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Scottish Studies Foundation
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**THE FRANK WATSON PRIZE IN SCOTTISH HISTORY** 132
Hugh MacDiarmid’s writing career was a committed act of engagement and identification with the land of his birth. In ‘Scotland’ he tells us:

So I have gathered unto myself /
All the loose ends of Scotland,
And by naming them and accepting them, /
Loving them and identifying myself with them, /
Attempt to express the whole.¹

In ‘Direadh 1’ he names Scotland as his Muse, ‘the very object of my song / – This marvellous land of Scotland’.² On addressing his hero Dostoevsky in A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle, the poet claims that ‘a’ that’s Scottish is in me / As a’ things Russian were in thee’ and at the end of the poem he learns that, like Christ, the Scottish poet must die to redeem his people from the ‘livin’ tomb’ of their philistine individual lives and failed collective history.³ In ‘Conception’, the artist gives birth to a new idea of Scotland that is at one with his own identity:

So that indeed I could not be myself /
Without this strange, mysterious, awful finding /
Of my people’s very life within my own /
– This terrible blinding discovery /
Of Scotland in me, and I in Scotland⁴

Informed by postcolonial theory, this essay explores the way in which MacDiarmid creates a metaphysical Scotland – an absolutist vision of a nation that he identifies absolutely with himself – out of the complexities of his own divided Scottish identity.

Introduction: The Colonial Scot
Christopher Murray Grieve’s conception of the poet Hugh MacDiarmid in Montrose in 1922 simultaneously generated
an idealized vision of Scotland. Grieve’s plan for a renascent Scotland is as absolutist as his poetic persona. MacDiarmid’s identitarian politics allowed him the hubris of believing that ‘I am Scotland itself to-day’. The Scot’s close self-identification with the nation could be compared with Gustave Flaubert’s comment as to the inspiration behind his most famous character, ‘Madame Bovary, c’est moi’. Flaubert denounces bourgeois French provinciality through the figure of Emma Bovary; Grieve rages against a kailyard Scotland in the verse of Hugh MacDiarmid. But if Emma Bovary was defeated by the parochialism of her environment, Chris Grieve was determined not to be. Grieve attempts to make Scotland whole, healing the fractures of the past – the Reformation, the Union with England, the Anglophone Scottish Enlightenment, and Scotland’s investment in the British Empire – through the force of his own self-created personality, his essential self, MacDiarmid.

However, such splitting of the personality as witnessed in Grieve-MacDiarmid implies a problematic sense of self, as if artistic creativity in Scotland can only come through the discarding of a damaged personality and a subsequent process of self-recreation. The poet’s hatred of the Other in the form of the English, combined with his dual personality, displays the subaltern consciousness of the colonial subject, the very identity structure from which he is striving to escape. This schizophrenia also signals a loathing of the actual, leading to a condemnation of what is in the name of what could be. Grieve’s creation of his essential self as MacDiarmid in turn leads to his vision of the real, essential, metaphysical Scotland, in almost every way the opposite of the existent nation.

The idea of a split Scottish identity is employed in G. Gregory Smith’s *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919), a book that was particularly fruitful for MacDiarmid in its delineation of the essential Scot. Smith’s Caledonian anti-syzygy, a ‘combination of opposites’ or duality of the self – ‘two moods’ in the national literature of fantasy and reality – productive of great creative energy, seems unlikely to strike us now as peculiarly Scottish, despite the presence in the national literature of such obvious exemplifications of the idea as
James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) and R.L. Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). According to Smith, the Caledonian antiszygy is an apt ideational expression of the dichotomous nature of Scottish identity and the nation’s ruptured political and cultural experience:

> we have a reflection of the contrasts which the Scot shows at every turn, in his political and ecclesiastical history, in his polemical restlessness, in his adaptability, which is another way of saying that he has made allowance for new conditions, in his practical judgement, which is his admission that two sides of the matter have been considered.

As Robert Crawford points out, the Caledonian antiszygy has ‘become something of a cliché’ in Scotland:

> The standard thing to do with a Scottish writer is to show how he (or, very occasionally, she) corresponds to the well-established pattern of the Caledonian Antisyzygy. This model has been useful, but constricting. It is surely a measure of the theoretical poverty of much Scottish literary criticism that it has remained for most of the twentieth century the sole major interpretative model of the Scottish writer, and of Scottish Culture as a whole.

Yet for MacDiarmid, Smith’s essentialism was a valuable tool that enabled him to read the present as a degenerative phase caused by pernicious Anglicization. If only Scotland could find its true radically republican, internationalist identity the historical fractures of the past and the personal psychological splits of the present could be made whole.

**The Uncanny Scot**

MacDiarmid’s *Scottish Eccentrics* (1936) is a book-length exemplification of the Caledonian antiszygy. Here he contends that the dualistic identity of ‘almost every distinguished Scot’ is made up of ‘extraordinary contradictions of character, most dangerous antinomies and antithetical impulses’. However, through Union with England the canny
Scot has largely replaced this older, more distinguished Scottish type. Writing in 1931, MacDiarmid dismisses the canny Scot as a cultural stereotype fostered by the English in order to further political control:

The contention is that the Union with England and other factors have favoured the wrong type of Scotland and promulgated on that basis – to the detriment and practical elimination of the finer elements of our race – a false and unworthy myth. [...] The ‘false myth’ of the canny Scot, with its subsidiaries, the mean Aberdonian and the egregious highlander of the Clans MacSporran and Macspurtle.

In *Scottish Eccentrics*, MacDiarmid sees the character of the post-Union Scot as having ‘undergone a very remarkable change’ that ‘may itself be only another exemplification of this peculiar working of our national genius’ for a contrariness at odds with the image of the canny Scot. The stereotypical Scots of the United Kingdom, encapsulated in the canny Scot myth, ‘are regarded for the most part as a very dour, hard-headed, hard-working, tenacious people, devoted to the practical things of life and making no contribution to the more dazzling or debatable spheres of human genius’. For the MacDiarmid of *Lucky Poet* (1943), this post-Union, monochromatic Scottish identity is mirrored in the drab empiricism of the nation’s presiding philosophy: ‘Scotland’s most pressing problem is undoubtedly the continued sway (in the head, if not on the lips) of the Common Sense Philosophy.’

MacDiarmid seeks the replacement of this culturally and politically disabling fallacy of the canny, pragmatic Anglo-Scot encouraged by Enlightenment metropolitanism with his own Celtic myth of the massively erudite and disinterested, divinely inebriated Scoto-Gaelic poet, the essential metaphysical Scot.

The ‘clichéd image of the “canny Scot”’, as Alan Riach points out, is a form of music hall ‘tartan mockery’ successfully incarnated in MacDiarmid’s *bête noir* Harry Lauder. MacDiarmid mentions Lauder often in his work, believing him to have ‘played England’s game and held Scotland up /
To ridicule wherever you’ve gone.\textsuperscript{xvii} MacDiarmid’s difficulty with Lauder is twofold. Firstly, the cultural image that Lauder presented of Scotland to the world was so hopelessly reactionary that it compounded the political provincialization of the Scots and effectively denationalized them:

The reason why the Harry Lauder type of thing is so popular in England is because it corresponds to the average Englishman’s ignorant notion of what the Scot is – or because it gives him a feeling of superiority which he is glad to indulge on any grounds, justified or otherwise. ‘Lauderism’ has made thousands of Scotsmen so disgusted with their national characteristics that they have gone to the opposite extreme and become, or tried to become, as English as possible; ‘Lauderism’ is, of course, only the extreme form of those qualities of caniness, pawkiness and religiosity, which have been foisted upon the Scottish people by insidious English propaganda, as a means of destroying Scottish national pride, and of robbing Scots of their true attributes which are the very opposite of these mentioned. It is high time Scots were becoming alive to the ulterior effect of this propaganda by ridicule.\textsuperscript{xviii}

For MacDiarmid, Lauder is a Scottish Uncle Tom contributing to English nationalism’s cultural and political domination of Scotland. MacDiarmid thought of Lauder as a Scottish stereotype, harmful to the nation’s sense of itself. He jealously hates Lauder because the entertainer has become what the poet wants to be, the voice of Scotland. Only, for this Scottish nationalist poet searching for the essential, metaphysical Scot, Lauder is the false voice of a degraded nation: ‘The problems o’ the Scottish soul / Are nocht to Harry Lauder’.\textsuperscript{xix}

Secondly, Lauder was remarkably popular and rich. According to Lauder’s biographer Gordon Irving, ‘When he did a broadcast at Christmas in 1925, he was given the highest fee ever paid at that time by the British Broadcasting Corporation. It was in the region of £1,500.’\textsuperscript{xx} Lauder’s is a true rags-to-riches story, from a small house in Portobello,
where he was born in 1870 and where his father worked as a potter, to friendship with Andrew Carnegie and Charlie Chaplin and knighthood in 1919. MacDiarmid's beginnings were similarly modest, but he was never to receive the plaudits that Lauder won and worked in a field which, as a self-proclaimed highbrow, he considered to be infinitely more important to the national culture:

The fact that this over-paid clown gets £1,500 a week is a shameful commentary on the low state of public taste. It represents a salary which, divided up into good reasonable sums, would provide for 150 intellectual workers yearly amounts of £500 each. £500 a year is considerably more than the average that has been earned by any of the writers, artists, or musicians of whom Scotland has any right to be proud during the past 200 years. One of the finest of modern Scots, John Davidson, commits suicide because he cannot stand any longer the daily humiliations to which he is exposed through his inability to lower himself successfully to cater for the mass; Harry Lauder – who has done nothing worth doing and is not fit to blacken Davidson’s boots – earns £1,500 a week, a 150th part of which would have kept Davidson in comfort and enabled him to add work of permanent value to the world of letters. Burns, towards the end, is sore depressed for £5. But Harry Lauder earns every week more than double all Burns received for his immortal poems – and has the indecency to take it and think he is worth it.\textsuperscript{xxi}

Lauder not only thought he was worth the money he earned, he propagandized for the system from which he benefited so handsomely and to which the communist MacDiarmid is opposed. In an article in the Democrat, which proclaimed above the title of its hundredth issue ‘We are out to fight the policy of red revolution’, Lauder tells us ‘how money is made’:

We are beginning to realise that we cannot get something for nothing; that work is the cure for most wrongs – good, honest work for an honest and fair
wage. Money is only made by those who control it, keep it, and put it to its proper use. A man who never tries to save and never tries to put his money to its best advantage will never make any and never deserve to: hence the reason that Communism will never be a practicable thing. We are none of us alike; some work and some don’t and never will. I myself have never been a ‘ca’ cannyist’. I have worked my hardest all my life, and I don’t regret a single day spent. Communism would mean the absolute negation of the principle of self-help, and, moreover, of human nature.xxii

Irving tells us that after some bad contractual experiences in London, Lauder ‘made up his mind that he would never again see other artistes on the same bill earning more money than himself’,xxiii For the MacDiarmid of ‘Ode to All Rebels’

Ilka man that blethers o’ honest toil, /  
And believes in rewards and punishments,  
In a God like Public Opinion, /  
And the sanctity o’ the financial system…

is a ‘devil’ and the task of the rebel ‘is to destroy them a’’.xxiv In attempting to destroy Lauder, the elitist MacDiarmid is aiming his polemical guns at the most famous Scot of the day and the false, capitalist Anglo-Scotland that he cannily represents.

For MacDiarmid, the travesty that is the canny Scot stereotype is dangerous because it immobilizes Scottish identity within politically controllable colonial confines. Postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha sees such stereotyping as an integral part of the theoretical doctrine of colonialism: ‘An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of “fixity” in the ideological construction of otherness.’xxv By parading before us ‘the strange procession’ of heterogeneous Scottishness collected in Scottish Eccentrics, MacDiarmid is attempting to break that ‘fixity’ and allow a much more fluid idea of national identity. However, his eccentrics, notable failures like William McGonagall and Christopher North, seem merely to be the dualistic flip-side of the stereotypical snobbish superiority of the English – MacDiarmid’s book
follows on from Edith Sitwell’s *English Eccentrics* (1933) – and the eminently empirical and imperial Brit.

MacDiarmid’s masculinist conception of the nation also perpetuates stereotypes: there is, for example, only one woman in *Scottish Eccentrics*, Elspeth Buchan, an eighteenth-century religionist. MacDiarmid’s analysis of the character of Scottish women tends to reinforce the canny Scot myth he is attempting to break. He contends that they ‘have perhaps played a greater part, influenced the activities of the men to a greater extent, than the women of any other European nation’:

> Can the absence in modern Scotland of all the rare and higher qualities of the human spirit be attributed to this undue influence of the female sex? It may have something to do with it. It is, at all events, worth recalling that Galton in his study of genius maintains that it seldom comes where the mother’s influence is strongest. Scotswomen are overwhelmingly not the sort to be ‘fashed with the nonsense’ of any attention to the arts, or other precarious and comparatively unremunerative activities on the part of their offspring, as against due concentration on the business of getting on and doing well in a solid material sense.\(^{xxvi}\)

Riach suggests that, ‘Far from implying misogyny, a close reading might demonstrate MacDiarmid’s complicity in feminist theories about the social construction of sexual identity.’\(^{xxvii}\) However, given that MacDiarmid’s whole body of work may be seen as an attempt to re-masculinize a Scotland that has been feminized by its role as the weaker partner of the Union, this contention is difficult to support. The problem with MacDiarmid’s conception of identity, whether female or national, is that in its reliance on the antisyzygy trope it centres the dualism of colonial discourse within the very subject that is seeking to escape this paralyzing schism.

MacDiarmid’s essentialism emanates in part from his own religious, psychological and creative needs which, in a megalomaniacal manner, he projects on to his nation. However, the nationalist poet also wishes to make whole in the present a problematical inheritance from the past: the political and
cultural fissures of the Union and the Anglophone Scottish Enlightenment. Such are illustrated by the metropolitan Dr Johnson – whose Dictionary (1755) contributes to the process of British linguistic standardization – on a visit to Enlightenment Edinburgh in 1773:

> The conversation of the Scots grows every day less unpleasing to the English; their peculiarities wear fast away; their dialect is likely to become in half a century provincial and rustick, even to themselves. The great, the learned, the ambitious, and the vain, all cultivate the English phrase, and the English pronunciation, and in splendid companies Scotch is not much heard, except now and then from an old Lady.xxviii

MacDiarmid attempts to surmount such ruptures in tradition by writing a Scots poetry that seeks to re-establish a distinctly Scottish national voice. However, his search for the metaphysical Scot in Montrose in the 1920s denies the Anglo-Scottish element of Scottish identity through the essentialism of a totalizing project that attempts to uncover the real Scotland. Writing ‘Towards a Scottish Renaissance’ in 1929, MacDiarmid proposes that we

> take a typical Anglo-Scot, opposed to Nationalism, ignorant of Scots and still more of Gaelic, and carefully catalogue all that he takes for granted as reasonable, natural, and inevitable in any connection – and repudiate the lot, and take up the very opposite positions.xxix

From a postcolonial theoretical perspective, such absolutist repudiation of alterity, the striving after cultural and political unity, is the theoretical armoury for the very political and cultural imperialism that MacDiarmid is seeking to counter. By portraying Scottish cultural identity since the Union as dualistically fractured and failed, through acceptance of Gregory Smith’s dichotomous antisyzgy as the essence of the true Scot, MacDiarmid mirrors metropolitan culture’s deliberately distorted vision of its Other, the peripheral or marginal culture. MacDiarmid’s essentialism helps keeps the Enlightenment imperial dualism of centre and
margin alive and is ultimately, therefore, a self-defeating theory for the marginalized culture to embrace.

The Catholic Scot

The failure to achieve a unified identity in personal, cultural, political and metaphysical terms in modern Scotland is the subject of *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, a work which Tom Nairn has described as ‘that great national poem on the impossibility of nationalism’. xxx Published in 1926, this modernist poem is the culmination of MacDiarmid’s experience of the First World War and the reading, thinking and writing that began ‘Somewhere in Macedonia’, from where he intended to return and ‘enter heart and body and soul into a new Scots Nationalist propaganda’. xxxi MacDiarmid’s thinking at this time of war had turned towards Neo-Catholicism, about which he wrote essays on ‘Neo-Catholicism’s debt to Sir Walter Scott’ and ‘The Indisserverable [sic] Association’ between Scottish culture and Catholicism. xxxii Even at this early stage – these ideas are from a letter to George Ogilvie dated 20 August 1916 – MacDiarmid is not only concerned with acquiring Scottish cultural omnipotence, but also with the idea of failure in the national culture:

I have my ‘The Scottish Vortex’ [as per system exemplified in *Blast*], ‘Caricature in Scotland – and lost opportunities’, ‘A Copy of Burns I want’, [suggestions to illustrators on a personal visualization of the national pictures evoked in the poem], ‘Scottish colour-thought’ [a study of the aesthetic condition of Scottish nationality in the last three centuries] and ‘The Alienation of Our Artistic Ability’ [the factors which prevent the formation of a ‘national’ school and drive our artists to other lands and to foreign portrayal]. xxxiii

The Scottish Renaissance group that MacDiarmid was to have such an influential part in promoting had many Catholic converts within its ranks, such as Fionn Mac Colla, whose novel *The Albaanach* (1932) and non-fictional work *At the Sign of the Clenched Fist* (1967) castigate the cultural blight of Scotland’s Knoxian heritage and who converted in 1935, and Compton Mackenzie who converted in 1914 and whose novel...
Sinister Street (1913-14) climaxes with the hero Michael Fane coming to the faith: ‘Rome! Rome! How parochial you make my youth.’ xxxiv Mackenzie later wrote the personalistic Catholicism and Scotland (1936). The self-proclaimed atheist MacDiarmid never converted to Catholicism, but many of his earlier ideas accord with what William Storrar calls ‘the parrot cries of the Scottish literati about the continuing blight of Calvinism on the nation’s psyche’. xxxv For instance, this is MacDiarmid in 1928:

I assert without fear of contradiction that the general type of consciousness which exists in Scotland today – call it Calvinistic or what you will [it has, at any rate, been largely coloured and determined by the unique and peculiarly unfortunate form the Reformation took in Scotland] – is anti-aesthetic to an appalling degree, and none the less so because it is, ipso facto, constitutionally unconscious of its disability, and naively disposed to set up its own gross limitations as indispensable criteria. I make no apology for my central position that no amount of theology or morality can compensate for the lack of active creative perceptiveness in a people. xxxvi

The drunk man laments the cultural influence of Calvinism in almost pathological terms, suggesting a disease particular to the artist that has communal side effects:

O fitly frae oor cancerous soil /
May this heraldic horror rise!
The Presbyterian thistle flourishes, /
And its ain roses crucifies... xxxvii

The theoretical MacDiarmid of the Scottish renaissance, aiming to unify Scotland against political and cultural provincialization, believes that

It will not do to identify Scottish nationality and traditions wholly with Protestantism. There has always been a considerable native Catholic population, and most of the finest elements in our traditions, in our literature, in our national history, come down from the days when Scotland was wholly Catholic. xxxviii
By emphasizing the cultural bountifulness of Scotland’s pre-Reformation, Catholic past, MacDiarmid is attempting to counter the influence of Protestantism in dynastically and politically uniting the nations of the United Kingdom and so undermine its power to continue to do so in the present. When Linda Colley asks, ‘Who were the British, and did they even exist?’ the answer she supplies is emphatic: ‘Protestantism was the foundation that made the invention of Great Britain possible.’xxxix Similarly, of the metropolitan, Anglophone Scottish Enlightenment, Alexander Broadie says, ‘Moderate Protestantism was the Enlightenment baptised’.xl For MacDiarmid, looking to heal the ruptures of the past, these are good political and ideological reasons to exaggerate an attachment to Catholicism and correspondingly overestimate the cultural damage perpetrated by the religion of his birth.

The Metaphysical Scot

The drunk man begins his metaphysical odyssey in search of the absolute by wrestling with Scottish Presbyterianism and its cultural consequences. In the process, he betrays his own Calvinist inheritance through his elect attitude to his fellow nationals and the national culture. The real Scotland has lost its spirit and has been buried underneath the dross of a fake tourist culture. Even Scotland’s most famous export, whisky, has been watered down and now ‘the stuffie’s no’ the real Mackay’.xli Whisky is a metaphor for the deplorable condition of a nation from which the essence has been stolen to benefit others, leaving Scotland ‘destitute o’ speerit’.xlii It is the drunk man’s self-imposed task to expose this counterfeit culture in order ‘To prove my saul is Scots’xlii He will do so by treating of ‘what’s still deemed Scots and the folk expect’, such as whisky and Robert Burns, before moving on to metaphysical ‘heichts whereo’ the fules ha’e never recked’.xliv For the drunk man searching for the essential nation and its worthy inhabitant, the metaphysical Scot, ‘Sic transit gloria Scotiae’ – all the glories of pre-Reformation Scotland have passed away – to be replaced by the kailyard offerings of Presbyterian ministers and the canny music hall caricature of a Scot, ‘Harry Lauder (to enthrall us)’.xlv
In *A Drunk Man* MacDiarmid feels impelled to represent Scotland because the nation is intrinsic to his identity. The drunk man’s sense of self is compiled of ‘a composite diagram o’ my forbears’ organs’ and although this uncanny Scot attempts in self-disgust to exorcize this haunting by his ancestors, ‘yet like bindweed through my clay it’s run’. On examination of himself, the drunk man finds his innermost, spiritual identity to be irredeemably connected to a metaphysical Scotland:

```plaintext
My ain soul looks me in the face, as ’twere,  
And mair than my ain soul – my nation’s soul!
```

Similarly,

```plaintext
Scotland, responsive to my thoughts,  
Lichts mile by mile, as my ain nerves,  
Frae Maidenkirk to John o’ Groats!
```

The drunk man, seeking a metaphysical nation made complete and undivided through the creative endeavours of the essential Scot, is bound body and soul to the whole of a fractured Scotland.

Yet in spite, or perhaps because, of the drunk man’s close identification with his country, his attitude to his fellow nationals is disdainful. MacDiarmid often behaved in a similar way in his public pronouncements on other famous Scots, such as Burns and Lauder, for instance. If he is Scotland then he must oust anyone else who may have a claim to national precedence in order to clear the way for his own vision of the nation. The absolutist MacDiarmid in pursuit of a metaphysical Scotland creates a cultural vacuum – not the so-called fractures of the nation’s past – through his idea of a failed Scotland that he can then fill with his saviour-like presence. Illustrating MacDiarmid’s Calvinist inheritance, the visionary drunk man sees himself as elect in comparison with the majority of Scots, represented by his spiritually unenlightened drinking companions Cruivie and Gilsanquhar:

```plaintext
What are prophets and priests and kings, /  
What’s ocht to the people o’ Scotland?  
Speak – and Cruivie’ll goam at you, /  
Gilsanquhar jalouse you’re dottlin!
```
J.K.S. Reid, in his introduction to Calvin’s Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God, reminds us that Calvin affirms that there is clearly a difference of condition amongst those who have a common nature. In the darkness common to all, some are illumined, while others remain blind. The question Calvin raises is how this differentiation comes about. His answer to the question is equally clear: we must confess that ‘God, by His eternal goodwill, which has no cause outside itself, destined those whom He pleased to salvation, rejecting the rest; those whom He dignified by gratuitous adoption, He illumined by His spirit, so that they receive the life offered in Christ, while others voluntarily disbelieve, so that they remain in darkness destitute of the light of faith’.

In a metaphysical poem soaked with references to Christ and Calvary, the visionary drunk man is clearly in thrall to his Presbyterian formation. Combined with a sense of elect superiority, this leaves the drunk man somewhat at odds with his Scottish environment and its myth of Burnsian egalitarianism. Paradoxically, his elect, elitist self-identity may be an attempt to dismember within himself the spiritual remnants of a Christianity – inherited from his small-town Border childhood – that bears resemblance to Burnsian socialism:

O gin they’d stegh their guts and haud their wheesht / I’d thole it, for ‘a man’s a man’ I ken, / But though the feck ha’e plenty o’ ‘a’ that’, / They’re nocht but zoologically men.

