ADAPTIVE MODERNISM AND BEYOND: TOWARDS A POETICS OF A NEW SCOTLAND

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Abstract

The idea of a 'New Scotland', and the role of 'New Scots' in it, is being debated critically. This essay contextualises this debate with reference to historical antecedents contemporary protagonists draw on, sometimes extensively. It introduces the Scottish Renaissance, which can be regarded as an expression of 'adaptive' modernism. The Scottish Folk Revival after the Second World War, as a form of 'adaptive' modernism, shares the key concerns of that Renaissance, connecting with it through the *Carrying Stream* (Hamish Henderson). The two movements share more than their ethnological foundations, a focus on language and identity, and a generalist interest in civic improvement. Reflecting on the significance of heritages, authenticity, resources, and sustainability in this context, the discussion concludes with an appraisal of the (anti-)modern/post-modern ethnopoesis at work in contemporary Scotland.

Keywords: *Scotland, modernism, ethnopoesis, Carrying Stream.*

Introduction

In Scotland over the last decade or so, in the run-up to, and aftermath of, two referenda that are widely regarded by Scots of all descriptions as major turning points for the country of their imagined community, there has been a lot of talk – in the media, popular and political culture, and academia – about a 'New Scotland',

and the place of the 'New Scots' in it. In this essay, I want to shine a light on these developments, contextualising them with reference to their historical antecedents contemporary protagonists draw on, sometimes extensively.

Following a brief sketch of the New Scots and the New Scotland, I introduce the Scottish Renaissance, which can be regarded as an expression of 'adaptive' modernism. The Scottish Folk Revival after the Second World War, as a form of 'adaptive' modernism, shares the key concerns of the Renaissance, connecting with it through the *Carrying Stream* (Henderson). The two movements share more than their ethnological foundations, a focus on language and identity, and a generalist interest in civic improvement, especially town and country planning. Reflecting on the significance of heritages, authenticity, resources and sustainability in this context, I conclude with an appraisal of the (anti-)modern/post-modern ethnopoesis at work in contemporary Scotland.

The New Scots and the New Scotland

The term "New Scots" was initially applied to the immigrants who came in the 1960s, mostly from former Commonwealth countries, and is nowadays extended to contemporary migrants from other origins, including EU-nationals, and refugees from Africa and the Middle East. However, people have been coming to Scotland[1] for a long time, from the *Scoti* themselves – arriving during the Dark Ages and, by the Carolingian dawn of the Middle Ages, displacing the Picts as the dominant ethnicity – to Lithuanian miners in the early 20th century. Hybrid cultural expressions of this migrant experience range from culinary delights like Haggis Pizza to the playful combination of symbols for ritual and other performative purposes, such as wearing a Lion's Head mask over a Bonnie Prince Charlie kilt outfit for Chinese New Year. The idea that contemporary Scotland is an inter- and transcultural society developing an inclusive way of nation-building is a key trope in politico-cultural debate here. This form of 'being a nation' integrates the 'New Scots' into a complex shared cultural identity with an associated heritage and future, rather than through 'shallow essentialist' identity markers [Kockel 2012a, 2017].

Since 2012, when arrangements for the first independence referendum were set in train, we have witnessed the growth of a vibrant social movement from self-conscious counter-culture to increasingly self-confident, constructively self-critical proto-mainstream – the resurgence of a European small-state political nationalism

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[1] There actually was no 'Scotland' until the arrival of the Scoti on the west coast, and the name is therefore a colonial label [White 1998]. In the Highlands and Islands, Viking incursions and later Norse settlements complicated the identity picture, creating what Cait McCullagh [pers. comm.] describes as *a whole constituency of folk who don't even consider themselves 'Auld Scots', let alone contemplating new ones.*

rooted in a cultural renaissance. By September 2014, support for independence had grown from less than 30% at the start of the referendum campaign to 45%; by early 2021, some twenty consecutive polls had put this support at well above 50% (averaging 55%+ at the time of writing) and, for the first time in polling history, in the majority across all demographic groups.

There is tentative evidence that many New Scots, especially EU-citizens, most of whom had said 'No' to independence in 2014 – having been told by the *Better Together* campaign that leaving the UK would mean having to leave the EU also – have since the 2016 Brexit referendum, which has forced Scotland to do just that against its democratic will, changed their voting intention to 'Yes'. In the run-up to the 2014 independence referendum, there had been a growing sense that, given the country's cultural and political heritage, the traditional arts had a duty to contribute to the debate on the future of the nation. However, with political tensions rising, organisations and networks involved in traditional arts avoided expressing a political position. That initiative had to come from individual activists and independent circles, such as the non-party creative cultural campaign National Collective [McFadyen 2018].

