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Studies in Scottish Literature intends to produce an annual survey of Scottish fiction, which the present writer will compile on the same lines as Alexander Scott's survey of Scottish poetry. The report for 1977 will be seen in the next issue; but it was felt that before the first survey should appear an introductory and much more general survey of the state of Scottish fiction since the war, listing the major new voices, the individual novels of value, and paying heed to the ongoing work of established writers. (Much of the content of this first general survey is drawn from the essay "Scottish Fiction since 1945," written by the present author for *Scottish Writing and Writers* (Ramsay Head Press, 1977). I apologize for the overlapping material, but think that it will prove useful to readers of the future annual surveys to have the introductory and background picture within the pages of the same periodical.)

It seems only fair in such brief scope as this to give pride of place to the most creative and able writers working within Scotland and expressing themselves in terms that relate and contribute to the Scottish situation; so that for our purposes the recent massive achievement of William MacIlvanney in *Docherty* (1975) will loom larger than, say, Muriel Spark's *The Takeover* (1976). That being said, however, I don't think any sensitive critic should ignore novels which, although not set

in obvious Scottish terms, demonstrably have within them themes and symbolic patterns which draw on a Scottish tradition of fiction--for example Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960), with its Jeckyll-and-Hyde protagonist Dougal Douglas, or James Kennaway's *Some Gorgeous Accident*.

The outstanding feature of that revival of Scottish fiction in the twenties and thirties seems to me to be the emphasis on a perspective and a value structure which transcended and predated the Scottish present and the recorded, historical Scottish past.

> It is a far cry to the golden age, to the blue smoke of the heather fire and the scent of the primrose! Our river took a wrong turning somewhere. But we haven't forgotten the source. . .

argues Neil Gunn in his first great statement of what was to be the unifying theme of all his later work, *Highland River* (1937). Lewis Grassic Gibbon was to adopt this same perspective in *Sunset Song* (1932) while Eric Linklater's *Magnus Merriman* (1934) was to move to the realisation that timeless Orkney held the key to Magnus's spiritual identity far more than any of the city and political experiences he underwent in the lowlands of Scotland. Naomi Mitchison's *The Corn King and the Spring Queen* (1931) explored similar themes of man's instinctive foundations and roots, even though the action is based on the Black Sea and Sparta in the third century before Christ. And indeed, going beyond fiction to the poetry of MacDiarmid, Muir, and the Soutar of "Birthday," or to the drama of Gordon Bottomley, one can see that the exploration of myth and a belief that it offers a fundamental level of individual awareness more important than the background of recorded history and society was common amongst even those who, like MacDiarmid and Muir, or Gibbon and MacDiarmid, felt that they disagreed on more surface issues.

Basically the shared idea was, of course, that the various major events of Scottish history--the organisation of the tribal peoples into property owning, separated hierarchies, the Reformation, the religious and social divisions, and the Industrial Revolution--were corrupting events, leading the Scot (and the Scot is here used as archetype for Western Man) away from his "Golden Age," his instinctive and primitive, but not unsophisticated ideal self. But yet another aspect of this mythic fiction, as in the usage of Finn in Gunn's *Silver Darlings* or Chris in *Sunset Song*, has important implications for the work of modern Scottish fiction writers.

Here I must look briefly at the entire tradition of Scottish fiction. Broadly, the great nineteenth century novels like *Wa-*

verley (1814), or *The Justified Sinner* (1824), or *The Entail* (1823), or *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889), or *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901) are satiric, negative, and destructive in their picture of the Scottish soul. That tradition continues into the twentieth century with *Gillespie* (1914), *Hatter's Castle* (1931), *Happy for the Child* (1953), *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), *Household Ghosts* (1961). It can be argued with real force that Edwin Muir's theory of a Scottish dissociation of sensibility is still an important and defining concept in terms of Scottish fiction, whereby emotion and thought are separated to the excessive and unhealthy development and exclusion of the one and whereby the other finds creative expression in the recurrent themes of personal disintegration, family division, and national dualism in many of these modern Scottish novels. At the very least one can accept the mordant truth of the reviewer quoted by Angus MacDonald in his essay on "Modern Scots Novelists" in *Edinburgh Essays in Scots Literature* (1933) who said that the aim of the Scottish novel was to

> Paint village hell where sadist monster mutters
> Till Scotland's one mad House with its Green Shutters
> Depict the lust that lurks in hall and hovel
> And build thereon a Scottish national novel.

This tradition or type of Scottish fiction would generally, I think, be regarded as one of the strongest and most productive of quality of all. But I do not think it is the greatest, and I bring discussion of it in here only because I do not think the finest strain, that of the "mythic" attempt to recreate a Scotland in touch with older roots and an older identity than that of *recorded* Scottish history, can be understood unless it is seen partly and importantly as a reaction *against* the defeatism and bleakness of satirical and reductive Scottish fiction.

In other words, the greatest Scottish fiction and the Scottish novel at its best was a reaction against this bleak vision of Scottish spiritual identity. I believe that Scott himself, realising the implications of his humorous but bitter picture of Scotland in *Waverley*, tried in the figure of Morton in *Old Mortality* (1816) and in Jeannie Deans in *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818) to transcend the limitations of national moral and imaginative degeneration; to portray complete and balanced human beings who could heal the divisions of Scottish history. Leaving aside the question of artistic success in these attempts, nevertheless I think it can be seen that Scott *tried* to write "novels of regeneration," novels where individuals of epic moral stature confront the sick Scottish society

and indicate, in their own integrated selves, the elements necessary for Scottish spiritual rebirth. Few other novelists of the nineteenth century try; possibly George MacDonald, and certainly Stevenson, in his two novels about David Balfour (the resemblances, if one sets David's attempt in the matter of the murder of the Red Fox to assert justice against expediency, between his and Jeannie Deans's situation are striking). But Scott and Stevenson lacked the plane of myth in these attempts, which is where their effort is deepened in the hands of Gunn and Gibbon. Jeannie Deans and David Balfour give way to Finn of the *Silver Darlings* and Chris Guthrie ("Chris Caledonia") of Gibbon's trilogy, and the statement becomes aesthetically deeper and more satisfying, as the events and the symbolism of these novels reveal that these protagonists are both local, real figures and timeless representatives of an ancient, traditional and cyclic way of life.

So the first feature of the "Renaissance" fiction of relevance to the present day fiction is the older fiction's view of Scotland's ancient, almost timeless past as a contrasting deep note against the modern cacophony; with the occasional projection of this to the point where an attempt is made to assert in an archetypal or epic figure like Gunn's Young Art or Old Hector that these are symbols of *positive* values which need to be returned to before Scotland can become a vital, harmonious entity. It seems to me that this fundamental assertion continues to underly the important work of modern Scottish novelists like Alan Sharp, William MacIlvanney, and even, although so apparently different from these two urban writers, the Orcadian George Mackay Brown. In the best sense, these writers continue an old tradition in Scottish fiction, and I will give this important work primary place in the discussion of this essay.