David McCrone tells us that ‘In the Scottish myth, the central motif is the inherent egalitarianism of the Scots’. He proceeds to analyse Burns’s poem ‘For a’ that and a’ that’ which seems to strip away the differences which are essentially social constructions. In spite of these (the ‘a’ that’), Burns is saying, people are equal. His meaning of equality is, however, ambiguous. He is calling not for a levelling down of riches, but for a proper, that is, moral appreciation of ‘the man o’ independent mind’.
It is ‘pith o’ sense and pride o’ worth’ which matter, not the struttings and starings of ‘yon birkie ca’d a lord’. The ambiguity of his message is retained to the last stanza – ‘that man to man the world o’er shall brothers be for a’ that’ – an appeal to the virtues of fraternity rather than equality in its strict sense.liii

The ‘ambiguity’ of Burns’s poem is mirrored in the paradoxical nature of Calvinism. On the one hand, it inculcates a spirit of equality in its adherents; on the other, it predestines some to salvation while damning the rest. MacDiarmid’s sense of elect superiority – a psychological mechanism to compensate for an inferiority complex connected to his feelings about his provincialized, self-repressed nation – would leave him impatient with the concept of fraternity. For W.N. Herbert, ‘the antisyzygy which most fiercely powered’ MacDiarmid’s life and writing was ‘love and revulsion for himself and his nation’.liv If MacDiarmid is one of the elect then he is free to ‘adopt a thorough antinomian attitude’ towards ‘all sorts of vibrantly commonplace people’, in particular the bulk of post-Union Scots:

To save your souls fu’ mony o’ ye are fain, /
But de’il a dizzen to mak’ it worth the daen’. /
I widna gie five meenits wi’ Dunbar /
For a’ the millions o’ ye as ye are.lv

Alan Bold tells us that as a boy the poet ‘was awarded several certificates for Bible knowledge’ and that local minister and poet T.S. Cairncross was ‘Arguably the greatest influence on Christopher Grieve’s boyhood’.lvi Bold confirms that ‘the intellectual elitism of MacDiarmid is an extension of the doctrine of the elect so crucial to the Calvinistic tradition of the Scottish kirk’.lvi MacDiarmid says of the religion of the Covenanters that ‘It holds me in a fastness of security’, implying that the ‘waves of their purposefulness’ give meaning to life, saving the adherents of extreme Presbyterianism from metaphysical despair, but also suggesting that at the existential limits the atheist poet comes home to the religion of his childhood: ‘In weather as black as the Bible / I return again to my kind’.lviii As he grew older, MacDiarmid was
to leave behind that security of religious belief. However, he never completely abandoned the frame of reference of Christianity, in particular the Calvinistic outrage at what he saw as a lack of spiritual growth in the majority and a concomitant feeling of elect superiority that he belonged to the few who have or even can evolve spiritually:

Aye, this is Calvary – to bear / 
Your Cross wi’ in you frae the seed, 
And feel it grow by slow degrees / 
Until it rends your flesh a’ apart, 
And turn, and see your fellow-men / 
In similar case but sufferin’ less 
Thro’ bein’ mair wudden frae the stert!…

Born a Calvinist, the drunk man spiritually comprehends the physical agony and metaphysical torment of the crucified Christ and knows that suffering is the lot of humanity. However, the elect modernist poet, infected with a double dose of elitism, believes himself to suffer more than ordinary Scots, particularly in a Calvinist culture that he considers – and that his view of modern Scottish identity as failed helps render – artistically sterile.

One of the consequences of MacDiarmid’s teleology in its application to the national identity is the idea that the real Scotland is somehow hidden in the muck of materiality and can only be revealed when the country discovers its true spiritual destiny. Until it does so it will languish in cultural and political desolation, ‘Scotland turn Eliot’s waste – the Land o’ Drouth’.lix Addressing Dostoevsky, the drunk man states that God-bearers or ‘Narodbogonosets are my folk tae’.lxi (MacDiarmid’s real Christian name, Christopher, means Christ-bearer.) However, the religion of his birth has fallen on hard times – ‘the trade’s nocht to what it was’ – like the nation it once led.lxii MacDiarmid wittily suggests that ‘Unnatural practices are the cause’, understanding that the demise of religion can be attributed to changes in the sexual climate and material inventions such as contraception.lxiii As such, ‘baith bairns and God’ll be obsolete soon / (The twawesome gang thegither)’,lxiv If religion is ‘the stane the builders rejec’ in the
construction of modernity but is still ‘the corner-stane’ of human understanding of life then, despite the Calvinistic nullity they have made of the present culture, the God-bearers of Presbyterianism – Scotland’s ‘chosen people’ – can ensure that ‘Scotland sall find oot its destiny / And yield the 
\textit{use-chelovek}, literally the all-man or pan-human.\textsuperscript{lxv}

Ideally, the spiritual evolution inherent in Calvinism will elicit, for the first time since the Greeks, a supremely independent and whole person, Nietzsche’s dream of transcending the human with a new over-man. Hence, the imperialistic goal of Scottish history, the historic mission of the nation, is to effect the unification of humanity through the East-West synthesis with Dostoevsky’s Russia, producing through this combination of different national values a spiritually regenerated, truly enlightened human identity. Quoting Sir Richard Livingstone, MacDiarmid attempts a similar synthesis of East and West in ‘Dìreadh III’ of ‘the Scots with the Chinese’, this being ‘the best chance / Of reproducing the ancient Greek temperament’, the resultant effulgent Sun of \textit{Republic} being born of a cultural amalgam that will combat what the poet sees as ‘the perilous night of English stupidity’.\textsuperscript{lxvi} As with other modernists, MacDiarmid’s dreams of human perfectibility savour unpleasantly of almost eugenicist and racist solutions to the perceived political problems of modernity in order to return to the imagined cultural superiority of the classical Greek citizen. Concerned with the degeneration they believed to be implicit in modern democracy, some modernists were attracted to eugenics as a way ‘to assume responsibility for a creation recently orphaned by God’.\textsuperscript{lxvii} MacDiarmid’s cranky idea of selective national crossbreeding is an extreme example of a politics that seeks to rid Scotland of the influence of the Saxon. Like the evolutionary eugenics of Woolf, Eliot and Yeats, it is ultimately religious in its desire for an essential national identity.

With \textit{To Circumjack Cencrastus} MacDiarmid continues the idea of his nation as spiritual reformer of the world, a place where ‘the religious attitude has found / In Scotland yet a balancin’ ground’ that will see ‘North, South, East, West nae mair opposed’.\textsuperscript{lxviii} Imagining an absolutist Scotland, the poet wants
To see it frae the hamely and the earthly snatched /  
And precipitated to what it will be in the end /  
A’ that’s ephemeral shorn awa’ and rhyme nae mair /  
Mere politics, personalities, and mundane things lxix

In MacDiarmid’s nationalist vision, a metaphysical Scotland, conjoined with Russia, will challenge the world supremacy and materialism of imperial Anglo-Saxondom.

From nineteenth-century Pax Britannica to twenty-first-century Pax Americana: after 1930, the communist MacDiarmid opposes the totalitarian rationalizing project of the East – revolutions theoretically inflamed by the Enlightenment-inspired materialism of Marx – to the imperialistic Protestant liberal capitalism of the Saxon West, which also lays claim to Enlightenment foundations. MacDiarmid was fond of saying that the Scots, or rather the Gaels, were originally from Stalin’s Georgia: ‘We are Georgians all. / We Gaels’. lx But the elision of terms through which the poet identifies himself performs a brand of cultural imperialism of its own, the Presbyterian Scottish Borderer becoming the pre-Union Catholic singer of Highland Gaeldom. As late as 1953, coronation of Saxe-Coburgian Elizabeth (purportedly the) II, MacDiarmid still thought of himself as ‘The Man for whom Gaeldom is waiting’, believing that ‘Lowland Scotland is a battleground / Between Europe and Gaeldom’. lxxi MacDiarmid’s Calvinism wants everything ‘that’s ephemeral shorn awa’ from Scotland including, it seems, his own cultural identity and the actual development of the nation. Like many other Scottish artists, MacDiarmid liked to bemoan the cultural deleteriousness of Calvinism. However, his own ‘religious attitude’, which seeks the revelation of metaphysical reality beyond the ephemerality of material actuality, coupled with his Calvinistic credo of the elect, blights Scottish cultural identity in the present with the apparent failures of the past. Present in MacDiarmid is the reverse of the imperialistic Enlightenment duality written of by Murray Pittock:

The perceived Germanicity of Protestantism also contributed to the paradigm whereby Highlanders/Celts were stereotyped as Catholic, which most were
This in turn helped reinforce the mythology, sedulously fed by many of the Enlightenment writers themselves, in which Lowland Scotland was ethnically Germanic, and Highland Scotland Celtic.

According to David Daiches, ‘there was little fruitful inter-relation between Gaelic and non-Gaelic culture in eighteenth-century Scotland’. This ‘split’ in the culture between the sophisticated literati of the metropolitan Enlightenment and the ‘deeper cultural traditions of Scotland’ suggests ‘that the problems and paradoxes of Scottish culture in the eighteenth century were not only bound up with the past but also prefigured the future’. For MacDiarmid in 1965, the cultural life of Robert Fergusson’s Edinburgh, during the Enlightenment and in the present, ‘boils merrily along among the common people, but is frozen stiff before it reaches the educated section of the population’. The emphasis on the universal significance of the local at the heart of MacDiarmid’s radical politics defies the cultural and political inferiorism of the geographic and class-based discrimination of the metropolitan Enlightenment by backing history’s losers, those marginalized by the British state’s imperial policy of political and cultural standardization. However, reinvented as a bard of Gaeldom, the non-Gaelic-speaking MacDiarmid simply transposes the dualisms of the Scottish Enlightenment that his Calvinism inherits. As such, he is one of Scotland’s ‘sham bards’ who, like Edwin Muir, renders contemporary Scotland ‘a sham nation’. This metaphysical MacDiarmid doesn’t see Scotland whole, he sees himself idealized – and calls his vision Scotland.

Conclusion: The Post-colonial Scot

MacDiarmid’s metaphysical Scotland, like Flaubert’s character Madame Bovary, is a fictional creation that aims to transcend the bounds of the actual. The Scottish poet’s horror of the provincial is, in part, the detestation of this component in himself, coming from small-town Langholm and living all his life in marginal locations. MacDiarmid’s insistence that modern Scottish identity is flawed arises from his own insecurities and is both a mirror of and a contributory factor
in the Scottish cringe that many post-MacDiarmid Scottish intellectuals have tried so hard to dispel. However problematical, MacDiarmid’s (de)construction of Scottish identity, his puncturing of Scottish myths, can also be positive. As I have argued elsewhere, his troubling of national and personal identity is postcolonial in its insistence on the universal importance of seemingly peripheral peoples like the Scots.  

With Scotland’s recent devolutionary settlement meaning the Scots can again play some part in the governance of their own country, scholarly interest has been sparked about the Scots abroad in the previous two centuries and the part they have played in the creation of other nations. In the 1920s and 1930s – during MacDiarmid’s best periods in Montrose and then Whalsay in Shetland – the loss of Britain’s imperial mission, coupled with a new wave of emigration provoked by increasing poverty at home, led some to believe, as Richard Finlay notes, ‘that Scotland would soon cease to exist as an identifiable nation’. MacDiarmid’s massively energetic response to this crisis was an ideological attempt to reorient Scottish identity away from a false universalism that took no cognisance of the condition of Scotland. As this essay has emphasized, this can lead MacDiarmid into an essentialism that formulates the real Scotland as everything the nation has failed to be – Celtic, radical, republican and independent. However, in the present climate of renewed Scottish cultural and political vigor, it is perhaps such absolutism of vision that gives MacDiarmid’s work the claim – almost – to ‘have succeeded’:

See behind me now / The multiplicity of organizations all concerned With one part or another of that great task / I long ago – almost alone – most imperfectly – discerned/ As the all-inclusive object of high Scottish endeavour / The same yesterday and today, and forever. / Fianna Alba and the Saltire Society, / The Scottish Socialist Party and Clann nan Gaidheal, / And a host of others all active today / Where twenty years ago there was not one to see.

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Endnotes

Works frequently cited have been identified by the following abbreviations:


i MacDiarmid, ‘Scotland’, CP1, 652.

ii MacDiarmid, ‘Dìreadh I’, CP2, 1168.

iii MacDiarmid, A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle, CP1, 145, 165.

iv MacDiarmid, ‘Conception’, CP2, 1070.


vi ‘Flaubert was often asked who had been his model for Madame Bovary, but he invariably replied that he had invented her. “Madame Bovary,” he always declared, “c’est moi!”’ Francis Steegmuller, Flaubert and Madame Bovary: A Double Portrait (1939; repr., London: Constable, 1993), 339.

vii See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘In a Word: Interview’, Outside in the Teaching Machine (London/New York: Routledge, 1993), 1-23, for the tussle between essentialism and anti-essentialism in the subaltern’s attempt to escape from the colonial place.


ix Ibid.

xi MacDiarmid, _SE_, 284.

xii MacDiarmid, ‘Whither Scotland?’ (1931), repr. in _RT2_, 269, 271.

xiii MacDiarmid, _SE_, 284.

xiv Ibid., 285.


xvi Alan Riach (ed.), ‘Survival Arts’, _SE_, 324.

xvii MacDiarmid, ‘Sir Harry Lauder’, _CP2_, 1287.

xviii MacDiarmid, ‘Scottish People and “Scotch Comedians”’ (1928), repr. in _RT2_, 114.

xix MacDiarmid, _To Circumjack Cencrastus_, _CP1_, 248.


xxi MacDiarmid, ‘Scottish People and “Scotch Comedians”’ (1928), repr. in _RT2_, 114-15.

xxii Harry Lauder, ‘How Money is Made: Sir Harry Lauder and Cure for “Ca Canny”’, _Montrose Standard_, 18 March 1921, 6; first appeared in the _Democrat_.

xxiii Irving, _Great Scot!,_ 137.

xxiv MacDiarmid, ‘Ode to All Rebels’, _CP1_, 507, 508.


xxvi MacDiarmid, _SE_, 160-1.


xxxii Ibid., 8-9.

xxxiii Ibid., 9.

xxxiv Compton Mackenzie, _Sinister Street_ (1913-14; repr., London: MacDonald, 1949), 880.


xxxvi ‘The Conventional Scot and the Creative Spirit’ (1928), repr. in _RT2_, 55.

xxxvii MacDiarmid, _A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle, CP1_, 152.


x Alexander Broadie, _The Scottish Enlightenment: The Historical Age of the Historical Nation_ (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001), 49.

xi MacDiarmid, _A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle, CP1_, 83.

xli Ibid.

xlii Ibid.

xliii Ibid.

xlv Ibid., 84, 164.

xlvii Ibid., 93.

xliv Ibid.

xlviii Ibid., 108.

xlx Ibid.

ii MacDiarmid, A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle, CP1, 85.


iii Ibid., 91.


lv MacDiarmid, Lucky Poet, 78; MacDiarmid, A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle, CP1, 107.


lvii Ibid., 33.


lix MacDiarmid, A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle, CP1, 134.

lx Ibid.

lxii Ibid.

lxiii Ibid.

lxiv Ibid.


lxviii MacDiarmid, To Circumjack Cencrastus, CP1, 289.
lxix Ibid.


lxxiv Ibid., 10, 8, 97.


or over five hundred years, the printed word has played a central role in human development, revolutionising communications and transforming society. Between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, Edinburgh played a particularly important and influential part in this communication revolution, establishing itself as a world-renowned centre for printing and publishing. One of the city’s most famous publishers and printers was Thomas Nelson and Sons, which specialised in producing popular literature, children’s books, educational books, Bibles and religious texts. From its founding in 1798 to its departure from Scotland in 1968, Nelsons was an established and well-known presence in Scotland, its Parkside Works on Dalkeith Road a major landmark in the Edinburgh cityscape. This paper charts its history as an international publisher and printer, examines its place in the working lives of its employees, and looks at the impact of its philanthropic activities on the social fabric of Edinburgh. It draws on social history research and original interviews with former Nelsons employees conducted under the SAPPHIRE
In 1798 Thomas Nelson opened a second-hand bookshop at the head of the West Bow, near St Giles Cathedral. The shop’s exterior later acted as the colophon of Nelsons and can be seen in many forms throughout the company’s publishing history. Thomas soon realised there existed a ready market for cheap, standard editions of non-copyright works and he attempted to satisfy it by publishing popular reprints of classics. The company gained its ‘Sons’ when William and Thomas II entered their father’s business in 1835 and 1839 respectively. Thomas I died in 1861. William concentrated his talents on the marketing side, while Thomas II devoted his to editing and production. William died in 1887, Thomas II in 1892. They were succeeded by George Brown, Thomas’s nephew, who managed the company until Thomas III and Ian, Thomas’s sons, were able to join John Buchan and him as directors. This was the team that was responsible for the predominance of Nelsons in Scottish printing and publishing at the end of the nineteenth, beginning of the twentieth centuries. The chief reason for creating a specific record of the working lives of the staff at Nelsons was that predominance.

A fire had devastated the Hope Park works of Nelson in 1878, causing damage estimated between £100,000 and £200,000, only some of which was covered by the insurance on the buildings. Within two months Thomas Nelson and Sons were back in operation, albeit on a limited scale. Within two years the production works moved to a new site at Parkside, near Arthur’s Seat, an Edinburgh industrial landmark next to its most prominent physical feature. The calamity brought the fortuitous benefit of investment in new plant from which a flood of reprints, schoolbooks, prize books and religious books poured – all at inexpensive prices. Efficiency was gained not only through introduction of the latest technology but also through standardisation of the product. The books were grouped into various popular libraries, such as the New Century Library that included titles by Dickens, Thackeray and Scott, ‘handy for the pocket or knapsack, and especially suitable for railway reading’ as the firm’s advertising read. The Sixpenny Classics, later just Nelson Classics, began in
1903 as a reprint series of non-copyright works and was eventually to consist of over 400 volumes; the Nelson Library, selling at sevenpence, offered from 1907 reprints of copyright works in still familiar, at least to denizens of second-hand bookshops, red and gold cloth bindings. New titles were issued each fortnight and John Buchan, a recent addition to the firm, brought into the Classics fold works by James, Conrad and Wells. A Shilling Library provided a series of further copyright titles of general literature, while several foreign series catered for languages other than English. A new factory, capable of producing 200,000 books a week, was built in 1907 to undertake these and other series. Buchan wrote in retrospect in *Memory Hold-the-Door* (1940), his autobiography, of that pre-1918 period in the firm’s history: ‘We were a progressive concern, and in our standardised Edinburgh factories we began the publication of cheap books in many tongues. On the eve of the war we must have been one of the largest businesses of the kind in the world, issuing cheap editions of every kind of literature not only in English, but in French, German, Magyar and Spanish, and being about to start in Russian.’

Throughout its development, the company looked for new methods to distribute its books. By 1818 it was already selling its books at the Edinburgh market place and at country fairs. In 1829 it took the innovative step of appointing a publisher’s representative, James McDonald, to call on bookshops in the South of Scotland and northern England. William Nelson was very active on the marketing side of the business, continually visiting booksellers and seeking out new markets. By the time he died in 1887 he had traversed three continents to set up a robust overseas business network. The company opened a number of offices in Britain and throughout the world. First to open was its London office at 35 Paternoster Row in 1844. Nelsons became the first British publisher to establish a branch in the United States when it opened its New York office at 42 Bleecker Street in 1854. By 1915 further offices were established in Leeds, Manchester, Dublin, Paris, Leipzig, Toronto and Bombay. Trading relations were also established with Australia (Melbourne) and South Africa (Cape Town). In
1961 and 1963 respectively, offices were also opened in Lagos and Nairobi. These houses underwent a number of organisational changes. In the late 1940s, the Toronto and New York offices were incorporated as independent companies specialising in religious publications. Bible publishing was to become another strength of Nelson's work. It published its first Bible, the King James Version, in 1885. In 1946 the firm issued the RSV (Revised Standard Version) New Testament, followed by the Old Testament and complete Bible in 1952. The new translation was phenomenally successful, particularly in North America, where within two years of publication Nelsons sold over three million Bibles. In 1960 and 1962 the Australian and South African offices also became registered companies and in May 1962 the firm joined forces with the Thomson Organisation for overseas sales, heralding the splitting of the publishing and printing sides.

Technological change occurred slowly in the printing industry between Gutenberg's initial exploitation of moveable type in the middle of the fifteenth century and the building of the Parkside works for Nelsons at the end of the nineteenth. Technological innovation was for Nelsons the means to the end of promoting 'the democratic intellect' through successful publishing. In the earliest days of the firm, its books had to be inexpensive to be accessible to a new reading public of the skilled working classes and Thomas Nelson employed the still uncommon process of stereotyping, invented by William Ged, another Edinburgh man, to reduce production costs over a large print run. In 1850 Thomas Nelson II perfected a rotary press, a model of which was demonstrated at the Great Exhibition in the following year. It is no exaggeration to state that this machine was the original model for all subsequent newspaper presses until well into the twentieth century. (It can still be seen in the National Museum of Scotland.) However, it was the opportunity created by the re-equipment of the Parkside works that led to the introduction of the most up-to-date technologies. The company was among the first to introduce Monotype keyboards and casters, using them in its composing room to reset one reprint every two days in addition to other work. Efficiency was gained not only through this introduc-
tion of the latest technology but also through standardisation of the product. The books were all to the standard size of 6.5 x 4.25 inches that became known as the ‘Nelson size’. Nelsons patented a casing-in machine that could case, that is, place in hard covers, 900 books an hour.

However, the corollary of high output and low prices was low profit margins and a dependence on maintaining high volume sales. From 1878 to 1881 fiction represented 40% of the total books produced but only 10% of the total profit made by the firm over the same period. Furthermore, books by certain authors such as R.M. Ballantyne were much more profitable than the norm; 53% of Nelson’s profit from fiction was derived from 17% of the titles. The conclusion must be that the greater proportion of the fiction published by Nelsons, including reprints, many of which were out of copyright, made very little money.\textsuperscript{v} Any contraction in constant volume sales would represent a threat to the company’s continuing health. The First World War itself, through the denial of foreign markets, the loss of manpower and the general exigencies of wartime, led to the temporary rundown of Nelsons and initiated its long-term decline. Much of the effort expended during the inter-war period, particularly in expanding its educational list and reducing the dependence on reprints, represented merely an attempt to reverse that decline.

With the passing of the Education Acts in England and Scotland in 1870 and 1872, Nelsons had already moved into the new market, launching textbook and educational reader series such the ‘Royal Reader’ Series, the ‘Royal School’ Series, the ‘Highroads’ Series \textit{(Highroads of History, 1907; Highroads of Literature, 1911; Highroads of Geography, 1911)}. After the death of Thomas Nelson III in 1917, Ian Nelson, his brother, succeeded as head of the family firm.\textsuperscript{vi} The take-over of the publishing house of T.C. & E.C. Jack in 1915, with its strengths in children’s titles, had consolidated the direction to which the company was to commit itself. Buchan brought in Sir Henry Newbolt, with whom he had worked in the Ministry of Information during the war, to act as editorial advisor in the educational field. Various series along the lines of its reprints were produced, such as the Nelson School Classics. In part
response to Newbolt’s own 1921 report on the teaching of English in schools in England and Wales, Nelsons produced in 1922 ‘The Teaching of English’ series (eventually running to some 200 titles) under the editorship of Newbolt himself and Richard Wilson. The latter also introduced a new type of school reader in ‘Reading for Action’ and ‘Read and Remember’. A further series, ‘The Teaching of History’, also grew out of Buchan and Newbolt’s collaboration. Indeed, Buchan’s influence was apparent long after his leaving in 1929. Ian Nelson remained head of the firm until his death in 1958.

Comments from former employees acknowledge the positive reputation that Thomas Nelson and Sons had as an employer throughout the interwar years and after. I put ma name down in Nelsons a year before I left school because there was always a big waiting list. (Robert Horne) For some families, employment in Nelsons was a hereditary occupation. Family members from a number of generations and members of a generation were employed in the firm, sometimes in a number of different departments and trades. Nelsons was a firm that fostered loyalty: workers spent much, if not the entirety, of their working lives with it.

