

704

'OOT O' THE WORLD AND INTO THE LANGHOLM' :
A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO HUGH MACDIARMID'S

THE MUCKLE TOON

WITH TEXT, COMMENTARY AND GLOSSARY

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL I

by Patrick Crotty

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ABSTRACT

The present study grew out of a conviction that the poems written for the Muckle Toon volume of Clann Albann - Hugh MacDiarmid's abandoned opus of the early nineteen thirties - are too intricately interrelated to be understood in isolation from each other. My aims were to arrange the poems of The Muckle Toon in a manner suggestive of MacDiarmid's unity of purpose in planning and composing that unfinished work, and to relate their themes and techniques both to his earlier and later development and to modern poetic practice generally. I have hoped thereby to clarify the shape of his career, the most widely accepted view of which rests upon an inadequate appreciation of the poetry of the early thirties.

Volume One comprises a critical introduction to The Muckle Toon. The biographical opening chapter centres on the poet's youth in 'the Muckle Toon o' the Langholm', and on the background to his imaginative concern with

the place in maturity. Chapter Two, the most wide-ranging in my study, discusses questions relating to language and meaning in MacDiarmid's work which must be explored if the position of The Muckle Toon in his career is to be understood. Chapter Three examines the poetry with regard to structure, symbol, prosody, and language, while Chapter Four is concerned with the subject-matter of The Muckle Toon. This last chapter also argues for the continuity of MacDiarmid's development by demonstrating that the early Shetland poetry embodies a critical response to, and a partial fulfilment of, the Clann Albann scheme.

Volume Two includes the text of The Muckle Toon, supplemented by related items drawn from the range of MacDiarmid's output in poetry and prose, a critical and explanatory Commentary, and a Glossary. Reasons for including the 'related items' are given in A Note on the Text.

Langholm Cemetery, September 13th 1978

Oot o' the warl'
And intil the Langholm
For the ae last time
Gangs Chris

To tyauve wi' the benmaist
Chthonian poo'ers
And thraw a louch look owre
The abyss.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

'Oot o' the World and into the Langholm' is entirely my own work; my study could not have attained its present form, however, without the aid, encouragement and generosity of very many people.

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On my expeditions to Scotland I was greatly assisted by the late Dr Christopher Murray Grieve, whose courtesy, attentiveness and humour dissipated much of the tongue-tackit awe with which I approached him; by his wife, Valda Trevlyn, whose warmth and

v

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Patrick Crotty

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
VOLUME ONE	
PREFATORY	1
CHAPTER ONE: 'THE MUCKLE TOON THAT I'M CONCERNED WI' NOO':MACDIARMID AND LANGHOLM	15
(A) 'A Dumfriesshire Boy':Childhood in the Muckle Toon	15
(B) 'Unexpectedly Back'	59
CHAPTER TWO: 'SERVICES OF SIGNIFICATION': ASPECTS OF MEANING AND LANGUAGE IN MACDIARMID'S WORK	143
(A) Language and Communication	
i) The Competing Tortoise	145
ii)'Something I Never Mention'	170
(B) 'The Rouch Auld Scots'	
i) Introductory	206
ii)Scots and Modern Literature	211
iii)MacDiarmid and Scots	232
CHAPTER THREE: 'MAIKLESS FIRES':FORM AND TECHNIQUE IN <u>THE MUCKLE TOON</u>	257
(A) The Structure of <u>The Muckle Toon</u>	259
(B) The Symbolism of <u>The Muckle Toon</u>	271
(C) Stanza and Metre	283
(D) The Language of <u>The Muckle Toon</u>	303
i) The poetry of 1931	306
ii)The later Muckle Toon poetry	316
a) Thin Scots	317
b) Dense Scots	324
c) Rich Discursive Scots	336
d) English	342

CHAPTER FOUR: FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION:	
THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF <u>THE MUCKLE TOON</u>	346
(A) An Explanation	346
(B) Evolution and the Journey from Childhood	
i) 'The force that's brocht life up ...'	359
ii) 'The epoteia I maun ha'e ...'	379
iii) 'A' wha haena had a glisk ...'	401
iv) 'As bairns in their bairnliness ...'	415
(C) 'Secret, devious, and persistent guide...': Religion in <u>The Muckle Toon</u>	424
(D) 'Into the Langholm': Sense of Place in <u>The Muckle Toon</u>	443
i) Country and Kingly Cousins	446
ii) Dr. Williams and Mr. Grieve	462
iii) 'Wowf Places'	471
iv) The Frontier	479
(E) Bonds	484
(F) Was Burke Richt?	499
APPENDIX A : A NOTE ON SCOTS	520
APPENDIX B : MACDIARMID AND THE ROMANTIC TRADITION	530
NOTES	556
Prefatory	556
Chapter One	560
Chapter Two	589
Chapter Three	602
Chapter Four	612
Appendix A	630
Appendix B	633

VOLUME TWO

A NOTE ON THE TEXT
THE MUCKLE TOON

1

1

2

PRELUDE

10

I

25

II

41

III

70

IV

95

V

98

VI

146

VII

160

VIII

168

APPENDIX A

173

APPENDIX B

234

APPENDIX C

241

COMMENTARY

245

Prelude

255

I

281

II

293

III

330

IV

355

V

361

VI

431

VII

464

VIII

485

Appendix A

490

Appendix B

498

Appendix C

502

GLOSSARY

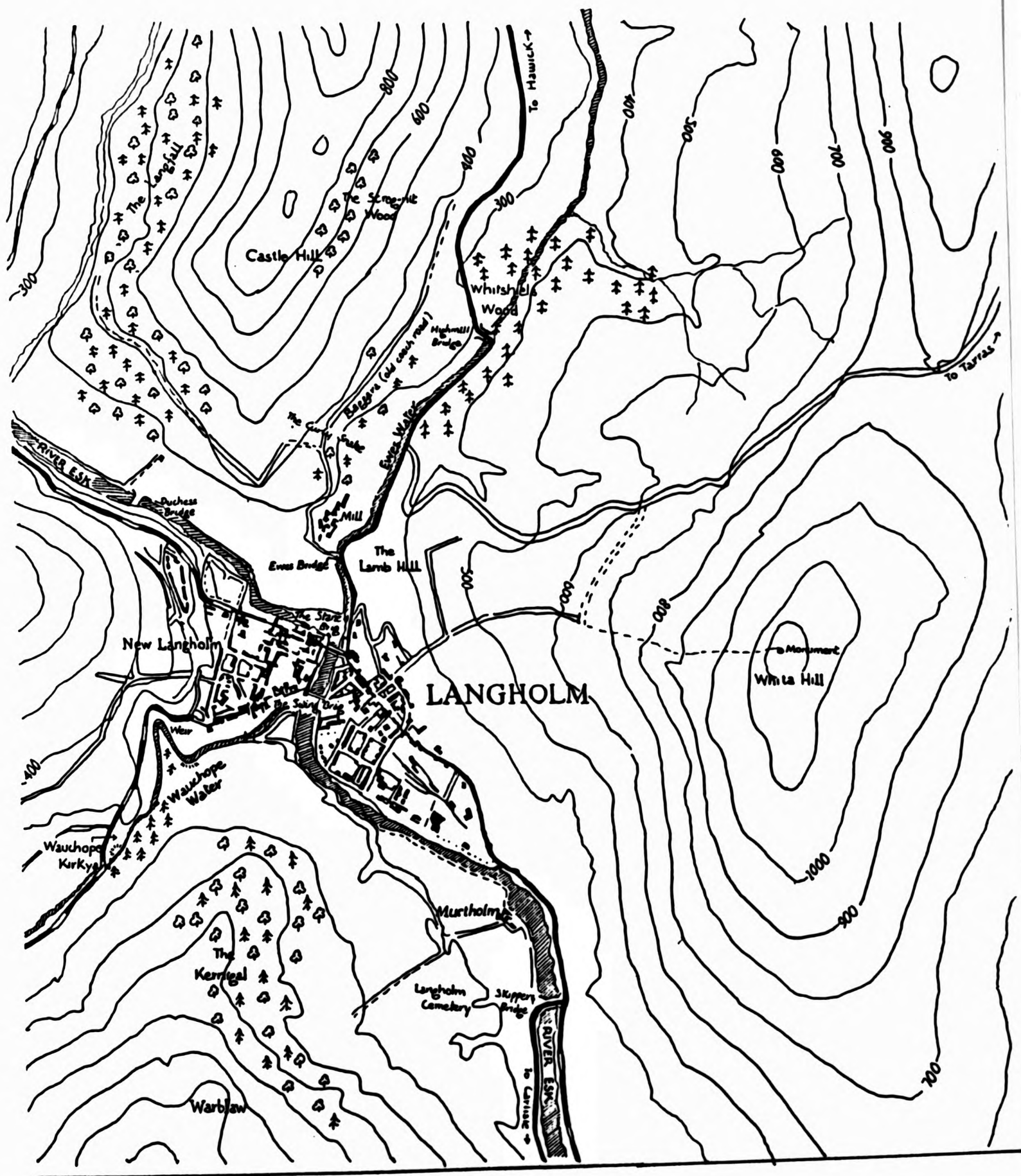
'OOT O' THE WORLD AND INTO THE LANGHOLM'

VOLUME ONE

A Critical Introduction to Hugh MacDiarmid's

The Muckle Toon

For Bríd and Brian



MACDIARMID'S LANGHOLM

PREFATORY

'Must I forever plan what I shall never execute? I am tortured worse than any Tantalus'. The author of this anguished enquiry was Christopher Murray Grieve, Sergeant-Caterer of the Officers' Mess in a Royal Army Medical Corps encampment 'somewhere in Macedonia'.¹ He had just entered his twenty-fifth year when, on August 20th 1916, he wrote the letter complaining thus of his difficulty in bringing his literary conceptions to birth.

Six years were to pass before he began to produce, above the signature 'Hugh MacDiarmid', the body of verse which is the central achievement of Scottish literature in the twentieth century. Yet already a distressing tendency to outline literary schemes which had little chance of

fulfilment had become obvious to himself and, presumably, to George Ogilvie, his mentor and recipient of the letter. From the early nineteen-twenties onward, Grieve's work as a cultural propagandist exacerbated this propensity. He agitated relentlessly for a national renewal in life and letters which would undo the harm done to Scotland by centuries of political and economic adversity. The apostle of the 'Scottish Renaissance' announced ambitious literary projects which frequently failed to find printed or even written form. These grand heraldings of writings which barely existed in the poet's brain served both to boost a morale which may not always have been as robust as it seemed, and to impress upon his hearers the burgeoning reality of the Scottish Renaissance in the work of its most energetic advocate. Thus in Grieve's letters, and in MacDiarmid's contributions to newspapers and periodicals, we hear of novels, short story collections, sonnet sequences, travel books, political tracts, essays on religious and philosophical subjects and, recurringly, poetic works of epic proportions.

MacDiarmid's statements with regard to the placing of his poems in proposed large-scale structures are unreliable. But to disregard these pronouncements and allow the chronology of the poems' appearance in volumes to fix the shape of his career - as has been done by the editors of the Complete Poems - leads to a seriously distorted view of his achievement. A volume-by-volume presentation of the work in the period 1925-30 is justified. MacDiarmid carefully assembled the contents of the five volumes of his verse published in those years, volumes which contain all his surviving major poetry of the twenties. In the case of the two books which comprise single extended poems - A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle (1926) and To Circumjack Cencrastus (1930) - the sequence of lyric and discursive passages was considered by the author to be definitive (even if, in the case of Cencrastus, he was disappointed by the final shape). After 1930, however, confusion overtakes the MacDiarmid bibliography. Many of the major poems of the thirties languished for decades in the magazines and periodicals of

their first appearance before being swept into compilation volumes which provided no indication of their original publication dates. These poems are presented in the Complete Poems according to the publication dates of the compilation volumes. Thus the unsuspecting reader will attribute such important works as 'Whuchulls' and 'The Glass of Pure Water' to 1967 and 1962 respectively, instead of to 1933 and 1937². This editorial method has the effect of obscuring a highly achieved poem-cycle composed in 1931 and 1932, and consequently of misrepresenting the course of MacDiarmid's poetic development.

The obscured poem-cycle consists of verse written for The Muckle Toon, the unfinished first volume of a proposed five-volume work which was to be called Clann Albann. The poet first let his readers know that he was working on such a scheme by way of a note to an excerpted poem which appeared in the July 1931 issue of the Modern Scot. By the time his only declaration of aims with regard to the five-volume epic was

published in a religious affairs periodical twenty-five months later, he had already abandoned the project, though 'Clann Albann: An Explanation' is equivocal on the point.³ MacDiarmid claimed in the 'Explanation' to 'have practically finished writing' the first of the five volumes, but his description of it as 'longer than my "Cencrastus"' suggests that The Muckle Toon was meant to be a considerably more bulky book than can be constructed from what he called 'the work that has already appeared'. (All but one of the poems which can confidently be ascribed to Clann Albann had 'already appeared' when the 'Explanation' saw the light of day.⁴) The Muckle Toon writings are to be found in First Hymn to Lenin and other poems (1931), in the pamphlet Second Hymn to Lenin (1932), in Scots Unbound and other poems (1932) and among the author's numerous poetic contributions to newspapers and magazines in the period 1931-33. The First Hymn and Scots Unbound collections, unlike the volumes published by the poet in the twenties, comprised gleanings of current work rather than formal displays of work achieved. An Author's Note in each collection ascribed the contents to Clann Albann, the Scots Unbound note

specifying that it was to the first volume of that work that the poems belonged:

The poems in this volume, like those in my First Hymn to Lenin and Other Poems (Unicorn Press, 1931) and Second Hymn to Lenin (Valda Trevlyn, Thakeham, 1932), are separable items from the first volume of my long poem, 'Clann Albann', now in preparation.⁵

These Author's Notes are problematic (see below, pp. 132-3, 265), and not even the first fifth of the Clann Albann project came near completion. Nevertheless the writings intended for The Muckle Toon comprise a body of verse characterised by a higher degree of thematic, symbolic and formal unity than any attempted extended work in the range of MacDiarmid's poetry, with the exception of A Drunk Man.

The generality of the poetry in To Circumjack Cencrastus (1930), In Memoriam James Joyce (1955), and The Kind of Poetry I Want (1961) is markedly inferior in quality to that written for The Muckle Toon. Neither are the constituent parts of those works as closely related to each other as the poems composed for the abandoned epic of the early thirties. Yet, because each of the named opera was printed separately in book form

in the poet's life-time, they are presented as units in the Complete Poems (1978), where the parts of The Muckle Toon are scattered, unidentified, through two volumes. The editors of the Complete Poems are not to be faulted for this, as they were merely following the instructions of MacDiarmid, the last sentence of whose Author's Note reads:

Other large-scale projects, such as 'Clann Albann' (with its parts 'The Muckle Toon' and 'Fier comme un Ecosais') and the complete 'Cornish Heroic Song for Valda Trevlyn', were either abandoned or subsumed in other works, and are not recorded here.

(Complete Poems I, p.vi)

These words were written in 1976, forty-four years after the poet suspended work on Clann Albann. Like many artists whose work can be divided into several 'periods', each with its characteristic style, MacDiarmid was at any given stage of his development disposed to undervalue the productions of earlier stages. Half a decade of frenetic literary activity already stood between him and Clann Albann when, towards the end of the nineteen thirties, he evolved his later poetic manner. For the rest of his life he clung to the aesthetic attitudes appropriate to that manner. It

is hardly surprising then that his cursory 1976 reference to The Muckle Toon gives little indication of how seriously he regarded the project when he was in the throes of composition.

It has long been known that most of the poems MacDiarmid wrote in the early thirties were meant to take their place in an extended work. Some of the poet's statements relating to Clann Albann were reprinted in Duncan Glen's Hugh MacDiarmid and the Scottish Renaissance in 1964⁶. In Hugh MacDiarmid, published in the same year, Kenneth Buthlay used the Clann Albann scheme as a de facto context for his examination of the poetry of 1931 and 1932⁷. Ruth McQuillan exploited the categories provided by 'Clann Albann: An Explanation' to organise an account of MacDiarmid's development in a Ph.D. thesis accepted by the English faculty of the University of Cambridge in 1973. Dr. McQuillan's invaluable biographical study includes details of the Clann Albann scheme unavailable in published works. W. R. Aitken, the poet's bibliographer, in the course of an essay on 'MacDiarmid's "Unpublished" Books' which appeared in 1977, devoted almost six pages to marshalling the author's ascriptions of poems and collections of poems to Clann Albann⁸.

The success of some commentators in ignoring the pioneering work of these scholars is little short of astonishing in view of the fact that Ruth McQuillan's dissertation is the only one of the above not readily accessible to the MacDiarmid student. Ann Edwards Boutelle's so-called 'Study of Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry' - Thistle and Rose (1980)⁹ - limits its research to published sources and treats the notoriously inadequate Collected Poems (1962, revised 1967) as the authorised MacDiarmid canon.¹⁰ Boutelle's failure to mention Clann Albann may not be surprising, but she certainly heard of the scheme if she read the books she condescends towards in her reference to 'Duncan Glen's historical approach in Hugh MacDiarmid and the Scottish Renaissance and Kenneth Buthlay's brave but limited attempt to deal critically with the total work in Hugh MacDiarmid.'¹¹ Catherine Kerrigan's Whaur Extremes Meet: The Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid 1920-1934 (1983) is less brash and generally much better informed than Boutelle's book.¹² The author's scholarship, however, is not in evidence when she deals with the poetry of 1931 and 1932: she makes no reference to Clann Albann

or The Muckle Toon and, in consequence, seriously misreads the poems (See below pp.410-12).

The Marxist critic David Craig is responsible for what must surely be the most inexplicable critical sin of omission with regard to The Muckle Toon. The revised version of his essay 'MacDiarmid the Marxist Poet', from The Real Foundations: Literature and Social Change (1973), is largely devoted to a consideration of the poetry written for The Muckle Toon.¹³ Yet Craig makes no mention of that proposed book, or of the Clann Albann scheme in which it was to take its place. He observes:

(It) would be wrong to offer any account whatsoever of MacDiarmid that didn't point out (it has never been distinctly noticed) that between 1930 and about 1935 he created a major sequence of poems which no one at that time, with the exception of the Yeats of 'Meditations in Time of Civil War' and the Eliot of the Quartets, could approach. They hang together thematically, since they all explore the organism of the human being, the particular form of it that is the poet himself, and the concerns (the relation between consciousness and the id, revolutionary politics, industrial work, rootedness in family and locality) that nourished or interfered with his deep processes. They also have enough in common stylistically for them nearly to make an integrated work. With few exceptions they are written in some form of six-line verse and in a long line, usually with four or five stresses, that has room for complex trains of thought.¹⁴

Craig appends a 'Note on the Major Poem Sequence of the Early Thirties' to his essay, attributing thirteen poems to the sequence. He somewhat arbitrarily divides them into those which 'deal more autobiographically with MacDiarmid's thinking about his life to date' and those which 'deal more objectively and philosophically with his intellectual concerns'.¹⁵ Even his claim that his table 'sets out this work in the order in which it appeared' is unreliable as he places 'From Work in Progress' after, rather than before, the poems included in the First Hymn to Lenin volume.¹⁶ 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton' was published in 1932, 'Whuchulls' in 1933, yet this order is reversed in Craig's professedly chronological arrangement of the pieces.¹⁷ He reproduces the titles of 'From Work in Progress', 'Lynch-Pin' and 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton' inaccurately. The following is a reproduction of the table he draws up:

Charisma and My Relatives	First Hymn to Lenin
Water of Life	Prayer for a Second Flood
Work in Progress	The Seamless Garment
By Wauchopeside	
Lynch-pin	Whuchulls
From 'The War with England'	Milk-wort and Bog-cotton
Bracken Hills in Autumn ¹⁸	Harry Semen

The last three poems listed were not written for The Muckle Toon (though, for reasons outlined in the Commentary (see Vol. II, p. 484), I have included 'From "The War with England"' in the Text as a 'related item'). 'Whuchulls' is not, strictly speaking, a Clann Albann poem, though Craig's instinct in including it is doubtless right (see Commentary, pp. 452-3). While he correctly identifies nine of the poems written for the poetic sequence upon which MacDiarmid was engaged in the early thirties, he misses more than thirty poems actually ascribed by the poet to Clann Albann. Craig can hardly be said to have 'noticed' the Muckle Toon sequence as 'distinctly' as he might, certainly not as distinctly as it had been noticed in Buthlay's book, which appeared nine years before the extended version of 'MacDiarmid the Marxist Poet'. In 1978 another essay of Craig's - 'Hugh MacDiarmid's Peak' - was printed in the MacDiarmid Memorial Number of the Scottish Literary Journal.¹⁹ The five years that passed between the publication of his two essays saw the appearance of Aitken's article with its brief inventory of author's statements about Clann Albann. Yet in 1978 Craig could still write, in relation to the poetry of the early thirties, of 'something that perhaps can never be proved but seems to be the

case: that the key poems of this phase are virtually parts of one long whole, they amount to MacDiarmid's Prelude or Four Quartets.²⁰

A more recent book-length study of the poetry - Alan Bold's MacDiarmid: The Terrible Crystal (1983)²¹ - marks an advance on Boutelle's and Kerrigan's work insofar as it examines the poems of 1931 and 1932 in their proper Muckle Toon context. However, Bold looks to intuition rather than research to decide which poems do and which do not belong to the Clann Albann scheme. He fails to explore adequately the genesis and even the meaning of the poetry's central Water of Life emblem. He does not advert to the childhood and scriptural motifs which do so much to unify the writings intended for The Muckle Toon (see below, pp. 415-22, 439-42).

The two latest books on MacDiarmid - Harvey Oxenhorn's Elemental Things²² and Nancy K. Gish's Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and His Work²³ (both 1984) - contain perceptive incidental criticism of individual Langholm poems but they intimate nothing of those poem's relationship to a large-scale enterprise.

Though Bold rightly warns of 'the problematic nature of any reconstruction of MacDiarmid's various projected books'²⁴, there is an obvious

need to gather for the first time into the confines of a single volume all the poems attributed by their author to Clann Albann. Only one of these²⁵ was ascribed to any of the later volumes of that projected work, which is why 'The Muckle Toon' rather than 'Clann Albann' appears in the sub-title of the present study. In the late twenties the poet completed, but failed in his efforts to have published, a short-story collection which also had the title, The Muckle Toon (see below, pp. 61-5 and 454-6). The stories from this collection are among the 'related items' reproduced in the Text and Appendices of Volume Two. The collection is referred to in Volume One as 'the prose Muckle Toon'. References to 'The Muckle Toon' allude only to the poetry written for the first volume of Clann Albann, that is to say, to the Text exclusive of 'related items'. However, any item which appears in the Text is, on citation in Volume One, accompanied by the reference M.T. and the page-number of its reproduction in Volume Two. In the case of poems collected in the Complete Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid, a C.P. reference, with volume and page-number, is given before the M.T. one.

CHAPTER ONE

'THE MUCKLE TOON THAT I'M CONCERNED WI'

NOO' : MACDIARMID AND LANGHOLM

' . . . no till lately hae the hame scenes played
A pairt in my creative thocht . . . '

'From Work in Progress'

(A) 'A Dumfriesshire Boy': Childhood in

The Muckle Toon

'Langholm' or 'the Muckle Toon': blazoned on roadsigns, both names greet the visitor to the Dumfriesshire burgh whether he approaches from Carlisle, England, twenty miles to the south, or from the Roxburghshire town of Hawick a similar distance in the opposite airt. Both names have associations of largeness which are not confirmed by the size of the town itself. 'The Langholm' (that definite article is commonly retained in local speech) means the Long Holm.

A holm is a stretch of rich, flat riverside land. The more formal name of Hugh MacDiarmid's birthplace, therefore, embodies a recognition of the 'luxuriance of nature' which impressed itself on the poet as a very young child (Lucky Poet, p. 219). The holm in question owes its existence to the conjunction of three river valleys. The Ewes joins the Esk at the town's northern extremity; the Wauchope flows in a little downriver of the burgh's centre. The Muckle Toon means simply the Big Town, an appellation that might dispose one to expect a population of more than the 2,700 recorded in the census of 1974. There is however no town of comparable size for more than ten miles in any direction. Indeed one has to travel six miles from Langholm to find any settlement of significant size at all. To the sheep-farming folk of the neighbouring valleys and hills, Langholm was for years at once the focus of the woollen industry and the only accessible market centre. In the days before the steam and internal combustion engines brought Carlisle and Hawick within reach, the burgh was a little metropolis,

the centre of a world. 'The Muckle Toon o' the Langholm' is a phrase which both captures the mingled pride and affection in which the Langholmite holds his native place, and highlights the historic importance of the town to the economy of the region.

Whatever the angle of his approach, the visitor to Langholm will see a hill-top obelisk before he glimpses the town itself. This landmark commemorates General Sir John Malcolm, K.C.B., who achieved distinction as a soldier, diplomat and author in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. A statue of Sir Pulteney Malcolm - another of the so-called 'four Knights of Eskdale', four brothers who were knighted for their services to the empire - is to be found next to the town's architectural centre-piece, the block incorporating the Town Hall and the Post Office and Library Building. A large plaque in red granite on the front of the Town Hall preserves the memory of William Julius Mickle (1735 -1788), the local poet who translated the Lusiad of Camoëns and, reputedly, composed the popular poem 'The Sailor's Wife'

('There's nae luck aboot the hoose').¹ A muckler poet, Hugh MacDiarmid, was, until the recent erection of a sculpture in his honour at the White Yett, just east of Whitshiels, commemorated only by a small brown plate on the wall of the Post Office and Library Buildings.

Langholm is set between four hills - Warblaw, Castle Hill, the Lamb Hill and Whita Hill. On the lower slopes of the most imposing of these - monument-capped Whita - stands Arkinholm Terrace. Christopher Murray Grieve was born in No. 3 on the morning of August 11th 1892. His parents were the twenty-eight year old Ewes valley postman James Grieve and his thirty-four year old bride of ten months, Elizabeth. The baby was named after his paternal grandmother, Christina Murray. The couple's only other child - a boy born in April 1894 - was named Andrew Graham after his maternal grandfather. These christenings are significant not for their quaint genealogical symmetry but because they foreshadowed the development of the brothers. Christopher would identify with his father and with his father's side of the family, while Andrew, if we are to believe the scarcely

impartial witness of the older brother, grew up favoured by the mother (see below pp.41-6). Yet the poet inherited the resolution and longevity of his mother's people - 'tenacious, long-lived country folk' - along with the qualities of the paternal ancestors he characterised as 'hardy keen-brained Border mill-workers' ('The Kind of Poetry I Want', C.P.I, p. 615).

Genealogy was one of Grieve's boyhood hobbies (L.P., p.4). At an early point in The Muckle Toon, however, the poet asserts that he knows almost nothing about his ancestry:

My clan is darkness 'yont a wee ring
O' memory showin' catsiller here or there
But nocht complete or lookin' twice the same.

('From Work in Progress', C.P. II, p.1149;
M.T., p.13)

Enclosed in that little ring of memory were the poet's grandfathers, Andrew Graham, mole-catcher and farm-labourer, and John Grieve, a weaver and later a power-loom tuner in the Reid and Taylor tweed mill which would provide the setting of his grandson's celebrated didactic poem, 'The

Seamless Garment' (C.P. I, p.311; M.T., p.121). Others of significance were John and Robert Laidlaw, the two cousins on the Grieve side who were 'instrumental in turning' the boy's aspirations towards literature' (L.P., p.8). The Laidlaws published poems and articles in the Eskdale and Liddesdale Advertiser.

In Lucky Poet MacDiarmid is not at all hesitant about illuminating the ancestral darkness beyond the 'ring o' memory'. He contends that another Laidlaw - William, Sir Walter Scott's steward at Abbotsford - was a 'connexion' of his (L.P., p.2). As William Laidlaw was a cousin of James Hogg's mother, it is tempting to speculate that Christopher Murray Grieve's ancestry may be plaited with that of the Ettrick Shepherd.² Though the poet never claimed kinship with the author of The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner, he was eager to regard two other luminaries born in the eighteenth century as his relations:

Murray is the oldest name in Scotland. My kinsmen on this side included Alexander Murray (1775-1813), the great linguist, student of the languages of Western Asia and North-East Africa and Lapland, and author of History of European Languages, and also Lindley Murray (1745-1826), styled 'the Father of English Grammar'. Thus ... one of my main prepossessions as a writer - my concern with linguistics - is hereditary.

(L.P., p.3)

MacDiarmid even goes so far as to assure us that the fourteenth-century herald, Henry Grieve, first named incumbent of the office of Lord Lyon, was one of his forefathers. He adds provocatively, 'I have no intention of setting out here the genealogical tree of my descent from the gentleman in question, ... I merely state the facts' (L.P. pp.1-2). He claims some distinction in his maternal lineage, too:

I traced the distant connexion of my mother's family with the Grahams of Netherby. They had 'come down in the world', however. Her great-great-grandfather had been the Laird of Castlemilk, but had been a typical reckless, hard-drinking, heavy-gambling laird of his time, and had gambled away his estates on the turn of the card to, I think, one of the well-known Border family of Bell-Irving, or to one of the Buchanan-Jardines, who now own the property in question.

(L.P. p.4)

The Muckle Toon's dearth of reference to these distinguished - if very dubious - branches of the poet's family tree is not to be explained by an uncharacteristic outbreak of modesty on MacDiarmid's part, but by his wish to present his genius as an evolutionary mutation, in line with the informing vision of the sequence. He telescopes his ancestry in the line:

Reivers to weavers and to me. Weird way!
 ('From Work in Progress', C.P.II, p.1150;
M.T., p. 13)

We have already met the weavers. What of the reivers, the free-booters who flourished in the Border country in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, withholding fealty not only from the despised Southron but also from the Scottish king in Edinburgh? The fierce independence of spirit of the hardy retainers of the 'debatable lands' had obvious attractions for MacDiarmid, who carefully cultivated a bellicose literary persona. Yet the Borderers are remembered not only for their cattle-raids and feuds, but for the 'communal' art of their ballads, and it is as an heir of the balladeers that Langholm's poet salutes Lenin in The Muckle Toon's 'First Hymn' to the Bolshevik leader:

Descendant o' the unkent Bards wha made
 Sangs peerless through a' post-anonymous days
 I glimpse again in you that mightier poo'er
 Than fashes wi' the laurels and the bays
 But kens that it is shared by ilka man
 Since time began.

(C.P. I, p.298; M.T., p.98)

The poet's claims of descent from the 'unkent Bards' is not unreasonable: most people whose antecedents have for years dwelt in the Border area must have some anonymously poetic blood in their veins. And though the ballad-makers were anonymous, the protagonists of their 'peerless sangs' were anything but: the surnames of Christopher Grieve's immediate ancestors figure prominently in the ballads. 'The Outlaw Murray' and 'Hughie the Graeme' (i.e., Graham) are the subjects of two well-known pieces, while 'James Telfer of the Fair Dodhead' includes the following lines:

'Alack a wae!' quo' auld Jock Grieve,
 Alack! my heart is sair for thee!
 For I was married on the elder sister,
 And you on the youngest of a' the three'.³

Though MacDiarmid was disposed to lay claim upon the distinguished (in Lucky Poet) and the romantic (in The Muckle Toon) as his remote ancestors, he was equally keen on underscoring the ordinariness of his immediate background.

Proletarian roots were good credentials for a 'communist' poet, and as they were precisely what the left-wing English poets of the thirties lacked, the Scot did not miss a chance of advertising them:

Michael Roberts and All Angels! Auden, Spender,
 those bhoyos,
 All yellow twicers: not one of them
 With a tith of Carlile's courage and integrity.
 Unlike the pseudos I am of - not for - the
 working class
 And like Carlile know nothing of the so-called
 higher classes
 Save only that they are cheats and murderers,
 Battening like vampires on the masses.
 ('Third Hymn to Lenin', C.P. II, p.900)

Such rhetoric cloaks the fact that Christopher Grieve had a far from disadvantaged childhood. Though thirty-seven shillings was the highest weekly wage reached by his father (L.P., p.231), the family was a small one and never knew actual poverty. And in two vital respects Grieve's early environment contrasted sharply with that of the urban proletariat with whom he was to identify himself. His home was dominated by books to an extent unusual for a household in any social class, and, Langholm being a small town, he enjoyed an essentially rural boyhood.

The first of these boons resulted, paradoxically, from James Grieve's lowly status of country postman. Before Christopher was four years old the family moved from Arkinholm Terrace to a house in Henry Street, 'New Langholm'.⁴ Then, in the early days of the new century, they recrossed the Esk to settle in a ground-floor apartment in the Post Office and Library Building. Upstairs was Langholm Library which, built around a nucleus endowed by the great engineer Thomas Telford (1757-1834) - a native of nearby Westerkirk -, had grown to a collection of 'upwards of twelve thousand books' (L.P., p.8). Elizabeth Grieve was made caretaker of the building. Though she was to castigate the older of her sons for 'aye sittin' in a corner mumpin' owre a book' ('Andy', M.T., p. 43), she allowed the boy constant access to the feast of written culture upstairs.⁵ Other Langholmites had to pay for each volume borrowed, but young Grieve was able to take books downstairs at night by the laundry-basketful (L.P., p.8).⁶ The poet acknowledged the library as 'the great determining factor' in his development (L.P., p.8). It accustomed him from childhood to see the world 'through a

"strong solution of books" (Annals of the Five Senses, p.17). His allusive, quotation-gorged prose style, along with the encyclopaedic yearnings of his poetry, can be traced to his reading habits in the first decade of the century.

Indoors Christopher Grieve had a library to develop his mental powers. Outdoors lay the profuse natural beauty of Eskdale, a ready teacher for his senses. Though MacDiarmid tells us in Lucky Poet (p.230) that he spent less time out of doors than did his peers or his brother, the poetry testifies to his acute appreciation of the woods, uplands and, above all, the rivers of his native region. No visitor to the district will question his statement that Langholm was 'a wonderful place to be a boy in' (L.P., p.219). Just before embarking on the Clann Albann project the poet catalogued some of his boyhood diversions as follows:

The delights of sledging on the Lamb Hill or
 Murgholm Brae; of gathering "hines" in the
 Langfall; of going through the fields of
 Baggara hedged in honeysuckle and wild roses,
 through knee-deep meadowsweet to the "Scrog-nit"
 wood and gathering nuts or crab-apples there;
 of blaeberrying on Warblaw or the Castle Hill;
 of "dookin'" and "guddlin'" or making islands
 in the Esk or Ewes or Wauchope and lighting
 stick fires on them and cooking potatoes in
 tin cans....

('My Native Place', M.T., p.6)

He commented that

these are only a few of the joys I knew,
 in addition to the general ones of hill-
 climbing and penetrating the five glens
 which (each with its distinct character)
 converge upon or encircle the town -
 Eskdale, Wauchopedale, Tarrasdale,
 Ewesdale and, below the town Carlisle-
 wards, the "Dean Banks".

('My Native Place', M.T., p.6)

A third stroke of good fortune further
 helped to equip for a life in literature the
 boy who would call his autobiography Lucky Poet.
 As a pupil in Langholm Academy he was taught by
 Francis George Scott (1880-1958), who was later
 to achieve distinction as a composer. Scott,
 a native of Hawick - another Border town -,
 taught in Langholm for eight years from 1904.
 The poet was to make much of the fact that the
 composer and he shared a 'frontier' heritage.

He commented as follows on his relationship with his teacher:

As a matter of fact I was his blue-eyed boy, the star pupil. But one did not need to be a star pupil to know - indeed, I think all of us recognised at once - that Mr. Scott was out of the ordinary run of teachers, and was, in fact, an eagle among sparrows; or rather, a lion in a den of Daniels, which in regard to the Scottish public he has remained ever since. I think that the basis that was laid then for our later friendship and collaboration was the fact that we were both imbued with the frontier spirit.⁷

When the two Borderers renewed contact in the early twenties the older man was already an admirer of such Scots lyrics by MacDiarmid as had appeared in print. He became the poet's closest confidante on artistic matters, helping to work out a final shape for A Drunk Man and suggesting improvements to draft versions of many of the poems written for The Muckle Toon. The creative debt was two-sided, however: commentators agree that Scott's finest work is to be found among his settings of his former pupil's lyrics.⁸ Another teacher at Langholm Academy, William Burt, also remained a life-long friend of the poet. MacDiarmid counted Scott and Burt 'among the strictly limited number of the best brains in Scotland' (L.P., p. 229).

It is probable that Christopher Grieve's first experience of poetry pre-dated his family's move to the Post Office and Library Building. The Grieve household had a strongly religious atmosphere and the boy must have heard the sacred poetry of the Bible in infancy. He may not have been so fortunate when it came to secular poetry however. He recalled that 'Burns ... was taboo in my father's house and quite unknown to me as a boy ...' (L.P., p.191). James Grieve was an elder of Langholm's South United Presbyterian Church ('the Toonfit Kirk') and Superintendent of the Sunday School there. His sons have been remembered by a contemporary as 'leading lights' of the Sunday School, where Christopher began teaching Bible Knowledge while still in his early teens.⁹ Not surprisingly, the poetry bears the marks of the devotional ambience of the author's early life. Biblical allusions are exploited to particular advantage in The Muckle Toon. Indeed even in his program-atically anti-Christian verses MacDiarmid knows how to cite scripture for his purpose.¹⁰

(The influence of fundamentalist Christianity on MacDiarmid's work is explored below, pp.424-6). The religious zeal which may have denied Grieve access to secular poetry in his youngest years enhanced his exposure to the art as he grew up. In 1901 Thomas Scott Cairncross was appointed to the Toonfit Kirk. The new minister was a versifier of some accomplishment. By the time he ended his six-year stay in the Muckle Toon he had acquainted the brightest boy in his Sunday School with a range of contemporary poetry (see L.P., pp.222-3).¹¹

MacDiarmid professed himself to be as eager to associate with his people's political beliefs as he was to distance himself from their religious faith. In Lucky Poet (p.225) we are told that 'The old Radicalism was still strong all over the Borders' in his boyhood. We are not told that this Radicalism flowed directly from fundamentalist Christian conviction: Free Presbyterians were generally Liberal in politics, as adherents of the Auld Kirk were Tory.¹² And 'Radical' and 'Liberal' were virtually interchangeable terms in Victorian

and Edwardian Scotland. The 'old Radicalism' was still in evidence in the Borders in 1983, when the Liberals won absolute majorities in the constituencies of Roxburgh and Berwickshire, and of Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale, in the General Election. Mr. David Steel, who sits for the latter constituency, is the best-known contemporary embodiment of that Radicalism. The poet's attempt to find prefigurations of his own revolutionary socialism in the stock political attitudes of the Borders should, therefore, be treated with caution.

MacDiarmid hardly inherited the politics of his immediate family either. True, he called James Grieve's 'Trade Union and Co-operative views' the 'crude/Beginnin's o' my ain deep interests' ('Fatherless in Boyhood', C.P. II, p. 1250; M.T., p. 89). Yet in Lucky Poet (p. 226) he claimed no more than that his father 'was coming steadily towards the Socialist position' just prior to his death. MacDiarmid's fierce Ishmaelitism embodied an attempt to define himself against, rather than to accommodate himself to, the mores of family and society. The key to his outlook is to be sought therefore in his individual psychology

rather than in the manifest values of his parents and of the culture to which they belonged.

(This is not to deny that Grieve's psychology is a Scottish type, an illustration of what he called 'The Caledonian Antisyzygy': but that is the type of the great 'Scottish Eccentric' rather than of the conventional Scot whom the poet held in contempt.¹³ 'The Caledonian Antisyzygy' is discussed below on pp.226-7).

Though MacDiarmid's 'guttersnipe' politics may have been 'a disgrace to the community' of his home town¹⁴ - a community satirised for its gentility and sycophancy in 'Prayer for a Second Flood' (C.P. I, p.299; M.T., p.131) and in the story 'The Common Riding' (M.T., p.27) - the egalitarian and patriotic poles of those politics were rooted in his Langholm experience. Not even the respectable versions of Socialism and Nationalism promoted by the Labour Party and the Scottish National Party have met with much popular acceptance in the Borders. Nevertheless the most important event in the Langholm calendar is a celebration of collective rights and national identity. The Common Riding, held on the last Friday of July each year, has obvious appeal for

the children of the town, who play an integral part in the proceedings. But as well as the colour and excitement which accompany any great public festivity, the Langholm Common Riding is characterised by a rich symbolism which must have powerfully affected the imagination of the child who was to become Scotland's greatest modern poet.

A Common Riding is a ritual marking of the boundaries of a burgh's common lands. Ridings have been held in many towns in the Border region since the sixteenth century. (The origins of the practice of 'beating the bounds' or 'riding the marches' are lost in antiquity.) Langholm's is a relatively recent Common Riding, having been instituted in 1816. More than half a century earlier, in 1759, the Court of Session in Edinburgh ordered beacons to be set up to mark the division between Langholm's commonty and the surrounding enclosed lands. Archibald Beattie ('Bauldy Beattie') was appointed to maintain the bounds. Beattie was Town Drummer, and Crier of the annual Sheep Fair. On the day after the Fair each year he walked the marches, accompanied

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That vigorous proclamation is remembered at the opening of one of the most exhilarating passages in A Drunk Man:

Drums in the Walligate, pipes in the air,
Come and hear the cryin' o' the Fair.

A' as it used to be, when I was a loon
On Common-Ridin' Day in the Muckle Toon

(C.P. I, p.97; M.T., p.26)

A commentator has written that the 'sense of history, of having roots in an important community' which attends these festivals 'makes the Common-Ridings an astonishing revelation to the stranger.'¹⁶ A sense of having roots in a nation as well as in a community is established by the focal role of Scotland's national plant in the Langholm celebrations. Four emblems - three of which appear on the town's coat-of-arms - are carried in procession through the streets. These are a turf-cutting spade, a salt-herring nailed to a wooden disc, a red-and-white floral crown surmounted by an orange lily (this is the emblem which is not on the town arms¹⁷), and a huge, specially grown thistle. All but the first of the emblems are carried high, being lashed to poles. The spade has

the most obvious link with the ostensible purpose of the Common Riding. The Spade Carrier is the 'custodian of the marches' who 'digs the pits and turns the boundary sods with his special spade - decorated with heather and anointed with whisky'.¹⁸ The Bannock-and-Saut-Herrin' (the wooden disc represents a barley-bannock) symbolises 'the town's feudal dues to the local baron'.¹⁹ The republican Grieve played down the third emblem's affirmation of loyalty to the British monarch, seeing the Floral Crown instead as a symbol of Beauty and Love. Last of the emblems is the giant thistle - 'at least aucht fit high wi' the tap about as muckle in diameter' (M.T., p.34). The children of Langholm join the parade at the same time as the Floral Crown and the Thistle. Carrying heather besoms, they follow the emblems to Mount Hooley, where each child is rewarded a new five-penny piece (the traditional three-penny bit having been replaced on Decimalisation in 1971). Touting his heather besom, Grieve walked in the Common Riding parade immediately behind the huge plant, which, rotated and pushed up and down by its bearer, afforded his townspeople an emotional affirmation of their national identity.

Seeing the enormous thistle bobbing before him on Common Riding Day seems to have been one of the key experiences of the poet's childhood. The plant upon which the Drunk Man meditates in MacDiarmid's most famous poem is frequently visualised as the many-headed thistle of Langholm's Common Riding, though there is only one explicit reference to the Muckle Toon's summer festival in that work.²⁰ Both in the short story, 'The Common Riding' (M.T., p.27), and in A Drunk Man, the author's assumption of the 'burden o' his people's doom' (C.P. I, p.165) is symbolised by the Bearer's acceptance of the Thistle in the Langholm parade:

The bearer twirls the Bannock-and-Saut-Herrin',
The Croon o' Roses through the lift is farin',

The aucht-fit thistle wallops on hie;
In heather besoms a' the hills gang by.

But noo it's a' the fish o' the sea
Nailed on the roond o' the Earth to me.

Beauty and Love that are bobbin' there;
Syne the breengin' growth that alane I bear;

And Scotland followin' on ahint
For threepenny bits spleet-new frae the mint.

Drums in the Walligate, pipes in the air,
The wallopin' thistle is ill to bear

(C.P. I, pp97-8; M.T., p.26)

The facts of MacDiarmid's personal life form at least part of the ostensible subject-matter not only of his two published volumes of autobiography - Lucky Poet (1943) and The Company I've Kept (1966) - and of the prose and verse Muckle Toon, but also of random passages in a variety of works from all stages of his career. Yet in general MacDiarmid eschews direct revelation of the emotional life which sustained and finally subverted his creativity. We shall see that there is a disguised confessional impulse behind much of his writing (below, pp.170-205), and even that he thought of his entire literary enterprise as a variety of self-portraiture (below, pp.354-7). Almost nowhere in the poet's output, however, do we find frank delineation of his own moral and affective development.

The activities celebrated in MacDiarmid's writings about Langholm are, in the main, pastimes of boyhood rather than adolescence. Details of reminiscence suggest that it was on the young child that the Muckle Toon made

its deepest impression. The path called the Curly Snake, which the poet said 'probably constituted itself the ground-plan and pattern of my mind' ('From Francis George Scott: An Essay', M.T., p. 158) turns out upon investigation (Commentary, p.460) to have been so physically insignificant as to suggest he was very small indeed when he was awed by it. Similarly, as we have already observed (above, p. 37), the 'wallopin' thistle of MacDiarmid's best-known poem is repeatedly viewed from the vantage-point of a child on Common Riding Day. The Muckle Toon poems celebrate some of the places loved by the poet in boyhood, and allude to the adolescent crisis which dominated his last years in Langholm. The stories of 'the prose Muckle Toon' focus on a period more or less ignored by the poetry - that of immediately pre-teenage pubescence - and it is only in them that we find anything in the nature of detailed autobiographical exploration.

Christopher Grieve was called Christie at home by his mother, and Kit in school by his classmates.²¹ The protagonists of 'Murtholm Hill', 'Maria', and 'Andy' (M.T., p. 180, 82 and 43), however, are known respectively as

Peter, Tam and Tammy. Though details of domestic background differ from story to story (not insignificantly - see below, p.45), there is little doubt that all three boys would answer to the name Kit. We are told that 'Murtholm Hill's' Peter is twelve years old (M.T., p.180). The protagonists of the other two stories are at a similar stage of development. On the evidence of these sketches Christopher Grieve was a thoughtful boy who sometimes startled adults with his picturesque observations, tiny anticipations of the poetry he would write two decades later (see, e.g., the opening sentences of 'Murtholm Hill'). The lad's reflective nature was no unmixed boon, however, as it cut him off from his peers:

He kent that he was cleverer than them - but only in his heid; he could think a' kinds o' things - but they did a' kinds o' things they couldna' even think about, as quick as lichtnin' afore he'd had time to ken what they were daein'. They couldna follow his thochts; but he couldna follow their actions. Though he was as healthy and as strang and as guid-lookin' as ony o' them - and better fed and better clad than maist o' them - somehoo or ither his body didna' seem as quick and as shair o' itsel' as theirs; or raither, his body and his mind were

disconnected somehow. What they thocht, when they thocht at a', aye depended upon what they were daein'; their minds and bodies worked together. And often the bodies were the quicker o' the twa. No' his. His thocht was aye first, and mair often than no' owre fast and fankled his actions - it made him dackle. He lacked self-confidence. It gi'ed him a miserable feelin' - as if he was shut up inside himsel' and couldna get oot.

(M.T., pp.189-90)

Hugh MacDiarmid, who spent decades alternately taunting and wearily justifying himself to his fellow-countrymen, inherited the problems of this Eskdale boy.

'Andy' suggests that the social unease depicted in the quoted passage from 'Murtholm Hill' was rooted in Christopher Grieve's feelings of alienation from his own family. The sketch's central incident - a comic one - is recounted in Lucky Poet (p.225) as a true story concerning James Grieve and his sons. The significance of the piece, however, lies in the characterisation rather than the action, particularly in the portrayal of father, mother and brother as in varying degrees unsympathetic to the first-born. The younger

son is a thorn in Tammy's flesh - 'aye sneerin' at him, tormentin' him' (M.T., p.44) and winning the mother's active and the father's passive support against him. 'Andy', we are told, 'was his mither's Jacob' (M.T., p.44). Tammy/Christie, then, saw himself as an Esau figure, despised in his own home for not measuring up to its standards of utility and commonsense. (Despite its incongruity - Christopher, the artistic child, being much more Jacob-like than the grosser Andy - this biblical identification had great appeal for the poet, who described those Langholmites who met with his approval as 'in excelsis the "hairy ones"' (L.P., p.224), and achieved one of his artistic triumphs in 'Tarras' (C.P.I., p.337; M.T., p.147), an evocation of a gloriously hirsute earth goddess.)

Lucky Poet's few references to Andrew confirm the short story's suggestion of a deep-seated rivalry between the Grieve brothers. One of these takes the form of a joke, a fact which should alert the reader to the possible subterranean involvement of the teller's feelings in the matter:

... I was caught in the act of trying to commit my first murder - attempting, in short, to smash in the head of my newly-born brother with a poker, and, when I was disarmed, continuing to insist that, despite that horrible red-faced object, I 'was still Mummy's boy, too'.

(L.P., pp. 218-19)

Another is more forthright:

There is an early photograph of my brother and myself - how slight and shy I look; how burly and self-assertive my brother looks in comparison!

(L.P., p.230)

Is there even a vestige of rancour in that sentence, as in the use of Andy Grieve's real name in the sketch in which the author's boy-self lurks behind the label 'Tammy'?²² It appears at any rate that, despite (or, indeed, because of) their proximity in age, the Grieve brothers were not companions. The outdoor pleasures celebrated in MacDiarmid's Langholm writings are no less solitary than the indoor pursuit of reading which so exasperated his mother.

Boutelle has seen the fraternal rivalry depicted in the Muckle Toon stories and Lucky Poet as the key to MacDiarmid's character.

Taking her cue from a sentence in the latter book she argues that the poet's 'lack of confidence, coupled with a need to prove himself superior, has given us some of MacDiarmid's most interesting poetry.'²³ She continues:

It has pushed him always towards the extreme, the unknown, and the unexplored, because, as he recognises in a rare moment of insight, there is no competition there.²⁴

The relevant sentence in Lucky Poet reads:

I was fully conscious of my unconquerable aversion from entering into competition with anyone - I was determined to operate only in directions in which there could be no competition, since the whole aim would be the production of work that was sui generis.

(L.P. p.227)

While this is an interesting interpretation of MacDiarmid's programmatic extremism, one should be wary of regarding the writings as a transparent medium through which the workings of the author's boyhood psychology can be observed.

'The prose Muckle Toon' is the only lengthy work by MacDiarmid to prominently feature a maternal figure. In 'The Moon through Glass' (M.T., p.213) we meet a somewhat less sympathetic mother than in 'Andy', in 'Maria' a considerably more tolerant one. The mother in 'Murtholm Hill' is proud of her sensitive son, and kind almost to the point of indulgence. But 'Murtholm Hill's' Peter is an only child and can therefore claim the undivided love of his parents. The story, then, reinforces rather than counters the impression that Christopher Grieve felt that his place in his mother's affections had been usurped by his younger brother.

The only major reference to Elizabeth Grieve in a MacDiarmid poem is to be found in 'The North Face of Liathach' (C.P. II, p.1055). This meditation on a Highland rockface, which was first published in 1955,²⁵ includes the following lines:

No flower, no fern,
 No wisp of grass or pad of moss
 Lightens this tremendous face.
 Otherwise it might remind me of my mother.
 The education she gave me was strict enough,
 Teaching me a sense of duty and self-reliance
 And having no time for any softness.
 Her tenderness was always very reserved,
 Very modest in its expression
 And respect was the foremost of my feelings for her.

(C.P. II, pp.1056-7)

The 'reserved' and 'modest' tenderness of the poet's mother presumably gained release in the verses she wrote in her young womanhood — verses her older son deemed 'very bad' (L.P., p.8). In general, however, it is her severity, rather than any of the qualities which 'lightened' it, that MacDiarmid emphasises in his reminiscences of her. It should be pointed out that Andrew was no less a victim of his mother's ambitious gentility than Christopher: both boys were jeered at as 'Mother's angels' for being 'kept tidier ... and better dressed' (L.P. p.225) than their peers. Though relations between Elizabeth Grieve and her older son may have been strained during the poet's boyhood, the pair seem to have managed to get along quite amicably later. The letter to George Ogilvie quoted at the beginning of this study includes a résumé of Grieve's life from 1911 to 1916.

In the course of his autobiographical jottings the poet writes of the alcoholic excesses which enlivened his period as a journalist in Forfar:

So far did (these) go, in fact ... that a sudden access of unaccountable good sense made me take a house, four miles in the country by Glamis Castle way, and invite my mother to keep house for me. The result was eminently satisfactory.²⁶

In Lucky Poet (p.224) the author acknowledges that 'an incredible gulf' separated him from his 'humble, devout little mother', but affirms that this 'did little or nothing to spoil our personal relations with each other'.

Grieve's references to his mother imply both hostility and condescension, attitudes which are entirely absent from his writings about his father. He presents James Grieve as 'a kindly, gin conscientious, man' ('From Work in Progress', l.51, C.P. II, p.1148; M.T., p.11) whose fundamental seriousness did not prevent him teasing his wife for her sobriety ('Fatherless in Boyhood', l.13, C.P. II, p.1251; M.T., p.89). Though James was no less devout a Presbyterian than Elizabeth, he did not share her impatience with 'book-lear':

"Let the laddie abee," he aye said;
there's waur things than readin'."

('Andy', M.T., p. 43)

He generally kept his counsel, however, rather than cross his wife (see quoted passage below). MacDiarmid's work repeatedly suggests that the poet admired his father but felt that he never really knew him. In 'Andy' we read that Tammy believed that his father would understand his feelings about his mother and brother. Yet the boy found it impossible to communicate these:

The kind o' things he wanted to say
were fell ill to say - and he kent that
even if he could say them it 'ud hae to
be to somebody he trustit and likit, and
if he tried it on wi' his faither he'd
nae suner get stertit than either Andy
or his Mither 'ud see he got nae faurer

. . .

(I)t was a kind o' fear that gar'd them
aye chip in afore him and prevent him frae
sayin' what he kent he wad hae said -
whatever that was - gi'en time and fair
play; and that gi'ed him hert. He kent
his faither jaloused something o' this -
but no' juist eneuch. He lookit at him
in a queer switherin' way whiles - and
syne sided wi' his mither and Andy; it
was that muckle easier. But he felt that
if he could juist explain things to his
faither aince he'd hae nae mair bother.

(M.T., pp. 45-6)

The inaccessibility of the father to the son was to be made absolute by the sudden death of the former when the latter was eighteen:

We look upon each ither noo like hills
Across a valley. I'm nae mair your son.

('At My Father's Grave', C.P. I, p.299;

M.T., p.90)

MacDiarmid is generally reticent on the subject of his psycho-sexual development. Though in Lucky Poet (p.2) he boasts that the old people in Langholm compared him to his paternal grandfather for being "'aye among the lassies'", the story 'Murtholm Hill' paints a different picture, suggesting at the very least that it was not until his later teens that Kit Grieve cut a dash among the girls of the Muckle Toon:

A' the ither lads were aye daffin' and cairryin' on wi' the lassies. Of coorse, maist o' them had sisters o' their ain, or were aye wi' chums that had sisters. He hadna. And in dealin' wi' lassies there was a hail complicated way o' gan' on he didna ken the vera first letter o'. Lassies took nae mair notice o' him than if he wasna there.

(M.T., p.191)

It is probable that the artist of the Scots prose sketches gives more dependable witness than the aggressive self-apologist of Lucky Poet. Yet we have no reason to believe that Grieve's teens were tortured by sexual doubt as opposed to social clumsiness. There is no trace in his work of a fevered adolescent consciousness such as we associate with Rilke and Joyce (writers approvingly cited in The Muckle Toon). We shall see, however, that the adult crisis which precipitated MacDiarmid's breakdown in 1935 did have a sexual aspect (below, pp. 186-8).

Grieve's teens may not have been troubled by what he was later to inelegantly call 'the Psycho-somatic Quandary'.²⁷ They were, nevertheless, beset by severe difficulties of a different nature. At the centre of the youth's predicament was the question of a career. Already intent on devoting himself to poetry, he was under pressure to opt either for teaching or the Civil Service (L.P., pp. 227-8). He later claimed to have alarmed his mother and father by threatening to become a tramp:

Pressed, I admitted that what I really was going to be was a poet; and that, I think, horrified them even more. Poetry did not pay, and they pleaded with me and counselled and advised me until we were all exhausted.

(L.P., p.228)

The parents prevailed and Christopher went to Edinburgh in September 1908 to enroll as a trainee teacher at Broughton Junior Student Centre. A poem published in the Eskdale and Liddesdale Advertiser two months later shows how keenly the sixteen-year old Grieve felt this first exile from the Muckle Toon, and how seriously he was already grappling with the craft of verse:

Here is no gorgeous rioting of gold,
 Blue, or gleaming red,
 In skies unutterably cold,
 Hopeless and dead.
 The vision which no more delights these eyes
 In bright remembrance glows.
 There is a glory in the western skies;
 Esk ripples rose.

(M.T., p.2)

Four months after the publication of 'Memories of Langholm' came news which left the young versifier feeling 'as if the bottom had fallen

out of my world,²⁸ and heavily underscored the dangers of the poetic path he had elected to follow. On March 23rd 1909, John Davidson, the Scottish poet he most admired, committed suicide in Cornwall (see Commentary, pp. 345-8). A poem written for The Muckle Toon twenty three years later records the effect of Davidson's death on the trainee teacher:

... (Something in me has always stood
 Since then looking down the sandslope
 On your small black shape by the edge of the sea,
 - A bullet-hole through a great scene's beauty,
 God through the wrong end of a telescope.

(C.P. I, p.362; M.T., p.92)

It is impossible to determine how seriously Grieve embraced the prospect of becoming a teacher. He clearly enjoyed his time at Broughton, becoming deeply involved in literary and social activities there, and winning the friendship of George Ogilvie, the English master who would remain his chief artistic adviser until he re-established contact with F. G. Scott more than a decade later.²⁹ In Lucky Poet, however, he tells us:

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I had determined from the outset that I would never be a teacher, which I knew must be an utterly soul-destroying job, but trusted my luck to 'get out of it' without hurting or alarming my parents too much.

(p. 228)

A letter written in 1918 corroborates this claim that the poet strained against his proposed pedagogical future:

Once but for my father (and that was after I had been at Broughton a year or so) I would have become a gardener....30

Grieve was saved from teaching not by luck, however, but by the 'terrible vein of recklessness' which the Headmaster of Langholm Academy had detected in the youth some years earlier (L.P. p.227). It is altogether appropriate that the misdemeanour which led to his demise from Broughton, with half a year of his three-year course still to run, should have related to those very articles he was accustomed to seeing the world through (see above, pp.25-6) - books. A transgression involving misappropriation of reference books led to his abrupt departure from the Junior Student

Centre. He was not expelled, however: the school records state that he 'resigned on grounds of health and mistaking his vocation.'³¹

The record of the poet's resignation is dated January 27th 1911. Exactly one week later, on February 3rd, James Grieve died after what his son recalled as 'a few days' illness of pneumonia' (L.P., p. 18). Was the father already sick when the son returned to tell of the inglorious termination of his career prospects? Or did Christopher plunge the family into crisis and forever after blame himself for the subsequent fatal illness of James? We cannot know the precise chronology of events in the Grieve household in that fateful week, but it is surely significant that Lucky Poet includes an attempt to misrepresent such facts as can be established. We are told on p. 228 of that work:

My father died suddenly before I was finished at the Junior Student Centre. I took immediate advantage of the fact to abandon my plans for becoming a teacher.

This recourse to untruth suggests that the poet experienced guilt in relation to the death of his father. The prominence given that subject at crucial stages of MacDiarmid's poetic development implies that he felt a lasting need to justify himself to his father's memory. The earliest of his successful Scots lyrics, 'The Watergaw' (C.P. I, p. 17), explores the meaning of the 'last wild look' of a dying person, a last look that critics are disposed to identify with that of James Grieve as described in the opening verses of The Muckle Toon³²:

Afore he deed he turned and gied a lang
 Last look at pictures o' my brither and me
 Hung on the wa' aside the bed, I've heard
 My mither say. I wonder then what he
 Foresaw or hoped and hoo - or gin - it squares
 Wi' subsequent affairs.

I've led a vera different life frae ocht
 He could conceive or share I ken fu' weel
 Yet gin he understood - or understands
 (His faith, no' mine) - I like to feel, and feel,
 He wadna wish his faitherhood undone
 O' sic an unforeseen unlikely son.

('From Work in Progress', C.P. II, pp. 1148-9;
M.T., pp. 11-12)

Grieve confessed himself 'tossed ... hither
 and thither' by a 'hurricane of mental and
 moral anarchy' in 1911.³³ Ogilvie sought

to alleviate his protégé's material difficulties by securing him a post in the capital as a reporter on the Edinburgh Evening Dispatch. Journalism would provide the poet with a more or less steady income for much of the next two decades. He did not last long in his first position, however. Books, once again, proved his undoing: he was sacked for selling review copies, the property of the Dispatch, in order to finance typing and postage for the freelance articles and reviews he wrote in his spare time.³⁴ Late in the year he left Scotland for Ebbw Vale in Wales, where he was employed by the Miners' Federation as a reporter on the Monmouthshire Labour News. A letter to Ogilvie dated October 24th suggests that the young poet was beginning to find his equilibrium again by the end of the year.

He was soon back in Scotland, however, having antagonised his employers by the 'tactlessness' with which he pursued what he called the 'spiritual sides' of the socialist question.³⁵ 1912 was the last year in which Grieve lived for any length of time in the Muckle Toon. Four years later he summed up this period of his life as follows:

Back home again to Langholm. Living, practically, as Bernard Shaw did, off my widowed mother. Reading inordinately (a fault persisted in to such an extent at too tender an age as to be largely responsible for my present predicament), and spasmodically writing enough to bring in an average of say £1 a week of which I smoked and purchased papers to the extent of, say 25%. Philandered extensively during this period. Intimate passages with three young ladies, all English, revived in me our racial antipathy to the English More important is the way in which my attention for the first time was turned to Scottish nationalism and national problems ... Later fell seriously in love with a Scotch girl, a school teacher. Began to work hard, buoyed up with new dreams of honour, visions of a "home of my own" etc. (You can easily complete the picture - ambition stirred, all better instincts at work, my whole being suffused with a new spirit.)³⁶

The school teacher Grieve intended to marry was a Berwickshire girl named Minnie Panton.³⁷ His wish to settle down with her prompted him to leave Langholm for the last time, in search of financial security. He worked for the Clydebank and Renfrew Press and then for papers in Fife and Angus. His mother's remarriage and departure from the town, the collapse of his engagement to Miss Panton, his war service in Europe from 1916 to 1919, the straitened circumstances of his first marriage and the penury of the early years of his second, all conspired to keep the poet away from his native place. With the exception of one very brief

visit, he did not go 'out of the world and into the Langholm' again until after the Second World War.³⁸ He certainly never returned to the Muckle Toon in the years 1922 to 1939, the period to which his most significant work, including almost all his Langholm writings, belongs. In old age the poet made a practice of visiting the town late in July each year to partake in the Common Riding celebrations. On September 13th 1978, four days after his death in an Edinburgh hospital at the age of eighty-six, Christopher Murray Grieve was buried in Langholm Cemetery, on the slopes of his beloved Warblaw.

(B) 'Unexpectedly Back'

Christopher Grieve had spent almost two decades away from Langholm when the place and the experiences he associated with it became the focus of a major imaginative enterprise by his poetic alter-ego Hugh MacDiarmid. The opening poem of the Muckle Toon volume of Clann Albann communicates the poet's surprise that he should consider such subject-matter appropriate to his art:

(N)o' till lately ha'e the hame scenes played
A pairt in my creative thocht I've yet
To faddom and permit.

('From Work in Progress', C.P. II, p. 1147;
M.T., p. 10)

Yet this was not the first time his 'creative thocht' had concerned itself with 'the hame scenes'. We have already encountered his juvenile celebration of Eskdale's 'gorgeous rioting of gold' (above, p. 51). A piece written in Salonika in 1916 and included in the first substantial gathering of Clann Albann poems fifteen years later affirms the homesick soldier's ability to see a Dumfriesshire landscape even under the harsh light of a Greek sky:

Praise God that still my feet can find
 In distant lands the old hill-road,
 And tread always no alien clay
 But their familiar sod.

('Beyond Exile', C.P. I, p.305; M.T., p. 3)

Another poem from his R.A.M.C. days expresses Grieve's preference for the brown streams of the Borders to the 'rich blue flood' of the Mediterranean ('Allegiance', C.P. II, p. 1200; M.T., p.4). 'Crowdieknowe' (C.P. I, p.26; M.T., p.81), one of the 'early lyrics' which marked the transformation of the poet's art 'into something rich and Scots' (Cencrastus, C.P. I, p. 239.), celebrates the Middlebie kirkyard where Elizabeth Grieve's forebears were buried. Yet these Langholm references seem few and far between in the context of the considerable quantity of verse (in English up to 1922, mostly in Scots thereafter) published by the author from 1908 to the middle of the nineteen twenties. By 1926, however, the 'hame scenes' had begun to inform MacDiarmid's 'creative thocht' with fruitful intimacy. The Muckle Toon influence on A Drunk Man can hardly be doubted, though it becomes explicit only in the 'Drums in the Walligate' lyric (see above, p.37). It is nevertheless arguable that, as they all relate to the Common Riding Thistle, the Langholm allusions in MacDiarmid's famous dramatic

monologue are no more than a happy corollary of his choice of Scotland's national emblem as his poetic symbol. In the case of the next long work he attempted to have published, though, the debt to his home town was central and explicit.

We first hear of 'the prose Muckle Toon' in a letter from the author to Neil Gunn, dated February 28th 1927:

So far as I am concerned I've made a little headway with my own novel (in English) but switched that to one side, on a sudden impulse, deciding that my next book would be a collection of short stories in Scots. I've well over half the book written. One of the stories - "The Common Riding" - will appear in the Glasgow Herald shortly.

. . .

By the way, if these short stories are accepted (as I've little doubt they will be) for publication in book form I want to dedicate them to Mrs. Gunn and yourself - "To J. G. and N. M. Gunn."? The title of the book will be "The Muckle Toon".

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MacDiarmid's confidence in the acceptability of his story collection was misplaced. We next hear of the project five months later in a letter he wrote to Blackwoods of Edinburgh, publishers of Sangschaw, Pennv Wheep and A Drunk Man:

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I have to thank you for your most kindly expressed letter regretting your inability to publish "The Muckle Toon". I quite understand how difficult it is under present conditions to find a publisher for certain kinds of work. ⁴⁰

No list of the rejected volume's contents has survived. In 1927, however, MacDiarmid contributed one Scots prose sketch each to the Scots Magazine and the Gallovidian Annual, three to the Scots Observer, and five to the Glasgow Herald.⁴¹ An eleventh story appeared in the Scots Observer the following year.⁴² Nine of these pieces have recognisable Langholm settings, or autobiographical subject-matter, or both. The two exceptions - 'The Visitor' (M.T., p. 221) and 'The Moon Through Glass' (M.T., p. 213) - are closely related to some of the other stories: the former shares the style and supernatural concern of 'A Dish o' Whumple' (M.T., p. 173) and 'A'Body's Lassie' (M.T., p. 203), while the latter pursues more circumspectly the theme of sibling rivalry and maternal hostility treated with uncharacteristic autobiographical candour in 'Andy' (M.T., p. 43). These eleven stories comprise all the Scots prose published by MacDiarmid in the second half of the nineteen twenties. It is reasonable to assume that all eleven belong to 'the prose Muckle Toon', though only 'The Common Riding' (M.T., p. 27) was explicitly ascribed to that work (in the letter to Gunn). Whether

or not the poet wrote other 'Muckle Toon' stories, for which he failed to find outlets in newspapers and periodicals, must remain a matter of surmise.

As it stands, 'the prose Muckle Toon' is one of the oddest of MacDiarmid's productions, in that it contains work of considerable substance and polish side by side with exercises in populist entertainment. There is writing of the very highest order in 'The Waterside' (M.T., p. 103), where a sophisticated literary persona is constructed from the canny social attitudes of ordinary Langholmites. A similar ironic folksiness informs 'The Common Riding' until that story is 'spoiled', as Buthlay has observed, 'by an excess of sentimental patriotism at the end'.⁴³ 'Andy' is notable for its psychological acuity, as, to a lesser extent, are 'Old Miss Beattie' (M.T., p. 71), 'Murtholm Hill' (M.T., p. 180), 'Maria' (M.T., p. 82) and 'The Moon Through Glass'. The other stories represent a much lower order of achievement. "Holie for Nags" (M.T., p. 228) is of interest for its detailed attention to actual memories of Grieve's Langholm childhood, though these relate to outdoor pastimes rather than to matters of psychological significance. The piece almost entirely lacks structure, however, and the reader familiar with the 'early lyrics' must see in the cosmic imagery of the closing sentences no more than a fanciful transposition

of a technique deployed to powerful imaginative effect in the poems. 'The Visitor', 'A Dish o' Whummle' and 'A'Body's Lassie' are whimsical essays in the supernatural, stories not altogether divorced from the 'Kailyard' tradition their author is generally credited with countering.

The 'oddness' of 'the prose Muckle Toon' is probably attributable to its constituent parts being aimed at quite disparate audiences. The four pieces last discussed above appeared in the Scots Observer, a periodical professedly devoted to the Protestant cause and therefore of a readership whose interests were not primarily literary. (It is only fair to point out that the Observer was nevertheless unfailingly generous in its allocation of space to MacDiarmid's literary and propagandist activities in the late twenties and early thirties.) 'Murtholm Hill' was published in that still flourishing popular digest, the Scots Magazine. With the exception of 'Old Miss Beattie', the only Muckle Toon stories to wholly eschew sentimentality - 'Andy', 'Maria', 'The Moon Through Glass' and 'The Waterside' - were printed in the Glasgow Herald, as was 'The Common Riding'. These stories were presumably pitched to the relatively high standards of readers of the literary pages of a national daily. Consideration of the outlets chosen for the Langholm sketches inevitably raises the question of the seriousness of MacDiarmid's purpose in writing 'the prose Muckle Toon'.

Was the enterprise any more than a pot-boiling exercise, albeit one which issued in the profundity of 'Andy' and the brilliance of 'The Waterside'? The stories lack the speculative edge, the philosophical concern with the mystery of origins, which marks the poetry of the Clann Albann Muckle Toon of a few years later. They are not, perhaps, to be regarded as a major landmark in MacDiarmid's development, though they deserve more attention than they have received from any critic save Buthlay.⁴⁴ (The folk element in 'the prose Muckle Toon' is discussed below, pp. 454-6).

There is no questioning the seriousness of purpose behind To Circumjack Cencrastus, the poetic sequence upon which MacDiarmid laboured intermittently for four years from the end of 1926. Shortly after the publication of A Drunk Man he wrote to Ogilvie:

So long as Blackwood's retain their faith in me I don't care. It will be about a year at least before I ask them to publish Cencrastus, and it may be longer. It will be a much bigger thing than the Drunk Man in every way. It is complementary to it really. Cencrastus is the fundamental serpent, the underlying unifying principle of the Cosmos. To circumjack is to encircle. To Circumjack Cencrastus - to square the circle, to box the compass, etc. But where the Drunk Man is in one sense a reaction from the "Kailyard", Cencrastus transcends that altogether - the Scotsman gets rid of the thistle, "the bur o' the world" - and his spirit at last inherits its proper sphere. Psychologically it represents the resolution of the sadism and masochism, the synthesis of the various sets of antitheses I was posing in the Drunk Man. It will not depend on the contrasts of realism and metaphysics, bestiality and beauty, humour and madness - but move on a plane of pure beauty and pure music. It will be an attempt to move really mighty numbers. In the nature of things

such an ambition cannot be hastily consummated. It will take infinite pains - but along these lines I am satisfied that, if I cannot altogether realise my dream, I can at least achieve something well worth while, ideally complementary to the Drunk Man - positive where it is negative, optimistic where it is pessimistic, and constructive where it is destructive.⁴⁵

By the time Cencrastus appeared at the end of 1930 MacDiarmid knew that the new work was 'bigger' than A Drunk Man only quantitatively (it outruns the earlier poem by about a thousand lines). He had failed not only to 'consummate' his 'ambition', but even to achieve in the attempt 'something' he could consider 'well worth while'. The Cencrastus débâcle had profound implications for his poetic practice. He sought to face up to many of them in planning his next extended poem, The Muckle Toon. The nature of the 1930 sequence's shortcomings must be appreciated if the place of Clann Albann in MacDiarmid's career is to be understood. Cencrastus is examined below from the point of view of language (pp.241-7), structure (pp.260-61), metre and stanza form (pp.286-9), and symbol (pp.272-3). Its manifestation of a characteristic philosophical and technical problem of MacDiarmid's with regard to the possibilities of expression is discussed on pp.156-9, while its implicit commentary on the poet's psychological dilemma in the late twenties is considered on pp.176-9. Our present concern, however, is with the biographical circumstances of MacDiarmid's first major artistic defeat, and their bearing upon The Muckle Toon.

The frustrations of what might be called 'the Cenchrastus years' - the late twenties - seem all the more acute in the wake of the quite spectacular successes of the poet's career in the earlier part of the decade. Personal unhappiness certainly contributed to the artistic miseries of the Cenchrastus years, as we shall see in the following pages. To what extent its opposite had made possible the triumphs of the 'early lyrics' and of A Drunk Man must remain a matter of conjecture, as there is little in the way of intimate disclosure in either the poetry or the correspondence of the period in question. (Certain covert indications of psychological strain in A Drunk Man are discussed below, pp.180-83). A bare rehearsal of the facts of the poet's life from his return from the Great War to the publication of his celebrated Scots reverie in 1926, however, is sufficient to suggest how 'swippert and swith wi' virr' (A Drunk Man, C.P. I, p.98) he was in those years by comparison to the later twenties.

On demobilisation in 1919 Grieve set up home with Margaret 'Peggy' Skinner, whom he had married while on leave the previous year. The couple had met when they worked for the same group of newspapers - he as an assistant editor, she as a copy-holder - in Cupar before the War.⁴⁶ In 1921 they settled in

Montrose, Angus, where Christopher had secured employment as a reporter on the Montrose Review. Despite the claims of domesticity and of a demanding job, the poet found time to enter local politics, launch a national literary movement, and write the poems which still form the basis of his reputation.

Grieve's active involvement in local government may seem strange in a young writer struggling to capitalize on the scanty leisure afforded by full-time employment. He was elected to Montrose's Town Council as an Independent Socialist in 1922. He also served as a Parish Councillor and in 1926 became a Justice of the Peace. Ogilvie apparently expressed the view that he was squandering his powers. The poet's reply makes clear at least that he was labouring under no delusion of altruism:

No reward that letters was to bestow would tempt me to sever the connection with the Town and Parish Councils and other Boards of which I am a duly elected representative here. It's too funny for words - and my sense of humour must be provided for in the first place. Other things come after that.

47

Grieve at any rate managed both to 'provide for' his sense of humour and to expend prodigious energies on propagandist and creative literary pursuits. In 1920 he initiated his campaign of cultural catalysis

('My function in relation to Scotland ... has been that of the cat-fish that vitalizes the other torpid denizens of the aquarium' (L.P., p. XXV)) by publishing the first of his three Northern Numbers anthologies of recent Scottish verse. Next he edited and financed the Scottish Chapbook, a literary review which ran for fourteen monthly issues from August 1922 to the end of the following year. He also edited and published - again from his council house at 16, Links Avenue, Montrose - a thirty-four number political weekly called the Scottish Nation (May 8th 1923 to December 25th 1923). He was the driving force behind a further literary periodical, the Northern Review, which collapsed after its fourth monthly issue in September 1924. He reached a wide audience and achieved a high degree of notoriety through the deliberately provocative 'Contemporary Scottish Studies' articles he contributed to the weekly Scottish Educational Journal from mid-1925 to the beginning of 1927.

Grieve used his periodicals to launch his own literary career as well as his programme for a Scottish Renaissance. Many of his poems first achieved printed form on the pages of the Scottish Chapbook and the Northern Review. But he also began collecting

his works at this time. Annals of the Five Senses appeared in 1923. Published at his own expense, this book contained six prose pieces which had been written as far back as 1919, along with six poems of more recent vintage. The prose is on the whole more interesting than the poetry, as it succeeds in reflecting something of the author's mercurial sensibility. (The prose sketches of Annals are discussed below, pp.145-53). We find the first mature work in Sangschaw (1925), a collection of lyrics written from August 1922 onwards. The language is now Scots rather than English, the name on the title-page Hugh MacDiarmid rather than C. M. Grieve. More Scots poems, chiefly of a lyrical nature, were collected in Penny Wheep, which, along with A Drunk Man, appeared in 1926. The poet may have appended the name 'Hugh MacDiarmid' to his earliest poetic offerings in Scots only because C. M. Grieve's antipathy to the employment of the language for serious literary purposes was well known. (See pp.236-43 below, for a discussion of the circumstances and artistic consequences of his conversion to Scots.) Some months after the publication of Sangschaw he confided to Ogilvie:

I'd shed the pseudonym now if I could
- but I can't for various reasons.⁴⁸

He entered literary history as Hugh MacDiarmid, and this most famous of his many pen-names appeared on the title page of all his volumes of poetry and at the foot of

most of the poems he contributed to newspapers and magazines thereafter.⁴⁹ The greater bulk of the correspondence, however, was written by Christopher Grieve. In the present study 'Grieve' is used in discussion of the poet's personal life and of works he published under that name. Otherwise the better-known 'MacDiarmid' is employed.

In the early and middle twenties MacDiarmid discovered his creative powers and deployed them with an assurance he was never to equal. No visitation of poetic energy could have yielded such a harvest had the poet not rigorously organised his leisure. He appears to have exploited every spare moment in his busy schedule of newspaper work and political activity, even to the extent of teasing out the formal intricacies of his lyrics as he cycled from one journalistic assignment to another. The body of verse from which A Drunk Man's two thousand, six hundred and eighty five lines were extracted was written in the evenings over an eight-month period from the end of 1925 in one of the bedrooms of 16, Links Avenue.⁵⁰ The publication of that work on November 22nd, 1926 marked a watershed in MacDiarmid's career. The 'Young Chevalier', as Sydney Goodsir Smith was to observe, had arrived 'at Holyroodhouse'.⁵¹ The

poet declared himself 'as satisfied ... as is at all good for me' with A Drunk Man.⁵² Yet he looked on the book as little more than a prelude to greater things. He wrote to Ogilvie on December 9th:

I am frankly anxious not to die young. In many ways I am a late ripener. All my best work is still to come. I am only beginning to find myself.⁵³

MacDiarmid did not die young, and he produced much remarkable poetry after 1926. But the confidence of that letter to Ogilvie was soon bruised by the adversities he encountered in composing Cencrastus. These related in large measure to his failure to maintain a balance between his poetic endeavours and his other activities. The rhythm of life which had sustained the creation of the three masterful volumes of the mid-twenties appears to have broken down completely now.

The poet's letters reveal the existence of strains long before these began to adversely affect his art. As in the case of the adolescent crisis of a decade and a half earlier, the question of employment was close to the centre of his troubles. He had a 'steady job' with the Montrose Review, but it was a draining and poorly paid one. The birth of his first child, Christine, on September 4th 1924 whetted his desire for a more remunerative occupation. He wrote to Ogilvie a few months later:

For some time now I have been on the look out for a suitable job of some kind - no easy matter, for my lack of academic qualifications, the fact that I have so far as journalism is concerned served only on little local papers ... and then my politics and my expertise generally in the gentle art of making enemies have all combined to make me an adept at falling between all sorts of stools. Still, I am anxious to "better myself" - indeed, I owe it to my wife and daughter ... to do so.⁵⁴

Soon Grieve was complaining of his failure to find alternative work in terms which suggest that his attempts to do so were not wholly economic in motivation:

I can't get out of Montrose though, do what I will, and I loathe my work here.⁵⁵

A further letter expressing the poet's desire for a change of circumstance touches upon the uncongeniality of the social and intellectual climate of Montrose:

I am really feeling the need now, for divers reasons, of getting into a city and have during the past year tried to do so in all sorts of ways - but without success. I'm beginning to get desperate for I don't want to have to reconcile myself to Montrose - or the life of Montrose - for good.⁵⁶

While there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the poet's desire to leave his position on the Montrose Review, the fact that his letters to Ogilvie cite varying reasons for leaving may indicate that the real pressure for change came not from himself at all but

from his wife. Grieve's journalistic, literary and propagandist commitments can have left him little time to savour the joys of domesticity. His spouse, evidently a proud and ambitious woman, can hardly have escaped feelings of neglect and impoverishment. Willa Muir, whose husband Edwin was a close associate of MacDiarmid and F. G. Scott in the twenties, has given the following striking portrait of Peggy Grieve in her Montrose days:

Christopher and his wife Peggy were living in a council house on the fringe of the town, where Peggy cooked the meals and washed and ironed Christopher's shirts She was then pregnant with their second child; we thought her most attractive as she stood clinging to Christopher's arm, the day we first met her, looking up shyly through dark eyelashes, with a daisy-like white collarette round her neck, apparently an embodiment of the 'wee wifie' loved by Scotsmen.

. . .

No one could have predicted that her 'wee wifie' charm would be so effective as to secure for her a coal business in London, after divorcing Christopher, so that in time she became an authority in the next wartime Ministry of Fuel and Power.⁵⁷

Montrose was a small town, with little to offer in the way of the social possibilities Peggy was to exploit so successfully when the family moved to London.

It is remarkable that Grieve's complaints to Ogilvie about Montrose were made in 1925 and 1926,

when his art was not being visibly affected by the conditions he lamented, while the letters of the Cenrastus years, written when his poetic practice was foundering on the rocks of his professional and domestic difficulties, are almost silent on his troubles. In Cenrastus itself, however, MacDiarmid is all too free in giving vent to the frustrations of his last years in Montrose:

Gin but the oor 'ud chop and set me free
 Frae this accursed drudgery
 Aiblins - aince I had had my tea -
 I could address mysel' to poetry,
 Sufferin' nae mair th' embarrassment o' riches
 Wi' which desire brute circumstance bewitches
 Till my brain reels and canna faddom which is,
 'Mid endless cues, the ane for which it itches,

Thrang o' ideas that like fairy gowd
 'll leave me the 'Review' reporter still
 Waukenin' to my clung-kite faimly on a hill
 O' useless croftin' whaur naething's growed
 But Daith, sin Christ for an idea died
 On a gey similar but less heich hillside.
 Ech, weel for Christ: for he was never wed
 And had nae weans clamourin' to be fed!

(C.P. I, p. 237)

Though sometimes powerful in themselves, these expressions of impatience do little to further the essential themes of the sequence.

The strains of the Cenchrastus years were not only personal and creative in nature, but extended to MacDiarmid's relations with his publishers as well. We have seen that Blackwoods turned down 'the prose Muckle Toon' in mid-1927 (above, pp. 61-2). The company may have felt aggrieved at the poet's failure to give them an option on The Lucky Bag, a pamphlet which had appeared earlier the same year. This contained sixteen lyrics written during an 'unexpected spasm' of creativity shortly after the completion of A Drunk Man.⁵⁸ Feeling himself obliged to raise the matter in a letter to Blackwoods in 1929, MacDiarmid dissembled with regard to the pamphlet's size:

It occurs to me that you may have wondered at my putting out a little sheaf of eight short poems as one of the "Porpoise Press" broadsheets, but I only did this under considerable pressure to oblige several friends, and derived no pecuniary or other advantage whatever from the transaction.⁵⁹

What the publishers made of this we do not know. It is clear however that they failed to show interest in plans for an anthology of The Hundred Best Scots Poems and for a compilation entitled Towards a Scottish Renaissance submitted by the poet in 1927 and 1929 respectively.⁶⁰

Additional material added by compiler of the Complete Poems,⁶¹ and the discussion in F. G. Scott's

On August 17th of the latter year the firm received a manuscript containing 'some 36 poems, mainly short, like those in "Sangschaw" and "Penny Wheep"', in addition to 'one long poem not dissimilar in technique to "The Drunk Man"'.⁶¹ MacDiarmid hoped to have all thirty-seven poems published as a volume with the title Fier Comme un Ecossais.⁶² Two weeks later he wrote to the publishers to complain that he had not received acknowledgement of the manuscript's safe arrival. Deciding against publication, Blackwoods eventually explained to a surprised and disappointed poet that his manuscript was 'too slight to make a volume'.⁶³ What happened to the rejected material? MacDiarmid scholarship must be open to the possibility that many of the poems in the Fier Comme un Ecossais manuscript have been lost to posterity. It should be pointed out that five poems which appeared in the Pictish Review during the summer of 1928 were described as being 'From "Fier comme un Ecossais"'. Three of these were reprinted in Cenchrastus.⁶⁴ There is simply no way of knowing how much of the manuscript sent to Blackwoods was gorged into the 1930 sequence. The recent discovery of unpublished material in the Delaware manuscript (see below, pp. 122-3), my own unearthing, in the course of my researches for the present study, of published material missed by compilers of the Complete Poems,⁶⁵ and the discussion in F. G. Scott's

letters of the early thirties of poems which obviously reached him but never reached the public,⁶⁶ demonstrate the incompleteness of the MacDiarmid canon where the years immediately after the publication of Cencrastus are concerned. The Fier Comme un Ecossais letters in the Blackwoods deposit in the National Library of Scotland establish the possibility that the record of the poet's production in the late twenties is similarly incomplete.⁶⁷

A letter written by F. G. Scott to Maurice Lindsay in 1945 claims that MacDiarmid encountered difficulties with Blackwoods in regard to the manuscript of Cencrastus, but this claim is extremely difficult to corroborate. Alan Bold has highlighted some of the inaccuracies of the same letter in its discussion of the composition of A Drunk Man.⁶⁸ The part of the letter we are concerned with here refers to a visit paid by the composer to the poet shortly 'before the "Cencrastus" MS was sent off to Blackwoods':

Again I went through to Montrose but he was very disappointed that I couldn't give him my approval and he was still more disappointed when the MS was returned to him. I know that for some time after this he was very unsettled and gladly went off to London. ... He pattered on with

the 'Cencrastus' MS for a few months and it finally appeared in 1930, but Blackwoods dropped him I fancy after completing their contract and when he wrote to me from London enclosing the book he asked me never to discuss it with him.⁶⁹

The announcement that Cencrastus was in preparation was made on the dust-jacket of A Drunk Man. Blackwoods, however, saw no manuscript of the poem for a very long time thereafter and do not appear to have given any a priori commitment to publish it. On February 7th 1929 the poet wrote to them:

My new poem, "To Circumjack Cencrastus", has been delayed by illness and other difficulties, but is making slow but steady headway now, and what is already finished of it is undoubtedly 100 per cent better than any of my previous poetry. I am hoping that in due course your famous old firm may publish this for me.⁷⁰

When he forwarded the Fier Comme un Ecossais manuscript on August 16th he commented:

I had hoped to have sent you my long poem "To Circumjack Cencrastus" ere this: but I am still working on it, and do not wish to part with it until I am satisfied that I cannot possibly do any more to it.⁷¹

On September 2nd he wrote the letter enquiring as to the receipt of the Fier Comme un Ecossais manuscript. A week later he left Montrose for good.⁷² It is most unlikely that submission and rejection of Cencrastus took place after August 16th but in time for MacDiarmid

to experience a 'very unsettled' period before leaving for London less than a month later. Scott's chronology is obviously faulty: in view of this and of the musician's proclivity for trumpeting his own talents at the expense of those of his former pupil, one cannot regard as reliable his assertion that Blackwoods initially rejected Cenrastus. There is no other evidence that they did anything of the sort. It is true, however, that Cenrastus was the last work by MacDiarmid to be published by them. The poet had succeeded by the early thirties in making himself a persona non grata to the Scottish establishment. Blackwoods was a firm of unimpeachable respectability: it is probable that they 'dropped him' not for literary reasons or even because his books were not selling, but because he had become an embarrassment to their gentility. Cenrastus was the last of MacDiarmid's books to be handled by a major Scottish publishing house: for the rest of his creative life he had to rely either on London publishers or on tiny Scottish firms.

The birth of a son, Walter, on April 5th 1928, presumably intensified the Grieves' desire to better their financial position. Deliverance appeared to be at hand when Compton Mackenzie offered Christopher the relatively well-paid position of acting editor on a new, London-based radio magazine, Vox. Early in September

1929 the family left for the English capital. The abandonment of his own country for that of the 'Auld Enemy' may seem incongruous in the case of as ardent a Scottish nationalist as the poet, who, much later, in the course of a radio interview, recalled his fateful decision as follows:

It was a great mistake when I went to London - that was (at) Compton Mackenzie's instigation, you see - he'd offered me far more money ... and I needed the money anyway, you see, badly - but I shouldn't have gone.⁷³

The move to England proved disastrous for the poet (though not for the poetry - exile was to prove a powerful stimulus to the composition of The Muckle Toon). Early in December Grieve sustained severe concussion when he fell head-first from the open upper deck of a moving bus. No sooner had he convalesced than Vox closed due to inadequate funding. He later reflected on the Vox episode with some bitterness:

What he (Mackenzie) didn't tell me was that it wasn't a secure job, and it didn't last long ... and then I was high and dry.⁷⁴

MacDiarmid spoke of the 'economic insecurity' which followed on the collapse of the radio magazine as 'one of the main causes of my alienation from my first wife'.⁷⁵ Certainly the spouse who had found it difficult to run a home on the small salary of a Montrose newspaperman must have had her patience taxed beyond endurance when

the move to London began to result not in the promised alleviation of circumstances but in actual penury. Doubtless there were other, more intimate reasons for the estrangement of Christopher and Peggy Grieve. The poet's correspondence in this period is reticent on the subject of his discordant domestic life. In his last letters to Ogilvie, which date from this time, he tried to hide from his old mentor the fact that his marriage was falling apart. Grieve was franker with Helen Cruickshank, admitting that

my circumstances these days have been "curious and harassing", apart altogether from the fact that I am striving might and main to complete "Cencrastus"...⁷⁶

So 'curious and harassing' were the poet's circumstances, indeed, that when he went to Liverpool in May 1930 to take up a new position, his wife and children stayed behind in London.

Grieve's new employment was as Publicity Officer to the Liverpool Organisation, 'a body', as he explained to Ogilvie, 'run by the Corporation of Liverpool, Wallasey, Bootle and Birkenhead, to boost Merseyside interests of all kinds...'⁷⁷ His function was 'to write leaflets etc. and maintain a steady flow of articles to the home, colonial and foreign press'.⁷⁸ He joked to Gunn:

I have fallen on evil days: and my lot is to have illustrated articles on technical subjects in the overseas edition of "The Ironmonger", The London Chamber of Commerce Journal, the Hamburger Nachrichten, etc. - signed articles, damnie!⁷⁹

In his first months in the Lancashire port MacDiarmid finished Cencrastus, overseeing the proofs in August and September.⁸⁰ He wrote the opening poem of The Muckle Toon there, probably in the spring of 1931.⁸¹

But his Liverpool sojourn was far from happy. In 1932 he confessed that he had allowed his 'drinking ... proclivities' to interfere 'with the diligent discharge' of his duties of Publicity Officer.⁸² In Lucky Poet we hear of 'a wild year' (p. 105) in Liverpool which proved as 'unfortunate' as the 'interlude in London ... but for other and far more painful reasons, and owing perhaps to a considerable extent to my own blame ...' (p.41). By May 1931 Grieve had lost his job and returned to his divided London household.⁸³

The uncertainties of the poet's life in the period 1927-30 spilled over into Cencrastus. Compton Mackenzie judged miraculous 'the fact of his being able to produce a book at all under the conditions in which he has had to be working...'.⁸⁴ Its overall lack of coherence is perhaps the sequence's most eloquent testimony to the inadequacy of those conditions for major artistic achievement. There are many specific pointers to

the travail of the Cencrastus years, too. We have already noted the thematically inappropriate complaints about the author's unfavourable employment situation, etc. (above, p. 75). The sequence also includes weary acknowledgements of its own lack of pace, and even humorous anticipations of the reader's impatience with its confused energies:

Oot in ilka brainstorm
Withoot an umbrella
Whaever saw the like
O' sic a foolish fella!...

(C.P. I, p.252)

From our point of view the most interesting - though by no means the most overt - textual index of the turmoil which accompanied composition is the series of references to Langholm. These are not sufficiently numerous to constitute a motif, but there are more of them than the poet acknowledged when he wrote that Cencrastus contained only 'a few lines of allusion' to the Muckle Toon ('My Native Place,' M.T., p.5). Though the Langholm references are arguably of little significance, revealing no more than the sequence's characteristic disfiguring garrulousness, they can nevertheless be construed as the first signs of the poet's turning from the penury of the present towards the relatively unexplored imaginative capital of the past. This

aspect of Cencrastus, therefore, can be said to foreshadow the manifest connection between MacDiarmid's circumstances in the early thirties and the autobiographical concerns of The Muckle Toon.

Cencrastus' first allusion to the poet's home town is to be found on the title page, where the work is given the alternative name, 'The Curly Snake'. In an essay which appeared in 1955 the poet wrote of a Langholm path called the Curly Snake which 'always haunted' his imagination and 'probably constituted itself the ground-plan and pattern' of his mind (see 'From Francis George Scott: An Essay', M.T., p.158). Nothing of this is made explicit in the poem, however, where MacDiarmid's metaphysical serpent refuses to slip into any shape as palpable as that of a woodland path. Yet the 'hame scenes' serve to illustrate one at least of the visionary experiences the verse struggles to convey: Cencrastus is told that, 'in some slant licht some movement o' you thraws', the poet is able to

See a' the world become an amber haze,
 A sunny flood in which humanity lies
 Troot-like, wi' motionin' fins and beckonin' tail,
 And wan inscrutable ensnarin' een,
 As I've seen often in the Esk or Ewes....

(C.P. I, p.185)

Five pages later Langholm's rivers are glimpsed again,
 in the course of a parenthetical description of the
 hair of a writer's 'dear',

A'e threid o' which, pu'd through his nails,
 'ud frizz
 In coontless kinks, like Scotland's craziest burn
 - Aye, yon bright water even wi' the sky
 That if, when we were bairns, we threw corks on't
 We panted to keep up wi' them in vain....

Soon we hear of MacDiarmid's bringing a French visitor
 on a tour of Gaelic Scotland and leaving him

twenty miles from Carlisle,
On his way back to France

(C.P. I, p.209)

(A note on p. 293 explains that the reference here is
 'to Langholm in Dumfriesshire, the author's birthplace.')
 A later passage provides what is perhaps the most
 significant of Cencrastus' allusions to the
 Dumfriesshire burgh:

for themsels'. Such writers, we are told, are
'borne' on unexamined notions

as I've seen in a spate
Tree-trunks, sheep, bee skeps and the like
On the bible-black Esk.

(C.P. I, p. 283)

The most intensely lyrical moment in the later
pages of Cencrastus is a recollection of a 'hame
scene' in lines which might be set beside the most
celebratory verses of The Muckle Toon:

And hoo should I forget the Langfall
On mornings when the hines were ripe but een
Ahint the glintin' leafs were brichter still
Than sunned dew on them, lips reider than the fruit,
And I filled baith my basket and my hert
Mony and mony a time?

(C.P. I, p. 271; M. T., p.157)

---ooOoo---

Though MacDiarmid was acutely aware of the
shortcomings of Cencrastus he had no firm idea of how
his work should develop. He certainly did not realise
that the way forward from the Curly Snake sequence lay
through Langholm. He wrote to Ogilvie at the end of
1930:

... I did not do in (Cencrastus) what I intended. I deliberately deserted my big plan, because I realised I had lots of elements in me, standing between me and really great work, I'd to get rid of - and I think I've done it. My next book will be a very different matter - with none of the little local and temporary references, personalities, political propaganda, literary allusiveness, etc. It is based on Goethe's Faust as Joyce's Ulysses was on Homer - i.e. takes "Faust" as its springboard - its framework - but it is to be cast in dramatic form and as straightforward and sun-clear as I can possibly make it, with none of the experimentalism and ultra-modernist elements Joyce used. But we'll see. I'm working very hard on it and hope - although it's an enormous proposition - to have it ready for publication this Spring! 85

Did MacDiarmid really embark upon a new work so soon after the publication of Cencrastus? He certainly gave his correspondents the impression that the months following the sequence's appearance on October 29th were productive. On January 12th he declared that he was 'up to the eyes in further work' and that 1931 was 'going to be a great year'.⁸⁶ He mentioned his proposed Goethean work again in a letter to his fellow-poet, William Soutar, on March 10th:

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I ... am busy now with an immense work - a sort of Scots "Faust" - in which the general current of the whole will be tremendously strong, the lyrical interludes relatively few and far between, the subjective eschewed for the objective and dramatic.⁸⁷

Unlike the case of Fier comme un Ecossais, the manuscript of which definitely did reach Blackwoods, there is no evidence other than that of the poet's own letters that the 'Scots "Faust"' ever got beyond the planning stage. It is notable that the reference to its infrequent 'lyrical interludes' is the nearest we get to a firm indication that the work was to be a poetic one. Three days after writing to Soutar, however, MacDiarmid assured Gunn, 'I'm going ahead with my huge new poem'.⁸⁸ If he was referring here to the Faust project we must ask what became of a long poem which claimed his attentions over a three-month span. (It is possible, of course, that MacDiarmid did little or no creative work in the period in question. He led a very undisciplined life in Liverpool (see above p. 83) and his leisure problem was compounded by a two-week illness in February and by worries concerning the health of the family he had left behind in London.⁸⁹) If Clann Albann was what the poet had in mind we must marvel at the suddenness with which he laid aside the 'immense work' described on March 10th in favour of

the 'huge new poem' of March 13th. He could hardly have devoted his energies to both simultaneously.

There is a further possibility - that Clann Albann and the Faust work were one. This seems unlikely at first sight. One looks in vain for a Faustian substructure in the poetry of the early thirties. The only volume of Clann Albann which approached realisation - The Muckle Toon - apotheosises the 'little local ... references' the Goethean opus was to eschew, and includes the apparent 'political propaganda' of the first two 'Hymns to Lenin' (C.P. I, pp. 297, 323; M.T., pp. 98, 141). The Langholm poetry, moreover, exhibits a good deal of 'literary allusiveness', if of a less pernicious kind than the gratuitous name-dropping of Cencrastus. (One notes in passing the incongruity of MacDiarmid's aim to keep free of literary allusions a work 'based on Goethe's Faust as Joyce's Ulysses was on Homer'.) Such central poems as 'Water Music' (C.P. I, p. 333; M.T., p. 16), 'Tarras' (C.P., p. 337, M.T., p. 147) and 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' (C.P. I, p. 346; M.T., p. 133) are as far from being 'straightforward and sun-clear' in style as anything in the poet's oeuvre. MacDiarmid even reserves The

Muckle Toon's bitterest satire for Goethe (see 'The Oon Olympian' (C.P. I, p. 354; M. T., p.125) and 'The Point of Honour' ll. 60-1 (C.P. I, p. 389; M. T. p.165)).

Yet it is not entirely unreasonable to speculate that the Clann Albann scheme evolved from the plan to write a Scots Faust, despite the evidence of the above to the contrary.⁸⁹ There is an affinity of aims between the German's master-work and the Scot's proposed five-volume opus. Goethe wrote that Faust was an attempt to 'preserve' the 'period of development of a human soul'.⁹⁰ MacDiarmid described the massive poem he projected as 'a study in the evolution of my mentality and development as a poet' (Clann Albann: An Explanation, M.T., p.236). A passage in the Scot's autobiography suggests a more specific link between the two works:

My story ... is the story of an absolutist whose absolutes came to grief in his private life.... Faustus-like, I have tried to encompass all experience, and find myself at last happy enough marooned on this little island of Whalsay

(L.P., pp. 44-5)

These words establish that the poet saw Goethe's hero as one who 'tried to encompass all experience...'.⁹¹

The phrase is twice echoed in The Muckle Toon.

In the lyric 'Lynch-Pin' we hear of the speaker's

effort
To embody a' creation

(C.P. I, p.332; M.T., p.69),

while it is stated in l. 177 of 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' that in order to 'truly live' (l.180) a man must sift 'a' creation through himself'' (C.P. I, p.351; M.T., p.137).

A comparison of the 'Faust letters' to Ogilvie and Soutar suggests that, as plans for his new poem hardened in his mind, MacDiarmid began to dispense with the scaffolding which had been necessary to its first visualisation. Phrases such as 'based on Goethe's Faust as Joyce's Ulysses was on Homer', and 'takes "Faust" as its springboard - its framework', give way to the vagueness of 'a sort of Scots "Faust"'. What remained of the original conception in the Clann Albann plan was the notion of an individual's 'Faustus-like' acquisition of experiences. A new sense of the literary possibilities of his nationalism, however, pushed Scotland to the forefront of the poet's 'creative thocht' in the first months of 1931. Now he would write of a hero struggling to encompass the mystery of Scotland. The reader who bears in mind

the fact that Scotland exists in MacDiarmid's work as much as an emblem for 'the whole of the real' (L.P., p.114) as it does as an actual country, will not fail to discern the Faustian ambience of the following words from 'Clann Albann: An Explanation':

The poem is an autobiographical one and a study in the evolution of my mentality and development as a poet, and, in particular, my knowledge of and attitude towards Scotland. The first book deals with ... my boyhood days....

The second book ... is concerned with my widening knowledge of Scotland and its history and literature and the emergence of the Scottish Nationalist ideas with which I have since been so actively concerned The third book ... concerns my marriage (...symbolising the Union of Scotland, the bridging of the gulf between Highland and Lowland, and ... treating Gaeldom as the feminine principle)....

The fourth book ... deals with my furthest conceptions of the historical function of the Scottish genius; and the fifth and final book, represents... the abandonment by the spirit of the poet of all that has preceded this stage and his ascent into a different order of consciousness altogether.

(M.T., pp.236-7)

There are other, admittedly slight, traces of the Goethean plan in MacDiarmid's writings for and about Clann Albann. The Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe is quoted at the head of 'The Burning Passion' (C.P. I, p.303; M.T., p.139).

Of less significance is the inclusion of the Olympian in 'Second Hymn to Lenin's' rather conventional list (C.P. I, p.323; M.T., p.141, 1.27) of Europe's great poets. The claim in the letter to Soutar that 'the subjective' was to be 'eschewed for the objective and dramatic' in the 'immense work' MacDiarmid was planning may seem difficult to reconcile with the personal focus of the Langholm poetry. But The Muckle Toon was to be only the first of five Clann Albann volumes, and its attention to the particularities of the poet's early experience may be no more indicative of his aims in the other volumes than the psychological explorations of Part I of Faust are of the metaphysical concerns of Part II. Indeed something of the relationship between the parts of the German masterpiece is recalled in 'Clann Albann: An Explanation', where MacDiarmid envisages bringing 'sub specie aeternitatis' in Volume Five material considered under the aspect of the 'past' in Volume One (M.T., p.240). 'Every healthy effort', observed Goethe, 'is directed from the inward to the outward world'.⁹¹ The 'Explanation' somewhat similarly conjures 'the contrast or interaction of "inner" and "outer"' (M.T., p.237). The poet warned that the writings of The Muckle Toon were 'presented merely as starting points for the attitudes developed from book to book' of the larger scheme (M.T., p.238).

This suggests how he could think of his 'immense work' - if it was to Clann Albann that he referred in the letter to Soutar - as 'dramatic'. A conflict of ideas and perspectives, rather than of personalities, would provide the drama. In a letter published in the Scots Observer on January 27th 1933, Valda Trevlyn explained:

All these poems are part of a big scheme in which the diverse points of view expressed will be balanced against each other.⁹²

One item in the poet's correspondence goes a long way towards confirming that the Clann Albann scheme did indeed derive from the intention to model a work on Faust. The following extract from a letter from Grieve to Jessie B. MacArthur discusses 'a sort of national epic' in terminology strongly reminiscent of that used to describe the Goethean project to Ogilvie:

I am very glad you like "Cencrastus". It has certainly brought me far more appreciation than any of my previous books. As a whole I do not think it is so completely achieved as my "Drunk Man": nor did I succeed in working out my intention - indeed I deliberately departed from it, realising that I was not yet capable of that task, and that it was necessary to get rid of all kinds of elements (not without their own values) which have been standing between me and my real job. I believe I've done that now; and can go ahead to a far bigger task.

That's what Bottomley and Saurat both mean in the last "Modern Scot" when they indicate a sort of national epic - perfectly clear and straightforward and without cheap personalities, highbrow display etc. - as what I'm obviously in training for; and that in fact is what I am tackling now - a vast business. Goodness only knows if I can pull it off: but I think I can and have already put an enormous amount of labour into the preliminary work to ensure a design that will be four-square. We'll see.⁹³

This was written on February 25th 1931, i.e., after the letter to Ogilvie, but before that to Soutar. The two months that had passed since the composition of the first 'Faust letter' had seen the publication in the Modern Scot of two reviews of Cencrastus which, on the evidence of the poet's comments to Mrs. MacArthur, initiated the metamorphosis of the Scots Faust into Clann Albann. One of these, by Gordon Bottomley, included the following remark on 'Mr. McDiarmid's gifts':

If he ever finds a human and Scottish figure on which to focus them, they are of the right kind and fulness to enable him to do for his country what Ibsen did for Norway in "Peer Gynt", De Coster for Belgium in "Tyll Ulenspiegel", Cervantes for Spain in "Don Quixote".⁹⁴

The other, by Denis Saurat, similarly dwelt upon the potential rather than the achievement represented by Cencrastus:

Hugh MacDiarmid has made two attempts at a long poem, with A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle and To Circumjack Cencrastus. The poet seems to be in process of training for a sort of lyrical epic of the 10,000 to 20,000 lines order, conceived in a modern spirit, in which the sarcastic mood alternates with the enthusiastic.

...

These two preliminary poems reveal many qualities that would go to the making of a great masterpiece....

I do not know that the best of these attempted epics is not in the lyrics that are interspersed through them

He is probably the best poet that Scotland has produced; and Scotland is his subject. But he has not yet quite established contact with his subject. It is necessary for him to make several attempts; it is necessary for him to publish such attempts because a great work of art is the result of a certain collaboration between a man and his people; and there must be a certain kind of sympathy going out to the singer from the sung. Thus Milton knew from his youth that there was a certain quality in what he wrote that his people would not "willingly let die". Thus it is in Hugh McDiarmid to become the great national Scottish poet, if the Scots will have him. He cannot do it without them, but an intense condemnation of him might be of as much use to him as praise. If he has to exalt himself over mere indifference his task will be all the more difficult, and he may be forced back upon himself and merely lyrical poetry.95

I have quoted this review extensively because of its manifest impact upon MacDiarmid. Though a measure of susceptibility to advice from sympathetic quarters was to be expected in the wake of the failure of Cenchrastus, the extent of the poet's deference to one commentator's analysis of his situation is little short of extraordinary. Grieve always retained something of the self-educated man's exaggerated respect for the academic, and Saurat was perhaps the first heavy-weight academic to champion him. The French critic and philosopher taught at Glasgow University for a period in the twenties, when he became friendly with Grieve, Edwin Muir and F. G. Scott. He translated 'A Moment in Eternity' (C.P., I, p.3), most ambitious of the early English poems, into French, and is generally credited with coining the phrase 'the Scottish Renaissance' (though Alan Bold has persuasively argued that the term originated with the poet⁹⁶). Saurat is mentioned in Lucky Poet (p. xix) as one of 'four especial friends' of the author's to whom 'has ... been like lighting upon a four-leafed clover'.⁹⁷

The phraseology of the Saurat review of Cenrastus is echoed not only in the letter to Mrs. MacArthur ('the ... epic ... I'm obviously in training for ...'), but also in the first announcement of Clann Albann ('...lyrics interspersed through this work ...' (see below, p.104)), and in the Author's Note to the First Hymn collection ('These poems are all ... short items interspersed throughout "Clann Albann", a very long poem predominantly of a non-lyrical character ...'). Of more significance than this parroting of diction, however, was the poet's acceptance of the French reviewer's three main propositions with regard to the nature of his genius.

The first of these was that Scotland was MacDiarmid's subject. Now, 'the matter of Scotland' is obviously central to A Drunk Man and, despite the poet's stated desire to get 'rid of the thistle, "the bur o' the world"' in Cenrastus (above, p.65), 'the state that Scotland's in the day' (C.P. I, p.204) inspired some of the finest poetry in that work, too:

Whiles
 I look at Scotland and dumbfounded see't
 A muckle clod split off frae ither life,
 Shapeless, uncanny, unendurable clod
 Held in an endless nightmare (like a foetus
 Catcht up in a clod)....

(C.P. I, p.275)

The 'Faust letter' to Ogilvie suggests that MacDiarmid initially intended to eschew 'the matter of Scotland' in his next attempted work, in order to break free from the thematic constraints on imaginative flight in Cencrastus. The Saurat review gave him the confidence to readmit to his 'creative thocht' a subject conspicuous by its absence from the first description of the Goethe project. (It is conceivable that the epithet 'Scots' which accompanies the substantive '"Faust"' in the letter to Soutar has patriotic as well as linguistic connotations.)

The second proposition is closely related to the first. If Scotland was to be MacDiarmid's subject then he, as a 'national poet', would have to provide his country with an epic. Thus were any notions he might have had of avoiding the infelicities of Cencrastus by confining himself to short, closely-worked poetic modes sacrificed to his sense of a high bardic calling. The thought that the 1930 sequence was no more than a muscle-flexing 'preliminary' to the

real epic for which he was 'in training' must have been an attractive one for MacDiarmid, as it not only minimised the importance of the work's failure but made that failure portend the success of his subsequent effort. Saurat's grand assessment boosted the hope, expressed in the letter to Ogilvie, that Cencrastus had got rid of the 'elements ... standing between (the poet) and really great work'. It is notable that while that first 'Faust letter' spoke of the labour involved in getting the Goethe project to the presses in a matter of months as 'an enormous proposition', it made no claims as to the scale of the opus itself. After the appearance of the two reviews of the Curly Snake sequence in the Modern Scot, however, MacDiarmid's work-in-progress became 'a vast business' (in the letter to Mrs. MacArthur), 'an immense work' (in the letter to Soutar), a 'huge new poem' (in the letter to Gunn).

