendry, became more self-aware, introducing a more complex commentary on

problems of identity and development. Hind's *The Dear Green Place* (1966) turned fiction towards examination of modern Scottish creative dislocation in a post-industrial, post-imperial world. His title plays ironically on the ancient Gaelic name for Glasgow as ideal rural community; his protagonist, a blue-collar worker trying to write a novel about Glasgow, finds his ideals crushed in a hostile city. A year earlier, however, Alan Sharp's *A Green Tree in Gedde* (1965) shared much of Hind's yearning, his disillusion similarly playing ironically on the 'Green Oak', his industrial town's lost green place. Here, the theme of the undermined pre-war vision of an essentialist rural 'truth' is reinforced in the novels' titles and locations. Gordon William's *From Scenes Like These* (1968), its title ironically quoting Burns's 'The Cotter's Saturday Night', likewise describes the fall from innocence and hope of young Dunky Logan in a typical Lowland and twilight territory between city and country. William McIlvanney's *Docherty* (1975) and his later fiction continued this dark theme. Here is real anger about social injustice, and hatred of western materialism, its hypocrisies and claustrophobic conventionality; yet there is also humour, rich metaphor and a sense of the tragic-comic absurdity of the human condition. Along with Kelman – in so many ways unlike – McIlvanney's thinking is rooted in existentialist philosophy. The emphasis on individual choice gives birth to scenes of frustrated violence, where internal family hostilities hide from their protagonists their more potent and less accessible enemy, the society that has destroyed their ideals and undermined their autonomy. Even in his detective fiction, the genre is used to articulate criticisms of power relations in contemporary Scottish society, though his later fiction, as with Jenkins, demonstrates a kind of hope in unresolved conclusions.

George Friel embodies with Jenkins and these others a similar nightmare vision of Scottish cities, and asks the same central question: is urban society to blame for producing its decadent protagonists, or are they failures in themselves? With Friel, however, Scottish fiction experiments with new narrative strategies and linguistic inventiveness, suggesting in the 1970s that conventional fictional expression would no longer suffice. His ironies on 'civilised' society are inventive and rich, as in the symbolic play on 'grace' in *Grace and Miss Partridge* (1969), with its lonely, self-tormenting old tenement lady trying to save Grace, whom she believes to be an innocent Glasgow girl, from sin – through murder. His articulation of this vision is very different from that of Jenkins, as he shows in *Mr Alfred MA* (1972). Superficially resembling Jenkins's earlier *The Changeling* in depicting a failed Glasgow teacher and his tragic relationship with his pupils, Friel's ironic Glasgow tragedy is all the more chilling and effective for his detached authorial position, modernist fragmentation of events, and inventive and symbolic Joycean word play. His novelistic technique draws on a variety of national and international predecessors as he reaches beyond older boundaries of expression.

More recently James Kelman seems a natural successor to these writers, with his consistent articulation of the voice of the dispossessed. His fiction insists on the writer's right to reclaim and reshape English as a language to speak for previously neglected Glasgow lives. Kelman is fiercely hostile to all the social and aesthetic connotations of 'English Literature', which he sees as supporting British class privilege and outmoded political arrangements. His fiction refuses to acknowledge privileges or taboos attached to registers or speech-patterns. Thus to Kelman the use of what is conventionally 'foul language' is necessary, since it is in reality a language of the country and as such demands recognition. The reader of Kelman who tunes into his low-key, apparently mundane presentation of sad lives and expletive-filled language finds a rich and complex world of irony, self-mockery, allusion and sophistication. This argues convincingly that very ordinary people are much more

self-aware, articulate and rich in redeeming humour than is conventionally allowed. It also locates the disintegration of standard language and metropolitan received values in the variety of a postcolonial world and a Scotland establishing new identities. Kelman's first novel, *The Busconductor Hines* (1984), revealed his typical protagonist, the intelligent working-class man paralysed by existential anomie. It also reveals a paradox running all through his work. On the one hand, Hines can be read as representative of a Glasgow underclass, and so standing for the dispossessed of the world. On the other, his greater intelligence, zany irony and alienation from his fellow-workers shows him to be a man alone, like Camus's *Outsider*. While the protagonist can change from blue-collar worker to teacher to down-and-out, as in *Hines*, *A Dissaffection* (1989) and the Booker-winning *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994) respectively, they are never – whatever the repetitive banality of their bleak and hopeless lives – the kind of hard men of McIlvanney's Tam Docherty, or Welsh's Begbie in *Trainspotting*. This change of approach in expressing Scottish society suggests that, however Kelman may seem at first to belong to a period of older disillusion, in many important respects he illustrates major changes in contemporary Scottish fiction. His more recent and very different novels, *Translated Accounts* (2001) and *You Have to Be Careful in the Land of The Free* (2004), set respectively in central Europe and America, show a writer open to change and development, eclectic and restless, crossing borders and reshaping assumptions, and to that extent typical of contemporary Scottish fiction.

Kelman's influence on others has been powerful, opening up possibilities for voices hitherto unheard. *Gentlemen of the West* (1984) was the first novel of Agnes Owens, who was encouraged by Kelman and Alasdair Gray. Her choice of protagonist is clearly influenced by Kelman: Mick, later Mac, a sometime bricklayer, lives among winos and feckless drop-outs in a down-at-heel community outside Glasgow. *A Working Mother* (1994) and the deliberately crudely entitled *For the Love of Willie* (1998) turn her focus on blighted women's lives. The first presents a manipulative and deceitful wife cheating and lying to husband, employer and friends, in a shameless avoidance of responsibility for her drinking and lust; the second a pathetic account of the ruining of a girl's life by an oily, lying grocer who abuses adolescents. Jeff Torrington's *Swing Hammer Swing* (1992) and *The Devil's Carousel* (1996) also acknowledge a debt to Kelman. His first novel sardonically celebrates Glasgow's Gorbals just as the demolition hammer destroys it as a community. Tom Clay, the teller, is very much a Kelman type: an unpublished writer who doesn't like regular employment, whose wife is in hospital having a baby, whose tenement is crumbling, and whose wife's relatives, like those of busconductor Hines, despise him. The plot is deliberately aimless and bizarre in its weird events and people. Torrington's way is to remind us that the banality of urban reality is stranger, sometimes funnier, but often more tragic, than represented in most fiction. In Torrington's second novel, though, the humour darkens as it recounts the last days of a west of Scotland car factory, becoming in the end bitter and apocalyptic in its description of the destruction of Scotland's industries in the 1980s. In this, he represents an explicit flowering of one strand of the Scottish novel's exploration in an international perspective of post-war, post-imperial, post-industrial loss of establishment certainties and the resulting haunted search for meaningful identity.

Given the writers discussed above, it can be seen that, far from representing a radical new wave of writing in Scotland, Irvine Welsh's work is the end-product of post-war scepticism and a widely felt sense of blighted urban possibilities. Drug addiction adds itself to problems of drink and poverty; and a ferociously black humour effectively portrays a new low of human sensibility. Yet, his work is nevertheless the culmination of a movement in Scottish writing dating back to the beginning of the century, with *The House with the Green*

Shutters (1901), and even, between the wars, with Alexander McArthur and H. Kingsley Long's *No Mean City* (1935). It also belongs to the tradition of caustic analysis of Scottish identity and community. More recently Duncan McLean, Gordon Legge and James Meek have intensified that tradition in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Meek provides a fascinating example of widening ambitions and boundaries in contemporary Scottish fiction. He began with more local Edinburgh surrealism, *MacFarlane Boils the Sea* (1980) and short stories, *Last Orders* (1992), blending Kelman with the grotesque. Then a quantum shift came with *Drivetime* (1995), with its aimless journey for our times, in which a bizarre trio go on a drab quest through a Europe devoid of romance. This dark surreal comedy became yet more pronounced in the stories of *The Museum of Doubt* (2000). Yet accomplished and disturbing as these fictions were, they can be seen as striking preparation for his hugely ambitious *The People's Act of Love* (2005). Meek spent almost ten years from 1990 as journalist in Russia, reporting for *The Guardian*; his outlook expanded enormously. The latest novel is outstanding in its scope. Set in Siberian wastes after the Great War, it works with a huge canvas: White and Red Russians battle over the soul of their nation, with the stranded Czech Legion unable to return home. The novel presents a rich variety of morals and values; those of dedicated revolutionary Samarin, who finds in the end that his emotionless zeal for his cause is betrayed by his humanity; those of the decent man in the middle, Czech officer Mutz, caught between his psychopathic leader Matula and his liberal conscience; and the tormented idealism of the people's act of love – the community of Yazyk who see castration as a way of becoming angels, liberated from earthly desire. Meek handles his vast territory and its people with irony and love; the result is a novel which can be placed in the great tradition of Turgenev and Dostoyevsky – and yet with echoes of Banks and *Song of Stone* (1997), and even Gibbon's political implacability in *Grey Granite* (1934).

With *Trainspotting* (1993) Welsh took urban realism to new depths of disillusion and despair. At first, *Trainspotting* appears a sequence of disconnected stories and fragmented scenes. Slowly connections begin to form, and the central figure, 'Rents', emerges as Mark Renton (deliberately) failed university student, failing too in his attempts to come off drugs. But he and his group – naive Spud, Sick Boy, and psychopathic Begbie – however sick, are undoubtedly intelligent. Theirs is the sickness of Trocchi's Joe in *Young Adam*, a version of the alienated protagonists of McIvanney and Kelman. They could change, but a deeper disgust with the world traps them. Underlying all the violence and visceral details, Welsh makes us see that they hate what their world has become as much as themselves: drink and drugs are as much a metaphysical escape as a temporary and pointless high. At the same time, Welsh engages with his readership playfully and even exploitatively, manipulating shock effects and linguistic games. Renton's extended code-switching sequence at the interview, for example, can be read as playing with the middle-class reader as much as an existential quest to fix an unfixed and alienated identity: here 'wanna yooz scruff' becomes product, part of a reified charisma of dispossessed violence and drugs.

The Acid House (1994) shows that Welsh's talents include the ability to create hilarious satiric fantasy. Fantasy and ferocious social satire fuse in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (1995). Roy Strang, in a hospital bed, takes refuge in his unconscious mind, inventing new worlds and new people to evade the horror he has known in reality: his abnormal and violent family, his abuse by an uncle, his football casual friends and his sexual savagery. The ending appals; but the novel patently tries to empathise with a malformed contemporary life. Welsh's latest work, like the three novellas of *Ecstasy* (1996), the terminal account of a rogue policeman *Filth* (1998) and *Porno* (2002), are more open to criticism

as sensation-seeking in their search for fresh horrors: necrophilia, chain-saw murders, ultimate sexual degradation.

The reaction against rural essentialism and the location of value in tradition and enduring historical roots also darkened writing working with rural locations and subjects. Despite the Renaissance celebration of the land and the seasons' rhythms, there was always an accompanying subversive undertone present in Scottish fiction even from the time of Galt and, later, *The House with the Green Shutters*. Writers continued this in the 1930s, including Ian Niall (writing fiercely against rural idealism in his first novel, *The Wigtoun Ploughman* (1939), as Ian McNeillie), James Barke, George Blake and Ian Macpherson (and even Lewis Grassic Gibbon, for all that his work apparently celebrates the abiding land and its beauty). This sub-tradition finally gave full voice to its pent-up disillusion and despair in Fionn MacColla's *And the Cock Crew* (1945), a novel about the agony of the Highland Clearances that simultaneously despairs of what Highland culture, religion and society had become. The majority of significant later Highlands and islands writers in English clearly felt that they had to continue this tonic realism. Norman Macdonald's *Calum Todd* (1976) bravely tried to fuse older Gaelic tradition with the demands of modernity. Calum is the alienated islander, and Macdonald used a series of apparently unrelated streams of consciousness of family and lovers to reveal his restlessness and shame in a stagnating Lewis that drives him into exile and alcoholism. More recently, Lorn MacIntyre has sustained a satiric portrait of Highland aristocracy in his *Chronicles of Invernevis* series, beginning with *Cruel in the Shadow* (1979), continuing with *The Blind Bend* (1981) and *Empty Footsteps* (1996). He effectively deconstructs the pretensions and vainglory of the great landed Catholic family of MacDonalds as their lairds exploit and condescend, abrogating to themselves a divinely given right to what pleases them among their people. Shetland historian John Graham's *Shadowed Valley* (1987), with its echoes of Gunn's *Butcher's Broom*, demonstrates how pervasive and long-lived is the resentment of the forced decline of traditional community. Graham's use of Shetland dialect gives authenticity to his sad history.

As with the urban writers, in these modern fictions of Highland and island decline, regeneration all too often seems impossible in the context of global and local post-war changes in power relations, both social and familial, and in social and community identity. The reader of these novels would be hard put to imagine how and from where hope for Scotland's urban and rural communities, distant as they seem from social autonomy or personal dignity, might emerge. But by the late 1960s and 1970s change was in the air, politically and culturally. The very different fiction of two major Scottish writers working throughout the last fifty years, Iain Crichton Smith and George Mackay Brown, exemplifies the beginning of negation's turning to affirmation centred in discovering a concern with human compassion and potential.

Like MacColla, Smith was a persistent questioner of Scotland's extreme religious attitudes. Smith rejected his Lewis Free Church background; but this and his Gaelic and island experience have profoundly influenced all his writing, underlying that moral questioning he shares with Robin Jenkins. There is indeed, throughout his poetry, drama and fiction, a bleak recognition of human suffering. Yet, against this black line throughout that sees human life as incomprehensible, there is also a thin red line representing life and hope, the red of human blood, symbolic of human willingness to empathise and suffer for others. In the poem, 'She Teaches Lear' (written around the time Smith was turning to fiction), he argues that 'from our own weakness only are we kind' – implying that hope can only come from a purely human recognition of empathy for others in community. His first novel,

Consider the Lilies (1968), was a deceptively simple account of an old widow's impending expulsion from the house of her family for generations. The evocation of Highland Clearance is stark; but the real concern is with the 'internal clearances' by a repressive church of charity, love and creativity. Mrs Scott becomes representative of all who suffer Scottish religious authoritarianism, but she is also Smith's own stern and pious mother, and the novel his working out of his complex relationship with her.

Smith's preoccupation with island and family loyalties continued in a long line of novels which take as their central issue his slow coming to terms with his small community background. After this, his fiction follows two main directions. On the one hand, there are the novels focusing on Lewis, and village community life. On the other, there are novels, usually centred on city life, that have their protagonists wrestle with issues of artistic value, often giving rise to crises of identity and doubt as to the existence of any genuine social and aesthetic values and meaning whatsoever. Both lines are concerned with Smith's emphasis on the need for pain in vital living, and the deadness of life dictated by dogma and devoid of change through human suffering. Arguably it was *On the Island* (1979), a novel made up of episodes of childhood experience, that began to find acceptance for the bleak experience of the Isle of Lewis, as Smith recalled childhood moments of significance. The places and the people that shaped him are seen with a new kindness and empathy. He next focused closely on the problems of living within a close-knit and potentially malicious group in *A Field Full of Folk* (1982). There, he allowed his minister protagonist to resolve his cancerous doubts through a kind of epiphany, a vision of the humbler ways in which the mean-spirited neighbours can be re-viewed as capable of great redemptive humanity. With this novel Smith seemed finally to have come to terms with his island past and the anomie of a post-war society in which old values have failed, but no clear new communal ones have yet emerged.

There were still major issues of identity and aesthetics to deal with. *In the Middle of the Wood* (1987) marks Smith's resolution of this second, and more difficult, self-questioning. Owing much to the title story of Smith's most bizarre and tragi-comic fiction, *Murdo and Other Stories* (1981), it uses self-parody and surreal comic perspective to come to terms with what had been Smith's most difficult period, in the early 1980s. Murdo, agonisingly poised between grotesque humour and appalling pain, points towards Smith's own nervous breakdown. *In the Middle of the Wood* uses Murdo's grotesque humour to positive effect, enabling Smith to see the nightmare comedy of his own trauma, and the recognition that no one can survive outside community. In *The Dream* (1990), his penultimate novel, he finally comes to terms with his divided island and city experience. His Glasgow University Celtic lecturer lets go of his life-long ideal of returning to champion his island and Gaelic culture, accepting instead a modern Scotland in a world of change and diverse identity, perhaps one of compromised ideals, but offering release from rural disillusion.

George Mackay Brown, often considered as locked into an ideal Orkney past, viewing his beloved islands from the perspective of his Catholic conversion, reveals himself to be far more complex than this simplistic view would allow. His hatred of so-called progress is well known, as is his heraldic view of the quartering of life into sea and land, fishermen and crofters. His fiction is elegiac in its presentation of the rhythms of the seasons, and their ancient ordering of the lives of simple people. Alongside this celebration of land and sea runs his satire on absentee lairds, greedy merchants, narrow ministers and debased modern Orkney. The stories of *A Calendar of Love* (1967) and *A Time to Keep* (1969) spoke of his need for a sustaining myth, which *Greenvoe* (1972) and *Magnus* (1973), as well as his poetry, suggested was supplied by his Catholicism. Closer reading of his work reveals

that his Catholicism is, however, of a strange order, often departing from orthodoxy and bonding frequently with ideas inherited from Orkney's pagan and Viking past. Here Brown seeks a resolution of the angst of contemporary alienation in revisiting and reintegration of identity, disoriented by modern changes, through renewed understanding of its diverse elements. He creates re-ordered identity in a mythopoeic process. His work through the 1980s and 1990s became a quest for a mythology beyond that which Catholicism could supply. Novels like *Time in a Red Coat* (1984) and *Beside the Ocean of Time* (1994) seek new answers. Life-long restlessness and doubt saw his work move from tradition to a deeply personal quest for a truth which only Art could supply, and takes him through a dislocated world into contemporary Scottish fiction. For all its dislike of modern Orkney and 'progress', as early as *Greenoe* Mackay Brown allowed a future recovery for the blighted island of Hellya, while later novels increasingly allowed self-discovery for their sadder but wiser ministers, lairds and writers.

So far this account has presented a generally bleak picture of ubiquitous scepticism and disorientation in serious Scottish fiction. The work of these two island writers in the 1980s shows them moving from elegy to qualified hope. Hints of such change have been identified in more recent urban writers already discussed. Given the immediate pessimism seemingly generated and deepened by the failure of the 1979 referendum on Scottish home rule, a paradox emerges, reminiscent of how Scottish culture flourished after 1707. Perhaps in reaction, perhaps in defiance of the 1979 result, the urban novelists as much as any other group went on to create work sustaining Scottish self-confidence and implying the need for home rule. Perhaps in the cause of devolved power and re-asserted communal identities, a creative response to the problems of post-war, postcolonial, post-industrial dislocation might be found. Arguably, indeed, one novelist in particular moved Scottish fiction from dystopian despair and modernity to postmodernity and contemporaneity. The major novels of Alasdair Gray – *Lanark* (1981), *1982*, *Janine* (1984) and *Poor Things* (1992) – chart a remarkable journey from initial urban claustrophobia and breakdown to release and profound change. His experiments in form reflect those in poetry by Edwin Morgan and Ian Hamilton Finlay; like them, he transforms not only perceptions, but the very perception of what is possible in both imagination and the writer's craft. These changes enable not only a new faith in Scotland as being in the early days of a better country, but new awareness of the need to challenge political, gender and identity stereotypes. In short, the values and systems, private and public, moral, governmental and economic, that had borne down on post-war Scots were to be faced and challenged. In the 1980s, alongside enquiring and newly confident poetry and drama, this fiction helped bring about a new and cautiously affirmative mood in Scottish writing and culture, and with it a remarkable range and variety of new Scottish fiction.

A chapter of this size can only indicate some of the main directions this new fiction took, citing exemplary novelists. At the head of these, however, must surely be placed the striking appearance of novels concerning themselves with what might be termed a theme of emergence from trauma. In a remarkable number of these, a central protagonist is introduced in a state of virtual breakdown, often hospitalised, always suffering from solipsistic introspection, with attendant feelings of guilt and withdrawal from self and society. These novels embody both formal experiment and generic adventurousness. The background is always a recognisably modern Scotland, whose social attitude or economic transition has helped bring about the trauma. What marks this fiction as dealing with contemporary Scotland in a new spirit, however, is the way in which both the events and the symbolic implications of the fiction allow the protagonist to break free and speak for new and

affirmative possibilities. The old experience and older Scottish attitudes can now be transcended.

Gray's novels have received wide critical attention and his achievement is fully recognised; perhaps not so well documented is the way his Scottish contemporaries draw on his achievement. Outstanding was Iain Banks's *The Bridge* (1986), unashamedly acknowledging Gray's inspiration, in its mixture of science fiction and psychology, and in its patterning of disaster, mental retreat and slow recovery. Following on came Janice Galloway's *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (1989), Carl MacDougall's *The Lights Below* (1993), Alison Kennedy's *Looking for the Possible Dance* (1993) and *So I Am Glad* (1995) and Alan Spence's *The Magic Flute* (1990) and *Way to Go* (1998). (Intriguingly, this new genre-pattern – disallowing the affirmative ending – was exploited by Welsh in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (1995).) These writers were strongest in their redemptive patterning; but many others sought, if in a less starkly structured manner, to exorcise their inherited Scottish (and, in the case of Bernard MacLaverty, Irish-Scottish) demons, among them Ron Butlin, John Herdman, Jackie Kay, Brian McCabe, Andrew O'Hagan and Christopher Whyte.

Another sign that a new optimism was abroad lay in the way the new writing handled the relationship between the urban and the rural. Where after 1945 the majority of serious writers had worked to demolish traditional idealisation of rural life, now many sought to suggest possible ways of reintegration, so that urban and rural could be viewed as mutually accepting. Gray suggests this in moments of perception of a bigger landscape in *Lanark* (suggestions enhanced by his panoramic landscape drawings of Scotland in the novel). Kennedy and MacDougall release their protagonists (in the novels cited above) from city depression to a cleansing rural experience. Novels like Iain Banks's *The Crow Road* (1992) and *Whit* (1993), or Andrew Greig's *Electric Brae* (1992) and *When They Lay Bare* (1999) allowed the action to move without restriction or privileging between the city and the country. A new emphasis appeared too in the way writers like Greig, Margaret Elphinstone and Ian Stephen exploit wider and rarely used locations: Shetland, Orkney, Lewis, the north-east, the Borders. It is as if a positive response develops to the post-war phenomena of de-colonisation, dependent branch economy and political alienation, and Scotland gains both a stronger sense of its potential in pre-devolutionary politics and an understanding of a post-industrial economy led by strong financial, electronic, tourism and oil sectors. In the light of this, Scotland is re-imagined. And this re-imagining is expressed in novels not only by formal dynamism and adventurousness, but by willingness to see an inclusive variety of Scotlands, rather than mutually antagonistic sectors within – or an exclusive version of – a mini-Scotland. (This is not to say all is Panglossian, however. This kind of shift of locational centring could still work in the ongoing negative stream of fiction discussed earlier. Duncan McLean showed contemporary materialism damaging rural society as much as the city's in *Blackden* (1992) and *Bunkerman* (1995). He and writers like Bess Ross in *A Bit of Crack and Car Culture* (1990) or, most recently, Luke Sutherland in *Venus as a Boy* (2004) are intent on showing how the nasty aspects of western culture generally have reached the remoter parts of our island.)

Scottish fiction rediscovered its older Scottish traditions. Gray echoes the Stevenson of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in *Poor Things*, and drew on the territory and rediscovery of James Hogg for *A History Maker* (1994). Likewise, John Herdman's novels show a debt to Hogg's *Justified Sinner*, as had Anglo-Scot Emma Tennant's *The Bad Sister* as early as 1978. Her later *Two Women of London* (1988) told a modern version of *Jekyll and Hyde*. Stuart Hood reworked Stevenson's love of inextricably linked opposite characters in *The Upper Hand* (1987), as did Alice Thompson in *Justine* (1996). Meanwhile, Alison (A. L.)

Kennedy exploited the nineteenth-century fictional tradition of Hogg and Stevenson's ambivalence between mutually exclusive supernatural and psychological readings of events in *So I Am Glad*. Margaret Elphinstone and Sian Haytoun returned to the inspiration of saga in *Islanders* (1994) and the *Hidden Daughters* (1989–93) trilogy respectively, as did Gregor Lamb in *Langskaill* (1999), while Allan Massie and Andrew Greig worked with ballad tradition in *The Hanging Tree* (1990) and *When They Lay Bare* (1999).

In returning to older traditions of Scottish fiction, something else was recovered and developed to suit contemporary vision. Post-war writers from Jenkins to McIlvanney had worked within social realism to repudiate what they saw as Scotland's false self-idealisation. They disallowed any supernatural possibilities such as those hinted at by writers like Gunn, Gibbon and Mitchison in permitting their Renaissance protagonists perceptions beyond the rationally explicable, in second sight or dream, and in events associated with standing stones, earth houses and other ancient places. There were of course occasional exceptions: in Spark's frequent hints, for example, that her protagonists might be more or less than human in *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960), *Jean Brodie* and *Symposium* (1990), and her frequent introduction of inexplicable events and characters in her later fiction. These and occasional novels such as Stewart Hutchinson's undeservedly forgotten *Scully's Lugs* (1979), with its haunting interconnection of strange happenings in Scotland with uncanny worldwide events thereafter, can be seen as a forerunners of the move back to the recovery of the supernatural in Scottish literature. But the years after 1980 saw the real change, with Gray (and Morgan and Lochhead in poetry and drama) leading the return of the supernatural in Scottish writing. In fiction, this could take the form of the traditional, with women writers especially exploiting ideas of second sight and symbolic magic, as well as bringing old legend and myth to life. Sian Hayton's trilogy on the daughters of the ancient Celtic giant Usthebadan, in *Cells of Knowledge* (1989), *Hidden Daughters* (1992) and *The Last Flight* (1993) is outstanding in this respect. Margaret Elphinstone evoked ancient Celtic magic in fiction like *The Incomer* (1987) and *An Apple From a Tree* (1991), and wove traditional supernatural scenes into *Islanders* (1994) and *The Sea Road* (2000). Ellen Galford brought Boadicea back to life in modern Edinburgh in *Queendom Come* (1990). Christopher Whyte created an eighteenth-century seer and shapeshifter in *The Warlock of Strathearn* (1997). Thereafter, many contemporary novelists have used older Scottish supernatural lore combined with postmodern dislocations and contemporary effects of magic realism, such as Andrew Greig in *When They Lay Bare*, Christopher Wallace in *The Resurrection Club* (1999), Andrew Murray Scott in *Tumulus* (1999), and Alice Thompson in *Pharos* (2002). The re-imagining of Scotland was also a re-imagining of humankind's scope and being in thoroughly contemporary modes.

Other kinds of supernatural and irrational fictions were now available too. With magic realism in vogue internationally, once again Gray led the way, with his eclectic mixture of fantasy, surrealism and science fiction. Scottish writers quickly developed the new possibilities, mixing these categories in a dazzling display of new approaches to fiction. Banks, Kennedy, Whyte, Alice Thompson, Chris Dolan, Christopher Wallace and Michel Faber all exploited modern fantasy where the bizarre and impossible allowed new perspectives on issues of identity and gender. A modern variant of Scottish Gothic emerged with Elspeth Barker's *O Caledonia!* (1991), to be developed by writers like Bridget Penney in *Honeymoon with Death* (1991), Carol Morin in *Lampshades* (1991) and John Herdman in *The Sinister Cabaret* (2003). Related to this was the new surrealism, which created its own dream-like possibilities in the work of many of the writers mentioned above, but became the complete

context of the intriguingly convoluted worlds of Frank Kuppner, Andrew Crumey and James Meek.

If Banks is clearly the leader in creating worlds that mingle fantasy and science fiction, he is by no means alone in his range, from caricature of actuality to apocalyptic extrapolation. Other examples include Ian McGuinness in *Inner-city* (1987) and its border town version *Bannock* (1990), John Mackenzie in *City Whitelight* (1986), and the later work of Paul Johnstone in his *Body Politic* series (beginning 1997), set in a future Edinburgh, and in a Scotland and Britain where all public order has broken down due to drug wars and economic depression. Johnstone creates a dystopian post-Platonic satire ('*quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*') that highlights continuing potential for social division and political corruption in contemporary society. An even more apocalyptic post-devolution Scotland is presented in Terry Houston's *The Wounded Stone* (1998), while Michel Faber's *Under the Skin* (2000) is arguably the most sinister of the type. Yet, perhaps no other novel so completely illustrates the new imaginative inventiveness and willingness to combine disparate elements in vibrant formal and linguistic experiment embodying (re)visionary imagination as Matthew Fitt's *But n Ben a Go-Go* (2000). Told in racy and sometimes creatively neologistic Scots, the Scotland it vividly envisages after global warming comprises a few city-islands haunted by a post-AIDS disease and privileged, but perilous, Drylands/Highlands, and yet allows a difficult and qualified success of hope and love over malign despair.

Related to these dystopias, and as additional evidence of the burgeoning of new genres, is the rise of contemporary *crime noir*. McIlvanney pioneered this with his Laidlaw series, and the genre at its best must now be considered as serious fiction, often transcending conventional types of protagonist, and adapting the best of American tradition to Scottish contexts. In their recurrently dark settings, cities plagued by drugs and political corruption, and in their pessimistic analyses of urban futures, they go beyond previous Scottish and British versions of the genre, using crime and the drama of urban corruption to emphasise the legacy of industrial decline and post-imperial isolation. (These writers surely also develop these aspects of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories so that Doyle can now be seen as initiating a strong Scottish genre, prophetically commentating on the corruption at the heart of a then seemingly thriving empire.) Frederick Lindsay followed McIlvanney with novels like his peculiarly sinister *Brond* (1983) and his later series, with his version of the requisite emotionally damaged yet socially sensitive Detective Inspector. The pre-eminent exponent now is the enormously successful Ian Rankin with his Laidlaw-like Inspector Rebus in a long series which began with *Knots and Crosses* (1987). Rankin works within the genre of detective fiction, but has re-woven its forms with sophisticated and self-referential perennial motifs and concerns of Scottish writing that enable it to encompass complex national character analysis, themes of doubling and hypocrisy and a rich idiom of the dark sides of the Enlightenment. Rankin conceives of himself, rightly, as a serious Scottish writer, while his success at exploiting the genre has taken his concerns to a whole new readership that might never before have read books set in Scotland. Striking new practitioners who follow and develop Rankin's approach and themes include Christopher Brookmyre (giving the genre a grotesque and satiric twist), and a growing number of women, including Val McDermid, Denise Mina, Ajay Close and Manda Scott, who join the long international list of distinguished women crime writers.

The rediscovery, revaluation and reshaping of older narrative strategies, themes and magical possibilities suggest that writers were also redefining their relationship to Scottish history. Where the grand storyteller of history, Nigel Tranter, had stalwartly presented the nation's dramas in traditional narrative (and possibly so doing more than

anyone else to tell Scots their history, or at least his version of it), new and postmodern perspectives began to appear. In *The Ballad of Sawney Bain* (1990) Harry Tait pioneered this new historicism with his revisionist re-creation of traditions of the Covenanters in his reassessment of the mysterious hate-figure of Scottish legend, the alleged cannibal, Sawney Bean. Dorothy Dunnet presented a new Macbeth who was also the formidable Earl Thorfinn in *King Hereafter* (1982). Allan Massie re-created a more poetic and sensitive Walter Scott in *The Ragged Lion* (1994). George Macdonald Fraser, author of the Flashman novels, gave a modern reading of the brutality of Anglo-Scottish border history in *The Candlemass Road* (1993). Recently, two novels have appeared giving postmodern views of the neglected Scottish tragedy of the Darien scheme in Douglas Galbraith's *The Rising Sun* (2001) and David Nicol's *The Fundamentals of New Caledonia* (2003). The outstanding exponent of this new historical fiction has been James Robertson. *The Fanatic* (2000) shows Scotland's bloody seventeenth-century past haunting modern Edinburgh; its award-winning successor *Joseph Knight* (2003) reveals, through a masterly combination of real events and deeply humane fiction, Scotland's forgotten part in the slave trade. And historical fiction could turn outwards to world history. Allan Massie's great series re-creating the lives of the Caesars showed magisterial knowledge and control, while Ross Leckie likewise told the epic of Hannibal in three novels, *Hannibal* (1995), *Scipio* (1998) and *Carthage* (2000).

This confidence in dealing with world issues can be seen as marking a new internationalism of location and theme consistent with the new vision and insight into a varied and diverse post-imperial and now post-devolution Scotland. Massie is at his best when dealing with grand narratives of the modern world, as in *The Death of Men* (1981), *A Question of Loyalties* (1989), *The Sins of the Fathers* (1991) and *Shadows of Empire* (1997). These apply a contemporary humane understanding to issues of national and self-betrayal on a global scale. Outstanding also is the work of William Boyd, Ronald Frame and Stuart Hood. Boyd's *A Good Man in Africa* (1981) and *The New Confessions* (1987) make links between Scottish character and foreign setting through their central figures. Later novels break the connection, confidently working on a worldwide scale in every sense in *Brazzaville Beach* (1990), *The Blue Afternoon* (1993) and *Every Human Heart* (2002). Frame works in a deliberately more enclosed context, his novels reflecting the sense of claustrophobia of his protagonists as they try to understand the complex familial and social situations which enclose them. Whether set in Scotland (as in his award-winning *The Lantern-Bearers* of 1999), the south of England, or France, these sophisticated and sensitive accounts of vulnerable children, adults and lost souls, as in *Winter Journey* (1984), *A Long Weekend with Marcel Proust* (1986), *Bluette* (1990) and *Walking my Mistress in Deauville* (1992), are far removed from previous traditions of Scottish fiction. Stuart Hood began an Indian summer of fiction with *A Storm from Paradise* (1985), which brought Russian culture and freedoms of manners in a love affair that tore apart the values of a small-town Scottish teacher. Thereafter, *The Upper Hand* (1987), *The Brutal Heart* (1989), *A Den of Foxes* (1991) and *The Book of Judith* (1995) moved to central Europe in narratives, like Massie's, of complex betrayal and love-hate relationships enmeshed in Europe's great political struggles.