The alignment of the traditional arts community with support for Scottish independence is noteworthy because this community had not been so politically active since the Scottish Folk Revival of the 1960s; now it was continuing an engagement that had its roots in the Scottish Renaissance of a century earlier.

The Scottish Renaissance

The term 'Scottish Renaissance' first appeared in the work of Patrick Geddes [1895] towards the end of the 19th century, but only gained wider currency following a 1922 book review for the *Scottish Chapbook* by Christopher Murray Grieve (aka Hugh MacDiarmid). Meanwhile, Geddes continued his innovative work in town and regional planning, introducing the triad *Place–Work–Folk* as one of what he called his 'thinking machines': matrices supporting new ways of thinking about the interrelationships of people with their localities – themes that deeply infuse the New Scotland of today.

Recognised internationally as a modernist movement, the cultural 'rebirth' of Scotland in that period affected all areas of the arts. For example, in art and architecture, Charles Rennie Mackintosh is the most widely known exponent of a distinctive 'Glasgow style', although his English-born wife Margaret MacDonald is now acknowledged as key creative force behind his work.

A distinctive Scottish modern art was postulated in the inter-war period by such as the Orcadian artist Stanley Cursiter, whose art was shaped by the Celtic Revival in Ireland; while working with Patrick Geddes, he experimented with Futurism

and explored other modernist ideas [Macdonald 2020: 125]. Cursiter later became director of the National Gallery of Scotland, and initiated the National Gallery of Modern Art.

In music the Scottish Renaissance was championed by Francis George Scott, who set to music several of MacDiarmid's poetic works. English-born Ronald Stevenson adapted works by poets of the Scottish Renaissance and created novel settings for Scottish folk songs.

However, it was Hugh MacDiarmid's literary work that gave the Scottish Renaissance its strongest impulse. In 1920, while still writing as C. M. Grieve, MacDiarmid initiated a series of anthologies that established him as the key thinker of this movement. By the middle of the decade, he had begun to write poetry in 'Lallans', a patois formed from regional dialects of Scots infused with conjured-up expressions, often embedded in English grammar. Others who followed his example included Alexander Gray, mainly known for translating ballads from the German and Danish traditions into Scots [Gray 1932, 1954]. However, the prime genre of the Scottish Renaissance was the novel, increasingly so after the novelist Neil Gunn became one of its key exponents in the 1930s. Other well-known writers associated with the movement included Lewis Grassic Gibbon (James Leslie Mitchell), whose trilogy *A Scots Quair*[1] has come to be regarded as being one of the most significant expressions of the thinking that underpinned the Scottish Renaissance.

The movement included several female authors, such as Willa Muir and Nan Shepherd; the latter recently became the first ever woman portrayed on a Scottish bank note. In their common exploration of Scottish identity, they rejected nostalgic and parochial perspectives in favour of critical engagement with politics and society. Unlike other writers in the movement, Shepherd lived all her life in a rural village in the Highlands. But while, throughout her work, this regional landscape features prominently, her writing could be understood as 'parochial' only in that most expansive sense in which, for the Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh, *the parish was not a perimeter, but an aperture: a space through which the world could be seen* [Macfarlane 2016: 62].

This global – one might even call it: 'cosmic' – perspective, grounded in the local, was an intuition shared by the parallel revival of Gaelic poetry, led by the Skye-born Sorley Maclean (Somhairle MacGill-Eain), whose *nua bhàrdachd* (new poetry) enthused a new generation of Gaelic-language poets, including George Campbell Hay (Deòrsa Mac Iain Dheòrsa) and Iain Crichton Smith (Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn).

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[1] The Scots term 'quair' means 'book'.

The writers of the Scottish Renaissance challenged established ways of seeing the world, uncovering the hidden ideological nature of dominant discourses constructing representations of Scottish life and its environment. Just as the Scottish Renaissance inspired the revival of both Scots and Gaelic writing, it also profoundly shaped the nascent Scottish independence movement. Today's Scottish National Party (SNP) can be regarded as having been at least partly stimulated by it. Although many of the protagonists in the Scottish Renaissance lived well into the final decades of the 20th century, and its impact can be traced into the present, not least in Scottish literature [McCulloch 2012], the movement's revolutionary impetus was widely regarded as exhausted by the 1960s – but was it really?