Saurat's comments, influential as they were with the poet, do not bear up well under scrutiny. How can poems like A Drunk Man and Cencrastus - whatever their length - be described as 'attempted epics' when they depend so wholly upon technical variety and upon the subjectivities of lyrical response for their effects? True, Saurat begins

with the term 'lyrical epic', but his nod in the direction of Provencal poetry is insufficient to clarify what he means by this. He intimates that the strengths of A Drunk Man and Cenchrastus are to be found 'in the lyrics that are interspersed through' those works, but nevertheless goes on to envisage an epic opus in which MacDiarmid will eschew 'merely lyrical poetry'. That is very close to arguing that the poet should give up what he is good at in favour of a mode of writing for which he has displayed no particular talent. And yet MacDiarmid eagerly embraced what might be called the third proposition of Saurat's review, i.e., that his future lay in the direction of composing works in which non-lyrical poetry would predominate. Already by March 10th, in the second 'Faust letter', we find him assuring Soutar that 'the lyrical interludes' will be 'relatively few and far between' in the opus he is preparing. The Author's Note to the First Hymn volume draws attention to the 'non-lyrical character' of Clann Albann. These statements establish that the poet was moving towards an anti-lyrical theory of poetry at a time when he was still in possession of considerable lyric powers; they serve as a warning that the later works' rhetoric

occasionally in his thought for more than a year,
in an entirely different context.

against 'irresponsible lyricism' (The Kind of Poetry I Want, C.P. II, p. 1021) should not be construed as a mere rationalisation of the failure of an exquisite gift.

It is likely that the evolution of the Goethe project into the sort of national epic envisaged in August 1933 in 'Clann Albann: An Explanation' was already complete by July 1931, when the following note was appended to 'From Work in Progress' (C.P.II, p. 1147; M.T., p.10) in the Modern Scot:

Being the first few stanzas of Part I of Mr. McDiarmid's big new poem, 'Clann Albann', the complete scheme of which is as follows: - Dedicatory Poem, Prologue; Part I. The Muckle Toon, First Interlude; Part II. Fier Comme un Ecossais, Second Interlude; Part III. Demidium Anima Meae, Third Interlude; Part IV. The Uncanny Scot, Fourth Interlude; Part V. With a Lifting of the Head, Epilogue. We hope to publish a few of the longer lyrics interspersed through this work in our next issue. 98

Though there are many allusions to a great poetic undertaking in the poet's correspondence through the spring and early summer of 1931, this is the first reference to actually name the work on which he pinned his artistic hopes. The phrase 'Clann Albann', however, was not new: it had featured prominently in his thought for more than a year, in an entirely different context.

'Clan Albainn' or 'Clann Albainn' or 'Clann Albann': Grieve spelt the political movement's name no more consistently than he did the proposed epic's. 'Clan Albainn' has been adopted here both to differentiate the former from the latter and because this was the spelling used by the poet in his fullest published discussion of his subversive brainchild.⁹⁹ The earliest datable reference to Clan Albainn takes the form of a dark admonition in a letter to Helen Cruickshank:

Mum's the word about C. A. in the meantime.
I'm in earnest there.¹⁰⁰

This was written on June 14th 1930. A roughly contemporary letter to Neil Gunn warns:

And don't you sniff about Clann
Albainn - it is going O.K.¹⁰¹

The secrecy which shrouds these early references was not maintained long. The Summer 1930 issue of the Modern Scot contained an article by Grieve explaining that Clan Albainn was a secret society dedicated to the use of militant action in pursuit of Scottish independence:

I ... assert that Scotland will never secure a measure of independence worth having without being forced to adopt means similar to those taken by the Irish....102

The citation of the Irish liberation struggle suggests that Grieve may have borrowed his conspiratorial group's name from Clan na Gael, the American support organisation of the Fenians and the I.R.A.¹⁰³ Clan Albainn means the 'family' - or, as he translated the title of his proposed five-volume opus, the 'children' ('Clann Albann: An Explanation' (M.T , p.240)) - 'of Scotland'. The poet hoped to attract into his secret society the 'necessary minority' for an effective campaign for national independence. He did not have a tiny elite in mind, however:

An Aberdeen friend writes that, judging by the people he has talked to, there will be ten ready to join Clan Albainn for every one who will join the National Party, as soon as the former begins to act.104

This confidence was never put to the test: Clan Albainn's 'actions' were limited to assaults on the sensibilities of the National Party's moderates.¹⁰⁵ Yet Grieve continued to write excitedly of his political plans. On October 7th 1930 he informed Helen Cruickshank that he was 'definitely getting

on now with the organisation of Clan Albainn'.¹⁰⁶
 Five months later Neil Gunn was assured of the poet's
 intention to prosecute his purpose:

Delight at progress of Inverness
 Branch SNP. But intend shortly to
 put "cat among the pigeons". Fed
 up with SNP policy altogether - and
 SNP personnel too. Nothing for it
 really but Clann Albann.¹⁰⁷

Using the pseudonym 'James Maclaren' in the Scottish
 Educational Journal of June 19th 1931, Grieve expressed
 the opinion that 'most people' had 'heard of the
 National Party and of Mr. Grieve's "Clann Albann"...'.¹⁰⁸

A subsequent item by Maclaren countered some of the
 earlier references by presenting Clan Albainn as a
 caucus within the National Party rather than as a
 discrete entity:

While the inclination of the Party as
 a whole is unmistakably to the left
 wing, there is, of course, a movement
 within the movement, and it is this
 "inner circle" or "cell" which holds
 the clue to imminent developments,
 and in all probability to the future
 of Scotland. I am not referring
 here merely to Mr. Grieve's "Clann
 Albann", nor to "Fianna na h-Alba"
 nor to the "Scottish Republican
 Brotherhood". 109

Fianna na h-Alba was presumably named after the Irish Republican youth movement, Fianna Éireann, and the Scottish Republican Brotherhood after the secret society which masterminded the Fenian Rising of 1867, the Easter Rising of 1916 and the War for Independence in the early twenties, the I.R.B. One wonders if these Scottish counterparts of Irish separatist organisations were anything more than proliferating figments of an imagination which needed to be persuaded that Scotland could follow Ireland's path to political autonomy.

It is not without significance that the period of Grieve's enthusiasm for Clan Albainn coincided almost exactly with his stay in Liverpool. Merseyside was hardly an ideal geographical location for the launching of a clandestine campaign against Scotland's connection with England. But the Clan Albainn episode is to be understood as a response to the poet's experience of exile rather than as a practical effort to free his country from the clutches of the Auld Enemy. Soon he was to attempt an alternative, and altogether more rewarding, response to his profound sense of displacement.

I have discovered no reference to Clan Albainn later than June 1931, and no use of the title Clann Albann earlier than the following month. The non-contemporaneity of the political and poetic applications of the term suggests that, as composition got under way, MacDiarmid drew for his epic enterprise on energies which had previously gone into the pursuit of distant revolutionary objectives, i.e., that Clann Albann in a sense replaced Clan Albainn. There is no trace of the latter in the poetry ascribed to the former. An unpublished poem written in January 1932, however, ends with a couplet which arguably combines the political and poetic connotations of the Gaelic phrase, 'the children of Scotland'. The poem is not a distinguished one, but, as we will have cause to allude to it again (below, p.223; also Commentary, p.472), it is reproduced in full here. The possible significance of the reference to the author of Faust, occurring as it does within three lines of the words 'Clann Albann', will not be lost on readers who have followed our arguments about the genesis of MacDiarmid's 'national epic':

The Hidden Scotland

O Scotland lies beyond us
 Like Poetry free to a',
 Pindar's, Spenser's, Milton's,
 Few read - a waterfa'
 O' endless music hurled
 Beyond the end o' the world.

Simmer, winter, day and nicht
 We share wi' ilka land,
 Yet on planes we dinna share,
 But can, and shall, some stand,
 Countries o' a spirit
 We inherit yet nor merit.

Established in the arts
 As weel as on the earth;
 We share their sky but to
 Like glories gie nae birth
 As dae the lands wha's sons
 Expand a' life's horizons.

Like England wantin' Shakespeare
 And Germany Goetheless
 Maist o' oor country still
 Is pent in naethingness.
Then up, Clann Albann, up and set
To work for this lost Scotland yet.

110

The outline plan for Clann Albann was evidently developed and refined in the first half of 1931. It is very difficult to determine precisely when the first Muckle Toon pieces were composed. While many letters written in the months preceding the announcement of the 'big new poem' in July 1931

Increasingly caught up in happy recollections of it and speculations as to what divided me so early and so completely from all the tastes and tendencies of my relatives and other early friends.

(M.T., pp. 5-6)

protest MacDiarmid's intense involvement with the enterprise, this involvement may have related more to the conception than to the execution of the work. The letter to Mrs. MacArthur goes some distance towards confirming that this was in fact the case:

I ... have already put an enormous amount of labour into the preliminary work to ensure a design that will be four-square.¹¹¹

MacDiarmid seems to have published no poetry at all in the nine months between the appearance of Cencrastus and the publication of 'From Work in Progress' in the July 1931 issue of the Modern Scot. The most nearly creative piece of writing to emerge in this period was an essay commissioned by the Scots Observer for a Hogmanay special, 'For Auld Lang Syne: A Symposium upon "My Native Place"', in which the poet acknowledged that the Muckle Toon was much on his mind:

I have not been there for years; and years before that I felt that I had completely outgrown the place. My interests lay along lines no-one else in the place seemed to share, and I shared none of theirs And yet, within the past year or two I have found myself increasingly caught up in happy recollections of it and speculations as to what divided me so early and so completely from all the tastes and tendencies of my relatives and other early friends.

(M.T., pp.5-6)

He concluded:

(I) If I ever go "out of the world and into Langholm again," it will only be in dreams or in my poet's craft in which, perchance, I may yet find words for some of the felicities I remember and to which (despite all my subsequent divergence of interest and effort) the texture of my spirit must owe incomparably more than I can ever repay or acknowledge.

(M.T., p. 9)

MacDiarmid's determination to write a huge, 'objective and dramatic' poetic opus kept him for months from pursuing his intuition that the remembered 'felicities' of Langholm could become a theme for his art. To embark on a poetry of reminiscence would, after all, be to disregard Saurat's counsel about eschewing the lyrical and self-centred:

There is, I should say, already perhaps too much of himself in Cencrastus. I take it that To Circumjack Cencrastus is to expel the self, which stands and bars the threshold into real epic poetry. May therefore this Cencrastus be circum-jacked, so that we need no more psycho-analysis of the poet. We know him now. We want his work. 112

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MacDiarmid was not yet ready to expel the self from his poetry (aspects of the role of self in his work are explored on pp. 170-205 and 354-7, below) but he now set about treating it under an heroic aspect, in the hope thereby of transcending the mere expression of personality which had vitiated Cencrastus. The realisation that he could serve in his own person as the 'human and Scottish figure' upon which, as Bottomley had observed, his gifts needed focussing, acted as the prime catalyst of Clann Albann. By effecting a fusion of the 'Faustian' and 'national epic' plans, this realisation furnished a coherent schema for a long poem, if for a poem of a very different nature to those envisaged by Bottomley and Saurat. It freed MacDiarmid to exploit the Langholm theme which had been clamouring for his attention for months, but which, in his zeal for a high impersonal art, he had felt obliged to ignore.

'From Work in Progress', designed as the first Muckle Toon poem to be read, was also the first to be published. It is impossible to say with certainty if it was the first written of the Langholm pieces, though the skimpy evidence intimates that it may

have been. The parenthesis in l.87 implies that composition took place before mid-May 1931, when Grieve lost his job on Merseyside and returned to the English capital:

My wife and weans in London never saw
The Muckle Toon that I'm concerned wi' noo
(Sittin' in Liverpool), and never may.

(C.P. II, p. 1149; M.T., p.12)

The poet's correspondence through the summer, as we shall see below, suggests that he was enjoying a period of great creative excitement. I think it likely that the bulk of the contents of the First Hymn collection, along with most of the other poems of 1931, were written in London after his return from Liverpool - though I cannot offer proof of this. If my guess is correct, MacDiarmid composed almost no poetry in the first four months of the year, and the spate of publication which began in July was of material 'spleet-new frae the mint'. The homogeneity of the Muckle Toon poems of 1931 in stanza form, language and imagery demonstrates that the poet expended considerable care on ensuring a 'four-square' design for the first volume of Clann Albann, and not only for the overall plan. This care may account in some measure for the dearth of poetry in the earlier part of the year.

'From Work in Progress' offers eloquent testimony to MacDiarmid's initial reluctance to commit his energies to a poetry of reminiscence. He acknowledges his surprise at the urgent intrusion of 'the hame scenes' on his thoughts. He declares that he cannot

tell what brings me unexpectedly back
Whaur't seems nae common thocht or interest's left.

(C.P. II, p. 1147; M.T., p. 10)

He nevertheless goes on to offer a plausible - indeed obvious - reason for the unsolicited onset of memories and speculations relating to his childhood:

My wife and bairns, is't tinin' them that thraws
Me back on my first cause?

(C.P. II, p.1147; M.T., p.10)

The reader need not share the poet's surprise at the personal concerns of the poetry of 1931. Alone in an industrial city in a culturally antipathetic country, and under severe emotional and financial strain, Grieve was at an extreme remove from his rural Scottish boyhood, and consequently at the mercy of idealised recollections of his early years. Furthermore, his present predicament shared many of the features of the cataclysmic series of events of two decades earlier which culminated in his final

departure from the Muckle Toon. At both these critical junctures in his life he lost a family, a home, and a series of jobs, and faced a radically uncertain future.

Almost immediately on dismissal from his Liverpool post, Grieve wrote to Blackwoods, begging his old publishers to use their influence to secure a job for him. Describing 'the new poem upon which I am now engaged' as 'by far the biggest thing I have yet attempted', he complained that the 'new worry of unemployment had 'obtruded itself' upon composition.¹¹³ The poet spent the summer at his wife's London address, failing in his attempts to secure employment, but getting down at last to real work on The Muckle Toon. He wrote to Gunn on September 4th:

I've been hunting in vain for a lucrative job and keeping the pot boiling by what free-lancing I could - though to tell the truth even in this emergency spending 99/100ths of the energy that should have gone in this way to a huge poem which (just wait till you see) contains by far the best stuff I've done yet. Two biggish lyrics out of it are appearing in a miscellany of new poems edited by Lascelles Abercrombie which Gollancz are publishing very soon - and

Abercrombie thinks they are
two of the most remarkable poems
Britain has produced for long
enough. 114

He added at the end of the letter that he had been
'long enough unemployed now ... to know the feeling
of being really down and out'.

That autumn, however, presented the prospect
of a solution to Grieve's unemployment problem.
He was offered the post of Literary Director of
the Unicorn Press, a private limited liability
company being set up by two businessmen, L. N.
Cooper and J. F. Moore. His work was to consist
of reading manuscripts and supervising translations,
as well as inaugurating and maintaining contacts
with writers. He would have a weekly salary of
£5, the services of a typist, and ample spare time
in which to write poetry and supplement his income
by freelance journalism. There was one difficulty
to overcome, however - he had to find Share Capital
of £500. This was a considerable sum in 1931,
but Neil Gunn, Peggy Grieve and her consort,
William McElroy - a London coal and iron merchant -,
put up most of the money and the poet joined Cooper
and Moore on the directorate. Grieve's venture

into business did not work out. The tortuous details of his long-running quarrel with his fellow-directors can be followed in the Neil Gunn correspondence in the National Library of Scotland. At the risk of oversimplifying matters, it may be said that Grieve was from the beginning under pressure to pay the outstanding portion of Share Capital, and that policy disagreements added to the strain between him and his business partners until, in May 1932, he was deposed from the directorate amid recriminations which would continue well into the following year.¹¹⁵

The poet's stint with the Unicorn Press coincided with a period of particularly severe personal difficulty. He moved out from the family home at 18, Pyrland Road, N. 5, apparently before the end of September 1931. He wrote to Soutar on October 19th:

My affairs are in chaos and I have not yet had my books and papers etc., removed from home and brought down to my own flat.¹¹⁶

He confided that his problems were getting in the way of work on Clann Albann:

(T)hat monster work will not be ready for a long time yet. I am hoping perhaps to get the first volume of it out some time in the Spring, but there will be four other volumes each much bigger than "Cencrastus" to follow and consequently the whole cannot possibly be published until some time in 1932. In any case as you will be seeing from the papers shortly present conditions are (or rather have been) retarding my writing of it. It will take a little time after a domestic upheaval of that sort to get down again to a proper working basis.¹¹⁷

The reference to the breakdown of his marriage is typical of Grieve's letters at this time - steering clear of emotional disclosure, yet nevertheless communicating his distress at the dissolution of his union with Peggy, and at the publicity which accompanied it. Even Gunn, with whom he had maintained a regular correspondence for almost ten years, and who appears to have been a close friend of both husband and wife¹¹⁸, was spared the details:

Apart from pressure of work as you will probably know from various paragraphs in some of the Scottish papers I have had my hands full enough in other ways.¹¹⁹

When the divorce was granted on January 16th 1932, after proceedings which had started well before Christmas, the poet was ordered to pay £87 5s 8d for Peggy's expenses, in addition to a yearly alimony of £100 each for Christine and Walter.¹²⁰

Despite the traumas of 1931 MacDiarmid succeeded in producing in that year a body of poetry which, if small by his standards, was of high quality. He concentrated his creative energies almost solely on Clann Albann. Only two of the twenty-four new poems he published did not belong to the project. One of these was the rather too well known 'The Little White Rose' (C.P. I, p. 461), which appeared anonymously in the July issue of the Modern Scot. The other was 'The Kelpie in the Dorts' (C.P. II, p. 1249), which was placed at the head of the poet's essay 'The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea' in the same issue of that periodical.¹²¹ This piece indeed may not be wholly unrelated to Clann Albann, as it is an exhortation to the watersprite ('kelpie') to quit the sulks ('dorts') in which it has 'lain', and display its dazzling virtuosity to the world once more:

Then up and skail your maikless fires again,
 And multiply new shades o' joy and pain
 Kittle and mony-shaped as licht or rain

The poem can be read as a notice that MacDiarmid's muse is about to be put through her paces after her long sabbatical.

Sixteen of the new poems were printed, along with the Salonika lyric 'Beyond Exile' (see above, pp. 59-60), in First Hymn to Lenin and other poems, the publication of which was perhaps the only happy result of Grieve's association with the Unicorn Press. (The volume appeared early in December.) An Author's Note described the contents as 'all incidental and separable short items interspersed throughout "Clann Albann"'. There was no mention of The Muckle Toon. Subsequent statements, however, retrospectively ascribed the First Hymn poems to the opening volume of the 'five-fold scheme'.¹²² The fact that the First Hymn collection was a limited edition should alert us to the danger of regarding the selection and arrangement of the poems as representative of the author's ultimate intention for them - a point made, too strongly alas, in a deferential letter from Grieve to Blackwoods:

I am sure that you will appreciate that just as in the case of "The Lucky Bag" (Porpoise Press) the fact that I had "The First Hymn to Lenin" published otherwise than by your firm was simply because I regarded it as an interim work instead of a substantive production and felt that your firm had already done so much for me that it was to our mutual advantage in regard to minor works to divide the responsibility to some extent.¹²³

The First Hymn's Author's Note echoed the poet's October letter to Soutar by expressing the hope that Clann Albann's first volume would 'appear next Spring, and the remaining four volumes during the ensuing months'. This schedule proved wildly optimistic. By spring only two poems had been added to The Muckle Toon (see below, p.125). A sheaf of manuscripts in the keeping of the Morris Library at the University of Delaware suggests that that volume was not MacDiarmid's prime poetic concern in the early part of the new year. The sheaf consists of sixteen apparently new poems, many of them bearing dates, along with a version of a Scots poem which had been published in 1928 and a sequential arrangement of some of the English lyrics of the early twenties.¹²⁴ Two dates predominate - January 25th and 27th. The poems, therefore, seem to have been compiled within

a fortnight of their author's divorce. One of them, 'The Shifting Shadow' - which was published, with a different third stanza, as 'Fly Down, Eagle...' (C.P. I, p.380) in 1934 - may be read as an indication that a sense of overpowering adversity was responsible for MacDiarmid's temporary suspension of work on The Muckle Toon:

Come doon, eagle; come doon, sun!
Licht upon my sheckle bane.
Tell me hoo to gar the black
Shadows frae my sang begane.

Flee back, eagle; flee back, sun.
There's naething you can tell.
A' my woes are human anes
That I maun solve mysel'!

When we're heich and clear as you
Wha's woes were owre or oors begun
What at least as greater still
'll tyauve wi' shaddaws, eagle, sun?

If the Langholm book demanded more energy than the poet could muster at this very bleak point in his personal history, less ambitious schemes could be attempted. Accordingly, on January 27th he offered Blackwoods a collection called Alone with the Alone, featuring some such arrangement of his early English poems as is to be found in the Delaware manuscript,

in addition to the long, but as yet unwritten, title poem.¹²⁵ The Edinburgh firm showed little interest in the project and Alone with the Alone joined the ghostly company of MacDiarmid's unpublished books.

There is no doubt but that 1932 began inauspiciously. At the end of February the poet acknowledged that for some time past he had 'been up to the neck in worries of all sorts'.¹²⁶ Yet, as he observed in an essay published some months later, 'great poetry is ... the product of suffering conquered and transcendent'¹²⁷, and, if we cannot measure his sufferings at this period, we can certainly measure his success in conquering them, agreeing with the poet that some of the finest poetry he was ever to achieve was written in 1932.¹²⁸ Many of the poems of this year have nothing to do with The Muckle Toon, and many are of a lesser order of ambition and competence than even the slightest productions of 1931. The new Langholm pieces lack the admirable stylistic and thematic homogeneity of the First

Hymn's contents, yet they manifest in their variety creative energies of an intensity MacDiarmid had not succeeded in releasing since his hectic months of work on A Drunk Man. In view of the natural division between the Clann Albann writings of 1931 and those of 1932, it has been found convenient at certain points in the chapters which follow to deal separately with 'the poetry of 1931' (meaning Muckle Toon pieces composed and published - happily for the scholar, the terms seem to be interchangeable in this case - in 1931) and 'the later Muckle Toon poetry' (meaning pieces written for Clann Albann's opening volume in 1932 or later).

Biographers of MacDiarmid can hardly fail to relate his artistic rejuvenation to the influence of Valda Trevlyn, the Cornish girl he met in London in 1931. While 'By Wauchopeside' (C.P. II, p.1083; M.T., p.162) and 'Second Hymn to Lenin' (C.P.I, p.323; M.T., p.141) both appear to have been written by the middle of the second month of the new year, it was not until late spring, when the poet left London and the wranglings of the Unicorn Press behind and

took up residence with Valda in the Sussex village to Thakeham, that work on The Muckle Toon got under way in earnest again. The couple stayed in 'Cootes', a cottage owned by one of their more exotic associates, Count Geoffrey Potocki de Montalk, editor of the Right Review, who was at the time 'in gaol for publishing obscene literature' (L.P., p.48).

In the early part of his Thakeham sojourn MacDiarmid drew for his poetry as never before upon the 'secret reservoir' (L.P., p.20) of his memories of Langholm. 'Water Music' (C.P. I, p.333; M.T., p.16) was written before the end of April, 'Tarras' (C.P. I, p.337; M.T., p.147) drafted that month but extensively revised before its publication in the Free Man at the end of June, while the short but exquisitely wrought lyric 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton' (C.P. I, p.331; M.T., p.150) existed, in draft form at least, by early July.¹²⁹ Though these are 'polysemous' poems (to borrow a term from the first stanza of Part I of 'Water Music'), the element of celebration of locality is stronger in them than in the Muckle Toon verse of 1931. A reminiscence by Helen Cruickshank, who visited the poet in Sussex, confirms the impression given by the poems that his early weeks there constituted an oasis of peace in his

otherwise very turbulent English exile:

(O)ne day I walked some ten miles to the village of Thakeham, whither Chris had retreated. There, I soon found the thatched cottage, where Valda Trevlyn opened the door to my knock. I fell in love at once with this lovely Cornish girl who later became the poet's second wife, and together we went in search of Chris. We located him in "The White Lion" playing shove-ha'penny with Sussex yeomen who had dropped in for their pint on the way home from work. Chris, to my delight, looked in perfect health, and was writing hard. He later read to me his poem "Water-Music", which he had just completed. I thought "he'll come through all right". I was much impressed by Valda, who was gay and hospitable and full of wonderful courage, although their financial position was pretty desperate.

I returned to Edinburgh feeling that I could reassure anxious friends who were as concerned as I was about the poet's future. He seemed to many of us to be the king-pin around which our literary hopes for Scotland were built, and no evil must befall him.¹³⁰

MacDiarmid's own literary hopes were still built around Clann Albann which, according to a letter he wrote to Gunn on June 14th, was going to be 'some book'.¹³¹ He declared that he had 'done more poetry this last two months than in the previous two years: and much of it - even to my severest critic, F. G. Scott - among my very best.' Ten days later he was

confident enough to predict to the same correspondent that the first volume of Clann Albann would take no more than a month to complete.¹³² The poet had certainly written a considerable body of verse - much of it subsequently lost, as the references to and quotations from mysterious poems in F. G. Scott's letters of this period show - but his energies had by no means been wholly devoted to The Muckle Toon. Even his autobiographical impulse was not undivided, if an interview with the poet published on April 30th is to be believed: "Clann Albainn" contains few personalities (I am reserving these for a very outspoken "Autobiography of a Scots Poet", which I am now writing).¹³³ Scott, who was the first to see each new poem, evidently feared that MacDiarmid was losing control of his material. Many of the poems the composer was receiving had no perceptible link with Clann Albann; he was concerned that those that did belong to the scheme lacked the stanzaic uniformity of the previous year's work. So when he wrote to congratulate the poet on 'Tarras' ('C'est magnifique! - the very best thing you've ever done! tremendous etc., etc., etc.')

he made a corrective proposition:

What about "Clann Albainn" in 1 (O.N.E.) volume of 600 lines - there are 60 here - or in 6000 lines if you like? and as near this standard as is humanly possible throughout? The rag-bag and waste-paper basket won't do. It's fundamentally a lack of self respect like a man coming out on the street after being in a public lavatory with his trousers hanging down. He invites a kick i' the arse and he generally gets a few. So now for it:

"Clann Albainn" in iambic tetrameters, eleven lines to the stanza, and 100 stanzas! That should give you all the room you need! And I'll promise here and now to aid and abet at my damndest and go on the spree with you for a week when it's finished.¹³⁴

Scott's advice was wholly ignored by MacDiarmid, who had already rejected the notion of using a uniform stanza for Clann Albann and was unwilling to temper his ambitions with regard to the scale of the opus. On July 16th he told Blackwoods that he had over the previous twelve months 'written very considerably more poetry than all my previous work put together'. He explained:

It is all part of a huge scheme which I am steadily working out but I am not yet in a position to seek publication even for the first volume of this although that already amounts to over 8000 lines.¹³⁵

Few MacDiarmid scholars would register surprise if it were to emerge that hundreds of lines of verse written in 1931 and 1932 failed to find their way into print. It is nevertheless difficult to avoid the conclusion that the poet's figure of 8,000 lines is greatly inflated, implying as it does that by mid-July 1932 the Muckle Toon writings amounted to more than twice the bulk of all the surviving poetry of the period.

The main business of the quoted letter to Blackwoods was to sound out the company on the possibility of issuing 'a small book containing the very best of the short separable items' from the 'mass of writing' the poet had in hand. Long practice at rejecting MacDiarmid's work facilitated a prompt reply in which the publishers expressed themselves 'very doubtful about' the proposed book.¹³⁶ They ventured the opinion, based on the evidence of the sample verses included in the poet's letter, that 'the majority of readers' would find the volume's contents 'too difficult to follow'. Within a week of receiving this disappointing but all too predictable response from Blackwoods, MacDiarmid wrote to Eneas Mackay, who ran a small press in Stirling, explaining that while he had

'two books of poetry coming out this Autumn', he was 'anxious to put out another small volume of poems, entitled "Scots Unbound and Other Poems"....'.¹³⁷ The 'two books' were presumably conjured up in an attempt to disguise how anxious the poet was for an outlet for his work.¹³⁸ He betrayed something of his desperation, however, by offering to guarantee the 'small volume' to 'the extent of £25 against any loss shown six months after publication'. Mackay accepted the offer, and Scots Unbound and other poems came out, in an edition limited to 350 numbered copies, within three months of MacDiarmid's first approach to him. The book was the poet's last collection of new Scots poems, and the last of his important books in either prose or verse to be published by a Scottish firm for more than two decades. There can be few bleaker illustrations of the impoverished cultural ambience of his creative struggles than the fact that, the smallness of the edition notwithstanding, Scots Unbound and other poems was a commercial failure. A little over a year after its appearance MacDiarmid was called upon to pay the £25 he had promised.¹³⁹

The Scots Unbound collection poses problems for the compiler of The Muckle Toon. True, the Author's Note states that the contents belong to the first volume of Clann Albann (see above, p. 6). The poet further manifested his desire that the book be seen in the context of his epic undertaking by asking his publisher to devise a format as close as possible to that of First Hymn to Lenin and other poems for it.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless he sent Mackay a Prospectus which made no reference at all to the Clann Albann scheme:

In this important new volume of poems Hugh MacDiarmid not only gives us a few more of the highly concentrated lyrics with which he established his reputation, but a series of longer poems in which he carries to a new stage his work for the revival of the Scots Vernacular. We have here the maturest work of a poet who has achieved a world-wide reputation and evoked such tributes as these ... etc., etc.¹⁴¹

A number of poems in the collection, most notably the title-poem (C.P. I, p. 340), have at best only a tangential connection with the themes introduced in the Langholm poetry of 1931. Late in life MacDiarmid told Ruth McQuillan that his Author's

Note's ascription of the Scots Unbound poems to the proposed 'five-fold scheme' was not reliable.¹⁴² The procedure I have followed in selecting items from the volume for inclusion in my Muckle Toon compilation is outlined in A Note on the Text.

The relative peace of mind which had made possible the creative flowering of the late spring and early summer of 1932 was soon ruptured by mounting financial worries. Imprisonment does not appear to have prevented Count de Montalk from pursuing the poet for the rent for his cottage, while the latter was experiencing difficulty keeping up the payments on the furniture he had hired for it.¹⁴³ On June 14th Grieve wrote to Gunn of his predicament, in terms which recall the threat with which he had horrified his parents more than twenty years before (see above, p. 50):

I have not earned 10/- a week for the past four or five months.... I hope I can hold on here for a little longer in order to finish the books I am busy on, but it is exceedingly doubtful, and I may have to become a tramp in real earnest any day.¹⁴⁴

Tramps, however, do not have 'responsibilities', the increasing number of which were rendering the poet's prospects of a future in the vagrant fraternity more rather than less remote at this time. Valda was pregnant. When, on July 28th, after an unusually protracted confinement, she gave birth to James Michael, Grieve's third and last child, she was ordered to remain in hospital for a further two weeks. The couple, who had made provision to pay a few days' medical and maintenance fees, now faced a month's expenses. Their economic burden had become impossible.¹⁴⁵

In the course of a 'Special Interview' printed in the Free Man on April 30th, the poet let it be known that he regarded his exile from his homeland as permanent:

Asked about his own work and whether he would ever return to Scotland, Mr. Grieve replied that he was too completely at variance with practically everything that was thought and believed in in Scotland to-day (even by those who imagined they were promoting a National Movement) that he thought any question of his returning was impossible. "Besides", he added, "I must live and nobody would give me a job. They daren't even print my stuff."¹⁴⁶

By midsummer, however, after more than three years in England, he had realised that he had no greater hope of finding employment there than in Scotland.¹⁴⁷ And, no longer in a financial position to make such brief forays north of the border as he had managed in 1930 and 1931, he was suffering the pangs of exile more keenly than ever. He confided to Gunn that he felt 'disastrously cut off from Scotland and most of the activities that meant so much to me'.¹⁴⁸ Soon after Valda's discharge from the nursing home in Steyning the family left Sussex and, after a brief stop-over in London, headed for Scotland.¹⁴⁹

MacDiarmid was 'sittin' in Liverpool' when he began The Muckle Toon, and living deep in rural England when he composed his most fluent celebrations of the felicities of his native region. The project appears to have been both inspired and sustained by exile. Of the Muckle Toon pieces published in 1933 and 1934, those whose dates of composition can be determined were written in England. F. G. Scott's letters show that 'The Monument' (C.P. I, p. 386; M.T., p. 40), 'On Coming Home' (C.P. I, p. 381; M.T., p. 63),

'The Scots Renaissance' (C.P. II, p. 1274; M.T., p. 151); 'The Kernigal' (C.P. II, p. 1275; M.T., p. 152) and 'The Point of Honour' (C.P. I, p. 387; M.T., p. 164) all existed, in draft versions at least, before the poet left Thakeham.¹⁵⁰ I have been unable to establish the dates of composition of 'Whuchulls' (C.P. II, p. 1089; M.T., p. 153) and 'In the Langfall' (C.P. II, p. 1269; M.T., p. 159), two Langholm poems published in 1933. 'Whuchulls' is certainly one of the finest poems to take MacDiarmid's native region for its setting, and it may well have been written after the poet's return from England. On publication in the January 1933 issue of the Modern Scot, however, the piece was said to belong, not to Clann Albann, but to a hitherto unheard of work, 'In the Caledonian Forest' (see Commentary, p. 452).

MacDiarmid spent eight months on the Scottish mainland - in Edinburgh, Longniddry and Corstorphine - before leaving for the Shetland Islands, where his poetry entered a vigorous new phase.¹⁵¹ It was in this unsettled eight-month period that he effectively abandoned The Muckle Toon. Not only was the stimulus of exile gone, but his literary activities in general

were under threat from what a friend euphemistically termed the 'social interruptions' of life in the capital.¹⁵² It is impossible to determine to what extent the indifference of his countrymen - identified by Saurat as potentially the greatest obstacle to a successful epic undertaking by the poet (see above, p. 98) - was responsible for his loss of faith in Clann Albann. It is not impossible, however, to measure that indifference: almost 300 of the 350 copies of Scots Unbound and other poems remained unsold by the second week of December 1932.¹⁵³

"With a Lifting of the Head" (C.P. I, p.489; M.T., p.172), probably the last of MacDiarmid's poems written with Clann Albann in mind, was the only item to be assigned to a later volume than The Muckle Toon. There is reason to believe that this lyric dates from the poet's early weeks in the Shetlands.¹⁵⁴ When it first appeared - as "By a Lifting of the Head" - in the July 1933 issue of the Modern Scot, it was said to belong to 'the fifth volume of Clann Albann'. On its inclusion in the Second Hymn to Lenin collection two years later it was given the title which has been preserved in the Contents table of the Complete Poems, the title, that is to say, of the proposed fifth

volume of Clann Albann. The poem is of interest in the context of MacDiarmid's abandonment of his 'five-fold scheme' not because of its suspiciously swaggering expression of confidence in his future ability to discharge the 'immortal song', but because of its recognition that he has not yet been 'given' to do so:

Scotland, when it is given to me
 As it will be
 To sing the immortal song
 The crown of all my long
 Travail with thee
 I know in that high hour
 I'll have, and use, the power
 Sublime contempt to blend
 With its ecstatic end,
 As who, in love's embrace,
 Forgetfully may frame
 Above the poor slut's face
 Another woman's name.

This recognition that the 'high hour' of 'immortal song' is not yet at hand is an acknowledgement, akin to that made with regard to Cenchrastus in the letter to Ogilvie of December 16th 1930, that major achievement has eluded the poet. "'With a Lifting of the Head"' can be read as MacDiarmid's valediction to Clann Albann.

'Clann Albann: An Explanation' was published a month after the lyric we have been discussing first appeared in print, and a full year after the poet's return to Scotland from Thakeham. MacDiarmid's only lengthy statement on his 'five-fold scheme' throws much light on his conception of the proposed epic, and offers rewarding avenues of approach not only to the achieved poetry of The Muckle Toon but also to many other items in his production in the thirties and later. These matters are pursued in Chapter Four (pp.346-58). We are concerned here with the 'Explanation's' revelations about the poet's attitude in the summer of 1933 to the viability of Clann Albann, rather than with its description of the subject-matter of that work.

The 'Explanation' repeatedly intimates that the project it discusses may never come into existence. While MacDiarmid stops short of admitting that he has abandoned Clann Albann, he acknowledges that 'the whole scheme may never be carried out' (M.T., pp.234-5) and even that the realised portions 'must fall far short of the conception and in many important respects may have little or no correspondence with it' (M.T., p. 235). He states that he cannot promise the reader all of these completed segments, as some

of them may have to await 'posthumous publication' (M.T., p.235). His despair of finding an outlet for his work is cited also to account for his unwillingness to set a date for the appearance of the opening volume of his opus. He points out that

these are difficult days for poetry publishing, especially on such a magnitude in a linguistic medium debarred from most of the English reading public and otherwise of a kind which cannot appeal to any large body of readers.

(M.T., p.234)

The poet counters these gloomy reflections somewhat by stating that he has 'completed considerable portions' of volumes Two to Five of his scheme (M.T., p.234). The fact that the 'Explanation' gives considerably more specific treatment to The Muckle Toon than to these later volumes, however, suggests that only the opening fifth of the work got significantly beyond the planning stage. Yet we cannot accept in the sense in which it was intended MacDiarmid's claim to have 'practically finished writing' (M.T., p.234) this first fifth. Neither, on the evidence of the surviving material at any rate, can we agree that The Muckle Toon is 'longer than... "Cencrastus"' (M.T., p.234).

I shall argue in Chapter Four (p. 517) that the greatest poetry of the Shetland period registers the implications of MacDiarmid's failure to realise more than a fragment of his ambitious Clann Albann scheme. We shall see (in A Note on the Text, and in various of the Text's 'related items') that he returned at a number of points in his later prose and verse to Langholm themes which might have had a place in the first volume of that scheme. Yet the poet made very few references to Clann Albann after the publication of the 'Explanation'. On July 16th 1939, however, he responded to a query by William Burt, one of his teachers at Langholm Academy (see above, p.28), in terms which suggest that even seven years after his return to Scotland he found it difficult to admit that the project upon which he had expended so much creative energy during his English exile would remain unfinished:

The Clann Albann got shunted aside by my marital and economic disasters, and I have not reverted to it. It would not be a very difficult job to put all the parts of it I've already done into their proper sequence, and complete the structure in which they were to take their place, and add the other unwritten parts as originally planned. 155

Having occasion to quote a Muckle Toon piece in Lucky Poet, MacDiarmid neglected to name the work from which it was taken, ascribing it merely to an 'unfinished autobiographical poem' (L.P., p. 17). Writing to Ruth McQuillan in 1969 to express his approval of the 'angle of approach' to his poetry she proposed to adopt in her doctoral dissertation, he commented on Clann Albann: An Explanation:

I remember it, of course, but I must look at it again (I haven't seen it for a quarter of a century at least) and I may be moved to take it up again and do the job.¹⁵⁶

The Author's Note to the Complete Poems contains the poet's final, glum reference to his 'five-fold scheme' of the early thirties (see above, p. 7). MacDiarmid's last Author's Note was written so long after the abandonment of the enterprise that Clann Albann is recalled as a two-part rather than a five-part work.

CHAPTER TWO

'SERVICES OF SIGNIFICATION' : ASPECTS OF
MEANING AND LANGUAGE IN MACDIARMID'S WORK

'I've gotta use words when I talk to you'
T. S. Eliot, Fragment of an Agon

Problems of language are central to the poetic development of Hugh MacDiarmid. Every original poet, it is true, must struggle with language if he is to refine an idiom suited to the peculiarities of his sensibility and artistic aims. Yet the question of language is particularly searching in MacDiarmid's case. There are two main reasons - or, more accurately, clusters of reasons - for this, the first relating to the poet's urgent life-long concern with the possibilities and limitations of verbal communication, the second to the fact that the bulk of his most remarkable poetry was achieved in a different language (Scots) to that in which he conducted discursive thought (English).

The interaction of these factors did much to shape MacDiarmid's career: he might never have attempted to resurrect the words and phrases entombed in Jamieson's Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language and other word-lists but for his philosophical interest in the power of the word; equally, that interest might have petered out had he not reaped early and spectacular artistic rewards on substituting the northern for the southern tongue as his poetic medium. For organisational reasons the philosophical issue will be dealt with separately from the question of Scots in the pages which follow. Our discussion of these matters must range far and wide over the poet's work if it is to adequately depict the place of The Muckle Toon in his career. This chapter, however, is not designed as a comprehensive statement on Language in MacDiarmid.

A) Language and Communication

(i) The Competing Tortoise: The insufficiency of the word to disclose the realities of perception and cognition is pondered upon in, and indeed exemplified by, the prose sketches of Grieve's first book. The reader's difficulty in characterising the six 'stories' of Annals of the Five Senses is anticipated in the volume's Dedication, where the author writes of 'these ... psychological studies, essays, mosaics (call them what you will) which I have (perhaps the best word in the meantime is) "designed".'¹ Much later MacDiarmid would indicate that Rilke's Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge contained the sort of prose he would be proud to have written (L.P., p.33). Though the Annals sketches look distinctly inelegant in the company of the Aufzeichnungen, they share something of the extraordinary inwardness of the Austrian's writings. They are concerned with the hectic activity taking place 'under the woolly scalp of an undistinguished Scottish free-lance' (A., p.28).

The protagonist of each story is a projection of Grieve himself - obviously in 'Cerebral' (A., p.21) and 'A Four Years' Harvest' (A., p.61), somewhat disguisedly in 'The Never-Yet-Explored' (A., p.129) and 'A Limelight From A Solitary Wing' (A., p.155). The sketches constitute a series of explorations of the psychology of one who is 'athrill with the miracle of sentience' (A., p. 23), and so intent upon his own 'dexterous and irrepressible intellectuality' (A., p.63) as to sometimes feel 'like an inside without an outside' (A., p.29). One of the problems that exercises the 'irrepressible intellectuality' of the Annals' protagonists is that of finding precise verbal correlatives or even adequate pre-verbal cognitive categories for sensations and states of mind. This problem presents itself as follows to the heroine of 'The Never-Yet-Explored':

If means only existed or could be devised not so much for expressing in words, but for thinking exactly about, such matters, how much nearer she would get to herself; vast regions of perceptions and correspondences eluded the imaging powers of her surface consciousness. What a small part of the whole real experience could the tiresome cerebral pantomime of voice and vision contrive to represent! She sought after clear instances of audition, distinct "interior

words", whereby she might translate her intense intuitions into forms with which her surface mind might deal. She was actuated by motives conforming to a rhythm too great for her to grasp, so that manifestations of it appeared erratic and unprepared.

(A., p.134)

The states of heightened awareness delineated in the Annals sketches have elicited differing, though not necessarily contradictory, interpretations from the critics. Kenneth Buthlay has suggested that the poet's experiences as a victim of cerebral malaria in his R.A.M.C. days are explored in the most vivid of the six studies, 'Café Scene' (A., p.45).² Certainly Grieve's concern with mental processes (or 'psychological movements', as he calls them in the 'In Acknowledgement' page of Annals) could not be expected to remain unaffected by the fact that the processes of which he could speak authoritatively had once been disordered by fever. He appears indeed to have drawn upon the extreme particularities of his personal experience for literary effect, in an attempt to shock his readers into the realisation that quotidian mental activity, rarely reflected upon, has something of the bustling quality he depicts.

'Pathological' and 'psychological', as the author observes in one of the sketches, are 'practically, here at all events, synonymous terms' (A., p.144).

It is possible to relate the cerebral excitation Grieve struggles to represent in Annals of the Five Senses to the powerful personal tensions which can be glimpsed behind the poetry of the mid-twenties. (This point is discussed below, pp.173-6). The mental tumult celebrated in the sketches can alternatively be seen as the fermentation of creative energies which would, in time, issue in the mature poetry of MacDiarmid. The line of inquiry I wish to pursue here, however, is that inaugurated by Roderick Watson, who has viewed the Annals prose as an artist's response to Henri Bergson's reflections on the nature of human awareness.³

So crowded is the MacDiarmid 'pantheon' that concentration on the influence of any one of his intellectual preceptors exposes commentary to the risk of imbalance. Yet Bergson is a special case.

Despite the fact that the poet never praised him in verse - as he did such mentors as Dostoievsky, Solovyov, Doughty and Rilke⁴ - and seems never to have devoted an essay to explicating his thought, his creative writings clearly bear the stamp of the French philosopher's influence. This is true notwithstanding the jibe at fashionable Bergsonian vitalism cited with apparent approval in 'A Four Year's Harvest':

Most extensively he recalled a woman writer whose professed aim was to record the spiritual tendencies of the hour and to stimulate thought about them. She had perhaps what would be quite generally deemed to be a great deal of ability, but sometimes she had a glib fluency which gave an impression of superficiality and rushed her through dubious statements on to preposterous epic paths. . . . The second part of her book discussed the modern tendency to discredit reason in comparison with instinct (the frequent quotation of élan vitale (sic) supplying the shibboleth),

(A., p.95)

We shall see that the evolutionary vision of The Muckle Toon owes much to Bergson, a phrase from whose Creative Evolution even finds its way into a key passage of the poetry (below, pp.372-4). For the moment, however, it is the philosopher's concern with the nature of consciousness which

demands our attention, in particular those aspects of that concern which are reflected in the Scottish poet's early work.

Henri Bergson (1859-1941) was struck by the fundamentally dynamic character of experience, a character lost or distorted in the attempts of rationalist philosophy to define the real. Life in its immediacy, which Bergson called real duration, is a continuum. As it freezes that continuum into a series of static 'snapshots', analytic thought is incapable of encompassing reality, the nature of which is revealed rather in intuition, our immediate awareness of the world. Watson's suggestion in his essay "'Water Music" and the Stream of Consciousness'⁵ to the effect that the Annals sketches attempt to convey intuitive apprehensions of reality in words is vindicated by the following piece of philosophical chatter from Lucky Poet (p.283):

My philosophy interrogates 'immediate experience'. This I find to be a flux or 'stream of consciousness', whose constant basis is sensation. Distinction, variety, individuality, and definiteness are all the work of thought, and not given to immediate experience as such. So far, I go with Bergson

The attempt to mesh intuition in language involves Grieve in a paradox, for language is the tool of the analytic intellect. How can duration be relayed by the instrument of that form of knowing which inevitably distorts duration? This paradox accounts in some measure for the unsatisfactory impression the Annals sketches make on the reader. The following paragraph from 'Cerebral' is perhaps typical of the best writing in the book:

Night and day, city and country, sunshine and gaslight and electric blaze, myriad-faceted existences and his own extraordinarily vivid pictorial sense of his own cranial geography and anatomical activities were all co-visible to him, I say, and perfectly composed, without any conflict or strain. Nor were any of the elements permanent or passive. All of them lived, and each in perfect freedom, modifying or expanding, easing off or intensifying continually. They moved freely, each in its own particular whim, and they moved also with the unity of one impression. As one thing receded into unreality, the reality of other and ever other things became newly apparent (albeit oddly familiar and repetitive) taking him like trumpets. Colours flashed in and out like trout in clear waters. Surface impressions scuttled everywhere like rabbits with white scuts of discredit and under the ground (the darkness of which, needless to say, had a perfectly penetrable and gracious quality), all manner of strange things led busy but quite undisquieting existences, intricate, yet orderly. But easy comprehension and complete possession were never lost. The transfusing vitality of his interest never failed to discharge to the tiniest detail the demands of that versatility of sensation and speculation. He was athrill with the miracle

of sentience, quivering in every filament of his perceptions with an amazing aliveness. All his thoughts were to him (although all the while away down in the unguessable depths of his being, where the egos of his actualities and his appearances debated without end in the forum of the absolute, doubts may have been expressed as to what was becoming in a man of his years), every one of them sweet, careless, fragrant interpretations of the gratitude of being alive - Elysian fields of cogitation where all happy words which had endeavoured in honesty and humility to express for him raptures beyond adumbration, after their patient services of signification, entered into their full felicity - brilliant, joyous, poignant pages of appreciation, as sensitive and magical as the mind of youth ever lent to the wonder of being.

(A., pp. 23-4)

The 'patient services of signification' of these words are insufficient to render the directness and flux of actual awareness. This language seems too long-winded and abstract to convey the immediacy of consciousness. A distinction might be drawn here between the particular deficiencies of Grieve's language and the restrictions which limit the power of linguistic symbols generally. Watson has noted a lack of concrete detail in the prose.⁶ Formally, the Annals sketches are of little interest: Grieve's rampant parentheses are feeble counterparts indeed of the sleights Joyce, Faulkner and other modern writers effected in their efforts to break up the syntactical structures of discourse and represent

the deep life of the mind. There is, however, no need to judge whether the shortcomings of the Annals sketches stem mainly from the poverty of the author's technique or from the a priori unsuitability of language for the task he sets it. What is important is the fact that these early prose experiments provided Grieve with an object-lesson in the expressive limitations of language. A sense of those limitations was to haunt the poetry of his maturity.

At some points in his work MacDiarmid hints that language is incapable of communicating psychological truth; at others he seems to despair of expressing metaphysical reality in words. There is, indeed, a certain confusion between subjective experience and objective knowledge in the poet's thought. This confusion may have had its source in Bergsonian philosophy. By a simple identification of the flux of consciousness with the evolutionary movement of life 'out there', the French philosopher bypassed the difficulties of cognitive theory. A sympathetic commentator has written:

When ... Bergson turns to a general theory of evolution, as in L'évolution créatrice, it is not ... easy to see how this theory can be said to be based on intuition.

Even if we are immediately aware of a vital impetus or élan vital in ourselves, a good deal of extrapolation is required in order to make this intuition the basis for a general view of evolution.⁷

Correspondences, which must be argued for meticulously if their presence is not to weaken a philosophical system, may, by their mere evocation, strengthen a poem. Thus the symbolic import of the thistle in MacDiarmid's most famous work is enriched by that very failure to discriminate between the inner and outer domains upon which Bergson can be indicted. The Scottish poet's polymorphous thistle is, as Bergson said of the structure of reality, 'a continuous creation of unforeseeable novelty'.⁸ It is also an emblem of the inner life, of the ceaseless change which is a condition of consciousness. Highlighting the continuity of purpose between the Annals sketches and A Drunk Man, Watson has called the entire poem 'the stream of' the protagonist's 'consciousness'.⁹

A Drunk Man ends with an invocation to a numinous silence. The full significance of the sequence's concluding lyric has been the subject of a critical controversy, the details of which need not detain us here.¹⁰ Germane to our present concern is the

poet's sense that, after the exhausting utterance which constitutes the poem, after all the sayable has been said, the unsayable remains - undiminished by his efforts, aloof, transcendent, and pregnant with possibilities that can never be realised in speech. By comparison with the Annals sketches A Drunk Man is an artistic triumph. Yet it ends with an acknowledgement - a strangely jubilant acknowledgement - that consciousness and reality have once more slipped through the net of words:

Yet ha'e I Silence left, the croon o' a'

No' her, wha on the hills langsyne I saw
Liftin' a foreheid o' perpetual snaw.

No' her, wha in the how-dumb-deid o' nicht
Kyths, like Eternity in Time's despite.

No' her, withooten shape, wha's name is Daith,
No' Him, unkennable abies to faith

- God whom, gin e'er He saw a man, 'ud be
E'en mair dumfooner'd at the sicht than he

- But Him, whom nocht in man or Deity,
Or Daith or Dreid or Laneliness can touch,
Wha's deed owre often and has seen owre much.

O I ha'e Silence left

(C.P. I, pp. 166-7)

To Circumjack Cencrastus abandons the psychological focus of A Drunk Man and concerns itself exclusively with the external domain. The 'argument' of Cencrastus was outlined as follows in a letter written by the poet almost a decade after the sequence's appearance:

Cencrastus, the Curly Snake, is a Gaelic (or Scottish) version of the idea common to Indian and other mythologies that underlying Creation there is a great snake - and that its movements form the pattern of history. In my poem that snake represents not only an attempt to glimpse the underlying pattern of human history but identifies it with the evolution of human thought - the principle of change and the main factor in the revolutionary development of human consciousness, "man's incredible variation", moving so intricately and swiftly that it is difficult to watch, and impossible to anticipate its next moves. The poem as a whole therefore is a poem of Homage to Consciousness, a paean to Creative Thought.¹¹

MacDiarmid's attempt to trace the movement of thought in history can be seen as an ambitious, if doomed, development of the outward dimension of the thistle's meaning in the earlier sequence. The Drunk Man had asserted:

... I've nae faith in ocht I can explain
And stert whaur the philosophers leave aff,
Content to glimpse its loops I dinna ettle
To land the sea serpent's sel' wi' ony gaff.

(C.P. I, p.87)

The poet did not long share the contentment of his inebriated creation. Cencrastus is a verbal gaff (or, to have recourse to the sort of excruciating pun so beloved by MacDiarmid, a verbal gaffe) designed in the hope of landing the sea serpent, of circumjacking (i.e., enclosing¹²) the Curly Snake. Bergson believed that 'it is only in intuition that the mind can have direct awareness of the actual movement of life'.¹³ If we take the business of Cencrastus to be the presentation of 'the actual movement of life' as conceived by the philosopher, then the poet's endeavour was to find words for the object of an intuition. MacDiarmid, that is to say, 'had committed himself to nothing less than the task of expressing the inexpressible', as John Herdman, approaching the problem of the 1930 sequence from a slightly different angle to ours, has pointed out.¹⁴ At the very least, it can be affirmed that the poet was aware that his latest undertaking had a paradoxical aspect. The opening lines implicitly acknowledge that language cannot circumjack Cencrastus. Analogies and negative comparisons take the place of description in this initial salute to the serpent:

There is nae movement in the warld like yours.
 You are as different frae a'thing else
 As water frae a book, fear frae the stars...
 The licht that History sheds on onything
 Is naething to the licht you shed on it.
 Time's dourest riddles to solution slide
 Like Lautréamont's cormorant: and Man
 Shudders to see you slippin' into place....

(C.P. I, p.181)

A page later the Curly Snake is told:

... you rin coonter to the rhythms o' thocht,
 Wrenched oot o' recognition a' words fail
 To haud you

Such lines anticipate much ill-tempered complaint about language later in the sequence. Side by side with the poet's anguish at the feebleness of his own Anglo-Scots idiom - 'Guid Scots wi' English a' hamstrung' (C.P. I, p.236) - there is his insistent conviction that language does not 'square wi' fact' (C.P. I, p.218). A passage in praise of silence (C.P. I, pp. 218-19) echoes and to some extent clarifies the meaning of A Drunk Man's lyrical coda. Yet Cenrastus offers a more significant correspondence with the inarticulacy in which the weary protagonist of the earlier work finds solace. The later sequence, too, closes on an awareness that the power of the word is not inexhaustible. The alternative to speech which now beckons to the poet, however, demands more of him than mere contemplative

acquiescence in its truth. Brooding upon the
tininess of the fraction of humanity which actually
contributes to the development of the species, he
reflects that historically significant figures

never come except in due season
And croon a' controversies wi' a reason
Never heard o' before - yont ilka faction
- AND AYE A REASON FOR ACTION!

(C.P. I, p.292)

The block-lettered words constitute the sequence's
final line, if we except a spray of italicized
quotations in Gaelic and French. Along with the
following little-known piece published in 1928,
they may be taken to indicate the drift of MacDiarmid's
thought during the Cencrastus years on the relationship
between creative writing and political commitment:

The Question of Leadership

I do not ask to lead, but when at last
The time I work for comes then must I have
A holiday from pen and paper (that labour past)
Though only from my study to my grave,
Those graves that more than leaders we will need
Ere anyone has anything worth while to lead!

I do not ask to lead, but let me be
Foremost amongst the led, and let me see
Thought flower to action, let me hear
My own words speak like rifles in my ear,
And show there is no issue to my work
That I myself will for an instant shirk.

(C.P. II, p.1246)

(C.P. I, p.342)

'The Question of Leadership' and the muted call to action which lends a shaky resolution to Cencrastus point forward to the bold, if qualified, Marxist pose of the Muckle Toon poems. His intense prolificacy in the years following the publication of Cencrastus, however, demonstrates that it was not as an alternative to poetry that MacDiarmid embraced political commitment. Neither did he consider that a complementary strategy of art and action offered a solution to the problems of linguistic efficacy which had for so long cast a shadow over his work. Indeed a poem written at Thakeham in 1932, 'Scots Unbound', expresses more forcefully than any of his works from the twenties the fear that language cannot rescue the mind from solipsistic isolation:

Cwa; think o' nocht but the subtlest skills
 Gubert in folk like you and me,
 Kennin' hoo language, a tortoise competin'
 Wi' licht's velocity, compares wi' sicht,
 Though ve canna imagine life without it,
 Weird world-in-the-world, and seldom think richt
 O' the limitations no' lettin't gi'e
 In libraries as muckle's in the turn o' an e'e,
 Till whiles it seems there isna a taet
 In a' creation it couldna state
 But the neist instant we ken hoo sma'
 A pairt o' life can be voiced ava',
 - Nae words for the simplest experiences even,
 Sae that, set doon in oor best freen's mind,
 A terra incognita we'd find
 Yont a' believin'
 Wi' here and there some feature we kent
 But baffled whichever airt we went
 Wi' unexpected groupin's, proportions, shapes,
 Mismarrows through which a' sense escapes.

(C.P. I, p.345)

That image of the tortoise competing with light's velocity provides a cruel figure for the disparity between style and content in the Annals sketches. None of the extended poems of 1932 has as little bearing upon the themes of The Muckle Toon as 'Scots Unbound'. Yet the very irrelevance of this 'Divertissement Philologique' (Valery Larbaud's phrase serves as the poem's subtitle¹⁵) reveals the extent to which the language problem was on the poet's mind when some of the finest of the Clann Albann writings were being composed.

A second long poem from the Thakeham period highlights the unity of impulse behind MacDiarmid's revolutionary politics and his disquiet at the shortcomings of language. The attenuated lives of the masses are considered in the following passage from 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' in terms of that poem's key symbolism of mill-wheel and water:

Hoo few men ever live
 And what wee local lives at best they ha'e.
 Sirse, science and art might weel rin through the
sieve,
 Or jow like backfa's when the mill is set.
 If maist folk through nae elf-bores dribbled yet
 But in some measure lived to a' life is.
 Wad that their latent poo'ers 'ud loup alist,
 Kyth suddenly a' their wasted past has missed,
 And nae mair leave their lives like languages,

- Mere leaks frae streamin' consciousness as if
 Thocht roon' itsel' raised wa's prohibitive
 O' a' but a fraction o' its possible sway -
 But rax in freedom, nocht inhibitive,
 In fearless flourishin' amidwart,
 Fed by the hail wide world and feedin' it,
 Universal life, like an autonomous tongue
 In which some vision o' you micht be sung

(C.P. I, pp.350 - 1;

M.T., p.136)

The rhetorical excitement of MacDiarmid's meditative verse is sometimes, as in this case, achieved at the expense of lucidity. The poet seems to be alluding here to three separate notions about language which combine at the heart of his thought.

Firstly, his fear that there is no linguistic correlative for certain basic human experiences - a fear we have already encountered in the extract from 'Scots Unbound' - is expressed again by the comparison of languages to 'leaks frae streamin' consciousness'.

Secondly, MacDiarmid suggests that language raises a 'prohibitive' wall round 'thocht'. There is a contradiction between presenting language on the one hand as a trickle from the flood of consciousness, and, on the other, as a barrier which limits the scope of thought. It is as if,

in the emblem evoked by the poet, language is both the dam itself and the water which leaks through it. This figurative confusion, however damaging its consequences for the poem in which it occurs, is not necessarily indicative of an underlying confusion in MacDiarmid's attitude to language. A possible resolution of the problem is suggested by a letter of the poet's which appeared in the Free Man on December 9th 1933.

I draw a distinction between the synthetic use of a language and all other uses of it, either of what is called "a full canon" or of such restricted forms as any dialect, any particular "poetic diction", or any so-called "standard" (e.g. King's English). All of these use parts of the common stock of what may be called "the accepted vocabulary". It is a phenomenon observable in all languages that, despite minor differences, all these usages employ only a very small fraction - and for the most part all the same fraction - of the expressive resources of the language in question, and that the differences in vocabulary of a Shakespeare, a dialect writer like Barnes, a linguistic experimenter like Charles Doughty or Gerard Manley Hopkins, any other writer, and "the man in the street" are so slight in relation to the vast mass of available words they all exclude as to be practically negligible. The reason why nineteenth-twentieths of any language are never used is shrewdly related to the problem of the freedom of consciousness. As Dostoevski said, all human organisations tend to stabilise and perpetuate themselves - to become "a church" and to short-circuit human consciousness. This is most marked in our language-habit, our helpless submission to a fraction of our expressive possibilities - and in this connection it is vitally necessary to remember that language is just as much a determinant of what is expressed in it as a medium of expression. 16

The belief that language can convey only a hint ('mere leaks') of the richness of 'streamin'' consciousness implies that consciousness precedes language, while the claim that linguistic impoverishment limits 'the freedom of consciousness' rests on a view of language as a determinant of consciousness. The opposition between MacDiarmid's two propositions is largely a matter of semantics. 'Consciousness' in 'Depth and the Chthonian Image', that flood compared to which language is a trickle, seems to denote what Bergson called intuition, our immediate apprehension of real duration, while in the letter to the Free Man the same word refers to the fulness of reality attained by the mind through imaginative thought, what the poem calls the 'sway' of 'thocht'.

If my distinction between the two meanings of 'consciousness' is accepted, it will be seen that in repeatedly proclaiming 'the extension of human consciousness' as the ultimate end of his art and politics,¹⁷ MacDiarmid did not necessarily envisage a qualitative transformation in our immediate apprehension of reality, except insofar as such apprehension is coloured by understanding, experience

and emotion ('...a' men see contains faur mair than's seen,/Remembrance o' the past, fancy o' the future', as the poet put it in 'Depth' (ll. 79-80, C.P. I, pp. 348-9; M.T., p.135)). Rather it is reflective consciousness which is limited by our linguistic habits and which it is literature's function to expand. It should be noted however that one critic, James Burns Singer, has maintained that the poet did indeed believe in the imminence of a mutation in pre-reflective consciousness, as a result of which 'the barrier between consciousness and the unconscious will disappear, we shall consciously realise our oneness with life as a whole with which the unconscious is already continuous, though the fact is at present hidden from us, and our enlarged consciousness will give us direct insight into the nature of reality'.¹⁸ MacDiarmid's declaration in yet another Thakeham poem that the psyche 'canna ha'e owre muckle o'' revolution ('The Oon Olympian', l.207, C.P.I, p. 360; M. T. p.130) can be read as evidence in support of Singer's view.

The consciousness-extending art required by MacDiarmid must encompass all the activities whereby humanity defines itself in the highly

diversified culture of the twentieth century. Vast areas of the lexicon, unvisited save by students of this or that specialised discipline, must be incorporated in a new poetic diction. Only by thus joining issue 'at every point with modern intellection' can poetry earn its proper status as 'the rarest and most important faculty of the human mind'.^{18a} The aggrandised Scots idiom of 'Scots Unbound' and 'Depth and the Chthonian Image', with its imported clots of specialist terminology, shows that MacDiarmid was already moving towards such a conception of poetry in 1932, though he would not embark on his encyclopaedic 'world-view' poems for another three or four years.

The third notion about language in the extract from 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' follows from MacDiarmid's perception of a connection between wealth of consciousness and wealth of language. If the poet wishes to synthesize the totality of human consciousness he cannot limit himself to any one language, no matter how exhaustively he deploys its resources. The song of humanity must be sung in all the tongues of men. From 1932 onwards

MacDiarmid devoted much energy to arguing the need for a poetic language which would be, in the words of Solovyov he set at the head of In Memoriam James Joyce (C.P.II, p. 737), 'an interpenetration of all languages'. The call for such a tongue is consistent with the conviction expressed in one of the early prose sketches, 'A Limelight from a Solitary Wing', that 'if every opinion is equally insignificant in itself humanity's bewilderment of thought is a mighty net which somehow holds the whole truth'. (A., p. 160). MacDiarmid believed that Joyce's Finnegans Wake, the polysemous fluency of which is somewhat impertinently saluted in 'Water Music' (C.P. I, p.333; M.T., p.16), represented an attempt to create the 'world language' necessary for the presentation of 'the whole truth'. Hence he dedicated his lengthy prescriptive poem on world language to the memory of the Irish writer. The language desired by MacDiarmid would be free of the delimiting partiality of all existing tongues, but in what sense could it, or indeed any language, be called 'autonomous'? The 'vision' that would be sung by the 'autonomous' language of 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' is the poet's own sense of 'the greatest man can typify/And universalise himself' maist fully by' (ll. 172-3, C.P.I, p.351; M.T., p.137),

a vision, that is to say, of fulfilled individual humanity embodying 'the whole truth' of mankind's 'bewilderment of thought'. 'Autonomous tongue', unfortunately, is one of the number of semantically unclear phrases which mar an otherwise impressive poem. The conjunction of the phrase in a simile with 'universal life', however, together with the frequency with which arguments for 'world language' are advanced in the poet's subsequent prose and verse, will be enough to convince most readers that what MacDiarmid has in mind here is a language capable of housing the whole of human thought. Another poem written in 1932 confirms that the poet had by that year recognised the need for a 'world language', at least to the extent of denying the right of the most geographically dispersed of the globe's tongues to arrogate that role. 'Whuchulls', MacDiarmid's meditation on the swarming animal and plant life of Langholm's Whitshiels Wood, includes the following passage:

Creation disna live frae hand to mooth
 Juist improvish' as it gangs, forsooth,
 And there's nae meanin' in life that bode to da'
 Until we came - or bides a wicer day -
 'Yont brute creation, fools, bairns, unborn, deid.

I'd sing bird-mooth'd wi' ony ither creed,
 No' wi' Creation's nature and its aim;
 Or sing like Miffy - wheesht, world, while he
speaks.

In English - hence, the Universal Speech.
 He has nae wings; let birds pit on the breeks.
 Nae fins. Fish, copy him! And sae let each
 O' Nature's sorts be modelled upon him
 Frae animalculae to Seraphim.

(C.P. II, pp. 1091-2;

M.T., p.155)

This poem asserts that all forms of life must be adverted to, their peculiarity and diversity acknowledged, if the mind is to encompass Creation. The excerpted lines anticipate the observation, made much later in the poet's career, that a language is 'a form of life' (In Memoriam James Joyce, C.P.II, p. 799).

Attention has been concentrated in the foregoing on those aspects of the language problem which exercised MacDiarmid's concern while The Muckle Toon was being composed. He continued to be troubled and fascinated by questions regarding the relationship between language and consciousness long after he abandoned the 'five-fold scheme' of the early thirties, however, and indeed it was not until his last major work, the Joyce poem, that he most comprehensively addressed them.

(ii) 'Something I Never Mention': In the preceding pages we have explored aspects of MacDiarmid's awareness that language is not fully coincident with meaning. This may be the most appropriate point in the present study to raise a crucial problem with regard to the significance of the poet's oeuvre in its entirety. I refer to the question of the relationship of the work to the life of its author, a question of particular concern in an account of Clann Albann, his only professedly autobiographical poetic enterprise.

At an early point in his most sustained meditation on issues of language, MacDiarmid ends a parenthesis with a disarming, throwaway claim to the effect that

all this here, everything I write, of
course
Is an extended metaphor for something I never
mention.

(In Memoriam James Joyce,

C.P. II, p. 745)

James Burns Singer took these lines to refer to Wittgenstein's 'that whereof one cannot speak', something which lies outside the domain of language.¹⁹ Such an interpretation certainly tallies with the acknowledgements of the restricted power of language which recur in MacDiarmid's work, and in particular with suggestions in In Memoriam that words can point to realities which they cannot express (see, e.g., the quotation from Mallarmé on p. 764 of C.P. II, and the discourse on Hölderlin on p.771). Yet the poet's admission may have a different application: he may be intimating that his work disguises the promptings of personality which motivate it. There are other hints to this effect in the poetry. In a poem published in 1935, for instance, we hear of 'dogmas' which

are not as I once thought true nor as
 afterwards false
But each the empty shadow of an intimate
 personal mood.

('In the Slums of Glasgow',

C.P. I, p.562)

I think it can be shown that MacDiarmid's 'intimate personal' life had a far greater influence on the shape of his career than he was prepared to admit,

in particular that each change of direction in his development marked an act in an inner drama whose unfolding spanned from the early years of his maturity to 1935. MacDiarmid's poetry is not overtly autobiographical - even The Muckle Toon contains little in the way of direct self-revelation. But is there a covert autobiographical impulse at work in his writings? In the paragraphs which follow I will attempt to substantiate what I have taken to be the poet's own hint that there is.

The early prose sketches have a candid, even gauche, quality which is absent from the writings produced over the MacDiarmid pseudonym. When we read that the hero of 'A Limelight from a Solitary Wing', '... only knew that his heart ached night and day, and that the only solace possible would seem to be to find other hearts which ached night and day with more reason than his' (A, p.157), we might be reading any undistinguished writer on the growing pains of any sensitive young man. Yet later in the same piece we find the following acute analysis:

So his tendency was always to the whole, to the totality, to the general balance of things. Indeed it was his chiefest difficulty (and an ever-increasing one that made him fear at times cancellation to nonentity) to exclude, to condemn, to say No. Here, probably, was the secret of the way in which he used to plunge into the full current of the most inconsistent movements seeking ... to find ground upon which he might stand foursquare.

(A, p. 160)

These words describe a quandary which was to assume within a few years the proportions of an unendurable affliction. The Annals' protagonists' failure to find 'any clue towards understanding the selective instincts' ('Cerebral', A, p.30), weakly anticipates the Drunk Man's tragic awareness of the limitations attendant upon the choices which must be made if personal and artistic growth are to be achieved:

For ilka thing a man can be or think or dae
Aye leaves a million mair unbeen, unthocht,
undune,
Till his puir warped performance is,
To a' that micht ha' been, a thistle to the
mune.

(C.P. I, p.91)

So insistent is the reader's sense of a pressure of tragic experience behind the teeming insights of A Drunk Man, that one eminent Scottish poet-critic contends that the work should properly be regarded

as a 'confessional' poem.²⁰ The 'confessional poets'' characteristic overt concern with the recesses of personal history is foreign to the spirit of MacDiarmid's art. Their enlistment of poetry in the struggle for psychic integrity is another matter, however, and it is here that Iain Crichton Smith sees a parallel with MacDiarmid, arguing that a similar therapeutic impulse informs A Drunk Man (John Berryman's admiration for the sequence may be worth noting in the light of Smith's remarks²¹):

To select from experience and set up categories is to limit experience. Not to select is to die from a plethora of images. What one sees in this poem is a man creating a clearing in order momentarily to exist. There are manic sets of images crowding in on him and these represent the multifariousness of life perpetually raging around him. The creation of the artistic image and artistic order is a strategy by which, for the moment, the poet survives.²²

The plight of the author of A Drunk Man, as Smith presents it, strongly recalls the 'chiefest difficulty' of the protagonist of 'A Limelight from a Solitary Wing', and indeed the critic's choice of the word 'select' confirms Grieve's own diagnosis of his troubles in the phrase from 'Cerebral' quoted in the last paragraph above.

Whether or not the 'flow of figurative invention'²³, which is so outstanding a feature of A Drunk Man, can be traced to a heightened form of the fear of 'cancellation to nonentity' evoked in Annals of the Five Senses must remain a matter of conjecture. At the very least it can be said that Smith's comments have the merit of drawing attention to the sequence's aura of psychological pain. The eponymous speaker returns again and again to the problem of personal suffering. It is the significance, not the content, of suffering which attracts his attention, however. Where a confessional poet would record the facts of anguish, the Scot drills anguish for its meaning. A central question posed by MacDiarmid is whether artistic insight, represented by the roses of the thistle, is worth the 'jungly waste o' effort' (C.P. I, p.116) and pain the poet must pay for it. Though the particularities of his own experience do not concern him, his thought clothes itself so readily in images that few readers will accuse him of being, in his own memorable phrase (from 'Lament for the Great Music', C.P. I, p.480), a 'dilletante of chaos':

of t/

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 apairt,
 And turn, and see your fellow-men
 In similar case but sufferin' less
 Thro' bein' mair wudden frae the stert!...

(C.P. I, p.134)

A comparison of MacDiarmid's poetry after 1926 with his production up to and including A Drunk Man goes some distance towards bearing out Smith's depiction of the psychological context of the latter work. Cencrastus is generally held to fall far short of the standard set by the sequence of 1926 in terms not only of overall coherence but also of the quality of its constituent poems. To acknowledge this, however, is not to endorse the view that MacDiarmid's second attempt at an extended poem in Scots marked the beginning of a catastrophic decline in his creative abilities. Only an analysis based on an inadequate grasp of the poet's complex bibliography can produce the conclusion that the graph of his achievement went irreversibly into the descendant after 1926. One of the most confident of the 'decline' theorists, Ann Edwards Boutelle, argues that MacDiarmid lost the gift of 'paradoxical vision' after 1926.²⁴ She safeguards her thesis by ignoring not only some of the central

Muckle Toon poems, but also the most energetic writing of the poet's first year in Shetland. Boutelle's detection of a 'dominant...elegiac tone'²⁵ in Cencrastus is to some extent rendered explicable by the realisation that she has never read the main meditative movements of that sequence, but only those more detachable portions (amounting to considerably less than half the entire work) which were reprinted in the Collected Poems of 1962 and '67. Frustration and ill-temper, rather than despair and regret, characterise Cencrastus.

It is true, nevertheless, that in some of the fragments of Cencrastus Professor Boutelle has seen, the poet does acknowledge a certain loss of imaginative power:

I wha aince in Heaven's height
Gethered to me a' the licht
Can nae mair reply to fire,
'Neth deid leafs buriet in the mire.

Sib to dewdrop. rainbow. ocean,
No' for me their hues and motion.
This foul clay has filed me till
It's no' to ken I'm water still.

(C.P. I, p.234)

Why was MacDiarmid's confidence so shaken at this time? The answer that his creative faculties were showing signs of damage is not inevitable. A Drunk Man's sustained, passionate utterance could not have been achieved without great emotional expenditure. It is not surprising that a work the poet himself regarded as an 'outpouring'²⁶ was followed by a somewhat 'dry' period.

MacDiarmid's personal adversities in the late twenties clearly left their mark on Cencrastus, but there is nothing in the sequence to suggest that these caused him psychological stress of a comparable intensity to that which underlies the poetry he wrote in his first weeks in the Shetlands in 1933 (see below, pp.185-98).

The imperfection of Cencrastus can hardly be cited as proof that the poet's creative processes sustained serious, if obscure, damage after the completion of A Drunk Man. There is one respect, however, in which his second book-length sequence may be said to presage the trauma which led to the collapse of his health in 1935. (See below, pp. 198-204 for a discussion of that breakdown and its poetic consequences.) The sense of an integrated

personality behind A Drunk Man is not to be accounted for exclusively in terms of the technical excellence of the work: the 'voice' of MacDiarmid's Scots masterpiece is the voice of 'a man in his wholeness wholly attending', to borrow a phrase from D. H. Lawrence.²⁷ And separate from, though not necessarily unrelated to, the formal chaos of Cencrastus is the fragmentation of personality we glimpse through the poem. The sensual, affective and intellectual capacities, which gain unified expression in A Drunk Man, seem to develop independently of each other in the subsequent poetry. A sundering of the faculties, a sort of breakdown in communication between the levels of MacDiarmid's mind, constitutes the most serious deficiency in Cencrastus when set against A Drunk Man. The other infelicities of the 1930 sequence - undistinguished word-choice, rhythmic predictability, formlessness - are redeemed to varying degrees in the poetry of the early thirties. The reason A Drunk Man must continue to be regarded as a watershed in the poet's career is that he was, in the words of Alexander Scott, 'never again to weave so many aspects of existence into a living unity'.²⁸ Much of the anguish of the poems of 1933 stems from MacDiarmid's recognition

of divisions in his psyche which seem, in fact, to have become established some years earlier.

It is instructive to examine A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle in the light of our endorsement of Iain Crichton Smith's conjecture that the poem was the product of a desperate attempt by MacDiarmid to maintain the integrity of his sensibility. Years later the poet would characterise himself as the nightingale, 'whose thin high call/And...deep throb...seem to come from different birds/In different places'. ('The Caledonian Antisyzygy', C.P. II, p.1053). Though he sang in 1926 as one full-voiced bird in one place, he was already acutely aware of the discords which were to fragment his song. The protagonist of the sequence published in that year experiences difficulty in reconciling the demands of body and spirit. The conflict between these demands is frequently evoked by brutally animalistic imagery:

The dog-hank o' the flesh and soul

(C.P. I, p. 126)

(A 'dog-hank' is the 'knot' made by copulating dogs.) The Drunk Man has deeply contradictory feelings about the fact of embodiment. He can exult in the splendour of physical life:

Nerves in stounds o' delight,
Muscles in pride o' power,
Bluid as wi' roses dight
Life's toppin' pinnacles owre,
The thistle yet'll unite
Man and the Infinite!

(C.P. I, p.98)

But he also associates the body with 'debauchery and dirt...disease and daith' (C.P. I, p.128). He sees humanity as 'glorious in the lift' but 'grisly on the sod' (C.P. I, p.91). It might be argued that the dialectical method by which A Drunk Man proceeds fosters extremism of expression. Yet the poet's very choice of such a method, like his eager seizure of Gregory Smith's theory of the 'Caledonian Antisyzygy' to give it intellectual grounding (see pp.226-7, below), raises questions as to why systems which depend upon contradiction held such appeal for him.

The physical and spiritual levels of being converge in sexual love. The Drunk Man's attitude to sex is rich in contradiction. On the positive

to being invaded by the thistle's groping roots:

side, union with woman is seen to occasion self-knowledge, mystical insight, and acceptance of one's physicality and of one's place in the great genetic chain which links all human beings. On the negative side, sex is a 'wee relief' (C.P. I, p.155), a function of despised physicality. It is associated too with psychological pain:

Bite into me forever mair and lift
 Me clear o' chaos in a great relief
 Till, like this thistle in the munelicht
 growin',
 I brak in roses owre a hedge o' grief....

(C.P.I, p.113)

Negative attitudes to sex recur in the poetry of the early thirties, where there is little sense of the regenerative and illuminating power of the love encounter. One suspects therefore that when the poet makes his Drunk Man speak of his 'crookit instincts' and 'self-tormented spirit' (C.P. I, p.105), he is pointing, however unintentionally, to uncertainties in his own sexual being. Self-revelation was hardly MacDiarmid's aim. There is a passage in the sequence which may be interpreted as an indication that he was horrified at the thought of personal frankness. During a flight of grotesquery the Drunk Man imagines himself as a corpse whose grave is being invaded by the thistle's groping roots:

The roots that wi' the worms compete
 Hauf-publish me upon air.
 The struggle that divides me still
 Is seen fu' plainly there.

The thistle's shank scarce holes the grun',
 My grave'll spare nae mair I doot
 - The crack's fu' wide: the shank's fu' strang;
A' that I was is oot.

(C.P.I, p.104)

Would MacDiarmid have shared this corpse's consternation, had his own 'dark secrets' turns and twists' (C.P. I, p.89) seen the light of day? An interview given to Duncan Glen in 1968 strengthens the impression that the poet wished to obscure his personal history. Glen asked if a biographical approach would 'help to link a lot of your poetry and make it ... clearer in some respects'. MacDiarmid replied:

Well it might do, but where are they (i.e., the critics) going to get the biographical facts from? There are a lot of sham facts about you know. There will have to be an enormous process of correction before they can get down to an accurate biographical understanding A lot of the evidence has already been destroyed, and there are a lot of ideas current that have been expressed by various writers that are false.... These sort of speculations have got to be weede awa.29

The poet's singular failure, in that interview and elsewhere, to contribute to the 'enormous process of correction' which he saw as a prerequisite for

an 'accurate biographical understanding' of his achievement speaks for his desire to keep 'a' that he was' in.

The subject-matter of MacDiarmid's poetry registers the stress of private experience with greater immediacy in the early thirties than at any other time. The poet's burgeoning creative interest in his rural Scottish boyhood was clearly a response to the all too adult difficulties of his life in urban England. His treatment of the 'hame scenes', however, is not to be understood as readily as the fact of his recourse to them. The process of concealment is at work even in these 'autobiographical' writings, where MacDiarmid obscures crucial aspects of the past he ostensibly explores (the poems on his father's death, for example, making no reference to his own untimely return from Broughton). Its repeated expression of a fear that the author's powers are endangered is the poetry's one surprising concession to frankness. No echo of this insecurity is to be found in the letters or the discursive prose of the Clann Albann period. (The Muckle Toon's intimations of the victory of MacDiarmid's lower needs over his higher aspirations are discussed below, pp.499-513).

As we have seen in the previous chapter, MacDiarmid's return to Scotland at the end of the summer of 1932 coincided with his loss of interest in the poetic potential of his Langholm past. The consequences of his removal to the Shetland island of Whalsay further suggest the responsiveness of his art to developments in his personal life. The geography and geology of the archipelago in which the poet settled in May 1933 lent themselves to the painful act of imaginative self-confrontation which the poems written in the summer of that year document. The separateness of the islands from one another and from the distant mainland offered him an image for the self-contained isolation he aspired to, now that he had, as he saw it (in the closing stanza of 'Ode to All Rebels', C.P. I, p.512), become an 'apostate' from Scottish and from human society:

I ken these islands each inhabited
 Forever by a single man
 Livin' in his separate world as only
 In dreams yet maist folk can.

('Harry Semen', C.P. I, p.483)

And in the stones strewn along Whalsay's beaches
he found a model of the resilience he knew he would
need if his mind were not to be undone by the
conflicts which beset it.

MacDiarmid's first two months in Shetland
were immensely productive. Years later he would
attribute the huge quantity and varied quality
of material from this period to his sense of the
imminence of psychological developments which
might leave him unable to write at all.³⁰ Two
clusters of poems detach themselves from the
generality of the early Shetland work by their
technical merit and by the intense interiority
of their focus. One cluster consists of
explorations of an emotional life run awry; the
other communicates an intellect's determination
to preserve itself by ruthlessly curbing the demands
of the instincts and affections. The former group
is in Scots, the latter in English, a fact surely
indicative of the intimately psychological basis
of the Scots/English dichotomy in MacDiarmid's
work (see below. pp.250-1). The disparateness
of these two bodies of verse, written at the same
time and in response to the same set of experiences,
reveals how divided against himself the poet was at

this juncture. Two years were to pass before his breakdown. Yet these poems read like a rehearsal for it. Nowhere else are we allowed glimpse the travail of spirit which made the collapse of 1935 inevitable.

The Scots group includes the last really distinguished poetry MacDiarmid committed to the old tongue. The revulsion from the physical basis of human existence which is a feature of A Drunk Man and of some of the Muckle Toon pieces is voiced more strongly than ever here. 'Harry Semen' (C.P.I, p.483), 'Ode to All Rebels' (C.P.I, p.487) and 'Ex-Parte Statement on the Project of Cancer' (C.P.I, p.444) employ an imagery of semen, nasal mucus, excretion, menstruation, masturbation, homosexuality, gestation, venereal disease and cancer - including genital cancer - to express a sense of disgust of almost manic intensity. Biographical inferences should not, perhaps, be drawn from the horror of the randomness of physical life so vividly depicted in the fourth, and in the opening lines of the fifth, stanzas of 'Harry Semen', as that poem is a work of consummate ambiguity.³¹

We have little sense of the artist being 'above' his creations where the other two poems are concerned, however. In the 'Ode', in particular, we are aware of the intrusion of the man who suffers upon the realm of the poet who writes: concentration falters in the second half of a poem otherwise marred by a strained, embittered wit which seems to imply hostility towards the reader. Few will demur at Boutelle's detection of a 'pathological' element here, though it is not so easy to agree with her that MacDiarmid is being 'openly confessional' in this work.³² The reader who takes the 'Ode' and the 'Ex-Parte Statement' at face value will conclude that the poet's first marriage - to Kate, a fellow medical student - ended with the sudden death of his spouse, that his second wife, Jean, bore him a daughter and two sons, that his second marriage ended in divorce, and that he was, at the time of composition, suffering from cancer. One wonders why MacDiarmid bothered with biographical obfuscation in a poetry otherwise so outspoken and nakedly communicative of psychological pain. Did he hope thereby to discourage identification of the first person of these monologues with himself?

The Shetland work includes a small number of undisguised, if glancing, references to the extremity of Grieve's condition in his early months in the archipelago. The opening lines of one of the minor poems in the Scots group, 'Letter to R.M.B' (C.P. II, p.1271), indicate that the poet was haunted by the fear that his isolation would lead him to 'madness'. He declares in the same poem that

nae human speech
Can describe a life sae completely foreign
To a' that's wi'in onybody else's reach.

(C.P. II, p.1272)

By contrasting himself to an 'ordinary suicide' (C.P. II, p.1272) he intimates that he contemplated taking very drastic action indeed to resolve his difficulties. One of the English poems, 'On a Raised Beach' suggests that he had to struggle to see a 'deeper issue' than 'suicide...confronting' him on Shetland's desolate shores (C.P. I, p.428). An essay published in At the Sign of the Thistle³³ corroborates these hints by relating that a Shetland boatman who set him down on an uninhabited island feared the poet would commit suicide there.³⁴

It is remarkable that Grieve's correspondence from Shetland at this time betrays almost nothing of the mental unrest which informs the poetry. The cheerful reticence of the letters might be said to further illustrate the fragmentation of his personality. Writing to Neil Gunn on May 19th, however, he did reveal something of his fevered self-absorption:

...(I)n certain respects and these incomparably the most vital to me, I am out of touch with everybody else in Scotland: and, indeed, I cannot even yet move about with any confidence, or produce effective work, in this new world of my spirit. But I am gradually finding myself - a new self. That is why I am here - have been a fortnight, and will be, I hope, for many months. I am rowing about on lonely waters; lying brooding on uninhabited islands; seeing no newspapers and in other ways cutting myself completely away from civilised life.³⁵

In other letters he was content to boast of the bulk and variety of work completed in late May and June:

I ... have now completed a body of new poetry which amounts to at least as great a bulk as half of all I have hitherto published. Not a bad six weeks output. As to quality I have no doubt that some of the items will add considerably to whatever reputation I already have with those whose opinions weigh with me,

while the bulk of the work is up to my usual standard and similar in kind - or kinds - although this new world of the Shetland Isles is reflected throughout in subject matter etc....36

A letter to William Soutar on July 5th communicates a buoyant sense of well-being:

I am still in the Shetlands and mean to remain here for the winter if I possibly can. These almost uninhabited islands and lonely seas suit me splendidly: and I'm glad to be away from political movements, newspapers, and all the rest of it for a while. Besides I have a heavy tale of work in hand for which this is an ideal atmosphere. In the interstices of leading the simple life of an island fisherman I have been able already to write more poetry than all my previously published stuff put together. The little pieces that have appeared here and there are not samples. On the contrary most of the stuff consists of poems too long for periodicals and I am satisfied is not only up to my best level but represents in several cases valuable new departures.37

Not until a year later, when much of the poetry of 1933 was about to appear in the Stony Limits volume, did MacDiarmid even hint to the same correspondent at the crucially personal nature of its inspiration:

Some of these poems, I think, show me approaching a solution of the problems which ... I have been confronting.38

The poems alluded to in the later letter to Soutar were presumably 'Vestigia Nulla Retrorsum' (C.P. I, p. 416), 'Stony Limits' (C.P. I, p. 419), and 'On a Raised Beach' (C.P. I, p. 422), the most earnest and ambitious of the English group produced during the previous summer. The stones of Shetland provide the key symbol of these and related writings, the most complex symbol in MacDiarmid's oeuvre other than the thistle in A Drunk Man and the Muckle Toon's 'Water of Life' figure. My comments here are not intended to exhaust the significance of an emblem which furnishes a single focus for the poet's concern with biological and political evolution, religious belief, death, the historical mission of genius and the nature of consciousness. I am concerned only with the poetry's implicit commentary on its author's psychological state. The poems advocate an immanent, secular, anti-humanist 'redemption' whereby mental life can flourish without regard to lower personality needs. MacDiarmid's 'terrifying stoicism'³⁹ rests on propositions such as,

... an emotion chilled is an emotion controlled

('On a Raised Beach',

C.P. I, p. 426)

and,

... all who speak glibly may rest assured
That to better their oratory they will have
For a Demosthenean pebble to roll in their
the whole earth
mouths.

('On a Raised Beach',

C.P. I, p. 431)

Yet despite the puritanical vehemence of these central pronouncements, the poems sound a strong elegiac note (as do certain other English pieces in Stony Limits, most notably 'In Memoriam: Liam Mac'Ille Iosa' (C.P. I, p.414) and 'Lament for the Great Music', (C.P. I, p.462)). Two of the three are in fact elegies - 'Vestigia' is subtitled 'In Memoriam: Rainer Maria Rilke 1875-1926', and the title poem, 'In Memoriam: Charles Doughty 1843-1926'. It is as if MacDiarmid raises a lament over the emotional and instinctual capacities 'killed' by the main argument of the poems. His breakdown in 1935 may illustrate his failure to maintain the 'detachment that shocks our instincts and ridicules our desires' (C.P. I, p.426) which he had prescribed two years earlier in 'On a Raised Beach'.

We have already encountered MacDiarmid's argument for the necessity of a 'synthetic' poetic diction which would give literary employment to elements of vocabulary hitherto unused for creative purposes (above, p. 163). He made preliminary efforts to create such a mode in English during his first months on Whalsay. 'In the Caledonian Forest' (C.P.I, p. 391) and 'Ephphatha' (C.P. I, p. 393) are programmatic in impulse and do not approach the condition of poetry. More interesting and successful attempts to give poetic vivification to unusual words are to be found in the poems discussed in the previous paragraph. Though the opening lines of 'On A Raised Beach' and some of the key stanzas of 'Vestigia' are scarcely less impenetrable than 'In the Caledonian Forest' and 'Ephphatha', they appear to have been written out of the need to express the reality of the poet's Shetland experience - a reality as 'completely foreign' to MacDiarmid's former self as it was to his fellow-men - rather than out of a desire to illustrate a theory of poetic diction. That is to say, the strange language of these passages was designed to execute a task for which the poet

fix

Will not avail us. Such paraplegias we
 have borne
 While over us Heaven's last lawines seemed
 to run
 - Only the scaphism of the stars anew to
 brook!

(C.P. I, p. 419)

These lines might be paraphrased as follows: 'Nor can we duplicitously play for time; shut our eyes despite the sun's burning off of their lashes. Any island's too small for more than life and death. And in the darkest night with bated breath to grope our way over familiar stones made foreign by any disordering of the sense of touch in a petty death-of-the-Gods will not avail us. Such paralyses we have borne, while over us Heaven's last avalanches seemed to run - only to endure anew the stinging of the stars.' ('Scaphism' is defined in the dictionary the poet was using at the time of composition as 'a Persian punishment by which the victim was fastened in a hollow tree, and smeared over with honey to attract wasps, etc.'⁴⁰)

This stanza - the last of 'Vestigia Nulla Retrorsum' (i.e., 'No Steps Backwards' - the poem as a whole asserts the impossibility of a return to the comforting certainties of unexamined opinion)

ability of the external world.

- dwells on the psychological cost of the repudiation of religious values which is central to the message of the 'English group' of Shetland poems. (MacDiarmid's changing attitude to religion in the early thirties is discussed below, pp. 426-8). The twilight of the poet's gods is 'petty' presumably because it is of mere personal concern, and also because, before their 'death', these gods existed only in his mind. The references to Greek ('penelopeise'), Norse ('Ragnarök') and Persian ('scaphism') civilisation, like the allusions to different cultural epochs which pack the opening passage of 'On A Raised Beach', serve to highlight the stones' aloofness from human achievement, illustrating the aphorism that

All human culture is a Goliath to fall
To the least of these pebbles withal.

('On a Raised Beach',

C.P. I, p. 431)

The closing lines of 'Vestigia' suggest that the absolute physicality of the universe affirmed by the poet will continue to torment him, despite his insistence on a petrification of instinct and emotion to enable him mirror in his own person the imperturbability of the external world.

The 'synthetic English' passages we have been discussing can be defended on the grounds that no other method could communicate the particular disorientation of the poet's sensibilities at this time. The impenetrability of the language - its 'sheer...pebbly puzzlingness'⁴¹ - is obviously appropriate to the poetry's concern with stones. The strange diction accords also with MacDiarmid's desire to develop a 'synthetic English' idiom. Yet is there not a fourth influence at work here, a characteristic scrambling of the evidence with regard to the poet's affective life? It is a fact, whether or not a significant one, that the only lines in the English work of the summer of 1933 to admit to personal vulnerability are cast in a language opaque to all but the dictionary-wielding enthusiast.

The Muckle Toon poetry points forward to the Shetland experience which culminated in the poet's collapse of 1935. To fully appreciate Clann Albann's place in MacDiarmid's career, then, it is necessary to say something of this focal event and of its artistic consequences. The collapse is not well documented. We know that the poet went to London

in June 1935 for a stay of some weeks.⁴² By
 early August Valda had joined him. On the
 6th of that month she wrote to Helen Cruickshank:

Christopher's health is definitely
 breaking up, he had the Dr. in on
 Saturday, he has to have preserves,
 ever since we've been here he has
 had blinding headaches a thing I've
 never known him to have. Of course
 the preserves will probably put that
 right, when I went to fetch the
 medicine Dr. Coiclan told me that
 he must go very slow indeed, that
 apart from being on the verge of
 a nervous breakdown a few more
 heavy drinking bouts would finish
 things.⁴³

The Grieves appear to have returned to Whalsay
 shortly after this letter was written. On or
 before the 29th of the month the poet was back
 on the mainland, in hospital in Perth. Precisely
 what happened to him in Whalsay is unclear. The
 local doctor, David Orr, who had first invited him
 to Shetland, has stated:

... (Physically he was poorly, but
 in addition there was a certain disorien-
 tation, which we later surmised was due
 to a summation of numerous subconscious
 'insults' arising from domestic difficulties
 a few years previous.⁴⁴

Grieve spent seven weeks in hospital at the expense
 of F. G. Scott before returning to Whalsay, still
 weak and suffering from weight loss.

Almost three years after leaving hospital in Perth the poet confided to Helen Cruickshank that his 'productive powers' had 'not got back to their old standard' since his 'serious illness in 1935'.⁴⁵ MacDiarmid did, however, write a substantial quantity of verse in the last forty-three years of his life, most of it in the late thirties and early forties. About six hundred and fifty of the fourteen-hundred-odd pages of the Complete Poems contain verse composed after 1935. The consequences of the psychological injuries sustained by the poet in the collapse of that year are not far to seek in this material. Indeed if we take his admission concerning his 'productive powers' to have qualitative rather than quantitative application, we will have no difficulty in agreeing with him. The sense of form, already questionable before the Whalsay illness - as Cencrastus demonstrates -, disintegrates altogether now. Long works are compiled simply by stringing together blocks of discursive verse, many of which consist of more or less doctored, and generally unacknowledged, quotations from other authors. (The plagiaristic tendency discernible in Grieve's work from the

beginning becomes rampant after 1935: our figure of six-hundred and fifty pages of verse produced after that year would have to be revised downwards very drastically if we were to exclude passages known to be based on other texts.⁴⁶⁾ The worst among MacDiarmid's late poems are amorphous chunks of opinion. A failure to attend to the detailed working of the verse compounds the formal inadequacy of the work. This failure is most apparent in the degeneration of the poet's once exquisite sense of rhythm. Line follows line with no detectable rhythmical pattern. Line endings are arbitrary. MacDiarmid's cheerful description of his later verse as 'chopped-up prose' ('The Caledonian Antisyzygy', C.P. II, p. 1052) is too accurate to provoke dissent. Indeed on those occasions when the poet does use rhyme he has recourse to such awkward inversions and semantically redundant filler-words that the reader becomes impatient for the return of the 'chopped-up prose'.

It is a mark of the resourcefulness of MacDiarmid's genius that the foregoing comments do not amount to a dismissal of his later work. By virtue of a sort of cerebral zeal, an almost

loving delight in the particularity of the facts he collates, and a range of rhetorical devices, the poet holds the reader's attention through great stretches of In Memoriam James Joyce and The Kind of Poetry I Want. A considerable number of shorter poems which display some of the flaws we have mentioned win to illumination through a daring development of the epic simile, MacDiarmid's one significant contribution to poetic technique after 1935. 'Island Funeral' (C.P. I, p. 575), 'The Glass of Pure Water' (C.P. II, p. 1941), 'Bagpipe Music' (C.P. I, p. 665), 'Crystals Like Blood' (C.P. II, p. 1054) and 'Of My First Love' (C.P. II, p. 1946; M.T., p. 97) are perhaps the most notable of these.

Not in form alone but in subject-matter, too, the later poetry displays the legacy of the personal crisis which reached its climax in 1935. The resolutely objective, factual, scientific focus of the work evinces the poet's awareness of the all too subjective nature of the difficulties which led to his breakdown. On those rare occasions when the mask of omniscient imperturbability is dropped, a desolated psychology is revealed:

Even so in these sterile and melancholy days
 The ghastly desolation of my spirit is relieved
 As a winter wood by glowing moss or lichen,
 And the sunk lane of my heart is vivified,
 And the hidden springs of my life revealed
 Still patiently potent and humbly creative
 When I spy again the ancestral ties between
 Scotland and Wales....

('On Reading Professor Ifor Williams's
 "Canu Aneurin" in Difficult Days',

C.P. I, p. 690)

Even so you lie
 Near the base of my precipitous, ever lonelier
 and colder life....

('Of my First Love',

C.P. II, p. 1047)

When the later poetry rises to passion it is usually
 passion of a peculiarly cerebral type. Yet one
 primary emotion survived the cataclysm of 1935 to
 be sounded again and again through the work of
 subsequent years. The horror of physicality
 encountered in the poetry of the twenties and
 early thirties is recalled now by a sense of
 loathing, typically occasioned by contemplation
 of the slums of Glasgow. As if to underscore
 the fact that the poet's emotions are involved,
 a vestigial form of his old image-making facility
 asserts itself in passages such as the following:

To see or hear a clock in Glasgow's horrible,
Like seeing a dead man's watch, still going
though he's dead.
Everything is dead except stupidity here.

Where have I seen a human being looking
As Glasgow looks this gin-clear evening -
with face and fingers
A cadaverous blue, hand-clasp slimy and cold
As that of a corpse, finger-nails grown
immeasurably long
As they do in a grave, little white eyes,
and hardly
Any face at all? Cold, lightning-like,
unpleasant, light, and blue
Like having one's cold spots intoxicated with
mescal.
Looking down a street the houses seem
Long pointed teeth like a ferret's over the slit
Of a crooked unspeakable smile....

('Glasgow', C.P. II,
pp. 1049-50)

--ooOoo--

The thematic range of MacDiarmid's work renders classification of him as an autobiographical poet inadequate. It is nevertheless incontestable that the evolution of his poetic practice reflected developments in his private life, and that the resolution of his personal conflicts marked the end of his artistic growth. A thorough investigation

of his achievement cannot afford to ignore the poet's own intimation that the poetry is emblematic of concerns he was unable or unwilling to treat directly. The Muckle Toon's 'hidden' autobiographical aspect is perhaps more revealing of the author's state of mind in the early thirties than its overt concern with his Langholm experience is of his youthful mentality: I refer to the irreducibility of the polarities which characterise the poetry designed for Clann Albann's first volume. MacDiarmid sought to resolve the oppositions paraded in A Drunk Man, but it is his express intention to widen the tensions - between matter and spirit, Langholm and the world, actual and ideal social organisation, the consciousness of the child and of the genius - he posits in The Muckle Toon. The listed concerns, which provide an intellectual framework for the poet's imaginative return to his birth-place, will be discussed in Chapter Four. It is hoped that the present section of Chapter Two has provided a psychological context for that discussion.

(B) 'The Rouch Auld Scots'

(i) Introductory:

Despite the large claims that have been made for it by distinguished commentators, Hugh MacDiarmid's work has not become part of the experience of most readers of modern poetry. True, the poet is now represented in the more prestigious anthologies, even getting a longer introductory note than any writer save James Joyce in the Twentieth Century section of The Norton Anthology of English Literature.⁴⁷

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A glance through the indices of some of the most widely available British and American critical surveys of modern verse, nevertheless, shows that it is still permissible to ignore MacDiarmid while acknowledging the work of lesser poets, from Dylan Thomas to Seamus Heaney, who have hailed his achievement.

There are many reasons for the neglect of MacDiarmid. The bibliographical confusion discussed at the beginning of this study (pp. 3-4) is sufficient to defeat all but the most determined attempts at possessing the poetry. MacDiarmid's concern with the 'matter of Scotland' acts as a discouragement to readers wary of political fanaticism. Yet it is neither to deny nor to denigrate his involvement with Scottish politics to point out that, where his best poetry is concerned, Scotland is less a country than an emblem of the configuration of the actual. People who know something of the poet's aggressive public persona can, understandably perhaps, come to the mistaken conclusion that his poetic obsession with Scotland represents no more than

an expression of chauvinistic zeal. The technical clumsiness and emotional coarseness of some of the English poetry has probably deterred its share of readers too.

There can be little doubt, however, that the factor which has done most to keep MacDiarmid from his place in the pantheon of modern poets of the English-speaking world has been the issue of Scots. Less than half of the poet's published verse is in Scots, but his significant achievement is largely, though not wholly, confined to that tongue. Yet Scots is one of the more easily surmounted obstacles to an appreciation of MacDiarmid's work: a few hours' effort yields the neophyte a working knowledge of the poet's idiom, whereas much longer is required if he is to penetrate the bibliographical fog which occludes the relationship of the major poems to each other. All but the most wilfully dense passages of MacDiarmid's Scots are no more strange to the untutored eye than typical extracts from Langland and Chaucer which, along with the truly forbidding poetry of the Anglo-Saxon period, undergraduates

are expected to master. The historical status of the Middle English writers as progenitors of the poetic tradition of the English language, and the established literary value of their work, act as a guarantee to novices that their struggles with medieval texts will be rewarded. People are similarly willing to address themselves to the difficult idioms of such moderns as Ezra Pound, Hart Crane, or David Jones. Clarifying contexts supplied by scholarship have made these 'difficult' poets accessible to the energetic reader. But Scots at first sight seems anachronistic, even uncouth, and promises little in the way of the sophistication MacDiarmid's poetry in fact possesses. Though the Langholmite's treasures are buried no deeper than Crane's, the lie of the land has discouraged many from digging for them.

The rustic appearance of MacDiarmid's language is deceptive: there is a distinctly modern dimension to both the fact and the manner of his employment of Scots. His recourse to the old tongue can be seen as a response to problems of expression he shared with many non-Scottish writers who have attempted

to use English creatively in the present century. Furthermore, it is arguable that the attitude to history implicit in his choice of medium has much in common with the cultural outlook of his foremost English and Irish contemporaries. These points relating the theoretical background of the poet's use of Scots to characteristic concerns of modern literature should, perhaps, be pursued before an account of his practical involvement with the language is attempted. The comments which follow are not intended to deny that certain old-fashioned qualities in MacDiarmid's work stem from his dependence upon a language which had been in decline for centuries before his birth. (A perceptive early critic recognised that the Sangschar experiment had both a revolutionary and a reactionary dimension.⁴⁸ We shall see, indeed, that A Drunk Man owes some of its power to features which might be called 'medieval' (below, pp. 226-9).)

I have not thought it necessary to provide an apology for Scots in the pages which follow. The interested reader, however, will find a discussion of the poet's own defence of his idiom, along with a brief history of the language, in Appendix A.

(11) Scots and Modern Literature: Christopher Grieve had been writing verse in English for at least fourteen years when he produced 'The Watergaw' (C.P. I, p. 17) and 'The Blaward and the Skelly' (C.P. II., p. 1212), his first Scots poems, in 1922.⁴⁹ Even the best of his early English poetry exhibits difficulties of articulation akin to those which limit the efficacy of the prose sketches of Annals of the Five Senses. The metrical centrepiece of that volume, 'A Moment in Eternity' (C.P. I, p. 3), is generally regarded as the most interesting and successful of these early poems. A well-disposed critic has isolated a failure of 'verbal realisation of the subject' as the poem's major flaw, and contrasted this shortcoming with the extraordinary degree of such realisation in the case of the early Scots lyrics.⁵⁰ While the success of the lyrics may be attributed in some measure to the inoperacy of

psychological factors which render literary expression in English problematic for any Lowland Scot (see below, p.233), there is an obvious correspondence between MacDiarmid's move from a mannered English to Scots and the central modernist quest to replace an abstract and generalising idiom with a concrete, particularising one.

MacDiarmid's resuscitation of the Lowland tongue may be viewed as an extension of a trend already apparent in the work of writers as diverse as Gerard Manley Hopkins, Thomas Hardy, and the Imagists. Hopkins' cultivation of the Anglo-Saxon pith of English, Hardy's cunning deployment of dialect and specialist terms, and the Imagists' commitment to the 'natural object' as 'adequate symbol', were all based on a perception of the need for a poetic language more forceful and exact than that of the imitative Romanticism of the late nineteenth century. Interestingly, it was not to these poets, but to avant-garde novelists, that MacDiarmid's apologist Grieve looked in his search for analogies to vindicate the linguistic sleights of the early lyrics.

Does this indicate that he saw the experimental Scots of the poems as offering a way out of the expressive impasse represented by the Annals sketches? At any rate, he hailed Scots as 'an inchoate Marcel Proust' (sic),⁵¹ and claimed that he had been 'enormously struck by the resemblance - the moral resemblance - between Jamieson's Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language and James Joyce's Ulysses'.⁵² Further comparisons with prose pioneers were made in passages such as the following:

The Scottish Vernacular is the only language in Western Europe instinct with those uncanny spiritual and pathological perceptions alike which constitute the uniqueness of Dostoevsky's work, and word after word of Doric establishes a blood-bond in a fashion at once infinitely more thrilling and vital and less explicable than those deliberately sought after by writers such as D. H. Lawrence in the medium of English, which is inferior for such purposes because it has an entirely different natural bias which has been confirmed down the centuries to be unsusceptible to correction. The Scots Vernacular is a vast storehouse of just the very peculiar and subtle effects which modern European literature in general is assiduously seeking...⁵³

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Scots provided a means of 'making it new', of escaping conventional modes of expression which the poet would later characterise as fig-leaves 'o' the mind whereby/Humanity has socht to hide its sin' ('Depth and the Chthonian Image, ll. 199-200, C.P., p. 352; M.T., p.137). The Scots lexicon provided MacDiarmid with ammunition for a Joycean assault on the 'wa's prohibitive' which circumscribe consciousness, opening the way for a literary utterance which did not involve emasculation of the personality.

It is arguable that MacDiarmid's turning to Scots was no more reactionary a strategy than the resort of many modern poets to the past in their search for elements of a new poetic diction or verbal music. T. S. Eliot's debt to the blank verse of Jacobean drama is widely recognised. John Crowe Ransom used studied archaisms of style to express a twentieth century sensibility. The same author adapted the metre of the old ballads for a poetry of sophisticated irony. W. H. Auden reached further into the past and employed the

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alliterative measures of Anglo-Saxon in his verse. Both Robert Graves and Dylan Thomas strove to imitate the aural intricacies of Welsh poetry. What distinguishes MacDiarmid from these writers is the fact that his backward glance involved not only style, metre and the importation of a few cunningly chosen unusual words, but a transformation of the general vocabulary of his verse.

We might considerably extend the preceding paragraph's list of writers who looked to the past for technical reorientation, and yet find ourselves no nearer to locating MacDiarmid's position on the map of modern poetry. Such a placing is suggested, however, when we compare the poet's sense of cultural ancestry with the historical outlook of some of his closest and most distinguished contemporaries. There might seem to be no more compelling reason than the accidental one of chronological contiguity for claiming that MacDiarmid, Robert Graves, David Jones and Austin Clarke make up an 'archipelago' on the map of twentieth century verse. (All four were born in the eighteen nineties.) The formal and technical disparateness of their work is manifest. Yet there are significant parallels

between the cultural obsessions from which the work of each of these writers might be said to have sprung. The four share a critical perception of a certain blandness in the Modernist version of European civilisation. (They were not at one in their attitude to Modernism in general - MacDiarmid and Jones admired and were to some extent influenced by the artistic innovations of the movement, which Graves and Clarke condemned noisily.) The revolution in literary procedure brought about by James Joyce and Ezra Pound - MacDiarmid's favourites among the Modernists - was effected partly in the service of radically new perspectives on the past. Yet Joyce's celebration of the 'commodus vicus of recirculation' of all things, like Pound's concern with 'the repeat in history', represented a cultural historicism which, however novel in its broad sweep, was quite conventional in its acceptance of the Graeco-Roman world as the matrix of European civilisation. The Dubliner and the son of Hailey, Idaho were content to see themselves as inheritors of the Classical and Renaissance traditions in literature. The poets I have mentioned with MacDiarmid, conversely,

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chose to explore aspects of their cultural inheritance obscured by the account of European experience which Joyce and Pound, along with T. S. Eliot, accepted.

The connection between MacDiarmid and his three contemporaries is at its most tenuous in the case of Robert Graves, both because the latter did not develop his historical outlook until quite late in his career - the first version of The White Goddess appeared in 1948⁵⁴ - and because of the relative technical conservatism of his poetry. Yet Graves' insistence on the need for poetic regeneration through imaginative rediscovery of the ancient roots of lyric impulse can be seen as an extreme form of the revisionist cultural historicism of MacDiarmid, Jones and Clarke. It is doubtful if the Scot, even at his most 'thrown', ever made a proposition as radical as Graves' central one to the effect that the evolution of patriarchal societies - of which classical culture and the Christian religion are alike expressions - constituted a disastrous historical mistake. The anthropological speculations of The White Goddess may stand in need of verification, but they provided their author with a myth which sustained him in the creation of some of his most distinctive poetry.