A glance at the writers listed above reveals another feature of contemporary Scottish writing: the new confidence and range of women writers. Historical and romance fiction, often fused, had been the usual territory of twentieth-century women before the 1980s, with more ambitious writers like Catherine Carswell, Willa Muir and Naomi Mitchison lonely voices. Even as late as the 1960s, Muriel Spark stood out as exceptional. All this

changed with Galloway, Kennedy, Owens, Elphinstone, Hayton, in novels already discussed, as well as Elspeth Davie, Joan Lingard, Jessie Kesson, Dilys Rose, Jackie Kay, Ali Smith and many others producing outstanding fiction through the last twenty-five years. Smith especially represents the impressively innovatory women's fiction, in recent novels like *Hotel World* (2001) and *The Accidental* (2005), shortlisted for the Booker Prize. *The Accidental*, with its intrusion of a mysterious woman into the troubled lives of a middle-class family, combined with a disturbing background meta-voice which seems to speak for the concerns and alienation of contemporary culture, manages brilliantly to merge older Scottish themes of supernatural visitants with international modernity. A new landscape of male and female writers was established. Women wrote now about the issues of women and gender, calling attention to areas previously occluded or neglected. Men too increasingly wrote about women, exploring complementary issues of gender and the treatment of women by men, as in Gray's *1982*, *Janine*, and *Something Leather* (1990), Banks's *Whit*, the fiction of Frame, and most recently and challengingly in Alan Warner's *Morvern Callar* (1994), *These Demented Lands* (1997) and *The Sopranos* (1998).

Old subject matter gave way increasingly, as did older formal methods, to the exploration of ways of living previously disregarded and new ways of expressing linguistic innovation. In this context, the work of Kelman belongs. However dark in his existentialist vision, in his opening up of the textures of ordinary living and his articulation of unheard voices he led the way for writers like Duncan Mclean, Gordon Legge, Agnes Owens, Laura Hird, John Burnside, Des Dillon and, more recently, Alan Bisset, to follow. Moreover, in all these, as in Fitt's *But n Ben a Go-Go* and the work of Warner, the boundaries between standard English and Scots language usage are broken down, allowing the polyphony of the spoken varieties and registers of Scotland's voices to be heard fully for the first time, a linguistic exploration of the varieties of Scotlands already referred to.

In this linguistically exuberant investigation and celebration of Scotland's diverse identities, old moral boundaries were pushed aside. Writers like Ali Smith, Jackie Kay and Christopher Whyte deal with cross-gender and gay issues with assurance and insight, as in Smith's *Like* (1997) and Kay's *Trumpet* (1998) and Whyte's hilarious and devastating satire in *Euphemia MacFarrigle and the Laughing Virgin* (1995) and serious challenge in *The Gay Decameron* (1998). Louise Welsh's dark Glasgow study of child pornography in *The Cutting Room* (2002) introduces a gay investigator, as does the detective fiction of Manda Scott.

It is clear, then, that an extraordinary explosion of creativity in the twentieth-century Scottish novel has continued into this century. This chapter has drawn attention to many national and international political and cultural factors that have influenced and inspired novelists to respond, but other contextual factors must be considered. In Scotland as in other major literary cultures, it is certainly true that over the last three decades there has been an increase in the range of support institutions for the development of the novel. Substantial book prizes – including in Scotland the influential Saltire Book Prizes (e.g. History Book of the Year since 1965; Book of the Year since 1982) – have developed. The Scottish Arts Council has had a particularly active role, launched in the period 1971–9 by the then Literature Director, Trevor Royle, in supporting new writing. Since 1983, the Edinburgh Book Festival has constantly evolved, establishing all sorts of literary production, but perhaps especially novels, as worthy of public attention and celebration. Film and television adaptation opportunities, however limited the impact on most authors, have developed. Scottish publishing is full of vitality, while authors have generally become celebrated public figures on a par with their nineteenth-century status. The year 2004 saw a

culmination of these processes in the nomination by UNESCO of Edinburgh as the first World City of Literature. While some of these developments may be seen as in one respect or another a commodification of literature and the novel, they all provide a supportive context for creative innovation.

In all of this, such figures as Ian Rankin and Irvine Welsh have flourished to become not only novelists, but also international figures. Alexander McCall Smith's remarkable African detective stories, which successfully fuse the genre of Kailyard and crime fiction, and his serialised newspaper novel work exploit the potential of media culture and enterprising literary agency to sell Scottish writing, helping further establish Scotland as a world literary centre. Similarly, J. K. Rowling's hugely popular *Harry Potter* stories have grown very clearly out of the Scottish Arts Council's literary support system to have impact worldwide. Her novels speak for an acceptance of diversity and compassion through the complex moral growth to maturity of her hero as he faces self-doubt and his own temptations to impetuosity and arrogance in a world struggling for positive values against demons of snobbery, intolerance, authoritarianism, fascism and racism. The values she embraces and the conflict in her world between good and bad clearly follow fundamental Scottish novelistic themes. Rowling, like McCall Smith, creates a new social ambience in which values recognisably rooted in Scottish culture are tested and reasserted in accessible and relatively undemanding forms that have brought whole new readerships to the modern novel. Her subversion of the twentieth-century boarding-school children's novel has taken that form into creative and commercial levels previously unthinkable, yet another example of Scottish fiction's breaking of traditional boundaries. Rankin, Welsh, McCall Smith and Rowling are all literary phenomena. All from Scotland, their work in different ways exploits that fact.

Surveying the range of writers discussed, another instance of gathering cultural confidence emerges. In academic and media discussion, the growing number of what could be termed Anglo-Scots (or vice versa) are treated as a natural part of the country's production. Not only is the fiction of Spark regarded as among the finest Scotland has produced, despite its increasingly non-Scottish nature, but also that of Emma Tennant, Alison Fell, Candia MacWilliam and William Boyd. Increasingly, their work features in shortlists for Scottish literary awards, along with the work of non-Scottish writers like Rowling who have made their home in Scotland, like Bernard MacLaverty, Kate Atkinson, Michel Faber and Megan Delahunt. An intriguing example of this widening of awareness of what counts as 'Scottish' came with the shortlisting for the Saltire Book of the Year of Canadian Alistair MacLeod's magnificent exploration of links between the Highland Clearances, emigration and modern North American racial tensions in *No Great Mischief* (2000). The winners today of major Scottish awards are frequently novelists whose novels have little or no Scottish content, as with the Saltire Society's Scottish Book of the Year award to Janice Galloway's life of pianist Clara Schumann in *Clara* (2003). The voices of diverse communities are also beginning to be heard, for example in the work of Leila Aboulela and Suhayl Saadi.

Taken as a whole, all this suggests that a profound change of mood and orientation has come over Scottish fiction, releasing inhibited voices and opening up endless possibilities. Perhaps the most intriguing development in writing in the last decade is its disregard of traditional category, type and form, and the sheer diversity of production. Awakening from claustrophobic rural and urban dream and nightmare, it moves exuberantly within many Scotlands, all of them now malleable and negotiable, or to work with confidence outside Scotland altogether.

Further reading

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Re-imagining the City: End of the Century Cultural Signs in the Novels of McIlvanney, Banks, Gray, Welsh, Kelman, Owens and Rankin

Marie Odile Pittin-Hédon

The British novel of the last twenty years rests on an international tradition that ranges from Dickens to Kafka, including such American urban crime-fiction landmarks as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. It has, however, been increasingly concerned with the portrayal – and rewriting – of a rapidly mutating cityscape as a sprawling, fast-moving, economically determined monster. The city's imaginative representation has been marked by fragmentation of the old literary models. As Jean Michel Ganteau explains in *The European English Messenger* XI/1 (2002), much recent writing contributes to this revitalisation, focusing on and challenging the limits of *mimesis*, presenting worlds in which conventions of representation have gradually been replaced by new concepts of presentation and simulation. The late twentieth-century Scottish mode participates in this international phenomenon, using its own approach to the wider context. From the representation of a city of the margin and its limits – in all senses of the word, geographical, cultural and sociopolitical – it starts to dissolve into the representing material itself and finally to displace it into a 'no-place', literally, an absence of space or time. It is an exploration of creative (im)possibilities, a dark venture into social and cultural dead ends, associated to a vital explosion of freedom and self-assertion.

Two decades span the publication of Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* (1981) and Irvine Welsh's *Glue* (2001). The former contains the now almost mythical 'Glasgow is a magnificent city' monologue where Duncan Thaw analyses the situation of Glasgow as that of a city where 'nobody imagines living', while the latter gleefully shreds the academically derived notion of 'urban myth' as the character Terry Lawson wonders, 'if ah wis tae punch you in the mooth, wid that be an urban myth?' In these decades, literary output in Scotland has mostly concerned coming to terms with two opposed and somewhat complementary issues. The first, identified by Cairns Craig in *The Modern Scottish Novel* (1999), is that of the long list of Scottish writers who were bequeathed a nation with either no imagination, or an imagination in exile. This notion dates back to the Knoxian Calvinist stunting of the imagination, a feature that makes up the thematic concern of

Gray's *The Fall of Kelvin Walker* (1985). The second is the theoretical question of the diversity of Scottish cultural vision and production of which, with the benefit of hindsight, Thaw's monologue can be taken as one starting point. The conceptual basis of 'imagining the city', therefore, can be seen as at once historicised, descriptive or analytical, and prospective.

This is arguably the reason for the diversity of the artistic responses both foreshadowing and kick-started by the publication of *Lanark*. Agnes Owens, Alasdair Gray, William McIlvanney, Ian Rankin, Irvine Welsh, Iain Banks and James Kelman, among others, have over the years produced historiographic reconstructions of cities, a kind of 'unreal realism', an existential species of naturalism, but also metafictional texts or postcolonial, post-modernist or even cross-generic narratives. At the core of their specific and mutually challenging responses lies the shared desire to centre their various thematic concerns on the long-debated issue of urban Scotland, itself a far cry from their predecessors' 'urban Kailyard'. The city becomes a city, or rather myriads of cities whose representations bear upon one another. The reader comes across, in turn, a personified city in McIlvanney's Glasgow and Rankin's 'straight-laced old town' of *Dead Souls* (1999), a many-shaped abstraction in Gray's and Banks's fictional worlds, or a series of absences whose impact on individuals can only be judged by default in Owens's largely-unnamed spatial universes. The city moves from the status of historical starting point in McIlvanney's *Docherty* (1975) and his detective trilogy, *Laidlaw* (1977), *The Papers of Tony Veitch* (1983) and *Strange Loyalties* (1991), with their insistent stereotype of the city as a territory for hard men and working-class heroes, to that of an irrelevance in his later works, particularly *The Kiln* (1996). McIlvanney's male-centred fiction provides a sense of ordinariness, social division and injustice; it constructs a poetics that has been called a 'socialist aesthetic'. It is, however, articulated around the notion of compassion, and awareness of the forces that shape the characters.

His early novels' – now somewhat *passé* – conception of the city is debunked in the works of Ian Rankin and Irvine Welsh. Rankin uses the technique of overkill, stressing, for example, in *Black and Blue* (1997), that Glasgow is tame compared with American megalopolises. Meanwhile, Welsh's subheading 'clubland' in *Glue*, parallels the clichéd description of the city as 'gangland', while his extremely violent characters parody the hard-man stereotype, thus questioning assumptions about the urban working class. Welsh himself is a figurehead of the new fiction that emerged in literary fanzines (or 'litzines'). After post-punk *Trainspotting* (1993), written in Edinburgh working-class dialect, short stories, novels and two plays appeared, depicting rave parties, ecstasy and club music, the familiar universe of 1990s youth, the 'jilted', 'chemical', or even 'fucked' generation. Welsh, however, identified his inspiration not in drug, but in working-class culture. It certainly relies on a shock aesthetic, its emblematic figure Frank Begbie, the perfect embodiment of pure, mindless, unjustifiable and unatoned violence. *Glue* (2001) and *Porno* (2002) portray the underside of contemporary global city life, attempting to redefine popular culture. Like Welsh, Rankin explores the concatenation of city and violence. *Knots and Crosses* (1987) launches Inspector Rebus, who borrows substantially from the hard-boiled, American version. Within this model, Rankin erodes boundaries between public and private, innocence and guilt, certainty and doubt. His novels not only focus on violence and lawlessness; they reflect on social exclusion, deprivation and hopelessness, as does their unusually ruminative protagonist. Later novels like *Rebus*, *The St Leonard Years* (2001) or *Resurrection Men* (2002) confirm this trend, offering no traditional closure, no certainty.

All those (counter-)responses to Gray's reservations have gradually taken on a new, more interactive aspect: they question rather than represent the city, a fact consistent with the success of the detective genre with not just McIlvanney and Rankin but also, on occasions, Welsh and Banks. Gray himself inserts work on the ever-shifting metaphoric values of the city of Glasgow into his global metafictional project in *Lanark*, now a classic postmodernist text with its dual plot, books numbered out of sequence, and experiment with typeface and layout. 1982, *Janine* (1984) and *Something Leather* (1991) were described as pornographic, but, like *Lanark*, show deep commitment to what Alison Lee in *Realism and Power: Postmodern British Fiction* (1989) calls 'structures of power', whether 'familial, governmental' or derived from 'corporate control'. Later works, illustrated by himself as usual, *A Book of Prefaces* (2000) particularly, but also *Poor Things* (1992), further explore another set of preoccupations of Gray: the notions of plagiarism, intertextuality, rewriting and literary criticism.

Iain Banks achieved widespread and controversial notice with his first novel *The Wasp Factory* (1984). Writing prolifically both mainstream and (as Iain M. Banks) science fiction, his topics range from a deranged teenager's macabre musings (*The Wasp Factory*) to a man's physical wanderings in a strange dream-world (*The Bridge*, 1986), or the cunning manipulations of high finance (*The Business*, 1999). His novels share certain features: the exploration of the nature of violence (with the recurring motif of war and its symbolic Banksian appendage, the figure of the castle); the notion of physical or mental entrapment, often finding a literal equivalent within the narrative itself, using the cityscape as a vehicle (as in *Walking on Glass* (1985), or *The Bridge*). They exploit Scottish issues and Scottish types, like the figure of the double, while subverting genre and mixing high and low culture: *Canal Dreams* (1989) starts as a realistic novel, and develops into a thriller. At first sight less concerned with urban representations, Banks's writing provides for the city, a timeless, spaceless husk, an alternative vacuum to be filled.

James Kelman acknowledges in *Some Recent Attacks* (1992) his need 'to write as one of [his] own people'. His writing indicates a wish to imagine the city by supplying its missing or silenced voice and a concern – shared with fellow-Scottish writers – with the 'history-less' void of Scottish culture identified by Cairns Craig. This results in a consistent refusal by many writers to draw a line between their work's themes and its technical make-up. Kelman in *The Edinburgh Review* 71 called his first novel *The Busconductor Hines* (1984) 'a first person novel written in the third person', just as McIlvanney first conceived of Laidlaw as a voice, the only one capable of rendering what he feels in Glasgow, 'the accumulated weight of working-class experience'. This distinctly Scottish voice is *sine qua non* for Kelman, Welsh and Gray, even if all also use Standard English. For Kelman, writing in *Chapman 57*, 'getting rid of that standard third party narrative voice is getting rid of a whole value system'. This radical shift in cultural politics is reinforced by his unheroic, non-Marxist vision of the working class, undramatic conception of plot, and use of demotic speech, a strict linguistic objectivity forcibly extracting characters from the ghetto of dialogue. Hines, Tammas in *A Chancer* (1986), or Patrick Doyle in *A Disaffection* (1989) all suffer from solitude and incommunicability, yet humour, irony and self-mockery move Kelman's novels, dubbed 'novels of despair', away from social realism. *Translated Accounts* (2001) carries this isolation and fragmentation to an extreme, presenting a disrupted narrative that questions the notions of margin and centre and challenges language, taking the representative process as its central theme, and the narrative voice to as yet undisclosed territories in his fictional world.

What links Kelman, McIlvanney, Owens, Rankin, and, occasionally, Gray, Banks and Welsh, is their poetics of what Keith Dixon has called 'street metaphysics', asserting the

existence of other realities, resisting censorious suppression and assuming ordinary lives are dramatic. Kelman, for example, writes in *The Burn* (1991):

Different incisions seemed to have been cut into the wall and from inside one of them an insect was peering at him. [. . .] What if for every incision one such insect was lodged? Mind you, they were so minute, these insects, he was not afraid. He could ignore them easily. Or else he could get a spray gun and blast them all to smithereens. But what was the use of fantasising. He was not going to do anything. He couldn't do anything. He was stuck fast on this wooden chair, surrounded by everything hostile you could possibly conceive of in the universe.

This opening summarises a common programme for modern Scottish fiction: a minute depiction, which alone can account for the degree of jeopardy caused to the characters' collective and individual lives by capitalist modernity and Thatcherite politics. The key words are disaffection, alienation, dispossession and isolation; they find an echo in Gray's and Banks's intricate urban architecture, Rankin's housing estates depicted as mouse traps for the non-insider in *Knots and Crosses*, or Owens's or Kelman's derelict old tenements used by squatters. In short, the city is a death-wielding machine, which, like Banks's wasp factory, offers the insect-like individual trapped within neither possible explanation nor means of succour. This, as Dixon remarks, marks Scottish literature off from its European or even English neighbours even if some critics find it 'problematic that "our essential identity" [. . . should be] carried by the losers'. Indeed, Agnes Owens's first novel *Gentlemen of the West* (1985) as well as her short stories *Lean Tales* (1985) focus on the underclass and its daily lives. They contribute to mapping a bleak townscape peopled by anguished, solitary and self-doubting characters even though, like Kelman and McIlvanney, Owens does not write about the working class as a call to political commitment. Themes of exile and escape are prominent in her work: Mac, the central character of *Like Birds in the Wilderness* (1987), seeking his fortune with the prospect of the North Sea oil, is inexorably led back to his starting point. Circularity, but also internal exile, finds a new echo in her later fiction, taking a purely psychological and tragically creative dimension in *For the Love of Willie* (1998), or staging an aborted flight into fancy and freedom in 'Jen's Party' in *Bad Attitudes* (2003). Her novels dramatise the moment when her protagonists – who over time have become female – are still trapped in a pre-determined social, ideological and cultural representation from which they only intermittently manage to break free.

At the other end of the fictional spectrum stand the overblown descriptions of Banks's and Gray's science fiction. Gray's description of battlefields in *A History Maker* (1994) and of Lanark's aircraft's arrival in Provan in *Lanark* both suggest expansiveness and suspension, freedom from the constraints of gravity accompanied by a shattering of time. Banks adds a space-operatic dimension, creating a variety of modules and spacecrafts, and having his characters wander between planets and civilisations, the most important being 'the Culture'. Yet Banks turns space-operatic conventions on their heads, mostly confining characters' actions to a small scale and resisting the hero-saves-the-galaxy pattern. The sense of confinement, but also of helplessness that finally takes over in Banks's and Gray's science fiction suggests mental or sociopolitical entrapment.

To the temporal distance introduced by science fiction corresponds a critical distance. McIlvanney's and Owens's somewhat stereotyped figures may point to Kelman's or Gray's anti-heroes or even Welsh's parodic 'punk generation' working class, but what really characterises the latest species of working-class anti-heroes is their capacity for parody and

revenge. Mavis, in *People Like That* (1996), is still thinking under the pressure of expected definitions:

‘Who do you think you’re shoving?’
 ‘Scum,’ said the woman over her shoulder, which depressed Mavis.
 She recognized the truth of the statement.

By contrast, Welsh’s use of the same word forcibly divests it of its pre-determined connotations: Simon in *Porno* pronounces his friend Renton ‘scum. We all are . . . I mean that in a positive sense’, and applies adjectives such as ‘the righteous, intelligent clued-up section of the working classes’. More generally, much contemporary writing dismisses one of the main shortcomings of Scottish fiction, articulated by an *avatar* of the grumpy author of *Lanark*, ‘the grumbler’ in *Lean Tales*: ‘We decided that our city was completely cultureless because it refused to blend imagination with political commitment.’ In *Porno*, Spud wonders why political commitment somehow slipped out of his class’s hands:

Loads ay they political cats huv stalls set up, urgin ye tae buy revolutionary papers an that. It’s funny though, man, but they political gades aw seem like they come fae posh hames, students n that. No thit ah’m knockin it, but ah think, it should be the likes ay us that agitate for change, but aw we dae is drugs. No like in the General Strike n that. What happened tae us?

Yet, his own enterprise of writing a history of Leith, itself a tongue-in-cheek *mise en abyme* of Welsh’s putting of contemporary writers on the literary map, practically contradicts his own misgivings, and points to the fundamental strategic shift from industrial to creative action.

Owens employs fictional blurring, especially in her later fiction. In *For the Love of Willie*, the whole narrative can only be understood retrospectively, the reader eventually learning that what placed the female character in her utterly dependent position is a terrifying and potent gesture of self-assertion and rebellion: the smothering of her own baby. Paradoxically, however repellent the murder, it serves as a powerful act of liberation from the dominated position that seems inevitable in McIlvanney, or even in Kelman’s early novels (with the hopelessly circular structures of *The Busconductor Hines* and *A Chancer*). The use of the first person, the parody of older models (Welsh’s ‘clued-up’ working-class heroes are a club owner-cum-thief and a porn filmmaker), the blurring of narrative boundaries in Gray, Banks and even McIlvanney and Kelman, the violence – murder in Owens’s case – all stand for a symbolic act of seizure of power, a sort of acquired right for the ‘scum’ to assume social and narrative power, as Renton puts it :

The *raison d’être* of our class was simply to survive. Fuck that; our punk generation, not only did we thrive, we even had the audacity tae be disillusioned.

In the last decade, the concept of urban Scotland has extended to England in Banks’s *Dead Air* (2002) or Rankin’s *Tooth and Nail* (1992) and Europe (Berlin and Amsterdam in *Glue*, or Grenoble in *The Kiln*), even reaching out to Australia (in *Glue*). In this, it has contributed to the mapping, in Kristin Ross’s phrase, of the ‘new “world city” of postmodernism’ (cited in Francis Barkers (ed.), *Postmodernism and the Re-reading of Modernity* (1992)). The trope of the parallel world, or the alternative universe, is frequently used by contemporary Scottish writers. *Walking on Glass*, for example, has three separate narrative

strands echoing one another and contriving to build 'tower block[s] of books' serving as a Sartrean hell for its two elderly prisoners. The city becomes a paper-and-words construct that closes in on characters and readers alike like a huge trap: in the castle of books, some 'subsidiary characters' can be met. Similarly, in *Lanark's* epilogue, the author-conjurer famously mistakes the 'book' for the 'world', while, in 1982, *Janine*, Janine realises, in a metaleptic scene deriving from Muriel Spark's *The Comforters*, that she is only a character in a story. The characters' entrapment is sealed even more tightly by being turned into an inescapable, literally written, fate. Even the writer often considered as the most remote from postmodernism, McIlvanney, portrays the book as a trap in *The Kiln*, with 'Tom Docherty ou le livre vivant' wondering if he will 'ever learn to live outside of books and films'. McIlvanney rewrites Greek myth in *A Gift from Nessus* (1968); Rankin alludes to both hard-boiled detective fiction and *Laidlaw*; Gray, in his famous catalogue of plagiarisms in *Lanark*, but also most notably in *Poor Things*, takes rewriting both as a conceptual basis and as a narrative end. All assert, by putting formal issues at their core, the key part the trope of the city of books has to play, as the carrier of the basic contradiction that Scottish literature has to grapple with. It is very aptly described in *Walking on Glass* as both a deathly trap and liberation: 'The castle was no longer the prison it had seemed before; it was a library, a museum of literature, of literacy, of language.'

The best way for contemporary writers successfully to achieve this reconciliation of the irreconcilable involves a return to the basic component of their trade: words. This is indicated by Gray's illustration to *The Book of Prefaces* showing a monkey typing Tom Leonard's own parodic verse 'in the beginning was the word' into a computer, a drawing that also appears in a slightly different form in Banks's *The Business*. Kelman's *Translated Accounts*, built on the same narrative pact as *Poor Things*, relies, according to Graham McDonald in *Études Écossaises* 8 (2002), on the linguistic obscurities that challenge the notion of the representative process, as well as reflecting on the political significance of words. All its chapter heads are placed between inverted commas signalling them as more important as words than as titles in their own right, one being reduced to a fundamental if laconic equation: 'words, thoughts'. The shredding of the novel's words encompasses discontinuous narrative, dislocated narrative figures, their discourse a collection of non-sequiturs. The intrusion in Chapter 5 of signs derived from computer language, and the repetition of a sentence in immediate succession in a slightly altered form indicate a mechanical appropriation of meaning and language. This radical tearing up of the narrative suggests a creative reality that has itself become a trap, a 'computerisation' of words and thoughts condemned by Gray in his *Book of Prefaces*. In this context, the only future for creative writing is running amok, a disintegration in the literal sense of the words, as in *Translated Accounts*:

If she had written this as expressed by myself, foolish foolish, childish arrogance. *There is no god, only continuation, we shall live forever. Can a future be there for ourselves.* Yes. I had said this to her, yes, but the answer to her question is no, there will come no future. [. . .]

No. I have said, no.

In the concluding words, telling has become inexorably entangled, fraught with impossibilities and irreconcilable contradictions that survive only in the mere statement that 'it is true':

I cannot say about a beginning, or beginnings, if there is to be the cause of all, I do not see this. There are events, I speak of them, if I am to speak then it is these, if I may speak.

The accumulation of hypothetical markers in this extract may well paradoxically serve as the final, definitive assertion needed to clinch the rebellious act of freeing from the old historical, geographical, linguistic and literary constraints, in its affirmation of the supreme form of expression for the Scot: the (in)famous Caledonian antiszygy applied to the method of artistic creation.

As a consequence of the globalisation of plot, the early 1990s witnessed a shift of target for Scottish writers. The trope of entrapment of the 1980s has taken on a more literal as well as more sinister meaning. Contemporary writers work from within a status which borrows from the colonial, as is clearly indicated by Kelman's identification of himself as part of a tradition that includes Irish and Caribbean writers, or by Welsh's parallel between Scotland and the apartheid system in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (1995). Where *Janine* or *Trainspotting* were mostly concerned with self-hatred and self-abuse for Scotland's dependent or colonial status towards England, *Glue* has extended the subservience to an economic, political and cultural dependence that covers the whole world, claiming that 'we've different empires to serve now . . . we're something else. Europe, or the fifty-first US state'. As the original issue becomes transformed, so too do the motifs, with destruction, violence, death and ruthlessness best rendering the way out of the trap. Hence, the monstrous rape that serves as the plot's guideline in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* and the increasingly brutal and uncontrollable individuals that are replacing the conventional thugs of detective fiction in Rankin's novels. Hence also, the parody of a cop story turned into nightmare of violence in *Filth*. Hence, finally, the flat, detached tone with which the apparently harmless characters in Owens describe their gruesome killings. Significantly, the topos of violence to women, so obvious in the rape motif in Gray or Welsh, is sometimes reversed with extremely violent characteristics being transferred to women in Banks's heroines.

Ritualised violence is often connected with the apocalyptic theme: most novels by Banks rely on this paradigm, just as Kelman's *Translated Accounts* uses the concepts of dislocation and apocalypse as fictional starting points. In the new, apocalypse-driven context, violence becomes enmeshed within a complex network that involves representation, reality and dreams, but with an allegorical dimension that is turned on its head. Whereas *Janine* suggests a reassuring hierarchy of discourses, with the violence safely contained within the space of the narrator's daydreams, Banks's reader, in *The Bridge*, is hard put to tell which of the narrative worlds is the primary one. Similarly, *Canal Dreams* (1989) starts on a dream that is played backwards and seems to re-enact that opening as the novel progresses, indicating that reality may be just what it claims to be: a harrowing, if far-fetched, nightmare. The horrible suggestion is taken up by Welsh or Rankin, and even, although less crudely, by Owens in her later novels, to be conducted to its logical conclusion that reality is the nightmare that somehow can no longer play itself out in the more desirable, more benign world of dreams. *Marabou Stork Nightmares* makes a strong case for an interpretation of the space occupied by Roy's dreams as the safer place to be. Similarly, Banks's *Dead Air*, triggers the plot by using the September 11th events as reality-based peripeteia that will only serve it insofar as it allows the narrative voice an outburst that once again reverses the order of prevalence between reality and fiction:

'Where's Superman? Where's Batman? Where's Spiderman?' 'Where's Bruce Willis, or Tom Cruise, or Arnie, or Stallone?' 'The barbarians have seized the narrative.' 'Fuck, the bad guys are re-writing the script . . .!' 'Challenger and Chernobyl were SF, Aum Shinrikyo and the Tokyo Underground was manga; this is a disaster movie directed by Satan.'

In this novel therefore, with its central villain an all-powerful, at once remote and omnipresent, hoodlum-Mephistopheles figure, evil, as in Rankin, Welsh or the later fiction by Kelman, has become the norm within which the characters have to operate. This norm seems routed back to reality through its own fictionalisation as well as its borrowing from popular culture, particularly Hollywood blockbusters, and, in Rankin's case, by the contract offered by detective fiction, which makes safe removal into a fantasy world impossible.

The titles to some of Rankin's novels testify to this ambivalent approach, ranging as they do from the rather conventional *Let it Bleed* (with its reference to the popular musical culture of a Rolling Stones song) to the less straightforward *Dead Souls* or even *Resurrection Men* (the first reminding us of Gogol's master-work, the latter the Gothic nickname for Edinburgh grave-robbers). The trend over time is to point in the direction of pure evil, a darkly metaphysical yet reality-grounded evil. This description also fits *Translated Accounts*, with its dreamlike, unreal universe peopled by 'bodies', patrolled by mysterious 'securitys' who stand for an intricate lacework of violence, death, storytelling and reporting. In the face of such indistinctness, the only factor that is left is the telling, the locating of discourses within one big narrative space. The satanic or hellish world can no longer, as in *Lanark*, be located in the allegorisation of the real: it is all-pervasive. It is the world of Rankin, the motionless narratives of Owens and Kelman, the satanic universes of Banks or Welsh, or even the furnace in McIlvanney's *The Kiln*. Those narratives at once represent and *are* our new, global reality. The invasion (a recurrent theme in Banks's science fiction) is complete. The city is no longer a separate and identifiable entity. The marginal is no longer on the margin. There is no such thing as geographical space and chronological time, a geopolitical mapping of the universe. What remains is the post-apocalyptic desert, the 'no-space' best captured by Welsh in *Glue*: 'you see it all, that space, that freedom. You see how we're running out of space, out of time.'

The development of Scottish fiction over the last twenty years has seen a gradual darkening of the material used by writers. Banks, Rankin, Welsh and certainly McIlvanney started from popular genres, rock culture and blockbuster movies, to end up producing an increasingly Dostoyevskian vision of the city. Welsh uses the unacceptable, taking great care always to connect it with its urban environment, and granting it the status of a vernacular. His, and his contemporaries', writing relentlessly points towards a new direction, well away from the old descriptive and political models. It journeys through popular and high culture, but also through the bleakest aspects of postmodern art, with remarkably integrated narrative manipulations now gone well beyond Gray's postmodern games in *Lanark's* epilogue. With the support of newcomers such as Louise Welsh, Laura Hird, Denise Mina or John Burnside, Owens, Gray, McIlvanney, Kelman, Banks, Rankin and Welsh's dark vision of the city develops into a metaphor of the intricacies and impossibilities of creation and liberation. In this, they achieve the paradoxical task of both suggesting and contradicting Gray's cryptic message that 'we' have indeed come to *'The End of Our Tethers'*.

Further reading

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The Border Crossers and Reconfiguration of the Possible: Poet-Playwright-Novelists from the Mid-Twentieth Century on

Ian Brown and Colin Nicholson

A significant element in late twentieth-century Scottish writing is the relatively large number of writers who work across boundaries. Working in different genres, even in different art forms and languages, they show a high level of achievement in each. A non-exhaustive list would include Robert McLellan, Jessie Kesson, Robert Kemp, Sidney Goodsir Smith, Iain Crichton Smith, George Mackay Brown, Stewart Conn, Donald Campbell, Tom McGrath, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Edwin Morgan, Kenneth White, John Byrne, Liz Lochhead, Christopher Whyte, George Gunn and Jackie Kay. This border crossing reflects deeply felt cultural and political issues (and fissures) in Scottish life and art.