Adaptive Modernism

In the Scottish context, Modernism happened rather asynchronously and, especially in the field of literature, followed its own distinctive path, which Price [2010] describes as being *a variety of Adaptive Modernism*, arguing that *[l]ike the Modernists ... Adaptive Modernism is ... in debt to the literature of the second half of the 19th century (perhaps for Gunn, Hardy; perhaps for MacDiarmid, Dostoevsky)*. Importantly, this Adaptive Modernism is not an iconoclastic pursuit of 'modernity for modernity's sake'; rather, it draws extensively and intensively on the past – *there is no past-denying Scottish futurism*.

Scott Lyall [2014: 73] argues that the Scottish Renaissance, not unlike the Irish Revival, was *a counter-Renaissance against the anti-national ideals of the Renaissance*, but, paradoxically, also *a lament and a replacement for the Renaissance that Scotland supposedly did not have in the early modern period*. While Hugh MacDiarmid and Edwin Muir, two of the Scottish Renaissance's main exponents, had vastly divergent visions concerning the future direction of Scottish literature, both saw the Early Modern period as the Golden Age of that literature. As many other protagonists of the Scottish Renaissance, they viewed the Protestant Reformation as an unmitigated disaster for Scottish creativity. MacDiarmid [1992: 71] suggested *breaking English Ascendancy* by *getting back behind the Renaissance*.

Seen in those terms, the Scottish Renaissance may appear nothing but a kind of Romantic nationalism, a movement Tom Nairn [1977] diagnosed as having been absent from Scotland in the 19th century, when the nation participated instead in building up and running the British Empire. However, the term 'Renaissance' in this context refers to re-birth of the nation after the end of Empire, heralded by the First World War that ended with the first break-up of the United Kingdom – the secession of Ireland, which began in 1921 and, after several stages of disentanglement, provisionally concluded with Brexit a hundred years later [Higgins 2021; O'Toole 2019]. MacDiarmid [1996: 13] saw *the cultural exhaustion*

of English as an instance of the *decline of the Occident* [Spengler 1923] and thus the ideal context in which a Scottish Renaissance could blossom. [1] However, this is really an anti-Renaissance [MacDiarmid 1996: 9]:

> *The future of the Scots spirit may depend upon the issue of the great struggle going on in all the arts between the dying spirit of the Renaissance and the rediscovered spirit of nationality. Today there is a general reaction against the Renaissance. Observe the huge extent to which dialect is entering into the stuff of modern literature in every country. Dialect is the language of the common people; in literature it denotes an almost overweening attempt to express the here-and-now. That, in its principle, is anti-Renaissance.*

Many writers of the Scottish Renaissance identified industrialisation, urbanisation and Anglicisation as forces of cultural destruction, yet they saw the main 'spiritual sickness' affecting modern Scotland as originating with the Protestant Reformation. Edwin Muir believed that the Protestant theologian John Knox's popular influence *did ... rob Scotland of all the benefits of the Renaissance* [Muir 1930: 309]. The Scottish Renaissance, in that sense, was *a cultural Counter-Reformation* – the Renaissance Scotland never had – and, as a specifically **Scottish** movement, an anti-Renaissance rejecting the universalism of the Renaissance from a national perspective [Lyall 2006: 39]. This rejection was, however, not directed at universalism per se, nor against the cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment, to which Scotland significantly contributed [McFadyen and Nic Craith 2019], but rather belongs with anti-, post- and decolonial movements, as did the earlier Irish Revival [Said 1988].

This tension between a European Renaissance as the aesthetic and political rebirth of an (ultimately imagined) Classical culture that unified different 'civilised' nations on the one hand, and a specifically Scottish Renaissance on the other, looking deliberately towards the vernacular, in many ways resembles the tension between the universalising aspirations of the Enlightenment and the celebration of diversity by the Romantic movement. In the Scottish case, this tension is often referred to as *antisyzygy*[2] – a characteristically Scottish ability, exemplified by many protagonists of the Scottish Renaissance, not least Patrick Geddes, to hold together seemingly

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[1] Thomson [2013: 253] notes that the insistence by MacDiarmid and others in the movement on *national renewal premised on a stronger sense of national belonging ... [led] ... to an uneasy relationship with Continental fascism.*

[2] The concept of a *Caledonian antisyzygy* was introduced by Smith [1919], worked out within a generalist approach that was at once philosophical, scientific, humanistic, and democratic [Davie 1961].

contradictory traditions in creative confluence.[1] Confluences are where waterways springing from two or more different sources flow into one another. Rivers often mark boundaries, and so confluences may mark the coming together of three or more territories from which they not only carry drifting matter and sediment downstream, but also facilitate multidirectional transportation, and translation from one embankment to the other.