With nothing of the stridency with which Graves pursued his theories of the Muse, David Jones sought in his work to bring to greater boldness some of the background hues in the canvas of British culture. He was fascinated in particular with Arthurian legend and with the meeting of Roman and Celtic world-views in the early Christian period. Jones' interest in the past arose out of a concern with the significance of twentieth-century experience rather than out of antiquarian escapism. In his first long work, In Parenthesis,⁵⁵ he used Malory's Morte d'Arthur and the sixth century Welsh epic Y Gododdin, along with such 'mainstream' texts as the Bible and Shakespeare's history plays, to create a frame of reference for his exploration of the meaning of the human waste of the Battle of the Somme. His fastidious garnering of the cultural traditions of the island of Britain in his major poetic work, The Anathemata,⁵⁶ was at once an acknowledgement of, and a protest against, the increasing depersonalisation of life in a mechanised society. Jones' belief in the essential unity of the cultures of mainland Britain might appear to set him in the opposite camp to the Scottish separatist MacDiarmid. Yet his insistence

upon the contribution of the neglected and peripheral to that notional unity - in particular his concern with the Celtic 'underblanket' of English civilisation and with the continuing contribution of Wales to the complex of Britain - made this apostle of unity no less a champion of diversity and regionalism than MacDiarmid. It is no surprise to find the Anglo-Welsh Catholic's work espoused in the autobiography of the Scottish Communist (L.P., p.336).

Austin Clarke's preoccupation with the 'Celtic Romanesque' phase of Irish history similarly involved a plea for freedom from cultural centralisation. Clarke's historical obsession was an imaginative response to the constriction of life in Ireland in the early years of national independence. The setting up of the Irish Free State had done nothing to enhance the liberty of the individual. Rather, the new parliament gave civil force to the puritanical teaching of Rome: while the clergy's discouragement of 'company keeping' made courtship almost impossible, the state inhibited the life of the mind by enforcing a rigorous censorship

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of written material 'liable to incite passion' - a liability imputed to almost all contemporary literature. On the positive side, however, these years saw great advances in the repossession of the Irish past by historical scholarship. New light was being shed on neglected and misunderstood epochs of the island's history. Clarke was greatly excited by the revelation of a thriving national culture in the centuries prior to the Norman invasions. The Norman conquest and the concomitant Romanisation of Irish Christianity put an end to an era in which a monastically organised Irish church had preached an anthropocentric religion and overseen a flowering of literature and decorative art. How different that church had been from the Roman Catholic Church of the Free State which connived with the civil authority to restrict personal growth and artistic expression! Clarke's lyric reconstruction of the Celtic Romanesque ambience had a biting contemporary, satirical aspect, for it denied his church its spirituality and his state its claim to nationhood. 57

The parallels between MacDiarmid and Clarke are closer than those between the Scot, Graves and Jones. Both poets were heirs to established

national literatures. (Jones and Graves do not clearly derive from any one poetic inheritance, despite the latter's sporting contention that he is an Anglo-Irish poet.) The relationships of Clarke and MacDiarmid to their respective traditions were not, of course, identical. The greatest of the Anglo-Irish poets, W. B. Yeats, was composing his finest work in the very years Clarke was growing towards artistic maturity. Four centuries, however, had passed since the flowering of Scots in the work of Henryson and Dunbar when MacDiarmid began his attempt to resuscitate 'Lallans'. More than a hundred years of indifferent verse separated the poet from the last great representative of his tradition, Robert Burns. There are striking contrasts in the nature of the traditions MacDiarmid and Clarke extended: the mere fact of employment of Scots - whether for folk-song, art-poem or pastiche - implies a historic Scottish identity; but the Irishman who uses English writes in the tongue of the conqueror. Clarke, however, is a key figure - one might say the key figure - in that movement within Anglo-Irish verse concerned with the development of what Thomas MacDonagh called an 'Irish mode'⁵⁷, a distinctive Hibernian English idiom.

The correspondences between the cultural attitudes of MacDiarmid and Clarke owe their particular interest to the fact that each writer's choice of poetic idiom was determined in large degree by his sense of the burden of history. The highly-wrought style of Pilgrimage and other poems (1929) and Night and Morning (1938)⁵⁸ was an attempt to emulate in verse the fastidious elaboration of the illuminated manuscripts of the Celtic Romanesque era, and to imitate characteristic effects of Gaelic prosody. MacDiarmid's gesture in the name of tradition was as much a matter of vocabulary as of style: his poetry attempted to revivify words drawn from the work of the 'Makars' and from the folk-speech of later years. Both the Scot and the Irishman sought to recover a national past for modern consciousness through the development of a distinctive poetic language.

The cultural nationalism shared by MacDiarmid and Clarke is given theoretical expression in The Hidden Ireland (1924), Daniel Corkery's study of eighteenth-century Irish Gaelic poetry. The Scot cited the book as early as 1926⁵⁹, and there

are many references to it in his critical writings over the following decades. He alluded to it in the title of an unpublished poem from 1932 (reproduced above, p.110). A recent account of Clarke's early work has established that The Hidden Ireland helped shape that poet's attitude to history, too.⁶⁰ The following passage of Corkery's is perhaps worth quoting as extensively as (if more accurately than) MacDiarmid quoted it in an essay⁶¹ which appeared in the same month as the first Muckle Toon poems:

It has to be insisted upon that Renaissance standards are not Greek standards. Greek standards in their own time and place were standards arrived at by the Greek nation; they were national standards. Caught up at second hand into the art-mind of Europe - thus becoming international, their effect was naturally to whiten the youthfully tender national cultures of Europe. That is, the standards of a dead nation killed in other nations those aptitudes through which they themselves had become memorable. Since the Renaissance there have been, strictly speaking, no self-contained national cultures in Europe. The antithesis of Renaissance art in this regard is national art. To some it may seem as if the Renaissance has justified itself in thus introducing a common strain into the art-consciousness of all European countries. That common

strain was certainly brilliant, shapely, worldly-wise, strong, if not indeed gigantic, over-bounding in energy, in life! Yet all the time there was a latent weakness in it, a strain, a sham strength, an uneasy energy, a death in life. It always protested too much. Dissembling always, it was never simple-hearted enough to speak plainly, and so, intensely. It therefore dazzles us rather than moves us. If it has justified itself, then should we swap Rheims cathedral for St. Peter's and Rouen for St. Paul's! "One would, however, swap Dante for Shakespeare?" - Yes, but what did Shakespeare's native wood-notes wild know of the Unities? Happy England! - so naively ignorant of the Renaissance at the close of the sixteenth century. Unhappy France! - where even before Shakespeare was born they had ceased to develop their native Christian literary modes, had indeed begun to fling them aside for those of Euripides and Seneca.... The Renaissance may have justified itself, but not, we feel, either on the plane of genuine Christian art or pagan art. It is not as intense or as tender as the one, nor so calm, majestic and wise as the other.

A Romantic movement is not usually thought of as a violent effort to re-discover the secret power that lay behind Greek art; yet in essence that is what every Romantic movement has been.⁶²

(Corkery's virtually interchangeable use of the terms 'romantic' and 'national' is appropriate to MacDiarmid, the romantic character of whose work is considered in Appendix B).

One of the central proposals in the Irish critic's book is that 'the whole trend in modern literature' is in the direction of the 'long discarded modes' of the Middle Ages.⁶³ Now, six decades after the appearance of The Hidden Ireland, it is difficult to discern rampant medievalism in the art of the early twentieth century. Corkery's choice of A. E. Housman as a representative modern may be judged to lighten the weight of his argument. Are tendencies towards the medieval to be found in the work of poets younger than Housman? Auden's exploitation of alliterative metres and Graves' debt to the poetry of John Skelton, hardly, between them, constitute a trend. The endless elaborations of Ulysses certainly have a medieval character, though Joyce's novel cannot be said to illustrate that 'creeping back to the national hearth'⁶⁴ which Corkery regarded as essential to the modern anti-Renaissance spirit.

The Hidden Ireland's reflections on recrudescent medievalism are of interest in suggesting further affinities between MacDiarmid and Clarke. The latter's poetry conjures a medieval world, even if,

in the main, it exchevs the literary modes of the Middle Ages. MacDiarmid was eager to draw attention to the medieval qualities of Scots, boasting that 'the vernacular' was 'a great untapped repository of the pre-Renaissance or anti-Renaissance potentialities which English has progressively foregone'.⁶⁵ No less enthusiastically, he embraced a theory of Scottish psychology which laid stress on the survival in the national mind of medieval habits of thought:

(T)he literature (of Scotland) is remarkably varied, and ... becomes, under the stress of foreign influence and native division and reaction, almost a zigzag of contradictions. The antithesis need not, however, disconcert us. Perhaps in the very combination of opposites - what either of the two Sir Thomases, of Norwich and Cromarty, might have been willing to call 'the Caledonian antisyzygy' - 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

...

There is more in the Scottish antithesis of the real and fantastic than is to be explained by the familiar rules of rhetoric. The sudden jostling of contraries seems to preclude any relationship by literary suggestion. The one invades the other without warning. They are the 'polar twins' of the Scottish Muse.

...

This mingling, even of the most eccentric kind, is an indication to us that the Scot, in that medieval fashion which takes all things for granted,

is at his ease in both 'rooms of life', and turns to fun, and even profanity, with no misgivings. For Scottish literature is more medieval in habit than criticism has suspected, and owes some part of its picturesque strength to this freedom in passing from one mood to another. It takes some people more time than they can spare to see the absolute propriety of a gargoyle's grinning at the elbow of a kneeling saint.⁶⁶

It is understandable that these extracts from G. Gregory Smith's Scottish Literature (1919) should have appealed to Grieve, for the vision of Scotland's national psyche offered here mirrored his own extraordinarily polarised sensibility. Reading them must have given the poet an experience of recognition akin to that his Drunk Man would undergo on confronting the thistle:

My ain soul looks me in the face, as 'twere,
And mair than my ain soul - my nation's soul!

(C.P. I, p. 93)

Not surprisingly, the work which most successfully encompasses the polarities of MacDiarmid's mind is the most 'medieval' of his productions. The medieval qualities of A Drunk Man, however, are not limited to the 'routh/O' contrairies' (C.P. I, p. 119) marshalled there. The poem's

basic conceit of drunkenness owes something to the dream vision convention of medieval allegory. (To acknowledge this is not to dispute the distinctions drawn by Boutelle between the natures of the experiences granted to the Scot's protagonist, on the one hand, and to the heroes of the old allegorical poems, on the other.⁶⁷) David Daiches has drawn our attention to medieval prototypes for the attitudes which lurk behind some of the swaggeringly modern ideas of A Drunk Man, speculating as follows on MacDiarmid's poetic lineage:

His ancestors are not Hopkins and Laforgue and the Jacobean dramatists or any of the other well-known sources of modern poetic idiom; but Chaucer and Dunbar and Villon and Skelton, the Goliardic tradition of the Middle Ages, the flyting tradition of medieval Scotland, the humanist polemics of Renaissance Europe MacDiarmid, in fact, remains wholly original in the sources of his poetic inspiration and in the special qualities of his poetry.⁶⁸

The qualities Daiches detects in A Drunk Man stem from the nature of Scots and of the literary traditions associated with that language rather than from the direct influence of the listed writers upon MacDiarmid. Scots had last been

employed for the highest literary purposes in the late Middle Ages, and some of the words used in A Drunk Man had not been exercised since then. More importantly, the folk idioms chosen by MacDiarmid serve to domesticate his philosophical speculations in a manner which recalls Smith's citation of 'that medieval fashion which takes all things for granted'. Corkery's notion of the essence of medievalism was similar to Smith's, and the Irish critic saw a key role for dialect in the radically anti-Renaissance literature he wished for:

Note again, the influence that other late comers in the field of world-literatures, such as Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, are having on the world of letters. It is the literatures of these countries that are really the pathfinders of to-day. Note again, how impossible it would have been for America to make any progress in literature if Whitman had not arisen to slay the New Englanders. Still further observe the huge extent to which dialect is entering into the stuff of modern literature in almost all countries. Imagine what Racine would say to Eugene O'Neill! Dialect is the language of the common people; in literature it denotes an almost overpowering attempt to express the here and now, that, in its principle is anti-Renaissance. 69 .

MacDiarmid liked the closing sentences here well enough to reproduce them, inaccurately and without

acknowledgement, in his book, Albyn: or Scotland and the Future.⁷⁰ He was to refuse the mantle of 'dialect poet' (see Appendix A), and it is arguable that he had little interest in employing 'the language of the common people' in his work. The attraction of Corkery's remarks lay in their suggestion of a link between the cultural historicism and the quest to render the immediacies of experience which were both implicit in the poet's employment of Scots.

Graves, Jones, MacDiarmid and Clarke came to artistic maturity in the aftermath of the Great War. With the exception of Clarke, all had seen service in the European theatre of war. Their experiences there and on their return painfully illustrated the shortcomings of received notions as to the nature of European civilisation. The more localised turmoil of Clarke's Ireland could be represented as part of a larger pattern involving the destruction of the imperial powers of the old European order (a point not lost on C. M. Grieve). Each of these writers gave individual expression to a widespread perception of the need to erect a new theory of civilisation to replace that which had been 'disproved' by the War. Oswald

Spengler's The Decline of the West, which began to be published in 1922, provided a widely influential formulation of the problem. Spengler argued that European civilisation had passed its period of ripeness and would inevitably wither away to be replaced by a new growth. The old 'Apollonian' order, rooted in the classical world, was about to give way to a 'Faustian' culture drawing strength from elements stifled under the Apollonian ascendancy. Grieve eagerly exploited these views in the 'causeries' of his principal organ of propaganda in the early twenties, the Scottish Chapbook. Corkery's study appealed to him - as it did to Clarke - because it gave a specifically Celtic twist to such a vision of civilisation; along with G. Gregory Smith's Scottish Literature, it licenced his intuition that Scotland might, in relation to a Spenglerian view of history, be one of 'the stones the builders despised' and become a corner-stone of a new European order.⁷¹ Similarly, the old Lowland tongue, hitherto a virtually unexplored byway, might become a major poetic roadway in the literature of the new civilisation.

(iii) MacDiarmid and Scots: The Southern Counties dialect of Scots was still strong in Dumfriesshire in the early years of the present century. Though it is impossible to discover how rich an idiom was used in the Grieve household, there are indications that the future poet had more than a casual acquaintance with the old tongue. His mother, an uneducated woman from the rural hinterland of the Muckle Toon, can be presumed to have spoken as braid a Scots as was to be heard on the Borders. A garbled tape-recording of the poet in conversation with John Laidlaw (see above, p. 20) suggests that he was still fluent in his native Langholm long after he had ceased to write literary Scots with distinction.⁷² The intensity of his response to the words and phrases he found in Jamieson in the early twenties similarly points to a childhood intimacy with the language of the Lowlands. MacDiarmid's argument that no Scottish writer,

'writing in English', can 'contribute anything essential and indispensable to the central tradition ... of English literature'⁷³ rests on a view of English as foreign to the early experience and racial memory of the Scot. A reviewer of the second edition of A Drunk Man applied this notion to the poet's own case, and related the sequence's success to its being cast in the language of the author's childhood. The anonymous contributor to the Times Literary Supplement wrote of that language as

the one in which the poet is least likely to mistake what he thinks he feels, or what he thinks he ought to feel, for what he really feels. This is a question of integrity. Childhood is the period during which people live closest to the 'collective unconscious', to the soul of the people, and childhood is the period of life therefore that is most receptive to those grand, persistent motifs of the race which it is the poet's business to keep viable. This is the main reason for the present revival of the Scottish language, and one main result of this revival has, of course, been a new awareness among Scotsmen of the deep life of their race.⁷⁴

Scots certainly appears to have enabled MacDiarmid to make verbal contact with his real feelings.

Indeed he might have been referring to his own as much as to his nation's psychology when he claimed that English is 'incapable of affording means of expression for certain of the chief elements of Scottish psychology'.⁷⁵ The poet never tried to conceal the intimate nature of the appeal of 'Lallans'. In Lucky Poet he commented:

Just as a glass can be shattered by striking a certain note on the fiddle or - if an alleged American case is authentic - a suspension bridge can be broken down in the same way, and just as (I have heard it said) during the 1914-18 War soldiers disintegrated without being touched if their 'number was up' and a shell came over with a certain sound, so it is only in the Scots language I can achieve or maintain if not, in certain senses, integrity of expression, at least 'the terrible crystal'; its sounds affect me in the opposite way to the sounds of the above-mentioned shells and bring me fully alive.

(p.35)

And in 1975 he recollected:

It was like a revelation when I wrote my first poem in Scots ... I must have tapped some source deep in myself.⁷⁶

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And in 1975 he recollected:

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MacDiarmid's response to Scots was obviously rooted deep in his personal history. That is why he was able to use with such colloquial facility the words and phrases he found in dictionaries. Only when his language is bloody-mindedly dense - as in some passages in 'Scots Unbound' (C.P. I, p. 340) - do we fail to detect a human voice in the poetry. The more dilute Scots of many lesser poets moves with a stiffer, less natural rhythm than his idiom. MacDiarmid's poetry is resolutely colloquial in tone, despite its 'high-brow' content. Some of its characteristic energy, indeed, stems from the disparity between its lofty content and demotic style, a disparity which, surprisingly perhaps, involves neither irony nor folksiness. But MacDiarmid's language is even further removed from real speech than the so-called 'colloquial category' evolved by Fergusson and Burns (see Appendix A). The language the boy heard and spoke in south-eastern Dumfriesshire is not the language of the poetry: the leading contemporary authority on Scots has insisted that, 'it is not in his native Langholm that (MacDiarmid) writes, despite much loose talk as if it were'.⁷⁷

When Christopher Grieve returned home from the Great War to begin his agitation to revitalise Scottish literature, he did not see Scots as a suitable vehicle for a new poetic movement. Contemporary attempts to revive 'the vernacular' for poetic purposes met with his contempt. The case against the tongue was obvious. Grieve wanted a poetry which exploited the techniques of the most adventurous literary art of Europe and reflected a twentieth-century sensibility, while Scots was a language in which poetasters encased stock responses to stock situations. The tongue had ceased to develop before the Industrial Revolution. It had had its heyday in an era when intellectual enquiry, then limited mainly to theological and philosophical discourse, was conducted through the medium of Latin. How then could Scots either express the everyday realities of life in the Machine Age, or mediate the complexities of contemporary intellectual endeavour? Grieve was blunt about the language's limitations. He declared it 'safe to predict' that more and more Scottish writers would commit their work, as he intended to commit his, to English, 'for the simple reasons (1) that they will reach a

larger public (2) that the English language is an immensely superior medium of expression'.⁷⁸ The realisation that Scots could afford expression to aspects of his own and of his nation's psychology which were incommunicable in English had not yet dawned upon the poet. He was merciless in his castigation of the revivalists:

Vernacularists are engaged in a futile and stupid attempt to turn back the clock, to perpetuate old divisions and differences.... The main stream of Scottish literature must be that in which the vital pre-occupations of the nation are most effectively represented. The Doric is utterly incapable of any such task.⁷⁹

Grieve even seems to have envisaged, and condemned in advance, the sort of experimental use of Scots which would soon give birth to his first major poems, for in the article from which the foregoing quotations are taken he included a contemptuous reference to 'feeding prodigally on the husks of rusticity'.⁸⁰

His own grundle was soon among the husks. When he began 'adventuring in dictionaries' (In Memoriam James Joyce, C.P. II, p. 823) in the summer of 1922, Grieve realised that the 'vernacular'

poets of the previous century and a half had worked so far within the language's limitations that a vital poetry which eschewed the outworn diction of the Burns tradition could still be created in Scots. He foraged the lexicon for components of a new poetic idiom, without regard to regional variations or to whether the words he chose were still current anywhere in Scotland. Eclecticism with regard to diction was not new (see Appendix A) and MacDiarmid was not the first to use such eclecticism to increase his stock of rhymes. It is the extreme quality of his linguistic promiscuity, his deliberate rummaging for the most unfamiliar elements of the Scots vocabulary, that distinguishes MacDiarmid's practice from that of poets of previous centuries.

Many of the 'early lyrics' were produced by a radically different compositional process to that used by MacDiarmid's great predecessors from Henryson to Burns. Crudely speaking, it might be said that the meaning of the older poets' works pre-existed its formulation in completed poems: writing was a matter of finding the most suitable words for the presentation of given thoughts. Their twentieth-century successor, conversely, approached composition

as a sort of lexicographical prospector setting out to release the buried energies of Scots. He wrote of his method as follows in Lucky Poet:

Because of a profound interest in the actual structure of language, like Malarmé's, like Mallarmé I have always believed in the possibility of 'une poésie qui fut comme deduite de l'ensemble des propriétés et des caractères du langage' - the act of poetry being the reverse of what it is usually thought to be; not an idea gradually shaping itself in words, but deriving entirely from words - and it was in fact (as only my friend F. G. Scott divined) in this way that I wrote all the best of my Scots poems....

(p.xxiii)

The 'early lyrics' do not all 'derive' from the lexicon to the same extent. Many are quite conventional in form, owing less to Symbolism than to the ballad tradition. Yet even these latter poems frequently betray a peculiarly verbal impetus (see Commentary on 'Crowdieknowe', Vol. II, p. 336). One unfortunate result of MacDiarmid's spectacularly successful dictionary-dredging which might be mentioned here was his tendency to see the solution to problems of poetic language almost wholly in terms of vocabulary. His comments on Synthetic English quoted above (p.163) seem to imply that he thought mere choice of terminology more important to the poetry of the future than

deployment of the chosen terms in image and metaphor.

The poetry of Sangschaw, Penny Wheep and A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle was composed in a period of sustained excitement occasioned by Grieve's dual discovery of a 'vast storehouse' of poetic effect⁸¹ in Scots, and of his own creative powers. It was not wholly a willed poetry insofar as the poet's art frequently followed where his linguistic explorations led. There is a sense in which, where his early work is concerned, MacDiarmid can be seen as an instrument whereby the latent energies of Scots gained release. Thus Iain Crichton Smith has written:

The lyrics made themselves necessary.
They appeared through him.⁸²

The young writer's recourse to the pseudonym 'Hugh MacDiarmid' was an acknowledgement of his surprise at the wealth of Scots and at the fertility of his own response to the language. But MacDiarmid was not content to remain an 'instrument' for long. He was soon attempting to deploy his new-found powers in accord with the dictates of his will.

A Drunk Man is a pivotal work in this regard: its author was still under the influence of his exhilarating discovery of Scots, but he was also attempting to give shape to the poetic insights which psychological pressures were granting him in such abundance in the nineteen twenties. Cencrastus, though, was written after the lexicographical excitement of the early twenties had entirely worn off. Here, as in most of MacDiarmid's subsequent verse, the 'act of poetry' comes close to 'what it is usually thought to be ... an idea gradually shaping itself in words' (even if the shaping process too often remains incomplete). A transformation of poetic language is the most obvious consequence of the change of approach to composition. The language of the lyrics is concrete, and there is great compression of meaning in them. The language of Cencrastus, conversely, is abstract, and many words in the sequence could be blue-pencilled with little damage to the sense.

The best of the lyrics resulted from an attempt to put 'to literary use forgotten words that have a descriptive potency otherwise unobtainable'.⁸³ Many of these words were 'forgotten' because they had

gained currency only in the speech of country folk. (There are interesting parallels between the literary achievements of MacDiarmid and John Millington Synge. The Scot found in the lexicon something akin to what the Irishman had discovered in the speech of the Connacht peasantry two decades earlier: a cultural ambience which had never achieved expression in literature). The communities whose speech MacDiarmid claimed for poetry had lived their lives close to elemental rhythms. The dialect phrases of these people retained an intimate correspondence between word and object long lost to the speech of more sophisticated societies. There was a causal link therefore between MacDiarmid's cultivation of unusual idioms and his production of remarkably concrete poems. The vivid, tangible quality of the poetic language of the 'early lyrics' derives from the nature of Scots as much as from the technical cunning of the poet. An inherent bias in the language stored in Jamieson gives the lyrics a natural place in the range of modern verse: their thoroughly delatinate idiom links them to the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, while their concreteness can be seen as a version of that concentration upon the poetic object demanded by the Imagists. Thus

the deconcretising of poetic language which we witness in Cenrastus leads to a sudden loss of modernity in MacDiarmid's 'voice'. The retreat from the lexicon involves a surrender of style. At many points in Cenrastus Scots functions as little more than a cloak behind which the poet tries to conceal the banality of his musings:

Even my wife whiles fails to see
 - And wha can blame her? Fegs no' me -
 What ails me that I canna win
 Wi' a' my brains the comfortin'
 Security that maist folk hae
 (Folk in oor station, that's to say)
 But aye on ruin's brink maun sway,
 And risk her and the bairns tae
 - It's no as if I could be shair
 My verse at last'll be worth mair. ...

(C.P. I, p. 251)

It may seem unfair to compare the language of such an extract as this with the language of MacDiarmid's early Scots work, since the loose, discursive mode of Cenrastus has no parallel in Sangschaw and Penny Wheep. Long passages not only of the 1930 sequence but also of A Drunk Man are written in a much less forbidding Scots than that of the lyrics. These passages are less energetic than typical stanzas of dense Scots from the first two MacDiarmid volumes, but then

discursive poetry rarely has the concentration of lyrical. A Drunk Man marks an advance upon the poet's earlier achievement in the old tongue because it shows him successfully employing Scots for forceful argument as well as for lyrical effects. The artistic frustrations of Cencrastus do not relate exclusively to a crisis of confidence in the idiom which had served MacDiarmid so well in the earlier sequence: one detects also a sense of boredom with the persona required by dramatic monologue, as if the poet recognised in mid-composition that he had worked this vein out in A Drunk Man. Yet the reader's abiding impression, on coming to Cencrastus after the work of the twenties, is of a suspension of the critical engagement with the Lowland language which had yielded the wonderfully concrete and vivid poetry of MacDiarmid's first five years as a Scots practitioner.

The poet was showing signs of dissatisfaction with Scots even before he ran into difficulties with Cencrastus. The protagonist of the 1926 sequence complains that 'Lallans' is not sufficiently responsive to the demands of his drunken inspiration.

It is the 'puir relation' of his 'topplin' mood' (C.P. I, p. 116), a 'language that but sparely floo'ers/And maistly gangs to weed' (C.P. I, p. 122). He suspects at one point that it is the destiny of the Scottish poet to inherit a language which cannot sustain imaginative flight:

God gied man speech and speech created thocht,
 He gied man speech but to the Scots gied nocht
 Barrin' this clytach that they've never brocht
 To onything but sic a Blottie O
 As some bairn's copybook micht show.

(C.P. I, p. 115)

Impatience with the expressive capacities of Scots is little more than a passing mood in A Drunk Man. Cencrastus, though, is truly a work in which language 'but sparely floo'ers'. Many of that volume's repeated admissions of thwarted artistic ambition centre on the poet's unavailing struggle with the language which had so excited him in the early twenties. He despairingly owns the idiom of his sequence a 'loose and gallus tongue' (C.P. I, p. 237), a 'hauf-English' (C.P. I, p. 249) upon which he can no longer depend for poetic galvanisation.

The linguistic disillusionment evident in Cencrastus stems partly from MacDiarmid's baffled

awareness that Scots was losing its power to activate his verbal imagination, and partly from his changed apprehension of the language's role in Scottish culture. A central assumption behind the composition of A Drunk Man had been that the consciousness of the race to whom Scots belonged would automatically gain expression once the language's energies had been liberated by the poet's tessellations of the unusual words he found in dictionaries. As a consequence of his exploratory, manipulative approach to language, MacDiarmid could regard himself as a national poet of Scotland. Thus in February 1926, while working on A Drunk Man, he declared that his poem-in-progress derived its unity 'from its preoccupation with the distinctive elements in Scottish psychology which depend for their effective expression upon the hitherto unrealised potentialities of Braid Scots'.⁸⁴ In the late nineteen-twenties, however, MacDiarmid became convinced that Gaelic, not Scots, was the language of the historic Scottish nation - a Celtic nation which had in the past, and would have again in the wished-for future, cultural and political commerce with the other Celtic 'nations',

Ireland, Wales and Cornwall. An aspirant national poet of Scotland would have to write in Gaelic. And, as he regretfully acknowledged in Cencrastus, Hugh MacDiarmid knew almost no Gaelic:

O wad at least my yokel words
Some Gaelic strain had kept
As in Othello's sobs the oaths
O' Thames. no' Venice. leapt,
And ave in puir Doll Tearsheet's shift
The Queen o' Egypt slept.

The modest daisy like the Rose
O' a' the Warld repetalld
- Fain through Burns' clay MacMhaighstir's fire
To glint within me ettled.
It stirred, alas, but couldna kvth,
Prood, elegant and mettled.

(C.P. I, p. 225)

(The reference here is to Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair - otherwise known as Alexander MacDonald - one of the two great Scots Gaelic poets of the eighteenth century.)

By the time MacDiarmid came to plan Clann Albann, then, both the theory and the practice of his revival of Scots seemed on the point of collapse. But in the language issue, as in so much else, The Muckle Toon represents a very remarkable, if temporary, reversal of the trend of his poetic practice.

MacDiarmid's career as a 'Lallans' poet effectively came to an end in 1933. After completing what we have referred to (above, pp.186-9) as the 'Scots group' of his early Shetland writings, he used the language only intermittently and with little distinction. The Muckle Toon, therefore, represents his last attempt at a large-scale work in the old tongue. The drift back to English in fact became perceptible before his abandonment of the project.

'Gairmscoile' (C.P. I, p. 72), an apology for Scots written in the poet's first flush of excitement at discovering the literary possibilities of the language, includes the following delighted testimony to its aural qualities:

It's soon', no' sense, that faddoms the herts
o' men,
And by my sangs the rouch auld Scots I ken
E'en herts that ha'e nae Scots 'll dirl right
thro'
As nocht else could - for here's a language
rings
Wi' datchie sesames, and names for nameless
things.

(C.P. I, p. 74)

After the 'early lyrics', MacDiarmid's most brilliant and varied exploitation of the 'soon's' of 'the rouch auld Scots' is to be found in such Muckle Toon poems of the Thakeham period as 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton' (C.P. I, p. 331; M.T., p.150), 'Water Music' (C.P. I, p. 333; M.T., p.16), 'Tarras' (C.P. I, p. 337, M.T., p.147), and 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' (C.P. I, p. 346; M.T., p.133). However, in another Sussex piece - 'The Point of Honour' (C.P. I, p.387; M.T., p.164) - the poet expresses impatience with the 'onomatopoeic art' essayed so memorably in the four poems we have named, interrupting an evocation of the Esk to protest:

No more of mere sound, the least part!
I know how it acts, connecting words, implying
A rate of movement, onomatopoeic art,
Or making a reader start trying
To interpret the mouth's actual movement
As a gesture: or acting directly
Like a tune - a mode that is different
From the rest as darkness from light to me,
These intelligible, this a mystery.

(C.P. I, p. 388; M.T., p.164)

'The Point of Honour' comes closer than anything else in The Muckle Toon to confronting MacDiarmid's sense of impending creative atrophy. Appropriately, it is the only lengthy Clann Albann piece written in the language the poet had depended upon before the fertilisation of his creativity by his encounter

with the Scots lexicon.

The reversion to English heralded by 'The Point of Honour' was complex in impulse and is not to be explained with ease or authority. It is possible none the less to identify four factors - psychological, intellectual, aesthetic and (for want of a better term) commercial - which seem to have contributed to MacDiarmid's movement away from Scots.

The psychological is perhaps the most striking of these. A major difference between MacDiarmid's poetry in Scots and in English is that the words of the latter give little indication of rootedness below the threshold of consciousness. This distinction is particularly marked in the case of the early Shetland work, which includes some of his finest writing in both languages. We have already seen (above, pp.189-97) that the Scots poetry of the period in question communicates extreme emotional distress, while the English celebrates a sort of jettisoning of the affective baggage of personality. It is arguable that MacDiarmid turned away from Scots in 1933 for the

reason he had pursued his experiments with the language after the composition of 'The Watergaw' eleven years earlier, i.e., because Scots put him in contact with his most primal responses. English allowed no approach to the affective disorder depicted in the Scots poetry of his first months in Shetland. The Lowland tongue, index of the psychological intimacy so memorably rejected in 'On a Raised Beach', had no place in MacDiarmid's poetic strategy after 1933, though he never admitted that this was so. The stage for this dénouement was already being set during MacDiarmid's last summer in England. 'The Point of Honour's' farewell to 'mere sound' and declaration of commitment to an 'intellectual flame' (l. 71, C.P. I, p. 389; M.T., p.165) which would sear merely personal considerations, involved a valediction also to 'the rouch auld Scots'. It was by the language's 'soon's', after all, that the poet's 'hert' had been 'faddomed'. There is a direct link between the later poetry's psychological reserve and its lack of musical distinction.

The intellectual impetus towards English related to MacDiarmid's desire to create a poetry which would 'join issue at every point with modern intellection'

(see above, pp.165 - 6). Precious little of the latter is carried on in the old tongue of the Lowlands. There is a clear continuity of purpose between the experimental Scots of the nineteen twenties and the experimental English of the nineteen thirties. The poet had claimed the lapsed observations of extinct communities for literature. Could the insights of science not be similarly annexed? The step from ransacking Jamieson to appropriating the vocabularies of science is not a big one, but it is a step on the road from Scots to English. While planning Clann Albann, MacDiarmid made the stubborn claim that Scots could be 'adapted to the requirements of expression in this highly citified, industrialised and scientific age'.⁸⁵ Such heroic posturing could not change the fact that most post-medieval elements in the 'Lallans' vocabulary had their origins in rustic life. The poet's first three Scots volumes had demonstrated that such elements could be 'adapted' for a psychologically modern literature. They could play only a very minor role, however, in a poetry which sought to reflect the characteristic intellectual pursuits of the twentieth century.

MacDiarmid's Shetland experiences prompted him to write poems of a type for which the genius of Scots was not fitted. 'On a Raised Beach' (C.P. I, p. 422) and 'Lament for the Great Music' (C.P. I, p. 462), perhaps the most impressive English pieces in the Stony Limits collection, are written in that language for the best of aesthetic reasons. Proclaiming his emergence from a crisis which was, in point of biographical fact, still far from over when they were composed, both works convey the poet's determination to survive the eclipse of metaphysical and political hope. They communicate a sense of enormous loss. It is unlikely that MacDiarmid could have achieved in the medium of Scots the gravity of tone which distinguishes these elegiac poems. Scots' 'twinkle in the eye' quality is suitable for a poetry of dialectical energy, but it is inappropriate to the sober, agnostic, anti-humanist vision the poet was now striving to express:

It is a frenzied and chaotic age,
Like a growth of weeds on the site of a
demolished building.
How shall we set ourselves against it,
Imperturbable, inscrutable, in the world
and yet not in it,
Silent under the torments it inflicts upon us,
With a constant centre,

With a single inspiration, foundations firm and
invariable;

By what immense exercise of will,
Inconceivable discipline, courage, and endurance,
Self-purification and anti-humanity,
Be ourselves without interruption,
Adamantine and inexorable?

('On a Raised Beach', C.P. I, p. 429)

With its familiarising character and reductive tendency, Scots was of little use to MacDiarmid in his need for an alienated and elevated style such as we see in this passage. The poet consistently sought to counter the notion that Scots writers always fall back on English when they want to express thought rather than feeling. He convincingly cited a phrase from 'The Seamless Garment' in support of his argument (see Commentary, pp. 393-4). My point here that he necessarily had recourse to English in his quest for a mode of sober reflection should not be construed as an endorsement of the view passionately rejected by MacDiarmid. Certainly, Scots seems to have been the language of his feelings, but it was also the language he had used for the poetic encapsulation of complex trains of thought not only in A Drunk Man but also such Langholm pieces as 'Water of Life' (C.P. I, p. 314; M.T., p. 112) and 'Whuchulls' (C.P. II, p. 1089; M.T., p. 153).

The commercial failure of Scots Unbound and other poems, which the poet was obliged to redeem out of his own exhausted pocket (see above, p.131), revealed the virtual non-existence of an audience for his Scots poetry. One surmises that MacDiarmid had hoped that his move to London in 1929 would result in his acceptance by the artistic community of the metropolis and in a widening recognition of his achievement. Such hopes were not to be realised. Isolated on Whalsay in 1933 with his new family and in dire need of an income, he cannot but have been aware that an international or even a British reputation would bring with it more satisfying and remunerative journalistic and other commissions than he was attracting as Scotland's most despised iconoclast. It is tempting to relate his poignant acceptance that the Ceol Mór will never

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to a painful recognition of the minority appeal of his own art, and to read his farewell to the

pipers at the end of the 'Lament' as a disguised valediction to the Scots muse he had served with unacknowledged distinction for more than a decade. Certainly the Stony Limits volume in which the 'Lament' appeared - a predominantly English collection published by a London firm (Victor Gollancz) - seems to have represented an attempt by MacDiarmid to secure an audience for his work furth of Scotland.

CHAPTER THREE

'MAIKLESS FIRES': FORM AND TECHNIQUE
IN THE MUCKLE TOON

'Let me range owre a' prosody again'

'Whuchulls'

The reader who comes from Cencrastus to the poetry of the early thirties is immediately struck by the energy and confidence of the latter. There are a few signs of careless workmanship in the Clann Albann material, but there is no trace of the weariness which characterises the sequence published in 1930. While the renewal of MacDiarmid's creative vigour may be traced to developments in his personal life, it was no mere inspirational reawakening. Artistic discipline, the willed shaping of the intuitions granted the poet, is evident throughout The Muckle Toon, even providing the subject matter of some of the writing:

Archin' here and arrachin there
Allevolie or allemand,
Whiles appliable, whiles areird
The polysemous poem's planned.

('Water Music', C.P. I, p. 333;

M.T. p.16)

From a formal and technical point of view, the Langholm poetry represents a notable recovery of the creative poise lost by MacDiarmid in the Cencrastus years. I propose to examine The Muckle Toon in this chapter under the headings of Structure, Symbolism, Stanza and Metre, and Language, in each case briefly relating the poet's practice in the early thirties to his career as a whole.

A) The Structure of The Muckle Toon

Though MacDiarmid attempted long poems at many stages in his development, only once did he succeed in giving a semblance of inevitability to the sequential organisation of the component units of a work. The structural coherence of A Drunk Man derives as much from the extraordinary fecundity of the poem's central symbol as it does from architectonics. Nevertheless even in this case the poet felt obliged to enlist the aid of F. G. Scott in assembling the work for publication.¹ The inherently dramatic raw material of A Drunk Man is suggestive of structure. An intoxicated mind confronts a polymorphous thistle. Switches of mood and metre reflect the protagonist's response to imagined changes in the plant's appearance. Meditative or lyrical movements are inspired by his agreement or disagreement with the conclusion of a previous movement. Even the most violent breaks and juxtapositions further the poem's essential celebration of 'the routh/O' contrairies' (C.P. I, p. 119) the Drunk Man finds within himself.

Given the device of drunkenness and the emblematic inexhaustibility of the thistle, this structural approach is adequate to MacDiarmid's purpose. The energy of contradiction and the liberating influence of the whisky in the protagonist's blood keep the poem moving at a hectic pace.

To Circumjack Cencrastus has no underlying philosophy of paradox, and no sense of a single, complex psychology behind its monologue, to forge links between the bits and pieces from which it is assembled. Its heterogeneity is no less attributable to the poet's failure to find an emblem for use as an organising principle than A Drunk Man's homogeneity is to his success in doing so, and is therefore a subject to which we will return in the next section of this chapter. The sequence completely lacks the sort of dramatic schema which reinforces the integrating power of the symbolism of the earlier work. Thematically related items are grouped together here and there, but lengthy stretches of the book comprise apparently arbitrary arrangements of individual poems. Adjacent pieces frequently lack even minimal contradictory or complementary relationships such as those which enhance the

Drunk Man's 'stream of consciousness' effect.

In the years after his breakdown of 1935 MacDiarmid planned poems of truly immense length. If we are to judge by the chunks of these which he managed to have published,² he now eschewed the problem of structure altogether, being content to arrange paragraphs of free verse more or less according to the logic of prose discourse. The poet who had been distressed by the formlessness of Cenchrastus cannot have been blind to his failure to give significant shape to the vast poems on which he laboured in his later career. However, he stubbornly sought to turn incapacity to advantage by arguing that 'symphonic' art belonged to an outmoded stage of human development, whereas the 'epic' procedure of his immense English poems accorded with the spirit of a dawning cultural epoch:

Wagner was right ... when he spent years studying word-roots. He knew (as Charles Doughty knew) that we were coming to another of the quantitative - as against accentual - periods in culture. It is that lack of historical knowledge which disables no Marxist that is wrong with our mere impressionist commentators

on such a phenomenon. (It is this question of quantity as against accent that distorts to most Scots the nature of our pibrochs of the great period. These knew no 'bar'. They were timeless music - hence their affiliation with plainsong, with the neuma. Barred music - accented music - finds its ultimate form in symphony. Unbarred music - quantity music - expresses itself in pattern-repetition; hence the idea that the Celt has no architectonic power, that his art is confined to niggling involutions and intricacies - yet the ultimate form here is not symphony; it is epic.) It is epic - and no lesser form - that equates with the classless society. Everything else - no matter how expressly it repudiates these in the mere logical meaning of what it says as against what it is - belongs to the old order of bourgeois 'values', to the nebulous entities described by terms like 'spiritual' and 'soul'; in short, it stands for the old romantic virtues, which is to say, pragmatically, for nothing.³

In 1931 MacDiarmid did not yet feel the need to hide his lack of 'architectonic power' behind a theory. His embarrassment at the failure of To Circumiack Cencrastus did not make him revert to the short and highly-wrought lyrical modes in which he had first won distinction, but it was almost certainly responsible for his abandonment of the organisational approach which had served him so well in his first, and so poorly in his second,

Scots 'gallimaufry'.⁴ While the poet never explicitly indicated the sequence individual poems were to take within The Muckle Toon, he evidently decided in 1931 that each piece in his new work would be intrinsically related to the venture and would not depend upon its position in relation to other pieces to establish its relevance. We may be skeptical about MacDiarmid's claim in 'Clann Albann: An Explanation' that he was 'working on a definite predetermined plan' (M.T., p.235), but the poetry of 1931, if not of the following year, bears the mark of a deliberate effort to organise material for an integral extended work. Even in a random arrangement the poems achieve a unity unmatched by the elements of Cenchrastus in their definitive sequence. Their studied cohesiveness in symbol, attitude and style is reinforced by a high degree of stanzaic uniformity.

MacDiarmid seems to have envisaged a structural role for contradiction in Clann Albann, but oppositions would be set up between 'attitudes developed from book to book' (M.T., p.238), involving 'opinions ... balanced against the opposite views expressed elsewhere in the poem' (M.T., pp 235-6), rather than, as in the case of A Drunk Man, between adjacent pieces. One

looks in vain to the author's comments about his 'five-fold scheme' for a clue to his conception of the internal organisation of the first of the five proposed volumes. His declared intention to 'devote a whole section of "Clann Albann" to the Scottish Church, my father's and mother's beliefs and practices, and allied themes'⁵ might be taken as an indication that he visualised a sectional ordering for the poems of The Muckle Toon. The phrase 'and allied themes', however, may mean that the 'whole section' in question here is the entire opening book of Clann Albann. Nevertheless the Muckle Toon poems lend themselves to a sectional arrangement, and are therefore presented in discrete divisions in Volume Two.

The poet may have intended the stanza form he developed specially for The Muckle Toon (see below, pp.288-96) to convey the work's central statements, while short poems and variations on the major themes would be cast in a variety of moulds. Five hundred and eighty one of the eight hundred and ten Clann Albann lines published in 1931 are committed to the stanza. We cannot be certain, however, that MacDiarmid meant the 'Muckle Toon stanza' to predominate to such an extent. For one thing, his comments in his publicity

for Clann Albann and in his letters never allude to the six-line stave; for another, there is evidence that he thought of the poems which exploit it as extrinsic to the main thrust of his epic undertaking. He described the contents of the First Hymn collection as 'all incidental and separable short items interspersed throughout Clann Albann, a very long poem predominantly of a non-lyrical character'.⁶ Yet the collection contains 'Water of Life' (C.P. I, p. 314; M.T., p.112), one of only five Muckle Toon pieces to exceed a hundred and fifty lines in length,⁷ and 'Prayer for a Second Flood' (C.P. I, p. 299; M.T., p.131), a spirited attack on Presbyterian canniness, which the author elsewhere referred to as a 'lyric'.⁸ Both poems are cast in the characteristic Muckle Toon stanza. If MacDiarmid considered all the poems of 1931 to be 'short' and 'lyrical', does it follow that the core, 'non-lyrical' poetry of Clann Albann never saw the light of day? There are grounds for believing that the poet's protestations of the non-lyrical nature of his Work in Progress were designed to mollify demanding admirers such as Saurat (see above, pp. 97-104): they provided an intellectually reputable if purely notional schema which freed him to pursue concerns which might otherwise appear

wantonly subjective. Some commentators may find it possible to take MacDiarmid at his word in this matter, and accept such later Langholm-related pieces as 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' (C.P. I, p. 346; M.T., p. 133) and 'The Oon Olympian' (C.P. I, p. 354; M.T., p. 125) as the fulfilment of the promise of an extended, non-lyrical mode to carry the main burden of Clann Albann. Yet these poems are longer than the professedly 'short' 'Water of Life' by a mere seventy-eight and eight lines respectively.⁹

In 1932 MacDiarmid rejected the idea of using one dominant stanza form for The Muckle Toon. As we have seen in Chapter One (above, pp. 128-9), the poems written in that year vary in style and subject-matter as well as in versification. Passages which develop themes introduced by the previous year's material occur in poems bearing little general relation to the Clann Albann effort. Some of the finest writing in The Muckle Toon was composed during the author's Thakeham sojourn, but its very vigour and diversity marks the collapse of the structure towards which the poetry of 1931 seems to have been working.

Specific correspondences between the poems of The Muckle Toon are identified in the Commentary. These correspondences are not only a matter of stylistic similarity and the gradual elucidation of aspects of a common symbolism: traces of an attempted structure can be discerned from the manner in which some pieces fleetingly allude to others, or depend upon others for the fulness of their meaning. For instance, The Muckle Toon's opening poem contains the promise that MacDiarmid will 'sune prove' that his boyhood was awake to the beauty of his native countryside ('From Work in Progress', l. 4, C.P. II, p. 1147; M.T., p. 10). That pledge remains unfulfilled in 'From Work in Progress' itself, but is duly honoured in other poems written for the inaugural volume of Clann Albann. 'At a Humble Grave' (C.P. II, p. 1251; M.T., p. 91) clearly alludes in its opening stanza to another piece, though to which other piece is not obvious. The first two lines of 'Of John Davidson':

I remember one death in my boyhood
That next to my father's, and darker, endures
(C.P. I, p. 362; M.T., p. 92)

give that poem a natural position after the poetry on the death of James Grieve, specifically after

'At My Father's Grave' (C.P. I, p. 299; M.T., p. 90), which includes a reference (in l. 5) to 'the great darkness' of the Ewes postman's death. The 'recent poem/About Lenin' mentioned in ll. 8-9 of 'The Seamless Garment' (C.P. I, p. 311; M.T., p. 121) is presumably the 'First Hymn' (C.P. I, p. 297; M.T., p. 98). The reference accords with the premeditatedly throwaway style of 'The Seamless Garment' (see below, p. 314), but it may have been intended also as a reminder to the reader of a poem he has already encountered in his sequential reading of Clann Albann's first volume. The use of the word 'epopteia' in l. 196 of 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' (C.P. I, p. 352; M.T., p. 137), clarifies the meaning of the same word in ll. 5 and 27 of 'Charisma and My Relatives' (C.P. I, pp. 301, 302; M.T., p. 41).

In 'Tarras' MacDiarmid invokes the 'genia' loci of an upland bog near Langholm. The personality addressed in the poem is sluttishly yet gloriously feminine, with an immense capacity to absorb experience. The poet perceives a connection between the bog's anarchic generosity and the feckless, unrespectable energy of the proletariat:

This Bolshvik bog! Suits me doon to the grun'!
For by fike and finnick the world's no' run.
Let fools set store by a simperin' face,
Ithers seek to keep the purale in place
Or grue at vermin - but by heck
The purpose o' life needs them - if us.
Little the bog and the masses reck
O' some dainty-davie or fike-ma-fuss.
Ho for the mother of usk and adder
Spelderin' here in her coal and madder
Faur frae Society's bells and bladder.

(C.P. I, p. 337; M.T., p. 147)

This is the opening stanza. The political parallel is not developed in the remaining verses. If we take 'Tarras' in isolation these lines seem almost irrelevant, but in the context of The Muckle Toon they form a bridge between the political poems and the poems of place. Viewed in this light we can detect in the first line of 'Tarras' an autobiographical dimension, a chuckling recognition of how the 'hame scenes' fitted Christopher Grieve for communism.

Perhaps the most explicit cross-reference in The Muckle Toon links 'From Work in Progress' and 'By Wauchopeside'. The former poem ends with the speculative claim that

The thrawn auld water has at last upswung
 Through me, and's mountin' like the vera devil
 To its richt level!

(C.P. II, p. 1150; M.T., p. 13)

The opening line of 'By Wauchopeside' comments wryly on this conclusion:

Thrawn water? Aye, owre thrawn to be aye thrawn!
(C.P. II, p. 1083; M.T., p. 162)

These small hints must be heeded in any attempt to assemble The Muckle Toon. Along with the note in the Modern Scot indicating that 'From Work in Progress' would be the volume's first poem (see above, p. 104), they are the only guidelines MacDiarmid bequeathed his editors. Yet thematic correspondences readily suggest groupings for the poems. Outstanding items are difficult to place more often because they can be added with equal justice to two or more major clusters than because they fail to echo the characteristic concerns of the work. A brief explanation of the arrangement I have devised is given in A Note on the Text in Volume Two, while a more detailed account is interspersed throughout the Commentary.

B) The Symbolism of The Muckle Toon

Hugh MacDiarmid's poetic development falls into seven more or less distinct divisions. First there is the English verse written before Grieve became MacDiarmid, then the 'early lyrics' in Scots, followed by A Drunk Man, Cenchrastus, the Muckle Toon and other poetry of 1931 and 32, the early Shetland work, and, finally, the 'world-view' poems to which the author devoted his energies after 1935. It is generally agreed that the least problematic poetry is to be found in the second, third, fifth and sixth of these chronological categories. Though MacDiarmid's work varies greatly in manner and matter from phase to phase of his development, the poetry of each of the four 'successful' chronological categories has its characteristic symbolic or figurative machinery, while that of the other three lacks an emblematic cynosure.

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The 'early lyrics' typically juxtapose human and cosmic perspectives; the reader's as well as the protagonist's attention is focussed on the thistle in A Drunk Man; the Water of Life symbol draws the philosophical and autobiographical themes of The Muckle Toon into unity; and the personal, intellectual and political concerns of the Shetland poetry come together in an imagery of stones.

Cencrastus comprises almost all the surviving poetry of the only 'unsuccessful' chronological category of MacDiarmid's mid-career. The sequence's failure is attributable in very large measure to the insufficiency of the central symbol of the Curly Snake. The Cencrastus figure is no less remote to the senses than the very abstract themes it is meant to harness and concretise. (For brief accounts of these, see above, pp.156-8, and below, pp.359-63). Kenneth Buthlay has written of 'the difficulty of associating anything positive or humanly realizable with the original symbol of Cencrastus, which was by its very nature the most elusive of concepts'¹⁰ - a difficulty which defeated the poet in the late twenties and continues to defeat his readers. There is some densening towards thematic coherence at the end of Cencrastus but this

'attempt...to stitch in a symbolism of sea and serpent...should have been taken care of at the planning stage', as Buthlay has insisted.¹¹

A study of the Langholm poetry suggests that when MacDiarmid began work on his new long poem in 1931 he was keenly aware of the need for a richer and less abstract emblem than that which had brought his last attempt at major creation to grief. The most effective of The Muckle Toon's strategies against Cencrastus-like incoherence is the Water of Life symbol. Though the symbol's possibilities are exploited with great brilliance and energy, it is perhaps in his choice rather than in his handling of it that MacDiarmid most surely reveals his understanding of the shortcomings of Cencrastus. The Water of Life is a far more objective correlative than the serpent of the 1930 sequence for the poet's evolutionary vision (see below, pp.376-8), since it springs from actual childhood experience and, in one of its aspects at least, has an ongoing reality external to his mind:

A perfect maze
 O' waters is about the Muckle Toon
 Apairt frae't often seemin' through the weather
 That sea and sky swap places a'thegither.

('Water of Life', C.P. I, pp. 314-5;
M.T., p. 112)

No matter how abstruse the speculations of The Muckle Toon, the gurglings of

... Wauchope, Esk, and Ewes...,
Each wi' its ain rhythms till't

(Water Music', C.P. I, p. 333;
M.T., p. 16)

are never far away.

It is difficult to discuss poetic symbols without considering their content. As the subject-matter of The Muckle Toon is the concern of the next chapter, I will limit my comments here to a brief depiction of how the Water of Life emblem enables MacDiarmid to give integrated representation to themes which in any abstract formulation must appear widely disparate.

At the most obvious level, since The Muckle Toon renders homage to the district in which the poet grew up, the Water of Life is a celebration

of the rivers which dominate that district. The sight

The recurrent vividness o' licht and water
Through every earthly change o' mood or scene ...

('Depth and the Chthonian Image',

C.P. I, p. 352; M.T., p.138)

sound

And you've me in your creel again,
Brim or shallow, bauch or bricht,
Singin' in the mornin',
Corrieneuchin' a' the nicht...

('Water Music', C.P. I, p. 335;

M.T., p. 17)

and even the touch

Once, with my boy's body little I knew
But her furious thresh on my flesh ...

('The Point of Honour', C.P. I, p. 388;

M.T., p.164)

of Langholm's waterways provide much of the surface
detail of the verse.

The Water of Life's primary emblematic application
is as a figure for evolutionary energy, an energy
conceived by the poet not only as

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The Water of Life's primary emblematic application
is as a figure for evolutionary energy, an energy
conceived by the poet not only as

the force that's brocht life up
Frae chaos to the present stage

('Excelsior', C.P., I, p. 317;

M.T., p. 115)

but also as the impulse which spurs him towards
 higher consciousness through the exercise of his
 art:

The thrawn auld water has at last upswung
 Through me, and 's mountin' like the vera devil
 To its richt level!

('From Work in Progress', C.P. II, p. 1150;

M.T. p. 13)

Yet water also has a destructive character, identified
 by MacDiarmid with the terrifying impersonality of
 evolutionary advance:

Nae man can jouk and let the jaw gang by.
 To seem to's often to dodge a silly squirt
 While bein' whummed in an unseen spate
 Lodgin' us securely in faur deeper dirt
 Or carryin' us to heichts we canna see
 For th'earth in oor e'e.

('Water of Life', C.P. I, p. 316;

M.T., p. 113)

The poet takes Noah's Flood as a figure for this
 capacity of history to overturn mankind's most
 cherished ideals and achievements, visualising as a
 second Deluge the political revolution he deems

necessary to sweep away modes of thought and behaviour
which inhibit the expansion of consciousness:

There'd ha'e to be nae warnin'. Times ha'e
changed
And Noahs are owre numerous nooadays,
(And them the vera folk to benefit maist!)
Knock the feet frae under them, O Lord, wha praise
Your unsearchable ways sae muckle and yet hope
To keep within knowledgeable scope!

('Prayer for a Second Flood',
C.P. I, p. 299; M.T., p. 131)

In its Noah's Flood manifestation the Water of Life effects an explicit connection between the central symbol and the religious motif (see below, pp.424-42) of The Muckle Toon by extending the poetry's tapestry of allusions to the Book of Genesis (see below, pp.441-2). The central symbol also has an implicit scriptural reference, for water is typically valued in the Bible for its life-giving properties: for example, it overcomes the enemies of Israel during the escape from Egypt (Exodus 14:26-28) and saves the Israelites during their subsequent sojourn in the desert (Exodus 17:1-7; Numbers 20:1-13). Not until the New Testament, however, is the Water of Life trope expressly articulated. Chapters Three and Four of The Gospel According to St. John, which recount Jesus' promise of eternal life through baptism, are key texts in this regard. It is appropriate that

The Muckle Toon's most exquisite lyric should take the form almost of a meditation upon the first of these chapters (see Commentary, p.443 , on 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton' (C.P. I, p. 331; M.T., p.150)). Scholars have seen behind Christ's discourse with the Woman of Samaria in John 4 the influence of Old Testament eschatological writings which depict Jerusalem as 'a source of living waters'.¹² A sense of an imaginatively significant place as 'a source of living waters' underpins the development of MacDiarmid's Water of Life figure, too. In general it can be said that MacDiarmid applies the scriptural phrase Water of Life to his secular conception of evolutionary impulse in a spirit of irony which accords with the profane usage of sacred terminology elsewhere in The Muckle Toon (see below, pp.439-40).

MacDiarmid's poignant awareness of the unreliability of creative energy forms one of the minor themes of The Muckle Toon (see below, pp. 499-504). It is a theme typically presented in terms of the poetry's ubiquitous imagery of water. The 'living waters' of the Esk are looked

upon not only as a source but also as a measure of
the poetry:

There's mony a troot in the auld Dog Pool
Livelier, praise be, than ocht you can write.
Lean owre as you used to ga'en to the school
And see the broon shadows and ivory beaks
Bonnier than ony book bespeaks.

('The Dog Pool', C.P. II, p. 1252;

M.T., p. 161)

In 'Water of Life' (ll. 119-21, C.P. I, p. 318;
M.T., p. 115) and 'The Dog Pool' (ll. 13-18) the
poet communicates his fear of an imminent crisis
of inspiration by genially adverting to the possibility
that even the endlessly fecund Esk is not inexhaustible,
and may one day vanish, in the words of the second of
these poems, 'roon'The curve at Land's End...'.
.

I have attempted to do no more here than draw
attention to the major significations of the Water of
Life emblem. The motif's many occurrences are noted
and, where necessary, discussed in the Commentary.
If we are to understand the nuances of the Langholm
poetry's central symbol, however, something must be
said about the use of water imagery in MacDiarmid's
work before and after The Muckle Toon. We have
already encountered Grieve's early interest in the
philosophy of Henri Bergson and his attempt in

Annals of the Five Senses to represent perceptual experience on the page (above, pp. 148-53). Much of his writing from Annals onwards exemplifies his faith that, as an unidentified quotation in 'The Never-Yet-Explored' puts it, 'The essence of life lies in the movement by which it is transmitted' (A., p. 132). It is arguable that the protean water figure, like the thistle in A Drunk Man, was designed as an emblematic recreation of the life-disclosing 'movement' envisaged by the Annals maxim. Water imagery clearly has such a function in the following excerpts from Cencrastus:

The pale-wa'd warld is fu' o' licht and life
Like a glass in which water faintly stirs.

(C.P. I, p. 270)

My love is to a' else that is
As meaning's meaning, or the sun
Men see ahint the sunlight whiles
Like lint-white water run....

(C.P. I, p. 291)

MacDiarmid's most sustained comparison of the 'tiny hardly visible trembling of ... water' to the movement of life manifesting itself is to be found in a fine late poem, 'The Glass of Pure Water' (C.P.II, p. 1041). Though never made explicitly, a similar comparison may be intended in The Muckle Toon's

celebration of Langholm's rivers. (This point is taken further in a discussion of levels of meaning in 'Water Music', below, pp.328-9.)

Almost a decade before beginning work on The Muckle Toon Grieve used the phrase Water of Life as the title of a poem. The following lines, from the only published fragment of that early 'Water of Life'¹³, are interesting because they show the Christ-Water link of the Langholm writings already forged, if to a wholly unsardonic effect:

Thy name is Legion, Son of Man,
 And every day is Christmas Day
 And every morn is Easter Morn.
 Where'er the Tides of Life are borne
 You tread upon the waters still
 You speak to them and they are wine.
 You crave them in your agony
 And shameful vinegar is Thine.
 Born and reborn upon their way
 Life's waters serve the hidden will
 Of Him Who turned away from Thee,
 Yea, water, wine and vinegar
 We in our changeful courses are
 According to His plan.

(C.P. II, p. 1214)

There are a number of minor motifs of emblematic significance in The Muckle Toon. Childhood, the poet's Border heritage, and earth are the most important of these. They will not

be considered until Chapter Four (below, pp. 415-22, 479-83 and 477-8) as a discussion of them here would anticipate that chapter's concern with the subject-matter of the Clann Albann poetry. Tensions between naturalism and symbolism in MacDiarmid's treatment of 'the hame scenes' are examined in that chapter also (pp. 463-9).

(C) Stanza and Metre

The firmness of MacDiarmid's resolve to win the summit of his art in the poetry of the early thirties is nowhere so evident as in the internal organisation of the Muckle Toon pieces. The poem which announces that resolve (see above, pp. 120-1) displays something of the technical mastery it promises by sustaining one masculine rhyme through each of its thirty-eight lines:

There is nae height that ony leid can gain,
 You canna match wi' ferlies o' your ain,
 Nae height unreached but you may first attain;
 Faurer than the laverock's soars your sweeter strain.
 Only to earth the laverock sinks again,
 But you plunge deeper faur than ony brain
 's yet gane, or aiblins can till you unchain
 Poo'er's yours alane....

(The Kelpie in the Dorts', C.P., II, p. 1249)

The Langholm poetry unchains powers of stanzaic ingenuity and stamina unsurpassed even in the 'early lyrics' and A Drunk Man.

The peculiarly linguistic genesis of the most original poetry in Sangschaw and Penny Wheep has been considered above (pp. 238-40). There is a special sense in which the aural as well as the semantic patterning of the lyrics can be said to 'derive entirely from words'. That is to say, the poet evolved metrical and stanzaic forms to accommodate the sounds of the individual words or phrases which, by engaging his attention, gave the poems their initial impetus. Thus Buthlay can write of the 'organic' forms of some of the 'early lyrics'.¹⁴ This 'organic' approach to composition, which involved building poems almost by the syllable, explains why the lyrics contain MacDiarmid's most haunting and original verbal music. It also accounts for their shortness: the lyrics enshrine single, linguistically-inspired insights which do not require narrative or discursive development over numbers of stanzas. Christopher Grieve, however, was an intellectual, much given to discourse, and

statement and argument would become increasingly important to the 'poetry of the whole man'¹⁵ he was determined to create. Accordingly, the great bulk of his poetic output from the mid-twenties to the mid-thirties was written in line with the more or less conventional procedure of fitting words into chosen metrical and stanzaic patterns, and it was in this work that his technique was most exactly tested.

In A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle MacDiarmid succeeded in creating a unified extended poem without having recourse to a dominant stanza form. Stephen Mulrine has detected 'upwards of fifty metrical schemes' in the work.¹⁶ Two-, three-, four-, five-, six- and twelve-line stanzas, with varying rhyming arrangements, are used. There are seven-line and nine-line single-stanza poems in the book, as well as verse paragraphs of irregular length. Stanzaic diversity, however, is countered by near uniformity of rhythm. Though the constituent poems range from two stresses a line to six, the great majority of A Drunk Man's verses scan iambically. Mulrine has commented that the sequence exhibits 'an iambic regularity which is remarkable in a serious modern poem'.¹⁷ In fact only a handful of the 'early lyrics' seriously challenge the supremacy

of the iamb in MacDiarmid's Scots poetry.

The poet was still 'word-drucken'¹⁸ on Scots when he wrote A Drunk Man. Though a few elements of the sequence's vocabulary seem to have been employed primarily because of the author's desire to test their poetic potential,¹⁹ the 'organic' stanza forms we associate with the lyrics are not to be found there.

The indiscipline which afflicts the thematic development of To Circumjack Cencrastus has its counterpart in the versification of that work. Cencrastus opens with a group of unrhymed thirteen-line stanzas. The first twelve lines of these are usually of iambic pentameter, but there are virtually unscannable four-stress lines as well. The last line has two or three iambic feet. Soon these blocks of verse lose the appearance of staves, developing into a series of blank verse paragraphs of irregular length. The short closing line is retained. Later these units are further broken up by the interpolation of poems in a variety of measures, before disappearing altogether. Towards the end of the book the thirteen-line form of the opening pages reasserts itself.

Appallingly, MacDiarmid has to point out that it does so:

I'm back to my original stanza noo
 It's no' juist arbitrary like the Warld
 But is a different if no' a better joke
 A joke o' my ain, tho' I've ended it
 Wi' a bare vestige o' the auld bob-wheel
 To show that there is corn in Egypt yet.

(C.P. I, pp. 255-6)

The poet here likens his short closing line to the 'bob-and-wheel' device which is a feature of two standard verse forms of the Scottish poetic tradition - the 'Cherrie and the Slae' and the 'Christis Kirk on the Grene' stanzas - as well as of the Scots alliterative poems of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.²⁰ MacDiarmid's truncated line is a 'bare vestige' of the device because he retains only the 'bob' or short line, and does not follow it with the longer line or group of longer lines upon which the 'wheel' effect depends. Regrettably, it is not until its last appearance in the sequence that the 'Cencrastus stanza' houses vivid and musical poetry: 'North of the Tweed' (C.P. I, p. 269) has rightly been identified as one of the sequence's 'particularly impressive' pieces.²¹

Iambic pentameter with frequent but irregular rhyme is employed to good effect as a medium for discursive verse towards the end of Cencrastus.

However, most of the volume's paragraphic poetry - in trimeter and tetrameter as well as pentameter - is, to say the very least, technically undistinguished. A high proportion of the stanzaic poetry, too, is without accomplishment. It is perhaps as much a fault of diction as of metric - too many of the verses appear to have been composed by pouring the most readily available phrases into undemanding forms. Of the number of very successful single poems and short passages which escape the general drabness of Cencrastus, three share the same unusual rhyme scheme, abcbdd. These are the lyrics beginning 'A fool sings...' (C.P. I, p. 197) and 'Lourd on my hert...' (C.P. I, p. 204), and the following 'amazing ...lines that no one else could have written'²²:

And aye the veil is rent and a' I see
 In horror-stricken blasphemy is mysel'
 As in a mirror, and owre my shoulder, Daith,
 And 'yont Daith Life again - an endless swell
 O' mountain efter mountain, a faithfu' flock
 Each wi' a bawbee for the collection poke!

(C.P. I, p. 242)

This is the rhyming system of the stanza MacDiarmid chose to carry the central Muckle Toon poems of 1931. It is unusual in that two of the six lines are unrhymed, leaving the poet a considerable degree of freedom within

the constraints of stanzaic structure. The typical Muckle Toon stave is closer to that of 'Lourd on My Hert' than to those of the other examples cited above. The second verse of that poem reads:

O wae's me on the weary days
Whan it is scarce grey licht at noon;
It maun be a' the stupid folk
Diffusin' their dullness roon and roon
Like soot,
That keeps the sunlight oot.

(C.P. I, p. 204)

The 'bob-and-wheel' of the couplet is inverted in the Clann Albann poems. (Equally, the rhymed conclusion of the Muckle Toon's six-line stave can be seen as a development from the unrhymed ending of Cenrastus' thirteen-line stanza.) The new unit is sufficiently short for the closing 'wheel-and-bob' (if we may call it that) to sum up and clinch the argument of the preceding lines. The verses move with a forcefulness and sense of direction MacDiarmid never achieved in the 'Cenrastus stanza'. The 'Muckle Toon stanza' is used to convey heated polemic:

Few even o' the criminals, cravens, and fools
 Wha's voices vilify a man they ken
 They've cause to fear and are unfit to judge
 As they're to stem his influence again
 But in the hollows where their herts should be
 Foresee your victory...

('First Hymn to Lenin', C.P. I, p. 297;

M.T., p. 98)

as a vehicle for deceptively casual rumination:

Gin he had lived at warst we'd ha' been freen's
 Juist as my mither (puir auld soul) and I
 - As maist folk are, no' ga'en vera deep,
 A maitter o' easy-ozie habit maistly, shy
 O' fundamentals, as it seems to me,
 - A minority o' ane, may be!...

('From Work in Progress', C.P. II, p. 1149;

M.T., p. 12)

or as a simultaneously affectionate and sardonic mode
 of reminiscence:

Weel the Waterside folk kent what I mean;
 They were like figures seen on fountains whiles,
 The river made sae free wi' them - poored in and oot
 O' their een and ears (no' mooths) in a' its styles,
 Till it clean scooped the insides o' their skulls
 O' a' but a wheen thochts like gulls.

('Water of Life', C.P. I, pp. 318-9;

M.T., p. 116)

The stanza has an apparently inbuilt capacity
 to express the irony and vehemence essential to
 MacDiarmid's poetic persona. Did the poet invent
 the form which seems so naturally attuned to his
 psychology? When I put that question to Dr. Grieve
 in March 1977 he replied that the stave was 'a
 traditional Scots verse-form'.²³ However, I have
 failed to trace it in the work of any earlier poet
 of the Lowland tongue. The 'Muckle Toon stanza'
 is nevertheless 'traditional' to the extent that

it displays a number of Scottish characteristics. We have already likened its concluding couplet to an inverted 'bob-and-wheel'. The couplet is typically used to exhibit that 'shrewd sense of reality' identified by Kurt Wittig as a distinguishing feature of Scottish poetry from the medieval period onwards.²⁴ (Many of the attitudes cultivated in MacDiarmid's poetry are purposely, even single-mindedly, Caledonian: this may explain why the poet remembered as Scottish rather than 'MacDiarmidian' a stanza developed to reflect some of those attitudes.) Six-line staves have been popular with Scots poets from Dunbar onwards. 'Standard Habbie', otherwise called 'the Burns stanza', is by far the best known of these. MacDiarmid's stanza is manifestly different from 'Standard Habbie'. That form, employed so extensively in the eighteenth century, rhymes aaabab. The short b lines are used to deflate the momentum built up by the opening triad of as. MacDiarmid rarely uses his short line reductively, and the 'Muckle Toon stanza' completely lacks the 'hamely, couthy' quality which attends upon the earlier form.²⁵

The abcbdd rhyme-scheme is to be found in the work of one Scottish, though not Scots, poet. Some of the minor poems of none other than John Davidson,

Christopher Grieve's boyhood hero (see above, pp. 51-2), employ the scheme. Davidson, however, did not use the abcbdd pattern in his more characteristic and achieved work, and it is doubtful if stanzas such as the following had any influence on MacDiarmid's choice of vehicle for his early Clann Albann poems:

With swinging stride the rhythmic tide
 Bore to the harbour barque and sloop;
 Across the bar the ship of war,
 In castled stern and lanternd poop,
 Came up with conquests on her lee,
 The stately mistress of the sea.²⁶

With its internal rhymes and long-lined couplet, this is very different from MacDiarmid's stanza in sound and effect. Davidson's verse may have been modelled on Tennyson's celebrated lyric 'The Splendour Falls', perhaps the only well-known poem in English to rhyme abcbdd. Herman Melville used the same rhyme-scheme, without the internal chime.²⁷ A long-lined couplet gives the American poet's stanza, too, a shape quite unlike MacDiarmid's. The form used in the longer Muckle Toon poems of 1931 therefore seems to have been the Scottish poet's own invention.

We have seen that the abcbdd rhyme-scheme, if not of the 'Muckle Toon stanza' itself, makes a number of appearances in Cenchrastus. The scheme features earlier in MacDiarmid's work, too - in a

minor poem of 1927 (reproduced above, p. 159), in ten of A Drunk Man's stanzas (two on p. 135 of C.P. I,²⁸ eight on pp. 155 and 156), and, significantly, in the first successful 'early lyric'.

'The Watergaw' (C.P. I, p. 17) is to some extent 'organic' in form. The shape used for both stanzas seems to have been evolved to incorporate a saying the poet found in James Wilson's Lowland Scotch as Spoken in the Lower Strathearn District of Perthshire (1915).²⁹ This was 'Dhur'z nay reek ee laivruk's hoos dhe nikht', a rhythmical, de-phoneticized version of which supplied the first line-and-a-third of MacDiarmid's second stanza. The opening stanza's first line was presumably built to match this, using a word provided by Wilson, 'yow-trummle'. 'Antrin', 'chitterin' 'on-ding' and 'watergaw' itself also came from Wilson. Yet the poem cannot be said to have been wholly linguistically generated, as it explores an experience which preceded composition:

Ae weet forenicht i' the yow-trummle
 I saw yon antrin thing,
 A watergaw wi' its chitterin' licht
 Ayont the on-ding;
 An' I thocht o' the last wild look ye gied
 Afore ye deed!

There was nae reek i' the laverock's hoose
 That nicht - an' nane i' mine;
 But I hae thocht o' that foolish licht
 Ever sin' syne;
 An' I think that mebbe at last I ken
 What your look meant then.

The alternate long and short lines give these verses from 1922 a different movement from those composed for Clann Albann nine years later, the short lines even recalling something of the effect of 'Standard Habbie's' cutting bs. The typical Muckle Toon closing couplet, however, is very similar to that of 'The Watergaw'. MacDiarmid's comment that he 'tapped some source deep in (him)self' with his 'first poem in Scots' (see above, p. 234) may be relevant here. We can surmise that the intimately psychological reverberations of the poet's linguistic conversion freed him to write about the cataclysmic event of his adolescence - his father's untimely death.³⁰ Is it mere coincidence that the shape of that deeply personal 'first poem in Scots' shares key features with the stanza chosen by MacDiarmid in 1931 to house his poetry of autobiographical speculation?:

Foreseein' in Christine's or in Walter's mind
 A picture o' mysel' as in my ain
 My mither rises or I rise in hers
 Incredible as to a Martian brain
 A cratur' o' this star o' oors might be
 It had nae point o' contact wi'.

('From Work in Progress', C.P. II, p. 1148;

M.T., p. 11)

The first five lines of the 'Muckle Toon stanza' have four, five or, rarely, six stresses each. The final line variously has two, three or four feet. Iambic metres predominate, but are not adhered to slavishly. The opening foot of each of the first four stanzas of 'First Hymn to Lenin' (C.P. I, p. 297; M.T., p. 98), for instance, is trochaic: a vigorous, declamatory utterance results. Elsewhere anapaests and dactyls break the pattern to reinforce the colloquial quality of the poet's discourse.

The Muckle Toon poems of 1932 do not make use of the six-line stanza MacDiarmid perfected the previous year. Why did the poet abandon the form? There is an occasional clumsiness in his handling of it, such as the intrusion of an extra line in the seventh stanza of 'Water of Life' (C.P. I, p. 315; M.T., p. 113). Yet he can hardly have found the form taxing. He executed stanzas requiring far greater dexterity - such as those of 'Tarras' (C.P. I, p. 337; M.T., p. 147), for example, or 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' (C.P. I, p. 346; M.T., p. 133) - within months of dispensing with it. A version of the 'Muckle Toon stanza' is employed on occasion in MacDiarmid's subsequent poetry - with some distinction in 'Bracken Hills in Autumn' (C.P. I, p. 1151) and the opening

lyric of 'Towards a New Scotland' (C.P. I, p.450), with less rhythmic assurance in 'The Belly-Grip' (C.P. I, p.394) and the second part of 'Thalamus' (C.P. I, p. 412). The stanza had ably served a variety of purposes in the Langholm poems of 1931: MacDiarmid may have felt its continued use would lead to monotony.

Many of the other forms in the Clann Albann series of poems are closely related to the 'Muckle Toon stanza'. 'The Seamless Garment' (C.P. I, p. 311; M.T., p. 121) employs the characteristic abcbdd rhyme scheme, but instead of five pentameters or tetrameters followed by a short sixth line, it has short b lines and a concluding line which varies in length from two to five feet. Both the eleventh and twelfth stanzas feature an extra couplet. 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton' (C.P. I, p. 331; M.T., p. 150), the Muckle Toon lyric which MacDiarmid prized above his work of the early twenties, consists of two six-line stanzas in the familiar rhyme-scheme. The relationship between these recalls that between the octet and sestet of a sonnet - a legacy of Grieve's sonneteering poetic apprenticeship, perhaps.³¹ Metrically it is an unusual lyric. The three successive heavy stresses at the end of the third line, and the trochees in the fifth, strongly counterpoint the basic iambic versification.

The resurgent iambs of the second stanza seem all the more free-flowing after the checked rhythms of the first. 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton' is Clann Albann's only abcbdd poem to achieve a verbal music as subtle as that of the best of the 'early lyrics'. Another Muckle Toon piece cast in the typical six-line stanza, 'The Scots Renaissance' (C.P. II, p. 1274; M.T., p. 151), is irregular in having a seven-line opening stanza. As in 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton', the closing line of the six-line staves is not foreshortened.

The 'Muckle Toon stanza' generally constitutes a unit of meaning - it is rarely divisible into quatrain and couplet. Its first four lines nevertheless share the rhyme-scheme of the great majority of Clann Albann's quatrains: all but six of the one hundred and eleven four-line Scots stanzas written for that work rhyme abcb. In his earliest English poems and again in A Drunk Man the poet showed a preference for this quite common rhyme-scheme. It is the scheme of the Border Ballads, and indeed MacDiarmid uses it with the typical ballad four-stress, three stress, four stress, three stress metre in a number of the poems, even in some stanzas of that otherwise least ballad-like of writings, 'Water Music':

Brent on or boutgate or beshacht
 Bellwaverin' or borne-heid,
 They mimp and primp, or bick and birr,
 Dilly-dally or show speed.

(C.P. I, p. 334; M.T., p. 16)

Some of the Muckle Toon's single-stanza poems are made up of abcb groupings followed by a couplet. 'The Monument' (C.P. I, p. 386; M.T., p. 40), for example, can be broken up into four such groupings and a couplet, though only the first of the four constitutes a self-contained quatrain. 'Religion and Love' (C.P. I, p. 307; M.T., p. 61) consists of an abcb quatrain followed by a 'Muckle Toon stanza'. Many of the miscellaneous poems are cast in forms which resemble the dominant six-line stave. Some - such as 'The Prostitute' (C.P. I, p. 397; M.T., p. 62), the shorter 'Water of Life' (C.P. II, p. 1251; M.T., p. 102) and 'The Oon Olympian's' first italicized digression (C.P. I, p. 357; M.T., p. 127) - employ expanded versions of the form. Others use stanzas or even verse paragraphs (in the case of 'By Wauchopeside', (C.P. II, p. 1093; M.T., p. 162)) which end with a couplet or triplet to varying degrees reminiscent of the 'Muckle Toon stanza's' dd conclusion.

Vestiges of the dominant form of 1931 notwithstanding, the miscellaneous poetry of The Muckle Toon exhibits great diversity of metrical and stanzaic organisation. The

variety of technical effect is too great to be exhaustively recorded here, but a description of the strategies of rhyme and rhythm employed in a few of the poems is perhaps in order. Two single-stanza elegiac pieces - 'Fatherless in Boyhood' (C.P. II, p. 1250; M.T., p. 89) and 'Of John Davidson' (C.P. I, p. 362; M.T., p. 92) - are constructed from abba groupings. The latter poem is not as strongly iambic as the generality of the Clann Albann material, and indeed there are a number of non-iambic feet in 'Fatherless in Boyhood' also. The stately movement of 'At My Father's Grave' (C.P. I, p. 299; M.T., p. 90) is achieved in unrhymed iambic pentameter. Both the sixth and the mainly anapaestic fifth lines drop a foot. Rhyme is important to 'The Kernigal' (C.P. II, p. 1275; M.T., p. 152), though each of that poem's three staves follows a different scheme. 'Second Hymn to Lenin's' stream of quatrains is broken by a six-line stanza (C.P. I, p. 328; M.T., p. 145) which rhymes 'from the outside in', i.e., abccba. The virtually unscannable 'Cheville' (C.P. I, p. 353; M.T., p. 124) most closely approaches rhyme in the feminine near-rhyme ('sorry'/'glory') of its concluding couplet. 'Lynch-Pin' (C.P. I, p. 332; M.T., p. 69) also scans very irregularly, in consequence of its superb argumentative density. 'Tarras' (C.P. I, p. 337; M.T., p. 147), one of The Muckle Toon's show-pieces, is cast in eleven-

line stanzas rhyming aabbcdceee. The fourth and fifth have only nine lines each, rhyming aabbcdcd and aabcbcd respectively. These stanzas can be seen as overlapping eleven-line ones, for the a couplet of the fifth completes the e triplet of the fourth. We have seen (above, pp. 128-9) that MacDiarmid resisted pressure from F. G. Scott to make the 'Tarras' stanza the staple unit of The Muckle Toon.

Dactyls and anapaests supplement the iambic feet of 'Tarras', giving the poem its jaunty, energetic movement. Anapaests predominate in two minor pieces - 'A Dumfriesshire Boy' (C.P. I, p. 384; M.T., p. 1) and 'Religion and Love' (C.P. I, p. 307; M.T., p. 61) -, in the display of aural pyrotechnics at the end of 'The Hole in the Wall' (C.P. I, p. 398; M.T., p. 54), and in the section of 'Second Hymn to Lenin' which begins, 'Are my poems spoken in the factories and fields...?' (C.P. I, p. 323; M.T., p. 141). In general, when a trochaic or dactylic movement (metres which stress the first syllable of a foot) inaugurates a poem, it soon gives way to an iambic or anapaestic measure (see 'Pedigree' (C.P. I, p. 303; M.T., p. 56), 'The Church of My Fathers' (C.P. I, p. 397; M.T., p. 60) and 'On Coming Home' (C.P. I, p. 381; M.T., p. 63)).

MacDiarmid's nascent poetic powers in the early thirties are perhaps nowhere so strikingly revealed as in his meditative verse. 'Whuchulls' (C.P. II, p. 1989; M.T., p. 153) sustains iambic pentameter, with virtually no substitutions, over a hundred and sixty nine lines. The poem is divided into verse paragraphs which vary from seventeen to fifty one lines in length. The rhyme scheme is irregular, but only in the italicized blank-verse section of the penultimate paragraph do we find more than one or two unrhymed lines. 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' (C.P. I, p. 346; M.T., p. 133) is an even longer exercise in iambic pentameter. It is written in twenty-four-line 'stanzas', the basic rhyme scheme of which is abcbbdeffebbcbadgghihijj. Only the first, third, sixth and tenth of the poem's ten blocks of verse strictly adhere to the scheme, however. Regularity is further interrupted by the fact that the fourth 'stanza' has only twenty three lines. The characteristic Muckle Toon rhyme-scheme, abcbbd, is used to open each of the ten divisions of the poem, and the typical 'wheel and bob' couplet to close them.

Nowhere in Cencrastus does MacDiarmid display a mastery of meditative discourse comparable to that manifested in 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' and 'Whuchulls'. Many passages in the sequence are not

as relentlessly iambic as 'Whuchulls', yet they read much more mechanically. The poet's decision to use rhyme does not wholly account for these extended pieces' avoidance of the jaded movement of Cencrastus. The distinctive music of 'Depth...' and 'Whuchulls', as of much of the Langholm poetry, results to a considerable extent from richness of poetic diction and from judicious use of assonance and alliteration. As these are matters of language rather than rhythm or rhyme, they will be considered in the next section of the present chapter.

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(D) The Language of The Muckle Toon

MacDiarmid's Langholm poetry is executed in a variety of linguistic modes. These embrace Scots idioms ranging from the readily accessible to the most unfamiliar the poet could contrive with the aid of the lexicon, in addition to a generally non-experimental English. Verbal energies unmatched in MacDiarmid's work since A Drunk Man are generated and sustained in the Scots modes.

The following comments make use of the term 'thin Scots' to denote a poetic medium which, though Scots, has a large proportion of words familiar from

English. This is sometimes called 'English with a Scottish accent'.³² The poet himself refers to it, in Cenchrastus, as 'hauf-English' (C.P. I, p. 249). These descriptions are unfortunate insofar as words conventionally thought of as English can be said to belong to the common stock of both languages. MacDiarmid's slightly misleading nomenclature accords with his propensity for viewing questions of poetic language solely in terms of vocabulary (see above, p. 239). He rarely acknowledges that Scots differs from English in syntax as well as in diction. MacDiarmid's 'hauf-English' is really a form of Scots in which the percentage of exclusively Scottish words is low.

The term 'dense Scots' is employed in the pages which follow to describe an idiom with an artificially high proportion of words peculiar to the Lowland tongue. Neither of the epithets 'thin' and 'dense' is intended pejoratively.

The distinction between the poetry of 1931 and the later Muckle Toon material (see above, p.125) is heightened by the differing creative attitudes to language revealed by the two bodies of work. Just as one stanza form dominates the early Muckle Toon

writings, while the poet has recourse to many different units of organisation in the later additions to Clann Albann, so too there is near uniformity of verbal texture in the poetry of 1931, while the work of the following year makes use of a mixture of idioms.

(i) The Poetry of 1931

In view of his efforts to avoid the deficiencies of Cencrastus with regard to structure, symbol and versification, MacDiarmid might have been expected to reinforce the purely Scots complement of his poetic diction in the early Muckle Toon writings. The linguistic idiom of the first Clann Albann pieces, however, is not noticeably different from that of the generality of Cencrastus. 'From Work in Progress', as the following lines - on James Grieve's dying look at photographs of his sons - illustrate, is committed to a Scots which can present few difficulties even to the beginner:

I've led a vera different life frae ocht
 He could conceive or share I ken fu' weel
 Yet gin he understood - or understands
 (His faith, no' mine) - I like to feel, and feel,
 He wadna wish his faitherhood undone
 O' sic an unforeseen unlikely son.

I like to feel, and yet I ken that a'
 I mind or think aboot him is nae mair
 To what he was, or aiblins is, than yon
 Picture o' me at fourteen can compare
 Wi' what I look the day (or looked even then).
 He looked in vain, and I again.

('From Work In Progress', C.P. II, pp. 1148-9;
 M.T., p. 12)

Yet this language is a sensitive register of the poet's thought as he struggles to understand the significance of his memories. No 'denser' than the Scots which had ineffectively cloaked the long-winded opinings of Cenrastus, this Scots lends an intimacy to MacDiarmid's meditation which would be very difficult to achieve in English. And it is an intimacy which reinforces the meaning, rather than occluding or subverting it. The colloquial tone thus won, in the words of John Manson, 'both reveals and understates the tension'.³³

The union of style and subject-matter in the Muckle Toon poetry of 1931 can have been no mere accident. The poet, who was so off-hand in his attitude to language a year before, now displays

a very sophisticated awareness of the power of words to carry overtones and subtleties of meaning. His new poetry analyses its own statements, amplifying or qualifying them as soon as they are made. For instance, in the lines above MacDiarmid confesses that he likes to feel - and before telling us what it is that he likes to feel he breaks in to affirm that he does indeed feel it. The ending of the second of the stanzas further illustrates the poet's critical attitude to language. A verbal trick arising out of the two meanings of 'look' - 'to direct the sight with attention' and 'to appear' - enables him to present as aspects of a single reality such disparate concerns as the relationship of his appearance in a boyhood photograph to his real boyhood appearance and to his present appearance, his father's dying glance at that photograph, and his own no less perplexed glance over the distant 'hame scenes'. The dictionary is not being dredged here, yet the poetry is still, in a special sense, being 'derived ... from words'.

Kenneth Buthlay has written of, 'a "literal" feeling for words that is peculiar to MacDiarmid, though there is something akin to it in James Joyce.'³⁴

Euthlay's observation was occasioned by the words
'or try' in the following stanza from 'Water of
Life':

Their queer stane faces and hoo green they got!
Juist like Rebecca in her shawl o' sly.
I'd never faur to gang to see doon there
A wreathèd Triton blaw his horn or try,
While at his feet a clump o' mimulus shone
Like a dog's een wi' a' the world a bone.

(C.P. I, p. 319; M.T., p. 116)

This is only one of a number of instances in the First
Hymn collection where MacDiarmid exploits his concern
for the literal meaning of words to poetic advantage.
'Water of Life's' opening stanzas provide another
example.

Wha looks on water and's no affected yet
By memories o' the Flood, and, faurer back,
O' that first flux in which a' life began,
And won sae slowly oot that ony lack
O' poo'er's a shrewd reminder o' the time
We ploutered in the slime?

It's seldom in my active senses tho'
That water brings sic auld sensations as that
(Gin it's no mixed wi' something even yet
A wee taet stronger); but in lookin' at
A woman at any time I mind oor source
And possible return of course.

(C.P. I, p. 314; M.T., p. 112)

The last line here has a number of meanings. Most
obviously it refers to the reversibility of mankind's
evolutionary journey. It also has sexual connotations,

which on one level constitute a joke and, on another, add to The Muckle Toon's tapestry of references to the early chapters of St. John's Gospel. (In John 3:4 Nicodemus, conversing with Jesus, invites an elaboration of the Water of Life figure with the question:

How can a man be born when he is old?
can he enter the second time into his
mother's womb, and be born?)

The line's concluding words may retain something of the colloquial import of 'of course', i.e., 'as a consequence of the foregoing'. Strictly speaking, they would need to be preceded by a comma to do so. However, in view both of the number of instances in The Muckle Toon where clichés or 'filler' phrases are used simultaneously for their meagre colloquial and for fuller poetic meanings, and of the poet's characteristic weakness for the term 'of course',³⁵ it is likely that they were intended to.

There are further striking examples of MacDiarmid's "'literal" feeling for words' in 'The Seamless Garment' (C.P. I, p. 311; M.T., p. 121). This poem embodies an attempt to explain Leninism to the poet's mill-worker cousin 'Wullie' in terms drawn from the latter's experience. The penultimate stanza reads:

Ailie Bally's tongue's keepin' time
 To the vibration a'richt.
 Clear through the maze your een signal to Jean
 What's for naebody else's sicht
 Short skirts, silk stockin's - fegs, hoo the auld
 Emmle-deugs o' the past are curjute and devauld!

(C.P. I, pp. 313-4; M.T., p. 123)

'Emmle-deugs' is a colloquial expression for offal, rubbish or 'anything loose and flying'. In this most deliberately conversational of poems MacDiarmid might be expected to use the phrase merely as a colloquialism. Yet he keeps its literal meaning - 'tatters fluttering from a dress' - firmly in mind.³⁶ And this meaning relates the phrase not only to the articles of clothing mentioned in the previous line but to the Seamless Garment of the poem's title as well. The words 'emmle-deugs o' the past', therefore, connote (1) outdated sexual mores, (2) old fashioned clothes which seem ragged by comparison to contemporary sexy styles, and (3) past organisations of society which the 'Seamless Garment' of the perfectly articulated Marxist civilization of the future will make appear tattered indeed. This same line offers another instance of the poet's 'literal' approach to language. 'Curjute' and 'devauld' are the only archaisms to puncture the colloquial idiom of 'The Seamless Garment'; and they refer to what is archaic: the words live out their meanings of 'overthrown' and 'fallen'.

MacDiarmid commented in 'Clann Albann: An Explanation' that 'the return to thoughts of Langholm and my boyhood represents a "return to the people" which has its bearing on the motives which impelled me to use braid Scots...' (M.T., p. 238). This suggests that he wanted to create a popularly accessible poetic idiom in the language of his native community. A letter sent by the poet to William Soutar just before work on The Muckle Toon got under way tells a different story, however:

If great poetry is written in any language it does not matter a hoot whether nobody can read except the man who wrote it; that does not affect its qualities; and I am not prepared to concede that the artist should be concerned with his audience or that art must subserve any social or other purpose in its own development. So far as I am personally concerned I am quite clear that I am not now nor likely to become - whatever potentialities I may have had in the past - the man to write ... bairn-rhymes or repopularise Scots.³⁷

As is usual with MacDiarmid, the private confidence is a more dependable index of his artistic intentions than the public utterance. Despite their alternately declamatory and colloquial styles, the poems of 1931 do not mark a 'return' to the speech of the poet's Dumfriesshire brethern. With its factory floor setting and step-by-step argument for socialism,

'The Seamless Garment' might have provided the opportunity for an exercise in Langholm Scots. Yet the diction of this poem is scarcely less 'synthetic' than that of the work of the mid-twenties: for example, we find the Scots 'thocht' and the English 'thought' used within twenty lines of each other to facilitate the demands of rhyme.

The poetry of The Muckle Toon is no more written 'for the people' than its language is 'of the people'. 'The Seamless Garment' should not be construed as evidence that MacDiarmid was engaged in forging a new demotic Scots idiom in the early thirties. I find it difficult to agree with Buthlay that the poem comprises 'straight man-to-man stuff, in which the limitation of modern colloquial Scots - the fact that it tends to be associated largely with working folk who have had least in the way of formal education - is seen to have its own virtue'.³⁸ Not only is 'The Seamless Garment' not cast in 'modern colloquial Scots' ('thocht' - 'thought', 'curjute and devauld!'), neither is it addressed 'man-to-man'. The 'simplicity' of this piece, like that of the poetry of the eighteenth century 'Revival' (see Appendix A), derives from sophisticated literary convention. The poem is aimed at the educated rather than the popular mind, despite its elaborate show to the contrary:

Are you helpin'? Machinery's improved, but folk?
 Is't no' high time
 We were tryin' to come into line a' roon?
 (I canna think o' a rhyme.)

(C.P. I, p. 313; M.T., p. 123)

This is a somewhat condescending gesture towards the poet's fictive listener. MacDiarmid is not really giving vent to a Marxist impatience with the demands of art. The reader knows, as 'Wullie' presumably does not, that the word 'rhyme' itself supplies the aural correspondence with 'time' the poet professes himself too busy to seek. Socialist content and conversational tone notwithstanding, this is hardly popular art.

In only one poem from 1931 does MacDiarmid employ a noticeably richer Scots than that of Cencrastus. 'Prayer for a Second Flood' lets loose a spate of Lowland vocables in prefiguration of the 'great upwelling of the incalculable'³⁹ which the poet hopes will sweep away the hypocrisies of the Langholm devout and of their fellow-conventionalists everywhere:

Ding a' their trumpery show to blauds again.
 Their measure is the thumblefu' o' Esk in spate.
 Like whisky the tittlin' craturs mete oot your poo'ers
 Aince a week for bawbees in the kirk-door plate,
 - And pit their umbrellas up when they come oot
 If mair than a pulpitfu' o' You's aboot!

O arselins wi' them! Whummle them again!
 Coup them heels-owre-gowdy in a storm sae gundy
 That mony a lang fog-theekit face I ken
 'll be sooked richt doon under through a cundy
 In the High Street, afore you get weel-sterted
 And are still hauf-herted!

(C.P. I, pp. 299-300; M.T., p. 131)

(ii) The later Muckle Toon poetry

The Muckle Toon material composed after 1931 makes use of four more or less distinct linguistic idioms. They are: thin Scots such as we have encountered in the early Clann Albann poems; Scots of an impenetrability unprecedented in MacDiarmid's work save in a handful of the 'early lyrics'; a rich discursive Scots which might be located 'half way' between the first and second of these categories, and, finally, English.

(a) Thin Scots

Nearly seventy per cent of the later Muckle Toon poems are written in an idiom which has very few wholly Scots elements of vocabulary. There is great variety of artistic quality and effect in this body of work.

All The Muckle Toon's quatrains, with the exception of those of 'Water Music', are committed to this very accessible form of Scots. It is the medium of the finely achieved colloquial scorn of 'Second Hymn to Lenin':

What hidie-hole o' the vineyard d'they scart
 Wi' minds like the look on a hen's face,
 Morand, Joyce, Burke, and the rest
 That e'er wrote; me noo in like case?

Great poets hardly onybody kens o'?
 Geniuses like a man talkin' t'm sel'?
 Nonsense! They're nocht o' the sort
 Their character's easy to tell.

They're nocht but romantic rebels
 Strikin' dilletante poses;
 Trotsky - Christ, no' wi' a croon o' thorns
 But a wreath o' paper roses....

[sic]

(C.P. I, p. 324; M.T., p. 142)

and of the near doggerel of 'The Oon Olympian's'
 weakest passages:

Come a' nit-wits, knaves and fools,
 Conventional folk, and celebrate
 Goethe's centenary, and cry again
 Hoo noble he was, serene, and great.

You're likely judges to pronounce
 On sicna qualities nane can doot
 And least o' a' yoursel's, wha ha'e
 The big battalions to boot.

Is there a humble soul who lacks
 A' lear, yet's no' a specialist
 On the beautifu', and good, and true
 And o' creation feels the gist?

(C.P. I, p. 354; M.T., p. 125)

The poetry in this second extract is poor because it
 is underworked. Clumsy inversions, unimaginative
 word-choice, forced rhymes, barely competent metrical
 organisation: why is MacDiarmid guilty of technical
 lapses he was so obviously fitted to avoid? The

coarseness of the mental attitude behind this diatribe similarly testifies to a failure of effort, of thought. Once again, as it had too often been in Cenchrastus, Scots is becoming a mannerism, a meagre wrapping which fails to hide the poverty of the offering. What does the language contribute to these three stanzas? They are only marginally worse in English:

Come all nit-wits, knaves and fools,
 Conventional people, and celebrate
 Goethe's centenary, and cry again
 How noble he was, serene and great.

You're likely judges to pronounce
 On such qualities no-one can doubt
 And least of all yourselves, who have
 The big battalions to boot.

Is there a humble soul who lacks
 All learning, yet is not a specialist
 On the beautiful, and good, and true
 And of creation feels the gist.

The Scots version is slightly less displeasing metrically. But the northern tongue does not even offer much in the way of rhyme here: the chime between 'doot' and the filler 'to boot' can hardly be regarded as a stylistic felicity.

Thankfully there is little else in the poetry of The Muckle Toon as feeble as these three quatrains. Elsewhere the Scots context renders acceptable rhymes

and phrases which would be glaringly archaic in plain English (the highly appropriate 'I wis' of l. 152 of the 'Second Hymn to Lenin' (C.P. I, p. 327; M.T., p.145) comes to mind as an example of the licensing power of Scots in this regard). It has been observed of even the extremely thin Lallans of the closing lines of the 'Second Hymn that 'it allows the poet...to achieve a ruggedness and simplicity, an almost biblical force, which, if attempted in modern, colloquial English, might sound only like propagandistic rant.'⁴⁰ Bare, forceful statement was highly prized by MacDiarmid, who wrote in 1952:

There is one other aspect from which I wish to discuss Fergusson's work - his astonishing power of direct statement in poetry; a quality of the Scots language which he used with mastery and which, of all its qualities, is, it seems to me, that which Scots poets of today, and tomorrow, stand most in need; the quality, in short, all too seldom exemplified in Burns but on occasion magnificently employed as, for example, in what I consider the most powerful line in all Burns's poetry:

Ye are na Mary Morison.⁴¹

This is Daniel Corkery's 'national art', which is 'simple-hearted enough to speak plainly, and, so, intensely' (see above, pp. 223-4). (The contribution of Scots to direct poetic statement is further considered in the Commentary on 'Second Hymn to Lenin' (pp. 424-5).)

The later Muckle Toon poetry which is not cast in quatrains puts language from our first category to a variety of uses. Thin Scots sustains the gleeful vehemence of 'The Monument' (C.P. I, p. 386; M.T., p.40), carrying the poet's scorn unflinching through a ten-line sentence. It allows MacDiarmid to threnodize in a variety of keys: the political lament of 'Homage to Dunbar' (C.P. II, p. 1265; M.T., p. 94), the more personal lament of 'The Kernigal' (C.P. II, p. 1275; M.T., p. 152), and the arcane, sardonic elegy 'The Scots Renaissance' (C.P. II, p. 1274; M.T., p. 151) are equally successful. (These are all minor poems. For a deep elegiac note MacDiarmid always looked to English. See above, p. 253). Historical meditation ('Religion and the Scottish Renaissance' (M.T., p. 65)), ironic self-aggrandisement ('Why I Became a Scots Nationalist' (C.P. I, p. 339; M.T., p. 149)), and the following deft portraiture of the creative processes themselves all fall within its scope:

Thrawn water? Aye, owre thrawn to be aye thrawn!
 I ha'e my wagtails like the Wauchope tae,
 Birds fu' o' fechtin' spirit, and o' fun,
 That whiles jig in the air in lichtsome play
 Like glass-ba's on a fountain, syne stand still
 Save for a quiver, shoot up on inch or twa, fa' back
 Like a swarm o' winter-gnats, or are tost aside,
 By their inclination's kittle loup,
 To balance after hauf a coup.

('By Wauchopeside', C.P. II, p. 1983;
M.T., p. 162).

These poems are not rooted in the lexicon: their vocabulary is drawn rather from the naturalised word-stock of the poet. By the early thirties MacDiarmid had almost a decade of experience as a practitioner of verse in Scots behind him and was able to use the language with easy authority. Indeed it might even be said that in 1932 Scots was coming too readily at his bidding: the critical attitude to language which we detected in the poetry of 1931 is not so much in evidence in the work of the following year. (That "'literal" feeling for words' is not entirely absent from the later Muckle Toon poetry, however. For example, the epithet 'unplumbed' in the opening line of the 'Consciousness springs frae unplumbed deeps' digression of 'The Oon Olympian' (C.P., I, p. 356; M.T., p. 127) is no mere workaday word, but one which gains an ironic dimension from the taps-and-pipes imagery of subsequent stanzas.)

Two short poems from 1932 run counter to the general trend by employing thin Scots for a poetry more subtle and more delicately modulated than the best work of the previous year. MacDiarmid achieves in 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton' a dignity of utterance unequalled elsewhere in his Scots output:

Wad that nae leaf upon anither wheeled
 A shadow either and nae root need dern
 In sacrifice to let sic beauty be!
 But deep surroondin' darkness I discern
 Is aye the price o' licht. Wad licht revealed
 Naething but you, and nicht nocht else concealed.

(C.P. I, p. 331; M.T., p. 150)

F. G. Scott declared that 'Lynch-Pin' (C.P. I, p. 332; M.T., p. 69), the other consummate Muckle Toon lyric of 1932, 'sounds like a Donne or Shakespeare sonnet and b'gad isn't far behind one'.⁴² MacDiarmid, typically, seems to have thought of the poem as an 'exercise'.⁴³ (The poet's failure to realise his ambitious blue-prints is balanced somewhat by his equally characteristic achievement of work far outstripping his intentions in scale and quality. This tendency is most memorably exemplified by his first lyrics in Scots and by A Drunk Man.⁴⁴) The significance of these two superb Scots poems of 1932 to MacDiarmid's career generally is that they constitute lyrical poetry of the highest order arrived at by the opposite process to the lyrics of Sangschaw and Penny Wheep. These ratiocinative poems do not 'derive...from words', but show complex ideas gracefully shaped in language. The critic experiences difficulty in separately assessing the contribution to these lyrics of diction and versification - a difficulty which is perhaps an earnest of their merit.

(b) Dense Scots

The Muckle Toon is concerned with origins. MacDiarmid's return in the summer of 1932 to the source of his first successful poetry is appropriate to the spirit of the work. His poetic practice had drifted considerably away from the rich Scots of his earliest lyrics, but now he immersed himself again in Jamieson's Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language. Was he reacting to a perception of danger in the ease with which he could turn out line after line of the sort of colloquial Scots we have examined? Or hoping for an artistic reorientation as profound as that which had overtaken him on his first recourse to Jamieson ten years before? The fact that a sense of the fragility of the creative impulse haunts The Muckle Toon suggests a positive answer to the second at least

of these questions. But MacDiarmid may merely have been responding, as he so often did, to his immediate circumstances: Jamieson was directly available to him in the cottage at Thakeham. F. G. Scott's copy of the shorter version of the Dictionary was one of the presumably few books he had with him there.⁴⁵ (The Montrose Public Library's copy of the fuller version had been used for the great work of the twenties.)

Three extended poems most clearly bear the mark of MacDiarmid's return to the lexicon. They are, in chronological order of composition⁴⁶, 'Water Music' (C.P. I, p. 333; M.T., p. 16), 'Tarras' (C.P. I, p. 337; M.T. p. 147) and 'Scots Unbound' (C.P. I, p. 340). It is remarkable that these poems are completely different in kind from the products of the poet's earlier raids on the Scots vocabulary. Two of them are distinctly successful, earning their place in even the smallest ideal selection of their author's work. The third, 'Scots Unbound', is more 'experimental' and less effective than the others: but as it lies outside the ambit of The Muckle Toon the reasons for its failure need not detain us here.

No major poem of MacDiarmid's gives away its lexical origins as blithely as 'Water Music'. Commentators have been quick to point out that much

of its diction is drawn from the 'a', 'b' and 'c' pages of Jamieson.⁴⁷ To identify the source of the words the poet chooses is not, of course, to slight the skill with which he deploys them. Nowhere else in MacDiarmid's work do we get such sustained verbal music. For a comparable music in the English literature of the present century we have to go, as MacDiarmid knows, to the great dream-novel of James Joyce, Finnegans Wake. The poet exhibits that knowledge brashly in the italicized lines which he places at the head of his poem:

Wheesht, wheesht, Joyce and let me hear
Nae Anna Livvy's lilt,
But Wauchope, Esk and Ewes again,
Each wi' its ain rhythms till't.

(C.P. I, p. 333; M.T., p. 16)

(Finnegans Wake would not be published until 1939; but versions of 'Anna Livia Plurabelle', the eighth chapter of the novel, had appeared in 1928 and 1930). The first quatrain of Part I of 'Water Music' strengthens the reader's expectation of a versified Scots imitation of the language of the Wake:

Archin' here and arrachin there,
 Allevolie or allemand,
 Whiles appliable, whiles areird,
 The polysemous poem's planned.

(C.P. I, p. 333; M.T., p. 16)

Gorged with pun and allusion, Joyce's last novel is probably the most 'polysemous' literary work ever attempted. There is no comparable verbal play in MacDiarmid's poem, where the linguistic technique is quite straightforward. (An attempt to create a Scots idiom comparable to that of Finnegans Wake would eventually be made, light-heartedly, by Sydney Goodsir Smith in his novel Carotid Cornucopius.⁴⁸) In his conversations about Finnegans Wake Joyce placed greater emphasis on his book's aural qualities than on its polysemous dimension: he wanted his language to make 'pure music' and was much more concerned that an Italian translation of the novel would be mellifluous than that it would capture the sense of the original.⁴⁹ It is therefore by virtue of the musicality of the language in which it sets out to recreate the sound of living waterways that MacDiarmid's poem earns the epithet 'Joycean'. Like the Irish author's evocation of the 'riverrun' of the Liffey, 'Water Music' makes its first appeal to the ear. 'Here is a poetry that communicates before it is understood', comments Seamus Heaney, 'where the auditory imagination is entirely capable of penetrating to a basic meaning spoken by the music of the vocabulary, alien though that vocabulary may be'.⁵⁰

While 'Water Music' cannot compare with Joyce's 'Anna Livia' chapter as an exercise in the polysemous, the poem does operate on a number of semantic levels simultaneously. Most obviously it celebrates in verbal music the waters of Langholm. Water is the key symbol of The Muckle Toon. A number of poems explicitly connect the easy flow of the rivers with the threatened flow of MacDiarmid's poetic impulse. Hence the delight communicated by the poem is not only - is not principally even - the poet's delight in the Wauchope, the Esk and the Ewes, but the 'self-delight' (as Yeats might call it) of untrammelled creativity. The poem itself, like the rivers and streams it invokes, arches here and arrachs there, as if in illustration of Blake's dictum that 'Energy is eternal delight'. Boutelle's charge that the poem lacks emotion⁵¹ arises from a failure to recognise as emotion the exhilaration attendant upon the successful release of poetic energy.

Roderick Watson has suggested a further meaning for 'Water Music' as a whole. Stanza after stanza consists of alliterating pairs of adjectives or present participles with opposed meanings. Most of the words

are of extremely precise designation. Watson sees the manner in which 'these specific, separate references and identities are caught up by the verse and the alliteration and subsumed to the undifferentiated continuing flow of the poem' as analogous to that in which conceptual experience is carried in the wash of consciousness.⁵² That is to say, he regards the poem as a 'model' of the stream of consciousness as described by Bergson. In his Introduction to Metaphysics that philosopher wrote of 'the inner life' as 'variety of qualities, continuity of progress, and unity of direction'⁵³, words which describe 'Water Music' as accurately as another of his delineations of 'real duration' had fitted the thistle in A Drunk Man (see above, p. 154). This interpretation interestingly relates the poem to MacDiarmid's almost obsessive concern with the communicability of consciousness.

A third reason why 'Water Music' may be called 'polysemous' is that the 'meaning spoken by the music' is frequently quite different from that spoken by the words themselves once the vocabulary has yielded up its secrets. The following stanza is a case in point:

Lively, louch, atweesh, atween,
 Auchimuty or aspate,
 Threidin' through the averins
 Or bightsom in the aftergait.

(C.P. I, p. 333; M.T., p. 16)

The sounds suggest the merry splashing of streams.
 Yet 'louch' means sluggish, and 'auchimuty', paltry
 - quite the opposite to what their music communicates
 here. This may be poetry of aural suggestiveness,
 but it cannot, strictly speaking, be called onomatopoeic.
 The tension between sound and sense in this quatrain
 does not necessarily damage the poem. But there are
 problematic stanzas:

Or barbybrained or barritchfu',
 Or rinnin' like an attercap,
 Or shinin' like an Atchison,
 Wi' a blare or wi' a blawp.

(C.P. I, p. 333; M.T., p. 16)

The second line here is rhythmically very effective,
 as it does indeed suggest the movement of a running
 spider ('attercap'). But is it possible to visualize
 a stream running like a spider? The difficulties
 with regard to this stanza are compounded by the
 lack of a present participle in the fourth line.
 Perhaps the poet intends the reader to take it that
 the streams are moving with a bleating ('blare') or
 belching ('blawp') noise. 'Blare' and 'blawp' are

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well chosen for their onomatopoeic quality. As it stands on the page, however, the line in which they occur is connected syntactically to those which precede it. How can streams - how can anything - shine noisily? Synaesthetic effects are not uncommon in poetry - one thinks of Baudelaire's 'Correspondances' 54 - but they must justify themselves by illuminating the reader's perceptual experience. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that MacDiarmid sacrifices sense for sound here. Almost a decade earlier he had declared his faith that

It's soon', no' sense, that faddoms the herts
o' men....

('Gairmscoile', C.P. I, p. 74)

But the 'soon' of the early lyrics had not been achieved at the expense of sense. The lyrics' characteristic 'datchie sesames' (see above, p. 248), which opened on startling psychological and metaphysical vistas, were, after all, a matter of sense. There is a blandness about some passages of 'Water Music' which derives from the fact that words are employed there as rhythmical counters rather than as tokens of meaning.