I tell you how they did it. You see the school that I went to, they had connections with Nelsons. And as we were leaving school they put forward our names as possible employees. And I didn’t even apply for a job. But they had a welfare worker who looked after the girls. And she came to see ma mother and she asked ma mother if I would like to work in Nelsons. Asked all intimate things, you know, an she said, would I like to work in Nelsons. So of course at that time I was the eldest of ten of a family so I had to get tae work quickly to make some money, you see. So ma mother said ‘oh yes’, she says ‘that would be lovely’ because I could walk to it from where I lived. (Isabella Smith)

The employment conditions in Nelsons formed part of a wider pattern of work that existed in the Edinburgh (and Scottish) printing and publishing industry. Entry into the firm
was controlled by the number of apprenticeships laid down by agreement with the trade unions (there were then a number of these across the industry).

In actual fact, in those days it’s like the shipyards – you had to have somebody to speak for you. Fathers got their sons in and your uncles got their nephews in and that kind of thing. I was very lucky because a cousin of mine was union steward for the lithographers. And he was able to get me the forms and able to get me into the entrance exam and that kind of thing. And of course you had a very serious entrance exam to pass in those days. It was for colour blindness, deafness and all sorts of things and plus there was a sort of an IQ test as well. I’m not sure how they judged that but there was a kind of a multiple choice question paper. Two, four, six, eight: what’s the next number kind of thing, you know. So once you satisfied them that you were compos mentis to go into the trade, you never got in right away. There was a very strict rota for apprentices. It was one apprentice for three journeymen, two apprentices for seven, three for nine, and five for eighteen. So you had to wait a wee while till, not dead man’s shoes but till somebody graduated and, when somebody graduated, then they were able to take on another apprentice. Or if they were taking on two or three more men they were allowed to take on another apprentice. So it was very, very strictly controlled and the printing trade was very strong in those days.

(Bill Reid)

The apprenticeships lasted seven years for males (later six) and four years for females, after which they became journeymen. Andy Anderson was given a spell as a messenger before an apprentice vacancy opened in one of the departments. He became a binder, rather than a compositor or a printer, because that was the first post to appear.

And you went around the place where you’d be taking mail here, there and everywhere. And I was there about a fortnight and then I started ma apprenticeship in the binding department there. I
worked there from the July and I worked in the bindery an’ you went round and you helped. You were just taken through – I worked wi’ one journeyman and then you got put maybe in between three journeymen doing another job. And you got shifted around in the bindery and the foreman would come along and say ‘right I’m shifting you, I’m putting you onto this machine wi’ another journeyman, you do that.’ Well, I did that for about a year. And then the next year I got moved to what we call the machine folding where they had the big folding machines. The sheets come down from the printers and they were folded into signatures or sections. And I went there to learn that. I don’t know how many machines they would have there then; they maybe might be half a dozen different folding machines there. An’ I was in the machine folding for quite a while. It would be maybe a year I was there and you learnt the different folding machines. Once again this all had to be written down in your notebook and you learned the system of setting them up.

(Andy Anderson)

This method of watching, learning, and doing was common across all the trade departments in the printing works.

First year’s training as an apprentice was really just watching somebody and doing something. You sat beside a journeyman and you just watched what he did for the first six, nine months. You helped him with some heavy lifting an’ things like that, you know. But in the main you were just going along for the first six or seven months watching him. We also had in the letterpress department a series of graduated printing machines with a local platen thing. And then we had a low Wharfedale in the corner, two very small machines and then you moved up to the next Wharfedale before you got onto, onto what they call ‘meelie’ machines, the big Miehle. And then after that you can move onto the Perfectors. So there was a range of machines all the way along. And after six months, when the apprentice who was on the platen machine moved on, you got to do the work on the
platens. And that included business cards for the reps, letter headings, all that kind of jobbing work that you would do in a jobbing printers. And we used to do all our own in the print and after six months you were the apprentice in charge of all that. The gaffer or the foremen always came along and kept an eye on you an’ things. Once you did about six or nine months of that and the next apprentice was coming into the system you moved onto a little Wharfedale which in those days I think was a double-demy machine.

(Bill Reid)

After the first year of work (that constituted also a probationary period), the apprentice was able to undertake more formal day-release and/or evening tuition at the Watt College in Edinburgh.

And there was a day-release class to go to the Heriot Watt once a week and that was a three-year course.
And it was the Heriot Watt and the printing department was in the Cowgate [Chambers Street].

(Bill Reid)

On successful completion of the day-release course, the apprentice served out his time with the company until ‘graduation’ as a journeyman. The constant throughput of apprentices was necessary not only to the maintenance of the company’s volume production, increasingly of educational titles, but also to counter the rare ‘poaching’ of Nelsons-trained journeymen by other Edinburgh printers.

You were a very close-knit group. Very seldom did people leave and go somewhere else. If someone went somewhere else for another job it was [intake of breath] quite a major scandal you know, or not a scandal but – people raised their eyebrows. If you suddenly said ‘oh I’m chucking it, I’m going to Constables or I’m going to Clarks’ or something like that. (Bill Reid)

Throughout the firm, males and females each had their own distinct work roles. Men had the highest status jobs that included composing and printing. Women generally under-
took a range of tasks that were described as ‘laying on and taking off’. These included feeding sheets into a printing press, folding, and stitching. The trades also had a hierarchical structure. At the top were the process workers, followed by the lithographers, compositors, printers and then book binders.

And so there was a great camaraderie in Nelsons at the time. A bit of rivalry too between the book binding section and the rest of the plant – everybody thought they were superior. The process workers thought they were by far, had a superior trade to the rest, and they looked down on compositors and printers and stereotypers. Mainly because I think the process workers – I don’t know if it was a class thing or not – but they always came in in suits and they just put overcoats on. We couldn’t put overcoats on because of the flying machinery and that kind of thing. We had to put on boiler suits in those days. But even then the printers never went home in their boiler suits. They always took them off an’ dressed and went outside in the main street and you couldn’t tell whether he was coming from the office or whether he was coming from the factory floor.

(Bill Reid)

Each trade had its own work conditions, hours of work, and rates of pay.

The trade union was central to many aspects of employment and work conditions in the industry. As Nelsons undertook a range of trades, the workers were represented by a number of unions, one for each trade or group of trades. At the lowest level of union organisation, at a departmental level, was the Chapel. This was headed by the Father of the Chapel (FOC), usually a man, elected by the workers to act on their behalf. Staff recalled that relations between the Chapels and the Nelson management were generally favourable.

There wisnae any big moans. I think in the Chapel if there was any aggravation it was more inside the Chapel rather than the Chapel with the management. Used to have lots o’ arguments inside the Chapel
rather than outside it. (Andy Anderson)

For many of the workers interviewed, the only strike action they were involved in took place in the summer of 1959, a period of general action throughout the Edinburgh printing industry.

The biggest issue that I ever recall was the strike. And I mean there wisnae just our management. Our management would go along wi’ other management; you were sticking to your side an’ we were sticking to ours. We got on pretty well with the management. (Andy Anderson)

And it [1959] was the most wonderful summer you are ever likely to find. And the lads will all tell you this. Any of the lads they couldn’t give picket duty – we were golfing, bowling an’ things and it was wonderful. Ma wife was still working at the time so it didn’t worry me. But at that time we got five pound a week strike money. And we were earning twelve pound a week in terms of a wage. Now literally what you were getting was 50% of wages for striking. But, aye, it became very nasty between the Master Printers Federation and the unions. (Bill Reid)

The previous experience of the General Strike of 1926 was not so sunny but just as fresh in the memories of some of the older Nelsons workers.

Well, actually, you see the General Strike was in 1926. Now we’re all came out, like if you were in the union you came out. And there was only half the employees got back. But I got back somehow or other. Then after the General Strike when I went back they put me to the warehouse so of course I was glad to get a job anywhere. And it was just the work, just the normal hours that if you were off sick you got no money. That was a dead blank. You got nothing. (Isabella Smith)

More generally, however, the Nelson family was noted for being a ‘Christian employer’ and for having Christian values that prompted the family and firm, like other major printing
and publishing companies in Edinburgh, to engage in a
number of philanthropic activities for the good of their work-
force and the wider community. The family’s paternalistic
interest in its workers was expressed in a number of ways.
The factories were built along modern principles with regard
to heating, lighting, ventilation, tidiness and cleanliness.
These conditions ensured that the workers had a good phys-
ical environment to work in. The firm provided a range of
welfare facilities, including women welfare officers.

They had this lady who was the welfare worker. I
don’t think she bothered about the men so much.
She really took an interest in the girls, you know.
Like if some of the girls there she thought they were
undernourished, well you got malt and cod liver oil
an’ things to help you. And she watched to see that
everybody was in good health, you know. I had Miss
Wally. She was before Miss Park. I was still there
when Miss Park came and she wasn’t anything so
good as Miss Wally. She was excellent. But Miss
Park, I wasn’t so keen on her but then she got her
sister in to help her. (Isabella Smith)

The two Misses Park were two sisters. Old spinsters
an’ of course they looked at everything. And they
were the original directors of human resources,
welfare officers I suppose. You never called them
welfare officers or even personnel officers in those
days. But the girls wanted stuff you know for them-
selves an’ things they used to go to, and they looked
after. If a girl was having a wee bit problem then they
used to cry on their shoulder an’ that an’ the two
old dearies. And they actually ran the canteen as well
as all sorts – an’ they were just generally there for
the welfare of everybody in the place, you know.
(Bill Reid)

Great place for girls. Even in the factory they had
what they called the rest room. And there was a
welfare lady there and if any girl wasn’t feeling well
they took her down to the rest room, looked after
her. Everything inside there for girls. They had a
welfare lady and they had a room for the girls. And the welfare was wonderful. (Robert Horne)

Until at least the 1930s the firm had a convalescent home at Pomathorn, near Penicuik.

And, of course, Nelsons got a good name. It was an excellent firm. Like their social things and the way they treated their workers was excellent. At that time a lot of the employers didn’t bother much about their employees. But Nelsons took a special interest in their workers. And we used to have a holiday home at Pomathorn. Now that’s just out of Penicuik and we could go there for a weekend or a week whatever. If you went for a weekend you paid two and six and the food was absolutely splendid. I can still remember it. For the whole week you paid ten shillings. That was Nelsons house. They provided the house and they provided a housekeeper. And she did everything like, well she had cleaners but she did all the cooking and everything. And of course the food was perfect. I used to often go an’ I’ve had many happy times in Pomathorn. You could go anytime. It was never closed. It was always open. If like, if you were sick and you wanted a wee change to buck you up you could go there. Or if you had a weekend free and you just wanted a break you could go. Or you could when it was your holidays. See at that time we only got a week’s holidays. (Isabella Smith)

Some workers, especially women and first year apprentices, recollected being given a cup of hot cocoa during the morning break, a practice meant to safeguard the health of its more vulnerable workers.

The workers that couldnae get home at lunchtime stayed far away. There was a hall opposite at Nelsons and they got lunches there, a three-course lunch for one an’ six. (Robert Horne)

At Parkside, there was a sports field and the ‘Institute’ that workers could use for sporting and recreational activities as well as lunch. For not only did Thomas Nelson and Sons look after the welfare of its employees during their working hours,
but that concern crossed also outside them. The firm provided a range of recreational facilities for its workers. In the Parkside Works there were allotments in the extensive grounds. Some had greenhouses which grew ‘wonderful tomatoes’. Next to the Parkside Works, on Dalkeith Road, was the playing field (‘the field’) that had a football pitch, tennis court, and pitch and putt course. At its edge, was a bowling club, now Parkside Bowling Club.

Nelsons had playing fields next to it. And all the schools in the summer had their sports there. So that Nelsons was very popular because they could go over there in the evening and play football an’ that. Nelsons had big playing fields for their workers. They had tennis courts, football pitch, hockey pitch, a putting green. That was so the workers, after the work you met them in the evening again, in the summer up at the playing fields. Well, they had sport, the sports field. They had bowling, golf. And you didnae only work with people, you played with them in the evening, at golf or something you know. That was all free in the playing fields. (Robert Horne)

Across the road from the Works was the Institute, which not only served as a works’ canteen but also hosted concerts, lectures, dances and other events. Some workers recollected that there was a club for male employees ‘in the centre of the city’. The workers had a number of societies, some of which received grants from Nelsons. These included a football club (‘you had kudos if you were on the football team’), badminton club, golf club and rifle club. Some of the sporting clubs played in competitive leagues, such as the Printers’ League. The dramatic club staged plays and concerts. Clubs held a succession of dances, especially in the winter months. Departments also had their own clubs and societies: the office, for example, had a book club and a Christmas savings club.

Nelsons organised a number of annual social events for its workers. These included dances, of which the most important was the Christmas dance, ‘a dressed-up affair in dinner suits and bowties and evening dresses for the ladies’.
In the wintertime they used to run all sorts of dances in what they called the Institute, which was across the road, which is now houses, I think. It’s that white building at the end facing the park. And that was the canteen but they used to run dances on a Saturday. (Bill Reid)

An informal dance, a flannel dance, was held in the summer months. The Institute also housed a diversity of other activities.

In the hall opposite Nelsons they had a dramatics club that met once a week an’ had concerts. They had a whist drive and dance nearly every Friday night for the workers. One an’ six and you got sandwiches and tea an’ pies. (Robert Horne)

Not unsurprisingly, these social occasions were the opportunity for budding romances to grow into marriage between work colleagues.

And there was a tremendous amount of that kind of intermarriage. I don’t know if it was more prevalent in the printing trade than it was in say a plumbers or builders or something like that. But it always seemed to happen a lot, you know. And of course in those [days], Nelsons had a great social side. (Bill Reid)

Until the early 1960s, the highlight of the social year was the annual trip, given free to all the workers in the factory.

Once a year there was a free day. We had tae close – the first Saturday in June all the workers got taken on a holiday. A day somewhere like Whitley Bay. (Robert Horne)

On that Saturday in July, a train was hired to take the workforce to locations such as Aberdeen and Weymss Bay. These trips were much enjoyed: ‘everybody looked forward to it’; ‘it was such a good day’.

Right throughout the fifties an’ I think it stopped maybe near about fifty-eight, fifty-nine. But certainly from the time I went I used to go out the Waverley and you had this six or eight coach train, you know.
And they would take you across to Rothesay or Dunoon. You would get on to one of the paddle steamers in Dunoon. And there was about four or five hundred of us from Nelsons on this train and you had a day-out’s picnic, never cost you a sausage. An’ they paid for everything but it was a family picnic as it was meant to be I suppose. (Bill Reid)

In the post-1945 period, the strategy of diversification into textbooks was predominant: the educational list became all-important to the company; and the tradition of cheap reprints, alive since its foundation, died. To compensate, overseas markets for textbooks were nurtured. The links Nelsons had had with the old Empire were reinforced in the new Commonwealth, especially in East and West Africa and the West Indies. The development of Nelsons paralleled Britain’s own movement from centre of Empire to member of Commonwealth: in 1949 the Canadian branch became an independent company; in 1960 the Australian firm was established; in 1962 the South African branch was registered as a distinct company; a Nigerian company was set up in 1961; a Kenyan company followed in 1963. Even in 1887, a Royal Reader had been produced in the Nyanja language of what was then Nyasaland, now Malawi, and, sixty years on, Nelsons was publishing a wide range of textbooks in Kiswahili, Yoruba, Ewe, Twi and Ga. Specialist school books such as West Indian Histories and Malayan Arithmetic illustrated the company’s determination to retain its hold on an important but vulnerable market.

Ian Nelson’s successor in 1958, his son, Ronnie Nelson, seemed less interested in the successful management of the family firm than previous generations. A failure to invest in technological innovation on a continuing basis in the post-1945 period contributed to the firm’s decline and eventual take-over. Whatever was introduced in the way of new machinery and methods was a case of too little, too late. In 1962 Thomas Nelson & Sons was absorbed into the Thomson Organisation, in an effort to sustain its academic and educational publishing interests on a global scale. In common with
other publishing enterprises at the time, the production plant was divorced from the publishing division. The former remained in Edinburgh, while the latter took up permanent residence in London. The publishers began to seek and accept competitive quotations for production work from a variety of printers in Britain and more frequently abroad. The printing division of Nelsons was sold to the Edinburgh company Morrison & Gibb in 1968; the Parkside works, at one time the glory of the firm, were razed to the ground to make way for the headquarters of an insurance company. The grounds became home of the swimming pool for the 1970 Edinburgh Commonwealth Games. Staff reaction reflected the sense that, with the closure of Nelsons, an entire community had been lost.

When we arrived back in Southampton, I phoned Edinburgh, phoned ma brother and he says don’t come back tae Edinburgh; he says, the printing trade is gone; he says, it’s up the chute; everything’s come apart, and he says, Nelsons are closed. And I couldnae believe this. I thought it couldnae be closed. But there we were: the place was all shut doon and then there was the Commonwealth Pool where Nelsons had their football park and where they had the trade union gala. There was a swimming pool there, you know, and it was a bit o’ a surprise, a bit o’ a surprise to see all this. (Andy Anderson)

_Napier University_

**Appendix One**

_Amy Anderson_ began work at Nelsons at the age of 15 in 1946. He was employed in the bindery until 1964 when he left to move to Australia. He worked in the State Library in Adelaide before moving back to Edinburgh. Interview carried out by Dr Heather Holmes on 11th June 1999 at the interviewee’s home.

_Robert Horne_ started work in Nelsons in 1926. He worked in the
printing department until its closure in 1968. Interview carried out by Dr Heather Holmes on 15th September 1999 at the interviewee’s home.

*Bill Reid* began work at Nelsons in 1949 at the age of 15 in the letterpress department. He worked there until Nelsons closed in 1968. Interview carried out by Dr Heather Holmes on 19th October 1999 at the interviewee’s home.

*Isabella Smith* started work at Nelsons in 1923. She started in the bindery and then moved to the warehouse. She left Nelsons in 1943 to spend time with her family and then later went on to work as a porter on the railway. Interview carried out by Dr Heather Holmes on 29th April 1999 at the interviewee’s home.

**Acknowledgements:**

The authors would like to thank the many interviewees who gave so willingly of their time and memories to SAPPHIRE and Dr Heather Holmes for carrying out the interviews in such a sympathetic and knowledgeable manner. We are grateful to the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland for the award of a grant to the project without which it would not have been completed in such a timeous and successful way.

**Endnotes**

i All edited quotations from the SAPPHIRE interviews are referenced in the text by the interviewee’s name. They are listed and detailed in Appendix One. The general aims of SAPPHIRE are to record the social, economic and cultural history of the Scottish printing and publishing industry in the twentieth century, to document aspects of the working lives of people who have been employed in the industry and have witnessed the changes that have taken place within it, and to create a permanent archive and database within the Edward Clark Collection at Napier University. The bulk of the material in the archive consists of recordings of personal reminiscences of former and current employees within the print and publishing industry. Photographs and videos of current work practices are also being gathered. These provide a living record of the industry before further technological changes take place. The oral
and contemporary material is enhanced by the collection of ephemera such as trade literature, photographs and relevant memorabilia. The archive is catalogued and online access is available through www.sapphire.ac.uk to digitised elements of the SAPPHIRE archive. For this present project SAPPHIRE conducted some forty interviews, each of two to three hours duration, with former Nelsons employees to fill in the human aspects of the pre-existing rather dry and skeletal history. Similar interviews were more recently conducted within communities on the Water of Leith, formerly a major Scottish paper production centre. These provide valuable insights into the relationship between the paper-making industry and the communities built around it. In addition, a photographer has been commissioned to create a photographic archive of the contemporary book trade in Edinburgh, including libraries and bookshops, and these images are now available through the online SCRAM database (www.scran.ac.uk). The current SAPPHIRE project is the collection of reading reminiscences ‘Scottish Readers Remember’. Support funding for all these activities has been awarded by Napier University and Queen Margaret University College. Grants and awards have also been obtained from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Pilgrim Trust, the British Academy, the Gordon Fraser Charitable Trust, the Edinburgh Booksellers’ Society, the Institut Français d’Ecosse, and the present descendant of Thomas Nelson and Sons, Nelson Thornes. SAPPHIRE has been the recipient of a Glenfiddich Living Scotland Award for the preservation and promotion of Scotland’s cultural heritage.


iii John Buchan, *Memory Hold-the-Door* (Hodder and Stoughton: London, 1940) 87


v The dedication in John Buchan’s *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915) reads: “To Thomas Arthur Nelson, Lothian and Border Horse. My dear Tommy, you and I have long cherished an affection for
that elementary type of tale which the Americans call the ‘dime novel’ and which we know as the ‘shocker’ – the romance where the incidents defy the probabilities, and march just inside the borders of the possible. During an illness last winter I exhausted my store of these aids to cheerfulness, and as driven to write one for myself. This little volume is the result, and I should like to put your name on it, in memory of our long friendship, in these days when the wildest fictions are so much less improbable than the facts.”

Tommy died at the Battle of Arras in 1917.

The Nelson family also contributed to the greater good and welfare of Edinburgh. After the fire at Hope Park the Nelson brothers erected two pillars at Melville Drive on the edge of the Meadows to acknowledge the assistance that they had been given by the city in their time of need. Thomas Nelson II left a bequest from which four halls, the Nelson Halls, were built across Edinburgh in locations such as McDonald Road and Bernard Terrace. These were built as working men’s libraries. The Nelsons also contributed to the public life of Edinburgh in a variety of other ways. William Nelson was interested in the improvement of the cityscape of Edinburgh and was instrumental in the restoration of St Bernard’s Well on the Water of Leith, the Argyll Tower, St Margaret’s Chapel, and the Old Scottish Parliament House in Edinburgh Castle. Thomas Nelson II took an interest in religious, scientific and educational movements. He donated subscriptions to a number of causes such as the erection of the Royal Infirmary and new buildings at Edinburgh University.
Tradition is defined in Part I (last issue) as a spontaneous expression of a people created within its community and characterized by continuity and transmission. Such a definition relies upon a geographic community where continuity occurs through regular practice facilitated by the close proximity of the members of that community. Transmission happens during these interactions through emulation of, and correction by, other community members. Invented traditions, on the other hand, do not rely on geography. Rather, the initiators of the tradition devise other means to gain continuity and transmission. As a result, a non-geographic community is created around a shared identity embodied in a single cultural expression. Part I discussed how the four traditional dance genres in Scotland were devised to create identity. Part II will extend this idea to explore how contexts and transmission processes are developed to facilitate community.

Community

Despite common usage, there is no authoritative definition of community. The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology admits the vagueness of the word, characterizing community as “a set of societal relationships based on something which the participants have in common – usually a common sense of identity.” This definition is broad enough to encompass geographic or traditional communities as well as what Benedict Anderson calls “imagined communities,” that is, a group of people who share a common identity but do not necessarily
live in the same place or know all other members of that community. Imagined communities, in part, are generated by invented traditions. However, for non-geographic communities, no criteria exist for labeling a group of people a community. Therefore, in my research, I have created criteria based on the above definition and common scholarly usage of the term.

The first and most obvious criterion is that a community must have boundaries. Being a member of a community implies that there are non-members and that a boundary exists to distinguish the two. “A set of societal relationships,” suggests the second criterion, social structure. Without social structure, there would be no distinction between groups that form a community and groups, such as subway riders, that share a common identity but have no other relationship. Although social structure can be understood in many ways, here it refers to how community members interact. The last criterion, institutionalization, comes from a community’s need to extend beyond its actual membership at any given time. The three criteria for community, then, are boundaries, social structure, and institutionalization.

Analysis of the four traditional dance genres in Scotland reveal that certain key factors, notably, the presence of a primary organization, the establishment of a technique, and the choice of context affect the development of community. This part of the paper will explore the interplay between invented traditions and community formation, and demonstrate how these factors develop the parameters necessary for a community.

**Scottish Country Dance**

Scottish Country Dance has been developed and fostered primarily by a single organization, the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society (RSCDS). Coordinated by its head office in Edinburgh, RSCDS boasts 170 branches worldwide from “Aberdeen to Adelaide, Capetown to Chicago and Tokyo to Toronto,” as stated on its website, as well as nearly 500 affiliated groups. It has a total membership of 25,000, out of an estimated 50,000 dancers worldwide. Founded by
Jean Milligan in 1923, RSCDS remains the only organization coordinating Scottish Country Dance. Milligan was a teacher at Jordan Hill College, Scotland’s premier teachers’ college, and noted for her exceptional abilities as both a teacher and a promoter. Not surprisingly, RSCDS places much emphasis on teaching and technique. The combination of a single driving organization and a well-defined technique significantly influenced the development of the performance contexts and possibilities for transmission. The result has been a vibrant, self-sufficient (as opposed to government-subsidized), world-wide community.