The other strong tradition I mentioned is that tradition of bitter, denigratory comment which runs from *Waverley* and *The Entail* to *The House with the Green Shutters* and beyond. Astonishingly, this thin black line of social criticism (often presented obliquely, as in Stevenson's major work) did not turn itself in the direction of the huge changes in Scotland from the rural and agrarian economy to the urban and industrial until the nineteen twenties although the stance of say, George Blake or Robin Jenkins is still basically the same hard-eyed, reductive view of Scotland seen as trapped in its past as in *The House with the Green Shutters*. This strain has continued strongly since the war from work like *The Dance of the Apprentices* by Edward Gaitens (1948) to Gordon Williams's *From Scenes like These* (1968) or *Household Ghosts* by James Kennaway (1961).

Lastly I will discuss work of importance outwith these two

main traditions, since even a brief account of modern Scottish fiction must find a place for the work of Muriel Spark, Kennaway's "English" fiction and that of the more distinguished Anglo-Scots like Hugo Charteris, and conversely those who are not Scots by birth but who have chosen, like Robert Nye, to live and work in Scotland.

Post-war Scottish novelists found it even more difficult than their "Renaissance" predecessors to present a positive picture of Scotland in terms of their central characters and situations. There are no Chris Guthries, no heroic figures representing Scottish regeneration like those of Gunn. Gunn's own fiction of course continued till 1953 with *The Key of the Chest* (1945), *The Drinking Well* (1946), *The Shadow* (1948), *The Silver Bough* (1948), *The Lost Chart* (1949), *The White Hour* (1950), *The Well at the World's End* (1951), *Bloodhunt* (1952) and *The Other Landscape* (1954). (Since Gunn is without doubt the greatest writer of fiction in Scotland in the twentieth century, and since the bulk of his work is before our period, in place of the very full discussion of his work which is necessary I refer the reader to *Neil M. Gunn: The Man and the Writer*, ed. Alexander Scott and Douglas Gifford (1973)). But the first outstanding new voice after the war whose work held out real promise of development into a full, positive statement about Scotland in the epic tradition of Gibbon and Gunn was Neil Paterson's in *The China Run* (1948) and especially his grandly conceived study of a fishing community in the North-East, *Behold thy Daughter* (1950). Here, in the central character of Thirza Gare, was a possible heir to Finn of *The Silver Darlings* (Gunn, 1941) and Chris Guthrie of *A Scots Quair* (Gibbon, 1932-34). Her fortunes at times seemed symbolically representative of Scotland's, and more universally, of "The Folk" anywhere. She had, too, a hard, satiric toughness lacking in her predecessors, an answer perhaps to earlier criticisms of Gunn and Gibbon's "mysticism" and dangerous proximity to sentimentalisation. But sadly, her ultimate significance in the book turned out to be little more than that of the heroine of the earlier short novel *The China Run*. The lesser and conventionally romantic elements of the book, with its Yankee pirate skipper Dirk Stullen and his rough, manly wooing of Thirza, its night adventures and smuggling, began to dominate in a way which reduced the genuine visionary element. That element had been there, in Thirza's and her friend John MacPherson's dream of the glorious possibilities for the fishing and the people of the Moray Firth and the North-East; but in a manner reminiscent of David Balfour's withdrawal from the world of politics and public life in *Catriona*, Thirza Gare abandoned Scotland for a life on ship with her sea-captain; and her epic role was immediately diminished in this denial of roots which anti-

cipated Paterson's own abandoning of the novel, after one more volume of fiction, the short stories of *And Delilah* (1951). He turned to cinema and film scripts, and one can only speculate as to where a career in fiction would have taken him.

Indeed a mood of nostalgia and bitterness haunts all attempts made to write Scottish epic fiction after the war. Two particular achievements, greater and darker than *Behold Thy Daughter*, stand out: Naomi Mitchison's *The Bull Calves* (1947) and Fionn MacColla's *And The Cock Crew* (1945).

The Bull Calves is about Naomi Mitchinson's forebears, the Haldanes of Gleneagles, and their part in the 1745 rebellion. Only Scott's *Waverley* can be compared with this for its warm and compassionate understanding of the divisions of race and loyalties which tear Scotland and whole families apart. It is massively researched, yet, since it is presented through the central unifying consciousness of Kirstie Haldane, who manages to bring together Highland and Lowland former enemies through her love of all, it is never arid, although long and complex. Kirstie can thus be seen in a tradition going back to Scott's Jeannie Deans and Gibbon's Chris Guthrie; the tradition of the unifying central consciousness who stands finally for something essential in the Scottish psyche. She is one of "the Bull Calves," the Haldanes, who are significantly *whole* in themselves. Mitchison stresses the deliberate symbolic importance of their role in fusing the divided heads and hearts of a Scotland torn by civil war, as she depicts a strange, motley family, quarrelling amongst themselves, yet capable of real altruism and total involvement for and in Scotland. And Naomi Mitchison goes on to make it clear why it is with Kirstie and the Haldanes that reconciliation within Scotland will take place. Kirstie's humanity like that of Jeannie Deans or Wat of Chapelhope's in Hogg's *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, cuts across political and traditional hates; as when she shelters a Jacobite. . .

> "But you were harbouring a rebel, Aunt Kirstie!"
> "What's about it? She was my own cousin, gif her man was twenty times a Jacobite. And who was to ken?"

And throughout the novel one of the finest strands is its humanity; as Kirstie tries to reconcile the ancient animosity of Lowlanders and Highlanders.

Yet for all its theme of integration and regeneration, the novel seems at last to be strangely hopeless. There is a quality of aftermath, of resignation in its mulling over of old wars and ancient fires, possibly because the links with the present are of limited validity. Somehow the chronicle

seems to remain an enclave in time--partly due, perhaps, to the fact that Naomi Mitchison is so absorbed by the actions and loves of her ancestors that a necessary impersonality is lost. And this quality of defeat dominates *And the Cock Crew*. This is the most bitter of all historic and epic novels, with none of Gunn's optimism on the same issue, which is that of the Highland clearances. Master Sachairi is the deeply committed, loyal, but stern minister whose sense of duty is torn in two by his view of the upheaval in his people's ancient life style. There are magnificient and deep insights here into the Calvinist mind, as Sachairi struggles to find a whole view of the affair which will let him *act* instead of holding him trapped. Too honest a man to deny the suffering, too honest to rest in the easy assumption that the people's wickedness has caused their downfall, the minister is doomed. All his conditioning, like that of Robert Wringhim in *The Justified Sinner*, has finally made it impossible for him to even conceptualise along the same lines as the poet Fearchar whom he himself banished, actually and symbolically, from the glen. In the arguments of minister and poet we touch MacColla's essence--which is unusual, deeply expressed as it is in a kind of poetic dialectic. Critics may argue that his central characters lack roundness, that the polemic outweighs the achievement in creating convincing scene and character; but I feel that MacColla has succeeded in making *argument* itself sufficiently powerful and symbolic to carry the aesthetic force necessary for this to be called a novel rather than a tract disguised as novel. If there is something of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* in tone and quality, yet it has its dignity.