My adverse comments on the language of 'Water Music' apply to specific stanzas, and should not be extended to the poem as a whole. (Incidental difficulties

are discussed in the Commentary.) Sound and sense reinforce each other at many points in the poem. Difficulties notwithstanding, Part I constitutes a triumph in verbal music unparalleled in the range of modern poetry in English. It must be said of course that the many dialects into which Scots had broken up by the time Jamieson's Dictionary was compiled granted the poet a great store of synonyms from which to draw the most metrically apt words. Such a variety is not available in English because, paradoxically, of the health of that language. This question of linguistic raw material highlights another difference between Joyce's task in 'Anna Livia Plurabelle' and MacDiarmid's here. The Irish writer concocted his own words, while the Scot merely borrowed his. (Curiously, the most 'MacDiarmidian' piece of Joyce's river-evocation is not to be found in Finnegans Wake at all. Joyce unsuccessfully submitted the following verse to his publishers for use as a 'blurb' on the two-shilling edition of Anna Livia Plurabelle (1930):

Buy a book in brown paper
 From Faber and Faber
 To see Anna Liffey trip, tumble and caper.
 Sevensinns in her singthings,
 Plurabelle in her prose,
 Seashell ebb music wayriver she flows.⁵⁵

Water music indeed!)

The only other Muckle Toon poem in the 'dense Scots' category is 'Tarras'. This piece is written in a version of MacDiarmid's discursive style with the exclusively Scots element greatly reinforced. Syntax is not bent to accommodate aural effect here, as it is in 'Water Music'. In general 'Tarras' is less linguistically forbidding than that poem. Like 'Water Music' it is concerned with one of the four elements, Earth (a lesser Muckle Toon motif - see below, pp. 476-8) providing the focus in this case. The poem is a sort of raucous hymn to the Earth Mother as she manifests herself on Tarras Moor, an upland bog some miles from Langholm. Rarely has MacDiarmid effected such a happy marriage between subject-matter and linguistic technique:

The doup of the world is under you here
And, fast in her shochles, she'll find ye,
When you're drawn to where wind and water shear,
Shuttles o' glaur, and shot-heuch, to wind ye,
Till you peughle and hoast in the shug-bog there,
While she lies jirblin' wide to the air
And now and then lets a scannachin flare.

(C.P. I, pp. 338-9; M.T., p. 148)

This poetry brilliantly exploits the naturally earthy quality of Scots and the language's wealth of fricative and guttural sounds. MacDiarmid might not have succeeded in writing it had it not been for the dictionary at his elbow. Yet 'Tarras' does not derive from a linguistic impulse. Rather the poet ransacks

the lexicon for the mot juste and, the genius of Scots being uniquely appropriate to the character of his proposed utterance, the lexicon yields a rich booty. It could be claimed that MacDiarmid displays a greater mastery of Scots in this poem and in passages from other poems of 1932 than he does anywhere else in his work. He succeeds here in reversing the servant-master relationship to the language which had obtained in the case of the lyrics, while sacrificing relatively little in the way of verbal economy. F. G. Scott's judgement that 'Tarras' constituted a higher achievement than any of the poet's previous productions (see above, p. 128) suggests that he saw MacDiarmid perfecting a personal style in this work. The tragedy is that rather than marking a new beginning in MacDiarmid's Scots verse, the poem comes towards the end of his career as a 'vernacular' poet.

'Water Music' and 'Tarras' are the most resolutely Scots of MacDiarmid's poems, perhaps the most resolutely Scots works written since Gavin Douglas had vowed to keep 'na Sudroun' four hundred years earlier (see Appendix A). Despite his

Anglophobia, MacDiarmid retains much 'Sudroun' in almost all his verse. But it is surely significant, in view of the relation of Scots to the physical and English to the intellectual polarities of his mind, that the poet's greatest evocation of the earth element is made in the most richly Scots non-lyrical style he ever achieved. 'Water Music' has analogous psychological significance. Committed to a Scots even denser than that of 'Tarras', it is rhythmically the most impressive item in the MacDiarmid canon. Rhythm, as the poet was to observe in 'Lament for the Great Music', 'is an animal function' (C.P. I, p. 474). The care-free 'Water Music' can be said to reflect as surely as the haunted 'Ode to All Rebels' (C.P. I, p. 487) the dialectic which culminated in the breakdown of 1935, for it can be seen as the last poem in which MacDiarmid expresses acceptance of his own physical nature.

(c) Rich Discursive Scots

Two ambitious but problematic pieces written in 1932 demand a linguistic category of their own. Both 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' (C.P. I, p. 346; M.T., p. 133) and 'Whuchulls' (C.P. II, p. 1089; M.T., p. 153) are philosophical poems in which passages of singular poetic power coexist with undistinguished and underworked stretches of verse. 'Depth' is particularly uneven and suffers from the poet's failure to fully articulate his symbolism. Line after line of each poem is written in a Scots little denser than that which we have assigned to our first category. But the proportion of unfamiliar Lowland words increases in places and, in general, the passages in which it does so are those which show MacDiarmid achieving a new mastery of meditative

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discourse (see above, pp. 301-2):

Aye balk and burral lie the fields o' life.
 It fails to acresce a kennin' frae the past,
 In a' its fancied contacts wi' what's meant
 When it seems shairest in worst backspangs cast;
 Its heritage but a bairn's pairt o' gear,
 A puir balapat at hairst its fingers speir
 And often mairket a toom barley-box;
 Aye in bad breid despite their constant toil,
 As bairns in their bairnliness, a cursed coil
 Hauds men content wi' casual sweetie-pokes
 O' a' creation's gear; and little is amassed
 Maist folk can life-rent - nocht hain at last.

(C.P. I, p. 350; M.T., p. 136)

Only the first six of these twelve lines display a Scots richer than the idiom of 1931, but they create a context for what follows. The richness results as much from the rarity and exclusive Scottishness of the words - 'balk', 'burral', 'balapat', etc. are not variant forms of English words - as from the ratio of Scots forms to elements of diction shared by the northern and southern tongues. One surmises that much of 'Depth's' unusual vocabulary is random booty from the raids on Jamieson for the linguistic materials from which 'Water Music', 'Tarras' and 'Scots Unbound' were constructed. (The great majority of the unfamiliar words in the poem begin with the letter 'a'. Most of the rest begin with 'b'.) Yet the alliterative and assonantal effects of the finest passages are achieved without

the syntactical violence that mars some of the stanzas of 'Water Music'. The concrete imagery of these passages anchors the speculative, abstract subject matter of the poem. The detailed harvest setting of the extract given above is drawn from rustic Scottish life, but there is nothing 'couthy' about the lines. Rather MacDiarmid succeeds in employing archaic language and archaic imagery to express a modern, Marxist argument about the attenuation of consciousness by inadequate social structures.

'Whuchulls' is written in a considerably less exalted style than 'Depth and the Chthonian Image'. The poem employs few Scots words that are not to be found elsewhere in MacDiarmid's work. The theme of 'Whuchulls' is the inability of the mind to acknowledge the sheer multiplicity of natural forms. If there is nothing arcane about the language here, as there was in 'Depth', the Scots words the poet chooses have a sufficiently outré quality to suggest the baffling array of organisms which confront the visitor to Whitshiels wood:

First speir this bowzie bourach if't prefers
 The simmer or the winter, day or night,
 New of forhooied nests, rain's pelts or smirrs,
 Bare sticks or gorded fullyery; and syne invite
 My choice twixt good and evil, life and death.
 What hoar trunk girds at ivy or at fug
 Or what sleek bole complains it lacks them baith?
 Nae foliage hustle-farrant in windy light
 Is to the Muse a mair inspirin' sight
 Than fungus poxy as the mune; nae blight
 A meaner state than flourish at its height.
 Leaf's music weel accords wi' gloghole's glug.

(C.P. II, p. 1089-90; M.T., pp. 153-4)

The Scots nouns and adjectives here impinge on the reader's mind with just the rude force of the teeming organisms of the wood presenting themselves to the brooding observer. A relatively high proportion of the Lowland words do not have familiar English variants. Most elements of vocabulary here nevertheless come from the common stock of both languages. These latter act as a foil, exaggerating the 'uncouth' properties of the peculiarly Scots elements to create the overall effect of seething organic life. The onomatopoeic particle 'glug' in that last, marvellously Caledonian, reductive line is no more Scots than English. But the earthiness of 'Lallans' allows the poet to smuggle into his verse words which would be almost impossible to use decorously in poetry composed wholly in the southern tongue. 'Whuchulls' includes a number of onomatopoeic effects rarely surpassed in MacDiarmid's work.

Consider, for example, the second line of the following extract:

'I like to see the ramel gowd-bestreik,
And sclaffer cuit-deep through the birsled leafs.
Here I dung doon the squirrels wi' my sling
And made the lassies brooches o' their paws,
Set girns for rabbits and for arnuts socht,
Herried my nests and blew the eggs, and lit
Fires o' fir-burrs and hag in tinker style....'

(C.P. II, p. 1092; M.T., p. 155)

Only the opening two lines here are densely Scots. In the five remaining lines, though, as in much else in this poem and in 'Depth', MacDiarmid seems to choose his exclusively Scots words with a view to setting up alliterative or assonantal patterns with more familiar neighbouring words:- 'dung doon'; 'girns', 'rabbits', 'arnuts'; 'Herried', 'nests', 'eggs'.

These two poems were written less than a year before English replaced Scots as MacDiarmid's characteristic poetic medium. ('Harry Semen' (C.P.I, p. 483) is the only Scots poem of the highest quality composed later than 'Whuchulls'.) We have already noted that the two meditations show the poet suddenly achieving the authoritative reflective style which had eluded him in Cencrastus (above, pp. 301-2). They are perhaps his most

musically satisfying exercises in iambic pentameter, as a result of their employment of a richer canon of Scots than his other work in that metre. In his last months of major production as a Scots author, MacDiarmid was awake once again, as he had been in the early nineteen twenties, to the variety of words, to their particularities of texture, to their subtle nuances of feeling and sound. Most of his enduring poetry exemplifies his faith in the principle that it is by 'soon' that the 'herts o' men' are 'faddomed'. He was to reject that principle explicitly before he abandoned Clann Albann.

(d) English

Curiously, the poem which attacks the 'onomatopoeic
are' essayed so successfully in the Scots verse of the
Thakeham period is perhaps the most aurally attractive
of MacDiarmid's English pieces: t/

Cut water. Perfection of craft concealed
In effects of pure improvisation.
Delights of dazzle and dare revealed
In instant inscapes of fresh variation.

Exhilarating, effortless, divinely light,
In apparent freedom yet reined by unseen
And ubiquitous disciplines: darting, lint-white,
Fertile in impulse. in control - keen.

Pride of play in a flourish of eddies,
Bravura of blowballs, and silver digressions.
Ringling and glittering she swirls and steadies,
And moulds each ripple with secret suppressions.

('The Point of Honour', C.P. I, p. 388:

M.T., p. 164)

Yet this music is self-conscious and flashy compared to what we find in MacDiarmid's best Scots work. The showmanship of this extract cannot hide a lack of texture in the verse. The poet is already beginning to pay an artistic price which was to be paid over and over in the later poetry. Style may be thought of as the successful expression of a sensibility. All but the most hastily executed of MacDiarmid's verses of thin Scots in the early thirties exhibit style - it does not occur to us to question the presence of a serious literary personality behind the lines. But some passages of 'The Point of Honour' display a failure to achieve minimal style:

May the boy's spirit its lessening got;
Dissympathy with nature, sheer sensual force,
Lust of light and colour, the frequent note
Of free enthusiasm in its course.

(C.P. I, p. 389; M.T., p. 165)

The other English poems of The Muckle Toon are of minor status, though three of them are very skilfully executed. 'Of John Davidson' (C.P. I, p. 362; M.T., p. 92) is the best known of the three. This little elegy is written in the language that Davidson employed for all his work. (It is interesting to reflect that MacDiarmid's favourite among Scottish poets never wrote a word of Scots, Lowlander though he was. Davidson's

mature style is nevertheless as thoroughly Caledonian as the English of his disciple's later manner.) 'Cheville' (C.P. I, p. 353; M.T., p. 124) is a densely organised poem which must be counted one of MacDiarmid's most muscular English performances. 'Antenora' (C.P. I, p. 361; M.T., p. 132) is scarcely less accomplished, though the verb 'descry' in the second line fractures the colloquial tone. Such archaisms are unobtrusive in the Scots work. The old-fashioned quality which barely intrudes on 'Antenora' is an embarrassing feature of much of MacDiarmid's English verse. The first stanza of another Muckle Toon poem - 'In the Langfall' (C.P. II, p. 1269; M.T., p. 159) - provides two examples of it. The epithet 'fair' has been used too often in Romantic and Victorian verse to communicate either how the bracken tops in the Langfall look or what the poet feels about them. The use of 'aright' for 'properly' in l. 6 in order to meet the demands of the metre might be taken by a reader who chanced on the poem as evidence of a fundamental lack of seriousness on the poet's part.

The Muckle Toon is undeniably fragmentary in its realisation. MacDiarmid's technique nevertheless, despite occasional lapses, proved sufficiently subtle and robust to articulate in the verse written for Clann Albann's first volume a poetic vision of great scope and originality. Examination of that vision is the business of the final chapter of the present study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION : THE SUBJECT - MATTER
OF THE MUCKLE TOON

And your een sall be like the Bible syne
Gin its middle was tint
And Genesis and Revelation
Alane left in't.

To Circumjack Cencrastus

(A) An Explanation

Our knowledge of the thematic concerns of The Muckle Toon must derive from a study of the poems ascribed to that work rather than from MacDiarmid's statements of purpose with regard to Clann Albann. Those statements are few and, with one exception, both brief and cursory. The exception, 'Clann Albann: An Explanation', cannot be regarded as a reliable guide to the poet's intentions. It was written after the poems¹ and fails to draw attention

either to their characteristic symbolism or to their elaboration of a poetic myth of evolution. Yet the 'Explanation' is of sufficient interest to merit consideration before we examine the evidence of the poetry with regard to the subject-matter of MacDiarmid's Langholm book. The piece's importance lies in its depiction of the place of The Muckle Toon in his own view of his career at a time when he had yet to admit - even to himself, perhaps - that the book would never be completed.

The subsequent development of the poet's career is prefigured to some extent in the 'Explanation'. Much of MacDiarmid's prose and verse from 1933 onwards is concerned with matters which were to have been dealt with in the unwritten books of the 'five-fold scheme'. The drift towards propaganda in some of the pieces of the Stony Limits and Second Hymn to Lenin collections, for example, can be viewed in the light of the statement that the second volume of Clann Albann was to be 'political' in nature (M.T., p. 239). Similarly, those passages of Lucky Poet (pp. 358-62, 367, 387-9, 397-401) in which MacDiarmid writes of Audh the Deep-Minded, his Gaelic Muse, treat of some of the proposed themes of Demidium Anima Meae (sic).²

Scottish Eccentrics (1936)³, probably the most coherent and entertaining of the poet's book-length prose works, 'deals with' his 'furthest conceptions of the historical function of the Scottish genius' (M.T., p. 237) through a consideration of the 'Strange Procession'⁴ of distinguished Scots of the past: that is to say it deals with matter the author had intended to cover in The Uncanny Scot, the fourth volume of his epic undertaking. (The title of that unwritten volume of poetry is recalled in the antithesis between the Canny and the Uncanny Scot developed in the closing pages of Scottish Eccentrics.) Finally, some of the key poems of the Stony Limits collection celebrate the illumination to which the poetry of The Muckle Toon looks forward and which was to have provided the subject-matter of With a Lifting of the Head, the concluding volume of the Clann Albann scheme. (This point is argued in detail on pp.392-400 below.) Thus 'Clann Albann: An Explanation' should not be dismissed as a mere sketch for an epic which was abandoned less than a fifth of the way through. It is of considerable worth as a sort of ground-plan for MacDiarmid's writing in the decade 1931-1941.

MacDiarmid's designation of his prospectus for Clann Albann as an 'explanation' is unfortunate, as the piece itself stands in need of explanation. The Scots Observer statement communicates uncertainty as to the very nature of the opus it advertises. The poet seems to visualise a work of personal focus when he tells us:

The poem is an autobiographical one and a study in the evolution of my mentality and development as a poet, and, in particular, my knowledge of and attitude towards Scotland.

(M.T., p. 236)

But the title suggests a work of strongly public character, for MacDiarmid asks us to remember

that the title "Clann Albann" means the children of Scotland - past, present and future - and that the aspects under which they are envisaged from book to book are intended to correspond to past, present, the double present (i.e., the apparent and the real), future, and finally, sub specie aeternitatis.

(M.T., p. 240)

Perhaps there is no reason why 'a poem of such a scope and so complex and multiform a character' (M.T., p. 235) should not encompass both the public and private domains. The trouble is that the writings ascribed to Clann Albann do not bear out the author's own description of the project. The poems are 'personal', they deal

with 'the past' - but they touch hardly at all on the 'past' of 'the children of Scotland'. The theme of childhood has a non-personal significance insofar as a parallel between the concern with the poet's childhood and the notion that 'mankind is yet in its boyhood' is established in the poems (see below, pp. 415-22). But no connection is forged between Scotland and childhood. It must be stressed that the poems are not only less concerned with Scotland than Clann Albann as a whole was to be, but less so than The Muckle Toon was to be:

The first book deals with "The Muckle Toon" (i.e., Langholm, in Dumfriesshire), my birthplace, and my boyhood days; and this involves poems about my parents, about the hills, woods, and streams of that district, about my first contacts with Love and Death, about the Church influence which bulked so large in my life then, about Border history, and about the actual - and symbolic - significance of the frontier.

(M.T., p. 236)

There are stray allusions to Border history in the material collected in the volume which accompanies this study, but no 'poems about' that subject are to be found there. There is some exploration of the symbolic importance of the frontier with England, but no reflection on its 'actual significance'.

MacDiarmid's description of the contents of the first volume of Clann Albann is misleading too insofar as there is no exploration of his 'first contacts with Love' in the designated Muckle Toon work. Much of the poetry concerned with his 'first contacts with ... Death' deals with the death of James Grieve, a theme already listed under the 'parents' heading. Similarly the 'hill' pieces of The Muckle Toon overlap those which deal with Langholm's 'woods' (see below, pp. 471-3). The most accurate feature of his account concerns the religious practice which 'bulked so large' in his early life. The poet's childhood experience of fundamentalist Christianity is effectively employed as a backdrop for the speculations developed in the poetry. The piece that deals most directly with 'the Church influence' suggests a reason for the dearth of poetry on some of the declared themes of Clann Albann. 'Religion and the Scottish Renaissance' (M.T., p. 65), a fragment quoted by the poet to illustrate a point in an article he contributed to the Scots Observer,⁵ begins both in mid-line and mid-sentence. This fact surely indicates that the piece is an extract from a lost, longer poem. We have already discussed the likelihood that some Clann Albann writings got to the composition stage

but subsequently perished (see above, pp. 77-8, 130). An anecdote recounting Valda Trevlyn's quick-witted rescue of the toilet-paper manuscript of 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton' from a Sussex bar-counter⁶ further illustrates how perilous the journey from pencil to print could be for MacDiarmid's poems at this period. It is not inconceivable, then, that the poet did produce verses dealing with those areas of subject-matter mentioned in his prospectus for The Muckle Toon which are not covered in the surviving poetry. But it is with the surviving poetry that we must grapple here. It will be clear from the foregoing that categories drawn from 'Clann Albann: An Explanation' cannot profitably be applied to that. In my criticism and in my arrangement of the text I have attempted to follow the implicit dictates of the creative work wherever these clash with the frequently careless and contradictory directions of the poet's journalistic persona.

Problems arise even from MacDiarmid's statement (M.T., p. 236) that his immense poem was to be 'an autobiographical one'. Only the first fifth of Clann Albann was to be concerned with the past.

The complete work he envisaged was hardly, then, 'a person's life written by himself', the usual meaning of 'autobiography'. Indeed the poet was still engaged upon the Clann Albann volume which does throw a backward glance over his life when he let it be known that he was working simultaneously on an 'Autobiography of a Scots Poet' (see above, p. 128). This claim would seem to suggest that he did not regard the 'five-fold scheme' as autobiographical in any literal sense. Eleven years were to pass before the appearance of Lucky Poet, a volume proclaimed by its subtitle to be the 'Autobiography of Hugh MacDiarmid'. Yet even this book contains far less personal history than it does expressions of the author's opinions on a host of controversial issues. We have seen in a previous chapter that MacDiarmid's poetic output in its entirety may be thought of as autobiographical to the extent that its development reflects the pressure of his private experience (above, pp. 170-205). Yet we do not find frank revelations of the personal life of C. M. Grieve in the poetry.⁷ Why did the author use the word 'autobiographical' of the Clann Albann scheme when he manifestly had no intention of systematically relating in verse the events of his life? The answer lies in the poet's particular

employment of terminology. By 'autobiography' MacDiarmid means a projection of an image of the self. The extent to which such projections recur in his work is remarkable, and by no means limited to undertakings which were presented to the public complete with an 'autobiographical' tag.

The prose sketches of Annals of the Five Senses draw upon Grieve's 'extraordinarily vivid pictorial sense of his own cranial geography' (A., p. 23). Even his outward appearance is a source of wonder to this (as yet) 'undistinguished Scottish free-lance' (A., p. 28):

... his eyes bright as the eyes of a lizard, his lips shut very tightly, a colourless face with a curious fullness at the corners of the tucked-in mouth, folded about the stem of his pipe, which isolated the expression....

(A., p. 73)

The 'indefatigable self-analyst' (A., p. 155) identifies the procedure which would become the poetic modus operandi of Hugh MacDiarmid:

He started anew from himself around an anthropomorphic universe, and went in search of a larger self which was the reflection and confirmation of his own....

(A., p. 68)

MacDiarmid's best-known work is, in its own words,

A brain laid bare,
A nervous system.

(A Drunk Man, C.P. I, p. 149)

The sequence presents a psychology which is a composite of the author's own and that of the 'true' or 'uncanny' Scot of his cultural propaganda.⁸ Lucky Poet is an attempted representation, in a journalistic idiom, of the mind of C. M. Grieve (it has been called a 'magnificently immodest portrait' of the poet⁹). Even the 'world-view' poetry of In Memoriam James Joyce projects a self - the heroic self of a polymath who has achieved the breadth of culture to which his practically monolingual creator can only aspire:

There is no language in the world
That has not yielded me delight
(Ranging lightly from Mackay on the various
forms of the Gaelic story
Comh-abartachd eadar Cas-Shiubhal an t-Sléibhe
agus A' Chailleach Bheurr -
To the 218 plots of Kotzebue
And Somdeva's Katha Sarit Sagara (Ocean Streams
of Story)
And the way Stesichorus learned his method of
handling
Some of his stories from the Hesiodic epic
And owed his form to Dorian choral poetry.
I have known all the Shihp'in
Even as I know that the elephant's paws
Are like the lishu style of writing....

(C.P. II, p. 818-9)

It is not surprising, in view of the recurrence of a species of self-projection in MacDiarmid's work, that 'Clann Albann: An Explanation' is to be comprehended more readily as a blue-print for a massive poetic self-portrait than as a plan for an autobiography. One of the lyrics written for the project ('Lynch-Pin', C.P.I., p. 332; M.T., p. 69), suggests that the poet saw his entire creative enterprise as a self-scrutiny sustained by the faith that the key to macrocosmic mysteries lay hidden in the microcosm of the self. The poem designed to open The Muckle Toon, like 'Lynch-Pin' and the first stanza of 'The Hole in the Wall' (C.P. I, p. 308; M.T., p. 53), shows that scrutiny extended once again, as it had been in Annals, to the author's physical features:

I am whey-faced. My een
Ha'e dark rings roon' them and my pow is fair.

('From Work in Progress', ll. 39-40,

C.P. II, p. 1148; M.T., p. 11)

MacDiarmid's persistent creative interest in the lineaments of his own personality suggests a context for his achievement which throws particular light on Clann Albann. Self is the quintessential concern of Romantic poetry. M. H. Abrams has written:

In accordance with the view that poetry expresses the poet's own mind, imagination, and emotion, Romantic poems take as their subject matter, not the actions of other men, but the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of the poets who wrote them. The lyric poem written in the first person, which had earlier been regarded as a minor poetic kind, became a major Romantic form and was usually described as the most essentially poetic of all the genres.¹⁰

No fewer than eighty-four items in MacDiarmid's Complete Poems begin with the word 'I'. The next most common opening word in his work is the definite article, which inaugurates seventy-five pieces. For all Wordsworth's 'egotistical sublime', we find in that poet's collected works only three poems beginning with the first personal pronoun, as opposed to thirty-two with 'The'. Certainly MacDiarmid's 'perpendicular pronoun' is sometimes used as a character-creating device. More often, however, it speaks, as the 'I' in Romantic poetry does, for 'the poet in his private person'.¹¹ Furthermore, when the Scot's prose or verse presents a fictive protagonist, there is a typically Romantic identification between author and hero. Abrams has commented:

Even in his ostensibly fictional writings, narrative and dramatic, Byron usually invites his readers to identify the hero with the author, whether the hero is presented romantically (as in Childe Harold, Manfred or the Oriental tales) or in an ironic perspective

(as in Don Juan). An extreme instance of this tendency is Wordsworth's Prelude, which is a poem of epic length and epic seriousness about the growth of the poet's own mind.¹²

The relevance of these comments to MacDiarmid's case need not be laboured. Kenneth Buthlay has noted that the work envisaged in 'Clann Albann: An Explanation' has 'a distinctly romantic look about it, with a suggestion of Wordsworth's Prelude',¹³ while David Craig has compared that group of Muckle Toon writings which has engaged his attention to 'one of the key books'¹⁴ of Wordsworth's great poem. A sketch of some major aspects of MacDiarmid's relationship with the Romantic tradition in English poetry is attempted in Appendix E.

(B) Evolution and the Journey from Childhood

(i) 'The force that's brocht life up...': Though MacDiarmid gave poetic expression to his preoccupation with human evolution at many points in his career, faith in evolutionary process forms the central tenet of only two of his major writings - To Circumjack Cencrastus and The Muckle Toon. It is true that the Drunk Man broods on the subject of evolution, but, as the poet himself somewhat uneasily recognised, ideas are more important for their yield of poetic insight than for their content in the sequence of 1926. The letter to Ogilvie quoted on pp. 65-6 above communicates the author's fear that his celebration of the clash of opposites in A Drunk Man was intellectually irresponsible. The following sentences may bear repetition:

(W)here the Drunk Man is in one sense a reaction from the "Kailyaird", Cencrastus transcends that altogether - the Scotsman gets rid of the thistle, "the bur o' the world" - and his spirit at last inherits its proper sphere. Psychologically it represents the resolution of the sadism and masochism, the synthesis of the various sets of antitheses I was posing in the Drunk Man. It will not depend on the contrasts of realism and metaphysics, bestiality and beauty, humour and madness - but move on a plane of pure beauty and pure music.

Perhaps what Grieve really wanted to get rid of were the psychological tensions which underlay the intellectual polarities of A Drunk Man, rather than those polarities themselves. At any rate, this letter shows him disregarding a warning given by a voice in the head of the protagonist of the poem he had just completed:

Thistleless fule,
You'll ha'e nocht left
But the hole frae which
Life's struggle is reft! ...

(A Drunk Man, C.P. I, p. 100)

When MacDiarmid excised the 'bur o' the world' from his poetry he was left with the prolix and aurally unattractive abstractions of Cencrastus - hardly the 'pure beauty and pure music' he had hoped for. He did not succeed in articulating with either passion or clarity the mythology of evolution with which he hoped to replace the warring antitheses of the earlier

poem. Cencrastus is so chaotically organised, and so apparently diverse in its subject-matter, that as intelligent and sympathetic a critic as Edwin Morgan has seen in the sequence's meditations upon mankind's struggle towards consciousness only a repetition, 'without any particularly illuminating development', of the 'evolutionary ideas of the Drunk Man'¹⁵. Evolution is merely one of a number of notions played with in the course of the latter work, however, while it is central to the conception of the sequence published in 1930. MacDiarmid's most exhaustive account of his intentions in writing Cencrastus was not composed until almost a decade after the work's appearance (see above, p. 156 and below, p. 370), but the letter to Ogilvie reveals that the title, and therefore, presumably, the evolutionary themes represented by the eponymous serpent, were already determined by the end of 1926.

We have seen in Chapter Three that the poetic procedures which went into the making of The Muckle Toon were sufficiently different from those used in Cencrastus to suggest that MacDiarmid was trying in the early thirties to compose a work as unlike his 'Curly Snake' sequence as possible. These

technical and formal dissimilarities should not blind us to strong thematic affinities between Cencrastus and the first volume of Clann Albann: the evolutionary subject-matter of the 1930 sequence reappears as a sort of ulterior theme in The Muckle Toon. The allusive, name-dropping, would-be philosophical style of the former gives way to a more urgent, personal mode. The 'bur o' the world' re-enters the poet's verse now in the shape of his concern for the contingencies of his individual history. MacDiarmid's circumstances in the early thirties may have rendered inevitable the invasion of his imagination by speculations concerning family ties and the lost domain of his Scottish childhood, but he responded with shrewd artistry to the irruption of the personal into his 'creative thocht', pressing the autobiographical material he could not gainsay into the service of the vision of evolution he had failed to articulate in Cencrastus. (The canny journalist who wrote 'Clann Albann: An Explanation' was careful not to draw attention to similarities between the new poem he described and a work which was widely regarded as less than successful.) The strength of much of the best poetry in The Muckle Toon derives from an interpenetration of the particular and universal themes of the poet's own intellectual growth and the struggle of his species towards a level of consciousness

that would make life worthwhile. Cencrastus and the completed fraction of Clann Albann belong to the same phase of their author's poetic development insofar as they express a linear vision of life. A Drunk Man's stress on the never-ending war of opposites undercuts the imaginative validity of the belief in progress that struggles to assert itself here and there in the poem. The poetry written just after the Cencrastus-Muckle Toon phase dwells on aspects of being immune to either improvement or decay. In broad terms, therefore, MacDiarmid's poetry of evolution is framed between a poetry of chaos and a poetry of stasis.

It would be difficult to supply an exact and exhaustive identification of the philosophical sources of the poetic myth of evolution presented by The Muckle Toon. Developmental interpretations of man's place in the cosmos, after all, have constituted a dominant strain in European thought since Hegel, and even the 'man-in-the-street' has some familiarity with social and historical extrapolations from the principles of Darwinian biology. Among thinkers MacDiarmid is known to have admired, Marx, Solovyov and Bergson espoused philosophies of process, while Nietzsche and

Dostoievski, though not evolutionists, proclaimed that man could overcome limitations traditionally regarded as intrinsic to his nature. As an artist, MacDiarmid was interested in the broad outlines of a poetic vision of evolution rather than in the detailed workings of a philosophical system. Nevertheless, to appreciate the place of The Muckle Toon in his intellectual development and to understand some of its more abstruse passages, we must say something of the work of two philosophers whose thought is drawn upon in the poetry. It might be expected that one of these would be Karl Marx, in view of the many references to Lenin in The Muckle Toon (indeed some of Marx's most celebrated statements are alluded to in ll. 46-7 and ll. 58-60 of the 'First Hymn' - see Commentary pp. 367 and 368). The evolutionary ideas which inform the poetry, however, have much less to do with dialectical materialism than with philosophies a conventional socialist would regard as far from progressive. The two thinkers are Vladimir Solovyov, a Russian whose influence can be detected behind many of the ideas in the entire range of MacDiarmid's work, and Henri Bergson, whose reflections on the nature of consciousness may have motivated the prose experiments of Annals of the Five Senses (see above, pp. 148-53).

Vladimir Sergeyvich Solovyov (1853-1900)

taught, as Plotinus had done two millenia earlier, that the Universe was an emanation from God. Unlike the classical philosopher, he believed that the act of creation involved the Deity in a species of self-limitation, 'a surrender in part of his freedom'.¹⁶ That ancient fragmentation of the One is not, however, irreversible; for, through the intervention of St. Sophia (otherwise 'the Wisdom of God' or 'the female hypostasis of the Deity'), God is gradually becoming reconciled to his creation. This process of reconciliation, whereby matter slowly becomes spiritualised, is evolution. Evolution will come to an end when the original unity of the One has been restored. Human consciousness is that element of the created world which co-operates with St. Sophia to strain towards union with the Godhead. In 'Towards the New Order I', an essay he contributed to the New Age in 1925, the poet outlined the role of humankind in Solovyov's metaphysic as follows:

I propose to concern myself with
 ...the problem of Human Genius, and without
 going into the question of personal immortality
 and the relationship of the individual to the
 cosmos, it is sufficient for my purpose to
 regard human consciousness as Vladimir
 Solovyov regarded it - as the conscious

element whereby Saint Sophia, the Divine Wisdom, hopes to reconcile the Universe to God. The first task of the conscious is to recognise that this is its duty and its still more or less unconscious desire; and the first thing it must do towards the accomplishment of that mighty task is to win to a like consciousness first the unconscious masses of humanity (including all the dead), then the lower orders of creation, the animals plants etc. and finally so-called inanimate matter.¹⁷

The high-flown, apocalyptic character of Solovyov's thought ill accords with the sardonic attitudes cultivated in MacDiarmid's poetry. Yet there is no doubt that the poet took the Russian's philosophy seriously. Essays published in 1923 and 1925 express his enthusiasm for Solovyov.¹⁸ In January 1928 he was planning a book on St. Sophia: or the Future of Religion.¹⁹ He resurrected an early poem on the Russian's thought for publication while working on The Muckle Toon (see 'Hymn to Sophia: The Wisdom of God', C.P. I, p. 455)²⁰. 'On A Raised Beach' (C.P. I, p. 422) records MacDiarmid's disavowal of Solovyov's key belief that deceased human beings and inanimate matter can be won to consciousness. That great paean of rejection nevertheless communicates something of the anguish of exorcism. Even before 1933, however, the poet was experiencing difficulty

reconciling the cosmic optimism of Solovyov with his own less sanguine intuitions. When, in A Drunk Man, he opts for direct exposition of Solovyov's doctrines, he is careful to distance himself from them:

Sae God retracts in endless stage
Through angel, devil, age on age,
Until at last his infinite natur'
Walks on earth a human cratur
(Or less than human as to my een
The people are in Aiberdeen);
Sae man returns in endless growth
Till God in him again has scouth.

(C.P. I, pp. 144-5)

Would MacDiarmid have inserted that debunking parenthesis against Aberdonians if he wholeheartedly assented to Solovyov's vision of man's place in cosmic development? Whatever the answer to that question, it cannot be denied that the lifeless versification of the first four lines of the following extract from Cenrastus undercuts their sense, suggesting, along with the remainder of the passage, that a disappointed and embittered MacDiarmid has no faith in the vision of transfiguration he proclaims:

The day is comin' when ilka stane
'll hae as guid as a human brain
And frae what they are noo men
Develop in proportion then
(At least it's hoped they will
And no' be owretaeen still)

While sex and ither hauf way stages
Perish wi' the barbarous Ages,
Tho' maist folk then as noo nae doot
'll hae 'the misfortune no' t'exist,'
And the feck o' the rest'll lead a life
That to ocht worth while 'ud never be missed.

(C.P. I, p. 221)

Solovyov's thought is essentially religious. For all the 'tremendous overhang of religious ideas' which, as MacDiarmid admitted,²¹ characterises A Drunk Man, even that poem expresses a sensibility more skeptical than devout. Already by 1926 the poet may have had doubts about the ideas he has espoused so uncritically in his essays on Solovyov. Certainly in the years subsequent to the publication of his great Scots sequence his fascination with religious interpretations of existence gave way to increasingly forthright atheism. Correspondingly, theological speculations such as we find in A Drunk Man, hedged about with doubt and shot through with contradiction though they are, play a diminishing role in the poetry.

A Drunk Man expresses a faith in the healing capacity of sexual love which has no counterpart in The Muckle Toon. This fact suggests that at a time when MacDiarmid was more than ever concerned with

theories of evolution he was less satisfied with Solovyov's particular theory than he had been in 1926, when the notion of evolution was not nearly so important to him. The Russian held a belief in the redemptive power and religious significance of sexual love which hinged on his understanding of the role played in cosmic process by the Deity's female hypostasis. The ~~Futurist~~ ^{Symbolist} poet Alexander Blok (1880-1921), a disciple of the philosopher, gave ironic formulation to the identification between St. Sophia and the object of 'sex-love' (Solovyov's term²²) in his lyric, 'The Stranger'.²³ This poem is the model for MacDiarmid's most powerful invocation of the mysterious 'silken leddy' who 'darkly moves' (C.P. I, p. 89) through the earlier sections of A Drunk Man. The simultaneous phasing out from the Scot's subsequent work of a religious dimension and of belief in the regenerative power of sexual love²⁴ strengthens the case for associating the mysterious feminine presence of the 1926 sequence with St. Sophia rather than with the 'White Goddess' muse of lyric tradition. (Attitudes to women and sex in The Muckle Toon are discussed below, pp. 491-8).

In the 1939 letter to Helen Cruickshank in which he retrospectively set out the intentions behind Cenchrastus, MacDiarmid cited Solovyov's model of evolution. He apparently hoped that omission of reference to the place of the dead in the Russian's system would be sufficient to make that scheme sound like one an atheist could embrace:

In Russian religious thought...Man's destiny is through his consciousness to reconcile the lower orders of creation - animals, plants, minerals - to St. Sophia, the Wisdom of God, who is the female hypostasis of the Deity. My poem envisages that reconciliation (and insists upon the part Scotland should, can, and must, play in that great task) in purely intellectual - i.e. non-mystical and non-religious terms.²⁵

Who but MacDiarmid could propose to envisage a divine teleology in wholly secular terms? We shall see, however, that The Muckle Toon presents a vision of evolution which has much in common with Solovyov's, and yet lacks a numinous aspect. Speaking to Walter Perrie in 1974, the poet outlined his beliefs in a manner which suggests a basis for his seemingly absurd attempt to effect a profane visualisation of the integration of universe and Godhead:

Human life itself implies a belief in, a desire to participate in, the transcendental. It's inherent in us without reference to any religious belief.... The transcendental, if I am right, comes out of the seeds of things. It's inherent in the original substance - it's part of the materialism. 26

Like any materialist, MacDiarmid accepts the world as given, seeing no reason to posit a divine origin for it. Nevertheless he believes that implicit in matter is the possibility of its own transfiguration. In much of his poetry, like Solovyov, he views human consciousness as the element which motivates the world towards transfiguration, i.e., which impels evolution. But in The Muckle Toon, while more than ever interested in the evolution of consciousness, he repeatedly suggests that human awareness may not be the goal of the evolutionary process (see below, pp. 384-6). This is the chief respect in which the vision of the Clann Albann poems differs from that of Cencrastus and the main reason why the philosophical framework of the poetry of the early thirties cannot be regarded merely as a secularised version of Solovyov's system. Some details in The Muckle Toon, indeed, suggest the influence of quite another philosophical formulation of evolution, that of Henri Bergson.

In Creative Evolution²⁷ (which appeared in English in 1911, four years after its initial publication as L'évolution créatrice) Bergson proposed a dualistic world-view in which the 'upward' movement of 'Life' clashed with the 'downward' movement of 'Matter'. 'Life' in this sense is a cosmic form of the élan vital, of which, as we have seen earlier (above, p. 154), the French thinker believed we are intuitively aware in ourselves. 'Matter', on the other hand, 'represents the falling back, the process of unmaking, while the movement of life in the world represents what remains of the direct upward movement in the inverted movement'.²⁸ All that exists in the material world embodies the achievement, and at the same time the failure, of the upward movement of 'Life'. Frederick Copleston writes that, according to Bergson, 'The creation of living species is due to the creative activity of life; but from another point of view the self-perpetuating species represents a falling back'.²⁹ This notion is apparently alluded to by MacDiarmid in the following stanza from 'The Hole in the Wall':

It means that nature's still seekin'
 In ilka man born a way oot
 Experimentin' again and maist o' us ken
 Failin' again without doot.

(C.P. I, p. 309; M.T., p. 53)

That is to say, any human being who does not effect an evolutionary mutation in consciousness constitutes in his own person a 'falling back', a failed experiment of the élan vital. There is a further allusion to Bergson's concept of the 'downward' movement of failed natural experiments in 'Another Turn of the Screw', where poetry itself is presented as such an unsuccessful attempt at expression by the vital impulse of 'Life':

'But what is poetry but anither
 Less-easily-vanquished-nae-doot
 Voice-shape that in turn fa's abreid
 And lets the same silence up through't?'

(C.P. I, p. 310; M.T., p. 57)

The two poems I have quoted are of minor status. But in one of the central poems of The Muckle Toon - the longer 'Water of Life' - we hear a strong echo of Bergson's celebrated comparison of the creative impulse to jets of steam. The philosopher wrote:

So, from an immense reservoir of life jets must be leaping out without ceasing, each of which, falling back, is a world.³⁰

The poet lists antithetical pairs of life-forms and comments:

Ah, weel I ken that ony ane o' them,
 Nae maitter hoo vividly I ca't to mind,
 Kennin' the world to men's as light to water,
 Has endless beauties to which my een are blind,
 My ears deaf - aye, and ilka drap a world
 Bigger than a' Mankind has yet unfurled.

(C.P. I, p. 317; M.T., p. 114)

One non-philosophical source of MacDiarmid's evolutionary ideas should be mentioned. The poet's compatriot and boyhood hero John Davidson embraced a monistic materialistic philosophy which saw mind as simply an expression of matter. Davidson, who, unlike Solovyov and Bergson, is celebrated by name in The Muckle Toon (see 'Of John Davidson', C.P. I, p. 362; M.T., p. 92, and 'John Davidson', M.T., p. 93), looked upon the evolutionary thrust towards consciousness as matter's struggle for 'self-knowledge'.³¹ MacDiarmid's lines in 'Lament for the Great Music':

Mind is the organ through which the Universe reaches
 Such consciousness of itself as is possible now

(C.P. I, p. 480)

recall the older poet's description, in 'The Testament of a Vivisector', of 'this mind of man' as the 'organ of matter's consciousness'.³² In an essay published

in the Free Man on April 1st 1933, Grieve wrote as follows on the system developed by Davidson as a replacement for 'the imagination of Christendom' which, as an atheist and early follower of Nietzsche, he had rejected:

What did Davidson substitute? A profound and passionately asserted vision of life as matter seeking ever finer and more effective manifestations. And in poetry, "the subtlest, most powerful, and most various organ of utterance articulate faculty has produced," he saw the latest emanation of what he calls the "concrete mystery, matter", created, "like folk, or flowers, or cholera, or war, or lightning, or light", by an evolutionary process involving all activities and states of consciousness.³³

The influence of Davidson's vision of evolution can be glimpsed in MacDiarmid's treatment of poetry as a natural life-form. We have already seen poetry so treated in 'Another Turn of the Screw' (above, p. 373), where it is brought into the framework of Bergsonian metaphysics. 'Museum Piece' (C.P. I, p. 300; M.T., p. 68), too, presents poetry as an 'emanation' of the 'concrete mystery, matter'. Such a view of the cosmic impulses underlying poetry explains why in the opening poem of The Muckle Toon MacDiarmid can claim that

poetry isna made
 O' onything that's seen, toucht, smelt or heard.

('From Work in Progress', C.P. II, p. 1147;
M.T., p. 10)

The evolutionary vision of The Muckle Toon is more amenable to brief description than are the philosophical systems upon which it is based. MacDiarmid ignores such central features of these systems as Bergson's Matter-Life dichotomy and Solovyov's divine entelechy. He regards the impulse of human evolution as an impetus towards consciousness. The separate but related aspects of that

force that's brocht life up
 Frae chaos to the present stage

('Excelsior', C.P. I, p. 317; M.T., p. 115)

upon which the poetry focusses, are, firstly, its significance for the personal life of the poet and, secondly and consequentially, its significance for humanity in general. The concern with the source and quality of his own consciousness - a consciousness MacDiarmid grandly and casually accepts as a typification of genius - provides both the autobiographical ballast without which The Muckle Toon would be in danger of going the abstraction-riddled way of Cenchrastus, and

a philosophical and aesthetic context for such political poems as the 'Hymns to Lenin' (C.P. I, pp. 297 and 323; M.T., pp. 98 and 141) and 'The Seamless Garment' (C.P. I, p. 311; M.T., p. 121). The philosophical link that joins these ostensibly Marxist poems to the poetry in which MacDiarmid broods upon his own origins and destiny is supplied by that least communistic of thinkers, Vladimir Solovyov. The poet's 1925 précis of Solovyov's thought, which we have quoted on pp.365-6, yields the clue. If we suppress the religious content of the excerpted passage from 'Towards the New Order I' we are left with an abstract of the characteristic Muckle Toon thesis with regard to the nature and obligations of genius. We can say that the author 'proposed' to 'concern' himself in the Clann Albann writings with 'the problem of Human Genius', and to illustrate the claim that it is 'the...task of the conscious' to recognise its role in evolutionary process and 'win to a like consciousness...the unconscious masses of humanity'. (It might seem therefore that MacDiarmid achieved in The Muckle Toon something akin to what he subsequently said he had set out to achieve in Cencrastus - a 'non-mystical

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and non-religious' presentation of Solovyov's metaphysic. It should be pointed out, however, that in his 'Cenchrastus letter' to Helen Cruickshank the poet stressed the 'historic mission of humanity in relation to the Cosmos',³⁴, whereas in The Muckle Toon he is primarily concerned with the relationship between genius and the rest of mankind.) A significant feature of 'Towards the New Order I' is that MacDiarmid is already by 1925 identifying 'Human Genius' with quantity of consciousness rather than fertility of artistic invention. That identification is central to the poetry written for Clann Albann.

MacDiarmid surveys evolution in The Muckle Toon from a vantage point which looks back towards the slow and precarious emergence of consciousness from the primeval slime, and forward towards an enhancement both of his own awareness and of that of mankind at large. The consciousness of the masses will be extended as a result of communist revolution. The illumination which awaits the poet is a more mysterious affair, to which he gives the name epopteia. In the pages which follow we will deal with questions of consciousness in The Muckle Toon first as they relate to MacDiarmid himself, and then as they relate to humankind generally.

(ii) 'The epopteia I maun ha'e...': Implicit in The Muckle Toon's separate treatment of MacDiarmid's own consciousness on the one hand, and that of the masses on the other, is the notion that the poet has travelled further along the evolutionary road than his fellows. That notion had already gained expression in Cencrastus, where we hear of humankind's struggle

Up frae the slime, that a' but a handfu' o' men
Are grey wi' still.

(C.P. I, p. 285)

MacDiarmid is a representative of history's men of genius, a fraternity unbespattered by the primordial slime. Genius has sufficient breadth of awareness to acknowledge and to look with equanimity upon the material and historical forces which underlie consciousness. The ability to subdue personal interests to the

demands of an impersonal evolutionary force is not won without anguish. It involves trust in a power compared to which individual human life 'is straw' ('Cheville', l. 6, C.P. I, p. 353; M.T., p. 124). The poet writes that he is

ready noo at ony time
To be hurled back or forrit to ony stage
O' ocht we've ever been twixt sun and slime
Or can become, trustin' what's brocht about
A' th'ither sequels to the water-shute.

('Water of Life', C.P. I, p. 316; M.T., p. 114)

Lenin and Rilke serve MacDiarmid as symbols of true genius. Lenin's 'secret' was that he was so 'at hame' with working-class politics that he was incapable of 'fause movements' ('The Seamless Garment', ll. 13, 26, 27, C.P. I, pp. 311-2; M.T., p. 121) - that is to say, all his actions were aligned to the 'real will' ('First Hymn to Lenin', l. 63, C.P. I, p. 299; M.T., p. 99) of the evolutionary impulse. (It might be objected that the poet expresses no more here than the Marxist notion of historical necessity. Certainly he plays up parallels between the dialectical materialist view of history and his own myth of evolution in this instance, but the one should not be confused with the other.)

'The Oon Olympian' (C.P. I, p. 354; M.T., p.125) presents Goethe as MacDiarmid's emblem of false genius. He is a 'stabilisation fool' (l. 54, C.P. I, p. 356; M.T., p. 126) who does not share the poet's willingness to be 'hurled back or forrit to ony stage' of the historic struggle of his species. The author of Faust is pilloried too for failing to appreciate the dependence of his mentality upon ineffable processes:

Auld Goethe never wet his feet
But had the water laid on
Baith H. and C.. nor kent nor cared
The deeps his pipes made raid on,
A mighty expert on H₂O
Almaist hailly in terms o' taps
Plus a shoo'er o' rain, a river's flow,
Even a keek at the sea perhaps
- But Oh! that the Heavens had opened and let
A second Flood on this plumbers' pet!

(C.P.I, p. 357; M.T., p. 127)

MacDiarmid castigates the great German for being one of the 'fools wha think that they can pose/As authorities on thought' (ll. 106-7, C.P. I, p. 357; M.T., p. 127), but who accept the phenomenon of thought unquestioningly. He compares them to glass-balls on a fountain, 'bobbin' cratur's' (l. 110, C.P. I, p. 357; M.T., p. 127) who suppose that they control the rising and falling of the waters which in point of fact control them.

True genius, conversely, recognises its debt to forces
which lie beyond the realm of the rational:

There is nae reason but on unreason's based
And needs to mind that often to hain its sense.

('Whuchulls', C.P. II, p. 1091;

M.T., p. 154)

The argument against the 'nitwits, knaves and
fools/O' the educatit classes' ('The Oon Olympian',
ll. 212-3, C.P. I, p. 361; M.T., p. 130) is pursued
most fully in a poem which does not belong to the
Muckle Toon group at all, but which is worth examining
here for the light it sheds on the thinking behind
MacDiarmid's attacks upon rationalism in his poetry
in the early thirties. 'Thalamus' (C.P. I, p. 411),
from the Stony Limits collection, proposes that the
rational capacity has its anatomical basis in relatively
new 'centres of the brain'. Rationalists behave as if
these new centres were designed to supersede rather than
to complement the older ones:

...proud of their cortex few
Have glimpsed the medial nuclei yet
Of their thalamus - that Everest in themselves
Reason should have explored before it
As the corpora geniculata before any star
To know what and why men are.

(C.P. I, p. 413)

Uncritical subservience to reason leads to attenuation of awareness. In stanzas which share both the form and the symbolism of characteristic Muckle Toon pieces, MacDiarmid broods upon the ills which follow from the fact that rationalists are 'liars to their own anatomy':

Meanwhile reason, used or misused,
 Usurps man's consciousness;
 Life's other and greater tide flows unseen
 And its presence men hardly guess,
 Or the subtle ubiquitous ways
 It shapes and limits all reason says.

Men are held to a fraction of their lives,
 And reason discounts for the most part
 All stray overflowings of life's deeper flood,
 Instincts, intuitions, religion, art,
 And though a small part of the whole
 Would fain have entire control.

(C.P. I, p. 412)

The praiseworthy state of consciousness the poet of The Muckle Toon enjoys has as one of its features the conviction that 'Creation' can be apprehended fully only if the mind adverts to the myriad particularities of created things. The conviction is expressed, in a variety of tones, in most of the major poems and is voiced in a number of the minor pieces as well. The poet is cheerful about it in 'Water Music':

... 'twixt the pavvy o' the Wauchope,
 And the paspey o' the Ewes,
 And the pavane o' Esk itsel',
 It's no' for me to choose.

(C.P. I, p. 335; M.T., p. 18)

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 It's no' for me to choose.

(C.P. I, p. 335; M.T., p. 18)

It spurs him to excited vehemence in 'Second Hymn to Lenin':

A poet has nae choice left
Betwixt Beaverbrook, say, and God,
Jimmy Thomas or you,
A cat, carnation, or clod.

(C.P. I, p. 327; M.T., p. 144)

'Charisma and My Relatives' explores some of the grimmer implications of the conviction:

Sae to my bosom yet a' beasts maun come,
Or I to theirs, - baudrons, wi' sides like harps,
Lookin' like the feel o' olives in the mooth,
Yon scabby cur at whom the gutter carps,
Nose-double o' the taste o' beer-and-gin,
And a' my kin.

(C.P. I, p. 302; M.T., p. 42)

MacDiarmid's belief in the impropriety of valuing one life-form over another probably had its roots in the philosophy of Solovyov. In 1923 the poet had quoted the Russian to the effect that:

Reality is one living system, each part of which, while remaining unique and individual, enters at the same time into the composition of a wider whole...which includes the limitless multiplicity of forms.³⁵

But by going a step beyond Solovyov and regarding human existence itself as merely one life-form among many, MacDiarmid ended up with a relativistic vision of man which is impossible to reconcile with the Russian's

thought:

What is oor life that we should prize't abune
Lichen's or slug's o' which we ken scarce mair
Than they o' oors when a' things said and dune,
Or fancy it ser's 'heicher purposes'?
The wice man kens that a fool's brain and his
Differ at maist as little 'gainst a' that is
As different continents and centuries,
Time, station, caste, culture, character -
Triflin' distinctions that dinna cairry faur....

('Whuchulls', C.P. II, p. 1089;

M.T., p. 153)

In 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' the poet explicitly
rejects anthropocentric philosophical systems:

We only want
The world to live and feel its life in us?
But the world lives whether we dae or no'....

(C.P. I, p. 352; M.T., p.137)

MacDiarmid is as insistent as Solovyov that genius
recognise its role in the evolutionary process.
In terms of purely human evolution his attitude
is almost identical with the Russian's - genius must
win the masses of humanity to a consciousness
commensurate with its own. But while both poet and
thinker agree in affirming that 'the conscious' must
understand its place in relation to cosmic process,
their notions of what that place is differ greatly.
Solovyov, as we have seen (above, p.365), views

man as the protagonist in a cosmic drama. MacDiarmid recoils not so much from the philosopher's belief as from the certainty which underpins it. The poet's 'genius' must be awake to the possibility that the miracle of consciousness has no absolute significance, that 'ilka drap' which condenses from the evolutionary steam-jet may be 'a world/Bigger than a' Mankind has yet unfurled'.

The state of consciousness we have been describing in the preceding paragraphs is one which has already been attained by the poet of The Muckle Toon. But MacDiarmid repeatedly lets it be known that he expects at any moment to be 'hurled...forrit' to a higher degree of awareness. As early as the poem designed to open Clann Albann's first volume he declares his faith that the Water of Life is 'mountin' in him 'to its richt level' ('From Work in Progress', ll. 119-20, C.P. I, p. 1150; M.T., p. 13). He feels illumination 'steal ...owre' him in 'Charisma and My Relatives' (ll. 5-6, C.P. I, p. 301; M.T., p. 41). At the climax of both 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' (C.P. I, pp. 352-3; M.T., p. 138) and 'Whuchulls' (C.P. I, p. 1093; M.T., p. 156) the poet implies that he is just within sight of the 'radiant licht' ('Depth', l. 229, C.P. I, p. 353; M.T., p. 138) of vision. As

MacDiarmid has not yet experienced the illumination to which he looks forward so keenly, The Muckle Toon contains little description of its content. Strewn through the poetry, however, are a number of hints as to the nature of the imminent revelation. These hints must be pieced together if we are to understand the 'argument' of Clann Albann's first volume, since the higher consciousness to which the poet aspires is nothing less than the goal of the personal evolution which provides that aspect of the poetry - the autobiographical - to which he was most eager to draw attention.

MacDiarmid has no doubt as to the transformative power of the vision he seeks. He writes in 'Charisma and My Relatives' of

The epopteia that, yet f'und, like rain
 'Ud quickly to the roots o' a' thing rin
 Even as the circles frae a stane that's hurled
 In water ring the world.

(C.P. I, p. 302; M.T., p. 41)

The choice of the word epopteia provides a clue to the nature of the illumination towards which the poet feels impelled. The Greeks gave the name epopteia to the final stage of initiation into the Greater Mysteries at Eleusis. The revelation granted the initiate is

thought to have involved disclosure of the secrets of the dead and of the afterlife. And indeed there are many references to death in The Muckle Toon. The number of these, and the cryptic nature of some of them, seem to imply a philosophical thanatopsis which is never fully articulated. Goethe, the false genius, is twice brought to task for misunderstanding the significance of death. He is

Owre nice to look Daith in the face

('The Oon Olympian', l. 57, C.P. I, p. 356;
M.T., p. 126)

unlike the poet, who claims in 'Water of Life' (l. 50, C.P. I, p. 315; M.T., p. 113) that true knowledge 'o' life' is based upon confrontation with the problem of dying. (The other criticism of the German writer's attitude to last things is made in ll. 196-9 of 'The Oon Olympian', C.P. I, p. 360; M.T., p. 130.) John Davidson's death is contrasted to those of his compatriots killed in imperial wars. Davidson is praised at the expense of the soldiers because he

looked daith closer, less afraid,
And fund the monster freendlier then
Than his insensate countrymen.

('John Davidson', M.T., p. 93)

The last of 'Second Hymn to Lenin's' italicized lyrics similarly asserts that 'the conscious' differ

from the masses of humanity in their attitude to death,
even if death ignores the distinction:

Whatever their jobs a' men are ane
In life, and syne in daith
(Tho' it's sma' patience I can ha'e
Wi' life's ideas o' that by the way)

(C.P. I, p. 328; M.T., p. 145)

'Cheville' suggests something of the nature of
enopteia by hinting at the possibility of outgrowing
mortality 'in huge recognition' (C.P. I, p. 353;
M.T., p. 124).

It is tempting to find in The Muckle Toon's
muted but persistent linking of death and revelation
traces of Solovyov's teaching with regard to the duty
of 'the conscious' to claim the dead for consciousness.
The dead are to be found in graveyards, and graveyards
provide the setting of no fewer than five of the poems
designated for the first volume of Clann Albann (appropri-
ately, as many of the poet's 'first contacts with ...
Death' (Clann Albann: An Explanation', M.T., p. 236)
must have been made in Langholm's picturesque cemeteries
- see Commentary, pp.330-1. This graveyard poetry has
Eleusinian connotations, too, for, as a writer on the
Greater Mysteries has explained, burial had a mystical
significance for the ancient Greeks:

(W)hen a man died, he was buried in the earth to partake mystically in the cyclic renewal of life. This was the message of Eleusis: out of every grave new life grows - for the initiates there are "good hopes" for a glorious immortality in the afterlife.³⁶

MacDiarmid, though, sees the 'afterlife' in grisly terms of

a' the processes that run
Frae oor corpses in the grun'.

('Ex-Parte Statement on the Project of Cancer',

C.P. I, p. 447)

'Depth and the Chthonian Image' relays a vision of the teeming activity of maggots attacking a buried body; the poet realises with horror that the swarming movement of the worms is prefigured by the bustling molecular activity which sustains corporeal life and at the same time speeds the body towards dissolution. He argues that no analogy can suggest the experience of epopteia to a man as effectively as

the shadowy flock
O' atoms in himsel' precariously seen,
Queer dirlin' o' his cells at sic an 'oor,
He whiles can note wha hasna else the poo'er,
Laichest Brownian movements swarmin' to his een
As neath a microscope - a deemless thrang,
To catch their changin' time, and get the hang
O' a' their swift diminishments doon the steep
Chutes o' dissolution, as he lay amang

The mools already, and watched the maggots' wars
 Upon his flesh, and sune its finitude mock
 Their midgeswarm jaws until their numbers fa'
 To a'e toom mou', the fremit last o' a'
 The reelin' corruption, its vain mudgeons there
 Wi motions that nae measure can seize on....

(C.P. I, p. 348: M.T., p. 134)

In the graveyard poems of The Muckle Toon MacDiarmid displays no confidence in either the possibility or the wisdom of reversing the corruption process in the case of the folk who lie in his burgh's cemeteries. He reflects that the occupants of Wauchope Kirkyard would have to be guaranteed more impressive lives than they led in Langholm if they were to be worth resurrecting:

A thoosand people in this a'e kirkyaird
 I kent, and suddenly a' the memories laired
 'Neth these green sods, o' looks and ways
 And a' the freends an' foes o' my young days
 Encompass me - hoo could it be
 That ocht could change sicna diversity?

Daith's gi'en nae added stature to them then?
 In this vain resurrection they seem to rise
 Juist as they were, and sae belittle Daith;
 And there is naething in the haill wide world
 That is the better for a repeat supply
 O' ordinary folk; and so it is
 Wi' a' Earth's graves and memories.

('The Kernigal', C.P. II, pp. 1275-6;

M.T., p. 152)

The resurrection celebrated in this poem takes place in the poet's own head. But, MacDiarmid argues, an actual physical resurrection of the Wauchope dead would be no

less vain than this imagined one if it transpired that the risen had learned nothing from their experience of death. And in 'The Scots Renaissance' he wryly suggests that the grave will remain the proper place for corpses

until the hail earth has nae mair room
For the deid bodies of nonentities....

(S.P. II, p. 1275; M.T., p. 151)

He does not speculate what will happen thereafter. MacDiarmid doubtless had Solovyov's doctrines in mind when he wrote the graveyard poems of The Muckle Toon, but there is no evidence that he concurred with them.

The Muckle Toon's hints as to the nature of epopteia are too scrappy to permit any definite representation of the vision anticipated by the poet. There is, however, nothing unduly mysterious in MacDiarmid's failure to develop the theme he repeatedly introduces, since he presumably intended to deal exhaustively with it in the final volume of his 'five-fold scheme'. The fifth book of the proposed epic is described as follows in 'Clann Albann: An Explanation':

"With a Lifting of the Head" (from Plotinus) represents a part of "Goodbye To All That" - the abandonment by the spirit of the poet of all that has preceded this stage and his ascent into a different order of consciousness altogether.

(M.T., p. 237)

Had With a Lifting of the Head been written, one might expect to find retrospective clarification there of the meaning of epopteia in The Muckle Toon.

Notwithstanding the abandonment of the Clann Albann scheme before the completion of even the first volume, such clarification is hinted at in poems written within a year of the last Muckle Toon pieces. At an earlier point in the present study (above, pp. 186-98) I have suggested that the most interesting poetry in the Stony Limits collection reflects the psychological disorientation suffered by MacDiarmid in his first months in Shetland. If the sense of imminent enlightenment repeatedly communicated by The Muckle Toon was rooted in the poet's personal experience, then that Shetland disorientation may be seen as the fulfilment of the poetry's promise of epopteia.

MacDiarmid's most 'objective' account of his spiritual predicament in 1933 is to be found in a verse-letter he wrote to Robin Black, publisher of the Free Man, the periodical he had edited during his last weeks on the mainland:

My dear R.M.B., I was still a bit feart
 O' madness, o' livin' in a 'warld o' my ain',
 Afore I cam' back to Scotland last time.
 Noo that's haily and forever gane.
 And withoot hesitation I'd choose
 The grave or the madhouse cell than share
 A single 'idea' but twa-three Scots hae -
 And wi' these twa-three scarce share ony mair.
 Scotland nae mair exists for me
 Than it does for ony ordinary suicide.
 I've come ti this uninhabited isle
 And wi' it and the sea and sky I'll bide
 And o' my life here can tell even you
 Naething whatever - nae human speech
 Can describe a life sae completely foreign
 To a' that's wi'in onybody else's reach.
 But as a last letter afore I forget
 The past as if it had never been
 I'll pen my verdict on Scotland....

('Letter to R.M.B.', C.P. II, pp. 1271-2)

The existential state described in these lines seems to involve 'the abandonment by the spirit of the poet of all that has preceded this stage and his ascent into a different order of consciousness altogether'. The major Stony Limits poems describe the poet's state of mind in his early months on Whalsay 'subjectively'. They show that MacDiarmid did not respond to illumination

with the imperturbability he had predicted in one of the Muckle Toon poems. Two 'voices' in 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' had warned that men typically respond to an experience of the ineffable by adopting either ascetic or licentious extremes of behaviour. The poet had rejected these warnings with impatient confidence:

A'e voice may cry alood: 'Wha ever sees
 You to hairy goon and mossy cell has gane.'
 Anither proclaim the vital vision gi'en
 'Ud move to deeds frae care o' consequence clean.
 But baith are wrang - the reckless and the fremt.

(C.P. I, p. 353; M.T., p. 138)

MacDiarmid might have paid more attention to the first of these voices. The overwhelming intuitions of 1933 made a cell of his imagination, and he became that cell's hairy-gowned inhabitant. And it was not only by virtue of his ascetic response to it that the poet's Shetland epopteia belied his expectations: in the light of enhanced awareness, even the notion of what constitutes true consciousness proposed in the poetry of the early thirties was shown to have been inadequate. The Muckle Toon's almost ubiquitous assertion that all created forms are of equal value is modified in 'On a Raised Beach':

All else in the world cancels out, equal, capable
 Of being replaced by other things...
 But the world cannot dispense with these stones.
 They alone are not redundant. Nothing can replace
 them
 Except a new creation of God.

(C.P. I, p. 426)

The repercussions of believing that the inanimate stones
 have greater metaphysical significance than all organic
 life are immense. Evolution, after all, is a function
 of organic life:

So these stones have dismissed
 All but all of evolution, unmoved by it,
 (Is there anything to come they will not
 likewise dismiss?)

(C.P. I, p. 424)

So 'quickly to the roots o' a' thing' ('Charisma and
 My Relatives', l. 28, C.P. I, p. 302; M.T., p. 41)
 did MacDiarmid's Shetland vision 'rin' that it
 destroyed the very faith in process which had brought
 him to the borders of epopteia in the first instance.
 'On a Raised Beach' embodies the poet's recognition
 that a philosophy based solely on extrapolations from
 organic life can yield only a partial understanding of
 reality. The poem can be read as a critical reappraisal
 of the central assumptions of Cencrastus and The Muckle
 Toon.

There is, nevertheless, one important respect in which the insights gained by MacDiarmid in his months of turmoil in the Shetlands were consistent with the Muckle Toon's expectations of epopteia. The central poems of Stony Limits confirm the link between vision and an enhanced understanding of death repeatedly suggested in the Clann Albann writings. The three poems placed before 'On a Raised Beach' in the Stony Limits volume are at once elegies for, and communings with the spirits of, men who had died in the decade preceding 1933 - the Gaelic enthusiast Liam Mac'Ille Iosa (William Gillies, d. 1932)³⁷ and the poets Rainer Maria Rilke (d. 1926) and Charles Montagu Doughty (d. 1926). MacDiarmid suggests that the mental gulf which separates him from his fellow-Scots on the mainland is sufficiently like that which separates the dead from the living to enable him approach the subjects of his elegies on an equal footing. He tells Rilke:

... our abreption from the abderian accidie
Of most men brings us near you....

('Vestigia Nulla Retrorsum', C.P. I, p. 417)

The implications of MacDiarmid's Shetland epopteia are explored in 'On a Raised Beach', the most discursive and least threnodic of the group of English poems composed in the early summer of 1933. The secrets revealed to the poet on his Whalsay storm beach were hardly those disclosed to the initiates at Eleusis, yet they were no less concerned with death and the afterlife. The rejection of Solovyov's vision of immortality in MacDiarmid's greatest meditative poem is counterpointed by a grim acknowledgement that the stones - lowest of all orders of creation, further from consciousness than anything else on earth - enjoy an access to eternity man can participate in only when his consciousness has been extinguished by death:

These stones go through Man, straight to God, if
 there is one,
 What have they not gone through already?
 Empires, civilisations, aeons. Only in them
 If in anything, can His creation confront Him.
 They came so far out of the water and halted
 forever.

...

These stones will reach us long before we reach
 them.
 Cold, undistracted, eternal and sublime.

...

- I lift a stone; it is the meaning of life
 I clasp
 Which is death, for that is the meaning of death;
 How else does any man yet participate
 In the life of a stone,

(iii) 'A' wha haena had a glisk...: By contrast to the private illumination anticipated in The Muckle Toon, the extension of mass consciousness envisaged by MacDiarmid has little of the cryptic about it. Yet it is not entirely straightforward. 'Second Hymn to Lenin' (C.P. I, p. 323; M.T., p. 141) expresses the belief that the lives of the masses would be greatly enhanced if the material necessities of life could be guaranteed to each individual. Catherine Kerrigan writes that 'MacDiarmid recognises that ... the only thing which inhibits development is that the energy of the mass of people is still taken up with the need to earn their daily bread'.³⁸ But the poet is not guilty of the banal proposal that increased leisure will ensure higher consciousness. It is clear from the 'Second Hymn' that his notion of material necessity includes not only 'breid-and-butter problems' (l. 76, C.P. I, p. 325; M.T., p.143),

but also

Sport, love, and parentage,
Trade, politics, and law

(C.P. I, p. 325; M.T., p. 143)

all of which

S'ud be nae mair to us than braith
We hardly ken we draw.

(C.P. I, p. 325; M.T., p. 143)

MacDiarmid, then, sees the very concerns which supply the content of most lives as constraints which must be outgrown if the potential of mankind is to be fulfilled. The urge to get away from the material base of existence which typifies the 'communist' poetry of The Muckle Toon is anathema to the doctrinaire Marxist. David Craig has commented as follows on the lines we have quoted:

This simple assertion deserves a simple reply: how could love and parentage, vital physical-emotional links between us as human beings, ever dwindle to mere reflexes, in any conceivable stage of mankind's evolution?³⁹

Craig's question is valid, though the poet's 'simple assertion' may be as psychologically cogent as it is intellectually problematic. These verses, no less than the personally focussed ones written during the

same period, speak for MacDiarmid's estrangement from the physical side of his own nature. The Muckle Toon contains no expressions of delight in bodily life such as we find in A Drunk Man (see above, p. 181), despite the fact that the Langholm sequence proclaims a far more materialistic world-view than that work. Craig has accused MacDiarmid of 'using Marxism's concern with the future to license a maddened desire to escape from the necessities of existence as we know it'.⁴⁰ The most scathing attack on the characteristic Muckle Toon attitude to the material foundation of life, however, comes not from a critic's pen but from that of the poet himself. The following piece, 'Dytiscus', was included, along with much of the finest Clann Albann material, in the Scots Unbound collection:

The problem in the pool is plain.
 Must men to higher things ascend
 For air like the Dytiscus there,
 Breathe through their spiracles, and turn
 To diving bells and seek their share
 Of sustenance in the slime again
 Till they clear life, as he his pool
 To starve in purity, the fool,
 Their finished faculties mirrored, fegs,
 Foiled-fierce as his three pairs of legs?
 Praise be Dytiscus-men are rare.
 Life's pool still foul and full of fare.
 Long till to suicidal success attain
 We water-beetles of the brain!

(C.P. I, p. 354)

MacDiarmid seems to recognise here that the prescriptions of 'Second Hymn to Lenin' would have mankind 'starve in purity'.

The 'communist' poetry of The Muckle Toon expresses an aspiration for an ill-defined liberation but it lacks the social realism and even the satirical dimension of more conventionally Marxist verse. Satire is reserved for those, like Goethe and Langholm's church-goers, who sin against a metaphysical, as opposed to a socio-political, standard. Even the didactic 'The Seamless Garment' (C.P. I, p. 311; M.T., p. 121), for all its factory-floor setting and painstaking explanation of Lenin's significance, is remarkably free of the concerns a socialist activist might be expected to discuss with a potential convert. There is no reference to the ownership of the mill. The question

D'ye live to the full,
Your poo'ers a' deliverly taught?

(C.P. I, p. 312; M.T., p. 122)

is the nearest the poet gets to enquiring after the living and working conditions of the employees. He observes that

Mony a loom mair alive than the weaver seems

(C.P. I, p. 313; M.T., p. 123)

but does not use his observation as a pretext for an elaboration of Marx's theory of alienation. Long after he abandoned Clann Albann MacDiarmid demanded of literature that attention to the details of the daily existence of the masses which is conspicuously absent from the The Muckle Toon's 'political' pieces:

What do we Scottish writers most lack, most need?
 - An immediate experience of the concrete,
 A rich overflowing apprehension of the definite
 Day-by-day content of our people's lives,
 A burningly clear understanding of the factors
 Of the actual correlation of the forces, in
 at work,
 labour today.

('To the Younger Scottish Writers',

C.P. I, pp. 635-6)

It is notable that even here the poet recommends rather than supplies the poetic fare beloved by Marxists. The autobiographical opening volume of Clann Albann would have been an obvious place for MacDiarmid to show how his communism grew out of his working-class experience; yet the poems written for that volume do not yield any indication that he felt his family and townspeople were oppressed except in the sense that they did not share the peaks of consciousness attained by genius. MacDiarmid repeatedly insists in The Muckle Toon that the masses must scale those

peaks, but despite his call for

Organic constructional work,
Practicality, and work by degrees;
First things first...

('Second Hymn to Lenin', C.P. I, p. 325;
M.T., p. 143)

he gives no indication of how the transformation of mass consciousness is to be effected. (To be fair to the poet it must be said that his prose contributions to periodicals in the early thirties⁴¹ show that he believed the Social Credit proposals of Major C. H. Douglas provided mankind with practical means of

Freein' oor poo'ers for greater things

('Second Hymn to Lenin', C.P. I, p. 325;
M.T., p. 143)

as a first step towards higher consciousness.)

'The Burning Passion' presents MacDiarmid's communism as a function of his desire for higher consciousness for himself. The quotation from the Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe which he sets at the head of his poem is very revealing:

From Homer and Polygnotus I every day learn
more clearly that in our life here above ground
we have, properly speaking, to enact Hell'.

(C.P. I, p. 303; M.T., p. 139)

The relevance of these words to the verses which follow them depends upon the particular definition of Hell as separation from God. This Hell is 'enacted' in MacDiarmid's separation from the vision he fitfully and fleetingly achieves in moments of artistic creation. The masses live in a darker hell because their separation from vision is unrelieved. Yet, as they have never experienced the heightened awareness against which quotidian human consciousness must be measured, they do not appreciate the inadequacy of their lives. If they could only be made suffer the anguish proper to their state of total separation from the 'shinin' presence' (l. 21, C.P. I, p. 306; M.T., p. 139), argues MacDiarmid, they might be stirred to pursue the higher consciousness which alone could render their lives worthwhile:

This thocht o' a' wha hasna had a glisk
 And canna understand oor torments syne
 Gi'es courage to us - and the lust to bring
 Like cruelties to them, tho' we ken fine
 The veritable vision withdrawn alane
 Can gi'e (no justify) the pain.

(C.P. I, p. 304; M.T., p. 139)

Trotsky, who is pilloried in 'Second Hymn to Lenin' (ll. 43-4, C.P. I, p. 324; M.T., p. 142), proposed

that the 'average citizen of the classless society' would be 'raised to the level of an Aristotle, a Goethe, a Marx'.⁴² This may seem an ambitious objective for the revolution, but it is a modest one by comparison with that set out by MacDiarmid in 'The Burning Passion'. The poet is troubled by the realization that the great creative men of history spent only a tiny fraction of their lives actually exercising their genius. Great troughs of 'normal living' separated the insights by which they contributed to human evolution. As he put it in A Drunk Man:

We wha are poets and artists
 Move frae inklin' to inklin',
 And live for oor antrin lichtnin's
 In the haingles atweenwhiles,

Laich as the feck o' mankind....

(C.P. I, p. 100)

Now he hails communism as a means of doing away with the 'haingles' and ensuring that every human life is an uninterrupted series of 'inklin's'. 'The feck o'' MacDiarmid's communist comrades might be expected to have little comprehension of, and less sympathy for, the motivation behind his faith in revolution. The poet may be judged to make too great demands on the human species. Yet it would be a mistake to play

down the 'impossibilist' aspect of MacDiarmid's politics. Twice in The Muckle Toon he attempts to justify political violence. Both attempts are made on the basis that the life of the more conscious is of greater value than that of the less conscious human being. Wealth of consciousness is the poet's only absolute value, and he is prepared to sanction as great a sacrifice of inadequately conscious human beings as is necessary to ensure a high level of awareness for those he deems deserving of existence. 'First Hymn to Lenin' includes the following reflection on the role of the Bolshevik secret police in maintaining the gains of the October Revolution:

As necessary, and insignificant, as death
 Wi' a' its agonies in the cosmos still
 The Cheka's horrors are in their degree;
 And'll end suner! What maitters't wha we kill
 To lessen the foulest murder that deprives
 Maist men o' real lives?

(C.P. I, p. 298; M.T., p. 99)

The climactic stanza of 'The Burning Passion' is, if anything, even more blood-curdling in its commitment to human sacrifice in the cause of higher consciousness:

Be this the measure o' oor will to bring
 Like cruelty to a' men - nocht else'll dae;
 The source o' inspiration drooned in bluid
 If need be, owre and owre, until its ray
 Strengthens in a' forever or's haily gane
 As noo save in an antrin brain.

(C.P. I, p. 305; M.T., p. 140)

Catherine Kerrigan argues in her study Whaur
 Extremes Meet that the poet's attitude in the quoted
 stanza from the 'First Hymn' is 'made more understandable
 by the revolutionary temper of those times when mass
 unemployment, the means test and growing police brutality
 pushed the British working class to the limits'.⁴³ She
 further states:

MacDiarmid's justification of violence in
 the cause reveals an anger and vengeance
 which suggests his own feelings of acute
 frustration and social impotence. That
 MacDiarmid was also expressing the feelings
 of many of his class is evident by the way
 in which people like C. Day Lewis recognised
 this work as the first real poetry of
 revolution.⁴⁴

This is to miss the point completely. Full employment,
 the abolition of the means test and the disbanding of
 the police force would not have caused the slightest
 alteration in MacDiarmid's attitude. He had made
 his position clear in Cencrastus:

I'm oot for shorter oors and higher pay
 And better conditions for a' workin' folk
 But ken the hellish state in which they live's
 Due maistly to their ain mob cowardice.
 Yet tho' a' men were millionaires the morn
 As they could easily be
 They'd be nae better than maist rich folk noo
 And nocht that maitters much 'ud be improved
 And nicht be waur.

(C.P. I, pp. 228-9)

Indeed the poet wants to intensify rather than to relieve the suffering of the working class, or at least to replace the anguish proper to slavery with that proper to genius (see Cencrastus, C.P. I, p. 288). Contempt for humanity's inadequacies goes much deeper in MacDiarmid than sympathy for its adversities. The attempt to explain characteristic attitudes of the first two 'Hymns to Lenin' by recourse to orthodox Socialism results from failure to recognise the relationship of the poems to the Clann Albann scheme. Boutelle⁴⁵ and Kerrigan, like the poet's friend Sydney Goodsir Smith, grapple unavailingly with the 'Hymns' because they view them in isolation from the autobiographical meditations upon evolution which they were designed to complement. Smith's essay, 'MacDiarmid's Three Hymns to Lenin'⁴⁶, appeared before scholarship had addressed itself to his mentor's chaotic bibliography. But Ann Edward Boutelle's Thistle and Rose (1980), like Catherine Kerrigan's better-informed but still

inadequate Whaur Extremes Meet (1983), was written long after Kenneth Buthlay's warning in his still unsurpassed introductory study, Hugh MacDiarmid (1964), that his subject's 'attitude...towards Lenin and revolutionary Communism is best understood if one sees the first two Hymns in the context of the other poems which he was writing at that time'⁴⁷—in the context, that is to say, of The Muckle Toon.

In 'Clann Albann: An Explanation' MacDiarmid advised readers against regarding 'such poems' as the 'hymns to Lenin' as 'expressions of my own opinions', and stated that they were 'presented merely as starting points for the attitudes developed from book to book' (M.T., p. 238). He wrote thus presumably to soften criticism of the murderous sentiments of the stanzas from the First Hymn volume which we quoted in the last paragraph but one. Yet there is little doubt that Grieve embraced attitudes no less fierce than those propounded in the poetry of his MacDiarmid alter-ego. The following sentence from an essay which appeared in the Free Man on September 3rd 1932 reveals the uglier side of his liberationist politics:

Nature abhors a vacuum and I personally prefer any manifest tendency whatever to mere opportunism or sitting on the fence, and, while I am no anti-Semitic in the Hitlerite sense, and while any anti-Semitism I show has reference rather to the relative influence and proclivities of Jewish elements in certain circumstances than to any general application, I think, as a Douglasite, that the Jewish race has developed a particular genius in regard to finance which is a curse and a menace to humanity as a whole, and, as a Communist, I think it is not illogical to hate, and try to exterminate such Jews just as I regard it as legitimate and necessary for proletarians at a certain point to exterminate the intelligentsia from whom they themselves derived that knowledge and efficiency which enables them to do, or contemplate doing, anything of the sort.⁴⁸

What, one is tempted to ask, will remain of higher consciousness when the intelligentsia has been despatched by the proletariat?

There is little point in seeking to justify Grieve's views or in trying to explain away their brutality. The contempt for liberal values displayed by Yeats, Eliot and Pound in the nineteen-thirties has frequently been deplored, but it was no greater than that expressed by their socialist opponent, MacDiarmid. Indeed this poet of the Left is no more egalitarian in his attitude towards existing political conditions than his Right-wing fellow poets. He too despises the masses - 'I'm only interested in the higher brain centres'⁴⁹

- but he looks forward to the day when the proletariat will enjoy a wealth of consciousness conservative political theorists see as necessarily the preserve of the few.

- but he looks forward to the day when the proletariat will enjoy a wealth of consciousness conservative political theorists see as necessarily the preserve of the few.

(iv) 'As bairns in the bairnliness...': I have argued above (pp.356-8) that Clann Albann was conceived as a work of Romantic self-portrayal. The fact that its first volume takes childhood as a major theme might be construed to underscore the Romantic character of the enterprise. The attitude to childhood delineated in The Muckle Toon, however, is radically at variance with the cult of the child familiar from the writings of Rousseau, Blake and Wordsworth. MacDiarmid is not fundamentally concerned with the moral development of man, so whether or not childhood is a naturally good state is irrelevant to him. Where late eighteenth-century writers perceived innocence, he sees only ignorance. His interest in quantity rather than quality of consciousness leads him to embrace a view of individual human development which is diametrically opposed to the prelapsarianism of Wordsworth. The latter lamented the fading 'into the light of common.

day,⁵⁰ of the child's intense experience of existence.

He wrote:

Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy.⁵¹

For MacDiarmid childhood itself is a prison-house, the walls of which remain intact through the life of an individual who fails to detonate charges of intellect and art at their base. He declared in an interview in 1968:

I've got no patience with children. I'm
only anxious for them to grow up...and
become conversible.⁵²

This singularly negative attitude to childhood is given artistic expression only in the poems written while it was being strongly challenged by MacDiarmid's recrudescent emotional involvement with the 'hame scenes'.

The theme of childhood in The Muckle Toon furthers the evolutionary vision we have been discussing. The entire autobiographical aspect of the book - the poet's concern with Langholm, with his family, with his early years generally - is conjured only to be dismissed as a stage of his personal evolution which MacDiarmid must abandon if he is to ascend to the next stage, epopteia. He turns to his 'trivial store'

('Fatherless in Boyhood', l. 15, C.P. II, p. 1251; M.T., p. 89) of childhood memories, to the source of his own consciousness, in search of the key to greater awareness. Yet he repeatedly expresses his lack of faith in such source-hunting, at one stage reminding his readers of the wisdom of rural dwellers who know that the eagle's filthy eyrie does not contain the secret of its owner's magnificent flight ('Country Folk', C.P. I, p. 306; M.T., p. 22). Elsewhere the poet implies that Christ might as well have gone back to carpentry as he to Langholm ('The Oon Olympian', ll. 158-9, C.P. I, p. 359; M.T., p. 129). In 'Water of Life' he equates a return to the Muckle Toon with 'extinction' but adds, with typical gleeful paradox, that extinction can be

A salutary process bringin' values oot
Ocht else 'ud leave in doot.

(C.P. I, p. 317; M.T., p. 115)

MacDiarmid's imaginative sifting of the scenes of his childhood confirms his divorce from his family and relations. He feels constrained to tell his father's shade, in a wonderfully unadorned sentence:

I'm nae mair your son.

('At My Father's Grave', C.P. I, p. 299;

M.T., p. 90)

His sense of distance from his past grows as he ponders
a family photograph:

No' here the beloved group: I've gane sae faur
(Like Christ) yont faither, mither, brither, kin
I micht as weel try dogs or cats as seek
In sic relationships again to fin'
The epopteia I maun ha'e....

('Charisma and My Relatives', C.P. I, p. 301;
M.T., p. 41)

Far from constituting 'an attempt to re-establish
contact with the Langholm relatives, no matter how
painful such an attempt may be'⁵³, the verse written
for The Muckle Toon speaks for the poet's realisation
of the finality of his separation from his 'kin and
native place' ('From Work in Progress', l. 28,
C.P. II, p. 1147; M.T., p. 10).

Rejection of childhood as an obsolete stage of
development is implicit in the more personal poetry of
The Muckle Toon. In the poems dealing with MacDiarmid's
concern for the extension of mass consciousness, however,
this rejection is made explicit and childhood becomes
a symbol for humanity's backwardness. Such a view
of childhood was central to the poet's conception
of Clann Albann, as the following sentences from his
'Explanation' of the proposed work make clear:

Whether I am able to carry out this scheme with any completeness remains to be seen, but these brief notes may, at least, serve to illuminate my purpose in a fashion that a number of readers appear to desire, and from my point of view, a useful purpose will have been served if the latter are thereby deterred from regarding the work that has already appeared as other than very preliminary in relation to the plan as a whole, and intentionally so as being in keeping with the immaturity of boyhood. If the implications of this are extended in certain passages to suggest that mankind is yet in its boyhood and that all ideas are therefore provisional and liable to changes such as those between the notions of a lad and a grown man, that, too, is of purpose and required by what comes after.

(M.T., pp. 239-40)

(It is interesting to note that MacDiarmid's assertion, 'mankind is yet in its boyhood', reformulates John Davidson's passionately held conviction that 'the world is barely adolescent'.⁵⁴) The childhood motif is subtly woven into the texture of The Muckle Toon. For example, the poet refers to the dawn of history as the time we 'ploutered (i.e., paddled) in the slime' ('Water of Life', l. 6, C.P. I, p. 314; M.T., p. 112). We are told in 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' (ll. 124-30, C.P. I, p. 350; M.T., p. 136) that men are held to a fraction of their due at the harvest of consciousness, content, 'as bairns in their bairnliness',

with bags of sweets when they should be demanding the sacks of grain won by their labour. Such ubiquitous Muckle Toon imagery unlocks the symbolism of perhaps the most 'personal' of all passages in the book, the following stanzas from 'Water of Life':

She clung to me mair tightly at the end
 Than ane expects or wants in sic a case,
 Whether frae love or no' I needna say,
 A waste o' guid material - her face
 Fastened on mine as on a flag a sooker
 And naething shook her.

Although my passion was sair diluted then
 I mind the cratur' still frae tip to tae
 Better than ony that I've troked wi' syne
 - The gowden pendants frae her lugs, her skin
 Sae clear that in her cheeks the glints 'ud play
 As whiles wi' bits o' looking-glass as loons
 We'd gar the sun loup roon's.

(C.P. I, p. 315; M.T., pp. 112-3)

The references to boyhood pastimes - placing moistened bits of leather ('sookers') on Langholm's flagstones, using fragments of mirrors to bounce the sun's reflection - imply that the poet broke away from this woman because he saw relations with her as an impediment to growth.

The equation of childhood with outmoded levels of human development is drawn most clearly in The Muckle Toon's two 'Hymns to Lenin'. Some of the

most celebrated words of Christ and of Marx are brought together under the aegis of the childhood motif in the 'First Hymn':

Christ said: 'Save ye become as bairns again.
Bairnly eneuch the feck o' us ha' been!
Your work needs men; and its worst foes are juist
The traitor^s wha through a' history ha' gi'en
The dope that's gar'd the mass o' folk pay heed
And bide bairns indeed.

(C.P. I, p. 298; M.T., p. 99)

The motif runs right through the 'Second Hymn'. The poet complains:

We're grown-up folk that haena yet
Put bairnly things aside
- A' that's material and moral -
And oor new state descried.

(C.P. I, p. 325; M.T., p. 143)

The following stanza has been criticized for seeming 'to operate at a very low pressure indeed - and not only because it paraphrases the Bible via Wordsworth!'⁵⁵:

You confined yoursel' to your work
- A step at a time;
But, as the loon is in the man
That'll be ta'en up i' the rhyme.

(C.P. I, p. 326; M.T., p. 144)

Once it is recognised that the 'loon' reference establishes the Muckle Toon context of the stanza, these lines, still undistinguished perhaps, become

less objectionable. The 'Second Hymn's' climactic declaration that even communist revolution is but a step on the way to the spiritual liberation of which poetry is the guarantor has been much admired:

Unremittin', relentless,
Organised to the last degree,
Ah, Lenin, politics is bairns' play
To what this maun be!

(C.P. I, p. 328; M.T., p. 145)

Yet how much stronger is the effect of these lines when it is appreciated that the phrase 'bairns' play' relates them to the concern with his own childhood and that of his species which MacDiarmid articulates so variously in other poems designed for the first volume of Clann Albann!

--oOo--

Personal and political evolution supply the essential subject matter of The Muckle Toon. The poetry's other concerns subserve the poet's interest in his spiritual growth away from his Langholm past and in humanity's ascent from its marine beginnings.

The most important ancillary themes in the Clann Albann writings relate to the influence of religion and place on MacDiarmid's personal development, to his attitude towards human intercourse, and to his sense of the problematic nature of his art. These matters will be considered in turn in the remainder of the present chapter.

(C) 'Secret, devious, and persistent guide...':
Religion in The Muckle Toon

Given the intensely religious ambience of his formative years, neither MacDiarmid's overt concern in The Muckle Toon with the faith of his boyhood, nor his more or less unconscious manifestation of attitudes which are, at root, Calvinistic, comes as a surprise. The poet was not unaware that his sensibility bore the lineaments of a system of beliefs he had outgrown intellectually:

... a' the thochts
 I e'er can hae seem naething set aside
 Religious history in Scotland here -
 My secret, devious, and persistent guide.

('Religion and the Scottish Renaissance',

M.T., p. 65)

Is there a vestige here of the original visualisation of The Muckle Toon as part of a 'national epic' (see

above, p. 97)? These lines make no distinction between MacDiarmid's private debt to Presbyterianism on the one hand, and the enduring influence of the religious past on contemporary Scottish culture, on the other. In general, however, it is the contribution of Scottish Calvinism to his own particular mentality which interests MacDiarmid, who commented in 1932:

I have all along been conscious that - however blasphemously I inverted it - I could no more get rid of my Protestant heredity than James Joyce can get rid of his early Roman Catholic training...⁵⁶

That heredity is not far to seek in the poetry. 'On a Raised Beach' (C.P. I, p. 422) may represent a desperately earnest attempt by MacDiarmid to extirpate the religious yearnings of his nature, yet the poem thunders against the promptings of instinct and emotion with something of the bleak ferocity of a 'Wee Free' sermon. The Muckle Toon's essential exaltation of the genius over the masses resembles the elevation of the predestined Elect over the multitudes of the damned in Presbyterian eschatology. The poet's supposition that he belongs to the select band who enjoy wealth of consciousness may appear no less cosy to some readers than the assumption of the Unco Guid in Burns' famous poem that they belong to the 'venerable Core' of mankind.⁵⁷ In Cenchrastus MacDiarmid admitted to the

fear that his spirit might be no more

Than a distortit memory o' the U. P. Kirk.

(C.P. I, p. 241)

In The Muckle Toon he acknowledges the inevitability of the Kirk's influence on his mentality, only to draw a distinction between recognition of and acquiescence in that influence:

My nature its ain stubborn coonsel keeps,
Owreborne, acceptin' since it can nae ither,
This complex and unanswerable poo'er,
But never reconciled to it - at best
Deeply alane forever as best freends endure.

('Religion and the Scottish Renaissance',

M.T., p. 65)

MacDiarmid writes in 'Fatherless in Boyhood' (C.P. II, p. 1250; M.T., p. 89) that James Grievé's devotional leanings constituted the 'crude/Beginnin's' of some of his own 'deep interests' (ll. 9-10). Theological speculation was obviously a 'deep interest' of the mind which produced A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle. By the early thirties, however, the poet was well on his way towards the renunciation of theistic values recorded in his early Shetland work. His precise position in those years with regard to the existence of God is very difficult to construe on the evidence of The Muckle Toon, as the poems

imply a number of distinct conceptions of divinity. The word 'God' serves as a mere synonym for a vision of harmonised energies in ll. 37-8 of 'The Seamless Garment' (C.P. I, p. 312; M.T., p. 122). 'Cheville' (C.P. I, p. 353; M.T., p. 124) presents the deity of primitive societies - a personification of elemental forces which illustrate by contrast the weaknesses and limitations of human nature. The God of orthodox religion is dismissed as a creation of the mind in 'Depth and the Chthonian Image', where MacDiarmid writes of

waesome ghosts
O' that reality man's pairt o' and yet caps
Wi' Gods in his ain likeness drawn
- Puir travesties o' your plan.

(C.P. I, p. 348; M.T., p. 134)

Elsewhere in the poem it is suggested that the notion of deity has contributed to the historic enslavement of the human spirit, and that modern philosophy's refutation of theism heralds the long overdue liberation of consciousness:

Let us remove a' lets and hindrances then
Even as the principle o' limitation, God,
Packed wi' posterity, silent like the deid,
And aye respondin' to a lesser need,
Has vanished like a cloud that weighed on men
Owre lang - till your pure radiance glowed.

(C.P. I, p. 351; M.T., p. 136)

Readers familiar with A Drunk Man might be tempted to identify the presence addressed in the last line of both of these extracts - a presence more radiant and far-seeing than the Christian Deity - with the Unknown God invoked in the sequence of 1926.⁵⁸ Other passages, however, imply that the 'you' of 'Depth' is no more than the poet's own

sense o' the greatest man can typify
And universalise himsel' maist fully by.

(C.P. I, p. 351; M.T., p. 137)

If this is so, MacDiarmid seems to attribute to a mere projection of his own thought the objective ontological status he criticises the Christian God for lacking. Perhaps it is unwise to seek clarification of the poet's metaphysical beliefs in so problematic a poem as 'Depth and the Chthonian Image'. It must be said that his description of the poem as 'a perfectly clear and comprehensive expression of my whole aesthetic, political, and general position - a complete statement of "the faith that is in me"⁵⁹ does not reassure one as to the coherence of those beliefs.

While MacDiarmid displays a guarded respect in The Muckle Toon for his father's religious commitments, he makes no attempt to hide his contempt for the more extreme expressions of Presbyterian fervour he encountered

in Langholm. The 'minor prophets frae vennel and wynd' he celebrates in 'On Coming Home' (l. 10, C.P., p. 381; M.T., p. 63) may be 'talkin'/O'Christ' (ll. 5-6), but he notes that the asperities of their 'Auld Testament' (l. 5) faith are wholly untempered by the gentler teachings of the Nazarene. The religion of the Borders is two thousand years out of date:

The Sauria in their ain way
Had muckle to commend them.
Fell fearsome cratur, it's a shame
That Nature had to end them.

And faith! few men aboot the day
But hae guid cause to speir
Why sicna auld impressive forms
Had to dee for them t'appear.

Sae aiblins wi' traditional Scots,
Covenanters and the lave,
Wha's grand auld gurlly qualities
Deserve a better stave....

(C.P. I, p. 381; M.T., p. 64)

'The Church of My Fathers' (C.P. I, p. 307; M.T., p. 60) makes a similar point, indicting the Langholm devout for their failure to realise that their worship has ceased to have a living object. The church-goers of the Muckle Toon are accused in 'Prayer for a Second Flood' (C.P. I, p. 299; M.T., p. 131) of using their devotional practice to shield themselves from such insights into the 'unsearchable ways' (l. 5) of creative force as might form the basis of genuinely religious experience.

If, as 'On Coming Home' suggests, the 'Christianity' of the Toonfit Kirk was remarkable for its undervaluation of Jesus in favour of his more authoritarian forerunners, it may be that MacDiarmid's fascination with Christ has little to do with his boyhood experience of religion.⁶⁰ That fascination is a strikingly persistent feature of the poetry in Scots. Christ is the subject of three poems in the Sangschaw collection ('I Heard Christ Sing', 'O Jesu Parvule' and 'The Innumerable Christ', C.P. I, pp. 18, 31 and 32), and of central passages in Penny Wheep's 'Bombinations of a Chimaera' (C.P. I, p. 60). The Drunk Man is constantly aware of

The thocht o' Christ and Calvary

(C.P. I, p. 122)

'liddenin'' in his head. His inebriated speculations centre on the crucifixion, which is treated as a mythopoeic affirmation of the connection between vision and suffering.

Though that connection is much brooded upon in The Muckle Toon, the crucifixion motif of the earlier sequence is not repeated there. Christ is now presented as the archetypal visionary whose high purpose sets him apart from his fellows. Thus MacDiarmid's alienation

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Though that connection is much brooded upon in The Muckle Toon, the crucifixion motif of the earlier sequence is not repeated there. Christ is now presented as the archetypal visionary whose high purpose sets him apart from his fellows. Thus MacDiarmid's alienation

from Langholm is seen to extend the pattern set by
Jesus' departure from Nazareth:

I've gane sae faur
(Like Christ) yont faither, mither, brither, kin....

('Charisma and My Relatives',

C.P. I, p. 301; M.T., p. 41)

The historical characters who win the poet's admiration
are those who spoke

Things different as Christ frae ither folk.

('The Scots Renaissance', C.P. II, p. 1274;

M.T., p. 151)

It is, however, as a measure of the significance of
Vladimir Illyich Lenin that the figure of Christ is
most memorably and exhaustively employed in the Clann
Albann material. The following stanza from A Drunk
Man should be kept in mind if we are to savour the
context of The Muckle Toon's Christ/Lenin comparison
in MacDiarmid's intellectual development:

A greater Christ, a greater Burns, may come.
The maist they'll dae is to gi'e bigger pegs
To folly and conceit to hank their rubbish on.
They'll cheenge folks' talk but no their natures, fegs!

(C.P. I, p. 86)

The poet now hails Lenin as a greater Christ, harbinger of the historical epoch which will replace that ushered in by the Nazarene. And, unlike the 'greater Christ' of the Drunk Man's skeptical musings, the Russian will change more than people's talk. He may not 'change folks'...natures', but, by removing the conditions which render alienation inevitable, he will put people in touch with their human nature for the first time:

For now in the flower and iron of the truth
 To you we turn; and turn in vain nae mair,
 Ilka fool has folly eneuch for sadness
 But at last we are wise and wi' laughter tear
 The veil of being, and are face to face
 Wi' the human race.

('First Hymn to Lenin', C.P. I, p. 298; M.T., p. 99)

Lenin is in a profound sense a successor to Christ, for he fulfills the latter's

sayin' lang kept dim
 That whasae followed him things o' like natur'
 'Ud dae - and greater!

('First Hymn to Lenin', C.P. I, p. 297;
M.T., p. 98)

Those who may be thought of as Lenin's opponents - even men as brilliant and dedicated as the politically inefficacious artist James Joyce and the 'historically

discredited' Bolshevik Leon Trotsky - are dismissed as dud messiahs who are unfitted to endure the reality of a passion such as Christ's:

They're nocht but romantic rebels [sic]
 Strikin' dilletante poses;
 Trotsky - Christ, no' wi' a croon o' thorns
 But a wreath o' paper roses.

('Second Hymn to Lenin', C.P. I, p. 324; M.T., p.142)

Christ and Lenin both promise abundance of life to their followers. Lenin is the greater of the two, because his kingdom is to be realised in the here-and-now. In place of the Nazarene's 'Eternal Life', pursuit of which, according to the poet, involves 'cowardice/And life denial' ('The Oon Olympian', ll. 35-6, C.P., I, p. 355; M.T., p. 125), Lenin offers 'Maist men... real lives' ('First Hymn', l. 54, C.P. I, p. 298; M.T., p. 99). MacDiarmid's praise of the Bolshevik leader at the expense of the founder of Christianity is not essentially blasphemous, as it relates primarily to the revolutionary's contribution to history. Historical effectiveness is a Communist category of judgement, and many Christians would be happy to see Lenin outscore Jesus in a purely Marxist evaluation of the significance of those two figures. It is hardly good Marxism, however, to compare the first decade of Lenin's influence with the first two millenia of Christ's.

The irreverent employment of Christ as a yardstick for the achievement of Lenin accords with the characteristic Muckle Toon pose of estrangement from received opinion. The Messiah/Bolshevik analogy, however, is to be understood in the light of the literary and philosophical interests of the poet's early manhood rather than as a response to the faith of his boyhood. Grieve's concern with Russian thought predated by many years MacDiarmid's rather belated espousal of the October Revolution. The problematic nature of Russian civilisation and the enigma of Christ were twin obsessions of intellectuals in the last decades of the Tzarist empire. George Steiner has observed:

Christ and God the Father are immensely present in the background of Russian literature. From Dead Souls to Resurrection, the Russian novel tells of a civilisation many of whose keenest minds were engaged in an anguished quest for a redeemer and lived in terror of Antichrist.⁶¹

Lenin embodies for MacDiarmid the solution to the two problems which had haunted the Russian mind. He is hailed in the 'Second Hymn' (l. 49) as the

Barbarian saviour o' civilisation

(C.P. I, p. 324; M.T., p. 142)

- a designation which neatly encapsulates the messianic and cultural aspects of his significance.

The influence of Vladimir Solovyov (see above, pp. 365-71) is discernible in MacDiarmid's apprehension of the redemptive, the first of these aspects of the Bolshevik leader's historical function. Solovyov's presentation of St. Sophia's role in cosmic process owes much to a Gnostic heresy whereby Sophia is regarded as a sort of female version of Christ.⁶² MacDiarmid's Lenin shares in the creative impulse of evolution rather as Christ/Sophia shares in the divine nature of the Father, and moves Sophia-like through the world of power politics as he urges history towards its goal. (It is interesting to note that Alexander Blok, a devotee of Solovyov much admired by the author of The Muckle Toon (see above, p. 369), had implied a Christ/Lenin parallel at the climax of his famous poem, 'The Twelve', written in 1918. Here is Blok's closing vignette of his twelve 'brutal, revengeful, yet childishly vulnerable'⁶³ Revolutionary Guards:

... So they march with sovereign tread...
 Behind them limps the hungry dog,
 and wrapped in wild snow at their head
 carrying a blood-red flag -
 soft-footed where the blizzard swirls,
 invulnerable where bullets crossed -
 crowned with a crown of snowflake pearls,
 a flowery diadem of frost,
 ahead of them goes Jesus Christ.⁶⁴⁾

In his argument for Lenin's importance to the evolution of civilisation MacDiarmid draws upon the thought of another of his early mentors, and presents the Bolshevik achievement as the fruit of Dostoevski's 'Russian Idea'. 'The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea'⁶⁵, an essay dating from the period of composition of The Muckle Toon, throws interesting light on the 'Hymns', indicating that Lenin appealed at least as much to the nationalist as to the socialist in MacDiarmid. The essay presents the Revolution as an expression of Slav character which has the potential to inspire - and the need to be redressed by - a comparable release of racial energies at the opposite periphery of Europe. Thus Lenin calls (unwittingly) to the Celtic world, and the Celtic world responds (obscurely) through a Scottish poet's elaboration of a 'Gaelic Idea':

It does not matter a rap whether the whole conception of this Gaelic idea is as far-fetched as Dostoevsky's Russian Idea - in which he pictured Russia as the sick man possessed of devils but who would yet 'sit at the feet of Jesus'. The point is that Dostoevsky's was a great creative idea - a dynamic myth - and in no way devalued by the difference of the actual happenings in Russia from any Dostoevsky dreamed or desired. 66

This passage retrospectively clarifies the following lines from Cencrastus, and reveals a connection between the 'political' poems of The Muckle Toon and some of the more abstruse speculations of the Curly Snake sequence:

If we turn to Europe and see
Hoo the emergence o' the Russian Idea's
Broken the balance o' the North and Sooth
And needs a coonter that can only be
The Gaelic Idea
To mak' a parallelogram o' forces,
Complete the Defence o' the West,
And end the English betrayal o' Europe.

(C.P. I, pp. 222-3)

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--oo0oo--

MacDiarmid viewed the October Revolution and its aftermath through the lens of his long-standing interest in Russian literature. He appears to have viewed his own religious inheritance through the same lens:

(J)ust as many Russians who were opposed to Bolshevism have now accepted it as at least a major fact in Russian history which must be accepted on patriotic grounds, so, more recently, I have been driven in my work to adopt an attitude to the Church of Scotland (despite my membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain) analogous to that of certain Russian writers who accepted the Russian Church not because of its tenets, but because the Russian people believed them, and this accounts for the fact that I devote a whole section of "Clann Albann" to the Scottish Church, my father's and mother's beliefs and practices, and allied themes...67

It is not without significance that 'The Church of My Fathers' (C.P. I, p. 307; M.T., p. 60), the only Muckle Toon piece about the Toonfit Kirk in which Grieve worshipped as a child, is adapted from an original poem by the nineteenth-century Russian poet, Fyodor Tyútchev (see Commentary, p.313).

Few poems in The Muckle Toon deal exclusively with 'the Church influence which bulked so large' (Clann Albann: An Explanation', M.T., p. 236) in the boyhood of Christopher Grieve. The poet's major commentary on his 'Protestant heredity' is an implicit one, woven with considerable skill into the texture of

the Clann Albann verse. Three separate strands of reference can be distinguished, all of them serving to create an ironic contrast between the pieties of MacDiarmid's upbringing and the secular speculations he pursues in the poetry.

The first strand involves the employment of sacred terminology in profane contexts. The Water of Life symbol itself constitutes an example of this tendency. More heavily ironic is the use of the word 'hymn' to describe the addresses to Lenin. The poem which expresses the hope that unleashed creative energies will wreak havoc on the canny church-goers of Langholm is called 'Prayer for a Second Flood' (my emphasis) (C.P. I, p. 299; M.T., p. 131), while the classless society Lenin struggled to create is likened to the raiment worn by Christ during the Passion (see Commentary, p. 390, on 'The Seamless Garment'). 'Charisma', St. Paul's word for the spiritual gifts whereby the Third Person of the Trinity aids those who work for the consolidation of Christ's church on earth, is the term chosen by the poet in 'Charisma and My Relatives' (C.P. I, p. 301; M.T., p. 141) to denote the gift of genius which distinguishes him from his kin and inspires him with missionary zeal in the service of higher consciousness. This first skein of

reference manifests itself mainly in the titles of poems, and its scriptural allusions (with the exception of that of 'Prayer for a Second Flood') are made to the New Testament.

The second strand is related to the Water of Life emblem, in that it consists of allusions to the biblical source of that figure (see above, p. 277). Some of The Muckle Toon's echoes of the Fourth Gospel are very slight indeed, while others are quite explicit. All are identified in the Commentary. I will draw attention to only two of them here, in view of the fact that others have been encountered on pp. 277-8 and 309-10 above. The application to Lenin of Christ's conveniently neglected promise that his followers will accomplish 'greater ... things' than he ('First Hymn to Lenin', ll. 15-8, C.P. I, p. 297; M.T., p. 98), cites John 14:12. Elsewhere Jesus' rebuke to his mother at the Wedding Feast of Cana (John 2:4) is adapted to express MacDiarmid's distaste for intellectually dishonest solutions to aesthetic problems:

What have I or you to do with these?

('The Point of Honour', l. 59, C.P. I, p. 389;

M.T., p. 165)

The point of these echoes of the Fourth Gospel is not always obvious.

If the allusions to St. John sometimes appear gratuitous, the same cannot be said of the echoes of The Book of Genesis which form The Muckle Toon's third strand of religious reference. The Genesis motif is not only highly appropriate to MacDiarmid's concern with origins but serves an important unifying purpose in the Langholm writings. It is highly unlikely that the studding of the poetry with allusions to the opening book of the preferred Testament of the Toonfit Kirk can have been either unconscious or accidental. The motif is most obvious in its Noah's Flood manifestation, where it develops an aspect of the Water of Life symbol. Its other appearances are fleeting in character. Too numerous to catalogue here, they are all recorded in the Commentary. Of the many examples which suggest themselves, two may be sufficient to illustrate how subtly the poet worked the Genesis theme into the fabric of the Clann Albann poetry. MacDiarmid's disavowal in 'Lynch-Pin' (C.P. I, p. 332; M.T., p. 69) that the 'ort' missing from his 'structure o' banes' is hidden 'in ony woman' is made so casually that the allusion to the creation of Eve from Adam's rib can easily be missed.

'By Wauchopeside' (ll. 45-6, C.P. II, p. 1084;
M.T., p. 163) cites the patience of Methuselah rather
than that of Job. A reason for this departure from
the proverbial becomes apparent when one reflects that
Job is not a character from Genesis ; Methuselah is.

(D) 'Into the Langholm': Sense of Place in The Muckle Toon

Though the Muckle Toon poems take their collective name from MacDiarmid's native burgh, they are neither primarily concerned with, nor wholly positive in their attitude towards, Langholm. If the local saying which provides the title of the present study is anything to go by, then the poet was not the first Langholmite to regard his town with mixed affection and disdain:

Oot o' the world and into the Langholm!

('The Dog Pool', C.P. II, p. 1252; M.T., p. 161)

Few sons of the place, however, can have been as passionately interested in life outwith the Muckle Toon as MacDiarmid - his famous rhetorical rejection of 'the rose of all the world' in favour of 'the little white rose of Scotland' notwithstanding (see 'The Little

White Rose', C.P. I, p. 461). The Clann Albann writings bristle with the insistence that the poet will not allow his imaginative journey 'into the Langholm' lead him 'oot o' the world'.

The emphasis laid by The Muckle Toon on the necessity of casting off childish interests accounts in some measure for the frugal quality in MacDiarmid's response to the felicities of his native countryside. Certainly he celebrates some of those felicities, but he repeatedly lets it be known that they do not, in themselves, greatly concern him. Comparison with explorations made by other modern writers of the imaginative significance of place may help us to discern more clearly the nature and limitations of MacDiarmid's creative relationship to Langholm.

Place has served a variety of major functions in the literature of the English language over the past hundred years. One has only to think of Hardy's Wessex, Joyce's Dublin, Eliot's Little Gidding, Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County and Basil Bunting's Northumbria to appreciate the prevalence - and the diversity - of the locale theme in the modern poem and novel. I will restrict my comments here to

comparisons between MacDiarmid's attitude to Dumfriesshire, on the one hand, and those of William Butler Yeats to the West of Ireland, and of William Carlos Williams to Paterson, New Jersey, on the other.