Arguably, any act of creation involves crossing existing boundaries of perceived possibility or acceptability in any genre. Out of such transgression comes generic growth. A sense of where the core lies and what is liminal is central to self-definition, whether individual, generic or cultural. Exploratory crossing of boundaries is, therefore, a way of knowing, at least with less uncertainty, one's identity – or identities. Working in more than one literary genre is, beyond any possible economic advantage from extending a potential audience, to assert the existence of another identity, or at least that one's identity is complex and multiple. It represents resistance to simple categorisations, interrogating established expressive modes and identity as both artist operating within established models and individual within a settled culture. Such acts of creation assert not only variety of skills and complexity of identity, pushing boundaries within settled genres or art forms, but also the need to find expression in different modes or languages. So they express the right and capacity to break conventions, however imaginatively extended, of established modes, creating new interlinks and understandings. One of the results of boundary transgression is to allow, even require, reconfiguring of the possible.

Given this, one can see why there should, increasingly since the middle of the twentieth century, have been a surge of border crossing and boundary transgression in Scottish literature. At one level, of course, this relates to the importance of the term, 'Border', in various Scottish discourses. Whatever it may mean in other Englishes, in Scottish varieties 'Border' as a single term means specifically the Scotland–England border. This is not simply geographical. It relates to boundaries of hegemony, cultural acceptability, aesthetic taste and manifold other dimensions of culture, expression and identity. The Border in this sense

has existed for a millennium and more, its significance differing at different historical periods, but that significance inevitably related to versions of the idea of 'Scotland'. Further, the 'Border' reflects other, internal, borders between Scotland's long-established regions, often with their own Scots or Gaelic dialects alongside Scottish varieties of English. It can also be seen to relate to borders of class and religion, categories of economic power and exploitation and implicit and explicit hegemonies, sometimes based on supposed religious affiliation, politics or combinations of both. Twentieth-century developments have inflected the meaning of 'Scotland' in further ways. Specifically, after the First World War and the development of many 'new' small independent nation-states in Europe, attention was paid to the possibility of Scotland becoming one of those 'new' old states.

Initially, a small minority developed such thinking. After Suez in 1956 and the British Empire's disintegration between 1947 and the mid-1960s, however, rethinking of the nature of Scottish identities and liminalities developed apace. Modern recognition of Scottish complicity in imperialism and colonisation has removed the comforting myth of the innocent victim nation, colonised by the English. Indeed, some historians now use the terms 'Anglo-Scottish' – even 'Scottish' – Empire. This enables a more mature understanding of the identities of Scotland as a world colonial power, working in association with English power brokers. This, in turn, engages a profound questioning of cultural and historical identity and the nature and expression of 'Scottishness'. Recent constitutional changes demonstrate such questioning is not simply a literary matter. So far as it is a literary matter, however, it provides an incentive for the remarkable quantity of border crossing in Scottish literature since the middle of the twentieth century. Such border crossing tests the cultural subtext, the idea of what is a boundary and, so, where the identity of genre, individual and culture lies. As the 'United' Kingdom's nature is questioned, so writers who cross genre, language and art-form boundaries reflect that enquiry. Interrogating artistic borders, they interrogate the national idea.

Some important border crossers from the middle of the twentieth century are now mainly remembered primarily for one genre, although their significance can be better understood in their broader role. Robert McLellan, for example, is now seen chiefly as key to the development of Scots language drama, a particular aspect of his playwriting being his exploration of a revitalised synthetic Scots, based in his family's Lanarkshire dialect, to open new avenues of expression, particularly for serious drama. His plays embody a new vision of Scottish theatre's potential to deal in Scots languages with Scottish themes. *The Flowers o Edinburgh* (1948), for example, explores, in the context of imperial Scots' entrepreneurial self-enrichment, the Scots language's resourceful nature. McLellan's prose is less regarded now, but his writing constantly seeks new means of expression of the identities and, as he saw it, conflicts of cultural loyalty that Scots faced in a society of linguistic diversity, shifting political centres and complex possible allegiances. Similarly, although Robert Kemp wrote several novels, he is now remembered mainly as a playwright. While his own writing was imbued with a quizzical view of contemporary Scotland, it is the francophile Kemp's translation that seems to have had the most lasting impact. His versions of Molière's *L'École des femmes* and *L'Avare*, *Let Wives Tak Tent* (1948) and *The Laird o Grippy* (1955) are still produced and set a model of translation and adaptation of classic drama followed by such as Liz Lochhead, John Byrne and Edwin Morgan. Kemp introduced a new perception of what Scots and, so, Scottish literature and theatre were capable. Kemp's pioneering made translations discussed later in this chapter possible. His re-imagining of possibility includes his acting version of David Lindsay's *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*, produced in 1948 and several times since. Here, he edits to an evening's span a text that

required a day's full performance. Thus, he re-introduces audiences to the power and high quality of Lindsay's work and, hence, the long-standing potential of Scotland's dramatic identities and traditions.

A number of writers initially better known as poets were prominent for their experiments in other genres in the fifties and later. A pioneer was Sydney Goodsir Smith, whose poetry achieved a lyrical passion through his determined engagement with Lallans, under the influence of Hugh MacDiarmid and despite his New Zealand birth. His novel *Carotid Cornucopius* (1947) was followed in time by two substantial dramatic pieces. *The Wallace* (1960), arguably less a play than a pageant, presents Wallace beset by uniformly wicked English. Its narrowly nationalist stance reads oddly now. His radio play, *The Stick-Up* (1961), while somewhat melodramatic, provided his libretto for Robin Orr's opera, *Full Circle* (1968). Goodsir Smith's work experiments with the nature of both Scotland and literary genre, seeking, often lyrically and sometimes in outrageous satire, to explore underlying cultural and social values and question existing political order. Notwithstanding his creative boundary transgression, however, Goodsir Smith is mostly remembered now for his poetry.

Although Iain Crichton Smith wrote several stage plays and contributed to radio drama, often through Stewart Conn at BBC Radio Scotland, the generic boundaries he habitually crosses are those between narrative fiction and poetry. The border crossing that most distinguishes his work, however, marks a grounding fissure in Scotland's historical culture: the division between Gaelic and English languages. His bilingualism in a declining minority language and a globalising world language marked his personal experience to the extent that he soon discovered that, in writing about his life, as he repeatedly does, he was writing about the overwhelming effects of anglophone linguistic imperialism. Crichton Smith's willing participation in this process, through a prodigious output of poetry collections, novels and short stories, may have prompted by way of compensation his continued production of poetry, drama and fiction in Gaelic. It may also have motivated him to bring both historic and contemporary Gaelic sensibility to the attention of anglophone audiences through his translations of *Ben Dorain*, the eighteenth-century Gaelic poem by Duncan Ban Macintyre (1969), and a selection of Sorley MacLean's classic twentieth-century sequence, *Poems to Eimhir* (1971). His first collection of poems, *The Long River* (1955), was complemented by *Burn Is Aran* (1960), a collection of Gaelic poems and stories. Later prose includes *Consider the Lilies* (1968) exploring with great compassion and clarity the effects of the Highland Clearances on an old woman; and the surreally comic *Murdo and Other Stories* (1981). Later, he used the character of Murdo in a play, *Lazybed* (1997). Working in Gaelic and English and all his genres throughout his life, he constantly probes and celebrates the very nature of the varieties of Scottish literature.

At Scotland's northern extreme, the Orcadian George Mackay Brown also crossed generic borders, though for different reasons. *Loaves and Fishes* (1959), his first professionally published collection of poems, led to an efflorescence of poetry, fiction and drama, and collaboration with the composer Peter Maxwell Davies. Mackay Brown's distinctive elaboration of an Orkney tapestry more or less consciously attached his work to, as it plays variations on, the medieval *Orkneyinga saga*, which centres its narrative focus on Orkney and becomes a kind of secular scripture commemorating a different ethnic derivation in Scotland's historical formation. In this design, characters of Mackay Brown's invention take their place alongside, and sometimes interact with, figures from Norse myth and legend. His poetry habitually incorporates the Old Norse compound figurative phrasing known as *kenningar*; while at the same time, but towards a seemingly opposite effect, he

finds modern equivalents for the old Scandinavian 'rune', originally carved on weapons or in memorial stones and believed to possess magic, incantatory powers. In his handling, these can come close to haiku and ideogram. The purpose behind these transhistorical and cross-generic borrowings and adaptations was to find a way of marrying the pagan values of Norse narrative with Christian, and specifically Roman Catholic, sacramentalism. The spare language of *Greenwoe* (1972) achieves the directness of a saga, while in the novel *Magnus* (1973) his tapestry effect works vividly in the narrative combinations of poem, stage-set dialogue and a fictional retelling of the legendary, and bloody, coming together of pagan Norsemen with Christian martyrdom. Here is a bardic conjunction of epic narrative and twentieth-century reportage, and a correlation of the murder of Magnus with concentration-camp brutality. Mackay Brown's poetry achieves ever-new syntheses of his concerns throughout his life, while his novel *Beside the Ocean of Time* (1994) demonstrates his retention of his full powers till the end.

While it is possible to see Crichton Smith and Mackay Brown as above all poetic in their language use, it is impossible to define Stewart Conn as predominantly playwright or poet. From his first play, *Break-Down* (1961), a free-flowing version of the Orpheus tale set in Glasgow, until *Clay Bull* (1998), he has produced nearly thirty plays for stage, radio and television. He is a leading figure in Scottish theatre with a number of key texts including *I Didn't Always Live Here* (1967), *The Burning* (1971), *Play Donkey* (1977) and *The Dominion of Fancy* (1992). His poetry publication has a similar time-frame, beginning with the collections, *Thunder in the Air* and *The Chinese Tower* (both 1967), continuing with *Stoats in the Sunlight* (1968), through several more collections until *Ghosts at Cockcrow* (2005). While Conn's creativity runs freely across genre borders, it often appears that he finds in each genre a complementary expression of his themes, rather than exploring his themes equally in each genre. This point is emphasised by the linguistic choices he makes. Several of his plays, particularly the seminal historical drama, *The Burning*, are in varieties of Scots, while his poetry is in English. His poetry is specific, emotionally immanent and minutely observed, full of expression of the moment and the detail of sense and intellect. Meanwhile, his drama is highly theatrical, concerned with large-scale issues and public themes, whether Jacobean witchcraft trials, the politics of white mercenaries in Africa, or revolution and oppression in Georgian England or apartheid South Africa. Conn deals with the precariousness of our lives and affections, but it is in his poems that the private dimensions of this are explored. His work shows a literary parallel to the linguistic phenomenon of diglossia, which such experts as Manfred Görlach have sought to argue exists in the Scots' use of English and Scots. Conn achieves powerfully in his different genres, but does so, it would seem, seeking different results and using varying language sets.

Tom McGrath is not only another poet-playwright, but also a jazz musician. Coming to prominence in the 1960s, McGrath contributed to the legendary 1965 Beat Poets' event, Poetry International at the Albert Hall. His poems of this time sit alongside Ginsberg or Ferlinghetti's almost expressionist experiment, part of the internationalist sixties poetry movement. These experimental modes arguably relate from the beginning to the improvisational modes of jazz. It is striking, then, that his first close drama involvement was as musical director of the seminal *The Great Northern Welly Boot Show* (1972). Crossing genre and art-form boundaries to create a new theatrical synthesis and involving close cooperation between poet-playwright Tom Buchan and his company, it provided a model for the later group-focused creativity of the work of 7:84 Theatre Company under John McGrath. While Tom McGrath's first play *Laurel and Hardy* (1976) employs more orthodox dramaturgy in playing with the two comic stars' relationship, his subsequent work follows

a creative journey of his own. Jazz musician and beat poet, he finds whatever dramatic mode suits his intention rather than working in conventional pathways. In quick succession, he wrote three more plays, marking a new dynamic in his work. *The Hardman* (1977), written with Jimmy Boyle, finds a tough poetic Glaswegian dialect to explore themes of violence, oppression and justice. *The Android Circuit* (1978) seeks a theatrical mode for science fiction. *Animal* (1979) engages in creative experiment, using long periods of action without words, to contrast the lives of a troop of chimpanzees and the scientists observing them, not to the humans' credit. McGrath continues exploring his themes in the forms he finds answer best his needs: his translation of Daniel Danis's *Stones and Ashes* (1995) represents another questing strand of an artist whose art refuses restrictive boundaries.

Ian Hamilton Finlay not so much refused to accept restrictive literary boundaries as transgressed and transcended the boundaries of literature entirely. Having studied briefly at Glasgow School of Art before war service, he began as a poet and writer of short stories, many appearing in *the Glasgow Herald* in the fifties. His first poetry collection was *The Dancers Inherit the Party* (1960, extended version 1969), followed by *Glasgow beasts, an a burd* (1961) in Glaswegian Scots. His plays include *Walking through Seaweed* (1962) and *The Estate Hunters* (1970). In 1962 he launched, as editor, *Poor.Old.Tired.Horse.*, a periodical promoting concrete poetry and innovative interaction of the verbal and visual. This introduced new forms to Scotland and developed fresh international links. His poetry collection, *Rapel: 10 fauve and suprematist poems* (1963), marked the new synthesised direction in his work. *Telegrams from my windmill* (1964), with its modernised intercultural reference to Alphonse Daudet's *Lettres de mon moulin*, marked developing interest in the interaction of languages and cultures both synchronically and diachronically. Henceforward, he drew together his creative strands to work across established genre and art-form boundaries.

In 1966, he and his wife Sue, his close collaborator, settled at Stonypath, near Dunsyre. There they developed derelict buildings and four acres of grounds into what became known, after the 1978 launch of his 'Five Year Hellenisation Plan', as *Little Sparta*. Finlay set his work in a long classical and European tradition, as this ironic title suggests. Following his concrete-poetry experiments, Finlay considered the very shape and design of the word as integral to the meaning of the poem. He worked in a wide variety of media besides paper, including masonry, tile, brick, wood, carved rock and concrete itself. The intermeaning revealed in puns fascinated him: one poem draws on the double meanings of 'snow' and 'bark' as types of boat. Taking Virgil as inspiration, he engraved quotations from the *Eclogues* around Little Sparta and placed them in physical contexts that expand and complement their literal meaning. Having experimented with broadside and one-word poems since the late sixties, he embedded his poetry in a wide range of quasi-natural contexts he himself had shaped. This he did with frequent impishness: the kitchen garden of Little Sparta is entitled *Kailyard*. His location of poetry in the physical landscape allowed him to experiment with the passage of time. His poem,

Evening will come
They will sew the blue sail

for example, is carved into a wooden column that is weathering, changing both shape and intelligibility.

Finlay is not simply a writer of prose, poetry and drama; his mature work showed him as designer, print-maker, medal-maker, painter, sculptor, horticulturist, arboriculturist,

landscape gardener and craftsman. He used several languages including Latin, French, Italian, English and Scots. His boundary transgressions question the very nature and range of literature itself and are highly influential internationally. *The Guardian* has called him an 'avant-gardener' and he himself pointed out that 'garden' is an anagram of 'danger'. His work explores the slippage and ambiguity of meaning and life itself: concrete bird-tables shaped as miniature aircraft-carriers both domesticate the menace of war and introduce sinister threat to the everyday. Finlay crossed borders and explored liminalities to startle with the complexity of meaning underlying 'normality'. He investigated relationships between nature and change, revolution and stability, control, containment and release. He also remains the only Scottish writer to have been shortlisted for the Turner Prize (1985).

As an editor in the sixties, Finlay encouraged the experiments of both George Mackay Brown and Edwin Morgan. The latter's poetry indeed shows throughout his career an experimental spirit which quite matches Finlay while staying mainly, though not exclusively, within the boundaries of printed text. Morgan nonetheless stretches those boundaries to their limits by including in his creative output apocalyptic verse, concrete poetry, visual sound poems, nonsense verse, cut-up poems, epic blank verse, science-fiction narratives, different forms of sonnet sequences, surrealist writing, collage and a panoply of technical experimentalism. He shows the radical spirit of Dadaism alive and well in Glasgow to the end of the twentieth century and beyond. Morgan early acknowledged crossing borders as fundamental to his creative output in, for example, his translation into modern, flexible English of the Anglo-Saxon seedbed script, *Beowulf* (1952), his *Poems from Eugenio Montale* (1959) and his rendering of Vladimir Mayakovsky's revolutionary modernism into Scots (1972). He makes the political and cultural marker of difference explicit in his collection of critical essays on Scottish literature, *Crossing the Border* (1990). Tommy Smith set Morgan's experimental poem sequence, *Planet Wave* (1997), to music, commissioned by the Cheltenham International Jazz Festival, while later in the same year Morgan, accompanied by the guitarist Carlos Bonell, performed a suite of poems based on the music and lives of Turlough O'Carolan and William Walton. In keeping with Morgan's avowed priorities, the republic of letters he proposes is inclusive and limitlessly extensible, the Scotland he imagines and envisages is accordingly self-confidently plural and scornful of all limit, as demonstrated in his poem for the Scottish Parliament building's opening (2004). Morgan's homosexual orientation was still criminalised when he began to discover his creative potential; the protean commonwealth he inscribes constitutes a celebratory, not to say riotous, overthrow of limited potentialities in a permissive aesthetic correlated with a libertarian imaginative citizenship.

If transgressive border crossing is endemic in Morgan's writing, so is commitment to keep his audience with him, no matter how demanding his material. His success in this venture is signalled by the fact that his 1985 *Selected Poems* has sold in excess of 20,000 copies. Interestingly, despite Morgan's fecund and prolific experimentation in different verse forms for well over half a century, he has not been tempted to publish prose fiction. Nonetheless, he has always been loyal to the storyteller's art and always perceived his development of poetic voices in relation to dramatic potential. He came to the stage relatively late, preparing acting texts for The Medieval Players (a touring theatre company prominent in the 1980s specialising in performing medieval play-texts) of a Dutch play, *The Apple-Tree* (1982), and then of *Master Peter Pathelin* (1983). Performed in an attempt at authentic period style, these give little hint of the explosion of linguistic and dramatic vitality represented in his next translation, *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1992). This extends the theatrical

range of Scots, based in a vibrant Glasgow patois, in a way that draws on and expands the experiments of Scots language dramatists since Robert McLellan. With wit and precision, Morgan identifies the various linguistic and dramatic modes best suited to episodic changes in Rostand's play and brings it to a theatrical life that some critics have thought actually exceeds the exuberant theatricality of the original. *Phaedra* (2000) finds sonority and power that complements his *Cyrano*. His play trilogy, *A.D.* (2000), explores an alternative version of the life of Christ, here a humanised figure, finding and supporting love in the context of religious hypocrisy and imperial hegemony and in the midst of political conflict and social manipulation. It is typical of Morgan's creative chutzpah that, late in his career, he should produce successful drama of such variety and experimental power.

Born in the Gorbals in 1936 and raised on Scotland's west coast, Kenneth White is the only Scottish poet to have elaborated a theory of writing out of the notion of border crossings. Educated at the universities of Glasgow, Munich and Paris, he first established his reputation in France, where from 1983 to 1996 he held the Chair of Twentieth-Century Poetics at Paris-Sorbonne. The 'geopoetics' he has spent a lifetime refining grows out of his elaborate sense of a physical and cultural geography of intersecting centres and peripheries, both 'centre' and 'periphery' always remaining interchangeable terms. Since geopoetics involves nothing less than what White has called 'the orchestration of all cultures, an original synthesis', it is fitting he shares Alexander von Humboldt's conviction that the external world and our thoughts and feelings are as inextricably linked as thought and language. In a foreword to *Open World: The Collected Poems, 1960–2000*, White sees Ezra Pound as literary progenitor, 'but without his obstinate political aberrations, and with an attempt at more coherence'. At an early stage, with a rigorous selectivity and an already global reach similar to Pound's, he built on a number of major international predecessors' work. These include Eliot – the wanderer in the wasteland, not the figure canonised by the academy – and Yeats with his realisation, after his own early opening to a Celtic imagination of space, that there was 'more enterprise in going naked'. (White, though, continued to involve Celtic senses of ecology in arresting ways.) He drew too on MacDiarmid's radical impatience with the parameters of English poetic discourse, on William Carlos Williams's 'new leap of the poetic intelligence' that preserved space for a spoken demotic, and on Charles Olson's open-verse theory. Characteristically, White traces the break from modernity into a potentially different mapping of possibilities to 1917, not for Russia's transformation in that year, but for Einstein's publication of *Cosmological Considerations*.

'As a Scot,' White asserts, 'I felt closer to America than England,' and he was to take into hitherto unexplored spaces Pound's notion of 'periplum', consciousness always breaking into new imaginative territory. When White first began to talk about 'geopoetics' in the late 1970s, he found preliminary stimulus and encouragement in Walt Whitman. Immersed in Zen Buddhism, he was also powerfully drawn to the Taoist literary form that he sees making fun of heavy logic, moving rapidly through multiple spaces and mixing up all genres. In his poetry in English, White's world-ranging fields of energy and sometimes arcane philosophical investigations repeatedly ground themselves in Scottish specificities. As the poem, 'Scotia Deserta', tracks a sixth-century Irish missionary moving around the coastline of the Western Isles, its speaker accepts that Brandan 'was maybe a believer/but that's neither here nor there':

first and foremost
 he was a navigator
 [. . .]

tracing a way
 between foam and cloud
 with an eye to outlines.

House of Tides: Letters from Brittany and Other Lands of the West (2000) begins with the suggestion that 'In a general way, it's the Atlantic that governs our territory, creating the weather, shaping the coasts, wavelengthing minds'. The speaker of 'Scotia Deserta' listens to the tidal whirlpool of the Corrievreckan off the Argyll coast and contrasts information on Admiralty charts with 'the senses / that do no calculations / but take it all in', so that the whirlpool becomes 'a rushing white flurry // birthplace of a wave-and-wind philosophy'. In the radical ecology White explores, the figure of the Celtic monk Pelagius (c. 354–418) exercises a continuing fascination, both for his daring refusal of the Augustinian doctrine of Original Sin, and for his counter-insistence on liberation from guilt and the primacy of free will for individual self-fulfilment. This set Pelagius against the Christian Church of his day and his time's dominant thought-world. The final poem in *Open World* closes with a reminder of White's continuing loyalties:

Pelagian discourse
Atlantic poetics
 From first to last.

Poet-playwrights like Liz Lochhead, Donald Campbell and George Gunn have each in their different ways also crossed important borders in their work. Lochhead, having like Finlay studied at Glasgow School of Art, established herself as a poet, her first collection being *Memo for Spring* (1972), before *Blood and Ice* (1982) launched her as playwright. Lochhead, like Conn, is now both leading poet and playwright, but in addition she has developed a line of important translations of classic drama. Beginning with *Tartuffe* (1985), she has explored the potential for Scots to deal with and enliven her source language's expression. *Tartuffe* achieves a linguistic vitality that foreshadows Morgan's *Cyrano* and Lochhead has continued a list of translations from Molière and others that includes *Medea* (2000), *Miseryguts* (2002) – a version of *Le Misanthrope* – and *The Thebans* (2003). Her work brings her own perspective to male hegemony: part of her *Medea*'s special power is the outsider's sardonic stance towards a chauvinist society. Lochhead's free transgression of established boundaries facilitates understanding of the outsider who thinks and works outside conventional structures of thought and action. Campbell and Gunn similarly develop their work to transgress and challenge established boundaries. Campbell has described the particular importance to him of exploring the resources of Scots in his work and *The Jesuit* (1976) is a radical reworking of the power relations which underlay Reformation Scotland in ways which still resonate. This play's dramaturgical technique represents a post-Brechtian subversion of historical drama modes prevalent at the time of its first production. Other work of Campbell's has reflected his family roots in the far north of Scotland. Gunn too draws on his deep roots in Caithness, seeking in his work to rediscover and reassert the historical and cultural roots of that region in the Nordic world. Both his poetry and drama find stimulation in those roots and their modern counterparts. His experimentation goes further. *Song of Wick* (2003), for example, integrates poetry and drama (and music) in a performance presented by Wick primary school children, rediscovering their own history from earliest days until the present. Lochhead, Campbell and Gunn, in individual ways, re-explore cultural power relations by moving freely between

genres. Their work offers explicit challenge to institutional power and celebrates the regional and gender variety of Scotland.

Christopher Whyte also leads in reconfiguring possibility in Scottish literature and culture. Not only is he a poet in English, but he has learned Gaelic, becoming an important poet in that language. He has translated literature from, and sometimes into, several European languages, including Catalan, Croatian, French, Gaelic and Italian. His first novel, *Euphemia MacFarrigle and the Laughing Virgin* (1995), satirises the hypocrisy of the Catholic establishment, particularly in dealing with human sexualities, achieving tragicomic effect with aplomb. His *The Warlock of Strathearn* (1997) goes further in boundary crossing as his narrator changes sex. Whyte continues to produce poetry and novels of great quality and to add to international exchange in a stunning range of translations. Like Morgan, he has honoured gay sexuality in his work and continues to mark the diversification of Scottish culture. In this, his work asserts the importance of respecting the integrity of Gaelic's international standing. In *In the Face of Eternity: a bilingual anthology / Suelice Vjecnosti: dvojezicna antologija* (1993), his Gaelic poems are translated by Croatian colleagues and published, despite the English title, without the intervening filter of an English version. Similarly, *L'escarabat xinès* (2000) is published with Catalan translations facing the Gaelic poems. Whyte asserts the wide variety of Scotland's many identities.

It must be clear that, since the middle of the twentieth century, there has been in Scottish literature considerable crossing of boundaries, and with increasing momentum. Besides the authors discussed so far in this chapter, there are poet-playwrights like Douglas Dunn, who has also translated Racine's *Andromache* (1990) and poet-novelists like John Burnside, Ron Butlin, Andrew Greig, Brian McCabe, Carl MacDougall, Dilys Rose, Alan Spence, Catherine Lucy Czerkawska, Kevin MacNeil and Jackie Kay, the last three having also written drama. It was perhaps a short step from the page to the stage for the three voices in Kay's poem sequence *The Adoption Papers* (1991), and she brings her feminist perspective to bear on gender formation and mixed-race ethnicity through the different narrative voices of her first novel *Trumpet* (1998). There, Joss Moody, a jazz trumpeter with a Scottish mother and African father, born female, by choice a man, embodies identity not as essence but as performance. There are key figures such as John Byrne who, while his writing focuses in dramatic genres, has come to literature, like Ian Hamilton Finlay and Liz Lochhead, through fine art. Indeed, like Finlay, his artwork hangs in major galleries. Maud Sulter's visual art complements her poetry as she explores European stereotypes and black icons through collage and photography. Alasdair Gray, besides being a novelist who in his early days also wrote plays, is also a leading visual artist. James Kelman is a novelist and playwright. Maya Chowdhry is poet, playwright and visual artist. Don Paterson is a poet, playwright and leading musician. Luke Sutherland is both musician and novelist. John Purser is poet, playwright and composer. Bernard MacLaverty has added film direction to his prose and dramatic writing. Several writers have experimented in developing opera libretti, Bill Bryden, for example, for Robin Orr's *Hermiston* (1975), John Clifford from his own play (1989) for James MacMillan's *Ines de Castro* (1996) and Janice Galloway for Sally Beamish's *Monster* (2002). Meantime, Aonghas MacNeacail, his first Gaelic publications having involved collaboration with graphic artist Simon Fraser, experiments with other media including theatre, film and television. He has written lyrics in Gaelic, Scots and English for many composers including Ronald Stevenson and Phil Cunningham and Gaelic opera libretti for Alasdair Nicolson (*Sgàthach*, 1997) and Bill Sweeney (*An Turus* (The Journey) 1998). Another Gaelic poet, Màrtainn Mac an t-Saoir (Martin Macintyre) also writes short stories and is beginning to write drama in Gaelic. Other work has

experimented in writing for dance. C. P. Taylor has written a play, *Columba* (1973), in which dance forms a primary expressive role. Ian Brown has written the scenario for a ballet, *Positively the Last Final Farewell Performance* (1972), as well as translating Greek tragedy, creating site-specific concrete poetry for the Gateway Theatre foyer and producing *Poems for Joan* (2001), whose poetry is in both Scots and English. The crossing of boundaries relates to both actual and metaphoric languages.

The spirit and practice of transgressing closed categories of genre and identity are, then, both clearly fundamental to contemporary Scottish literary practice. They not only mark the issues and fissures in Scottish cultural life, but also reorganise, re-imagine and refresh insight into how Scotland and its literature may be understood and enjoyed. Such cross-boundary creativity can be seen in a particular contemporary form in the work of a writer like Grant Morrison. His plays *Red King Rising* (1989), about Alice and Charles Dodgson, and *Depravity* (1990) have both won awards, being published with four of his short stories in *Lovely Biscuits* (1998). Also a musician, he is, however, better known as a graphic novelist since the early 1980s, having achieved a worldwide reputation creating, *inter alia*, *X MEN* and *The Invisibles*. He has collaborated with his fellow-Scot Mark Miller as a graphic novelist working on popular comic figures like *Judge Dredd*. He is fascinated by the exploration and expansion of cross-cultural references and the interaction of popular art, plot, imagery and language across normally perceived boundaries of literature.

Bill Findlay and Martin Bowman's translation of Michel Tremblay's plays meantime reflects another aspect of border crossing, that of establishing new parameters in the target culture, so complementing the work of others discussed in this chapter. While in earlier times translation of classics was undertaken to dignify and enrich the vernacular, now much translation into Scots reflects a culture sure of its identity, both seeking to test itself in an international context and feeling able and free to assimilate at will aspects of other cultures. It is striking, then, how many of the genre border crossers are also leading translators, or even create work in more than one language. Arguably, the very act of translating changes the culture into which one translates. This is shown not only on such specific scales as the impact of Tremblay translations on Scottish theatre, but also more generally in translation's effect in changing the consciousness of target language potential. This has meant that very often, through translation as well as original work, border crossers have asserted the range and power of modern Scots, and extended both. George Steiner has noted that translating a poem brings one face to face 'with the genius, bone-structure and limitations of [one's] native tongue'. These writers not only change perceptions of genre and language, but, subtly and incrementally, confront their very reality, develop their potential and, so, change the world-view of both writer and reader.

By transgressing established boundaries of genre, language and even art form, border crossers explore and celebrate tensions between change and stable order. They recognise, in Morgan's words, 'that things are always in danger of being transformed into something else'. They celebrate alterity. Their work welcomes and embraces the hybridity of cultures and of Scotland and recognises the fecundity of impurity and the necessity of intermingling. In imagining and accepting new and unexpected combinations of form, culture and language, they reflect a dynamic vision. Perhaps this is possible because of the shifting borders and boundaries that always underlie Scottish culture and society. Certainly, these writers highlight in their work the truth that any unified conception of Scotland, or Scottish literature, or any other literature, is a lie. Truth for them has been found in interrogating and transgressing established boundaries and establishing, for the time being, new borders.

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In the Shadow of the Bard: The Gaelic Short Story, Novel and Drama since the early Twentieth Century

Michelle Macleod and Moray Watson

The twentieth century has seen a dramatic decrease in Gaelic speakers in Scotland: the 1901 census recorded 202,700 speakers; the 2001 census only 58,652. In 1901, although only a minority of Scotland's population spoke Gaelic (4.5 per cent of the total population), the Gaelic community was stable; by 2001, the language community was in flux and facing its language's death. The relative health of the Gaelic language contextualises developments charted in this chapter. Awareness of the language predicament is apparent as a theme in some prose (though not perhaps as prevalent as in the poetry of the same era). Despite the drop in speakers, however, the current Gaelic-speaking population is probably more literate than previous ones. This may explain the growing trend for literary prose writing. Prior to the twentieth century, there were discursive prose and traditional tales, but no tradition of literary prose and drama.

The early twentieth century witnessed an awakening experimentation with Gaelic prose style, part of the predominant Celtic Twilight movement. Drama too was quickly established as a popular genre by the 1920s. Yet, it was not until the second half of the twentieth century that Gaelic literary prose truly began to develop. The comparative health of a substantial corpus of short stories is due in part to the periodical *Gairm* (1952–2002), edited by Ruairidh MacThòmais (Derick Thomson) – with Fionnlagh MacDhomhnaill (Finlay MacDonald) until 1964. Through this quarterly new writers found print and new styles were pioneered. Yet, these developments have never reached as wide an audience as poetry of the same period; neither have they received the same level of critical study or acclaim. This must be due in part to limited readership. While bilingual publishing is the norm for Gaelic poetry, thus increasing its readership considerably, this is not the case for prose. This chapter presents a survey of three less considered genres: the short novel, story and drama.

Short story

To the outsider, the Gaelic community presents many contradictions. One of the most obvious is the peculiar and comfortable juxtaposition of Christian religion with ancient

superstition and folk-beliefs. These confluences, seen in poetry and fiction, are common in twentieth-century short stories. Cailein T. MacCoinnich (Rev. Colin N. MacKenzie, later mentioned in relation to the novel) and Eilidh Watt used superstition and folk-belief extensively in their stories. Indeed, there is a clear suggestion that Watt, at least, regards phenomena such as second sight as perfectly natural and verifiable. Her stories (such as in *Gun Fhois* (Without Rest, 1987)) marry such beliefs with a sense of close-knit community that no longer truly exists even for her characters. MacCoinnich explores supernatural ideas and how people's ignorance and perception of ill-understood natural phenomena can lead to a need for religion. MacCoinnich's thesis seems to be that religion fulfils a fundamental human need, whereas Watt's is that there is more than rationality and logic can easily explain.