The relationship of slow dawning respect which grows under suffering between these men is beautiful and effective, while the slow disintegration of both Sachairi's mind and the village with which he identifies is conveyed in a haunting, darkness-and-rain filled dream landscape. Few novels, not even the most bitter of James Kennaway, end with such flat, unqualified despair.

Perhaps it is true that the reason for the decline in quality and energy in Scottish fiction in the fifties is to be found in a general tiredness and disillusionment of spirit following the war, together with the postwar disappointments in the field of home rule developments. As if to state some such theme of elegy for lost identity, J. D. Scott's *The End of an Old Song* (1954) presented in deceptively quiet terms a picture ostensibly of two lovers and their shared love, against a background of rural decay, with the crumbling ancient house of Kingisbyres in Fife standing--or slowly falling--as a symbol of something more. The novel is in fact a strange kind of allegory for the diseased state of Scotland. Here is a strange

failure of national will, contrasting occasionally with the berserk and dangerous outbursts of its Scottish "hero," the quintessentially Scottish Alistair, who will stop at nothing to gain his loves and local ambitions, but has little or no sense of destiny or duty beyond his immediate personal desires.

When one takes Scott, the work of Robin Jenkins, and Kennaway's satire together, one realises that the *mood* of these three dominated the best Scottish fiction of the fifties, and it is opposition to their general sense of futility that is found in the anger and force of the new writers of the sixties like Sharp, MacIlvanney and Crichton Smith. I will deal with this "negative" vision of Scotland shortly; but presently I am tracing the development and the temporary disappearance in the fifties of that kind of fiction which takes as its subject the "state of Scotland," and presents its matter in epic or historic terms. And in this context the most important new voice, breaking over a decade of silence, was that of Alan Sharp, whose *A Green Tree in Gedde* won the Scottish Arts Council prize of £1000 for the best novel of 1965. It was the first part of what was designed to be a trilogy; *The Wind Shifts* (1967) was the second. The third part has not, and in all likelihood will never, appear, since Sharp has moved to Hollywood to write film-scripts, as reflected in his novel version of *The Hired Hand* (1971).

Sharp is a violent, intense, writer with a superb gift of grotesque metaphor and a sense of outrageous comedy, as well as a fundamental philosophical seriousness. His main problem (apart from a tendency to purple and pedantic prose) is indeed one of controlling so many gifts; one of the reasons the trilogy may be unfinishable is simply that it contains so much ambition and so many themes, together with an underlying symbolic structure that (like *A Scots Quair*) is completely controlled in the first part, less controlled in the second.

But *A Green Tree* can stand on its own. It begins with Moseby, a restless married student from Greenock, whose life, as we meet him, is about to change drastically (which is why the "wind will shift" for Moseby and friends in book two). But he is not the only major focus; the Cuffees, brother and sister, from Knutsford, are incestuous lovers whose lives are breaking through pressures too; while most important of all is Harry Gibbon (shades of *A Scots Quair*?), descendant of an old West of Scotland family, craggy individualists who sleep in the Greenock cemetery and whose lives are described in an early chapter of astonishing symbolism, magnificiently controlled, of the Green Tree; for as the meaning of the tree symbolism emerges, we discover a significance and power as deep as that of any of the Renaissance novelists and poets, as artful-

ly handled as MacDiarmid's Thistle, Moon, and Sea-serpent in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926), Gunn's House of Peace in *The Silver Darlings*, or the Standing Stones of Gibbon's *Scots Quair*. One of Harry Gibbon's ancestors has been a country preacher; not a ranting Puritan, but rather a strange Earth-lover, a semi-pagan who took part in harvesting and seed-time, who lived life lustfully in the fullest sense, and who preached wholeness of response, wonder and delight. This ancester, in his misunderstood surviving sermons and in his descendant, slow, lithe, wondering Harry Gibbon, haunts the foreground situations of slum Glasgow, and the beautifully evoked Clyde Littoral, London, Paris, the seedy digs and the pretentious parties. In short, Sharp attains a symbolism married with concrete control which rivals the Lawrence of *The Rainbow*, and certainly stands as the outstanding positive statement of modern Scottish fiction. *The Wind Shifts* is not so controlled, moving too swiftly as it does all over Europe, and changing its idiom unpredictably into Kafka-like strangeness of setting. Besides, one of the central figures, Cuffee, is killed--proving that his violent and ruthless attitude to life is finally self-destructive in comparison with Gibbon's "Green Tree" roots, but leaving problems of balance for the projected third volume that seem insuperable. But is it not significant, suggesting Sharp's place in a Scottish tradition, that he planned a trilogy so similar in overall conception to *A Scots Quair*?

The Orcadian George MacKay Brown has achieved a much larger body of work. *A Calendar of Love* (1966), *A Time To Keep* (1968) (short stories), *Greenvoe* (1972), *Magnus* (1973) (novels), *Hawkfall* (1974) and *The Sun's Net* (1976) (short stories), are all the work of a literary craftsman with an informing vision which illuminates them all. Brown too believes in completion and wholeness, and indeed the entire symbolism of his work is consistent, moving in a slow circle as it does round the Cathedral of St. Magnus in Kirkwall--and not just moving in space but in time also, since Brown sees the self-sacrifice of Earl Magnus in Egilsay as an Orkney Crucifixion, a re-enactment of Christ's redemption of fallen man. Like his Orkney predecessor Edwin Muir, the Fall of man is paramount to his work, and like Muir he is a poet whose work, poetry or prose, is characterised by a limpid simplicity which is deceptive, belying the deliberate and sometimes consummate artistry beneath the surface. But it seems to me--and I freely admit here that such comparisons are odious--that compared with Sharp, or, say Crichton Smith, he is *too* fixed in a *prescriptive* vision. His Catholicism--a strange Orkney hybrid of pagan celebration and reaction to the bleakness of the Reformation--compels him to a predictable denouement, and increasingly in the later work--as with the explicit miracle that ends *Magnus*--an artless obvious-

ness and repetitiveness of situation and image. Tentatively I suggest that his case is the sad one of a truly great writer who has chosen to live in a room with only one view from its single window. I shall pay much closer attention to his work in the next survey.

This is not the case with Iain Crichton Smith. There are superficial similarities. Living in Oban, he, like Brown, seems to be choosing remoteness as a necessary condition for his work; like Brown he moves easily from poetry to fiction. A frequent theme of his poetry and fiction--especially in *Consider the Lilies* (1968)--is, like Brown, a deep concern with the way in which the past of Scotland, and especially its bleak religious history, has malformed the present. But a closer examination of *Consider the Lilies* reveals their basic difference.