(i) Country and Kingly Cousins: The West of Ireland, specifically the Sligo-Leitrim area in which he grew up and the South Galway environs of Coole Park, had a three-fold influence on Yeats' writing. His poetry exploits the aural qualities of place-names, incidentally reflects the landscape and climatic conditions of Connaught, and draws strength from the folk beliefs of the native peasantry. These debts are scarcely less evident in the mature poetry of The Tower (1928) than in the Celtic Twilight verse of the early period. Yeats' practice offers a useful point of reference for our consideration of MacDiarmid's attitude to the place-names, landscape and common people of Dumfriesshire.

Place-names are sprinkled quite liberally through The Muckle Toon. Most of them are used for their bare onomatological function rather than for any poetic effect. The Kernigal, Warblaw, the Factory Gullets, the Skipper's Pool, the Fairy Loup, Tarras, Fiddleton Bar and Callister Ha' are admirable names, and some of them are cunningly employed in the poetry. One feels,

however, that their possibilities could have been more fully exploited. The poet signally fails to use these names to stimulate the auditory imagination as Yeats stimulated it with Clooth-na-Bare, Knocknarea, Dromahair, Sleuth Wood, Lissadell, Glencar and others - as MacDiarmid himself did, indeed, with Auchtermuchty, Ecclefechan and Tignabruaich in A Drunk Man (C.P. I, p. 144). Certainly such poems of place as 'Tarras' (C.P. I, p. 337; M.T., p. 147) and 'The Kernigal' (C.P. II, p. 1275; M.T., p. 152), whatever their strengths in other directions, do little to bear out the poet's statement (in 'My Native Place', M.T., p. 9) that he was 'positively haunted by some of the curious place-names, Baggara, Kernigall, Tarras...'

It is not only by virtue of his reluctance to exploit their sound qualities that MacDiarmid's response to Langholm's place-names seems restrained. His characteristic passion for the etymology and the literal meaning of words also deserts him in The Muckle Toon. He had written in A Drunk Man:

Like blurry shapes o' landmarks in the haar
The bonny idiosyncratic place-names loom,
Clues to the vieve and maikless life that's lain
Happit for centuries in an alien gloom....

(C.P. I, p. 108)

He made a similar point in an undistinguished poem published⁶⁸ while he was engaged upon the Clann Albann project (see 'The Vital Fact', C.P. II, p. 1265). In the verse he devotes to his native region, however, the poet uses place-names merely as points of topographical reference, without stopping to explore their etymological or historical significance. It can be argued that the neutrality of the place-names in The Muckle Toon recalls the paradisaical, unconditioned status of words as experienced by a small child and is therefore thematically appropriate to that enterprise.

Aspects of landscape are impressively evoked in a number of individual pieces in The Muckle Toon. For example, the jaunty fecundity of the rivers and burns of Dumfriesshire is imitated by the capering language of 'Water Music' (C.P. I, p. 333; M.T., p. 16), while the canny obduracy of Border bogland is apotheosised in 'Tarras' (C.P. I, p. 337; M.T., p. 147). Representation of landscape was hardly MacDiarmid's primary intention in writing either of these poems, however. The one takes the streams as an emblem of unfettered creativity, the other the bog as a figure for imperturbability. MacDiarmid's discursive autobiographical prose reveals his delight in the

MacDiarmid's verse is in general a less sensitive register of

colour and variety of Border scenery, but scenery is rarely cherished for its own sake in the poetry. Clann Albann's first volume, indeed, opens with a disavowal of the relevance of topographical splendour to the poet's art:

Gin scenic beauty had been a' I sook
 I never need ha' left the Muckle Toon.
 I saw it there as weel as ony man
 (As I'll sune prove); and sin syne I've gane roon'
 Hauf o' the warld wi' faculties undulled
 And no' seen't equalled.

But scenic beauty's never maittered much
 To me afore, sin poetry isna made
 O' onything that's seen, toucht, smelt, or heard,
 And no' till lately ha'e the hame scenes played
 A pairt in my creative thocht I've yet
 To faddom, and permit.

('From Work in Progress', C.P., II, p. 1147;
M.T., p. 10)

Distrust of sense-impressions is not surprising in a compatriot and admirer of David Hume, perhaps, but it is most unusual in a lyric poet. MacDiarmid, as Yeats observed of Plato,

thought nature but a spume that plays
 Upon a ghostly paradigm of things.⁶⁹

The Irish poet, sardonically saluted as the Scot's 'kingly cousin' in Cenrastus (C.P. I, p. 185), is said to have brought the weather of the West of Ireland into English poetry with his volume The Wind Among the Reeds. MacDiarmid's verse is in general a less sensitive register of

The recurrent vividness o' licht and water
Through every earthly change o' mood or scene

('Depth and the Chthonian Image',

C.P. I, p. 352; M.T., p. 138)

though here and there - most notably in 'Whuchulls'
(C.P. II, p. 1089; M.T., p. 153) - it brilliantly
recreates his sensuous boyhood experience of the
Dumfriesshire countryside. That last major Langholm
poem, however, rejects the feat it performs so well.
In ll. 118-21 the poet makes an admission which has
retrospective validity for most of the Clann Albann
pieces:

Scotland, Whuchulls, us
Interest me less for what they are than as
Facts o' the creative poo'er that, tho' they pass,
'll aye be qualified by their ha'en been.

(C.P. II, p. 1092; M.T., p. 155)

He asks us to accept that

It is nae treason ... to stell my een
No' on their fleetin' shapes but on their deep
Constituent principles destined to keep
A mystery greater than the sight o' eels
Kelterin' through a' the seven seas reveals.

(C.P. II, p. 1092; M.T., p. 155)

Landscape, in the distinctly unfleeting shape of Shetland's
stony vistas, had yet to leave its most profound impression
on MacDiarmid's work when these lines were written. Yet
the stones of Whalsay may have done little more than

provide an 'objective correlative' - albeit an uncannily apt one - for a spiritual landscape the poet was well on his way to inheriting before his decision to leave Scotland for the northern isles. (A letter from F.G. Scott dated July 19th 1932 suggests that the vision and even the wording of 'On a Raised Beach' were to some extent anticipated in a lost Muckle Toon 'series' of poems called 'On Bare Hill Tops'.⁷⁰ The poems seem to have taken one or more of Langholm's hills for their settings, to have been quite intimately autobiographical, and to have included such phrases as 'a bare cairn o' the lives o' men', 'the peak o' things/That canna whumle', and 'geological processes'. Scott gives the opening line of a stanza from one of the poems as

Death is a physical horror to me nae mair

- a statement which reappears, in English, in 'On a Raised Beach' (C.P. I, p. 428). Another sentence quoted by the composer is reproduced exactly in the Shetland poem:

It is reality that is at stake.

(C.P. I, p. 428)

Whether or not whole passages of 'On a Raised Beach' were in existence before MacDiarmid left Thakeham we may never ascertain, but our fragmentary knowledge of 'On Bare Hill Tops' indicates that the Shetland landscape served to confirm rather than to initiate the darkening of his poetic vision at this period.)

MacDiarmid's attitude towards the common people of his native region is in marked contrast to that of Yeats towards the country folk of Connaught. So great was the gulf of class and religion dividing the Irish poet from the peasantry that their world offered him a radical alternative to the verities of his own Ascendancy background. The Scot, coming from an ordinary Dumfriesshire family, inherited the same religious and political culture as the great majority of his fellow-Borderers. He held the country people from whom, on his mother's side, he was descended, in the contempt one class reserves for that only just below it. They were too close to be romanticised as Yeats had romanticised the poor people of the West of Ireland. MacDiarmid observes (with a somewhat self-conscious Communist swagger) in his autobiography:

My alignment from as early as I can remember was almost wholly on the side of the industrial workers and not the rural folk, and it remains so to-day. I never had anything but hatred and opposition for deproletarianizing back-to-the-land schemes; my faith has always been in the industrial workers and in the growth of the third factor between Man and Nature - the Machine.

(L.P., p. 3)

This distinction between the urban and rural dwellers of his home area is preserved in the poet's creative work, where we find considerable imaginative identification with the folk world of Langholm itself, but very little with that of its agricultural hinterland. ('Crowdieknowe' (C.P. I, p. 26; M.T., p. 81) which appeared in the Sangschaw collection, is arguably his only direct poetic salute to the rural ethos of the Borders.)

By the time MacDiarmid came to plan Clann Albann, however, even his sympathy with the urban community in which he grew up appears to have evaporated. At any rate, he eschews celebration of his townsfolk in the Langholm poems. We have seen (above, pp. 411-4) that the political philosophy which informs the poetry implies disparagement of ordinary human experience. A secondary reason for the lack of democratic feeling in the work may relate to the fact that The Muckle Toon

believes its title by being predominantly rural in its geographical focus. 'The prose Muckle Toon' of half a decade earlier is much warmer in its treatment of the common people of Dumfriesshire, but the stories of that work centre on the actual burgh of Langholm. It may be permissible to devote a paragraph to a consideration of them, as their treatment of the 'hame scenes' throws the Clann Albann attitude to the poet's fellow-Borderers into high relief.

We have already noted the varying levels of artistic sophistication of the Muckle Toon stories, and speculated that each story may have been geared towards the tastes of the readership of the periodical in which it was placed (above, p. 64). 'A Dish o' Whumple' (M.T., p. 173), 'A' Body's Lassie' (M.T., p. 293) and 'The Visitor' (M.T., p. 221) are perhaps the least technically distinguished items in MacDiarmid's output of Scots prose. Their subject-matter - ghostly intrusions into the lives of working-class Langholmmites - may appear 'couthy' indeed, and yet it is not wholly unrelated to that of the better sketches of 'the prose Muckle Toon'. Kenneth Buthlay's observation with regard to the second of these stories that it 'has more in common with folk tales...than with

literature as such,⁷¹ can be read not as a criticism but as a hint of how the author himself viewed the Langholm stories. The notion of the alienated intellectual MacDiarmid abandoning his cultural dug-out to record the lore of his 'ain folk' may take some getting used to, but there is no denying the importance of folk themes to 'the prose Muckle Toon'. In the three pieces we have mentioned, and in those passages of "Holie for Nags" (M.T., p. 228) which catalogue Langholm names for boyhood diversions, the author is hardly present in an artistic capacity at all. There is more shaping evident in 'The Common Riding' (M.T., p. 26), a story in which irony tempers but does not undermine the author's celebration of communal identity in the Muckle Toon. 'The Moon Through Glass' (M.T., p. 213), a sensitive psychological study, is based on a folk superstition. A tradition concerning Langholm's Boatford Bridge provides MacDiarmid with a focus for his wonderfully shrewd yet affectionate depiction of the mentalities of different classes of his fellow-burghers in 'The Waterside' (M.T., p. 103). A Drunk Man too, not only in its 'Drums in the Walligate' lyric (C.P. I, p. 97; M.T., p. 26) but also in its thistle-and-rose symbolism, which, as we have seen (above, p. 37), adumbrates the 'procession of the emblems' in the Common Riding,

illustrates the poet's creative sympathy with the populace of the Muckle Toon in the mid-twenties.

W. B. Yeats held that religious differences rendered the folk wisdom of Scotland much less appealing to the poetic temperament than that of Ireland. In 'A Remonstrance with Scotsmen for having soured the Disposition of their Ghosts and Faeries'⁷² he contrasted Irish Catholicism's easy accommodation of 'sprites and goblins' with the Scottish Presbyterian attempt to stamp out belief in such beings:

In Scotland you are too theological, too gloomy. You have made even the Devil religious. 'Where do you live, good-wyf, and how is the minister?' he said to the witch when he met her on the high-road, as it came out in the trial. You have burnt all the witches. In Ireland we have left them alone. To be sure, the 'loyal minority' knocked out the eye of one with a cabbage-stump on the 31st of March 1711, in the town of Carrickfergus. But then the 'loyal minority' is half Scottish. You have discovered the Faeries to be pagan and wicked. You would like to have them all up before the magistrate...you have denounced them from the pulpit.... The Catholic religion likes to keep on good terms with its neighbours.⁷³

Both Yeats and MacDiarmid were profoundly anti-rationalist in poetic vision, yet while Yeats' opposition to mechanistic philosophies made the beliefs of the Connaught

peasantry powerfully attractive to him, MacDiarmid looked on the faith of Dumfriesshire's Presbyterians as a local manifestation of the life-denying spirit he associated with rationalism.

Even if the sprites and goblins of Scotland were as engaging as their Irish fellows (and they may have been - James Hogg's 'Kilmeny',⁷⁴ and Robert Kirk's The Secret Commonwealth⁷⁵ present faeries of not wholly sour disposition), one would hardly expect MacDiarmid to have been interested in them. Not only did the poet inherit a puritanical cast of mind, but he flourished at a point in literary history when a creative concern with the supernatural was far less tenable than it had been in the fin de siècle ambience of Yeats' early work. There is more to folklore than ghosts and faeries, however, and the almost complete absence from The Muckle Toon of motifs related to tales associated with particular locations, to proverbs and sayings, to folk memories of historical incidents, to traditional practices in food and medicine, to local customs and other such lore, is surely remarkable in a work which mentions place after place in the vicinity from which it takes its name. Only in that very

arcane poem, 'The Scots Renaissance' (C.P. I, p. 1274; M.T., p. 151), and in the following stanzas from 'Water Music', do we find allusions to traditions concerning particular sites in the Langholm area:

Some day they say the Bigly Burn
 'll loup oot frae its scrabs and thistles,
 And ding the bonnie birken shaw
 A' to pigs and whistles.

And there's yon beck - I winna name't -
 That hauds the fish that aince was hookit
 A century syne - the fisher saw't,
 And flew, and a' his graith forsookit.

(C.P. I, p. 336; M.T., p. 18)

The phrase which provides the title of the present study is the only local saying to be found in the Clann Albann poetry (see 'The Dog Pool', l. 1, C.P. II, p. 1252; M.T., p. 161). Though much is made of the fighting heritage of the Borders in The Muckle Toon (see below, pp. 479 - 83), we look in vain for precise historical allusions or echoes of the ballads which commemorate the feuding past of the frontier country. Even the Battle of Arkinholm,⁷⁶ fought outside Langholm in 1445 on the site which gave its name to the terrace in which the poet was born (see above, p. 18), goes unmentioned. One lyric, 'Pedigree' (C.P. I, p. 303; M.T., p. 56), makes specific historical references, but an accompanying

note indicates that these owe more to a variety of printed sources than to MacDiarmid's grasp of folk tradition.

MacDiarmid boasted in Lucky Poet (p. 3) that his boyhood had equipped him with the faculty, which he never lost, 'of being able to go into cottar houses and secure immediate acceptance among the rural workers as one of themselves'. Had he exercised that faculty in early middle age - which, due to his geographical and economic circumstances he was of course powerless to do - he would hardly have listened to his hosts with the keen intent of Yeats in the cottages of Connaught. The poet regarded country folk rather as he regarded children (see above, p. 416) - they were simply ignorant human beings. His notorious typification of folk-songs and ballads as 'the simple outpourings of illiterates and backward peasants' was not made until 1964⁷⁷, but it betokens an attitude to the worth of ordinary lives which was already established more than three decades earlier. It is only fair to point out that sentimental vignettes of country life had become the stock-in-trade of popular Scottish novelists and versifiers in the decades prior to the .

launching of the Scottish Renaissance Movement. Yeats had no 'Kailyard' tradition to resist when he began drawing imaginative sustenance from the beliefs of the Catholic peasantry. An over-zealous commitment to the galvanisation of his compatriots' sensibilities, no less than a distaste for those he had characterised in an early poem as

poor folk who have
Less brains than me

('The Pathetic Fallacy', C.P. II, p. 1222)

may be invoked to account for MacDiarmid's singular lack of creative faith in the commons of Scotland.

The poet's anti-Kailyard exertions did not, however, prevent his implicit affirmation of Dumfriesshire folk-life in A Drunk Man and 'the prose Muckle Toon'. Why could he write only with sarcasm in the early thirties of the 'grand auld gurly qualities' ('On Coming Home', l. 23, C.P. I, p. 381; M.T., p. 64) in which he had expressed delight half a decade earlier? MacDiarmid clearly failed to establish the sort of symbiotic relationship between poet and people which Denis Saurat saw as essential to his production of

a more exalted work than A Drunk Man and Cenrastus (see above, p. 98). His alienation from 'the people' was increasing at the very time he was addressing himself as never before to the problem of his own origins. The psychological dilemma which lies at the root of this central paradox of The Muckle Toon is explored in 'Bonds', the next section of the present chapter (below, pp.484-98).

(ii) Dr. Williams and Mr. Grieve: No twentieth century English or American poetic work so obviously demands comparison with The Muckle Toon as William Carlos Williams' Paterson.⁷⁸ Here is another attempt at large-scale creation which takes its name and inspiration from a particular town. Unlike Langholm, the eponymous New Jersey settlement of Williams' 'personal epic'⁷⁹ is a large industrial city. The American poet was not born in Paterson, nor did he live there. Rutherford, his native place, lies close to the city, however, and Williams knew Paterson well. He reflected as follows on his choice of setting for his most ambitious poem:

I thought of other places upon the Passaic river, but, in the end, the city, Paterson, with its rich colonial history, upstream, where the water was less heavily polluted, won out. The falls, vocal, seasonally vociferous, associated with many of the ideas upon which our fiscal colonial policy shaped us through Alexander Hamilton, interested me profoundly - and what has resulted therefrom. Even today a fruitful locale for study. I knew of these things, I had heard. I had taken part in some of the incidents that made up the place. I had heard Billy Sunday: I had talked with John Reed: I had in my hospital experiences got to know many of the women: I had tramped Garrett Mountain as a youngster, swum in its ponds, appeared in court there, looked at its charred ruins, its flooded streets, read of its past in Nelson's history of Paterson, read of the Dutch who settled it.⁸⁰

Williams' detailed concern with the past of Paterson contrasts sharply with MacDiarmid's inattention to local history in The Muckle Toon. John Dewey's maxim, 'The local is the only universal, upon that all art builds', quoted with approval in the American poet's Autobiography,⁸¹ sums up the spirit which informs Paterson. How different from the Scot's mournful recognition of 'what wee local lives at best (men) ha'e' ('Depth and the Chthonian Image', l. 146, C.P. I, p. 350; M.T., p. 136)! Williams set out to 'lift an environment to expression'⁸² in his poem of place, whereas MacDiarmid was interested

only in such particulars of his remembered Dumfriesshire as could be pressed into the service of an essentially discursive poetic art. The Muckle Toon is radically dualistic, concerned more with the 'deep constituent principles' than with the 'fleetin' shapes' of natural phenomena (see above, p.450). Paterson, conversely, celebrates the random, the accidental, the contingent. Letters, quotations, and scraps of conversation cut across the verse, complementing its homage to the actual. Williams would have been glad to plead guilty to MacDiarmid's accusation that his work lacked 'a solid philosophical substratum'.⁸³

'Harry Semen' (C.P. I, p. 483) suggests that MacDiarmid was in the early thirties demanding such a substratum not only of art but of experience. The poem reveals that the anarchy of fact which so delighted Williams was a source of acute anguish to the Scottish poet:

... the bealin' continents lie upon the seas,
 Sprawlin' in shapeless shapes a' airts,
 Like ony splash that ony man can mak'
 Frae his nose or throat or ither pairts,
 Fantastic as ink through blottin'-paper rins.

(C.P. I, p. 485)

Paterson and The Muckle Toon tend towards opposite poles of the realism/symbolism dichotomy in twentieth century poetry. Williams attempts to present objects stripped of everything except their empirical authority, while MacDiarmid, impatient with the testimony of the senses, looks to nature only for the images necessary for the vivid presentation of his thought. Tom Scott's argument that MacDiarmid's best work effects a fusion of realism and symbolism seems to me to be mistaken. The argument appears in an essay on 'Lament for the Great Music'⁸⁴:

The Ceol Mor is at once reality and symbol, as the Thistle was to him. As I see it, the movement of European poetry leads up to the allegorical form dominant in the Middle Ages; and when that breaks up, takes the twin lines of realism and symbolism; and in the twentieth century (beginning earlier, probably with Goethe), the realist and symbolist lines re-integrate into a new polysemous art in which, instead of the abstract theology (or theory) of allegory proper, reality itself in the historical and scientific senses, becomes the adequate 'symbol' or allegorical term of a new vision. I call this new art, to which all modern art is moving, 'Polysemous Veritism', to distinguish it from Dante's 'Polysemous Allegory'. I have no scope here to develop this view, but MacDiarmid's work, like that of Pound, Joyce and many others, is a major contribution.⁸⁵

This is an interesting interpretation of a major trend in European literary history, and few can doubt that James Joyce's Ulysses, one of the central documents of modernism, achieves a synthesis of realism and symbolism. In the light of a consideration of Joyce's novel, however, MacDiarmid's claim to be regarded as a practitioner of 'Polysemous Veritism' appears very slight. Certainly the Scot finds 'adequate terms' for the mediation of a poetic vision in the 'realities' of his Langholm experience. Even if The Muckle Toon lacks the intricate emblematic patterning of the Irishman's masterpiece, it does have a rich symbolical dimension. But Joyce's exhaustive strategy of symbolism works in conjunction with a recreation of the sights and sounds of Dublin so meticulous in its detail as to make even Williams' love of the particular seem thin-blooded. It is in this latter aspect of his art - his representational treatment of Dublin rather than his mere choice of the city as microcosm - that Joyce's realism lies. The fact that Langholm is an actual place, or that there is a real Ceol Mór independent of 'Lament for the Great Music', does not make MacDiarmid a 'veritist'. There is no sustained attempt in the 'Lament' to recreate

the Great Music verbally, or in The Muckle Toon to render a naturalistic portrait of Grieve's life in the Dumfriesshire burgh and its environs.

The Muckle Toon and Paterson may illustrate opposing tendencies in modern literary practice with regard to the employment of symbols, but rigid classification of the Scottish poet as a lover of emblems and of the American as a master of one-dimensional particulars is to be avoided. After all, Williams' poem contains at least three figures of considerable symbolic complexity,⁸⁶ while, by exemplifying what Edwin Morgan has called the 'Scottish fondness for fact as against symbol'⁸⁷, MacDiarmid's later work endorses attitudes radically at variance with those of The Muckle Toon.

Williams' major gesture to the polysemous is made in his presentation of the Passaic River and its Falls, a presentation which has obvious affinities with the treatment of the Esk and its tributaries in The Muckle Toon. Like those that flow through Langholm, Paterson's river is identified with the 'stream of consciousness', the unformulable life of the mind:

Jostled as are the waters approaching
 the brink, his thoughts
 interlace, repel and cut under,
 rise rock-thwarted and turn aside
 but forever strain forward - or strike
 an eddy and whirl, marked by a
 leaf or curdy spume, seeming
 to forget .

Retake later the advance and
 are replaced by succeeding hordes
 pushing forward - they coalesce now
 glass-smooth with their swiftness,
 quiet or seem to quiet as at the close
 they leap to the conclusion and
 fall, fall in air! as if
 floating, relieved of their weight,
 split apart, ribbons; dazed, drunk
 with the catastrophe of the descent
 floating unsupported
 to hit the rocks: to a thunder
 as if lightning had struck...88

The opening lines here might profitably be compared to
 the first stanza of 'By Wauchopeside' (C.P. II, p. 1083;
M.T., p. 162), where mental activity is represented by
 water imagery and by details drawn from riverside life,
 while the passage as a whole offers an interesting
 analogue to 'Water Music' (C.P. I, p. 333; M.T., p. 16).
 Both MacDiarmid and Williams visualise not only the
 phenomenon of consciousness but the poetic process,
 too, in terms of the rivers of Dumfriesshire or New
 Jersey. The Wauchope, the Esk and the Ewes appear in
The Muckle Toon as embodiments of poetic energy success-
 fully articulated, while in Paterson the Passaic and its
 Falls symbolize the tremendous babble of life happening

around him which it is Williams' task to interpret and from which he must elicit the redeeming language of poetry.

The 'poetry of fact' to which MacDiarmid devoted his creative energies after 1935 repudiates the distinction between the 'fleetin' shapes' and 'deep constituent principles' of things asserted in the Clann Albann poems. When Duncan Glen observed, in the course of an interview with the poet in 1968, that 'Cartesian dualism had all gone from you by your later work', MacDiarmid replied 'I think it's true'.⁸⁹ Perhaps the most pithy formulation of the outlook which underlies the immense catalogues of In Memoriam James Joyce and The Kind of Poetry I Want was made in the unlikely context of the poet's defence of his decision to rejoin the Communist Party of Great Britain in the wake of the Russian invasion of Hungary of 1956. Writing in the Daily Worker on March 28th 1957, MacDiarmid stated:

I am a Nationalist because life as we know it is always specific - specific in time and place. It is of where and when it is, and of no other where or when.

I am a Communist because life is always, and always has been, individual. There is no question of a universal, because any attempt at definition of life must start out with the concept "individual", otherwise it would not be life.⁹⁰

'No ideas', as Williams insisted, 'but in things'⁹¹;

(iii) 'Wowf Places': Our discussion of the role of place in The Muckle Toon has so far centred on MacDiarmid's attitude to his native region in general. The present subsection is devoted to a consideration of those poems which relate to particular locations in the Langholm area.

'Clann Albann: An Explanation' itemises the geographical features to be dealt with in the first volume of the poet's 'five-fold scheme', promising poems 'about the hills, woods and streams' of his home 'district' (M.T., p. 236). The Muckle Toon handsomely lives up to this promise where the streams are concerned, but expends considerably less energy on the hills and woods.

It is not altogether clear that any of the poetry collected in the volume which accompanies this study can be said to be 'about the hills' of

Dumfriesshire. 'The Monument' (C.P. I, p. 386; M.T., p. 40) comes closest to qualifying perhaps, though, as the title indicates, that poem is concerned with the memorial which caps Whita Hill rather than with Whita Hill itself. MacDiarmid's correspondence nevertheless gives the impression that he was working on a number of pieces about Langholm's hills in the summer of 1932. He wrote to Helen B. Cruickshank on August 10th:

I did a couple of hill poems for the suite I mean to dedicate to you - but I'm not satisfied with them yet and am recasting them, besides having several others in the suite to do, so am not including these in 'Scots Unbound and other poems'...92

Did this 'suite' include the lost sequence, 'On Bare Hill Tops', which the poet may be presumed to have been 'recasting' after F. G. Scott returned the manuscript, with his detailed comments, three weeks earlier? (See above, p.451). It is not inconceivable that the terms 'poems about...hills' and 'poems about...woods' are interchangeable, since most of Langholm's lovely afforestations (including all those mentioned in MacDiarmid's poetry) are situated on the slopes of the river valleys which

meet at the holm from which the town takes its name.
 A local clergyman described the district as follows
 in 1793:

The verdant hills, beautifully skirted
 with woods which shelter it east and
 west; the Esk, overhung with woods,
 gliding gently along; the town
 appearing through the intertwining
 trees, and the hills and woods at a
 distance assuming a semi-circular
 form, terminate this charming land-
 scape, a landscape of which, as
 containing an assemblage of rural
 beauty and romantick scenery, it
 baffles the happiest efforts of
 imagination to give an adequate
 description.⁹³

Two centuries later hill and woodland are still as
 nearly synonymous in Eskdale as that account suggests.
 A sentence in a letter from the poet to Scott, however,
 seems to preserve the distinction between hills on the
 one hand, and the Langfall and the Kernigal - settings
 of two of the Muckle Toon's three 'poems...about...woods'
 - on the other:

What I'm pressing for is a hill done on
 a par with the bog in 'Tarras' - and I
 want the Langfall or Kernigal ditto.⁹⁴

If MacDiarmid ever completed a 'hill poem' of comparable
 quality to 'Tarras' (C.P. I, p. 337; M.T., p. 147) he
 did not succeed in having it published.

The three Clann Albann pieces which have woodland settings - 'Whuchulls' (C.P. II, p. 1089; M.T., p. 153), 'The Kernigal' (C.P. II, p. 1275; M.T., p. 152), and 'In the Langfall' (C.P. II, p. 1269; M.T., p. 159) - are 'about...woods' to the extent that 'Water Music' (C.P. I, p. 333; M.T., p. 16), 'Water of Life' (C.P. I, p. 314; M.T., p. 112), and 'The Point of Honour' (C.P. I, p. 387; M.T., p. 164) are 'about...rivers'. That is to say MacDiarmid addresses himself to his memories of Langholm's woods in search of the images which will enable him to convey his intellectual preoccupations. In the teeming plant- and animal-life of Whitshiels ('Whuchulls') he finds a most local habitation and name for his concern with the multifariousness of Creation, the comparative inevitability of events in the spiritual as against the physical world, and other matters. The dense woods of the Langfall, seen from within in the fading daylight, serve as an image of encroaching artistic crisis in 'In the Langfall'. The poet seems attracted mainly by the emblematic possibilities of woodland even in 'The Kernigal', a poem which evokes the particularity of place more successfully perhaps than any other item in The Muckle Toon (see Commentary, pp. 450-1).

The wood is now a symbol of resurrection, a figure sufficiently equivocal to suggest the satire, pathos and grotesquery of MacDiarmid's eccentric eschatology:

O wad they nicht rise up afore me noo
 Like the auld Kernigal on Warblaw there,
 Firs ranked in gloomy corridors,
 Tall too'ers each drilled to its straight height
 By its close neighbours' command - stern, bare;
 - And no' this chaos o' weeds and waste again,
 This human scree wi'ts artificial floo'ers.

(C.P. II, p. 1276; M.T., p. 152)

MacDiarmid did not succeed in his aim of celebrating the Langfall or the Kernigal with a poem comparable to 'Tarras'. His major woodland piece is undoubtedly 'Whuchulls', which celebrates a far less imposing wood than these. (See Commentary, pp453-4, for further discussion of the symbolism of 'Whuchulls'.)

Whitshiels, a long copse on the braes of Lamb Hill, overlooks the Hawick Road along which the young Grieve passed any time he set out for the scene commemorated in the most energetic of Clann Albann's poems of place. Turning right from the Hawick onto the Newcastleton Road he arrived, after a stiff hour's walk or demanding uphill cycle, at Tarras Moor. There is no disparity in this case between the natural grandeur of the location and the artistic splendour of the poem

which it inspired. And yet, as we have come to expect of MacDiarmid, the bog is present in 'Tarras' (C.P. I, p. 337; M.T., p. 147) as much as a symbol (of human equanimity) as it is as a physical object of contemplation. The muscular rhythms and rugged Scots diction nevertheless powerfully suggest the 'ratch and rive' of the moor's 'world uncouth':

The fog-wa' splits and a gair is set
O' corbie oats and corcolet
And drulie water like sheepeik seeps
Through the duffie peats, and cranlin' creeps,
Crowdles like a crab, syne cowds awa',
Couthless eneuch, vet cuttedly tae,
Tho' here and there in a sudden swaw
Corky-heidit as if in a playsome way,
But its lichtest kinks are a cowzie sport,
That nocht can cuddum - nocht can sort
For't, endless torsion, riddlin' port.

(C.P. I, p. 338; M.T., p. 147)

This stanza describes Tarras Water, a stream which is noted for the impetuosity of its lower reaches but which still moves sullenly, if with a few spirited anticipations of its later humour, through the upland moor celebrated in the poem. Uncharacteristically sluggish in the opening lines of the quoted stanza, the Water of Life figure is present in the rest of 'Tarras' only as the squelching, heather-hidden moisture of bogland. Here, as in a number of other Muckle Toon pieces written in the summer of 1932, earth rather than water assumes the main burden of symbolism.

A second poem with a bogland setting (and why is there no mention of 'poems about bogs' in 'Clann Albann: An Explanation'?) pays The Muckle Toon's most open tribute to the earth element:

I love you, earth, in this mood best o' a'
 ('Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton', C.P. I, p. 331;
M.T., p. 150)

Earth has two facets for MacDiarmid. It is seen in 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton' as the soil which succours the roots necessary to growth, while it is presented elsewhere as the clay to which all things which have ceased growing must return. This latter aspect of the earth symbol, an aspect the poet rather grandiosely styles 'the Chthonian Image', relates to the concern with the meaning of death which forms an intriguing counter-current to the Langholm poetry's meditation upon origins (see above, pp. 388-92).

The pre-eminence of earth over water in some of the later additions to The Muckle Toon does not necessarily indicate a loss of commitment to the Water of Life emblem on the poet's part. Most of the earth allusions occur in poems which deal with the spirit of place - e.g., 'Tarras', 'The Scots Renaissance' (C.P. II, p. 1274;

M.T., p. 151) and 'The Kernigal' (C.P. II, p. 1275; M.T., p. 152). It can be argued that MacDiarmid simply did not get round to writing about these particular 'wowf places' ('The Scots Renaissance', l. 1) until 1932, and that water imagery would be inappropriate in poems concerned with locations far less dominated by water than the Muckle Toon itself.

(iv) The Frontier: The 'poems...about Border history, and about the actual - and symbolic - significance of the frontier' which are mentioned in Clann Albann: An Explanation (M.T., p. 236) seem never to have been written (unless 'The Scots Renaissance, (C.P. II, p. 1274; M.T., p. 151) can be said to be 'about Border history'). The frontier, nevertheless, was evidently much on MacDiarmid's mind during the period in which he wrote the 'Explanation'. Two poems published in 1933, along with a third which appeared the following year, were said to belong to The War with England, a long work described by the poet as 'a companion volume to A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle'.⁹⁵ Only the third of these, however, a rather weak satire depicting the confusions of a wandering Scot who cannot tell the difference between England and Scotland in the dark, is actually concerned with the Border (see 'The Frontier: or The War with England', C.P. II, p. 1296).

Though the other two were in print before the appearance of the 'Explanation', there is no reason to believe that they were intended for MacDiarmid's 'five-fold scheme'. (One of these poems, 'From "The War with England"' (C.P. I, p. 454; M.T., p. 168) has nevertheless been used as a sort of coda in my arrangement of The Muckle Toon, for reasons outlined on p.484 of the Commentary.)

MacDiarmid's Langholm poetry displays hardly the slightest interest in either the 'actual significance' or the 'history' of his country's English frontier. Reflections on the Border's 'symbolic significance', on the other hand, constitute a motif of some importance in The Muckle Toon. Unlike the tapestries of allusion to childhood and to Genesis, however, these Border references do not fulfil a unifying purpose, as they are limited mainly to poems published in 1931. Their greatly diminished role in the later Clann Albann material strengthens the impression made by the simultaneous disappearance of the 'Muckle Toon stanza' that the poet departed from his original conception of his Langholm book in mid-composition (see above, pp. 124-5, 266).

The boundary between Scotland and England serves MacDiarmid as an emblem of the limits of the known. He presents himself in the poetry as a reiver on the frontiers of consciousness, a Borderer who will deploy on a spiritual plane the martial prowess so ably - and vainly - manifested by his ancestors on Scottish and foreign battlefields:

... (N) aewhere has the love-religion had
 A harder struggle than in Scotland here
 Which means we've been untrued as fechters even
 To oor essential genius - Scots, yet sweer
 To fecht in, or owre blin' to see where lay,
 The hert o' the fray.

We've focht in a' the sham fechts o' the world.
 But I'm a Borderer and at last in me
 The spirit o' my people's no' content
 Wi' ony but the greatest enemy,
 And nae mair plays at sodgers but has won
 To a live battle-grun'.

('Charisma and My Relatives', C.P. I, p. 301;

M.T., p. 41)

The poet sees it as his task to 'croun' the 'frontier spirit' he has inherited from his nameless forebears ('From Work in Progress', ll. 111-14, C.P. II, p. 1150; M.T., p. 13). Gratitude for the example of those forebears is implicit in the terminology chosen by MacDiarmid to describe his struggles in the service of higher consciousness. His business, no less than theirs, is 'fricative work' ('The Seamless Garment',

l. 95, C.P. I, p. 314; M.T., p. 123), his 'sangs' are 'gleids' of their 'candent spirit' ('A Dumfriesshire Boy', l. 7, C.P. I, p. 384; M.T., p. 1). Even the Wauchopeside wagtails that dart like the poet's own thoughts are characterised as 'birds fu' o' fechtin spirit' ('By Wauchopeside', l. 3, C.P. II, p. 1083; M.T., p.162).

Though he acknowledges in 'From Work in Progress' (ll. 116-7) that he has sprung

Frae battles, mair than ballads

(C.P. II, p. 1150; M.T., p. 13)

the poet pays one direct tribute to the minstrels of the frontier:

Descendant o' the unkent Bards wha made
Sangs peerless through a' post-anonymous days
I glimpse again in you that mightier poo'er
Than fashes wi' the laurels and the bays
But kens that it is shared by ilka man
Since time began.

('First Hymn to Lenin', C.P. I, p. 298;

M.T., p. 98)

If this tribute is read in conjunction with the following lines from 'Second Hymn to Lenin' it will be seen that MacDiarmid was attracted not so much by the ballads themselves as by their success in speaking for an entire community:

Are my poems spoken in the factories and fields,
In the streets o' the toon?
Gin they're no', then I'm failin to dae
What I ocht to ha' dune.

Gin I canna win through to the man in the street,
The wife by the hearth
A' the cleverness on earth'll no' mak' up
For the damnable dearth.

(C.P. I, p. 323; M.T., p. 141)

The communally composed, orally transmitted art of the balladeers could hardly have been more different from the poet's, which, its intermittent populist yearnings notwithstanding, was becoming ever more individualistic and isolationist in the early thirties. Just as the idea of Border pugnacity is sufficient for MacDiarmid, who fails to cite specific historical manifestations of the phenomenon, so too the idea of the 'peerless sangs' of the frontier is assumed into the symbolical machinery of a poetic enterprise which sets little store by either the content or the style of the ballads.

(E) Bonds

Few of the contradictions which typify MacDiarmid's career are starker than that illustrated by the fact that the creative venture which includes his earliest Bolshevik rhetoric, and which gestures acknowledgement towards his obscure, plebeian lineage, is the very work in which he most assiduously cultivates an eremitic poetic persona. Viewed in the context of his career as a whole, The Muckle Toon shows the poet increasingly inclined to cite Marx and Lenin, on the one hand, and increasingly given to expressions of distaste for ordinary human experience, on the other. The rejection of human intercourse is made, explicitly, at an early

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point in the work. The poem chosen to inaugurate the proposed autobiographical volume not only ruminates on the causes of the breach between the author and his Langholm relatives, but asserts that:

Maist bonds 'twixt man and man are weel ca'd bonds.

('From Work in Progress', l. 79, C.P. II, p.1149;

M.T., p. 12)

From this general principle MacDiarmid returns to a consideration of the particular bonds which tied him to 'his kin and native place', reflecting:

Fellow-feelin', common humanity, claptrap

...

I've had as little use for to be terse
As maist folk ha'e for verse.

(C.P. II, p. 1149; M.T., p. 12)

Certainly, The Muckle Toon's ideational framework compelled the poet to express dissatisfaction with all human activities which get in the way of the quest for higher consciousness. He designed that framework himself, however, and there can be little doubt but that the poetry's rejection of common experience and common humanity reflects the psychological trauma he was undergoing in the early thirties.

MacDiarmid's distaste for 'a' wha haena had a glisk' of vision ('The Burning Passion', l. 25, C.P. I, p. 304; M.T., p. 139) accords with the revulsion from physical and emotional experience which, as has been suggested earlier, eventually led to his abandonment of Scots (see above, pp. 250-1). A horror of bodily and affective life is a horror of life as it is lived by the great majority of human beings for whom intellectual endeavour is not of paramount importance.

'Whuchulls' (C.P. II, p. 1089; M.T., p. 153) exhibits the poet's recognition of the impossibility of reconciling humanistic values with his impulse towards eponteia. The quotation from Baudelaire placed at the head of the poem suggests that by the time this last major addition to the Langholm writings was composed MacDiarmid had scant regard for any form of evolution other than his own spiritual development. And yet his interest in the transfiguration of his awareness is closely related to at least one aspect of the broader evolutionary concerns of the earlier Muckle Toon poetry. 'Whuchulls' elaborates a theme which other Langholm pieces repeatedly introduce but fail to explore - the equivalent significance of all.

life-forms (see above, pp. 383-4). The poet now acknowledges that he must transcend his human nature if he is to win to epopteia. As that blessed state imparts a sort of 'God's eye view' of the orders of Creation, it is not to be attained by a representative of any one form of created life:

Original forest, Whuchulls, public park,
 Mysel', or ony man, beast, mineral, weed,
 I clearly see are a' aside the mark.
 The poet hauds nae brief for ony kind,
 Age, place, or range o' sense, and no' confined
 To ony nature can share Creation's instead.

(C.P. II, p. 1089; M.T., p. 153)

The use of 'the poet hauds' rather than 'I haud' is significant: it is in his capacity as poet that MacDiarmid will leave his humanity behind and enter a domain of the spirit unvitiated by the randomness which afflicts all physical life. Already in one of the poems published in 1931 a connection had been drawn between epopteia and poetic inspiration:

A line, a word, - and emptiness again!
 The impotent desire to ken aince mair
 The shinin' presence....

('The Burning Passion', C.P. I, p. 304;

M.T., p. 139)

Now the poet lays greater stress on that connection, implying that poetry belongs to a world of pure spirit set over against the material world represented by the wood of Whitshiels:

Yet here's a poem takin' shape again,
 Inevitable shape, faur mair inevitable
 Than birks and no' bamboos or banyans here,
 Impredictable, relentless, thriddin' the rabble
 O' themes and aspects in this thrawart scene.
 O freedom constrainin' me as nae man's been
 Mair constrained wha wasna, as I'll yet be, freer!...

(C.P. II, p.1090; M.T., p. 154)

'Whuchulls' closes with an excited premonition of deliverance from the swarming physicality of the wood. In the course of the climactic verse-paragraph MacDiarmid writes of epopteia as a 'lyric licht auld chaos canna dam' (my emphasis). The anticipation of illumination at the end of 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' affirms the link between the mystical and the aesthetic even more explicitly:

Eternity like a ring,
 Virile, masculine, abandoned at nae turn
 To enervatin' luxury
 About me here shall ever clearer burn,
 And in its licht perchance at last men'll see
 Wi' the best works o' art, as wi' you tae,
 Chance can ha'e nocht to dae!

(C.P. I, p. 353; M.T., p. 138)

In its assertion that works of art belong to a timeless realm where nothing can grow or decay, the opposition between the temporal and the eternal developed in these poems resembles that drawn by Yeats in 'Sailing to Byzantium'. Comparison of the Scot's with the Irishman's temporal-eternal dichotomy reveals a certain extremism, not to say confusion, in MacDiarmid's position:

Once out of nature I shall never take
 My bodily form from any natural thing,
 But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
 Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
 To keep a drowsy emperor awake...96

Yeats envisaged going 'out of nature' on his soul's release from his body in death. MacDiarmid seems intent on leaving the 'thwart scene' of biological life without dying, though he is noticeably reticent on the means he will exploit to effect such a remarkable egress. Unlike Yeats he is little attracted by the 'sensual music' of the temporal world. Unlike him, too, he seems to visualise not only the finished work of art, but also the process which made it, as coming under the aegis of the eternal. What I wish to draw attention to here, however, is not the ultimate coherence or incoherence of MacDiarmid's poetic vision,

but the fact of his insistence that works of art take 'inevitable shape'. His bold affirmations of the independence of art from event were made at a time when the Clann Albann scheme was falling apart under stress of what he was later to call his 'marital and economic disasters' (see above, p.141). Can they not be read as proud but essentially hopeless refutations of what he knew to be the case - that his high purposes were being subverted by what he referred to in In Memoriam James Joyce as 'the atrocities of human intercourse' (C.P. II, p. 833).

MacDiarmid's proposition that

Maist bonds 'twixt man and man are weel ca'd bonds
gains force in the light of his urgent desire to penetrate the visionary world. Human relations belong to the temporal sphere, to the 'auld chaos' which conspires to keep the poet from an experience of the ineffable. That is why there is no celebration of interpersonal warmth in The Muckle Toon's explorations of familial influence. It is the deepest reason why this work, which ostensibly draws inspiration from a locality rich in ballads and historical lore, is characterised

by an almost total eschewal of folk themes and modes. A poet increasingly disgusted by the frailties which stand between him and spiritual and artistic achievement, who identifies these frailties with the intrinsic fallibility of human nature, cannot be expected to look approvingly on that sense of contentment with self which is essential to folk-life and folk-art.

The Muckle Toon's treatment of sexual relations vividly exemplifies MacDiarmid's dismissive attitude towards human intercourse. According to the 'Explanation', Clann Albann's first volume was to contain 'poems...about' the author's 'first contacts with Love' (M.T., p. 236). MacDiarmid might more accurately have written of his poetry's concern with 'last contacts' with amatory experience. In The Muckle Toon we read not of the inauguration of sexual relationships in adolescence but of the breaking of two adult attachments - to Peggy Grieve (see below) and to the 'Eastern whore' of ll. 29-49 of 'Water of Life' (C.P. I, p. 315; M.T., p. 112-3). The rejection of love is consistent with the poetry's epoptic valediction to social allegiances, but it is more than just an aspect of that general protest against 'bonds' which restrict the freedom of the spirit. Clann Albann, after all,

was planned against a background of marital crisis. The poet's first marriage was legally dissolved, and his commitment to his new companion, Valda Trevlyn, sealed by the birth of a son, while the Langholm sequence was in progress. The verses designed to open The Muckle Toon show MacDiarmid freely speculating that his creative preoccupation with origins was occasioned by the failure of his marriage:

My wife and bairns, is't tinin' them that throws
Me back on my first cause?

('From Work in Progress', C.P. II, p. 1147;
M.T., p. 10)

The same poem suggests that the poet's horror of randomness may have been greatly aggravated by his loss of emotional security on the collapse of his union with Peggy:

My wife and weans in London never saw
The Muckle Toon that I'm concerned wi' noo
(Sittin' in Liverpool), and never may.
What maitters't then, gin a' life's gantin' through,
Biggit on sicna kittle sands as these,
Wi' like haphazardries?

(C.P. II, p. 1149; M.T., p. 12)

There is one further, very specific, reference to Peggy in The Muckle Toon. It occurs in 'Pedigree', a poem which appeared in the First Hymn to Lenin collection, published a few weeks before the poet's

divorce. Whether the present tense of this piece indicates that it was written while the Grieves were still living together, or is merely a poetic convenience, need not concern us, though it will be noted that the spouse in a flourishing marriage could hardly elicit such a barbed tribute:

If I'd to wale for ancestors, I'd ha'e
 (Ahint my faither wi' his cheeks like hines
 And my mither wi' her 'sad fish' lines)
 Auld Ringan Oliver and the Caird o' Barullion;
 And on my wife's side - as clear as day
 Still in that woman in a million,
 Keepin' me alert while savourin' wi' joy
 Her infernal depths - John Forbes o' Tavoy,
 For I never see her kaimin' her hair
 But I mind o' his beard in Driminor there.

(C.P. I, p. 303; M.T., p. 56)

The historical figure the poet chooses as an appropriate ancestor for his wife was one who, by stroking his beard, turned a banquet into a bloodbath (see Commentary, pp.307-9). The closing lines of 'Pedigree' turn out upon investigation to be anything but a lyric celebration of a woman combing her hair! The allusions I have mentioned constitute The Muckle Toon's only direct references to the poet's first marriage. MacDiarmid, however, intended to return to the subject of his relationship with his 'woman in a million' in a subsequent Clann Albann volume:

The third book "Demidium Anima (sic) Meae", concerns my marriage (a marriage - since my wife was a Highlander - symbolising the Union of Scotland, the bridging of the gulf between Highland and Lowland, and, incidentally, treating Gaeldom as the feminine principle), and where the second book is predominantly political and objective, this one is mainly psychological.

('Clann Albann: An Explanation', M.T., pp. 236-7)

In March 1941 the poet expressed the hope that that part of the original manuscript of Lucky Poet which concerned 'my domestic life, marriage, divorce, remarriage, and my children by both mothers' would be published as Lament for the Children (L.P. Author's Note, p. XIX). Neither of the promised autobiographical volumes dealing with Peggy Skinner ever appeared. Yet, though it is specifically cited in only two of the poems, Grieve's ultimately disastrous relationship with his first wife throws a long shadow over The Muckle Toon.

There can be little doubt that the contrast in attitudes to women and sexuality between A Drunk Man and The Muckle Toon registers the convulsion in Grieve's feelings for his wife between the mid-twenties and the start of the new decade. The Drunk Man complains about Jean's nagging, but places his faith in her

ultimate willingness to comfort him:

But aince Jean kens what I've been through
The nicht, I dinna doot it,
She'll ope her airms in welcome true,
And clack nae mair about it....

(C.P. I, p. 166)

The poet of The Muckle Toon, though, does not trust
women:

The pairts o' Langholm the Esk reflects
Seem like maist women, better than they are....

('The Liquid Light', C.P. I, p. 306; M.T., p. 117)

Where the protagonist of the 1926 sequence is awake
both to the sordidness and to the transfiguring power
of sexual love (see above, pp. 181-2), the speaker of
the Langholm poems again and again stresses the former,
and never the latter, aspect of physical union.
Thoughts of love, like thoughts of Langholm, relate to
stages of development too early to be contemplated
without distaste:

Ah, vivid recollection o' trudgin' that
Crab-like again upon the ocean-flair! -
Juist as in lyin' wi' a woman still
I feel a sudden cant and sweesh aince mair
Frae Sodom or Gomorrah wi' yon Eastern whore
T'oor watery grave o' yore.

('Water of Life', C.P. I, p. 315; M.T., p. 112)

Sex is necessary to effect the conception of human beings of genius. It is an extremely wasteful and uneconomic method of production, but it is the only one. Nothing could be less erotic than that solitary Clann Albann stanza in which the poet acknowledges the existence of this positive value in copulation:

Juist as frae ony couple genius springs,
 There is nae tellin' save wi' folk owre auld
 Or impotent. The stupidest pair on earth
 Are still as likely to strike in the blin'fauld
 Maze o' manseed upon the vital spark
 As folk o' merit, means, or mark.

('The Burning Passion', C.P. I, p. 305;

M.T., p. 140)

It might be argued that 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton' (C.P. I, p. 331; M.T., p. 150) is a love-poem and that The Muckle Toon is therefore not as overwhelmingly negative on the subject of love as I have suggested. Certainly there is something of the tenderness of MacDiarmid's early Scots lyrics in 'Milk-Wort', but the primary object of the poet's tenderness is not a human one. While Kenneth Buthlay is correct in pointing out that 'one receives the impression that the poet ... has in mind an actual girl whose eyes

and hair are like milk-wort and bog-cotton',⁹⁷ the piece is nevertheless addressed, explicitly, to the element celebrated in a number of the poems of 1932:

I love you, earth, in this mood best o' a'....

(C.P. I, p. 331; M.T., p. 150)

The poem is an act of homage to the ground in which the roots of MacDiarmid's bogland flowers 'dern' rather than to the half-glimpsed girl (see Commentary, p. 442). The two other poems from the Thakeham period which impute a feminine personality to the earth element are distinctly anti-romantic in their attitude to womankind. 'Tarras' (C.P. I, p. 337; M.T., p. 147) and its appendix, 'Why I Became a Scots Nationalist' (C.P. I, p. 339; M.T., p. 149), depict the poet in preparation for a love-bout with a stubborn partner who is not in any literal sense human. The rank charms of the bog-woman of 'Tarras' are praised only to highlight the poet's immunity to the attractions of the human female:

Ah, woman-fondlin'! What is that to this?
Soft hair to birssy heather, warm kiss
To cauld black water's suction.
Nae ardent breists' erection
But the stark hills'! In what dry-gair-flow
Can I pillow my lowin' cheek here
Wi' nae paps' howe below?
What laithsome parodies appear
O' my body's secrets in this oorle growth
Wi' its peerieweeries a' radgie for scouth
And the hail ratch and rive o' a world uncouth?

(C.P. I, p. 338; M.T., p. 147)

The last four lines here provide an early expression of MacDiarmid's sense of alienation from his own physicality - a sense which would be more fully, and more agonisingly, explored in 'Harry Semen' (C.P. I, p. 483), 'Ode to All Rebels' (C.P. I, p. 487) and other poems written in the early months of the poet's Shetland exile. In the last analysis, the bonds which most offended MacDiarmid were not those which he encountered in social and sexual intercourse, but those which rivetted his eager, questing spirit to a mortal, undependable body. Hamlet's cry might have been his:

O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,
 Thaw and resolve itself into a dew! 98

(F) Was Burke Right?

Examining in the foregoing section the sense of disintegration of social ties and even of personality which is communicated by key passages of The Muckle Toon, we have surmised (pp. 489-90) that MacDiarmid's claims for the transcendent metaphysical status of art were rooted in a fear for the reliability of his own poetic gift. At many points in the Langholm poetry that fear is more directly expressed than in the passages we have dealt with. Two main tapestries of allusion to artistic dilemma can be distinguished. Considering them in this final section, we shall see that the autobiographical impulse in the poetry of the early thirties may have arisen as a response - at once diagnostic and therapeutic - to a profound and puzzling creative malaise.

Some of The Muckle Toon's hints of artistic crisis are incidental to the main thrust of the poems in which they occur, and far from forthright. Take, for example, the closing stanza of 'The Seamless Garment':

And as for me in my fricative work
 I ken fu' weel
 Sic an integrity's what I maun ha'e,
 Indivisible, real,
 Woven owre close for the point o' a pin
 Onywhere to win in.

(C.P. I, p. 314; M.T., p. 123)

Lack is implied in the poet's recognition that he 'maun ha'e' the integrity of Border cloth. It is more frankly acknowledged in one of the last of the Langholm poems:

And round me now the sombre trees
 Each of a different black,
 Weld into one their various shapes
 Tho' here and there a crack
 Lets in a line of silver light
 About the unseen track,
 A line that lacks no less than I
 The kind of light I lack.

('In the Langfall', C.P. II, p. 1270; M.T., p. 159)

If the inference here is that the poet has lost his way, elsewhere it is that he has lost, or is about to lose, his creative energy.

Poetic energy is represented in The Muckle Toon by the Water of Life emblem, as the opening stanza of Part I of 'Water Music' (C.P. I, p. 333; M.T., p. 16) makes clear. The first of the two tapestries of allusion I have mentioned, comprising the poetry's most central and most nearly explicit disclosures of artistic dilemma, involves references to the running out of the Water of Life. St. John, from whose Gospel the latter symbol ultimately derives (see above pp. 277-8), foresaw in Revelation the failure of the streams. The fact that MacDiarmid quoted the following sentence of Dostoievski's in an essay written in 1931 may be significant:

It's the spirit of life, as the Scriptures call it, the river of living water, the drying up of which is threatened in the Apocalypse. 99

There are, however, no obvious echoes of Revelation in the poet's treatment of the drying-up theme. The last book of the New Testament visualises the threat to the Water of Life thus:

And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;

And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters;

And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters because they were made bitter.

Revelation 8 : 8-11

MacDiarmid eschews such prophetic fervour, conjuring the failure of the Water of Life in a spirit almost of genial fancy:

The Esk is drawn on like a knotless threid
 Juist owre lang for's to see the end o't yet,
 Tho' noo and then I tak' it in my heid
 That the pirn in the hills it's birlin' frae
 Maun near ha' ser'd its day.

('Water of Life', C.P. I, p. 318;

M.T., p. 115)

The suggestion of imperilled poetic impulse is stronger in the following related lines from 'The Dog Pool':

It'll be time to think when the Esk rins dry.
 Watch it noo while it's still ga'en by.

Catch it noo - for even as I speak
 The fish may be gaspin' on dry land there
 And the hindmaist wave o' the Esk gang roon'
 The curve at Land's End to be seen nae mair
 And a silence still waur for a sang to brak'
 Follow the row the waters mak'.

(C.P. II, p. 1252; M.T., p. 161)

Though the link between water and poetry ('sang') is explicit here, precognition of poetic decay does not reduce MacDiarmid to despondency. Only at the end of 'The Point of Honour', where artistic energies are once again likened to the flowing waters of Langholm, does gloom overtake his speculations. Rather than contemplate a drying up of the Esk, the poet now affirms

The unwearying flood of the river,
 Inexplicable, alien!

(C.P. I, p. 390; M.T., p. 116)

and asks:

Water, whither away
 In a flight that passes and stays forever?

(C.P. I, p. 390; M.T., p. 166)

His gloom results from the realisation that creative forces, though indestructible, work only for a limited period through particular individuals. A memory of fish marooned above the living flood of the Esk provides him with an image of his own relationship to past sources of inspiration:

Stranded. I with them! Would I wish to bend her
To me as she veers on her way again
Vivid and impulsive in crystalline splendour
Cold and seething champagne?

No. So life leaves us. Already gleam
In the eyes of the young the flicker, the change,
The free enthusiasm that carries the stream
Suddenly out of my range.

(C.P. I, p. 391; M.T., p. 167)

The Muckle Toon's second tapestry of allusion to its author's artistic difficulties is not immediately identifiable as such. MacDiarmid's recurring expressions of unease with the work's characteristic probing of origins may appear at first sight to be no more than displays of braggadocio, assurances that the poet has sacrificed none of his old tough-mindedness to his new concern with childhood. After all, we have seen (above, pp. 97-104, 115) that it was at the very time

when he was being prompted by sympathetic critics to eschew a personal in favour of an epic subject-matter that the pressures of exile and divorce drove his imagination back on the 'hame scenes'. But there is more to MacDiarmid's insistent sense of the impropriety of the Langholm poetry's autobiographical focus than mere apologetic gesturing to his admirers. There may similarly be more to that focus itself than is to be explained by nostalgia born out of the stress of his circumstances in the early thirties. Creativity, like the Wauchope, the Esk, or the Ewes, has a source, and the poet's involvement with his Border boyhood may be seen, in part at least, as an attempt to identify the source of the creativity which had 'kythed' so memorably in the three Scots volumes of the nineteen twenties before losing itself in the writhings of Cenrastus. This aspect of the return to the Muckle Toon is most fully brought out in 'By Wauchopeside' (C.P. II, p. 1083; M.T., p. 162), where the author's mental processes and the riverbank's busy bird-life are presented as mirrors of each other, and the debt of his creativity to childhood memories is acknowledged. Concern with the transience of inspiration comes

together in the following lines with acceptance of
Langholm as a source of poetic power:

I used to hear a blackie mony a nicht
Singin' awa' t'an unconscionable 'oor
Wi' nocht but the water keepin't company
(Or nocht that ony human ear could hear)
- And wondered if the blackie heard it either
Or cared whether it was singin' tae or no'!
O there's nae sayin' what my verses awn
To memories like these. Ha'e I come back
To find oot? Or to borrow mair? Or see
Their helpless puirness to what gar'd them be?
Late sang the blackie but it stopt at last.
The river still ga'ed singin' past.

(C.P. II, p. 1083; M.T., p. 162)

MacDiarmid is eager to advertise his awareness of
the dangers which attend his quest for sources:

Country folk, bein' wice, are content
To view the eagle's flight
Frae faur below, and no' gang near
Its eyrie's ugsome sicht.

('Country Folk', C.P. I, p. 306; M.T., p.22)

That he chooses to ignore this warning is hardly
surprising, given his low regard for the wisdom of
country folk (see above, pp. 452-3). And indeed the
poet escapes retribution for his foolhardiness - in
The Muckle Toon at any rate. (It is instructive to
read 'Harry Semen' (C.P. I, p. 483) as the record of a
further, biological stage in the source-hunt initiated

by the Clann Albann writings, the poem's 'movin' picture o' the spasm frae which I was born' (C.P. I, p. 484) being the sort of 'ugsome' disclosure of which the country folk had warned.) Even if no nest of horrors is uncovered in the Langholm poetry, MacDiarmid's discomfiture with his role of autobiographical detective is evident. The following lines from 'Second Hymn to Lenin' not only rebuke the Bolshevik leader for his too exclusive, Marxist interest in the infrastructure of society, but also acknowledge the unpleasant implications of the poet's imaginative concern with the origins of his life and art:

Yet Burke was richt; owre muckle concern
 Wi' Life's foundations is a sure
 Sign o' decay....

(C.P. I, p. 323; M.T., p. 141)

The fact that anxiety for the future of his creative gift is expressed in a poetry more energetic than any MacDiarmid had composed for half a decade is not without its ironic aspect. To Circumjack Cencrastus, for all its exasperated and exasperating avowals of frustration, communicates no comparable fear for the survival of the poet's inspiration. If however we look for 'signs o' decay' to the quality rather than

to the content of the writing, then MacDiarmid appears decidedly more secure in his powers in the Langholm poetry than in the Curly Snake sequence. The implicit evidence of the latter with regard to a quake in the foundations of its author's inspiration has already been considered (above, pp. 176-9). Incidental 'signs o' decay' are less easy to discern in The Muckle Toon, though two may be mentioned.

The first of these, MacDiarmid's return in the summer of 1932 to the lexical source of his earliest artistic success, has been discussed in Chapter Three (pp. 324-5). The second relates to the debt owed by passages in the poetry to texts by other authors. A brief account of the problem of borrowing in the Scot's work must be given if we are to decide whether or not the echoes of other writers in The Muckle Toon are symptomatic of faltering creativity.

The plagiaristic nonchalance for which MacDiarmid's later work is notorious can be seen as the culmination of a trend present in the poet's practice from the beginning. He had always shown an unusual readiness

to avail of the printed word as an imaginative resource. It might even be said that MacDiarmid is most truly a Communist in his attitude to the ownership of the printed word! That attitude was indicated at the very outset of his career, in the 'In Acknowledgement' page of Annals of the Five Senses:

As fish are seen through an aquarium so these perhaps strange fish of mine are discernible almost entirely through a "strong solution of books" - and not only of books but of magazines and newspaper articles and even of speeches. What I have done is similar to what is done when a green light on a railway replaces a red light, or vice versa, in a given lamp. 100

Much later, the poet confided:

When I see a possible poem, I work
With the utmost economy of effort.

('Burak', C.P. I, p. 668)

How often did he see possible poems, one is tempted to ask - whenever he looked at printed material? In the early twenties MacDiarmid limited his depredations to word-lists and dictionaries, and thereby set the scene for the creation of his celebrated lyrics in Scots. The exciting possibilities suggested by the discrete contents of the Scots lexicon demanded the utmost expenditure rather than the utmost economy of effort if they were to be realised. Not least among the

problems involved in building lyrical poems around the dictionary's booty of separate words and phrases was the refinement of a diction in which such booty would be idiomatically appropriate. It required much less effort to coax some sort of loose poetic pattern from a given text by cutting, substituting words, imposing line-endings, and changing punctuation to alter rhythms or emphasis. Yet it is clear that these two procedures - the one which produced the 'early lyrics', the other which issued in large tracts of the 'poetry of fact' - differ in degree rather than in kind.

MacDiarmid did not always look to the printed word for his inspiration, of course, and in moving beyond the dictionary for the raw material of A Drunk Man he applied his technical expertise to his 'own concerns' rather than to the 'second-hand'. The quoted terminology, David Craig's¹⁰¹, is somewhat moralistic, besides giving the impression of an irreducible opposition between disinterested juggling with literary detritus, on the one hand, and, on the other, poetic formulation of insights won from experience. The lyrics vindicate the richness of MacDiarmid's sensibility scarcely less triumphantly than A Drunk Man does, after all, while that sequence.

makes use of the writings of others to sound 'the unmistakable voice of pure MacDiarmid', as Kenneth Buthlay has demonstrated.¹⁰²

The question of written sources first becomes problematic in Cenrastus, where many passages comprise Scotticised and versified 'lifts' from a variety of prose texts. Such a method of composition is unobjectionable so long as the appropriated material is worked into a state of independent poetic life and integrated with the verse which surrounds it. Too often in his 1930 sequence MacDiarmid fails to bring sufficient creative pressure to bear upon his borrowings to meet either of these conditions.¹⁰³

The Muckle Toon seems much less dependent upon written sources than Cenrastus, though of course no passage in the poetry can be said with absolute certainty to have been composed without the aid of a model. The following stanza on the duties of the literary artist is a case in point - it sounds wholly MacDiarmidian, yet it is actually a rhymed adaptation of a sentence translated from one of Rilke's letters to his wife, Clara (see Commentary, p. 428):

He daurna turn awa' frae ocht
 For a single act o' neglect
 And straucht he may fa' frae grace
 And be void o' effect.

('Second Hymn to Lenin', C.P. I, p. 327;
M.T., p. 144)

How many similar debts have yet to be revealed? It must be admitted that the quoted stanza sits comfortably in the poem in which it appears. In general where a source can be identified for a poem or passage in The Muckle Toon, the use to which the source has been put raises no significant questions with regard either to literary ethics or to the health of MacDiarmid's creative processes. The Tyútchev poem which underlies 'The Church of My Fathers' (C.P. I, p. 307; M.T., p. 60) has been brilliantly adapted to express the Scottish poet's attitude to a particular church - Langholm's 'Toonfit Kirk' - while 'Why I Became a Scots Nationalist' (C.P. I, p. 339; M.T., p. 149) nods openly in the direction of the Pushkin lyric upon which it is based (see Commentary, pp. 313-4, and 438-9).

There are however two Muckle Toon poems which show MacDiarmid drawing upon prose sources in a manner which suggests that he is plugging gaps in his inspiration.

The presence of undigested matter from his reading in 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' (C.P. I, p. 346; M.T., p. 133) and 'The Point of Honour' (C.P. I, p. 387; M.T., p. 164) may be related to the fact that these poems date from the closing weeks of his stay in Thakeham,¹⁰⁴ when inroads were being made upon the leisure which had proved so productive earlier in the summer (see above, pp. 133-4). The padding in the first of these poems (see Commentary, pp. 414-5 and 417-8) amounts to no more perhaps than a despairing short-cut towards meeting the exacting formal demands the poet somewhat uncharacteristically set himself there (see above, p. 301, and Commentary, pp. 407-8). The implications of 'The Point of Honour's' non-allusive echoes are graver, not least in view of that poem's thematic concern with threatened creativity (see Commentary, pp. 476-82).

By the time the second of these poems was published - in Stony Limits and other poems in 1934 - MacDiarmid had already moved beyond lyrical composition. Soon he would begin to produce a poetry devoid of significant metrical patterning and more than ever dependant upon found materials, reproduced now with the minimum of modification (see above, pp. 200-4). Such developments

add poignancy to The Muckle Toon's persistent intimations of inspirational obstruction, and suggest that the undue reliance upon the writings of others which characterises 'The Point of Honour' should indeed be construed as a 'sign o' decay'.

What did MacDiarmid feel about these developments? We have seen (above, pp. 184-98) that clues to his psychological state on his removal to Shetland are to be found in the most serious and ambitious poems he wrote at that time rather than in his correspondence, his discursive prose or even in apparently 'confessional' passages of his poetry. So it is also in the case of his attitude to the supersession of his lyrical voice.¹⁰⁵ Paradoxically, the most magisterially impersonal of all the poet's productions, 'On a Raised Beach' (C.P. I, p.422), is that which betrays the depth of his concern at his changed artistic orientation. The references to 'song' which recur in the poem amount almost to a commentary upon his disenchantment with and desertion by lyrical impulse. (It is worth recalling here that MacDiarmid gave vent to an impatience with lyricism before the bulk of the Clann Albann material was written - see above, pp. 103-4).

The first allusion to song in 'On a Raised Beach' is to be found at the end of the opening verse-paragraph, when MacDiarmid, surveying the storm beach, asks:

What Cabirian song from this catasta comes?

(C.P. I, p. 423)

(The Cabirii were lesser deities associated with fire and creative energy who may have been brought to the Scottish poet's attention by Goethe's Faust.¹⁰⁶) This line seems to imply that no song can register the difficult lessons of the desolate rockscapes of Shetland. A similar point is made in MacDiarmid's elegy on Rilke, where poets are accused of offering shrill pipings in place of the thunderous utterance necessary to communicate the actuality of awareness:

Is this the sorry end of all our subtleties,
Unconscious compromise, natural yielding, brute collapse?
Our lost origin our acropetal striving saps.
Or human consciousness seems to us
Like thunder through successive banks of fog to go
Bubbling between them furious
And muffled again; and among these mysteries
We poets sit ceraunic as a chalumeau.

('Vestigia Nulla Retrorsum', C.P. I, p.419)

Such scornful reflections on the power of the lyric to encompass consciousness lend authority to a statement made by the poet in 1967 with regard to his abandonment of a lyrical mode of composition three and a half decades earlier:

I could no longer go on with that sort of thing but required to break up the unity of the lyric and introduce new material of various kinds on different levels of significance. 107

MacDiarmid appears to make quite the opposite case to this in the second verse-paragraph of 'On a Raised Beach', where he suggests not that song is an inadequate response to experience but rather that human awareness is of insufficient richness to sustain the sort of song he desires:

The inward gates of a bird are always open.
It does not know how to shut them.
That is the secret of its song,
But whether any man's are ajar is doubtful.

(C.P. I, p. 423)

Later he implies that he has in fact achieved the expansive song he sets over against the confined and confining songs of conventional poetry:

... my Muse ... with this ampler scope,
 This more divine rhythm, wholly at one
 With the earth, riding the Heavens with it, as the
 stones do

And all soon must.

(C.P. I, p. 425)

Perhaps the most suggestive reference to song comes in a passage devoted to a discussion of the illumination granted MacDiarmid in Shetland. It is surely remarkable that a poet whose finest lyrical creations were behind him, and who had recently failed to bring an ambitious undertaking - Clann Albann - to significant form, should have recourse to such terms as these in his effort to relay the visionary intensity of an enoptic experience:

It fills me with a sense of perfect form,
 The end seen from the beginning, as in a song.
 It is no song that conveys the feeling
 That there is no reason why it should ever stop,
 But the kindred form I am conscious of here
 Is the beginning and end of the world,
 The unsearchable masterpiece, the music of the spheres,
 Alpha and Omega, the Omnific Word.

(C.P. I, pp. 428-9)

Song is mentioned once more - again in conjunction with the Fourth Gospel's 'Omnific Word' - at the very end of the poem:

Song, your apprentice encrinite, seems to sweep
 The Heavens with a last entrochal movement;
 And, with the same word that began it, closes
 Earth's vast epanadiplosis.

(C.P. I, p. 433)

There may be no satisfactory explanation as to why song should be the fossil crinoid ('encrinite') apprentice of stone, or why its apocalyptic sweeping of the heavens should resemble the wheel-like ('entrochal') joint of the encrinite. Such obscurities, like the mutual irreconcilability of some of the other 'song' references, raise the question of MacDiarmid's confidence in offering his irregularly stressed English poetry as an alternative to the more muscular and musical Scots verse he had been producing for a decade. The magniloquence of the greatest of the Shetland poems fails to obscure the uncertainties in its author's response to his new creative circumstances. 'On a Raised Beach' embodies in its allusions to song an immensely courageous but doomed attempt to celebrate the failure of the Water of Life which the poet had foreseen in trepidation while engaged upon The Muckle Toon.

--ooOoo--

Hugh MacDiarmid's powers of lyrical utterance in Scots found fulfilment in the Langholm poetry in the very act of apprehension of their own decay. It was a problematic fulfilment, certainly. Yet even as it stands - unfinished, uneven, and lacking a set order for its constituent parts - The Muckle Toon must be counted second only to A Drunk Man as a sustained expression of the poet's genius. If the earlier verse in Scots and the subsequent work in English were alike to perish, the poetry written for the first volume of Clann Albann would be sufficient to secure for the Langholm byspale a place in the front rank of twentieth-century poets.

APPENDIX AA NOTE ON SCOTS

MacDiarmid was as eager to establish the status of Scots as a language rather than a dialect as he was to counter the charge that his literary employment of it was backward-looking. In an article written at the same time as his first Muckle Toon poems he protested:

Dialect is scarcely an adequate term to apply to the Scots vernacular. It is in a different category altogether to the "Dorset" or "Somerset" or other varieties of English; and it is rather to be regarded as a sister language to the latter.¹

In a lecture delivered at University College, Cork, more than four decades later, the poet was similarly to insist that Scots is 'a sister language' of English.² A resolution of the 'language or dialect' conflict depends upon definition of these terms. It is

perhaps fair to the poet to seek clarification of them in the lexicon he used himself. Chambers's Twentieth Century English Dictionary³ defines the noun 'language' as follows:

that which is spoken by the tongue:
 human speech: speech peculiar to a
 nation: style or expression peculiar
 to an individual: diction: any manner
 of expressing thought.

The same source informs us that 'dialect' means:

a variety or form of a language
 peculiar to a district: a non-
 literary vernacular: a peculiar
 manner of speaking.

Scots might be called a language in that it is a 'speech peculiar to a nation': but it is not the speech of a nation, as it never took root in the Highlands, remaining 'peculiar to' the Lowland 'district'. The Lowland tongue, however, is not a dialect in the sense of a 'variety or form of a language'. MacDiarmid enjoyed pointing out that Scots is no more a 'variety or form' of English than English is a 'variety or form' of Scots.⁴ The Northern speech, after all, developed side by side with the Southern, rather than as an offshoot

of it. Unlike regional varieties of English such as 'Somerset' or 'Yorkshire', Scots was simultaneously the language of the market-place and of a royal court. The fact that it has a number of distinct dialects further renders the designation 'dialect' inadequate for the whole of which they are parts. The tongue is manifestly not a 'non-literary vernacular'. The Twentieth Century Dictionary, then, appears to lean toward the 'language' side of the argument - until, on looking up 'Scots', one finds the subtlety of the earlier definitions undermined by the blunt assertion that the word refers to 'the dialect of English spoken in Lowland Scotland'. Further definitions of 'language' and 'dialect' might be adduced to champion the applicability of the one word or the other to Scots, without forcing an absolute conclusion to the argument.

It is probable that the poet's rejection of the term 'dialect' was motivated less by semantic scruple than by national pride and a resolve that his work would not be condescended to as quaint or rustic. Scots' historic status as the speech of a sophisticated polity and the 'high seriousness' of his own poetic purpose at least justify MacDiarmid's

insistence that the 'Lallans' of his poems is not to be compared to the Dorset or Somerset dialects of minor poetry.

Whatever its historical basis, MacDiarmid's sturdy contention that Scots is not a dialect of English has little practical relevance. No reader, whether he hails from Ecclefechan or Bangkok, will attempt to read Scots before he has mastered English. Grieve himself approached such sources as Jamieson's Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language as someone who thought and spoke almost entirely in English, even if his childhood exposure to a vestigial form of the 'auld leid' bequeathed him an intimately psychological response to the words and phrases he found there, and an ability to employ them with colloquial ease. His propaganda on behalf of Scots was carried on in English for that reason, and not only because those at whom the propaganda was aimed spoke the southern tongue. The nuances available to the Scots poet are nuances precisely because the sibling similarity between Scots and English provides a background which sets off subtle distinctions in the expressive capacities of the two tongues. If the reader who can understand Scots and cannot

understand English does not exist, it follows that poetry in Scots is, in a certain sense, a 'department' of the poetry of the English-speaking world (which is not to say a department of English poetry). It is not an independent growth in world literature such as French, Hebrew, or - more tellingly from a Scottish viewpoint, as the poet realised while working on Cencrastus - Gaelic poetry might be said to be.

It is possible to give here only a very crude account of the complex of racial, geographical and political factors which led to the separate evolution of Scots and English and to the eventual supplanting of the former by the latter. Scots (also referred to by Scottish writers as Braid Scots, Broad Scotch, Lallans - i.e., Lowlands -, the Doric and the vernacular) is a linear descendant of the tongue spoken by the Anglian tribes who conquered Northumberland and the eastern Lowlands of Scotland. The language of the Anglians shared many features with that of their Saxon fellow-Teutons who established power in south-eastern England, i.e., with the ancestral form of English. The seventh-century fragment 'Caedmon's Hymn' is

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perhaps the best known of the few literary remains of the Anglian tongue. The overthrow of the Anglian polity in the eighth century stilled literary utterance in the language for half a millenium. When the silence was broken by Thomas of Erceldoune (c. 1225 - c. 1300) and John Barbour (c. 1320 - 1395), the language which was beginning to flower in Scotland was already on its way to being 'degraded to a humble patois'⁵ in Northumberland. Scots poets as chronologically distant from each other as Barbour and Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount (c. 1490 - 1555) acknowledged the Anglian ancestry of their language by calling it 'Inglis'. The speech of London and Oxford they dubbed 'Sudron' (i.e., 'Southern'). However, the word 'Scots', which had originally been applied to the Gaelic of the Highlanders, eventually came to replace the term 'Inglis', as 'English' replaced 'Sudron'. The gap between 'Inglis' and 'Sudron' owed much of its width to the interaction of the old Southern speech with the French of the Norman conqueror.

The great age of Scots poetry is generally held to cover 'roughly a hundred years between 1425, the birth of Robert Henryson, and 1522, the

death of Gawin Douglas'.⁶ Henryson (who died c. 1506), William Dunbar (c. 1460 - c. 1515) and Douglas (who was born c. 1474) are the chief figures among the late medieval 'makars' (i.e., makers of verse) whose example remains a challenge to the Scots poet of the present day. It is arguable that Henryson and Dunbar are the only major figures in the entire tradition for whom the language question was not problematic. G. S. Fraser has noted that 'Douglas, in his version of the Aeneid, seems deliberately to write a rougher and thicker Scots than Henryson and Dunbar'.⁷ Already a Lowlander was seeking to allay his insecurity about identity by exaggerating the differences between his own tongue and that of the English. Douglas wrote as follows of his intentions with regard to idiom:

I set my besy pane
As that I culd, to mak it braid and plane,
Kepand na sudroun, bot our awin langage....⁸

Four hundred years later the same impulse would give rise to some of Hugh MacDiarmid's more clotted poetry, and to his claim to be 'infinitely more un-English' than Yeats (In Memoriam James Joyce, C.P. II, p. 757).

MacDiarmid has insisted that the attempt by Allan

The decline of Scots began just when the English language was blossoming in the work of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. The Reformation is generally seen as a key factor in the decay alike of Scots and of the high culture which had achieved expression in the work of the makars. When Scotland abandoned Catholicism she lost the contact with the European mind afforded her by her 'auld alliance' with France. It was to their English co-religionists that the Scots now looked for support. Increasing political and cultural subjugation to the southern partner followed. The Reformer's failure to provide a Scots Bible brought the language of the Authorised Version into the homes of the people, making English a model of correct utterance. After the Union of Crowns in 1603 the Scottish court moved to London and the language of the south became a prerequisite of advancement in commerce and the professions.

Though Scots was still on the tongues of the common people - and of the gentry, too, in their informal moments - when the eighteenth century 'revival' got under way, the resources of the spoken language had diminished greatly since the age of the makars. The Aberdonian critic Matthew P. Mc Diarmid has insisted that the attempt by Allan

Ramsay (1684/5 - 1758), Robert Fergusson (1750 - 1774) and Robert Burns (1759 - 1796) to create a 'colloquial category' arose from an experimental attitude to the old tongue.⁹ By adopting a 'folk persona' these writers created 'the only thorough-going colloquial poetry that literature knows'.¹⁰ The impression of naturalness and spontaneity in their poetic idiom is an artificially achieved one in that the 'colloquial category' is not wholly based on eighteenth-century spoken Scots. Fergusson looked to the Middle Scots of the makars (whose work the bookseller Ramsay had made available again) to enrich his diction. Burns' democratic sympathies and rustic themes demanded expression in an accessible idiom. Accordingly, he employed a smaller canon of Scots than Fergusson, his 'elder Brother in the muse'.¹¹ One result of this development, as Sydney Goodsir Smith has pointed out, was that the national Bard 'unwittingly limited the scope of Scots',¹² and established a bucolic mode which dominated Scots verse for more than a century after his death.

The decline of Scots as a spoken tongue continued through the nineteenth century, when little literature

of distinction was produced in it. The 'vernacular' is generally confined to dialogue, and that the speech of the lower orders, in the novels of Sir Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson. (Interestingly, Scots is used for narrative in the most powerful short works of these authors - Scott's 'Wandering Willie's Tale' and Stevenson's 'Thrawn Janet' are islands of excellence in the stream of the decline of literary Scots between Burns and MacDiarmid.) Stevenson wrote successful minor poetry in Scots. He readily acknowledged the artificiality of his poetic language:

...I simply wrote my Scots as well as I was able, not caring if it hailed from Lauderdale or Angus, from the Mearns or Galloway; if I had ever heard a good word, I used it without shame; and when Scots was lacking, or the rhyme jibbed, I was glad (like my betters) to fall back on English.¹³

The novelty of this admission lies in its frankness rather than in its content. Mixing dialects was soon to become so commonplace an activity that a leading critic could write thus of 'that...travesty called "Braid Scots"' three years before Christopher Grieve's first experiments with the language:

We know how it is made, how our poeticule waddles in good duck fashion through his Jamieson, snapping up fat expressive words with nice little bits of green idiom for flavouring. It is never literature, and it is certainly not Scots....¹⁴

APPENDIX BMACDIARMID AND THE ROMANTIC TRADITION

In the Introduction to her study of MacDiarmid's poetry of the 1920-1934 period, Catherine Kerrigan claims that the poet's 'is a great Romantic voice'.¹ Her elaboration of this claim, however, leaves much to be desired:

What he shares with the Romantic poets is the profound need for some kind of informing vision in a world in which religious belief is no longer a unifying force. Like the Romantics, MacDiarmid seeks in his poetry new ways of integrating humanity's view of itself with the course of the universe at large, ways of re-forging the old links with immortality.²

Dr. Kerrigan's intuition is worth a great deal more investigation than she herself sees fit to give it. She merely recognises affinities between MacDiarmid's basic poetic assumptions and the premises of Romanticism. She fails to pursue the question she all but raises with

regard to the poet's kinship with the great Romantic poets of the English language. This kinship is arguably more profound than criticism has guessed.

George Ogilvie's poetry course at the Broughton Junior Student Centre leaned heavily towards the Romantics.³ Even a cursory reading of Contemporary Scottish Studies⁴ establishes that, at the time of composition of the 'early lyrics' and A Drunk Man, MacDiarmid was far less uneasy than were his modernist contemporaries with the decadent romantic tradition. The comparative optimism of the Scottish poet's early work may not be unrelated to this fact.

In an essay published in 1926 MacDiarmid stated that 'the function of art is the extension of human consciousness'.⁵ He reiterated this belief many times over subsequent decades. As late as July 1978, two months before his death, he repeated the very phraseology of his 1926 essay in an interview with an Irish journalist.⁶ The Muckle Toon addresses itself more directly than any other work by MacDiarmid to the problem of consciousness - the mystery of his own consciousness and the need to expand his own mental horizons and those of the masses. Introducing their

anthology of Romantic poetry, W. H. Auden and Norman Holmes Pearson observe that a new definition of Man appeared at the end of the eighteenth century:

The divine element in man is now held to be neither power nor free will nor reason, but self-consciousness. Like God and unlike the rest of nature, man can say "I": his ego stands over against his self, which to the ego is a part of nature. In this self he can see possibilities; he can imagine it and all things as being other than they are; he runs ahead of himself; he foresees his own death.⁷

The anthologists point out that the typical Romantic concern with imagination is a concern with consciousness by another name, and draw our attention to the following statement by Coleridge:

The primary Imagination I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.⁸

The history of MacDiarmid's discovery of Scots - or rather of his discovery of a poetic self through experimental use of that language - further suggests the Romantic ambience of his work. We have already cited the poet's own testimony that Scots had put him in touch with 'some source deep in myself' (above, p. 234). The encounter with the lexicon, that is

to say, effected a release of poetic energy rather as opium is said to have done in the case of the author of 'Kubla Khan'. Daniel Corkery's conviction (see above, p. 224) that 'national art' - art which rejects Classical and Renaissance models - is necessarily Romantic is worth keeping in mind here also. In the following passage from Lucky Poet MacDiarmid defends his 'poetic change' from his 'enchanted early lyrics' in a manner expressive of his eagerness to acknowledge a Romantic lineage:

The greatest poets undergo a kind of crisis in
 their art,
 A change proportionate to their previous achievement.
 Others approach it and fail to fulfil it - like
 Wordsworth.
 Some, like Keats, the crisis helps to kill.
 Rimbaud underwent a normal, not an abnormal,
 poetic crisis.
 What was abnormal was his extreme youth, his
 circumstances, his peasant stock.
 It killed Keats, but Keats was not born of French
 peasants.
 It kept Milton practically silent for twenty years.

(C.P. I, pp. 614-5)

All the poets mentioned here, with the exception of Milton, are in the Romantic tradition. (The inclusion of Milton is not inappropriate: the Puritan poet was revered as a sort of father-figure by the early Romantics, and the protracted silence of his mid-career

was occasioned by an involvement with millennial politics so optimistic as to make the revolutionary enthusiasms of Wordsworth, Shelley and MacDiarmid seem temperate by comparison.) The great English Romantic poets are commonly divided into two classes - those who burned themselves out young (Byron, Shelley and Keats) and those who survived the lyric intensities of their youth to enter middle age with more or less truculence of spirit (Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge). In the lines from Lucky Poet MacDiarmid implicitly identifies himself with the latter group, while at the same time claiming to have reversed the predictable pattern of artistic decline in middle age.

MacDiarmid's career may be thought of as typically Romantic in shape not only by virtue of its central hiatus but also because it was planned in terms of long poems. A Drunk Man, Cenchrastus, In Memoriam James Joyce, The Battle Continues, The Kind of Poetry I Want and Direadh all appeared as single-volume works in the poet's lifetime, while two other major enterprises, The Muckle Toon and Impavidi Progrediamur (see footnote on p. 1462 of C.P. II), were seriously attempted. Such sustained

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commitment by a lyric poet to longer forms is very unusual in the twentieth century. Only W. H. Auden, who, it must be admitted, expressly repudiated the Romantic tradition, wrote a comparable number of book-length poems, but it is arguable that New Year Letter is alone among these in having the seriousness and energy of his best work.

MacDiarmid's poetry has striking affinities with the work of three of the great Romantics - Blake, Wordsworth and Shelley. Some of the parallels with Blake have been outlined as follows by Iain Crichton Smith:

It is sufficient to say that here are two poets...who both begin with lyrics of a certain kind, that is, lyrics which contain a fusion of the intellect and feeling which is highly unusual and at times hallucinatory. Both poets go on to write long poems based rather insecurely on systems which are fairly private (even MacDiarmid's communism doesn't seem to be all that orthodox). Both have little to do with the classical tradition (it is interesting that MacDiarmid very seldom refers to the Greeks and Trojans from whom so many poems have been quarried but rather goes back to Celtic sources). Blake too does not seem interested in a classical tradition but goes back to sources found nearer home. Both are radical in their views though they have the basic aristocratic attitude

of poets. They write about
 freedom and the spirit of man
 in chains.⁹

(One reason for the 'interesting' absence of references to ancient Greece in MacDiarmid's poetry is discussed above, pp. 215-6.) Smith proceeds to conjecture that a looseness of thought in the later, philosophical poetry of both writers may be traceable to their shared lack of university training. It might be objected that Smith's comparison is too generalized and glosses over profound dissimilarities in the work of the two poets. The linguistic techniques of the early lyrics of both, for example, have little in common. MacDiarmid's thought in his 'world-view' poems is not systematised, as Blake's is in the prophetic books. The Scot's later work is much less private in its frame of reference than that of the English poet. On the other hand similarities neglected by Smith might be adduced to further the comparison. For instance, the Drunk Man's struggle to encompass spiritual opposites might be likened to the concern with the 'two contrary states of the human soul' which is central to Songs of Innocence and of Experience. Blake's characteristic interest in 'the five Senses'¹⁰ is echoed in MacDiarmid's 'Ballad of the Five Senses' (C.P. I, p. 36) and in

Kenneth Buthlay and Ann Edwards Boutelle have perceived Wordsworthian parallels to this or that aspect of MacDiarmid's poetry.¹³ Their perceptions have been made in passing, Heaney alone offering a schematised, if very tentative, comparison. In a review of The Hugh MacDiarmid Anthology in Hibernia the Irish poet wrote:

Though he would have been the last to admit any comparison of himself with an Englishman, Hugh MacDiarmid's poetic career reminds me of Wordsworth's. Both discovered early a way of affiliating an individual talent to a submerged tradition; both professed a diction that was deliberately at variance with prevalent modes; both wrote classic lyric poetry in a short period of creativity and followed this by turning their lyric discoveries towards more ambitious goals, producing long meditative poems that wove their personal poetic and public worlds into a single major artistic form. The Prelude and A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle are the central achievements in the Wordsworth and MacDiarmid canons, emerging as plateaus of typical excellence towards which the earlier work was leading and in the shadow of which their later work is inevitably viewed.

Again like the young Wordsworth, MacDiarmid has a sense of an enervating cultural situation...that is intimately linked with his linguistic obsessions.¹⁴

Perhaps the most fruitful observation here is that of a link between Wordsworth's attempt to make poetry from 'a selection of the language really used by men', and MacDiarmid's employment of Scots. MacDiarmid clearly was not interested in developing an idiom based on contemporary Scottish speech. But the earliest successful work by both writers was a chiefly lyrical poetry drawing much of its character from a radically unorthodox theory of poetic vocabulary. Both confessed to the experimental nature of this early work. There are even some similarities of subject-matter in the first successful productions of both. For instance, we find an almost Wordsworthian concern with inarticulate human suffering in some of MacDiarmid's 'early lyrics': 'The Love-Sick Lass' (C.P. I, p. 55), 'The Widower' (C.P. I, p. 56) and 'Servant Girl's Bed' (C.P. I, p. 65) extend towards simple people grappling with powerful emotions an imaginative sympathy such as is encountered in Lyrical Ballads. 'The Currant Bush' (C.P. I, p. 46) and 'Empty Vessel' (C.P. I, p. 66) recall something of the pathos, and even of the situations, of 'The Thorn' and 'The Mad Mother'.¹⁵

It is in mid-career that MacDiarmid's poetry most closely resembles Wordsworth's. The 'stone poetry' of the Stony Limits collection, with its anguished insistence that 'every energumen' must become an 'Endymion' ('On a Raised Beach', C.P. I, p. 423), shares the Lake poet's concern with the petrification of youthful powers in middle age. The Leech Gatherer in Wordsworth's 'Resolution and Independence' might be described as one who has

shed the encumbrances that muffle
Contact with elemental things, the subtleties
That seem inseparable from a humane life

('On a Raised Beach', C.P. I, p. 428)

and gone

Into a simple and sterner, more beautiful
and more oppressive world,
Austerely intoxicating.

('On a Raised Beach', C.P. I, p. 428)

It is interesting that Wordsworth uses lithic imagery to describe the old man:

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
Couched on the bald top of an eminence;
Wonder to all who do the same espy,
By what means it could thither come, and
whence...16

'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' is the central middle-length poem of Wordsworth's maturity. 'On A Raised Beach' occupies a similar position in the MacDiarmid canon. The English poet was thirty-two when he began composing the one, the Scot almost a decade older when he wrote the other. (MacDiarmid considered himself a 'slow ripener' (L.P., p. 227), attributing the tardiness of his development to the 'provincialization' of Scotland.) A major aspect of both poems is a recognition of the insufficiency of the myths whereby the authors had flourished in young manhood to sustain them imaginatively in middle age. Both suggest that spiritual desolation is a necessary condition of cogniscent adulthood. Both poems imply a connection between loss of lyrical impulse and the collapse of the earlier sustaining vision. At one point, tone and phrase in MacDiarmid's poem recall Wordsworth's in evoking the landscape of maturity. The English poet had addressed the six-year old Hartley Coleridge as the 'Mighty Prophet' on whom

those truths do rest
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave.¹⁷

The Scot insists that it is necessary to

keep an open mind,
A mind as open as the grave.

(C.P. I, p. 430)

Even formally the poems resemble one another - is not 'On A Raised Beach' a somewhat ragged-edged Irregular Pindaric Ode? There are, of course, important differences between the two pieces. MacDiarmid's is at once less nostalgic and considerably more bleak than Wordsworth's. The intimations that come to him as he surveys his Shetland storm beach are, overwhelmingly, of mortality. It might be argued that these differences have as much to do with the dissimilar intellectual climates of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as they have with the psychological dispositions of Wordsworth and MacDiarmid.

Both David Craig and Kenneth Buthlay have adverted in passing to similarities between The Muckle Toon and The Prelude (see above, p. 358). Wordsworth declared the theme of his work to be 'the growth of

the poet's mind', while MacDiarmid explained that Clann Albann would concern itself with 'the evolution of my mentality and development as a poet' (M.T., p. 236). The Prelude and The Muckle Toon were thought of by their authors as merely the opening parts of truly vast works. The Recluse, or Views on Man, Nature and Society was no less sketchily planned than Clann Albann, even if, in addition to The Prelude, Book I of Part I of the proposed three-part work did see the light of day as 'Home at Grasmere', and the lengthy Part II appeared in 1814 as The Excursion. There is something of MacDiarmid's grand, disarming casualness in the English poet's avowal that, 'indeed', he knew 'not anything which will not come within the scope of my plan'.¹⁸

Not only has Clann Albann 'a distinctly romantic look about it, with a suggestion of Wordsworth's Prelude' (above, p. 358), but some of the individual Muckle Toon poems echo lines by the English poet or otherwise recall his work. All these echoes are noted in the Commentary. It is sufficient to point out here that two of the pieces develop a characteristic Romantic theme which first gained expression in such poems by Wordsworth as 'Resolution and Independence'

and the 'Intimations' Ode . 'The Burning Passion' (C.P. ', p. 303; M.T., p. 139) and 'The Point of Honour' (C.P. I, p. 387, M.T., p. 166) are concerned with a crisis of inspiration.

The first of these, perhaps more than any other poem in The Muckle Toon, demonstrates the originality of MacDiarmid's mind. From the conventionally Romantic starting point of despondency at the unreliability of inspiration and the indifference of mankind to his struggles, the poet works to a wholly MacDiarmidian dénouement, namely the proposal that Marxist revolution will ensure the perpetual openness of both the poet and his hitherto indifferent fellows to creative forces:

Wanted a technique for genius! Or, at least,
 A means whereby a' genius yet has done
 'll be the stertin' point o' a' men's lives,
 No' zero, as if life had scarce begun,
 But to owrecome this death sae faur ben in
 Maist folk needs the full floo'er o' Lenin.

(C.P. I, p. 305; M.T., p. 140)

That is a brazenly twentieth-century solution to a problem first posed early in the nineteenth.

The presence of Wordsworth is more readily detectable behind 'The Point of Honour', subtitled On watching the Esk again. Like 'Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey', this poem involves a return to a river-scene associated with the unreflective vigour of the poet's youth:

Once, with my boy's body little I knew
 But her furious thresh on my flesh;
 But now I can know her through and through
 And, light like, her tide enmesh.

(C.P. I, p. 388; M.T., p. 164)

Wordsworth began work on his poem immediately after leaving Tintern and completed it four days later. MacDiarmid drafted his poem in Sussex, years after he had last seen the Esk. There are differences of detail in the poets' relationships with their favoured riversides, too. Wordsworth's first visit to the Wye in 1793 took place at an intermediate stage in his development, when the days of his 'glad animal movements' were already in the past, but when he was still enjoying 'thoughtless youth'.¹⁹ The Scottish poet simply contrasts his headlong boyish delight in the river with his mature artistic capacity to wed 'words to her waves' (l. 23, C.P. I, p. 388; M.T., p. 164). This brash boast of poetic wizardry is

followed, however, by an admission - the pessimism of which, as Buthlay has pointed out, is 'very unusual in MacDiarmid'²⁰ - that the stream has 'suddenly' been carried out of his range (l. 118-9, C.P. I, p. 391; M.T., p. 167). The 'survival' of 'the intellectual flame' (l. 71, C.P. I, p. 389; M.T., p. 165) is the most nearly 'abundant recompense'²¹ that the poet can find for his loss. The comparison of the poetic impulse to the swift waters of the Esk is central to this poem and comprises a key aspect of the Water of Life symbol in The Muckle Toon generally. Wordsworth does not take the Wye as a symbol of inspiration in 'Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey'. Even the wonderful evocation of the music of the Derwent in Book I of The Prelude stops short of likening the movement of that 'bright blue river'²² to the flow of the poet's creative energy. But the picturing of the lyrical impulse as a 'rush of water', which is central to the imaginative universe of both MacDiarmid and his American contemporary William Carlos Williams, has a Wordsworthian prototype in the celebrated phrase from the Preface to Lyrical Ballads, 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'.²³

Indeed the Preface is mockingly cited in 'The Point of Honour' where the poet rails against

emotions forgotten in tranquillity.
Seductive solutions. genteel clarities....

(ll. 57-8, C.P. I, p. 389; M.T., p. 165)

We have encountered MacDiarmid's attempt to harness the vocabulary of science in an effort to create a poetry which would 'join issue at every point with modern intellection' (above, pp. 165-6, and 251-2). His endeavours in this regard clearly accord with Wordsworth's suggestion that poets of the future would 'follow the steps of the Man of Science... carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of...Science itself'.²⁴ Edwin Morgan has noted that much of MacDiarmid's later poetry constitutes a 'practical exploration'²⁵ of ideals set out in the Preface:

The remotest discoveries of the Chemist,
the Botanist, or Mineralogist, will be
as proper objects of the Poet's art as
any upon which it can be employed, if
the time should ever come when these
things shall be familiar to us, and
the relations under which they are
contemplated by the followers of these
respective Sciences shall be manifestly
and palpably material to us as enjoying
and suffering beings.²⁶

MacDiarmid's 'synthetic English' was motivated in part by a desire to make 'manifestly and palpably material' to his readers 'the relations under which' the 'remotest discoveries' of Science are 'contemplated'. The conditions visualised by the English poet had not yet come about by MacDiarmid's life-time, but, with typical intemperance, the Scot endeavoured to steal a march on history by writing as if they had.

I have tried to suggest significant points of comparison between the poetry of Wordsworth and MacDiarmid, and between the minds that produced that poetry. However it is not my wish to cloak the very real divergences between the sensibilities of these two men of genius. 'The Ruined Cottage' and 'On a Raised Beach' may share an austerity of outlook which has few parallels in the poetry of the English language, but it is an austerity which typifies only one aspect of MacDiarmid's mentality. The legendary humourlessness of Wordsworth is reflected in the sublime aspirations of his poetry. The Scottish poet's characteristic sense of fun may have gained no outlet in the English work of the early Shetland period, but is amply manifested - in grotesque,

genial or satirical guise - elsewhere in the poetry. It is seen at its best in A Drunk Man, where it is a function of the drunkenness of the protagonist. Indeed nothing could be less Wordsworthian than MacDiarmid's attitude towards inebriety. What could the author of A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle and the English poet who once, as an undergraduate, let his brain become 'clouded by the fumes of wine' and was ever after guilty about the lapse²⁷, have said to each other on the subject?

The work of Percy Bysshe Shelley bears many resemblances to the poetry produced by MacDiarmid in the early thirties. One might not expect to find significant points of contact between the aggressive Scottish nationalist poet and the Romantic described by Matthew Arnold as an 'ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain'²⁸. These typifications, however, conceal a number of very suggestive affinities between the two poets. MacDiarmid has been called by David Daiches 'the greatest example in modern history of the Poet as Rebel'.²⁹ If by 'modern history' Professor Daiches means the twentieth century, it may not be overly difficult to agree with him, but if the nineteenth century is included in the reckoning then Shelley must give MacDiarmid a very close run for

the subversive honours. Both men were political activists who devoted much of their literary energies to the production of controversial essays and broadsides. (It might be said that the English poet incurred greater risk as a controversialist than the Scot, given the repressive nature of British political structures in the early nineteenth century.) Both poets used verse as a medium for propaganda: such poems as 'The Mask of Anarchy' and 'Men of England' provide a measure of the failure of the would-be popular, engagé pieces we find on some of the pages of the Stony Limits and Second Hymn collections. Both, like Coleridge, were intellectuals who, to a far greater degree than that writer, wove a concern with abstract ideas into the fabric of their verse. Indeed the very ideas which attracted Shelley and MacDiarmid were similar. Here were two visionary poets haunted by a perception of the need to emancipate humanity. For both the hoped-for emancipation had a political aspect but was ultimately a spiritual matter. In the mature poetry of the two men a shrewd sense of the unlikelihood of human liberation coexists with the desire to effect it. Both writers saw a key role for the prophetic visionary in mankind's struggle towards fulfilment. Shelley called him the 'poet', MacDiarmid, the

'genius'.³⁰ Herbert Read described Prometheus Unbound as 'the greatest expression ever given to humanity's desire for intellectual light and spiritual liberty', and speculated that the poem might one day 'take its commanding place in a literature of freedom of which we have yet no conception'.³¹ Shelley's book might be joined in such a 'literature of freedom' by 'The Seamless Garment', 'Whuchulls', the longer 'Water of Life' and passages from 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' - in other words by much of the finest poetry in The Muckle Toon.

Not only do many of the ideas in MacDiarmid's poetry approximate to those in Shelley's, the attitude towards ideas in the work of both writers is very similar. For example, in the following stanza from 'First Hymn to Lenin' MacDiarmid gives expression to a passionate skepticism very close to that which we find in Shelley:

Churchills, Locker-Lampsons, Beaverbrooks'll be
 In history's perspective less to you
 (And them!) than the Centurions to Christ
 Of whom, as you, at least this muckle's true
 - 'Tho' pairtly wrang he cam' to richt amang's
 Faur greater wrangs'.

(C.P. I, p. 297; M.T., p. 98)

Compare these lines to the following note appended to one of the choruses in Hellas:

The popular notions of Christianity are represented in this chorus as true in their relation to the worship they superseded, and that which in all probability they will supersede, without considering their merits in a relation more universal.³²

The sense of the provisional nature of all ideas which is central to the mature poetry of Shelley is recalled in 'Clann Albann: An Explanation', where MacDiarmid observes that 'All ideas are ...provisional and liable to changes such as those between the notions of a lad and a grown man...' (M.T., pp. 239-40). That sense gains memorable expression in 'On a Raised Beach', where we are told that

all the ideas
That madden men now must lose their potency in
a few years
And be replaced by others - even as all the
religions,
All the material sacrifices and moral restraints,
That in twenty thousand years have brought us no
nearer to God
Are irrelevant to the ordered adjustments
Out of reach of perceptive understanding
Forever taking place on the Earth and in the
unthinkable regions around it....

(C.P. I, p. 426)

Similarly on encountering Shelley's concern with the 'verge where words abandon us'³³, the student of MacDiarmid has the sensation of being on familiar terrain. We have noted earlier the absorption with his own mental processes which is evident in the Scot's work, most clearly in the prose of Annals of the Five Senses but in much of the major poetry as well (above, pp. 145-60). The following extract from Richard Holmes' study, Shelley: The Pursuit, indicates that the English poet harboured a similar obsession:

He was both fascinated and terrified by the workings of his own mind viewed in solitude. Though his work almost never became realistically autobiographical in the sense of Wordsworth's Prelude, or studiously self-analytic in the mode of Coleridge's poems, nevertheless the secret workings of his own personality and the half-hidden movements of his mind at a subconscious level, were for him an ever-deepening source of imagery, and poetic myth-making.³⁴

There is no doubt that MacDiarmid was familiar with Shelley's work. Consider the Drunk Man's outburst of impatience with the Scots language:

God gied man speech and speech created thocht,
He gied man speech but to the Scots gied nocht.
Barrin this clytach....

(C.P. I, p. 115)

This echoes ironically Asia's defence of Prometheus in Act II Scene IV of Prometheus Unbound:

He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the universe.³⁵

The title 'Scots Unbound' (C.P. I, p. 340) recalls that of Shelley's 'lyrical drama', but it is the language rather than the people of Scotland that MacDiarmid proposes to liberate in his 'Divertissement Philologique'. There is much of Shelley, too, in the Scottish poet's conception of the aims and scope of poetry. His insistent claim (see above, pp. 164-6) that 'the function of art is the extension of human consciousness' approximates in content and even in terminology to Shelley's statement in A Defence of Poetry that literature 'enlarges the circumference of the imagination'.³⁶ (We have seen that what MacDiarmid calls 'consciousness' in The Muckle Toon has much in common with what the Romantics termed 'imagination' (above, pp. 531-2).) 'Second Hymn to Lenin' is MacDiarmid's 'defence of poetry' against the demands of mechanistic Marxism. The notion of poetry developed there - that of a quintessentially human power which encompasses and transcends merely contingent aspects of existence - is very Shelleyan:

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Ah, Lenin, you were richt. But I'm a poet
 (And you c'ud mak allowances for that!)
 Aimin' at mair than you aimed at
 Though yours comes first, I know it.

(C.P. I, p. 323; M.T., p. 141)

...

The sailor gangs owre the curve o' the sea,
The hoosewife's thrang in the wash-tub,
And whatna rhyme can I find but hub,
And what else can poetry be?

The core o' a' activity,
Changin't in accordance wi'
Its inward necessity
And mede o' integrity.

Unremittin', relentless,
 Organised to the last degree,
 Ah, Lenin, politics is bairns' play
 To what this maun be!

(C.P. I, p. 328; M.T., p. 145)

Is MacDiarmid not here warning the architect of the
 most convulsive revolution in modern history that
 poets must still remain 'legislators of the world'?

NOTES

... of the second volume of the present study.

NOTES

PREFATORY

1: Letter from Grieve to George Ogilvie, August 20th 1916. Grieve's letters to Ogilvie are kept in the National Library of Scotland.

2: 'Whuchulls' (C.P. II, p. 1089; M.T., p. 153) appeared in the Modern Scot, Vol. III, No. 4 (January 1933).

'The Glass of Pure Water' (C.P. II, p. 1941) was first published in the Canadian Forum, Vol. XVII, No. 198 (July 1937). e/

3: 'Clann Albann: An Explanation', which appeared in the Scots Observer on August 12th 1933, is reproduced on pp. 234-40 of the second volume of the present study.

4: Indeed the exception, 'First Love' (C.P. I, p. 434; M.T., p. 95), can be ascribed to the scheme with rather less confidence than most of the other poems. See Commentary, pp. 357-8.

5: Hugh MacDiarmid, Scots Unbound and other poems (Stirling, 1932), Author's Note.

6: See Duncan Glen, Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve) and the Scottish Renaissance (Edinburgh, 1964), pp. 215-6.

7: See Kenneth Buthlay, Hugh MacDiarmid (C. M. Grieve) (Edinburgh and London, 1964), pp. 63-71.

8: See W. R. Aitken, 'Hugh MacDiarmid's "Unpublished" Books: A Bibliographical Exploration', in Of One Accord: Essays in Honour of W. B. Paton, edited by Frank McAdams (Glasgow, 1977), pp. 57-72 (pp.61-3,65-7).

9: Ann Edwards Boutelle, Thistle and Rose: A Study of Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry (Loanhead, 1980).

10: Collected Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid (New York, February 1962 and Edinburgh, August 1962); revised edition with enlarged glossary prepared by John.C. Weston (New York, 1967).

11: Thistle and Rose, p. 10.

12: Catherine Kerrigan, Whaur Extremes Meet: The Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid 1920-1934 (Edinburgh, 1983).

13: 'MacDiarmid the Marxist Poet', in David Craig, The Real Foundations: Literature and Social Change (London, 1973), pp. 230-53. An earlier version of this essay was published in 1962 (see Hugh MacDiarmid: a festschrift, edited by K. D. Duval and Sydney Goodsir Smith (Edinburgh), pp. 87-99) and collected in Hugh MacDiarmid: A Critical Survey, edited by Duncan Glen (Edinburgh, 1972), pp. 155-67.

14: 'MacDiarmid the Marxist Poet', p. 237.

15: 'MacDiarmid the Marxist Poet', pp. 252-3.

16: 'From Work in Progress' (C.P. II, p. 1147; M.T., p. 10) was published in the Modern Scot, Vol. II, No. 2, in July 1931. First Hymn to Lenin and other poems appeared the following December.

17: 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton' (C.P. I, p. 331; M.T., p.150) appeared in Scots Unbound and other poems in the autumn of 1932, 'Whuchulls' (C.P. II, p. 1089; M.T., p. 153) in the Modern Scot, Vol. III, No. 4, the following January.

18: 'MacDiarmid the Marxist Poet', p. 253.

19: David Craig, 'Hugh MacDiarmid's Peak', in Scottish Literary Journal, Vol. 5, No. 2 (December 1978), pp. 36-49.

20: 'Hugh MacDiarmid's Peak', p. 45.

21: Alan Bold, MacDiarmid: The Terrible Crystal (London, 1983).

22: Harvey Oxenhorn, Elemental Things: The Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid (Edinburgh, 1984).

23: Nancy K. Gish, Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work (London, 1984).

24: MacDiarmid: The Terrible Crystal, p. 242.

25: "'With a Lifting of the Head'" (C.P. I, p. 489; M.T., p. 172). See above, pp. 137-8.

CHAPTER ONE

1: We are told in Lucky Poet (p. 4) that Grieve, while still in his early teens, defended 'the claim of... Mickle...to the authorship of "There's nae luck about the hoose"' in the pages of the Eskdale and Liddesdale Advertiser.

2: See John Carey, 'Chronology of James Hogg', in James Hogg, The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner, edited with an introduction by John Carey (Oxford, 1981), pp. xxxi-xxxiii (p. xxxi) for Hogg's connection with Laidlaw.

3: 'Jamie Telfer of the Fair Dodhead', in A Book of Scottish Verse, selected by R. L. Mackie, 2nd Edition: The selection revised with a new introduction by Maurice Lindsay (London, 1968), pp. 131-8 (p. 133).

4: See Ruth McQuillan, 'MacDiarmid's Clann Albann: A Study in the Poetic Development of C. M. Grieve', Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1973, pp. 19-20, for a discussion of the Grieve family's sojourn on the western side of the Esk.

5: See 'MacDiarmid's Clann Albann', p. 22, for a description of the library and its contents.

6: See 'MacDiarmid's Clann Albann', pp. 21-4.

7: Quoted in Alan Bold, MacDiarmid: The Terrible Crystal (London, 1983), p. 24.

8: See, e.g., Ronald Stevenson, Western Music: an introduction (New York, 1971), p. 178.

9: See 'MacDiarmid's Clann Albann', p. 265.

10: See, e.g., 'At the Graveside' (C.P. I, p. 541), where the biblical:

(T)he eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth
(Proverbs 17 : 24)

is scornfully echoed in the line:

The eyes of fools are on the ends of God.