**Organization**

RSCDS, founded to “protect and promote Scottish Country dance,” at the start of the re-invented dance tradition had important consequences in terms of the creation of a Scottish Country Dance community. First, RSCDS provided a key element for community formation, institutionalization. Second, RSCDS has deliberately and very successfully created contexts and regulated transmission. Finally, it exercised significant influence over community lore. In other words, RSCDS has created or invented a unified conception of the dance steps and their history as well as the identity they encompass.

In many traditions people argue over what is “traditional” or “ authentic,” but not in Scottish Country Dance. Its practitioners certainly debate, as revealed by a quick glance at the Strathspey e-mail list discussions or the writings of Hugh Foss, a past RSCDS chairman and prolific author. However, arguments are based only on movements not specified by Milligan, for example, the pousette. A box figure for two couples, it originally started on the left foot with hands held in the middle. However, when the waltz was introduced, the pousette was done in a waltz hold and accordingly started on the right foot. Milligan changed the arms back to being held in the middle but did not specify the feet. Practitioners never argue over whether the arms are correct, but they frequently argue about which foot to start on. Research and discussion frequently occur for intellectual stimulation as well, but never
do they serve to dispute Milligan or the correct way to do Scottish Country Dance. Both Hugh Foss and Alan Mair acknowledge that there are fashions and a bit of individuality in every group of dancers, but generally, people agree on RSCDS standards of movement and steps.

Such uniformity comes from two directions: the tradition’s single source and its subsequent written form. Milligan defined Scottish Country Dance and taught it personally internationally as well as through RSCDS. Much of the community lore is based on Milligan’s teaching, validating her authority. RSCDS wrote down very precisely the tradition as developed by Milligan. Steps have been named and explained and the corresponding figures diagrammed. As documented in many other traditions, once a dance is recorded, that version is considered to be the correct one, and so gains added legitimacy.

Having a definitive, written, and undisputed record of the tradition was essential for creating community boundaries in this case. In geographic communities, boundaries are usually obvious, articulated by the physical social space of a group. In imagined communities, boundaries are often drawn along ascriptive or ethnic lines. However, in this case, the boundaries are created by knowledge, that is, learning the dances, the symbols of identity, and the appropriate behavior as established by the community. Decisive “correct” dances facilitated the growth of the Scottish Country Dance community. It developed around an established, unchanging tradition rather than the reverse, common to geographic communities, where an established community molds the tradition.

Forming boundaries in this way has had several ramifications for the social structure of the Scottish Country Dance community. First, there have been few serious rifts within the community. It is characterized instead by general agreement. Only those who wish to join, do. Dissatisfied members can easily leave. Second, because Scottish Country Dance requires no previous connection, mental or physical, to a certain set of individuals or a piece of land, it can easily travel world-wide.
Technique

Teaching is critical to maintaining a definitive version of Scottish Country Dance. A technique was developed to transmit the dance movement in an orderly, precise fashion. Most classes begin with a warm-up that leads to the practicing of basic steps and figures. The class ends with learning one or more dances that contain these movements. This teaching method ensures that all dancers both recognize and can name all the basic building blocks. Thus, Scottish Country Dance is based on a dance technique, comparable to ballet or Graham. Individuals’ movements are not handed down, but rather a collective consensus on the movement is passed on. Technique is instrumental in providing continuity and contributes to institutionalization.

RSCDS also regulates technique through a teacher certification process. From the beginning, the organization has required its teachers to pass two examinations. To pass them, teachers must be knowledgeable about the history and music associated with the tradition, and be able to both dance and teach the dances. Both dancing and teaching require intimate knowledge of the technique. However, the examinations are only a means to an end. By dictating what knowledge every teacher is required to have and what standard must be attained, RSCDS controls change. Technique then, enables RSCDS to sustain the unity that is so vital to maintaining its boundaries.

Technique has a further practical purpose in the classroom. It facilitates teaching. It serves as a way to introduce the dance form to a beginner, accelerating the process of familiarity and allowing the tradition to be transmitted. In geographic communities, this happens through frequent contact. A technique also breaks the movements into discreet components that can be learned easily. Beginners, particularly men, noted in interviews that when they knew the basics, they were more willing to attend a dance event. In addition, technique gives the beginner something to focus on in class if s/he is not yet prepared to learn the dances. At the same time, it keeps the more experienced dancers from getting bored. Advanced classes keep themselves engaged by continuing to work on the grace of their movements and stylistic refinements such as
pointing their feet. Thus, technique facilitates the transmission process, particularly important in an invented tradition.

**Context**

RSCDS developed an extremely effective social context in what might be called a “class and dance ball” system. Today, most dancers attend weekly classes and monthly or quarterly balls, depending on their level of enthusiasm. Classes are not drop-ins but require a commitment of usually ten weeks. The regular interaction of people in class forms a social space, the basis of the social structure.

Balls are the next step up in the structure. They do not take place as frequently as classes and require significant preparation. Much time goes into learning the dances that will be on the program, thus providing an incentive for attending classes. The periodic ball then gives structure and meaning to what would otherwise be random learning. Possibly more importantly, balls and classes provide social events for couples and places where single people can meet others and enjoy a wider circle of friends. Balls also provide an opportunity to dress up and for the men to wear the kilt. According to several informants, this is a great attraction for learning Scottish Country Dance and going to balls. The system thus creates a social space and provides incentives to generate the interaction necessary for a community of adults.

These social contexts, however, do not encourage young people to dance. Not surprisingly, RSCDS has had difficulty in getting children and teenagers to take up Scottish Country Dance. In part, it is an activity for couples rather than for large groups in which children usually participate. The goals of learning, in this case, going to balls, are not geared toward children either, as they are less likely to be interested in couple-based social events. However, Alan Mair noted that competitive dance festivals were more successful with children than with adults. A competitive structure changes the goal of learning from “social” to “winning,” and children often take inspiration from competition. Festivals, Mair noted, worked less well with adults and soon fell out of use. For children, on the other hand, festivals give them age-appropriate goals.
Scottish Country Dance is done by children in other contexts. For example, Joanne MacLean taught Scottish Country Dance to children in Glasgow’s worst neighborhood. Here the final goal was a performance, giving the children a sense of purpose and enhancing their self-esteem. However, this use of dance is very different from that of RSCDS. These children were not part of a country dance community but were simply using the dances. Indeed, children are not an integral part of the social structure of the Scottish Country Dance community. Most dancers enter this community as adults, starting in university. Unlike traditions in geographic communities that are passed from elders to children, the Scottish Country Dance tradition gains continuity from the instructional class.

Additional contexts for Scottish Country Dance have developed more recently. One is the demonstration team, a group of experienced dancers who perform together. As in the context of the competitive festival, the demonstration team context changes the goal from social interaction to perfection. This goal raises the bar for the advanced dancer, providing continued inspiration and incentive. For the advanced dancer, the focus is not merely on remembering the figures but accurately achieving the timing and spacing in relation to the seven other members in the set. At the same time, performances appeal to many more adult dancers than do competitions. Several dancers have explained their preference for performing in terms of giving the gift of dance to the audience or demonstrating their Scottish heritage.

Written literature and the internet enlarge the social contexts for Scottish Country Dance. Hugh Foss is probably the most prolific author on the subject, but others have also written about the history of country dancing and its rebirth as RSCDS style. Foss published several short books, one called *Sunday Writings*, which is a mixture of poetry and tongue-in-cheek debates about the execution of certain dance figures and the nature of RSCDS itself. The Web provides a similar, but more contemporary outlet. People invest a lot of time making web pages detailing the history of Scottish Country Dance, posting dance class times and information about Balls,
and talking about dance in newsgroups. Not only do these contexts give people a hobby, but they increase the strength of the social connections between dancers.\textsuperscript{ix}

Further expanding the number of contexts are summer schools and weekend workshops. The main RSCDS summer school takes place in St. Andrew’s every year. It has been a meeting place for dancers and musicians for years, giving people something active and fun to do on their holidays. It is also the place where the dances, usually twelve in number, published by the society for that year are first taught. Recently, workshop weekends in exotic places, such as Hungary have become popular as well. Although they are not advertised as holidays, they function much like them. Workshops give people a reason to go to a given place and provide a community once they get there.

**Highland Dance**

Highland Dance shares several similarities with Scottish County Dance—a central organization, a regulated technique, and an international field. One organization is responsible for establishing the standards that exist in Highland Dance today, the Scottish Official Board of Highland Dance (SOBHD). However, it is not the only organization promoting Highland Dance. There exist separate, recently affiliated organizations in the United States, Canada, and Australia, and a second organization in Scotland itself, the Scottish Official Highland Dance Association (SOHDA). All these organizations are united by a single, highly regulated technique established by SOBHD. Highland Dance also has an international outlook, although not practiced in as many places as Scottish Country Dance. Highland Dance is found primarily in the United Kingdom and many parts of the former British Empire, particularly Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and South Africa. Like Scottish Country Dance, it represents a self-sufficient tradition not relying on government funding but on the active involvement of many members. In contrast with Scottish Country Dance, Highland Dance contexts have developed within a system of competitions and medal tests.
Organization

SOBHD was formed in 1952 to regulate and preserve Highland Dance. The genre, however, predated the founding of the organization, an important distinction between Highland and Scottish Country Dance. Like RSCDS, SOBHD provided the necessary institutionalization for a community to develop. However, as an organization, it was unable to provide unity comparable to the Scottish Country Dance movement. SOBHD standardized steps and dances, wrote them down, and, in the process, created a technique. However, for many, particularly when regulation was first imposed on advanced dancers, the changes were forced. Dancers were pressured to attend only sanctioned events and to dance appropriate steps. Thus, conflict rather than unity pervaded the community.

The conflict engendered by SOBHD illustrates the problems with boundary formation and the necessity of perimeters. As in Scottish Country Dance, the boundaries of the Highland Dance community are neither of a geographic nor ascriptive nature. One enters the community by learning the dances and participating in one or more social contexts. However, such perimeters work only if the dance form is relatively static. In other words, without standardization, despite the conflict that it has engendered within the Highland Dance community, community development would not have taken place and is endangered. The newly formed SOHDA is a case in point.

Dissent with SOBHD regulation in Scotland led to the formation of SOHDA. Although regulated competitions have been the norm in Scotland for the last thirty years, practitioners in such places as Australia and New Zealand, where SOBHD standardization and subsequent regulation did not hold sway, stuck to an “old way” of dancing. In addition, recent research carried out by individuals such as Mats Melin has brought to light an older repertoire and style of dance maintained in Scotland itself. The newly-formed SOHDA was established to include many of these dances. In other respects, however, SOHDA continues much in the vein of SOBHD, writing down the dances in a standardized form and
having a competition system of its own. Although SOHDA
purports to have a different identity from SÖBHD, the
similarities in structure between the two Highland Dance
organizations illustrate the need for specificity of the dance
form if a community is to be formed.

Other organizations have sprung up around Highland
Dance, which were formed because SOBHD’s jurisdiction
did not reach beyond Scotland. These include FUSTA
(United States) and ScotDance Canada. Organizations over-
seas did not fight with SOBHD about technique; that is, the
Americans and Canadians did not argue about what was
traditional to Scotland but rather took the tradition as
presented and danced it. They formed their own organiza-
tions, mostly within the last ten years, to expand context
through elaborating the competition system. The Scots, on the
other hand, did not see the need to regulate dance outside
Scotland. It was Scottish dance, to be preserved in Scotland. If
dancers wanted to dance at the World Championships in
Scotland, it was incumbent on them to conform. This is a very
different attitude from the one taken by Milligan and RSCDS.
Therefore, although Highland Dance is performed wherever
expatriates have brought it, it was not originally disseminated
and regulated internationally. It would seem that SOBHD
did not intend Highland Dance to draw non-Scots into its
community but rather to maintain the Scottish community,
even though it is possible for non-Scots to become involved.

Technique
The standardization of Highland Dance with the forma-
tion of SOBHD in 1952 functioned to create a technique.
Popular dances at competitions were sanctioned as legitimate,
and steps were chosen from the repertoires of well-known
dancers and recorded. Today there are four main dances
called Highland dances, two “character” dances (jig and horn-
pipe), and thirteen “national” dances. Each has about eight
steps, of which six are usually combined to create the dance
at any one time. A textbook has been created, necessitating
that all positions be clearly defined and the dances written
down. Everything has been specified from the angle of the
head and knee to the placement of the feet in each position. As demonstrated above, the creation of a technique is essential to institutionalization and boundary creation.

Technique, or the existence of it, also affects social structure. After standardization, there was a shift of focus in the Highland Dance community from presentation to technique. Previously, dancers had been judged on how creatively they choreographed and performed their own steps. Although technical skill was required, it was not the primary focus of the dance. Today, judging is divided into three categories, timing, general deportment, and technique. The first two categories are scored on a ten-point scale, and the latter on an eighty-point scale. Clearly technique is far more important than musicality or performance, making Highland Dance more suited to competitions and displays than to small gatherings where personal interaction prevails. Not surprisingly, Highland Dance with its visual impact is used to represent an abstract idea of Scotland rather than to induce interaction between performers and audience in small community gatherings.

Highland Dance technique, however, allowed it to leave Scotland easily. One could pick up a book, as dance researcher Mats Melin did in his youth in Sweden, and learn the dances. Furthermore, doing Highland Dance correctly is a straightforward procedure since, according to SOBHD, there is only one way, and that is the right way. This makes it feasible for outsiders to participate in a national “imagined” community of Scotland. However, the form does little to develop community on a local level, given the way technique has structured the dances.

**Context**

Although the contexts for Highland Dance are expanding rapidly today, the principal one remains competition. The average dancer attends approximately ten to fifteen competitions a year. The most competitive dancer can attend one every weekend from May until August. Each competition is divided into groups and age categories. There are five groups: Primary, for those under seven, Beginner, Novice,
Intermediate, and Premier. One must win a medal at six competitions in the Beginner and the Novice categories and spend a year in Intermediate before entering the Premier category. Each category is then broken down further into age groups, depending upon the number of dancers. This system provides both short-term and long-term goals for the participants. There is always another competition where one can test oneself or another level of expertise to attain.

Once children move into the Premier class, the goals change. The focus is on perfecting technique. The means to this end is a system of “championship steps” published annually for competition use. Each year SOBHD decides on the combination of existing steps that will be used in each of the four Highland dances. In this way dancers are required to learn well and dance all the steps possible for each dance over the course of three or four years. The hierarchy in which dancers function changes as well. Instead of moving up classes, they attempt to win events with a broader base of competitors, first a regional championship, then an inter-regional (or national) championship, and finally the world championship.

The competition system works well to facilitate a high standard of dancing that can be adjudicated because of its rigid technique. However, the competition system was developed for children. The oldest Premier category is for those eighteen and over. For a variety of reasons, competitions do not have the same appeal for adults as for children. Possibly, because at competition level, Highland Dance is as grueling as any strenuous athletic competition, making it difficult for adults with aging bodies to maintain the level of training demanded. Consequently, even though this system provides a context for children to learn and develop skill, it does little to continue the dance tradition. Sometimes the children of Highland dancers participate, but most children are new recruits each generation.

The Workshop and the Festival have developed in conjunction with the competition system. Workshops are structured around learning the championship steps and finding out what the judges will be looking for in any given year.
Such workshops serve the Premier dancers. In the last several years, the Festival context has emerged. The Festival is a competition for the pre-Premiers where the dancers receive comments from the judge as well as awards. These events have only developed in America and Canada and have not been adopted in Scotland. They function in support of the competition system but exhibit the slightly more social aspect associated with Highland Dance in these two diaspora areas.

A regional and inter-regional competition system has developed in the United States and Canada, but does not exist in Scotland. The Scots participate only in that they host the world championships every year in late August. In the U.S. and Canada, the regional and even more so the inter-regional competitions have become social events as well as competitive ones. The latter, for example, last four to five days and include sightseeing activities and social mixers. This change in the social structure of the dancers, from competitors to friends, seems to reflect a desire, first, to form a stronger Highland Dance community by deepening the bonds between members, and second, to encourage older dancers to continue dancing. Scotland is more resistant to change, possibly because they are more oriented toward symbolizing their community than forming it.

Another important context for Highland Dance is performance. Performances occur in many places, but particular venues are such “Scottish” gatherings as St. Andrew’s Society events in November, Robert Burns’ suppers in January, and, recently, Tartan Day in April. Highland Dance displays are also a feature of such major events as the Edinburgh military tattoo in August at Edinburgh Castle or an international tour of a Scottish regimental pipe band. Highland Dance performances work well to represent Scottish culture, both in Scotland and in the diaspora.

**Stepdance**

Stepdance differs radically from the two previous genres. A very old Scottish tradition, it had fallen out of fashion in Scotland by the 1920s, surviving only on Cape Breton Island.
Beginning in 1992, the famous Cape Breton step-dancer, Harvey Beaton, taught Stepdance for several consecutive summers in Scotland at Sabhal Mor Ostaig, the Gaelic college on Skye. Several of the graduates have gone on to teach and develop performance groups in the last decade, gradually reintroducing the genre. Stepdance had existed mostly in the geographically defined communities of the Highlands and Islands. Thus, then and now, there exists no organizing body, defined technique, or invented contexts to perpetuate the form. In order to take root outside geographic communities, Stepdance has become associated with the traditional music community.

**Organization**

Ten or twelve graduates from the Sabhal Mor Ostaig course are currently teaching in Scotland. Three of these people/groups are actively developing the Stepdance tradition – Frank McConnell, Mats Melin, and the Scottish Step Dance Company headed by John Sikorski and Keri. Each, however, is exploring different aspects of the dance form. McConnell has done significant research in Cape Breton and is interested in exploring the rhythms to their utmost within the traditional format as defined by the Cape Breton standard. Although he is a contemporary dance choreographer, McConnell has chosen not to mix contemporary, and traditional dance. In contrast, the Scottish Step Dance Company (SSDC) has been pushing the limits of Stepdance to accommodate the increasingly complicated rhythms of Scottish traditional music. For example, SSDC happily dances to tunes in unusual meters, such as 7/8, and they are creating a repertoire of jig steps which previously didn’t exist. Melin, on the other hand, is doing a bit of both. He looks at Stepdance as part of a range of Scottish dance, linking older styles and modern Highland Dance. His company, Dansa, performs a range of styles from the extremely traditional to very contemporary manipulations of Stepdance material. The lack of a guiding organization has allowed such individual exploration of the form but has done little to build community.

Tradition, as discussed in Part I, implies an identity and a
community to shape it. However, Melin and Keri characterize tradition very differently, illustrating the distinctions that can develop in the absence of a defining organization. Melin, an outsider from Sweden, refers to Stepdance as “the” tradition, implying there is a standard that one can improvise and innovate within, but not change. Keri, on the other hand, refers to Stepdance as “our” tradition. She maintains that as long as the form reflects her idea of Scottish dancing, not employing the flashy high kicks found in Irish dance, for example, and is connected to the music, she is free to “muck about” with steps.

These contrasting conceptions of the “tradition” imply different communities. For Melin, Stepdance seems to symbolize a community – the old Scottish Highland geographic communities in this case – rather than reflect one, and thus, change is limited. Keri, on the other hand, interacts on a regular basis with traditional musicians who form something of a “geographic community.” She, like them, is not self-conscious about change in the dance form, seeing it as a reflection of herself. The difference is in the boundaries. For Melin, one can join the community by learning the dance form. Learning in this case is distinct from either Scottish Country Dance or Highland Dance, because what one must learn to be part of the community is not explicit; it is a longer, more involved process. However, for Keri, becoming part of her community depends on more than just learning the form; it depends on acceptance by the community.

Common to Melin and Keri, however, is a sense that Stepdance is communal. They both noted in interviews that Stepdance is characterized by a particularly intense connection between the rhythm of the music and the dance, and thus between the musicians and the dancers. There is a lot of give-and-take among the participants, who shape the outcome together. Therefore, this form works very well to create a sense of community among a group of people who interact regularly because they have a shared geographic base as well as a common interest, but it does little to create community on a grander scale in the manner of Highland Dance or Scottish Country Dance.
Technique

In contrast with Scottish Country Dance and Highland Dance, Scottish Stepdance has no technique. There are basic steps for each meter of music, but Stepdance is primarily an improvised form. Keri teaches a variety of old steps learned from masters such as Harvey Beaton and new steps that she has created. However, she always teaches variations to prevent a dancer from being ensnared by a particular step if it does not fit the music. The individual steps are not important in themselves. They are not named and are rarely repeated verbatim. Melin takes a similar approach to teaching, spending a great deal of time on drilling steps so that the dancer’s feet become completely familiar with specific movements and rhythms. Ultimately, the goal is to gain fluency of movement in order to improvise. Achieving such a goal takes regular interaction with an accomplished dancer, either in a class or a social context. Thus, Stepdance is most readily learned in a geographic community. Unsurprisingly, the diffusion of this revived form has not spread quickly within Scotland and not at all outside the country.

Until recently, Stepdance did not have a written form. Consequently, little emphasis was placed on learning a canon of steps and dancers typically made up their own steps. Individuals developed a small repertoire and either varied or improvised on them. Now, however, people have begun to develop ways of recording steps. Keri, for example, has devised a system combining rhythm notation to mark the number of beats and arrows to show the direction of the foot. Her system allows her to maintain a greater repertoire of steps and to help her students remember them more easily. Since her system is not legible to outsiders, no exchange with other dancers occurs. Thus, human interaction on a regular basis is still required to learn new steps and develop the form. The emphasis remains on the exchange rather than the learning of steps, on community rather than symbolic performance.

Context

The most common context for Stepdance is performance. Two companies exist, the Scottish Stepdance Company and
Dansa. The Scottish Stepdance Company focuses on giving
the audience an understanding of the connection between the
music and dance. They use both old and new traditional
music, inventing the accompanying steps. At times, other
dance forms such as Flamenco are incorporated. Nonetheless,
Keri has an underlying, if not articulated, notion of what is
Scottish about Scottish Stepdance. Although she cannot
define it, she easily answers questions about what is not
Scottish. For example, she feels that Scottish Stepdance will
never be used in a show like Riverdance. “The Scots are more
modest than that,” she says. “It wouldn’t make sense, all those
high kicks and flashy costumes. We don’t think like that here
on Skye.” She also feels that Stepdance is an inherently
solo form; even when performed by a group, the steps never
look the same.

Dansa, Mats Melin’s group, which includes Frank
McConnell, is radically different. They, too, are doing perfor-
mance-oriented dances. However, they draw mostly upon the
knowledge they have as traditional dancers. Their first
commission was based on the rhythm of a spinning wheel
and included step-dancing, Scotch reels, quadrilles, and some
contemporary movement. They are currently developing
steps to create a work based on a waulking song, a type of
old Scottish work song. Their dances use elements already
defined as Scottish, unlike the dances of the SSDC, which
include flamenco and jazz. Both companies represent “tradi-
tion” and all that connotes, but in a contemporary form
appealing to today’s audiences.

The performance context of Stepdance has had several
consequences for the development of community. First, Step-
dance does not provide regular, participatory contexts
comparable to the class and dance-ball system of Scottish
Country Dance or the competition system of Highland
Dance. Although the genre Stepdance promotes community,
its main context, the stage, does not. At best, performance
symbolizes a communal, interactive geographic community.
Yet it differs sharply in its symbolic nature from Scottish
Country Dance or Highland Dance. Stepdance is actively
evolving and is a contemporary, changing expression of the
traditional music community. Second, although performances also provide some sort of institutionalization, economic pressures on performing groups jeopardize this process, and so Stepdance must rely heavily on government funding.

Stepdance has yet to find a proper social context. It is gaining popularity as a way of adding variety to concerts of traditional music, and it is often performed during musical ceilidhs. It still does not have a setting where others can watch, copy, or, if experienced, exchange new steps. However, Melin has noted that people are beginning to bring Stepdance back into Ceilidh dance halls, where, he hopes, it will begin to flourish with the regular give-and-take of good dancers. The lack of a consistent context, since it has neither a geographic community nor an organization to provide one, is another reason that a larger community has not coalesced around this dance form.