MacCoinnich's prose is, on the whole, charming and engaging (see, for instance, *Nach Neònach Sin* (Isn't That Strange), 1973). In common with Watt he tends to rely on archetypes for characters: even main characters are rarely rounded or sympathetic in their own right. Only his skill with language and slightly old-fashioned, action-filled plots maintain attention through what can, at times, be thinly disguised didacticism. Watt's characters can sometimes become little more than lists of names, and, given the sheer numbers of her characters, it can be difficult to keep track. Nevertheless, this conveys a sense of the extended Gaelic community and of continuity that makes family and awareness of the past more important than the individual. Meantime Pòl MacAonghais (Paul MacInnes) is also distinguished for the variety of characters and situations in his stories (e.g. in *An Guth Aoibhneach* (The Joyful Voice, 1990)). Some are little more than humorous entertainments – in the mould of Dòmhnall Alasdair's (Donald Alasdair, discussed later in this section) – though others are thought-provoking and sensitive. MacAonghais's storytelling skills are without question.

There is no doubt, however, that the leading exponents of the modern(ist) short story in Gaelic are Iain Crichton Smith (published in Gaelic as Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn) and Iain Moireach (John Murray). Both, natives of the Isle of Lewis, share much common ground, especially in comparison with their peers: they are comfortable with experimentation in setting or characterisation, make extensive use of modern technique, imagery and metaphor, employ modern structures, and explore thematically beyond the superficial interest of an engaging plot.

Compared with Smith's, Moireach's output is relatively tiny. Aside from occasional magazine and periodical publication, Moireach has only one collection of stories to date: *An Aghaidh Choimheach* (The Strange Face, 1973). Although its quality is variable, the best stories in *An Aghaidh Choimheach* are as significant as anything in twentieth-century Gaelic literature. Moireach's language use is much more dialectal than Smith's: his Lewis background is easily discernible in word choice and phrasing. He uses colloquialisms, Lewis slang and English interpolations, especially in dialogue, which lend a certain realism in the context of bilingual communities. His work is often bleak and uncompromising, most particularly in indicting relationships and the human condition, but humour is also found. For instance, 'An Gamhainn' ('The Heifer') is an amusing exploration of the importance and power of women in rural Highland communities. The chief protagonist in 'An Gamhainn' is ruthlessly – and, for the reader, at least, hilariously – manipulated and manoeuvred by the women in his life. The story's pathos is actuated by skilful conflation of Cailean and the heifer of the title, the women equated with the bull. In this community, Moireach shows us, the women are in charge. His stories experiment with form and length; compare the short, yet celebrated, 'Briseadh na Cloiche' ('Breaking the Stone') and 'Feòil a'

Gheamhraidh' ('Winter Meat') to the much longer title story. At times, there are, too, surprising switches of point of view while 'A' Chaora Chonadail' ('The Black Sheep') attempts, though not entirely successfully, a kind of stream-of-consciousness monologue.

Iain Crichton Smith is prolific in both English and Gaelic in both drama and the novel, while perhaps being best known as a poet. His five volumes of Gaelic short stories take the form to new technical and emotional levels and he is by far the most consistent writer of literary fiction the language has seen to date. Often thought of as bleak and morose, Smith is in fact the most humorous of all Gaelic writers and foremost proponent of dramatic irony. As with many of his poetry volumes, three short-story collections' titles feature pairs of nouns: *Bùrn is Aran* (Water and Bread, 1960) (which originally contained poetry as well), *An Dubh is An Gorm* (The Black and the Blue, 1985), *Maighistirean is Ministirean* (Masters and Ministers, 1970), though *Na Guthan* (The Voices, 1991) and *An t-Adhar Ameirigeanaich* (The American Sky, 1973) break this mould. Such doubling of nouns reflects a tension or dialectic that pervades Smith's writings. This is arguably produced by Smith's awareness of his bilingualism and biculturality.

Richard Cox, in his contribution to Colin Nicholson's *Iain Crichton Smith* (1992), argues that Smith 'is predominantly preoccupied with the psychological dimension of human existence, interpreted through broad philosophical frameworks'. This preoccupation often manifests itself in characters facing dilemmas or seeking epiphanies (Smith's characters are often ironically aware of their search for epiphany, even at times, implicitly, their own fictionality), paranoid or deluded characters, or characters whose predilection for intellectualism and egocentrism renders them incapable of communication, unable to form meaningful relationships. This sense of isolation also imbues Smith's fascination with language and the structuralist and post-structuralist hypotheses of the unreliable nature of language as a vehicle for communication. He contrives scenarios in which characters talk at cross-purposes, do not say what they mean or generally deceive themselves or one another. All the while, he shows awareness that language and metaphor are not constant, and may be inadequate.

Smith's poetic skills are apparent in his short stories. His tight, sparse writing style squeezes meaning from the most basic and, normally, prosaic of words. Everyday words like 'thin', 'yellow', 'door' and even 'football' become semantically laden in a prose style as accessible as it is multi-layered. Where Moireach might be prepared to obfuscate on first reading and challenge the reader to tease out his meaning, Smith lures in the reader and permits an ever-increasing yield of significance with each reading.

Among other exponents of short fiction in Gaelic, Tormod Caimbeul (Norman Campbell, known as Tormod a' Bhocsair) is the most noteworthy, like Smith, making liberal use of humour and irony. He has two collections of short stories *Hostail* (Hostel, 1992) and *An Naidheachd bhon Taigh* (News from Home, 1994) and his novel *Deireadh an Fhoghair* (The End of Autumn, 1979) is dealt with later. His fiction is firmly rooted in his Lewis background and much can be regarded as at least semi-autobiographical. In some ways, he is the prose equivalent of a village poet. This is certainly reflected in the significance he attaches to certain events, nicknames and in-jokes. His brother Alasdair (also known as 'A' Bhocsair' – son of the Boxer) writes 'village fiction' in similar vein, though notably not in his novel *Am Fear Meadhanach* (The Middle Man, 1992). Alasdair writes about a somewhat fictionalised Ness, as in his drama. His *Liontan Sgaoilte* (*Spread Nets*, 1999) is a surprising mixture of stories, dialogues, playlets and fictitious diary entries. The different pieces are separated by short inter-chapters allowing him to experiment with a more reflective tone than the reminiscent voice of most of the narration.

Also in 'village fiction' style is Torcuil MacRath's (Torquil MacRae's) *An Cearcall* (The Circle, 2002). These stories, with the same first-person narrator throughout, are only loosely fictional reminiscences and accounts; all the time there is an awareness of the passing of time. The short story 'An Cearcall' and the poem with the same title at the end of the collection illustrate with an overwhelming sense of pathos the narrator's sorrow at the apparent demise of Gaelic culture. The 'circle' of the title is Gaelic culture; the narrator seems in no doubt the circle has been broken.

The Ùr-sgeul imprint at CLÀR has begun publishing fiction of which the novels are discussed later. Short-story collections include Màrtainn Mac an t-Saoir's (Martin MacIntyre's) *Ath-Aithne* (Re-aquaintance, 2003), which includes a small number of English stories, and Donnchadh MacGillÌosa's (Duncan Gillies's) *Tocasaid 'Ain Tuirc* (Iain Son of the Boar's Hogshead, 2004). Mac an t-Saoir's prose style is somewhat similar to Eilidh Watt's: it is descriptive and explicatory, with a tendency towards verbosity and more emphasis on characters' histories or familial histories than on the significance of the immediate moment. This is reflected in the way that the stories often have clear Aristotelian structures rather than following the more modern practice of beginning *in medias res* or leaving open endings. Most stories in *Ath-Aithne* take the form of long, rambling reminiscences, perhaps akin to the recounts of a village tradition-bearer or seanchaidh (it is here noteworthy that Mac an t-Saoir himself practises the oral craft of the seanchaidh or storyteller). In spite of the impressive variety of scenes, settings and subject matters, characters are largely indistinguishable from one another, and, as with Watt, this is probably Mac an t-Saoir's intention. Like Iain Moireach, Mac an t-Saoir experiments with form: for instance, in 'Ealain an Fhulangais', the narrative voice is shifting and spasmodic and drifts into stream of consciousness and monologue.

Tocasaid 'Ain Tuirc is one of very few short-story cycles in the language, featuring the same circle of friends in different situations as they live their lives. The cover notes suggest that it is almost a disjointed novel; there is certainly a case to be made for this. However, MacGillÌosa's changing styles and different points of view make it easier to treat the book as a short-story cycle. At its best, *Tocasaid 'Ain Tuirc* is comparable to some of Iain Moireach's work, although philosophically rather different. Unlike Moireach, MacGillÌosa echoes the Caimbeul brothers in trying to capture the essence of the Ness area of Lewis as vividly as possible, even sometimes to the detriment of a story. Thus the book fits the genre of 'village fiction' already mentioned. MacGillÌosa takes this so far that we encounter mimesis of the fully bilingual Ness community not only in dialogue, but even in narrative. His narration flows as smoothly as the spoken word. He allows typical English expressions to seep into the telling, just as they do in his dialogue and in the Gaelic conversation of the Ness people. This realism counterpoints the black humour and sharp, poetic imagery that pepper the stories. Some stories are almost dramatic, with quick-fire dialogue that sparkles with well-observed wit.

Dòmhnall Alasdair Dòmhnallach (Donald Alasdair MacDonald, known simply as Dòmhnall Alasdair) is well known as a village poet of considerable skill. His short stories appeared in 2001 as *Sgeulachdan Dhòmhnail Alasdair* (Donald Alasdair's Stories). Short, satisfying, old-fashioned, twist-in-the-tale stories, these do not challenge the reader's attention or intellect unduly. In bright, witty language, his stories are wholly entertaining, eschewing the moral or philosophical conundrums underlying the work of more literary writers like Moireach and Smith.

Novel

The earliest Gaelic novels are perhaps more remarkable for their existence than their literary achievement. Their early genesis is important in the development of Gaelic literary prose. The first novel Iain MacCormaic's (John MacCormick's) *Dùn Aluinn no An t-Oighre 'na Dhiobarach* (Dunaline or the Banished Heir, 1912) is a lengthy adventure story set during the Clearances, its hero the title character. Like its successors of this period, there are numerous sub-themes and plots. Although *Dùn Aluinn* was published in book form a year before Aonghas MacDhonnchaidh's (Angus Robertson's) *An t-Ogha Mór* (The Great Grandchild, 1913), the latter had previously been partly serialised in the periodical *An Sgeulaiche*. *An t-Ogha Mór* again has a complex plot and its style is clumsy and encumbered. Set between the 1715 and 1745 Jacobite risings and between Skye and London, it deals with family feuds, love interests and espionage. Sometimes the text's style resembles traditional tales with an omniscient and intrusive first-person narrator, while the play within the novel is notable, perhaps suggesting the popularity of plays at the time.

The third Gaelic novel is Seumas MacLeòid's (James Macleod's) *Cailin Sgiathanach* (Skye Girl, 1923), subtitled *Faodalach na h-Abaid* (The Foundling of the Abbey) and set in late eighteenth-century Skye. At 364 pages, it is a substantial volume; it is remarkable that it has taken eighty years for the language to produce another novel of similar length, Aonghas Phàdraig Caimbeul's (Angus Peter Campbell's) *An Oidhche Mus Do Sheòl Sinn* (The Night before We Sailed, 2003). *Cailin Sgiathanach* was perhaps even old-fashioned in its own time, with a complex series of plot twists, disputed inheritances, threat of undeserved imprisonment, sea voyages, forced marriage, death and tidy resolutions, all relying on the reader's suspension of disbelief. The novel's title-character is manoeuvred by a discernible authorial hand into a position where she must choose to marry a man she does not love in order to save her father from prison, so forsaking her true love. The ending involves a rather predictable *deus ex machina* and the prose is somewhat laboured and verbose.

It is likely that practical factors led to the long gap between these first three novels and the second phase of novel-writing that arose in the 1970s and has carried on, admittedly sporadically, since then. The large cost of producing novels must have been prohibitive in terms of the size of the potential readership throughout most of the twentieth century, especially as literacy has not always been widespread in the language. The language itself probably added to the long hiatus between novel-writing periods. Gaelic prose in the early twentieth century was based on old religious and scholarly paradigms that did not lend themselves well to fiction. The tortuous and unwieldy writing style of the time most likely seemed dated or even hackneyed in a period that was witnessing the literary innovations of modernism in other languages. By the 1970s, other Gaelic prose writing had developed a style that was closer to the vernacular or, at times, mimetic of the folktales still popular at that time. Between 1971 and 2003, novella-sized volumes allowed Gaelic writers to test their ability to sustain longer prose works.

Cailean T. MacCoinnich, whose short stories are mentioned earlier, attempted one novel: *A' Leth Eile* (The Other Half, 1971). In many respects the style is very like that of his short stories with broad, descriptive character strokes and a didactic undertone. There is no question, however, that this novel represents a movement away from the novels of the start of the century. Also in 1971, the first of only two novels to have been written by women (excluding novels for children and teenagers) was published. Màiri NicGill-Eathain's (MacLean's) *Gainmheach an Fhàsaich* (Sand of the Desert, 1971) attempts

popular, romantic fiction. Although this attempt is not very satisfactory, it is worthy of note, no further attempts at this type of writing having occurred.

The Gaelic novel reached its pinnacle to date with Iain Crichton Smith's *An t-Aonaran* (The Loner, 1976), first of his Gaelic novels for adults (he also wrote novels for children and teenagers), followed by *Murchadh* (Murdo, originally serialised in *Gairm* (106–9) 1979–80), and *Na Speuclairean Dubha* (The Dark Glasses, 1989). *An t-Aonaran* is often described as a novella, and indeed it is an almost exact Gaelic version of Smith's 'The Hermit', published as a (very long) short story. *An t-Aonaran* focuses on Teàrlach, a retired schoolmaster, a Smith 'intellectual'-archetype, whose world is disrupted by the intrusion of a hermit into the village. The hermit becomes the mirror for Teàrlach's identity, allowing him to explore the depths of his own lonely existence, perhaps for the first time in his unfulfilling life. As is common in Smith's fiction, there is little emphasis on description: what little there is generally consists of striking, poetic imagery and well-observed, subtle metaphor. Teàrlach's late wife's fiddle, for instance, becomes a metonym for their unsuccessful, eventually loveless marriage, conveying a greater sense of their lives' isolation than could be achieved by reams of descriptive or discursive writing. The colour yellow, as another example, initially represents youth, innocence, freshness and, then, longing for what is lost.

An t-Aonaran is character-driven, where the earlier Gaelic novels (and some later ones) are plot-driven. *Murchadh* is an early vehicle for the character who later appears in the English *Thoughts of Murdo* (1993) and *Murdo: The Life and Works* (2001). In these, Murdo is clearly seen as a comical, self-deprecating *alter ego* of the author. While *Murchadh* is also comical, the Gaelic version is rather more suggestive of psychosis and trauma. Character also drives *Na Speuclairean Dubha*, although it at first seems to be a detective story with the main character trying to work out why a neighbour has committed suicide. It soon emerges, however, that the chief protagonist's real quest is within himself: he, Trevor Bailey, is in search of truth. Like Teàrlach, he struggles with communication and interpersonal relationships. *Na Speuclairean Dubha* is, if anything, even shorter than *An t-Aonaran*, but Bailey's quest for the objectively knowable conveys the feel of a novel rather than an extended short story.

Tormod Caimbeul's novel *Deireadh an Fhoghair* (1979) is more interesting than his short fiction. The setting is uncomplicated – the sparse Highland glen that we have come to expect in Gaelic fiction – and there are really only three characters who play an active part. Nonetheless, the structure of chapters and narrative style combines to make a challenging read. Caimbeul uses three old friends to explore notions like memory, friendship, belief and fear. At times, the language is slow and rambling, echoing the movements and thought processes of the ageing characters. Some passages suggest traditional Gaelic poetry in the way the author relishes almost meaningless word-lists for no more than the effect of their sounds. This is 'village fiction' with a strong hint of modernism throughout and an important development in the Gaelic novel.

An Sgàineadh (The Schism, 1993) is Tormod Calum Dòmhnallach's (Norman MacDonald's) only Gaelic novel, although he wrote two English novels and many Gaelic plays. Its structure and style mark it out. It is divided into four distinct parts, and, although not explicit, the same first-person narrator appears in each section. An over-arching exploration of cultural archetypes and stereotypes ties together the sections. The text is critical of stereotypes of the Gael and proposes an individual's acceptance of the stereotype will lead to harm, as in the narrator's alcoholism in the first and second sections. By challenging stereotypes of the Gael, Dòmhnallach proposes a Gaelic racial unconscious, while

the theme of Gaelic identity and its false social portrayal also appears in Màiri NicGumaraid's (Mary Montgomery's) *Clann Iseabail* (Ishbel's Children, 1993). This satisfying novel deals with some themes common to the other 'literary' novels, but this time the main protagonist is a young woman. Ciorstagh, an islander now living in Glasgow, tries to balance her beliefs and interest in politics (in Northern Ireland and Scottish nationalism), cultural identity and writing with her commitment to her island family.

Alasdair Caimbeul's *Am Fear Meadhanach* (The Middle Man, 1992) is a dark first-person novel. The narrator, in the final stages of a terminal illness, considers his life's worth. Caimbeul's protagonist concludes he has had a lonely existence with very few notable accomplishments. Despite the novel's gloomy situation, the story is not entirely morose: death at the end of the novel offers peace and freedom; there is no fear. The title's categorisation of the central character, Murchadh MacLeòid, as 'meadhanach', continued throughout the text, is of particular interest. 'Meadhanach' means 'middle' (as in the second son of three), 'average' (as in his lack of laudable accomplishments) and also 'sickly'. The sickness, however, is not only the terminal illness from which he suffers, but also the inauthentic existence he has led throughout his life that has made him define himself in terms of others. Death allows him release.

Not all modern Gaelic novels are dark or concerned with teachers and writers considering their *raison d'être*. Calum MacMhaoilein's (MacMillan's) work concerns the Lewis fishing industry. *A' Sireadh Sgadain* (Looking for Herring, 1990) is a loosely fictionalised account of a fishing family, starting at the end of the nineteenth century and spanning three generations. His *Seonaidh Mòr* (Big Johnny, 1993), although classified as an adult novel, is more akin to a children's novel; it also suffers from a weak plot and unrealistic characters. Dòmhnall Iain MacÌomhair's (Donald MacIver's) *Cò Rinn E?* (Who Did It? 1993) is a simple, unstylised and light-hearted whodunnit. Tormod MacGill-Eain's (Norman Maclean's) first two novels *Keino* (1998) and *Cùmhnantan* (Contracts, 1996) also bring light relief. The dialogue and language of both are rich and graphic, giving a colour and lightness to the characters often lacking in Gaelic novels. MacGill-Eain uses swearing and sexually explicit language in his varied scenarios: sex scenes, pubs, TV studios, travellers' camps. This variety of settings is highly effective. *Cùmhnantan*, with its caustic wit, is set in the Gaelic television industry at the time it received a big government funding increase. *Keino* is in essence a love story that could transcend any cultural and linguistic border, dealing in guilt and redemption through the relationship of Hector, a restless schoolteacher, and Elizabeth, an older traveller woman. *Dacha mo Ghaoil* (2005) – whose title contains a pun that provides a double translation, 'My Beloved Dacha/Home' – satirises unscrupulous aspiration after material things through such activities as marriages of convenience with east European brides, trading in illicit venison and drug-dealing, all told with a dark sense of the comic.

The 1970s, then, saw a minor renaissance in the Gaelic novel, tentatively sustained throughout the following three decades. All this new generation of novels, however, were short, barely topping a hundred pages. Until the poet Aonghas Phàdraig Caimbeul's first novel *An Oidhche Mus Do Sheòl Sinn* (The Night before We Sailed) in 2003, it appeared that the form would never extend beyond novella length. *An Oidhche Mus Do Sheòl Sinn*, though, is large, sweeping and ambitious, taking place over a long time and in several countries. It follows the lives of several members of a Uist family, revolving around the war period and its aftermath. Family members go to war, fight, die, join the priesthood, stay at home, love, give birth, earn unlikely redemption, develop relationships and struggle to maintain their traditions. Some of Caimbeul's techniques do not succeed (such as his

occasional authorial intrusions and forewarnings), but the novel is, on the whole, well realised and a significant breakthrough.

Caimbeul's *An Oidhche Mus Do Sheòl Sinn* was the first novel in the new Ùr-sgeul series. Since then, four more lengthy novels have appeared: *Là a' Dèanamh Sgèil do Là* (A Day Spent Making Tales Until Dawn, 2004) by Aonghas Phàdraig Caimbeul; *Dacha mo Ghaoil* (My Beloved Dacha, 2005) by Tormod MacGill-Eain, discussed above; *Gymnippers Diciadain* (Wednesday Gymnippers, 2005) by Màrtainn Mac an t-Saoir; and *Na Klondykers* (The Klondykers, 2005) by Iain F. MacLeòid. The Ùr-sgeul series marks a new dawn for Gaelic novel-writing.

Drama

Drama is an overlooked genre of Gaelic literature. Certainly, in the late eighteenth century, there were examples of plays for audiences clearly bilingual in Gaelic and English. Archibald Maclaren's *The Humours of Greenock Fair* (1789) and *The Highland Drover* (1790) were performed to apparent success in Inverness, Aberdeen, Perth, Dundee and Greenock, making some fun at the expense of non-Gaelic speakers. Such an initiative, however, was short-lived, representing a brief insertion of Gaelic into hegemonic English-language theatre at a time when there might be sufficient urban bilingual audiences as a result of recent migration. Few studies of modern Gaelic drama exist, however, though this may be due in some part to the unavailability of texts. Of a corpus of possibly as many as 500 plays, very few have been published and there is no complete database of plays. Yet, the study of Gaelic drama is worthwhile on two counts: first, it provides an additional commentary on Gaelic society; second, although not written as 'literature', some plays of the 1960s and 1970s certainly deserve literary recognition. Given the general unfamiliarity of much within this genre, this section provides an overview of the plays' context as well as the plays themselves.

It is believed – as noted by Dòmhnall Iain MacLeòid in 'An Sgeilp Leabhraichean' in *Gairm* 59 – that the first purely Gaelic play was not performed until 1902. Performed by Edinburgh University Celtic Society, its title and author appear – perhaps symptomatically – currently to have been forgotten. Earlier, some plays were published in Gaelic periodicals such as *An Gaidheal* (The Highlander) and *An Teachdaire Gaelach* (The Highland Messenger). These possibly grew out of the literary 'conversations' popular at the turn of the twentieth century. Those could be didactic, informative or humorous, and seemed a popular genre; although a written genre, 'conversations' are believed to have sometimes been read aloud. Arguably, however, the drama movement of the early twentieth century is inextricably linked with the Celtic Twilight movement's Gaelic language revival initiatives. Gaelic drama's first prominent advocate, the Hon. Ruairidh Erskine of Mar, began publishing plays as early as 1912 in his periodical *Guth na Bliadhna*; he also published a series of articles promoting Gaelic drama. In addition to some plays' appearance in this and other early twentieth-century Gaelic periodicals, *Deò-Gréime*, *An Gaidheal* and *An Teachdaire Gaidhealach*, others made it into pamphlet form. Most of the little existing publication has occurred in this form.

Despite the fact that this drama was originally created by Gaels living in urban areas (the first play being performed in Edinburgh), drama soon became popular in Highlands and Islands Gaelic communities, especially in festival and competition format. Out of a corpus of possibly 500 plays, there are very few written for non-competitive performance,

professional productions being scarce (there having been only two purely Gaelic-language professional theatre companies, referred to in Chapter 29 by Ian Brown: *Fir Chlis* and *Tosg*). The amateur environment within which Gaelic drama evolved has had a lasting impact on the Gaelic play's format: it is generally one-act and not lasting longer than half an hour.

Early plays were frequently light-hearted and humorous, reflecting their being often written for *ceilidh* performance. They tended to portray traditional customs: for example, two plays by Iain MacLeòid (John Macleod) *Rèiteach Mòraig* (Morag's Betrothal, 1911) and *Pòsadh Mòraig* (Morag's Wedding, 1916) represent and imitate traditional Gaelic practices associated with betrothal and marriage. Some portray areas of Scottish history where the Gael was always undermined, but somehow struggled through. For example, two plays by Dòmhnall Mac-na-Ceardadh (Donald Sinclair) are historic: one during the Clearances (*Fearann a Shìnnisirean* (Land of his Ancestors), 1913) and the other around the 1745 rising (*Crois Tara*, (Cross of Tara), 1914). Containing rather implausible love sub-plots, both praise the traditional Gaelic lifestyle's merits whilst portraying Lowland culture's evils. Playwrights of this era, besides MacLeòid and Mac-na-Ceardadh, include Gilleasbuig MacCullaich (Archibald McCulloch) and Iain MacCormaic (John McCormick), whose plays are naturalistic, though often littered with songs that were adopted as anthems of 'the Gaelic cause'.

The style of Gaelic drama continued in a naturalistic and limited thematic vein until the 1960s and 1970s when contemporary trends in European drama began to be explored in Gaelic. Drama became less parochial: the dramatists realised that a knowledge of other literatures would enhance their writings and that their plays need not be confined to subjects specifically related to the Gaelic way of life. Parallels exist with the literary developments of the short story and poetry of this era. Several dramatists showed great innovation, adopting techniques and themes used internationally and adapting them to fit a Gaelic framework. Notable among these are Tormod Calum Dòmhnallach, Iain Crichton Smith, Fionnlagh MacLeòid (Dr Finlay Macleod), Donaidh MacIlleathain (Donnie Maclean) and Iain Moireach. Other dramatists, however, Pòl MacAonghais and Alasdair Caimbeul, continued with more light-hearted and naturalistic plays, complementing their writing in prose, but with great awareness of the playwright's craft. MacAonghais in particular was prolific and, as with some others, many of his plays were first written for radio and then adapted for stage.

Tormod Calum Dòmhnallach wrote around thirteen plays, only one of which, *An Ceistear, Am Bàrd's Na Boirionnaich* (The Catechist, the Poet and the Women, 1974) was published. He aimed to create a drama that truly belonged to the Gaelic tradition, drawing on traditional songs, history and tales. In this, his plays may sound parochial and no different from earlier work. Yet, one of his most memorable plays, *Anna Chaimbeul* (Ann Campbell, 1977), with its intoxicating use of traditional song, influences of Japanese Noh theatre as portrayed by Yeats, and stagecraft, immediately establishes Dòmhnallach as a playwright achieving his desire to create a (modern) 'Gaelic' drama.

Two of Iain Crichton Smith's plays were published by An Comunn Gaidhealach, following their success at competitions. Like many of this era's plays, his eschew traditional boundaries and explore wide-ranging topics; sometimes they are humorous; sometimes they concern serious issues, like the betrayal of Christ in *An Coileach* (The Cockerel, 1966) or the Clearances and human conscience in *A' Chùirt* (The Court, 1966). Of his own range of subject matter, Smith writes:

Some years ago I wrote a play in Gaelic about the Trojan War and it was felt by some that this was not a suitable topic for a Gaelic writer. I disagreed and still disagree. There is no reason

why the Gaelic writer, if he wishes, should not comment on ideas and events which transcend the Gaelic world.

European existential and absurd drama particularly influenced Gaelic drama of the 1960s and 1970s. Of those cited, Fionnlagh MacLeòid was probably most enthusiastic about this form. For example, his seminal *Ceann Cropic* (it is impossible to translate this title, referring to a traditional fish dish using cod's head) (1967) has two characters in an enclosed environment. As is common in literature of the absurd, the enclosed space accentuates language that is often banal. This play's dialogue structure is certainly one of its most striking features. Short, sharp lines throughout highlight that communication problems lead to 'inauthentic existence', but that, by being more attentive to language, an individual may better comprehend his or her predicament.

MacLeòid's plays were not alone in displaying awareness of current threats to Gaelic language and culture. In Donaidh MacIlleathain's *An Sgoil Dhubh* (The Dark School, 1974), innovative use of stagecraft, and absurd dialogue and setting, bring a gravity to his treatment of the threat of non-native external sources to the continued existence of Gaelic culture. Iain Moireach, too, shows awareness of this trend in his numerous plays (for example in *Feumaidh Sinn a bhith Gàireachdainn* (We Have to Laugh), 1969). His greatest talent, however, is as a wordsmith: his plays show a variety of styles and situations, their dialogue often both witty and convincing.

Of playwrights mentioned, all wrote into the 1980s and some into the 1990s. However, not since the 1970s, despite the development of professional companies, has the same innovation or passion for writing Gaelic drama been seen.

The beginning of the twenty-first century gives occasion to consider the future development of Gaelic prose and drama. While there was undoubtedly growth and enthusiasm at the start of the twentieth century, it was not until the 1970s and 1980s that quality comparable to that of the poetry began to emerge, despite and perhaps as a reaction against the shrinkage in language use. The role of Iain Crichton Smith, in particular, must be recognised: his immense contribution to Gaelic literary prose and drama (in addition to poetry) is remarkable; his seminal short stories and novels raise the standard of literary achievement for others to emulate.

Further reading

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Staging the Nation: Multiplicity and Cultural Diversity in Contemporary Scottish Theatre

Ian Brown

It is a commonplace that there has been a Scottish theatrical renaissance since 1970. Such a blanket term, however, masks a richly complex picture. Certainly, the decade between 1963, when the first Traverse building opened, and 1973, when the Scottish Society of Playwrights, the national playwrights' support and development organisation, was founded, includes much significant change. The year 1966, for example, saw the launch of Clive Perry's Royal Lyceum regime, which established Richard Eyre and Bill Bryden. In 1969 the Citizens' regimes of Giles Havergal and, soon after, of his co-directors, Philip Prowse and Robert David MacDonald were launched. This year also saw the start of the experimental work of Max Stafford-Clark's Traverse Workshop Company, which gave birth in 1974 to England's Joint Stock Theatre Company. Then 1972 saw the production of the popular and innovative *The Great Northern Welly Boot Show*. In this decade alone, the first plays were produced of Bill Bryden, Ian Brown, Tom Buchan, George Byatt, Stewart Conn, Stanley Eveling, Tom Gallacher, John McGrath, Hector MacMillan and W. Gordon Smith, to name but a representative, and representatively male, sample. It seems clear, then, that, while one might dispute the importance of individual dates, the decade 1963–73 clearly initiated a 'theatrical renaissance'. Such an emphasis, however, should not be allowed to obscure earlier achievements. Due credit must be paid to work by such playwrights as Joe Corrie, Robert McLellan, James Bridie (Henry Osborne Mavor), Ena Lamont Stewart, Robert Kemp and Alexander Reid. To understand the diversity of playwriting in recent decades, then, it is necessary to consider its foundation.

The roots of modern Scottish playwriting are not only found in the work of earlier twentieth-century playwrights. A key strand in recent theatrical scholarship has been the emphasis on the role of performance and performers in the history of Scottish theatre rather than, or beside, that of texts and playwrights. Pioneering producers had a significant influence. These include the Scottish National Players (1921–47), the Scottish Community Drama Association (SCDA, founded 1926), Glasgow Unity (1941–51), Glasgow Citizens' Theatre (founded 1943), the Edinburgh International Festival from 1947 and the Gateway Theatre Company (1953–65). In broad terms, the Scottish National Players and the related SCDA movement tended to focus on a rather idealised rural-romantic view of Scotland, although within the SCDA movement it was possible to find work more focused on contemporary issues. Glasgow Unity's professional company (it also comprised three amateur companies) particularly explored contemporary life in the west of Scotland. Meantime, the

influence of the Edinburgh Festival brought to Scotland contemporary world drama from many traditions. Within that international context, it presented, though somewhat intermittently, Scottish drama, whether, as in 1948 and subsequently, Robert Kemp's version of Lindsay's *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*, or such new drama as, in 1960, Sydney Goodsir Smith's *The Wallace*. Meantime, the Gateway Theatre Company, and to a lesser extent the Citizens', developed a new writing focus, with an emphasis on writing in Scots. All these phenomena had by the 1960s contributed positively to thinking about Scottish theatre's potential.

Of the authors mentioned, much of McLellan and Reid's work seemed to engage with romantic historic myths in one way or another. Their work explored historic themes while Kemp set classic plays by Molière into Scots contexts. It may well be that all three were providing, in a sense, a historic drama for Scottish theatre that did not exist substantially – or had been forgotten – in textual form. McLellan, for example, explores in *The Flowers o Edinburgh* (1948) themes such as the interaction of the Scottish Enlightenment and new Anglo-Scottish, 'British', imperialism, and the conflict between Scots and English languages at the time of David Hume, who, while famously wishing to extirpate 'scotticisms', himself spoke Scots. Katja Lenz observes that a motivation for such historical drama may be the way it allows assertion of the national culture, marking it off from the English or the joint British, demonstrating that a separate history exists. (Indeed, it is likely that such writing formed part of a nation-building and -defining artistic agenda for the middle of the twentieth century akin to that in Swedish theatre's long tradition of plays about its history, including, of course, Strindberg's history plays.) Earlier McLellan plays like *Toom Byres* (1936) and *Jamie the Saxt* (1937) readily fit such a purpose. Similarly, Kemp's Scots translations of Molière such as *Let Wives Tak Tent* (1948) are now classics of the modern Scottish stage. What such plays do not usually do, though, is address contemporary problems of the industrialised Scotland of the mid-twentieth century.