11: For the chronology of Cairncross's stay in Langholm I am indebted to MacDiarmid: The Terrible Crystal, p. 22.

12: See Christopher Harvie, Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics, 1707-1977 (London, 1977), p.86.

13: See 'The Caledonian Antisyzygy', in Hugh MacDiarmid, Scottish Eccentrics (London, 1936), pp. 284-319.

14: Chapter II of Lucky Poet is entitled 'Portrait of a Guttersnipe'.

15: Quoted in Timothy Neat, 'The Langholm Common Riding', in Seer, III (June 1980), pp. 41-9 (p. 47).

16: Neil McCallum, quoted in F. Marian McNeill, The Silver Bough. Volume Four: The Local Festivals of Scotland (Glasgow, 1968), p. 37. There is a valuable account of the Langholm Common Riding on pp. 135-9 of McNeill's book.

17: The Town Arms are described as follows:

Azure, a saltire argent; between - in chief, a thistle slipped proper, imperially crowned or; on the dexter, a spade in pale, blade upwards, wreathed with heather proper; on the sinister, a wooden platter surmounted in turn of a salt herring paleways, and marked with the letter B on each side of the herring; and in base a toison or.

('MacDiarmid's Clann Albann', p. 319)

18: 'The Langholm Common Riding', p. 45.

19: 'The Langholm Common Riding', p. 45.

20: See Ruth McQuillan, 'A Look at the Langholm Thistle', in Calgacus, Vol. I, No. 3(Spring 1976), pp. 14-7.

21: So Dr. Ruth McQuillan, who has spoken to many of the poet's Langholm contemporaries, assures me.

22: Michael Grieve, the poet's son, has told me that his father usually referred to Andrew as 'Graham'.

23: Ann Edwards Boutelle, Thistle and Rose: A Study of Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry (Loanhead, 1980), p. 20.

24: Thistle and Rose, p. 20.

25: In Lines Review, No. 7 (January 1955).

26: Letter from Grieve to George Ogilvie, August 20th 1916, National Library of Scotland.

27: 'The Psycho-somatic Quandary' was used as the title of one of the sections of A Drunk Man when that poem was broken into separate lyrics and discursive passages for the Collected Poems. See Collected Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid (New York, February 1962 and Edinburgh, August 1962); revised edition with enlarged glossary prepared by John C. Weston (New York, 1967), p. 82.

28: 'John Davidson: Influences and Influence', in Selected Essays of Hugh MacDiarmid, edited with an introduction by Duncan Glen (London, 1969), pp. 197-204 (p. 197). This essay originally appeared in John Davidson: a Selection of His Poems, edited by Maurice Lindsay (London, 1961).

29: For an account of Grieve's Broughton years see Catherine Kerrigan, Whaur Extremes Meet: The Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid 1920-1934 (Edinburgh, 1983), pp. 13-6.

30: Letter from Grieve to George Ogilvie, April 28th 1918, National Library of Scotland.

31: See Whaur Extremes Meet, p. 16.

32: See, e.g., Thistle and Rose, p. 52, and MacDiarmid: The Terrible Crystal, p. 61.

33: Undated letter to Ogilvie, National Library of Scotland. Internal evidence suggests this letter was composed before a dated one of October 24th 1911.

34: This narrative is pieced together from Grieve's own account in a letter to Ogilvie dated September 25th 1921. The letter appears to have been misdated. November 25th seems, on internal evidence, a more likely date.

35: Letter from Grieve to Ogilvie, August 29th 1916, National Library of Scotland.

36: Letter from Grieve to Ogilvie, August ~~29~~th 1916, o/
National Library of Scotland.

37: See 'MacDiarmid's Clann Albann', p. 100.

38: A week's holiday spent in Selkirk in October 1921 provided the poet with an opportunity of visiting Langholm (see letter to Ogilvie, October 27th 1921, National Library of Scotland). There is no indication that he availed of it.

39: Letter from Grieve to Neil M. Gunn, February 28th 1927. The poet's letters to Gunn are kept in the National Library of Scotland.

40: Letter to Blackwoods, July 29th 1927. Grieve's letters to William Blackwood and Sons are kept in the National Library of Scotland.

41: 'Murtholm Hill' (M.T., p. 180) appeared in the Scots Magazine of April 1927.

'Old Miss Beattie' (M.T., p. 71) was published in the Gallovidian Annual, 1927.

'A Dish o' Whumple' (M.T., p. 173), 'A'Body's Lassie' (M.T., p. 203) and 'The Visitor' (M.T., p. 221) appeared in the Scots Observer on March 19th, May 14th and October 1st 1927 respectively.

The following are the Glasgow Herald stories:

'The Common Riding' (<u>M.T.</u> , p. 27)	March 12th
'The Waterside' (<u>M.T.</u> , p. 193)	April 16th
'The Moon Through Glass' (<u>M.T.</u> , p. 213)	July 16th
'Maria' (<u>M.T.</u> , p. 82)	August 27th
'Andy' (<u>M.T.</u> , p. 43)	October 22nd

42: "'Holie for Nags"' (M.T., p. 228) was published in the Scots Observer on September 22nd 1928.

43: Kenneth Buthlay, Hugh MacDiarmid (C.M. Grieve) (Edinburgh and London, 1964), p. 79.

44: Hugh MacDiarmid (C.M. Grieve), pp. 78-80. This consideration of the stories has been dropped from the revised version of Buthlay's book (Edinburgh, 1982).

45: Letter from Grieve to Ogilvie, December 9th 1926, National Library of Scotland.

46: These details are taken from a letter from Grieve to Ogilvie, August 20th 1916 (National Library of Scotland), and from Gordon Wright, MacDiarmid: An Illustrated Biography (Edinburgh, 1977) p. 8.

47: Letter from Grieve to Ogilvie, January 15th 1923.

48: Undated letter to Ogilvie, National Library of Scotland. Internal evidence suggests the letter was written late in 1925.

49: There is no clear rationale behind the poet's deployment of his best-known pseudonym. For instance, 'Dante and Douglas' (C.P. II, p. 1262; M.T., p. 169) is presented as a poem by 'Grieve' on the same page as three lyrics by 'MacDiarmid' - 'In the Langfall' (C.P. II, p. 1269; M.T., p. 159), 'Yellow Belly' (C.P. II, p. 1270) and 'North and South' (C.P. II, p. 1271) - in the Free Man of April 8th 1933. The same poem was attributed to 'MacDiarmid' on its original publication in the New English Weekly on December 8th 1932.

50: These details regarding the composition of the lyrics and A Drunk Man are based on conversations I conducted with the poet at Brownsbank in March 1976 and March 1977.

51: Sydney Goodsir Smith, 'MacDiarmid's Three Hymns to Lenin', in Hugh MacDiarmid: A Critical Survey, edited by Duncan Glen (Edinburgh, 1972), pp. 141-54 (p. 147).

52: Letter from Grieve to Neil M. Gunn, December 14th 1926, National Library of Scotland.

53: Letter from Grieve to Ogilvie, December 9th 1926, National Library of Scotland.

54: Undated letter to Ogilvie, probably early 1925,
National Library of Scotland.

55: Undated letter to Ogilvie, probably late 1925, National
Library of Scotland.

56: Letter to Ogilvie, August 6th 1926, National Library
of Scotland.

57: Willa Muir, Belonging (London, 1968), pp. 116-8.

58: Grieve wrote to Neil M. Gunn on June 22nd 1926:
I had an unexpected spasm which produced 25 poems
for a new collection of lyrics...which I propose
to call "The Lucky Bag".

(National Library of Scotland)

59: Letter from Grieve to Blackwoods, February 7th 1929,
National Library of Scotland.

60: Neither The Hundred Best Scots Poems, for which the
poet submitted a suggestion on July 29th 1927, nor
Towards a Scottish Renaissance 1919-29, for which he
offered a prospectus on February 27th 1929, was ever
published. See letters from Grieve to Blackwoods for
above dates, National Library of Scotland.

(G.P. I, p. 250).

61: Letter from Grieve to Blackwoods, August 16th 1929, National Library of Scotland. Written in another hand at the top of the letter is 'M.S. recd 17/8/29'.

62: The second volume of Clann Albann was to have the same title as the unpublished collection of 1929 (see Commentary, pp.498-9). It does not follow that there was any correspondence in content between the two proposed books. Of the many instances of MacDiarmid's use of the same title for different works, that of 'The Muckle Toon' for a short-story collection of 1927 and for the first volume of Clann Albann some years later is perhaps the most pertinent here.

63: See letters from Grieve to Blackwoods, September 2nd 1929 and April 5th 1930, and from Blackwoods to Grieve April 7th 1930 (National Library of Scotland).

64: For poems ascribed to Fier Comme un Ecossais see the following issues of the Pictish Review:

Vol. I, No. 7 (May 1928):

p. 78: 'A Scotsman's Heaven' (C.P. II, p. 1247)

p. 82: 'Dedication: To Christine': This lyric - which begins, 'There's owre mony killywimples in your singin'' - was reprinted without a title in Cencrastus (C.P. I, p. 250).

Vol. I, No. 8 (June 1928)

p. 87: 'The Conventional Scot and the Creative Spirit': The two stanzas included in this prose piece were reproduced in Cencrastus. See lyric beginning, 'The Muse to whom his hert is given' (C.P. I, p. 207). 'Muse' was printed with a lower-case 'm' in the Pictish Review.

p.88: 'Scottish Poet's Wealth': This poem - which begins, 'He has nae treasure in his pooch' - appeared in Cencrastus without a title (C.P. I, p. 252).

p. 89: 'The Celtic Sunrise' (C.P. II, p. 1248).

65: In addition to two Muckle Toon pieces - 'Religion and the Scottish Renaissance' (M.T., p. 65) and 'John Davidson' (M.T., p. 93) - I came upon the following not inconsiderable poem:

PARLEY OF BEASTS

I thank Thee, Lord, for Rupprecht oor Prince
And for clipshear, emmet, and black pishminny;
For forms o' life like sae muckle mince,
For a' men see - and a' they dinna;
And watch the haill o' the world agog
- Like readin' a paper in the "bog".

Mankind are few and ha'e little space
In a world that's maistly ta'en up wi' the lave..
Clouds o' fleas can crêpe the sun's face,
Mair than London's inhabitants teem ilka wave.
I praise Thee for a'thing birthfuller than men;
For ane o' us you mak' millions o' them.

Parley o' beasts? But what shall we parley?
 Maist men ken little o' beasts the day.
 A dog or a cat we may ken, but hardly.
 O' the lave o' creation and best we ha'e
 But a glisk; a jeissle; a trevelling menagerie;
 A Noah's Ark; a kind o' kedgerie.

Novalis was richt and here in an auchen,
 In a handfu' o' stour, unco patterns I see,
 Ciphers o' creation - it's nae use talkin';
 They weave in an endless riddle-ma-ree,
 Brandit wi' brent gowd, brounet, or pied
 Wi' a' the colours we've ever descried.

I leave it to ithers you aiblins inspire
 In a different way to deem something they see
 Your private parlicue and roost it higher
 By their diligent love till it comes to be
 The centre o' the Universe, that angels attend
 In its maikless place world withoot end.

An attercap can be dilate thus
 Till it trawls the void wi' its lyart net,
 A foggie-toddler fill the sun wi' its fuss,
 A fit on ilka star a millipede set,
 But it isna for my imagination
 To exaggerate or alter onything's station.

The average mind dulled by the greedy demands
 O' shortsighted life is driven away
 Frae what's benmaist to it and understands
 Its true possessions nae langer, and sae
 Is flegt if it sees in some quiet minute
 Mair than usual o' nature, and the prodigies in it.

I praise Thee, Lord, for lion and lamb,
 Eagle and serpent and a' that I've seen
 Only pictures o', or been forced to cram
 My mind wi' mere names o' - praise for gi'en
 Swarms sma' or unseen for ilka cratur o' size;
 And praise for the worms to whom I'm devise.

A'thing cashdireach, caschrom, minute, immense,
 Peacefu', monotonous for the maist pairt, followin'
 Their destiny wi' a wisdom deeper than men's,
 Wireworms, sclaters, - buneuchs o' creation!
 Tho' neist to nocht o't to us is unfurled
Te deum laudamus for your hotchin' world!

No author's name was appended to this poem on its appearance in the Free Man of June 24th 1933 (p.5). The issue of July 1st 1933, however, carried the following note (p. 12):

We regret that in our issue of last week the author's name was omitted from the poem, "Parley of Beasts", which was written by Hugh MacDairmid (sic). - Ed.

66: Scott's letters to Grieve are kept in Edinburgh University Library.

67: A letter from Grieve to Ogilvie dated January 30th 1928 mentions three 'volumes of lyrics' which appear never to have been sent to a publisher:

I am...working away at several volumes of lyrics - "Demidium Anima Mea" (sic); "Maidenkirk to John O' Groats" ... and "Songs for Christine".

(National Library of Scotland)

For a valuable discussion of these projected books see Ruth McQuillan, 'The Complete MacDiarmid', in Studies in Scottish Literature, Volume XVIII (1983), pp.177-209 (pp. 189-91).

68: MacDiarmid: The Terrible Crystal, pp. 89-90.

69: Letter from F. G. Scott to Maurice Lindsay, dated May 29th 1945, quoted in Kenneth Buthlay, 'The Scotched

'Snake', in The Age of MacDiarmid: Essays on Hugh MacDiarmid and his influence on contemporary Scotland, edited by P. H. Scott and A. C. Davis (Edinburgh, 1980), pp. 122-56 (p. 127).

70: Letter from Grieve to Blackwoods, February 7th 1929, National Library of Scotland.

71: Letter from Grieve to Blackwoods, August 16th 1929, National Library of Scotland.

72: In a postscript to his letter to Blackwoods of September 2nd 1929 (National Library of Scotland) Grieve wrote:

After the 9th inst. my address will be
18 Pyrland Road
London, N.5.

73: 'Hammer and Thistle: Hugh MacDiarmid, Scottish Writer and Politician', Hugh MacDiarmid interviewed by Micheál Ó hUanacháin, 1973, 1977, broadcast in The Arts Programme, R.T.E. Radio, February 23rd 1978.

74: 'Hammer and Thistle'.

75: 'Hammer and Thistle'.

76: Letter from Grieve to Helen B. Cruickshank, April 30th 1930. The poet's letters to Cruickshank are kept in Edinburgh University Library.

77: Letter from Grieve to Ogilvie, December 16th 1930, National Library of Scotland.

78: Letter from Grieve to Ogilvie, December 16th 1930, National Library of Scotland.

79: Undated letter from Grieve to Neil M. Gunn, National Library of Scotland.

80: See letters from Grieve to Neil M. Gunn, July 31st and September 12th 1930, National Library of Scotland.

81: L. 87 of 'From Work in Progress' (C.P. II, p. 1149; M.T., p. 12) proclaims that MacDiarmid was 'sittin' in Liverpool' as he composed the poem.

82: Letter from Grieve to Helen B. Cruickshank, August 10th 1932, Edinburgh University Library.

83: In a letter sent to Blackwoods from an Edinburgh address on May 15th 1931 Grieve wrote of the loss of his Liverpool position and declared his intention of returning to his wife and children within a few days (National Library of Scotland). He appears to have stayed at 18 Pyrland Road, the Grieve family's north London address, until September 1931. A letter to Gunn, dated the 4th of that month, shows him still at Pyrland Road. A further letter to the same correspondent, dated September 9th, is addressed from the office of the Unicorn Press. (The poet's letters to Neil M. Gunn are kept in the National Library of Scotland).

84: Compton MacKenzie, in the Modern Scot of January 1931, quoted in 'The Scotched Snake', p. 128.

85: Letter from Grieve to George Ogilvie, December 16th 1930, National Library of Scotland.

86: Letter from Grieve to Neil M. Gunn, January 12th 1931, National Library of Scotland.

87: Letter from Grieve to William Soutar, March 19th 1931, National Library of Scotland.

88: Letter from Grieve to Neil M. Gunn, March 13th 1931, National Library of Scotland.

89: See letter to Soutar, February 21st 1931, National Library of Scotland, and letter to Gunn, March 13th 1931, National Library of Scotland.

89a: A recently-published letter sent by Grieve to Compton Mackenzie on September 7th 1931 confirms that Clann Albann was indeed MacDiarmid's 'Scots Faust'. See The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid, edited with an introduction by Alan Bold (London, 1984), p. 404.

90: Quoted in Goethe, Faust/Part Two, translated with an introduction by Philip Wayne (Harmondsworth, 1959), Introduction, p. 18.

91: Goethe to Eckermann, quoted in Great Writings of Goethe, edited with an introduction by Stephen Spender (New York, 1958), Introduction, p. xi.

92: 'Hugh MacDiarmid Defends And is Defended', the Scots Observer, January 7th 1933, p. 11. Valda Trevlyn's letter, dated December 25th 1932 and addressed from Bude in Cornwall, is written in a style markedly similar to the poet's own.

102: 'Clan Albann and Other Matters', pp. 7-8.

93: Letter from Grieve to Jessie B. MacArthur,
February 25th 1931, National Library of Scotland.

94: Gordon Bottomley, review of To Circumjack Cencrastus,
the Modern Scot, Vol. I, No. 4 (January 1931), pp. 60-4
(p. 64).

95: Denis Saurat, review of To Circumjack Cencrastus,
the Modern Scot, Vol. I, No. 4 (January 1931), pp. 64-6.

96: See MacDiarmid: The Terrible Crystal, p. 240.

97: The others are F.G.Scott, Kaikhosru Sorabji and
Oliver St. John Gogarty.

98: The Modern Scot, Vol. II, No. 2, p.107.

99: C.M.Grieve, 'Clan Albainn and Other Matters', in
the Modern Scot, Vol. I, No. 2 (July 1930), pp. 7-10.

100: Letter from Grieve to Helen B. Cruickshank,
June 14th 1930, Edinburgh University Library.

101: Undated letter from Grieve to Neil M. Gunn,
National Library of Scotland. Internal evidence
suggests the letter was composed in July 1930.

102: 'Clan Albainn and Other Matters', pp. 7-8.

103: See Sean Cronin, The McGarrity Papers: Revelations of the Irish revolutionary movement in Ireland and America 1900-1940 (Tralee, 1972), passim.

104: 'Clan Albainn and Other Matters', p. 8.

105: Writing in the Spring 1931 issue of the Modern Scot, the poet struggled to give the impression that Clan Albainn had indeed begun to act:

Clann Albann is surely if slowly growing and maturing its plans. Let there be no mistake about this. And militant action has already been taken with impunity in one significant instance. The authorities deemed it better not to intervene: the action of the militants was entirely successful and was not subsequently reversed but allowed to stay. But the authorities are so well aware of this militant undercurrent that they prevented any mention of this incident in any of the papers, although steps had been taken by the militants to see that the papers were quickly informed. Subsequent efforts have failed to induce the editors of any of the daily or evening papers to publish any reference to the matter.

- C. M. Grieve, 'Scottish National Development, Civic Publicity, Tourism, and Other Matters', in the Modern Scot, Vol. II, No. 1 (April 1931), pp. 32-44 (p. 43).

106: Letter from Grieve to Helen B. Cruickshank, October 7th 1930, Edinburgh University Library.

107: Letter from Grieve to Neil M. Gunn, March 13th 1931, National Library of Scotland.

108: James Maclaren, 'Whither Scotland?', in Scottish Educational Journal, June 19th 1931, pp. 726-7 (p.727).

109: James Maclaren, 'Whither Scotland? II', in Scottish Educational Journal, June 26th 1931, pp. 757-8 (p. 758).

110: The manuscript of this poem in the Morris Library of the University of Delaware is dated January 25th 1932. See pp. 122-3, below.

111: Letter from Grieve to Jessie B. MacArthur, February 25th 1931, National Library of Scotland.

112: Denis Saurat, review of To Circumiack Cencrastus, the Modern Scot, Vol. I, No. 4 (January 1931), pp. 64-6 (p.66).

113: Letter from Grieve to Blackwoods, May 15th 1931, National Library of Scotland.

114: Letter from Grieve to Neil M. Gunn, September 4th 1931, National Library of Scotland.

115: This narrative is based upon letters from Christopher and Peggy Grieve, and from L. N. Cooper, to Neil M. Gunn, in the period September 1931-May 1933. The letters are in the Gunn correspondence in the National Library of Scotland.

116: Letter from Grieve to William Soutar, October 19th 1931, National Library of Scotland.

117 Letter from Grieve to William Soutar, October 19th 1931, National Library of Scotland.

118: Grieve wrote to Gunn on April 6th that both he and Peggy were 'equally hopeful' that the novelist would agree to be godfather to their son Walter. Two letters from the first Mrs. Grieve (May 18th and June 1st 1932) in the Gunn correspondence in the National Library of Scotland similarly suggest that Peggy was friendly with Gunn in her own right.

119: Letter from Grieve to Neil M. Gunn, December 1st 1931, National Library of Scotland.

120: See 'MacDiarmid's Clann Albann', p. 176.

121: 'The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea' was published in two parts in the Modern Scot (Vol. II, No. 2 (July 1931) and Vol II, No. 4 (January 1932)). It was reprinted in Selected Essays of Hugh MacDiarmid, pp. 56-74.

122: The most important of these statements are the Author's Note to Scots Unbound and other poems (see above, p. 6), and that to Second Hymn to Lenin (see Commentary, p. 421).

123: Letter from Grieve to Blackwoods, January 27th 1932, National Library of Scotland.

124: The poem published as 'The Celtic Sunrise' (C.P. II, p. 1248) - in the Pictish Review, Vol. I, No. 8 (June 1928) - reappears as 'The Summit' in the Delaware Manuscript, with 'lanely' substituted for 'caller' in l.3.

125: Letter from Grieve to Blackwoods, January 27th 1932, National Library of Scotland.

126: Letter from Grieve to William Soutar, February 26th 1932, National Library of Scotland.

127: C. M. Grieve, 'At the Sign of the Thistle: The Opportunity of the Unemployed', the Free Man, September 24th 1932, p. 6.

128: See C. M. Grieve, 'At the Sign of the Thistle: Edinburgh University and Scots Literature', the Free Man, December 30th 1933, p. 6, where the poet writes

(L)et me tell Mr. Gordon and all his kind who deplore my "falling-off" that there are not six of the lyrics in my first three books which they can name that can be set aside the very considerably greater bulk of my top-notch work contained in my last two books or published recently in periodicals and not yet collected, and that in any competent consideration of my work whatever the following poems must be regarded as major pieces, viz. Tarras, the first part of Water Music, Milkwort and Bog-Cotton (sic), the second Apprentice Angel poem; The Seamless Garment; In Memoriam Liam Macillelusa and Harry Semen.

The first four of the seven listed poems were composed and published in 1932.

129: As F. G. Scott's letters to the poet in the period April to August 1932 make clear. The composer's letters to Grieve are kept in Edinburgh University Library.

130: Helen B. Cruickshank, 'Mainly Domestic: Being some Personal Reminiscences', in Hugh MacDiarmid: a festschrift, edited by K. D. Duval and Sydney Goodsir Smith (Edinburgh, 1962), pp. 187-95 (p. 192).

131: Letter from Grieve to Neil M. Gunn, June 14th 1932, National Library of Scotland.

132: Letter from Grieve to Neil M. Gunn, June 24th 1932, National Library of Scotland.

133: 'C. M. Grieve Speaks Out: Special interview with "The Freeman"', the Free Man, April 30th 1932, p. 4.

134: Letter from F. G. Scott to Grieve, June 28th 1932, Edinburgh University Library.

135: Letter from Grieve to Blackwoods, July 16th 1932, National Library of Scotland.

136: Letter from Blackwoods to Grieve, July 29th 1932, National Library of Scotland.

137: Letter from Grieve to Eneas Mackay, July 27th 1932, National Library of Scotland. There is a small but interesting correspondence about Scots Unbound and other poems, featuring letters from Grieve, Mackay, the Rev. Dr. Lauchlan MacLean Watt and the Rev. Canon MacCulloch of Stirling, in the National Library of Scotland. h/

138: It is possible that the poet was referring to the pamphlet edition of 'Tarras' (Edinburgh 1932) and to a selection of his poems which he hoped to have published by Victor Gollancz. See letter from Grieve to Neil M. Gunn, August 4th 1932, National Library of Scotland.

139: See letter from Grieve to Mackay, January 10th 1934, National Library of Scotland.

140: See letter from Grieve to Mackay, July 29th 1932, National Library of Scotland.

141: Sent by Grieve to Mackay, August 31st 1932, National Library of Scotland.

142: I am indebted to Dr. McQuillan for this information.

143: The Helen B. Cruickshank correspondence in Edinburgh University Library contains two letters from the London legal firm of A. W. Gamage enquiring as to Grieve's whereabouts. A note in the hand of the poetess explains that these letters relate to furniture rented for the Thakeham cottage. Writing to his benefactress from Sussex on August 19th 1932 Grieve intimated that a seizure of his furniture might be imminent.

144: Letter from Grieve to Neil M. Gunn, June 14th 1932, National Library of Scotland.

145: See letters from Grieve to Neil M. Gunn, August 4th and 16th 1932, National Library of Scotland.

146: 'C. M. Grieve Speaks Out'.

147: See letter from Grieve to Neil M. Gunn, August 16th 1932, National Library of Scotland.

148: Letter from Grieve to Neil M. Gunn, June 14th 1932, National Library of Scotland.

149: See 'Mainly Domestic: Being some Personal Reminiscences', p. 192.

150: See letters from Scott to Grieve, July 8th, 19th and 28th 1932, Edinburgh University Library.

151: See 'Mainly Domestic: Being some Personal Reminiscences', pp. 192-3. The date of Grieve's arrival in Shetland, and consequently the length of his sojourn on the Scottish mainland after his return from England, can be gauged from his statement in a letter to Gunn, dated May 19th 1933, that he had at the time of writing spent a fortnight on Whalsay.

152: 'Mainly Domestic: Being some Personal Reminiscences', p. 193.

153: See letter from Eneas Mackay to Grieve, December 9th 1932, National Library of Scotland.

154: The 'new longish separate poem (about 900 lines)' which MacDiarmid wrote in his first weeks in Shetland - see letter to Neil M. Gunn, May 19th 1933, National Library of Scotland - is more likely to have been 'Ode to All Rebels' (C.P. I, p. 487) than any other

surviving work. "'With a Lifting of the Head"' is one of the Ode's interpolated lyrics.

155: Letter from Grieve to William Burt, July 16th 1939, Edinburgh University Library.

156: Letter from Grieve to Ruth McQuillan, May 24th 1969, in the possession of Dr. McQuillan.

CHAPTER TWO

1: All references to Annals of the Five Senses are to the third edition, introduction by Alan Bold (Edinburgh, 1983).

2: Kenneth Buthlay, Hugh MacDiarmid (C. M. Grieve) (Edinburgh and London, 1964), p. 10.

3: Roderick Watson, "'Water Music" and the Stream of Consciousness', in Scottish Literary Journal, Vol. 5, No. 2(December 1978), pp. 6-19 (pp.11-12).

4: MacDiarmid paid homage to Dostoevski in a long passage in A Drunk Man (C.P. I, pp. 137-52), to Doughty in 'Stony Limits' (C.P. I, p. 419), and to Rilke in 'Vestigia Nulla Retrorsum' (C.P. I, p. 416). While the poet addressed no poem to Solovyov, he honoured him with a respectful mention in Cencrastus (C.P. I, p. 208), and acknowledged him as the source of the

ideas expounded in 'Hymn to Sophia: the Wisdom of God' (see note accompanying that poem in C.P. I, p.455).

5: "'Water Music" and the Stream of Consciousness', pp. 11-12.

6: "'Water Music" and the Stream of Consciousness', p. 8.

7: Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol. 9, Part I (New York, 1977), p. 207.

8: Quoted in A History of Philosophy, Vol. 9, Part I, p. 207.

9: "'Water Music" and the Stream of Consciousness', p. 12.

10: See Iain Crichton Smith, 'The Golden Lyric', in Hugh MacDiarmid: A Critical Survey, edited by Duncan Glen (Edinburgh, 1972), pp. 124-40 (p. 134).

11: Letter to Helen B. Cruickshank, February 1939, Edinburgh University Library.

12: In the letter to Helen B. Cruickshank Grieve explains that 'to "circumjack"' means 'to enclose'.

13: A History of Philosophy, Vol. 9, Part I, p.205.

14: John Herdman, "'To Circumjack Cencrastus'", in Akros, Vol. 12, Nos. 34-35 (August 1977), pp.65-75 (p. 67)

15: In his essay 'I Don't Know What To Call It But It's Mighty Unlike Prose' (in Our Exagmination Round his Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress, Samuel Beckett and others (London, 1972), pp.95-102 (p. 95)) Victor Lloná wrote of Finnegans Wake:

Among so many other things, what we have seen so far of Work in Progress appears to be a "divertissement philologique", if I may borrow the pat expression of a lover of such entertainments, M. Valéry Larbaud.

Our Exagmination was first published in Paris in 1929. MacDiarmid appears to allude to the book on pp.183-6 of At the Sign of the Thistle: a collection of essays (London, 1934).

16: The quoted letter was accompanied on publication by the 'synthetic English' poem, 'In the Caledonian Forest' (C.P. I, p. 391).

17: See, e.g., Micheál O hUanacháin, 'The Extension of Human Consciousness', in Aquarius, No. 11 (1979), pp. 14-15. See also pp. 531-2 of the present study.

18: These words of Gerald Heard's are quoted by Singer in the course of his essay, 'Scarlet Eminence' (A Critical Survey, pp.35-57 (p.55)).

18a: MacDiarmid, 'Problems of Poetry Today, I', New English Weekly, September 21st 1933. Collected in At the Sign of the Thistle, pp.89-93 (p.92).

19: 'Scarlet Eminence', p. 54.

20: Iain Crichton Smith, 'Hugh MacDiarmid: Sangschaw and A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle', in Studies in Scottish Literature, No. VII (January 1970), pp.169-79 (p. 179).

21: See John Berryman, 'The Long Way to MacDiarmid', in Poetry, Vol. 88, No. 1 (April 1956), pp.52-61 (pp. 58-61).

22: 'Hugh MacDiarmid: Sangschaw and A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle', p. 177.

23: Hugh MacDiarmid (C. M. Grieve), p. 49.

24: Ann Edwards Boutelle, Thistle and Rose: A Study of Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry (Loanhead, 1980), p.161.

25: Thistle and Rose, p. 167.

26: A Drunk Man appears to have been MacDiarmid's attempt to effect a 'liberation' of the Scots vis comica such as he has visualised some years earlier in the following celebrated passage:

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

('Causerie: A Theory of Scots Letters', Scottish Chapbook (February, 1923), collected in The Thistle Rises: An Anthology of Poetry and Prose by Hugh MacDiarmid, edited by Alan Bold (London, 1984), pp.125-31 (p.129)).

27: 'Thought', D. H. Lawrence, Selected Poems, edited with an introduction by Keith Sagar (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 227.

28: Alexander Scott, 'MacDiarmid: The Poet' in The Hugh MacDiarmid Anthology (London, 1972), pp. xvii-xxiii (p. xx).

29: The MacDiarmids: A Conversation - Hugh MacDiarmid and Duncan Glen. with Valda Grieve and Arthur Thompson (Preston, 1970), no page numbers.

30: Conversation with the present writer, Brownsbank, March 1977.

31: See Harvey Oxenhorn, Elemental Things: The Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid (Edinburgh, 1984), pp. 171-82, for a sensitive account of the tensions in 'Harry Semen'.

32: Thistle and Rose, p. 190.

33: The essay in question is 'Life in the Shetland Islands' which appeared in At the Sign of the Thistle. It is more readily available in The Uncanny Scot: A Selection of Prose by Hugh MacDiarmid, edited with an introduction by Kenneth Buthlay (London, 1968), pp. 80-92.

34: The Uncanny Scot, p. 80.

35: Grieve's letters to Neil Gunn are preserved in the National Library of Scotland.

36: Letter to Gunn, June 22nd 1933, National Library of Scotland.

37: The letters to William Soutar are kept in the National Library of Scotland.

38: Letter to Soutar, February 20th 1934, National Library of Scotland.

39: 'Scarlet Eminence', p. 51.

40: Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language, edited by Rev. Thomas Davidson (London and Edinburgh, 1912). The poet 'went through' 'Vestigia Nulla Retrorsum' for me with the aid of his copy of this dictionary at Brownsbank in March 1976. He informed me that he had used Chambers's while working on the early Shetland poems. See Ruth McQuillan, 'MacDiarmid's Other Dictionary', in Lines Review, No. 66 (September 1978), pp. 5-14.

41: G. S. Fraser, 'Hugh MacDiarmid: The Later Poetry', in A Critical Survey, pp. 211-27 (p. 216).

42: The Helen B. Cruickshank correspondence in the Library of Edinburgh University is the source of the dates and information in this paragraph.

43: Letter from Valda Grieve to Helen B. Cruickshank, Edinburgh University Library.

44: David Orr, 'MacDiarmid - The Man', in Jabberwock, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1958), p. 14 (quoted in Duncan Glen, Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve) and the Scottish Renaissance (Edinburgh, 1964), p. 135.

45: Letter from Grieve to Helen B. Cruickshank, April 10th 1938, Edinburgh University Library.

46: The problem of plagiarism in MacDiarmid's later work is given detailed consideration by Edwin Morgan in his essay, 'MacDiarmid's later poetry against an international background', in Scottish Literary Journal Vol. 5, No. 2 (December 1978), pp. 20-35.

47: The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Fourth Edition, General Editor: M. H. Abrams, 2 vols. (New York, 1979), Vol. II, pp. 2325-30.

48: John Buchan, in his preface to Sangschaw (see Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve) and the Scottish Renaissance, p. 88).

49: 'The Watergaw' and 'The Blaward and the Skelly' were published anonymously in the Dunfermline Press on September 30th 1922. See Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve) and the Scottish Renaissance, p. 75.

50: David Daiches, 'Hugh MacDiarmid's Early Poetry' in A Critical Survey, pp. 58-84 (p.59).

51: 'Causerie: A Theory of Scots Letters', Scottish Chapbook, (March 1923) collected in The Thistle Rises, pp.131-7 (p.131).

52: 'Causerie: A Theory of Scots Letters', Scottish Chapbook, (February 1923), The Thistle Rises, p.129.

53: 'Causerie: A Theory of Scots Letters', Scottish Chapbook, (March 1923), The Thistle Rises, p. 131.

54: Robert Graves, The White Goddess (London, 1948).

55: David Jones, In Parenthesis (London, 1937).

- 56: David Jones, The Anathemata (London, 1952).
- 57: Thomas MacDonagh, Literature in Ireland (Dublin, 1916), pp. 64-82.
- 58: The poetry from these collections can be found on pp. 153-75 and 181-92 of Austin Clarke, Collected Poems (Dublin, 1974).
- 59: See C.M. Grieve, 'Rhythm and Race', Scottish Educational Journal, August 20th 1926. Collected in Hugh MacDiarmid, Contemporary Scottish Studies (Edinburgh, 1976), pp. 120-2 (p. 120-1).
- 60: Maurice Riordan, 'The Early Work (1916-1938) of Austin Clarke', Ph. D. dissertation, McMaster University, 1981, pp. 99-100.
- 61: 'English Ascendancy in British Literature' was published in July 1931 in the Criterion and collected in The Uncanny Scot (pp. 115-34).
- 62: Daniel Corkery, The Hidden Ireland, 2nd edition (Dublin, 1967), pp. 12-13 (see The Uncanny Scot, pp. 132-3).

- 63: The Hidden Ireland, p. 11.
- 64: The Hidden Ireland, p. 15.
- 65: C. M. Grieve, Albyn: or Scotland and the Future, (London, 1927), p. 25.
- 66: G. Gregory Smith, Scottish Literature: Character and Influence (London, 1919), pp. 4, 20, 35.
- 67: Thistle and Rose, p. 85.
- 68: David Daiches, in Appendix B to the fourth edition of A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle (Edinburgh, 1962), pp. 103-4.
- 69: The Hidden Ireland, pp. 14-15.
- 70: Albyn: or Scotland and the Future, pp. 24-5.
- 71: See essay on Edwin Muir contributed by Grieve to the Scottish Educational Journal on September 4th 1925 (Contemporary Scottish Studies, pp. 29-32 (p. 32)).

72: The recording, which is in the possession of Jean White, was made in Miss White's house during one of Grieve's post-war visits to his native place at Common-Riding time.

73: The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry, selected and edited by Hugh MacDiarmid (London, 1946), Introduction, p. xvi. The Golden Treasury was first published in 1940.

74: Times Literary Supplement, January 8th 1954 (quoted in Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve) and the Scottish Renaissance, pp. 27-8).

75: Albyn: or Scotland and the Future, p. 36.

76: Scottish Marxist, No. 10, Winter 1975 (quoted in Edwin Morgan, Hugh MacDiarmid (Harlow, 1976), p. 7).

77: David Murison, 'The Language Problem in Hugh MacDiarmid's Work', in The Age of MacDiarmid: Essays on Hugh MacDiarmid and his influence on contemporary Scotland, edited by P. H. Scott and A. C. Davis (Edinburgh, 1980, pp. 83-99 (p. 94)).

78: 'A Scotsman Looks at His World', Dunfermline Press, November 25th 1922 (quoted in Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve) and the Scottish Renaissance, p. 73).

79: 'A Scotsman Looks at His World', Dunfermline Press,
November 25th 1922 (quoted in Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher
Murray Grieve) and the Scottish Renaissance, p. 79).

80: 'A Scotsman Looks at His World', Dunfermline Press,
November 25th 1922 (quoted in Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher
Murray Grieve) and the Scottish Renaissance, p. 79).

81: 'Causerie: A Theory of Scots Letters', Scottish
Chapbook, (March 1923), The Thistle Rises, p.131.

82: 'The Golden Lyric', p. 140.

83: Dunfermline Press, September 30th 1922 (quoted in
Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve) and the
Scottish Renaissance, p. 75).

84: Glasgow Herald, February 13th 1926 (quoted in
Edwin Morgan, Hugh MacDiarmid (Harlow, 1976), p. 12).

85: A. L., 'In Praise of Local Dialect', Scottish Educational
Journal, May 1st 1931, p. 495.

CHAPTER THREE

1: See Alan Bold, MacDiarmid: The Terrible Crystal (London, 1983), pp. 89-91.

2: See Kenneth Buthlay, Hugh MacDiarmid (C. M. Grieve) (Edinburgh, 1982), pp. 110-14, for a brief account of the bibliographical history of the later work.

3: 'Charles Doughty and the Need for Heroic Poetry', the Modern Scot, Vol. VI, No. 4 (January 1936), collected in Selected Essays of Hugh MacDiarmid, edited with an introduction by Duncan Glen (London, 1969), pp. 75-85 (pp. 75-6).

4: MacDiarmid used the term 'gallimaufry' (defined in Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language, edited by Rev. Thomas Davidson (London and Edinburgh, 1912) as 'any inconsistent or absurd medley') to describe A Drunk Man (in the Author's Note to that work). Kenneth Buthlay has observed:

It is true of Cencrastus in a pejorative sense of the term not really applicable to A Drunk Man that it is a "gallimaufry".

(Hugh MacDiarmid (C.M. Grieve)

(Edinburgh and London, 1964), p. 57.)

5: C. M. Grieve (Hugh MacDiarmid), 'Religion and the Scottish Renaissance Group', Scots Observer, June 9th 1932, p. 8.

6: Author's Note, First Hymn to Lenin and other poems (London, 1931).

7: If we include the interpolated lyric 'Excelsior' in our reckoning, 'Water of Life' has one hundred and sixty-one lines. 'Whuchulls' (C.P. II, p. 1089; M.T., p. 153) and 'Second Hymn to Lenin' (C.P. I, p. 323; M.T., p. 141) are longer by nine and ten lines respectively. 'The Oon Olympian' (C.P. I, p. 354; M.T., p. 125), with two hundred and fifteen lines, is shorter by twenty-four lines than The Muckle Toon's most extended piece, 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' (C.P. I, p. 346; M.T., p. 133).

- 8: On publication in the Modern Scot (Vol. II, No. 3 (October 1931), p. 205), 'Prayer for a Second Flood' (C.P. I, p. 299; M.T., p. 131), 'At My Father's Grave' (C.P. I, p. 299; M.T., p. 90) and 'Museum Piece' (C.P. I, p. 300; M.T., p. 68) were described as, 'Lyrics from "Clann Albann"'.
- 9: The reference here is to the longer of The Muckle Toon's two poems of that name - to 'Water of Life' (C.P. I, p. 314; M.T., p. 112) rather than to 'Water of Life' (C.P. II, p. 1251; M.T., p. 102).
- 10: Kenneth Buthlay, Hugh MacDiarmid (C.M. Grieve) (Edinburgh, 1982), p. 62.
- 11: Kenneth Buthlay, Hugh MacDiarmid (C.M. Grieve) (Edinburgh and London, 1964), pp. 56-7.
- 12: The Jerome Biblical Commentary, edited by Raymond E. Brown, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, S.J. and Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm., 2 vols. (London, 1969), Vol. II, p. 440.
- 13: 'From "Water of Life"' (C.P. II, p. 1213) appeared in Northern Numbers, Third Series (Edinburgh, 1922).

14: Kenneth Buthlay, 'The Appreciation of the Golden Lyric: Early Scots Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid', in Scottish Literary Journal, Vol. 2, No. 1 (July 1975), pp. 41-66 (p. 49).

15: 'Hammer and Thistle: Hugh MacDiarmid, Scottish Writer and Politician', Hugh MacDiarmid interviewed by Micheál Ó hUanacháin, 1973, 1977, broadcast in The Arts Programme, R.T.E. Radio, February 23rd 1978.

16: Stephen Mulrine, 'The Prosody of Hugh MacDiarmid's "A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle"', in Akros, Vol. 12, Nos. 34-35 (August 1977), pp. 51-62 (p. 51).

17: 'The Prosody of Hugh MacDiarmid's "A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle"', p. 52.

18: William Soutar's poem, 'The Auld Tree', includes the following lines on MacDiarmid:

Word drucken was he, but his words
As the rambusteous lilt o' birds
Wauken'd the thistle....

(Quoted in Duncan Glen, Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve) and the Scottish Renaissance (Edinburgh, 1964) p. 109).

- 19: See, e.g., the words 'fratt' and 'gy' in C.P. I, p. 155.
- 20: See Kurt Wittig, The Scottish Tradition in Literature (Edinburgh and London, 1958) pp. 114-16.
- 21: See John Herdman, "'To Circumjack Cencrastus'", in Akros, Vol. 12, Nos. 34-35 (August 1977), pp. 65-75 (p. 66).
- 22: Kenneth Buthlay, Hugh MacDiarmid (C. M. Grieve), (Edinburgh and London, 1964) p. 61.
- 23: Conversation at Brownsbank.
- 24: The Scottish Tradition in Literature, passim.
- 25: For a discussion of the characteristics of 'Standard Habbie' see The Scottish Tradition in Literature, pp. 116-17.
- 26: 'A Cinque Port', The Poems of John Davidson, edited by Andrew Turnbull, 2 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1973), Vol. I, p. 56.

27: Stanzas Two, Three and Four of the five-stanza poem 'To Ned' follow the abcbdd rhyme-scheme. See Selected Tales and Poems by Herman Melville, edited with an introduction by Richard Chase (New York, 1950), pp. 404-5.

28: Interestingly, the abcbdd stanzas on p. 135 of C.P.I concern Melville.

29: See 'The Appreciation of the Golden Lyric', p. 57.

30: MacDiarmid denied that 'The Watergaw' was concerned with the death of James Grieve (see The MacDiarmids: A Conversation - Hugh MacDiarmid and Duncan Glen, with Valda Grieve and Arthur Thompson (Preston, 1970), no page numbers). Buthlay has suggested that the poet's denial was a piece of 'mystification' ('The Appreciation of the Golden Lyric', p. 55). See Commentary, p.259 .

31: No fewer than thirty of the English poems from the early twenties collected in the Complete Poems are sonnets.

32: See, e.g., Ann Edwards Boutelle, Thistle and Rose: A Study of Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry (Loanhead, 1980), p. 161.

33: John Manson, 'Water of Life: Some Hugh MacDiarmid Poems of the Early Thirties', in Akros, Vol. 12, Nos. 34-35 (August 1977), pp. 79-85 (p. 79).

34: Kenneth Buthlay, Hugh MacDiarmid (C. M. Grieve) (Edinburgh and London, 1964), pp. 67-8.

35: MacDiarmid's 'over-use' of the phrase 'of course' is discussed by Kenneth Buthlay in his essay, 'Hugh MacDiarmid: Where Extremes Meet', in Gordon Wright, MacDiarmid: An Illustrated Biography (Edinburgh, 1977), pp. 9-18 (p. 11).

36: Chambers's Scots Dictionary, compiled by Alexander Warrack, M. A., with an introduction and dialect map by William Grant, M. A., LL. D. (Edinburgh, 1911).

37: Letter from Grieve to Soutar, March 19th 1931 (quoted in Catherine Kerrigan, Whaur Extremes Meet: The Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid 1920-34 (Edinburgh, 1938), pp. 160-1).

38: Kenneth Buthlay, Hugh MacDiarmid (C. M. Grieve) (Edinburgh, 1982), p. 79.

When he began with an elaborate conception, as in Whaur Extremes Meet and The Muckle Toon, the result was less impressive.

39: See 'The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea', the Modern Scot, Vol. II, Nos. 2 and 4 (July 1931 and January 1932), collected in Selected Essays, pp. 56-74 (p. 73).

40: Note on MacDiarmid in Modern British Literature, edited by Frank Kermode and John Hollander (New York, 1973), p. 563.

41: 'Robert Fergusson: Direct Poetry and the Scottish Genius', in Selected Essays, pp. 129-149 (p. 142)

42: Letter from Francis George Scott to Grieve, July 8th 1932. Scott's letters to the poet are preserved in Edinburgh University Library.

43: Scott's letter of July 8th 1932 includes the following sentence in its discussion of 'Lynch-Pin':

If you think this an exercise, then take a lot more of it.

44: The lyrics and A Drunk Man were alike products of MacDiarmid's exploratory attitude towards the Scots language: he appears to have lacked a clear sense of the finished artifact when setting to work upon them. When he began with an elaborate conception, as in Cencrastus and The Muckle Toon, the result was less impressive.

45: See letter from F. G. Scott to Grieve, May 15th 1932, Edinburgh University Library.

46: As established by Scott's discussions of the poems in his letters to Grieve.

47: See, e.g., Roderick Watson, "'Water Music" and the Stream of Consciousness', in Scottish Literary Journal, Vol. 5, No. 2 (December 1978), pp. 6-19 (p.15).

48: Sydney Goodsir Smith, Carotid Cornucopius, the first four fitts (Edinburgh, 1947); revised and enlarged edition (1964).

49: See Richard Ellmann, James Joyce (London, 1966), p. 713.

50: Seamus Heaney, 'Tradition and an Individual Talent: Hugh MacDiarmid', in Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-78 (London, 1980), pp. 195-8 (p. 196).

51: Thistle and Rose, p. 176.

52: "'Water Music" and the Stream of Consciousness', p. 17.

53: Quoted in "'Water Music" and the Stream of Consciousness', p. 17.

54: Baudelaire: Selected Poems, chosen and translated with an introduction by Joanna Richardson (Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 42. See William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity (London, 1984), pp. 12-14, for a brief but illuminating discussion of synaesthesia.

55: Quoted in James Joyce, pp. 629-30.

CHAPTER FOUR

- 1: The 'Explanation's' reference (M.T., p. 234) to 'my last three books' (viz., First Hymn to Lenin and other poems, the Second Hymn to Lenin pamphlet and Scots Unbound and other poems) establishes this.
- 2: 'Dimidium Animae Meae' is the correct spelling (see Commentary, p. 500). MacDiarmid's lack of classical training is evident from the solecisms which afflict many of the Latin phrases in his work.
- 3: Hugh MacDiarmid, Scottish Eccentrics (London, 1936).
- 4: The 'Epilogue' (pp. 261-83) of Scottish Eccentrics - which is placed before the final chapter! - is entitled 'The Strange Procession'.

5: C. M. Grieve (Hugh MacDiarmid), 'Religion and the Scottish Renaissance Group', Scots Observer, June 9th 1932, p. 8.

6: Mrs. Grieve has told me that the manuscript was left on the counter as the poet was helped from the White Lion public house. See Gordon Wright, MacDiarmid: An Illustrated Biography (Edinburgh, 1977), p. 56.

7: 'Unfathered Through Divorce', a poem in the Delaware manuscript, is a startling exception.

8: See, e.g., Scottish Eccentrics, pp. 284-319, and 'Causerie: A Theory of Scots Letters', Scottish Chapbook (March 1923), collected in The Thistle Rises: An Anthology of Poetry and Prose by Hugh MacDiarmid, edited by Alan Bold (London, 1984), pp. 131-7.

9: John Montague, 'Mystic Materialist', a review of MacDiarmid's Complete Poems, the Guardian, November 30th 1978, p. 9.

10: M. H. Abrams, 'The Romantic Period: Introduction', in The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Fourth Edition, General Editor: M. H. Abrams, 2 vols. (New York, 1979), Vol. II, pp. 1-20 (p.7). Hereafter, 'Abrams'.

11: Abrams, p. 7.

12: Abrams, p. 7.

13: Kenneth Buthlay, Hugh MacDiarmid (C. M. Grieve)
(Edinburgh, 1982), p. 70.

14: David Craig, 'MacDiarmid the Marxist Poet', in
The Real Foundations: Literature and Social Change
(London, 1973), pp. 230-53 (p. 253). An earlier
version of this essay was published in Hugh MacDiarmid:
a festschrift, edited by K. D. Duval and Sydney Goodsir
Smith (Edinburgh, 1962), pp. 87-99, and collected in
Hugh MacDiarmid: A Critical Survey, edited by Duncan
Glen (Edinburgh, 1972), pp. 155-67.

15: Edwin Morgan, Hugh MacDiarmid (Harlow, 1976), p.18.

16: The quoted phrase is taken from the poet's essay,
'A Russo-Scottish Parallelism', Selected Essays of Hugh
MacDiarmid, edited with an introduction by Duncan Glen
(London, 1969), pp. 38-43 (p.40).

'A Russo-Scottish Parallelism' was originally published
in the Glasgow Herald on March 17th 1923.

17: 'Towards the New Order I', the New Age, March 26th 1925, pp. 259-60.

18: See notes 16 and 17 above.

19: On January 30th 1928 Grieve wrote to George Ogilvie:

At the moment I am putting everything else aside to finish as rapidly as possible a little book entitled "St. Sophia: or the Future of Religion" which is to appear in Kegan Paul's "Today and Tomorrow Series".

(Grieve's letters to Ogilvie are preserved in the National Library of Scotland). The proposed book never appeared.

20: 'Hymn to Sophia: The Wisdom of God' was first published in the Scottish Chapbook, Vol. I, No. 12, in July 1923. It cropped up again in the New English Weekly of April 28th 1932 before being collected in Stony Limits and other poems.

21: Letter dated August 21st 1968 to John C. Weston, quoted in Weston, Hugh MacDiarmid's 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle': An Essay (Preston, 1970), p. 36.

17: 'Towards the New Order I', the New Age, March 26th 1925, pp. 259-60.

18: See notes 16 and 17 above.

19: On January 30th 1928 Grieve wrote to George Ogilvie:

At the moment I am putting everything else aside to finish as rapidly as possible a little book entitled "St. Sophia: or the Future of Religion" which is to appear in Kegan Paul's "Today and Tomorrow Series".

(Grieve's letters to Ogilvie are preserved in the National Library of Scotland). The proposed book never appeared.

20: 'Hymn to Sophia: The Wisdom of God' was first published in the Scottish Chapbook, Vol. I, No. 12, in July 1923. It cropped up again in the New English Weekly of April 28th 1932 before being collected in Stony Limits and other poems.

21: Letter dated August 21st 1968 to John C. Weston, quoted in Weston, Hugh MacDiarmid's 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle': An Essay (Preston, 1970), p. 36.

22: See Ruth McQuillan, 'Hugh MacDiarmid's "On a Raised Beach"', in Akros, Vol. 12, Nos. 34-35 (August 1977), pp. 89-97 (p. 93).

23: See 'The Stranger' in Alexander Blok: Selected Poems, translated from the Russian by Jon Stallworthy and Peter France (Harmondsworth, 1974), pp. 43-4.

24: 'Religion and Love' (C.P. I, p. 307; M.T., p. 61) suggests an awareness on the poet's part of a connection between his hardening atheism and his increasingly anti-romantic attitude to sexual relations. It is arguable that criticism has failed to advert to the importance of the second of these factors in MacDiarmid's work from the early thirties onwards. Consider, for instance, the ironic echo of Romeo's

With love's light wings did I perch these walls
For stony limits cannot hold love out...

(Romeo and Juliet, Act II, Scene 2,
ll. 6-7, The Annotated Shakespeare,
edited by A. L. Rowse, 3 vols. (London, 1978),
Vol. III, p. 91)

in the title of the volume of 1934. The allusion to the biblical

Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples:
for I am sick of love

(Song of Songs 2 : 5)

in the opening line of 'On Reading Professor Ifor
Williams's "Canu Aneurin" in Difficult Days'

(C.P. I, p. 689) should also be noted.

25: Letter from Grieve to Helen B. Cruickshank,
February 1939, Edinburgh University Library.

26: Hugh MacDiarmid, Metaphysics and Poetry (Hamilton,
1975) no page numbers.

27: Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution, translated by
Arthur Mitchell (London, 1911).

28: Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy,
Vol. 9, Part I (New York, 1977), p. 222.

29: A History of Philosophy, Vol. 9, Part I, p. 222.

30: Quoted in A History of Philosophy, Vol. 9,
Part I, p. 222.

Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples:
for I am sick of love

(Song of Songs 2 : 5)

in the opening line of 'On Reading Professor Ifor
Williams's "Canu Aneurin" in Difficult Days'

(C.P. I, p. 689) should also be noted.

25: Letter from Grieve to Helen B. Cruickshank,
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28: Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy,
Vol. 9, Part I (New York, 1977), p. 222.

29: A History of Philosophy, Vol. 9, Part I, p. 222.

30: Quoted in A History of Philosophy, Vol. 9,
Part I, p. 222.

31: In 'The Testament of a Vivisector' Davidson wrote:

Chief end
Of matter-of the Earth aware in us,
As of that Greater Matter orb'd and lit
Throughout Eternal Night - is evermore
Self-Knowledge.

(The Poems of John Davidson, edited by
Andrew Turnbull, 2 vols. (Edinburgh and
London, 1973), Vol. II, p. 325.)

32: The Poems of John Davidson, II, p. 326.

33: 'John Davidson', the Free Man, April 1st 1933,
pp. 7-8 (p.7). This essay appeared as an instalment
of 'At the Sign of the Thistle', the poet's 'Weekly
Causerie' in the Douglasite periodical. (It was
'English blank verse', not 'poetry', that Davidson
saw as the 'subtlest, most powerful, and most various
organ of utterance articulate fancy has produced'.
See essay, 'On Poetry', The Poems of John Davidson,
II, pp. 531-8 (p. 533).)

34: Letter from Grieve to Helen B. Cruickshank,
February 1939, Edinburgh University Library.

35: 'A Russo-Scottish Parallelism', p. 40.

36: Reinhold Merkelbach, 'Mystery Religions', in The New Encyclopaedia Britannica Vol. 12 (Chicago, 1979), pp. 778-85 (p. 779).

37: The following paragraph from an 'At the Sign of the Thistle' contribution on 'Various Men and Matters' (the Free Man, August 13th 1932, p. 5) may be worth quoting for the light it sheds on the obscure subject of one of MacDiarmid's finer elegies:

The death of William Gillies (Liam Mac Gille Iosa) on 23rd July lost the Scottish Movement one of its pioneers and ablest protagonists, and myself one of my best friends. This is no place for an adequate account of his career and his work for the Irish and Scottish movements and the Gaelic cause. There is material there for a fascinating and important narrative. A man of charming personality and abundant gifts, he was amongst other things a prolific writer, and a careful selection of his political and general articles and of his dramas would make a book which would constitute a valuable addition to the growing literature of the Scottish movement. No man knew Scotland from top to bottom better than he did, and no man of his generation served its real and highest interests better.

38: Catherine Kerrigan, Whaur Extremes Meet: The Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid 1920-1934 (Edinburgh, 1983), p. 166.

39: 'MacDiarmid the Marxist Poet', p. 249.

40: 'MacDiarmid the Marxist Poet', p. 249.

41: See, e.g., 'At the Sign of the Thistle: The Puzzle of Mr. Grieve', the Free Man, September 3rd 1932, pp. 4-5 (p.4). Hereafter, 'The Puzzle of Mr. Grieve'.

42: Quoted in Arthur Koestler, Bricks to Babel: Selected Writings with Comments by the Author (London, 1982), p. 71.

43: Whaur Extremes Meet, p. 163.

44: Whaur Extremes Meet, p. 163.

45: Ann Edwards Boutelle, Thistle and Rose: A Study of Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry (Loanhead, 1980), pp. 196-210.

46: Sydney Goodsir Smith, 'MacDiarmid's Three Hymns to Lenin', in Hugh MacDiarmid: a festschrift, edited by K. D. Duval and Sydney Goodsir Smith (Edinburgh, 1962), pp. 73-86. Collected in A Critical Survey, pp. 141-54.

47: Kenneth Euthlay, Hugh MacDiarmid (C. M. Grieve)
(Edinburgh and London, 1964), p. 64.

48: 'The Puzzle of Mr. Grieve', pp. 4-5.

49: MacDiarmid in conversation with George Bruce,
interview broadcast by B.B.C. Radio Scotland on
August 1977. Reproduced in The Thistle Rises
pp. 274-85 (p. 282).

50: 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections
of Early Childhood', l. 77, in William Wordsworth: The
Poems, edited by John O. Hayden, 2 vols. (Harmondsworth,
1977), Vol. I, p. 526.

51: 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections
of Early Childhood', ll. 67-8, William Wordsworth: The
Poems, I, p. 525.

52: The MacDiarmids: A Conversation - Hugh MacDiarmid
and Duncan Glen. with Valda Grieve and Arthur Thompson
(Preston, 1970), no page numbers.

53: Thistle and Rose, p. 202.

54: 'On Poetry', The Poems of John Davidson, Vol. II, pp. 531-8 (p. 533).

55: Roderick Watson, Hugh MacDiarmid (Milton Keynes, 1976), p. 42.

56: 'Religion and the Scottish Renaissance Group'.

57: 'Address to the Unco Guid, or the Rigidly Righteous', l. 9, Burns: Poems and Songs, edited by James Kinsley, (London, 1969), p. 37.

58: See Kenneth Buthlay, 'The Scotched Snake', in The Age of MacDiarmid: Essays on Hugh MacDiarmid and his influence on contemporary Scotland, edited by P. H. Scott and A. C. Davis (Edinburgh, 1980), pp. 122-56 (pp. 122-5) for a discussion of the Unknown God.

59: Letter from Grieve to Helen B. Cruickshank, August 19th 1932, Edinburgh University Library.

60: The stained glass Agnus Dei in the 'Toonfit Kirk' counters the evidence of the poetry in this regard.

61: George Steiner, Tolstoy or Dostoevski (Harmondsworth, 1967), pp. 237-8. +15:

62: See Ruth McQuillan, 'MacDiarmid's Clann Albann: A Study in the Poetic Development of C. M. Grieve', Ph. D. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1973, pp. 187-94.

63: Alexander Blok: Selected Poems, Introduction, p. 26.

64: Alexander Blok: Selected Poems, pp. 127-8.

65: 'The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea', originally published in two parts in the Modern Scot, Vol. II, Nos. 2 and 4 (July 1931 and January 1932) is reproduced in Selected Essays, pp. 56-74.

66: 'The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea', p. 67.

67: 'Religion and the Scottish Renaissance Group'.

68: Scottish Educational Journal, March 3rd 1932, p. 326.

- 69: 'Among School Children', ll. 41-2,
The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats (London, 1950),
p. 244.
- 70: Scott's letters to Grieve are preserved in Edinburgh
University Library.
- 71: Kenneth Buthlay, Hugh MacDiarmid (C. M. Grieve)
(Edinburgh and London, 1964), p. 78.
- 72: W. B. Yeats, 'A Remonstrance with Scotsmen for
having soured the Disposition of their Ghosts and
Faeries', in Mythologies (London, 1959), pp. 106-9.
Yeats's essay was first published in The Celtic Twilight
in 1893.
- 73: 'A Remonstrance with Scotsmen', pp.107-8.
- 74: James Hogg, 'Kilmeny', in The Book of Scottish
Ballads. collected and illustrated with historical
and critical notices. By Alex Whitelaw (Edinburgh
and London, 1851), pp. 511-6.

75: This celebrated study, a manuscript in the Advocates Library 'by Mr. Robert Kirk, Minister at Aberfoill, 1691', has, in its fourth reprint (London, 1815), two titles, viz.

Ane Essay of the Nature and Actions of the Subterranean (and, for the most part) Invisible People Heretofore going under the name of Elves, Fauns, and Fairies, or the Lyke, among the Low-Country Scots, as they are described by those who have the Second Sight; and now, to occasion further Inquiry, collected and compared, by a Circumspect Inquirer residing among the Scottish-Irish in Scotland.

and

Secret Commonwealth, or A Treatise displaying the Chiefe Curiosities as they are in Use among diverse of the People of Scotland to this Day:- Singularities for the most Part peculiar to that Nation. A subject not heretofore discoursed of by any of our Writers, and yet ventured on in an Essay to suppress the impudent and growing Atheisme of this Age, and to satisfie the Desire of some choice Freinds.

76: The power of the Black Douglas was broken by the Crown at this battle.

77: Letter dated April 7th 1964, published in the Scotsman, April 10th 1964.

78: William Carlos Williams, Paterson (New York, 1963).

79: Laurence B. Holland, note on Paterson, in The Norton Anthology of American Literature, edited by Ronald Gottesman and others, 2 vols. (New York, 1979), Vol. II, p. 1464. Hereafter, 'Holland'.

80: The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams (New York, 1967), pp. 391-2.

81: The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams, p. 391.

82: The Selected Letters of William Carlos Williams, edited by John C. Thirlwall (New York, 1957), p. 286.

83: The MacDiarmids: A Conversation.

84: Tom Scott, 'Lament for the Great Music', in A Critical Survey, pp. 184-91.

85: 'Lament for the Great Music', p. 185.

86: See Holland, p. 1465 for a brief account of these.

87: Edwin Morgan, 'A Glimpse of Petavius', in Edwin Morgan, Essays (Cheadle, 1974), pp. 3-15 (p. 9).

88: Paterson, pp. 7-8.

89: The MacDiarmids: A Conversation.

90: Quoted in Duncan Glen, Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve) and the Scottish Renaissance (Edinburgh, 1964), p. 126.

91: Paterson, p. 6.

92: Letter from Grieve to Helen B. Cruickshank, August 19th 1932, Edinburgh University Library.

93: Quoted in John Elliot, Langholm, no date, no page numbers.

94: Letter from Grieve to Scott, July 22nd 1932, Edinburgh University Library.

95: The Free Man, March 31st 1934, p.7. See Commentary pp. 483-4.

96: 'Sailing to Byzantium', ll.25-9, The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats, p. 218.

97: Kenneth Buthlay, 'The Appreciation of the Golden Lyric: Early Scots poems of Hugh MacDiarmid', in Scottish Literary Journal, Vol. 2, No. 1 (July 1975), pp. 41-66 (p. 60).

98: Hamlet, Act I, Scene 2, ll. 129-30, The Annotated Shakespeare, III, 201.

99: 'The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea', p. 66.

100: C. M. Grieve, Annals of the Five Senses, third edition, introduction by Alan Bold (Edinburgh, 1983).

101: 'MacDiarmid the Marxist Poet', p.232.

102: Kenneth Buthlay, 'Some Hints for Source-Hunters', in Scottish Literary Journal, Vol. 5, No. 2 (December 1978), pp. 50-66 (p. 57).

103: See 'The Scotched Snake' for a detailed consideration of the debt of Cenchrastus to found materials.

104: As F. G. Scott's letters to Grieve in Edinburgh University Library indicate - see letters of July 19th and July 28th 1932.

105: 'I used to write sic bonny sangs' (C.P. I, p. 494), a lyric interpolation in 'Ode to All Rebels', might be taken as a confessional statement on MacDiarmid's change of poetic style. In fact, however, it sheds little light on the subject.

106: See Goethe, Faust/Part Two, translated with an introduction by Philip Wayne (Harmondsworth, 1959), pp. 142, 145-7.

107: Hugh MacDiarmid, A Lap of Honour (London, 1967), Prefatory Note, p. 11.

APPENDIX A

- 1: A. L., 'In Praise of Local Dialect', Scottish Educational Journal, May 1st 1931, p. 495.
- 2: Lecture to English Department, University College, Cork, December 10th 1973.
- 3: Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language, edited by Rev. Thomas Davidson (London and Edinburgh, 1912). See n. 40 to Chapter Two.
- 4: In the course of the lecture delivered to the English Department at U.C.C.

5: Chambers's Scots Dictionary, compiled by Alexander Warrack, M.A., with an introduction and dialect map by William Grant, M.A., LL. D. (Edinburgh, 1911), Introduction, p. viii.

6: Sydney Goodsir Smith, A Short Introduction to Scottish Literature (Edinburgh, 1951), p. 13.

7: G. S. Fraser, A Short History of English Poetry (Somerset, 1981), p. 73.

8: Gawin Douglas, 'From "The Eneados (Aeneid)"', Late Medieval Scots Poetry: A Selection from the Makars and their Heirs down to 1610, edited with an introduction, notes and glossary by Tom Scott (London, 1967), p. 128.

9: Matthew P. McDiarmid, 'Hugh MacDiarmid and the Colloquial Category', in Hugh MacDiarmid: A Critical Survey, edited by Duncan Glen (Edinburgh, 1972), pp. 117-23 (pp. 117-9).

10: 'Hugh MacDiarmid and the Colloquial Category', p. 117.

11: 'On Fergusson', l. 3, Burns: Poems and Songs,
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12: A Short Introduction to Scottish Literature,
p. 23.

13: 'Note', Poems by Robert Louis Stevenson (London,
1908), pp. 5-7 (p. 6). Stevenson's 'Note' originally
appeared in Underwoods in 1887.

14: G. Gregory Smith, Scottish Literature: Character
and Influence (London, 1919), pp. 138-9.

APPENDIX B

1: Catherine Kerrigan, Whaur Extremes Meet: The Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid 1920-1934 (Edinburgh, 1983), p. 1.

2: Whaur Extremes Meet, p. 1.

3: Dr. Ruth McQuillan's mother studied at Broughton under Ogilvie. Mrs. McQuillan remembers Ogilvie's especial fondness for Keats.

4: Hugh MacDiarmid, Contemporary Scottish Studies (Edinburgh, 1976). A less complete collection of these essays, which made their appearance in the Scottish Educational Journal from June 1925 to February 1927, was published in London in 1926.

- 5: Hugh MacDiarmid, 'Art and the Unknown', in Selected Essays of Hugh MacDiarmid, edited with an introduction by Duncan Glen (London, 1969), pp. 44-8 (p. 44). This essay originally appeared in the New Age in 1926.
- 6: See Micheál Ó hUanacháin, 'The Extension of Human Consciousness', in Aquarius, No. 11 (1979), pp. 14-15 (p. 14).
- 7: Introduction, in Poets of the English Language, Vol. IV: Blake to Poe, edited by W. H. Auden and Norman Holmes Pearson (London, no date), pp. xiii-xxvii (pp. xiii-xiv).
- 8: Poets of the English Language, IV, p. xv.
- 9: Iain Crichton Smith, 'The Golden Lyric', in Hugh MacDiarmid: A Critical Survey, edited by Duncan Glen (Edinburgh, 1972), pp. 124-40 (p. 131).
- 10: See, e.g., William Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, with an introduction and commentary by Sir Geoffrey Keynes (London and New York, 1975), plate 4. See also S. Foster Damon, A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake (London, 1973), p. 364.

11: The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, plate 7.

12: Preface to 'Milton', The Illuminated Blake, annotated by David V. Erdman (London, 1975), p. 216.

13: David Daiches, 'Hugh MacDiarmid's Early Poetry', in A Critical Survey pp. 58-84 (pp. 83-4)

David Craig, 'MacDiarmid the Marxist Poet', in The Real Foundations: Literature and Social Change (London, 1973), pp. 230-53 (p. 253).

Seamus Heaney, 'Tradition and an Individual Talent: Hugh MacDiarmid', in Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978 (London, 1980), pp. 195-8 (p. 195).

Roderick Watson, Hugh MacDiarmid (Milton Keynes, 1976), p. 42.

Edwin Morgan, 'Poetry and Knowledge in MacDiarmid's Later Work', in A Critical Survey, pp. 192-202 (pp. 192-3). Also Hugh MacDiarmid (Harlow, 1973), p. 10.

John Montague, 'Mystic Materialist', the Guardian, November 30th 1978, p. 9.

Kenneth Buthlay, Hugh MacDiarmid (C. M. Grieve) (Edinburgh, 1982), p. 70.

Ann Edwards Boutelle, Thistle and Rose: A Study of Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry (Loanhead, 1980), pp. 12, 56, 107 and 186.

14: Reproduced in Preoccupations, p. 195.

15: William Wordsworth: The Poems, edited by John C. Hayden, 2 vols., (Harmondsworth, 1977), Vol. I, pp. 304-11 and 277-80.

16: 'Resolution and Independence', ll. 57-60, William Wordsworth: The Poems, I, p. 553.

17: 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood', ll. 116-8, William Wordsworth: The Poems, I, p. 527.

18: Quoted by Ernest de Selincourt in his Introduction to Wordsworth: The Prelude, or, Growth of a Poet's Mind (Text of 1805), edited from the manuscripts with an introduction and notes by Ernest de Selincourt, a new edition, corrected by Stephen Gill (London, 1970), pp. ix-x.

19: 'Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1793', l. 90, William Wordsworth: The Poems, I, p. 360.

20: Kenneth Buthlay, 'Shibboleths of the Scots', in Akros, Vol. 12, Nos. 34-35 (August 1977), pp. 23-47 (p. 46).

21: 'Lines ... Tintern Abbey', l. 88, William Wordsworth: The Poems, I, p. 360.

22: The Prelude (1850 version), Book First, l. 285, in The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Fourth Edition, General Editor: M. H. Abrams, 2 vols. (New York, 1979), Vol. II, p. 261.

23: I have echoed here Charles Tomlinson's phrase, 'poetic energy imagined as the rush of water'. See William Carlos Williams: Selected Poems, edited with an introduction by Charles Tomlinson (Harmondsworth, 1976), p. 11.

24: 'Preface to "Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems (1802)"', in William Wordsworth: The Poems, I, pp. 867-96 (p. 881).

25: Edwin Morgan, 'Poetry and Knowledge in MacDiarmid's Later Work', in A Critical Survey, pp. 192-202 (p. 193).

- 26: William Wordsworth: The Poems, I, p. 881.
- 27: See Wordsworth: The Prelude. or. Growth of a Poet's Mind (Text of 1805), Book III, ll.294-328 (l. 306), pp. 280-1 (p. 280).
- 28: 'Shelley', in Matthew Arnold's Essays in Criticism First and Second Series, with an introduction by G. K. Chesterton (London, 1964), pp. 331-51 (p. 351).
- 29: David Daiches, in a note on MacDiarmid in The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. II, pp. 2325-30 (p. 2330).
- 30: Shelley in A Defence of Poetry (passim), MacDiarmid in The Muckle Toon (passim).
- 31: Herbert Read, The True Voice of Feeling: Studies in English Romantic Poetry (London, 1968), p. 271.
- 32: Percy Bysshe Shelley: Plays, Translations, and Longer Poems (London, 1907), p. 350.

33: Quoted by M. H. Abrams in a note on Shelley,
The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. II,
p. 662.

34: Richard Holmes, Shelley: The Pursuit (London, 1976),
p. 64.

35: Percy Bysshe Shelley: Plays, Translations, and
Longer Poems, p. 183.

36: 'A Defence of Poetry', in Sidney - An Apology
for Poetry: Shelley - A Defence of Poetry, edited
with introduction and notes by H. A. Needham (London,
no date), pp. 67-109 (p. 79).

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An exhaustive list of the writings of Christopher Murray Grieve is neither a practical nor a wholly desirable proposition. How can the scholar be confident of tracing every piece of verse and prose contributed to newspapers and periodicals by the poet-journalist - anonymously, pseudonymously, and otherwise - during the course of a career which spanned eight decades? W. R. Aitken, however, has compiled a record of the major publications. See 'A Hugh MacDiarmid Bibliography', in Hugh MacDiarmid: A Critical Survey, pp. 228-41, and the supplementary list published in Akros, Vol. 12, Nos. 34-35 (August 1977), pp. 113-14. The addition of the following items brings Dr Aitken's checklist up to date:

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c) Uncollected Poetry

Untitled fragment quoted in 'Religion and the Scottish Renaissance Group', by C. M. Grieve ("Hugh MacDiarmid"), the Scots Observer, June 9th 1932, p. 8.

'John Davidson', the Free Man, July 2nd, 1932, p.2.

'Parley of Beasts', the Free Man, June 24th, 1933, p.5.

d) Unpublished Poetry

Manuscript dated London 1932 in the Morris Library at the University of Delaware.

e) Unpublished Fiction

"Holie for Nags", the Scots Observer, September 22nd, 1928, p. 5.

f) Correspondence

So voluminous is the surviving correspondence of Christopher Murray Grieve that Alan Bold's generous selection of the letters leaves unpublished many items of relevance to an investigation of the Clann Albann writings. The following manuscript

collections were drawn upon in the preparation of the present study:

Grieve/Blackwoods: National Library of Scotland, Deps. 266 and 309.

Grieve to William Burt: Edinburgh University Library, Gen. 902.

Grieve to Helen B. Cruickshank: Edinburgh University Library, Gen. 886.

Grieve/Neil M. Gunn: National Library of Scotland, Dep. 209.

Grieve/Eneas Mackay: National Library of Scotland, Acc. 7913.

Grieve to George Ogilvie: National Library of Scotland, Acc. 4540.

Grieve to F. G. Scott: Edinburgh University Library, Gen. 887.

Grieve to William Soutar: National Library of Scotland, Mss. 8506-47 and 8561 passim.

F. G. Scott to Grieve: Edinburgh University Library, MacDiarmid archive, uncatalogued.

g) Uncollected Interviews

'C. M. Grieve Speaks Out: Special Interview with "The Freeman", the Free Man, April 30th 1932, p. 4.

'Hammer and Thistle: Hugh MacDiarmid, Scottish Writer and Politician', Hugh MacDiarmid interviewed by Micheál O hUanacháin, 1973, 1977, broadcast in The Arts Programme, RTE Radio, February 23rd 1978.

'At the Sign of the Thistle: On Standing One's Ground', the Free Man, November 12th 1932, p. 5.

'At the Sign of the Thistle: John Davidson', the Free Man, April 1st 1933, pp. 7-8.

h) Uncollected Essays and Reviews, arranged in chronological order

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'Towards the New Order I', by C. M. Grieve, the New Age, March 26th 1925, pp. 259-60.

'Clan Albainn and Other Matters', by C. M. Grieve, the Modern Scot, Vol. I, No. 2 (July 1930), pp. 7-10.

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'At the Sign of the Thistle: Various Men and Matters', the Free Man, August 13th 1932, p. 5.

'At the Sign of the Thistle: The Puzzle of Mr. Grieve', the Free Man, September 3rd 1932, pp. 4-5.

'Wyndham Lewis', by A. K. L., Scottish Educational Journal, September 9th 1932, pp. 1090-1.

'At the Sign of the Thistle: The Opportunity of the Unemployed', the Free Man, September 24th 1932, p. 6.

'At the Sign of the Thistle: On Standing One's Ground', the Free Man, November 12th 1932, p. 5.

'At the Sign of the Thistle: John Davidson', the Free Man, April 1st 1933, pp. 7-8.

'At the Sign of the Thistle: Edinburgh University
and Scots Literature', the Free Man,
December 30th 1933, p. 6.

'Rainer Maria Rilke', New Britain, February 28th
1934, p. 450.

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(Some uncollected Essays and Reviews found relevant to the preparation of the present study, arranged in chronological order.)

- 'The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins', by A. L., the Scottish Educational Journal, March 27th 1931, p. 357.
- 'Colour and Literature', by A. L., the Scottish Educational Journal, March 18th 1932, p.351.
- 'At the Sign of the Thistle: Nietzsche in Scotland', the Free Man, May 21st 1932, p. 5.
- 'Hugh M'Diarmid's Latest Poem' (unsigned), the Scottish Educational Journal, May 27th 1932, p. 663.
- 'At the Sign of the Thistle: Mr. Eyre Todd and Scots Poetry', the Free Man, May 28th 1932, p. 4.
- 'At the Sign of the Thistle: An Earlier Anglophobe', the Free Man, June 4th 1932, p. 5.
- 'At the Sign of the Thistle: Lenin and Us', the Free Man, June 11th 1932, p. 6.
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- 'At the Sign of the Thistle: Communism and Literature', the Free Man, August 6th 1932, pp. 4-5.
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- 'Mr. C. M. Grieve's Last Shot', the Scots Observer, January 21st 1933, p. 11.
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- 'The Significance of Cavalcanti', by A. L., the Scottish Educational Journal, February 10th 1933, p. 161.
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- 'Fish in Scottish Poetry', by James Maclaren, the Scottish Educational Journal, August 18th 1933, p. 948.
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704

'OOT O' THE WORLD AND INTO THE LANGHOLM'

VOLUME TWO

The Muckle Toon ,

Text, Commentary and Glossary

3/86

In Memory of Christopher Murray Grieve

and for

Valda Grieve

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

The present compilation gathers into one volume for the first time all the poems which can be said with confidence to have been written for Clann Albann. These have been supplemented by thematically related pieces of prose and verse drawn from many areas of the author's output. Each item in the Text has been marked (a), (b), (c) or (d) to indicate to which of the following four categories it belongs:

(a) Designated Clann Albann material: The two volumes of verse assembled during MacDiarmid's English exile - First Hymn to Lenin and other poems (1931) and Scots Unbound and other poems (1932) - carry Author's Notes ascribing their contents to Clann Albann. The formal and thematic homogeneity of the First Hymn poems

corroborates that ascription, and accordingly each of the volume's constituent pieces has been included here. The poems of Scots Unbound, however, are far more various. MacDiarmid contradicted that volume's Author's Note some years before his death when he told Dr. Ruth McQuillan that the book was not composed exclusively of pieces designed for his five-part autobiographical scheme. I have therefore omitted most of the title-poem (C.P. I, p. 340), along with 'An Apprentice Angel' (C.P. I, p. 332), 'Dytiscus' (C.P. I, p. 354) and 'The Scott Centenary' (C.P. I, p. 361). The poems I have retained are either clearly illustrative of themes formulated elsewhere in The Muckle Toon or were individually ascribed by the poet to Clann Albann. (The problem of the Scots Unbound Author's Note is discussed in Vol. I, pp. 132-3).

This category includes many poems which remained uncollected until the nineteen sixties or later and which were stated on their original publication to belong to Clann Albann.

(b) Poems from the early thirties apparently intended for Clann Albann, though not explicitly ascribed to that work: The pieces in question were published in the period 1931-33 and seem on internal evidence to have been written for The Muckle Toon.

(c) Stories from 'the prose Muckle Toon': See Vol. I, pp. 61-5. Major stories from this work which complement the Langholm poetry or accord with the thematic dictates of 'Clann Albann: An Explanation' are presented in the Text. Stories of lesser relevance or ambition appear in Appendix B.

(d) Miscellaneous writings: Once he had suspended work on The Muckle Toon MacDiarmid made no effort to complete the book or even to bring together the scattered poems he had assigned to it. His subsequent prose and verse is by no means silent on the subject of Langholm, however. A completed Muckle Toon might have provided a context for the autobiographical observations which made their way, with more or less pertinence, into the later work. None of these has been included in the Text on the grounds of autobiographical interest alone:

each 'imported' piece either extends at least one motif of the poetry designated for Clann Albann's opening volume or deals with subject-matter the poet undertook to write of there.

My use of material written before work on Clann Albann got under way may appear at first sight less easy to justify. It must be pointed out however that MacDiarmid characteristically swept into his longer works poems and passages which had enjoyed a prior independent existence. Indeed in compiling a group of Clann Albann poems for publication the poet created a precedent for my inclusion of writings composed before 1931: 'Beyond Exile' (C.P. I, p. 305; M.T., p. 3), which had originally appeared in the Broughton Magazine in 1919, was reprinted in First Hymn to Lenin and other poems.

--ooOoo--

My arrangement of the Text has been guided by the considerations outlined on pp. 262-70 of Vol. I. The following is a brief guide to the schema I have chosen. More detailed explanations are to be found at the head

of each section of the Commentary.

- Prelude : Early Langholm-related material
- I : Expository
- II : Writings pertaining to the Common Riding
- III : Ancestry, family and religion
- IV : Contacts with Death
- V : Love
- VI : The Water of Life
- VII : The spirit of place
- VIII : The threat to the Water of Life

--ooOoo--

The authorised text of all MacDiarmid's collected poetry, incorporating small but significant emendations made by Dr. W. R. Aitken, is to be found in the Complete Poems. I have deferred to that text in all instances except one: the poem printed as 'Kinsfolk' in the Complete Poems (II, P. 1147) appears here under its original title, 'From Work in Progress' (M.T., p. 10).

The orthography and punctuation of the original printings of items not reproduced in the Complete Poems have been retained here, though printers' errors have been corrected.

CONTENTS

A NOTE ON THE TEXT	1
THE MUCKLE TOON	1
PRELUDE	2
I	10
II	25
III	41
IV	70
V	95
VI	98
VII	146
VIII	160
APPENDIX A	168
APPENDIX B	173
APPENDIX C	234
COMMENTARY	241
Prelude	245
I	255
II	281
III	293
IV	330
V	355
VI	361
VII	431
VIII	464
Appendix A	485
Appendix B	490
Appendix C	498
GLOSSARY	502

THE MUCKLE TOON

A DUMFRIESSHIRE BOY

I had the fortune to live as a boy
In a world a' columbe and colour-de-roy
As gin I'd had Mars for the land o' my birth
 Instead o' the earth.

Nae maitter hoo faur I've travelled sinsyne 5
The cast o' Dumfriesshire's aye in me like wine;
And my sangs are gleids o' the candent spirit
 Its sons inherit.

(b)

PRELUDE

MEMORIES OF LANGHOLM

Here is no gorgeous rioting of gold,
 Blue, or gleaming red,
 In skies unutterably cold,
 Hopeless and dead.
 The vision which no more delights these eyes 5
 In bright remembrance glows.
 There is a glory in the western skies;
 Esk ripples rose.

How horrible the clatter and the noise 10
 That jars eternally:
 There is no music in the voice
 Of the city.
 But, oh! the sweet sad song Ewes used to sing
 Is ringing in my ears.
 Its magic tinkling still will ring 15
 Throughout the years.

God! here is gloom and stricken loneliness,
 And barren withered boles,
 Gaunt, stark, loom through the mistiness,
 And men, like moles, 20
 Potter in the darkness. Great God! Does gorse
 Still glow on Whita's slope?
 Does Esk ream with its old wild force?
 Sea-winds blow hope?

by 'Alister K. Laidlaw' 1908

(d)

BEYOND EXILE

Praise God that still my feet can find
 In distant lands the old hill-road,
 And tread always no alien clay
 But their familiar sod.

And all the ocean's broad estate
 Be but a gleaming band to me
 That slips between the bending fields
 To find no foreign sea.

5

No stranger's roof-tree covers me,
 Albeit I travel far and wide
 And sundering leagues but closer bind
 Me to my darling's side.

10

And if I pass the utmost bourne
 Why, then, I shall be home again -
 The quick step at the quiet door,
 The gay eyes at the pane!

15

SALONIKA, 1916

(a)

ALLEGIANCE

WRITTEN ON THE MEDITERRANEAN

'The ancient chorus of the rich blue flood,
The mystic sundance of the Middle Seas,
What have you in your heart, Scots Borderman,
Prithee, that can compare with these?'

'A brown stream chunners in my heart always. 5
I know slim waters that the sun makes dance
With splendid subtlety and suppleness,
And many a green and golden glance.'

'See by the Spanish and the Afric coasts,
The sailing vessels go with precious freight, 10
Of silk and costly oil and coloured fruit,
And treasures of the antique great!'

'I see: but in my treasure-chest I have
Chimes of the red bell-heather, green fir-fans,
And moorland mysteries and mountain hopes 15
That are no other man's.

'Praise give I freely to that mighty Queen
Who passes now in splendour and in state,
But ah! my heart is hers whose shy, light eyes
And small, swift smile elate 20

'Sealed me the servant of a cause forlorn,
Whose dream and whose desire I cannot tell,
Where timeless silence in the far blue hills
Hangs like a ready bell!'

(d)

MY NATIVE PLACE

After journeying in recent years over most of Scotland, England, and Central, Southern and Eastern Europe, I am of the opinion that "my native place" - the Muckle Toon of Langholm, in Dumfriesshire - is the bonniest place I know, by virtue, not of the little burgh in itself (though that has its treasurable aspects, and on nights when, as boys, we used to thread its dim streets playing "Jock, Shine the Light" and race over the one bridge, past the factory, and over the other, with the lamp-reflections wriggling like eels at intervals in the racing waters, had an indubitable magic of its own), but of wonderful variety and quality of the scenery in which it is set. I have not been there for years; and years before that I felt that I had completely outgrown the place. My interests lay along lines no-one else in the place seemed to share, and I shared none of theirs. In all my published poetry there is, I think, but one lyric in "The Drunk Man" and a few lines of allusion in "To Circumjack Cencrastus" devoted to it. And yet, within the past year or two I have found myself increasingly caught up in happy recollections of it and

(d)

speculations as to what divided me so early and so completely from all the tastes and tendencies of my relatives and other early friends. One of the main reasons for this, probably, is the fact that my own children are domiciled in London, and that I cannot but compare the quality of the childhood available to them there with my own childhood's happy playground. The delights of sledging on the Lamb Hill or Murtholm Brae; of gathering "hines" in the Langfall; of going through the fields of Baggara hedged in honeysuckle and wild roses, through knee-deep meadowsweet to the "Scrog-nit" wood and gathering the nuts or crab-apples there; of blaeberrying on Warblaw or the Castle Hill; of "dookin'" and "guddlin'" or making islands in the Esk or Ewes or Wauchope and lighting stick fires on them and cooking potatoes in tin cans - these are only a few of the joys I knew, in addition to the general ones of hill-climbing and penetrating the five glens which (each with its distinct character) converge upon or encircle the town - Eskdale, Wauchopedale, Tarrasdale, Ewesdale, and below the town Carlislewards, the "Dean Banks". As we grew up, too, we learned to savour the particular qualities and rites

of Langholm in comparison with the other Border burghs - the joys of Langholm Common-Riding compared with those at Selkirk or Hawick, for example; the peculiar shibboleths of local pronunciation; the historical associations of our corner of the "ballad-land" rife with its tales of raidings and reivings and strewn with the remnants of peels; the wealth of local "characters" who were still about but seem now to have almost died out - Jenny Spells, Jimmy Moniplies, and the like. As I grew into my early teens I ranged further afield, and soon all the Borders were within my ken. Many places had their special beauties or points of interest and advantage; but none had the variety of beauty centred round Langholm itself - none seemed so complete a microcosm of the entire Borderland. I knew now where to find not only the common delights of hill and forest and field and waterside (and chiefest of all these to me were the chestnut trees at the sawmill - even now it thrills me to remember the beautiful chestnuts, large and lustrous as horses' eyes, which so surprisingly displayed themselves when we cracked open the prickly green shells, and I remember many huge "strops" of them I strung and many a fierce competition at "Conquerors"),

but the various kinds of wild orchises, and butterwort, sundew, and the like; the various nests - including Terrona crags where ravens nested; how to deal with adders and smoke out wasps' "bikes", and much other lore of that sort. In short, a boyhood packed full of country sights and sounds - healthy and happy and able to satisfy its hunger on a long walk with juicy slices of a big yellow "neep" stolen from an adjoining field. Apart from the most radical mental and spiritual divergence, and the circumstances which sent me first to school and thence to work in other parts of Scotland and furth of Scotland, ties which might have drawn me back more frequently were broken with my father's early death, and again, "the men who were boys when I was a boy" - my old school chums and playmates - suffered the sudden dispersal of the war generation. Many of them made the supreme sacrifice; and I myself was on active service for nearly four years, in Salonika, Italy, and Marseilles, and of all the men I met in the Army, only one, I think, was a Langholmite. These war years interposed a barrier like that set up by a serious illness; it is difficult ever to take up again threads broken in that way: and now,

while I have many a vignette of rare beauty, many a memory of pure and enriching experience - while at times I am positively haunted by some of the curious place-names, Baggara, Kernigall, Tarras - as a result of the early years I spent in Langholm, to which, however, I have only returned once, and that for a mere flying visit twelve years ago - it is not for myself that I crave any renewed experience of its delights, but for my children, whose city-sted lives seem to me attenuated and glamourless in comparison. I would have their lives enriched by a similar colourful and diverse contact with Nature in turn, even if they too, must needs break with it as radically as I have done. But for myself - and perhaps for them, if a return to Langholm or any like spot (and there is no like spot - no spot quite like) is impossible - if I ever go "out of the world and into Langholm again," it will only be in dreams or in my poet's craft in which, perchance, I may yet find words for some of the felicities I remember and to which (despite all my subsequent divergence of interest and effort) the texture of my spirit must owe incomparably more than I can ever repay or acknowledge.

I

FROM WORK IN PROGRESS

Gin scenic beauty had been a' I sook
 I never need ha' left the Muckle Toon.
 I saw it there as weel as ony man
 (As I'll sune prove); and sin syne I've gane
 roon'
 Hauf o' the warld wi' faculties undulled 5
 And no' seen't equalled.

But scenic beauty's never maittered much
 To me afore, sin poetry isna made
 O' onything that's seen, toucht, smelt, or heard 10
 And no' till lately ha'e the hame scenes played
 A pairt in my creative thocht I've yet
 To faddom, and permit.

Gin there's an efter life hoo can I guess
 What kind o' man I'll be wha canna tell
 What's pairted me here frae my kith and kin 15
 In a' airts mair than Heaven is frae Hell
 (To bate the question which is which a wee)
 As't seems to them and me.

Nor tell what brings me unexpectedly back
 Whaur't seems nae common thocht or interest's left.20
 Guid kens it wasna snobbery or hate,
 Selfishness, ingratitude, or chance that reft
 Sae early, sae completely, ties that last
 Maist folk for life - or was't.

I bein' a man made ither human ties 25
 But they - my choice - are broken (in this case
 No' a' my choice) as utterly as those
 That bound me to my kin and native place.
 My wife and bairns, is't tinin' them that thraws
 Me back on my first cause? 30

(a)

Foreseein' in Christine's or in Walter's mind
 A picture o' mysel' as in my ain
 My mither rises or I rise in hers
 Incredible as to a Martian brain
 A cratur' o' this star o' oors micht be
 It had nae point o' contact wi'. 35

Daith in my faither's case. I hae his build,
 His energy, but no' his raven hair,
 Rude cheeks, clear een. I am whey-faced.
 My een
 Ha'e dark rings roon them and my pow is fair. 40
 A laddie when he dee'd, I kent little o'm and
 he
 Kent less o' me.

Gin he had lived my life and wark micht weel
 Ha' been entirely different, better or waur,
 Or neither, comparison impossible. 45
 It wadna ha' been the same. That's hoo things
 are.
 He had his differences frae some folks aroon'
 But never left the Muckle Toon.

He had his differences but a host o' freen's
 At ane wi' him on maist things and at serious odds 50
 In nane, a kindly, gin conscientious, man,
 Fearless but peacefu', and to man's and God's
 Service gi'en owre accordin' to his lichts
 But fondest o' his ain fireside o'
 nichts.

Afore he dee'd he turned and gied a lang 55
 Last look at pictures o' my brither and me
 Hung on the wa' aside the bed, I've heard
 My mither say. I wonder then what he
 Foresaw or hoped and hoo - or gin - it
 squares
 Wi' subsequent affairs. 60

I've led a vera different life frae ocht
 He could conceive or share I ken fu' weel
 Yet gin he understood - or understands
 (His faith, no' mine) - I like to feel,
 and feel,
 He wadna wish his faitherhood undone
 O' sic an unforeseen unlikely son. 65

I like to feel, and yet I ken that a'
 I mind or think about him is nae mair
 To what he was, or aiblins is, than yon
 Picture o' me at fourteen can compare
 Wi' what I look the day (or looked even then). 70
 He looked in vain, and I again.

Gin he had lived at warst we'd ha' been freen's
 Juist as my mither (puir auld soul) and I
 - As maist folk are, no' ga'en vera deep 75
 A maitter o' easy-ozie habit maistly, shy
 O' fundamentals, as it seems to me,
 - A minority o' ane, may be!

Maist bonds 'twixt man and man are weel ca'd
 bonds.
 But I'll come back to this, since come I maun 80
 Fellow-feelin', common humanity, claptrap (or
 has
 In anither sense my comin'-back begun)
 I've had as little use for to be terse
 As maist folk ha'e for verse.

My wife and weans in London never saw 85
 The Muckle Toon that I'm concerned wi' noo
 (Sittin' in Liverpool), and never may.
 What maitters't then, gin a' life's gantin'
 through,
 Biggit on sicna kittle sands as these,
 Wi' like haphazardries? 90

My clan is darkness 'yont a wee ring
O' memory showin' catsiller here or there
But nocht complete or lookin' twice the same.
Graham, Murray, Carruthers, Frater, and faur
mair

Auld Border breeds than I can tell ha' been 95
Woven in its skein.

Great hooses keep their centuried lines complete.
Better than I can mind my faither they
Preserve their forbears painted on their wa's 100
And can trace ilka tendency and trait
O' bluid and spirit in their divers stages
Doon the ages.

To mind and body I ha' nae sic clue,
A water flowin' frae an unkent source 105
Wellin' up in me to catch the licht at last
At this late break in its hidden course,
Yet my blin' instincts nurtured in the dark
Sing sunwards like the lark.

I canna signal to a single soul 110
In a' the centuries that led up to me
In happy correspondence, yet to a'
These nameless thanks for strength and
cleanness gi'e,
And mair, auld Border breeds, ken I inherit
And croun, your frontier spirit.

Reivers to weavers and to me. Weird way! 115
Yet in the last analysis I've sprung
Frae battles, mair than ballads, and it seems
The thrawn auld water has at last upswung
Through me, and's mountin' like the vera devil
To its richt level! 120

FROM 'LUCKY POET' (1)

My boyhood was an incredibly happy one. Langholm was, indeed - and presumably still is - a wonderful place to be a boy in.

Scotland is not generally regarded as a land flowing with milk and honey - and I have lived in diverse parts of it long enough now to know that it is seldom, perhaps, that it presents itself in that guise. Nevertheless, it can do so at times, and probably does so far more frequently than is commonly understood. It certainly did so in my boyhood - with a bountifulness so inexhaustible that it has supplied all my subsequent poetry with a tremendous wealth of sensuous satisfaction, a teeming gratitude of reminiscence, and that I have still an immense reservoir to draw upon. My earliest impressions are of an almost tropical luxuriance of Nature - of great forests, of honey-scented heather hills, and moorlands infinitely rich in little-appreciated beauties of flowering, of animal and insect life, of strange and subtle

(d)

relationships of water and light -

The recurrent vividness of light and water
Through every earthly change of mood and
scene,

and of a multitude of rivers, each with its
distinct music and each catering in the most
exciting way for hosts of the most stimulating
and wholesome pleasures a fellow can know in
the heyday of his youth - ducking, guddling,
girning, spearing eels, and building islands
in midstream and playing at Robinson Crusoe.

WATER MUSIC

TO WILLIAM AND FLORA JOHNSTONE

Wheesht. wheesht. Joyce, and let me hear
Nae Anna Livvy's lilt,
But Wauchope. Esk. and Ewes again,
Each wi' its ain rhythms till't.

I

Archin' here and arrachin there,
 Allevolie or allemand,
 Whiles appliable, whiles areird,
 The polysemous poem's planned.

Lively, louch, atweesh, atween, 5
 Auchimuty or aspate,
 Threidin' through the averins
 Or bightsom in the aftergait.

Or barmybrained or barritchfu' 10
 Or rinnin' like an attercap,
 Or shinin' like an Atchison,
 Wi' a blare or wi' a blawp.

They ken a' that opens and steeks, 15
 Frae Fiddleton Bar to Callister Ha',
 And roon aboot for twenty miles,
 They bead and bell and swaw.

Brent on or boutgate or beshacht 20
 Bellwaverin' or borne-heid,
 They mimp and primp, or bick and birr,
 Dilly-dally or show speed.

Brade-up or sclafferin', rouchled, sleek,
 Abstraklous or austerne,
 In belths below the brae-hags
 And bebbles in the fern.

(a)

Bracken, blaeberrys, and heather 25
 Ken their amplefeysts and toves,
 Here gangs ane wi' aiglets jinglin',
 Through a gowl anither goves.

Lint in the bell whiles hardly vies 30
 Wi' ane the wind amows,
 While blithely doon abradit linns
 Wi' gowd begane anither jows.

Cougher, blocher, boich and croichle,
 Fraise in ane anither's witters, 35
 Wi' backthrows, births, by-rinnin's,
 Beggar's-broon or blae - the critters!

Or burnet, holine, watchet, chauve,
 Or wi' a' the colours dyed
 O' the lift abune and plants and trees 40
 The grow on either side.

Or coinyelled wi' the midges,
 Or swallows a' aboot,
 The shadow o' an eagle,
 The aiker o' a troot.

Toukin' outrageous face 45
 The turn-gree o' your mood,
 I've climmed until I'm lost
 Like the sun ahint a clood.

But a tow-gun frae the boon tree,
A whistle frae the elm, 50
A spout-gun frae the hemlock,
And, back in this auld realm,
Dry leafs o' dishielogie
To smoke in a 'partan's tae'!

And you've me in your creel again, 55
 Brim or shallow, bauch or bricht,
 Singin' in the mornin'
 Corrieneuchin' a' the nicht.

II

Lappin' on the shirrel,
 Or breengin' doon the cleuch,
 Slide-thrift for stars and shadows,
 Or sun-'couped owre the heuch'.

Wi' the slughorn o' a folk 5
 Sightmen for a thousand years,
 In fluther or at shire
 O' the Border burns' careers,

Let them popple, let them pirl, 10
 Plish-plash and plunk and plot and ploom
 In quakin' quaw for fish-currie
 I ken a' they're about.

And 'twixt the pavvy o' the Wauchope,
 And the paspey o' the Ewes, 15
 And the pavane o' Esk itsel',
 It's no' for me to choose.

Be they querty, be they quiet,
 Flow like railya or lamoo,
 Only turn a rashmill or 20
 Gar a' the country tew,

As it's froggin' in the hills,
 Or poors pipestapples and auld wives,
 Sae Waich Water glents and scrows,
 Reels and ratches and rives.

Some day they say the Bigly Burn 25
 'll loup oot frae its scrabs and thistles,
 And ding the bonnie birken shaw
 A' to pigs and whistles.

And there's yon beck - I winna name't - 30
 That hauds the fish that aince was hookit
 A century syne - the fisher saw't,
 And flew, and a' his graith forsookit.

And as for Unthank Water,
That seeps through miles o' reeds and seggs,
It's aye at pilliewinkie syne
Wi' the gowdnie's eggs. 35

Nae mair than you could stroan yoursel'
The biggest o' them you may say,
Yet lood and still I see them stoan
To oceans and the heaven's sway. 40

Fleetin' owre the meadows,
Or cleitchin' in the glaur,
The haill world answers to them,
And they rein the faurest star.

Humboldt, Howard, Maury,
Hildebrandsson, Hann, and Symons,
A digest o' a' their work's
In these dour draps or diamonds. 45

And weel I ken the air's wild rush
As it comes owre the seas,
Clims up and whistles 'twixt the hills,
Wi' a' the weather gi'es 50

O' snaw and rain and thunder,
Is a single circle spun
By the sun's bricht heat and guided by
Earth's spin and the shapes o' the grun'. 55

Lappin' on the shirrel,
Or breengin' doon the cleuch,
I can listen to the waters
Lang - and no' lang - eneuch. 60

Wheesht. wheesht. Joyce. and let me hear
No' Anna Livvy's lilt,
But Wauchope. Esk. and Ewes again,
Each wi' its ain rhythms till't.

FROM 'LUCKY POET' (2)

My first bit of luck was ... to be born in the wonderful little Border burgh of Langholm in Dumfriesshire, and, since the 'Lucky' in my title, of course, embraces both good luck and bad luck, my first bit of bad luck coincided with my first introduction to my native land, for my mother wrapped me well in a Shetland shawl and took me to the door to see - but, alas! my infant eyesight could not carry so far, nor, if I could have seen, would my infant brain have understood - the most unusual sight of the Esk frozen over so hard that carts and horses could go upon it for twenty miles as upon a road, and the whole adult population were out skating upon it all day and, by the light of great bonfires, at night. That, I think, has not happened since - nor anything approaching it; and there was I, poor little mite, so unfortunate as to be unable to see it, though I was held outside for the purpose.

(d)

CATTLE SHOW

I shall go among red faces and virile voices,
See stylish sheep, with fine heads and well-wooled,
And great bulls mellow to the touch,
Brood mares of marvellous approach, and geldings
With sharp and flinty bones and silken hair. 5

And through th'enclosure draped in red and gold
I shall pass on to spheres more vivid yet
Where countesses' coque feathers gleam and glow
And, swathed in silks, the painted ladies are
Whose laughter plays like summer lightning there. 10

(d)

COUNTRY FOLK

Country folk, bein' wice, are content
To view the eagle's flight
Frae faur below, and no' gang near
Its eyrie's ugsome sicht.

(a)

FROM 'LUCKY POET' (3)

What I remember above all else of those boyhood days is the wealth of wild fruit. Many a great basket of blackberries I gathered on the hills around Langholm (hills, as Sir G. M. Trevelyan says, 'Like the procession of long primaeval ages that is written in tribal mounds, Roman roads, and Border towers'); then there were the little hard black cranberries, and - less easy to gather since they grow in swampy places - the speckled crane-berries, but above all, in the Langfall and other woods in the extensive policies of the Duke of Buccleuch, there were great stretches of wild raspberry bushes, the fruit of which the public were allowed to pick, and many a splendid 'boiling of jam' I gathered there - gathering more than the raw material of jam, too,

(d)

... Or I would come cycling back into Langholm down the Wauchope road with a pillow-slipful of crab-apples (as at other times a basket of plovers' eggs) on my carrier; and again there was the Scrog Nut Wood, shaking its bunches of nuts like clenched fists in the windy sunlight.

I have travelled most of Europe since I left Langholm - been in Macedonia, Greece, Italy, France, Spain, Holland, Austria, Cornwall, the Faroe Islands - but I have nowhere seen loveliness so intense and so diverse crowded into so small a place. Langholm presents all the manifold and multiform grandeur and delight of Scotland in miniature - as if quickened and thrown into high relief by the proximity of England.

FROM 'LUCKY POET' (4)

Another thing about Langholm. There is an annual Common-Riding, and amongst the emblems that are carried in procession through the streets in which I used to play 'Jock Shine the Light' in the blue twilight of so long ago are - in addition to the Crown of Roses - an eight-foot thistle and a barley bannock with a salt herring nailed to it, with a tweldepenny nail, and all the children carry heather besoms. In the same way I was always determined that in whatever work I might do, the emblems of my nationality would figure second to none.

(d)

THE COMMON RIDING

Drums in the Walligate, pipes in the air,
Come and hear the cryin' o' the Fair.

A' as it used to be, when I was a loon
On Common-Ridin' Day in the Muckle Toon.

The bearer twirls the Bannock-and-Saut-Herrin' 5
The Croon o' Roses through the lift is farin',

The aucht-fit thistle wallops on hie;
In heather besoms a' the hills gang by.

But noo it's a' the fish o' the sea 10
Nailed on the roond o' the Earth to me.

Beauty and Love that are bobbin' there;
Syne the breengin' growth that alane I bear;

And Scotland followin' on ahint
For threepenny bits spleet-naw frae the mint.

Drums in the Walligate, pipes in the air 15
The wallop'in' thistle is ill to bear.

But I'll dance the nicht wi' the stars o' Heaven
In the Mairket Place as shair's I'm livin'.

Easy to cairry roses or herrin',
And the lave may weel their threepenny bits earn.20

Devil the star! It's Jean I'll ha'e
Again as she was on her weddin' day

(d)

THE COMMON RIDING

"Ambition's a queer thing", he said,
"and grows in the maist unlikely places and
tak's the maist unaccountable shapes."

"The queerest case o' ambition I ever
kent o' here in the Muckle Toon was that o'
puir Yiddy Bally (Bally for Ballantyne).
Yiddy was a puir bit eaten-an-spewed-lookin'
cratur a' his days; but even afore he left the
schule he was Common-Riding-daft. He seemed
to leeve for naething else. This year's was
nae suner owre than he begood talkin' aboot
next year's. Ye could scarcely get him to
say a word aboot onything else - but mention the
Common Riding! But at first he hedna muckle
to say aboot that either - only if onybody
mentioned it ye could see that he was a' lugs.
And he was aye spierin' whenever he got a chance
at auld folks aboot Common Ridings lang syne.
It sune becam' a stanin' joke - Yiddy Bally and
the Common Riding. And at first he didna'
like bein' lauched at, and ye could see him

(c)

pretendin' no' to be interested if it was mentioned, and even gan' oot o' his wey to cheenge the conversation. But that didna last lang, and he sune got used to bein' lauched at - and, aiblins, to like it. It gied him a kind o' distinction o' its ain, and he was sherp eneuch to ken that folk are apt to be gratefu' whiles to the cause o' their amusement. For a while, tae, he used often to get his leg pu'd - some o' the wags 'ud mak' up the maist ludicrous fables o' past Common Ridin's and puir Yiddy swallowed them a' like lamoo. But a' the same his real knowledge o' a' the oots and ins o' its history was growin', and it wasna lang afore he kent the guid coin frae the fause.

"Naething could stop him. He even got at the files o' the local paper and read every line aboot the Common Ridin' that had appeared in't since the year one. And, forbye, he kent a' that ony leevin' body cud tell him. And the mair he learned the mair thrifty o' his lear he

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turned. He wasna aye talkin' aboot the Common Ridin' noo, tho' a'body kent he was aye thinkin' aboot it. No. It was only as a special favour he'd talk aboot it. And syne it was only to a wheen carefully-selected cronies. In ord'nar company if Common Ridin' was mentioned he'd never let cheep unless he was appealed to to settle a knotty point. He was the final court o' appeal. Whatever he said was richt. Frae the time he was oot o' his teens he was never kent to mak' a mistak'. He was like that memory-man in the papers - only the Common Ridin' was Yiddy's a'e subject. On a'thing else he was as toom as a cock's egg. But ye couldna riddle him wi' the Common Ridin'. He'd the names o' a' the Cornets aff by hert frae A to Z, and no' only the Cornets, but the dogs that wun the wrestlin' and wha' cairried the Croon o' Roses and the Thistle and the Bannock and Saut Herrin', and wha cried the Fair, and hoo mony horsemen followed the Cornet, and wha was his richt-hand man and wha was his left-hand man, and whatna year saw the first wumman rider, and what like the weather was - and, dod! I'm no shair that he didna ken the name

o' ilka bairn that ever toddled wi' a heather besom and got a thripp'ny bit. He was a fair miracle. And forbye, he was an authority on the rites themselves - the size o' the Thistle, the bakin' o' the bannock, the twal' penny nail that hauds the saut herrin' to the bannock, the order o' precedence in the procession, the exact wordin' o' the Cryin' o' the Fair, and a' the ancient details o' the burgh boonds and the rights o' the freemen."

"But he hedna wun on the Committee yet. Ye ken what a Committee is in a place like this. It's aye in the haunds o' a certain few, and if ye dinna belang to their cleek ye've nae mair chance o' gettin' on to't than a rich man has o' gaen' through the e'e o' a needle. But Yiddy's cheenge o' tactics showed the steady development o' his ambition - his maister-passion, as the meenister ca's't. It was a move in the richt direction no' to be owre free wi' his information to Tom, Dick, and Harry, but he took guid care no' to disoblige ony o' the Committee if they did'm the honour o' askin' his opinion on ony point. He played his cairds well. The Common Ridin' Committee was

like a' thing else in the Muckle Toon - kirks, the Masons, freen'ly societies - it was composed o' individuals you never heard o' in ony ither connection. And apart frae the Committees they specialise in, their opinions on onything else arena worth tippence. It only met in public aince a year for the choosin' o' the Cornet. The committee were chosen tae, but naebody ever thocht o' no' juist re-electin' the auld haunds again unless there was a vacancy by act o' God or ane o' them leavin' the toon; and a' the ither arrangements were made by the committee. And to tell the truth, although the Cornet was chosen by the meetin' to a' appearances, the committee aye had it a' cut and dry aforehaun'. For a' his knowledge it wasna until he was in his twenty-third year that Yiddy was elected a member o' the committee. Twa years afore that some bletherin' fule proposed him when there was nae vacancy. If it had gane to the vote there's nae doot he'd hae been elected a' richt and some ither body knocked oot - but Yiddy up and said he couldna allow his name to gang forrit under sic circumstances. Ye should hae heard the applause. It was an understood thing after that that Yiddy would fill the first openin'.