Although some regular classes exist — such as Frank McConnel’s in Inverness or the ones held through the Edinburgh and Glasgow fiddle-clubs — most people learn Stepdance through the intermittent youth Feisean workshops, or short summer courses, such as those given by Sabhal Mor Ostaig. Consequently, most people know only the basic steps. Even if they have been able to learn a lot of steps, they are unlikely to have developed fluency in the idiom because the learning period was too short a time. Lack of fluency in the idiom does not foster the necessary social institutions to develop the form. At present, only those who are performing regularly are actively practicing and developing steps. Without a regular context, the transmission process based on learning by example breaks down, preventing Stepdance from developing into an effective expression of community.

Stepdance does not travel easily. When it has moved to other parts of the world, such as Quebec and the United States, it has been integrated into the host culture where it has become the expression of the community doing it and not a symbol of its culture of origin. Because it is not symbolically Scottish but communally Scottish, relying on the give-and-take of people in Scotland, it has not traveled abroad without changing into a local expression of culture.
Cheilidh Dancing
Cheilidh Dance is a social dance form comparable to, but less formal than, Scottish Country Dance. It was originally done in community dance halls and at weddings. It fit well into the social patterns of geographic communities. Even when those patterns changed, people continued to learn and do the dances in school, at weddings, and other social and community events. The dancing never died out completely in the twentieth century, although it was not until the late 1980s that Cheilidh Dance reappeared in urban settings. Pubs in Edinburgh, the Riverside Club in Glasgow, university clubs, and traditional music events now provide regular venues for Cheilidh Dance.

Organization
Despite Cheilidh Dance’s rebirth, no organization has sprung up to regulate it. Like Stepdance, people use the dance form as situationally appropriate. For example, the Riverside Club uses it as entertainment; university clubs use it to create a social event. Individual, unconnected contexts provide a kind of institutionalization, as was historically the case, rather than an overarching organization as in Scottish Country Dance or Highland Dance. In a sense, Cheilidh Dance forms a small community in each venue, but, in contrast to Scottish Country Dance or Highland Dance, no community is formed across all Cheilidh dancers. Every group structures cheilidh dances to suit their needs and express their identity; the only continuity is provided by the cheilidh bands.

Technique
Cheilidh Dance is a fairly simple dance form. There are seven main dances that everybody can learn by watching the dancers or listening to the caller’s instructions. The steps are drawn almost entirely from pedestrian movement. The more complicated ones have been changed into easier forms, for example, pas de basque into stamp and kick. The simplicity of the dances allows everybody to join in, disrupting the notion of boundaries. If everybody can dance, then the community cannot be restricted by the ability to learn the
dances, as in Scottish Country Dance and Highland Dance. In this case, the movement does not create boundaries but rather facilitates the creation of context, as will be demonstrated below.

**Context**

Cheilidh dances have become very popular in universities. Every university club, whether the rowing club or international students club, holds a cheilidh dance each term. There is one almost every weekend. However, students rarely attend more than one or two a semester. Ironically, cheilidh dances give context to a social evening rather than require context to happen. They work because they facilitate interaction among participants and because extensive knowledge or skill is not required to participate. Cheilidhs have been adopted because they help create community. This community does not coalesce around the dance form as in the previous genres, but rather, by using its dances as a context.

Cheilidh dances function similarly in the traditional music community, where they are done as a form of recreation. In this case they become another expression of an already existing community. There are regular contexts whenever musicians get together. The most respected dancers are copied, and the tradition is passed down and developed in this way, a transmission process that emulates most closely the process that occurred in the pre-industrial geographic communities of Scotland. Thus, Cheilidh Dance facilitates social interaction in small-scale, local communities, as opposed to Scottish Country Dance and Highland Dance, which create far-flung international communities.

The Riverside Club in Glasgow has become another regular context for the genre, holding cheilidh dances every Friday night. The club provides the necessary institutionalization for a localized community. Unlike other cheilidh contexts though, the number of dances are increasing rapidly because most people attend regularly and tire of the standard dances. Although more difficult dances are taught by a caller, the more common ones are not. Therefore, it is very difficult for newcomers to join in. Indeed, the regular, more experienced
dancers often grumble about the presence of beginners. Thus, in contrast to the previously mentioned contexts of Cheilidh Dance, boundary formation is occurring. Being a member of the community requires learning the dances as in Scottish County Dance, but because the Riverside Club has a fixed location but a fluid population, the identity of the club community is always in flux, and thus the dance form remains a spontaneous expression.

**Conclusion**

The previous analysis makes clear the effect that a primary organization, a technique, and a context have on the development of a community. A primary organization is necessary to create an imagined community as demonstrated by Scottish Country Dance and Highland Dance. However, as demonstrated by Cheilidh Dance at the Riverside Club, an organization is not necessary for establishing a community. Technique allows, and is indeed necessary for a dance form to travel, but its rigidity does little to stimulate local community building. Context influences whether a community is created, who participates, the social structure, and the transmission process.

All four Scottish traditional dance genres foster community in one way or another. Two approaches can be distinguished, one exemplified by Highland Dance and Scottish Country Dance, the other by Stepdance and Cheilidh Dance. The first uses the dance form as the element around which all the other ingredients necessary for a community coalesce. In contrast, the second provides a missing ingredient in an already existing community. Consequently, Scottish Country Dance and Highland Dance work well on an international level. They provide an expression for a heavily symbolic, transnational Scottish “imagined” community, linking people together in an increasingly global network. The two genres represent Scotland in an abstract way, but they don’t necessarily reflect contemporary Scottish culture. In other words, these dance forms reflect a vision of “official” Scotland, but not necessarily the lived experience of today’s Scottish people.

Stepdance and Cheilidh Dance, on the other hand, function better on a local level. They change to suit the context,
whether performance or cheilidh. They promote interaction between people, allowing the participants to negotiate identity through the dance form. Consequently, these forms are better suited to creating and expressing contemporary Scottish identity. Because they are malleable, they are more accessible to everyone as a form of social expression. As one Cheilidh and Scottish Country dancer commented, “[Cheilidh dancing] shows Scots at their best, pissed [drunk] and having a good laugh.” While the remark was offered in jest, it contains an element of truth recognized by the speaker and the others interviewed for this study.

Traditional dance in Scotland has been utilized and manipulated by different people to negotiate identities and communities in a rapidly changing world. Clearly dance, in whatever form, fills an important void in Scottish communities, both abroad and at home.

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* (Editor’s Note: Part I. of this article was published in _International Review of Scottish Studies_, Vol. 28 (2003), pp. 3-21)

**Endnotes**

i By geographic community is meant a group of people who live in the same place and interact daily—a standard sociological definition.


iv Data is from a survey taken in 1979 and published in the _Dance Archive_.

v RSCDS webpage, www.rscds.co.uk.

vi Community lore can also be understood as the sociological concept of community memory.

Interview with Alan Mair.

Interview with Cheilidh dancers, Brian Martin, Colin MacLennan, and Leslie, at the Elephant Café, Edinburgh, 8 January, 2002.

Recently, SOBHD has become the world-wide governing body.

SOBHD, Articles of Constitution.

Personal observation.


The community formed in this case functions as a geographic community not because the members necessarily live near each other but because their interaction is regular and the transmission process is of the nature found in a geographic community.

Interview with Keri.

Ibid.

Scotland experienced many changes between 1830 and 1860. The growing pains associated with such change caused many Scottish inhabitants to become disenchanted with the political strife, high unemployment, poor housing, inadequate public health, unsanitary living conditions and the religious turmoil of their native homeland. As a remedy, the government removed restrictions on passenger travel and encouraged many influential individuals to establish companies that specialized in, and promoted, the large-scale export of these disenchanted and displaced Scottish people to colonies such as those in British North America.

Since letter writing was one of the primary mediums of communication in the Victorian era, the ‘act of emigration’ led many to record the unforgettable details of their actions, interests, regrets and attitudes in family correspondence. Even in the context of high illiteracy, individuals could be found to write and read family letters. Cameron et al. notes, “…the fact that these letters were widely circulated within the community reveals that literacy was not invariably the atomizing and alienating force that communications theorists have assumed.”

Letters are a rich source of historical information that offers fascinating glimpses of the personal, historical and social contexts of pioneer life, the family unit and social customs of the nineteenth century.

For the purposes of this study I have chosen various collections of Scottish family correspondence, written between 1830 and 1856, as a primary means of reconstructing the
experience of the Scottish people who immigrated to Upper Canada during the nineteenth century. Represented in this selection will be the Anderson, Beattie, Brough, Cormie, Gair, Good, Houston-McNeely-Blair, Kirkwood, and Smibert families. For the most part, the authors of this collection of letters were literate writers who wrote eloquently and frequently. As an archival collection, this correspondence, which can be found in the ‘Archival and Special Collections’ in the Wellington Room of the McLaughlin Library at the University of Guelph, represents a commonality between, and a context for, the family members who immigrated to Canada and their relatives in Scotland by reflecting a shared heritage. As a social history, these personal narratives document the daily lives, working conditions and social interactions of the Scots. As personal records, this private correspondence reveals a personal insight into the attitudes and struggles of those individuals involved in the nineteenth century popular Scottish migrations. Since these letters were not written for public viewing, these ‘pure’ ‘untouched’ literary pieces, which were written at the grassroots level, make for fascinating and illuminating reading by bringing colour, texture, energy, honesty and a human element to a life lived long ago. The following will provide a bird’s eye view of the Scottish emigrant experience as seen through the words of emigrant letters.

During the nineteenth century the idea of immigrating to Canada became popular with the Scottish people. But since the transatlantic voyage between Canada and Scotland was often perilous and long, and many emigrants knew nothing about ocean voyages or their ships, an emigrant’s troubles started even before they reached the Canadian shores. Although letters home alluded to the length of the trip, many ignored such ramblings and looked only to the better life that Canada offered. For many sailing ships, the westward crossing of the Atlantic against prevailing winds stretched into prolonged storm-tossed voyages of two months or more. In an 1841 Report on Emigration, Lord Sydenham notes:

The average length of the passage of 237 vessels, [...] has been over 48 days: 101 were at sea over 40 days,
43 over 50 days, 23 over 60 days, 13 over 70 days, 3 over 80 days and 2 over 90 days. The average [...] during the month of August was 70 days.\textsuperscript{ii}

This same report suggests that the unusually long passages, the overcrowded state of the ships, poor sanitation and the lack of provisions, resulted in much sickness and distress among the emigrants bound for Canada\textsuperscript{iii}. In an 1841 letter to his brother, mother and sister, James Good describes his family’s unpleasant nine-week passage to Canada. He writes:

...[there is] great sickness amongst us...June 1\textsuperscript{st} a most terrific storm...we could get no vitels cooked great fear of going to the bottom all passed a sleepless night...water running down the hatches...We are in a very uncomfortable situation...

Vessels were bound by law to “…furnish daily a pound of bread and 50 gills of water for each passenger...” but passengers were expected to bring other kinds of food themselves.\textsuperscript{iv} Even though shipmasters were required to sign, by the Act of Parliament, declarations that not only claimed there were sufficient provisions, water and space for passengers but also guaranteed the ship’s seaworthiness, many masters of vessels and ship brokers did not comply.\textsuperscript{v} For example, on June 20, 1841 Good notes, “Provisions getting very scarce water 8 gills in 24 hours” and again on July 9\textsuperscript{th} he writes,

Captain is going to put us on an allowance of water. He is afraid we will be 6 or 7 weeks...Provisions very scarce, one half pound of biscuit for every adult in 24 hours with 8 gills of poor water so you see that we could not get very fat.

The lack of fresh food, water and proper cooking facilities often led to illness and death.\textsuperscript{vi} Good sadly reported, “One of the passenger’s wives bore a child. [on July 9\textsuperscript{th}] The woman that had the child died for want of cordials, her child died and one older that was mother and two children were thrown overboard.”\textsuperscript{vii} An Emigrant Department Weekly Returns Report confirms Good’s suggestion that the water furnished to the passengers was “…frequently so bad as to be sometimes
quite unfit for use. In his January 1841 despatch to Lord Russell, Lord Sydenham noted that emigrants bound for Canada were:

...insufficiently provided with clothes, with bedding or provisions...they have about them the seeds of disease, arising from the destitution and misery in which they have been living previously to embarkation [consequently] great sickness and mortality occur on the voyage, and immediately after their arrival in Canada.

Frequently emigrants were kept huddled in the hold of the ship designed for cargo, where a neglect of proper ventilation, light and cleanliness and a lack of facilities ‘necessary for the purposes of nature’ resulted in ‘fetid exhalations from the hold’ and the rampant spread of disease between passengers and crew. In addition to this, cockroaches, vermin and rats were frequently among the passengers fighting for morsels of food. Emigrant agent, A. C. Buchanan and medical superintendent at Grosse Isle, Dr. G. W. Douglas reiterated these claims in their reports. As a result, Sydenham proposed amending the existing Passenger Act whereby new measures to protect and assists emigrants from the perils of emigration would be implemented. Although there appeared to be a marked change in the general conditions of the transatlantic passage by 1843, mortality, destitution and distress continued to be a problem as late as 1847. Many captains, who were interested in extending an already sizable profit, engaged in fraudulent activities by delaying their departure deliberately, or by extending the voyage itself, in order to sell extra rations at exorbitant prices. Good’s letter suggests that there were other means by which passengers could obtain goods. For instance, when the rest of the passengers were “…very badly of [sic]…” James Good was able to acquire provisions for his family by working in the place of a sailor who was “…very bad with the ague”. Furthermore, the exorbitant cost of passage prohibited many from travelling to Canada. As Beattie reveals in his letter to his uncle George, some passengers were able to travel to Canada for free, but others like
William Glennid paid ninety pounds for passage.\textsuperscript{xvi} In spite of the perilous ocean voyage and the ongoing abuse of immigration legislation, emigrants continued to pour into Canada. Family correspondence indicates that many were willing to chance poor conditions and possible death in order to join their friends and relatives in Canada for either a visit or long term residency. In a letter addressed to friends in Canada, Agnes Kyd makes reference to Robert Blyth[?]’s impending trip to Canada. She notes,

> Mr. Thomson and all his folk is away (going away) her mother is away too she is very old woman about seventy-eaght [sic] years of agge [sic] my Father thinks he will not be of much use but to look after the oxen and cows he is scared at the sea [?] then [sic] is no saying but we may come we have not much to keep us hear [sic] now and we may get a little place then brought in and ready and we could be very happy every little place…\textsuperscript{xvii}

On April 28, William Aitken writes, “John Graham should come out which I believe he intends doing so next Spring if spared life and health till that time, indeed we would not mind much coming all out together, as Mary is very anxious for it…”\textsuperscript{xviii} Many also believed that Canada was the land of opportunity where everything was moving forward. For this reason, Arthur Houston contemplated sending his son Andrew to Canada for two or three seasons so that he could “…Study Medeson [sic] and when [they went] out to Canada he could be a farmer and Doctor both.” He also stated, “The [sic] are nothing stopes [sic] the people of gowing [sic] out to America but want of means…”\textsuperscript{xix} Many believed that the new revolution in transportation methods made the trip between Canada and Scotland much easier than it had formerly been and understood that if things did not work out in Canada, they could simply return home. From the emigrant correspondence under investigation, it is possible to ascertain that some people could not afford to return home because their letters were rife with requests for funds from those who remained in Scotland. Furthermore, many
who chose to remain in Canada sent letters back to Scotland requesting that family members join them in Upper Canada. Thus throughout the nineteenth century, a constant flow of personal letters, which expounded upon the positive attributes of Upper Canada, encouraged potential settlers to emigrate.

Selected family correspondence illustrates the fact that emigrants who sailed from Scotland between 1830 and 1856 were not only connected by time and space but were also connected by a shared desire to maintain ties with family and home. Immigration altered the family bond, but it did not destroy it because the familial bonds were maintained despite the vast distances that separated the families. Loneliness led many authors to assume the role of chronicler, as they regularly updated family members on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean with family news. For example, on February 13, 1843 James Good sent a letter to his brother, sisters and family informing them of the birth of his new daughter. He wrote:

We are all well at present but Magdalene she had followed Agnes and Mrs Hucheson’s example for she had a daughter upon the 9th of February. She is to be Magdalene the second. Magdalene equally missed her female friends for Angus Campbell’s wife has been very badly this some time and could not attend but Mary, her sister, and myself had to officiate.xx

The fact that Good assisted in the birth of his daughter is unusual because most men did not participate in such activities at this time. Good’s participation therefore suggests that, once they arrived in their new home in Canada, many emigrants were forced by necessity into unfamiliar activities and roles.

In another letter, prodigal son John Anderson provides an interesting and detailed account of his travels in Upper Canada:

…leaving Guelph I walked to Hamilton from thence to Toronto taking the stage I came to NewMarket and then to (?) I remained thee [sic] being in several places about twelve month I am now working in NewMarket.xxi
Weather updates were also a way of keeping family apprised of life in Upper Canada. For some, the weather conditions were ominous, but for others it was merely a continuation of what they had already experienced at home. In 1843 Good described the weather in Canada to family in Scotland as:

...so very cold. The snow in the woods is above 3 feet deep. It is not very cold in the day but in the night it is most shocking. There is a kind of dryness in the air that makes it very cold but neither cold in winter nor the heat in summer is any great change for a Scotch man.xxii

Sometimes emigrants posted letters to family to request items that would enable them to continue their trade in Canada. For instance, James Good, weaver, acknowledged receipt of ‘reeds’ from his brother in Scotland. He explained,

...the reeds, is all very good but 500 and the 6 1/4 are too light. They ought to be stout for it is very heavy work. The shuttle is far to small, it should be one inch and one forth thick, one inch and three forths broad and 14 inches long. The nails is good if you had put a few glass eyes of the largest size...

Since he started with no loom and only one reed, he had to rely on people in Scotland to ship, or bring, any items he could not either make, or find, in Canada.xxiii In another letter, John Kyd sent thread and buttons to his sister in Canada so she could continue her dressmaking business.xxiv These two examples are also indicative of the fact that some emigrants continued to ply their trade in Canada with some degree of success. They also provide additional proof that the connections between Scotland and Canada were not merely familial they were also economic.

Since Scottish emigrants wished that their family and friends would join them, their letters were filled with accolades of Canada. Good remarks, “We spent New Year’s day with singing and dancing...I owe nobody anything...Every tree down gains something but at home every Saturday made us poor as ever. We have more peace and pleasure
than ever we had…”xxv Good also explains,

I never was happier and Magdalene was never happier in all our lives, money is scarce but meat is plenty…A Canadian farmer is the happiest man in this world…I had almost forgot, if you would come here I would reckon you would get a man and a farmer and Ann Brown too. J. & M. will give you your meat till you get a husband.xxvi

In a later letter he declared, “Magdalene would not come to Paisley for the world, all that she is sorry for is that she was not here 18 years ago.”xxvii For as much as emigrants in Canada wanted to let those left behind know about Canada’s positive attributes, family members in Scotland, who were suffering in “…a world of sorrow and trouble…helpless creatures, whose lives [were] very uncertain…”xxviii also wanted as much information about Canada as possible. Some simply asked, “…do you think it desirable to emigrate do you find yourselves more comfortable…”xxix Many were interested because they hoped to emigrate there one day. And, the individuals who emigrated were more than happy to provide the information with the hopes that other family members would join them in their new country. Many heeded their friends and relatives’ words because in 1844 three quarters of the emigrants who arrived in Canada joined relatives. Two hundred and twenty of those who joined relatives were women with their children (854 persons) who were joining husbands in different sections of the province.xxx William Beattie requested that his brother George forward him information about banking, the soil and the possible returns accrued from farming in Canada before he made any decision to sell his property in Scotland and emigrate to Canada.xxxi Thomas Smibert asked his Uncle James to:

…but his description with the very pavement of the streets... houses outside and inside, shops, churches, dresses...Then a farm, from the house to the fields... All these things, though familiar to you, are novel to us, and a great mass of our population are most anxious to know what comforts of a place they may emigrate to.xxxii
James Brough’s father demanded to have a complete picture of what his son’s life as an independent male was like in Canada. In a letter dated April 7, 1834 he asked,

...write us immediately on receipt of this letter...as I mention in my last I wish you to give me a detailed account of everything concerning yourselves and your place particularly I wish you to answer the following questions what like is your house how is it furnished how is the boys employed how is Jeanie employed what is the food you principaly use what is the common price of cows oxen and sheep what kind of soil does your land chiefly consist of dry or wet have you any good springs in it, is there good wood on it and what kinds, have you good neighbours, how is the Sabbath spent there, how do you do for public worship if you have no settled minister, how are you supplied with Schoolmasters in your Township, how far are you from James Robinson, what is the number of your lot, what is good fish near you...xxxiii

Since the first few years in Canada were the most difficult, some correspondents tempered their encouragement with cautionary advice by suggesting,

I do not think there is just now a finer field for the exertions of a man with a small income, a labouring man, or a mechanic, than this country lays open; but it must be entered upon with a mind fully prepared to meet serious hardships, and to overcome them.xxxiv

As a result, some residents of Scotland were adamant that family members who travelled to Canada return home. The Brough family letters are filled with examples of lonely relatives and friends trying to convince the new Canadian residents to return to Scotland. In a letter to his cousin James, John Brough proclaimed,

I think you had better come home to one [job] here & by your own labours you could support yourselves very well as work is now quite plenty here...I do not
know how I would have been if I had been in Paisley
but I think it would not not been so well with me and
family for we have almost all we would wish.xxxv

In another letter, Marget Brough suggested to Canadian
resident Jeany, “…if you think your Brothers can make a
living out of it & if your Mother and Brothers thinks it would
be better to try and sell it and come home we would do what
we could to make you as comfortable as we can…”xxxvi

Although family ties, obligations and affection played
an important part in an emigrant’s life, neighbours and
passers-by sometimes acted as a surrogate family when blood
relations were absent. James Good explains, “We are on the
road between Newhope and Preston so that we get too many
visitors in summer for drinks and in winter to get warmed.
Instead of being dull we have more visitors than ever we
had.”xxxvii In addition to this, Good’s Pennsylvanian Dutch
neighbours visited his family often even though they spoke
very little English.xxxviii

Among the greatest preponderance of letters between
Canadian and Scottish people were the ones that exhibited a
preoccupation with death and health. It may be argued that
letters that announced the news of the death of a loved one
were simply a way of including relatives who lived far away.
Furthermore, it is also considered a common form of letter
writing etiquette to inquire about the health and welfare of
the letter’s recipient. But, since death played an elaborate
symbolic role in the Victorian era, and because death was a
common domestic fact of life, melodramatic death and the
rituals that surrounded it infiltrated the literary world of the
emigrant.xxxix One of the best illustrations is Arthur Houston’s
account of his mother’s death:

She closed this Mortal Scene on Thursday even-
ing…She fell into a quiet Slumbering that she shill
remained quite sensible except for a few minutes
after she would awake out of a long sleep. She smiled
at the prospects of death and her Exite [sic] was full
of the Happiness of a well grounded hope. The
Saturday following her corpse were numerously and
respectably attended to Kilrea Church Yard and intered [sic] in the grave of her loving Father and Mother.

One of the most interesting examples of this fascination with death, however, can be found in a letter written by Hellen Elliot in November of 1842. In this letter Elliot writes, “I have heard of no deaths here” but in an effort to continue the narrative on death, she explains, “…there was one down in Dumfries had two died [sic] the doctor thought it was much owing to improper treatment by confining them”. One woman simply stated at the end of her letter that there were simply too many deaths to mention. This preoccupation is taken to extremes when correspondence reflects not only a desire or an expectation that death is imminent any day but also a strong religious conviction that life everlasting depended on a virtuous life. John Kyd confides,

I need not expect to be very stout now my days is near a close...that we may be all Prepared for our latter end and be found among the ordained of the Lord may the Lord Bless you and all your family may we all mind that we might all die.

In another instance, William Bethune notes,

I will soon have to depart from this world altogether - Are you prepared for this removal. Are you living not for time but for Eternity?...Hoping that you are daily endeavouring to live a life of faith in the Son of God, and that your desire to glorify him on earth.

