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Editorial: 'Round the spaces where the buildings were'[1]

This issue of *IJSL* looks to the rune, the copy and the manifesto as means of defying time, and to the implication of ruin in every cultural revival – the cleared space before and after the building.

Articles centred mainly on the twentieth-century address a modernist primitivism uniting skaldic permanence with Bergsonian *durée réelle*, the overtly textualised double as national allegory, repetition as the basis of urban ethos, and the false dawn of the Renascence before the Renaissance.

Neil Rhind's essay on *Poor Things* disentangles the novel's playful web of mimetic aporias, paying special attention to the 'double fabrication' of Bella's story and its tripling by her pictorial rendering as an idealised national icon. Anchored in an almost nostalgic Victorian Kelvingrove, Gray's bold re-mediation of *Frankenstein* and the Shelley circle fuses with a metafictive commentary on Glasgow 1990, drawing the apparently monumental symbolism of 'Bella Caledonia' directly into the cultural politics of devolution.

Manfred Malzahn offers a tour d'horizon set firmly within the boundaries of the Scottish and urban, from the dullard minstrels of a hellish late-medieval Edinburgh to the city's 'bourgeois reconquista' in the age of *Trainspotting*, and the shift from a city of pungently communal, contested territory to one experienced only as 'blind space' through which the individual makes a meaningless (if not frictionless) passage.

But perhaps Edwin Muir's sense of the repressed desire of a Scottish street crowd, and its 'apparently unmotivated intentness', has no more to do with Calvinism than the pointed question of T.S. Eliot's pageant play *The Rock*, first performed in the same year *Scottish Journey* appeared (1934):

> When the Stranger says: 'What is the meaning of this city?
> Do you huddle together because you love each other?'

What will you answer? ‘We all dwell together
To make money from each other’? or ‘This is a community’?[2]

If Eliot turned to Catholic tradition as a citadel against the empty-handed disenchantment of ‘an age which advances progressively backwards’, his fellow convert George Mackay Brown found an austere ritual quality in Norse kennings. But Brown’s skaldic modernism, Michael Stachura shows, constantly plays the objective image off the intuitive sense; as in Pound’s Imagism, the infrangible thing-ness of the runic carving is also a figure for subjective becoming and the unceasing progress of death.

Julian Hanna’s essay on the twilit dawn of the little magazine *Evergreen* suggests that Patrick Geddes and William Sharp’s short-lived project reflected the omnipresence of degeneration and renewal in *fin de siècle* literary culture throughout the British Isles, its taste for the vitally urban tempered by consciously neo-romantic Celticism. In a brilliant pen-sketch of keening Edinburgh, Geddes evokes the Scots as an ‘unconqueraby renascent people’ most fully themselves in the ‘hushed assemblage’ of collective mourning. Sharp’s own curious doubling of self and gender remains mysterious; was the ‘otherness’ of Fiona Macleod merely a stratagem suited to the taste of the 1890s?

Finally, Stefanie Preuss’s occasional paper takes us back to the canon wars, and their belated function as a vehicle for literary nationalism in contemporary Scotland. Various efforts to rig-up a national list, shelf or smorgasbord of officially Scottish books suggest a lasting insecurity about the status and reality of Scottish literature itself, and implicitly affirm the channels of institutional power from which such lists always seem to emerge. Building such exclusive developments on ostensibly populist and democratic foundations only obscures the effort and presuppositions of those clearing the space, and staking out the boundaries of what goes up next.

This will be the last number of *IJSL* in its current form. Our current online home has outlived its purpose, and we are, with a willful sense of resisting the zeitgeist (if not attempting a revival), flitting to the domain of print. The next issue will appear in early 2014, under the banner of Edinburgh University Press. The journal will have a renewed format and remit, and slightly revised editorial arrangements. Ian Duncan will formally step into the shoes of Eleanor Bell as co-editor, a role he has fulfilled for the past two issues. Special thanks to Jacqui Ryder for her fine work as reviews editor, and to all the contributors, reviewers and members of the advisory board who assisted with the past — that is, the first — eight issues.

The ‘internationalism’ of this journal, we hope, has never simply been about bypassing the national paradigm or looking askance at its suppositions. Our aim has been to expand the scholarly discussion about Scottish literature and to step beyond the worn grooves of established debates in the field. This being said, Scottish literature has little choice but to be a campaign as well as a field of literary criticism. While this final issue draws on critics from Portugal, Austria, Canada and the United Arab Emirates, their origins and locations are not the ‘international’ point. Building a space in which new questions and critical arguments can take root in the field – without ignoring its tacit assumptions and investments – will remain the aim of the ‘new’ journal when it re-emerges.

Back issues of the journal will remain on this website indefinitely, and will remain free to access. In the meantime, we are very please to receive proposals for future submissions and special issues at scott.hames@stir.ac.uk.

NOTES

[1] See the quotation from Tom McGrath's poem 'Maryhill' in Manfred Malzahn’s article.

[2] T.S. Eliot, *Selected Poems* (London: Faber,1954), p. 117.

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A Portrait of Bella Caledonia:
Reading National Allegory in Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things*

Neil Rhind

Commentary on Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* has long recognised the central role reserved for processes of interpretation. An early review by Edwin Morgan noted that the novel is 'set up in such a way that the reader's delight in documentary and pseudo-documentary devices is almost taken for granted, since the actual narrative line is relatively thin'.[1] Such mixed praise may suggest these devices are mere compensation or camouflage for the novel's lack of substance; on the contrary, the metafictive techniques of *Poor Things* are the necessary formal realisation of its thematic centring upon the interpretative. The substance of the narrative lies less in the thin events of its diegetic world than in the far denser network of interpretation erected around them. While the novel's central aporia concerns the competing ontologies implied by the accounts of McCandless and Victoria — each refutes the other — the central paradox of *Poor Things* rests upon wildly different representations of Bella/Victoria *within* these accounts, generated by intradiegetic narrators' differing conceptions and interpretations of events. The novel's true complexity operates via narrative disagreements less fundamental than the twinned and incommensurate accounts of Bella and Victoria, in which characters in less privileged narrative positions offer contradictory representations of their shared world; the ensuing discrepancies are readily reducible to differences in characters' interpretations of events. The accounts of Bella's life given by Grimes, by Blessington's lawyer and in Wedderburn's letter are acts of representation which contradict McCandless' own, yet are safely undermined through being subsumed within his narrative. Their further representations of Bella may be approached not as ontological but as epistemological problems. Outwith McCandless' narrative the process of reading enacted on the novel, and that enacted *within* the novel, become closer still. Victoria's account is not only her self-representation, but an interpretation of her husband's narrative, a process continued by 'Gray' in further paratexts. As both textualized interpretation and 'historical' artefact, *Poor Things*' concern with the process of reading history spills over into that of reading itself.

Non-verbal signs are especially prominent in the various hermeneutic dillemmas presented *within* the diegetic world of *Poor Things*. Thus Bell's cranial scar is given a series of incommensurate origins: in Victoria's Dickensian narrative, it results from her father's violence; for McCandless, it marks Bell's brain-transplant; Wedderburn describes it as '*the mark of Cain*'.[2] An objective physical trace doubling as a textual reference, Bella's scar evokes Randall Stevenson's observation that 'Gray has restored to Scottish writing a sense of the book as significant object, and of the potential for integral – or sometimes almost ironic – relations between verbal and visual'.[3] While this may help to draw *Poor Things*' illustrations into its network of signification, Stevenson goes on to repeat Morgan's criticism, adding the 'possibility that extravagant presentation may be less an enhancement of the text than compensation for lack of imagination or substance in the written word' (44). Where the strength of the written word lies in the network of re-interpretation existing between narratives, the integration of visual elements into similar intertextual relationships must represent its enhancement rather than mere compensation. The degree to which this integration is achieved can best be judged by exploring the role of a single visual element within this network: the portrait of the central character.

There are at least four features within Bella's portrait which mark it as unique among Strang's engravings (45). The first of these is the suggestion of non-realist signification within the picture itself. Where the other portraits depict their subjects in costumes readily associated with their presumed appearance, Bella's clothing is explicitly unlike that of her textual representation; she herself urges the reader to 'ignore the Gainsborough hat' (251), among other features. While it is possible to read a metaphorical element into even the more realist portraits – note the prominence of Blessington's medals and sword-hilt (209) – here such an element is more obvious, and more obviously an effect of the artist. Tellingly, the hat which Victoria would ignore – more accurately, its crowning thistles - feeds, along with the plaid over her shoulder, into a strongly metaphorical reading.

A more obvious alteration is the landscape against which Bella is foregrounded, as against the featureless shading surrounding the other subjects. As Dorothy McMillan has observed, this panorama combines a diversity of Scottish landmarks, including 'the Forth Bridge, the Wallace Monument, the Edinburgh Observatory, industrial installations, sea and hills'.[4] Moreover, this evocation of the Scottish landscape not only frames Bella but, as Kirsten Stirling suggests, implies even closer association, in that '[t]he composition of the portrait is such that the lines of Bella's body seem to be a continuation of the landscape behind her'.[5] This linkage serves to introduce a metaphorical model of a woman as symbolic of a nation. It is Bella's portrait which leads McMillan to hail her as 'the spirit of Scotland' (87), while Stirling, although finding substantial textual evidence, again locates the 'initial stimulus' (269) for this reading of the character with this illustration. Similarly, Johanna Tiitinen notes that the portrait 'is an illustration

that leads to *further* interpretations of the novel'[6], as if holding these pictorially-stimulated interpretations separate from those originating solely in response to the text.

This dual reference, whereby the portrait serves to represent and interpret Bella both as a diegetically real character and as a metaphorical textual representation, is echoed in the third difference between this and the other portraits in *Poor Things*. As with the more realist portraits, the import of Bella's picture depends on reference to a caption, a further paratext. With the other portraits these captions suggest a simple correspondence between image and text, the same 'thing' represented in different media. Bella's caption adds an epithet which transforms her into 'Bella Caledonia'. Again, this works to assert a metaphorical reading of Bella, in both pictorial and textual forms. As if to reinforce this reliance on mutual interpretation, where the strips on which captions are written are effectively divided from the other portraits, Bella's hands lie over this edge. As well as openly engaging with the text in this way, the position of her arms also suggests that she is leaning on the border between picture and paratext; this metaphorical figure quite literally imposes herself on her text, or else rests upon her caption.

Any exploration of the significance of this visual artefact as interpretive filter to the text must trace its metaphor within the text itself. Dietmar Böhnke questions the validity of such a reading on the grounds that 'this interpretation certainly has its limits (and there are too many contradictions in the novel to make it really convincing)'.[7] In effect, Böhnke seizes upon as a flaw in this reading qualities which *Poor Things*' contradiction-strewn intertextual network posits as flaws in *all* reading. Gray has written that '[m]etaphor is one of thought's most essential tools. It illuminates what would otherwise be totally obscure. But the illumination is sometimes so bright that it dazzles instead of revealing'.[8] Partly for this reason, Gray's figures often alternate between realist and allegorical interpretative contexts at different moments. Within the purely metaphorical mode similar shifts occur between different, often contradictory, supportable readings, a condition which Fredric Jameson suggests as endemic to the mode. 'If allegory has once again become somehow congenial to us today', he writes, '…it is because the allegorical spirit is profoundly discontinuous, a matter of breaks and heterogeneities, of the multiple polysema of the dream'.[9] It is in terms of such discontinuity that the individual elements of any reading of Bella Caledonia must be understood.

The natural beginning for a reading of Bella Caledonia is clearly the origin of Bella herself, though this is neither natural nor clear. With each interpretation laid onto the character her origins are multiplied, yet all are united in their artificiality. Hiding Bella's status as 'surgical fabrication' (35), Godwin gives her 'extinct, respectable…[parents who] will be better than none' (35). This alibi doubles her fabricated origins / origin in fabrication, later supplemented by Wedderburn's supernatural suggestion that Bella is perhaps spawned by 'Lucifer Baxter' (94), 'the Father of All

Lies' (95). This particular 'lie', however, is fathered not by Baxter but by Wedderburn. In ascribing to her this newly fabricated origin, he in fact fabricates a further Bella unlike that appearing elsewhere in the text. Similarly, the origin of Bella offered by Blessington's staff takes 'Bella' as a false identity assumed by Lady Blessington, and so created linguistically rather than physically. Victoria's narrative partially legitimates this origin by confirming the co-identity of Bella and Blessington's wife, but does so by rendering McCandless' suggestion of her origin a double fabrication; here the Frankenstein method is 'a cunning lie' (274).

This emphasis on Bella's hyper-constructedness has led some interpreters of 'Bella Caledonia' to carry across the novel's concern with the problems of the narrative process into problems with the narrative's subject. Stirling, drawing attention to Bella's artificial construction, be it physically by Godwin or textually by McCandless, notes that '[i]n either case, Bella functions as the incarnation of men's fantasies' (272). In terms of a national allegory, however, Stirling also suggests that national and narratological concerns may be separable, offering a possible interpretation which describes not a feature of narrative but of Scotland: 'her internal construction…representing a monstrous state' (273). McMillan's reading, meanwhile, partially relocates Bella's artificiality as the artificiality of Scotland, observing that 'it is a nation that has to be invented, it will not simply evolve in the natural way of things' (87). Tiitinen, evoking the union of nation and narration which has become common critical currency after Benedict Anderson's concept of the 'imagined community', extends this aspect of Scottish identity to become a necessary dimension of all nations.[10] Here the origin(s) in fabrication ascribed to Bella becomes a means by which Gray reveals 'his awareness of nations as artificial constructs' (Tiitinen, p. 166).

There is a case to be made for understanding Bella's origins in each of these contexts. Beginning with the last observation, it is clear from the novel's concern with the (re)construction of the past that Gray is aware of the narrative form in which history becomes comprehensible. *Poor Things*' Russian, explaining to Bella that 'a nation is only as old as its literature' (114), might perhaps be seen to prize the importance of narratives as artefacts, a notion echoing Gray's claim that '[g]reat literature is the most important part of history'.[11] Gray has also offered an implicit valorisation of the role of history in fashioning national identity by basing much of his argument in *Why Scots Should Rule Scotland* around Scotland's history.Narrating Scotland's history from Pictland to the present, and beyond to 2020, Gray attempts to unite Scots within a single narrative. Suggesting the same function on a spatial, rather than temporal axis, he similarly hopes that identification with and in narrative will, via the precursors his story provides, 'persuade incomers to think of themselves as Scots'.[12] The Russian repeats in theory what Gray here shows in practice. Pushkin, in taking Russia as a literary subject, 'made Russia a state of mind – made it real' (116). As with Gray's attempt to forge a Scottish identity, this act unifies a people through co-identification, where before '[o]ur aristocracy spoke French, our bureaucracy was Prussian and

the only true Russians – the peasants – were despised by rulers and bureaucracy alike' (116). Similarly, the temporal dimension of narrative is crucial to both the imaginative formation of Russia and the identification of its inhabitants with this, making them 'aware of our tragic past – our peculiar present – our enigmatic future' (116).

In this context Bella Caledonia's construction is far from monstrous. Since the only means of making a nation 'real' are artificial, she cannot be set in opposition to an 'authentic' organic identity, which is itself illusory. Here the Russian's identification of Walter Scott as Pushkin's contemporary recalls Scott's development of the historical novel, a form in which, as Cairns Craig has commented, 'the accidental boundaries of the nation were formed into those symbolic systems which would provide readers with a sense of the fundamental unity and purpose of their social world'.[13] Yet if Scott stands as Scotland's localised manifestation of this function, other comments within this episode undermine Bella's situation as an exemplar of all nations. Firstly, literature's ability to construct national identity is not here the function of a single work, but of a national tradition. To the Russian, both Scott and Pushkin operate within national literary traditions which continue with Dickens and Eliot for the former, Gogol and Tolstoi for the latter. Yet, adding Shakespeare to this first list, the Russian asserts that, unlike Pushkin, Scott does not originate his tradition; correcting his comparison between Shakespeare and Tolstoi, he tells Bell 'you had Shakespeare centuries before Walter Scott' (116).

The Russian's conception of national identity, then, signals towards not only the historical novel, but to something like Eliot's organic tradition. That he openly asserts this as Bella's property is clearly problematic. Bella realises this herself, disclaiming ownership not only personally — 'I had read none of them!' (116) — but in terms of national identity, explaining that 'Burns was a great Scottish poet who lived before Scott, and Shakespeare and Dickens et cetera were all English' (116). This is to no avail, for 'he could not grasp the difference between Scotland and England' (117). Yet, if Bella vocally resists such absorption, on the metaphorical level she hints at compliance. Shifting the question of a national literary identity to its realisation in the mind of the individual, the Russian explains that 'people who care nothing for their country's stories and songs…are like people without a past – without a memory – they are half people' (116). Ignorant of the writers mentioned, Bella might be correct to see here a reflection of her own amnesia. By this identification, however, she transfers her place in this problem back from that of an individual reader to that of a nation, wondering if 'perhaps, like Russia, I am making up for lost time' (116). With a Scottish literary tradition going unrecognised by the Russian, and metaphorically lost with Bella's memories, it would appear that Scotland has been not only constructed, but erased.

In considering Bella's lack of memory there is a tension between interpreting this in the terms in which it is represented to and by Bella, and the terms by which it is known to McCandless;

between reading it as the loss of memory or as the absence of a past. Introducing his own account of the Scottish literary tradition, Gray engages with, and to an extent accepts, the critical tropes of both erasure and disjuncture. Announcing his project as necessary because 'after Arnold the teaching of literature in British universities allocated most Scottish writing to a footnote or ignored it', Gray suggests the failure to endow the Scottish tradition with cultural representation.[14] The system of values through which the 'British' canon has been constructed is explicitly noted as an English one, no matter that this goes unrecognised by its enforcers, 'English nationalists who did not know their limitations' (*Short Survey*, xi). The ill education of 'Bell Baxter [the] total ignoramus' (*Poor Things*, 116) is located in the cultural amnesia of Bella Caledonia.

Gray's account of the formation of a British literary tradition shows many simililarities with other critical writing on this topic. Identifying the construction of the British canon with implicit English nationalism, he parallels Craig's conclusion that this project was aimed at bolstering the self-image of Britain's core culture to the detriment of its peripheries. Indeed, for Craig the popular adoption of Eliot's organic model was achieved precisely through its ability to do this, its message being 'what the core wanted to know of itself – that it was, *by definition*, the only whole and complete culture'.[15] Further, the establishment of this core rests in part upon its absorption of other traditions, 'taking to themselves all significant achievements in the periphery that can be accommodated without too great a stress' (19), as Gray has British universities accommodate Scott ('accepted as an honorary Englishman because his influence throughout Europe could not be ignored' (*Short Survey*, x)). Those left behind in this shifting canonical focus thus fall into the amnesiac abyss where a Scottish tradition might be. The appreciation of Scottish culture as absence receives more direct comment in *Lanark*. Here combining the functions of both Bella and the Russian, Thaw explains to McAlpin that '[i]maginatively Glasgow exists as a music-hall song and a few bad novels. That's all we've given to the world outside. It's all we've given to ourselves' (243). Like the Russian, Thaw links an area's identity to cultural production: 'if a city hasn't been used by an artist not even the inhabitants live there imaginatively' (ibid). Like Bella, Thaw is in a sense amnesiac, unaware of previous representations. How far this represents an absence of Glaswegian culture, and how much its non-availability, is debatable. Douglas Gifford, while insistent that 'we must beware of interpreting Gray's satirical treatment of his protagonist as Gray's own view', is nevertheless tempted to implicate Gray in the discourse of amnesia.[16] His principal evidence here is *Lanark*'s index of plagiarisms. While references abound for both contemporary Scottish writers and international writers of all times, Gifford notes, 'Burns, Douglas Brown, Carlyle, Hume and MacDonald…are the only reference to Scottish literature before the twentieth century' (34). Yet the tentativeness with which Gifford applies this reading recalls several uncertainties in approaching *Lanark*'s often playfully self-undermining index. Further, Gifford's suggested cause for this amnesia, that Scottish culture 'fails to transmit the information

regarding its past achievements' (34), clearly repeats Gray's own concerns. Ultimately, then, the picture he develops of Gray as one of 'a long line of Scottish writers who believed their work spoke of their author's lonely creative isolation' (34), bears a potential to be read as an identity self-consciously assumed by Gray in order to represent, and perhaps question, this common trope.