The novel tells of old Mrs. Scott, a Lewis woman who is being put out of her house at the time of the Clearances. Having all her life conformed to the joyless demands of her religion, with all the concomittant respect for Authority and Law that that conformity implies, whe is therefore thrown into total confusion at her church's failure to support her in what she sees as her right to remain. The theme thereafter is of her liberation, her regeneration as a free individual, released from the ice of religious repression which has hitherto blighted her family joy. In making the first real gesture of justified revolt in her life against Patrick Sellars and all the false Authorities he represents, from Church to State, she is, as Smith puts it, developing a healthy, regenerating hatred

> not simply for those who were bent on destroying the Highlands, not simply for the Patrick Sellars, but for the Patrick Sellars in the Highlanders, those interior Patrick Sellars with the faces of Old Highlanders who evicted emotion and burnt down love.

The difference between Smith and Brown emerges through this. For Smith, the individual consciousness, its fulfillment and its pain, is *more* important than the history and the background, whereas for Brown, one is conscious almost always, as in his story of the sacrifice of Earl Magnus, that the individual's importance is as a part in the heraldic unity of Land and Sea, Birth and Death, History and the Present. In Brown's view, assertive individuals like the atheist hero of his short story *A Time to Keep*, or stricken outcasts like *Celia*, are not part of the vision he creates and therefore non-participants in his dangerously stereo-typed Dance of Divinely Ordered Orkney life.

And Smith in his following novels and stories was to reveal an almost embarrassing honesty about himself through his projections of what he so patently felt as personal issues in *The Last Summer* (1969), a Lewis adolescence, drawing, one feels, much on autobiography, and showing fully the author's love-hate relationship with images of beauty, power, and, in the graceful, fascinating figures of the sixthformers, Ronnie and Janet, accompanying evil. The decision of the novel's protagonist, the boy Malcolm, as he moves from the last summer of his childhood to a kind of maturity is a preference for honesty and real, as opposed to romantic love. Malcolm chooses the deathbed of his friend Dickie and the dowdier Sheila against the seductive irrelevancies of Christine and Ronnie--this decision, one intuits, was Smith's too. And in later work like *My Last Duchess* (1971), *The Black and the Red* (1973) (a collection of fine short stories haunted by Smith's feeling for a lost and nobler way of life, as in the story *Under an American Sky*) and *Goodbye Mr. Dixon* (1974) Smith continued to confess his own agonies of unsureness about personal relations--and the question of their ultimate significance. Only in the short stories of *Survival Without Error* (1970) did he attempt to "be" other people and other situations than his own--and the result was the least successful of his stories, with their unconvincing attempts to evoke the minds of lorry drivers, or their attempts to inject melodrama into the mundane, as in the bathetic tale of the schoolmaster who kills a hated pupil by putting a poison needle in the school cup.

But for all his agonising, wholeness of self is Smith's overall concern, as with Brown; although Smith's journey is a more tortuous one than Brown's. *Goodbye Mr. Dixon* marks a farewell to some of his dead selves, but no final resting place has been reached. One ventures to suggest that he, along with our next novelist, MacIlvanney, are possibly the only two Scottish novelists of the present with the honesty and craft to develop into major writers of fiction.

With *Docherty* (1975) William MacIlvanney immediately asserted his place at the head of modern Scottish fiction. *Remedy is None* (1966) has won him the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Award for 1967--but looking back at that novel the impression overall is of uncontrolled hatred of a system which stifled the potential of strong working class men like Grant. His son Charlie's blind violence as he lashes out against rather tritely drawn representatives of the suffocating bourgeoisie becomes tedious and purple--a MacIlvanney tendency. But the novel has real power and nobility, and as with Sharp, Brown, and Smith, the concern is with regeneration. Charlie is brought to see that his society (West of Scotland industrial) needs charity and integrity above all; violent and hateful attitudes cannot be

cured with violence and hate. A similar concern with integrity filled *A Gift from Nessus* (1968)--but I feel this was a difficult second novel to write, which never broke out of the conventional pattern of say, Amis's *That Uncertain Feeling*. Perhaps MacIlvanney saw this as he shifted ground to write poetry (*The Longships Enter the Harbour*, (1970)) and a play (*The Attic*, (performed 1975)). The play directly linked the first novel and *Docherty*. Here is the hate of the system, only distanced and tempered with outstanding humour, directly in line from Gibbon's use of "the speak" in *A Scots Quair*. Magnificently MacIlvanney evokes Graithnock, a Kilmarnock-like mining town, in 1914; its chat, its smells, its green surroundings--and its High Street, with the Docherty family, of Irish origin, as focus. Docherty is the father--and he is one of the great creations of Scottish fiction--different from say, Gourlay of *The House with the Green Shutters*, or Chris Guthrie of *A Scots Quair*, but comparable as an epic figure realised with truth and consistency. His fight to retain integrity in the face of appalling economic odds--and his victory, against these odds--is moving and noble. His relations with his neighbours, his priests--against whom he turns, dramatically--and his family--are done simply, often told in their own rich vernacular. The only real criticism is that towards the end the novel's centre shifts away from Docherty himself, implying a kind of failure, to his three sons--symbolically choosing three different roads, none of which, with the possible exception of Conn's, is seen as an end or truth in itself.

Very different in scale and approach, but comparable in the sheer sincerity and dignity of its aim is John's Herdman's *A Truth Lover* (1973). For all the apparent difference of type and class between Docherty the miner and Duncan Straiton, the young misanthrope who caustically surveys Scottish bigotry and pomposity, both are concerned with fundamentals of wholeness and honesty, and with the difficulty of asserting these in an alien and hostile society, and both novels succeed in presenting us with a central figure of impressive integrity.

Finally, I would finish my description of this group with reference to two writers whose concern has been with the possibility of wholeness within a Scottish society which makes that wholeness elusive. In both cases the very gentleness and sensitivity of response seems to me to have caused the full significance and beauty of the fiction to be neglected. Nancy Brysson Morrison--whose work dates back to the fertile thirties with her superb *The Gowk Storm* (1933), created deceptively gentle tales of family crises set against lyrically evoked and ever-changing Scottish landscapes; tales which slowly gathered great power through their beautifully structured anti-

cipations and echoes, as in *The Winnowing Years* (1949), a chronicle of several centuries of life in a manse, or *The Other Traveller* (1957), a Gunn-like situation where a man scared by marriage misfortune achieves peace and wholeness in a timeless Scottish country setting. Her great strengths are her feeling for landscape and history, and her ability to convey the sense of a community's being timeless, greater throughout history than its immediate representatives, as well as an uncanny power to endow houses and her settings with the ghosts of their occupants. If she has a weakness, it is that her overt Christianity, like MacKay Brown's, becomes intrusive and at odds with the real aesthetic shape of her work; which does not happen in the work of Ian Niall, probably best known for his non-fiction naturalists works like *The Poacher's Handbook* (1946) and *A Fowler's World* (1968). But in the sixties he began a series of the gentlest of fictions about the lives of archetypal country figures with *The Country Blacksmith* (1966); *The Galloway Shepherd* (1970), *The Village Policeman* (1971), and *The Forester* (1972) are the others so far. His stories hardly seem fictions at all, but are completely convincing and have a simplicity and dignity of statement which only MacKay Brown can rival, sharing too Brown's deep concern with the passing of older, rural values, but accepting them with a greater serenity, as he says at the end of *The Country Blacksmith*: "We cannot arrest the clock to preserve the things that delight our sentimental hearts. The wheel turns and it turns faster, and nothing stands still."