The Carrying Stream

The river as metaphor appears early in the Scottish Renaissance before it is picked up and transformed into a powerful symbol some two decades later. In *Highland River*, Neil Gunn [1994: 114] writes: *It's a far cry to the golden age, to the blue smoke of the heath fire and the scent of the primrose! Our river took a wrong turning somewhere! But we haven't forgotten the source*. A similarly *diffusionist-inspired pre-civilisation golden age* [Lyall 2012] infuses the work of Lewis Grassic Gibbon.

Gunn's metaphorical reference to a river of tradition would be taken up in the 1950s by Hamish Henderson, whose internationalist nationalism would critically shape Scottish ethnology [Kockel and McFadyen 2019]. In response to *the familiar and contentious question of the extent to which the Reformation, the Union, the Enlightenment, or all three as essential aspects of the same process*, had disrupted the vitality of cultural tradition, Henderson argued for *the continuity of a distinctive Scottish tradition*, placing it *in a wider European cultural setting, with Scotland absorbing and assimilating ideas and practices from the latter context in its own specific and peculiar way* [Burnett 2015: 224]. A polyglot who held internationalist socialism and Scottish nationalism in 'creative confluence' and had strong intellectual and personal connections with Germany and Italy, Henderson was a folklore collector, revivalist, political activist and public intellectual who wrote songs and poetry, and translated Gramsci's *Prison Letters* into English. Christopher Harvie's history of Scotland in the twentieth century, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes* [Harvie 2016] took its title from a line in one of Hamish Henderson's poems [Henderson 1948: 19].

Gibson [2015: 1f.] suggests Henderson *envisaged the role of the artist in society as one caught between an absolute submission to the collective tide of human experience* and *the need to absorb and recreate this collective force according to an individual or personal credo* – a creative tension embodied in the spirited exchange between Henderson and MacDiarmid in the letters pages of *The Scotsman* daily newspaper. According

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[1] The notion of a *creative confluence* holding *the traditional oppositions of classical reason together* has been applied in a decolonial analysis of the Irish context [Kearney 1985: 9]. Thinking about the phenomenon in terms of *creative confluence* softens the polarity often associated with the *antisyzygy*. The concept of *confluence* is beautifully expressed in the folk-oratorio *Rivers of Our Being* [Muktupāvels 2019], which culminates in a hymn to Henderson's Carrying Stream.

to Ross [2015: 146], the key word in this exchange *is not 'nationalism', which is actually secondary in the (in)famous flyting …, but … 'vision'. If they both agreed that without a vision the people perish, does that mean that they both shared a single 'vision' of things Scottish?* They clearly did not. Hugh MacDiarmid was part of a literary elite associated with *The Abbotsford*, a pub in Edinburgh New Town's Rose Street, whereas Hamish Henderson, with his informal 'office' in the Old Town's *Sandy Bell's*, was an active participant in the very 'folk process' he sought to comprehend, introducing the metaphor of the *Carrying Stream* [Bort 2010] into cultural consciousness, and writing songs in Scots, such as the political anthem *Freedom Come All Ye*, connecting socio-cultural struggles in Scotland with international issues and events [McFadyen and Nic Craith 2019]. Jointly with Calum MacLean, brother of the poet Sorley MacLean, Hamish Henderson was one of the first fieldworkers for the University of Edinburgh's School of Scottish Studies, which soon became the national centre for the study of Scottish ethnology.

Ethnology and the Nation

A cosmopolitan and international dimension to modernism was, paradoxically, often linked with a critical concern for local and national cultures [Robichaud 2005: 135]. Engagement with issues of nation and identity forms a key element of modernism, especially for colonised nations like Ireland. This also applies to Scotland, a junior partner in the United Kingdom for several centuries, where the absence of institutions of national self-determination was increasingly perceived to be a cultural problem. Synchronously with the rise of nationalism in early 20th century Scotland, a modernism shaped by Frazer's *Golden Bough* had emerged internationally; modern Scottish writers and poets considering their nation applied a similar anthropological perspective [Robichaud 2005: 136]:

> *From the Enlightenment onward, anthropology in Scotland plays an unusually prominent role in constructing the nation's cultural identity … Writers as diverse as James Macpherson, Robert Burns, and Sir Walter Scott approach Scottish society as a proto-anthropological site rich in endangered cultural practices, to be textually preserved and passed down as part of a continuous Scottish identity.*