If the displacement of a Scottish literary tradition by an 'organic' English canon represents one means by which Bella's amnesia may be approached, another is the failure of this tradition, its self-erasure by disjuncture. Mentioning several precursors for his literary survey, Gray explicitly identifies this critical trope, commenting that '[t]hese surveys often presented Scots literature as a growth stunted by catastrophe, a grim view got by comparing Scotland's literary history, not with that of Germany, Poland, or other nations that had suffered equal or worse turmoils, but by comparing it with England' (*Short Survey*, xi). This point again chimes with Craig, who questions the validity of adopting Britain's core culture as template for its peripheries since 'core cultures are not normal…cores are few and peripheries many' (*Out of History*, 116). In place of this template, Craig lays emphasis on polyvalent and contradictory influences within a 'single' tradition. Similarly, the political and economic 'turmoils' which Gray locates as a key difference between the Scottish and English traditions appear, not as calamitous 'events now beyond human control' responsible for the 'demise' of Scottish culture, but as aspects of the forces shaping that culture (*Short Survey*, xii). These may even take on a positive slant, historical forms of the impetus behind the process by which 'poets and narrators peacefully reinvented Scots culture from early times to the Twentieth Century' (ibid). Yet, if this realisation of Scotland-as-reinvention recalls Bella-as-reinvention, each new life remains similarly dependent on the death of the old, and creates an identity self-diagnosed as half a person. Gray, although accepting the actual occurrence of these turmoils in Scottish history, is reluctant to make them scapegoats for the demise of Scottish identity. At the same time his commitment to engaging with previous reconceptions of Scottish identity entails the incorporation of narratives which have encoded these incidents with just this signification. Bella Caledonia is both a narrative and a purposively inclusive metanarrative of Scottish history, with all the interpretative problems this entails.

One key moment of national disjuncture which might be expected to receive an ambiguous reception in the novel is the Act of Union. *Poor Things*' evocation of this theme consists of repeated, fragmentary suggestions which highlight the union as a focus within the novel without elaborating a coherent response to the event itself. The means by which these suggestions are raised again show Gray's engagement with previous narratives, recalling common tropes from the discourse of the union. These tropes range widely in both their obvious relevance to the union and their presence in the novel, from Blessington's incarceration of Bella – recalling, perhaps, such English attitudes as '[w]e have catcht Scotland and will keep her fast' (*Why Scots Should*

Rule Scotland, 46) – to an extended system of correspondences centring upon Bella's orphanhood, a feature common to all accounts of her genesis. In the Frankenstein hypothesis Bella has no natural parents, and both her 'mother' and her 'self' must die before she is born, while the alibi which conceals this fact gives her parents both fictional and dead. Victoria, although she loses only her mother, effectively orphans herself in abandoning her family. Reinforcing this theme, the novel surrounds Bella with further orphans, from Godwin to the motherless baby who sparks her social conscience.

To Alan Riach, the trope of the orphan in Scottish literature can be traced to the situation which the union engendered, where 'Scotland flourishes, culturally distinct, but…is also an absent political entity in search of its own statehood…orphaned from itself and travelling in a world without closure'.[17] As this search suggests, the aspect of self-identity from which Scotland is orphaned is, for Riach, its political autonomy, clearly useful in approaching the novel's concern with the act of union. Yet, in describing a 'flourishing' Scottish culture simultaneously 'orphaned from itself', Riach's terminology also invites a model of orphanhood conceived in terms of cultural disjuncture. That this may be of particular relevance for *Poor Things* can be seen in the sense in which orphanhood proceeds not only from parental demise, but from their being forgotten. Of Baxter's mother we are told '[n]othing definite was known' (15); he himself claims to 'have no memory of her' (18). The illegitimate McCandless buries his mother unmemorialised until 'nobody remembered the position of the grave' (9). Neither of his parents are named in the text. Godwin gives us his father's name, but does not give him the name father. His mother, too, may be misrecognised, if we follow the gossip that 'Sir Colin kept her as his maidservant…silently passing plates' (15). Victoria's father explains how 'you are queer Vicky, and the fact that you cannot remember your own dad proves it' (224).

A second trope by which Bella Caledonia recalls the act of union is marriage. As Donald Kaczvinksi has suggested, the close identification of Blessington with the British Empire might suggest their marriage as an allegorical condemnation of the union.[18] That this marriage predates Bella's creation – and thus that the union somehow predates Scotland – need not militate against such a reading, for Gray suggests elsewhere that it was the anxiety of their position within Britain which prompted the 'elegiac patriotism' by which Scots recreated their identity (*Short Survey*, xii). However it is not this marriage but Bella's couplings with Wedderburn which are referred to as her 'Acts of Union' (83). That these acts may be equated with marriage is suggested in Bella's name for him, Wedder, and the frequency with which she 'calls fornication wedding' (308). In any case, her ambiguous feelings towards bigamy – talking 'as if her engagement to marry [McCandless] and her elopement with Wedderburn were simultaneous' (70) and wondering '[w]hy should I *not* have a spare military husband somewhere' (89) – suggest that Bella's 'marriages' to Blessington and Wedderburn may be considered in parallel. If so, the fitness

of Wedderburn as figure of the Empire almost matches that of his predecessor, for although Scottish he is clearly an imperial beneficiary. Indeed, to Wedderburn, the Empire was 'invented in Glasgow' (95), through the industrial application of scientific advancements. Wedderburn's Empire is therefore, unlike Blessington's, neither a patriotic nor a military concept, but an economic one, and one which recalls a second dimension to the union of which Gray is aware, that '[m]any Scots, of course, were junior partners in England's imperial business venture. It enriched them' (*Short Survey*, xii).

Wedderburn's own attitudes to 'wedding' are suggestive in this regard. Unlike his previous philandering, Wedderburn desires a more lasting union with Bella. As it transpires their relationship lasts only for as long as they travel, strengthening the link between this union and foreign adventures in a way Bella recognises, this being 'our wedding trip' (124). At the same time, this union is also intertwined with economic considerations, Wedderburn admitting that he expects a 'few thousand per annum' from their marriage (82). The real economic danger involved, however, is identified by McCandless when he asserts that British law will never recognize a married woman's property rights, hinting here towards Scotland's curious position as both junior partner in Empire and powerless stateless nation, enriched by a 'marriage' which robs her of her rights to riches (67). As events proceed, it is the more positive aspect of this relationship which is highlighted, for it is not Wedderburn but Bella who profits from their trip. As the title given to her letters suggests, this evocation of Scotland's involvement in Empire is represented as an educational process forming the nation's character. It provides the means of encountering the self, seen in her conversation with the Russian, and of encountering the Empire, in the persons of the 'Missionaries', Hooker and Astley (127). With the latter pair this didactic dimension is foregrounded, as are two very different conceptions of the imperial project. Hooker, a literal missionary, expounds upon imperialism conceived in terms of education; employed to 'teach the natives of Peking the language and faith of the Christian Bible' (131), he justifies empire in terms of an innate Anglo-Saxon superiority which might nevertheless be transmitted to others, Britain and America 'like teachers in a playground of children who do not want to know that the school exists' (139). Astley, meanwhile, is not a missionary in such a conventional sense, his own reasons for travelling purely economic ('forging trade links with the Russian Bear' (137)). His faith is nevertheless as central to his vision of empire as Hooker's, with the inevitability of inequality asserted by his 'Malthusiasm' (132) justifying Britain's imperial expansion as surely as Hooker's Christianity. Without Hooker's divine sanction the British Empire no longer the product of a superior race, only the latest of the many peoples to 'have had their turn' (161). Gone too is the attendant notion of imperial responsibility.

For all that Astley claims to 'have no wish to spread [my faith]' (133), this, in a series of lectures delivered to Bell, is exactly what he attempts. That Astley may be taken as another representative

of the British Empire is clear, and like those previously encountered he invites Bella to join him in matrimony, a proposal which both precedes these lectures and returns as their conclusion. Having failed to accept the lectures' amoral worldview, Bella is offered in marriage the possibility of acting morally within this framework. What Astley offers, in effect, is partnership in a microcosm of empire, an estate with a 'farm on it and a whole village – think of the power you will have' (163). Yet Bella's would be a subsidiary control, effective only through the centre, 'bully[ing Astley] into improving the drains and lowering the rents of a whole community' (ibid). By installing Bella in power on behalf of Astley's tenants, rather than ceding power to them, this offer may also subtly recall Hooker's imperial myth. Accordingly, she recognises this situation for what it is, an appeal to self-interest masked as altruism, 'a cunning inducement to lead a totally selfish life' (164), and not only rejects it but resolves to become a socialist. It is not so curious, then, that Astley suggests the circular scar which Bell leaves in anger on his hand as their 'engagement ring' (153), partnership in exploitation and the development of conscience here somehow combined.

Mapping Bella's relationship with Astley onto the British Empire is problematic in two ways. First, that Scotland is here figured as the Empire's conscience, inherently more progressive than her partner-nation, is a common self-congratulatory myth expounded by the Scottish Left, reflected in the relative positions of Astley and Bella. This may again represent Gray's recognition of previous meta-narratives. It may also be taken as proscriptive, encouraging modern-day Scots to embody this value system regardless of its historical accuracy. This is a notion implied in McMillan's suggestion that Gray's recurrent slogan 'work as if you live in the early days of a better nation' – embossed upon the novel's cover – is one of the 'unmistakeable ways readers are invited to think of Bella in terms of national allegory' (86). This temporal bilocation of allegorical reference, whereby Gray's models refer simultaneously to Scotland's historical past and desired present would also help to negotiate the second, more basic problem represented by Bella's response to Astley: her rejection of his proposal. The repeated rejection of union within the British Empire which Bella enacts clearly stands in contrast to historical reality. This failure is resolved by projecting this rejection onto the future. Something of the inter-relationship between Bella Caledonia's potential temporal foci can be traced in Wedderburn's cashing in his Scottish Widows and Orphans shares to pay for their increasingly expensive trip (88). In recalling the company's post-Crimean origins, this detail suggests Scotland's position in underwriting the human costs of the Empire, as well as invoking further post-union orphans. Mention of the name also allows Gray to comment upon the present, noting that as part of 'Conservative publicity preceding a General Election, the chairman of Scottish Widows announced that if Scotland achieved an independent parliament the company's head office would move to England' (286). In highlighting the potential cost of independence, however, this point also suggests a significance to the specified Scottishness of the 'Clydesdale and North of Scotland banknotes' (178) with which Bella

purchases her independence through paying for Wedderburn's return. To Bella independence is worth this cost, since she 'would now earn what [she] needed by working for a living' (179). The clear echo of Gray's sloganeering on work contained in Bella's subsequent pride that she is 'no longer a parasite' (180) is however problematized by the fact that her 'work' is, at least initially, prostitution. That the money by which Caledonia supports herself also supports an English madam 'who looked like Queen Victoria' (171) reminds us of the historical, as well as proleptic, nature of her metaphor.

If Bella's relationship to Astley offers commentary on various realisations of a romanticised socialist Scotland with reference to multiple historical periods, her adventures with Wedderburn show a similar function with regard to a less positively realised ideal. Wedderburn's 'bastard bairns', 'put to good domestic agricultural use on the expanding frontier of our Empire' (80), again associate the cultural erasure of orphanhood as described by Alan Riach and embodied by Bella with Scotland's economy. He also engages, through use of such a 'Scoticism' for its 'truer human warmth than *babies* or *children*' (ibid); in the sentimentalisation of Scottish culture which Gray locates as an effect of imperial involvement. This theme recurs in Wedderburn's letter in association with union-implying sexual intercourse, be it with Bella herself, post-coitally transformed into Mary Queen of Scots, or his previous conquests, conducted within 'the moral code enjoyed, preached and practised by Scotland's National Bard' (ibid). In the context of this sentimentalisation, the Russian's positioning of Scott within the question of Scotland's cultural disjuncture finds a further level of meaning, Scott himself often being held to have 'invented a Scotland which displaced the real Scotland in favour of his romantic illusions' (Craig, *Modern Scottish Novel*, 117). Gray's elaboration of a purposefully inclusive metanarrative again leaves room for Scott-land as a potentially valid formulation of Scottish identity. The evocation of such associations in Bella's portrait are, after all, one means by which Gray's national metaphor is established.

Yet already Victoria's own comments on this aspect of her portrait – her own self-image closer to the myth of Clydesidism – work to question its validity. McCandless' description on the page opposite the portrait of 'churned effluent from the upstream paper-mill' appearing as 'heaps of filthy green froth, each the size and shape of a lady's bonnet' (44) does the same, juxtaposing this romanticised portrait with Scotland's industrial reality. Again, the novel's engagement is not solely with the past, and neither is Scott the sole target of such criticism. A further target is suggested by Martinez, who sees in Bella's unnatural grandfather, Colin Baxter, a premonition of his twentieth-century photographer namesake, whose 'romantic depictions of both Highland and urban scenes transformed the Scottish postcard industry'.[19] More generally, Martinez suggests that *Poor Things* stages a broader engagement with respect to the refashioning of Glaswegian history and identity undertaken in its year as European City of Culture. In this Gray was not alone, with many

Glaswegian writers voicing criticism of events surrounding this title, both individually and within the loose collective of the 'Worker's City' protest group. A typical criticism can be seen in Farquahar McLay's foreword to the *Workers City* anthology, where he questions the image promulgated of vibrant Glaswegian culture. 'Looking at the social, cultural and economic deprivation in working-class areas of Glasgow' he writes, 'and thinking about the rigours of the new Social Fund and Poll Tax to come, [the Culture City title] sounded like blatant and cynical mockery'.[20] The Workers City group is of particular relevance to *Poor Things*, in part because of their overt questioning of the City of Culture vision of the 'Merchant's City'. Their highlighting, in the words of James Kelman, of 'the grossness of the fallacy that Glasgow somehow exists because of the tireless efforts of a tiny patriotic coalition of fearless eighteenth century entrepreneurs and far-sighted politicians', finds many echoes in the novel.[21] Gray's history both repeats this image of enlightened philanthropy and undermines it, drawing out the realities of working class Victorian life in a city whose 'useless over-ornamentation was paid for out of … profits squeezed from stunted lives of children, women and men' (*Poor Things*, 275).

A more immediately practical impetus for the group's formation was the attempt to oust Elspeth King from control of the People's Palace, helping both she and her colleague Michael Donnelly in a fight 'not for their careers, but to safeguard the place itself, along with its tremendous collection of socio-historical relics'.[22] These sympathies are shared by Gray, who has suggested possible political motivations behind the council's rejection of King, as '[s]he dislikes the sale of public property to private companies, and the leaders of the district council wish to sell Glasgow Green near the Palace to English companies who will turn it into a vast commercial leisure centre'.[23] Both of these forms in which history may be excluded – be it re-written or devalued – are combined in Godwin's message to Victoria, which is also Gray's message to Scotland: 'Forget nothing…your worst experiences…will enlarge your mind if you remember them with intelligent interest' (*Poor Things*, 262). Yet if Bella's life expresses the history of Scotland, this history centres around its own amnesiac disjuncture. In the context of the Culture City establishment, this amnesia becomes not only an aspect of Scottish identity, but an effort to memorialise offical forgetting. The deadpan irony of Gray's introduction suggests a conflict between official recreations of identity and his own, observing that Donnelly only had time to read the McCandless narrative when '[h]e left the People's Palace in 1990 when Glasgow had been declared the official Culture Capital of Europe by Margaret Thatcher's Minister of Arts' (x).

The trans-world incursion of Donnelly into the novel represents more than a ludic instance of ontological play, for all that it evokes the delight which Morgan finds in *Poor Things*' pseudo-documentary conceits. In highlighting the permeable boundaries between history and fiction in this way, Donnelly's inclusion may be read, in postmodern terms, as suggesting history's innate fictionality. From another perspective, informed more by the role played by such incursions in

nineteenth-century literature, his appearance might be approached as an attempt to persuade the reader of the historical veracity of the fictional construct in which he has been embedded. A response more in keeping with *Poor Things*' meditation on fiction and history would be to regard Donnelly's appearance as a further recollection of the novel's insistence on the shared narrative form of these seemingly opposed concepts. Just as the real-world Donnelly was responsible for the rescue and preservation of historical artefacts relating to Scottish life, so does he function here with regard to a text which is doubly representative of Scottish history, in its actual identity as recreation and assumed identity as artefact. It is through his role as reader that the historical reality of the hitherto suppressed McCandless account is resurrected. In this regard it is important to note that Donnelly achieves this despite his subscription to the competing narrative offered by Victoria. It is through his recollection of something akin to her account that the manuscript initially incites his interest. Having passed both accounts on to Gray, Donnelly's role as reader continues, and his related role as author of narrative is introduced, in the various comments which Gray records as further asserting the reality of one account over the other. The awareness of historical reality is thus shown, as it is throughout the novel, as the result of the reader's negotiation between a number of competing narrativized accounts, a negotiation which may include the persistence of contradiction.

Bella's emphatic artificiality performs a particularly interesting function in this regard. Working to represent within the allegory of Scotland the very processes by which such representations are created, this theme may lend support, as Tiitinen suggests, to the assertion that Scotland is in this regard similar to all nations. While this may undermine readings which identify this monstrosity as distinctively Scottish, such as those provided by McMillan and Stirling, the same tropes of artificiality and attendant amnesia nonetheless also function as exactly such characteristics, at least insofar as they represent recurrent features of previous accounts of Scottish identity. The extent to which Gray himself holds these common tropes of Scottish identity to be true is debatable, and perhaps irrelevant. If Scotland's identity has indeed been subject to historical forces which result in its disjuncture and erasure, this may well be the specific burden of one nation, or, more likely, of all shifting, polyvalent nations throughout history. The notion that the former is the case has however attained this status of unique national characteristic through the very degree to which it has been diagnosed in Scotland's self-representations. This is true regardless of the extent to which Scottish cultural traditions can be seen to persist and develop across time, as when Michael Donnelly's role as trans-world incursion and textual conduit recalls Charles Baxter's appearance in *The Master of Ballantrae*, a move which Stevenson himself thought 'a little too like Scott'.[24] It is even true to the extent that the denial of a coherent Scottish identity and tradition would seem just such a tradition itself. Further, as the events surrounding the City of Culture show, self-alienation and disjuncture can also be a very real threat if Scotland does not take care to follow the example of Donnelly, who 'worked overtime to acquire and

preserve evidence of a local culture that was being hustled into the past' (*Poor Things*, vii). In acquiring and preserving various narratives of Scottish identity, of historical past, present events and future possibilities, *Poor Things* does just this. Offering them to the reader through a series of paratexts which compete with and re-interpret each other, the novel enacts the process by which such identities are constructed, and invites the reader to do the same, an invitation present even in a single illustration such as that of Bella Caledonia. After all, in saving McCandless' text from oblivion, '[w]hat most interested Michael Donnelly were the Strang illustrations, all portraits' (ix).