In rounding off this description of what I feel to be the country of the noblest and most ambitious flights of Scottish fiction, I would like to pay special tribute to the work of two of the great figures of the Renaissance of the twenties and thirties, whose major work does appear to lie in that period, but whose later work continues to surprise and delight in its constant change and fertility of approach. Sadly, Eric Linklater died recently. In tracing the development of his work in the fifties and sixties, I was struck by the movement in the fifties into a kind of wry cynicism, which although it never lost its redeeming love of wit and grotesque humour, was a dark period for the buoyant optimist of *Magnus Merriman* (1934) and the *Juan* novels (*Juan in America* (1931) and *Juan in China* (1937)).

> We who are the shrivelled little bastard cousins of God--the last thin paring of his finger nails, with the urge to create still beating against the hard and horny consciousness of separation from him. . . .We, like God, need belief. God himself is failing, and if scepticism, neglect, and blank indifference can undo Him how shall

I be immune?

This was in *A Sociable Plover* (1957), and came to a comic, sardonic, bleak head in *The Merry Muse* (1959) with the death of its most likable, vivid poet Hector McRae in the most absurd of Edinburgh road accidents. Linklater seemed to have reached a kind of middle aged desolation of spirit; *Position at Noon* (1958) was only a tired echo of the Juan novels and fun; *Roll of Honour* (1961) is haunted by a middle aged fatalism, and is as near as Linklater came to throwing in the towel of his wit and vivacity, as he accepts the slumbers of his retired teacher in sundazed Inverdoon. All the more marvellous was the resurgence then of exploration in *A Man over Forty* (1964) and in particular, the brave, bizarre, and disturbing *A Terrible Freedom* (1966). Here Linklater moved into what was for him--but not for Edwin Muir or Neil Gunn--a new, disturbing area--the landscape of dreams. Freedom in that landscape is terrible for Linklater and his aging protagonist, Evan Gaffikin; but it releases in this novel scenes of startling new beauty, with a power that even Linklater had not touched before. It also raised, for the first time in his work, that ultimate question which the sceptic in him had always avoided--the metaphysical enquiry about man's final spiritual self, underlying the surface, comic behaviour which had so occupied his satiric view hitherto. Thus--although no answers are suggested beyond some persuasive and beautiful glimpses--Linklater seems to me to have joined with Muir and Gunn in the highest quest of Scottish fiction.

The other great tradition of Scottish fiction I isolated was that of bitter, denigratory comment on what most of the practitioners of this kind see as a sick Scotland; a tradition which goes back to Scott's *Waverley*. Undoubtedly the greatest figure here for sheer range and massive achievement is Robin Jenkins.

Jenkins has been writing since *So Gaily Sings the Lark* (1950). He has written nearly twenty novels--none of them anything other than deeply serious and sometimes agonisingly harsh studies of love, whether it be family love or the love of a vision, a personal aspiration which may turn out to be an illusion, but which is the intense reality for its suffering holder. A fine critic of Jenkins, Alistair Thompson, thought that for all the suffering in the novels, Jenkins presented love as an epiphany, a redeeming affirmation. But with the benefit of looking over a greater range of his work, I feel that Jenkins's progress has been away from the theme of redemption and possible attainment of wholeness to a negative vision. Consider how the message of an early novel, the study of the poor boy John Stirling striving to be educated, dreaming of

release through the traditional Scottish educational egalitarianism, *Happy for the Child* (1953) is reversed in the later study of an Eastern boy's similar dream in *The Holy Tree* (1969). In the first John Stirling achieves peace and union with his mother, and a quiet hope ends the book--but murder and desolation end the boy's dream in the *Holy Tree*. The comic atmosphere of earlier novels like *The Thistle and the Grail* (1954), with its greater affection for small town character in its quest for reflected football glory, or the hope of regenerating dead love presented in *Love is a Fervent Fire* (1959) become fused in the bitter parody of each in *A Very Scotch Affair* (1969) where a Scotsman, whose name, Mungo, argues his stereotype role is bitterly observed failing to find his dream, amidst some very nastily and convincingly dissected neighbours. But indeed Jenkins's affirmative attitudes were questionable from the beginning. Although the eastern novels like *Dust on the Paw* (1961) and *Some Kind of Grace* (1960) seem to hold out a possible charity, can one ever banish that horrifying, tragic and magnificent picture of the slum child who hangs himself as he sees his dreams vanish at the end of *The Changeling* (1958)? And although there are fine, enduring women like Mrs. McShelvie of *Guests of War* (1956) whom Thompson rightly compares as achievement with Jeanie Deans and Chris Guthrie, can such occasional figures like her and the martyr figure McInver of *The Missionaries* (1957) really atone for the devastating pictures of human corruption and ant-like insignificance as in that superbly symbolic picture of innocence murdered, *The Conegatherers* (1955)? Jenkins is ultimately, I would argue, a profound and lonely pessimist, in the way of Hardy. He is also a writer of power and symbolism unequalled for its sheer intensity and stamina in all Scottish fiction, although his latest novels and stories from the *Expatriates* (1970), *A Far Cry from Bowmore* (1973) to *A Toast for the Lord* (1973) and *A Figure of Fun* (1975), though as evocative of landscape and setting and loneliness as ever, seem tired compared to those of 1955-65. Perhaps indeed his pessimism has taken its toll.

Certainly after the war there was a deep sense of disillusion and elegy to be found throughout Scottish fiction--in for example, J. D. Scott's *The End of an Old Song* (1954)--and directly comparable with this novel, if lacking its beautiful sense of place, are two more recent works, two of the most important of Scottish novels, James Kennaway's *Household Ghosts* (1961) and Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961). Both, like Scott, examine unusually the middle and upper classes of Scotland, their poisonous charms and hypocrisies, with rare satirical edge. Both are deeply enigmatic, not to say ambiguous, in their attribution of guilt and re-

sponsibility, and both in their settings have a deep awareness of a black, Calvinist based bias to their central characters. Kennaway's is the darker, probably the most bitter of all modern Scottish novels, following his already bitter picture of Scots character in the hard-drinking and dual-natured colonel of *Tunes of Glory* (1956). *Household Ghosts*, in its story of the dour teacher Dow destroying lovely and impulsive Mary and her brother, re-enacts the story of Knox and Mary as a kind of archetypal, oft-repeated Scottish situation. His achievement is to make the older level of history and Scottish "Ghosts" on the one hand completely compatible with the modern, real picture of a disintegrating marriage on the other. Similarly Muriel Spark manages to present Jean Brodie as a twentieth century Scottish teacher trying new methods in a hostile grey Edinburgh on one hand, but also as the descendant of infamous Edinburgh Deacon Brodie on the other. Scotland's past lives in these fascinating and ambiguous central figures.