Alexander Reid was surely conscious of this when he wrote in the famous 'Foreword' to his *Two Scots Plays* (1958) of the return to Scots as a return to 'meaning and sincerity'. There he argued the importance of growing 'from our own roots' and hoped that Scotland might some day make a contribution to world drama by cherishing 'our national peculiarities (including our language)', whether 'Braid Scots or the speech, redeemed for literary purposes, of Argyle Street, Glasgow, or the Kirkgate, Leith'. Certainly, Kemp's translations represent the bringing of masterpieces of 'world drama' into the repertoire of plays in Scots. In this, he not only cherishes 'our language', but, following the Renaissance tradition, asserts its dignity, power and range by using it as a target language for the translation of classics. Kemp, like many later playwrights, had a central concern in his Molière translations, as Donald Campbell said of his own practice in the spring of 1979 in the *New Edinburgh Review*, with 'exploration of the complexities and potential of the idioms of Scottish speech'. Kemp's own contemporary plays are second fiddle to his translations, which make the use of Scottish speech in serious translation an acceptable procedure. The translations of Victor Carin in, *inter alia*, *The Hypochondriack* (1963) and *The Servant o Twa Maisters* (1965) reinforce this contribution, as does that of Douglas Young in *The Burdies* (1966).

Corrie's work and, later, Lamont Stewart's for Glasgow Unity represent significant alternatives to historical or romantic drama. Corrie's work of the 1920s, such as *In Time o Strife* (1927), was concerned with contemporary issues like workplace conflict. Much of Corrie's later work focused on lighter one-act plays for the SCDA market, but his pioneering attempts to deal with contemporary industrial and social issues remained significant: *Dawn*

(1923), for example, was banned by the censor at the start of the Second World War. When Glasgow Unity's professionals presented such post-war work as Lamont Stewart's *Men Should Weep* (1947), George Munro's *Gold in his Boots* (1947) or Robert McLeish's *The Gorbals Story* (1948), they also addressed contemporary issues of industrial Scotland. The particular focus for them, of course, was west coast, with urbanised, specifically Glaswegian, contexts foreshadowing the English 'kitchen-sink' movement of the 1950s.

James Bridie stands outside this developing tradition, his plays either an inflection of romantic, even Gothic, drama such as *Mr Bolfry* (1943) or London focused, as in *Daphne Laureola* (1949). Indeed, many have seen Bridie's attempts to please the West End with well-made plays as a burden to him. Yet, there is substance to his writing: he was driven by his First World War experience as a doctor dealing with casualties. Shocked by inhumanity, he is motivated by an interest in psychology and, especially, what might be meant by 'Scottishness'. He examines human nature in such plays as the *Baikie Charivari* (1952) in the particular context of Jungian behavioural analysis. While this may not have made his plays more theatrically successful, it may explain the individuality of his drama. Leaving aside Bridie and Kemp, whom David Hutchison discusses in his earlier chapter, Scottish playwriting by the 1950s and 1960s had developed a broad dichotomy between, on the one hand, romantic and historic drama seen – however imprecisely – to include the work of McLellan and his colleagues and, on the other, contemporary realist, industrial, urbanised drama. There were exceptions to this. Jack Ronder in such plays as *Who Loves Moraig?* (1955) and *This Year, Next Year* (1961) sought to establish his own socially acute drama, without ever quite establishing an idiom that sustained itself. Ronder's one-man show for Russell Hunter based on the life of Lord Cockburn, *Cocky* (1969), and his *The Sinner's Tale* (1971), an adaptation of Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* presented by the Royal Lyceum Company as part of the Edinburgh Festival achieved some *succès d'estime*. In the 1970s, however, he moved into writing television drama where he achieved some cult status, contributing as a lead writer, for example, to the first two series of *Survivors* (1975–6; final, third, series 1977). By the 1970s in Scottish theatre, there seemed two ways forward: adopt the progressive urban approach, using the demotic of the cities as foreshadowed by Reid, or reclaim and de-romanticise the problematics of Scottish history.

Two influential plays illustrate this dichotomy: Stewart Conn's *The Burning* (1971) and *The Great Northern Welly Boot Show* (1972), by a writing team led by Tom Buchan and George Byatt, with songs by Billy Connolly and musical direction by Tom McGrath. The former was presented by Perry's Royal Lyceum; the latter in both Glasgow and Edinburgh by a scratch company including such performers as Bill Paterson, Kenny Ireland, Alex Norton, John Bett and Connolly himself, with Tom McGrath himself accompanying and design by John Byrne. The former, based on James VI's North Berwick witch trials, explores tolerance and realpolitik and was first produced of a new generation of Scottish playwrights' use of history as a means of examining current issues of identity, liberty and oppression. Where their predecessors used historical discourse to present a comic or epic vision of Scotland's past that rarely questioned the nature of their implicit ideologies, post-1970 playwriting on Scottish historical themes typically questions myths and values embodied in traditional versions of Scottish history and, so, of Scottish identity. Plays within this diverse genre move far beyond the simply historical and include such work as C. P. Taylor's *Columba* (1973), Brown's *Carnegie* (1973) and *Mary* (1977), Conn's *Thistlewood* (1975) and Donald Campbell's *The Jesuit* (1976). As the first four of the five plays mentioned demonstrate, there often accompanied this re-examination of history – perhaps necessarily – a re-examination and free experimentation in theatrical mode and dramaturgy. This line of

productions continues, diminished in number, but more complex and problematised, as David Greig's *The Speculator* (1999) and Brown's *A Great Reckonin* (2000) show. *The Great Northern Welly Boot Show*, on the other hand, marked a new development in addressing industrial and urbanised Scotland. Combining dramatic scenes, song and direct audience address, it presents the workers' occupation in 1971 of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders comically transmuted to a Welly (Wellington) Boot factory. Celebrating the possibility of direct action and vernacular language, it was immensely popular, while, addressing contemporary sociopolitical and industrial issues, it foreshadowed a new 1970s demotic vitality.

This may be seen in Bill Bryden's *Willie Rough* (1972), *Benny Lynch* (1974) and *Civilians* (1981), Roddy McMillan's *The Bevellers* (1973), Hector MacMillan's *The Sash* (1974), John McGrath's *The Game's a Bogey* (1974) and *Little Red Hen* (1975), Billy Connolly's *An me wi a bad leg tae* (1976), George Byatt's *Kong Lives* (1976) and Tom McGrath's *The Hardman* (1977). Mostly premièred in Edinburgh, the west coast focus of this work is clear. The perception grew in the 1970s that Edinburgh theatres, specifically the Royal Lyceum and the Traverse, were producing Glasgow's plays, while the Citizens' was dealing in other dramatic experiments not to do with the playwriting of its home city. To observe this, of course, is to take nothing away for the outstanding quality there of the playwriting, translations and adaptations of Robert David MacDonald. *Chinchilla* (1977), about the Diaghilev company, for example, is widely seen as an exploration of the aesthetic politics of the Citizens' company itself and *Summit Conference* (1978) sought to explore the nature of fascism though debate involving Mussolini's and Hitler's mistresses. The 'west coast' work demonstrated that Alexander Reid's hope had been fulfilled, and that the dominant voice was more Sauchiehall Street than Kirkgate. Indeed, this phenomenon has since been seen as representing a new sentimentalisation of Scottish industrial, political or workplace experience, *Clydesideism*, to complement such general, and often abused, terms as *Kailyard* or *tartanry*. While it would be harsh to place all these plays in this category, it is fair to say that, despite the clear-eyed bleakness of McGrath's *The Hardman*, many flirt with neoromantic working-class macho idealisation.

Even the historical drama of the period generally showed a working-class focus. Hector MacMillan's *The Rising* (1973), for example, revisits historical events from the perspective of working people, risking sentimentalisation. Only John McGrath's seminal *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black Black Oil* (1973), using key *Welly Boot Show* actors, escaped the topicality of the central belt. Whether such plays in the 1970s fall into the historical-revisionary or urban-industrialised paradigm, they tend to focus on working-class urban experience and to use Scots. This, in turn, might suggest that Scottish drama of the 1970s does not focus inclusively on the wide range of Scottish and international experience. To leave the matter there would distort a complex situation.

While the dominant modes of 1970s playwriting can be defined as above, other strands exist. After the work of Ena Lamont Stewart in the 1940s and beside that of Ada F. Kay (A. J. Stewart) in the 1960s, Joan Ure (Elizabeth Clark) developed until her death in 1978 a fruitful series of stimulating plays on topics related, though not exclusively, to gender politics. Robert David MacDonald, Stanley Eveling, Tom Gallacher and C. P. Taylor explored aspects of the nature of ethical truth and idealism in a manner that followed an almost Shavian and, for Gallacher, Ibsenite concern with the nature of truth. While other writers occasionally experimented with form, Eveling, Gallacher and, in part, Taylor generally used established dramaturgical modes to explore complex issues of personal ethics and belief. Their occasional experiments with form responded to specific theatrical stimuli: Max Stafford-Clark's Traverse Workshop Company for Eveling's *Our Sunday Times*

(1973); Joan Knight's Perth Theatre for Gallacher's musical, *Stage Door Canteen* (1978); the Traverse for Taylor's *Columba* (1973) for Mike Ockrent and *Walter* (1997) for Chris Parr. In Taylor's case, of course, this work culminated in *Good* (1981) for the Royal Shakespeare Company. Here, the hero's developing escapism in the world of music allows Nazism's steady, but unperceived, usurpation of the life and mind of a 'good man'.

Others already mentioned worked across a broader band of concerns than their colleagues. Tom McGrath's *Laurel and Hardy* (1976) explores the relationship of the great cinema clowns, while his *Animal* (1979) explores human and primate relationships with stunning theatrical originality. Ian Brown's *The Fork* (1976), presented by Gay Sweatshop in London and Edinburgh, explores issues of political activism, sexual orientation and gender politics, while Michael Wilcox's *Rents* (1979) explores similar issues in the context of Edinburgh's gay scene. Stewart Conn's *Play Donkey* (1977), focusing on a working-class Leith mercenary in Angola, addresses larger political, racial and international issues that his later work such as *Clay Bull* (1998) would follow up. Meantime, W. Gordon Smith produced a varied and lively experimental line of one-person and small-cast plays beginning with *Vincent* (1970), about the art of Van Gogh and the very nature of art itself. His iconic *Jock* (1973) questions with vivid humour and bright theatricality (and originally through a virtuoso performance by Russell Hunter) the myths and anti-myths of Scottish history and identity. Although these examples tend to be apart from the mainstream of 1970s new Scottish playwriting, they demonstrate that the two dominant modes were not all pervasive and that certain playwrights could both write in the dominant modes and explore individual avenues. It is true, nonetheless, that the 1970s playwriting renaissance was dominated by the male, the heterosexual, the central belt, the urban and the industrialised. It also paid little attention, except for episodes in McGrath's *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black, Oil*, to Scotland's third language, Gaelic; although a Gaelic theatre company, Fir Chlis ('Northern Lights'), was established in 1978, it collapsed within three years.

John McGrath stands somewhat outside these paradigms. He came to adopt Scottish theatre after his first Scottish play, *Random Happenings in the Hebrides* (1970) and the 1973 foundation with *The Cheviot of 7:84* (Scotland) Theatre Company, which he directed until the late 1980s. Such plays as *The Game's a Bogey* (1974) and *Little Red Hen* (1975) examined the struggles and criticised the compromises of radical political action, while later work like *Joe's Drum* (1979) attacked what McGrath saw as the suppression of Scotland's democratic voice. He sustained a non-chauvinist dramatic assertion of the identity of Scotland in a later series of large-scale plays with *Border Warfare* (1989), *John Brown's Body* (1990) and *Ane Satire of the Four Estates* (1996). At the same time, he produced a number of one-woman plays focused on the individual in her fight against globalism and imperialism.

John Byrne's work also grows out of, but away from, the 1970s tradition. After *Writer's Cramp* (1977), his first major play was *The Slab Boys* (1978). This seemed at first to be work-based comedy drama in the line of Roddy McMillan's *The Bevellers*. Its vivid linguistic fireworks, however, create humour and pathos arising from misunderstanding and the collision of personal universes. Different Scotlands jar, creating a seeming coherence overlying disjointed world-views where the international and local, American and Scottish co-exist and interpenetrate and conventional gender roles are questioned and satirised. Cairns Craig has coined the term 'displacemeant' to describe Byrne's method. Developing *The Slab Boys* into a trilogy, the second (1979) now called *Cuttin a Rug*, the third *Still Life* (1982), and following the three leading characters over a period of fifteen years, Byrne loses some dramatic focus, but gains paradoxical richness. Continuing to write for the theatre, Byrne also wrote two major dramatic series for television, *Tutti Frutti* (1987) and *Your Cheatin Heart*

(1990). As the titles make clear, both deal with the interaction of local and international popular cultures and the manifold creativity and misunderstandings such interaction fosters. Byrne explores the complexity of contemporary life in which local and global create new syntheses of each other and social and gender roles undergo change. He takes this further in his translation into Scots of *The Government Inspector* (1997) and *Uncle Vanya*, re-titled *Uncle Varick* (2004).

One clear example of the widening of the scope of Scottish theatre writing, its new self-assurance, providing a foundation for a new surge of activity in the early 1980s and after, was the emergence of new plays by women. Joan Ure's work has been, and is, important and Ena Lamont Stewart's first new plays for nearly two decades, *Walkies Time for a Black Poodle* and *Towards Evening* were presented in 1975 in the Scottish Society of Playwrights' Netherbow season. Nevertheless, the production of new plays by women was a rare event in professional Scottish Theatre until the 1980s. One of the earliest to make her mark was Sue Glover, whose plays on historical themes appropriate a 1970s mode. *An Island in Largo* (1980) deals with the history of Alexander Selkirk, the original of Robinson Crusoe, and the subsequent use of his history by Daniel Defoe. *The Straw Chair* (1988) deals with questions of male power and political corruption and of the mutual incomprehension and confrontation of eighteenth-century Scotland's multiple cultures. Her capacity to combine the realisation of difference, female versus male and class versus class, comes to high fruition in *Bondagers* (1991). Following a group of farm women in the cycle of the agricultural year from one February Hiring Fair to the next, this addresses in vibrant Scots the ways in which male systems of power, economic, political and sexual, oppress women and constrain their freedom of action and untrammelled integrity.

Liz Lochhead has also explored in her plays a variety of issues concerned with the place of women in modern society. Her most famous, *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987), deals, with great theatrical invention, with the myths of the conflicts of Mary and her English cousin, Elizabeth I. It deconstructs myths of womanhood, religion and nationality in contemporary Britain. She has also contributed highly successful translations into Scots of *Tartuffe* (1986) and of *Le Misanthrope*, re-titled *Miseryguts* (2002), demonstrating a point often made that Molière's French, which is regularly translated lamely into English, works very well in Scots. Her earlier *Blood and Ice* (1982) and *Dracula* (1985) both explore women's sexuality and power in a world of male hegemony. *Britannia Rules* (1998) explores class and gender differences in Scotland immediately after the Second World War as a metaphor for contemporary divides. *Perfect Days* (1998) presents with lively comic insight the quandary of the successful professional woman faced with the vagaries of love, lust and the desire, after a life of self-concern, to have a child before her biological time-clock runs out. Her *Medea* (2000) and *Thebans* (2003) illustrate her continuing interest in translation, the former in particular demonstrating remarkable power in her use of Scots as a target language.

The developing diversity within Scottish culture is striking among women playwrights. From the Italian-Scottish community, Marcella Evaristi's works, including *Dorothy and the Bitch* (1976), *Scotia's Darlings* (1978), *Mouthpieces* (1980), *Hard to Get* (1980) and *Commedia* (1982), adopt a lively satiric stance. They address gender, class and national identity issues and can perhaps be understood as a likely product of the experience of a member of a relatively new group within a community, living within two cultures and observing both cultural and gender interaction with a wry eye. The same community has nurtured Ann Marie di Mambro. Her wide range of plays on contemporary Scottish society includes, for example, *Tally's Blood* (1990), exploring the interaction, both pre- and post-war, of Italian traditions

within Scottish families and *Brothers of Thunder* (1994), which presents the moral conflict between a Catholic priest and a young homosexual student. Sharman Macdonald, meantime, has had most of her work premièred in London, where she lives. Her first major play, *When I was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout* (1984), explores the tensions, fears and satisfactions lived through by a pubescent girl in a 1950s Scottish seaside town. This play introduces such recurrent themes as the relationship of mothers and daughters and the pain of the ties that both hold them and prize them apart, as in *The Winter Guest* (1995), now also a film. *The Girl with Red Hair* (2005) explores four sets of relationships responding in different ways to an inexplicable death, achieving a spare plangency typical of the best of her writing.

Women playwrights' concerns have provided dramas that, while sometimes still using historical material, are clearly not male-dominated. Nor are their plays especially centred on the central belt and, although Rona Munro has written about working women, they are absolutely not based in industrial mythology or Clydesideism. Munro's exploration of a variety of contemporary issues includes, in *Saturday at the Commodore* (1989), issues of female sexuality and lesbianism and, in *Bold Girls* (1990), women's differing reactions to suffering from male savagery in strife-torn Belfast. *The Maiden Stone* (1995) presents us with a number of mysteries, including the pursuit of art and the otherness of non-urban pre-industrial society to the urbanised and post-industrial. Janet Paisley's *Refuge* (1996) is a harrowing exploration not only of male abuse of women, but also the ways in which women may come to connive in their own abuse because of emotional and social pressure. Paisley achieves high dramatic tension, graphically representing the horrors of physical and emotional abuse. Anne Downie has written plays and adaptations that engage wry wit with modern women's quandaries in societies still dominated by chauvinist conventions. *Parking Lot in Pittsburgh* (2002) offers a particularly strong central role for a powerful woman actor. The work and range of this generation is remarkable including, as it does, Catherine Lucy Czerkawska, who is not only poet and novelist, but playwright, her work including such plays as *Heroes and Others* (1980), *Wormwood* (1997) and *Quartz* (2000). Meanwhile, a younger generation includes Nicola McCartney, Zinnie Harris, Grace Barnes and Isabel Wright. Such variety of contemporary women playwrights has enriched and extended the range of Scottish theatre far beyond the apparent potential of the 1970s. Arguably, their emergence and opening of perspectives has allowed Scottish playwrights in general to be more open, escape older categorisations and explore more freely a wider range of topics and theatrical methods. Certainly, their work has fed and enlarged the imagination, dramatic methods and sympathies of Scottish theatre.

Younger male writers also offer new perspectives. Peter Arnott's revisiting of a topic of Bryden's in *The Boxer Benny Lynch* (1984) illustrates a broader social vision and less macho view of the world than Bryden's. While his earlier work tended to deal in historical material, such as *White Rose* (1985), about the Russian pilot-heroine Lily Litvak, and *Muir* (1986), about the eponymous Scottish hero of French revolutionary times, Arnott's work includes topical drama, adaptation and translation, such as his version of Dürrenmatt's *The Visit* (2005). He still returns, though, to historical material: his award-winning *The Breathing House* (2003) presents a swathe of Victorian Edinburgh society, a maelstrom of sexual and social hypocrisy where public-health crises reflect a crisis in moral health. Another particularly important example of a broader, less Clydeside-focused imagination has been John Clifford, a civic Scot, like Eveling and John McGrath, who rose to prominence with his *Losing Venice* (1985). Hit of the 1985 Edinburgh Festival, it explores, through an episode in Spanish-Italian history, current issues of power, authority and political

domination with a stunning theatricality and pared, poetic language. It uses history in the manner of the 1970s, but no longer simply revisits a Scottish historical episode. *Losing Venice*, *Ines de Castro* (1989) and *The Queen of Spades* (2002) with his other, non-historical, work demonstrate Clifford's fierce commitment to the exploration of power's corruption and the desperate search for free human identity faced with institutional potential to oppress the human spirit. Stuart Paterson, from *Merlin the Magnificent* (1982) on, has written a series of plays for children, including such traditional topics as *Beauty and the Beast* (1986) and *The Sleeping Beauty* (1995). These bring an entirely non-sentimental and complex eye to the moral universe in which children must grow and find themselves. This work is complemented by such fine adaptations as his *Thérèse Raquin* (1991) and 'adult' plays such as *King of the Fields* (1999), exploring the disruption of a 1930s family's business, power and sexual relations by a brother's unexpected return from war and a life on the road. Chris Hannan in *Elizabeth Gordon Quinn* (1985) and *Shining Souls* (1996), the first set in the First World War, the latter contemporary, explores from a particular woman-focused view the delusions and aspirations of working-class Glaswegians. Other new playwrights such as Iain Heggie have written highly provocative plays on contemporary themes making use of contemporary Scots language. Heggie's first great success, *A Wholly Healthy Glasgow* (1987), for example, is full of sly wit, situational humour and almost Ortonesque or Wildean amorality. It deals with the relationship between an older homosexual health club attendant and his younger colleagues during a chaotic afternoon when the innocence of the newcomer meets corruption. His *Wiping my Mother's Arse* (2001) shows mordant humour and cool directness in dealing with the relationships of the mercenary young and the need for dignity in the humiliations of old age, with side-swipes at the sentimentalisation of health-workers. While Tony Roper has achieved success only with *The Steamie* (1987), this play for an almost entirely female cast offers within its variety-influenced form insights into women's mutually respectful experience unexpected – perhaps unfairly – in a male playwright. Its representation of a 1950s Hogmanay in a Glasgow wash-house, full of hope for the New Year and such new urban estates as Drumchapel, and the despair and hope against hope of an older generation, has been widely produced throughout Scotland and beyond.

A developing theme has been the significance of translation in enriching modern Scottish theatre writing. Key contributors in this area are Bill Findlay and Martin Bowman. Their seminal translations of the works of Michel Tremblay, from *The Guid Sisters* (1989) on, caused Tremblay to be described by Mark Fisher in *The Guardian* on 29 October 1992 as the 'best playwright Scotland never had'. Findlay and Bowman have acculturated the work of the Québécois playwright to the Scottish theatre and in so doing opened further its range and interests. Findlay himself added to this repertoire by such translations as those of *The Weavers* (1997). In so doing, he complemented, before his untimely death in 2005, the work of such playwrights as Liz Lochhead and John Byrne. Edwin Morgan has also extended his translation from poetry to the stage with his *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1992), which, using a wide range of registers of modern Scots, achieves an overwhelmingly vivid expression of the theatricality of the original, as does his *Phaedra* (2000).

In the 1990s a new generation of exciting younger playwrights emerged. David Greig, lively and thought-provoking, explores the experience of young international-minded Scots. *One Way Street* (1995) presents alienated mainland European experience, while *The Architect* (1996) examines similar pressures on a young Edinburgh man. Here, his successful architect father strives to build 'better' apartment blocks and a materially successful, if emotionally sterile, life, while he rebels against his father's emotionally

numbing life and architecture. Greig enjoys experiment: *Caledonia Dreaming* (1997) was being written as the event it conveyed, the 1997 general election, was under way; his children's play *Danny 306 + Me (4 Ever)* (1999) requires human and puppet performers; *The Speculator* (1999) returns to history, exploring the adventurist proto-Thatcherite career of the Scots banker, visionary and fraud, John Law. *Outlying Islands* (2002) and *8000 Metres* (2004) explore more intimate themes of human relationship and personal identity, the latter in an extreme mountaineering context, while his work as a co-founder of the company Suspect Culture includes *One-Two* (2003). This investigates the rhythms beyond words at the core of human existence, the sounds of music and of heartbeat, through a complex interaction of instruments and characters. Greig has sustained a formal experimental strand in his work and he even appears as a named character in his own *San Diego* (2003), where innovative form sustains fabulous invention of the disenfranchised and emotionally lost in the transitory worlds of California.

Other leading playwrights of Greig's generation continue to add to the range and innovation of Scottish theatre. John Binnie in such plays as *Accustomed to her Face* (1993) explores the excitements, rewards, sorrows and dignity of same-sex love and the traumas of growth to emotional and sexual maturity. Christopher Deans in such plays as *Molly's Collar and Tie* (1996) and *Smells + Bells* (1998) brings ribald humour and his own sharp insight to the theme of same-sex love. The latter attracted particular censure from some quarters for its cheerful depiction of male fellatio in the confessional. Stephen Greenhorn's *Passing Places* (1997) brings a new perspective, fresh humour and zesty vitality to writing for the Scottish stage. His heroes, in their Scottish theatrical version of the international road movie, make a pilgrimage away from the post-industrial west central belt, the location of *Willie Rough*, around the country and nation and through the Highlands. They carry a surfboard, a symbol of free and easy escapist life, until that false symbol is destroyed. Then, one is ready to travel further, expanding his identity outwards, while the other returns home, enlarged by his experience and ready to participate in a renewed and redefined Scotland. Indeed Greenhorn's next play, *Dissent* (1998), was concerned with the career and compromises of an aspirant MSP in the new post-devolution settlement. Douglas Maxwell's *Decky does a Bronco* (2000), its title including the term for a particular manoeuvre undertaken by children on swings in a park, explores memory, childhood friendships and rivalries as antecedents for adult life, presenting reactions to the death of a young friend at the hands of a paedophile. Its actors all had to learn to 'do a bronco' on swings in order to perform the play, so uniting performance, locale and topic in a very particular way. *Helmet* (2002) found new electronic theatrical ways of examining the lives of young people consuming and consumed by computer games, while *Variety* presented in the King's Theatre at the 2002 Edinburgh Festival celebrated, if not entirely successfully, the traditions and passing of variety in one of Scotland's leading variety theatres. In *If Destroyed True* (2005), played against the backdrop of a computer screen and chat-room messages, Maxwell again experiments successfully. Here, family fragmentation under the effect of the death of a drug-addicted mother eventually brings together grandmother and grandson, whose own homosexual lover is killed, when a virtual love affair is violated, by sinister forces committed to maintaining New Flood as winner of the 'Worst Town in Scotland' award. Innovative content and form in Scottish playwriting continues to develop and thrive.

David Harrower is a leading member of this generation. *Knives in Hens* (1995) presents the complex politics of male/female love and social power in a love triangle involving a peasant, his wife and a miller in a primal rural context. *Kill The Old Torture Their Young*

(1998) explores intergenerational conflict, the transience of memory, loss of spiritual direction and absence of care for others. *Dark Country* (2003) examines modern tensions between urban and rural, modern and atavistic in the shadow of the Antonine Wall. *Blackbird* (2005) continues Harrower's exploration of difficult territories as a woman, Una, abused as a twelve-year-old fifteen years before, seeks out her male abuser, Ray. As Una seeks the restitution of what can never be recovered, peace, innocence and understanding of what has gone wrong, it is clear that she was drawn to Ray, now forced to adopt another name and menial job, who continues to wrestle with his guilt and desire (there is even a hint that the behaviour he claims was one-off may form a life pattern). Both struggle with the memory of pleasure, perhaps mutual, scarcely understood, and with disruptive consequences for both barely to be endured. Without forming simple judgements, Harrower shows his transgressive couple flinching repeatedly from renewed contact, even though driven by a recurrent sexual desire that very nearly finds full expression before they discover at the end a moment of exhausted contact. Harrower has written a number of successful adaptations of classic playwrights including Pirandello, Büchner, Chekhov and von Horvath, but his own writing carries his developing reputation. He deals – sometimes with bleak comedy – with the irresistible and irresolvable conflict between passion and accepted mores, the subversion of reason, the new rationalisations constantly invented to justify the unreasonable and the pain of the unachievable and deeply desired.

Many recent Scottish playwrights have established themselves well beyond Scotland, their work seen frequently not only on stages in England, but throughout the world. Clifford, Greig, Greenhorn and Harrower are only four of those who have established Scottish playwriting as an international phenomenon. Indeed, playwrights like Anthony Neilson have developed their art in such a way as to establish it as part of an international movement, in his case the so-called 'In yer face' school. Yet, Neilson, at the 2005 gathering of playwrights at the Gateway Theatre, observed a link in his case between such writing and earlier Scottish drama. Both his parents, he observed, were engaged in the production of Donald Campbell's *The Jesuit* and Neilson says that from his experience of those rehearsals he learned early to intertwine the personal, political, emotional and theatrical. In such work, the mature range of modern Scottish stage writing can be understood. Neilson's work is designed to shock complacency, particularly in regard to politico-sexual issues. In *The Censor* (1997), his main characters are an actress in pornographic films and a film censor whose encounter excoriates hypocrisy, while *Stitching* (2002) explores the nature of horrifying emotional and physical abuse and self-abuse in the interdependence of a failing marriage. *The Wonderful World of Dissocia* (2004) explores with zany humour and deep compassion the ambivalent nature of mental illness. Its first act takes place in the wildly surreal colourful world of the subject's mind. The second act takes place in a hospital where the patient is seen in sterile black and white surroundings while carers and family struggle to understand the patient who finds becoming well on their terms less than compelling. While Neilson works in English, Gregory Burke, in *Gagarin Way* (2001), uses a powerful demotic Scots to explore the unlikely comedic potential of a factory heist gone wrong. Burke demonstrates the typically sinewy dialogue of contemporary Scottish drama, achieving both specificity to Scottish experience and a simultaneous ability to open access to large social concerns regarding economic power, globalisation and corruption. His ability to deal with wider issues is demonstrated in *The Straits* (2003), where four teenagers in Gibraltar during the Falklands War embody in their microcosm the larger fatal implications of international hatred after the sinking of HMS *Sheffield*.

This multiplicity of topic, style and convention is reflected in the cultural diversity of modern Scottish plays and playwrights. Jackie Kay's *Chiaroscuro* (1986), for example, deals with four characters whose friendship is challenged and strengthened by their experiences of racism, sexism and homophobia. Grace Barnes approaches, *inter alia*, Shetland experience writing in Shetlandic, a Scots dialect inflected by its partial derivation from Norn, which thus has at a late stage a derived literary expression it does not appear to have had in its full flowering, partially – through one character – in *Wir Midder da Sea* (1999) and throughout in *Circles and Tides* (2002). Other work by her is in Scots-English including *Lavender Blue* (2002) and her adaptations of *Treasure Island* (2005) and *Trumpet* (2005). Shan Khan's *Office* (2001) deals with drug dealing, police corruption and prostitution in inner-city London and his *Prayer Room* (2005) with inter-religious political tensions. In the latter, liberal attempts to achieve consensus are faced with fundamentalist Christian, Jewish and Islamic dogmatics that cause the death of innocence and an innocent 'holy fool', effectively scapegoated by others' intransigence and self-justification. Henry Adam's *Among Broken Hearts* (2000) deals with his hero's return to the north after years of absence and the clash of cultures within traditional Scotland, while his *The People Next Door* (2003) is set in London. This deals with immigration in the aftermath of 9/11, police corruption and the potential, even in an alienated society, for those excluded to find an affectionate *modus vivendi* outside conventional structures. Riccardo Galgani explores family loyalty and identity in such plays as *Acts* (1999) and *Green Field* (2002), while in *The Found Man* (2005), he explores how an island community may discover its own corruption in its abuse of an un-named outsider, blamed for its own faults, while it seeks salvation from the promise of a mysterious, but named, stranger. Meantime, in 1996, a new Gaelic theatre company, Tosg ('Ambassador') was established and, at the time of publication, has survived a decade, far longer than the ill-fated Fir Chlis, presenting a wide range of new plays in Gaelic.

This chapter may seem at times almost congested with material. That, however, is part of its point. The talk of a theatrical renaissance with which it began is by now in danger of being jejune. What has happened in Scottish theatre since 1970 is a playwriting revolution. On the basis of a lively, but somewhat narrow, range of Scottish drama in the first part of the twentieth century, theatre writing has flourished. In the 1970s, writers followed broadly similar paths, unsurprisingly in a time of self-conscious re-invention. Since then, however, Scottish playwrights have produced a wide range of self-confident writing. While theatre historians have rightly pointed to a long-standing Scottish theatre tradition and its embodiment in performers and performance modalities, it is now incontrovertible that recent years have seen a diverse, active and successful body of Scottish playwriting. This body of work deals with a wide range of characters and issues: not only traditional material or questions of national identity in a modern age, but any contemporary international topic is grist to its mill. Translation into Scots and the translation of Scottish playwrights into other theatres take place to an unprecedented extent. Playwrights freely draw on and contribute to the body of international work. Alex Reid's 1958 hope that 'Scotland may some day make a contribution to World Drama' is fulfilled. The vibrancy of this contribution arises from the vitality of its playwrights and their engagement in creative interaction with the international stage and worldwide human experience. Modern Scottish playwriting reflects a wide-ranging and highly diversified set of identities for 'Scotland'.

Further reading

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Varieties of Gender Politics, Sexuality and Thematic Innovation in Late Twentieth-Century Drama

Ksenija Horvat

Theatre is a continuously evolving art form which explores individual and communal understanding of the multiplicities of meanings and definitions of society and social relationships. It has the power to frame, evaluate, reflect and transform such complex issues as national and personal identity in dynamic and creative ways through its uniquely live engagement of writers, performers and audiences. During the latter part of the twentieth century, as the nature and complexity of what 'national identity' might mean was explored on the Scottish stage, theatre was also an effective method of understanding and exploring gender and distinguishing between gender (socially constructed) and sex (biologically determined) roles in contemporary society. As more Scottish playwrights turned their attention to issues of personal and sexual politics, they explored and re-assessed gender and sexual identity by means of fresh, untraditional dramaturgical and performative approaches that continue to challenge, scandalise and delight contemporary theatre-going audiences.