NOTES

[1] See Edwin Morgan, 'A Misunderstood Monster?' *Chapman* 72. Spring 1993: 89-90, 90.
[2] Alasdair Gray, *Poor Things: Episodes From The Early Life Of Archibald McCandless, M.D., Scottish Public Health Officer*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company,1992, 89.
[3] Randall Stevenson, 'Mavis Belfrage: A Romantic Novel With Five Shorter Tales.' *Scottish Literary Journal* Supplement 46 (Spring 1997): 44-46, 44.
[4] Dorothy McMillan, “Constructed Out of Bewilderment: Stories of Scotland'. *Peripheral Visions: Images of Nationhood in Contemporary British Fiction*. Ed. Ian A. Bell. Cardiff. University of Wales Press, 1995. 80-99, 87.
[5] Kirsten Stirling, 'Imagined Bodies and the Landscape of Home: Woman as Nation in the Fiction of Alasdair Gray.' *Terranglian Territories: Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Literature of Region and Nation*. Ed. Susanne Hagemann. Frankfurt Am Main: Peter Lang, 2000. 269-276, 271.
[6] Johanna Tiitinen, *'Work As If You Live In The Early Days Of A Better Nation': History and Politics in the works of Alasdair Gray*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Printing House, 2004, 124. My emphasis.
[7] Dietmar Böhnke, *Shades of Gray: Science Fiction, History and the Problem of Postmodernism in the Work of Alasdair Gray*. Glienicke/Berlin: Galda & Wilch Verlag, 2004, 209.
[8] Alasdair Gray, *Lanark: A Life in Four Books*. London: Macmillan, 1994, 30.
[9] Fredric Jameson, 'Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism.' *The Jameson Reader*. Ed. Micheal Hardt & Kathi Weeks. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000. 315-339, 324.
[10] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.
[11] Alasdair Gray, *The Book Of Prefaces*. London: Bloomsbury, 2000, 9.
[12] Alasdair Gray, *Why Scots Should Rule Scotland*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 1997, 4.
[13] Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, 9.

[14] Alasdair Gray, *A Short Survey of Classic Scottish Writing*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2001, x.
[15] Cairns Craig, *Out of History*. Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996, 25.
[16] Douglas Gifford, 'Re-Mapping Renaissance in Modern Scottish Literature'. *Beyond Scotland: New Contexts for Twentieth Century Scottish Literature*. Ed. Gerard Carruthers, David Golde and Alistair Renfrew. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004. 17-37, 33.
[17] Alan Riach, 'Orphans and their Ancestors in Popular Scottish Fiction after 1945'. *Studies in Scottish Fiction: 1945 to the Present*. Ed. Susanne Hageman. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996. 51-83, 80.
[18] Donald P Kaczvinsky, '"Making Up For Lost Time" Scotland, Stories and the Self in Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things*.' *Contemporary Literature* XLII.4 (2001): 775-799, 787.
[19] Mario Diaz Martinez, 'Dissecting Glasgow: Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things*'. *Revista Canaria De Estudios Ingleses* 41 (2000): 117-131, 120.
[20] Farquhar McLay, Introduction. *Worker's City: The Real Glasgow Stands Up*. Ed. Farquhar McLay. Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 1988. 1-4, 1.
[21] James Kelman. 'Foreword'. *Some Recent Attacks*. Stirling: AK Press, 1992. 1-4, 1-2.
[22] James Kelman, 'Harry McShane's Centenary'. *Some Recent Attacks*. Stirling: AK Press, 1992. 46-52, 47.
[23] Alasdair Gray. 'A Friend Unfairly Treated'. *The Reckoning*. Ed. Farquhar McLay. Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 1990. 54-6, 56.
[24] R.L. Stevenson qtd. in Adrian Poole . 'Notes'. *The Master of Ballantrae*. Ed. Adrian Poole. London: Penguin, 1996. 229-246, 229.

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Hells, Havens, Hulls: Literary Reflections of Scottish Cities

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To anyone looking for patterns in human history, the formation and development of large urban conglomerations must surely appear as one of the most consistent and universal trends discernible. One may also perceive a movement towards global uniformity of urban settlements especially in our present times; and yet cities still remain as different from one another as do human beings, for all their generic similarities. Under these circumstances, looking at literary representations of urban milieus in the context of national literatures seems to be an appropriate manner of doing justice to the ambivalent nature of such images which reflect a specific city or cities, and at the same time the city as an ideal form in the Platonic sense, the one blueprint behind its many and varied manifestations.

In this brief and correspondingly eclectic survey of the city as a topos in Scottish literature from the eighteenth century to the present day, I would like to begin by borrowing and adapting a global framework outlined by Charles Rennie Short. His threefold typology of urban discourses will, by way of a slight adaptation, provide a grid for the ordering of my specific observations on selected Scottish texts. On these observations I will finally elaborate in reference to another general model set out in Paolo Virno's *Grammar of the Multitude*.

My first source is a recent article in which John Rennie Short distinguishes between the authoritarian, the collective and the cosmic city; a trichotomy with which I propose to match the respective images of the city as hell, the city as haven, and the city as hull. In the hope that the first two pairings may for the time being seem self-evident enough, let me try to explain the third. Short claims that the urban coalescence was initially a religious artifact whose inherent symbolism was hollowed out by a process of secularisation, transforming the meaningful cosmic city into the merely functional market city. The latter he sees as characterised by a mass of superficial signs which do not add up to any deeper or coherent sense, and which thus leave human beings without a sense of purpose to their lives: 'At its existentialist bleakest the city

becomes a setting for the meaningless passage of the individual through a blind universe, bereft of meaning' (23).

I shall come back to this point, which Short aptly enough illustrates with an example from a twentieth-century Scottish novel, James Kelman's *How late it was, how late* (Short, 23). First I will begin my historical account with the attempt to identify a characteristic juxtaposition of motifs related to all three of the abovementioned images, in an eighteenth-century Scottish poem. The text in question is 'Auld Reekie' by Robert Fergusson, the title Old Smoky being a time-honoured nickname of Edinburgh, the first and for long the only city of any considerable size in Scotland. Trevor Royle has chronicled its appearance in literature from around the beginning of the sixeenth century, when William Dunbar exhorted the authorities of Edinburgh to take action against some blatant or pungent nuisances.[1] Royle's summary of Dunbar's stocktaking reads as follows: 'It was not a pleasant picture. The city smells horribly, poverty is rife, merchants swindle honest men, the citizens fall pray [*sic*] to violence and crime and even the town's minstrels have fallen on such poverty of ideas that they can only sing two songs' (12).

If Dunbar's Edinburgh was sharply divided into a hell for the common people and a haven for the courtly and commercial elite, life in Fergusson's Auld Reekie was marked by a unique conviviality or 'mixter-maxter of the social classes' (Royle 97). Fergusson's poem reflects the outlook of citizens who have accommodated themselves pretty well in their environment, and have made their peace even with the infernal smells. The refuse dumped on the street each morning is referred to as 'Edina's roses' (Crawford 140), a variant of the popular euphemism Flooers o' Edinburgh. The dirty gutters are the nemesis of the fop or 'macaroni drunk' (144), who is therein subjected to an egalitarian levelling of his pretensions. Even 'deeds o' darkness and o' night' (143) do not meet with Draconian censure or Scots flyting, but are treated in the mellow spirit of Horatian satire; the mock-heroic talk about the 'glory' of the 'bruiser' is matched by the mock-moralistic talk about the 'shame' of the 'damn'd whores and rogues' (144).

Fergusson's poem thus paints a rather couthy Pandemonium, or a perpetual carnival that has survived Reformationist clean-up attempts. His city is not only a haven from inclement weather, 'Unfleggit by the year's alarm' (141); it also harbours the 'joyous tavern' and 'mony a club' (144) where merriment goes on after hours. The characteristic intermingling of classes and the freedom of speech in such enclaves made them an important informal forum of the Scottish Enlightenment: unorthodox thought and behaviour found shelter here just as debtors could 'breathe the bliss of open sky' (149) in the sanctuary of Holyrood Abbey, safe from the agents of the law. Those, however, are not the only representatives of the authoritarian city in Fergusson's view: equally watchful are the 'stairhead critics' who spy on 'Their neighbour's sma'est faults' (142) and thus represent the danger of a collective tyranny of the self-righteous, kept in check by

tolerant urbanity.

A more devious threat to the special kind of social life that Edinburgh bred came from the construction of the New Town, a project greeted with enthusiasm in Fergusson's poem, although he does express fear that the grand scheme begun under the guidance of 'Drummond's sacred hand' (150) might not fare so well under corrupt successors.[2] The nostalgia with which the poet regards the former Lord Provost parallels that with which he contemplates the palace of Holyrood, abandoned by royalty since the Union of Crowns in 1603. The former living symbol of Scotland's 'dignity' has become an empty and defunct reminder of its 'ancient state'; the poet is left

> Lamenting what auld Scotland knew
> Bien days forever frae her view. (148)

There is a twofold irony here: for the removal of the court surely contributed to the transformation of Dunbar's divided into Fergusson's fused Edinburgh, while the building of the New Town enabled a new social segregation that was fairly well complete when Robert Burns entered the city in 1786.[3] Fergusson was long dead by then, and the social elite had descended from the upper floors of the Old Town lands, to occupy more spacious and more sanitary dwellings beyond the former boundaries. To Burns, this development seems to have made the city only more impressive; and the 'Address to Edinburgh' praises the 'elegance and splendor' of the buildings, alongside Edina's status as a seat of commerce, justice and learning. What seems even more important, though, is the liberty of thought and speech that the city promised him. Coming 'from an Ayrshire community which was still very much in the iron grip of Knox's dogma and discipline' (Fowler 136), Burns held great expectations of Edinburgh's people: 'Their views enlarg'd, their lib'ral mind, / Above the narrow, rural vale' (Kinsley 249).

The earnestness of this expectation is somewhat easier to assess than the degree to which it was met. Fowler cites evidence suggesting that on the whole, the egalitarian Burns found urban men not too different from their rural cousins, while he admitted to the existence of a superior type among the city's women (see 136-137). In contrast to his success rate elsewhere, Burns's relations with such females seem to have borne out the note of unfulfilled desire that characterises the poet's gaze in the 'Address', where 'th'adoring eye' and the 'fancy' of the poet are engaged by 'Heav'n's beauties' (Kinsley 249). A discrepancy between stimulation and gratification, however, can turn a paradise of the senses into a tantalising hell, and if such a sentiment is present only as an undertone in Burns's poem, the latter does nonetheless invite association with more explicit passages such as the following, from Edwin Muir's non-fictional observations published 1935 under the title *Scottish Journey*. In the Edinburgh section of the book, we read:

> The apparently unmotivated intentness of Scottish street crowds is filled with unsatisfied desire. It is as if the eye were trying to undertake the functions of all the other senses, and the accumulated frustration and hope of a people were thrown into a painfully concentrated look. (18)

This seems eminently applicable to the combination between the voracious and the nostalgic gaze in Burns's 'Address', where the first and the last stanza refer to Edinburgh's past role as seat not only of the monarchy, but also of the Scottish parliament. The Castle and the Palace serve as a reminder of lost glory, viewed 'With awe-struck thought, and pitying tears'. To the wildly beating heart of the patriotic onlooker, fulfillment comes only through sentimental empathy with those who bore 'Old *Scotia*'s bloody lion'. The praise of Edinburgh's present and the expression of individual hope and promise or temptation is thus sandwiched into a lament for the city's and the country's past. For this past, the ancient monuments stand as relics that cast the 'honor'd shade' in which the rural poet takes 'shelter', as one to whom Edinburgh is still a haven, if clearly not a heaven (Kinsley 250).

If the feelings expressed by Burns on his entrance into Edinburgh both overlap and contrast with Fergusson's attitude towards his accustomed habitat, then the differences can be in part explained in terms of a disparity between the insider's and the outsider's perspective. Elsewhere, these two are sometimes found in a complex conjunction, as for instance in the final section of Robert Louis Stevenson's novel *Kidnapped*. Stevenson could hold much against his native Edinburgh; not least the climate, against which the more expansive city of his day was so much less effectively shielded than Fergusson's Old Town that it earned the following verdict expressed at the very beginning of Stevenson's 'Picturesque Notes': 'For all who love shelter and the blessings of the sun, who hate dark weather and perpetual tilting against squalls, there could scarcely be found a more unhomely and harassing place of residence' (4).

At the same time, Stevenson defiantly maintained that Edinburgh had 'but partly abdicated' (5) as a capital, and that there was 'no city of the same distinction' (4) to be found anywhere else in the world. In *Kidnapped*, however, his protagonist David Balfour finds himself repelled by the very sights which should have given pleasure to a youth of humble country upbringing first setting foot in the nation's principal city. Nonetheless, David's thoughts at that moment are with Alan Breck, the companion of his recent adventures in the Highlands, and he views the parting from Alan which was a condition of safe access to the city, as a betraying of loyalties. It is this sense of guilt that colours David's first impression, reported in the last chapter of *Kidnapped*:

> The huge height of the buildings, running up to ten and fifteen stories, the narrow arched entries that continually vomited passengers, the wares of the merchants in their windows, the hubbub and endless stir, the foul smells and fine clothes, and a hundred other

particulars too small to mention, struck me into a kind of stupor of surprise. (313)

This is surely at least in part a projection of authorial sentiments onto a fictional character, and moreover a good 130 years into the past. The description of the mid-eighteenth century city here contains the word ‘narrow’, an epithet which Burns had used to evoke a mindset prevailing in rural Ayrshire: and this mindset was indeed one which Stevenson likewise discerned in his Victorian city. In Stevenson’s literary imagination, the same contrasts which Fergusson sought to reconcile through poetic mediation were more likely to engender narratives of escape, pursuit, capture and return. Behind this pattern we can discern the dual nature of Victorian Edinburgh, a city that was on the whole far more sanitary and well-regulated than its previous incarnations, but that could at the same time feel far more constrained or restrictive.

The Edinburgh that David Balfour sees is chaotic and confusing. The historical city that he entered had harboured mettlesome individual minds like that of David Hume, seen refractory mobs as in the so-called Porteous Riots of 1736, or witnessed other ‘spectacular events’ (Daiches 111) such as the takeover by the Jacobite army in 1745. Even the staid Athens of the North of the early-nineteenth century, though lending itself as a suitable backdrop for the stage-managed pageantry of George IV’s royal visit, had still produced ‘ebullitions’ (Young 76) over religious and legal matters. In contrast, Stevenson’s Edinburgh seems to have no longer been too fertile a breeding ground either for radical thought or for radical action.

History and literature indicate that the evident marginalisation of eccentricity continued well into the twentieth century, with a consequent decline in the state of the arts. In 1878 Robert Louis Stevenson had still taken Edinburgh as ‘Half a capital and half a country town’ (*Notes*, 6), and when in 1930 Andrew Dewar Gibb bluntly declared, ‘modern Scotland has no capital’ (237), this judgment was funded less on the lack of political clout than on a drought of cultural achievement or activity, prior to Edinburgh’s metamorphosis into Festival City from 1947 onwards. There was and still is some doubt as to whether the annual inundation of the city with world-famous artists, amateur performers and their respective audiences for the duration of three weeks has any profound effect on cultural life outwith that period. The poet Robert Garioch shared such reservations, though in ‘Embro to the Ploy’, he mentions a positive side-effect in the at least temporary recreation of an eighteenth-century style social farrago in venues with a special late license:

Jist pitten-out, the drucken mobs
frae howffs in Potterraw,
fleean, to hob-nob wi the Nobs,
ran to this Music Haa. (18)

Elsewhere, Garioch's Edinburgh pubs can appear as enclosures to escape from rather than to escape to. In 'Doktor Faust in Rose Street', the eponymous visitor terminates a brief sojourn from the place of his eternal damnation with the request to be taken back there, away from the student crowd with their unintelligible beery 'claivers' (78). The comic exaggeration qualifies the opinion to a certain extent: Faust's conclusion 'as Hell to Rose Street, sae is smell to stink' (79) tests the limits of hyperbole; and with their particular clientele, the venues located in this particular part of the New Town neither could nor can be taken as representative of Edinburgh in general. This compartmentalisation, however, is one of Garioch's very complaints, as voiced for instance in the poem 'To Robert Fergusson'.

Here, the poet laments a twofold division of the city along spatial, social, and linguistic lines. The use of urban Scots in Garioch's poetry is an attempt to bridge the division, by once again elevating the 'coorse and grittie' tongue of the Cowgate, abandoned by the educated classes to its degeneration into a 'corrupt twang' (22) which nonetheless remained the closest living relative of the eighteenth-century rhymer's literary Scots. To the modern poet, the sight of Fergusson's grave brings a meditative or dreamlike recreation of a former wholeness, an integrated and fulsome life symbolised in the personification of Fergusson's Edinburgh as a young woman 'weill worth seein' (19), holding out the promise of good things for those who lived with her. The meditation proves that ancient relics still mean something to those who recall former times, while the contemplation of shallow modern façades brings home the absence of meaning, substance, or reality:

> Thir days, whan cities seem unreal
> to makars, inwit gars us feel
> fause as the hauf-inch marble peel
> in Princes Street. (23)

Neither, however, does a look at the Old Town satisfy, for it is only a 'waesom wrek' of its former self. But if Garioch's palpable fondness for his city is thus often nostalgic, this nostalgia is not directed at an ideal past, but rather at one whose contradictions and imperfections could still be encompassed and envisaged by a single poetic sensibility. In this respect, there is a strong similarity between Garioch's regard for Fergusson and T.S. Eliot's regard for Donne; and in the poem 'The Muir', Garioch elaborates further on modern Scotland's predicament and its chances of embracing closeness and distance, reality and idea, reason and emotion, in a unified or indeed a 'twafald' (65) imagination. The scope of this imagination, however, he sees as fettered by infernal circumstances, including a dual urban hell with the smoking furnaces of Glasgow on the one side, and the bourgeois frigidity of Edinburgh on the other:

> In Glesca and in Hell muckle is kent
> of reik and flames, by deevils and by men
> levan or hauf-gaits levan, and they ken
> in Edinbrugh the wey to freeze the ghaist
> in ice as thick as thon in Dante's den. (52)

Over the past hundred years or so, Scottish urban literature has reacted in various ways to or against its real or supposed confinement. As regards Edinburgh fiction, the range of this variety can perhaps be measured in terms of the distance between Muriel Spark's Jean Brodie and Ian Rankin's John Rebus, or Irvine Welsh's Mark Renton. From the picture of a social framework with a stable centre that allowed a fairly precise pinpointing of characters and behaviour as orthodox or unorthodox, central or marginal, we have arrived at a picture in which the margins threaten to overshadow the core. This core is, as Christopher Harvie puts it, 'that middle ground of "insecure Scotland" which is tenuously protected by "overwhelmed"' (65) guardians such as DI Rebus.