Works like Macpherson's *Ossian*, Scott's *Waverley*, and Frazer's aforementioned *Golden Bough* are united by a common theme – the perseverance of the 'primitive' in the face of the incessant progress of modernisation. While arguably connected to the Enlightenment concept of societies progressing *out of barbarism into refinement* [Nairn 1981: 111], 'primitivism' as a perspective is a common feature of modernism, associated with a 'back-to-the-roots' nationalism in contrast to the trade-and-industry nationalism that underpinned empire. Such ethnologically infused visions

of Scotland are, however, not 'nationalist' as the term is commonly understood. Two years before the National Party of Scotland (the precursor of today's SNP) was established, MacDiarmid's *epic poem of modern Scottish nationalism* [Nairn 1981: 95] – *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* – had appeared in print. The Scottish Renaissance was *an interwar movement in all of the arts, with literature as its focal point* [Lyall 2019: 214], with its local and vernacular inclinations expressing a *provincial Modernism* [Crawford 1992] critically at odds with traditional views of a canonical modernism largely based in metropolitan areas [Dymock and Palmer 2011]. T. S. Eliot [1919], concerned about assertions of cultural diversity within the United Kingdom potentially undermining English dominance in Europe, questioned the very existence of a distinct Scottish literature, arguing that a literature is based on a singular language. Against such a myopic perspective, Smith [1919] argued that linguistic diversity and the combination of contrasts and opposites – the *Caledonian antisyzygy* – are the very foundation of Scottish literature.

Language and Identity

Conversely, Scottish modernism, expressed in a variety of languages – Gaelic and Scots as well as English – and notably inspired by translations of European writing, can be viewed as connected with a proliferation of similar movements elsewhere [Lyall 2019].[1] Lewis Grassic Gibbon, for example, before writing his *Sunset Song* [1932], had read Delmer's translation into English of Gustav Frenssen's 1901 *Jörn Uhl*, a bestselling *Heimat-Roman* (homeland-novel) set in rural north Germany. In that translation, Scots was used to convey regional resonances; taking Delmer's textual translation as inspiration for a broad cultural translation, *Sunset Song* illustrates the intertextual and international aspects of modernism, as well as a realisation of translation as a way of highlighting human experiences shared across national and cultural boundaries [Lyall 2019: 213].[2]

This association of cultural revival with linguistic diversity infused the collection of oral tradition materials by the School of Scottish Studies, where in the 1950s Calum MacLean led the work with Gaelic tradition-bearers while Hamish Henderson's focus was on their Scots language counterparts, including in particular

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[1] The cultural interchange with European cultures in particular continued to be a defining feature of Scottish modernism, with the direction of flow somewhat reversed during the 1960s and 1970s, when the Irish and Scottish folk revivals prompted similar movements, including dialect revivals, in several European countries.

[2] Frenssen's later work became highly ideologised, and he strongly supported Nazi policies. The 1970 translation of *A Scots Quair* into German, appearing only in the German Democratic Republic and under the author's original name, James Leslie Mitchell, used a rurally inflected High German; in 2018, a new translation by Esther Kinsky was published, using Low German vocabulary.

the Travellers. While this collecting activity was in part also motivated by the same concerns as the 'salvage ethnology' that had arisen across Europe in the light of accelerating industrialisation and the increasing urbanisation of life-worlds, it was also inspired by a Gramscian concern with liberation of the subaltern [Gibson 2010], and thus the collectors were, as Henderson [1991: 11] noted, *engaged willy-nilly in a political act.*

For Gramsci, 'folklore' – understood as a world-view – was necessarily *a counter-point of perpetual resistance, due to its very existence* [Gibson 2010: 244]. Moreover, according to Gramsci, we are all philosophers, engaging in everyday *spontaneous philosophy*, expressed through the very language we speak, through our common sense and through our beliefs, ways of seeing things and acting – that is, our folklore [Gibson 2010: 245]. In that spirit, Henderson emphasised the language we speak as foundational for identity, which, contrary to the stark individualism prevailing in Anglophone hegemonic culture, is always relational, not just at a societal level, but in the wider ecological sense of connecting to the world around us, which he found aptly expressed in Gramsci's letter to his sister Teresina, imploring her to support her son learning to speak Sardinian, the language of his native island [Henderson 1991: 15].