Another common theme found in most of the emigrant letters under study was a plea for the recipients to write soon and often. But information was not always disseminated during the first half of the nineteenth century because postal rates were very high, and the service was exceedingly slow and irregular due to poor delivery techniques, weather, road conditions and imperfect addresses. For example, some of the family letters studied here mere noted ‘Upper Canada’ as the address of the recipient. Others such as William Beattie’s letter to his brother in Nichol Township were very explicit,
noting the name, lot and concession number, the district as well as Upper Canada and North America. The regular charge to carry a letter from England to York was $1.12, but by way of New York, it was only forty-one cents. Therefore, many people sent their mail via the United States, which was an illegal practice at the time. In a letter to his brother James, John Brough mentions another common practice that the Brough family and other settlers used for mail delivery so that they could avoid the high cost of postage. He writes, “...when you receive this [letter] you will do by Peter and Christian Robison who are to leave Blinkbony this evening for America.” This practice of sending letters with other travellers often resulted in letters being miscarried.

In 1842 a daily line of mail-stages began. The mail delivery took place five times a week, but the stage seldom arrived on schedule. The ocean mails to Canada were carried in sailing ships even after the steamship was used for ocean travel. Even though in the 1830s letters between Liverpool and Quebec took only fifty days, a considerably shorter time than the earlier years, emigrants complained about the slow delivery and worried when no word was heard for extended periods of time. In a letter postmarked August 12, 1836, John Kyd complains to his son and daughter, “We are very uneasy to hear from you. We have had no letter from you since he had one that was dated Oct 18 1835. I sent a letter to you a few weeks after we received yours and have not heard since.” In another letter, Thomas Smibert’s opening lines in a letter to his brother notes,

It is now more than five years since I heard from you...I have written you twice since then, once by Alex Pringle ...about three years ago, about two years ago by a gentleman who went to New York – whether you got any of them I cannot say.

Prior to 1851, no postage stamps were used in Canada and envelopes were not used because the letters were usually folded into the shape of an envelope and closed with sealing wax and addressed. Ink stamps, sealing wax and folding are all visible on this study’s Scottish emigrant correspondence.
Letter postage was usually paid in advance to the postmaster and there was sometimes a charge at both ends. Some emigrants even apologized to the recipient for postage rates. In a very illegible Anderson family letter the author writes, “...sorry to put you to so much expense in paying for my letter.” Anna Jameson gives an emotional account of the destitute and homesick emigrants who:

... have not been long from the old country, round whose hearts tender remembrances of parents, and home, and home friends, yet clinging in all the strength of fresh regret and unsubdued longing, sometimes present themselves at the post offices, and on finding that their letters cost three shillings, turn away in despair.

Sufficient capital was a problem for many new emigrants to Canada. Thus many of the letters exhibited a preoccupation with money. There are continuous references to losses, loans, debts, defaults and costs that are intermingled with references to cash gifts and bequests. It is difficult to know why emigrants discussed so freely financial matters that we consider ‘private’. It is equally difficult to estimate the exact amount of capital that each emigrant brought to British North America. But it is possible to ascertain from reports that it was not easy for the new emigrants to get re-established and that the affluence of the Scottish emigrants varied from year to year and ship to ship.

In Scotland where many individuals were not eligible for parish relief, the assistance of landlords or weavers’ societies and public subscriptions were the only form of emigration aid practiced. Probably the largest amount of financial aid for emigrants came from Scottish landlords. One estimate suggests that about 14,000 inhabitants of the Highland region were supported in their passage in the entire period c. 1800 to 1860. In this study, however, none of the emigrants implied in their letters that emigrant societies, landlords or private philanthropists assisted them on their voyage to Canada. As a matter of fact, it would appear that many were not completely destitute. For instance, James Good engaged a boat to take
his family up the Rideau Canal to Kingston for two pounds and paid an additional 6 or 7 [illeg] for his luggage to be transported. Good, however, contradicts this assumption that he had capital upon arrival in Canada when he indicates a reversal of fortune in an 1842 letter. He states, “In Paisley I was owing everybody, nobody owing me but here [In Canada] it is everybody me.”

What the letters do indicate is that appeals for financial aid between Canada and Scotland existed on a wide-scale basis. In some cases, the aid was granted but in others, it was denied. James Smibert simply states, “...it is not in my power to [give] you the assistance you needed so much.” On the contrary, in a letter dated April 4, 1834, Jas Brough informs his son, “...we are sending you some money by James Stevenson on Smailholm who is going out to see his brother William in the same ship and Captain you went with...” The following week, Brough indicates in a letter that if Mr. Stevenson was not able to meet with son James, he would leave a Mr. Burnet with “…15 sovereigns which will pay your first instalment & enable you to purchase a cow...” but he also adds, “...and it is the last you may expect from us.” Could the later part of this reflect the fact that James’ father did not have the money to send or does this indicate the finite end of family obligations and James’ father’s unwillingness to further support his son’s new life in Canada? John Brough’s cousins received similar family aid. While writing to cousins in Canada Brough offers,

...I hope the land you have bought will do you good and as I believe that money is very scarce with you we must try what we can do to help you with the first instalment which will be [pounds] 20 due at this time twelve months and afterwards you will maybe get on by yourselves. I have no doubt that you will be able to make your own bread in America although I doubt if you will make any money...

On page two of a letter addressed to his brother, James Good requests a loan of a ‘five note’, which he promises to pay back in the fall. An additional letter dated the same day
offers insight into the contemporary interest rates and the use of capital when Good asks:

If you could lend me the money and I will give you six per cent that is the rule of this country. If you lend it it will enable me to get along in the winter and get seed and other things in the spring. It will come to me free of expense by sending it to the Canada Company in London and be returned the same.\textsuperscript{lx}

It is interesting to note that on February eighteenth, the following year, Good acknowledges receipt of the five-pound note and expresses relief that it arrived. He also explains that by sending it via the Canada Company he was able to save nine shillings sterling for delivery.\textsuperscript{lxi}

Of prime importance to the Scottish emigrants was the retention of independence and the acquisition of land. Land was available from both the government and land companies. On September 13, 1833 Thomas Anderson paid the first instalment on lot number 16, Concession 1 in the District of Guelph from The Canada Company, which was rooted in Scottish connections.\textsuperscript{lxii} This entitled him to take possession of the lot and to hold it, subject to the condition that if the five remaining promissory notes were defaulted, the Canada Company would take possession.\textsuperscript{lxxii} James Good mentions that he met with an Emigration Agent upon arrival in Canada in 1841 to discuss land, but he made no mention of the details other than the cost and the location of his land. He explains,

I have just been up to the Huron track and bought a 100 acres of land in the township of Downie on the banks of the river Theams [sic] 5 miles from Stratfoord [sic]… My lot goes within an 100 yards of the river and has a spring…I have to pay 3 pence per acre the second year and rises 2d pence per acre for 12 years and they I get a free Deed…there is nothing to pay the first year. …for my land I have to pay 32 shillings the first payment and 48 shillings the second 64 the third and 16 shillings every year…The 13\textsuperscript{th} year I will have 40 dollars to pay. It comes to 16/- per acre. I have wrought 1600 yards since September and I have got about 16 dollars in cash…\textsuperscript{lxxiv}
Land in Scotland and England was considerably more expensive than in Canada. In a discussion about moving to a new farm, Maddalina Brough notes,

…[John] would like to get a small Farm if he could but that is not easy to be had neither in Scotland nor England [...] Land has been letting very high in this neighbourhood...Farms have been letting for above ther [sic] values...

By 1854, land prices in Scotland had risen considerably. According to James Good Jr., “Land that was two dollars and a quarter is now ten dollars per acre...[his] father’s lot was now worth twenty five hundred dollars, a considerably large sum.”

Upon arrival in Canada, Good took what money he had left from the voyage (he states that he only had one dollar and 25 pounds of oatmeal when he landed in Newhope), left his family and went to Newhope in search of a house. Good states that he pretended that he had plenty of money so that offers of land and houses for sale were plentiful. When he went to the mill to purchase a half dollar’s worth of wood, the Millar extended credit so that he could purchase flour, butter and potatoes so that his family would have something to eat. Although staples had a monetary value, cash was always scarce. Thus, the pioneer economy relied heavily on barter and most staples were purchased by trade. But not all emigrants in Canada were as fortunate as Good and many had to rely on the kindness and handouts from neighbours and relatives. Like James Smibert, many emigrants believed the immigration propaganda posters that suggested Canada was a place where everyone “…has plenty to eat drink and to wear and there is none of us all that is overloaded with riches but has plenty and to spare.”

Many emigrants used their letters, which were rife with stories of plentiful food supplies, to tempt their hungry relatives. For instance, according to James Good, the food in Canada was both less expensive and more plentiful than in Scotland,
Meat is not easily got in Paisley but it is very cheap here [Canada]. I bought 224 lb beef for 3 dollars per 112 lb. which is little more than one penny per pound, pork is from 2 dollars to 2 1/2 per 100, flour 2 1/2 dollars per 100, potatoes 1/4 dollar per bushel butter 10 cents per lb. sugar that would cost 9d in Paisley is 10 cents here, Maple sugar is 8 cents per lb. cheese 10 cents. 100 cents is one dollar, one dollar is 4/- sterling Tea is one dollar a pound, so you see that one can live here, and if mother would but come here...she would not need to work any more, in fact leave all care in Paisley.lxix

In one letter Good even compared the variety of items served at their family meals to a wedding feast in Scotland. Good’s wife Magdalene had to learn how to cook in Canada for “…she knew nothing of making pies, puddings, sauces, cakes...[but now] Magdalene fires her loaves and pies for it is very different here.”lxix This account can be contrasted with one given by John Brough, which suggests that Scotland in 1847 was experiencing “…a year of great scarcity...almost a dearth...the greatest that ever [John] saw.”lxxi He continued on to suggest that the only thing that saved the poor was the fact that there was plenty of employment and good wages.

In Upper Canada, wages without board for most occupations in 1842 ranged from 6s 9d for millwrights to 3s 4 1/2 d for carters.lixii According to Good, millers, shoemakers and teachers were in demand in Upper Canada because people with qualifications to do these jobs were scarce.lxiii In addition to this, the Emigration Agent’s 1844 Report noted a decreased demand for agricultural servants and farmers of all classes and an increased requirement for mechanics and labourers that could be used to work on public works and construction projects such as the development of much needed gristmills. These mills opened another avenue of income for the Scottish pioneers.lxiv Robert Kirkwood’s 1841 letter to his father in Scotland outlined his plans to build a mill in Paris Upper Canada and requested that his father promote the sale of his flour in Scotland.lxxv

Although food prices presented few problems for the
settlers in this study, the acquisition of clothing was a greater challenge. Good notes, “Clothing is very dear here...in fact everything is about the double in the clothing by what it is in Paisley. Shoes is the only thing that is the same price.” As a result, many emigrants requested and received clothing from their homeland. Margaret Brough’s note to Jeany in 1839 outlines the contents of a box of used clothing:

...the frokes [sic] you can given them a little alteration yourself there is 3 shifts you can give your Mother one is town if she need them there is also a pair of Boots that will answer her and some capes there is (?) things for yourself you can make them up the best you can there is a suit for each of the Boys there is a strong coate [sic] for your Father and 4 shirts and a good deal of other things...

In a subsequent letter, Margaret again makes reference to

...a paresul [sic] of clothes...which will be a great benifet [sic] to you all...the dark gown will be a good winter one for you [Jenny] i think this is as much cotton as will be a shift to you[r] Mother and [for] you Jenny...

In the Brough family alone, 3 parcels of clothing plus separate shipments of shoes, dresses, straw bonnets, boots and stockings arrived in Canada for family members.

Home building was one of the most formidable tasks facing settlers next to the long and arduous job of clearing the land. While most settlers constructed simple, one-room log cabins, other with significantly more capital purchased ready-made farms. The Good’s first resided in a [rented?] house located in Hamilton. While the rest of the family waited in this home, James employed two hired hands to underbrush 12 acres on their land near Stratford so construction for a home for his family could begin in the spring. Good describes his new community as:

...a fine village all Scotch about 500 inhabitants, three miles from Preston about 300 inhabitants mostly German, 12 miles from Guelph about 600
inhabitants mostly Irish. The village of Newhope is a small place...the inhabitants is all Dutch but seven, two English, two Paisley bodys, their name is McKarcie, three Irish. There is a saw mill and whiskey distillery, four weavers and a blacksmith. The village is on the banks of the river Speed. My place is one mile west of the village. I have one acre of land...on the road between Newhope and Preston...

The social life of the pioneer community centred in the church and the school and the clergyman and the teacher were often the same person because these two positions were difficult to fill and fund. While education was important, it took second place to family duties and religious instruction. James Good confirms this when he explains, “I had to take [William] out of school this quarter to plough and harrow [the wheat] for he is a good ploughman and I will have plenty to do with hay and harvest and will soon have to hire a man [farmhand].” Contrary to Scotland, children in Canada during this period were not required to go to school. In Canada it was considered a luxury to be able to send children to school and many communities were “...in want of a teacher [in their] school...Good teachers is very ill to be got here [Canada]...”

The prospect of obtaining a respectable clergyman sometimes brought multi-faith neighbourhoods together. Family members’ letters from Scotland exhibited concern about the lack of ministers in Canada and chastised emigrants for their lack of spiritual leadership and what they saw as a neglect of their devoutness. John Brough wrote,

I am afraid you will be neglecting your spirituale [sic] interests for you say that Education Is much wanting, and a Gospel Ministry too. ...I hope better things of you as severall [sic] of you were taught to read your Bible before you left this highly preveleged [sic] country, and surely you don’t fail to peruse now, and as there is portions of that blessed Book that suits all the circumstances in which we can be placed...I hope that the day is not far distant when the Sun of
righteousness shall arise in meredinall splendour upon that hitherto dark corner of the world where it is now your lot to dwell, for we of this country are now contributing...to the support of missionaries to be sent amongst you...for the dark places are full of the habitations of horid [sic] cruelty.lxxxii

Many communities not only found it difficult to find and keep clergy, but they also lacked formal churches. At first religious services were held in the homes of church members where family members provided lengthy sermons. But once the emigrants were settled into their new communities, they worked together to erect a church. Quite often, the church, or ‘meeting house’ was the first public building in a community.lxxxiii The Good family letters suggest that in the early years there were three meeting houses within one mile of the Good family home but there was no regular preacher. They did, however, have a variety of visiting preachers. Good notes,

....there are a preacher every Sunday in each of them [meeting houses] and in Preston there is the Church of Scotland, that is three miles, and in Galt, that is four miles, but I am sorry to say that they are not well attended.lxxxiv

Farming was also an integral part of the lives of those who traversed the Atlantic en route to Canada. From emigrant letters it is possible to garner an understanding of early Canadian farming practices. For newly arrived emigrants, “...the first object...[was] to acquire the means of subsistence.”lxxxv Thus an emigrant’s mere existence was dependant upon the acquisition of livestock and the planting of crops. The first crops were usually planted as soon as a small portion of forested land was cleared of its thick covering of trees and matted surface.lxxxvi In the beginning emigrants planted only enough to ensure the survival of the family, but as time passed, the production of surplus produce enabled emigrants to trade or sell them at markets. Cereal grains such as wheat, rye, oats and barley were important crops. Wheat soon became the most important of all these grain crops. In a letter
home, Good explained the importance of wheat for anyone living in Upper Canada:

> I expect I will have a 150 dollars worth of wheat to sell by then. Wheat is the only thing that brings money here. It sells from three to four shillings sterling per bushel and always paid cash and without a man can raise wheat he will never get on. There is some has been here these ten years and never sold a bushel but always in the depth of misery but there is others again only been here for three years and can sell three or four hundred bushels. lxxxvii

Although wheat was the chief crop, it was not the only one. For instance, in 1844 along with eight acres of wheat, the Good family planted one and a half of potatoes, one and a half of oats, one of peas and one of Indian corn. lxxxviii Several Anderson family letters indicate that this family’s main crops consisted of potatoes and turnips. lxxix In the second year additional crops of wheat, hay and grass were planted on approximately five more acres of cleared ground. At this time pioneer farmers such as Good, were in a situation to adequately provide for their much-needed oxen and cow. Good explained in one letter that his cow lived on ‘brous’ (small twigs of trees) and “…1000 of hay…” xc

The acquisition of farm stock usually began with the purchase of a yoke of oxen. xci Cows, pigs and chickens were usually next. But until a farmer was able to produce enough crops to support the farm and his family, he had great difficulties financing the yoke of oxen he required to do his work, the cow that supplied his milk and the pigs and chickens that provided both eggs and meat for the table. Additionally, the financial aspects of living on a farm in Upper Canada could be complicated. James Good explains,

> Our cattle is a yoke of oxen and two cows, one year old heifer or quey [sic] and a calf, three sheep and two dogs…the oxen I bought them from Squire Fin. I get one year to pay 20 dollars and I am to pay the rest at the end of the second year, They are 65 dollars in all …All the rest is paid already so that I
owe no man anything. I have paid the first instalment
of my farm...xiii

But as the Scottish emigrant farmer planted the roots of
both his crops and his new life, he retained the roots of his
homeland that firmly connected him with the family, friends
and the heritage he would continue to nurture in Canada.

This historical study has offered an intimate glimpse into
the personal lives of the nineteenth century Scottish emigrants
who traversed the Atlantic Ocean and eventually settled in
Upper Canada. Though the use of their private family corre-
spondence this study has attempted to piece together the
personal, the historical and the social contexts in which the
family life of these early pioneers took place. In this respect, it
has been most successful. This report has suggested that many
factors worked together to bring about the changes that
encouraged the Scottish people to immigrate to a new land.
Although the reasons were many and varied, individual
circumstance, necessity and a push to acquire employment
and/or the desire for a better life were usually the driving
forces behind the emigrants’ decision to leave Scotland. These
proud and determined people endured perilous, long and
sometimes heart-wrenching voyages in order to realize a new
life. Since kinship bonds were enduring and strong, some
individuals were willing to chance poor conditions and
possible death in order to join their friends and relatives in
Canada and some Scots never gave up trying to coerce or
tempt family to cross the waters. But their letters also suggest
that the decision to immigrate was generally made with the
idea that someday these displaced people might return to the
place of their birth. Although this was not always possible,
emigrants in this study continued to exhibit a tremendous
loyalty to their homeland, and this feeling intensified as the
distance between kinship groups widened.

Loneliness and a shared desire to maintain connections
with family and home led many authors to assume the role of
chronicler. This suggests that letters were a way for separated
family members to reach out to the ones they loved. For those
in Canada, letters provided the security, encouragement,
guidance and support they needed to help them adjust to their new home. For those in Scotland, family correspondence provided assurances that all was well with their loved ones in the new world. Letters allowed correspondents to share a certain amount of intimacy such as the birth of a baby or the death of a loved one. Letters that advertised the advantages of living in Canada served as a medium for the emigration process. When the isolation of the Canadian wilderness led many family members to encourage those at home to join them in Canada, emigration and the population of Canada grew exponentially. Opening endearments and closing salutations indicate that even after long years of separation family bonds remained strong.

On the surface, the Scottish preoccupation with death, so prevalent in this collection of letters, appears to be connected to the profound fascination that Victorians had with death. Researchers might assume that the poignant descriptions of death and dying that infiltrated emigrant letters could be attributed to the fact that death was a common domestic fact of life. Thus writing about death was a way for emigrants to cope. But it is also possible that since emigrants and their families were extremely devout, their strong religious convictions prompted an obsession with death. Consequently, the act of writing about death reminded both the sender and the recipient that not only was life precious but also that living a virtuous life ensured ‘Life Everlasting’. Since letters have traditionally been the source of information about births, deaths and marriages, it could be that relatives were merely providing each other with important familial information. But, could these discussions about death can also be viewed as a metaphor for the death of their life in Scotland. Did the Scottish emigrants mourn the loss of their homeland like they would mourn the loss of a loved one?

The Scottish life or death struggle with money, so apparent in emigrant letters, might have resulted from long years of unemployment, the high cost of living and a prolonged lack of capital. Money may have simply been the subject of idle chit-chat. But, money matters can also have a more intimate significance. The exchange of money can bind people together
in an intimate way. Asking for money is one way of saying ‘I need you’ and providing money to those in need is a way of saying ‘I care about you and I want to improve your circumstances’. The fact remains that many did not have much money. And since the emigrant’s overriding desire for a better life included the acquisition of more capital, because materially speaking, more money usually meant a better life, it is not surprising that family letters exhibited anxiety about money.

As demonstrated above, letters by their very nature, tend to emphasize the daily preoccupations of their writers. Thus, since the writing of letters is an act that tells only the story and the information the author wants to impart, and because the information in each narrative suggests that it was important enough to document, emigrants’ letters have the ability to enhance the growing body of work whose concentration is the emigrant years. Literary transmission of the emigrant’s settlement experiences not only demonstrated the appropriateness and need of communicating this experience to other family members but they also serve to remind us of the precariousness on which the emigrants’ existence depended, particularly during their early years in Canada. These letters tell us about the writer’s perceptions of the emigrant experience, the issues that warranted the most concern, and give us insight into the thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, anxieties and trivial reflections of each chronicler. Therefore, we can ascertain that the contents of letters written at the grassroots level provide invaluable and intimate information about the ordinary folk.

There are, however problems inherent with the use of these particular letters as a source for historical information. Additionally, recapturing the full spectrum of the Scottish emigrant experience is a complex challenge. The fact that dramatic social changes between 1830 and 1856 were taking place for the emigrants and those they left at home in Scotland only further complicates such an endeavour. As a result, this study is by no means complete and leaves plenty of room for future investigations.

Nevertheless, this particular account is the story of the
Scottish people who made their way to Upper Canada and left their mark in that part of the world. These people, who were very similar to today’s refugees, had little material assets but somehow they managed to find the drive to make a new life in the Canadian wilderness. Although necessity forced these pioneers to discover skills they had never been aware of, they exhibited a natural ability to adapt and put down roots while at the same time they stayed firmly connected with their homeland. The unforgettable details of this volume of letters indicates that many emigrants attempted to replicate the social conditions of their homeland and as such brought new ideals, traditions and a new way of life to the Canadian frontier. Therefore when the Scottish emigrants arrived in Canada during the early stages of the nation’s genesis, they left their footprint on Canada’s national character, their imprint on its heritage, and gave many who call themselves ‘Canadians’ an identity rooted in the Scottish tradition.

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Endnotes

i Wendy Cameron; Mary M. Maude; Sheila Haines; JI. Little. “Assisting emigration to Upper Canada: the Petworth project, 1832-1837 [English immigrant voices: labourers’ letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s],” Canadian Historical Review, v.83 (1) (March 2002) pp. 105.

ii “Correspondence Relative to Emigration To Canada.” Correspondence Relative to Emigration To Canada Vol. 15. (Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers. Shannon Ireland: IUP, 1969), pp. 77.

iii Ibid. pp. 77.


vi “Correspondence and Other Papers Relating to Canada and to Immigration in the Provinces 1847-1848,” pp. 235.

vii *Good Family Correspondence*. Letter from James Good dated 1841 to brother, mother and sister regarding the Good family’s perilous nine week passage to Canada

viii *Reports Correspondence Returns and Other Papers Relating to The Affairs Of Canada*, pp. 22-23.


In the holds, passengers were frequently confined to beds that were “…shallow wooden boxes, usually in tiers of two or more, made of rough wood rudely knocked together.”

Frank, Emmerson *Scots*. (Tantallon: Four East Publications, 1987)

xi *Reports Correspondence Returns and Other Papers Relating to The Affairs Of Canada*, pp. 57.

xii *Cormie Family Ancestry File*: General emigration information compiled by the Cormie family.”

xiii *Reports Correspondence Returns and Other Papers Relating to The Affairs Of Canada*, pp. 611.

xiv *Good Family Correspondence*: Letter from James Good dated 1841 to brother, mother and sister regarding the Good family’s perilous nine week passage to Canada”

xv T. M. Devine. *Scottish Emigration and Scottish Society*. (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1992), pp. 94. In the 1840s and 1850s over 10,000 Highlanders were assisted by private landlords to move to Canada during the potato famine.

xvi *Beattie Family Correspondence*: Letter from John Beattie, Broomhill Farm to uncle George Beattie Nichol Township.” Written September 29, 1838 regarding lease problems, crop failures and emigration.
Anderson Family Correspondence. In a packet of letters from John and Agnes Kyd, dated April 5, 1834, to Thomas Anderson, Agnes Kyd gives an update of activities in Scotland and puts forth the suggestion that some friends and family members may be travelling to Canada in the near future.