The Edinburgh of Rankin's crime fiction is subject to all kinds of corrupting influences that undermine decency as well as respectability or gentility. The retreat of beleaguered middle-class values complements the long-established Scottish pattern of a rebellion against gentility, an assault which in Victorian Scotland could produce alliances between the most and the least cultured members of society. As Bernice Martin states in a 1981 study, the features of social change in Britain since the 1960s have included a growing convergence of behaviour between the expressive bohemians and the anarchic lumpenproletariat, both alike 'in their patterns of unstructured mess', and both 'anathema to the spirit of respectability' (55).

Seen from the conservative perspective of the petty bourgeois, there may thus indeed be reason enough to link whatever bohemian reconquista of Edinburgh has taken place, with the city's recent notoriety for crime. Still, there was enough criminal activity in Victorian Edinburgh, as shown in the real-life accounts of James McLevy, or the fictional case histories of James McGovan.[4] The double life of Deacon James Brodie as Town Counsellor and burglar belonged to the late-eighteenth century; and the career of Robert Knox with his connections to the notorious grave-robbers and corpse-purveyors Burke and Hare to the early nineteenth. Nonetheless, it is not only contemporary fiction's zest for debunking that has undermined the twentieth-century stereotype image of Edinburgh as a haven of peace or boredom, ruled by Morningside tea-drinkers and Jenners shoppers. Rankin's Rebus knows his statistics as well, in all likelihood, as do many of Rankin's readers, who can hardly doubt the veracity of claims such as these:

> There were large chunks of Edinburgh where you could live your whole life and never

> encounter a spot of bother. Yet the murder rate in Scotland was double that of its southern neighbour, and half those murders took place in the two main cities. (113-114)

A similar use of authentic material occurs in Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*, where rates of HIV infection are interwoven with TV game show noises in a manner that casts doubt not on the validity, but rather on the impact of such statistics (see 193).

While a desperately hedonistic life in Welsh's Edinburgh goes on under the shadow of AIDS, it is a disease called Senga that reigns in Matthew Fitt's recent Scottish Sci-Fi novel *But n Ben A-Go-Go*. Apart from using a futuristic projection of urban Scots as the vehicle of narration, this tale also projects Scotland's cities into a larger dystopian unit known as Port. The reader is challenged to gauge the similarities and differences between this place and the ones he or she knows; a task comparable to that posed by Lewis Grassic Gibbon's 1930s novel *Grey Granite* with its synthetic array of a 'socially fragmented' (McCulloch 36) Duncairn, or indeed by the enigmatic setting of James Thomson's long narrative poem *The City of Dreadful Night* (1874), which a recent compendium of Scottish literature describes as follows:

> A mixture of negative mind-state, nightmare, or dark hallucination – the idea and image of city used as a symbol with multiple significance, its usefulness stemming from its concrete location and its atmospheric possibilities of mausoleum gloom and stagnation. (Gifford 383)

A similarly atmospheric setting is produced by the projection of one city alone in Alasdair Gray's 1981 novel *Lanark*, a monumental work of fiction in which Glasgow coexists with its fictional mirror image Unthank. In its dual structure, *Lanark* continued as well departed from a tradition of realistic representation that combined or oscillated between the indictment of hellish conditions, and the expression of defiant pride in those who managed to live in them. Among the preceding images of Glasgow were that of a neater and tidier counterpart to eighteenth-century Edinburgh;[5] and that of a bastion of mercantile honesty and civic harmony, as represented in the Bailie Nicol Jarvie in Walter Scott's *Rob Roy*. The industrial revolution then left little more of the 'Dear Green Place' than its Gaelic name; as early as 1857, the poet Alexander Smith would half lament and half extol the fate of a 'true son' (Whyte 7) of Glasgow, whose life and grave are mapped out within its confines of the city he addresses in the spirit of sacrificial submission: 'A sacredness of love and death / Dwells in thy noise and smoky breath' (10).

Since the mid-Victorian days of Alexander Smith, the image of industrial Glasgow – whose development has been meticulously traced by Moira Burgess – and the image of the working class have formed a nexus firmly ensconced at the very centre of the Scottish sense of identity. This might be resented for different reasons: by those, for instance, who share MacDiarmid's view

that nothing good could ever come out of such a deprived and depraved place as Glasgow. A completely different, but equally resentful stance comes over in the following comment from *Trainspotting*:

> Ah've never met one Weedjie whae disnae think that they are the only suffering proletarians in Scotland, Western Europe, the World. Weedjie experience ay hardship is the only relevant experience ay it. (191)

This version of Glasgow/Edinburgh rivalry as a deprivation contest leads right into the thick of Scotland's contemporary debate. If it is true, as Michael Gardiner holds, that Scotland 'lacks the luxury of comfortable rural "organic" images of the national culture' (49), then privileged representations of urban experience would by the same token be potentially privileged representations of Scottishness. If the artistic scope or worth of such representations were limited by the soil on which they grew, then Scottish culture as whole would be branded as deficient.

Hence the ambivalent attitudes towards success and failure, especially of the artistic kind, in the literary production of Scotland. This double-edgedness is often accentuated by making a person with artistic or literary ambition the focal character, as for instance in Archie Hind's 1966 novel *The Dear Green Place*, which shows the protagonist Mat Craig's effort to become a novelist in spite of his view of the odds. To him, 'the grey tenement sprouted world of Glasgow' is devoid of all that makes a novel's material:

> the aberrant attempts of human beings and societies to respond to circumstances, all that was bizarre, grotesque and extravagant in human life, all that whole background of violence, activity, intellectual and imaginative ardour, political daring. (87)

The chief irony here lies in Mat's inability or refusal to see what others do perceive. The grotesque, the bizarre, and the violent had after all been obvious enough to become novelistic stereotypes. In 1935, Alexander McArthur's and Kingsley Long's *No Mean City* put the razor-wielding hardman on the literary map; in the 1960s, the genre tradition was still popular and productive, with Corgi paperback editions of the aforementioned tale as well as of Bill McGhee's *Cut and Run*.[6] Books like these are what Alasdair Gray alludes to in the famous scene from *Lanark*: 'Imaginatively Glasgow exists as a music-hall song and a few bad novels. That's all we've given to the world outside. It's all we've given to ourselves' (243).

Once again, the key is the difference between character and author. Duncan Thaw speaks from the perspective of a young art student in the 1950s; Alasdair Gray writes from that of a mature artist well aware of what Cairns Craig calls 'a profound amnesia about the real nature of Scottish culture and the actual history of the arts in Scotland' (34). Yet *Lanark* itself is clearly the fruit of

Gray's attempt to break new ground, to transcend fictional traditions or conventions, and to create a work of art on a previously unmatched scale; and the resulting creation of the surreal Unthank does come pretty near to what Lewis Grassic Gibbon might have considered a fitting embodiment of 'the essential Glasgow' (82), when he doubted the possibility of any anthropomorphic image.[7]

Craig identifies *Lanark*'s setting as belonging to a type of urban hell in Scottish fiction which is made hellish by the absence of history. The wraith-like life of a nation still extant, but no longer an independent player on the historical stage, is what Craig sees mirrored in the literary recreation of the Scottish city as 'a world of endless repetition, of endless endurance' (131) in which there is at best a drink- or drug-induced simulation of individual fulfillment. Seen through the lens of Short's typology, Alasdair Gray's Janus-faced portrait of Glasgow/Unthank shows a combination of aspects belonging to two complementary sub-categories. Short distinguishes between a thin authoritarian city where the main compulsive force is the drive for self-gratification, and a thick authoritarian city of total surveillance and control; the respective archetypes he names are Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984*.

The motif of an erasure of history connects more obviously with the latter, but does indeed have a place in both, especially when the market city transmutes into the upmarket city. In a 1991 study, Ian Spring has branded the creation of a New Glasgow image, beginning with the 1986 'Glasgow's Miles Better' campaign and continuing with the candidacy for European City of Culture status, as yet another blanking out of recollection. The peculiar deviousness he detects lies in the seemingly deliberate substitution of exposable, collectable or consumable artifacts for living memory; an operation exploiting as well as perverting the nostalgia built into Glasgow's mental framework ever since the obliteration of the Dear Green Place by a succession of dwellings as ephemeral as those of James Merrill's New York.[8] The entire city, viewed over time, is thus a sight as 'intrinsically unstable, continuously catastrophic' (Lombardo 148) as that of Massimo Cacciari's Venice.

Far-fetched parallels apart, the permanent refashioning of Glasgow has doubtlessly made the gap one of the more permanent features in its cityscape, and the nostalgic contemplation of the gap one of the more durable motifs in its literature. Proof of the fact that once again, nostalgia does not necessarily equate sentimental idealisation, may be seen in writings such as the 1979 poem 'Maryhill' by Tom McGrath:

> Streets crisscross, divert, make bends
> round the spaces where the buildings were.
> Now that they've gone, we want them back,
> but it wasn't exactly paradise, if you remember. (145)

Nonetheless, a staple part of Glasgow narrative, fictional or not, is the Glaswegian's epiphanic or vacant gaze at a vacant plot where a familiar building stood. For real-life examples, see TV footage of Billy Connolly's return to the spot where he was born, in the BBC series *World Tour of Scotland*;[9] or read Ian Spring's account of his visit to the spot where his childhood home had been 'erased from the landscape' (161). As an example from recent fiction, consider a passage from Anne Donovan's 2003 novel *Buddha Da*; its protagonist, archteypally named Jimmy, is surprised by his own feeling about the vanishing of a school for which he never cared much when he was a pupil there: 'So how come when ah turned that corner and seen that big gap where it used tae be, ah felt as if somebody's punched me' (314-15).

Donovan's book is just one among a number of significant recent contributions by female authors to Scottish urban writing. In addition to the most prominent names such as Liz Lochhead in poetry and A.L. Kennedy or Janice Galloway in fiction, I would like to single out Leila Aboulela, a writer of Sudanese origin who has added to the range of Aberdeen's literary reflections, most notably with the 1999 novel *The Translator*. Talking about new developments, I should also cite Joseph Mills' 1989 *Towards the End*, as being 'the first openly gay novel set in Glasgow with Glasgow characters' (Morgan 92).

Donovan's novel has no such obvious claim to novelty, but it does provide an original and subtly crafted counterpoint to the vision of writers such as James Kelman. Donovan's Glasgow is hell in its thinnest or lightest version; her main character suffers no destitution or squalor, though he is indeed trapped in a repetitive working-class lifestyle in which even excess is regulated to the point of nausea. As the realisation of a spiritual vacuum at the centre of his existence dawns on him, he finds himself drawn by the austere attraction of a Buddhist Centre that pulls him away from his family and friends. In the novel, there is no narrative closure or synthesis of the incongruous elements; no final victory or mediation between the contrary forces or lifestyles. Instead, the reader is left to ponder the relative merits of different reactions against the loss of cosmic meaning. Short describes the real-life urban backlash against secularisation as follows: 'In the city there are many and varied attempts to fill the God-shaped hole at the center of our materialistic culture' (23).

Books such as Donovan's may help to remind readers of the necessity of such attempts, as well as of the dangers and difficulties attendant on each individual one. The secularisation of the city has after all been a process of liberation, too: and wherever the city manifests a generally accepted cosmology or indeed ideology, the status of the citizen is bound to be contingent on acceptance.[10] Neither is collectivism the one unified answer to it all, for, as Short says in summary of a caveat voiced by Janet Abu-Lughod, 'civil society contains the Michigan Militia and Ku Klux Klan as well as chess clubs and benign neighborhood groups' (24).

Similarly, the social contexts we belong to, our family, friends, colleagues, may double as our life support system and our torturers: and the city we live in may double as our playground and our penitentiary. Literature may promote the awareness of such duplicities and serve as navigational guide for the urban reader who traverses hell on each crossing from one haven to another, or who locates new meaning inside the empty hull of derelict signifiers. We would do well, however, to consider that writing the city may not be tantamount to mastering it. Paolo Virno suggests that when 'opportunism and idle talk become tools of great importance' in the world of labour, then communicative action 'no longer lies outside the sphere of the material reproduction of life' (107).

Food for thought for one confronted with the loquaciousness of today's Scottish urban writing and of its literary criticism. Among the voices which readers make out in recent texts, many bespeak a far greater claim to authenticity than for instance those which one finds in the so-called Proletarian Novel of the 1930s. Whereas George Blake or James Barke would tend to use a third-person narrator and keep the rendering of working-class dialogue within the bounds of middle-class sensibilities, the readers of Kelman or Welsh get a largely unmediated hearing of their characters. But if those characters' lives are infernally repetitive, then their utterances are likely to be so, too. The question then is whether the redundancy of the text leads to anything else than a corresponding cycle of repetitions in author/reader communication. Virno's *Grammar of the Multitude* cautions against the rash accusation that repetition proves 'the *childishness* of contemporary metropolitan forms of behaviour'. But whereas he sees a fundamental need for repetition as 'the principal safe haven in the absence of solidly established customs,' he also sees a need for repetition to transcend itself, through a process lacking in contemporary cities:

> In traditional societies (or, if you like, in the experience of the 'people'), the repetition which is so dear to babies gave way to more complex and articulated forms of protection: to *ethos*; that is to say, to the usages and customs, to the habits which constitute the base of the substantial communities. (39)

The production of commonality is a matter of civic survival. Virno warns that a 'publicness of the intellect' which does not 'become a *republic*, a public sphere, a political community' (41) will cause a mushrooming of hierarchies, of dependency and submission. In view of this danger, it seems vital for Scotland to remember that Scottish cities have, as Angus Calder states, 'functioned on republican terms' (*Culture* 8) in the past, and have never entirely lost their demotic energy and democratic potential.[11]

NOTES

[1] See poem 55 (174-176) in Bawcutt's edition. In contrast to this, Dunbar addresses Aberdeen as 'The lamp of bewtie, bountie and blythnes,' or as 'The vall of velth, guid cheir and mirrines' (Bawcutt 64).

[2] George Drummond took an active role also in promoting the spread of education among Edinburgh's children; see T.C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People 1560-1830*. London: Collins, 1969.

[3] For an in-depth study of the relationship between Scottish literature and this social background, see David Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People, 1680-1830*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1961.

[4] James McLevy, an Edinburgh detective, recorded his experiences in a series of books in the 1860s. In 1878, the author and musician William Crawford Honeyman published a set of fictional case histories under the pseudonym James McGovan.

[5] Fergusson's 'Auld Reekie', expresses the following hope:

> Nae mair shall Glasgow striplings threap
> Their city's beauty and its shape,
> While our new city spreads around
> Her bonny wings on fairy ground. (150)

[6] See Spring (74) and Morgan (89) for details on content and presentation of these publications.

[7] Gibbon himself concludes: 'The monster of Loch Ness is probably the lost soul of Glasgow, in scales and horns, disporting itself in the Highlands after evacuating finally and completely its mother-corpse' (82).

[8] A comparison of works like the 1962 poem 'An Urban Convalescence' to contemporary texts from Glasgow is just one of many possibilities for making or highlighting connections between the urban west of Scotland and the other side of the Atlantic.

[9] Produced in 1994 by Sleepy Dumpling (Music) Ltd; VHS recordings distributed by Polygram.

[10] The ambivalence of my phrasing is intended: for the individual's acceptance of a cosmology or ideology can be as crucial as the cosmology's or ideology's acceptance of an individual.

[11] This article is based on a paper delivered at 'Text and the City: Language and Literature in Urban Contexts' (Cairns, Australia, July 2005).

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Making it New: Imagism and George Mackay Brown's Runic Poetry

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I am really quite modern, you know,
despite my affecting the ancients
Ezra Pound, 'Redondillas'

I can so carve and colour the runes
'Sayings of the High One', *The Poetic Edda*

Ezra Pound believed that in order to 'make it new', one had 'to resuscitate / The dead art of poetry'.[1] With an even bolder sense of paradox, the battle cries of Hugh MacDiarmid – 'back to Dunbar' and 'Not Traditions—Precedents' – locate the possibility of renewal in the remote past. Very much a product of the Scottish Renaissance, George Mackay Brown also looked to the dead for inspiration, drawing on ancient texts such as *Njáls saga*, *Grettis saga*, *Orkneyinga saga*, translations of skaldic poetry (structurally complex court poetry from the Viking Age), and Scotland's rich ballad and song culture in order to re-inspire what he saw as an Orkney community beginning to suffer from an inhibiting case of cultural and historical amnesia. Although Brown did not try his hand at the most demanding skaldic meter known as *dróttkvætt*, due to his belief in its being 'impossibly difficult' to reproduce in English, he tried to 'wrench skaldic verse into a shape acceptable to modern readers', which, as we will see, meant reproducing A.B. Taylor's translations of skaldic poetry from his 1937 edition of *Orkneyinga Saga* into a distinctly modern, minimalist style.[2] As Julian D'Arcy argues in *Scottish Skalds and Sagamen* (1996), Brown created this minimalist style in his work by blending 'the laconic and aphoristic diction of his Norse inheritance with traditional folklore structures.'[3]

This paper explores Brown's experiments with ancient runic poetry and kennings (skaldic metaphors). Although runic inscriptions – messages or spells from the early Germanic alphabet that were chiselled into rock or bone by the Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons – can be found in such places as Maeshowe and the Unstan cairn on Orkney, it is more probable given the

structure of his own rune poems that Brown found inspiration in the ancient Anglo-Saxon, Icelandic, and Norwegian *Rune Poems* gathered together and reprinted by Bruce Dickins in *Runic and Heroic Poems of the Old Teutonic Peoples* (1915). The outcome, whether conscious or not, was a collection of brief, static poems realising similar effects as those of the early Imagist movement. By using the well-defined structure of parataxis found in the Icelandic and Anglo-Saxon *Rune Poems*, a number of Brown's rune poems adhere to Pound's definition of the interpretive metaphor, which is the fundamental structural component of the archetypal Imagist poem 'In a Station of the Metro'.