In some sense, the collectors at the School of Scottish Studies, led by Henderson and MacLean, followed in the footsteps of Alexander Carmichael who, in the second half of the 19th century, collected and translated folklore in the Gaelic-speaking highlands and islands. Very much a cultural document of its time, his *Carmina Gadelica* presents orally collected material in translation, and his editing has attracted some controversy, although the linguistic quality of the text has ensured its continued significance. Carmichael's work correlates with the modernist Gaelic poets, such as Sorley MacLean, in a way similar to how Geddes's *Scots Renascence* connects with Hugh MacDiarmid's Scottish literary renaissance of a generation later. Murdo Macdonald argues that *Carmina Gadelica* is *an act of linguistic conservation and renewal ... comparable ... with Geddes's interventions in the Old Town of Edinburgh. In both cases much was preserved that otherwise would have been lost and a new cultural dynamic was made possible* [Macdonald 2020: 81].

Town and Country Planning

The work of Patrick Geddes has been influential in a wide range of academic disciplines and has shaped professional practice. His triadic 'thinking machines' [Meller 1990: 45–52], for example the famous *Place–Work–Folk*, are being applied by ethnologists, geographers and planners to explore the connections between culture and nature through the prism of 'place' [e. g., Kockel 2008]. As these 'thinking machines' exemplify his integrated cosmovision, his three-dimensional 'Notation

of Life' reflects the dynamic relationship between people and their environment, representing a call to action as well as a methodology. Patrick Geddes was thinking from a culturally grounded perspective, drawing on history and tradition to improve his contemporary lifeworld. Based on his belief that art, as a manifestation of place drawing on folklore and tradition, creatively expresses the collective memory of a society, his cultural ecological imagination is perhaps best epitomised by his magazine *The Evergreen,* which brought together artists, writers and thinkers sharing a belief in Scotland as a creative nation with its own vision of a collective that is based on creativity, place, and community action. The Romantic idea of rootedness in a specific locality as vital for a truly international, global vision – expressed in his famous dictum 'think global, act local' – was the very foundation of Geddes' thinking.

In the 1920s, the Scottish writers Edwin and Willa Muir spent time at Hellerau, a new town on the edge of Dresden, where fellow Scot A. S. Neill, a radical educationalist, had helped set up an international school [Lyall 2019: 217]. Established in 1909, Germany's first 'garden city' was built following Ebenezer Howard's ideas of community planning, which were deeply influenced by Patrick Geddes [Odom 2016]. In his autobiography, Neill [1973] says about his time in Hellerau that it gave him *a Weltanschauung* (..) *and in a way it killed any tendency* [he] *had towards nationalism.* Fifty years earlier, in his semi-fictional *A Dominie Abroad*, he had written: *We cannot be international unless we are first national. Why, I am much more of a Scot in Dresden than I am in Edinburgh, and for the first time in my life I think seriously of wearing a kilt* [Neill 1923: 67]. For Neill, who discovered a personal sense of Scottishness while in Germany, there was no contradiction in being both an internationalist and a nationalist; both perspectives were complementary foundations for a broad-minded worldview [Neill 1923: 69]. Edwin and Willa Muir's sense of belonging in Hellerau during 1922–23 was later described by Willa [Muir 1968: 74f.]:

> *The atmosphere was genuinely international. No racial, political or national prejudices interfered with the many new friendships now formed.* (..) *No one country had a preponderance in numbers and each young student was met and treated as an individual person, not as a Finn or a Czech or a Belgian.*

Like Geddes and others associated with 'adaptive', 'provincial' modernist movements, the Muirs saw nationalism as a means of re-creating cultural pluralism, rather than a device for insisting on cultural homogeneity: *Wherever they originated, these early twentieth-century thinkers shared an intellectual project of cultural nationalism as a basis for international co-operation* [Macdonald 2020: 108; see also Macdonald 2002].

Heritages and Authenticity, Resources and Sustainability

As a founder of town planning and human ecology, Geddes was, in one sense, thoroughly modernist; yet he was also, and comprehensively, a cultural revivalist. There is no conflict in this because for Geddes, according to Macdonald [2020: 146],

> *a sustainable future required an understanding of the past ... and his modernism did not simply learn from the past, it depended on it; thus, cultural revivalism and modernism are so profoundly intertwined that one can see them as two sides of the same early twentieth-century coin.*

Macdonald here compares this vision to that of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, recalling Patrick Geddes commenting on Mackintosh's Glasgow School of Art building that *never was concrete more concrete, steel more steely*, and pointing out that *at the same time never was architecture more informed by history*.