"And when he did he said that as far as could be ascertained he was by at least ten years the youngest member that had ever had the privilege o' servin' on that committee, barrin' Cornets. Ye'd ha'e thocht that that would ha'e been eneuch for the maist ambitious man. But Yiddy was cast in a different mould. I aye had the reputation o' bein' a gey lang sighted customer, and I kent weel that Yiddy had fish to fry naebody else had seen. But what kin' o' deep sea craturs they could be was anither question. Somebody asked me what I thocht he hed at the back o' his mind, and it was on the tip o' my tongue to say - 'What price Cornet?' By guid luck I was juist in time to check mysel' frae sayin' ocht sae foolish. Yiddy was young eneuch and licht eneuch in a' conscience to be Cornet, but he'd nane o' the ither qualifications. Apairt frae the fact that he didna' ken a'e end o' a pownie frae the ither, the Cornets are aye drawn frae the sprigs o' the gentry or young bluids o' fairmers - no' factory haun's. It tak's a bonny penny to be a Cornet, and Yiddy was the last man on earth to want to lower the dignity o' the Standard-bearer and ha'e the committee at their wits'

end for the cash to cairry oot the programme in proper style. Sae I juist said: -
'Yiddy kens what he's efter - and it'll no' be common property till he says the word', and, juist to keep up my reputation and forgettin' that mony a true word is spoken in jest, I addit:- 'And ye can guess till ye're tired, but ye'll no' fin' oot.'"

"It sune becam'perfectly obvious that Yiddy was playin' a deep game. Ye'd hae thocht he'd hae dominated the committee aince he got on t'it. But no' him. He did the lion's share o' the donkey wark - and gied the credit to the ithers. Ye never heard his voice in the public meetin's. Even in the committee meetin's he let the ithers dae a' the talkin'- but he'd talked tae each o' them singly first (or as mony as he needit tae talk tae wi'a particular end in view), and maist a'thing they did and said had come frae him in the first instance. Yiddy had them a'on strings withoot them, or onybody else, haein'ony idea o't. And as time gaed on it seemed clearer and clearer that he'd nae axe to cairry the croon o' roses or to mairshal the bairns wi'the heather besoms or gie oot the trippenny bits or get ane o'their freens on for this or that or the ither

thing, and naebody was better at smoothin'oot the runkles and seein'that everybody got what they wantit or as near haund it as possible, than Yiddy. But he aye kept in the backgrun' himsel' - the poo'er ahint the scenes, as the minister says. Aff an' on he got the chance o' maist o'the plooms, but he aye said "No," like George Washington - till he had refused sae often and yet dune sae much and obliged every ane o'them in sae mony ways that they simply couldna refuse him whatever he did want. Noo ye ken what Yiddy was like - juist a rickle o' banes wi'the thews o'a maggot. The thistle for the Common Ridin'was grown doon at the Toonfit. A plot o'grun was set apairt for the purpose, and mebbes half a dizzen thistles were grown each year, and for weeks aforehand croods used to gang doon on Sunday efternunes to see hoo they were comin'on. The biggest and shape-liest was chosen, but it was an unwritten law - and a point o'honour wi'the gairdener - that it hed to be at least aucht fit high wi'the tap aboot as muckle in diameter. Tied to the tap o'a flag pole it made a bonny sicht, wallopin' a'owre the lift, an'a hunner roses dancin'in't, a ferlie o'purple and green."

Like the suffragette colours, I thocht.

"It was mair than ae man could cairry, of coorse, for mair than a few yairds at a time. There were aye fower or five hefty chiels tell't off to gie a hand wi't, but the principal cairrier for mony a year had been Neen Ferguson. Ye mind Neen? A buirdly figure o' a man he was, sax fit three in his stockin' soles and braid in proportion. It used to be said that he could hae felled a bull wi' a single dunt o' his nieve. Weel, it was aye Neen's pride to cairry the thistle single-handed frae the fit o' the Port into the Market Place - a distance o' mebbe a hunder yairds - and auld folks used to say that mair than ae cairrier afore him had tried the same dodge, but he was the first that hed ever succeeded. Weel, juist three weeks afore the Common Ridin' puir Neen was cairret aff wi' the flu, and there was a rare howdy-do as to whae was to tak' his place."

I jaloused it richt aff the reel. "Yiddy," I said. He lookit me up and doon and then he gaed on:-

"Aye, Yiddy it was. The cat was oot o' the bag at last. There was nae gainsayin' him.

He was deid set on't, tho' ye'd as sune hae thocht o' a rabbit settin' in to worry a beagle. And mind you, tho' as I've tell't you, he'd pit them a' in sic a position that his word was practically law, they tried their utmaist to get him aff the notion. They lauched at him and pled wi' him and pointed oot hoo important it was frae the general standpoint o' the programme that the Thistle should be weel and truly cairrit. But it was nae use. 'I'll cairry the Thistle', he said, 'I'm no' muckle to look at but I've never let the Common Ridin' doon yet through onything I've either dune or left undune - an' I'll no' let the Thistle doon either. I'm mebbe no' a Hercules athegether - but guid gear gangs in little buik, and ye'll aiblins be surprised to see what I can dae when I set my mind to't.' 'It disna' maitter aboot settin' ye'r mind to't,' somebody said, 'Ye're no asked to balance't on yer heid. If your back was as strang as your will there'd be nae question aboot it.' 'I'll cairry it,' said Yiddy. 'I'll hae my helpers, but frae the fit o' the Port to the centre o' the Market Place I'll cairry it mysel', and nae ither man'll pit a finger on the pole.' Excitement ran high when the news leakit oot: and shair eneuch when the day cam' there was Yiddy wi' the holder strappit roond his middle,

at the howkin' o' the Thistle, wi' his helpers
roond him. It was a whopper tae.

It took them a' their combined strength
to lift the pole aince the Thistle was tied on
and fit the end o't into Yiddy's holder. It
was perfectly clear then that they'd made a
big mistake. The rest left gae o't juist for
a meenit, and Yiddy fair doobled up under the
load. They'd to tak' haud again at aince.
Yiddy never said a word but juist gied reid
and white by turns like - like a signal. Aff
they gaed to join the procession. The helpers
raxed themsel's for a' they were worth tae mak'
it as licht for Yiddy as they possible could -
but even then as ane o' them said, 'We expectit
tae hear his spine crack at ony step.' Yet it
was wonderfu' tae see hoo the wee cratur braced
himsel' up. Heaven only kens what he maun hae
been sufferin'. ... Still they got to the
fit o' the Port a'richt, and then Yiddy said:
'Noo haunds aff. I'll manage the rest mysel'.
No' a haund slackened, but Yiddy lookit at his
helpers first on the ae side, then on the ither
with sic a glower in his een that they let gae
afore they kent what they were daen. They said

after his een were juist like twa slaps into Hell itsel'. And he moved - cairryin' the Thistle by himsel'. The first twa-three steps maun ha'e shown him that nae maitter what unheard o' strength he'd summoned to his assistance, he'd never manage tae the centre o' the Mairket Place. That maun ha'e been an awfu'moment for him - for this is hoo I figure it oot. It was the pride o' the Common Ridin' versus his ain. Could he maintain them baith? The first wadna suffer materially if he let his helpers tak' haud again - but the second wad, mortally. There was only a'e way oot it seemed. Sae he started to rin! Guid alane kens hoo. A'body else stude stock still, their een stelled in their heids and their herts in their mooths; ye could ha'e heard a peen fa'. He reached his goal. The Thistle swung for a meenit in the air. Syne he seemed to crumple juist as if he'd gane fair through himsel' wi' the thistle hidin' the hole. In the deid silence it was the eeriest thing ye could imagine. Then as sune as he was doon sic a hullabaloo! I was as near him as you are to me, noo, and a wheen o's pu'd the thistle affin'm and had him up in oor airms afore the crood had time to surge in. We were like herrin' in a barrel noo. 'Gangway,' somebody shouted - and a lane opened up to the

door o' the chemist's shop as if by magic.
'Haud on', cried Yiddy: 'Alick,' he said turnin'
to ane of his helpers, 'tak the Thistle. I
dinna ken what possess't me - but the Common
Ridin' maun go on. A'e man can cairry me -
I'm nae great wecht - and I haena faur tae gang.
Let naebody else move.' Sae ae man cairret him
to the chemist's shop, while a'body else stude
like stookies and Yiddy made him halt on the
doorstep.

"'Gang on wi' the Common Ridin'," he cried,
in a voice that soondit richt owre the Market
Place. And we did. But Yiddy was deid afore
his voice had stoppit echoin'! - and whiles I
think it hasna stoppit yet!"

THE MONUMENT

Few ken to whom this muckle monument stands,
Some general or admiral I've nae doot,
On the hill-top whaur weather lang syne
Has blotted its inscribed palaver oot.
Yet it's a worthy landmark faur and near 5
Juist as, in a' the affairs o' men,
Nonentities - kings, bankers, and the like -
Wha's vera names they briefly or never ken
Control the thowless mobs wha care faur less 10
For a' earth's poets and philosophers
Or onybody else o' lastin' worth
Than for sic figureheids as this stane ser's
Fitly to memorise in keepin' wi'
His rank and emptiness baith, for a' to see.

(b)

CHARISMA AND MY RELATIVES

TO WILLIAM McELROY

No' here the beloved group; I've gane sae faur
 (Like Christ) yont faither, mither, brither, kin
 I micht as weel try dogs or cats as seek
 In sic relationships again to fin'
 The eopteia I maun ha'e - and feel 5
 (Frae elsewhere) owre me steal.

But naewhere has the love-religion had
 A harder struggle than in Scotland here
 Which means we've been untrue as fechtors even 10
 To oor essential genius - Scots, yet sweer
 To fecht in, or owre blin' to see where lay,
 The hert o' the fray.

We've focht in a' the sham fechts o' the world.
 But I'm a Borderer and at last in me
 The spirit o' my people's no' content 15
 Wi' ony but the greatest enemy,
 And nae mair plays at sodgers but has won
 To a live battle-grun'.

A fiercer struggle than joukin it's involved.
 Corsels oor greatest foes. Yet, even yet, 20
 I haud to 'I' and 'Scot' and 'Borderer'
 And fence the wondrous fire that in me's lit
 Wi' sicna barriers roond as hide frae'ts licht
 Near a'body's sicht.

And cry 'as weel try dogs or cats as seek 25
 In sic relationships again to fin'
 The eopteia' that, yet f'und, like rain
 'Ud quickly to the roots o' a' thing rin
 Even as the circles frae a stane that's hurled 30
 In water ring the world.

(a)

Sae to my bosom yet a' beasts maun come,
Or I to theirs, - baudrons, wi' sides like harps,
Lookin' like the feel o' olives in the mooth,
Yon scabby cur at whom the gutter carps,
Nose-double o' the taste o' beer-and-gin,
And a' my kin.

35

And yet - there's some folk lice'll no' live on,
I'm ane o' them I doot. But what a thocht!
What speculations maun a man sae shunned
No' ha'e until at last the reason's brocht
To view acceptable, as the fact may be
On different grun's to them and me.

40

ANDY

He juist hated fishin' - but he couldna refuse. For a'e thing, his mither 'ud be on his top in a meenit wi' a voice that could clip clouts. She'd nae patience wi' him - "Aye sittin' in a corner mumpin' owre a book!" If it had been his schule-books it wadna hae been sae bad - but poetry and novels and guid kens what! Stuffin' his heid wi' a lot o' useless nonsense. His faither was faur owre saft wi' him. "Let the laddie abee," he aye said: "there's waur things than readin'." But he'd to pey for his faither's support in a' kinds o' ways, and his mither and Andy saw that he did.

If there was a message to rin or a hank o' yarn to wind, he was aye there or thereabouts and had to pit doon his book tae dae't. He daurna complain o' bein' interrupted in his readin' tho' it was a hunner times a nicht, for his mither 'ud appeal to his faither, and his faither 'ud side wi' her then. It was only when he wasna wantit for something else that his faither stuck up for him bein' suffered

(c)

to read in peace. But the mair he did for his mither, the mair she thocht him Jessie-like. And ahint it a' was Andy's influence - aye sneerin' at him, tormentin' him, eggin' his mither on. Andy was his mither's Jacob. She thocht he was that manly - aye oot fishin', orcaddyin' at the golf course and makin' money. Nae books for him - barrin' his schule books, and nae mair o' them than he could help - and syne he'd to be helped wi' them. Andy - and his mither - took fu' advantage then o' his superior learnin. But tho' his mither wanted Andy to get on, at hert she sympathised wi' his contempt for book-lear, and tho' she made him help Andy she didna like him ony the better for bein' able to dae't.

Ilka time he did gang oot fishin' it was a fresh humiliation. The fact o' the maitter was that he couldna fish. He never catched onything but auld tin cans, or the brainches o' a tree or his ain breek-bottom; and he never heard the end o't. He'd an idea that if he could gang oot aince and catch a guid fry o' troot his mither and Andy 'ud never want him to gang again.

His faither, of coorse, was a crack hand either wi' worm or fly. Andy wasna muckle better than himsel', to tell the truth, but he never got into sic predicaments and he aye managed to catch something, even if it was only a smout. It wasna his wyte he didna' catch a' the fish ever made wi' ae cast, and in ony case his mither aye said, "The wee'r the trout the sweeter."

His faither was wonderfu' patient wi'm. He never leuch at him - till the ithers began it. And he never lost his temper and said his fingers maun be a' thooms - or no' often! It 'ud ha' been a' richt if Andy hadna been there. He believed he could ha' explained his feelin's aboot the haill thing in a way his faither 'ud understand - but he haurdly ever saw his faither alane. There was never ony fishin' unless Andy had naething better to dae and got his mither to get his faither to tak' them.

Andy was aye wi' them if they were outside and his mither if they were in the hoose. The kind o' things he wanted to say were fell ill to say - and he kent that even if he could say them it 'ud hae to be to somebody he trustit

and likit, and if he tried it on wi' his faither he'd nae suner get stertit than either Andy or his mither 'ud see he got nae faurer. They kent, deep doon, the difference atween him and them - better mebbe than he did himsel' - and they took precious guid care he didna' get a chance o' expressin' it. And the things they could aye say to side-track him and pit him in the warst possible licht and gar him mak' a fule o' himsel were that muckle easier to say than the vera first words o' ony defence he could mak!

A' the same it was a kind o' fear that gar'd them aye chip in afore him and prevent him frae sayin' what he kent he wad hae said - whatever that was - gi'en time and fair play; and that gied him hert. He kent his faither jaloused something o' this - but no' juist eneuch. He lookit at him in a queer switherin' way whiles - and syne sided wi' his mither and Andy; it was that muckle easier. But he felt that if he could juist explain things to his faither aince he'd hae nae mair bother.

He liked bein' outside a' richt (tho' he liked readin' better). But he'd hae preferred bein' alane - wi' his ain thochts. It was haurd eneuch thinkin' outside onywey, even if ye were alane - haurder than in the hoose; mebbe because there was faur mair to gar ye think. What he couldna stand was Andy aye yabble-yabbling about things he felt sae sma' and silly in comparison wi' nature or books. The wild skelp and slither and swish o' the spate was eneuch for him - withoot makin't a' juist a side-issue to fishin'.

He could hae stood for oors daen naethin' but watchin't. But that was exactly what Andy and his mither couldna' understaund or thole. Fillin' yer heid wi' a lot o' wild ideas that ser'd nae purpose - no' like fishin'! Sensible folk didna gang oot to gape and glower at the flood - they gae'd to catch fish, and the degree o' their sense was determined, if no' a'thegither by the number o' fish they caught, at a' events by the evidence they gied that that was what was first and foremaist in their minds. He kent that he was seein' a thoosan' things that Andy 'ud never see - twirly

bits, shades o' colour, queer wee soonds that werena tint in the general roar, crochet-patterns o' faem - and he'd see a thoosan' mair if his mind was free.

He'd fa'n into a broon study. A' at aince he heard a yell and the birlin' o' a reel. Andy had yin on - and "By Jings, it's a whopper," he bawled to his faither. His faither was comin' back owre the rocks as fast as his legs 'ud cairry him, to help to land it. "Gie't plenty o' play," he cried. Andy's face was a picture - fair eindoon determination, like a thundercloud - as if there was naethin' in the warld but him and this wallopin' troot and the need to land it.

He felt he was seein' the hail truth about Andy noo. He'd aye be like that - deid serious about something that didna maitter a docken and blin' to a' that did. Puir Andy, he felt wae for him - wi' a face like that, makin' a life-or-daith maitter o' something you could buy for tippence for breakfast frae the man that cam' roon wi' the lorry. His face like that was like seein' the flair o' the sea - a'e meenit a' jobblin' waves, and the next - naething but dour black glaur.

He felt he could gang richt through the bottom o' Andy's mind noo to the promised land like the Jews gan' through the Reid Sea; but it was a fell clarty road. If it 'ud only bide like that it micht dry; but nae doot in a meenit or twa the muckle treacherous flood that generally hid it 'ud sweep owre't again and naebody that hadna seen't for themsel's 'ud ken the horror it covered.

Whether Andy hadna heard his faither's advice or thocht he kent better or was juist owre anxious, he'd rung in till his rod was like a hauf-hoop and his line as ticht as the gut o' a fiddle - and there was its heid! It was a whopper and nae mistak'! Andy wadna hauf craw owre him noo! His faither was juist at him when - snap! - the line broke and in the blink o' an e'e, afore his faither could lift a haund to stop him Andy dived into the pool heid first - efter the troot.

It was a deep pool and a dangerous ane. There had been twa-three folk drooned in't. His faither's mind was slow in workin'. For a second he saw him - standin' wi' his

een fair stelled in his heid. He saw as faur ben into his faither then as he'd seen into Andy a meenit afore. Andy bobbed up in the centre o' the pool, brakin' the bonny swirl o' the waters like a muckle blot in an exercise-book, and still wi' the same determined look on his face - he hadna had time to alter it. It had been that fixed. He was conscious o' hauf a dizzen different thochts at aince - the pure comicality o' Andy gaen in efter the troot; the fact that he'd be spared a lot o' trouble and humiliation if Andy was drooned; a hauf-waesome, half-ashamed sense o' his faither's flabbergasted condition - and a' at aince he dived in tae.

It was pure accident - juist the way o' the current and the angle he struck the water at - but the next thing he kent he'd Andy by the jacket-neck wi' the ae hand and a haud o' a rock on the faur side o' the pool wi' the ither, and his faither was comin' splashin' through the shallower water a wee bit higher up, and in a meenit or twa he'd hauled them baith oot.

Ane or twa ither anglers cam' rinnin' up.

"Weel dune, Tammy," a voice shouted frae the ither side o' the pool. "It's the bravest thing I've ever seen." It was Macrae, the banker, nae less. It 'ud be a' owre the toon in nae time. He was a hero. It was a guid job ither folk had seen it tae, or Andy and his mither 'ud hae whittled it doon to naething. But he kent they wadna like him ony the better - tho' for a while they might hae to pretend to. That might be still waur to stand than onything he'd had to pit up wi' yet.

What had gar'd him jump in to the rescue? He couldna soom. He might easy hae made things waur instead o' better. That 'ud juist hae been like his luck. A' this ran through his heid in less time than it tak's to tell while he was sittin' up tryin' to get the water oot o' his lugs and listenin' to the human hubbub about him and the stoond o' the spate that seemed looder than ever noo he'd had a mair intimate acquaintance wi't. A' at aince he louped to his feet. He'd thrawn his rod doon when he dived and it had got jammed by the reel in the rocks; but - look! He couldna get owre to't. He was dancin' like

a hen on a het girdle. But the banker had seen't at the same time.

"A' richt, Tammy, I'll see to't for ye"
- and he did. Played it bonney! And, by
jings, it was a whopper!

But Andy aye declared that it was naething
ava compared wi' the ane he'd lost - "And,
besides, ye didna' land it yersel'!"

THE HOLE IN THE WALL

No' the love o' women, and nae concern
 Wi' my personal interests, gi'es
 This look to my een, this curve to my mooth,
 But a deeper cause than these.

I share them wi' mony wi' whom 5
 I share little else - they come frae the haill
 Past o' mankind wha lived and loved
 Like us, wi' nae ither avail.

'Wha's the bairn like? Faither or mither.'
 'I'd hair like honey at his age tae.' 10
 'Juist look at this photo o' Uncle Sam.
 It's no' ill to ken whaur his nose comes frae.'

It means that nature's still seekin'
 In ilka man born a way oot
 Experimentin' again and maist o' us ken 15
 Failin' again without doot.

You're a fechter tae? The best o' news.
 The fecht sae faur frae owre
 Has haurdly begun, and'll wax foraye
 In proportion to oor power. 20

For a' my een are as different frae yours
 As twa chestnuts are frae a horse's,
 And to oor mooths the wind and the wave
 Are mair like identical forces,

Even my poetry yet may hint 25
 The imperious curve or the quiet look
 Through which the haill o' the world'll find
 The outlet it has sae lang sook.

(a)

Individual glory is little.
 We're sodgers. Let each 30
 Dae his duty, not care wha makes
 - Sae lang as it's made - the breach.

As in mony a poem the emphasis
 O' the poet's expression we tine
 Through no' understandin the metrical structure 35
 Sae wi' lives like yours and mine.

Like when Uncle Dick wi' his pinkie crookt
 Made yon gesture o' his,
 A raither slow line, half-blocked, half-reprovin',
 And suddenly Liz
 - Dirty Dick! Liz-Quiz! - 40
 In a slightly buoyant anapaestic tone
 Threw the dog a bone,
 And a wealth o' new rhythms was syne let loose
 To mither's dismay, a' through the hoose. 45

FROM 'LUCKY POET' (5)

For many generations ... my forebears have belonged to the working class, and I would not have it otherwise if I could. My grandfather, John Grieve, was a power-loom tuner in a Langholm tweed mill. I only remember seeing him once - shortly before he died, when I was about four years old; an alert, 'jokey' little man. I remember he wore a transparent, butter-coloured waistcoat or linen jacket; and on the occasion I recall I caught him in the act of taking some medicine of a vivid red colour, and somehow or other got it into my childish head that he was drinking blood, and thought of him with horror - not unmixed with envy - for years afterwards. I resemble him physically (in point of leanness and agility, though I am considerably taller) and facially (a big brow and all the features squeezed into the lower half of my face); but when I was a lad the older folk used to tell me I took after him in another respect - 'juist like your grandfather', they used to say, 'aye amang the lassies'.

(d)

PEDIGREE

If I'd to wale for ancestors, I'd ha'e
(Ahint my faither wi' his cheeks like hines
And my mither wi' her 'sad fish' lines)
Auld Ringan Oliver and the Caird o' Barullion;
And on my wife's side - as clear as day 5
Still in that woman in a million,
Keepin' me alert while savourin' wi' joy
Her infernal depths - John Forbes o' Tavoy,
For I never see her kaimin' her hair
But I mind o' his beard in Driminor there. 10

(a)

ANOTHER TURN OF THE SCREW

'I try to mind a'body I ken
But tine coont and am face to face
Wi' a host o' shapes and voices flegsome
As the eternal silences o' space.'

'And fu' o' the tragedy springin'
Frae sic mooths and een o' men,
As their soonds and looks gi'e way
To the void again.'

5

'Ah, if they werena sae fine and clear,
Wrocht in sic rare detail,
Fraught wi' sic delicate shades o' meanin'
- A' to nae avail!'

10

Fear? What's fear to a Border man?
Can a poet be cowed by fear
Wha's incomprehensible images suddenly
Are understood, and seem aye t'been clear?

15

'But what is poetry but anither
Less-easily-vanquished-nae-doot
Voice-shape that in turn fa's abreid
And lets the same silence up through't?'

20

The void only seems that, to us
In sic temporary shapes corsels.
What gars us speak o' appearances
Is an appearance tae, and nocht else.

(a)

FROM 'LUCKY POET' (6)

There was a strong local spirit in Langholm, and I had already, under the influence of the Laidlaws and in answer to my own inborn propensities, developed a keen interest in the rich local psychology (Langholm, like all the little Scottish burghs thirty years ago, was a hotbed of pungent and peculiar 'characters', and apart from that there was the general recklessness and gusto and go of Border life) and in local history and such like. Still more important was the fact that we did not speak English, but a racy Scots, with distinct variations in places only a few miles away. Hawick Scots was strongly differentiated from Langholm Scots, though Hawick was only twenty miles away. Still more different was the speech of Canonbie, only six miles south of Langholm, where the people always used the Quakerish 'thee and 'thou'. I early acquired an exact knowledge of these differences and discovered in myself in high degree that passion

(d)

for linguistics which is so distinctively Scottish (and so republican au fond) and so utterly un-English - a passion which has been an outstanding feature of all my subsequent work, and which is, of course, though at first glance apparently in contradiction to that impulse to use Scots in order to get back among the common people and down to the roots of our national psychology, not only reconcilable with that save on a very short and superficial view, but indissolubly connected with it. Above all, there was the frontier spirit - the sense of difference from, and not infrequently hatred of, the English, which I inherited to the full, and which later developed into my lifework.

THE CHURCH OF MY FATHERS

This is the kirk o' my faithers	
And I ken the meanin' at last	
O' its pea-green wa's and chocolate pillars	
And am stricken aghast	
For here, ready for the road,	5
Religion was biddin' goodbye.	
Her hoose was toom and she'd turned	
Wi' hopeless een sullen and dry	
For a last look roond when a blast	
O' lichtnin' tore frae the sky	10
And struck her deid where she stood.	
In the dismantled room	
Hauf-lifelike still she stands	
Decomposin' in the gloom.	
To the faithfu' seein' nae difference	15
She's in her usual still	
And the hoose is fitly furnished	
In keepin' wi' God's will.	
I ha'e nae doot they're richt,	
But, feech, it's a waesome sicht!	20

(a)

RELIGION AND LOVE

'Frae the mysteries o' religion seldom
And never frae the mysteries o' love
Should the veil be torn' - the auld cant
Fits your cowardice still like a glove.
The veil's roond your een - naewhere else. 5
They are naked and unashamed
And the only mystery aboot them
Is the way they're denied and defamed
By ignorance ca'in itsel' awe
And folly guisin' as law. 10

(a)

THE PROSTITUTE

Let sweethearts, wives, and mithers
Be what they can.
Nature ootrins oor tidy thochts
And it its plan
Your place is greater than theirs
- Servin' nae man, but Man.
Their life to Life may steek its doors;
Keep open yours.

(a)

ON COMING HOME

Scottish Jews comin' doon frae the mountains
Wi' the laws on their stany herts;
Minor prophets livin' i' the Factory Close
Or ahint the gasworks - fresh sterts?

Folk frae the Auld Testament are talkin' 5
O' Christ but I'm no' deceived.
Bearded men, cloakt wimmen, and in gloom
The gift o' Heaven's received.

Scottish Jews comin' doon frae the mountains, 10
Minor prophets frae vennel and wynd,
In weather as black as the Bible
I return again to my kind...

(a)

The Sauria in their ain way
Had muckle to commend them.
Fell fearsome cratur's. it's a shame 15
That Nature had to end them.

And faith! few men about the day
But hae guid cause to speir
Why sicna auld impressive forms
Had to dee for them t'appear: 20

Sae aiblins wi' traditional Scots,
Covenanter's and the lave,
Wha's grand auld gurlly qualities
Deserve a better stave.

But they hung on - and still hing on - 25
Survivals frae an age lang dune.
Gin they'd deed a century syne
They'd whiles shine oot ... like the mune! ...

(b)

'RELIGION AND THE SCOTTISH RENAISSANCE'

... but aye ahint
 Sic changin' thochts the country o' my birth
 Claims me, means mair to me, till a' the thochts
 I e'er can hae seem naething set aside
 Religious history in Scotland here - 5
 My secret, devious, and persistent guide.
 The facts prevail; and hoo that compares
 Wi' religious history in ither lands
 And my approval here and disapproval there,
 At last my spirit hailly understands 10
 Is vain and trivial. My spirit understands
 Altho', like surface water owre still deeps,
 My thochts gang helter-skelter, and faur ben.
 My nature its ain stubborn council keeps,
 Owreborne, acceptin' since it can nae ither, 15
 This complex and unanswerable poo'er,
 But never reconciled to it - at best
 Deeply alane forever as best freends endure.

(a)

FROM 'LUCKY POET' (7)

My mother, of course, could not argue. She and I were always great friends and had a profound understanding of the ultimate worth of each other's beliefs - the qualities of character involved - though no attempted statement of her beliefs ever conveyed the slightest meaning to me. She dealt exclusively in incredible clichés. 'Ah! wait till you see the light', she would say to me; or: 'You see, you haven't been washed in the blood of the Lamb yet' - phrases that were hardly likely to be very effective in dealing with a son whose favourite anecdote was of a party of Cambridge undergraduates discussing the ethics of suicide, who in due course came to the method of committing suicide by hanging, in which connexion the classic case of Judas Iscariot was cited, when one of the students shrugged his shoulders and said: 'But what could you expect of a nouveau riche?'

(d)

Though, in fact, it did little or nothing
to spoil our personal relations with each other,
there was an incredible gulf fixed between
that humble, devout little mother and the son
who was to write poems like:

Hunters were oot on a Scottish hill
A'e day when the sun stude suddenly still
At noon and turned the colour o' port
A perfect nuisance, spoilin' their sport.
Syne it gaed pitch black a'thegither.
Isn't that juist like oor Scottish weather!

MUSEUM PIECE

I was born o' a woman - ane o' the last
 O' that famous race
 Afore it was ta'en back into man
 Its original place.

The difference was at bay in her,
 And, kennin' its doom,
 Made me a poet; the woman in me kens
 Poetry bears mair than the womb.

5

Nature never abandoned a fairer
 Aince-mair-promisin' field.
 (It'll be leavin' man next.) Failure micht
 almost ha' been left
 To flourish there and bide concealed.

10

Poetry's incomprehensible stuff? You'd rather
 The white breist and tenty hand?
 But Nature kens what it's da'en - even women
 in their day
 Were whiles ill to understand.

15

(a)

LYNCH-PIN

TO 'AE'

Here where I sit assembling in the sun
The salient features o' my structure o' banes
I feel that somewhere there's a missing one
That mak's a dish o' whummle o' my pains.
Sma' but the clue to a' the rest, and no' 5
In ony woman hidden nor on this earth,
And if there's ony ither world, hoo it's got there,
If't has, I ken nae mair than hoo I ken my dearth
That yet fills my haille life wi' the effort
To embody a' creation - and find this ort. 10

(a)

THE GRAVES OF MY RACE

A' owre the Borders lie the unkent graves
O' oor coontless hosts.
Only their ghosts micht find them - and we're no'
A folk that's gi'en to ghosts!

(a)

OLD MISS BEATTIE

It's as faur back as I can mind. I maun hae been a gey wee laddie at the time. I aye gaed wi' my mither on her veesits to the seeck and the deein', and whiles wi' my faither tae. My brither didna. He juist point-blank refused. I kent I sudna want to gang either - but I did. I didna let my faither and mither ken hoo keen I really was. No' that I was ony feart o' them jalousin' that it wasna naitural for a boy to want to see auld dottlin' cratur's o' men and wimmen leevin' their lane in a'e-room hooses in oot-o-the-wey corners o' the toon, and stertin' to think oot my real reasons. But I kent that ither folk (includin' my brither) had different opinions and wadna be lang in expressin' them. My faither, and still mair, my mither were different frae the feck o' folk - they were mair religious. That was hoo they'd aye sae mony silly auld folk to veesit. And they thocht their sons sud be different tae. As a maitter o' fact they were puzzled owre my brither; he took life that easy. He was aye oot playin' wi' a pack o' ither loons. It took my faither and mither a' their time to get him

(c)

to bide in lang eneuch to dae his lessons at nichts. I wasna like that. I had to mak' the best o' lads and lassies aboot my ain age in the schule - I managed no' sae bad wi' the lassies. But outside schule 'oors I'd nae use for the lads ava', and nane for the lassies either unless I was fair stuck for something better. Folks that saw e'e to e'e wi' my faither and mither used to say I'd an auld heid on young shoulders. I'd learned the knack o' sayin' byordinar' pious things - in the richt company. I could gar them forget I wasna as auld as themsel's. And I could dae't withoot lookin' the least bit self-conscious tae. "Losh me", folk used to think efter a bit when they mindit again that I was only a wee laddie at the schule, "the boy's lost his ain mooth and fund a minister's". But it was only the kind o' folk that were mair or less like my faither and mither themsel's that I could strike in that way. Ithers took a vera different view.

And they took a vera different view o' my faither and mither tae. A' they did for auld folk and badly folk never brocht them a penny piece, and whiles it brocht them nae end o' ill-wull - but ither folk got it into their heids that there was "mair in't than meets the e'e." Noo I ken vera weel that it was naethin'- sae

faur as my faither and mither kent - but eindoon Christianity. My faither's wages werena abune the average - but mither and him seldom gaed onywhaur empty-handit. And the funny thing was that the mair they gied the better they got on themsel's. That's what took folk to the fair. It was aye a couple o' oranges or a quarter o' tea, or twa three scones, or, in the warst cases, a bunch o' grapes. And mony's the auld cratur, as it cam' near the end, they sat up wi' nicht aboot, and weel they kent it was a thankless job. Even the bodies themsel's were fell suspicious and ill-to-dae-wi'. Tho' they'd naething in their bit hooses worth a bodle they followed your every move as tho' you were a thief, and every time you gied them their drap o' medicine you micht hae been poisonin' them. Whiles, gin the illness was lang-drawn-oot or o' a delicate and fiky kind, the mair you did for them the mair they hated you. They couldna help needin' you tae handle them - but the mair they needit it, the mair they resented it. And abune a' they hated deein' and you watchin' them. Afore the end cam' they'd send their een through you like reid het needles. It was a' vera weel for you to want them to tak' it easy and to pass oot quiet - a' vera easy for you - when it was them that was daein' the deein'! You were fell clever - but no' clever enuch to

help them - even if you wanted to, which was questionable. Hoo can onybody ever be deid shair o' onybody else's motives? Few o' thae folk were when they cam' to dee. Suspicion and dislike were upper-maist. It's fine for doctors and ither folk roond a bedside to keep a calm sough; but it's no sae easy for the cratur in the bed.

Noo I'm no' gaun to probe into the real reasons that gar'd my faither and mither tak' up sae mony cases o' that kind. I ken what they themsel's thocht. I ken that that didna juist exhaust the maitter. But they had baith ony amount o' patience, and naethin' was owre muckle bother for them, and, for a' that was thocht and even said to the contrary, they never got a brass farthing or a stick o' furniture for their trouble. Mair than aince when there was onything o' ony consequence left it was claimed by relations that had taen precious guid care no' to come near as lang as there was onything to dae, and they werena slow in suggestin' that faither and mither had poked in their noses whaur they werena needit, and hintin' that there micht be reasons for't. Mither used to get fair in a wax when onything o' that kind happened, and the angrier she got the mair colour attached to the suspicion.

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Speakin' for mysel', I dinna think I was ever the least bit concerned owre ony o' the cratur. A' that I wantit was to see what happened and hoo. And to watch my faither and mither "in action," as it were, and speculate owre the sense o' pooer - or, as the case micht be, pooerlessness - a body feels at somebody else's daith-bed. Yin got a' kinds o' eerie thrills. I used to watch a' that my faither and mither did and listen to a' that they said - but ahint the twa three oranges, or the bit prayer, or the medicine, or the talkin' aboot things, or the "wheesht, wheesht noo, an' no' tire yersel' oot - ye're bringin' on the cough again" - ahint a' the Christianity and humanity, as it were, I saw an eindoon animal drama. Whiles I thocht that, though they keepit up the surface play, my faither and mither got a blink o't tae, but nearly aye I kent the body that was deein' saw naething else. A' that was said to them or dune for them then seemed to gang alang a different plane a'thegither and never come into contact wi' them ava'. It made you feel that the Doctor and whiles the Minister, and your faither and mither, had made a queer mistak', and were treatin' a beast juist as if it had been a human bein'. It was like bein' at the theatre - only me and the body that was deein' mindit that we were only watchin' a play; a' the rest were like the silly wumman at the

pictures that whiles forgets they're no real and bawls oot a warnin' to ane o' the characters.

But the cratur's were generally owre faur gane when they got to this stage, and it didna last lang eneuch for me, besides bein' maskit maistly by the effect o' the medecine or me no' bein' there at juist the richt time. Auld Miss Beattie was an exception. She was in that state frae the vera beginnin' - lang afore she was bedridden even. She lookit like a monkey to stert wi' - and had the brichtest and broonest pair o' een imaginable. As a rule, there was naething else in them but juist pure glossy broon. But whiles they seemed to slip and slither aboot and syne to reel in her heid wi' excitement, and whiles they narrowed to the thinnest slits and syne you'd see eindoon malice keekin' roon' the corners o' them. She wasna to be trustit. My faither and mither used to whisper to each ither aboot her - when they thocht I wasna listenin'. I dinna ken juist what they said, but she wasna to be trustit, no' even wi' hersel', and I kent better than let mysel' be left alane wi' her. Yince we were in her parlour and my mither had to gang into the kitchen to get something

or ither. She was nae suner i' the lobby than I saw Miss Beattie movin' - as if she wasna' movin' ava', and wi' the blandest and maist benevolent licht in her een - to get atween me and the door. I made a dive for't juist in time. Sic a snarl o' rage she gied! I dinna ken what 'ud hae happened if she'd got me, and I dinna like to think. I was mair carefu' efter that; sae were my faither and mither. We never turned oor backs on her again. You couldna move in that hoose but the auld cratur's een were on you - like a snake's, waitin' to strike. There was a queer atmosphere about it - as o' something no' human ava'. You couldna pit it doon to onything in particular, but it was a' roond you. Uncanny wasna the word for it. And nae maitter what she said, or what onybody else said, in that hoose it soondit unreal, as if it was juist a pretence, a disguise for something else that didna bear thinkin' aboot. Whatever was wrang wi' her made a'thing but itsel' seem wrang. A big book o' texts hung on the kitchen-wa' and it was aye open at the same page. "Ho, all ye that thirsteth." I wadna hae taen onything to eat or drink in that hoose for love or money, but I never lost an opportunity o' gangin' there a' the same - especially efter the time I've juist tell't ye aboot - and it's little my faither or mither ettled the kind o' stimulant

I was aye imbibin' there. But auld Miss Beattie kent -
and 'ud fain hae gi'en me a stronger dose!

FROM 'LUCKY POET' (8)

One of my earliest interests was the genealogy of Border families, the results of my researches into which I used to publish in the local paper, the ESKDALE AND LIDDESDALE ADVERTISER, when I was in my early teens. (It was in that paper, too, that I remember defending - about the same time - the claim of another Langholm poet, William Julius Mickle, translator of Camoën's LUSIAD, to the authorship of 'There's nae luck about the hoose'.) I traced the distant connexion of my mother's family with the Grahams of Netherby. They had 'come down in the world', however. Her great-great-grandfather had been the Laird of Castlemilk, but had been a typical reckless, hard-drinking, heavy-gambling laird of his time and had gambled away his estates on the turn of the card to, I think, one of the well-known Border family of Bell-Irving, or to one of the Buchanan-Jardines, who now own the property in question. My mother's people lie in the queer old churchyard of Crowdieknowe in the parish of Middlebie, which is the subject of one of my best-known

tr.s.

(d)

lyrics - 'Crowdieknowe' - a wonderful name for a cemetery, even better, perhaps, than the more sentimental one of Sleepy-hillock at Montrose, for which for some time, years later in my life, I shared administrative responsibility as a member of the local town council and of the parks and gardens committee thereof. These two names must, at all events, be hard to beat for their aptness to such a purpose. Long lived people they were, my mother's people - farm-labourers, game-keepers, and the like. Her father died in his ninety-sixth year through accidentally slipping and falling down the stone steps from the back-door of his cottage one dark night. He was the first man I saw die, and I remember to this day the ragged wounds on his forehead where he had hit the ground.

CROWDIEKNOWE

Oh to be at Crowdieknowe
 When the last trumpet blows,
 An' see the deid come loupin' owre
 The auld grey wa's.

Muckle men wi' tousled beards,
 I grat at as a bairn
 'll scramble frae the croodit clay
 Wi' feck o' swearin'. 5

An' glower at God an' a' his gang
 O' angels i' the lift
 - Thae trashy bleezin French-like folk
 Wha gar'd them shift! 10

Fain the weemun-folk'll seek
 To mak' them haud their row
 - Fegs, God's no blate gin he stirs up
The men o' Crowdieknowe! 15

(d)

MARIA

Maria was gaun to dee. "But it'll no likely be till some time through the nicht," he'd heard his mither say. Still, that wasna lang. It was an unco queer thing to think about; there she was, talkin' and to a' appearances gey near in her usual - as he'd aye kent her; and even jokin' and lauchin' whiles. Did she ken she was gaun to dee? She didna seem the least bit feart. Ye'd think the prospects o' the weather and the clish-clash o' the toon wadna maitter muckle to a wumman that wadna see the morn. He wondered at his mither. She kent Maria was "At daith's door", and yet she was as bad as Maria - her tongue gaen' sixteen to the dizzen about nocht o' ony consequence, and rallyin' and cairryin' on as if deein' was the maist ordinary thing imaginable. He'd expected something a'thegither different - hushed voices and lang faces, and a terrible solemn kind o' feelin' ower a'body and a'thing. He felt disappointed. To a' ootward appearances there was neist to naething oot o' the common in't ava. Maria might be

gaun' to dee, but she certainly didna look like it. Yet a' at aince - accordin' to his mither - something 'ud happen, and Maria 'ud be "nae mair"; the blinds 'ud be pu'd doon, and syne the men 'ud come and pit Maria's body in a lang black coffin and tak' it awa' and bury it in the grun', and she'd never be seen or heard tell o' again. What a queer thing! What did a body feel like, deein'? He'd hae liked to speir at Maria, but something tell't him that he mauna. That was hoo Maria and his mither were gibble-gabblin' the way they were daein' - to keep awa' frae the thing that was uppermaist in baith o' their minds.

Mebbe he'd see Maria deein' and ken a' about it. His mither had to rin hame for a wee; and he'd to bide wi' Maria till she cam' back. "Ye'll no' be feart?" she'd spiered him, and he'd said he wadna - but he'd felt feart eneuch, till he cam' in and saw Maria lookin' juist as she'd aye lookit.

But, tho' he'd felt real feart, he'd managed to smile a brave wee smile and say "Na, na! I'll be a'richt," for he kent weel eneuch that it wasna ilka laddie o' his age that had the chance o' sittin' by a daith-bed - alane at that. It wadna be a thing to brag about - but to haud his tongue about, and that 'ud mak' him a' the mair mysterious and important. He could hear folk sayin': "There was naebody wi' her when she deed - but Tam Mackie. His mither had had to gang hame, but Tam volunteered to bide till she cam' back. She wasna lang gane afore the cheenge cam'. Puir Maria; she'd a sair struggle at the end. The laddie did a' he could. It maun hae been a gey trial for him. He disna like to talk about it, but ye canna wonder at that."

Sae, altho' it was a relief in ae way to find Maria sae like hersel', it was disappointin' in anither. There was only a'e thing oot o' the ordinar'. Maria was lyin' in the best bedroom - what had been Mary's room - instead o' in the kitchen bed. It was a bonny room - a' licht colours, juist like the water-colour paintings hingin' on the wa's in their gowd

frames. He mindit Mary. She'd been an awfu' lady-body; Maria had aye dune a' the wark. It seemed queer to see Maria in Mary's bed. It gied ye the same sensation as when ye crackit open a chestnut. O' a' the unexpectit things in the warl' shairly there's naething mair unexpectit than to crack open sic a pale green shell and see yon bricht broon chestnut inside it - like a muckle doonsin' e'e. Maria lookit juist as oot o' place in Mary's bed. She was that dark o' the skin. Mary had been a' pink and white - like a rose. And if Maria lookit a kennin' paler than usual it was mebbe owin' to the whiteness o' the sheets reflectin' in her face. If there had been naething but the blankets, there micht hae been nae cheenge at a'.

"Weel, weel, I'll no' be lang," his mither was sayin'. "Juist lie back and see if ye canna get a wee sleep. I wadna talk ony mair ... Tam'll juist sit owre here by the winda and if there's onything ye want he'll get it for ye ... Sit here, Tam."

And she gar'd him sit beside the winda.

"Gie her a look ilka noo and then," she whispered, "I'll no' be lang. I think she'll be a' richt till I come back. Keep quiet an' she'll mebbe fa' owre."

His mither was gane. As sune as the door closed ahint her, he lookit owre; Maria was lyin' back wi' her e'en shut. She lookit afa' faur awa' tho' and he could haurdly mak' oot her face at a' for the shaft o' sunlight that cam' slantin' in. Bairns were playin' in the street outside. It was queer to think his brither was up on the golf course somewhere caddyin'. He wadna come and sit like this. Nae fear. "Tam was 'his mither's boy". What gar'd folk say that in sic a way as to mak' ye feel a wee thing ashamed - as if ye were a kind o' lassie-boy? Shairly it took mair courage to sit like this aside a deein' wumman than to cairry a kit o' clubs roon' the hill. Hoo quiet it was in here - like bein' cut off frae life a'thegither. He was mair feart noo; he felt his hair risin'. He wished Maria 'ud wauken again. It hadna been sae bad when she was talkin' awa' to his

mither. If he moved and made a wee noise mebbe she'd wauken. He lookit owre to the bed again, movin' his heid forrit to get clear o' the sunbeam. She hadna stirred. There wasna a soon' o' ony kind. It seemed a lang time since his mither gaed awa'. Mebbe she'd met somebody an' was standin' talkin'. He wished she'd come noo.

... Wheesht! Was that her? He thocht he'd heard a door openin'. Could it be Daith comin'? His hert was dirlin' inside him at an awfu' rate. He felt like rinnin' owre to the bedside for protection - but he couldna move. The bedroom door was openin' - tho' you could hardly see it move; it couldna be a human bein' that was open'n't. His mither's heid keeked in; he'd been sittin' wi' stelled e'en, haudin' his braith - he could hardly believe it was really her and no' - no' what? He couldna conjure up ony picter o' the terrible sicht he'd expectit to see.

His mither stepped owre to the bedside. Had she seen hoo frichtened he was?

"Wheesht", he felt like sayin', "She's sleepin'," but something hindered him. And his mither turned roon'. He kent at aince frae her look that it was a' owre. Maria was deed - and he hadna seen her deein' efter a'. It didna seem possible. He felt awfu' disappointed. He micht as weel no' ha' been there ava'. If he'd only f'und oot afore his mither had come back - and been able to tell her, to show her he kent. Even if he hadna seen onything he could ha'e claimed to ha' seen a' kinds o' things. She couldna ha' contradicted him. Could he no' pretend even yet to ha' kent? What could he say? He wished his brain didna feel sae stupid-like.

"Rin and tell your faither, Tam," she said.

He was off like a shot - rinnin' thro' the streets for a' he was worth. Shairly folk 'ud see frae his face and the way he was rinnin' that he was cairryin' important news. That was aye something. But he was wishin' in his hert o' herts that his thochts were gaen as quick as his legs. He couldna mak' up his mind what to say.

FATHERLESS IN BOYHOOD

Your bike-wheels ga'en like bees-wings doon
the road,
Or, your face scarlet frae the icy wind,
Openin' your big broon bag and showin' in'd
Cakes, apples, oranges, a wondrous load,
Frae hogmanayin' a' the way up Ewes, 5
Or 'mang your books, as queer a lot to me
As ony library frae Mars might be,
Or voicin' Trade Union and Co-operative views
Or some religious line, as 'twere the crude
Beginnin's o' my ain deep interests there, 10
Or gien' me glimpses, fleetin', unaware,
O' feelin's that noo I micht ha'e understood
Or jokin' mither (a ploy you aye were at),
Then suddenly deid, wha'd never ailed afore.
Ah, no' your death, but memory's trivial store, 15
The tragedy - o' no' bein' even that!

(a)

AT MY FATHER'S GRAVE

The sunlight still on me, you row'd in clood,
We look upon each ither noo like hills
Across a valley. I'm nae mair your son.
It is my mind, nae son o' yours, that looks,
And the great darkness o' your death comes up
And equals it across the way.
A livin' man upon a deid man thinks
And ony sma'er thocht's impossible.

5

(a)

AT A HUMBLE GRAVE

Yet gin by speakin' o't as tho'
It was a maist distinguished grave,
That folk in croods 'ud flock to see't
My braith I'd save.

I'll no' pretend that it moves me
To thochts profounder than I ha'e;
Nor credit to anither grave
- Even Nihum-Nahum's, say!

5

Gin I invent sic sentiments
An empty plot o' grund'll ser'
- Yet where on Scottish soil the fraud
Or the gain elsewhere confer?

10

(a)

OF JOHN DAVIDSON

I remember one death in my boyhood
That next to my father's, and darker, endures;
Not Queen Victoria's, but Davidson, yours,
And something in me has always stood
Since then looking down the sandslope
On your small black shape by the edge of the sea,⁵
- A bullet-hole through a great scene's beauty,
God through the wrong end of a telescope.

(a)

JOHN DAVIDSON

Here was a Scotsman, o' the race
Wha's sons ha'e focht in ilka war,
And dee'd in ilka land and sea,
Wha faurer than them a' gaed faur, 5
And looked daith closer, less afraid,
And fund the monster freendlier then
Than his insensate countrymen.
Better, if sic could live, to dee,
Sae the best Scot for a century
Dee'd while fower million fools lived on 10
Content, as gin a wit had gane -
No' juist a thousand times their ain!

(b)

HOMAGE TO DUNBAR

Wha wull may gang to Scott's or Burns's grave
 But nane to yours, in your lost Scotland, lost
 Neth this oor Scotland as neth the ocean wave
 Atlantis lies, and haud'n a greater host
 Than Brankstone's deidly barrow ten times owre 5
 To reckon nane but men o' wit and worth.
 The floo'ers o' the Forest wede in Flodden's earth
 Were nocht but weeds to you, Scotland's best floo'er.
 Still, like the bells o' Ys frae unplumbed deeps,
 Whiles through Life's drumlie wash your music leaps 10
 To'n antrin ear, as a'e bird's wheep defines
 In some lane place the solitude's ootlines
 (As a sculptor the form frae the marble
 A greater silence's you wi' your warble
 - A' th'auld Scotland, abandoned, unexplored, 15
 Brocht oot vastly, waesomely, in your a'e word!)
 And wee wings shak' the immobility
 And ootshine the vera sunshine suddenly
 - Oh, in your unkent grave there's mair life yet
 Than Scotland's had else or's like to get! 20

(a)

FIRST LOVE

I have been in this garden of unripe fruit
All the long day,
Where cold and clear from the hard green apples
The light fell away.

I was wandering here with my own true love, 5
But as I bent o'er,
She dwindled back to her childhood again
And I saw her no more.

A wind sprang up and a hail of buds 10
About me rolled,
Then this fog I knew before I was born
But now - cold, cold!

(b)

FROM 'THE KIND OF POETRY I WANT'

I remember how even as a boy I watched
The courting couples go out the Ewes road - the girls
Walking along so neat and ladylike
While coming down the street but as soon as they got
in the dark
Siding up like heifers, or coming back 5
Stop (where I stood hidden) to fix up. I soon
tired of the show,
Especially after a night when I saw Jean Scott
come back.
It was the first time she'd gone out. Her people
were strict too.
I had no desire ever again to see a scared girl
Coming home from her first kick at the whiffle 10
tree.

(d)

OF MY FIRST LOVE

O my first love! You are in my life forever
 Like the Eas-Coul-aulin in Sutherlandshire
 Where the Amhainnan Loch Bhig burn
 Plunges over the desolate slopes of Leitir Dubh. 5
 Silhouetted against grim black rocks
 This foaming mountain torrent
 With its source in desolate tarns
 Is savage in the extreme
 As its waters with one wild leap 10
 Hurl over the dizzy brink
 Of the perpendicular cliff-face
 In that great den of nature,
 To be churned into spray
 In the steaming depths below. 15
 Near its base the fall splits up
 Into cascades spreading out like a fan.
 A legend tells how a beautiful maiden
 In desperation threw herself
 Over the cataract - the waters
 Immediately took on the shape 20
 Of her waving hair,
 And on moonlight nights she is still to be seen
 Lying near the base of the fall
 Gazing up at the tremendous cascade 25
 Of some six-hundred feet!
 O my first love! Even so you lie
 Near the base of my precipitous, ever lonelier and
 colder life
 With your fair hair still rippling out
 As I remember it between my fingers 30
 When you let me unloosen first
 (Over thirty chaotic years ago!)
 That golden tumult forever!

(d)

FIRST HYMN TO LENIN

TO PRINCE D. S. MIRSKY

Few even o' the criminals, cravens, and fools
 Wha's voices vilify a man they ken
 They've cause to fear and are unfit to judge
 As they're to stem his influence again
 But in the hollows where their herts should be 5
 Foresee your victory.

Churchills, Locker- Lampsons, Beaverbrooks'll be
 In history's perspective less to you
 (And them!) than the Centurions to Christ 10
 Of whom, as you, at least this muckle's true
 - 'Tho' pairtly wrang he cam' to richt amang's
 Faur greater wrangs.'

Christ's cited no' by chance or juist because
 You mark the greatest turnin'-point since him 15
 But that your main redress has lain where he's
 Least use - fulfillin' his sayin' lang kept dim
 That whasae followed him things o' like natur'
 'Ud dae - and greater!

Certes nae ither, if no' you's dune this.
 It maitters little. What you've dune's the thing, 20
 No' hoo't compares, corrects, or complements
 The work of Christ that's taen owre lang to bring
 Sic a successor to keep the reference back
 Natural to mak'.

Great things ha'e aye ta'en great men in the past 25
 In some proportion to the work they did,
 But you alane to what you've dune are nocht
 Even as the poo'ers to greater ends are hid
 In what's ca'd God, or in the common man, 30
 Withoot your plan.

Descendant o' the unkent Bards wha made
 Sangs peerless through a' post-anonymous days
 I glimpse again in you that mightier poo'er
 Than fashes wi' the laurels and the bays 35
 But kens that it is shared by ilka man
 Since time began.

(a)

Great things, great men - but at faur greater's cost!
 If first things first had had their richtfu' sway
 Life and Thocht's misused poo'er might ha' been ane
 For a' men's benefit - as still they may 40
 Noo that through you this mair than elemental force
 Has f'und a clearer course.

Christ said: 'Save ye become as bairns again.'
 Bairnly eneuch the feck o' us ha' been!
 Your work needs man; and its worst foes are juist 45
 The traitors wha through a' history ha' gi'en
 The dope that's gar'd the mass o' folk pay heed
 And bide bairns indeed.

As necessary, and insignificant, as death
 Wi' a' its agonies in the cosmos still 50
 The Cheka's horrors are in their degree;
 And'll end suner! What maitters't wha we kill
 To lessen that foulest murder that deprives
 Maist men o' real lives?

For now in the flower and iron of the truth 55
 To you we turn; and turn in vain nae mair,
 Ilka fool has folly eneuch for sadness
 But at last we are wise and wi' laughter tear
 The veil of being, and are face to face
 Wi' the human race. 60

Here lies your secret, O Lenin, - yours and oors,
 No' in the majority will that accepts the result
 But in the real will that bides its time and kens
 The benmaist resolve is the poo'er in which we exult
 Since naebody's willingly deprived o' the good; 65
 And, least o' a', the crood!

FROM 'LUCKY POET' (9)

As boys, my brother and I wore the Graham tartan. Our mother was Elizabeth Graham. If my father's people were mill-workers in the little Border burghs, my mother's people were agricultural workers. My alignment from as early as I can remember was almost wholly on the side of the industrial workers and not the rural folk, and it remains so to-day. I never had anything but hatred and opposition for deproletarianising back-to-the-land schemes; my faith has always been in the industrial workers and in the growth of the third factor between Man and Nature - the Machine. But even as a boy, from the steadings and cottages of my mother's folk and their neighbours in Wauchope and Eskdalemuir and Middlebie and Balbeattie and Tundergarth, I drew an assurance that I felt and understood the spirit of Scotland and the Scottish country folk in no common measure, and that that made it at any rate possible that I would in due course become a great national poet of Scotland. To this day

(d)

I have not lost the faculty of being able to go into cottar houses and secure immediate acceptance among the rural workers as one of themselves. This is far more than a question of being 'a good mixer'. I know the subtlest shibboleths, though I hardly know how. It acts (on a far wider section of the community) like a knowledge of the 'horseman's word' - a freemasonry. It acts not only in the cottages of the Border countryside, but equally well all over Scotland and in the Hebrides and Shetland Islands. It served me splendidly in my journalistic days in Berwickshire and Fife and Angus, and some of the most potent imponderables of my poetry derive from this secret source. For, as John Cowper Powys says: 'Deep within us is a secret fount, from whose channel, by a resolute habit of the will we can clear away the litter that obstructs the water of life'.

WATER OF LIFE

Wha is the fool that disna ken
The aneness that's betwixt,
Through a' the divers forms in which
They're temporarily fixt,
The ocean and the dewdrop,
The river and the cloud?
Water is ane, and man is ane,
Naw maitter what shapes they've ta'en.

5

Speak o' your lives and principles,
Your tastes and hopes and fears,
And a' you think is you indeed,
Still plainly it appears
Water accommodates itsel'
To the vessel in which it's put,
And so do you; and when it's broke
Joins again the common stock.

10

15

(a)

THE WATERSIDE

There was faur mair licht and life -
o' a kind - in the hooses along the Waterside
than onywhere else in the toon. The front
windas lookit richt into the water wi' nae
trees to daurken them, and the lift was
clearer and braider there than owre ony ither
pairt o' the toon. There were juist twenty
hooses frae the Stane Brig to the Swing Brig,
and the toon gaed abruptly up ahint them through
a patchwork o' gairdens wi' grey stane wa's to
the muckle backs o' the High Street hooses and
on to the terraces on the face o' the hill.
And on the faur side o' the Water there was
naething but the Factory. But the river was
braid and a' broken up and fu' o' movement
there and, tho' some o' the loons could thraw
a stane frae a'e side to the ither, the Factory
seemed faur awa' and could dae naething to
impose itsel' on the Waterside windas or
oppress them in the least. Abune the Stane

(c)

Brig lang gardens, dark wi' auld trees, ran doon to the river frae the backs o' hooses that lookit the ither way and formed a continuation o' the High Street, and aneth the Swing Brig there were the heichs and howes o' a lump o' waste grun' in front o' the New Mill that the Toon Coouncil were usin' as a cinder dump, and owre frae them the Murtholm Woods spielin' the braes o' Warblaw.

Juist abune the Stane Brig there was the meetin' o' the waters whaur the Ewes clashes into the Esk and alow the Swing Brig the Wauchope cam' tumblin' in. But in front o' the Waterside hooses the bed o' the river was fu' o' muckle flat shelves o' rock they ca'd the Factory Gulleets that cut up the water into a' kinds o' loupes, and scours, and slithers, and gushes, wi' twa-three deep channels in atween them through which the main flows gaed solid as wa's. Gulls were aye cryin' there and whiles there was a heron standin' on a rock when the water was low, or a kingfisher even. Sae, in the simmer time, or bricht winter days, the hooses alang the Waterside were aye fu' o' licht and life that made the ongauns o' their

inhabitants o' as little consequence as the ongauns o' the rats in the cellars were to them, and the dunt and dirl o' the river was in them like the hert in a man, and they had shoals o' licht and the crazy castin' o' the clouds and the endless squabble o' the gulls in them faur mair even than the folk talkin' and the bairns playin'. It wasna sae much a case o' leevin' your ain life in ane o' thae hooses as bein' pairt and paircel o' the life o' the river. Your hoose wasna your ain. It was wind-and-water ticht in a'e way bit no' in anither. A' the ither hooses in the toon were sober and solid in comparison. And the folk that leaved in them had a guid grip o' their lives. But along the Waterside they were windy, thriftless, flee-aboot cratur. The sense was clean washed oot o' them. A' the sense - and a' the stupidity tae. It's only some kinds o' birds that ha'e een like what theirs becam' - cauld and clear and wi' nae humanity in them ava'.

The folk up the hill lookit doon on the toon and some o' them pitiet it and some o' them felt clean abune't, but the taps o' the

hills a' roon aboot that they saw frae their windas kind o' steadied and silenced them. They werena like the Waterside folk; there's a queer difference atween ha'en taps o' hills and taps o' waves aye in yin's life. And the folk in the tree-daurkened hooses were different again - they were slow and secret and aften kind o' sad. And the folk on the High Street had naething but themsel's and ither folk in their lives - they were clannish and fu' o' clash and conceit, and aye ccmmin' an' ga'en throughither. But the Waterside folk kept skitin' this way and that. There was neither peace nor profit in their lives. They couldna settle. Their kind o' life was like the dippers' sang. It needit the skelp and slither o' rinnin' water like the bagpipes' drone to fill oot the blanks. Withoot that it was naething but a spraichle o' jerky and meaninless soonds.

There was only a narrow cobbled street between the hooses and the water wa' that stude aboot twa feet high, and was aboot as braid on the tap and syne fell frae aucht to ten fit to the riverside rocks. And dae what ye wad,

naething 'ud ever content the bairns but to be scramblin' up on the wa' and rinnin' alang't, and their mithers were aye at their doors wi' their herts in their mooths. They never kent a meenit's peace.

It was only in the winter time that the water exercised its poo'er owre the hail toon. The hills were hidden in mists then and the folk that were aye accustomed to them were at a loss. They were like a puckle water when a jug braks: they'd tint the shape o' their lives. And the folk in the High Street couldna talk lood eneuch to forget the roarin' o' the spate. It seemed to be underminin' the toon. It was level wi' the tap o' the water wa'. Trunks o' trees, hay rucks, and whiles sheep and kye, cam' birlin' doon on the tap o't. The Waterside folk lived in their doors or windas as gin' their hooses had nae insides. They could dae naething but look, or raither be lookit at, through and through, for it was the water that did the lookin' and no' them. There was nae question o' thinkin'. It was faur owre quick and noisy for that. It fair deaved them, and every noo and then a muckle wave loupit in through their

een and swirled in their toom harnpans and oot again. That's what I mean when I say that the Waterside folk were brainless cratur's. Brains were nae use there. To dae onything ava' they'd to use something faur quicker than thocht - something as auld at the water itsel'. And thocht's a dryland thing and a gey recent yin at that. The Waterside folk couldna stop to think. The High Street folk thocht aboot naething bit themsel's and a' they did was the out-come o' that. The folk on the hill-side were like the sailor's parrot - they didna say muckle, but they were deevils to think. The Waterside folk micht hae managed to dae a bit thinkin' in the simmer time when the water was low, but low water, they said, gied them a queer feelin' as if the fronts o' their faces had fa'n aff, that fair paralysed them. They were like the man that tell't the wumman he wanted nane o' her damned silence; and sae they juist stottit aboot like a wheen hens wi' the gapes.

I mind a'e Sunday when the water was higher than onybody had ever seen it afore. They were frichtened for the Swing Brig. But it had

stoppit rainin' a wee by dennertime, and the fules o' High Street folks, and a wheen o' the Hillside yins tae, wad send their bairns to the Sunday schule. To get there they'd to cross the Swing Brig. It was weel named Swing Brig that day. It was as crazy wi' unexpectit movements as the flair o' the Hoose o' Fun at the Glesca Exhibition. Every noo and again the rusty contraption wheenged richt abune the clammer o' the spate. Ye could hear nae ither soon' but the roar o' the water and whiles the whine o' the iron. Juist at skailin'-time for the Sunday schule the rain cam' on again waur than ever. It fell hail water. Faithers and mithers cam' rinnin' doon wi' umbrellas and waterproof coats juist as the bairns were croodin' on to the Brig. And a' at yince it brak in twa haufs and skailed a'body on't into the river like a wheen tea leafs in a sink.

The news spreid like lichtnin'. Afore the bairns struck the water the banks at baith ends o' the Brig were black wi' folk. Men that could soom, and some that couldna, dived richt in and brocht bairns oot. Ithers had run to a tongue o' rock that ran oot into the

river a bit faurer doon, and were in time to grab a wheen o' the weans there as they gaed whummlin' by. Atween the Brig and the end o' the cinder dump a back swirl had scoopit oot a hole for itsel' and by guid luck maist o' the bairns were spun into that. Men jumpit in wadin' up to their oxters to rescue them, and a wheen wimmen tae. Human cheens were made frae the tap o' the dump to the middle o' the pool. A'e wumman, in particular, was fair awa' wi't; her bairn had been on the Brig, and she slid doon the cinder brae on her hunkers richt into the pool. She grabbit a wee lass frae a man a bit faurer oot, but when she saw it wasna her ain bairn the doited cratur, withoot kennin' what she was da'en, pitched it into the water again. She was frae ane o' the hooses on the Hill - a' thocht and nae sense! Nane o' the High Street folk ventured into the water tho' a' their bairns were rescued; and nane o' the Waterside folk's bairns were on the Brig when it broke. Catch them! But they did the feck o' the savin' wi' an air as muckle as to say: "If the fules 'ud keep their brats at their ain gate-en's they'd be less nuisance to ither

folk". If it had been the faithers and mithers instead o' the bit bairns, I question whether the Waterside folk 'ud hae bothered to rescue them, and even as it was I'm no shair they felt in their herts they were daein' richt - especially on a Sunday.

WATER OF LIFE

Wha looks on water and's no' affected yet
 By memories o' the Flood, and, faurer back,
 O' that first flux in which a' life began,
 And won sae slowly oot that ony lack
 O' poo'er's a shrewd reminder o' the time
 We ploutered in the slime? 5

It's seldom in my active senses tho'
 That water brings sic auld sensations at that
 (Gin it's no' mixed wi' something even yet
 A wee taet stronger); but in lookin' at 10
 A woman at any time I mind oor source
 And possible return of course.

Happy wha feels there's solid ground beneath
 His feet at ony time - if ony does.
 Happy? That's aiblins ga'en a bit owre faur. 15
 I only mean he differs frae me thus
 Tho' I'm whiles glad when a less shoogly sea
 Than ithers cradles me.

And if I'm no' aye glad o't it's because
 I was sae used to waters as a loon 20
 That I'm amphibious still. A perfect maze
 O' waters is about the Muckle Toon,
 Apairt frae't often seemin' through the weather
 That sea and sky swap places a'thegither.

Ah, vivid recollection o' trudgin' that 25
 Crab-like again upon the ocean-flair! -
 Juist as in lyin' wi' a woman still
 I feel a sudden cant and sweesh aince mair
 Frae Sodom or Gomorrah wi' yon Eastern whore 30
 T'oor water grave o' yore.

She clung to me mair tightly at the end
 Than ane expects or wants in sic a case,
 Whether frae love or no' I needna say,
 A waste o' guid material - her face
 Fastened on mine as on a flag a sooker 35
 And naething shook her.

(a)

Although my passion was sair diluted then
 I mind the cratur' still frae tip to tae
 Better than ony that I've troked wi' syne
 - The gowden pendants frae her lugs, her skin 40
 Sae clear that in her cheeks the glints 'ud play
 As whiles wi' bits o' looking-glass as loons
 We'd gar the sun loup roon's.

Nae doot the sudden predicament we shared
 Has fixed her in my mind abune the lave, 45
 A kind o' compensation for the way
 She was sae tashed and lightlied by the wave
 Oot o' my recognition and slarried by
 The infernal sly.

A man never faced wi' death kens nocht o' life. 50
 But a' men are? But nicht as weel no' be!
 The ancient memory is alive to few
 And fewer when it is ken what they see,
 But them that dae fear neither life nor death, 55
 Mindin' them baith.

Nae man can jouk and let the jaw gang by.
 To seem to's often to dodge a silly squirt
 While bein' whummed in an unseen spate
 Lodgin' us securely in faur deeper dirt 60
 Or carryin' us to heichts we canna see
 For th'earth in oor e'e.

Nae gulfs that open 'neath oor feet'll find
 Us haily at a loss if we juist keep
 The perspective the deluge should ha' gien's 65
 And if we dinna, or if they're mair deep
 Then even that is muckle guidance in,
 It's there altho' we're blin'.

Whatever is to be, what's been has been;
 Even if it's haily undune that deed'll bear 70
 A sense o' sequence forever in itsel',
 Implyin', and dependent on, what erst was there,
 Tho' it's no' conscious o't - less conscious o't
 Than men o' their historic lot.

Hoo I got oot o' yon I dinna ken,
 But I am ready noo at ony time 75
 To be hurled back or forrit to ony stage
 O' ocht we've ever been twixt sun and slime
 Or can become, trustin' what's brocht aboot
 A' th'ither sequels to the water-shute.

Shall wellspring and shower, ebb-tide and neap, 80
 Refuse their separate pairts cryin' let's be ane,
 In function as natur', appearance as fact?
 Foul here, fair there, to sea and sky again
 The river keeps its course and ranges
 Unchanged through a' its changes. 85

Wha speak o' vice and innocence, peace and war,
 Culture and ignorance, humility and pride,
 Describe the Fairy Loup, the thunder-plump,
 The moss-boil on the moor, the white-topped tide;
 And the ane as sune as the tither'll be 90
 Brocht doon to uniformity.

Ah, weel I ken that ony ane o' them,
 Nae maitter hoo vividly I ca't to mind,
 Kennin' the world to men's as light to water,
 Has endless beauties to which my een are blind, 95
 My ears deaf - aye, and ilka drap a world
 Bigger than a' Mankind has yet unfurled.

Excelsior

Sae worked the instinct in the seas
And jungles we were born in
But signa cares are useless noo
Tho' aiblins no' for scornin'.

Sae worked the kindnesses we got
Frae shadows gane avont recall.
Sae work whatever relationships
May haud us still in thrall.

Still on we fare and tine oor need
O' modern mither's as monkey's care, 10
Syne wives, bairns, freens, and in the end
Oorsels we weel can spare.

And ave the force that's brocht life up
Frae chaos to the present stage
Creates new states as ill for us 15
As oorsfor eels to gauge.

The promise that there'll be nae second Flood
 I tak' wi' a' the salt I've saved since then. 100
 Extinction? What's that but to return
 To juist anither Muckle Toon again?
 - A salutary process bringin' values oot
 Ocht less 'ud leave in doot.

It teach't me mony lessons I've ne'er forgot -
 That it's no' easy to thraw cauld water on life; 105
 The changes a man can safely undergang
 And bide essentially unchanged; the strife
 To tak' new forms and in it no' forget
 We've never managed yet.

The Factory Gullets and the Skipper's Pool 110
 Are different as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
 But the quick changes o' the Esk that joins
 These twa afore it meets the Solway Tide
 'Ud faur ootrin the divers thochts o' Man
 Sin' Time began. 115

And yet, tho' hospitable to them a',
 The Esk is drawn on like a knotless threid
 Juist owre lang for's to see the end o't yet,
 Tho' noo and then I tak' it in my heid 120
 That the pirln in the hills it's birlin' frae
 Maun near ha' ser'd its day.

Or else I feel like payin' oot line
 Forever to an unimaginable take,
 And ken that in the Buck and Croon Hotels
 They'd lauch my tale to scorn, altho' gudesake, 125
 They credit mony hardly less faur-fetched,
 Heaven kens if mine is stretched!

The Buck and Croon Hotels - guid judges baith
 O' credibility I've cause to ken;
 A wee hauf wi' the emphasis on the wee, 130
 And day and daily d'they no' see again
 A miracle clean-flypit, in the maitter
 O' wine turn't back to water?

Weel the Waterside folk kent what I mean;
 They were like figures seen on fountains whiles. 135
 The river made sae free wi' them - poored in and oot
 O' their een and ears (no' mooths) in a' its styles
 Till it clean scooped the insides o' their skulls
 O' a' but a wheen thochts like gulls.

Their queer stane faces and hoo green they got! 140
 Juist like Rebecca in her shawl o' sly.
 I'd never faur to gang to see doon there
 A wreathèd Triton blaw his horn or try,
 While at his foot a clump o' mimulus shone
 Like a dog's een wi' a' the world a bone. 145

THE LIQUID LIGHT

The pairts o' Langholm the Esk reflects
Seem like maist women, better than they are,
Just as, a wee bit flown and DILUTIOR,
I'm better than when sober by faur.

(a)

FROM 'LUCKY POET' (10)

(W)hen I went to Edinburgh ... people on Princes Street and elsewhere used to turn round and gaze and gape after me when I passed. It did not make me self-conscious in the least, though sometimes it was a nuisance. I got used to it, however, and took it as a matter of course. It was only lately, when I was on a visit to Manchester, I discovered that the same thing was still happening. I have been told that this is due to my eyes - but I cannot see that there is anything unusual about my eyes - no insane glitter or anything of that sort - or about my expression, gait, the impression of superabundant vitality I disengage, attire, or anything else. Certainly it is not my hair; I used to have a head of towsey hair of the colour of teased rope, but it is not nearly so wild nowadays, and in any case it was never sufficiently unusual to explain the effect I am describing. (My only really unusual feature - too small, however, to be noticed except under

(d)

close scrutiny - are two holes, like piercings for earrings, at the upper ends of the joinings of my ears to my head. These were the source of considerable interest to the examining doctors when I joined the Army and would, I was assured, serve to identify me anywhere. There was the usual sort of story current in our family, of course - that I owed them to the fact that my mother had her ears pierced not long before I was born. But that is just rubbish. They are, of course, vestigial bracts - deriving from the gills of the fish-stage of our evolution. They occur, I believe, in about one man per 100,000. In me they are exceptionally clearly defined....)

FROM 'TO CIRCUMJACK CENCRASTUS' (1)

Plato was a son o' Athens, no' Apollo,
And I - belang the Muckle Toon, of coorse,
Yet ken the plight the hird in the Noctes kent
- The frenzy o' the immaterial soul in maitter
dronin'
And warslin' wi' unkent poo'ers to get a fithaud 5
yet
On the greensward o' genius!

(d)

THE SEAMLESS GARMENT

WHENE'ER THE MIST WHICH STANDS 'TWINXT GOD AND THEE
DEFECATES TO A PURE TRANSPARENCY

Coleridge

You are a cousin of mine
Here in the mill.
It's queer that born in the Langholm
It's no' until
Juist noo I see what it means
To work in the mill like my freen's. 5

I was tryin' to say something
In a recent poem
About Lenin. You've read a guid lot
In the news - but ken the less o'm? 10
Look, Wullie, here is his secret noo
In a way I can share it wi' you.

His secret and the secret o' a'
That's worth ocht.
The shuttles fleein' owre quick for my een 15
Prompt the thoct,
And the coordination atween
Weaver and machine.

The haill shop's dumfoonderin'
To a stranger like me. 20
Second nature to you; you're perfectly able
To think, speak and see
Apairt frae the looms, tho' to some
That doesna sae easily come.

Lenin was like that wi' workin' class life, 25
At hame wi't a'.
His fause movements couldna been fewer,
The best weaver Earth ever saw.
A' he'd to dae wi' moved intact 30
Clean, clear, and exact.

(a)

A poet like Rilke did the same
 In a different sphere,
 Made a single reality - a' a'e 'oo' -
 O' his love and pity and fear;
 A seamless garment o' music and thought
 But you're owre thrang wi' puirer to tak' tent o't. 35

What's life or God or what you may ca't
 But something at ane like this?
 Can you divide yoursel' frae your breath
 Or - if you say yes - 40
 Frae your mind that as in the case
 O' the loom keeps that in its place?

Empty vessels mak' the maist noise
 As weel you ken. 45
 Still waters rin deep, owre fu' for soond.
 It's the same wi' men.
 Belts fleein', wheels birlin' - a river in flood,
 Fu' flow and tension o' poo'er and blood.

Are you equal to life as to the loom? 50
 Turnin' oot shoddy or what?
 Claith better than man? D'ye live to the full,
 Your poo'er's a' deliverly taught?
 Or scamp a' thing else? Border claith's famous,
 Shall things o' mair consequence shame us?

Lenin and Rilke baith gied still mair skill, 55
 Coopers o' Stobo, to a greater concern
 Than you devote to claith in the mill.
 Wad it be ill to learn
 To keep a bit eye on their looms as weel
 And no' be haily ta'en up wi' your 'tweel'? 60

The womenfolk ken what I mean.
 Things maun fit like a glove,
 Come clean off the spoon - and syne
 There's time for life and love. 65
 The mair we mak' natural as breathin' the mair
 Energy for ither things we'll can spare,
 But as lang as we bide like this
 Neist to naething we ha'e, or miss.

Want to gang back to the handloom days? 70
 Nae fear!
 Or paintin' oor hides? Hoo d'ye think we've got
 Frae there to here?
 We'd get a million times faurer still
 If maist folk change profits didna leav't till 75
 A wheen here and there to bring it about
 - Aye, and hindered no' helped to boot.

Are you helpin'? Machinery's improved, but folk?
 Is't no' high time
 We were tryin' to come into line a' roon? 80
 (I canna think o' a rhyme.)
 Machinery in a week mak's greater advances
 Than Man's nature twixt Adam and this.

Hundreds to the inch the threids lie in,
 Like the men in a communist cell.
 There's a play o' licht frae the factory windas. 85
 Could you no' mak' mair yoursel'?
 Mony a loom mair alive than the weaver seems
 For the sun's still nearer than Rilke's dreams.

Aillie Bally's tongue's keepin' time 90
 To the vibration a'richt.
 Clear through the maze your een signal to Jean
 What's for naebody else's sicht
 Short skirts, silk stockin's - fegs, hoo the auld
 Emmle-deugs o' the past are curjute and devauld!

And as for me in my fricative work 95
 I ken fu' weel
 Sic an integrity's what I maun ha'e,
 Indivisible, real,
 Woven owre close for the point o' a pin 100
 Onywhere to win in.

CHEVILLE

FOR KAIKHOSRU SORABJI

Who remembers the Great Flood? The scope
 Of the waters and their deafening din
 Towering like God over the spirits of men,
 Flocks, forests, and villages cast to the deep, 5
 Who can sustain the menace of Nature
 And praise forces to which life is straw
 - Or glimpse them without seeming to outgrow
 His mortality in huge recognition?
 Tiger-cub torrent, shall I watch you and try 10
 To think of all water is to the world? -
 Seeing, and sorry for, all drowned things, sorry
 Yet with, Cheville, a sense of God's glory.

(a)

THE OON OLYMPIAN

Come a' nit-wits, knaves and fools,
Conventional folk, and celebrate
Goethe's centenary, and cry again
Hoo noble he was, serene, and great.

You're likely judges to pronounce 5
On sicna qualities nane can doot
And least o' a' yoursel's, wha ha'e
The big battalions to boot.

Is there a humble soul who lacks 10
A'lear, yet's no' a specialist
On the beautifu', and good, and true
And o' creation feels the gist?

Things hidden frae the wise are yours, 15
The brain-prood err this way and that,
Thank God the general mind o' Man,
Securely ignorant, stands pat.

Great Goethe represented this;
Your ain kind in excelsis he,
And a successfu' business man 20
Even Faust, at last, we see.

Yet no' because he's ane o' you
Owre you fork his colossal legs,
- Or aiblins gang up parallel;
Wi' sic a giant it's ill to tell. 25
Maist o' you dinna ken or care
That or ocht else aboot him, fegs,
- Tak'n his genius juist forgrantit,
As he took a' thing else he wantit.

The hail thing's sham - evasion o' thocht 30
By hook or crook; and empty fame.
As Goethe in his time was blin'
To a' worth while, sae in his name,

To creative force you turn blin' een, 35
Dodgin like him a' mental strife,
Intent to win by cowardice
And life-denial Eternal Life.

(a)

Order? - o' weaklin's wha require
 Safe-gairdit lives and daurna trust
 Their inner sel's; and Form? - that fears
 Further developments o' Dust.

40

Ersatz antiquity that turns
 Poetry to nocht but a preserve
 For educatit folk, wha find
 The present owre muckle for their nerve.

A moderate literature that tak's
 Ready-made conventions o' the real,
 Misses a Hölderlin, and hates
 A Jean Paul like the deil,

45

Ignores brute facts and a' the deep
 Fissures o' life and pays nae heed
 To dialectic logic workin' at aince
 In coontless coonter ways instead

50

O' the cosh continuity
 A stabilisation fool
 Like Goethe, false to his ain age,
 Mak's his privy dookin' pool.

55

Owre nice to look Daith in the face,
 Or tak' cognisance o' decay
 Nae man worth ca'in a man can thole
 Sic thowless things as you the day.

60

Lang while a sheer anachronism
 A life devoted to the muse?
 - Oor impotence as poets in this
 We'll aiblins plausibly excuse.

Or cry that you reflectit weel
 The coorse that history 'bood tak'
 - And ca' it genius to be swept
 On willy-nilly wi' the pack?

65

But a' the wisdom o' the past,
 A' the glozin', trimmin', truth,
 Since beauty against beauty wars,
 Life'll aye thraw off wi' little ruth.

70

Consciousness springs frae unplumbed deeps
And maist o' men mak' haste 75
To kep odd draps in shallow thoughts
And let the rest rin waste.
Quickly forgettin' ocht they catch
Depends upon the kittle coorse
O' a wilder fount than they daur watch 80
Free-springin' in its native force
Against the darkness o' its source.

Wha fear the cataract and like
Some spigot's drip instead,
Wha prate o' laws and turn blin' een, 85
On the anarchy that's gied,
Owreshadowed wi' its chaos still
Even sic puir arbitrary forms
May weel haud to - they need them ill -
Thoughts faur frae elementary storms
Tricklin' through thin domestic pipes 90
To their wee ta'en-forgrantit types.

Auld Goethe never wet his feet
But had the water laid on
Baith H. and C., nor kent nor cared 95
The deeps his pipes made raid on,
A mighty expert on H₂O
Almaist hailly in terms o' taps
Plus a shoo'er o' rain, a river's flow,
Even a keek at the sea perhaps
- But Oh! that the Heavens had opened and let 100
A second Flood on this plumber's pet!

Hoist them like ba's, ye fountains, yet
Upon your loupin' jets,
O' wha's irregular ups and doons 105
Nae metronome the measure gets,
The fools wha think that they can pose
As authorities on thought
Yet daurna look whence it arose
Nor faddom the conditionin' o't 110
- And let the bobbin' cratur's think
It's them that gars you rise and sink!

Poet wha ootgrew Poetry
Weel may Philistia approve
Your cute prolepsis and the sheer 115
Opportunism o' your move,

Deny a' human values and applaud
 Man's vegetative side, pleased wi'
 Your Gelegenheitsgedicht, like Keats'
 Poetry that comes like leafs to a tree.

This isna poetry? Sing
Some simple silly sang
O' willows or o' mimulus
A river's banks along.

120

About the metamorphosis
O' plant and beast a poet may
Sing but o' the struggle for't
In man and cosmos - nay!

125

The intricacies o' the mind
For poetry arena suited.
Be like a daisy and you'll be
A poet - wha can doot it?

130

Keep clear communication lines
Whatever else you keep,
For poets 'bood to follow
Each ither ave like sheep.

135

Nor speir hoo faur you paved the way
 For Poetry's relegation or
 Juist kent what public you could ha'e
 'Ud gang that airt - and ran before.

Nae ivory too'er! Poets mauna seek
To iouk the common needfu' jobs
And general interest o' mankind.
That o' a' use their verses robs.

140

Goethe was richt: the 'Farbenlehre'
Was his best work: and he did richt
In turnin' Faust to drainage schemes
And fashin' nae mair wi' verbal sleight.

145

And I am richt in ga'en back
In like wise to the Muckle Toon;
And dungarees are better wear
For a man than a scarlet goon.

150

Nae poet can be nocht but that:
But man, freend, citizen, as weel.
Let him tak' tent he disna tine
Sicht o' a' that in poet's zeal. 155

Nae ivory too'er! Goethe was richt
In thus growin' oot o' doesy
- Wad Christ'd ootgrown religion tae
And gane back to carpentry!

Auld banes be oors! Let poets dee young
Sic foolishness is no' for us
While a 'Times Literary Supplement'
Promotes oor donnart hobbies thus. 160

Wha fund in Poetry a cul-de-sac
 Wi' poetic justice to anither 165
 Blin' alley turned, and witless missed
 The times' trend a'thegither,

And drag on noo i' the least alive
 To the vital in life and letters.
 Your fifty years' funeral in Weimar 170
 Still the 'rinnin' concern' o' your debtors.

Hach! Bein' nae bourgeois perquisite
 The Fortwirkende in mankind
 Has ta'en a coorse restrictin' you 175
 To a meaner role than you divined.

Pragmatic test? What do you think
 You mean to the world's workers noo?
 'Continually operative' - no' in them
 If still in a dispensable few.

If still in a dispensable few 180
 A whilie langer - and then
 Life's saltatory way'll mak' them
 Deid ends, as you to me or apes to men.

Ridiculous optimist, maintain 185
 Your proofless unity o' the real.
 There's pluralisms abroad at last
 Ha'e a' sic follies in a creel.

The quantum theory's dung to blauds
 The classic picture o' the world. 190
 Nae shameless syncretism ser's
 Sic humpty-dumpties aince doonhurled

A' the King's horses, a' his men
 Can never cock them up again
 - But there's eneuch Aunt Sallies left 195
 To shy at still, nae mind what's gane.

Ah! Weel nicht Goethe cry that Daith
 Is Nature's plan for life t'abound.
 For Life and Daith! And the same need
 For supersession in culture's found.

It's time you had it. There can be 200
 Nae revolutions worth the name
 Wha's leaders till in spiritual things
 Uphaud auld fetishes o' Fame.

Let Lunatscharskies blether on 205
 O' 'divine monuments o' ancient thought'
 The psyche's the richt to revolution tae
 - And canna ha'e owre muckle o't.

Ideas by the company they keep
 Are kent, and henceforth nane worth ha'en 210
 - And or lang nane ava' -'ll be seen
 Wi' ony o' yours, oon Olympian.

Come a' you nitwits, knaves and fools
 O' the educatit classes,
 The name o' Goethe isna kent 215
 - And never will be - to the masses.

PRAYER FOR A SECOND FLOOD

There'd ha'e to be nae warnin'. Times ha'e changed
 And Noahs are owre numerous nooadays,
 (And them the vera folk to benefit maist!)
 Knock the feet frae under them, O Lord, wha praise
 Your unsearchable ways sae muckle and yet hope 5
 To keep within knowledgeable scope!

Ding a' their trumpery show to blauds again.
 Their measure is the thimblefu' o' Esk in spate.
 Like whisky the tittlin' cratur's mete oot your poo'ers
 Aince a week for bawbees in the kirk-door plate, 10
 - And pit their umbrellas up when they come oot
 If mair than a pulpitfu' o' You's aboot!

O arselins wi' them! Whummle them again!
 Coup them heels-owre-gowdy in a storm sae gundy 15
 That mony a lang fog-theekit face I ken
 'll be soaked richt doon under through a cundy
 In the High Street, afore you get weel-started
 And are still hauf-herted!

Then flush the world in earnest. Let yoursel' gang,
 Scour't to the bones, and mak' its marrow holes 20
 Toom as a whistle as they used to be
 In days I mind o' ere men fidget wi' souls,
 But naething had forgotten you as yet,
 Nor you forgotten it.

Up then and at them, ye Gairds o' Heaven. 25
 The Divine Retreat is owre. Like a tidal bore
 Boil in among them; let the lang lugs nourished
 On the milk o' the word at last hear the roar
 O' human shingle; and replenish the salt o' the
 earth
 In the place o' their birth. 30

(a)

ANTENORA

The stream is frozen hard. Going by
This wintry spectacle I descry
How even Edinburgh folk may be
In Scotland, not Antenora, yet,
Not traitors to their land, condemned
To a frore fate in Cocytus' pit,
But seasonably Scottish in their way,
And thaw, though hellish slow, some day!

5

(a)

DEPTH AND THE CHTHONIAN IMAGE

On looking at a ruined mill and thinking
of the greatest

TO JOHN MACNAIR REID

Absolvitur ab instantia is decreed
 In every case against you men array.
 Yours is the only nature stiflin' nocht,
 Meetin' a' the experiences there are to ha'e
 And never neetin' ane o' them raw-edged. 5
 Ripe, reconcilin' mind, sublimely gauged,
 Serene receptiveness, nae tongue can speak
 Your fair fey form felicitously enow,
 Nae subtle mind seek your benmaist howe 10
 And gar your deepest implications beek.
 The mills o' God grind sma', but they
 In you maun crumble imperceptibly tae.
 Nor shadowed nor lit up by ony thocht,
 Nae perfect shinin' o' a simmer's day 15
 View wi' your ark's assopat speed
 In its pure task engaged.
 Time and Eternity are no' at odds
 In you as in a' that's Man's - and God's,
 For nane can look through you as through the sun
 and see
 Some auld adhartare wi' neuked bonnet there, 20
 Urphanomën - o' what? Ah, no, alluterlie
 You deal afflufe wi' a' that's fordell and nae gair
 In your allryn activity lets kyth
 The faur-side o' your sneith.

As life to death, as man to God, sae stands 25
 This ruined mill to your great aumrie then,
 This ruined mill - and every rinnin' mill?
 The awte or bait o' everything you ken
 And tak' it quicker than a barber's knife
 Wi' nocht aclite. There is nae chance o' strife. 30

(a)

Micht a' the canny your abandon see!
 Nor ony din they mak' let them forget
 Their generations tae and creeds'll yet
 Crine to a sic-like laroch while the lets-a-be
 O' a' your pairts as eidently agree. 35
 Nocht needs your wa's mair audience to g'ie.
 Forever ample baith in scouth and skill,
 Watchin' your aws by nicht it seems to me
 The stars adreigh mimic their drops and 'mang
 hands
 There is nae nearer image gi'en to life 40
 O' that conclusive power by which you rin
 Even on, drawin' a' the universe in,
 Than this loose simile o' the heavenly hosts
 Vainly prefigurin' the unseen jaups
 Roon'd your vast wheel - or mair waesome ghosts 45
 O' that reality man's pairt o' and yet caps
 Wi' Gods in his ain likeness drawn
 - Puir travesties o' your plan.

To picture the invisible via the stars
 Is the least boutgate that man's speech can gang, 50
 As for your speed the analogy o' sleep,
 Your speed and your boon millin' - no' even the lang
 Processes o' metamorphosis in rock
 Can fetch that ben to him like the shadowy flock
 O' atoms in himsel' precariously seen, 55
 Queer dirlin' o' his cells at sic an 'oor,
 He whiles can note wha hasna else the poo'er,
 Laichest Brownian movements swarmin' to his een
 As neath a microscope - a deemless thrang,
 To catch their changin' time, and get the hang 60
 O' a' their swift diminishments doon the steep
 Chutes o' dissolution, as he lay amang
 The mools already, and watched the maggots' wars
 Upon his flesh, and sune its finitude mock
 Their midgeswarm jaws until their numbers fa' 65
 To a'e toom mou', the fremit last o' a'
 The reelin' corruption, its vain mudgeons there
 Wi' motions that nae measure can seize on
 As micht the sun to earth's last look appear
 Like yon cart-wheel that raxes to a cone 70
 Afore the spider lets its anchorage slip,
 An insect in its grip.

Nae knowledge its ain offices here
 Can seek to magnify and ithers suppress.
 An arbiter frae corruption free hauds sway 75
 Unlike man's mind that canna ken unless
 It decks its data wi' interpretation
 To try to mak' a rational creation.
 Hence a' men see contains faur mair than's seen,
 Remembrance o' the past, fancy o' the future. 80
 To memory and imagination you stand neuter
 As 'twere a scientist confrontin' the gi'en
 That nae logical, a priori, or ither reasons confess
 And yet are carriers o' value that redress
 His rational world frae bein' senseless tae, 85
 Tho' here, as in sma'er things, nae inspired guess,
 Teleological reasonin' or rapport sheer,
 Gi'es minds like his sic valuable dilation.
 You're no' its meanin' but the world itsel'.
 Yet let nae man think he can see you better 90
 By concentratin' on your aneness either.
 He pits his mind into a double fetter
 Wha hauds this airt or that, no baith thegither.
 You are at aince the road a' croods ha' gane
 And alane wi' the alane. 95

Alane wi' the alane, yet let us no' forget
 Theistic faith's but, extrapolate, plottin' on
 The curve o' sae-ca'd knowledge science has made
 - Science and theism ha'e their roots in common
 (Tho' few can credit sic a teachin' noo!) - 100
 And needs the same redress as sciences do
 To say the least. Alane wi' the alane remains
 A relative conception as self-betrayed
 As heidstrang science dispensin' wi' sic aid
 As frae the world's allogic, kept in mind, it gains. 105
 Nae mutual justice, undue claims foregone,
 Sympathy wi' divers ootlooks and endeavours shown,
 Union o' knowledge's kingdoms piously prayed,
 Is less a movement leadin' awa' frae you
 Than ony in the opposite airt to it, 100
 Nor can a poet as I am cease to con,
 Heedless o' baith, your prime significance
 To lead his muse a needle-angel's dance
 By hailin' truth a mathematical point
 Wi' nae relation to the ooter world, 115
 Whether the times are in or oot o' joint
 O' scant concern since a' thing earthly's hurled
 - You tae -- indifferent, adiaphora, faur alow
 Ocht this tak's heed o'.

Aye balk and burral lie the fields o' life. 120
 It fails to acresce a kennin' frae the past,
 In a' its fancied contacts wi' what's meant
 When it seems shairest in worst backspangs cast;
 Its heritage but a bairn's pairt o' gear,
 A puir balapat at hairst its fingers speir 125
 And often mairket a toom barley-box;
 Aye in bad breid despite their constant toil,
 As bairns in their bairnliness, a cursed coil
 Hauds men content wi' casual sweetie-pokes
 O' a' creation's gear; and little is amassed 130
 Maist folk can life-rent - nocht hain at last.
 Yet o' the way-drawn profit wha tak's tent?
 The feast is spread yet helplessly they fast,
 Aye win an Irishman's rise wi' unco strife,
 Cast oot frae a' their dues by the silly fear 135
 That hauds them in habits o' poortith still,
 While by them brim the torrents to your mill,
 The vast way-drawing that denies mankind
 Or pairt or parcel in science or in art
 Till bare as worms the feck o' them we find. 140
 Each generation at zero still maun start
 And's doomed to end there, wi' a' that they
 forgaed
 Caught in the suction o' your lade.

Or pairt or parcel in science or in art.
 - Or even in life! Hoo few men ever live 145
 And what wee local lives at best they ha'e.
 Sirse, science and art might weel rin through
 the sieve,
 Or jow like backfa's when the mill is set.
 If maist folk through nae elf-bores dribbled yet
 But in some measure lived to a' life is. 150
 Wad that their latent poo'ers 'ud loup alist,
 Kyth suddenly a' their wasted past has missed,
 And nae mair leave their lives like languages,
 - Mere leaks frae streamin' consciousness as if
 Thocht roon' itsel' raised wa' prohibitive 155
 O' a' but a fraction o' its possible sway -
 But rax in freedom, nocht inhibitive,
 In fearless flourishin' amidwart,
 Fed by the hail wide world and feedin' it,
 Universal life, like an autonomous tongue 160
 In which some vision o' you might be sung,
 Let us remove a' lets and hindrances then
 Even as the principle o' limitation, God,
 Packed wi' posterity, silent like the deid,
 And aye respondin' to a lesser need, 165
 Has vanished like a cloud that weighed on men
 Owre lang - till your pure radiance glowed.

Ein Mann aus dem Volke - weel I ken
 Nae man or movement's worth a damn unless
 The movement 'ud gang on withoot him if 170
 He de'ed the morn. Wherefore in you I bless
 My sense o' the greatest man can typify
 And universalise himsel' maist fully by.
 Nocht ta'en at second-hand and nocht let drift,
 Nae bull owre big to tackle by the horns, 175
 Nae chance owre sma' for freedom's sake he
 scorns,
 But a' creation through himsel' maun sift
 Even as you, nor possible defeat confess,
 Forever poised and apt in his address;
 Save at this pitch nae man can truly live. 180
 Hance to these ruins I maun needs regress
 - As to the facts o' death and a' the past
 again,
 Beast life, plant life, minerals, water, sky,
 A' that has been, is, is to be - frae you
 Clear seen, still clearer sicht to pursue. 185
Similia similibus rotantur, a' facts amang
 I seek the Ereigniswerden's essence then
 That shows a' that seems kent in it wrang
 And gars a' else point back to it again,
 Their worth to guide wha can use them hence 190
 To your fulfillin' experience.

Elschaddai. Emelachan. We only want
 The world to live and feel its life in us?
 But the world lives whether we dae or no',
 A's vice that abates life or can blin' us 195
 To your final epopteia - contents us with
 The hearin' o' the ear, no' the vision swith,
 The life o' shadows, mere tautology,
 Ony curious fig-leaf o' the mind whereby
 Humanity has socht to hide its sin, 200
 Portentous prison-hooses o' fause thocht we see
 'Science' big heicher dailly - a' that can pin us
 To the spectral frae the live world, come atween
 us
 And the terrible crystal, the ineffable glow.
 Diseases o' the will that needs maun fin' us 205
 Less potent to act, and a' the clichés and cant,
 Limitations o' personality, pap for pith,
 Robotisation, feminism, youth movements,
 A' the super-economic programme's intents
 Set grey, a hellish parody (oot there 210
 Forenenst your blazin' energy), and its
 Perpetual fause alarms, shams o' seemin' fair
 Fixed fallacies auld as man, sheer waste o' wits
 - Oh, you are no' the glory mankind desires
 Yet naething else inspires! 215

The recurrent vividness o' licht and water
 Through every earthly change o' mood or scene
 Puirly prefigures you - a' Nature's dreamt,
 And no' dune, thrang wi' ither plans, has been
 A fog twixt you and us. It's nocht to ken 220
 Something has happened - save only when
 'Mang mony alternatives sic choice was ta'en.
 You aye exclude a' ither possibilities.
 A'e voice may cry aloud: 'Wha ever sees 225
 You to hairy goon and mossy cell has gane'.
 Anither proclaim the vital vision gi'en
 'Ud move to deeds frae care o' consequence clean.
 But baith are wrang - the reckless and the fremt.
 And in your radiant licht man's first truth's seen
 - Tho' still the last and least to matter 230
 In a' their fond affairs to the mass o' men -
 The love o' economics is the mainspring
 O' a' the virtues. Eternity like a ring,
 Virile, masculine, abandoned at nae-turn 235
 To enervatin' luxury
 About me here shall ever clearer burn,
 And in its licht perchance at last men'll see
 Wi' the best works o' art, as wi' you tae,
 Chance can ha'e nocht to dae!

THE BURNING PASSION

TO CARMEL HADEN GUEST

'From Homer and Polygnotus I every day learn more clearly
that in our life here above ground we have, properly
speaking, to enact Hell.'

(Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe VI 230)

Wad that the burnin' passion aince attained
Whether by lichtnin' flash or creepin' dawn
Nae langer came and gaed but held for aye,
Wi'ts growth, gin Change is needfu' still to Man,
Ha'ein' as in, no' o', perfection 5
Its hail direction.

But oh! the apathy that fixes on
Men wha accordin' to the spirit live
- The constant problem o' recapturin'
At any cost, and haudin', the fugitive 10
Grace that alane can fetch, oor glisks o't teach,
Genius within reach.

Afore each sovereign feat the swimmer maun
Gang under, and hoo many times, and oft 15
The source o' inspiration's ill to trace.
Still, still, we see it, infinitely aloft,
And struggle on - but gin oor poo'ers gi'e oot
What will ha'en struggled boot?

A line, a word, - and emptiness again! 20
The impotent desire to ken aince mair
The shinin' presence, and the bitter sense
O' bein' unjustly treated, wi' despair
Cryin' 'better to see and tine, no' see ava'
Like maist men' - ah!

This thocht o' a' wha haena had a glisk 25
And canna understand oor torments syne
Gi'es courage to us - and the lust to bring
Like cruelties to them, tho' we ken fine
The veritable vision withdrawn alane 30
Can gi'e (no justify) the pain.

(a)

No' justify, tho' we maun think it does
 Or be indifferent to its effects,
 Or wi' oor peers, or but oorsels, concerned,
 Yet ken hoo genius a' oor themes rejects,
 Syne gars the heavens open apropos 35
 'God' or the sea or Uncle Joe.

A' thing is equal here, and only here,
 And ony o' my relatives may be
 Occasions for genius. Let me look again.
 A' thing is equal here - sae faur's we see - 40
 Yet genius fa's unequally, here and there,
 And nane kens when nor where.

Juist as frae ony couple genius springs,
 There is nae tellin' save wi' folk owre auld
 Or impotent. The stupidest pair on earth 45
 Are still as likely to strike in the blin'fauld
 Maze o' manseed upon the vital spark
 As folk o' merit, means, or mark.

Wanted a technique for genius! Or, at least,
 A means whereby a' genius yet has done 50
 'll be the stertin' point o' a' men's lives,
 No' zero, as if life had scarce begun,
 But to owrecome this death sae faur ben in
 Maist folk needs the full floo'er o' Lenin.

Be this the measure o' oor will to bring 55
 Like cruelty to a' men - nocht else'll dae;
 The source o' inspiration drooned in bluid
 If need be, owre and owre, until its ray
 Strengthens in a' forever or's hailly gane
 As noo save in an antrin brain. 60

SECOND HYMN TO LENIN

TO MY FRIENDS NAOMI MITCHISON AND HENRY CARR

Ah, Lenin, you were richt. But I'm a poet
(And you e'ud mak allowances for that!)
Aimin' at mair than you aimed at
Tho' yours comes first, I know it.

An unexamined life is no' worth ha'in'. 5
Yet Burke was richt; owre muckle concern
Wi' life's foundations is a sure
Sign o' decay; tho' Joyce in turn

Is richt, and the principal question 10
About a work o' art is frae hoo deep
A life it springs - and syne hoo faur
Up frae't it has the poo'er to leap

And hoo muckle it lifts up wi'it
Into the sunlight like a saumon there,
Universal Spring! For Morand's richt - 15
It s'ud be like licht in the air -

Are my poems spoken in the factories and fields,
In the streets o' the toon?
Gin they're no', then I'm failin' to dae 20
What I ocht to ha' dune.

Gin I canna win through to the man in the street,
The wife by the hearth,
A' the cleverness on earth'll no' mak' up
For the damnable dearth.

'Haud on, haud on: what poet's dune that? 25
Is Shakespeare read,
Or Dante or Milton or Goethe or Burns?'
-You heard what I said.

- A means o' world locomotion,
The maist perfected and aerial o' a'.
Lenin's name's gane owre the hail earth,
But the names o' the ithers? - Ha! 30

What hidie-hole o' the vineyard d'they scart
Wi' minds like the look on a hen's face,
Morand, Joyce, Burke, and the rest 35
That e'er wrote; me noo in like case?

Great poets hardly onybody kens o'?
Geniuses like a man talkin' t'm sel'?
Nonsense! They're nocht o' the sort 40
Their character's easy to tell.

They're nocht but romantic rebels
Strikin' dilletante poses; [sic]
Trosky - Christ, no' wi' a croon o' thorns
But a wreath o' paper roses.

A' that's great is free and expansive. 45
What ha' they expanded tae?
They've affected nocht but a fringe
O' mankind in ony way.

Barbarian saviour o' civilization
Hoo weel ye kent (we're owre dull witted) 50
Naething is dune save as we ha'e
Means to en's transparently fitted.

Poetry like politics maun cut
The cackle and pursue real ends,
Unerringly as Lenin, and to that 55
Its nature better tends.

Wi' Lenin's vision equal poet's gift
And what unparalleled force was there!
Nocht in a' literature wi' that 60
Begins to compare.

Nae simple rhymes for silly folk
But the hail art, as Lenin gied
Nae Marx-without-tears to workin' men
But the fu' course instead.

- Organic constructional work, 65
 Practicality, and work by degrees;
 First things first; and poetry in turn
 'll be built by these.
- You saw it faur off when you thocht 70
 O' mass-education yet.
 Hoo lang till they rise to Pushkin?
 And that's but a fit!
- Oh, it's nonsense, nonsense, nonsense,
Nonsense at this time o' day
That breid-and-butter problems 75
S'ud be in ony man's way.
- They s'ud be like the tails we tint
On leavin' the monkey stage;
A'maist folk fash aboot's alike
Primaeval to oor age. 80
- We're grown-up folk that haena yet
Put bairnly things aside
- A' that's material and moral -
And oor new state descried.
- Sport, love, and parentage, 85
Trade, politics, and law
S'ud be nae mair to us than braith
We hardly ken we draw.
- Freein' oor poo'ers for greater things,
And fegs there's plenty o' them, 90
Tho' wha' s still trammelt in a low
Canna be tenty o' them -
- In the meantime Montéhus' sangs -
 But as you were ready to tine
 The Russian Revolution to the German 95
 Gin that ser'd better syne,
- Or foresaw that Russia maun lead
 The workers' cause, and then
 Pass the lead elsewhere, and aiblins
 Fa' faur backward again, 100

Sae here, twixt poetry and politics,
 There's nae doot in the en'.
 Poetry includes that and s'ud be
 The greatest poo'er amang men.

- It's the greatest, in posse at least, 105
 That men ha'e discovered yet
 Tho' nae doot they're unconscious still
 O' ithers faur greater than it.

You confined yoursel' to your work 110
 -A step at a time;
 But, as the loon is in the man,
 That'll be ta'en up i' the rhyme,

Ta'en up like a pool in the sands 115
 Aince the tide rows in,
 When life opens its hert and sings
 Without scruple or sin.

Your knowledge in your ain sphere 120
 Was exact and complete
 But your sphere's elementary and sune by
 As a poet maun see't.

For a poet maun see in a'thing,
 Ev'n what looks trumpery or horrid,
 A subject equal to ony
 - A star for the forehead!

A poet has nae choice left 125
 Betwixt Beaverbrook, say, and God,
 Jimmy Thomas or you,
 A cat, carnation, or clod.

He daurna turn awa' frae ocht 130
 For a single act o' neglect
 And straucht he may fa' frae grace
 And be void o' effect.

Disinterestedness,
Oor profoundest word yet,
But hoo faur yont even that
The sense o' onything's set!

135

The inward necessity yont
Ony laws o' cause
The intellect conceives
That a' thing has!

140

Freend, foe; past, present, future;
 Success, failure; joy, fear;
 Life, Death; and a' thing else,
 For us, are equal here.

Male, female; quick or deid
 Let us fike nae mair;
 The deep line o' cleavage
 Disna lie there.

145

Black in the pit the miner is,
The shepherd reid on the hill,
And I'm wi' them baith until
The end of mankind, I wis.

150

Whatever their jobs a' men are ane
In life, and syne in daith
(Tho' it's sma' patience I can ha'e
Wi' life's ideas o' that by the way)
And he's nae poet but kens it, faith,
And ony job but the hardest's ta'en.

155

The sailor gangs owre the curve o' the sea,
The hoosewife's thrang in the wash-tub,
And whatna rhyme can I find but hub,
And what else can poetry be?

160

The core o' a' activity,
Changin't in accordance wi'
Its inward necessity
And mede o' integrity.

165

Unremittin', relentless,
 Organized to the last degree,
 Ah, Lenin, politics is bairns' play
 To what this maun be!

170

THE BACK O' BEYOND

Bend doon, the sunsmite oot o' your een,
To this lanely pool and see
A'e shadow gantin' 'mang shadows there
And mind aince mair wi' me
Hoo months afore they were born
Mony a fine simmer's day
'S come doon through their mither's joy
To where men lay.

5

Stand up; and at midday yet
What a glunsh we get!

10

(a)

TARRAS

I

This Bolshevik bog! Suits me doon to the grun'!
For by fike and finnick the world's no' run.
Let fools set store by a simperin' face,
Ithers seek to keep the purale in place 5
Or grue at vermin - but by heck
The purpose o' life needs them - if us.
Little the bog and the masses reck
O' some dainty-davie or fike-ma-fuss.
Ho for the mother of usk and adder 10
Spelderin' here in her coal and madder
Faur frae Society's bells and bladder.

The fog-wa' splits and a gair is set
O' corbie oats and corcolet
And drulie water like sheepeik seeps
Through the duffie peats, and cranmlin' creeps, 15
Crowdles like a crab, syne cowds awa',
Couthless eneuch, yet cuttedly tae,
Tho' here and there in a sudden swaw
Corky -heidit as if in a playsome way,
But its lichtest kinks are a cowzie sport, 20
That nocht can cuddum - nocht can sort
For't, endless torsion, riddlin' port.

Ah, woman-fondlin'! What is that to this?
Soft hair to birssy heather, warm kiss
To cauld black waters' suction. 25
Nae ardent breists' erection
But the stark hills'! In what dry-gair-glow
Can I pillow by lowin' cheek here
Wi' nae paps' howe below
What laithsome parodies appear 30
O' my body's secrets in this oorie growth
Wi' its peerieweeries a' radgie for scouth
And the hail ratch and rive o' a world uncouth?

Her cautelles! On cods o' crammasy sundew
Or wi' antrin sprigs o' butterwort blue, 35
Here in a punk-hole, there in a burn,
She gecks to storm and shine in turn,
Trysts wi' this wind and neist wi' that,
Now wi' thunder and syne wi' snaw,
Bare to the banes or wi' birds in her hat, 40
- And has bairns by them a',
- Bairns!

(a)

Bycomes o' bogs and gets o' cairns,
Ultimate flow of her flosk and ferns...
The doup of the world is under you here 45
And, fast in her shochles, she'll find ye,
When you're drawn to where wind and water shear,
Shuttles o' glaur, and shot-heuch, to wind ye,
Till you peughle and hoast in the shug-bog there,
While she lies jirblin' wide to the air 50
And now and then lets a scannachin flare.

Come pledge her in a horse-punckin then!
Loons to a byssim, pock-shakin's o' men,
Needna come vauntin' their poustures to her.
Their paramuddle is whey to her heather. 55
To gang through her mill they maun pay
Ootsucken multure to the auld vulture,
Nor wi' their flauchter-spades ettle to play.
Withoot thick paikies to gaird their cul-ture!
What's ony schaftmon to this shud moss? 60
Or pooky-hair to her matted boss?
- Pledge her wha's mou' can relish her floss!

II

WHY I BECAME A SCOTS NATIONALIST

Gi'e me Scots-room in life and love
 And set me then my smeddum to prove
 In scenes like these. Like Pushkin I
 My time for flichty conquests by,
 Valuing nae mair some quick-fire cratur' 5
 Wha hurries up the ways o' natur',
 Am happy, when after lang and sair
 Pursuit you yield yoursel' to me,
 But wi' nae rapture, cauldly there, 10
 Open but glowerin' callously,
 Yet slow but surely heat until
 You catch my flame against your will
 And the mureburn tak's the hill.

(a)

MILK-WORT AND BOG-COTTON

TO SEUMAS O'SULLIVAN

Cwa' een like milk-wort and bog-cotton hair!
 I love you, earth, in this mood best o' a'
 When the shy spirit like a laich wind moves
 And frae the lift nae shadow can fa'
 Since there's nocht left to thraw a shadow there 5
 Owre een like milk-wort and milk-white cotton
 hair.