Different from these subtle descriptions of middle class betrayal, but similar in its overall bitter view of Scottish life, is the tradition of *No Mean City*, in which the writer turns his attention to the obvious blight of city life in Glasgow and the big cities. Edward Gaitens wrote the most powerful of the post-war indictments in *The Dance of the Apprentices* (1946). Here, though written with power and lyric ability, is the tendency to stereotype so common in the Glasgow novel, in the picture of sensitive Francie McDonnell, doomed with his friends to find his socialist ideals wither in a Glasgow dominated by Capital. The conclusion sets the tone for the Glasgow novel of the next twenty years, as Francie broods in the cell to which conscientious objection has taken him. . .

> Never would he in the humblest of ways be a leader of men. He would daydream. . .till advancing years deadened his power of dreaming and he would end like his father and brothers, an obscure walker in the drama of life.

The tendency to melodrama, the pessimism, and the barely-controlled anger are the hallmark of this flourishing, if negative, tradition; and the work of A. J. Cronin (*Hatter's Castle* (1931)), Fred Urquart (*Time Will Knit* (1938)), George Blake (*The Shipbuilders* (1935)), and Lennox Kerr (*Glenshields* (1932)) has been carried on by many more; outstandingly, by James Allan Ford, George Friel, Archie Hind, Alistair Mair, Stewart McGregor, Allan Campbell McLean, Angus Wolfe Murray, John Quigley, and Hugh C. Rae.

To turn to this work in more detail Ford's *A Statue for a Public Place* (1965) and *A Judge of Men* (1968) are fine satiric

novels which look in turn at the lives of an eminent Scottish civil servant and a famous Scottish Law Lord. In the latter particularly Ford analyses keenly and honestly the ambiguities of public and private morality which cause the destruction of self in Law Lord Robert Falkland, an achievement in fiction which can stand being set beside Stevenson's Hermiston. Scotland is seen through bleak, though not embittered, lenses here--as in the work of Glasgow schoolteacher George Friel, which seems to me to be some of the finest and best crafted of modern Scottish fiction. It is a shame and blot on our national self-respect that his death last year should have gone unremarked and unlamented. For sheer creative ability and sensitivity Friel had no superior, and his handful of bleak, experimental, and highly poetic novels should be compulsory reading for all interested in Scottish culture. His *Bank of Time* (1959) was a "first novel" choice by Hutchinson's; while his strange, sad study of the predestined failure of a slum child with visions in *The Boy Who Wanted Peace* (1964) was successfully dramatised on British Television. *Grace and Miss Partridge* (1969) continued to explore, with the most delicate balance of wry humour and savage satire, the sheer flatness and hopelessness of slum life, with an increase of brilliant techniques of juxtaposition of fast moving, contrasting episodes which nevertheless related in the denouement--with Friel developing his techniques of punning (Grace, the girl of the story, is also the "saving grace" which Miss Partridge wants to distill from the slum by "removing" Grace--through her murder, and Miss Partridge, appalled by worries of tax and money, is visited in her lonely hours by "inspectres"). Friel's undoubted masterpiece, the comic, horrific indictment of not just Scottish but Western life, Western attitudes to children and education in the Western wilderness, is *Mr. Alfred M. A.* (1972). Mr. Alfred is a sensitive, shy teacher, broken in dreams of being a poet, unable to teach with the saving shell of personal toughness and ultimate disinterest of his colleagues, who hold him in mild contempt. Friel's achievement is to explore Alfred's mind till we see indeed that he is truth, he is the lost awareness which sees the writing on the wall (the novel was originally to be called *The Writing on the Wall*), the wrecked lives in the squalid schemes, the cheapness of the media, the shallowness of our institutions. His final breakdown is one of the most sustained, virtuoso pieces of controlled hysteria anywhere in English literature; as he takes to drink, goes mad, the scrawled, dirty jotters, the aerosolled walls and bus kiosks with broken windows, the telephone boxes with their ripped out receivers, become fully convincing metaphors for the decline of the West; which in Alfred's mind sets up a litany of madness linked to the writ-

ing on the wall from the Bible and Nebuchadnezzar's doom. All this is saved from heaviness by a superb sense of irony and of when it is necessary to change the point of view--as when Friel jumps to the police car which sees Mr. Alfred making his own writing on the wall, and, all in the day's work, arrests him. No one has Friel's ability to put tragedy in the same sentence as the most disturbing comedy. His last novel was *An Empty House* (1974); he is an immeasurable loss to Scottish literature. Next to him a novelist with similar interests, Robert Nicholson, seems much less powerful.

Archie Hind has written one novel and promised so much more. His *The Dear Green Place* (1968) is an evocation of Glasgow by its hero, a struggling young office worker who wants to create. Poetical, feeling, and alive to the paradoxes of Glasgow as few other novels are, nevertheless the novel seems to me to be unresolved, with an unconvincing ending and--bane of other good writers like MacIlvanney and Sharp--often, in its honest desire to avoid cliche, lapsing into the purple and the pretentious; as does Alistair Mair's *The Ripening Time* (1970), which, for all its deep sense of Glasgow materialism and sterility, often approaches bathos as it introduces its bizarre sexual diversions which seem to have been included to guarantee its paperback future. For all its faults, though, an important novel--as is Stuart McGregor's work, unfortunately limited to two novels by his tragic death in 1973. *The Myrtle and the Ivy* (1967) and *The Sinner* (1973) cast a caustic eye at the modern Edinburgh scene, although the real satiric effect was lessened by the lack of control of pace and incident, and a tendency to melodrama.

Allan Campbell McLean's Niven Award-winning novel *The Islander* (1962) I have been unable to find; but his Arts Council Award winner *The Glasshouse* (1969) is a brutal, compulsive study through a young Scottish soldier of army cruelty. McLean writes much for children, and well; but this adult novel alone puts him high in this group, as does Angus Wolfe Murray's *The End of Something Nice* (1967), a chilling tale told with a deceptive simplicity, about the separation of a brother and sister who are unnaturally close, possibly as a result of the heartless, casual, selfish neglect of their upper-class parents and teachers. Murray satirises here the same levels of Scottish society as James Kennaway in *Household Ghosts*; it is sad that he has not yet followed up this satiric promise. In a way this is also true of the work of John Quigley--who has a good five novels since his first, *To Remember with Tears* (1963), but who seems to me to have lost the commitment and intensity which filled the first. In the bleak, tragi-comic story of the old crofter Cruachan Campbell, a lonely, stubborn relic of a by-gone age and a dying community, there was the