Anderson Family Correspondence. Letter from William and Mary Aitken (?) dated Loanhead (?), 28, April 1834 to Thomas Anderson regarding receipt of letter, Mary gave birth to a son named Alexander, possible travel to Canada and deaths of friends and neighbours.

Houston-McNeely-Blair Family Correspondence. Typed copy (on Dr. Houston’s letterhead) of the letter from Arthur Houston dated Glasgow, 9 April 1832 to his brother in Carleton County regarding the death of their mother, financial settlement with brother James in Ireland for keeping mother, difficult financial times, contemplation of sending son Andrew to study medicine to be useful in Canada.

Good Family Correspondence. Letter from James Good dated Newhope, 13 February 1843 to his brother, sisters and family informing them of Magdalene giving birth to a daughter, friendliness of Dutch neighbours, land payments and the snow.

Anderson Family Correspondence. Letter from John Anderson dated NewMarket, February 22, 1837 to his parents apologizing for his past conduct and giving them a rundown of his activities in Canada.

Good Family Correspondence. Letter from James Good dated Newhope, 13 February 1843 to his brother, sisters and family informing them of Magdalene giving birth to a daughter, friendliness of Dutch neighbours, land payments and the snow.

Good Family Correspondence. Letter from James Good dated 11/12 January 1842 to brother in Scotland about the independence of owning land and the price of a pig in Canada. Also advising the best time for James’ mother to emigrate. Letter from James Good dated Newhope, 23 November 1842 to “Dear Sir” describing his initial difficulties in Canada, describing Newhope’s location, credit in Canada, the lack of supplies for his weaving business and the local wildlife. James also indicates, “I went and bought as much wood as I wanted without paying anything and commenced making my loom, lay, pirn, wheel, shuttles and shafts which surprised my neighbours… they pronounced a first rate weaver and carpenter.”
Anderson Family Correspondence: In a packet of letters from John and Agnes Kyd, dated April 5, 1834, to Thomas Anderson, Agnes Kyd gives an update of activities in Scotland and puts forth the suggestion that some friends and family members may be travelling to Canada in the near future.

Good Family Correspondence: Letter from James Good dated Downie, 11/18 August 1844 to brother and sister regarding sale of potatoes, production of sugar, a description of the Downie farm and the positive attributes of Canada.

Good Family Correspondence: Letter from J. & M. Good dated at Newhope 23 September 1841 to brother in Scotland about new life in Canada, which they very much like.

Good Family Correspondence: Letter from James Good dated 11/12 January 1842 to brother in Scotland about the independence of owning land and the price of a pig in Canada. Also advising the best time for James’ mother to emigrate.

Brough Family Correspondence: Letter from John Brough dated Nenthorn, 22 May 1838 to brother James regarding the receipt of a letter confirming the arrival of ten pounds, Robert contracting measles, and the letter concludes with a religious tract about sin.

Anderson Family Correspondence: Letter from [illleg.] dated Edinburgh 30 March 1835 to “Dear sister” regarding baker’s wages, shoemaking and emigration to Canada.


Beattie Family Correspondence: Letter from William Beattie, Broomhill Farm, Strathdon Parish Aberdeenshire, Scotland to his brother George Beattie in Nichol Township. Written June 13, 1836 regarding conditions at Broomhill Farm and arrangements for emigration.

Smibert Family Correspondence: Letter from Thomas Jr. to uncle James Smibert dated 30 September 1840 informing James of the death of Thomas Sr.
xxxiii **Brough Family Correspondence**: Letter from Jas Brough dated Nenthorn, 7 April 1834 to son James regarding money sent to purchase a cow and a request for a very detailed update on every facet of life in Canada.

xxxiv **Anderson Family Correspondence**: Letter from John Anderson dated NewMarket 22 February 1837 to his parents regarding books, McKenzie & radicals and the first few years in Canada.

xxxv **Brough Family Correspondence**: Letter from John Brough dated Nenthorn, 24 May 1841 to Cousin James Brough regarding financial assistance, James Robinson’s past visit to see James, encouraging James to return to Scotland.

xxxvi **Brough Family Correspondence**: Letter from Margaret Brough dated Nenthorn, 24 May 1841 to Jeaney sending regards and hoping the farming season goes well and if not then extends an offer to return to Scotland.

xxxvii **Good Family Correspondence**: Letter from James Good dated Newhope, 23 November 1842 to “Dear Sir” describing his initial difficulties in Canada, describing Newhope’s location and the local wildlife.

xxxviii **Good Family Correspondence**: Letter from James Good dated Newhope, 13 February 1843 to Brother, Sisters and family informing them of Magdalene giving birth to a daughter, friendliness of Dutch neighbours, land payments and snow.

xi Houston-McNeely-Blair Family Correspondence: Typed copy (on Dr. Houston’s letterhead) of the letter from Arthur Houston dated Glasgow, 9 April 1832 to his brother in Carleton County regarding the death of their mother, financial settlement with brother James in Ireland for keeping mother, difficult financial times, contemplation of sending son Andrew to study medicine to be useful in Canada.

xii Anderson Family Correspondence: Letter from Hellen Elliot dated 18 November 1842 to her sister Margaret Anderson regarding her journey home, bad winter roads near Guelph and the death of an unknown person and Mr. Pringll Spear’s child.

xiii Letter from John Kyd dated Kennoway, 12 August 1836 to Thomas Anderson expressing concern that no letter has been received since October 1835 and news about the Graham family inheritance.

xiii Anderson Family Correspondence: Letter from Alex Kyd dated 28 September 1838 to Peggy Anderson sending pleasantry and asking for a reply.

xiv Anderson Family Correspondence. Letter from William Bethune dated Kennoway, 24 January 1838 to Thomas Anderson regarding receipt of letter, allusion to rebellions in Upper Canada, local animals, inquiry about Canadian cities and religion.

xv Edwin C. Guillet. Early Life in Upper Canada. (Toronto: The Ontario Publishing Co., Ltd., 1933), pp. 606. In the early part of this period, letters posted in England or Scotland in November seldom arrived at York before the following spring; while under the most favourable conditions of later years at least two to three months was necessary.


**Brough Family Correspondence:** Letter from John Brough dated Nenthorn, 24 May 1840 to James mentioning that he is glad James received the box of goods from a previous letter, that he is sending information via two travellers who are leaving for America, regrets that James is ill and ends with religious thoughts about healing through God.

**Anderson Family Correspondence:** Letter from John Kyd dated Kennoway, 12 August 1836 to Thomas Anderson expressing concern that no letter has been received since October 1835 and news about the Graham family inheritance.

**Smibert Family Correspondence:** Letter from Thomas Smibert dated 14 August 1828 updating James on family news, outlining his concern about not having heard from James and his economic troubles with the tannery.


5. *Good Family Correspondence*: Letter from James Good dated 1841 to brother, mother and sister regarding the Good family’s perilous nine week passage to Canada.

6. *Good Family Correspondence*: Letter from James Good dated Newhope, 23 November 1842 to “Dear Sir” describing his initial difficulties in Canada, describing Newhope’s location and the local wildlife.

7. *Smibert Family Correspondence*: Letter from Thomas Smibert (Peebles Scotland) to brother James Smibert (London, Upper Canada) dated 29 March 1825 regarding an inability to provide funds and Thomas’ letter tanning business.

8. *Brough Family Correspondence*: Letter from Jas. Brough dated Nentorn, 7, April 1834 to his son James in Otonabee Upper Canada regarding sending money and updates to friends in Scotland.
Brough Family Correspondence. Letter from Jas Brough dated Nenthorn, 7 April 1834 to son James regarding money sent to purchase a cow and a request for a very detailed update on every facet of life in Canada.

Brough Family Correspondence. Letter from John Brough dated Nenthorn, 8 March 1843 to “Dear Cousins” offering money and expressing concern of neglect for educational and spiritual activity in Canada.

Good Family Correspondence. Letter from James Good dated Downie, September 9, 1843 to his brother and friends regarding crops, livestock and finances in Canada. He also adds a request for money so that he is able get along in the coming winter.

Good Family Correspondence. Letter from James Good dated Downie, 18 February 1844 to his brother acknowledging receipt of money. It also provides details of life in Canada including clearing the land, intemperance, Canadian misfortunes. Good also requests his brother forward a song book from Scotland.


Anderson Family Correspondence. September 13, 1833 Agreement to purchase lot in Guelph.

Good Family Correspondence. Letter from James Good dated 11/12 January 1842 to brother in Scotland about the independence of owning land and the price of a pig in Canada. Also advising the best time for James’ mother to emigrate.

Brough Family Correspondence. Letter from Maddalina Brough dated Wooden Mills, 5 April 1849 to her sister about a visit from William Robison, hard times at Nenthorn and surprise at lack of minister in Canada.

Good Family Correspondence. Letter from James Jr. dated Downie, 7 October 1854 to his uncle informing him of his marriage to Jane McEwan and the rising price of land in Scotland. James Sr. informs him of the death of a friend. His daughter Ann married James Chawens.
lxvii Good Family Correspondence: Letter from James Good dated Newhope, 23 November 1842 to “Dear Sir” describing his initial difficulties in Canada, describing Newhope’s location and the local wildlife. “Reports Correspondence Returns and Other Papers Relating to The Affairs Of Canada,” pp. 431.

lxviii Smibert Family Correspondence: Letter from James Smibert dated London 5 March 1846 to his nephew Thomas regarding a family inheritance, banking, the situation in Canada and family news.

lxix Good Family Correspondence: Letter from James Good (no date) to his brother and sister regarding the cost of food in Canada, a family update, religious instruction in Canada, and a list of items he would like sent for his weaving business.

lxx Good Family Correspondence: Letter from James S. Good dated Newhope 23 November 1842 to “Dear Sir” regarding business and life in Canada.

lxxi Brough Family Correspondence: Letter from John Brough dated Wooden Mill, 31 May 1847 to Mr. Dear regarding living near Kelso, not having a farm, the Corn Laws and commodity prices. Attached is a letter from M. Brough about family updates.

lxxii “Reports Correspondence Returns and Other Papers Relating to The Affairs Of Canada,” pp. 431.

lxxiii Good Family Correspondence: Letter from John Good dated 1 September 1850 to his uncle in Scotland informing him that James has been ill since April, success of crops, loss of some livestock, and an outline of trades that would do well in Canada.

lxxiv “Reports Correspondence Returns and Other Papers Relating to The Affairs Of Canada,” pp. 827.

lxxv Kirkwood Family Letter: Letter from Robert Kirkwood in Paris to his father Andrew Kirkwood in Scotland dated 8 December 1841. The letter describes the plans for a mill that Robert and his partner are building in Paris. It also discusses finding a market for their flour and exporting some to his father in Glasgow.

lxxvi Good Family Correspondence: Letter from James Good dated Newhope, 13 February 1843 to his brother, sisters and family informing them of Magdalene giving birth to a daughter, friendliness of Dutch neighbours, land payments and the snow.
Brough Family Correspondence: Letter from Margaret Brough dated Nenthorn, May 1839 to Jenny regarding a box of clothes sent along with the letter.

Brough Family Correspondence: Letter from Margaret Brough dated Nenthorn, 7 May 1842 to Jenny about a parcel of clothes that was sent and an update about friends.


Good Family Correspondence: Letter from James dated Downie, 6 February 1853 to brother recounting the visit of J. Burns, their growing livestock herd and crops, the need to hire a farmhand, success of the Canada Company.

Good Family Correspondence: Letter from James Good dated Downie, 1 August 1851 to brother informing him that he is still ill, that potatoes are a complete failure, of a flood, and of the loss of their minister and the lack of a teacher.

Brough Family Correspondence: Letter from John Brough dated Nenthorn, 8 March 1843 to “Dear Cousins” offering money and expressing concern of neglect for education and spirituality in Canada.


Good Family Correspondence: Letter from James Good (no date) to his brother and sister regarding the cost of food in Canada, a family update, religious instruction in Canada, and a list of items he would like sent for his weaving business.

“Correspondence Relative to Emigration To Canada,” pp. 69.


Good Family Correspondence: Letter from James Good dated Downie, September 9, 1843 to his brother and friends regarding crops, livestock and finances in Canada. He also adds a request for money so that he is able get along in the coming winter.
Letter from James Good dated Downie, 18 February 1844 to his brother acknowledging receipt of money. It also provides details of life in Canada including clearing the land, intemperance, Canadian misfortunes. Good also requests his brother forward a song book from Scotland.

Anderson Family Correspondence: Letter from John Kyd dated Kennoway, 12 August 1836 to Thomas Anderson expressing concern that no letter has been received since October 1835 and news about the Graham family inheritance; Letter from M. Anderson dated 22 May 1843 to Thomas regarding receipt of letter, parental advice about a debt owed to Thomas by John Pearson, and news of marriage of Peter Orn; Letter from David Anderson dated Kennoway, 18 March 1834 to his brother Thomas regarding death of mother, family updates, commodity prices, and possibility of coming to Canada.

Letter from James Good dated Downie, 18 February 1844 to his brother acknowledging receipt of money. It also provides details of life in Canada including clearing the land, intemperance, Canadian misfortunes. Good also requests his brother forward a song book from Scotland.


James Good to his brother and friends, 9 September 1843.
REVIEWS


This collection of scholarly yet accessible chapters is a lasting tribute to what was an important television series conceived and broadcast by BBC Scotland. Over the last decade or so, history as entertainment has become especially popular through the medium of TV. Perhaps it is the dedicated channels which proliferate our cable and satellite listings, or perhaps it is a realization of just how fascinating the search for our historical past is, especially when accompanied by the visual richness of collected artifacts, still photographs and, for over a century now, moving images. This particular series, entitled as of the book, is also important for being a retort to the biggest and most ambitious series produced by the BBC in recent decades, Simon Schama’s *A History of Britain*. This British broadcast has combined syndication and video/DVD release with tie-in books and a website. Both series have their starting port on Orkney, showcasing the remarkable Ring of Brodgar, Maes Howe and the Neolithic village at Skara Brae. However, many criticized Schama for ignoring Scotland until it impinged directly on England. This is a major reason why the BBC Scotland production, presented by Fiona Watson, was so well received. Gordon Menzies first produced a broadcast and accompanying book on Scotland’s history in the early 1970s. His most recent team of Scottish historians is an excellent one and under the watchful guidance of Scotland’s Historiographer Royal, Professor T.C. Smout, as principal historical adviser, the collection exudes credibility along with accessibility.

The introductory comments by the editor make it clear that the search for Scotland’s history is also a search for its identity (p. vii). Our identity is essentially multi-faceted, but we use history to gives us the roots that allow us to progress as
a nation. The editor reminds us that so much of Scotland’s 10,000 years of history is undocumented. The first eight thousand years left us nothing that the historian would call an historical record, and much of the rest of that history has excluded all but the exceptional from our view. At this point Ian Armit takes up the challenge of Scotland’s pre-history (p.1) to show how climate and geography changed sufficiently to enable the first settlements to be established. In no meaningful sense was this Scotland, with the early Mesolithic peoples meandering around northern Europe and this inhospitable territory still joined by an enormous land-bridge (Doggerland) to Denmark (pp.4-5). But the persistence of the Neolithic farmers, despite an inferior diet to their Mesolithic hunter-gathering predecessors, saw the slow transition to established communities and, as the archeological evidence in Orkney suggests, an intricate and developed culture followed (pp.8-9ff). History begins, Alex Woolf proclaims in chapter 2, when documents take over from archeological evidence (p.24). The period since the Roman invasion of AD79, and writings of Cornelius Tacitus and Cassius Dio, give us much insight into early Scotland, a period Woolf describes as the ‘Birth of a nation’ (pp.24-6). His narrative weaves through the competing battles for supremacy between the Picts, the Gaels or Scotti, and the Angles in the period from the sixth to the tenth century, finishing on the forty year rule of Constantine mac Aeda and the stability he gave to the kingdom of the Scots (pp.44-5). The move from Pagan to Christian Scotland was part of this coherence and the history of the monk and the establishment and patronage of monasteries is the theme of Geoffrey Barrow’s fascinating chapter. After Nynia (Ninian) in Whithorn in Galloway (c.500), it was Columba’s move from Ireland to Iona in 563 which was the headline to these developments. There were a series of monasteries established throughout western Britain and Ireland in the sixth and seventh centuries (p.49), reaching a golden age in the period c.1090 to c.1250 (p.53). The series presenter, Fiona Watson, guides the reader through that well-documented fall and death of Alexander III in 1286, which with the death of the infant Maid of Norway left Scotland without any direct royal
line. As well as the battle for the throne between Bruce of Annandale and John Balliol, there followed a battle for overlordship of Scotland with the English monarch Edward I seeking sovereign rights over the Scottish crown (pp.65-8). The wars of independence with Wallace and Bruce (and the latter’s remarkable spin-doctoring as the most insecure of patriot-kings) is here sketched with clarity and skill. Another favored history given a fascinating twist is provided by Michael Lynch in his analysis of ‘Court and Kirk’ in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The cult of honor created by James IV, and the creation of the Great Hall in Edinburgh and Stirling Castles, the restoration of the cult of Andrew and Margaret as national saints (p.96) and the attempts in the 1580s and 1590s to exert state control over the church (p.111) are all featured here. A reminder that Scotland’s landscape has continued to impact on its history, as has its proximity to its European neighbors, is a point well made in Christopher Smout’s chapter. He shows these early inter-linkages between the east coast ports of Scotland, especially Fife, and their Dutch and Flemish partners while the west coast towns often had direct routes with France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (pp.115-6). The Union of Crowns in 1603 starts off Edward Cowan’s chapter and he charts the interplay of monarchical ambition, Scotland’s attempt at kick-starting an Empire at Darien, and the coming of political union. Trade was especially important with England, and with England’s expanding Empire, and this point is used by Christopher Whatley to help us understand the delicate political, religious and economic wrangling that resulted in that most controversial of events, the Union of 1707 with England. Cowan and Whatley set up the political-economy of Scotland at the start of the modern period, and Hamish Fraser weaves in the social history which went alongside the ‘Victorian achievement’ of economic and industrial success. It is a chapter which captures the confidence of the nineteenth century, while Finlay’s, by way of contrast, concludes the volume on a note of economic and social decline, with the rise of labour and nationalist politics in the twentieth century as a response to Scotland’s contribution to a British malaise.
This is very good introduction to Scotland’s history. The chapters are relatively short, with no footnotes, and they explain their subject with great craft. At times there is the usual conflict in the focus between the history of kings, queens and the high politics of the nation, and the need to consider the populace. But this should not detract from the quality of what is on offer. And talking of which, the publishers collaboration with Historic Scotland is just one of the reasons why this book is so copiously illustrated – and there is even the odd map or two to tell us which Scotland, and there are many claims in the making of this nation, is the focus of each chapter. This is a book to recommend.

Dr. Graeme Morton
University of Guelph

Since the 1970s, works on Jacobite history have flowed with wild abandon from presses around the globe. Historians like E. Cruickshanks, D. Szechi, P. Monod, J. Black, B. Lenman, M. Pittock, and F. McLynn have cast their eye upon issues of politics and culture, primarily within an exclusively domestic framework. Too often these works have left the impression that the Jacobite movement was little more than a noble and chivalric, but ultimately doomed, attempt by the ‘Children of the Mist’, a ragtag band of Highland and Irish misfits, to affect the restoration of the exiled Stuart monarchy. Likewise, the exiled monarchs, especially James III, with whom Wills is primarily concerned, are portrayed as enigmatic, but ineffective leaders, making great plans but consistently failing to follow through. Rebecca Wills’ *The Jacobites in Russia 1715-1750*, taking as its theme the period of the Jacobite diaspora, suggests that the Jacobite movement, as it relates to early eighteenth century Russia, was far more nuanced and complex than previous work has allowed. In the course of her work, Wills examines the nature of Russo-Jacobite relations - not only in a Russian context, but in a broader European one – and the crisis of identity facing the men who were both Jacobite and Russian.

Though some historians have begun to look at Jacobitism in a wider European context (notably, D. Szechi), this remains an under-researched, but fertile, area of study. One aspect of this ‘European context’ is the Jacobite diaspora, an event that reached its height in the aftermath of the Rising of 1715, often considered to have been the rebellion with the greatest chance of success. In the wake of the ‘15, high profile Jacobites fled Britain, seeking both refuge and career opportunities in countries like Sweden, Prussia and Russia. In these countries, which were looking to establish themselves as ‘great powers’, Jacobite military and political skills were in high demand. This was especially true in Russia, and the period from 1716 to 1730 (encompassing the reigns of Peter the Great, Catherine I,
and Peter II) was the most dynamic and encouraging for Russo-Jacobite relations.

Russia was particularly attractive to Jacobite exiles like Peter Lacy, James Keith, Thomas Gordon, William Hay, and Sir Robert Erskine, Peter the Great’s personal physician. In part this was due to the dire financial situation of James III’s exiled court – the Stuart king simply could not afford to retain those men who supported his restoration in 1715. Peter the Great, however, could. Moreover, Peter’s Westernisation policies opened up many opportunities for Jacobite exiles, especially in the military. Russia’s highly selective military system ensured that, though it employed proportionally fewer foreigners and fewer Jacobites than elsewhere in Europe, those Jacobites who met the high recruitment standards ascended to the top of their fields, wielding power and influence far beyond their numeric strength. With the active support of the Tsar, the Jacobite community in Russia flourished, contributing to the further deterioration of Anglo-Russian relations (already significantly damaged by the ‘Gyllenborg conspiracy’, the Atterbury plot, the embassy of Daniel O’Brien, ‘first Jacobite Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary to the Emperor Peter I’, and the concerted effort of both Russian envoys and exiled Jacobites to actively recruit from the British Navy). With the death of Peter the Great in 1725, the Jacobites lost one of their primary supporters. The fact that no such Jacobite rising succeeded (or was even attempted) with Russian support between 1715-1725 is not, according to Wills, indicative of Russian failure to cooperate, rather than the fact that, given the complicated nature of European politics at the time, no rising would have been feasible.

Wills notes that many historians have traditionally asserted that, after Peter I’s death, Jacobite activity in Russia ceased immediately. However, looking at contemporary British propaganda, Wills shows that the converse was true, given the frequency with which the ‘Jacobite threat’ was invoked by Sir Robert Walpole’s propaganda machine. Although such assertions were more often than not made to conceal continued political and territorial rivalries in the Baltic, this manoeuvre would have been wholly ineffective had the Jacobites movement
truly been defunct. Nevertheless, though far from insignificant, there simply was not sufficient support for a Stuart restoration anywhere in Europe – Austria refused to support the Jacobites in a time of peace, Sweden was forced to accede to the Treaty of Hanover (at considerable financial cost to Britain), France withheld support in the face of Hanoverian supremacy, and Spain was hampered by military inadequacy. This basic lack of support was compounded by the events of Peter II’s reign, during which Britain and Russia drew closer together politically, a process that culminated in the renewal of Anglo-Russian diplomatic relations in 1731.

This realignment of Russian and British interests confronted Jacobites with a difficult situation, where any activity on behalf of James III (and, therefore, against the Hanoverian regime) would conflict with their service to the Russian monarch (now Britain’s ally). Though many Jacobites, like James Keith, simply shifted their attention from Jacobite activity to matters of career, thereby skirting a conflict of interest by allowing Jacobite interests to lie fallow, the embassy of James Fitzjames, Spanish duke of Liria and loyal Jacobite, demonstrated that, in the fickle arena of international politics, professional obligation and personal allegiance were neither mutually exclusive nor indicative of disloyalty. James III himself often praised the work of exiled Jacobites in Russia, lauding their military service, perhaps in the vain hope that one day their talents would be successful channelled into a Stuart restoration. However, even renewed and exclusive devotion to the growing Russian empire was not enough to protect Jacobite officers from the rampant xenophobia of the reigns of Anna Ivanovna and Elisabeth. Wills suggests that, as Jacobite officers were skilled disproportionately to native talent, Russia may not have succeeded in the conflicts of the 1730s and ’40s without the critical leadership of men like Thomas Gordon, Peter Lacy and James Keith. Facing the resignation of many prominent leaders, both Anna and Elisabeth attempted to curb anti-foreign agitation. Despite a measure of success, as many as eight hundred foreign officers left Russia for comparable positions elsewhere in Europe. Finally, even James Keith, perhaps the most influential and prominent Jacobite in
the post-Petrine period, could no longer tolerate the hostile Russian atmosphere. He fled to Prussia in 1747, depriving the Russian military of its most able commander and providing Prussia with an invaluable intelligence source on Russian military affairs. Thus, by the end of the 1740s, Jacobite influence had decreased significantly and was no longer a legitimate threat to European political stability; nonetheless, the overall impact of Jacobite influence was to Russia’s lasting gain, as it helped to establish Russia as one of Europe’s Great Powers.