Such a re-assessment was not, of course, new in Scottish theatre. J. M. Barrie in *The Admirable Crichton* (1902), *Peter Pan* (1904) and *What Every Woman Knows* (1908) questioned 'accepted' gender roles and the social conditioning behind parent-child and male-female identities. Four decades later, Benedick Scott's *The Lambs of God* (1948), an earnest account of homosexuality against the backdrop of the Depression, presented one of the Scottish stage's first openly homosexual characters. While Barrie's subtle subversion and Scott's challenging frankness were arguably hampered by the conventions of their time, later twentieth-century playwrights, both male and female, were less constrained in investigating gender roles and sexual identity.

Ena Lamont Stewart's *Starched Aprons* (1945), about Edinburgh nurses, elaborates the choices that women have to make between careers and domestic lives. Love is seen as a class privilege, and marriage just another economic transaction in the world where a man chooses to marry a socially acceptable wife. In *Men Should Weep* (1947, rewritten 1976), Lamont Stewart turns her attention to the working class as her heroine, Maggie, challenges the conventions of women's familial roles and embodies the strength her husband John claims, but does not possess. Lamont Stewart offers a balanced view of both sexes: though Maggie's sister Lily may represent an anti-male view in the play, Lamont Stewart never gives her an upper hand in the action; it is clear John is equally a victim of the harsh economic environment. Although Maggie can be seen as an archetypal mother figure as featured in the same period by male playwrights, Lamont Stewart clearly questions male and

female gender stereotypes: indeed, she rewrote the ending of the play. In the original, John goes back to drink, their son Alec kills his wife Isla, and Maggie dies in childbirth. In 1976, a substantially more positive tone prevails: Maggie stands up to her husband and by doing so shifts their power relations. Later plays continue to examine gender relationships. *Business in Edinburgh* (1977) explores marriage, hypocrisy and men's attitudes towards single women in the tragi-comic business of Sarah Hazlitt's 1822 divorce from William, which brought them to Edinburgh for several uneasy months. It offers sharp insights into the mind and emotions of a wife struggling with her sense of inadequacy and abandonment. In *Kind Milly* (1978), Lamont Stewart explores women's ageing and alienation in modern consumerist society through the friendship of Milly and Peggy, two lonely women from different social backgrounds. At first reading, Lamont Stewart may seem to inhabit conventionally gendered frameworks, but she constantly subverts convention, linking individual and communal identity from a distinctive radical female perspective. As Adrienne Scullion notes, Scottish drama, portraying the social hierarchy at large through the microcosm of familial relations, is often concerned with a community rather than individuals, and with that community's inclusion or exclusion of individuals. Lamont Stewart undermines a hierarchical patriarchal community, asserting the place of the individual.

Ada F. Kay (A. J. Stewart) in *The Man from Thermopylae* (1961), set soon after the battle between Athens and Sparta, is also concerned with the individual. Her protagonist, Pantites, the battle's only survivor, realises on returning home the extent of society's indifference towards individuals. He loses love, duty, valour and identity, only to reclaim them. Kay questions patriarchal society: Pantites, a soldier and son of a senator, comes to doubt not only his position in Spartan society, but its conventional suppression of human feelings. She shows father and son forbidden by Spartan law to show joy on their first reunion. Pantites finds his wife pregnant by another man, because society demands sons to be soldiers. Kay throughout alludes to patriarchal imperialist aspirations and oppressive gender stereotyping.

Despite such an example, Scottish theatre in the 1960s was dominated by male playwrights. The handful of women writing plays did not feel that they benefited from the changes then under way. Joan Ure's sprightly experimentation often made her seem alienated from Scottish, predominately male, writing circles. In *I See Myself as this Young Girl* (1968), her heroine envies her daughter's freedom to study while she baby-sits for her, coming to imagine herself as an unmarried mother whose child blocks her ambitions. Though Ure's focus was always on women, often particularly their mother-daughter, private-professional or straight-gay relationships, she is never one-sided. In terms of content and themes, however, she places female characters centre-stage, challenging their alleged biological role in the 'separate spheres' ideology that would confine women to private/domestic/invisible space outside the public/business/visible domain reserved for men. Her work openly acknowledges, as does Lamont Stewart's and Kay's, that both genders may be oppressed by the separate spheres model. *Take Your Old Rib Back, Then* (1974), for example, depicting crumbling marital relationships, explores themes of colonisation of and by women and men. Ure challenges the 'sisterhood' myth, refusing to see women as one inchoate mass with a single voice. Instead, she advocates plurality of identities and voices that may echo or oppose each other. She recurrently considers the concept of the feminine in Scottish society in general, and art in particular.

Later occasional plays by Joan Ure such as *The Woman Who Got the Government Grant* (1976) and *Make a Space for Me* (1977) directly address lack of opportunity for women on the Scottish stage. As Ian Brown notes in Chapter 29, the 1970s remained dominated by

male playwrights focusing on patriarchal perspectives. Some, however, questioned gender and sexual identities. Tom McGrath does in *Sisters* (1978) and *Kora* (1986). Donald Campbell's *The Widows of Clyth* (1979) explores female solidarity, seeing female communities as more open and supportive than their male counterparts. Michael Wilcox addresses homosexual experience in *Dekka and Dava* (1978) and *Rents* (1979), about Edinburgh's gay scene. Meanwhile, in 1976 Marcella Evaristi exploded on to the stage with *Dorothy and the Bitch* (1976) and *Scotia's Darlings* (1978), playing with notions of woman's neediness and vulnerability, and exploring the life of Italian-Scots women. A musical extravaganza *Mouthpieces* (1980) followed these. Here, she addresses power, particularly sexism, and language, exploring gender, sexual, national and class identities in a series of more or less independent humorous sketches.

Evaristi pursued her interest in gender and sexual issues in later plays such as *Hard to Get* (1980) and *Commedia* (1982), typically personal-political accounts of women's lives and the shattering of their dreams in contemporary society. Despite their feminist themes, Evaristi continually refuses to tie herself to a narrow feminist definition. *Hard to Get*, for example, explores the irony of an independent spirit being much more attractive than the needy spirit in a society where women are identified only by their silence in the public (male) sphere. In *Commedia*, she touches on another of her recurrent themes, the need for women to be independent, reflected through the relationship between a middle-aged widow and a young man. Most of her work is also about multiculturalism, perhaps autobiographically, since she was brought up in Glasgow suburbs with significant immigrant populations.

Around this time Liz Lochhead's performance of her poetry had established a dialogue between herself and her audience; her subsequent dramatic work frequently employs structural or formal experiment, plays almost as poetry, benefiting from rich poetic imagery and language (both English and Scots). *Blood and Ice* (1982) concerns Mary Shelley's creation of Frankenstein, rejecting the idea that the feminine should be defined in terms of motherhood. Lochhead's Mary defies the confined gender roles of patriarchal society that render female artistic creation contradictory and even 'monstrous', because women are assigned to the private/silenced sphere. Her female characters are no longer dutiful, even if sparky, wives and mothers as in Bill Bryden's *Willie Rough* (1972) or objectivised as in Roddy McMillan's *The Bevellers* (1973). They are outspoken and independent individuals in their own right.

Her most interesting investigations into gender issues may perhaps be in *Dracula* (1985) and *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987). In both, she develops a fresh, irreverently non-linear, metaphor-laden form, flowing from that of *Blood and Ice*, playing with the concepts of feminine as object in male gaze, and the virgin-whore dichotomy of earlier romance drama. The latter's episodic structure is reminiscent of film scripts, fragmentary episodes being tied together by a narrator, La Corbie, who can be seen as cabaret commère, Greek chorus, or Celtic bard. The play is about Scottish identity and language, but also about the construction of histories, religion and female identity. The exploration of female identity, the position of woman in Scottish society, is a common thread through all Lochhead's plays, but she often uses this thread as a starting point for discussion of other issues, exploring intricacies of human nature across gender boundaries. Her *Tartuffe* (1984) is a tongue-in-cheek portrayal of a stereotyped Scottish (as much as French) miser, while her later media-satirical version of *Le Misanthrope, Miseryguts* (2002), offers a bleak picture of modern Scotland, ripe with prejudice, corruption and mixed loyalties. Her favouring of structural and linguistic experimentation often means her earlier plays have non-linear

poetic structures. Later, *Quelques Fleurs* (1990–1), *Britannia Rules* (1998) and, especially, *Perfect Days* (1998) all exemplify more linear naturalistic narrative in which she continues to probe her characters' gender and familial relationships.

Sue Glover's plays have always been inspired by the Scottish storytelling tradition. Her stage plays' realism is often infused with chimerical and mythic elements seeking to articulate women's unspoken experiences. Her protagonists are outsiders who occupy a society's margins. Rona in *The Seal Wife* (1980), for example, is a 'selkie', unaccustomed to this world, uneasy in her role of wife and mother. Although Glover's focus appears to be on exploring the feminine, female identity and sexuality, she also critically explores perceptions of both genders and paradoxes of myth and reality. In *The Straw Chair* (1988), both female and male are seen as puppets of political forces in eighteenth-century Edinburgh. Mixing history and myth, Glover exposes the double standards of a patriarchal society that stifles female identity as Rachel, Lady Grange, is abducted by her Jacobite Lord Advocate husband and imprisoned for life on remote St Kilda. Here, woman is seen as the other, the inferior, the chaotic and the godless, destined to remain controlled and invisible. The interconnection of gender and class issues in *The Straw Chair* is further examined in *Bondagers* (1991). Emphasising the close link between the exploitation of women's bodies and labour on the one hand and of the land on the other, *Bondagers* abandons linear structure, following the annual flow of farming seasons. It is Glover's most dramatically experimental play with choruses and dance sequences, building upon a ceilidh tradition and creating a communal, ritualistic feeling.

Glover's themes of the economic, political and sexual exploitation of women take on even darker undertones in *Sacred Hearts* (1994) about the protest of French prostitutes in Lyons in 1975 against the lack of police protection from the so-called 'Lyons Ripper'. This attacks Christian theology's Madonna-strumpet ideology and its marginalisation of women, and exposes men's violent attitudes towards women's sexuality and the patriarchal monetary economies that produce prostitution. In later plays, Glover views the oppression of both genders. *The Shetland Saga* (2000) explores the quandary of those abandoned on Klondyker trawlers, dealing with the individual's claim to personal, physical and emotional space, the sense of (non-)belonging to a community and the effects of economic and political relations on individual minds and entire societies. Discursive in form, *The Shetland Saga* remains a lucid and gripping insight into the ways in which humans deconstruct and reconstruct their personal realities within society's limitations.

By the late 1980s, a growing number of women such as Ann Marie di Mambro, Sharman Macdonald, Rona Munro and Lara Jane Bunting were producing substantial work. Di Mambro's plays such as *The Letter-Box* (1989) and *Tally's Blood* (1990) deal with women's experiences of living in small urban environments. *The Letter-Box*, in particular, paints a painful picture of domestic violence against women at the hand of the worst Scottish machismo. Written as a monologue, it shows semi-conscious Martha, thrown out of the flat by her drunken husband, speaking through the letter-box, trying to calm down her little daughter. The indifference of social forces is emphasised by two lovers, aptly named Jack and Jill, who see her and epitomise a society that refuses to acknowledge the violence on its doorstep. *Tally's Blood* is set on the eve of the Second World War, a precarious time for the Italian-Scots community, labelled enemy aliens. It concerns prejudice and the struggle to keep one's cultural identity whilst living in another cultural environment. Rosinella's prejudice against the Devlin family and all things not Italian, and stubborn sticking to old-fashioned ways, blinds her to change around her and the needs and vulnerabilities of those close to her. *Tally's Blood* is not only

about preservation of one's identity, it is also about changing oneself, realising that, whilst where one comes from determines part of one's identity, it does not determine one's essence. Finally, Rosinella returns to Italy where – liberating as this in a sense is – she realises she does not belong any more.

In several plays by these playwrights, men are made invisible: it is as if they are consciously removed from the stage in order to centralise women's experience. This happens in both *Bondagers* and *The Letter-Box*. In other cases, men are seen as weak or impotent, despite their own self-perception: the very profession of the priest in *Sacred Hearts* emasculates him; Massimo in *Tally's Blood* can never stand up to Rosinella. Sharman Macdonald is another in whose plays men are weaker, seen as absent fathers, old men, or young boys, but never as mature adults. She focuses on coming-of-age tragic-comedy and relationships between female friends or mothers and daughters. *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout* (1984), *When We Were Women* (1988) and *The Winter Guest* (1995) reiterate the concept of sisterhood, with the sole purpose of subverting it. Her female characters are often portrayed as dislocated – both emotionally and physically – from the world that they live in. This world of absent fathers or husbands still operates according to oppressive masculine rules, seldom leaving other options to the younger generation of women than to leave home early in search of careers and their own identity. Macdonald captures in *The Girl with Red Hair* (2005) another theme that dominates her plays – death and loss – as it explores the ways in which a community deals with a death of a young person. Seventeen-year-old Roslyn has died in a car accident a year earlier, and the play investigates the lives of those left behind, her boyfriend Matt, her mother Cath, a childhood friend Pam, and other residents of the small fishing village who were touched by her life, and untimely death. Yet, this play also celebrates life, and communicates, in a sparse lyrical language that has become Macdonald's trademark, the author's view, in the words of Mark Fisher's *Guardian* review, that 'even after death, life goes on'.

Rona Munro also intentionally removes or objectifies the male characters in her plays. She believes western culture consciously makes male experience visible, while female experience is never spoken of in ways that women themselves would recognise. She strives to abandon idealised pictures of women and to represent a whole range of experiences. In *Fugue* (1983) and *Saturday at the Commodore* (1989) she explores coming of age and accepting one's own sexuality and mortality. The latter also touches upon homosexuality, a strand in Scottish playwriting discussed later in this chapter. Munro addresses the conscious and recurrent building of one's self-images, taking this theme further in *Bold Girls* (1990), about the lives of women in Belfast during the Troubles. Her female cast inhabit a society where men are removed, in prison or dead, and where women have to accommodate harsh realities. Deirdre infiltrates Marie's and Cassie's space, causing havoc by uncovering long-buried secrets. Where male communities in much recent Scottish drama are marked by hierarchy of dominance, the hard-man myth and idolisation of mother figures, women's communities are more flexible and sharing so that the rite of passage that follows is both Marie's and Cassie's as much as Deirdre's. While in male workplace drama a violent act often leads to communal rejection of the newcomer, here the newcomer must cut like a knife (metaphorically and literally) through man-made myth, the idealisation of absent man around which women have spun their existence. The play ends in Marie's recognition of the falseness of her world and acceptance of Deirdre. Munro also addresses *Bold Girls'* theme of violence against women – physical and emotional – in *Piper's Cave* (1985) and *The Maiden Stone* (1994). Both of these plays explore the relationship of women with the natural landscape: 'Landscape' is the name of the heroine of the former and the stone of

the latter is in the form of a running woman. Both use flowing dramaturgical structures without single all-conclusive climaxes.

Lara Jane Bunting uses naturalistic structures as she portrays women's experiences in provincial environments in Scotland. The predominant themes of her plays, like *Vodka and Daisies* (1989), *Love but Her* (1990), *It's not Enough* (1996) and *My Piece of Foreign Sky* (1996), are bigotry, claustrophobia, coming of age, friendship, love, machismo, homosexuality and familial relations. In these plays, the domestic sphere is invaded or threatened by men, and women's communities become a stronghold where women's voices are given an outlet through bringing to the fore the folkloric, communal spirit. The domestic sphere thus becomes the place of creativity, and ultimately a potent tool to undermine the separate spheres ideology.

Alongside such women playwrights, some male playwrights, including Chris Hannan, Tony Roper, Mike Cullen and John Clifford, also work, partly or wholly, around gender issues. Hannan's *Elizabeth Gordon Quinn* (1985), for example, is an unsentimental portrayal of one woman's existence in Glasgow's working-class milieu during the First World War. His succinct writing highlights the harshness and self-delusion of class and imperialist ideologies, while his heroine asserts her right not to be assimilated within established class or gender categories. Similarly, Tony Roper's *The Steamie* (1987) celebrates women's lives and communal spirit in 1950s' Glasgow. Sometimes criticised for alleged lack of political intent, its successful use of Scottish popular theatre forms implicitly asserts the autonomy and creativity of women working together, respecting both old and new group-members. This play highlights, as does *Bondagers*, the cooperative and mutually supportive function of women's groups as opposed to the competitive and chauvinist nature of male groups in such plays as Roddy McMillan's *The Bevellers* or Tom McGrath's *The Hardman*. Cullen's *Anna Weiss* (1997) tackles the uneasy topic of child abuse. He spins an intricate web of relationships between three characters: Lynn, her father David, and Anna, a hypnotherapist specialising in 'lost' memories. Aware of possible False Memory Syndrome, he questions the ways his characters see themselves and each other in a society based on mistrust and creation of 'fake' individual mythologies of gender and sexuality. John Clifford's poetic voice asks profound questions about the ways modern society perceives femininity and masculinity. *Losing Venice* (1985) and *Ines de Castro* (1989) deal with modern issues through renaissance Venice and medieval Portugal. Clifford's characters often feel uneasy in their own skins, their individualities marginalised and suppressed by the constraints of political, social and religious agendas. Clifford deconstructs socially accepted gender clichés and criticises society's inability to acknowledge and accept those who are different. In *Letter to his Friends* (2000), the story of Eden and the Fall provides an allegory of human history in which he sees cruel, arbitrary, unjust and misogynist suppression of identity. His experimental one-man performance, *God's New Frock* (2003), draws on autobiographical material in a personal exploration into the nature of gender and sexual identity.

In more recent work by both male and female playwrights preoccupations with gender, national identity and the place of Scotland in contemporary global society have been replaced by more personal (his/her)stories in the context of alienating society. They explore the redefinition of gender roles in families, domestic violence, motherhood and parent-child relationships in the context of eroding relationships and economic change. Such issues are the main preoccupation of plays like Duncan McLean's *Julie Allardyce* (1995), David Greig's *The Architect* (1996) and Riccardo Galgani's *Acts* (1999). In the latter examples, there is a clear shift from a traditional representation of family in terms of fixed and often stereotyped hierarchy of gender roles, towards the fragmentation of

relationships and individual identities to the point of mutual non-recognition. In *Julie Allardyce*, McLean places a female protagonist firmly in a primary role, creating the complex character of a young woman who works on an oilrig and exploring the effect a woman's economic independence may have on intergender relationships. Julie lives in the shadow of a macho culture that discriminates against women and, having understood that the traditional concepts of love and marriage and, indeed, of economic independence are illusory, she abandons her job and her fiancé. Greig's *The Architect* and Galgani's *Acts* go even further. The communication between protagonists in both plays is disjointed to the extent that it seems as if they enact never-ending soliloquies. Greig and Galgani present the urban consumerist environment as dehumanised and dehumanising, alienating and destructive for individuals and families. While Greig's characters still recognise familial links, even if alienated from them, the protagonists in Galgani's *Acts* behave like complete strangers. They are Ionescian caricatures who move in separate spheres and conduct senseless disjointed dialogues. He uses absurdist structure and clown-like movement to show their deconstruction as individuals and members of a family unit.

The 1990s and the early twenty-first century also saw the re-emergence of playwrights like Marcella Evaristi with her musical fantasy *Nightflights* (2002), and Sharman Macdonald with her dramatic lament, *The Girl with Red Hair* (2005). Another prominent name to reappear after a long absence as a playwright was Catherine Lucy Czerkawska, a Scotland-based poet and novelist of Polish, Irish and English parentage. Her first play, *Heroes and Others* (1980), was produced by the Scottish Theatre Company and her community theatre show *The Devil and Mary Lamont/Bonnie Blue Hen* (1995) by Borderline Theatre Company, but it was not until Traverse Theatre premièred *Wormwood* (1997) that Czerkawska's playwriting regained prominence. Both *Heroes and Others* and *Wormwood* deal with wider community issues, the latter, for example, depicting the 1986 Chernobyl disaster from the individual perspective of Natalia, returning to her native village to face the ghosts of the past. *Quartz* (2000), a play about magic, religion, bigotry and loneliness, was followed by *The Price of a Fish Supper* (2005), a dramatic monologue looking critically at the plight of the Scottish fishing industry.

The 1990s further saw the emergence of women playwrights like Nicola McCartney, Zinnie Harris, Grace Barnes and Isabel Wright. McCartney's *Heritage* (1998), about the first generation of Scots-Irish emigrants to Canada, is a post-*Bondagers* play addressing personal and national identity and growing up in a new environment. There the prospects of new life, and love, are shattered by old hostilities. Zinnie Harris's *Further than the Furthest Thing* (2000) is a sensitive account of the displaced lives of a small close-knit community of a remote island. Harris translates her mother's childhood memories into fantastic, poetic and profoundly personal tales of love and loss and displacement in modern society. Barnes's play *Lavender Blue* (2002) explores the emotional world and skewed sense of identity of a young woman returning from Australia to her home town, determined to find out what happened to her twin sister. Wright's *Mr Placebo* (2003) unpicks the tales of a group of men meeting in a hospital ward, having agreed to sell their services as medical guinea pigs.

Several playwrights, both gay and straight, have addressed issues of gay gender and sexuality following earlier work already mentioned by Benedick Scott and Michael Wilcox. Iain Heggie's *A Wholly Healthy Glasgow* (1987) explores an alternative (a)morality built round the outsider nature of gay life within patriarchal power structures. John Binnie's first play *Mum, Dad, There's Something I've Got to Tell You* (1986) concerns the coming-out of eighteen-year-old Colin. It features a series of monologues in which the protagonist struggles with his own sexual identity and telling his parents about it. The play uses religious

connotations to depict the intricacies of the need to frame one's identity against the backdrop of social prejudice and familial relations. His second play, *Killing Me Softly* (1987), focuses on two young people's gay/straight relationship. Rather than the community/family relations of his first play, the emphasis is more on individual feelings of isolation. Binnie also deals with lesbian love in *Accustomed to Her Face* (1993). Although lesbian themes are not a major preoccupation in her writing, Rona Munro's *Saturday at the Commodore* (1989) also deals subtly with growing up and discovering one's lesbian identity, here in a small farming community.

At the end of *Killing Me Softly* Binnie introduces the topic of AIDS, a theme found worldwide in playwriting of this period. Following his *The Fork* (1976), which dealt with political and sexual repression and homophobia, Ian Brown's *Wasting Reality* (1992) explores the ways AIDS devastates individuals and families. Taking place in a single day, the emptying of the dead son/brother's flat becomes the emptying of his old identity from his family's lives and their coming to terms (or failing to do so) with his sexuality and their bereavement. Memory of the past becomes a central issue in Brown's play, whose form uses dramatic imagery and stage-time to investigate gender roles, grief and loss. Meantime, James Duthie's *Greta* (1997) deals with closeted identity and reversal of gender roles in the life of a transsexual in a small fishing village in the north-east of Scotland, celebrating her spiritual integrity. Christopher Deans's *Molly's Collar and Tie* (1997), whose title derives from slang for gay men and women, outlines the history of gay and lesbian experience in Scotland. Written in episodic form, the play recounts stories of famous gay and lesbian characters throughout Scottish history, from James VI and Murray Hall, a nineteenth-century Scottish businesswoman and dyke, to the formation of the Scottish Minorities Group in 1969. Two contemporary characters, the Drag Man and the Drumming Woman, link the fragmented historical episodes. His *Smells + Bells* (1998) examines hypocrisy in the Catholic Church as a gay priest discovers and expresses his sexuality.

Alison Smith is preoccupied with boundaries and deeply cautious of narrowly labelling her work, or herself, as a lesbian author. Arguing that any gay writing network is artificial in its very nature and therefore counter-productive for one's writing, she often deals in her plays with a ritualised portrayal of Scottish community. In *The Dance* (1988), one actress plays three roles, the Maiden, the Mother and the Hag, the traditional non-Christian representations of the three stages of the female identity. The ritual structure of the play identifies the feminine as witch-like and connected with the natural cycle of life: at the end of the play the Hag leaps into the position occupied by the Maiden at the beginning. Smith depicts the cycle of life as the cycle of identity, both national and sexual, portraying sexual difference from a female perspective. In *Comic* (1990) two female characters, Verity Venture and Jinny, constantly re-create fictional constructions of themselves, and in *Trace of Arc* (1991) the same woman reappears under different names to go through the repeated ritual of shopping, and answering the supermarket staff's questions with fragmented advertising slogans. Fragmentation and ritualisation as a destabilising factor recur in her drama, a reminder that one must always wear a mask and live someone else's life in a society unresponsive of difference. Jackie Kay's *Twilight* (1993), about male gay experience in urban Scotland, is even sharper, reflecting her critique of Scottish society as bitterly homophobic and racist. Indeed, most plays on homosexual themes embody a strong element of homophobia in one or more characters, whether Tim's brother Michael in *Killing Me Softly*, Morag, dead Michael's sister, in *Wasting Reality* or the community at large in James Duthie's *Greta*.

Nevertheless, the fact that more plays have been produced exploring and challenging gender and sexual stereotypes suggests a new openness on the part of writers, and so their audiences, to tackle this subject. Unlike previous decades, when female playwrights especially struggled to release the female voice from an invisibility zone, both female and male authors have more scope to present pluralities of voices and to express diverse individual and communal identities on Scotland's stage. Scottish theatre since the mid-1970s has seen refreshingly innovative work in areas of gender and sexuality by established writers, as well as the appearance of promising new writers writing in these areas.

Further reading

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- Gifford, Douglas and Dorothy McMillan (eds) (1997), *The History of Scottish Women's Writing*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
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- Scullion, Adrienne (2000), 'Contemporary Scottish Women Playwrights', in Janelle Reinelt and Elaine Aston (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Women Playwrights*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 94–118.
- Whyte, Christopher (ed.) (1995), *Gendering the Nation: Studies in Modern Scottish Literature*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. [Particularly, Adrienne Scullion, 'Feminine Pleasures and Masculine Indignities: Gender and Community in Scottish Drama', pp. 169–204.]

The Diaspora and its Writers

Iain Wright

In the twentieth century the Scots continued to be a semi-nomadic people. In fact, even more of them were on the move: in the 1920s alone, as a result of the post-war assisted emigration schemes, nearly 400,000 emigrated – as many as had done so in the whole of the nineteenth century. The net loss in the first half of the twentieth century was a remarkable 1,100,000 (from a country of 5 million) and the Scottish Historical Society concludes that no country on the continent of Europe has lost such a high proportion of its people as Scotland. The effects were dramatic and had both an economic and a cultural significance which has still not been adequately explored, especially since an ever-increasing number of emigrants were skilled workers – 55 per cent of those leaving in the early twenties, for instance – and professionals. These emigrants were highly literate, and, since the Scots also continued to be a nation of narrators, *seanachaidhean*, tellers of tales and singers of songs, especially tales and songs of their own origins and travels, they produced an extensive body of literature. It is surprising therefore that no attempt has been to take an overview of their writings, or even to examine the texts of the main individual areas of the diaspora – Australia, New Zealand, Canada – in any detail.

This is a particularly good moment to begin such an attempt, because of three distinct recent developments. First, the last twenty years have seen the sudden flowering of ‘Diaspora Studies’, providing new vocabularies and tools of analysis. A landmark was Stuart Hall’s essay ‘Cultural Identity and Diaspora’ (1990), which, along with writers like Frantz Fanon, Salman Rushdie and Edward Said on whom he drew, was one of the triggers for a wave of diaspora theorisings, as the first generation of ‘Postcolonial Studies’ began to look old-fashioned and scholars sought new territories to explore. Robin Cohen’s numerous works, especially *Global Diasporas* (1997), and James Clifford’s *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (1997) had a major impact. In the most influential of them all, *Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), Paul Gilroy claimed that there was ‘a general shift within the postcolonial field towards privileging mobility over stasis’. Diana Brydon went further and claimed ‘diaspora now rivals globalization as a totalizing explanation for contemporary experience’ (in ‘The Ends of Postcolonialism Rethinking Autonomy, Cosmopolitanism and Diaspora’, <http://anscombe.mcmaster.ca/~globaldoc/globalization.index.html>).

In all this, it is paradoxical and striking that there was disappointingly little analysis of the Scottish case. Scots emigrants were evidently not as sexy (or politically correct) as West Indian, Jewish and Chinese ones. Gérard Chaliand’s *Atlas des diasporas* (1991), for example, surveyed fifteen main movements, including the Irish, but not the Scots. The journal *Diaspora*, launched by Oxford University Press in the same year, has published some eighty major articles, but not one of them deals with the Scots. But the situation is now on the

turn, not so much in the field of diasporic theory itself, but within Scottish Studies departments and within the emigrant communities themselves. In 1999, Aberdeen University created a new Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies, with Seamus Heaney and Edwin Morgan on its advisory board, and designated the Irish and Scottish diasporas as one of its three key themes. Ionad Nàiseanta na h-Imrich (The National Centre for Migration Research) has recently been established at Scotland's only Gaelic-language tertiary college, the Sabhal Mòr Ostaig on Skye. The Celtic Studies offerings at St Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia, the major Gaelic-teaching university in North America, now include courses on the diaspora. In the United States, the Scottish Council Foundation recently launched its Scottish Diaspora Project, with a very specific political agenda, set out at <http://tartan.communitiesofthefuture.org/Scottish-diaspora.html> (accessed February 2006):

While there has undoubtedly been a new sense of revival in Scotland, this has not really been articulated. Making the Diaspora (and others) aware that what Scotland is embarking on is no less than a new Enlightenment – i.e., a deep systemic transformation – may be a way to catalyse all kinds of support and enthusiasm.

'Diaspora' was the topic of the first issue of the lively electronic journal *e-Keltoi: Journal of Interdisciplinary Celtic Studies*, and the equally lively electronic resource *Saorsa Media* was launched in 2002 as 'an outlet for materials relating to Scottish Highland literature and heritage in America'. The list could easily be extended, especially as Scottish Studies courses, usually with a diasporic component, multiply around the world (in Australia they are now formally established in Melbourne and Flinders Universities and at the Australian National University in Canberra).

The second main reason for this upsurge of activities was not 'academic' in any sense. It was the events of 1997 and their consequences: 'A nation once again' – but what *kind* of nation? The one that was to be constructed was of a quite new kind, and it would certainly not be one limited to the geographic boundaries of Scotland itself. There was a strong new interest – not just in Scotland of course, but it was particularly relevant there – in what Benedict Anderson had called some years before, in a highly influential book, *Imagined Communities* (1983). The Scots *natio* would more and more be thought of as the totality of those conscious of themselves as Scots, not just as the inhabitants of one part of an archipelago. The Irish had been talking about a 'Greater Ireland' for a long time. Now a 'Greater Scotland' had to be thought out.

The third reason why this is a good moment to survey the literature of the overseas Scots is that that literature itself, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, began to come of age, producing major writers of international standing for the first time. It was able to do that because, for the first time, it began to think hard about the authenticity of its own inherited mythologies. It picked up, or developed independently in parallel with, the same process which was going on in Scotland, especially after the thought-provoking 'Scotch Myths' exhibition in St Andrews and Edinburgh in 1981 and the lively debate (see, for instance, Colin McArthur's collection of essays, *Scotch Reels* (1982)) which ensued. That debate was well overdue, for – it is as well to speak bluntly – a very large proportion of the literature of exile had remained backward-looking, imprisoned in cliché and the Kailyard of popular imagination.

All exile communities tend to be culturally conservative (see, for comparison with the Scots case, *Long-Distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities*, Zlatko

Skrbis's illuminating 1999 study of Slovenes and Croats in Australia). They have a strong desire to preserve their imagined lost communities in aspic or in amber, beyond time and outside history. This can often present severe problems when the old country is trying to head off in a new direction. (One thinks of Sinn Fein's problems in trying to get its American fundraisers to accept the end of the armed struggle and that 'Romantic Ireland's dead and gone' or Australian Yugoslavs having to adjust to the new realities of the Balkans: the problems of what Benedict Anderson calls 'long-distance nationalists'.) But we have not yet clearly explained to ourselves why Scots – perhaps all Scots but especially overseas Scots – have been so peculiarly fixated on, and unready to question, anachronistic national myths. In the introduction to the influential collection of essays *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), Eric Hobsbawm was careful to point out that, while all societies are continually involved in tradition-construction, there are particular moments when the activity seems specially problematic, or restricting. It is no accident that his introduction was immediately followed by Hugh Trevor-Roper's 'The Highland Tradition in Scotland', an attempted exposé (now much contested) of the fabrication of the historically unfounded myths of tartanry of the early nineteenth century.

One result of all this freeze-framed nostalgia was that when, in the early 1920s, Hugh MacDiarmid launched his campaign for the 'desuetisation of Scottish culture and the deTibetanization of the Highlands and Islands' – the 'Scottish Renaissance' – he saw the diaspora more as a part of the problem than of the solution. He clearly implied that its cultural institutions – epitomised for him in the Burns Clubs – were a massive obstacle in the way of his project for kicking Scotland into modernity and modernism.