This paper examines Brown's kennings and links them to Pound's use of the ideogram, also central to Pound's Imagist philosophy. Brown's inclusion of runic and haiku-like poems in *The Year of the Whale* (1965) and his poetry collections of the 1970s can be seen as a contribution to similar experiments in terse poetics of this period, such as Ian Hamilton Finlay's *Glasgow Beasts, an a Burd* (1961). Brown also studied the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins as a postgraduate at Edinburgh University and may have been inspired by Hopkins' experiments with Germanic poetic forms and conventions, such as the diction and alliterative phonic values of Anglo-Saxon poetry and Old Norse rhyme schemes. As well as poems identified by Brown as being imitations of runic poetry in *Poems New and Selected* (1971) and *Fishermen with Ploughs* (1971), I will look at a number of miscellaneous poems that, although not so identified as imitations, do correspond to the formal structure of the original *Rune Poems* and Brown's own runic poetry. Like Pound's early Imagist verse, Brown's runic poetry displays a concern with filtering language down to a fundamental economy of expression. Adhering to the Imagist principle of 'direct treatment', Brown created poems that present 'an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time' via 'direct treatment of the "thing," whether subjective or objective'.[4]

As Réné Taupin observed in his 1929 doctoral thesis, the originality of Imagism came in 'seizing at a single blow, in the fullest vitality, the image, the fusion of reality in words.'[5] As Taupin's English translators explain,

> Imagist poetry aimed at complete objectivity, leaving out all rational and moral comment, for behind was the belief that only the image communicates meaning. The sparer, starker, more strict the image, the better the poem.[6]

This emphasis on detachment, sparseness, and a heightened visual intensity is the essential feature of Brown's runic poetry as well as his 'translations' of skaldic verse. His ability to describe an image with curt objectivity is most beautifully displayed within a few of the poetic segments of 'Haiku: For the Holy Places'. Here is 'Fishing Bird':

Fishing Bird

It waits, rock-fast, wind-flung
Wing – wind – enthirling

One flash from the sea's hoard.[7]

Although this poem is obviously a haiku, it is worth noting that its structure – the identification of an objective image followed by a laconic poetic description – closely resembles the structure of the original *Rune Poems* and Brown's own runic poetry. This poem, along with many of Brown's rune poems such as 'Fish and Corn' from 'Runes from Holy Island' and 'Barn Dance' from 'Runes from the Island of Horses', is an example of Brown's ability to render an image in stark language and stands comparison with H.D.'s exemplary Imagist poem 'Oread':

Whirl up, sea –
whirl your pointed pines,
splash your great pines
on our rocks,
hurl your green over us,

cover us with your pools of fir.[8]

Both poems are Imagist in the general sense that they are short, direct, and vivid. But both of them are also, as Pound would say, 'endowed with energy'.[9] H.D.'s poem generates its energy by its use of forceful verbs: 'whirl', 'splash', 'hurl', and 'cover'. An imperative mood is created by having each of these verbs establish a forceful trochaic opening at the beginning of the majority of its lines, culminating each time in crescendo that, in true Imagistic form, suggests simultaneously the whip and sway of the tops of forests in the wind and a surging, crashing sea. A similar use of sound and stress is used in Brown's poem to evoke the rise and sudden plunge of a fishing bird. The stress placed on the repetition of the consonant 'w' in 'wind' and 'wing' in the first and second lines, separated by dashes that cause us to sound each word with extra force, evokes the wind being pushed under the bird's outstretched wings as it gradually ascends and hangs in the sky before the verb 'enthirling', with its amphibrach stress, evokes the sudden dip of the bird as it twirls and plunges towards the sea.

As well as the first Imagist principle of 'direct treatment', the above-mentioned poem, as well as the majority of Brown's rune poems, adhere to the second Imagist principle: 'To use absolutely no word that did not contribute towards the presentation' ('A Retrospect', 4). This concern with honing language down to a colder, minimalist style is apparent throughout Brown's work. As well as the curt fragments of runic verse, Brown took inspiration for his prose and poetic writing from

the larger rhetorical style of the sagas and the short, stabbing lines of skaldic poetry. ‘It is good, for certain types of writing,’ Brown states in his 1997 autobiography, ‘to use as few words as possible. The structure and form of the saga stories is magnificent. I think I have learned from them the importance of pure shape.’[10] His own versions of Taylor’s translations of the skaldic poems in *Orkneyinga Saga* exemplify this minimalist style. Here, for example, is Taylor:

> We watch o'er the sea-steed
> When o'er the stout gunwhale
> The billow breaks wildly.
> The duty is done.
> While the lazy land-lubber
> Sleeps by some maiden
> Soft-skinned and kind,
> Over my shoulder
> I gaze towards Crete.

And Brown:

> Night. Sheets of salt.
> Armond on watch.
> A heave and wash of lights
> From the island.
> The lads of Crete
> Toss in hot tumbled linen.
> This poet on watch
> Cold, burning, unkissed. (*An Orkney Tapestry*, 2-3)

Brown’s minimalist style and use of imagery transforms Taylor’s rather archaic translation into something far more fresh and striking. If he was looking for a medium that would concentrate his language down to its most essential features, runic poetry gave him that structure. Indeed, he explains the essential function of runic poetry in one of his rune poems from ‘The Stations of the Cross’:

> *Rune*
> Obliterator
> of a thousand questing mouths
> and sevenfold silence still. (*Collected Poems*, 189)

‘A poem exists in its purity’, says Brown. ‘Silence is best: poetry is forever striving for the unattainable perfection of silence.’[11] If Brown was looking for the perfect poetic form to present this idea, the axe poems of the Vikings, carved as they were into rock, gave the impression of

something enduring, true, and eternal. In short, they are those ‘words cut oot i’ the stane’ that MacDiarmid’s speaker in ‘The Eemis Stane’ cannot comprehend due to the interfering and erosive forces of ‘the fug o’ fame / An’ history’s hazelraw’.[12]

The dichotomy between conceptual abstraction and subjective intuition – between Positivism and the Bergsonian 'hidden realm of mental life’ that flows in a flux of sensations underneath the accepted grid of surface understanding (4) – had a productive effect on the poetry and prose of the early Modernists. In his superb poem ‘Erat Hora’, for example, Pound beautifully captures and expresses an idiosyncratic moment of intensity from as ordinary an image as a woman turning her head:

> And then she turned.
> And, as the ray of sun on hanging flowers
> Fades when the wind hath lifted them aside,
> Went swiftly from me. (*Selected Poems*, 14)

Brown also possessed an ability to capture 'moments' of still life and evoke their intensity through the juxtaposition of images. His description of the moon, for example, in ‘Childsong’ as ‘a clown / Tumbling through clouds’ (*Collected Poems*, 23) has the same laconic detachment and suggestiveness as Hulme's description of the moon in ‘Above the Dock’ as ‘a child's balloon, / Forgotten after play.’[13] His images are always intriguing and often refreshingly original. In ‘Whales’, Brown describes the setting sun as a ‘gold whale’ sinking ‘in welters of blood’, and in ‘Haddock Fishermen’, ‘Sunset drives a butcher's blade / In the day's throat’ (*Collected Poems*, 97, 120). When we examine a selection of Brown’s runic poetry we will notice a similar creative interplay, or ‘comparison’, as Pound would say, between objective image or abstract concept and a more subjective or intuitive interpretation. It is therefore important to discuss certain threads within the philosophies of Bergson and Nietzsche and how they came to influence Hulme and Pound's preoccupation with 'surface' and 'depth'.

In his own opposition to what Nietzsche called the ‘anthropomorphic error’, that is, the error of identifying intellectual constructs as essential 'reality', Bergson proposed his theory of *durée réelle* – ‘real duration’. Underneath the codified appearance of the seemingly unchanging 'reality' of our surface consciousness, our inner, subjective self, which is suppressed by the rationalising processes of the intellect and established systems of language, resides in a ‘perpetual state of becoming’.[14] Instead of continually perceiving the world through solidified impressions, our deeper consciousness of immediate experience, which is in a continual state of flux, never experiences the same thing twice. As Sanford Schwartz explains:

> What we perceive is inseparable from how we perceive it. Things are permeated with

> values, the objects of present sensation with the coloring of all that we have experienced in the past. But we usually attend to the selfsame object rather than its ever-changing appearances, and therefore lose sight of an important dimension of experience.[15]

While champions of Positivism believed that the whole of 'reality' and human nature could be reduced to a system of determinate laws, Bergson argued that beneath the surface of perceived 'reality', or the ‘objective aspect’ that is part of ‘public property’, lie hidden idiosyncratic ‘depths’ of ever-changing immediate experience (162). These depths, Bergson argued, are essential to our understanding of a greater reality, of experience, and can release us from the deterministic mechanisms of perception and understanding and bring us back to some form of ‘vital’ humanity. As well as the intellect, Bergson believed that fixed modes of language suppress the validity of our subjective experiences by trying to order them into a very limited number of words:

> In short, the word with well-defined outlines, the rough and ready word, which stores up the stable, common, and consequently impersonal element in the impressions of mankind, overwhelms or at least covers over the delicate and fugitive impressions of our individual consciousness. (131-132)

Bergson therefore placed great importance on the writer, who is able to use words in such creative ways as to present the fluctuations of consciousness, if not directly, expressively. Such works became a reality, of course, in 'steam-of-consciousness' novels such as Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and poetry such as MacDiarmid’s *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926). Bergson's philosophy had a great impact on the early Imagists. Both Hulme and Pound drew from Bergson's concept of ‘real duration’ in an attempt to justify the use of images as a means of penetrating a more individual immediate experience. As Hulme states in *Speculations* (1924), ‘Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence of an intuitive language.’[16]

While Hulme drew heavily from Bergson's philosophy, he also made it his own through selective misreading. Instead of trying to penetrate the flow of consciousness, that is, ‘real duration’, he tried to negotiate past ‘stock types’ by presenting more precisely the ‘individuality of objects’. As Hulme states, ‘we never really perceive the real shape and individuality of objects [...]. We tend to see not *the* table but only *a* table’ (159). With clear similarities to Bergson's mistrust of ‘the rough and ready word[s]’ of language, Hulme wanted to bypass the ‘counter’ language of abstraction through the employment of a ‘visual’ language of poetry. For Hulme, poetry ‘is not a counter language, but a visual concrete one. It is a compromise for a language of intuition which would hand over sensations bodily’ (134). Hulme therefore also seems to have drawn from Nietzsche. Like Nietzsche, Hulme believed that the abstract ‘counters’ of today's language were once fresh metaphors that have grown hard, stale, and are now erroneously perceived as signifiers of essential reality. Nietzsche, although also of the mind that we must get back to some sort of

immediate experience, did not believe, like Bergson, that we can delve underneath surface reality to find a pure and pristine level of consciousness – whatever that may be. Instead, Nietzsche believed that man's protean vitality, or 'will-to-power', comes from his ability to stamp new forms of perception onto the 'chaos of sensations'.

Fresh metaphors, similes, or any other kind of comparison that can create new and sudden combinations, can establish new ways of understanding the world and bring us back to an awareness of immediate experience. We have already seen this in Brown's juxtaposition of sunsets with disturbing images of butchery, and, as we shall see, a selection of his runic poetry strongly evokes Pound's interpretive metaphor. His use of Norse kennings, like Pound's ideogrammic method, create new relations between previously unconnected particulars and therefore reveal new associations and heightened visual impressions of the object. As Brown states in 'To a Hamnavoe Poet of 2093',

> Language, unstable as sand, but poets
> Strike on the hard rock, carving
> Rune and hieroglyph, to celebrate
>
> Breath's sweet brevity.
>
> Swan-path, whale-acre. Do you honour
>
> The sea with images? (*Complete Poems*, 326)

What Brown perhaps saw in the *Rune Poems* and kennings of the Norsemen was what Nietzsche saw as mankind's 'fundamental human drive':

> The drive towards the formation of metaphors is the fundamental human drive [...]. This drive continuously confuses the conceptual categories and cells by bringing forwards new transferences, metaphors, and metonymies. It continually manifests an ardent desire to refashion the world which presents itself to waking man, so that it will be as colourful, irregular, lacking in results and coherence, charming, and eternally new as the world of dreams.[17]

Pound's 'ideogrammic method' and 'interpretive metaphor' are two such ways of 'bringing forwards new transferences'. As Schwartz makes clear, there is a subtle difference between these two concepts: 'While the ideogram exhibits both the unifying concept and its constituent particulars, the precise interpretive metaphor displays both the "interpretive" pattern and the natural object it interprets' (86). Both of these modes have striking resemblances to Brown's poetry: his use of Norse kennings dissolves abstract objects or concepts into atoms of concrete

particulars, and the structure of his rune poems, which resemble the structure of the Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic *Rune Poems*, uses a form of parataxis by juxtaposing an abstract object or concept with a more personal or imaginative description. Pound's idea of the ideogram came from reading Ernest Fenollosa's tract *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry* around 1914. Very much of the same mind as Bergson and Nietzsche, Fenollosa argued that abstract concepts are granted priority over the concrete particulars they connect. What Fenollosa found in the ideogram was a way of combating the 'anthropomorphic error': by presenting a picture of its compound elements, the ideogram demonstrates the formation of an abstract concept through the combination of its constituent letters. Pound gives a brief account of this process in his *ABC of Reading* (1934) by describing a method that shows how the abstract concept 'red' might be evoked through the juxtaposition of 'rose', 'cherry', 'iron rust', and 'flamingo'.[18] As Schwartz states,

> The ideogram […] anchors the term in immediate experience: it performs the function of abstraction without allowing us to hypostatize the concept into an autonomous entity. We are able to see simultaneously the unifying form and its constituent particulars. (88)

The kenning, a vital feature of Old Norse skaldic poetry, is a form of imagery whereby two unrelated words are juxtaposed to create a more poetic name for an abstract object or concept. In the second part of Snorri Sturluson's *The Prose Edda*, the poetic guidebook called *Skáldskaparmál*, the Norse god of poetry, Bragi, instructs Ægir, the Norse god of the sea, about the language of skaldic verse, which includes a list of examples concerning the use of kennings. '"How should the sea be referred to?"' asks Ægir.

> 'By calling it the blood of Ymir, the visitor to the gods, the husband of Ran, the father of the daughters of Ægir […], by calling it the land of Ran, and of the daughters of Ægir, and of ships or of the names of sea-going vessels, and of the keel, and of the prow, and of planks and seams, and of fish and of ice, and calling it the way and routes taken by sea kings, likewise the ring of the islands, house of sands and seaweed and rocky islets, or the land of fishing gear, sea birds and the following wind.'[19]

As D'Arcy states, kennings are 'endemic' in the poetry and prose of Brown (243). Examples include: 'whale road' (the sea), 'salt furrow' (a boat ploughing through the sea), 'hawkfall' (death), 'earth-gold' (harvest), 'blue hills' (whales), and 'mouthing silver' (fish). In 'The Sea: Four Elegies', Brown describes there being a 'vast ancient terror' locked within the abstract shell of the word 'sea'. Therefore, in order to get past this abstraction, he displays a number of kennings that, in Nietzsche's words, will keep the sea 'eternally new':

> THE SEA

> The word 'sea' is small and easily uttered.
> They utter it lightly who know least about it.
> A vast ancient terror is locked in the name
> Like energy in an atom.
> Sailors, explorers, fishermen know this.
> Women who stand on headlands, they know it.
> The maritime tribes knew it well.
> Their artists strove at harp and loom
> To cover the terror with beautiful names.
> She is the Great Sweet Mother.
> She is the Swan's Path.
> She is the Whale's Acre.
> She is the Garden of White Roses.
> She is the Keeper of Horses.
> (The Loom also, and the Harp with a thousand voices.)
> She is the Giver of Salt and Pearls.
> The Vikings, her closest children, hated the sea.
> She summoned them, twice a year, from plough and lovebed.
> They called her, with cold mouths, the Widow Maker. (*Collected Poems*, 168)

Brown was therefore just as aware of and concerned with the limits of language as the early Modernists, and he tried to counter these restrictions through the employment of Norse kennings and experiments with runic poetry.

Pound's interpretive metaphor juxtaposes an objective or 'natural' image with an imaginative image. As Schwartz explains, ‘The precise interpretive metaphor stands, therefore, between ornamental and exemplary metaphor. Neither mere fancy nor scientific fact, it projects as experiential reality rather than conceptual certainty a particular way of apprehending experience’ (94). Indeed, the interpretive metaphor was central to Pound's explanation of Imagism. According to Pound, the poet must be detached and objective while remaining able to participate in personal expression. Archie Bevan and Brian Murray quote a passage from fellow Orcadian writer Eric Linklater's *Orkney and Shetland* (1971) in their introduction to *The Collected Poems of George Mackay Brown* (2006) that captures exactly this characteristic in Brown's writing:

> The poet watches, in imagination, the passers-by at a wedding, a funeral, a country fair – solemn or riotous, but apprehended with a visionary understanding. (xiv)

In Imagistic terms, the poet coldly, 'objectively' broods over an ordinary object or concept, like a ‘flounced edge of skirt’, and then looks inside himself to find a more expressive way of moving past this abstraction: ‘The flounced edge of skirt, / recoiling like waves off a cliff’ (Hulme, ‘Images’, *Selected Writing*, 15). The poet therefore expresses subjectivity by presenting the objects and forms that appear before him in heightened states of visual perception. Pound's famous

description of how he came to write ‘In a Station of the Metro’ highlights this process. Explaining his frustration at not being able to capture in words the experience he felt at seeing a number of beautiful faces immediately after stepping off a metro train in Paris, he recalls the precise form of parataxis in the Japanese haiku. After a year's editing, he produces his two-line masterpiece which records ‘the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective’:

> The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
> Petals on a wet, black bough.[20]

Through the imaginative vision of the poet, the tangible object of perception – ‘faces in the crowd’ – is transformed into a more subjective expression of immediate experience that defamiliarises established notions and fixed impressions. Before showing how a number of Brown's rune poems correpsond to this effect, it is important to highlight how the Teutonic *Rune Poems*, like the Japanese haiku for Pound, gave Brown an accommodating structure in which to accomplish similar effects.

The *Rune Poems* were a recitation of letters of the Scandinavian *fuþark* and Anglo-Saxon *futhorc* runic alphabets while at the same time providing an explanatory stanza for each letter. As Bruce Dickins explains, their main purpose was as mnemonic devices to help people remember the order and names of each of the runic characters. They fall under the category of the Anglo-Saxon, Norwegian, and Icelandic *Rune Poems*. The Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic *Rune Poems* create their mnemonic poems by first of all quoting a word that has the first letter of the runic character they are describing and then dedicate a stanza afterward to a more poetic description of that word. Here, for example, is the Anglo-Saxon rune poem describing ‘ice’ which starts with the runic character ‘I’:

> *Is byþ oferceald, ungemetum slidor,*
> *glisnaþ glæhluttur gimmum gelicust,*
> *flor forste geworuht, fæger ansyne.*
>
> (ice) is very cold and immeasurably slippery; it glistens
> as clear as glass and most like to gems; it is a floor
> wrought by the frost, fair to look upon.[21]

This is identical to the structure of the Icelandic *Rune Poem* and Brown’s own runic poetry. Here, for example, is Brown’s rune poem describing ‘thirst’ in ‘Hill Runes’:

Thirst

Horse at trough, thrush in quernstone,
The five ploughmen
Much taken up with pewter. (*Collected Poems*, 127)

What makes the Icelandic *Rune Poem* distinctive is that 'In each of these stanzas are contained three *kenningar* – the elaborate periphrases which bulked so large in the technique of the Icelandic skaldic poems' (Dickins, 7). Here is the Icelandic stanza describing 'Ice', which consists of the runic character '*Í*':

Íss er árbörkr
Ok unnar þak
Ok feigra manna fár
Glacies jöfurr.
Ice = bark of rivers
And roof of the wave
And destruction of the doomed.

And here is the stanza describing 'sun', which contains the runic character 'S':

Sól er skýja skjöldr
Ok skínandi röðull
Ok ísa aldrtregi
Rota siklingr.
Sun = shield of the clouds
And shining ray
And destroyer of ice. (Dickins, 31)

Both stanzas have obvious similarities with Pound's interpretive metaphor: an object or abstract concept is identified followed by a few lines of a more descriptive quality which give it a more personal or intuitive association which, in Nietzsche's words, bring forth 'new transferences'.