Without a doubt, *The Jacobites in Russia 1715-1750* makes an invaluable contribution to an under-developed body of literature on international Jacobitism. Her writing is detailed, organized, and thoroughly-researched, drawing upon a vast quantity of archival material from Scottish, English, and Russian collections. Russian history has often been neglected by British historians, largely due to the language barrier, the inaccessibility of primary sources, and an unfortunate tendency to underestimate Russia’s significance in both British and international politics. Rebecca Wills’ work demonstrates that this need not, and should not, continue to be the case.

*Megan Selva*

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Fifty years after breaking away from the established Church of Scotland, the Free Church found itself facing a disruption of its own. In 1893 a second, notably smaller, disruption occurred. Yet for the two ministers who left and the lay people who followed them this second disruption was still significant. Indeed, those who left saw themselves as the true heirs of the original founders of the Free Church.

James Lachlan MacLeod devotes a chapter to each of four major themes in order to tell this story. After a brief introduction, MacLeod turns to his first theme, the changing social context within Scotland. While this chapter helps to establish some background, it does not seem crucial to the main arguments of the book. The major arguments are found in the next three chapters: “The Free Church Response to Biblical Criticism and Darwinian Science”; “The Highland-Lowland Divide in the Free Church”; and, “The Declaratory Act of 1892”. The approach in all of these chapters is primarily a history of ideas approach, wherein MacLeod traces how the various positions grew further and further apart. His major sources are books, comments from magazines (often on the conservative end of the Free Church), Overtures within the church on specific issues and sermons which all dealt with these issues. For example, in the chapter on the Declaratory Act, the author outlines the history of the Westminster Confession and its place in the church, before then addressing the growing sense by some in the church that their consciences would not allow them to agree or subscribe to all of it. Sources used and quoted from include speeches made at the Assembly, Overtures, sections of R. Mackintosh *The Obsolescence of the Westminster Confession of Faith* (1888) and responses from the conservative church journal *The Signal*. Very helpfully the author includes the full text of the Declaratory Act itself. In the very important chapter on divisions between the
Highlands and the Lowlands, as well as in the discussion of both biblical criticism and evolution, similar sources are used, allowing for the variety of voices from the time to be heard, including a strong presence of those in the more conservative wing of the Free Church.

James MacLeod paints a picture of growing divisions within the Free Church. Advances in Biblical studies were embraced by many and came to be taught by various professors in the Free Church colleges. There was also a strong reaction against these ideas, and MacLeod is careful to stress the various positions taken in these debates. Although less time is spent within the book discussing evolution, MacLeod argues that a similar process occurred in response to Darwin’s teachings. As already noted, in the second major section of the book MacLeod discusses the “growing division between the Highland and Lowland congregations of the Free Church,” and the role that racial theory and hostility to the Gaelic language played in that division. MacLeod’s clear understanding of and articulation of the way in which late Victorian racial theory denigrated the language and culture of the Highlands in contradistinction to that of the Lowlands is crucial to understanding what occurred in 1893. What is noteworthy is how few clergy, despite these divisions, actually ended up leaving the church in 1893 to help found the Free Presbyterian Church. MacLeod argues that lingering memory of the costs of that first disruption and the cost of leaving behind manses and incomes and a highly valued church, when at this time deterrents to many leaving, and encouraged them to rationalize their decision.

The book offers a very thorough, detailed and learned account of the disruption and examines the ideas leading to divisions within the church. MacLeod is correct to stress the variety of causes that led to the disruption, but it would have been helpful to weight them. Which of these factors – changing understandings of the Bible, the ideas of Darwin, racism towards Highlanders, or the specific battles over the Westminster Confession – was most significant? My sense in reading the book is that the growing cultural divide was absolutely fundamental. Notwithstanding, this is an important
book on division within a Christian denomination in the latter nineteenth century. Its thorough approach will help us in doing comparative study beyond Scotland and this one tradition, to the other fragmenting Christian denominations in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

*Stuart Macdonald*

*Knox College*
Joining the recent outpouring and expansion of historical writing on medieval Celtic themes, John Marsden’s latest contribution provides a welcome exploration of a hitherto largely uncelebrated collective. Making a fine addition to the increasing literature concerning Scotland’s Western Isles and their connections with both Scandinavia and Ireland, Galloglas is exemplary in its gathering of sparse sources to provide a full and insightful narrative. It is a welcome addition to the new stream of both Irish and Scottish medieval histories that push beyond the traditional themes to explore in new directions.

Giving due credit to Gerard A. Hayes-McCoy’s pioneering work on the Galloglas, Marsden makes full use of available materials to explore both the rise and fall of this mercenary warrior class in medieval Ireland; placing them in their wider historical and ethnic contexts. After setting the stage of Scandinavian, Irish, Scottish, and Norman interactions in the mid to late medieval era, Marsden breaks down the Galloglas into the 6 kindreds comprising the vast majority of available records: the MacSweeneys, the MacDonnells, the MacSheehys, the MacRorys, the MacDowells, and the McCabes. To each of these groups, Marsden devotes a separate section exploring their origins, expansions, and central interactions with the other Galloglas groups. While regrettably conjectural as regards the origins of the different kindreds, the lack of traditional sources is well supplemented by both name analysis, and an appropriately cautious use of clan histories. As with any historian matching evidence between chronicles, there is an unfortunate amount of approximation done in identifying individuals common to more than one source. However, he carefully leads the reader through murky waters and names both too common and too often changing. One point he clearly expounds is the common descent of four of the kindreds from Somerled of Argyll, providing an important connection with this notable ‘Lord of the Isles’ and the key
ethnic connection between these Irish mercenaries and the Western Isles.

Although Marsden’s tracing of the histories of the kindreds becomes somewhat difficult to follow at times, the included genealogies provide, with frequent checking, adequate support to follow these complicated and incomplete family histories. The writing leaves no doubt that the author has entirely immersed himself in his research of the Galloglas, drawing upon a wide variety of sources even outside of Scotland and Ireland. Unfortunately, at times there is difficulty in pinpointing exactly what sources were used for specific information, as the author skims over anecdotes with sparse footnoting. However, the overarching argument of this book, the importance of these Galloglas to Ireland during several centuries of intermittent warfare, is well made. A tentative argument is put forward towards their importance initially beginning with Edward Bruce’s invasion of Ireland. He convincingly argues that Edward’s forces showed the native Irish the potential effectiveness of Hebridean and West Highland warriors against previously unmatched Norman precision and technology. A brilliant picture is painted of the mercenary warrior, armed with his traditional long axe, able to stand against Norman horsemen, and providing able protection for Irish lords. Thus, through the fourteenth century, their renown was made known, and through the fifteenth century their use became widespread as a wider range of paymasters needed to match galloglas against galloglas. He argues that their peak was reached specifically in 1504 at Knockdoe, the largest battle of its kind in Irish history. However, Marsden also discusses the problems with supporting this type of mercenary warrior. The view that supporting these mercenaries through either ‘coyne and livery’ or grants of land eventually became too costly is logically presented, and he points to this as the problem leading to their eventual fall into disuse, and replacement by the Scottish Redshanks. Unlike the Galloglas, these ‘seasonal warriors’ could be called upon from Scotland in numbers great enough to combat those that could be raised by Queen Elizabeth.

The third chapter focuses on the Galloglas as warriors,
showing the common traits and descriptions that unified these
groups of mercenaries. He argues strenuously as to the impor-
tance of the Galloglas in Irish warfare as the ‘elite professional
class’, especially in the late medieval period. His argument, in
large part, focuses around a logical examination of their
usability as opposed to any abundance of sources to the point.
The argument is still well made, despite the lack of records
though, as he demonstrates the use of Galloglas by both the
Northern Irish lords as well as the Anglo-Irish magnates of
the Pale. They are shown as true mercenaries, fighting, espe-
cially in the later period, most often against one another,
while being employed by rival factions. It is argued that the
previous Irish mercenary warrior of choice, kern, were both
to prone to previous loyalty and ineffective against Norman
cavalry to continue to be used. The fourth chapter then
attempts to put the Galloglas in the greater context of Scandi-
navian influence throughout the medieval era. However, at
times this overview becomes too broad and might be better
suited for an extended work on the patterns of Scandinavian
influence as opposed to this work on the mercenary Irish,
who, although distantly influenced, bear little comparison
with the Scandinavian influence in Russia or Normandy.

Marsden has played the part of historical detective expertly
throughout this work, finding scraps of information over an
immense geographic and chronological range to weave together
his view of the Galloglas. Unfortunately, the scarcity of his
information, drawn mainly from several Irish chronicles, forces
a large amount of conjecture. However, his presumptions
always flow logically, and while occasionally very optimistic
in nature, he does leave this information solely as hypotheses,
often discussing several conceivable scenarios at length. In
the end, this book is to be congratulated as it certainly repre-
sents the definitive work on the Galloglas; a story that was
due to be told, and has been told well.

Andrew Bonnell
University of Guelph

This is a comprehensive study of twelve crucial years not only in the career of Mary of Guise, the French queen of James V, but also in the history of Scotland. Those were the years that witnessed the swansong of the “Auld Alliance”, an alliance that was forged by Scotland and France out of mutual need for protection against English aggression and that survived for over 250 years. In the attempt to preserve it, Guise’s role was a vital one. Widowed at the age of 27, Guise stayed in Scotland for eighteen turbulent years, to contend with English invasions, with lawlessness in the Borders and the Highlands, and with growing religious conflict within the realm. Much of the book’s value comes from Ritchie’s close analysis of events. She introduces the reader to Guise’s years in France but the focus of the book is on her ascent to power in Scotland and on her astute handling of political affairs thereafter.

At the heart of any study of Guise’s life lies, inevitably, the question: why did she stay on? Ritchie contends that “Dynasticism, not Catholicism, was the primary motive behind her policy in Scotland.” (p.248). This is a startling contention, and even more so is her claim that Guise “was raised, and later operated, in a world where dynasticism took precedence over personal and religious convictions” (p.245). In sixteenth-century Europe, religion, as much as dynasty, played a powerful role in the lives of men and women. That Guise should have fought with such courage to maintain the Franco-Scottish alliance and the thrones of Scotland and France for her daughter is not surprising. Rather, it is to be expected. But it is dangerous, perhaps, to dismiss motives other than personal glory. She was almost certainly conscious of her duty to the French kings, for François I had raised her status to that of a Daughter of France, and conscious also of her duty to the Catholic Church in which she was raised and which she never abjured. In the end, the portrait that emerges is not so much that of a woman driven by dynastic ambition as one subject to French foreign policy.
The most arresting and valuable part of Ritchie’s work is her discussion of French involvement in Scottish affairs. Here she throws a bright light on Henri II’s dream of a Franco-British Empire and the new importance that Scotland acquired on the European stage. Under the terms of the Treaty of Haddington in 1548, France sent men, munitions and money to help the Scots oust the English; in return, the five-year-old Queen of Scots was betrothed to the Dauphin and sent to France. The two nations were now more closely intertwined than they had ever been before. Ritchie contends that Henri II now became the ‘Protector’ of Scotland, Scotland became a ‘protectorate’ of France, and French power was fully established when Guise was officially appointed Regent in 1554. This is a provocative thesis, surely, for the French presence was strongly resisted by many of the Scots lords and was never officially established. Yet, when Henri declared Scotland to be a “Kingdom which is under my protection and which I consider mine,” (p.31) and “I have pacified the Kingdom of Scotland which I hold and possess with the same power and authority as I have in France…” (p.68) one sees how the relationship between the two nations had shifted, at least in Henri’s mind. French power in Scotland was consolidated, Ritchie contends, with the marriage in 1558 of Mary Stewart and the Dauphin. In the absence of a Tudor heir, the young Queen of Scots now provided Henri with the key to an empire that embraced Scotland, England, Ireland and France. The marriage between Mary Tudor and Philip of Spain further complicated matters, for it brought the Valois-Hapsburg conflict right to the Anglo-Scottish border. Guise’s domestic policies were now affected by European affairs. When war broke out between Henri II and Philip of Spain, for example, Guise was forced to abandon her efforts to establish order within her realm; instead, she had to turn her attention to fortifying the Borders and, reluctantly, to planning an invasion of England.

The book is not without flaw. It is derived from Dr. Ritchie’s doctoral dissertation and the academic stamp is still visible. In the perceived need to show how her work differs from previous studies she has been exceedingly dismissive of
other historians. It is a pity that these early chapters were not removed, for they create an unfortunate tone and can be of little interest to a wider readership. Some careless errors could have been avoided. Ritchie cites Gladys Dickinson’s “Instructions to the French Ambassador, 30 March 1550” several times in Chapter 2 but incorrectly attributes the material to M. Wood. Confusion occurs also in her discussion of the House of Longueville, where Guise’s first husband, Louis d’Orléans, is named François on page 135 note 46. Finally, on the death of Guise’s son in 1551 a long dispute ensued over the division of the Longueville estate. The woman involved in the lawsuits was not Françoise d’Alençon, duchess of Vendôme, as claimed, for she had died in 1550, nor had she ever been the wife of Louis d’Orléans’ father.

This book is a valuable contribution to an important period in Scotland’s history. Ritchie’s interpretations are sometimes provocative but she is to be commended for turning the searchlight on the relationship between Scotland and France in the dying years of the alliance, as well as on Scotland’s role in a wider world. Above all, she brings attention to a remarkable Frenchwoman, Mary of Guise-Lorraine. It is gratifying to see the recent interest in this intelligent and valiant woman for, in addition to Ritchie’s study, an abridged edition of Rosalind K. Marshall’s *Mary of Guise* appeared in 2001. Whether the Auld Alliance would have survived had Guise lived is the intriguing question that Ritchie leaves us with when she concludes: “Only with her death in June 1560 would its collapse be complete.”

*Joan Noble*

*Independent scholar*
Of primary interest, to those keen on any specific Celtic area, is the use of the word Celtic to conjoin different geographical areas through a common cultural inheritance. This is an interesting response to two movements within British historiography. The first movement recognized the Anglo-centric nature of British historiography, which relegated cultures not of Anglo-Saxon/Norman to a secondary role. R.R. Davies\(^1\) was one of the first to suggest that the geographic emphasis on England promoted an imbalanced interpretation of British history when it was instead an English history. Yet, other British countries do not escape this criticism unscathed, since “Irish, Scottish and Welsh historians seem so often intent on cultivating their own corners, rather than communicating with a wider historical world.”\(^2\) This collection of essays attempts to bring together case studies
from all Celtic areas, and to confront the issue of geographical isolationism and the resultant marginalization of surrounding areas.

This collection also reacts to a secondary debate on the issue of Celticism. Each of these countries are connected through a shared Celtic culture, yet this term has since been attributed a more diverse definition. Romantic medievalism and studies in Arthuriana have both acted to broaden the scope in Celtic studies.

There are four articles which focus on saints’ cults in Wales, including “St. David and St Davids: Some Observations on the Cult, Site and Buildings,” by J. Wyn Evans, “Welsh Hagiography and the Nationalist Impulse,” by Elissa R. Henken, “Twelfth-Century Welsh Hagiography: The Gogynfeirdd poems to saints,” by Nerys Ann Jones and Morfydd E. Owen, and “The harlot and the hostess: a preliminary study of the Middle Welsh Lives of Mary Magdalene and her sister Martha,” by Jane Cartwright. While Wynn Evans confronted the issue of reconciling the disparity between the dates of St. David’s life and the cults, which developed on the basis of various vitae, Henkin focussed more on the connections between St. David Cults burgeoning Welsh nationalism. The issue of nationalism is not distinct to Wales, and can be found within the foundation to various saints’ cults throughout Celtic Britain. Jones, Owen and Cartwright expand their examination beyond Wales to Brittany and universal saints.

Patricius Vitae, and the results of combining their lives into one mythology. O’Loughlin revisits the St. Patrick in the Muichu Vitae within a political context, as well as the interpretive knowledge the vitae presents on pre-Christian Irish culture. Bray’s examination of the earliest Irish Vitae take her out of Ireland and into Merovingian Europe and the hagiographic tropes established there. Wooding’s exploration of the Cult of St. Brendan examines narrative issues in the Nauigatio. The origins of the Culdee sects in later medieval Scotland may be found in this Irish saint’s Vitae.

For those interested in Celtic culture in Brittany, Bernard Merdrignac contributed to this collection “The Process and Significance of rewriting in Breton Hagiography,” in addition to Mary-Ann Constantine’s work on “Saints Behaving Badly: Sanctity and Transgression in Breton Popular Culture.” Merdrignac explores the issues of hagiographic tradition as interpreted in Breton literature, beginning with the etymological and philological origins of hagiography. While Constantine’s work on popular attitudes of Cult adherents to patron saints presents a microhistorical examination that provides scope for further examination outside Breton society.

At this point in the book there has been some reference to Scotland, and Thomas Owen Clancy’s article, “Magpie Hagiography in Twelfth-century Scotland: the case of Libellus de nativitate Sancti Cuthberti,” and an article by Penelope Dransart, “Saints, Stones and Shrines: The Cults of Sts Moluaq and Gerardine in Pictland,” illustrate the closer examination of Scottish saints’ cults. The two articles span the sixth century to the twelfth, and focus on the interconnections between hagiographic tradition and the development of saints’ cults. Interesting, I think, is the representation of Pictish culture and later Anglo-Scottish society.

The purpose of this collection is to examine the interconnections between the hagiography and saints’ cults of various Celtic nations, and I believe that it has, at least in part, succeeded. Though the individual regions are specifically segregated within the collection, there are also many instances where geographical borders are transgressed by hagiographic tradition and the veneration of saints. These practices were
developed in spite of political climate, and sometimes due to political climate. Cartwright's purpose is admirably met, and the collective effort presents an arguably cohesive presentation of consistent pan-Celtic hagiographic traditions and saints' cults.

Trudi Wright
University of Guelph

The myth of the displaced Highlander, bedecked in kilt and sporran while longing for kith and kin as he steadfastly forges a new life for his family in a far away land, is a familiar one. But does this myth represent the reality of Scottish migration? The answer, as is ably demonstrated in the essays contained in *The Heather and the Fern* (University of Otago Press, 2003), is that it does not. Scots migrants did not come from a single social group or economic class. Rather, they constituted a cross section of Scottish society as varied as the landscapes of their native land. By clearly illustrating the diverse nature of Scottish migration *The Heather and the Fern*, a compilation of papers (with some additions) presented at the University of Otago’s 1998 Bamforth Conference on Scottish migration to New Zealand, makes an important contribution to the historiography of both Scotland and New Zealand.

The book opens with John M. MacKenzie’s discussion of the role of the Scots within the Empire. He counters the prevailing myth of the displaced Highlander by arguing convincingly that Scots, from all regions and all walks of life, eagerly embraced migration as a way of realizing ambitions which could not be fulfilled at home. While acknowledging the reality that some Scots were forced to emigrate he clearly demonstrates that many others, particularly Lowlanders, “voluntarily and enthusiastically” (p. 12) seized the opportunities presented by Empire. MacKenzie further argues that those Scots who participated in the Imperial adventure were not, contrary to another popular myth, collaborating with the English but were, in fact, asserting their distinctiveness. In discussing the Scottish experience within the Empire MacKenzie contrasts the experiences of the Scots with those of the Irish and alludes to the fact that the Presbyterianism of the Scots contributed to their success while the Catholicism of the Irish contributed to their relative lack thereof. This argument is not adequately supported, and remains unconvincing.
Despite this criticism MacKenzie’s essay presents a thoroughly readable overview of the Scottish experience within the Empire. MacKenzie’s essay also counters the prevailing myth of the displaced Highlander by demonstrating, through the use of short case histories, that many Highlanders freely chose to emigrate throughout the Empire.

Tom Brooking contributed an examination of the various economic, political, and cultural contributions the Scots made to New Zealand. He argues that, unlike in other localities where Highlanders tended to congregate in large groups, those who emigrated to New Zealand dispersed somewhat into the local population and that this made their contributions more subtle, but no less pronounced, than elsewhere. He also dispels the prevailing myth of the displaced Highlander by demonstrating that Lowlanders emigrated to New Zealand in greater numbers than did Highlanders. Brooking concludes his essay by admitting that “much of the discussion in this chapter has been tentative because we lack a solid empirical base for so many aspects of our cultural history.” (p. 64) and proceeds to instigate a call for “more sustained research on the historical experience of ethnic subgroups amongst our British settlers.” (p. 64) It is a call that historians in former colonies throughout the world would do well to heed.

In his examination of Scottish gold miners in New Zealand Terry Hearn builds upon the foundation laid by Brooking and presents an excellent statistical analysis of Scottish migration patterns. He demonstrates that the Scots who migrated to Otago in search of gold were generally older than other British migrants and, as such, tended to make long term commitments to the region. This helped to infuse Otago with a more Scottish character than was evident in other regions. Hearn’s analysis of the demographics lead to several convincing conclusions concerning the composition and contributions of the Scots who came to New Zealand in general, and Otago in particular.

Rosalind McClean focuses her analysis on the experiences of women and demonstrates that they were generally far more reluctant to emigrate than were their male counterparts. She does qualify this by concluding that, once they
accepted emigration, Scots women made significant contributions to their new communities and, often times, became the preservers of Scottish culture within those communities. McClean also provides evidence that indicates the changing attitudes of Scottish women towards emigration over time. In earlier years relatively few were inclined to emigrate independent of other family members but, by the late nineteenth century, more Scottish women were leaving their family unit in order to emigrate to the colony. McClean has laid a solid groundwork for further investigation into this trend as well as that of other aspects of women’s experiences of migration.

Jennie Coleman’s contribution examines the tradition of piping in New Zealand. This topic is one which would be expected in any examination of Scots migration for what could be more Scottish than the pipes? Coleman’s analysis, however, will be a difficult read for the non-specialist, drawing as it does from her doctoral thesis on the same topic. The reader might have been better served had Coleman included fewer diagrams and concentrated more on a less technical explanation of the tradition as it evolved in New Zealand. Despite this criticism, however, it must be acknowledged that her analysis does provide a unique interdisciplinary approach to the piping tradition which is unlikely to be found elsewhere.

The Heather and the Fern concludes with Alan Raich’s highly readable and informative exploration of the influence of Scotland’s literary tradition upon New Zealand’s. Rather than focusing solely on the work of Burns, as many are wont to do, Raich attempts to examine how the main themes of Scottish literature all played a role in the development of New Zealand’s tradition. Once this role has been established he goes on to demonstrate not only the similarities between the two traditions but, perhaps more importantly, the ways in which they diverged thus helping to establish the national identity of each nation. It is this which sets Raich’s work apart from that of many others.

Taken in its entirety The Heather and the Fern is an immensely readable book which makes an important contribution to the historiographies of both Scotland and
New Zealand. It is accessible to both the specialist and non-specialist alike and, as such, is recommended reading for anyone with an interest in the history of Scottish migration or its influence on New Zealand’s development.

Colin Graham  
Wilfrid Laurier University

Endnotes


2 Ibid., 13.
THE FRANK WATSON PRIZE
IN SCOTTISH HISTORY

The Frank Watson Scottish History Book Prize will be awarded in Autumn 2005 to the best book, monograph, dissertation or edited set of papers on Scottish history published between 2003-2004. Preference will be given to original work on a topic in early Scottish history or in any area of Scottish History which has been largely unexplored. Three copies of books for consideration should be submitted by authors, publishers, or any other sponsor by June 15, 2005 to:

Professor Graeme Morton
Chair
Scottish Studies Programme
University of Guelph
Guelph, ON
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The prize will be awarded at the University of Guelph at its 2005 Autumn Colloquium, held in late September or early October. The recipient is expected to receive the award in person and to present a lecture and a seminar while visiting Guelph. Transportation and accommodation will be provided. Further information may be obtained by writing to the above address or by e-mail from: gmorton@uoguelph.ca