power of MacKay Brown's *Greenvoe*, and the bitter humour of Friel's *Mr. Alfred M. A.* Indeed, at one level the novel took on a symbolic force like that of Golding's *The Spire*, in its picture of the old man's crazy dream house, half castle, half cathedral, and its drawing of the simple, warm-hearted Shenna, the lost innocence of the island. Albeit sometimes melodramatic, Quigley's aims and achievement in this novel were of the highest order, and his later, bleak novels which moved into more fashionable, less explicitly Scottish situations like those of Journalism (*The Bitter Lollipop*, 1964) or the Whisky Business abroad and at home (*The Secret Soldier*, 1966), and, more importantly in that the drawing of the central, dour, materialist David Dron seems directly in the tradition of Gourlay of *The House with the Green Shutters*, a novel of sordid Glasgow in buildings and business, *The Golden Stream* (1970)--these later novels, like the competent but flavourless international thriller, *The Last Checkpoint*(1971), are increasingly profitable but increasingly disappointing. *King's Royal* (1976) is twice as long as his first novel, apparently epic in scale, but has a curious flat echo of the George Blake chronicles of West Coast families, without, say, the acid edge of Guy McCrone at his caustic best on the Glasgow Middle Classes in *Wax Fruit* (1947), that impressive trilogy on the social aspirations of the Moorhouse family. McCrone increasingly seems to me to be under-estimated--possibly because his satire on the snobberies and foibles of his protagonists is tempered by a charitable acceptance that Glasgow did become great through just such a mixture of vision and petty ambition in its merchants--and their wives. In any case, his trilogy and descendants like *Aunt Bel* (1949), *The Hayburn Family* (1952), *James and Charlotte* (1955) and *An Independent Young Man* (1961), however happily they resolve their immediate personal problems, nevertheless leave a serious, ironic overall picture of a Glasgow which may change superficially, but continues to be grey, conservative, and pretty unconcerned about the larger issues of the Arts, the Outside World, and Liberal Attitudes.

But the tradition of *No Mean City* (1935), of the naturalistic, bittersweet, raw Scottish industrial novel continues unabated--so much so that one feels that the stereotypes are now a serious danger. They spoiled some of Hind's *The Dear Green Place*, much of Quigley's work, most of Hugh Munro's *The Clydesiders* (1961), Alexander Highland's *The Dark Horizon* (1971), to mention only some of the artistically better examples of the type. It is now almost impossible to "see" the urban scene with clear eyes which makes it all the more astonishing when the feat is achieved, as in Alexander Trocchi's poetic evocation of loneliness, the canal-and-railway desolation of Lowland Scotland, *Young Adam* (1961). Here is an evocation of

moral alienation with its roots shown to be deep in a spiritual sickness which is Scottish--and quite credible, as the novel's "justified sinner" moves towards the terrible climax, where another man hangs for his crime--and the sinner's moral awareness is shown to be quite arid and dead. It is interesting that this process of total moral degeneration should be the theme of Gordon Williams's finest--and only explicitly Scottish--novel, *From Scenes Like These* (1968), the description of the making of a basically healthy and sensitive boy into a brute mind, bellowing aggressively at the ritual release of the football match at the end. This is the most powerful modern satire of all on urban living conditions, phony social values of pseudo-masculinity and violence, all the more effective for its sensitivity of analysis of the central characters' attitudes. Williams has moved outwards into novels about the R. A. F. (*The Camp*, 1967), about journalists in England (*The Upper Pleasure Garden*, 1970) and America (*Walk Don't Walk*, 1972), but it is interesting that in all these novels it is still a specifically Scottish consciousness, a Scottish central character, who is measuring himself against the broader experience--as in the violent novel of Ian McGraw from Shettleston in London crime, *Big Morning Blues* (1974). A similar interest in the analysis of violence in terms of Scottish experience has been more extensively developed in the work of Hugh C. Rae, whose vivid *Skinner* (1965), based on the multiple murderer Manuel, succeeded in transcending the limits of the crime novel--as did many of his later works in the genre; *Night Pillow* (1967) the story of a family feud after a rape, which showed, like Williams's work, the necessary connection between the action and the debased Scottish environment of the housing schemes; *A Few Small Bones* (1968); *The Marksman* (1971); and especially *The Saturday Epic* (1970), which attempted to portray much more than Rae had hitherto tried, broadening its view to recreate the entire motivation of two Glasgow gangs. Touched by melodrama at points, it showed Rae to be developing into one of the finest of modern Scottish novelists; one awaits his new novel, *Harkfast*, which will break new ground again, with anticipation.

In listing these examples of response to the negatives of Scottish life I am aware of the dangers of falsifying the scene. Nevertheless it is indisputably true, for whatever it is ultimably worth, that the strongest modern tradition is a bleak, satiric one; and that there is a real difficulty for the Scottish writer who seeks to find real comedy in such scenes, apart from the ironic and absurd. Nevertheless a few writers succeed, to an extent--notably Chaim Bermant, George MacDonald Fraser, and Cliff Hanley. Bermant's *Jericho Sleep Alone* (1964) traces the adolescence of a young Glasgow Jew in

a city pleasant with trees and Art Galleries--another side to our previous view; and sympathises with the ludicrous setbacks with real humour, as in *Ben Preserve Us* (1965)--but is it not significant that the humour of the second is based on the pawky incidents of a provincial wee town? Bermant has *had* to change his scene to preserve the humour--and later novels move outside Scotland--and lose their artistic achievement, which is a shame in that the writer of the poignant *Diary of an Old Man* (1966), a first hand account of old age, has a compassion and warmth in that novel which promised great things. Similarly George MacDonald Fraser creates his humour furth of Scotland, in the adventures of his rogue *Flashman* (1969); in dealing with real Scottish life he manages to make the incidents involving gallus, mindless, dirty Private McAuslan in *The General Danced at Dawn* (1970) and *McAuslan in the Rough* (1974), amusing by detaching McAuslan from any hint of real social conditions, and isolating him in the mythical cliches and special conditions of the British Army abroad. McAuslan's risibility comes from the ludicrous contrast between himself and the world of the officers' mess, polite norms; and thus, though entertaining, it is basically trivial. More authentic is the humour of Cliff Hanley, who in *Dancing in the Streets* (1958) genuinely touches the real humour of working class family life; and in *The Taste of Too Much* (1960) he extended this to the novel, writing a classic account of adolescence and first love in a setting devoid of razors or violence, although still obviously Glasgow. *The Red-Haired Bitch* (1969) continued to find sharp humour in ordinary Glasgow life--here teaching, with Hanley making some pungent, yet still good-natured criticisms of Scottish teaching, as the headmaster of his school sets out the Scottish orthodoxies--"Beatles, and guitars, and drugs, and promiscuous sex--they all go together, but not in my school." But for me the funniest Hanley achievement paradoxically illustrates my case that *real* Scottish life is not suitable material for comic fiction is *The Hot Month* (1967), where Hanley's send-up of an untypically hot summer in a West Highland village creates marvellous humour. But although there are some real ironies about the Anglicised Gentry, the locals, and West Highland life, the novel is basically escapist in its creation of a bizarre holiday world--and none the worse for that; but in order to achieve its limited humorous effect, like so much of sentimental or even simply pleasant Kailyard or melodramatic Scottish fiction, like the work of Jane Duncan, or Lilian Beckwith, or Patrick O'Connor, M. O'Donaghue, Margaret Davies, or Robert Crichton, it has to limit or falsify the Scottish experience. The stereotypes of *No Mean City* and the Kailyard still flourish.