Turning again to Brown, we can see the structural process of the original *Rune Poems* in his own runic poetry. Here is his rune describing 'fog' in 'The Weather Bestiary':

FOG
The sun-dipped isle was suddenly a sheep
Lost and stupid, a dense wet tremulous fleece. (*Collected Poems*, 51)

D'Arcy concurs that this is a 'perfect Imagistic [cameo]' (243). The simple and abstract word 'fog' is suddenly given a more imaginative connotation through its juxtaposition with a sodden, baffled

sheep (perhaps ‘sun-dipped’ also alludes to the process of sheep dipping) which successfully evokes the estranging effects the famous Scottish fog or ‘haar’ can have on one’s senses. The unsettling effects of this phenomenon have been commented upon by other Scottish writers such as Nan Shepherd, who, in *The Living Mountain* (1977), states that such effects ‘drive home the truth that our habitual vision of things is not necessarily right: it is only one of an infinite number, and to glimpse an unfamiliar one for even a moment, unmakes us, but steadies us again.’[22] This statement is quite apt in conjunction with a poem that explodes the abstract counter ‘fog’ into something far more intense, personal, and evocative. Furthermore, it is interesting that it is an ‘isle’ – presumably one of the Orkney isles – which is ‘lost and stupid’, generating a faint suspicion that Brown is commenting on Orkney’s fragile Scottish-Scandinavian identity. In *For the Islands I Sing*, Brown uses the forceful adjective ‘sundered’ to describe Orkney’s geographical relationship with the Scottish mainland and describes his fellow Orcadians as ‘half-Nordic islanders’ (1, 37).

Another of Brown's equally suggestive rune poems comes from ‘The Weather Bestiary’. In this rune the lifeless word ‘snow’ is given a predatory feel as advancing winter weather begins its patient stalking of a colourful if sickly Autumn:

> SNOW
> Autumn, a moulted parrot, eyes with terror
> This weird white cat. It drifts the rose bush under. (*Collected Poems*, 51)

Just as Eliot describes the lingering, curling movement of ‘yellow fog’ in ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’ in the terms of a sly, seductive, opportunistic cat that ‘rubs its back upon the window panes’ and slips by terraces[23], the ‘weird white cat’ of Brown’s poem successfully evokes the image of winter as it surreptitiously covers Autumn with frost and snow.

In ‘Runes from the Island of Horses’ Brown once again evokes an idea of ‘Winter’ with simple images in a rune poem that has a touch of William Carlos Williams:

> *Winter*
> Three winter brightnesses –
> Bridesheet, boy in snow,
> Kirkyard spade. (*Collected Poems*, 79)

As well as exploding ‘winter’ into something far more personal and intuitive through the use of three strikingly evocative and independent images, Brown subtly weaves the theme of the cycle of life and death through its lines as we move from consummation (the wedding), to birth (the young boy), and finally to death (the kirkyard spade). But the instant success of this poem

remains in its juxtaposition of the lifeless word ‘winter’ with personal images that, in Pound’s words, ‘gives that sudden sense of liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth [...]’ (‘A Retrospect’, 4).

The final rune poem I will examine is ‘Circle’ from ‘Runes from a Holy Island’. Although not as eerie or linguistically suggestive as the early Imagist lyrics of MacDiarmid, we can see similarities in both poets’ attempts to capture or juxtapose the universal with the local. Just as MacDiarmid captures the universal concept of death in the ‘chitterin’ licht’ of a flickering, indistinct rainbow in ‘The Watergaw’ (17), Brown is able to concretise the grand and universal concept of the life cycle in an earthly and vivid depiction of a fishing community:

> *Circle*
> Cod, give needles and oil.
> Winter hands
> Must sew shrouds by lamplight. (*Collected Poems*, 79)

Although the fishermen have caught the cod to feed the community and the oil from the fish is being used to keep the lamps burning and the community healthy, the fish bones are being used to sew funeral shrouds, possibly for fishermen who died trying to catch the cod in the first place or even the sewers themselves whose ‘winter hands’ connote approaching death.[24] In Eliot’s *Preludes*, the speaker states that ‘I am moved by fancies that are curled / Around these images and cling’. Although Eliot’s speaker does not seem to find anything useful or appealing in the images of the city life he depicts – ‘Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh; | The worlds revolve like ancient women | Gathering fuel in vacant lots’ (23) – Brown’s image of old, cold hands sewing shrouds poignantly encapsulates without any signs of emotional or moral commentary the grand concept of the essential revolutions and interconnectedness of life and death.

Brown has for the most part been deemed the most ‘provincial’ among twentieth-century writers. As Douglas Dunn states, ‘Brown, as a poet of remote island communities and unindustrial, non-urban landscapes, is at odds with the tradition of modern poetry’.[25] Berthold Schoene’s review of Brian and Rowena Murray’s *Interrogation of Silence: The Writings of George Mackay Brown* highlighted the ‘scholarly neglect and even impending erasure’ that threatened Brown’s critical reception, and called for a ‘theoretically up-to-date scholarly investigation’.[26] Timothy C. Baker’s *George Mackay Brown and the Philosophy of Community* (2009) has since successfully analysed the idea of community in Brown’s work alongside the philosophical theories of giants such as Hegel, Heidegger, and Adorno. This paper intends to complement these new investigations, positioning Brown within a world-literary and world-philosophical context. Until recent re-examinations of his work, Brown was commonly viewed as a stuffy traditionalist, introspective in

his local isolation, and naive in his reverence for a golden past of folklore, archetype, the spinning of yarns and good-humoured Shakespearean tinkers — a world that had now been subsumed by the forces of modernity. There is, of course, much truth in these claims. But this shouldn't be held as the dominant line regarding Brown's work. As this article has shown, Brown could infuse those traditional elements with a modern, minimalist tongue and deep philosophical imagination. Just as Pound and MacDiarmid had turned to traditional forms and texts such as the Japanese haiku, Scottish ballads, Homer's *Odyssey* and the poetry of Henryson and Dunbar in order to make a new, modern poetry, Brown turned to the traditional forms and texts of Orkney's Scandinavian cultural inheritance such as skaldic poetry and *Orkneyinga Saga* and revitalised them as sources for his own modern experimentation and cultural expression. Furthermore, in turning to Orkney's Scandinavian connection, Brown enlarges Scotland's perceptions of its culture. He may be deemed 'provincial' by critics such as Dunn who see modern writing as having to focus on the urban and industrial, but he is certainly not introspective. Instead, Brown's use of Nordic culture opens his enclosed island mentality into a larger cultural world. In short, not only does Brown revivify tradition through modern experimentation, the use and reinvention of those traditional Scandinavian forms and texts generate a more expansive, international cultural imagination.

NOTES

[1] Ezra Pound, 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley', in *Selected Poems of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1957), p. 61. For this source and all others, page numbers are given subsequently in the text.

[2] George Mackay Brown, *An Orkney Tapestry* (London: Quartet Books, 1973), p. 2.

[3] Julian D'Arcy, *Scottish Skalds and Sagamen: Old Norse Influence on Modern Scottish Literature* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1996), p. 247.

[4] Ezra Pound, 'A Retrospect', *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. by T.S. Eliot (Norfolk: New Directions, 1954), pp. 3-4.

[5] Réné Taupin, *The Influence of French Symbolism on Modern American Poetry*, trans. by William and Mary Pratt (New York: AMS Press, 1985), p. 96.

[6] William Pratt, *The Imagist Poem: Modern Poetry in Miniature* (Ashland: Story Line Press), pp. 29-30.

[7] George Mackay Brown, *The Collected Poems of George Mackay Brown*, ed. by. Archie Bevan and Brian Murray (London: John Murray, 2006), p. 461.

[8] H.D., *Collected Poems, 1912-1944*, ed. by Louis Martz (New York: New Directions, 1983), p. 55.

[9] Ezra Pound, 'Affirmations—As for Imagisme', *Selected Prose, 1909-1965*, ed. by William Cookson (New York: New Directions, 1973), p. 375.

[10] George Mackay Brown, *For the Islands I Sing* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2008), p. 56.

[11] George Mackay Brown, *Northern Lights: A Poet's Sources* (London: Trafalgar Square Publishing, 1999), p. 316.

[12] Hugh MacDiarmid, *The Complete Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid*, eds. Michael Grieve and W.R. Aitken, Volume 1 (2) (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 27.

[13] T.E. Hulme, *Selected Writings*, ed. by Patrick McGuiness (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 2. [14] Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Date of Consciousness*, trans by F.L. Pogson (London: Elibron Classics, 2005), p. 130.

[15] Sanford Schwartz, *The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot, and Early Twentieth-century Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 22.

[16] T.E. Hulme, *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1936), p. 135.

[17] Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral sense', in *The Nietzsche Reader*, eds. Keith Ansell Pearson and Duncan Large (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 121.

[18] Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (New York: New Directions, 1960), p. 22.

[19] Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda*, trans. by Jesse L. Byock (London: Penguin Books, 2005), p. 112.

[20] Ezra Pound, 'Vorticism' (1914), reprinted in *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (1916; New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 89.

[21] Bruce Dickins, *Runic and Heroic Poems of the Old Teutonic Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915; New York: Kraus, 1968), pp. 14-15.

[22] Nan Shepherd, *The Living Mountain* (1977), reprinted in *The Grampian Quartet*, ed. by Roderick Watson (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1996), pp. 77-78.

[23] T.S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot* (London: Book Club Associates, 1977), p. 13.

[24] This rune poem differs in Brown's *Selected Poems: 1954-1992* (London: John Murray, 1996). Instead of cod, Brown's poem runs thus: 'Whale, give needles and oil.' Whale oil makes more sense in terms of being used as fuel for burning in lamps.

[25] Douglas Dunn, ''Finished Fragrance': The Poems of George Mackay Brown', *Poetry Nation*, 2 (1974) http://poetrymagazines.org.uk/magazine/record.asp?id=3506 [accessed 10 August 2011] (para. 17 of 35).

[26] Berthold Schoene, 'Interrogation of Silence. The Writings of George Mackay Brown', *Scottish Studies Review*, 6 (2005), 131-133 (pp. 131, 133).

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Manifestoes at Dawn:

Nation, City and Self in Patrick Geddes and William Sharp's *Evergreen*

Julian Hanna

In a revealing backward glance in 1954, the poet Hugh MacDiarmid wrote to his friend the novelist Neil Gunn to explain what the 1890s meant to him. Gunn began his career as a contributor to MacDiarmid's short-lived but influential and innovative nationalist periodicals, the *Scottish Chapbook* (1922-23) and *Scottish Nation* (1923). He had written two weeks earlier asking MacDiarmid why, in a BBC Radio broadcast, he had 'placed' Gunn's rural novels not among the texts of the Scottish Renaissance of the 1920s, but in the 1890s, the decade that stood (Gunn wrote) 'for an ultra-sophistication, for men like Beardsley and Oscar Wilde'. MacDiarmid replied by positing a different set of associations, and a different 'renaissance':

> The 'Nineties stood not only for Beardsley, Wilde, etc. – but also for the Celtic Renaissance (i.e. the Celtic Twilight stuff), e.g. Patrick Geddes with his Celtic Renascene, the early Yeats poems etc. That was the point of my reference so far as you were concerned.[1]

He proceeded to tell Gunn, whose novels have indeed been described as carrying into the twentieth century Fiona Macleod's 'vision of a doomed and marginal Celticism'[2], that his intention was only 'to disassociate myself from romantic idealisations of Gaelic "spirituality", etc. … in accordance with my own Marxist tenets'. Somewhat surprisingly, MacDiarmid invoked a younger generation of critics to make the case that Gunn did not belong in the 'Scottish Renaissance Movement' proper ('as laid down by me at the outset in the *Scottish Chapbook*').[3] In effect he told Gunn — fairly or otherwise — that history had judged him to be 'something entirely different': a throwback to the previous generation and an older 'renaissance' (ibid.).

The Scottish Renaissance inaugurated by MacDiarmid in the twenties had its share of manifestos, which was not unusual at the time.[4] 'The Chapbook Programme' in particular,

published in the second issue (September 1922), sets out in straightforward manifesto style an agenda for the magazine and the movement it claims to represent, starting with 'The principal aims and objects' and ending with a vow to 'meddle wi' the Thistle'.[5] It is a mix of the practical ('*Should you wish to help us, kindly send us the names of friends likely to be interested*') and the polemical, which can be seen in the stated objective: 'To insist upon truer evaluations of the work of Scottish writers than are usually given in the present over-Anglicised condition of British literary journalism' (ibid.). Following in the wake of artistic movements like vorticism, imagism, futurism, and dada, and political events like the 1916 Easter Rising and the 1917 Russian Revolution, anyone who wished to formulate a national movement in the arts with accompanying propaganda would have had numerous templates and texts to draw upon for inspiration. But what role did manifestos play in the late-nineteenth-century movements referred to in MacDiarmid's letter, the twin renaissances – one famous, the other nearly forgotten – led by W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory, Patrick Geddes and William Sharp?[6] How did they draw up their manifestos, what did they wish to proclaim, and how do their declarations of principle compare with later examples, not only of MacDiarmid, but of Marinetti, Tristan Tzara, Wyndham Lewis, and the other polemicists of the 'high manifesto' period in Europe?

MacDiarmid's *Chapbook* pays homage in its opening manifesto, the 'Causerie', to Patrick Geddes's *Evergreen* (1895-96). The earlier struggle for cultural revival is praised not only for its Scottish nationalism but also for its civic and international character. '[T]he organ of a band of social reformers in one of the poorest quarters of Edinburgh,' MacDiarmid wrote, 'touched an international note, and kept up the spirit of the best ideals in literature and art.'[7] There is, however, a conspicuous omission: the tribute fails to mention William Sharp, who was not only a leading *Evergreen* contributor (under his own name and as 'Fiona Macleod'), but who also acted as managing director of both the *Evergreen* and the affiliated publishing house of Patrick Geddes and Colleagues. MacDiarmid portrayed Geddes, who was still living and very active in 1922, as a worthy predecessor. Years later, in *The Company I've Kept* (1966), MacDiarmid mourned the 'neglect' of Geddes in Scotland, describing him as 'one of the outstanding thinkers of his generation, not merely in Britain but in the world, and not only one of the greatest Scotsmen of the past century but in our entire history'.[8] But the unfashionable Sharp, whose career in the 1890s masquerading as 'Fiona Macleod' was preceded by a decade in London doing literary odd jobs, represented all that modernism, and modern Scotland, wished to leave behind. As a result, he is absent from the narrative. Ultimately, however, MacDiarmid judged it necessary to dismiss the earlier Scottish renaissance in order to move forward with a new renaissance. The *Chapbook* manifesto ends: 'The Scottish literary revival proved to be a promise that could not be kept.' This re-enacted demise cleared the stage for the renaissance of 1922. 'To-day', MacDiarmid declared, 'there is a distinct change in the air' ('Causerie', p. 4).

Identity emerges as a central theme in the *Evergreen* and the manifestos it contains. Various competing identities are at play. The magazine's conflicted sense of place, its separate loyalties to Edinburgh, Scotland, and London, as well as to a cosmopolitan intellectual community, is one aspect of this complex identity. Another is the sexual identity of Sharp and his more productive alter ego, Fiona Macleod. Like MacDiarmid, Sharp wrote under a variety of pseudonyms during his career; he went to great lengths to keep their identities distinct and convincing. In the case of Fiona Macleod, her reputation as the leading Scottish author in the Celtic revival during the nineties easily overshadowed Sharp's own modest fame. Given that the two personalities professed different opinions — as well as different religions[9] — it is important to examine what effect Sharp's split identity had on the identity of the *Evergreen*. With 'decadence' and 'degeneration' being prevailing themes for artists and critics in the period in which the *Evergreen* was published (the first issue appeared only weeks before Oscar Wilde's case against the Marquess of Queensberry went to trial), another important question is how the magazine attempted to portray itself as an agent of renewal and rebirth. What is the *Evergreen*'s relationship to a more 'decadent' contemporary like the *Yellow Book*, for example, or even Sharp's own *Pagan Review* (1892)? The object of these lines of investigation is to clarify the *Evergreen*'s contribution to the Scottish renaissance of the 1890s and, more broadly, fin-de-siècle periodical culture. For reasons of length, the particular focus of this essay will not include either the visual or the scientific side of the *Evergreen*, though both of these aspects would no doubt bring their own rewards. Instead, it will bring into focus new aspects of the history and character of the manifesto, a genre which became indispensable to the early twentieth-century avant-garde, and to nationalist movements across Europe; and a genre which is only now beginning to receive the critical attention it deserves.[10]

Scottish nationalism is given its most explicit airing in the *Evergreen* in Geddes's essay-manifesto, 'The Scots Renascence', at the end of the first issue (Spring 1895). It begins on an elegiac note by commemorating the death of John Stuart Blackie, the University of Edinburgh professor whose great popularity was manifested in a long funeral procession through the streets of the city. The piece opens: 'Blackie was buried yesterday'. Geddes describes 'the working people in their thousands and tens of thousands [who] lined the way from St. Giles' to the Dean'.[11] The occasion for mourning, however, soon gives way to a jubilant demonstration of hope for the future:

> Coming down the Mound, in full mid-amphitheatre of Edinburgh, filled as perhaps never before, with hushed assemblage of city and nation, the pipes suddenly changed their song, ceased their lament, and 'Scots Wha Hae' rang out in strenuous blast; the anthem of a Renascent – ever renascent – unconquerably renascent people.

The death of Robert Louis Stevenson the previous December is recalled ('it is but one step in thought to that solitary Samoan hill'). The two men are named 'the leader of nationality' and 'the leader of literature', respectively. Geddes uses these winter deaths in the inaugural spring issue of the *Evergreen* to frame his challenge: 'What then – save "Finis Scotiae!" – can remain for us to say?' (ibid., p. 133).

Geddes begins his answer by acknowledging 'signs that some reaction' to Scotland's troubles 'is at hand'. But this 'reaction' is so far negative because it takes the form of a 'narrower' nationalism that ignores the true problems facing the country, whether in education, science, law, literature, or medicine (p. 134). 'Where then lies the true patriotism?' he asks. The answer is that it lies first 'in energy for the living; only secondarily in honours to the dead'. This 'living Scotland', with its 'renascent' architecture and 'artistic life', is centred in Edinburgh, in accordance with Geddes's belief in the metropolis as a concentration of the intellectual life of a nation. Edinburgh is used consistently in Geddes's writings as a model or microcosm for larger geo-political phenomena. Indeed, at the end of the piece there is a small drawing of the city in silhouette: fittingly, it is unclear whether the time of day depicted is dusk or dawn, though we might assume the latter. The theme of transition between past and future, endings and beginnings, which runs through the *Evergreen* is reinforced at the conclusion of the piece, again in the context of Scottish (or more broadly, Celtic) nationalism. The closing lines overlay the opening image of a public funeral with a seasonal image of the Resurrection:

> Such is our Scottish, our Celtic Renascence – sadly set betwixt the Keening, the watching over our fathers dead, and the second-sight of shroud rising about each other. Yet this is the Resurrection and the Life, when to faithful love and memory their dead arise. (p. 139)

Edinburgh struggles for precedence with the greater Scottish nation in the pages of the *Evergreen*, but ultimately it is the city that triumphs. If this is not made sufficiently clear in 'The Scots Renascence' of the first issue, then it is made clear in the 'Prefatory Note' of the second (Autumn 1895) and the 'Envoy' of the final issue (Winter 1896-97), two short manifestos which bookend the *Evergreen*'s four-issue run. The 'Prefatory Note' lists the *Evergreen*'s main concerns as being 'the Celtic Renascence, now incipient alike in Literature and Art' – the confident tone already marking a progression from the issue of the previous spring – and 'the revival and development of the old Continental sympathies of Scotland' (p. 8). Both these aims appear at first to be national in character, but on closer inspection they can be seen to fix the Scottish capital in an international context, and to emphasize its distinctive cosmopolitanism. The declaration reads: 'while we would renew local feeling and local colour, we would also express the larger view of Edinburgh as not only a National and Imperial, but a European city'. It further states: 'we would …

share in that wider culture-movement which knows neither nationality nor race'. There follows a reference to 'our open and growing group', a community whose numbers swelled with visitors each August for Geddes's highly successful summer school at the University. In addition the 'Prefatory Note' mentions an 'illustrious guest' to the summer school of 1895 and to the Autumn issue. This is the French geographer and anarchist Elisée Reclus, who contributes an article on his idea of 'La Cité du Bon Accord', which is again in keeping with Geddes's civic philosophy and focus.