Writing during the first term of the re-constituted Scottish Parliament, social philosopher Tariq Modood [2001] noted that, even before devolution, the ethnic label 'British' had increasingly been replaced by 'Scottish', to the point where it was almost easier to be British and Pakistani than to be British and Scottish.[1] This may have been an early signal of a trend that has since led to the result of the 2014 independence referendum being much tighter than either side had anticipated. However, it also reveals a peculiar turn in the political discourse on identity and belonging in Scotland. Because of its apparent internal contradictions, this turn remains difficult to grasp analytically: A strong emphasis on 'land' and 'place' is normally associated with exclusion, but in Scotland it appears to signify a way of inclusion – not just rhetorically, but in everyday practice. The ongoing debate about land reform – whose land this Scotland is and should be – is critically connected with a simultaneous debate about who is or is not 'Scottish', and what that designation actually indicates. Key themes of the land reform debate include absentee landlordism, the persisting inequalities in Scottish society, and care for the environment as a global issue with specific Scottish aspects. For many centuries, migration out of and into as well as within Scotland has been a significant social issue; the persisting historical problem of rural depopulation, together with contemporary immigration, is bringing this issue very much into focus again. The connections between these themes were captured eloquently in John McGrath's *The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black Black Oil*, a play firmly rooted in the cultural movement discussed here, which was first produced in 1973 by agitprop theatre group *7:84* – a name referring to the fact that in the 1960s some 7% of the population owned 84% of the wealth. The first production of the play *was the moment when all the questions as to "What kind of Scotland?"*

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[1] This paragraph is based on Kockel [2017].

began to find answers [Burnett 2015: 232f.]. The play was re-staged with significant popular success during the referendum campaign and has since had further sell-out runs across the country, which suggests the issues addressed have lost little of their relevance.

With its reference to natural resources, and oil in particular, the play highlights what has more recently been theorised as Scottish modernism's turn towards 'lithic agency'. In *A Scots Quair*, the pivotal character, Chris, returns time and again to the stone war monument and the ancient standing stones to reaffirm her temporal perspective, and her son's commitment to communism is likened to 'grey granite', the title of the last novel in the trilogy. Similarly, a cultural 'lithoscape' is portrayed by Nan Shepherd, whose Grampian novels are turned into a quartet by her later meditation on *The Living Mountain*, which understands the mountain as *an organic, inorganic, and atmospheric body* [Gardiner and Stones 2020: 1045]. These lithic perspectives offer *an intervention into Scotland's 'problem of a suspended history'* [Gardiner and Stones 2020: 1046, citing Craig 1996 and Gray 1981]. Gardiner and Stones also refer in this context to Edwin Morgan's *Sonnets from Scotland*. Morgan was Scotland's first official Makar (poet laureate) in modern times, and his poetry *both acted as a conduit for a vast range of European modernisms, and was associated with … independence issues* [Gardiner and Stones 2020: 1048]. A stanza from his poem [Morgan 2004] commissioned for, and performed at the reconstitution of the Scottish Parliament illustrates this lithic perspective; the building itself, located across the road from the Royal Palace of Holyrood House, is an eloquent statement of that perspective, with its architecture referencing Scotland's land, sea, natural resources, and cultural heritages:

> *But bring together slate and stainless steel, black granite*
> *and grey granite, seasoned oak and sycamore, concrete*
> *blond and smooth as silk – the mix is almost alive – it*
> *breathes and beckons – imperial marble it is not!*

The poem's perspective is not unlike Hamish Henderson's who, in his *Elegies* [Henderson 1948, cited in Neat 2002], wrote:

> *Let my words knit what now we lack*
> *The demon and the heritage*
> *And fancy strapped to logic's rock.*
> *A chastened wantonness, a bit*
> *That sets on song a discipline,*
> *A sensuous austerity.*

As Timothy Neat observed in his *Guardian* obituary to Henderson, this is *the kind of vision that Charles Rennie Mackintosh expressed in stone and wood and glass* [Neat 2002]. The new building of the Museum of Scotland, opened in 1998, begins its narrative of the nation's story with its geology [Cohen 2015, cited in Gardiner and Stones 2020: 1048], building layer upon layer of historical sediment until the story culminates on the top floor in a present that maps the 20th century.

Gardiner and Stones analyse the emphasis on what they call *lithic agency* as a shift from a subject-centred worldview that they call *Hanoverian*[1] – a perspective based on 'natural law' that can see society only as organically evolving association of individuals owning property, and therefore requires ontological distance from material objects – and argue that this *lithic agency*, already a concern of the Scottish modernists, *can be traced forward to anxieties over the 'totalising' or 'time-fixing' qualities of nuclear weapons* [Gardiner and Stones 2020: 1041].[2] They note that the issue of nuclear energy, and especially nuclear weapons, formed *one of the key fissures behind the 2014 Scottish independence referendum,* arguing that *the **materiality** of nuclear war in post-1979 culture is thematically bound up with a 'stony' consciousness that ... continues Scottish modernism's lithic yearnings* [Gardiner and Stones 2020: 1054, original emphasis].