No' wan in fifty kens a wurd Burns wrote
 But misapplied is a'body's property,
 And gin there was his like alive the day
 They'd be the last a kennin' haund to gi'e –

Cruse London Scotties wi' their braw shirt fronts
 And a' their fancy freen's, rejoicin'
 That similah gatherings in Timbuctoo,
 Bagdad – and Hell, nae doot – are voicin'

Burns' sentiments o' universal love,
 In pidgin English or in wild-fowl Scots,
 And toastin' ane wha's nocht to them but an
 Excuse for faitherin' Genius wi' *their* thochts.

A' *they*'ve to say was aften said afore
 A lad was born in Kyle to blaw aboot.
 What unco fate mak's *him* the dumpin'-grun'
 For a' the sloppy rubbish they jaw oot?

Mair nonsense has been uttered in his name
 Than in ony's barrin' liberty and Christ.
 If this keeps spreedin' as the drink declines,
 Syne turns to tea, wae's me for the *Zeitgeist!*

One can see his point. If this were a quantitative, sociological survey, rather than a literary critical one, one would have to report that 90 per cent of the literary production of the diaspora is sub-Burns (with a leavening of pseudo-Scott, the odd dash of ersatz Stevenson and traces of imitation Buchan) and is typified by the following, extracted from the American newsletter of Clan McAlister, courtesy of the splendid *Brigadoonery Canada* website ('Cyberheadquarters of the Scottish Colonial Tartan Police': <http://www.durham.net/~neilmac/>):

Thoughts of Home
Neil Harding McAlister

O, when I left Scotland long years ago
All the hills were covered with snow,
And the sunshine sparkled bright on the loch
Still and deep in the glen below.
I was then but a young lad –
And a young man has to roam.
And I did not know how soon I would miss
My wee croft and my Scottish home.

Where the eagle soars o'er high mountain crags
And the glen sweeps down to the sea,
Where the heather paints the fair purple hills,
Lies the hearth that is dear to me –
Where fire light shines on faces
Of the loved ones I have known,
And the skirl of pipes rides wild on the wind
With a song of my Highland home.

Now this brave New World holds much for a lad.
'Tis a fine and promising land
Where a man may earn his fortune and fame
By the labor of his own hands.
I've worked hard and I've prospered,
But I'd trade all that I own
Just to see once more the bright, bonnie glen
That still shines in my thoughts of home.

Individual writers who are aware of their own Scots background are scattered across the globe – Roy Campbell and Alan Paton are South African examples – but there are three countries where something like a self-conscious Scots literary tradition has been carried on or constructed: Australia, New Zealand and Canada, the three dominions selected for the huge assisted emigration schemes after the First World War. These are considered in turn.

Australia

The Australian poet Les Murray, when asked what contribution the Scots have made to Australia, is fond of quipping ‘Well we own it.’ He also claims that about a quarter of published modern Australian poets are of Scots ethnic origin or background. Both claims would be hard to establish, but it is certainly true that emigrant Scots have continued to consolidate and extend the roles they created for themselves in the nineteenth century. Their influence is also surprisingly unstudied (in comparison with, say, the Australian-Irish, who have a much higher public profile). Scots have been politically (and militarily) prominent in modern Australia: Sir Robert Menzies, who did more to form the modern Australian national identity than any other prime minister, was especially proud of his Scottish background, for instance. Their influence has been especially marked and culturally influential in higher education and in the literary institutions: many of the major Australian newspapers and publishing houses were Scots creations, and the network of influences has been fascinatingly complex (and sometimes ironic: the founder of the Murdoch empire, Walter Murdoch, an Aberdonian, was also the first Professor of English at the University of Western Australia). And then of course, at the local level, there was and is a vast network of Scottish cultural societies: Burns Clubs, Highland games associations, Clan associations, pipe bands, country-dance groups, the Scottish Australian Heritage Council. In the broadest sense of the word ‘literature’, their publications – *The Australasian Highlander*, *Highland Gathering* and so on – dominate diasporic literature, that is, writing reflecting on Scots Australians’ identity and roots. But it is striking how few of these publications have any literary content in the narrower sense. They contain very few poems or short stories even as compared to, say, the analogous Canadian publications, where, perhaps because of the continuing vitality of the Canadian *Gàidhealtachd*, for which Australia has never had an equivalent, tale-telling and narrative songs seem to have remained more central to ethnic self-awareness.

Perhaps one should not expect sonnets in cyclostyled clan newsletters, but the absence of literature is very striking when one turns to the more sophisticated publications. In 1998, the glossy magazine *Scots* was launched in Sydney as the organ of the Scottish Heritage Society, ‘especially created to Bring Scotland Home to the 40 million people of Scots descent around the world’. It now claims to be ‘the largest circulation full colour Scottish interest magazine in the world’. In the broadest sense of the word ‘literature’, *Scots* qualifies for inclusion in this chapter. It is a product of and an articulation of the emigrant experience. And indeed it is a highly literate production. It commissions competent writers: it will take you on a tour of the Borders with Sir David Steel and a witty exploration of the history of the haggis with one of the Two Fat Ladies. It is not mindlessly atavistic. It does not try altogether to evade the politics of the last few years or pretend that time stands still. It has carried a letter column from Michael Lynch, a professor of history at Edinburgh University, in which he reminds readers that a ‘New Scotland’ is in the process of creation. But what kind of new Scotland is in fact created in the magazine’s pages? One dominated entirely by the standard shortbread-tin myths? Well, no. An early issue actually contained a critique of *Braveheart* and its misrepresentations of Scottish history. But to whom did the editors give the commission? To one of the impressively wide-range of recent demythologisers – Cairns Craig, say, or Angus Calder, or Tom Nairn? No: to the Unicorn Pursuivant of Arms, accompanied by a picture of him in the full splendour of his official medieval rig. A large part of each issue is in fact devoted to laird-worship (although the tactic has

occasionally misfired: John Macleod of Macleod was given the flagship role in the first number, but even *Scots* had to report the fact that, shortly afterwards, he had attempted to sell the Black Cuillins for £10 million). What kind of ‘imagined community’ is cleverly and seductively constructed here? A Scotland of ancestral homes, Baxter’s jams, clan genealogies, soft-focus photographs of the Hebrides. And a Scotland more or less without culture – or, to be strictly accurate, a portrait of the culture with gaping rents where its most active and creative products should be. Music does very occasionally get a mention – an interview with Karen Matheson, a profile of Alistair Fraser – as long as it is strictly Celtic-traditional. But in its thirty-odd issues, there have not only been no poems or stories, there had not been a single article on modern Scottish literature, until, finally, Ian Rankin was admitted in Issue 26 (November 2004). The reader who relied on *Scots* for his or her knowledge of Scotland today would never know of the existence of Alasdair Gray, James Kelman, A. L. Kennedy – and *certainly* not Irvine Welsh.

What makes the selectivity of the commercial nostalgia-industry represented by *Scots* particularly striking is that it shows itself so out of touch with – or so deliberately excludes – not just the current realities of Scotland itself, but also the coming of age of the diaspora being explored here. As in its other areas, *Scots* Australians have begun to reflect in new ways on their ethnicity in the last twenty years, partly because ‘multiculturalism’ has moved to the centre of the national political agenda, partly because of the coming of self-rule to Scotland itself and the ways in which its ripples have reached even to the editorial pages of the most traditional clan news-sheets, and partly because many simply feel that Harry Lauder and the White Heather Club are finally dead and gone. One can see new kinds of self-reflection in the work of influential Australian poets like Chris Wallace-Crabbe, one of the best poets writing in Australia today, Professor of Literature at Melbourne University and one of the country’s most prominent public intellectuals. As well as writing the only poem known to the present author praising marmalade as one of the great Scots contributions to civilisation, Wallace-Crabbe, who describes himself as of ‘military-Bohemian’ Scots background, has a lovely, sceptical piece on the emigrant Scots’ capacity for self-mythologising, ‘Sporting the Plaid’, about his Arbroath grandfather. Having lost his commission in India (he hadn’t a clue what to do with his sepoy),

Blown to Australia, the old buck founded
a blague of Caledonian societies,
tatty diamond mines and a second family

with a blonde Highland schoolie from Cork,
spieling his impossible tales
of clan exploits

along the brown Jumna, on blue high seas,
in a Boxer Rising where
Crabbe’s roughriders exerted

their mongoloid talents
ensuring the flood of opium
for a smoky god and fleshpink empire.

I suspect you of being a shit
 but in stiff, perfect photographs
 magnificent beyond belief

on the bridge between dandy and warlord.
 The whisky fed your moustaches,
 your children adoring you,

scared stiff, bloodthirsty, tribal.
 When you were half-seas-over, roaring under the stars,
 'I could break that cabhorse's neck

with one blow of the heel o' my hand',
 you were all huff and puff, a bolt of plaid
 woven from dropped names.

There has as yet been no attempt at a comprehensive overview of the cultural achievements of Scots Australians. There is no equivalent of Bill Wannan's book on the Irish in Australia, *The Wearing of the Green* (1965). But two major Australian writers of Scots background, Don Watson and Les Murray, have shown the way. In 1984, Don Watson published his *Caledonia Australis: Scottish Highlanders on the Frontier of Australia*. Watson was and is one of Australia's most prominent and visible public intellectuals – he went on to become Paul Keating's speechwriter, and then his biographer – and his book attracted a great deal of interest and praise and was reprinted in 1997. It did not deal with the modern diaspora, except incidentally or implicitly – it is a history of earlier settlements, particularly those following the Clearances – but it performed a crucial role in providing a foundation-narrative for Scots Australians' self-understanding.

Four years earlier, Les Murray, then already a rising star and now indisputably Australia's most important and influential poet, addressed a conference on Celtic influence in Australia at the University of Sydney. 'The Bonnie Disproportion' (also published, in edited form, in the *Edinburgh Review* (May 1981) and, in full, in Murray's *The Paperbark Tree: Selected Prose*, 1990) is one of the finest and most thoughtful things yet written on the Scots contribution to Australian culture. Reference is made to their achievements in many areas of Australian life – politics, education, commerce, literature – but its centre is a meditation on the *fine*, the extended clan-family, and how its influence persists in the most intimate patternings of the lives of the poor farmers of New South Wales, Murray's own folk, and those like them. It is a subtle, engaging, highly personal reflection, which manages to be both clear- and misty-eyed at the same time. Murray knows the risks of diasporic fantasising about what Fanon called 'the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today [. . .] some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us', and that the dreams of the Hebrides (or in this case Caithness) may be mere dreams, and damaging ones:

I suppose what I have been describing is the common trap of ethnic consciousness. As the ancestral motherland recedes farther into the past, it becomes a dream, a fossilized style, a place of the wise dead.

But he still longs to communicate with those wise dead.

'The Bonny Disproportion' was by no means Murray's only meditation on the topic. It forms one link in a chain of verses and essays, from his earliest publications to his most recent ones. Some, like 'The Bonny Disproportion', centre on his own attempt to come to terms with his sense of possession or permeation by the past, as in his long poem 'Their Cities, Their Universities' (in *Collected Poems*, 1991):

The men of my family danced a reel with sugar
for two generations.
Robbie Burns was involved, that barley spirit
and history, and their fathers' voyage out
but that is a novel.
The past explains us and it gets our flesh.

That last line sounds a characteristic warning against 'presentism', the projecting of one's own needs and personality backwards on to the past. After a hundred lines he comes full circle, acknowledging again that only a novel can tell this story right:

They wasted their lands for that (and for all that)
the redhaired Murrays.
The reasons are a novel, incomplete as cultures
now everywhere become. It is almost overt now:

we are going to the cause
not coming from it.

Those concluding words are splendidly cryptic, but appear to be a further warning about the dangers of walking backwards into the future with one's eyes fixed on the past.

Several of Murray's texts centre on the loss of, and his nostalgia for, the Gaelic language. He is not, of course, a native Gaelic speaker – there have been no Gaelic-speaking communities in Australia for a hundred years – but he took evening classes in Sydney and two of his most personally charged pieces are obituaries on his teacher, a review piece called 'The Lost Inheritance' and 'Elegy for Angus Macdonald of Cnoclinn':

The oldest tree in Europe's lost
a Knotty branch it could ill spare
to make a hump in Sydney ground,
not for the first time. No. But the last.
A genus of honey bees has died out,
a strain that came to us from the lost world.

Here too Murray is wonderfully aware of the dangers of nostalgia for those lost worlds. This particular poem is in part a refusal of atavism, even daring to say that his mentor might have been better off away from the dying Hebrides, and offering a half-hope for a new future and a new synthesis in what seem some of the most memorable words ever written about the ironies of the diaspora:

And perhaps you too were better served here
than in Uist of the Sheldrakes and the tides

watching the old life fade, the *toradh*,
 the good, go out of the island world.
 Exile's a rampart, sometimes, to the past,
 a distiller of spirit from bruised grains;
 this is a meaning of the New World.

The good does not go out of the past.
 Angles of the moving moon and sun
 elicit fresh lights from it continually;
 now, in the new lands, everyone's Ethnic
 and we too, the Scots Australians, who've been
 henchmen of much in our self-loss
 may recover ourselves, and put off oppression.

It would not be visible to a non-Australian reader, but those final words appear to mean that the oppression the emigrants must put off – by coming to terms with it – is the oppression that they have been responsible for as well as the one they have suffered: the dispossession of the Australian indigenous peoples. They must say sorry too and not whinge endlessly on about how they have been victimised.

Although there were some impressive exceptions, emigrant Scots were deeply complicit in the oppression and dispossession of the indigenous peoples. Jim Hewitson's statement in *Far Off in Sunlit Places: Stories of the Scots in Australia and New Zealand* (1998) that 'Some Scots [. . .] stressed the responsibility of the settlers to the Aborigines; but generally the welfare of the indigenous peoples seems to have taken a low priority in the scramble for land' is a considerable understatement. Tasmania, as Lachlan Macquarie, the Gaelic speaker from Ulva who was the creator of modern, post-penal colony Australia, ensured, was one of the most Scottish parts of Australia. It was also the place where, uniquely in Australia and with few rivals anywhere in the history of international genocide, the entire Aboriginal population was exterminated. Tasmania is full of Scottish place-names still – Ben Nevis, Perth, Ben Lomond, Campbelltown, Struan – but they have a somewhat hollow echo in the lands from which the native Australians have gone forever. According to the Aboriginal local historians, Angus McMillan, 'discoverer' of Gippsland and still one of the iconic pioneer-heroes of white Australia, deliberately massacred hundreds of Aborigines on his expeditions with his 'Highland Brigade' in the early 1840s. The wars against the Maoris ferociously executed by the Glaswegian John Bryce in New Zealand thirty years later are another notorious example. There is a bitter irony, which Scots Australians (and New Zealanders, Canadians and Americans) are only now beginning to face, in the fact that the very Clearance Highlanders who had been so brutally dispossessed from their own homes and land were now often vigorously employing exactly the same tactic in the new country. 'Those to whom evil is done do evil in return,' as Auden wrote.

New Zealand

New Zealand is in many respects the most Scottish of the three former dominions. A large number of the original settlers were Scots and in the mid-nineteenth century they made up about half the population. The figure today is around a quarter, compared to about 10 per cent in Australia. The list of Scots 'makers of modern New Zealand' is again

impressive and, to the visitor, much of New Zealand simply *feels* very Scottish compared to most of Australia or Canada. Scottish place-names cover the country (Dunedin's founding fathers gave it the Gaelic name for Edinburgh and appointed one of Burns's nephews as its minister) and much of the architecture, both civil and ecclesiastical, is evidently Scottish. The country is covered by a network of Scots cultural and recreational institutions even denser than the Australian equivalent. Anyone who has attended the Portree Highland Games on Skye or any Mòd, will know how regularly New Zealanders can sweep the board in everything from the pibroch competitions to country dancing.

The literary results were also similar to the Australian case. Most Scots New Zealand writers continued to recycle the inherited themes and forms. It is as if, as in other parts of the diaspora, the cultural memory and habits of the oral tradition had persisted with peculiar but anachronistic strength. In oral recitations, originality is positively discouraged and the business of the *seanachaidh* is to present the audience with the familiar traditional stories. He or she will be vocally criticised if, beyond cunning grace notes and individual embellishments, the main components are radically altered or omitted. In diasporic writing, however, the main components tend not to be folkloric elements, but a limited set of tropes and themes derived from Burns and Scott and J. M. Barrie, tokens recirculated so many times that they have worn smooth and featureless.

New Zealand produced a good crop of tartanry and kailyardism of this kind. In particular, a glutinous mass of sub-Burnsian love poetry was turned out. Much of this was ephemeral and local, but one New Zealand poet, Hugh Smith, 'the Bard of Inangahua', was published nationally and indeed became a national celebrity. His work can stand as an epitome of the genre and is fairly represented by the first stanza of the poem with which he opened *Poems by an Ayrshire Scot* (1923):

FAR AWA TAE SCOTLAND

Far awa tae Scotland,
 Juist like in a pleasing dream,
 My thochts hae drifted hameward,
 And the haunts o' young days seem
 To spread in a' their beauty,
 And wi' fancy's e'e I view
 The daisy-spangl'd hills an' dales,
 Wi' sky o' bonnie blue.

Note that, formally speaking, Smith is no mean verse-craftsman. His prosody is good. He knows how to wield an iambic tetrameter. He is no McGonagall. But the *sentiments* are pure sugar-coated cliché.

In the second half of the twentieth century, in parallel with the Australian case, as New Zealand too became increasingly preoccupied with the need to construct a 'postcolonial' national identity, more thoughtful and self-critical explorations of New Zealand Scottishness began to appear. Keri Hulme, one of the most internationally respected and influential of contemporary New Zealand writers, has included reflections on the Scots elements in her own background in her discussions of New Zealand's ethnic complexity: her ancestry is Orcadian as well as Maori. An important role, as a catalyst, has been played by a temporary member of the diaspora, Alan Riach, now returned to Scotland, who both as a poet and an essayist has stimulated Scots New Zealanders to think about their story.

One New Zealander writer of Scots descent, James Baxter, however, towers over the landscape. Baxter was perhaps the greatest poet that New Zealand has produced and certainly one of the few to achieve international status and influence. Yet his case is one of the most paradoxical and poignant in the literary history of the diaspora. Baxter was intensely aware of his own Scottish roots. In his highly influential *Recent Trends in New Zealand Poetry* (1952), he urged that a probing of such roots – for New Zealand's other ethnic groupings as well – was essential for the new, self-consciously national poetry which New Zealand had to create in order to escape from the derivative timidity which ruled:

a hundred years is long enough for our society to have acquired a shape of its own. And not always by a complete break with the situation of our ancestors. The peasant clansmen of the Western Highlands of Scotland became the clannish farmers of Otago. The Otago hills and sea coast are not unlike the hills and sea coast of Argyllshire. So I have been fortunate enough to find the readymade myth of longbearded Gaelic-speaking giants distilling whisky among the flax from time immemorial. The ancestral face is very familiar to me.

Baxter's own early verses contain many meditations on his sense that Scotland was his spiritual home.

Among these hills our fathers came.
By strength of eye and hand alone
They built: and murmur loud as flame
Their voices from the living stone.

Forget not those whom Scotland bred
Above whose bones our cities stand.
Forget not them! nor the unknown dead
Whose broken veins flow through our land.

[. . .]

And Scotland was my spiritual home,
Or so it seemed. The tide ancestral swung
Over rock-weed. I plucked the bells of ling;
Saw bald Glencoe . . . and watched the red-coats come.
Old Edinburgh . . . were the cobbles dumb?

What his Scottishness meant to him was a deeply felt connection with or cultural memory of 'tribal' forms of community which provided him with an alternative to the lonely individualism of modernity. An extended meditation on the matter seemed to be promised. But it never came. When Baxter presented to the public tantalising glimpses of a portrait of a wild Scots-New Zealander *alter ego* he had created, he informed them that they were fragments of an autobiography which he had no intention of writing. He was true to his intention. His early texts were not followed up and the Scottish element more or less disappeared from his work. This seems to have been because Baxter took a conscious decision that his personal nostalgia was backward-looking and because (unlike Les Murray, say, who despite his great sympathy for Australia's indigenous peoples would never for a moment have contemplated 'going native') he decided he had an alternative tribe to hand. Baxter went

Maori, adopting a Maori name and marrying a Maori woman. He more or less turned his back on urban New Zealand society altogether, apart from controversial work in drug rehabilitation centres. Having renounced Presbyterianism, he converted to Catholicism (Murray followed the same route) and in 1968 was told in a dream to 'Go to Jerusalem'. 'Jerusalem' was the small Maori settlement of Hiruharama on the Wanganui river. Thereafter Baxter lived mainly there, became a major but controversial national celebrity, barefoot, hair and beard long and unkempt. He died in 1972, burned out by alcoholism and his settlement work, at the age of forty-six. His funeral was a mixed Maori and Catholic ceremony without a whiff of Knox in the breeze.

Canada

It is symbolically appropriate that, just as one of Canada's leading cities (Guelph) had been founded by one of Scotland's leading authors (Galt), one of Scotland's best-selling modern authors, John Buchan, should have been appointed Governor-General of Canada in 1935. Once again, there was a 'bonny disproportion' in Scots emigrants' influence on the country, of which they made up about 12 per cent of the population. As Arthur Herman has shown in *How the Scots Invented the Modern World* (2001), Scots had played central roles in the creation of the country, from the initial settlement of Nova Scotia, then through the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies and the Canadian Pacific Railway. They provided engineers, political, military and religious leaders, captains of industry, doctors and lawyers. And once again, their influence was particularly marked in the world of letters – in the universities (whose syllabuses were mainly based on Scottish models), in the creation of the country's major publishing houses and newspapers, and in literature itself. A striking number of the most talented and influential modern Canadian writers have reflected on the emigrant experience and their own Scottish roots.

In the early days, familiar patterns continued. Nostalgic tartanry and kailyardism were predominant. As J. M. Bumsted writes in *The Scots in Canada* (1982), the Scots Canadians

retained an ambivalent attitude toward the land of their origins, romanticizing and sentimentalizing the Scotland they had abandoned – and to which they usually had no intention of returning permanently.

Once again, this tendency was reinforced and perpetuated by an extensive network of cultural and social organisations which the Scots constructed across the country. In the second half of the twentieth century, however, we see the same move towards more critical self-reflection, even demythologisation, which was again part of a general debate about Canadian national identity and ethnic diversity. In non-fiction, John Kenneth Galbraith's acute and witty reflections on the Ontario Scots community from which he came, *The Scotch* (1964), are an influential example. In the fiction, something like a new sub-genre of self-analytical exile literature emerged. There is no equivalent in New Zealand or Australia. The novel about the history and dynamics of his New South Wales Scots forebears which Les Murray desiderated has not been written, either by Murray or by anyone else. But in Canada a clear and impressive line of novels of this kind can be traced.

The pioneer here was Hugh MacLennan. MacLennan is now a rather neglected figure, without much continuing influence, but he was once Canada's most well-known novelist,

regarded as the creator of the distinctively modern Canadian novel and, in turn, a key player in the formation of Canada's new national self-identity. *Two Solitudes* (1945) was the first important literary attempt to explore the deep Canadian cultural divide between anglophone and francophone Canadians, and six years later he followed it with *Each Man's Son*, an exploration of the country's Scots inheritance. It is a strange and uneven work. Its didacticism is overt and sometimes heavy-handed, and the whole thing seems too permeated by the author's personal obsessions. But it remains a powerful and painful achievement, addressing as no author in the diaspora had done before the ambivalence of part of the inheritance brought from Scotland, the darker of grimmer versions of Calvinism:

To Cape Breton the Highlanders brought more than the quixotic gallantry and softness of manner belonging to a Homeric people. They also brought with them an ancient curse, intensified by John Calvin and branded upon their souls by John Knox and his successors – the belief that man has inherited from Adam a nature so sinful there is no hope for him and that, furthermore, he lives and dies under the wrath of an arbitrary God who will forgive only a handful of his Elect on the Day of Judgement. [. . .] the curse remained alive with them, like a somber beast growling behind an unlocked door. It was felt even when they were least conscious of it. To escape its cold breath some turned to drink and others to the pursuit of knowledge.

The book's central character, Daniel Ainslie, is one of the latter, but despite his free-thinking and his conscious struggles 'every day of his life was haunted by a sense of sin' and, like a Greek tragic hero – the analogy is explicit – it destroys his marriage and himself.

Thirty-five years later the same themes were taken up by Alice Munro, but now in relation to female characters. In her middle age, Munro, one of contemporary Canada's major authors and one of the finest practitioners of the art of short fiction in the world, consciously turned back to examine the Scottish elements in her own psyche, writings and conditionings. Two of the most impressive results can be read in her collection, *Friend of My Youth* (1990). In the story which gives the volume its title, the heroine wrestles with the ambivalence of her own and her mother's differing attitudes to their own bodies and sexuality, represented by their different attitudes to Flora, a member of the strict sect of the Cameronians, one of the most puritanical and extreme of the Presbyterian splinter-groups who fled to the Americas. To the mother, Flora is a Presbyterian angel; to her daughter, a Presbyterian witch. They have different stories about her and thus, by implication (but Munro is too subtle and indirect an author to labour the analogy herself), different stories about what the Scots have given Canada:

What made Flora evil in my story was just what made her admirable in my mother's – her turning away from sex. I fought against everything my mother wanted to tell me on this subject [. . .] she honored the decency, the prudery, the frigidity, that might protect you. And I grew up in horror of that very protection, the dainty tyranny that seemed to me to extend to all areas of life [. . .] The odd thing is that my mother's ideas were in line with some progressive notions of her times, and mine echoed the notions that were favored in my time.

As we shall see in the case of Alistair MacLeod, Canadian-Scots writers have had a special and increasing interest in questioning the idea that there is one 'true' story to be told about these matters, a History, personal or collective, which stands beyond the conflicting variety of individual histories.

Munro's 'Hold me fast, don't let me pass' in the same collection is the story of another Canadian woman in search of her identity, and especially her sexuality, but this time the setting is Scotland itself. A widow, she has come to try and discover what had happened to her husband during his war service, and the heroine's personal quest is mysteriously entwined with her realisation of how protean and unreliable are the myths of Scottish history – what really happened at Flodden? Who was Montrose?

This is indeed a theme which the Canadian Scots have made peculiarly their own. Behind many of its variants – she is one of the few Canadian writers explicitly invoked in Alistair MacLeod's stories – one can discern the influence of Margaret Laurence. Laurence would also be on the list of the strongest and most influential writers of the late twentieth century in Canada. She published a series of books which include depictions of the Scots emigrant communities, the so-called 'Manawaka' novels, and the finest of these is *The Diviners* (1974). It is one of the few major works of the diaspora in which a main character makes a kind of renunciation of Scotland. The heroine, Morag Gunn, grows up with a deep sense of rootedness in a Scotland she has never seen, her childish imagination haunted by the stories told her by her foster-father about her ancestor, the legendary Piper Gunn, who led his folk out of the Clearances and through epic voyages and treks in their new country. Dissatisfied with her adult relationships, she feels that the key to her discontent is 'the Black Celt in me' and seeks to confront it. When she eventually gets to Scotland, her Scottish lover offers to take her to Sutherland, where her folk came from. She refuses.

'It's a deep land here, all right [. . .] But it's not mine, except a long long way back. I always thought it was the land of my ancestors, but it is not.'

'What is, then?'

'Christie's real country. Where I was born.'

She will renounce the idea – so powerful in the diaspora – that Scotland is 'Home'. But she will not renounce her foster-father's tales: 'myths are my reality'. There may be no truth in them at all. 'Piper Gunn [. . .] probably never lived in so-called real life' but he lives forever. And she goes on to write a novel, called *Shadows*, about the 'reality' of such tales and myths. Like many real Scots Canadians, and like Les Murray in Australia, Morag Gunn's yearnings for a lost world centre on her sense of the loss of the Gaelic language. She laments 'The lost languages [she is thinking also of French and Cree], forever lurking somewhere inside the ventricles of the hearts of those who had lost them.' The presence of Gaelic language, or memories of it, is one of the things that most distinguishes the Canadian case from the Australian and New Zealand ones.

In Australia and New Zealand even in the nineteenth century, Gaelic clung on only in pockets, and early in the twentieth century it disappeared altogether as a living language. The last Gaelic sermons were preached in New Zealand in the 1930s. But in eastern Canada, due to the extreme geographical isolation of the provinces of the Atlantic seaboard, a *Gàidhealtachd* – the only one in the world outside Scotland itself – was created and survives, with remarkable tenacity and even self-confidence, to this day. Native speakers may now be down to a thousand or so, but schemes to revitalise the teaching of Gaelic in schools have been energetically pursued and one can now study it at St Francis Xavier University in Antigonish. In 1993, an ambitious and lively web journal of Gaelic culture, *Am Bràighe* (<http://www.ambraigne.ca/>), was launched and thrives, with a strong literary content – articles about Sorley MacLean and about the Gaelic literature of the past,

transcriptions of Hebridean and local stories and poems. The last Gaelic newspaper in Canada had disappeared a century ago. Now the community again has an organ through which to foster the language, its stories and its music.

Other admirable efforts have been made – just in time, as the last tradition-bearers reach old age – to preserve the Highland culture, especially by John Shaw, a Cape Breton folklorist who has also worked in the School of Scottish Studies at Edinburgh University. In 1987 he translated and edited a dual-language edition of Joe Neil MacNeil's *Sgeul gu Latha / Tales until Dawn: The World of a Cape Breton Story-Teller*. Thirteen years later he was responsible for *Brìgh an Òrain / A Story in every Song: The Songs and Tales of Lauchie MacLellan*. Such song-lyrics deserve a place in any account of the texts of the diaspora, not just for their intrinsic merit, but because the relation between song and story is unusually close in Cape Breton music. Brìgh an òrain, the song's subject matter, is one its most important aspects, as one of Shaw's informants told him. 'Bha an t-òrain 'na naidheachd fhéin (The song itself was a story)'.

The foreword to *Brìgh an Òrain* was written by Alistair MacLeod, who lived close to Lauchie MacLellan. (He wrote it looking through the window frame that MacLellan, the local carpenter, had made for the MacLeods fifty years before.) It is, of course, from his proximity to the Gaelic culture, and from the complexity of his love for it, that the central strengths of his own remarkable writings derive. MacLeod has written a series of impressive short stories, now all gathered together as *Island* (2000), but his one novel, *No Great Mischief* (1999), winner of the world's richest literary award, the Dublin Impac Prize, is the great achievement. Regarded simply as a record, in a plain realist mode, of the Highland diaspora, the hard life in the mines and the fishing boats, the structure and dynamics of the family and of the 'clan' (in the original, non-feudal sense, the chieftainless extended family), the persistence and fragility of the Gaelic culture, it would be a permanent classic. But it also splendidly exemplifies what has earlier been called here the coming of age of the Scots literary diaspora, the quality which it had to acquire if it was to achieve any literary permanence or complexity: the capacity for self-reflection, and, specifically, reflection on the authenticity and utility of its own nostalgia. Thus, on the one hand, all Alistair MacLeod's fictions are pibrochs, laments, and what they lament is the world we have lost, a world of the positive values of the mutually supportive small community – what Ferdinand Tönnies called *Gemeinschaft* – as exemplified by the family or neighbourhood – often contrasted with the lonely crowds – the *Gesellschaft* – and facile consumerism of the great Canadian cities. At the same time MacLeod (like Murray) is deeply suspicious of such idealisations. It is likely that he would have little time for Leavis's nonsense about the organic community or Tolkien's sentimental idealisation of the Shire. It is not just that the Scotland which the emigrants left behind was a hard and unidyllic place. It is also that the very positive values they imported from their old communities may be dubious or problematic or anachronistic in a new world and a new era. In *No Great Mischief*, the grandparents are always preaching the same message to the young, 'look after your own blood', and at the centre of the novel is clan-loyalty, loyalty not to the chieftain but to the extended family, Clan Donald. But the novel is a tragedy and the tragedy arises not from the neglect of such a code of loyalty, but precisely from adherence to it. The MacDonald workers in the uranium mines welcome a distant Californian cousin to their group because he has red hair and is a MacDonald. He, however, knows nothing of their codes and is a dishonest opportunist whose theft of money from French workers at the same site leads to a bloody ethnic clash and the narrator's brother's imprisonment for murder, followed by decline into helpless alcoholism. Is it atavistic, and perhaps in the end destructive of the

community itself, to remain fixated on the values of the old country? Can we in any case be sure that these *are* the values of the old country and not simply our own nostalgic invention? Neither in his texts nor in interviews does Alistair MacLeod show any influence by postmodern theories of historiography and narrative. Nonetheless, his fictions are in fact a fine example of that characteristically late twentieth-century distrust of grand narratives that has made us rethink the past and our relation to it.

If, on its upper levels, *No Great Mischief* is a book about loyalty, deeper down it is a book about memory. Both the narrator and his maternal grandfather are fatherless. The book operates a continuous parallel between their attempts to reconstruct or recapture the faces of their fathers and their – and their whole community's – search for its origins, while always aware how elusive the faces and voices of the dead are and how much there is that may distort their communication with us. One of the subtlest and most poignant features of the novel is MacLeod's use of the narrator's two grandfathers to represent two alternative modes of the exile's relation to the past. 'Grandpa' cheerfully accepts all the myths and a thoroughly romanticised view of Highland history in general and of the Clan Donald in particular. 'Grandfather', immersed in his books, struggles with the complexity of 'real' histories, insisting on de-romanticising Killiecrankie and Culloden, and becoming exasperated when Grandpa sticks up for the MacDonald position on every occasion despite the fact that they blatantly changed sides at key moments of Scottish history.