The second short manifesto, the 'Envoy', emphasizes the strong local identity of the magazine. It refers to 'our little group of townsmen and gownsmen, who for these ten years past have been quietly gathering themselves together among the nooks and byways … of our ever ruinous, ever renascent Old Town'.[12] The group's eclectic membership and sometimes conflicting views — differences that grew more pronounced, not least between Geddes and Sharp, as the magazine reached its final number — are characterised as strengths. The 'frankly experimental' magazine, it states, has had 'no central authority, still less constraint … its artists and writers have been each a law unto themselves'. Now, at the end of this 'first venture', the disparate groups involved, including 'naturalist', 'sociologist', and 'Celticist', would 'develop apart', 'in fresh gatherings and meetings … Scottish or cosmopolitan, in new initiatives at home or afield'. This statement makes it clear that the *Evergreen* was a local project with international connections and ambitions, only secondarily concerned with the issue of Scottish nationalism. The *Evergreen*'s nationalism is diluted further still by the broader concept of Celticism. Sharp defined this identity cluster in the prospectus for an unrealized second publication, the *Celtic World*, which was included in a letter to Geddes in March 1895. The magazine, Sharp wrote, was to include 'Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Manx, Cornish, & Breton writers'.[13]

The emphasis placed on Edinburgh, in both its national and international contexts, may be explained with reference to Geddes's geographical and sociological interests. The Outlook Tower on Edinburgh's Royal Mile, which Geddes purchased in 1892, is widely regarded as the symbol — and the literal manifestation — of his vision.[14] In Geddes's care, the building and its eight floors of exhibits, with the famous camera obscura at the top, was a civic museum that aimed to show visitors 'the universe as seen from this point in Edinburgh'.[15] The survey began at the top with 'Edinburgh and its region' (including a view of the street below through the camera obscura), and proceeded down through 'ever-widening geographical and cultural zones' – Scotland, Britain, the British Empire, Europe, and the World – to ground level (Welter, p. 78). Like Yeats's Thoor Ballylee, the Outlook Tower was a manifesto in architecture, a monumental symbol of its caretaker's vision. Together with the *Evergreen* and the publishing house of Patrick Geddes and Colleagues, the Tower was the site from which Geddes and Sharp launched their local, national, and cultural renaissance. Its primary goal, in Elizabeth Sharp's words, was 'to recreate an active

centre and so arrest the tremendous centralising power of the metropolis of London'.[16]

The Outlook Tower acted as a symbol of resistance and a challenge to London's hegemony as a centre of innovation and cultural production. But William Sharp's ambition stretched even further than his wife's letter suggests. He told Geddes, in January 1895, after receiving the offer of a job at Geddes and Colleagues, that his intention was nothing less than 'to centralise in Edinburgh all the Celtic work now being done by Scottish, Irish, and Welsh writers'.[17] This was a very bold plan given the success of the Irish Literary Revival at the time. In 'The Scots Renascence', Geddes calls for a 'Literature of Locality' – a phrase that does little to define its own parameters (p. 137). *Evergreen* readers may have wondered whether Scotland itself was the 'locality' described, or if the nation in this context was only a loose coalition of smaller, more distinct regions. In either case, the phrase suggests a radical decentralization, shifting focus away from London and toward the Celtic fringe, where the Outlook Tower would provide a fresh perspective.

The foundations of the *Evergreen* project were rooted, in a very literal sense, in Edinburgh. Not only was the magazine a reincarnation of Ramsay's eighteenth-century publication of the same name; it was actually conceived on premises linked directly to Ramsay. Geddes had purchased Ramsay Garden, just up the Royal Mile at the Castle Gate, in 1894, as one of his several renovation projects in the Old Town. His family moved into one of the flats that he converted from Ramsay's set of garden homes, while the other flats were earmarked for use by university lecturers and visiting scholars, as well as the Sharps (Mairet, p. 70). This property, like the Outlook Tower, is a perfect symbol of thought and action united: Geddes and his circle meeting on the spot where Ramsay himself once lived and worked on his own *Ever Green* and his own renaissance. On the subject of the previous *Ever Green*, Geddes wrote: 'This little collection of old-world verse, with its return at once to local tradition and living nature, was as little in harmony with the then existing fashion of the day in literature as its new namesake would hope to be with that of our own, – the all-pervading "Decadence"' ('The Scots Renascence', p. 136).

Israel Zangwill, writing in the *Pall Mall Magazine* in February 1896, saw in Geddes's renovation projects an attempt to 'make of Edinburgh the "Cité du Bon Accord" dreamed of by Elisée Reclus'.[18] The author, writing on the *Evergreen* and 'the regeneration of Old Edinburgh' for his regular column, described being led by Geddes on a tour of the Old Town, where he was clearly impressed by the physical manifestation of the *Evergreen*'s rhetoric of renewal. 'There stand the houses he has built – visible, tangible', wrote Zangwill, 'concrete proofs that he is no mere visionary!' The strong practical element of Geddes's programme for a cultural renaissance sets it apart from the plethora of utopian visions suggested by Zangwill's dismissive phrase, 'mere visionary'. The activities overseen by Geddes in the mid-nineties, which combined literary and scientific experimentation with grassroots civic projects, were given expression in the *Evergreen*

manifestos and form in the architectural symbolism of the Outlook Tower and Ramsay Garden. What Geddes later called 'Civism' (a term he used in 1917 in his manifesto for *The Making of the Future*) was already at the centre of his philosophy in the *Evergreen* period.[19] 'Civism', combined with Geddes's internationalism, eventually led to the proposal for a 'Congrès International des Villes' (1910), to work toward peace and stability outside the nexus of nation states (Welter, p. 75).

Sharp's own cosmopolitan ideology is summed up in his 'Notes' to *Lyra Celtica*, a volume of the Celtic Library series published from the Outlook Tower. Here he declared, in relation to Yeats: 'In the world of literature there is no geography save that of the mind'.[20] The *Evergreen* editor, according to Flavia Alaya, sought to 'support national movements while opposing political nationalism'.[21] He was not alone in this aim: 'Behind him … were his Edinburgh colleagues of the *Evergreen* group … who seem to have been totally reluctant to make their own Celtic "renascence" either an entirely Gaelic movement or a nationalistic one' (p. 150).[22] Alaya quotes a passage in the second volume of Geddes's *Memoir*, where he states: 'our little scholastic colony in the heart of Edinburgh symbolises a movement which while national to the core, is really cosmopolitan in its intellectual reach' (p. 50).

Sharp's letters to Geddes at this time speak to the confusion of interests. One letter, for example, sees Sharp propose a 'series of short books of fiction' by international authors which 'might be called "The Evergreen Series": or, say, the "Cosmopolitan" Series', making the two names appear interchangeable.[23] In her book on Geddes, Helen Meller provides a simple solution to the dilemma of nationalism and cosmopolitanism in the *Evergreen* project. Using Alaya's chapter on Sharp's cosmopolitanism as the basis for her argument, she writes: 'the paradox was resolved in that their sense of national identity was built on a perception of place, and it was a romantic sensitivity to place which was the key to cosmopolitanism'.[24] However, the strain of these competing ideas of place and identity is not so easily overcome as Meller's statement suggests. One result of these tensions, in fact, is Fiona Macleod, who embodied Sharp's romantic idea of Scotland. It is almost as if this second identity was necessary to contain the side of Sharp that was not compatible with urbane cosmopolitanism. This 'identity crisis' is linked to the manifesto by the important fin-de-siècle motif of the mask, so beloved of Yeats, and the practice of concealing and revealing. These themes also testify to the manifesto's ambiguous and problematic authorship, and the strategic uses to which its attribution – group, anonymous, pseudonymous, or otherwise – is put by those seeking a safe position from which to make contentious, even dangerous, declarations.

Manifestos make their declarations implicitly as well as explicitly. A good illustration is the *Yellow Book*'s omission, in thirteen volumes, of any clear manifesto. This absence, in effect, 'declares': it

creates a negative or anti-manifesto that is perfectly suited to the message of *l'art pour l'art*. The magazine serves no larger purpose than the display of art; it does no 'work' of any kind, and has no message to relate other than itself. The *Evergreen*, by contrast, does include a number of manifesto-like statements, some of which are discussed in the present essay. Sharp was not a signatory to any of the *Evergreen*'s explicit declarations, but with his dual presence in each issue, as William Sharp and Fiona Macleod, he made a bold declaration of cultural and sexual identity, even if this declaration would have gone undetected by the majority of readers. During the winter of 1895, immediately preceding the *Evergreen*'s first issue, Sharp made a solo journey to the Isle of Arran. From here, he wrote to Elizabeth about his increasing feeling of being 'two people':

> There is something of a strange excitement in the knowledge that two people are here: so intimate and yet so far-off. For it is with me as though Fiona were asleep in another room … I am eager to see what she will do – particularly in *The Mountain Lovers*. It seems passing strange to be here with her alone at last … (Quoted in *Memoir*, p. 244)

In Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Jack Worthing, the confessed 'Bunburyist', admits that although he is Jack in the country he chooses to be 'Earnest' when he stays in London. Eventually he learns, much to his surprise and satisfaction, that he really is called Earnest; 'naturally', as he tells Gwendolen.[25] Sharp made a similar arrangement, and also found his true self in the mask. Fiona Macleod was country-born, reclusive, and given to mysticism, while 'William Sharp' was, in Elizabeth's words, 'of the intellectually observant, reasoning mind — the actor' (*Memoir*, 223). For Sharp, in contrast to Wilde's character, the rural self took precedence, and became what Sharp called his 'truest self' (ibid., p. 227). To meet the demands of modern life, Sharp, like Jack and Algernon, found it necessary to be two people at once. Fiona represented Sharp's new interest in all things Celtic and spiritual, and his retreat from the life he lived previously: rootless (though London-based), cosmopolitan, and materialistic. He used the *Evergreen*, in conjunction with the publishing firm of Geddes and Colleagues, to give Fiona a voice and further her career. The question that must be asked is whether this new identity represented the commodification of an exaggerated or artificial self (of the type that Regenia Gagnier has described in relation to Wilde[26]) or whether she embodied a more sincere quest for the 'truest self', albeit through the mask. Alaya notes that, for all his connections with aestheticism, 'there is yet nothing amused, indifferent, or cynical' in Sharp's commitment to radical politics, including feminism, and his belief in the social relevance of art (p. 8).

It is admittedly very difficult to believe that Fiona Macleod was an invention entirely untainted by commercial concerns. Sharp was known in London circles, after all, as something of a hack. Richard Le Gallienne recorded Wilde's remark that 'Whenever a great man dies, Hall Caine and William Sharp go in with the undertakers.' (Both Caine and Sharp published books on Dante

Gabriel Rossetti immediately following his death. Sharp's first three books, including the Rossetti biography, were all published in 1882.)[27] Wilde made Sharp the subject of more than one quip, despite the fact that Sharp had included two of his early poems ('Libertatis Sacra Fames' and 'On the Sale by Auction of Keats's Love Letters') in *Sonnets of This Century* (1886). 'Have you heard Oscar's last good thing?' Yeats asked Katharine Tynan in a letter sent on 28 February 1890. 'He says that Sharp's motto should be *Acutus descensus averni* (sharp is the descent into Hell)'.[28] Although he admired Fiona Macleod, Yeats shared Wilde's contempt for Sharp as a mere go-between. He made his feelings known when Sharp offered to chair a meeting of the Irish Literary Society in 1897. Yeats declared that Sharp's presence 'would bring ridicule on the whole movement', and the arrangement was cancelled.[29] Even so, Fiona Macleod does seem to be an identity that was felt deeply and passionately by Sharp — much more so, for example, than his earlier use of pseudonyms (for largely practical reasons) in the *Pagan Review*. The unavoidable fact, however, is that in his alter ego Sharp created a perfect author for the nineties, sufficiently 'other' by way of both culture and gender to become, for a brief time, the bestselling novelist that Sharp himself was not. Since he was, to those who met him, more Londoner than authentic Scotsman in his accent and manner, the revelation of Fiona Macleod struck many observers as a cunning trick.

Alaya, writing in 1970, described Sharp as 'a literary figure in utter disrepute' (p. 4). Decades of anti-romantic criticism in the earlier part of the century helped to establish the general bias against him, but it was the 'Celtic siren' (as Edmund Gosse described Fiona Macleod) who prompted the most disdain. Some critics, like Paul Elmer More in *The Drift of Romanticism* (1913), sought to isolate and exorcise Fiona Macleod from the more 'hard-headed' writing done by Sharp under his own name.[30] Alaya concluded that to distinguish between two 'Sharps' does no favours to his oeuvre, and she pointed out that this practice had been used mainly to 'pass judgement' on the part of his work more closely associated with 'decadence' and the 'Celtic Twilight' (p. 7). Nevertheless, it is hard to avoid reaching the conclusion that there are indeed two styles: in the *Evergreen*, at least, Sharp speaks with two distinct voices. What is important is to see how the pseudonym is used to express something that could not previously be expressed, and to give this expression the feeling of authenticity.

The difference in the *Evergreen* pieces is chiefly between the odes to nature that Sharp publishes under his own name and the 'Celtic' stories and poems that appear under the name Fiona Macleod. Sharp's poems, one in each of the first three issues, celebrate in turn the north wind ('Spirit of dauntless life, / And Lord of Liberty!'), a mountain brook ('Brown, wandering water, / Dear, murmuring water'), and the ocean ('O Sea, thou terror!').[31] The poems show neither great depth nor detail, being content mainly to follow the conventions of their genre. They are simple and restrained, despite frequent exclamations. The Fiona Macleod pieces are more numerous

and varied: they include four stories and seven poems in a range of styles. To write from a woman's perspective is evidently not Sharp's simple concern. In one poem, 'A Summer Air', Fiona Macleod assumes a male point of view, asking 'Where ... / Am I to roam / To find my bride, / To reach my home?'.[32] In fact, Sharp used Fiona Macleod as a means to greater extravagance, both in style and in content. Whereas the poems in Sharp's own name are conventional and relatively impersonal (allowing for the passionate tendencies of the romantic ode) the poems and short stories of Fiona Macleod are much riskier ventures, more energetic and at the same time darker and more 'decadent' in style. They seem to be, in effect, more revealing – a contradiction given the 'lie' of their authorship, but consistent with Sharp's claims about finding his 'true' voice. It is the Fiona Macleod pieces, taken as a whole, that make up Sharp's personal manifesto in the *Evergreen*.

Sharp also explored the use of multiple pseudonyms in the single-issue *Pagan Review*, an earlier solo effort in magazine publishing. Here, as in the *Evergreen*, his authors had well-developed separate identities, which Sharp went to some lengths to protect from disclosure. Again there is a parallel with MacDiarmid, who supplied fictional contributors for his early publishing ventures including the *Scottish Chapbook* and the *Scottish Nation*.[33] Wyndham Lewis, too, used the magazine format and the mask as outlets for his prodigious polemicizing, although his aliases (most notably the Enemy) were not kept secret. Sharp's *Pagan Review* featured stories, poems, plays, and essays by no less than seven fictional contributors, as well as employing a fictional assistant, W.H. Brooks, to handle correspondence. At least one contributor, W.S. Fanshawe, was even said to have published under his own name. A note explained that Fanshawe's book must be ordered through Mr. Brooks, 'Lest any miscarriage or delay occur, owing to Mr. Fanshawe's absence abroad'.[34] A story entitled 'The Pagans: A Romance', written under the name Willand Dreeme, is typical of the content. Wearing its literary flamboyance on its sleeve, it opens with a quote from Wilde. Another contributor is named Verlayne, and if this allusion is not enough, the editorial notes at the back draw curious attention to it, pairing the pseudonym with its source while conversely trying to reinforce the illusion of the pseudonymous author's existence by attacking him (that is, Sharp attacking Sharp). 'Mr. Verlayne's motive is at least original,' the note states, 'if, possibly, in its treatment, as Paul Verlaine said of a certain *pièce de fantaisie* by Rimbaud, *un peu posterièure à cette époque*' (p. 41).

The most striking piece in the *Pagan Review* is its manifesto, which is simply signed 'The Editor'. The 'Foreword', as it is called, is an exemplary declaration of intent. It so thoroughly lays out the character and intentions of the magazine that after reading it one understands completely Elizabeth Sharp's point that 'the one number had served its purpose' and no further issues were necessary (*Memoir*, p. 204). The values espoused in the manifesto, including atheism, equality between the sexes ('copartnery'), the cult of youth, and 'the sacredness of the individual', were

typical of progressive thinking at the time. The rhetoric, however, has more in common with pre-war avant-garde periodicals like *Blast* than with the *Yellow Book*. It begins by declaring: 'We aim at thorough-going unpopularity', and proceeds to shun the interest of '"They", "the general public"' (*Pagan Review*, p. 1). Slogans, rather than carefully phrased sentences, mark the piece: 'The new paganism is a potent leaven in the yeast of the "younger generation"', is one example (reminiscent of the futurist Marinetti's claim to be the 'caffeine of Europe'); another reads, 'It is LIFE that we preach … Life to the full, in all its manifestations, in its heights and depths' (pp. 2-4). At the same time, it steps outside its own rhetoric to make an interesting confession about the relationship between the manifesto and the movement, or in this case the magazine, for which it speaks: 'These remarks, however, must not be taken too literally as indicative of the literary aspects of *The Pagan Review*. Opinions are one thing, the expression of them another, and the transformation or reincarnation of them through indirect presentment another still'.[35] The review also aims at sexual openness, which was perhaps intended to be its selling point (and one of the meanings implicit in the term 'paganism'). Men and women being of 'profound and fascinating' interest to one another, it argues, 'it is natural that literature dominated by the various forces of the sexual emotion should prevail'. The editor promises, however, to resist the extremes of 'some of our French *confrères*' (p. 3).