In having so far described two traditions of Scottish fic-

tion I am aware that in the case of many fine and established Scottish writers I have begged the question by leaving them out of either. This is especially true of a group whose best work seems to me to have been written before the war, but who continued to write thereafter. I have already paid tribute to Naomi Mitchison's *The Bull Calves* (1947); but she continued to write fine children's stories, a comic novel rather like *The Hot Month*, *Lobsters on the Agenda* (1952), a fine book of Scottish short stories, *Five Men and A Swan* (1957), a science fiction novel (*Memoirs of a Space Woman*, 1962), novels and studies of her beloved Bakgatla tribe of Africa, as well as autobiography. She continues to write original and vivid short stories for the annual collections sponsored for the Scottish Arts Council. But nevertheless, while acknowledging her immense and richly diverse achievement, I feel that her major work in Scottish fiction culminated in *The Bull Calves*, as I feel A. J. Cronin's did in *Hatter's Castle* (1931), Fionn McColla's (Tom MacDonald, who died recently) in *And the Cock Crew* (1945), although some stimulating thought appeared in *At the Sign of the Clenched Fist* (1967) and *Too Long in this Condition* (1975). Likewise George Blake, Bruce Marshal, March Cost, Fred Urquhart, to name a few--but their post-war work lacked the creative surge and ambition of the 'thirties.

Over and above this there are four groups of fiction which for convenience and on a fairly arbitrary basis, I have separated from the two main traditions--even although one might well decide to replace them in these traditions. Firstly there is the strong Scottish tradition of historical and adventure writing, of which the outstanding modern representatives are Nigel Tranter and Dorothy Dunnett. The first has set himself more epic and demanding tasks than ever, and performed them with dignity and success, in his Robert Bruce trilogy, *The Steps to the Empty Throne* (1969-71), and *The Wallace* (1975), while Dorothy Dunnett has just completed the six novels of her *The Game of Kings* series. Here, in the person of her resourceful, suave, dangerous hero Francis Crawford of Lymond, is a James Bond of the Middle Ages, set in a thoroughly researched and vividly presented historical background. And these two are backed by many able recreators of history--to name only a few, Marion Campbell, Jane Lane, Jane Oliver, Elizabeth Sutherland. And akin to them are the many writers of soundly constructed adventure and thriller novels, from Sacha Carnegie and Henry Calvin (Cliff Hanley) to Alistair McLean and Josephine Tay.

The second group is small, but fascinating. It contains those who use the more experimental forms of the novel to explore themes which may be Scottish, but which oddly enough seem ultimately to share a strange atmosphere of a geographi-

cal and spiritual No Man's Land--as though the experimental methods had been adopted as necessary for investigation of strangely alienated people in dreamlike landscapes. To break my own definition as soon as it is made, Sydney Goodsir Smith's *Carotid Cornucopius* (1964), his Rabelaisian, Joycean account in rich Scots of the "splores, cantraips, wisdoms, houghmagandies, peribibulations and all kinna abstrapulous junketings" of the Caird of the Cannon Gait is rooted solidly in Edinburgh and Scotland and in, as Hugh MacDiarmid says "the recaptured spirit of Dunbar, Sir Thomas Urquart and Burns," however fantastic the ongoings may--and do--become. It stands alone; very different from the quiet, disturbing work of Elspeth Davy, whose short stories *The Spark* (1968) and *The High Tide Talker* (1976), and her novels *Providings* (1965) and *Creating a Scene* (1971) explore the apparently mundane from a curiously and effectively detached angle that paradoxically conveys an immense, distanced sympathy for her meticulously observed protagonists. Without her restrained power, but similarly exploring the ordinary from a highly personal point of view is John Elliott's first novel, *Another Example of Indulgence* (1970), while Sheila MacLeod continues to convey intense experience of loneliness and breakdown through unique style in *The Moving Accident* (1967), *The Snow-White Soliloquies* (1970), and *Letters from the Portuguese* (1971). Robert Nye is English, but has lived and worked so long in Scotland that it would be petty not to mention his ambitious, difficult, but impressive novel *Doubtfire* (1967) and his delightful, whimsical, learned fantasies, *Tales I Told My Mother* (1969), together with his bawdy, huge, highly acclaimed recreation of the life of *Falstaff* (1976). His friend and collaborator William Watson has also written a complex and funny love story, *Better than One* (1969).

This does not exhaust Scottish experimentation, and I use one of the most notable of Scottish writers of "speculative fiction" as he calls it to make the transition to my third remaining group, that summed up by the unsatisfying, necessary label "Anglo-Scots." By this I mean those who live and work outside Scotland and whose work is primarily for a British or international market, whose themes are universal and whose settings non-Scottish. Giles Gordon has now a distinguished body of such fiction, including *Pictures From an Exhibition* (1970), *Farewell Fond Dreams* (1975) (both collections of short stories), and the novels, *About a Marriage* (1972) and *Scenes of Married Life* (1976). But the outstanding Scottish writers furth of Scotland have undoubtedly been James Kennaway and Muriel Spark--whose work on Scottish themes has already been discussed, but whose main work lies in a broader tradition of fiction. In their own separate and varied ways they are very much experimentalists too--witness Kennaway's diver-

sity of techniques in *Some Gorgeous Accident* (1967) and *The Cost of Living Like This* (1969) and Spark's changes in styles from, say, the fairly conventional in *The Mandelbaum Gate* (1965) to *The Driver's Seat* (1970) or *The Takeover* (1976). And, for the rest of the "Anglo-Scots," impressive work has been produced by George Beardmore, Campbell Black, Hugo Charteris, Walker Hamilton, Elizabeth Mavor, Rosemary and Shena MacKay, Pauline Neville and Ian Sinclair.

Finally, the short story. Many of the writers already mentioned, like Mackay Brown or Elspeth Davie, are primarily masters of this form. In addition the work of some specialists remains to be mentioned: Tom Hanlon (*Once in Every Lifetime*, 1945), Dorothy Haynes (*Thou Shalt not Suffer a Witch*, 1949), G. F. Hendry (*The Blackbird of Ospro*, 1945), Morley Jamieson (*The Old Wife*, 1972), Eona McNicol (*The Hallowe'en Hero*, 1969) and outstandingly Fred Urquhart's magnificent two volume collection, *The Dying Stallion* (1967), and *The Ploughing Match* (1968). In terms of general collections since the war there has been *No Scottish Twilight* (1947) edited by Maurice Lindsay and Fred Urquhart; the Faber book of *Scottish Short Stories* of 1932 updated and revised by Fred Urquhart in 1957; the World's Classics *Scottish Short Stories* (1963) edited by J. M. Reid; and J. F. Hendry's second collection for Penguin (the first in 1943), *Scottish Short Stories* (1970) and *Ten Modern Scottish Short Stories* (1973), edited by Robert Millar and John Low. In addition, the Scottish Arts Council have since 1973 sponsored an annual collection of *Scottish Short Stories;* four volumes have appeared to date.

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