At one point in *No Great Mischief*, the narrator and his sister have been trying to think about their own history and that of their family, the *clann Chalum Ruaidh*, all the way back to the departure from Moidart. History and myth seem inextricable. The sister remarks 'I guess when you look at it now, one meaning can be true and the other can be accurate.' It is a simple distinction, but one of profound importance, especially for exiles and emigrants. Are their identity-forming dreams of the old country any the less 'true' for being unhistorical? At what point does their distance from 'what really happened' become objectionable – not just irrelevant and anachronistic, but even actually dangerous, fixating them in dreams of the Good Place which never was and blocking their efforts to deal with the present. When is the Saving Lie justified?

Alistair MacLeod's fictions are major achievements. In *No Great Mischief*, the writing of the diaspora does truly come of age. It is the finest thing yet produced from it and blazes a trail for the next generation of overseas Scots, who will have to write in a more frighteningly globalised world where old nationalisms – including 'long-distance nationalism' – no longer have a place.

Further reading

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New Diversity, Hybridity and Scottishness

Alastair Niven

At a 2002 conference, ‘The End of Britain?’, at Cumberland Lodge in Windsor, Angus Calder spoke of how Scotland, for all that it has one of the most stable borders in Europe, has a population which is ‘a diverse mix of Scots, Gael, Pict, Welsh and Anglo-Saxon’. And, one might reasonably add, Irish, Norse, Flemish, Galwegian, Norman, Jewish, Italian, Polish, South Asian, African, Caribbean and Chinese, without by any means exhausting the list. In other words, Scotland is now – and in earlier times was – a composite nation, melding together several ethnic elements. Unlike a country such as Iceland, with its extraordinary racial and cultural homogeneity, Scotland, as far back as we have knowledge of its human history, has always been an admixture of peoples. Contemporary writers like William Ferguson, David McCrone and Murray Pittock have explored in great depth the complexities of Scottish national identity. It is clear that Scotland’s evident sense of national cohesion is a successful idea rather than a genetic actuality. Scottish identity has always been constructed through processes of intercultural exchange arising from the interchange of diverse cultures, through both diaspora and immigration, and the integration of immigrant communities into an essentially civic and cultural – and by no means ethnic – conception of Scottishness. Thus, hybridisation of ‘native’ and immigrant cultures constantly redefines and renews the nature of ‘Scottishness’.

Black people were present at the medieval Scottish courts, with the Treasury in the reign of James IV (1488–1513) recording many instances of ‘blackmoor’ troubadors and entertainers being paid for their efforts. William Dunbar writes, as Carla Sassi reminds us, of a black lady at the court, ‘Ane Blak Moir’, as follows:

Quhou schou is tute mowitt lyk an aep,
And lyk a gangarall onto graep,
And quhou hir schort catt nois up skippis,
And quhou schou schynes lyk ony saep,
My lady with the mekle lippis.

It is hard not to read the terms used here, with the repeated animal imagery, as racially prejudicial, even if it were possible to allow for different times and mores. On the other hand, it is true that his language can be seen as an aspect of a tone he often adopts, sneering at people’s names, flyting, attacking men and women, friars and Highlanders. In certain moods, Dunbar plays with the concept of hating everyone (though in this poem the suggestion of the lady’s attractiveness is very much there too). Despite the cultural

diversity of Scotland in terms of its white population, then, it is clear that for centuries its much smaller black population is likely to have been an object of curiosity, perhaps positive interest or patronising indulgence, but also potential hostility. In any case, despite such a neglected reference as that of Dunbar, little of the varied demographic ethnicity of Scottish life, which in any case must not be overstated, found its way into the literature of Scotland until modern times. Few accounts of the journey from one version of nationhood to another take into account the contribution of significant minorities drawn from many parts of the wider world. Yet they deserve to be noticed and in recent years have demanded to be so. The historic diversity is manifold. The constant interlinking between Irish and Scottish cultures is a given from the earliest times and continues. It is embodied in recent years in the confidence of a wide range of Scots writers with Irish roots like Donny O'Rourke, Denise Mina and Andrew O'Hagan and Irish-born writers working long-term in Scotland like Bernard MacLaverty and Nicola McCartney. In the nineteenth century Italian immigration created an Italo-Scot community that can be proud of such writers as Alexander Trocchi, Marcella Evaristi, Ann Marie di Mambro and Riccardo Galgani. The contribution to Scottish literature of Jewish Scots whether a novelist and poet like Muriel Spark, a playwright like Jack Ronder or a critic like David Daiches is integral to its modernity. Following the Second World War, the Polish community in Scotland became firmly established and has produced, besides the novels and plays of Catherine Czerkawska, writers like Raymond Soltyssek with his short-story collection, *Occasional Demons* (2000).

These forms of cultural diversity, arising from immigration, are complemented in contemporary Scottish literature by the equally strong effect, from the nineteenth century on, of the interfusions of Scottish, Australian, Canadian and New Zealand writing. Les A. Murray, in many people's estimation not only Australia's major poet today, but one of the major contemporary poets in the English language, claims investment in a Scottish tradition which is anything but sentimental. Iain Wright in the previous chapter has addressed in detail the literature of the Scottish diaspora and the range and depth of these interfusions. Mention, too should be made of the excellent translations into Scots by Bill Findlay and Martin Bowman of plays by the Québécois writer Michel Tremblay, notably *The Guid Sisters* (1989) and *The House Among the Stars* (1992). In their partnership, the complexity of cultural interaction is very specifically exemplified. Findlay, in dedicating his seminal collection of essays on modern translations into Scots, *Frae Ither Tongues* (2004), to Bowman, described him as his 'guid freend and collaborator frae Québécois intil Scots [. . .] an Angus Pict in farawa Canada'. Bowman was born in Montreal of Scots parents (from Angus), grew up in a Scots community in the working-class suburb of Verdun and was raised speaking Scots as well as English. His partnership with Findlay, born and brought up Scots-speaking in Culross, has fed back into the home culture a strand of Québécois culture. This, in turn, has explored a new version of Scottishness in lively modern Scots dialogue, making Tremblay, in Mark Fisher's famous phrase, 'the best playwright Scotland never had'. For all this, it is far more difficult to trace much fertilisation of Scottish literature from India, Africa or the West Indies before the last part of the twentieth century. This cross-fertilisation, however, is now beginning to constitute further, new, diversity in Scottish literature.

No doubt black people settled in medieval Scotland had descendants. To these were added late eighteenth-century immigrants of African origin, affected by the expansion of transatlantic shipping on the west coast, by the involvement of Scottish owners in West Indian and North American slave estates and the international slave trade and by the

industrial enlargement of Glasgow. Meantime, Scottish imperial adventurers worked with the East India Company, and later in Hong Kong, so that there was undoubtedly intercultural exchange, however unequal, and some immigration from South Asia throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The numbers remained few, however, and their voices were largely silent in the domain of literature. After the Second World War matters changed, with migrant workers arriving from South Asia and from the Caribbean. Both groups came mainly to the cities, mainly from villages. They brought with them stories, songs and poems, which inspired their children to follow suit. Unpublished but locally written Urdu poems were circulated in Glasgow in the 1950s. The Pakistani community in Stornoway, mainly shopkeepers and small traders, has been settled there and in more outlying parts of the Hebrides for three generations, though younger ones are tending now to move away. The community kept alive its traditions as best it could in, for it, so isolated a setting, and there are traces of a creative interaction between Urdu and Gaelic, especially in song writing. Little of this has been published or recorded, and it is best appreciated at ceilidhs or in local broadcasts.

This population development means that people of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian derivation now make up about 1.5 per cent of the population of Scotland. Those of Caribbean origin are fewer, about 0.08 per cent, and those whose immediate background is African total 0.03 per cent. Perhaps because these numbers are relatively lower than the equivalent percentages in England, there is no equivalent in Scotland to the London-based Caribbean Artists movement. This, in the 1950s, in the persons of writers such as Andrew Salkey and George Lamming, stimulated a creative response to being *arrivants* in Britain, welcome only on other people's terms. Still less was there any echo in Scotland of the conversation that went on in Bloomsbury among the preceding generation of intellectuals, between the likes of Mulk Raj Anand and Tambimuttu on the one hand and T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf on the other. Black and Asian thinkers in Scotland took a long time to find their feet and to express themselves.

We can only speculate on why Scottish minority voices were so unforthcoming for so long. As a composite nation, one might have expected Scotland to yield more fruits from a tree that already had many branches and roots. That this did not happen at the equivalent time it was happening in England is most credibly explained by the all-consuming debate in Scotland in the years the latest immigration took place about the appropriate means of expressing a conflicted sense of what Scotland and Scottishness is, culturally and politically. In the 1960s and 1970s particularly, the conception of what it was to be Scottish – and what Scottish literature might be and achieve – was being explored vigorously in a context where cultural and political identity was being redefined. And this was taking place in a de-colonising and post-imperial era that in turn seemed to require a redefinition of the relationship of the imperial partnership of Scotland and England. At the same time, the extent to which Scottish writers and thinkers might have become self-colonised and engaged in what has been called 'inferiorism', a concept derived from Frantz Fanon's work, was a matter of deep and often-heated discussion. It is clear in retrospect that the 1979 referendum debacle and the arrival of Margaret Thatcher and her policies polarised and crystallised much of this debate in the 1980s. Perhaps only then could minorities in race, culture or sexuality start to move into the centre, in a way exactly paralleling in method, but not in timing, what happened in England. In 1994, a major literary conference, 'Out of the Margins', held at the South Bank Centre in London, celebrated the emergence into the British mainstream of – indeed, some argued without irony, the appropriation of the mainstream by – writers of African, Asian, Caribbean, Chinese or

South Pacific descent. Scottish minority voices featured only slightly. Today in a similarly themed conference they would be heard because they have started to sound out so loudly.

In such a situation one writer often opens doors for others. Here, this was Jackie Kay, born in Edinburgh in 1961. Elements of her life history surface in her work: her biological mother was white Scottish and her father Nigerian; her white Scottish parents adopted her; her lesbian sexuality at times suffuses her writing. She made her first appearance as a poet in an anthology of four black women writers, *A Dangerous Knowing* (1984). This was followed with intelligently plotted apprentice plays, including *Chiaroscuro* (1986) presented by the Theatre of Black Women at Soho Polytechnic (now Soho Theatre Company) and a drama of family life, *Twice Over* (1988), performed by Gay Sweatshop at the Drill Hall, London. It was with the publication of *The Adoption Papers* in 1991, however, that her name became prominent. A series of linked poems examine the experience of adoption from three sides, those of the daughter, the adoptive mother and the birth mother. Witty and tender, these poems were clearly partly autobiographical, or imagined from what the author had been told about the circumstances of her own adoption. Her adoptive parents were strong-minded Glasgow communists, but even they were cowed by the appearance of the social worker come to check out their suitability as parents. Yet, Kay's poetry is not simply confessional; it achieves splendid comic irony. As she writes:

I thought I'd hid everything
that there wasn't
giveaway sign left

I put Marx Engels Lenin (no Trotsky)
in the airing cupboard – she'll no be
checking out the towels surely

All the copies of the *Daily Worker*
I shoved under the sofa
the dove of peace I took down from the loo

A poster of Paul Robeson
saying give him his passport
I took down from the kitchen

I left a bust of Burns
my detective stories
and the Complete Works of Shelley

She comes at 11.30 exactly.
I pour her coffee
from my new Hungarian set

And foolishly pray she willnae
ask its origins – honestly
this baby is going to my head

She crosses her legs on the sofa
 I fancy I hear the *Daily Workers*
 rustle under her

Well she says, you have an interesting home
 She sees my eyebrows rise.
 It's different she qualifies.

Hell and I've spent all morning
 trying to look ordinary
 – a lovely home for the baby

Jackie Kay's voice in poems such as these cry out for performance and many who have heard her will think of her as being in an essentially orature tradition. Her warm voice and a quality close to glee make her platform readings not only popular, but also very moving. Both human feeling and satire are found in the adoption sequence, beside a strong strain of social criticism.

Kay's work seems in many places to recognise especially the sonic interplay of music, language and the singing that unites them. This appears in her collection, *Other Lovers* (1993), where she includes a sequence about the American blues singer Bessie Smith, whose emblematic life she returns to on several occasions, as though haunted by it. This theme of the interplay of music and language is taken up in her first novel, *Trumpet* (1998). Here, her subject is a jazz musician, Joss Moody, known as a married man, but revealed at death to have been a woman. Joss's life is based on that of Billy Tipton (1914–89), whose celebrity as a musician dated from 1934 when she opted to disguise herself permanently as a man. Tipton had many relationships with women, all of whom appear to have believed their lover was male. Kay triumphantly fictionalises and transmutes Billy Tipton and her/his life and explores Joss Moody's situation – and issues of identity-confusion, sexual ambiguity and the crossing of socially determined boundaries – with utmost sensitivity and understanding. The book deservedly won awards. While Kay's more recent work has not made the same impact, she continues to cast her net wide, with short stories – notably a collection called *Why Don't You Stop Talking* (2002) – and a novel for children, *Strawgirl* (2002). She can move from severity to gentleness almost in a phrase. Her poems in the wittily named collection, *Off Colour* (1998), whose subject is sickness and health, contrast with the sweet humour of 'The Oldest Woman in Scotland', a story about the extreme age of a lady who has always looked like the Queen. Both, however, are driven by an intense humanity, the defining quality of all Kay's writing.

Kay has become something of an iconic figure to young aspiring black and Asian writers. Her gender and search for creative identity are surely important elements in this, but so too must be the timing of her development. Suhayl Saadi has written that

it is no accident, I believe, that much of the hitherto published fiction and poetry from Scottish writers of South Asian [and it might be added, African and Caribbean] origin has been by women.

In Chapter 29 on theatre writing, Ian Brown has commented on the surge of playwriting by women in the 1980s. It is clear that this is linked with the need in that decade to challenge old assumptions and categories following the events of 1979 and, in reaction to them,

to re-energise self-exploration, seeking as wide as possible a variety of possible Scottish identities. For writers from African, Caribbean and Asian backgrounds, the events of 1979 seem to have released many years of displacement, enslavement and disenfranchisement into empowerment through literary expression. The 1980s certainly saw new writing of a younger generation of Scots addressing with a new force issues of, for example, the place of women, ethnicity of all kinds and the gay community in Scotland. The title of Maud Sulter's first collection of poems, *As a blackwoman* (1985), could hardly be clearer about its basis or the nature of its quest. Her search for roots is reflected in the title of her next collection, *Zabat: poetics of a family tree* (1989). She writes:

My blackness is a beautiful cloak
of selfhood that permeates the soul.

Zabat was accompanied by an exhibition and, although Sulter wrote a play, *Hysteria* (1991) and around the same time edited commentaries on art, ethnicity and women, her art has tended since this period to be focused on her very great talent as a photographer. She has examined issues of ethnicity, gender and identity in such exhibitions at her 'Jeanne Duval: A Melodrama' in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in 2003.

Out of Sulter's and Kay's boundary transgression and generic experimentation and the more general 1980s exploration of gender, ethnicity and sexuality, a new generation emerged in the 1990s. One such writer is Laura Fish, whose novel *Flight of the Black Swans* came out in 1995. Fish, of Guyanese and Jamaican parentage, was, like Jackie Kay, adopted when young by white Scottish parents. Her first fiction draws from this and, while she is one of a number of new female authors yet to prove themselves fully, she shows how Scottish African and Asian writing has begun to diversify. Another such writer is Bashabi Fraser, a poet who has also written an excellent appreciation of the city of Edinburgh, where she lives. Fraser's book *Tartan and Turban* (2004) profitably explores links between Scottish and Indian, especially Bengali, culture. She has also researched the previously little-known correspondence between Rabindranath Tagore and Sir Patrick Geddes. To Fish and Fraser must be added Leila Aboulela, Raman Mundair, Kamal Sangha, Sheila Puri, Maya Chowdhry and Saket Priyadarshi, all emergent voices in recent years with distinctive personas.

Aboulela was born in Sudan and Mundair in India. Both have settled in Scotland for a substantial time. Now living in Indonesia, Aboulela's internationalism poses obvious definitional problems. She lived in Aberdeen from 1990 to 2000 and was first published by the Edinburgh-based firm Polygon. (The importance of Scottish publishers in discovering and launching culturally diverse writing should not be neglected: both diehard and Luath have published Fraser, Capercaillie Chowdhry and both Polygon and Black and White Saadi, for example.) Mundair, meantime, works currently in Scotland, where she has been Writer in Residence both in the Shetland Islands and for Glasgow Women's Library. These writers can be seen as themselves part of the diasporas of their birth countries. Certainly their presence in Scotland has been important in their development as writers, but the question arises as to whether the fact that Aboulela uses Scottish settings occasionally makes her part of a Scottish literature. One response, of course, is that the question is finally arid, because Aboulela straddles cultures: though obviously Islamic in many aspects of her work, she is not a writer easily pigeonholed spiritually. Another would be that she herself has recognised the importance of her engagement with life in Scotland in developing her art. Mundair's work meantime has developed mainly south of the border,

her plays including *Missing Pieces* (1996), *Safe* (1999), *Tara* (1999) and *The Orange Sari* (previously entitled *The History of Doing*, 1999), while she has written for film and is both a visual artist and live artist. Her published poetry includes her collection *Lovers, Liars, Conjurors, and Thieves* (2003). Both writers engage in the multi-locationality of those engaged in diaspora and immigration, working across geographical, cultural and psychological boundaries. In this, it would be foolish to argue they should fit some pre-set model; rather, it must be welcomed that they contribute to the (re-)shaping of Scottishness, or the nature of Scottish literature. On her website, Mundair observes:

My journey started in India, where I left for England in my early years, my tongue flowing with Punjabi and Hindi. Having washed up upon these shores my 1st generation self grew . . . immersed in a foreign tongue until memories of umbilical tongue became diluted. Now I play with notions of home and projections of the self I am supposed to be, in a land where there are no true reflections of me . . . I play god . . .

Create

. . . music where there is no voice.

This playing ‘with notions of home and projections of the self I am supposed to be, in a land where there are no true reflections of me’ can be seen as a motif in the work of many of the writers discussed in this chapter. It can also, though, be seen to underlie the work of many Scottish writers who work across the linguistic boundaries of Gaelic, Scots and English or – as Ian Brown and Colin Nicholson discuss in Chapter 27 – cross-generic borders and creatively transgress boundaries of established modes of being and expression. It may even be that a particularly sympathetic critical context exists for such authors as Aboulela and Mundair, however transient their creative residence in Scotland, in a ‘Scotland’ where the very nature of what it is to be ‘Scottish’ and what ‘Scottish literature’ is remains a subject of lively creative contention. At the same time, Jackie Kay famously moved to Manchester to bring up her son in a very mixed multicultural community in a way more possible, to her mind, than in the numerically less diverse communities of even the cities of Scotland. Such a decision warns against too rosy a view of Scotland’s interculturalism, but it remains true that intercultural exchange continues to enrich and develop the nature of Scottish literature. The emergence of new writers – whether Scottish domiciled or born – from culturally diverse communities is a growing phenomenon, creating a new hybridity from the older hybridities of Scottish literature.

Leila Aboulela was the first winner of the Caine Prize for African Literature, set up in 2000 to commemorate Sir Michael Caine, the man chiefly responsible for the internationally celebrated Booker Prize. The Caine Prize restricts itself to short stories, in the belief that much of the best new talent will be found in anthologies, magazines and newspapers, and even on the worldwide web. Aboulela’s winning story, ‘The Museum’, was partly set in Scotland and picked up subtly on cultural nuances distinguishing west from east. She explores people’s misconceptions about the ‘other’, one of the main difficulties in developing cultural and racial harmony. Included in her collection of short stories, *Coloured Lights* (2001), it was preceded by a novel, *The Translator* (1999), and is followed by a second novel, *Minaret* (2005). *The Translator* authentically conjoins Scotland and Africa – far more than Giles Foden’s better-known novel, *The Last King of Scotland* (1998), though simply by virtue of its title the latter is sometimes listed as a work of contemporary Scottish writing. Foden’s main character, Nicholas Garrigan, may be Scottish and the allusion in the title to President Idi Amin of Uganda’s reference to himself as the last

king of a nation he claimed to have humbled, but the connections stop there. Aboulela sets her story in Aberdeen, focusing on the relationship between a Sudanese woman, Sammar, the eponymous translator, and a Scottish academic specialist in Islamic studies, Rae. Each inches towards the other across the divides of culture and religion. To date, this is the best examination in fiction of Muslim-Scottish connections, evoking Khartoum as graphically as Aberdeen. Aboulela's work explores issues of cultural confusion and displacement: alcoholism, discrimination, materialism, 'marrying for the visa' and loss of faith are issues she explores through her characters, as well as the racism they face from outsiders and internalise in oppressing themselves.

Maya Chowdhry represents a different aspect of the new diversity of Scottish literature. Brought up in Fife and claimed for Scottish multicultural writing, she has worked for long periods in England. Known as a poet, a playwright and a visual artist, Chowdhry's plays have often been produced at prominent theatres in England and include *Monsoon* (1991) for radio, *An Appetite for Living* (1997) at West Yorkshire Playhouse and *Splinters* (1998) at the Lyric, Hammersmith. Typical of her work is *Kaahini* (1997), presented by Birmingham Rep and Red Ladder Theatre Company, and dealing with migration from India to Britain and the entanglement of cultural change with sexual and emotional choices. *Playing with Fire* (2003), written for TAG for performance in Glasgow schools, deals directly with issues of multi-racialism. In this, as she says in an interview for a resource booklet prepared for the play's production, she draws on her own experience:

I'd faced racism growing up in Scotland and I desperately wanted to have answers [. . .] All my life I've tried to understand what it is and its personal implications for me and my life.

Her poetry complements her plays, concerned as it is with issues of ethnicity and gender. She seems to probe her way along a corridor in the hope that she will find her way into a wider space where her own identity will be more sharply revealed. In this she may well be speaking for a generation of younger writers at the beginning of this century, unsure of quite where they fit, but knowing they are defined more by race and gender than by class or economics as might have been the case with their predecessors. Chowdhry has developed her writing away from Scotland, though she has returned on occasion to work. It is as if, in exploring the complexity, both negative and positive, of the experience of her mixed ethnicity in a modern Scottish upbringing, she requires distance to address questions of cultural identity. At one level, this may no more than reflect the practice of, say, Muriel Spark; at another it may connote the particular difficulty of dealing with the pain of racist behaviour. Her work becomes a means of examining and exploring exile from home and oneself. It raises questions as to what 'home' may truly be and the destructive conflicts that may arise from not knowing the location of that elusive place.

Already, a new generation of writers is beginning to emerge. Its members have yet to produce major work, but their initial writing is highly promising. Much of this is found as yet only in journals or in such collections as *New Writing Scotland*, published annually by the Association for Scottish Literary Studies and the launch pad of many younger Scottish authors. In recent issues this has tried to spot talent in minority communities of all kinds. One example is Kamal Sangha. His story 'Straight to the Heart' was published in the anthology *New Writing 15* in 1997 and concerns the impact on an ordinary family of a racially motivated killing of one of the sons. Others have followed this path: Sheila Puri, whose background is Sikh and has written for broadcasting as well as print, was first published there.

In a landscape thinly populated by attentive literary critics, Suhayl Saadi has made a specialism of writing about black and Asian Scottish writers. He himself has also emerged as an interesting voice among younger writers. In 2004, his first novel, *Psychoraag*, was published. The *Sunday Herald* described the novel as 'Midnight's Children meets *Trainspotting*' and The *Herald* described it – in what it presumably intended as a compliment to both Saadi and Hugh MacDiarmid – as a 'sort of "Drunk Man Looks at a Thistle" for the 21st Century'. These critics claim impressive antecedents for Saadi, but his voice is very much his own. MacDiarmid, Rushdie and Welsh are linguistic forebears of *Psychoraag*, where the Scots *argot* of the streets of Glasgow combines with Scottish Standard English and some Urdu. The novel, through the motif of a journey from Lahore to Scotland, links two continents and has a persuasive grasp of city life and the moods of disaffected youth. At times, it is almost as though it was being played out against a sound tapestry of old films, Asian music and western pop. The same concerns, always charged with strong energy and atmosphere, are found in Saadi's short-story collection, *The Burning Mirror* (2001), which was short-listed for Scotland's best-known award for new writers, the Saltire First Book Prize. In common with many of the writers discussed in this chapter and the earlier one on 'The Border Crossers', he seems to be exploring various genres. He has experimented with a stage play, *Saame Sita Lapland Tales* (2003), set in Lapland and based on Sami folktales, and a Radio 4 drama, *The Dark Island* (2004). Saadi himself wrote in 2000 for the Association for Scottish Literary Studies of diversity in contemporary Scottish writing, not only in his own writing, but in that of others, in the following terms:

Simplistically, I perceive three dynamics:

1. Scottish writers gazing out and drawing on so-called 'other' societies or literary traditions and incorporating something of these into their own writing. What I call, 'looking out'.
2. Writers who hail from other cultures bringing something of their or their ancestors' experiences with them and those experiences exerting themselves, either consciously or otherwise, in fresh contexts in their writing. I call this, 'moving in'.
3. Writers who dig deep into that which they perceive as being their own, indigenous Scottish culture(s) and who, in doing so, are able to hit the bedrock, as it were. This is what I refer to as, 'digging deep'.

By these processes – looking out, moving in, digging deep – writing becomes indigenised. It becomes perceived as mainstream. That which, in literary terms, was seen as being 'outside' or substratum becomes internalised, manifest.

He is arguing not that there is some integration of new culturally diverse strands into 'Scottish literature', but that there is a new synthesis, a new hybridity, which constantly revises and re-creates the nature of both Scottishness and Scottish literature.

Following David Daiches, Saadi talks of cultural pluralism where:

We leap through worlds, not between them; they are not separate, but exist within one another, and one lives them all, constantly. And whether one likes it, or not, one's writing will express this.

The worlds one 'leaps through', then, are provisional and contingent on the constant interchanges of cultural identities, crossing boundaries and genres. It is no surprise in such a

world-view that many of the writers under discussion work not only across literary genres, but even across art forms, or draw on the influence of other art forms to shape their writing. The sense of language crossing boundaries and being embedded in music is strongest in the rhythms of dub poetry. In Scotland, there is the same demand in inner-city clubs and fringe venues for *reggae* and performance poetry as can be found in all the major urban centres in the United Kingdom. While there is as yet no voice as striking as John Agard's, Linton Kwesi Johnson's or Benjamin Zephaniah's south of the border, Fadeke Kokumo Rocks has emerged as a possible challenger. *Bad Ass Raindrop* (2002) is powerful and searing when she performs it, even though, read baldly on the page, it can look banal.

A constant cultural pluralism and working across old boundaries to create new syntheses both appear in the art of the most arresting new talent to have emerged in black Scottish writing at the start of the new century: Luke Sutherland. Not only a writer, he is also a musician, playing throughout the 1990s with the band, Long Fin Killie, based in the Highlands, then moving to London and forming the group, Bows. All this is relevant to his first novel, *Jelly Roll* (2001). Always generous to his fellow-Scottish writers, Sutherland has suggested that Janice Galloway sparked off his enthusiasm for fiction, though his voice is very different. In *Jelly Roll*, a band of musicians travels around Scotland; here, the influence of American road movies or the fiction of Hunter Thompson is strong as any. While this is in some ways apprentice work, it is sharply observed throughout. Indeed, when the band recruits young black Liam, he writes about Scottish racism with coruscating insight.

Sutherland grew up in Orkney, in the village of St Margaret's Hope, perched on the edge of a wild sea at the southern end of these islands.

There wasn't much to St Margaret's Hope. It was a no frills village that that made few concessions to fashion, a stance borne out by the utilitarian ring of its place names. The Back Road was behind the Front Road; the Church Road had a church on it; the School Brae had a school at the top of it; the Pier Road, a pier at the end of it; the village café was called the Café; the Cromarty Square was home to the Cromarty Hall; the burn that flowed through the centre was called, the Burn.

His memories are reminiscent of the early part of Edwin Muir's *An Autobiography* (1954), beautifully evoking Orcadian landscape, culture and society. Sutherland says 'Orkney might have finished me, but instead it made me'; it certainly shaped his second novel, *Venus as a Boy* (2004). Desiree, the central character, begins life as a boy in South Ronaldsay, Sutherland's home island. In this harsh, but lyrical, landscape lives can be bleak and uncreative. Yet, magic is never far away. If Sutherland has imbibed magic realism from contemporary continental and South American fiction, he puts it to original use. This is the most ambitious novel yet to have come out of black Scotland, bringing together Greek myth (the Midas story is pivotal), postmodernism and Scottish realism. Here is writing which manages both to be about modern sexuality, trans-gender and linguistically explicit, while also respectful of its literary antecedents. These include writing as diverse as George Mackay Brown's and James Kelman's.

The black and Asian literary scene in Scotland, rooted as it is in diverse Scottish traditions, has also transformed those traditions and is now vibrant. Nor is it restricted to a Scots audience or readership. Jackie Kay, Leila Aboulela and Luke Sutherland are at least as well known outside Scotland – indeed across the world – as they are within, though one is bound to observe that all three, perhaps for reasons addressed earlier in this chapter,

now live elsewhere. Maya Chowdhry's plays have been premièred more often outside Scotland than in it. This suggests a situation potentially akin to that in Guyanese writing. Guyana, with a population one-fifth the size of Scotland's, has produced an astonishing range of major authors, but without exception they live outside the country and publish abroad. One fears that this may be the case with Scottish Afro-Caribbean and Asian writers, too. We see the process happening with Glasgow-born Shan Khan, whose play, *Office*, was a success at the 2001 Edinburgh Festival and who has moved to London. Indeed, this study of youthful alienation in a world of prostitution, police corruption and drugs is set in the 'man eats man' environment of King's Cross. Though the play's spirit derives from a particular kind of Glaswegian energy, it is possible that the play's wider success was helped by Khan's decision to place it at a southern rather than a northern railway terminal. The play explores the corrosion and alienation of cultural values and identity with vitality and zest. *Prayer Room* (2005) is a rather more schematic exploration of inter-religious competition for use of a shared college facility. Here the difficulty of achieving intercultural cooperation is not blinked at, as liberal attempts to achieve harmony are confounded by antagonistic religio-cultural differences between Christian, Jewish and Islamic absolutists over the use of a college's multi-faith prayer room. In an ending thematically explicable, but melodramatically executed, a disabled innocent is gunned down, overtly symbolising innocent human suffering when diversity is not achieved through harmony.

Nonetheless, however at times straining for effect, the creativity of the writers this chapter discusses flourishes, taking its place alongside established writers and steadily producing new talent. As an example, of three new Scottish plays featured in the 2005 Edinburgh Festival, one, *Blackbird*, was by the relatively young, but established, David Harrower, while two were by new Scots. One was Khan's *Prayer Room*, discussed in the previous paragraph. The other was by Chiew Siah Tei, a Chinese-Malaysian novelist and film scriptwriter based in Glasgow over the previous decade, and commissioned, according to the production's programme notes, by the Edinburgh International Festival 'with the brief to write about Chinese life in Scotland'. The Festival brochure describes *Three Thousand Troubled Threads* as 'set in Glasgow and tell[ing] the story of Ying, a young second generation Chinese woman'. It continues:

Ying's life is interwoven like thousands of threads of troubled hair. A mother immersed in the past. An employer seeking to return to Italian family roots. And a Slovakian boyfriend feeling alienated in a foreign culture.

The play fits this description, though somewhat constrained dramatically by its novelistic scope, interrogating the idea of home, the difficulties for first-generation immigrants and the confusion of the second, who belong, like Ying's Scottish-Italian hairdresser boss and Ying herself, both to two cultures and to none. The play observes, often with bitter wit, the superficial fascination with eastern philosophy of some Occidentals, the pains of intergenerational conflict that is also intercultural and casual, and eventually abusive, sexual exploitation by a European man of an 'oriental' women. Above all, it follows the tangled relationship of Ying with her mother, uncle and dead father as their different needs conflict. Even her uncle comes to adopt a Scottish business-like attitude to family responsibility, while her mother still follows the old 'home' ways. In the end, Ying buys, perhaps too late, tickets so that she and her mother can make a journey, whether of return or discovery, back to her mother's (and perhaps her) homeland. The very richness of the play's

themes and action, although in this case overloading the play, highlights the diversity, complexity and hybridity of contemporary Scottish writing.

There is, indeed, an even wider new diversity than that mainly considered here. One example, speaking for many, is the Scottish-Chinese-Canadian writer Fiona Tinwei Lam, whose first book of poetry, *Intimate Distances*, came out in 2002. Born in Scotland in 1964, she is very firm in her biographical notes about drawing attention to her birth culture. Diasporas work in many directions and it may be a sign of future trends that this chapter ends with mention of a Chinese author, born in Scotland and reared in Canada, writing of distances and intimacies not only within families and between friends, but across oceans. Such new diversity has enlarged and enriched our conception of Scottishness and confirms its hybridity, the very nature of Scottish literature.

Further reading

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