Their conclusion points towards the land issue as a fundamental cultural divide ultimately separating Scotland from the Union born out of the conjunction of Protestant Reformation and European Enlightenment, and based on a 'natural law' perspective on property, *able to spread capitalist principles of accumulation throughout the empire*; but, arising out of an *unexpectedly long history of lithic encounters*, the authors see a way towards a society *less slavishly bound to ownership* [Gardiner and Stones 2020: 1055]. Such a society, connected with place other than by legal-commercial title, and more deeply, would be better capable of tackling the issues of sustainability its constituent communities are facing.

'Poetry Becomes People' – The New Scots in the New Scotland

Belonging in 21st century Scotland has become largely a matter of inclusion – if you live here and you want to be, you can be Scottish. But this does not amount to a postmodernist nirvana, a shallow-essentialist identikit of tartan and bagpipes you can swap as you please. Evident already during the independence campaign, that has

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[1] One might take issue with this characterisation, as the worldview they are describing is culturally English rather than in any historical sense continental European; but that is a topic for another time.

[2] It is worth noting that the European folk revivals from the 1960s onwards (see Note 1 on p. 16) have been closely aligned with the antinuclear and peace movements, and in many regions continue to be so; for a vignette of the *Free Republic of Wendland*, see Kockel [2012b].

become even clearer since. The scene in Scotland is markedly different from both 'blood-and-soil' type ethnic nationalisms and civic – or constitutional (Habermas) – forms of nationalism. It may not even be 'nationalism' in the common modern sense of the term. Whereas the resurgence of English nationalism since the 'Brexit'-vote is widely perceived as an outburst of xenophobia in a population that sees itself as ethnically English and constitutionally British, both defined with reference to the context of an Empire that no longer exists, the Scottish identity that has been emerging is built not so much on a (Romantic) ethnic or (Enlightened) civic nation, but rather on what one might call a 'community of spirit' sharing particular political concerns, combined with a commitment to stewardship of place in all its facets.

Most, if perhaps not all protagonists of the Scottish Renaissance were, like MacDiarmid, nationalists who believed that a national resurgence would need cultural influences from other nations. The same conviction today underpins the vision of a New Scotland embracing the New Scots. In the 1950s, the public confrontations ('flytings') between MacDiarmid and Henderson, especially concerning the literary value of the folk tradition, shaped Scotland's cultural agenda to the extent that Hamish Henderson's biographer, Timothy Neat [2002], called the two poets *the twin piers of 'revolutionary thought' in modern Scotland, archetypal representatives of Apollonian and Dionysian energy*. Growing up in this intellectual climate was another poet who has taken Scotland's adaptive modernism to a new 'lithic' dimension: Kenneth White, whose *geopoetics* [White 2003] is inspiring contemporary protagonists of a *creative ethnology* to follow the Carrying Stream 'into the mountain' [Kockel and McFadyen 2019]. Henderson's famous dictum that 'poetry becomes people', implying poetry generates and changes nations, has become a basic tenet of the ethnopoesis that we can see at work in today's Scotland [Kockel 2017].[1]

Scottish adaptive modernism did not run its course by the 1960s. The movement towards national self-determination that began in the heyday of the Scottish Renaissance carried the baton slowly but steadily, through victory in a 1967 Westminster by-election and the failed referendum of 1979, to an absolute majority in the Scottish Parliament elections of 2011. Leading up to the independence referendum that followed in 2014, groups like National Collective championed a continued and reinvigorated Scottish Renaissance, drawing their inspiration from

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[1] As an accidental participant-observer, I have found contemporary Scotland a most stimulating place, not only for its natural beauty and cultural heritages. Over the last decade or so, one of my projects has been the theoretical development of a critical topography informing a topology leading to deep toposophical understanding of human ecological relations in place [Kockel 2009]. Such an engagement requires grappling with issues around 'land' and 'belonging' that are as uncomfortable now as they were for protagonists of the Scottish Renaissance (see Note 1 on p. 13).

the well of their own tradition. Many of its protagonists have been inspired by Hamish Henderson's work and his metaphor of the Carrying Stream, and the Geddesian vision of sustainable communities. In between and from these two extends the internationalist heritage of the Scottish Renaissance, offering the New Scots vistas of authentic ways of being-in-the-New-Scotland they share by continuous co-creation.

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