A contemporary review of the *Evergreen* in the *Sunday Times* called it 'the first serious attempt we have seen … to combat avowedly and persistently the decadent spirit which we have felt to be over-aggressive of late'. The reviewer apparently skipped over the Fiona Macleod pieces in reaching this conclusion; it would not be surprising, in fact, to learn that the reviewer's impression had been derived entirely from William MacDonald and J. Arthur Thomson's 'Proem', which opens the first issue of the *Evergreen*. The 'Proem' is a manifesto of 'Renascence': reflecting the spring theme, it declares, 'behold! the world is young again and visionary'.[36] At the same time, it states: 'we do not ignore the Decadence around us, so much spoken of', and decries the 'clever writers emulously working in a rotten vineyard … healthy young men eager for the distinction of decay' (p. 10). The authors attack 'moral vulgarity', 'egotism', and even the epigram, which is judged 'a means of masking its emotional impotence, its bankruptcy of generous human qualities' (pp. 11, 15). The programme outlined 'against the background of Decadence' is one of civic pride, a return to nature, and practical plans for urban renewal ('So we may draw a little nearer to the City Beautiful'). The focus of these aims is not Scotland per se, but Edinburgh: 'Before all others there is our own, unique in the world … what might not this city become!' (pp. 12-15). The theme of regeneration against the prevailing tide of 'decadence' was translated into sociological terms in an article by Geddes in the same issue, 'Life and its Science'. In these terms the broad aim is 'to cleanse and change the face of cities, to re-organise the human hive', metaphors suggesting the possibility of eugenics.[37] Sharp's contribution to this push for renewal was to be a lecture at the summer school of 1895, entitled, 'Disintegration: Degeneration: Regeneration', as well as one on

‘The Celtic Renascence’. The lectures were to be part of a series of ten on the subject of ‘Life and Art’; during the first lecture, however, Sharp suffered a major heart attack, and the series was cancelled in order that he could recuperate (*Memoir*, p. 251).

Although the *Evergreen* was a relatively minor event in the full and productive careers of Geddes and Sharp, the magazine is worth revisiting not least as a product of this fruitful collaboration. The *Evergreen* provides examples of manifestos of an earlier Scottish renaissance, and it was an important influence on the later renaissance led by MacDiarmid. The *Evergreen* also represents the wider transition or ‘rebirth’ out of the ‘all-pervading “Decadence”’ at the turn of the century. Moreover, it provided a vehicle for Sharp’s unusual expression of his multiple national and sexual identities, his own ‘making manifest’. The success of Sharp’s manifesto is reflected in Yeats’s praise: he called Fiona Macleod the ‘real voice of the Celt’.[38] Finally, the *Evergreen*, the *Pagan Review* and the later *Chapbook* and *Nation* contribute an important Scottish branch to a broader genealogy of the literary manifesto in Europe.

NOTES

[1] *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. by Alan Bold (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984), pp. 270-71.

[2] Murray G. H. Pittock, ‘Sharp, William [Fiona Macleod] (1855-1905)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/index/101036041/William-Sharp, accessed 12 March 2011.

[3] MacDiarmid wrote: ‘There have been a great number of essays on [the Scottish Renaissance] in American, Canadian, French, German & other reviews & books lately and all these writers … omit your name altogether’. *Letters*, pp. 271-72.

[4] MacDiarmid wrote disparagingly about the lack of artistic manifestos in Scotland: ‘Scottish artists have not written much. They have been unfortunately free from the habit of issuing manifestos.’ See Hugh MacDiarmid, *Aesthetics in Scotland*, ed. by Alan Bold (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1984), p. 73.

[5] ‘The Chapbook Programme’, *Scottish Chapbook*, 1.2 (September 1922), 2. This vow is repeated in Part Three of *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1926): ‘To meddle wi the thistle and to pluck / The figs frae't is *my* metier, I think.’ The reference is to the famous motto of the Order of the Thistle, ‘*Nemo me impune lacessit*’, commonly translated into Scots as ‘Wha daurs meddle wi me’.

[6] For a short time, in the mid-1890s, the two separate movements appeared ready to fuse together to create a single Celtic Renaissance. Roy Foster has described a point at which pan-

Celticism was ready to take hold, aided by an alliance of two of its leading lights. In June 1896, Yeats 'had written excitedly to Sharp about the need to further "the mutual understanding and sympathy of the Scotch Welsh and Irish Celts"; this seemed about to happen'. See R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life. I: The Apprentice Mage, 1865-1914* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 166.

[7] Hugh MacDiarmid (C. M. Grieve), 'Causerie', *Scottish Chapbook*, 1.1 (August 1922), 2-5 (p. 4).

[8] Hugh MacDiarmid, *The Company I've Kept* (London: Hutchinson, 1966), p. 79.

[9] Sharp's background was Protestant, though he might also be described as Pagan, while Fiona Macleod was revealed by Sharp as Catholic. See Flavia Alaya, *William Sharp – 'Fiona Macleod': 1855-1905* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 165.

[10] For recent examples of manifesto scholarship, see Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999); Mary Ann Caws, ed., *Manifesto: A Century of Isms* (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln and London, 2001); Luca Somigli, *Legitimizing the Artist: Manifesto Writing and European Modernism, 1885-1915* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 2003); and Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[11] Patrick Geddes, 'The Scots Renascence', *Evergreen*, 1 (Spring 1895), 131-39 (p. 132).

[12] Patrick Geddes and William MacDonald, 'Envoy', *Evergreen*, 4 (Winter 1895-96), 155-56 (p. 155).

[13] Geddes Collection, National Library of Scotland. Sharp's 'very strong list' promised to include Yeats, Douglas Hyde, and George Russell (AE). Although he would be editor, he told Geddes: 'I think it best that the Editorial indication should be either | Published by Patrick Geddes and Colleagues |or simply Edited and Published in Edinburgh.'

[14] See, for example, the short section on the Outlook Tower in Volker M. Welter, *Biopolis: Patrick Geddes and the City of Life* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 2002), pp. 78-80.

[15] Philip Mairet, *Pioneer of Sociology: The Life and Letters of Patrick Geddes* (London: Lund Humphries, 1957), p. 70.

[16] *William Sharp: A Memoir*, ed. by Elizabeth Sharp (London: Heinemann, 1910), p. 249. Hereafter cited as *Memoir*.

[17] Geddes Collection, NLS.

[18] Israel Zangwill, 'Without Prejudice', *Pall Mall Magazine*, 8 (1896), 327-36 (pp. 327-28).

[19] Patrick Geddes and Victor Branford, *The Making of the Future: A Manifesto and a Project* (London: Sherratt & Hughes, 1917), p. 4. 'Civism' is grouped with 'humanism' and 'regionalism' as the three 'elements of reconstructive doctrine'. It includes, among other things, 'repair and renewal of historic cities' and 'the tidying up of confused industrial towns'.

[20] *Lyra Celtica*, ed. by Elizabeth Sharp, introduction and notes by William Sharp (Edinburgh: Patrick Geddes and Co., 1896), p. 399.

[21] For a detailed analysis of this theme in Sharp's career, see Alaya's chapter, 'The New Cosmopolitanism', in *William Sharp – Fiona Macleod*, pp. 146-72.

[22] MacDiarmid raised the language issue again in the 1920s, and he, like Sharp, cited the example of the Belgian Literary Revival as an argument in favour of writing in the dominant language. He declared of Scottish literature: 'Most of it is, of course, and must continue to be, written in English. But it is not English on that account, although it is denounced on that score by the ardent minority bent upon the revival of the Doric.' See MacDiarmid, 'Scotland and Belgium' (1922), reprinted in *The Raucle Tongue Volume I*, ed. by Angus Calder et al (Manchester: Carcanet, 1996), 28-30 (p. 30).

[23] Geddes Collection, NLS. Letter dated 29 April 1895.

[24] Helen Meller, *Patrick Geddes: Social Evolutionist and City Planner* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 100.

[25] At the end of the play, Jack declares: 'I always told you, Gwendolen, my name was Earnest, didn't I? Well, it is Earnest after all. I mean it naturally is Earnest.' Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, ed. by Merlin Holland and others (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 1999), 357-419 (p. 418).

[26] Gagnier writes: 'The late-Victorian dandy … had no patrons, so he needed a product. He produced himself. The commodification, or commercial exploitation, of the dandiacal self … amounts to the reinscription of art into life'. See Regenia Gagnier, *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1987), p. 7.

[27] Quoted in *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. by Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Fourth Estate, 2000), p. 270. The status of these remarks could be called gossip: Le Gallienne was himself a good friend of the Sharps, and William Sharp stayed with him in London on occasion.

[28] W. B. Yeats, *Letters to Katharine Tynan*, ed. by Roger McHugh (Dublin: Clonmore and Reynolds, 1953), pp. 111-12.

[29] Quoted in Foster, *Life*, I, p. 180.

[30] Gosse is quoted in Alaya, p. 6. Her use of More, who propagated the theory of the 'hard' Sharp as distinct from the 'soft' Fiona, appears on p. 8.

[31] Sharp, 'The Norland Wind', in *Evergreen*, 1 (Spring 1895), p. 109; 'The Hill-Water', in *Evergreen*, 2 (Autumn 1895), pp. 107-09; and 'Oceanus', in *Evergreen*, 3 (Summer 1896), p. 31.

[32] 'A Summer Air', *Evergreen*, 3 (Summer 1896), pp. 104-5.

[33] In fact, as in the case of Sharp-Macleod, Grieve was the editor of these early publications and MacDiarmid was a contributor (MacDiarmid was 'born' in the first issue of the *Scottish Chapbook*, August 1922). See Alan Bold, *MacDiarmid* (London: John Murray, 1988), pp. 134-35.

[34] *Pagan Review* 1 (15 August 1892), back cover.

[35] The manifesto ends with another key description of its rhetoric in relation to its realization. It states: '"Much cry for little wool", some will exclaim. It may be so. Whenever did a first number of

a new magazine fulfil all its editor's dreams or even intentions?' *Pagan Review*, pp. 3-4.

[36] William MacDonald and J. Arthur Thomson, 'Proem', *Evergreen*, 1 (Spring 1895), 9-15 (p. 9).

[37] Patrick Geddes, 'Life and its Science', *Evergreen*, 1 (Spring 1895), 29-37 (p. 37).

[38] Yeats used this phrase writing in the *Sketch* (28 April 1897). The piece is reprinted in Yeats, *Uncollected Prose*, ed. by John P. Frayne, 2 vols (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1970-75), II, pp. 108-10.

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Occasional Paper: Now That's What I Call a Scottish Canon!

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Lists of the greatest, essential or best-loved Scottish books have enjoyed a widespread popularity in recent years. *The Herald*, for instance, is currently asking its readers to nominate 'Your 100 Best Scottish Novels' in order to 'compile the definitive list of the 100 most important Scottish novels of all time'.[1] In 2005, the *Scotsman* published a list of '20 Scottish Books Everyone Should Read',[2] in 2006 Radio Scotland asked its listeners for 'The Nation's Favourite Scottish Poem',[3] in 2005 the Scottish Book Trust and the *List* magazine published a booklet on the *100 Best Scottish Books of All Time*,[4] and as part of the 2012 Aye Write! book festival, the 'Scotland's Bookshelf' project celebrated 'two of the best books published each decade across the past century' to mark the Mitchell Library's 100th anniversary.[5]

Rosemary Goring's introduction to the 'Scotland's Bookshelf' booklet illustrates several of the tensions inherent to list-making of this kind. Although many of these initiatives ask readers to choose their favourite Scottish book (often from a pre-selected 'long-list') – seeking to 'take a reading' of popular taste – they usually also claim to present a definite and binding selection: 'The sampler is intended […] to provide, in effect, a shorthand guide to some of the most influential books from that period that should sit on everyone's bookshelf, whether that shelf is real or simply in one's head' (p. 7). In specifying which books should or 'must' be read, it is clear these lists are not merely barometers of popularity, but express a claim for evaluative authority. They tell readers which books are the best, or most representatively and influentially Scottish, and so constitute a standard of literary and cultural value as normative. Although Goring admits that there is 'no right or wrong top twenty best books' and that the selection could also have been a very different one, she claims that the panel of Aye Write! experts know which books will eventually remain in the Scottish canon: 'The literary pinnacles we have picked out will still, we feel sure, be read and appreciated in a hundred years' time' (p. 8). Of course, such lists actively shape rather than passively reflect readers' expectations of what a Scottish canon might include. Likewise, the fact that these lists often aim to inspire readers to create their own lists only *seems*

contradictory, as each disagreement with the canon is also an affirmation of canon-enforcing procedures.

This tension between an ostensible democratic selection process and the postulated absoluteness of the result arises from the fact that canon formation in Scotland is an institutional process that is determined by political, and mainly nationalist, motives. As I argue in *A Scottish National Canon?*, such lists are the result of relatively recent processes of literary canon formation.[6] In the final few decades of the twentieth century, especially, a range of different institutions that mediate literature to the public at large began to shape a distinctive Scottish literary canon by publishing literary histories, anthologies, classics series, and intensifying the teaching of Scottish literature in schools and universities. Contrary to many other counter-canons and their respective movements, such as the feminist canon, these activities were less motivated by campaigns 'from below', but were institutionally driven processes that had the intention to strengthen a sense of national identity after the failed devolution referendum in 1979. In order to make up for the failure of nationalist politics, Scotland should be restored as a nation on the international cultural map. Simultaneously, academic criticism conceptualised Scottish literature as being inherently related to the nation and literature was seen as a means of preserving and advancing national identity. Cairns Craig's study of *The Modern Scottish Novel*, for instance, claims that through works by Alasdair Gray, James Kelman, Janice Galloway, A.L. Kennedy and Irvine Welsh, 'Scotland went on imagining itself as a nation and went on constituting itself as a national imagination in defiance of its attempted or apparent incorporation into a unitary British culture, a defiance which has had profound political consequences in the last decade of the twentieth century'.[7] Hence, Scottish literary criticism, as well as most other literary institutions, exhibited a keen desire to form a unique Scottish national identity through the creation of a Scottish literary canon.

Arguably, this desire was motivated by a sense of cultural inferiority. Since a literary canon is one of the preconditions of being accepted as a nation, these canon-making endeavours have been part of Scotland's strategy of positioning itself within the international literary field and of gaining distinction and accumulating cultural capital as a nation, to use Bourdieu's terminology. Pascale Casanova has pointed out how national literatures are created from political struggles between nations and how nations compete with each other for distinction through their literary canons. According to her, literatures are 'not a pure emanation of national identity; they are constructed through literary rivalries, which are always denied, and struggles, which are always international'.[8] This 'literary competition among nations' (Casanova, p. 105) serves to establish Scotland as a fully-fledged nation that has no reason to feel inferior as compared to other nations, most notably England. Thus, lists and canons claim cultural autonomy for the nation and, at the same time, function to remind the nation of its cultural achievements. Hence, Rosemary Goring,

in a *Herald* article on 'Scotland's Bookshelf', writes that 'there could have been no better exercise for reminding me what an astonishing heritage of fine books Scotland produced in the 20th and early 21st centuries. I don't want to beat a Little Scotlander drum, but whatever classics other nations have produced in the same period, Scotland can hold its head up as an equal'.[9] After devolution, the number of these lists of canonical works, and particularly the number of public polls on the subject, has even increased. It seems that after political autonomy has been largely attained, it is now necessary to consolidate what has been achieved in cultural terms and reinforce it in the minds of the general public.

Alongside the struggle for cultural autonomy, the fact that Scotland's is a rather small literature has led to the incorporation into the Scottish canon of several popular writers and works that also belong to other national traditions. Infamously, the *100 Best Scottish Books of All Time* included works by Virginia Woolf, George Orwell and Joseph Conrad, premised on various tenuous and far-fetched links to Scotland. Although these inclusions ironically mirror the incorporation of Scottish authors into the Anglocentric canon, of which cultural nationalists in Scotland have so long disapproved, appropriating these works was, in fact, not an absurd presumption, but a deliberate strategy to present Scottish national identity as multi-cultural, pluralistic and inclusive. In order to make up for a lack of unity, diversity and hybridity are often conceptualised as the inherent characteristics that define Scottish literature. According to Cairns Craig, Scottish writing exists '*between* traditions rather than within a tradition'.[10] Alastair Niven claims in *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature* that hybridity is 'the very nature of Scottish literature'.[11] In their postulation of diversity and hybridity, the canon-makers follow trends that are currently valued highly within the international literary field and therefore promise symbolic capital.

Ironically, these paradigms are at the same time used to exclude certain texts which do not conform with the dominant ideology of this neo-national canon. Hence, texts that cannot easily be constituted as 'national' texts in their content, theme or style, or writers whose political opinions are not in line with literary nationalism are omitted from the canon – despite its ostensible plurality. This results in a rather one-sided depiction of political views, of the oeuvre of certain authors and of the kind of genres that are considered most representative of the nation. When conservative writers like Allan Massie are excluded from the canon, when the works of Robert Burns are reduced to his Scots poetry at the cost of his English-language writings and when the realist novel is described as more or less the only literary form that can reflect the nation because of its dialogic form, then the canon is not a democratic representation of the nation, but a normative standard that conceals the true formal and political plurality of Scottish literature.

If this elision of literature and nation is not contested by disinterested readers and scholars, we run the risk of not only gaining a reduced and impoverished image of Scottish literature, but, even

more importantly, of being manipulated in forming our own critical opinions. In their claim for evaluative authority, these canons and lists codify their creators' specific norms and values, which are then equated with cultural value as such. Thus, a small elite social group defines the cultural basis of a whole nation. We therefore need a comprehensive dialogue about the criteria for inclusion into the canon and the mechanisms of canon formation in general. The debates about 'Scotland's Bookshelf' are a good start.

NOTES

[1] 'Your 100 Best Scottish Novels', *The Herald* Online, 27 May 2012, www.heraldscotland.com/books-and-poetry/your-100-best-scottish-novels [accessed 2 June 2012].

[2] Emma Cowing, 'The 20 Scottish Books Everyone Should Read', *Scotsman*, 28 December 2005, www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/books/the-20-scottish-books-everyone-should-read-1-685642 [accessed 2 June 2012].

[3] Published in Stewart Conn (ed.), *100 Favourite Scottish Poems* (Edinburgh, 2006).

[4] Willy Maley (ed.), *100 Best Scottish Books of All Time* (Edinburgh, 2005).

[5] Rosemary Goring, 'Scotland's Bookshelf: An Introduction', in *Scotland's Bookshelf: A Celebration of 100 Years of Scottish Writing* (Glasgow, 2012), pp. 7-8, (p. 7).

[6] Stefanie Preuss, *A Scottish National Canon? Processes of Literary Canon Formation in Scotland* (Heidelberg, 2012).

[7] Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (Edinburgh, 1999), p. 36.

[8] Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA, 2004), p. 36.

[9] Rosemary Goring, 'Scotland Stands Tall on its Past Century of Books', *The Herald*, 18 February 2012, www.heraldscotland.com/books-poetry/comment-debate/scotland-stands-tall-on-its-past-century-of-books.16744960 [accessed 2 June 2012].

[10] Cairns Craig, *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and English Culture* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 177.

[11] Alastair Niven, 'New Diversity, Hybridity and Scottishness', in Ian Brown (ed.), *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature, vol. 3: Modern Transformations: New Identities (from 1918)* (Edinburgh, 2007), pp. 320-331 (p. 331).