Wad that nae leaf upon anither wheeled
 A shadow either and nae root need dern
 In sacrifice to let sic beauty be!
 But deep surroondin' darkness I discern 10
 Is aye the price o' licht. Wad licht revealed
 Naething but you, and nicht nocht else concealed.

(a)

THE SCOTS RENAISSANCE

It was in these wowf places in years gane by
 That the Scots Renaissance had its origins
 And bred the unco spirits wha breenged through
 Oor douce conventions - Tarras Moor, the Rhims
 O' Galloway - did what Rimbaud socht to 5
 Wi' 'des secrets pour changerla vie' brocht
 Frae the lang road that leads to the Hill o' Nocht.

Mim as a may-puddock was the whale
 That swallowed Jonah, but less mim than Sime,
 The shark o' civilisation swallowed him hail, 10
 But he cam' through't diodon-like in time,
 And, safe on the Wauchope side o' Europe, spoke
 Things different as Christ frae ither folk.

And Oliver's world in which daylight's abolished
 And vocabularies afore then unkent 15
 Spring up like whirlwinds lies next to 'Geels,
 Whaur a'body's insane' - by which he meant
 The hail world no' whummed i' the New Dark Age
 He invented thocht's horrors to assuage.

And here Armstrong lifted a blotchy leaf 20
 Like an umbrella 'twixt his heid and the sun,
 And sat under't like Blok's wee Priest o' the Bogs,
 Prayin' for each bacillus in the grun'
 Singly, by name, and for the White Rose Prince o'
 Wales,
 On the spider-faced song that, if ocht, prevails. 25

And Blacklock's work like an auld peel-too'er stands
 Strang, dour, but if men add useless, toom
 - Aye, tomb o' mair than ever they'll jalouse,
 It'll stand until the hail earth has nae mair room
 For the deid bodies o' nonentities, 30
 Ane wi' the end that naebody foresees.

(a)

THE KERNIGAL

A thoosand people in this a'e kirkyaird
 I kent, and suddenly a' the memories laired
 'Neth these green sods, o' looks and ways
 And a' the freends an' foes o' my young days
 Encompass me - hoo could it be
 That ocht could change sicna diversity? 5

Daith's gi'en nae added stature to them then?
 In this vain resurrection they seem to rise
 Juist as they were, and sae belittle Daith;
 And there is naething in the hail wide world 10
 That is the better for a repeat supply
 O' ordinary folk; and so it is
 Wi' a' Earth's graves and memories.

O wad they micht rise up afore me noo
 Like the auld Kernigal on Warblaw there, 15
 Firs ranked in gloomy corridors,
 Tall too'ers each drilled to its straight height
 By its close neighbours' command - stern, bare;
 - And no' this chaos o' weeds and waste again,
 This human scree wi'ts artificial floo'ers. 20

(a)

WHUCHULLS

Il ne peut y avoir du progrès (vrai, c'est-à
dire moral), que dans l'individu et par
l'individu lui-même.

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

Gie owre your coontin', for nae man can tell
The population o' a wud like this
In plants and beasts, and needna pride himsel'
On ocht he marks by a' he's boond to miss.
What is oor life that we should prize't abune 5
Lichen's or slug's o' which we ken scarce mair
Than they o' oors when a' thing's said and dune,
Or fancy it ser's 'heicher purposes'?
The wice man kens that a fool's brain and his
Differ at maist as little against a' that is 10
As different continents and centuries,
Time, station, caste, culture, or character -
Triflin' distinctions that dinna cairry faur -
And if at ony point he stops and says:
'My lot has fa'n in mair enlightened days, 15
I'm glad to be a European, no' a black
- Human, no' hotchin' glaur' ahint his back
Let him forehear as foolish a future set
Him in a class as seemin' laicher yet,
Or ten pasts damn him for a graceless get. 20
Original forest, Whuchulls, public park,
Mysel', or ony man, beast, mineral, weed,
I clearly see are a' aside the mark.
The poet hauds nae brief for ony kind,
Age, place, or range o' sense, and no' confined 25
To ony nature can share Creation's instead.
First speir this bowzie bourach if't prefers
The simmer or the winter, day or night,
New or forhooied nests, rain's pelts or smirrs,
Bare sticks or gorded fullyery; and syne invite 30
My choice twixt good and evil, life and death.
What hoar trunk girds at ivy or at fug
Or what sleek bole complains it lacks them baith?
Nae foliage hustle-farrant in windy light
Is to the Muse a mair inspirin' sight 35
Than fungus poxy as the mune; nae blight
A meaner state than flourish at its height.

(b)

Leafs' music weel accords wi' gloghole's glug.
 Then cite nae mair this, that, or onything.
 To nae belief or preference I cling, 40
 Earth - let alane the mucklest mountain in't -
 Is faur owre kittle a thing to scho ahint.
 I'll no' toy wi' the fragments o't I ken
 - Nor seek to beshield it, least o' a' men! ...
 Yet here's a poem takin' shape again, 45
 Inevitable shape, faur mair inevitable
 Than birks and no' bamboos or banyans here,
 Impredictable, relentless, thriddin' the rabble
 O' themes and aspects in this thrawart scene.
 O freedom constrainin' me as nae man's been 50
 Mair constrained wha wasna, as I'll yet be, freer! ...

'Clearlier it comes. I winna na'e it. Quick
And gi'e me tutors in arboriculture then.
Let me plunge where the undergrowth's mair thick.
Experts in forestry, botany - a' that ken 55
Mair than I dae o' onything that's here.
I ken sae little it easily works its will.
Fence me frae its design wi' endless lear.
Pile up the facts and let me faurer ben.
Multiply my vocabulary ten times ten. 60
Let me range owre a' prosody again.
Mak' von a lammergeir, no' juist a wren.
Is that owre muckle for a Scotsman vet,
Needin' a soupler leid, great skills, he lacks?
Is he in silence safer frae attacks? 65
Yet wha can thole to see it cavalierly choose
In God's green wud - tak' this and that refuse?
Yon knoul-taed trees, this knurl, at least't'll use!
Gar memory gie the place fower seasons at aince'.
The world's no' mine. I'll tak' nae hen's care o't. 70
'Is that Creation's nature you evince,
Sma-bookin' Whuchulls to a rice or twa
Sae arbitrarily picked, and voidin' a'
The lave as gin it wasna worth a jot?'

There is nae reason but on unreason's based 75
 And needs to mind that often to hain its sense,
 Dodo and Mammoth had the same misplaced
 Trust in their données - and ha'e lang gane hence.
 Why fash sae muckle owre Nature's present stock
 In view o' a' past changes and to come? 80
 Its wipin' oot' ud be nae greater shock
 Than mony afore; and Poetry isna some
 Society for Preservin' Threatened Types,
 But strokes a cat or fiddles on its tripes,
 And for inclusions or exclusions, fegs, 85
 Needna apologize while a'e bird's eggs

Are plain, anither's speckled, beasts ha'e legs,
 Birds wings, Earth here brairds trees, here nocht but seggs.
 'Troth it's an insult for a man to seek
 A'e woman owre anither. A' women hae 90
 Their differences and resemblances, but whatna freak
 Thinks, frae the latter, ony ane'll dae
 Or, frae the former, fain 'ud sair them a'?

The world o' a' the senses is the same. 95
 Creation disna live frae hand to mooth
 Juist improvisin' as it gangs, forsooth,
 And there's nae meanin' in life that bode to da'
 Until we came - or bides a wicer day -
 'Yont brute creation, fools, bairns, unborn, deid.
 I'd sing bird-mooth'd wi' ony ither creed, 100
 No' wi' Creation's nature and its aim;
 Or sing like Miffy - wheesht, world, while he speaks.
 In English - hence, the Universal Speech.
 He has nae wings; let birds pit on the breeks.
 Nae fins. Fish, copy him! And sae let each 105
 O'Nature's sorts be modelled upon him
 Frae animalculae to Seraphim.
 He is nae poet, but likes the Laureate best.
What, write like that? - Ah! here's the crucial test!
 I ha'e the courage to be a Scotsman then 110
 (Nae Scot'll e'er be Laureate we ken!)
 Divided frae ither folk to Eternity's en',
 And, if I hadna, ken it wadna maitter.
 I'd be it still. Exclusive forms are nature.
It means to be and comes in Nature's way. 115
- In its ain nature's, as a' in Nature does.
 Supersessions, innovations, variations, display
 Nature, no' hide; and Scotland, Whuchulls, us
 Interest me less for what they are than as
 Facts o' the creative poo'er that, tho' they pass, 120
 'll aye be qualified by their ha'en been.
 It is nae treason then to stell my een
 No' on their fleetin' shapes but on their deep
 Constituent principles destined to keep
 A mystery greater than the sight o' eels 125
 Kelterin' through a' the seven seas reveals.
 These to a'e spot converge, but we gang oot
 Aye faurer frae oor source - ne'er back, I doot.

'I like to see the ramel gowd-bestreik,
And sclaffer cuit-deep through the birsled leafs. 130
Here I dung doon the squirrels wi' my sling
And made the lassies brooches o' their paws,
Set girns for rabbits and for arnuts socht,
Herried my nests and blew the eggs, and lit
Fires o' fir-burrs and hag in tinker style. 135

Hoo faur the interests o' progress warrant
Meddlin' wi' Whuchulls' auld amenities,
And their dependent livelihoods and ploys,
I'm no' to say: I'm glad to see it still
Temporarily triumphant against control. 140
It's pleasant nae doot for a woman to dream
O' vieldin' hersel' to some buirdly man
Wha kens what he wants and willy-nilly'll ha'e't
But when the time comes she'll ave find, I think,
Guid reasons for no' vieldin' - bless her hert! 145
Sae wi' the Whuchulls. May the Lord be praised.'
 Nae doot primeval beasts felt juist the same
 About the place - tho' different frae this
 As ony change that's still in store for it.
 Hauf saurian-emeritus, hauf prentice spook, 150
 You'll never see the plantin' for the trees,
 This Eden where Adam comes fu' circle yet.

There is nae ither way. For weel or woe
 It is attained. Tho' idle side-winds blow 155
 In on me still and inferior questions thraw
 Their crockets up, a' doots and torments cease.
 The road is clear. I gang in perfect peace,
 And my idea spreids and shines and lures me on,
 O lyric licht auld chaos canna dam!
 Celestial, soothin', sanctifyin' course, wi' a' 160
 The high sane forces o' the sacred time
 Fecht' on my side through it till I con
 This blainy blanderin' and ken that I'm
 Delivered frae the need o' trauchlin' wi't,
 Accommodated to't, but in my benmaist hert 165
 Acknowledgementless, free, condition or reform,
 Or sunny lown or devastatin' storm,
 Indifferent to me; where the Arts stert
 Wi' a' else corpore vili - 'God's Mercy-seat!'

FROM 'TO CIRCUMJACK CENCRASTUS' (2)

And hoo should I forget the Langfall
On mornings when the hines were ripe but een
Ahint the glintin' leafs were brichter still
Than sunned dew on them, lips reider than the
fruit,
And I filled baith my basket and my hert
Mony and mony a time?

5

(d)

FROM 'FRANCIS GEORGE SCOTT: AN ESSAY'

There is a place at Langholm called the Curly Snake where a winding path coils up through a copse till it reaches the level whence, after passing through a field or two, it runs on into the splendid woods of the Langfall. It has always haunted my imagination and has probably constituted itself the ground-plan and pattern of my mind, just as the place called the Nook of the Eight Paths in Gribskov, the great forest north of Hillerød, haunted Kierkegaard's.

(d)

IN THE LANGFALL

FOR VALDA

The path is lost in tanglewood,
I go towards the light
But how fair the bracken tops are
And lower leaves to-night.
I would that I had time to stay
And study them aright,
It is the light that cannot stay,
They do - but not in sight.

5

And round me now the sombre trees
Each of a different black,
Weld into one their various shapes
Tho' here and there a crack
Lets in a line of silver light
About the unseen track,
A line that lacks no less than I
The kind of light I lack.

10

15

(b)

FROM 'SCOTS UNBOUND'

No' the Esk that rins like a ribbon there
But gi'es and tak's wi' the cluds in the air
And ootwith its stent boonds lies at the root
O' the plants and trees for miles roondabout,
And gethers its tributaries, yet pulse-beats back 5
Up through them and a' that mak's it helps mak'
Sae I wad that Scotland's shape 'ud appear
As clear through a' its sub-shapes here
As whiles through my separate works I see
Their underlyin' unity.... 10

(a)

THE DOG POOL

Oot o' the world and into the Langholm!
 There's mony a troot in the auld Dog Pool
 Livelier, praise be, than ocht you can write.
 Lean owre as you used to ga'en to the school
 And see the broon shadows and ivory beaks
 Bonnier than ony book bespeaks. 5

Or when there's a spate and the water's as black
 As Maxton's hair and as noisy as Kirkwood
 Wha'd no watch it without wantin' to think?
 Tech, ony man that isna a stirk would. 10
 It'll be time to think when the Esk rins dry.
 Watch it noo while it's still ga'en by.

Catch it noo - for even as I speak
 The fish may be gaspin' on dry land there
 And the hindmaist wave o' the Esk gang roon' 15
 The curve at Land's End to be seen nae mair
 And a silence still waur for a sang to brak'
 Follow the row the waters mak'.

(a)

BY WAUCHOPESIDE

Thrawn water? Aye, owre thrawn to be aye thrawn!
 I ha'e my wagtails like the Wauchope tae,
 Birds fu' o' fechtin' spirit, and o' fun,
 That whiles jig in the air in lichtsomen play
 Like glass-ba's on a fountain, syne stand still 5
 Save for a quiver, shoot up an inch or twa, fa' back
 Like a swarm o' winter-gnats, or are tost aside,
 By their inclination's kittle loup,
 To balance efter hauf a coup.

There's mair in birds than men ha'e faddomed yet. 10
 Tho' maist churn oot the stock sangs o' their kind
 There's aiblins genius here and there; and aince
 'Mang white beams, hollies, siller birks -
 The trees o' licht -
 I mind 15

I used to hear a blackie mony a nicht
 Singin' awa' t'an unconscionable 'oor
 Wi' nocht but the water keepin't company
 (Or nocht that ony human ear could hear)
 - And wondered if the blackie heard it either 20
 Or cared whether it was singin' tae or no'!
 O there's nae sayin' what my verses awn
 To memories like these. Ha'e I come back
 To find oot? Or to borrow mair? Or see
 Their helpless puirness to what gar'd them be? 25
 Late sang the blackie but it stopt at last
 The river still ga'ed singin' past.

O there's nae sayin' what my verses awn
 To memories, or my memories to me.
 But a'e thing's certain; ev'n as things stand 30
 I could vary them in coontless ways and gi'e
 Wauchope a new course in the minds o' men,
 The blackie gowden feathers, and the like,
 And yet no' cease to be dependent on
 The things o' Nature, and create instead 35
 Oot o' my ain heid
 Or get ootside the range
 O' trivial change
 Into that cataclysmic country which
 Natheless a' men inhabit - and enrich. 40

For civilization in its struggle up
Has mair than seasonal changes o' ideas,
Glidin' through periods o' flooers and fruit,
Winter and Spring again; to cope wi' these
Is difficult eneuch to tax the patience 45
O' Methuselah himsel' - but transformations,
Yont physical and mental habits, symbols, rites,
That mak sic changes nane, are aye gaen on,
Revolutions in the dynasty o' live ideals
- The stuff wi' which alane true poetry deals. 50
Wagtail or water winna help me here,
(That's clearer than Wauchope at its clearest's
clear!)

Where the life o' a million years is seen
Like a louch look in a lass's een.

THE POINT OF HONOUR

ON WATCHING THE ESK AGAIN

I would that once more I could blend her
 With my own self as I did then
 Vivid and impulsive in crystalline splendour
 Cold and seething champagne.

(Cut water. Perfection of craft concealed 5
In effects of pure improvisation.
Delights of dazzle and dare revealed
In instant inscapes of fresh variation.

Exhilarating, effortless, divinely light, 10
In apparent freedom yet reined by unseen
And ubiquitous disciplines; darting, lint-white,
Fertile in impulse, in control - keen.

Pride of play in a flourish of eddies,
Bravura of blowballs, and silver digressions, 15
Ringing and glittering she swirls and steadies,
And moulds each ripple with secret suppressions.)

Once, with my boy's body little I knew
 But her furious thresh on my flesh;
 But now I can know her through and through 20
 And, light like, her tide enmesh.

Then come, come, come, let her spend her
 Quivering momentum where I lie here,
 Wedding words to her waves, and able to tend her
 Every swirl and sound with eye and ear.

No more of mere sound, the least part! 25
I know how it acts, connecting words, implying
A rate of movement, onomatopoeic art,
Or making a reader start trying
To interpret the mouth's actual movement
As a gesture: or acting directly 30
Like a tune - a mode that is different
From the rest as darkness from light to me,
These intelligible, this a mystery.

(b)

Is not consciousness of a sound an act
Of belief in it: are not movements of muscles 35
Transferred, apprehended, as rhythms, or fact
Of nature some other sense claims, like the tussles
You arouse of thought, hearing, touch and sight,
Variety of experience, a baffling medley
Till one wins, and I cease to know you aright 40
Yet dare not embezzle the dramatic insights,
The generative questionableness, knowing well
The greater risk of taking no risks,
Creating no ecstasies, changing the mights
Of old safe ecstasies to counters, discs, 45
Transports reduced to play-level,
The problematic, the murderous element
Of all art eschewed: no mad leap taken
Into the symbol, driving like your stream
Through all mere images, all that may seem 50
Its very character: the engagement
Twixt man and being forsaken,
All stale, unprofitable, flat and thin,
No restless eager poem that speaking in
A thousand moods achieves a unity, 55
No wracking indispensable energy,
Only emotions forgotten in tranquillity.
Seductive solutions, genteel clarities,
What have I or you to do with these?
Am I too old to spring like a salmon 60
And confined to Goethean gammon?
- And yet in the summer-time you
Sometimes come down to that too.

Nay the boy's spirit its lessoning got;
 Dissympathy with nature, sheer sensual force, 65
 Lust of light and colour, the frequent note
 Of free enthusiasm in its course.

What troubling flavour in this heady wine?
 It hides not Dionysos' but Astarte's sting?
 Mid the elemental enemies - cold, ravening brine - 70
 The intellectual flame's survival I sing.

Malicious and unaccountable twinkle, free
 Beyond human freedom from the laws of causation?
 Nay, gaily, daily, over abysses more ghastly
 Men cast spider-webs of creation. 75

(Nay, the last issue I have all but joined,
But my muse still lacks - and so has missed all -
The right temper, like yours, which goes to the point
Of the terrible: the terrible crystal.

Some day I cry - and may cry my life through - 80
Serene and modest in self-confidence like you
I will capture the world-free illusion two
Of naught, and they one, like me and the sun's rays.

For in you and in me moves a thought 85
So passionate and live like a plant or beast
It has its own architecture and has brought
A new thing to Nature - mine vague, yours exprest.

If I find yours I will find my own.
What lack of integrity prevents me?
Where is the reach-point (it exists I've known long 90
Waiting for me) of this integrity?

Found I shall know it like a turned lock's click
But I fumble and juggle again and again.
Your every least move does the trick
But I watch your quick tumblers in vain.) 95

But one sweep of motion in the world to-day,
The unwearying flood of the river,
Inexplicable, alien! Water, whither away
In a flight that passes and stays forever?

Full from the rains, but the flood sediment gone; 100
Under the brace of the glancing current
Each pebble shines as with a life of its own,
Electric, autonomous, world-shaking-divergent.

Or comes the disturbing influence with which I tingle
Only from the shoals of fishes that seem 105
As though they'd be stranded there on the shingle
From the swaying waters they teem?

A wagtail flits but noiseless - by knowledge awed
Of some great unseen presence? or food its gob in? -
Then suddenly, with expanding sweetness, a glad 110
Clear note rings out: Revelation!: Robin?

Stranded. I with them! Would I wish to bend her
To me as she veers on her way again
Vivid and impulsive in crystalline splendour
Cold and seething champagne? 115

No. So life leaves us. Already gleam
In the eyes of the young the flicker, the change,
The free enthusiasm that carries the stream
Suddenly out of my range.

APPENDIX A

FROM 'THE WAR WITH ENGLAND'

The social scene could be little
 But confusion and loss to me,
 And, Scotland, better than all your towns
 Was a bed of moss to me. 5
 I had to lie on the hills and watch
 The founts that to keep their tryst
 Had found their way through the wards of the rock
 Slower than the second coming of Christ
 To know how my task was priced.

I was better with the sounds of the sea 10
 Than with the voices of men
 And in desolate and desert places
 I found myself again.
 For the whole of the world came from these 15
 And he who returns to the source
 May gauge the worth of the outcome
 And approve and perhaps reinforce
 Or disapprove and perhaps change its course.

Now I deal with the hills at their roots 20
 And the streams at their springs
 And am to the land that I love
 As he who brings
 His bride home, and they know each other
 Not as erst, like their friends, they have done, 25
 But carnally, causally, knowing that only
 By life nigh undone can life be begun,
 And accept and are one.
 - When was anything born in Scotland last,
Risks taken and triumphs won?

(d)

DANTE AND DOUGLAS

Nature and Art - by these two powers, if thou hast
rightly read, 'tis meet the nations should in life's
true course be led; and since the usurer elsewhere
turns his feet....

Vergil to Dante; The Inferno.
How can it be that a good when shared shall make the
greater number of possessors richer in it than if it
be possessed by a few? - Dante to Vergil; The
Purgatorio.

To nurse indignation and horror
Is nae langer possible - here
A' that is past; the hail thing,
And way oot, at last are clear.

Dante was richt in his judgements 5
And their several places in Hell
Suited his trimmers, traders, and traitors,
Barrators and usurers well.

The number's increased since he wrote 10
O' the crood that watches the fecht
To tak' whichever side wins.
They're mony times multiplied.

Let them join the useless angels
Wha' stood 'for themsel's' alane
- Not for God nor against; but say 15
Nae mair o' them - a'e glance and on!

'Why holdest thou?' 'Why spendest thou?'
The vain coonter-cry continues
- Neither avails; and the hail lot 20
Even their names and identities lose.

The abuse of intellectual gifts,
Violence to Nature and Art - of late
Phlegethon, the red river of Hell,
The river of blood's aye in spate.

(a)

A' fruit o' capital that comes 25
 To wha sit still and tak' it and gi'e
 Nae real work to the world - and hoo mony
Dae that? - is frae the Deid Sea.

Let Scotland abune a' remember 30
 Calvin was the first Kirkman o' note
 To defend the takin' o' interest
 - And ponder its shamefu' lot.

Times ha' changed? - Shokeepers,
 Bankers, Clerks, and the mony-rangin'
 Servants o' Mammon are respectit noo? 35
Times ha' changed - but no' the unchangin'!

To Hell wi' the lot o' them? - No!
 Coals to Newcastle! They're there as it is
 To Hell wi' Hell? At least nae mair
 Need swell some circles o' th' Abyss. 40

'The sempiternal effluence streams abroad,
Spreading wherever charity extends,
So that the more aspirants to that bliss
Are multiplied, more good is there to love,
And more is loved, as mirrors that reflect, 45
Each unto other, propagated light.'

The Eight Wonder of the World,
 A Douglas at rest? - aye, in truth;
 Certain o' the ultimate issue
 And set abune wrath and ruth. 50

h/

WALLACETOWN

TO THE DUKE OF MONTROSE

Guid sakes, your Grace, you shouldna ettle
 To draw yon wabblin' length o' metal
 For fear your unpractised hand instead
 Should wabble waur and sned your heid.

I doot if a' your martial race, 5
 Wha fell in this or anither place,
 Could see your gest, they'd strauchtway dee
 A second daith o' hilarity.

But Wallace wight was a sterner cratur;
 I doot he'd think it nae lauchin' maitter 10
 For sicna fribble o' a lord
 To mock Scotland's cause wi' a museum sword,
 And to pit you in your place juist let you feel
 A tickle or twa o' the genuine steel.

(a)

'WITH A LIFTING OF THE HEAD'

(ὑπεροχῇ τῆς ἑαυτῶν κεφαλῆς
- Plotinus)

Scotland, when it is given to me	
As it will be	
To sing the immortal song	
The crown of all my long	
Travail with thee	5
I know in that high hour	
I'll have, and use, the power	
Sublime contempt to blend	
With its ecstatic end,	
As who, in love's embrace,	10
Forgetfully may frame	
Above the poor slut's face	
Another woman's name.	

(a)

APPENDIX B

A DISH O' WHUMMLE

"Ou, aye. She's aye leevin' - for ocht that onybody kens," he said.

"Hoo d'ye mean? - for ocht that onybody kens?" I spiered.

"Weel, up to a wheen years syne - mebbe five or sax - she was whiles seen gan aboot. But ane or ither o' them was aye wi' her. Naebody ever got chance of speakin' wi'r by hersel'."

"That was unco queer, was't no'?"

"Mebbe aye and mebbe no. It's haurdly for me to say. It's only lookin' back yin minds o't. Naebody noticed it at the time - or at first at ony rate. Gin onybody tried to hae words wi' her whichever o' them happened to be alang wi' her spoke for her and gin the auld body spoke hersel' at a' it was juist to repeat what they had already said. She never said a word that wisna pit into her mooth. There was nae gettin' roon' them; and ye'd to watch hoo ye tried. Ye ken what it is in a

(c)

place like this whaur everybody's connected through each other."

"Which o' them does she bide wi'?"

"I canna tell ye that either. There's a fell big family o' them and when she cam' here at the first go-aff she'd bide a wheen weeks wi' Jock in Henry Street, and syne a wheen wi' Dood in Back Mary Street and syne wi' Leeb in the Factory Entry, and whiles she'd gang doon to Mirrn's at the Tail. And sae on. She was aye on the go. It stude to reason. They were a' keen to hae'r and sin' she couldna' be in hauf-a-dizzen different places at aince she'd to dae the neist best thing."

He pu'd on his pipe for a meenit or twa as gin he was wunderin' whether to say ony mair or no'; and then he gaed on.

"Of coorse ye ken what a place this is for talk. When she cam' first she'd onies amount o' gear, bonnets an' cloaks an' costumes. Two' three kists pang fu'. An' she stoppit wi' Jock to start wi'. Dood and Leeb and the rest were nane owre weel pleased but Jock was the auldest and what could they dae? And Jock's wife is sic a managin' wumman. Besides he'd the biggest

family, and the sma'est pey. Jock was a prood man when he ushered her into his seat at the Kirk the first Sunday, and a'body noticed his wife had a new costume on. There was a lot of talk. Ye see, naebody kent juist hoo the auld body had been left. There were different stories but, by a' accoonts, she wisna' bare. I forget juist hoo lang she stoppit at Jock's - five or sax weeks onyway; and afore she left Jock's faimly was gey weel riggit oot. Their mither was a skilly craitur wi' the scissors and needle, and the bit bairns lookit' better than they'd dune for mony a lang day when she'd finished makin' doon some o' their granny's things to them. But I will say this for Jock and Jock's wife and some o' the rest o'them - it was a guid while efter that afore there was ony cheenge in the auld body's condition - to a' ootward appearances."

He took anither sook at his pipe.

"To cut a lang story short, it was noticed that by the time she'd made her first roon' and wan back to Jock's, she'd a sicht less luggage wi' her. And the claes she was wearin' at the Kirk werena the claes she'd worn the first Sunday and she wasna quite sae lang at Jock's as she'd been the first time afore she went on to Dood's

and she wasna sae lang at Dood's either afore she on to Leeb's - "

He seemed to hae lost himsel' a'thegither tryin' tae mind a' the oots-and-ins, sae I asked, "But which o' them was she wi' the last time she was seen?"

"That's juist what naebody can mind," he said. "An' it's no' for want o' tryin'. Every noo and again even yet the weemun argie themsel's black in the faces owr't but they never get oot o' the bit. And every noo and then ane o' them plucks up courage and pits a direct question at Leeb or Jock's wife, and I've heard them wormin' at the bairns, but the bairns are every bit as fly as their mithers. And whiles they've fair provokit me or some o' the ither men to spier at Jock or Dood, but it's nae guid - drunk or sober, there's nae gettin' ony faurer forrit wi' them. Jock'll say she's at Dood's and canna win' oot o' her room, puir body, and the doctor'll no' hae her fashed wi' visitors; Dood'll say she's at Leeb's; Leeb'll say she's doon at Mirr'ns at the Tail - The fact o' the maitter is that she's a'where and nae where at aince; and like to bide there."

"An' that's a' that onybody kens?"

He noddit.

"Onything may hae happened?"

He noddit again.

"But it's no' the thing - it canna be left at that."

He lookit as if he'd been aboot to nod a third time but had thocht o't. And I noticed that he didna' pey me the compliment o' askin' me if I'd onything to suggest that hedna already been tried.

Yet they're aye talkin' aboot her?" I persisted.

"Ou aye! They'll talk richt eneuch - gin onybody spiers."

"No' unless?"

"Whiles if they think ye're like to spier."

"It's a queer business."

"It's a' that," he said.

"There's naething ye haena' telt me?"

He was slow in answerin'.

"Weel," he said, "there's juist this an' ye can mak' o't what ye like. I canna vouch for the truth o't. But Bob Mackay was courtin' Leeb's man's sister at the time the auld cratur gaed to Jock's for the third time, or mebbe, the fourth. And it cam' frae him. He says that

she'd got to sic a state she didna ken whether she got ocht to eat or no'. And - I'm gien ye his vera words - Jock said: 'If it's a' the same to her there's nae much need to waste the guid mercies.' ... Sae, accordin' to Bob Mackay it cam' to this that sae lang as she was set doon at the table she'd sit there and gang through a' the motions, and be juist as weel content as though she'd been eatin' like the lave - and never hae a bite."

"Guid sakes!"

"Mind ye, I canna swear for the truth o't - but there's juist this. The vera last time my wife saw the auld cratur maun hae been as near as we can reckon juist aboot that time. She met Jock's wife an' her a'e efternune and Jock's wife and her talkit back and forrit first aboot a'e thing and syne aboot anither till my wife said she'd hae to rin' a' the way hame to get my tea - I'd been awa' in the country a' day wi' naething but a piece in my pocket and ud be as hungry as a hawk. And wi' that the auld wife opened her mooth and licked her lips and said: 'Naething beats a dish o' whummle.' Juist like that."

And he gied an imitation - like a cuckoo clock.

"My wife says you could hae knocked her doon wi' a feather. She was that taen aback that she fair missed her chance. Jock's wife took an awfu' red face and sterted talkin' aboot something else sixteen to the dizzen, as if it had been something unco important she'd near hand forgotten aboot - and she never took the slightest notice o' the auld wife's remark and my wife couldna' get a word in endways tho' she tried sae hard that she's never since been able to mind what Jock's wife did talk aboot - and as faur as we can mak' oot the auld wife's never been seen since -. And, mind ye, even supposin' for the sake o' argyment that she's aye leevin', there's mebbie a guid and sufficient reason for her never bein' seen oot. Accordin' to the best calculation o' the gear she cam' wi - an' I'm nae coonter mysel' - checkit wi' a' that her dochters and dochters-in-law and grandbairns hae been seen wearin' since, it appears that at the time my wife saw her last she canna hae hed a steek left barrin' what she was staunin' up in; an' it's a weel established fact that that particular dress was rinnin' up and doon the braes a month or twa efter that on the backs o' Leeb's brats."

"And what's a dish o' whummle?" I asked.

"Wund-pie," said he, and stumped off doon the close.

MURTHOLM HILL

"The world's like a bridescake in a shop window the day," he said.

"Weel, see and tak' care o' yersel' noo," said his mither, "and no' be comin' back killt."

"Nae fear o' that."

She was smilin'. The things that boy said! She'd see him waggin' his heid in a pulpit a'richt - if naething cam' owre him.

He was pleased that he'd gar'd her smile, and wonderin' what had pitten that in his heid - "the world's like a bridescake." No' bad for a boy o' twelve. There wasna' anither boy in the toon could hae said onything like it. He was wishin' he could follow it up wi' anither. It had never really been in his heid ava. It had juist louped frae naewhaur to the tip o' his tongue. He micht sit in the hoose a' day and no' think o' anither to gang wi't. Forbye, for his age, he was as tall and weel-built as ony o' the boys in the toon, tho' he'd never been

allowed to rin wild like maist o' them. Sittin' in the hoose and thinkin' o' things like that was fine; nane o' the rest o' them could dae that - but he wanted to show that he was as guid as them, at ither things tae. If they could dae things that he couldna that took awa' frae the things he could dae and they couldna. "Aye, he's clever, but he's no' strang." That took the gilt aff'n the gingerbread a'thegither. It made brains nae mair than the result o' bein' silly; a thing naebody envied.

Of coorse, he kent it 'ud be a'richt aince he was a bit aulder. It was only for a while he'd to thole it. He'd grow up into a banker or a lawyer, or, at the vera least, a teacher, and they'd be mill-hauds a' their days; and nae wicer, the feck o' them, at forty than they were at fourteen.

Seein' him dackle, his mither swithered tae. She wanted him to enjoy himsel', of coorse; yin's only young yince, but, a' the same, ... She thocht she'd try again.

"I wish ye werena gan' to the Murtholm tho'. The Lamb Hill 'ud dae ye fine. Ye'd enjoy yersel' as weel there, and it's faur safer."

"I'm owre big. It's only the infant schule that gang there."

"Weel, there's lots o' ither places - up Ewes or awa' oot the Copshawholm Road or the Wauchope, and ye'd hae them a' to yersel' and could dae as ye liked."

"They're a'richt for sli'in', but no for sledgin'. There's naething worth ca'in' a brae till ye gan' miles oot."

"Havers! The Copshawholm Road ... "

"The Copshawholm's no' steep eneuch to stert wi' - and syne it's owre steep. It 'ud be the best o' the lot if it began suner and endit better - and besides, the bobbies'll no' let ye sledge there. It's a blin' corner and bad eneuch for a bike let alane a sledge. There's been plenty o' accidents there already."

His mither had had nae thocht o' that end o' the road - and it aboot took her braith awa' him thinkin' she had! - but o' the heichs and howes awa' oot by the White Yett. There wadna be ony danger oot there, and it was quite steep eneuch for him, besides gan' up and doon like the switchback at the fair, but it was juist as weel to say nae mair aboot it. He'd shairly never think o' attemptin' the Lang Brae - but

the bare idea o't hadna' been sae impossible to'm or hoo could he hae thocht she'd actually suggested it? The idea fair gar't her shiver.

"The Murtholm's fell dangerous tae," she said. "The bottom hauf's steep, and if ye dinna tak' the corner ye gang richt into the water."

"It's frozen owre," he said, "and what's mair, it's as shallow as a saucer juist there. It wadna' come owre your taes, even if there was nae ice."

"Weel, it's narrow between the wa's. Some o' the bigger yins'll mebbe rin ye doon and coup ye. See and let the ithers awa' first. Ye'll be safer if ye come doon last wi' naebody ahint ye."

He gied a crookit kind o' lauch. Weemun didna' understaund. Hoo could ye wait till the last when there was nae last? They were gan' up and doon a' the time. He kent weel eneuch what she was hintin' at tho'! Twa winters syne he'd been on the Lamb Hill, when some o' the bigger yins cam' up and chased the youngsters awa' and took his sledge frae him. It was the finest sledge o' the lot by a lang chalk, wi' lang steel rinners - the roond, narrow kind, no'

the braid, flat yins. Maist o' the ither bairns had been on bits o' boxes withoot rinners at a'. Pride gangs afore a fa' - and he'd been fell prood. He'd been ane o' the biggest yins there, and wi' the best sledge he'd been nane owre canny about claimin' the croon o' the hill and hustlin' some o' the wee'r and less forritsome yins into the side. What a stound he had at the stertin' place! "Na, na. You gang first," said the ithers that were there. And as he flew doon he saw the envious looks o' the ithers that were climbin' back. The best sledge on the field! Gosh! it could gang! Like greased lichtnin'! And aince or twice that efternune as he was near the top climbin' up he saw ithers stertin', and, by rinnin' as hard and launchin' off as quick as he could, he was able to mak up on them hauf way doon and send them whirlin' and whummlin' into the wreaths at the side. Nae end o' fun. And he was juist in the middle o't when a wheen o' the big yins cam' along the top road frae the heid o' the Kirk Wynd and clam' the palin' and ordered them aff the coorse. He was climin' up at the time - and heard them. But they didna' mean him?

It 'ud be some o' the sma'er fry; and they were a bit o' a nuisance and 'ud be apt to get hurt if the big yins were usin' the coorse as weel. It 'ud be for their ain guid to keep oot o' the road; but he was a'richt - he could look efter himsel'. Abune a' wi' a sledge like that. Sae he paid nae heed, but trudged on to the stertin' place and clappit himsel' doon on his sledge - and was off. The big yins were still a yaird or twa away. The coorse swoopit doon and then there was a hump, and as you gae'd owre it the sledge flew clean in the air and landit again a yaird or twa doon, and then there was a glorious lang swoop wi' a curve-up at the end that brocht the rin' to a fine finish. But juist as he was toppin' the hump a muckle snawba' dung him clean aff the sledge and sent him whizzin' heid first inta the bank at the side. When he pickit himsel' up and got his e'en and his ears shot o' the snaw his toom sledge was birlin' awa' doon near the fit o' the coorse. And, a' at aince, wi' a shout that gar'd his hert stan' still and made him forget the stoundin' pain in the side o' his heid, ane o' the biggest o' the big yins - Bobby Price - gied a rin' and a jump at the stertin' place and brocht his feet

thegither and was off - swoopin' and soarin'
 owre the hump and swoopin' again like a bird wi'
 his airms ga'en up and doon as if he'd been
 dancin' the Hieland Fling, and whiles he
 coo'ered till his doup was level wi' his heels
 and up again. By sang! That took some daein'.
 It wasna mony could dae that. Hoo he wish'd
 he was as big as Bobby Price!

Bobby Price was at the bottom o' the coorse;
 and was comin' up again trailin' his sledge.

He felt like shoutin' to'm "Wha cut the
 yorlins' throats wi' the roostit nail?" and
 rinnin' awa' as hard as he could. He was a
 bad yin, Price - up to a' kinds o' ill. Him
 and his gang used to gang along the waterside,
 and when they saw a cat they'd "Cheechie, cheechie,
 cheechie," till it cam' wi'in reach and syne grab
 it and whirl it roon' and roon' by the tail in
 cairtwheels - and let gae. And syne there was a
 splash hauf way owre the water. He'd let them
 see. He'd . . . !

But a' at aince he pit his haund up to the
 side o' his face and brocht it doon again reid
 wi' bluid. The hert gae'd oot o'm, and he was
 as seeck as a dog. There maun hae been a stane
 in the snawba'. That was like them. He never

kent hoo he got hame. Naebody gaed wi'm. He kent them a', juist as they kent wha he was - but he hadna a chum amang them. And he gaed hame withoot his sledge. Bobby Price had it. He grat in his mither's airms as if his hert 'ud brak.

"Never mind," she said. "Your faither'll gang and get it when he comes in - and gi'e them what for, that's mair. That Price needs a sing on the side o' the lug." He'd picked up eneuch by this time to say: "Aye. It 'ud be the price o'm." He smiled even yet inside himsel' when he minded that pun.

But that wasna the warst o't. When his faither gaed to get the sledge there was nae sign o't. Price denied point blank that he'd ever seen it, and the rest backed him up. It was only when his faither was comin' awa' again that he fund a wheen broken sticks lyin' in the corner aside the yett. It was a' that was left o't. The brutes had kickit it to bits when they were dune wi't. But the rinners werena there. He kent naething o' that till the following mornin' and syne he'd anither greetin' match.

"Wheesht, wheesht," his mither said.
"Your faither'll mak' ye anither yin - and a
bigger yin at that."

"But the snaw'll be a' awa' again afore
it's ready. Boo-oo."

"Nae fear. He'll stert to't the nicht,
and mebbe finish't tae, and ye can tak' it doon
to the smiddy and get the rinners on't the morn's
forenune."

And his faither did. It was a beauty.
But he wasna allowed to gang sledgin' again unless
his faither was there to watch. And there had
been nae real sledgin' weather last winter at a',
and he'd never had it oot. That was the sledge
he had noo. It was a real grown-up sledge.
But, of coorse, he was big eneuch for't noo.

"Oh, I'll be carefu'," he said. "Ye needna'
be feart. I dinna want this sledge broken."

But he wasna sae shair in his ain mind.
He was big eneuch and strang eneuch - but he
was only yin. The rest hung thegither in
cliques. They might mix as free as ye like:
and they were a' freenly eneuch wi'm on the surface;
but if ocht gaed wrang - if there was a row or
ither - the rest 'ud split up in their different
groups as quick as lichtnin', and he'd be left
on his ain. And it wasna only that. He

couldna' fecht. He'd never had a fecht wi' onybody. Fechtin' wasna' sae muckle a maitter o' strength as juist kennin' hoo. Ye'd to be used to't or ye were nae match for them that were. And it wasna' only in regard to fechtin' that he was at a complete loss as compared wi' the ithers. They had an understaundin' - ways o' sayin' things, and o' lookin' at each other, and twistin' their faces, and a' the rest o't, that meent faur mair than they could ever hae pitten into words - that he couldna' faddom. It cam' frae a' kinds o' experiences and appetites that he didna' share wi' them. Ye needit to be leevin' amang't day and daily, to pick it up. He'd never been let rin' aboot the streets or play wi' the ithers oot o' sicht o' his mither's windas. He kent that he was cleverer than them - but only in his heid; he could think a' kinds o' things - but they did a' kinds o' things they couldna' even think aboot, as quick as lichtnin' afore he'd had time to ken what they were daein'. They couldna follow his thochts; but he couldna follow their actions. Though he was as healthy and as strang and as guid-lookin' as ony o' them

- and better fed and better clad than maist o' them - somehoo or ither his body didna' seem as quick and as shair o' itsel' as theirs; or, raither, his body and his mind were disconnected somehoo. What they thocht, when they thocht at a', aye depended upon what they were daein'; their minds and bodies worked thegither. And often the bodies were the quicker o' the twa. No' his. His thocht was aye first, and mair often than no' owre fast and fankled his actions - it made him dackle. He lacked self-confidence. It gied him a miserable feelin' - as if he was shut up inside himsel' and couldna' get oot. There was naething the maitter wi' his thocht if only his body 'ud answer to't. But, as the meenister said, "the spirit was willin', but the flesh was weak."

And then there were a' kinds o' things that he daurna even attempt for the sake o' his faither and mither. He didna' really want to - except that the ithers did them, and he juist wantit to show that he could tae. There were some o' the things they were aye sayin' - he could say them tae, but he kent that if he did they'd simply roar and laugh, because it 'ud be

perfectly plain he'd nae idea o' what they meant. And he'd nae way o' findin' oot. They were things ye couldna' ask onybody. Nane o' them had learned them by spierin' - juist by listenin' and lookin' or aiblins some kind o' instinct he hadna' got. You'd to live in a certain kind o' atmosphere to learn things o' that kind - and he didna, and a'body else did. It gied him a queer feelin' that he was naethin' but a pair o' e'en and a brain lookin' on at life - but withoot ony share in't. This was especially the case wi' lassies. A' the ither lads were aye daffin' and cairryin' on wi' the lassies. Of coorse, maist o' them had sisters o' their ain, or were aye wi' chums that had sisters. He hadna. And in dealin' wi' lassies there was a haill complicated way o' gan' on he didna ken the vera first letter o'. Lassies took nae mair notice o' him than if he wasna there. Or, if they did, it was to cry names after him - "Lassie-boy," and the like - or pu' his leg and roar an' lauch at the funny way he acted wi' them - no' like ony o' the ither boys ava.

And (he had crossed the wee brig owre the Wauchope noo and gane along the side o' the burn and was turnin' up the brae between the wa's:

and sledge efter sledge was whizzin' past him and landin' its riders on the bank at the corner, lauchin' and shoutin' in the height o' delight) this was the rub. Ye needed a lass ahint ye on a grown-up sledge to get the best fun oot o't. He hated comin' doon by himsel' and a' the ither lands wi' lassies sittin' on ahint them wi' their airms roond their necks. What was the use o' ha'ein' the best sledge on the coorse if a' the rest were gettin' twice as much fun oot o' sledges hauf as guid? And, besides, ye gaed quicker wi' somebody on ahint. Wecht for wecht, naebody could pass him. Stertin' level he'd be at the fit afore they were hauf-way doon the last brae. But if there was twa or mair on their sledges and only him on his, it was a different story. And nae maitter hoo quick he gaed or hoo fine his sledge was rinnin' or hoo weel she took the corners, he'd naebody to share his pleasure and pride - unless a look noo and then frae somebody climbin' up (but then a'body climin' up envied a'body comin' doon), or wi' a much puirer sledge, or less nerve than he had. But it was different wi' a pairtner! He'd an idea that to ha'e a lassie on ahint was only the last proof o' bein' grown-up - a man in

the fullest sense o' the term - and wi' a queer thrill o' its ain owin' to he didna' ken juist what; but, apairt even frae thae twa considerations a'thegither, it mair than doobled your enjoyment.

The wa' at a'e side stopped and a hedge began, and, huggin' the ditch, and keepin' a gleg lookout - for every noo and then a sledge wi' its shoutin' riders cam' swishin' by (and there were some whoppers oot, though his ain could compare wi' ony o' them, even in point o' size, and for beauty o' design and its thick reid cushion he hedna seen its marrow yet), he got to the top o' the first brae and on to a wee level stretch. The second brae curled awa' frae his taes like the letter S, hauf o't atween a couple o' slopin' fields, and the rest roon' the side o' a wud to the yett to the hill. Crickey, what a lot were oot. The haill way up was dottit wi' knots o' folk climin' back up, and there was a fair crood at the stertin' place. He'd been ower busy thinkin' to dae mair than notice that maist o' the sledges that had passed him were fu' o' young men and wimmen nearly dooble his ain age. There werena mony as young. Up to noo, for a' his doots and difficulties, he'd felt big eneuch and strang

eneuch at a' events - but this wasna the Lamb Hill. Frae top to bottom it was nearly a mile and a hauf lang - and tho' it was heavy gangin' on the snaw, an' it took ye the best pairt o' hauf an oor to spiel to the stertin' place, ye gaed to the bottom in five meenits. He'd need a' his wits in a press like this. "See and let the ithers awa' first." Gosh, that wadna be afore midnight.

A wee sledge cam' whirlin' roon the first bend o' the S. He saw at a glance that it was a boy in his ain class at the schule. Tom Montgomery, a cocky wee buffer, wi' ane o' the Fletcher lassies on ahint. But he hadna got to the straucht afore twa big toboggans - bigger even than his ain - wi' four folk on each o' them - shot oot roond the curve ahint him. They were racin' each ither. The lassie Fletcher lookit roon' and the toboggans were fleein' abreest and no' mair than a wheen yairds ahint them, and she whispered something to Tam. He should ha'e steered the nose o' his sledge into his left side a wee and then strauchtened her - and aiblins baith the toboggans 'ud ha'e had room to pass him or ane o' them micht ha'e pu'd up a wee and let the ither aheid. Mebbe

he did mean to dae that, but gied owre sudden a jerk, for he coupit richt in the middle o' the coorse on the tap o' the Fletcher lassie. The toboggans were still abreest; but the drivers were leanin' awa' forrit - each wi' ain o' his airms oot, and as they cam' up (it was eneuch to steeve their wrists) they gied Tam and the lassie a shove that sent them skitin' - ane to the ae side and ane to the ither - richt into the ditch. But the steel-shod rims o' the toboggan caught the wee sledge fair and square and dung it to splinters. ... He didna even lauch as he cam' up past Tam, scramblin to his feet.

"A narraw escape that time," he said.

"You're no hurt?"

"No. But there's owre mony big folks," said Tam, "and they shouldna gang twa abreest. I'd keep aff if I was you. It's no safe."

"Och, I'll be a'richt," and then, on a sudden impulse:

"Noo that you've nae sledge, you can come on wi' me if ye like. There's plenty o' room."

"Na! says Tam, nesty-like, "unless I was drivin' mysel'."

That was owre muckle to ask. And besides, he'd wantit him to refuse. That gied him his chance. "Weel, if you're gaun hame, and Jeannie's no' tired o't, she can come wi' me."

Jeannie lauched like to burst - in a kind o' way that needit nae words to complete her answer.

"I'll show them," he thocht as he trudged on.

He heard them sniggerin' ahint him, and Tam sayin' he hopit something or ither - he didna hear what, but he'd an idea. He'd show them - and yet he kent he'd pit his fit in it again, even offerin' Tam a ride as if he was tryin' to "come it" owre him, and waur, in regaird to the lassie Fletcher. It was ane o' the kind o' things that werena' dune - except by him - and he didna' ken why he'd dune it. She was nae beauty - wi' a face like a suet puddin'. It 'ud be fine to gang sailin' past them - if the same thing didna happen to his sledge. He hadna' bargained for sae mony big folk. Tam was richt eneuch. It wasna' safe - and a' the less safe him bein' himsel'. Pride gangs afore a fa' - but he wisna prood. Only he'd show them. He'd let them see. The sniggering...

He was nearly at the top, gan' roon the last curl o' the S. He'd been that thrang thinkin' that he hadna' noticed the sledges flashin' by. Sic a crood at the stertin' place - a dizzen or mair at least. But naebody had passed him on the way up and a fell lot had gane doon. He'd aiblins get a clear field efter a' - tho' sometimes that wasna' sae safe either. Some o' the big yins climin' up micht try pranks to whummle him or pelt him wi' snawba's. They were less likely to dae that if a wheen different sledges were comin' doon ahint each ither. Och weel, what did it maitter! He couldna' clim' up and syne walk doon! But he wished there had been naebody at the stertin' place. There was sic a banterin' and cairry-on whiles.

Then juist as he was comin' forrit he saw that the nearest to him was the new minister and his wife, and a lassie wi' them aboot his ain age. It was the minister's niece. The minister had been in his hoose the nicht afore last - his faither was rulin' elder o' the kirk. The minister kent him again: and said, afore them a', "Hullo, Peter."

Peter touched his hat and grinned.

"That's a fine sledge you've got."

"Aye."

"It's the prettiest I've seen yet,"
said the minister's wife.

There was juist a wee thing lackin' here
tho' - he didna want them to think that his sledge
was owre bonny. That was kind o' Jessie-like.

"Aye," he said, "and it can gang like lichtnin'!"

He blushed as he said this, for it had been
on the vera tip o' his tongue to say "like the vera
deevil." No' that he was in the habit o' sayin'
things like that. He didna ken quite what gar'd
him think o't, juist at this particular time:
and he hadna time to fin' oot. The stertin'
place was clear. The last sledge had left
juist as the minister spoke to him first.

He whirled his sledge roon wi' an expert
air and clappit himsel' doon on't, diggin' his
caukered heels in sideways a wee till he was
richt to stert.

A'body was watchin' him. He lookit up
and was juist gan' to touch his cap to the
meenister and be aff, when he catched the niece's
e'en. There was nae mistakin' her look. Up
he jumped and afore he'd time to think, he'd
asked her if she'd like to come wi'm. Afore
the words were weel oot o' his mooth he was

thinkin', "What a fule I am! What if she winna?" And he kent hoo a' the folk 'ud lauch and say what a cheek he'd had. It 'ud be a' owre the toon; and his faither and mither would be shair to hear o't, and wadna like it. Forbye, it was sae unlike him. And mair than that, a' at aince, he'd a horrible picture in his mind o' them coupin' and her lyin' deid wi' her heid twisted under her oxter and her neck broken like a stick. He'd never hear the end o't. It 'ud juist be like his luck.

But the lassie was beside hersel' wi' joy. "Oh," she said, "Will you?" "How kind," and she was dancin' roond aboot her auntie seekin' permission. "Please, please!"

He could see that her aunt wantit to let her gang, but was feart and yet didna ken hoo to refuse withoot disappointin' her and withoot hurtin' his feelin's tae.

At last - efter what seemed an eternity - she turned to the minister. "What do you think, Dick" she said. That was a'. Left it to him. And "Dick" to the minister! He lookit at him. Nae doot it was something in his e'en - for he was shair the minister was juist aboot to shak' his heid, when a' at aince he grinned.

"I think," says he, "if Peter'll be so kind - and (to his wife) if you don't mind, my dear - there's room for three - tho' what the guid folks'll think o' their new minister now I dare scarcely think."

Peter jumped at the chance. This was different frae Tam wantin' tae drive. The minister! And in twa three seconds there they were - the minister, then him, then the lassie wi' her airms roon his neck. His sledge juist held the three o' them neat.

"Now, hold on tight, Barbara," said the minister's wife.

"Barbara!" What a wonderfu' name! Barbara! Barbara needed nae second tellin'. She tightened her grip till he was near chokin'. It was rare to feel the lassie snugglin' in: she'd a wee fur coat on - and the sleeves o't were as soft as silk aboot his neck, and had the bonniest smell - like - like a chemist's shop.

"Keep your legs well up," said her auntie.

And she stuck them oot alangside his. Fine trig legs wi' lang-laced boots.

Juist as they were shootin' oot o' the first curl o' the S, they met Tam and the Fletcher lassie gaen up again - tho' what for, when they'd nae sledge? He didna let his een

licht on them, but juist turned his heid roon, lauchin' to the minister's niece. Her een sae close to his made his tail-end views o' the snaw and the sky like farles o' soot - and aince they were past he saw Tam and the Fletcher lassie standin' gapin' efter them wi' their een like saucers. The sledge was gan' at a terrific rate. It soared oot o' the S like a swallow, juist rocked for a minute on the wee bit level at the tap o' the first brae - then swoopit doon atween the wa's, wi' the folk climin' up, skippin' in the side like a puckle rabbits. He kent he was missin' a' kinds o' looks on the folks' faces - he hedna even time to tell himsel' that he was seein' this body and that body - but it 'ud a' come back to him efter; he wisna really missin' onything - his een were takin't a' in, tho' his brain was owre excited. But he'd mind a'thing later on. It 'ud bear thinkin' aboot for days an' days, and aye he'd mind something new. As the sledge gethered speed - an' there were mair and mair shadows o' folk skitin' oot o' the road - there didna seem to be three folk, but only yin. He was famous as the minister in front, and as bonny as a picter (no like yon suet-puddin' o' a Fletcher cratur') in the lassie ahint, but, still and on, he was himsel', Peter, the seen o'

a' een, the owner o' the sledge, here in the middle, feelin' that the minister and his niece were naething but pairts o' himsel' that he'd been able - hey, presto! - to flash oot to impress the folk and show the reenge o' his personality. Of course, the ithers micht tak' it oot o'm efter. He mauna look owre cocky. ... Bother sic ideas! He was leevin' for the meenit like a bird on the wing. ...

The minister took the corner at the fit dandy - as clean as a whustle, and they shot along the level as far as to the wee brig itsel' afore "the cat deed."

A'BODY'S LASSIE

She turns up at a' kinds o' odd times and in a' kinds o' odd places. Whiles she's dressed in rags and whiles she's in the vera height o' fashion like ane o' the coonty gentry. Her age varies. She may be nae mair than a lassie wi' her hair hangin' doon her back, or she may be a braw figger o' a wumman ye'd tak' for onything atween thirty and forty. But as a rule she looks aboot nineteen. Whatever her age she's as bonny as a dream. And there's nae end to her tricks. Mrs M'Vittie, the baker's wife, was juist sayin' to me yestreen that ye never ken wha's turn it'll be next wi'r. Ye'll hear a chop at the door and there's the split image o' yer wee lassie that deed o' the diphtheria. Ye ken that it's owre guid tae be true and yet ye can haurdly misbelieve yer ain een. And it's no' juist yer een. "Mummy," she'll say, that lifelike. A'e puir wumman I ken that's aye in a hatter wi' her big faimly kent there was something wrang and yet she wisna in time to keep back the words. "What gars ye knock, ye wee limmer?" she said "haudin' me rinnin' to the door when I'm thrang." She cud hae pu'd her tongue up by the roots efter.

And there's mair than ae mither in this toon has been ca'ed tae the door in the same way to fin' a wee bit white-faced, waesome bit critter staunin' on the steps. "Weel, what is't?" or "What ails ye, lassie?" - but never a word oot o' her heid. "Ha'e ye lost yer tongue? Noo, noo, nae mair greetin'. Rin awa' hame to your mammy. Whaur d'ye bide?" Or whiles ane o' her bairns 'ud come to the door wi' her or she'd cry ben to see if they kent wha' the streenge lassie was. But they'd nae idea. And it wasna till later on - mebbe efter she'd gane till her bed and hed a meenit to think - that the wumman 'ud say to hersel', "Losh, but it was fell like my puir wee Jeanie," or Lizzie, as the case might be, and begin worryin' hersel' till her man said, "Toots, wumman, what're ye rowin' aboot at? Can ye no' lie still?"

I'm namin' nae names, but I was tell't aboot a'e wumman that lives up the brae, and I hope there's no anither like her in the toon. The chop cam' to her door a'e forenune, and when she gae'd to't there was the bit lassie on the step. "What d'ye mean stannin' wi' yer clarty feet on my new-cleaned step?" says she. The lassie juist hung her heid. "What d'ye want, onyway?" said the wumman, but the lassie

juist swallowed in her throat and couldna get a word oot. "D'ye think I've got a' the mornin' to plaister wi' the likes o' you?" says the wumman, "clear aff oot o' this!" And slammed the door in her face. An 'oor efter, she happened to gang to the door again and there was the lassie aye stannin' on the step. Ane o' the bobbies was gaen by at the time, sae the wumman cried him owre and tell't him aboot "this silly wee brat that disna ken what she wants and'll no' gang awa." The bobbie was a great muckle fat reid-faced man that was a favourite wi' a' the bairns, and he pit his haund doon neth her chin and tilted up her facey. He'd juist time to see her afore she disappeared as gin she'd never been. Neither him nor the wumman saw which airt she gaed. "Missus," he said, "it's your ain bairn."

By jing, there was a row owre that. The wumman gaed richt doon to the Polis Office and reportit the maitter; and the Superintendent held an inquiry int't. The bobby stuck to his guns, and by guid luck the wumman neist door had seen the lassie and said she thocht nocht o't at the time, but later on it struck her that the lassie on the doorstep was the vera image o' the wean that deed. And she said she wisna surprised a bit that her ain mither didna recognise her.

"She's like that," she said. "She's forgotten she ever had her - tho' it's nae mair than three years come September that she deed." But ye ken what neebors are; and besides, wha ever heard o' a deid bairn comin' back hame and stannin on the doorstep? The Superintendent gaed the bobby a gey tellin' aff in front o' the wumman - but, after she was awa, he spoke to him and the next-door wumman in a different way a'thegither. As weel he might, seeing that he wisna only Superintendent o' the Polis but o' a Sunday schule, and the faither o' a faimily himsel!

Whiles the critter's ploys had a different endin' frae that tho! There was the case o' the druggist's hoose-keeper that was engaged to Wilson the plumber and had gien notice to quit at the term to be marriet. Guid kens what she saw in Andra Wilson, the muckle sumph. He wasna fit to clean her shoes to'r. Weel, he was stannin' lauchin' and talkin' wi'r at the druggist's door a'e nicht when a wee lassie cam' fleein' in frae naewhaur into her airms cryin' "Mummy, mummy." Afore the wumman kent what she was daein' she was doon on her knees cuddlin' the wee cratur for a' she was worth and lauchin' and greetin' at the same time, but in the vera middle o't - whisk! and the lassie

was gane as if it had been a' a dream. Wilson ca'd her a' the names he could lay his tongue to, and rived the engagement ring aff her finger and pitched it into the gutter whaur it rowed doon the cundy. The scaffy had a gey job graipin' in the glaurfor't the followin' day.

Sic a crood had gethered. It cam' oot that a gey wheen years afore when she was a young servant lassie she'd had a bairn to a son o' the hoose. But it deed when it was aboot nine. The wumman was still on her knees a' this time wi' a face like the day o' Judgment, but the druggist - his shop was juist owre the way - cam' elbowin' through the crood and liftit her up withoot a word spoken and took her into the hoose and banged the door on a'body's face. She's still wi'm; and I heard a rumour the ither day that they're gaun to be mairriet.

Then a'e nicht juist efter dark there was a wheen bairns playin' ring-a-ring-o'-roses at the heid o' the Factory Entry, when anither lassie cam' rinnin' oot frae the shadow o' the hooses into the ring o' the lamp to join them and twa o' the bairns let gae to mak' room for her. And juist then they saw wha it was and the dance stoppit as if they'd been struck.

"Jeannie Morrison," said ane o' the auldest o' the bairns aince she fan' her voice, "whaur hae ye sprung frae?"

"Whaur d'ye think?" said the lassie lauchin' and tossin' her curls.

"But ye're deid," said the other.

"Deid?" says she, "What's deid?"

The bairn lookit roon' at the rest for help, but they'd nane to gie.

"Deid's juist deid," said she.

"You mauna believe a' that the big folk say," said the lassie.

"Then you're no' deid efter a'?" said the ither.

"There's nae sic thing," said the lassie.

"Ee!" said the ither, "Sic a fraud!"

A' the rest o's in the class had to gie money to the teacher for a wreath for ye."

"Dinna let's waste time," cried the lassie, stampin' her feet. "It'll sune be bedtime and it's a while sin' I'd a game."

Sae they a' forgot what they'd mindit and clasped hands and danced roon' and roon' in the licht o' the lamp shoutin' and singin' till they were fit to drap. Syne twa-three o' their mithers cam' cryin' to them to c'wa hame and get to their beds and off they ran this way and that.

But them that mindit that Jeannie Morrison had been supposed to be deed, tell't their fathers and mithers aboot her; they took it in a gey queer way and Jeannie didna turn up at the schule the next day or ony ither day, and she never cam' to play wi' them again.

It's a queer body that hasna some unsatisfied desire or some skeleton in the cupboard, or doesna wish that something or ither hedna' happened - even if it's only gettin' auld. Tak' Mrs Dunbar, the banker's wife, for example. She was walkin' doon the High Street in braid daylight. And by the time she got doon to Cunningham the shoemaker's there was the bonniest wee lassie, walkin' alangside her, her hand in hers. And Mrs Dunbar and her were lauchin' and talkin' to each ither as happy as ye like! But juist at the fit o' the Kirk Wynd - whisk! - the lassie was gane. Mrs Dunbar lookit a' roon' aboot and gaed doon juist like an umbrella when the shank comes up through't. She'd to be carriet hame, puir body. She's kinda got owre it noo. "D'ye ever hear onything sae stupid?" she says, when she's tellin' aboot it. I've aye wanted a lassie, and, ye ken, I clean forgot that a' my bairns are laddies."

Ye ken auld Bauldy, the milkman? They say he hesna been able to see his ain feet this forty year an' mair. He was makin' his mornin' ca' at the Manse no' a month ago, when oot she trippit. Auld Bauldy cocks his een when he sees her, as wild as a turkey cock. "Ye didna turn up last nicht," says he. "I did," says she, "but I didna see you there." "What!" says he, "Ye leein' besom!" And in his anger he turned on the spigot wi' sic a jaw that he splashed himsel' wi' milk frae heid to fit. "Noo it seems it's your turn to droon," says she, and disappeared aff the face o' the earth. He opened his mooth like a fish and couldna shut it again, and he was stannin' like that and no' a drap o' milk left in his ten-gallon can when the meenister's wife hersel' cam' oot. It turned oot that twenty to thirty years back, Bauldy had been keepin' company aff and on wi' a servant lassie at the Manse (and as pretty as a picture she was, they say), and ae nicht he trysted her to meet him near haun' the Wauchope Brig whaur the road turns up to the Bex. Bauldy fell in wi' a wheen ithers doon the toon and got as fou' as a puggy an' forgot a' about it, but the lassie keepit the tryst. It was a pitch black nicht and somehoo or ither she had faun into the pool at the Brig and couldna win' oot. ... But it's queer he should hae mindit juist what she lookit like sae mony years efter, and him mairriet and a widower and mairriet again and wi' a dizzen o' a family.

Then there was the case o' the Provost himsel'! A mair dignified auld josser ye wadna meet in a day's mairch, wi' his white fish-tail beard and his lum hat. He was crossin' the Square a'e day, noddin' to this body and that body, and liftin' his tile to the ladies when, a' at aince, she steppit oot o' Myrtle's fruit shop and gaed a whistle. He whirled to the richt about like a young ane and sterted rinnin' to meet her. Of coorse, he flew heels-owre-gowdy and knockit in the croon o' his hat and broke his siller mounted nibby in twa into the bargain.

Then there was the time she put her airm in puir Jim Tamson's. And there was Jim, feeling twenty years younger and fair forgettin' a' about what had happened in the interval, and lauchin' and cairryin' on wi' her, and back in the daft days. But when they turned the corner o' John Street, wha did they rin into but his wife? At first glance he didna even ken her, but she sune enlightened him. She lookit auld eneuch to be the mither o' the bonnie cratur' swingin' on his airm and it was nae use him sayin' "We used to be great chums - we were in the same class at the schule."

"Schule!" said his wife, "It's easy seen ye're in yer second childhood."

Och, ye can explain it hoo ye like -
but there it is. Mebbe it'll be your turn
next.

THE MOON THROUGH GLASS

"Ee! ..." She felt she'd been owre late to haud the exclamation back; but, scansin' owre her shouder at her mither and sister she saw that she hedna gien hersel' awa' efter a'. Wi' a shakin' haund and a flutterin' hert she gaed on clearin' awa' the tea things. Should she say onything? It 'ud ser' them richt if she cried oot and gar'd them look up and see the new mune through the winda tae. But she'd never hear the end o't. No' that either o' them believed in't the way she did.

If they'd seen it themsels they'd never hae thocht twice aboot it, or the ane micht hae drawn the ither's attention to't and made some joke aboot it, prood o' daurin' the auld superstition and kennin' the ither 'ud feel the same way or, mebbe, pretend to be angry for the sake o' ha'en a row and pittin' the hoose in a steer. Especially if she was aboot, for she hated rows and her no' kennin' which o' them to side wi' for peace's

(c)

sak aye amused them and suner or later they kent they'd draw her into the row tae and syne they'd baith yoke on her and blame her for the haill to-do. If either her mither or sister had seen't they wadna' hae swithered a meenit aboot trappin' her into seein't tae and lauchin' thegither at her.

But she daurna try ony sic pranks wi' them. They'd mak the maist o't, tho' she kent weel eneuch - and they kent she kent - they thocht naething o't really and were only makin' a sang because it was her or for the sake o' makin' a sang. If it wasna' a'e thing it was anither. They'd aye to be wranglin'.

She could hear them and a' the turns and twists they'd gie't. "You sud think o' ither folk." On and on and on, as if she had dune it on purpose or, if no, oot o' eindoon want o' thocht which was even waur. "What were ye glowerin' through the winda at onywey? Dreamin' aboot that muckle sumph o' a man o' yours? Mebbe he'll propose the nicht at last. If he does ye can tak' it the auld sayin's come true for aince." That 'ud be her mither: she could hear her - and syne her sister

'ud follow suit. "But cheer up, Meg. It's no' you that need be hingin' the fupple - unless it's wi' disappointment at the kind o' man you've got after a' your fancy notions (no' that he'll no' be guid eneuch for you whatever he's like) - for it's him that'll hae the feck o' the ill luck, wi' you for his wife' And on and on and on.

She daurna say onything - aboot onything. They were aye doon on her, aye raggin' her. She could dae naethin' to please them. She wished her haund 'ud stop dirlin'. They'd baith sic quick een. Yet she was feart to gang to the back kitchen - she'd mak' sic a rattlin' as 'ud gar them look up, or she'd let the dishes fa'. It 'ud juist be like her luck. What a how-d'ye-do that 'ud mak''. She'd hae to pay for them - and it was Jock's birthday in a fortnight. She'd be tell't her fingers were a' thooms - pity the man that mairriet her - but nae doot she'd be mair carefu' wi' her ain things. Aye gan' dreamin' aboot! That was the main burden o' their complaint - she was aye dreamin'. That was the trouble atween them. They didna' ken what dreamin' was, what onybody could get to dream aboot. And the mair she'd tried to tell them (when she was younger) the less they'd understood and the mair they'd made a fule o' her. Her

and her dreamin'! What did she think she was? Better than ither folk? Aye moonin' aboot!

And, in the middle o' flytin' at her owre the broken dishes, her mither looks at the winda, and whups roond waur than ever wi' her haunds on her hips. "Ho! ho! Sae that's the cause. You and that damned mune! The ill-luck's no frae it, but frae you believin't." And her sister 'ud chip in: "And she wasna gaun to say a word aboot it. She wanted us to see it tae! O' a' the mean, dirty, underhaundit - ". On and on and on, the pair o' them! What could she say or dae? Suppose she tried to warn them.

Nae maitter hoo quiet she spoke, Jean at onyrate was facin' the winda and 'ud lift her heid and see't - and blame her for no' warnin' her quicker. Even if she did get the warnin' oot withoot either o' them seein't first they'd juist lauch at her and look straucht at it to spite her. And syne cairry on aboot her superstitiousness and the curse it was to a hoose, and to a'body connected wi' sic an afflicted cratur.

Her best plan was aye to haud her tongue - tho' when she did they ca'd it bein' "in the dorts" and ranted on about her perpetual ill-natur' - she was as blithe in a hoose as a thunder clood - and she kent as a maitter o' fact that no' bein' able to speak to them - to open her hert to them - had made her feel dour and tongue-tackit eneuch in the coorse o' the years. Thank God, she had Jock.

But at the thocht o' Jock the fu' tide o' her ill-luck in see'in the mune through glass - this nicht o' a' nights - poored owre her. It nicht mean ...! This was the first time her thocht o' Jock had had a tinge o' doot or fear. This was the first time that she hedna kent for shair, that nae maitter hoo miserable things nicht be at hame, she'd find naething but joy wi' him. He was her only ootlet. Only wi' him could she be hersel'. She wasna hersel' wi' her mither or her sister or ony o' the rest o' them. This wasna her life - this wranglin' back-bitin' miserable way o' daen'. But ilka noo and then she won clear o't for a wee - wi' Jock: and then she'd been hopin' to win' clear o't ategither sune. In fact, she expectit him to say the word that

vera nicht - if she hedna seen the new mune through the winda.

Whatna price to pay for a pure accident! And even as this thocht gaed through her heid she kent that there was a waur yin dodgin' through ahint it that she wasna able juist to see richt. It was that mebbe he'd still say the word this verra nicht! The ill-luck 'ud be in her bein' disappointed wi' him - or him wi' her - efter they mairriet; or frae ae cause or anither, their mairriage no' turnin' oot as they expectit. It was the first time that had ever entered her heid. Nae wonder it gaed slinkin' through't, she thocht in an effort to tell hersel' that it was oot o' the question - but even as she tried that, it cam' back in again, bigger than ever, and blacker.

She sterted to bamboozle hersel' sae that she could imagine it wasna there (altho' a' the time it was gettin' bigger and bigger and blacker and blacker) by tryin' to lauch at hersel' for forgettin' that the ill-luck only lasted for a month sae it couldna affect her mairriage (an' , by jings! she'd be mair carefu' in the future in regaird to new munes) and syne, when that didna work, by

tryin' to mind whether or no' the ill-luck couldna' be averted frae something o' consequence to something o' nane by brakin' a plate or some sic thing; and noo she was in sic a state that she was in twa minds either to let the tea things fa' and put up wi' a' that her mither and sister might say, or juist tell them plump and plain what had happened and ask them if brakin' a plate 'ud ward off the ill-luck. But if she did this last they wadna tell her - or they'd tell her wrang; and yet it was an awfu' pity to brak' a' the dishes if ane 'ud dae! She was fair in a swither.

It took her a muckle effort to begin movin' into the back kitchen (it was a God's wonder her mither and sister hadna been at her for takin' sae lang to clear the table as it was), and the dishes jiggle-jiggled in her haunds to sic a tune that aince she sterted (near-haund trippin' on the mat) she'd to rin to get them safe to the sink.

And the warst thocht o' a' struck her then. What if the ill-luck concerned Jock? What if onything had come owre him? What if he jilted her? Or if he'd had an accident and was - deid! She catch't sicht o' hersel' in her faither's lookin'-gless at the side o' the sink.

Jock hadna missed muckle onyway. What had he ever seen in her? She didna look the least like what she'd been feelin' inside hersel' afore she saw the mune. She was faur mair like her sister or her mither than she'd ever imagined. If Jock had been a' that she'd thocht he'd never hae gi'en the likes o' her a second look.

But if love had blinded her to the truth about hersel' nae doot it had blinded her to the truth about him tae. Her sister had aince said, "Wait till you're mairriet - he's only a workin' man, and you an' him'll juist be like ony ither workin'-class man and wife." She'd had a horrid vision o' Jock as nae mair than a common plooman, an o' mairrage as the same auld drudgery under a different name. Had a' young couples the same high-falutin' ideas - afore they mairriet? If they'd ha' come doon to the level o' the feck o' the folk roon' about - o' her faither and mither, say - it was a guid job he was deid. He couldna come doon then. She'd keep him the man she'd thocht him as long as she leeved. He'd aye be the outlet for her dreams.

But in that case whaur was the ill-luck o' seein' the mune through glass?... Tchah! She couldna' mak' heid or tail o't. But she'd better get on wi' the dishes or she'd be late - for what?

THE VISITOR

I mebbe haena got the hang o't just richt. It's a queer story. But, as faur as I can mak' oot, here it is.

It seems that in the middle o' the nicht there cam' a rappin' at the door. Mrs M'Ilwrath's a licht sleeper - no' like him. She heard the first chap but wisna shair it was their door. It was a bricht munelicht nicht but fell cauld. There's this to be said for her - that if it had been ony ither wumman in the toon and they'd heard a chap at that time o' nicht, and thocht it was at ony ither door than their ain, they'd have been oot o' bed and hauf oot o' the winda like a shot. They wadna hae waited to wauken their men - let alane lipped to them to find oot. It 'ud only tak' a wag to gang roond the streets in the wee sma' hoors chappin' at this door and that in the winter time to gar hauf the wives in the place hirple to the Kirk wi' frost-bitten feet the followin' Sunday. But that's gettin' awa' frae the point. Mrs M'Ilwrath prides hersel' on no' bein inquisitive like ither folk.

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The chappin' gaed on. Mrs M'Ilwrath sat up in bed. Her gudeman was snorin' for a' he was worth. She heard first a'e winda and syne anither gan' up along the street. The neebors were thrang. At last she cam' to the conclusion that it maun be her door richt eneuch. Wha could it be? She tried to think, but it wasna easy wi' the clapper gan' smack ilka twa-three seconds. She wondered if she could lie doon and fa' asleep juist as if she'd never heard it. Whaever it was 'ud be weel ser'd if she could. But the knockin' seemed to be gettin' looder and looder - like to smash in the door. The haill hoose was dirlin' - and the neebors were shoutin' to ask what the maitter was. "Mak' less din," she heard ane cry, "ye'll wauken the bairns." It couldna gang on. She'd hae to wauken Jock. But she leuch to hersel' when she thocht o' what the neebors 'ud say neist day. She'd never let on she'd heard ava'. It 'ud fair rile them. They'd get nae cheenge oot o' her.

"Jock", she said, and gied him a dunt in the ribs. But he juist grunted a wee.

"Jock," she said, and dunted him again. The knockin' never stoppit. Rat-a-tat. Tat-a-tat. Rat-a-tat. It was beginnin' to get on her nerves.

"Jock," she said, and gied him a third dunt. That waukened him, but he was slow in comin' to himsel', and it took a bit time to tell him what was what.

"Wha can it be?" she spiered.

But he'd nae idea.

"You'd better gang doon the stairs an' see."

"I'll thraw up the winda first and look oot."

"You'll dae nae sic thing. Doon stairs and get the kitchen poker, and cry through the door to see what it is and what they want afore ye open't."

Aff he gaed, and syne she heard him at the door: "Wha's there?"

But there was nae answer, and the knockin' gaed on withoot a break.

"Wha's there?", he cried again.

There was nae answer; juist rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat. Even on.

Syne she heard him open the door and - efter a wee - speakin' to somebody.

Then the door shut. She waited to hear his fit on the stairs, but it gaed along the lobby and into the parlour instead.

The muckle sumph! Wha could it be?
He micht hae shouted up the stairs at ony rate
to pit her mind at ease. She swithered a
while, thinkin' first ae thing and syne anither,
and a' the time ca'in' hersel' a fule for thinkin'
at a' when she'd nocht to gang by. They were
takin' a lang time. It was queer that Jock
hadna come up for his breeks even. She tholed
the suspense as long as she could. It seemed
an eternity. At last she shouted. "Jock,"
twice, but there was nae answer. Sae there was
naething for't but to rise. Up she got and put
her claes on. She could hear them talkin' frae
the heid o' the stair. The clock struck three
juist as she got to the fit o't. She gaed
alang the lobby and threw open the parlour door.

Jock stude dumfooned in the middle o'
the flair. There was naebody else in the room.

"Wha' was't?" spiered his wife.

"Naebody," he said.

"But I heard you talkin'."

"I was talkin' to mysel'."

"What keepit you doon here sae lang then?"

"I dinna ken."

"Ye needna tell me naebody could clour the
door like yon."

"Ye can look for yersel' then."

And that was a' she could get oot o'm.
 As a maitter o' fact he hasna' muckle mair to gie.
 "When I opened the door," he says, "wha was
 standin' there but mysel'? Plain as a pikestaff.
 For a' the warld as if the street was a lookin'
 glass. D'ye think I dinna ken mysel' when I
 see mysel'? 'Guid sakes', I said, 'whaur hae
 ye been to this 'oor o' the nicht?' 'I wish,'
 said he, 'I kent whaur I've been for a lang time
 back.' 'Dinna talk nonsense', says I. 'What
 I want to ken is, wha' I am if you're me?
 Ye'd better c'wa ben and let us thrash it oot.'
 I took him into the parlour and we argied back
 and forrit, but neither o's could mak' heid or
 tail o't.

"'If you're the real me,' I said in the
 hinder en', 'hoo in a' the wide warld am I to
 accoont to Mrs M'Ilwrath for haen the presumption
 to act sae lang in your place?'

"'Accoont to wha?' says he.

"And juist then I heard the wife upstairs
 shoutin' 'Jock'.

"He jumpit as if he'd been stung.

"'Wha's that?' says he.

"The wife,' says I.

"'Then I'm for oot o' this,' says he.

I'll no fash ye again. You needna be feart.'

'Haud on,' says I. 'What am I to say to her?'

"He suggested ae thing and anither, but a' they showed was that he'd nae idea o' the kind o' critter I've to deal wi' in the shape o' the wife. Ye'd ha'e thocht he'd nae idea what a wumman was, tho' he was fleggit at the very thocht o' ane.

"'Look here,' says I, 'I was sleepin' beside her, as canny as a lamb, when you sterted to batter at the door. You're no gan' to skedaddle noo' and leave me to tell her a cock-and-bull story nae wumman on earth 'ud believe. I'd hae nae peace efter that. Juist you stan' your grun' and let her see wi' her ain een. Then she'll no' blame me, whatever else she does.'

"I got atween him and the door as I spoke, and juist then I heard the wife comin' doon the stairs and along the lobby. Wad ye believe it - ye can either believe it or no' - juist as she opened the door the man vanished as if he'd never been there. Disappeared into naething afore my verra een. Guidness kens hoo!

"What could I dae or say? It's bad eneuch as it is, but if I'd telt her that it was my ainsel' that was chappin' at the door and syne o' oor conversation thegither, it 'ud hae been faur waur. Mind ye, I'm nane sorry the man vamoosed the way he did. If he stude his

grun' it 'ud hae helpit me in ae way but it 'ud hae complicated maitters beyond a' bearin' in every ither direction. I daurna imagine what the wife 'ud hae thocht if she'd opened that door and seen me - twice. Ance was eneuch. And it's faur better she shouldna believe what I tell her than no' be able to believe her ain een. As for the neebors, maist o' them hae gane oot o' their way to get unco friendly to me sin syne. They'd been wont to imagine I'd nae spirit o' my ain - but when they saw me at the door at three o'clock o' the mornin' they drew their ain conclusions. They didna see wha opened the door, and think it was the wife. I haena thocht fit to undeceive them. Considerin' the circumstances, a'thing's fitted in nane sae badly, but, mind ye, mum's the word."

"HOLIE FOR NAGS"

They were crackin' about the auld days in the Muckle Toon when they were loons thegither (and that wasna yesterday) and o' the games they used to play in the wee grey streets when the blue shaddaws were fa'in' in them, and it got daurker and daurker till Leerie gaed roon' lichtin' the lamps and throwin' splairges o' gowd into the lift that turned a'thing else still blacker (unless you were richt inalow them), and gar'd the shaddaws skip about like mad a' owre the place.

You could haurdly get used to your ain shaddaw even. It was that inconsistent. Whiles it gaed shootin' oot frae your taes like a telegraph pole, and whiles it was naething but a doited dot, and whiles it crookit a' airts like a "blotty O" or disappeared a'thegither and syne loupit oot on you roon' the neist corner like a bogey man.

"D'ye mind the twae auld Miss Beatties that keepit the Berlin wool shop in Parliament Square?" spiered Jamie.

"I mind ane o' them," said Jock (a year or twa younger than Jamie), - Jenny, but no' the ither. That's juist as faur back as I can mind tae. We used to say she'd forgotted to dee."

"Aye - but she didna in the hinder en'. Folk used to ettle she was as auld as life itsel', and 'ud live to the resurrection mornin'; but I kent better, because she could never hae come through the witchcraft days with-oot being brunt, and what's mair, I mindit her sister brawly, tho' I only saw yer yince to my knowledge and she was a hantle aulder than Jenny. Mina they ca'd her, and she was that auld that she even trett Jenny as if she was naething but a bairn. You couldna' see what like she was for craws' feet. Her face was juist like a moosewob, and she'd the queerest voice, like a scrievin' pencil squealin' on a slate, that fair set your teeth on edge. But Jenny was as bonny as an aipple, and had the brichtest and bluest een I ever saw. Nae doot it's juist my fancy noo, but when I think o't it aye seems to me as though at nicht, gin you gaed into the shop, she cam' in oot o' the back premises somewhere and lit up the haill place wi' naething but her twa een and a bit o' a smile, till it was as bricht as a dream."

"It was a muckle dungeon o' a shop tae."

"It was a' that. You were feart to gang in - and keepit the door wide open ahint you. I mind the time I saw Mina, afore Jenny cam' in tae: I felt just like a flea in the presence o' the Queen o' a' the Spiders. It was the dirtiest, queerest auld shop in the warld, wi' muckle stacks o' cairdboard boxes a' the colour o' stour, but you forgot a' that when Jenny cam' in, and it was a perfect miracle to see her openin' box efter box and turnin' oot muckle hauds o' reid wool frae ane and yalla frae the neist."

"I wonder if the bairns dae ony corkin' nooadays."

"Losh kens! I never see them at it, and haena for years and years. Nae doot they're a' motor-caur daft noo. It's the age o' machines, no' miracles. But mony a happy 'oor I've pit in wi' a pirn and fower tacks on the end o't, and a wheen ba's o' different coloured wool - and could yet!"

"And it was fine to gang spankin' up and doon the street syne wi' the brawest set o' reens in the toon, shakin' them oot like strops o' rainbows in the sunlight, and them a' jinglin' wi' a wheen wee brass bells."

"Anither great game was Conquerors. I haena seen a laddie wi' a decent tally o' chestnuts for mony a lang year. Fegs, when I come to think o't, I canna swear I've even seen a chestnut masel' sin' I pit lang troosers on."

"Nor me either. It's queer. For there's boond to be juist as mony - and juist as bonny - chestnuts as ever, and juist as mony loons thrang amang them and playin' conquerors, tae, tho' we dinna see them. I whiles see the trees wi' the can'les a' owre them, but never the chestnuts themsel's."

"I hope the loons ken aboot them, for it was great fun. Whiles I think there's naething bonnier in the warld than a muckle whopper o' a new-shuled chestnut wi' a' its mairkin's - frae cream to blood and mahogany. It's sic an unlikely thing, a chestnut - a prickly green ba', and when you crack it open what you find in't seems the last thing on earth you could possibly think o'. Sae rich and live-lookin' - like a deid man suddenly openin' an e'e!"

"Chestnuts aye mind me o' horses, and I used to love polishin' them up. Mony and mony a muckle string o' a hunder and mair I've haen."

"There was a tree at the sawmill I used to get my best anes frae. ..."

"And a wheen up the Langfall and in the lodge grun's. And it was great fun dingin' them doon, either by shying stanes or wi' a sling."

"There's an art in borin' them no' to start ony cracks. I mind still o' a'e beggar I had for mair than three years. He met a' comers in his first year, and had haurdly a dent on'm at the end o't, and the secund and third years he was runkled like a washerwumman's thoom and as haurd as a nail. I could pit him atween my clenched teeth and no' leave a mairk. He tint a'e corner in the lang run, and syne anither, and to end wi' there was only a wee scrunt o' a thing left didlin' at the end o' the string, but it could gang through a' the lave like a bullet through butter ..."

"D'ye mind playin 'Jock, Shine-the-licht'?"

"Aye - but no' aften. Mither wadna let me oot late eneuch".

"It had to be a nicht when the Toon Council were expectin' a mune and there wasna ony. It wasna canny whiles gin you gaed aff the main streets, but it was a rare game a' the same. And bools! Ye mind playin' bools?"

"Div I no'! I used to hae some beauties
tae. Glessies as bricht as Jenny's een, wi'
coloured twirls inside them and white sheeny anes,
and green anes oot' o' the taps o' lemonade bottles.
Clay-davies, doolies, hard-hacks, savies, cracksie-
pigs, cullies - I'd a' the kinds. I mind o' them
every time I see the stars reelin', and I can
haurdly look at a picter o' the globe - aye, or
at the earth itsel' for the maitter o' that, as
you whiles see it, no' in a toon, whaur it's a'
crancrums and stour, but frae a braw brae tap,
when you seem to see the hail o't birlin' clear
as a penny afore you - without wantin' to cry
'Holie for Nags'."

Jamie leuch, but no' for lang.

"The earth's oot o' the question a'thegither,"
he said. "It's faur owre big, and the sun and
mune are no' muckle better, but a starry nicht's
a great place to play daigie even yet, tho' your
ain een are nocht but twa o' the bools themsel's
- and aiblins the bonniest o' the lot!"

APPENDIX C

'CLANN ALBANN': AN EXPLANATION

The Rev. W. H. Hamilton and other critics of my last three books, which all consist of short detachable items from the first of the five volumes of my very long poem, "Clann Albann," now in progress, have expressed the feeling that they were handicapped by lack of knowledge of my complete scheme, and many private correspondents have written asking for such information on the subject as would give them some idea of the ultimate role, in relation to the total work, of these published fragments. I have also had queries as to when the first volume of "Clann Albann" is likely to be ready. I can give no idea of this last, though I have practically finished writing it. It is longer than my "Cencrastus" and much more varied alike in matter and manner, but these are difficult days for poetry publishing, especially on such a magnitude in a linguistic medium debarred from most of the English reading public and otherwise of a kind which cannot appeal to any large body of readers. Of the other four volumes I have also completed considerable portions, but "the spirit blows where it listeth," and I cannot set any date for the finish of the undertaking. In these circumstances - and since, also, the whole scheme may never be

carried out and much of it secure only posthumous publication - it may help those who are interested if I give a few particulars here. I cannot, of course, describe the nature and detail the purposes of a poem of such a scope and so complex and multi-form a character in the available space, and, if I could so express myself, there would be little point in writing the poem itself since that must necessarily be the most direct and economical way in which I can discharge the task. But a short statement may, nevertheless, serve to answer some of the questions that have been raised and dispel a number of misunderstandings which are partly accounted for by the piecemeal method of publication I have adopted. Even at the best the scheme as realised must fall far short of the conception and in many important respects may have little or no correspondence with it.

BOYHOOD THOUGHTS

First of all, then, let me say that I am working on a definite predetermined plan; every item was decided upon before I began writing; and, in many cases - some of which have already raised questions - the opinions expressed do not correspond with my own views,

but are balanced against the opposite views expressed elsewhere in the poem. The poem is an autobiographical one and a study in the evolution of my mentality and development as a poet, and, in particular, my knowledge of and attitude towards Scotland. The first book deals with "The Muckle Toon" (i.e., Langholm, in Dumfriesshire), my birthplace, and my boyhood days; and this involves poems about my parents, about the hills, woods, and streams of the district, about my first contacts with Love and Death, about the Church influence which bulked so large in my life then, about Border history, and about the actual - and symbolic - significance of the frontier.

WIDENING KNOWLEDGE

The second book, "Fier Comme un Eccossais", is concerned with my widening knowledge of Scotland and its history and literature and the emergence of the Scottish Nationalist ideas with which I have since been so actively concerned. The scene shifts to one part of Scotland after another, and to one period of history after another. It covers the whole country from Maidenkirck to John o' Groats, and the entire span of our national history. The third book "Demidium Anima Meae,"

concerns my marriage (a marriage - since my wife was a Highlander - symbolising the Union of Scotland, the bridging of the gulf between Highland and Lowland, and, incidentally, treating Gaeldom as the feminine principle), and where the second book is predominantly political and objective, this one is mainly psychological. It raises the most intimate questions concerning the blood and spirit of our race and the contrast or interaction of "inner" and "outer".

SYSTEMATIC PROGRESSION

The fourth book, "The Uncanny Scot," deals with my furthest conceptions of the historical function of the Scottish genius; and the fifth and final book, "With a Lifting of the Head" (from Plotinus), represents a part of "Goodbye To All That" - the abandonment by the spirit of the poet of all that has preceded this stage and his ascent into a different order of consciousness altogether.

It should be noted that it is part of the plan that each volume consists of different kinds of poetry, and that the whole series is thus designed to represent a systematic progression in the techniques and kinds of imagery and subject

matter employed, or, in other words, in each volume a different cast of mind and stress on a different range of interests altogether is involved. The hymns to Lenin which have occasioned controversy have their natural part in their first book because they are in logical sequence from the radicalism of that Border burgh and my father's pronounced Trade Unionist and Co-operative sympathies, while, in a wider sense, the return to thoughts of Langholm and my boyhood represents a "return to the people" which has its bearings on the motives which impelled me to use braid Scots and have led me at this stage in my career to my present political position. I would, however, warn all who may be tempted to regard such poems, or those which deal with religious questions, as expressions of my own opinions, to remember that they only form parts of the first volume of this very big scheme and are placed thus early in it of set design - in other words, presented merely as starting points for the attitudes developed from book to book. My scheme, too, renders it impossible for anyone at this stage to jump to the conclusion that I am writing largely under certain literary or other influences, for although these may seem to bulk largely in the

excerpts already published, that means that I regard them as elementary, i.e., in keeping with my boyhood, and tend to shed or transmute them into something very different as I proceed.

MEANS OF EXPRESSION

This five-fold scheme may be expressed by saying that the nature of the poetry in the successive books is personal, political (or racial) bipsychic (or Tiresiasian), metaphysical, and anagogic, and that each change involves corresponding thematic, verbal, and formal changes. Whether I am able to carry out this scheme with any completeness remains to be seen, but these brief notes may, at least, serve to illuminate my purpose in a fashion that a number of readers appear to desire, and, from my point of view, a useful purpose will have been served if the latter are thereby deterred from regarding the work that has already appeared as other than very preliminary in relation to the plan as a whole, and intentionally so as being in keeping with the immaturity of boyhood. If the implications of this are extended in certain passages to suggest that mankind is yet in its boyhood and that all ideas

are therefore provisional and liable to changes such as those between the notions of a lad and a grown man that, too, is of purpose and required by what comes after. It should also be remembered that the title "Clann Albann" means the children of Scotland - past, present and future - and that the aspects under which they are envisaged from book to book are intended to correspond to past, present, the double present (i.e., the apparent and the real), future, and finally, sub specie aeternitatis.

COMMENTARY

To obviate the necessity for notes to a Commentary which of its nature is annotative, the pages which follow make use of briefer procedures of reference than those in the Notes to Volume One. MacDiarmid's books are indicated by short title (fuller details can be found in the Bibliography), while periodicals are referred to only by title and date of issue. Correspondence is reproduced from manuscript, except where this was unavailable (in which case a 'Letters' reference directs the reader to The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid, edited with an introduction by Alan Bold (London, 1984)). The manuscripts of Grieve's letters to Helen B. Cruickshank and to F. G. Scott, along with those of Scott to Grieve, are in Edinburgh University Library. The poet's letters to George Ogilvie and Neil M. Gunn are kept in the National Library of Scotland. The following abbreviations have been used for critical works:

A Critical Survey - Hugh MacDiarmid: A Critical Survey, edited by Duncan Glen (Edinburgh, 1972).

- Bold - Alan Bold, MacDiarmid: The Terrible Crystal (London, 1983).
- Boutelle - Ann Edwards Boutelle, Thistle and Rose: A Study of Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry (Loanhead, 1980).
- Gish - Nancy K. Gish, Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work (London, 1984).
- Wright - Gordon Wright, MacDiarmid: An Illustrated Biography (Edinburgh, 1977).

Scriptural quotations are from the King James Bible.

A Dumfriesshire Boy (C.P. I, p. 384; M.T., p. 1)

This poem appeared in the Scottish Educational Journal of June 9th 1933, under its present title, as Part IV of a five-part sequence called 'A Kist of Whistles'. It reappeared as the italicised and untitled dedicatory poem to Stony Limits and other poems in 1934. It has been used here in fulfilment of MacDiarmid's intention to open Clann Albann with a 'Dedicatory Poem' (see Vol. I, p. 104).

'A Moorlander Looks Forward to a Bride' (C.P. I, p. 386) was published in the same issue of the Scottish Educational Journal as Part V of 'A Kist of Whistles'. 'Lynch-Pin' (C.P. I, p. 332; M.T., p. 69), 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton' (C.P. I, p. 331; M.T., p. 15)) and 'Two O'Clock in the Morning' (C.P. II, p. 1292) had appeared in the issue of January 20th 1933 as Parts I-III of the sequence.

l. 3: One of The Muckle Toon's three Martian comparisons. The others occur in ll. 33-6 of 'From Work in Progress' (C.P. II, p. 1148; M.T., p. 11) and ll. 6-7 of 'Fatherless in Boyhood' (C.P. II, p. 1250; M.T., p. 89).

ll. 6-8: A reference to the fighting spirit of the Borders (see Vol.I, pp. 479-83).

PRELUDE

Three poems, all of which anticipate to some degree the themes of The Muckle Toon, are presented here along with an essay which was in a very real sense the prelude to that work. All three lyrics, like the poetry of The Muckle Toon itself, were written under stress of separation from Langholm or Scotland. They were published before Grieve's adoption of his MacDiarmid nom-de-guerre.

Memories of Langholm (M.T., p. 2)

This poem by 'Alister K. Laidlaw' was printed in the Eskdale and Liddesdale Advertiser on November 25th 1908. It was recovered seventy years later by Ruth McQuillan and published in Lines Review, No. 69.

Grieve used the pseudonym 'Alister K. Laidlaw' (frequently in the abbreviated form, 'A.K.L.') through five decades of his career. 'Laidlaw's' talents were not exclusively authorial: 'A.K. Laidlaw' was Advertising Manager of the Scottish Chapbook (see Vol. I, p. 69). In his choice of this pseudonym, the young poet honoured two Langholm relatives and a putative 'connexion', all of whom had won some little literary distinction (see Vol. I, p.20).

'Memories of Langholm' gives expression to Grieve's feelings of home-sickness in his first months at the Broughton Junior Student Centre in Edinburgh. The antipathy to urban experience evinced by these verses never deserted the poet, though, as an ostentatiously tough-minded Communist, he liked to claim the contrary (see Edwin Morgan, Hugh MacDiarmid (Harlow, 1976), p. 3).

--ooOoo--

1. 1: 'Here': Edinburgh, presumably.

1. 22: 'Whita's slope': Monument-capped Whita Hill is one of the four hills which encircle Langholm. Arkinholm Terrace, where Grieve was born, is situated on Whita's lower slopes.

Beyond Exile (C.P. I, p. 305; M.T., p. 3)

The reproduction of this early piece in First Hymn to Lenin and other poems indicates that MacDiarmid intended to include it in The Muckle Toon. It had already appeared in the Broughton Magazine in 1919 and in Northern Numbers, First Series (see Vol. I, p. 69), the following year.

--ooOoo--

11. 13-16: MacDiarmid quoted with approval (on p. 69 and again on p. 76 of Lucky Poet) A. R. Orage's perplexing statement with regard to this stanza and the concluding stanza of 'Water of Life' (C.P. I, p.319; M.T., p. 116) that, 'in spite of all their external differences, their spirit is one'.

--ooOoo--

Salonika, 1916: The poet served with the Royal Army Medical Corps in Salonika for two years from August 1916.

Allegiance (C.P. II, p. 1200; M.T., p. 4)

Published in Northern Numbers, First Series, 1920. 'Allegiance' has been included in the present compilation because of its anticipation of two characteristic concerns of The Muckle Toon - the poet's sense of himself as a Borderer (see Vol. I, pp. 479-83), and his love for the rivers and streams of Dumfriesshire.

--ooOoo--

Written on the Mediterranean: This suggests that 'Allegiance' may have been composed between the summer of 1918 and that of 1919, while Grieve was stationed at Estaque, near Marseilles.

1. 5: 'chunners': Grieve's recourse to a Scots word to evoke the sound of a Border stream, in a poem written three years before his 'conversion' to the Lowland tongue, is most revealing.

My Native Place (M.T., p. 5)

This essay was Grieve's contribution to 'For Auld Lang Syne: A Symposium upon "My Native Place"', which appeared in the Scots Observer on January 1st 1931. More than a dozen eminent writers, churchmen and politicians took part in the 'symposium'.

--oo0oo--

p. 5: 'After journeying in recent years over most of Scotland, England, and Central, Southern and Eastern Europe...': Grieve indulges in hyperbole here. His English travels appear to have been limited mainly to 'journeyings' between London and Liverpool, and between each of those cities and Scotland. A six-day stay in Vienna as a delegate to the P.E.N. conference in June 1929

accounts for his experience of Central Europe, while he knew Southern Europe only through a brief visit to Spain, made during a walking tour of the Pyrenees while he was stationed near Marseilles. His war service in Salonika granted the poet the entirety of his acquaintance with Eastern Europe.

p. 5: 'In all my published poetry there is, I think, but one lyric in "The Drunk Man" and a few lines of allusion in "To Circumjack Cencrastus" devoted to it': Grieve here underestimates his poetry's debt to Langholm in the years prior to 1931 - see Vol. I, pp. 59-61 and 84-8.

p. 7: '...the beautiful chestnuts, large and lustrous as horses' eyes...': The young Grieve's sense of wonder at the emergence of a shiny chestnut from its green casing is recalled in two of the stories from 'the prose Muckle Toon' - see 'Maria' (M.T., p. 85) and "'Holie for Nags"' (M.T., p. 231). Ll. 21-2 of 'The Hole in the Wall' (C.P. I, p. 309; M.T., p. 53) offer an interesting contrast to this phrase from 'My Native Place', as they stress the dissimilarity between chestnuts and horses' eyes.

p. 9: '...at times I am positively haunted by some of the curious place-names...': See Vol. I, pp.446-8.

p. 9: '...I may yet find words...': This suggests that plans for The Muckle Toon may have been beginning to form in the poet's mind before the end of 1930.

I

The miscellaneous writings gathered in this section introduce many of the themes developed in later sections of the Text.

From Work in Progress (C.P. II, p. 1147; M.T., p.10)

When this poem appeared in the July 1931 issue of the Modern Scot it was accompanied by the note reproduced in Vol. I, p. 104. The note describes it as The Muckle Toon's 'first few stanzas'. Read in conjunction with the obviously tentative title, this description gives the impression that MacDiarmid did not regard 'From Work in Progress' as a complete constituent part of The Muckle Toon - an impression reinforced by his reference to it in Lucky Poet (p. 18) as a 'fragment of a poem'. The obviously fragmentary 'Religion and the Scottish Renaissance' (M.T., p. 65) was the only other Clann Albann piece to be characterised in such terms by the poet (see below, p.323).

This poem appears as 'Kinsfolk' in both the Hugh MacDiarmid Anthology and the Complete Poems. The original title has been preferred here, as being in keeping with the poet's intentions at the time of composition, and more relevant to a tessellation of the Muckle Toon poems.

These inaugural verses may seem to provide a disconcertingly low-key introduction to so ambitious a work as The Muckle Toon. A Drunk Man, however, had opened scarcely less casually, even if, after twenty lines, the poet had supplied a parenthetical explanation of his method:

To prove my saul is Scots I maun begin
 Wi' what's still deemed Scots and the folk expect,
 And spire up syne by visible degrees
 To heichts whereo' the fules ha'e never recked.

But aince I get them there I'll whummle them
 And souse the cratur in the nether deeps....

(C.P. I, p. 83)

'From Work in Progress' carries no such sly apology for its procedures. The poem nevertheless effectively serves an expository function with regard to most of the major themes developed in the Clann Albann material. As well as dealing (passim) with MacDiarmid's relationship with his parents, and with the value of human intercourse generally, it looks forward to his poetic celebration of Dumfriesshire's felicities (l.4), exemplifies his characteristic impulse towards self-portraiture (ll. 37-40), introduces his concern with his Border heritage (ll. 95, 113-4) and his quest for

enonteia (ll. 119-20), and states the dominant Water of Life motif for the first time (ll. 104-6, 116-20).

--oo0oo--

l. 4: 'As I'll sune prove': This parenthesis is the strongest internal index of the present poem's inaugural function in The Muckle Toon.

ll. 4-5: 'I've gane roon'/Hauf o' the warld': See note on the opening clauses of 'My Native Place' (above, pp.252-3).

ll. 7-8: 'poetry isna made/0' onything that's seen, toucht, smelt or heard...': See Vol. I, pp. 375-6 for clarification of this statement.

l. 24: Though it has always been printed without one, this line should presumably end with a question-mark.

ll. 26-30: In Lucky Poet (p. 19) MacDiarmid comments as follows on the extracts from the present poem reproduced there:

I wrote these verses at a time when I realized, with terrible distress, that, against my will, the ties between my wife and two children, Christine and Walter, were about to be broken no less completely than I had allowed the ties between myself and my relatives in Langholm and elsewhere to break.

l. 34: Other Martian comparisons are to be found in l. 3 of 'A Dumfriesshire Boy' (C.P. I, p. 384; M.T., p. 1) and in ll. 6-7 of 'Fatherless in Boyhood' (C.P. II, p. 1250; M.T., p. 89)

ll. 37-40: See Vol. I, p. 356 for a discussion of the significance of this piece of self-portraiture.

ll. 55-60: It has become a critical commonplace (see, e.g., Boutelle, p. 52 and Bold, p. 61) to identify the 'lang/Last look' of James Grieve at photographs of his sons, as described here, with the 'last wild look' of the subject of MacDiarmid's earliest successful Scots lyric, 'The Watergaw' (C.P. I, p. 17). See Vol I, pp. 293-4.

1. 56: 'pictures o' my brither and me': See Lucky Poet (p. 230):

There is an early photograph of my brother and myself- how slight and shy I look; how burly and self-assertive my brother looks in comparison.

1. 74: 'my mither': Elizabeth Graham Grieve lived until 1934, three years after these verses were published.

1. 79: See Vol. I, pp. 484-98.

1. 87: 'Sittin' in Liverpool': See Vol. I, pp. 82-3, for an account of Grieve's stay in Merseyside.

1. 91: 'My clan is darkness...': See Vol. I, pp. 19-23 for a discussion of this claim.

1. 94: The poet's maternal grandparents were Andrew Graham, a mole-catcher and farm-labourer, and Isabella Carruthers. James Grieve's parents were John Grieve, a weaver and later a power-loom tuner, and Christina Murray. John Grieve was widower to Margaret Frater when he married Miss Murray. Margaret Frater was,

therefore, not related to Christopher Murray Grieve and her name should not, strictly speaking, be included in a list of the known Border names in the poet's ancestry.

ll. 95, 113-14: MacDiarmid repeatedly expresses gratitude for his Border heritage in The Muckle Toon (see Vol. I, pp. 479-83).

ll. 104-6, 116-20: It is perhaps worth noting that the Water of Life figure is introduced before any reference is made to the rivers and streams of the Langholm area.

l. 120: 'its richt level': Epopteia, presumably - see Vol. I, pp. 386-400.

From 'Lucky Poet' (1) (L.P., p. 219; M.T., p. 14)

p. 15: The two lines of verse comprise an inaccurate and Anglicised reproduction of ll. 216-17 of 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' (C.P. I, p. 352; M.T., p. 138).

Water Music (C.P. I, p. 333; M.T., p. 16)

On its publication in the Scots Observer on May 5th 1932, 'Water Music' was accompanied by the following note:

Being extracts from the "Muckle Toon" volume of "Clann Albainn", a five-volume poem now in preparation, of which parts have appeared in "The Modern Scot", "The Criterion", "The New English Weekly", "The Scottish Educational Journal", etc., and in "First Hymn to Lenin, and Other Poems." (Unicorn Press, Ltd., 1931)

'Water Music' was collected in Scots Unbound and other poems.

An alternative position for this poem might have been found in the sixth section of the text, where the major Water of Life writings are gathered. It appears here to discharge MacDiarmid's undertaking (in 'From Work in Progress', l. 4, C.P. I, p. 1149; M.T., p. 10) to 'sune prove' his appreciation of his native region's natural splendours.

'Water Music' employs a denser Scots, and takes far greater liberties with syntax, than any other item in The Muckle Toon. The poem's singular linguistic challenge demands a singular response. It has seemed appropriate, therefore, to provide a line-by-line 'translation' of 'Water Music', while considering particular linguistic and interpretative difficulties in the Commentary, rather than to merely direct the reader to the Glossary. A discussion of language and meaning in 'Water Music' can be found in Vol. I, pp. 325-32.

Aural effect rather than clarity of expression appears to have been MacDiarmid's main objective in composing this piece. A semblance of semantic coherence, nevertheless, underlies the poem's bubbling cadences. The 'translation' which follows attempts to reveal that coherence:

Water Music

Hush. hush. Joyce. and let me hear
No Anna Livia's lilt,
But the Wauchope. the Esk and the Ewes again,
Each with its own rhythms in it.

I

Timorous here and grasping there
 Giddy or formal
 At times compliant, at times confused,
 The polysemous poem's planned.

Lively, sluggish, betwixt, between, 5
 Paltry or in flood,
 Threading through the cloudberry
 Or having a proper air of ease combined with
 activity.

Or foolish or harsh, 10
 Or running like a spider,
 Or shining like an old coin,
 With a bleat or with a belch.

They know all that opens and shuts 15
 From Fiddleton Bar to Callister Hall,
 And round about for twenty miles
 They form rings and bubbles and make waves.

Straight ahead or circuitous or crooked,
 Straggling or headlong,
 They act affectedly, or cry like a grouse,
 Move indolently or with a display of speed. 20

Tossed-up or shuffling along, ruffled, sleek,
 Cross-tempered or austere,
 In whirlpools below the overhanging banks
 And sips in the fern.

Ferns, blueberries and heather 25
 Know their sulks and cheerful chatter,
 Here goes one with jewels jingling in its cap,
 Another stares through a chasm.

Flax in flower at times hardly vies 30
 With one the wind rouses,
 While blithely down worn precipices
 Another rolls bedecked with gold.

Coughing, continuing to cough roughly, coughing with
 difficulty and coughing huskily,
 Wheedling in one another's throats,
 With recoillings, births, waves, 35
 Snuff-coloured or blue - the creatures!

Or brown, holly-green, dark green, black-and-white,
 Or dyed with all the colours
 Of the sky above and plants and trees
 That grow in either side. 40

Or agitated with the midges
 Or swallows all about,
 The shadow of an eagle,
 The disturbance made by a trout.

Pulling (an) outrageous face 45
 (Is) the winding stair to your mood,
 I've climbed (it) until I'm lost
 Like the sun behind a cloud.

But a pop-gun (with pellets made) from (the worthless
case of) the flax-stalk,

A whistle (made) from the elm, A blow-pipe made from 50
And, back in this old realm, the Umbellifera
Dry leaves of colt's foot
To smoke in a clay pipe!

And you have me in your power again,
 Swelling or shallow, weary or bright, 55
 Singing in the morning,
 Murmuring intimately all the night.

II

Lapping on the turfs,
 Or bursting down the narrow glen,
 A 'first-off-the-board' game of draughts for stars
 and shadows
 Or sun-'tumbled over the cliff'.

With the characteristic quality of a people 5
 (Who have been) salmon watchers for a thousand
 years,

In flood or at scant water
 Of the Border brooks' careers.

Let them bubble, let them ripple,
 Splash and plunge and flop and flounder, 10
 In quaking quagmire or fishes' hiding-place
 I know all they are about.

And between the quickstep of the Wauchope,
 And the high-spirited dance of the Ewes, 15
 And the pavane of the Esk itself,
 Its' not for me to choose.

Be they lively, be they quiet,
 Flow like striped satin or lamb's wool,
 Only turn a toy mill made from rushes or 20
 Make all the country labour,

As it's sleeting at intervals in the hills,
 Or pours cats and dogs,
 So Waich Waich Water gleams and swarms, 25
 Reels and tears and rends.

Some day they say the Bigly Burn 25
 Will leap out from its stunted trees and
 thistles,
 And knock the lovely birch wood
 All to wreck and ruin.

And there's that brook - I won't name it -
 That holds the fish that once was hooked 30
 A century ago - the fisher saw it,
 And flew, and abandoned all his equipment.

And as for Unthank Water,
 That seeps through miles of reeds and sedges,
 It's still engaged in some mischief or other. 35-6

No more than you could urinate yourself
 The biggest of them you may say,
 Yet loud and still I see them send out shoots 40
 To oceans and the heaven's sway.

Flowing over the meadows,
 Or falling in the mud,
 The whole world listens to them,
 And they rein the farthest star.

Humboldt, Howard, Maury 45
 Hildebrandsson, Hann, and Symons,
 A digest of all their work is
 In these dour drops or diamonds.

And well I know the air's wild rush
 As it comes over the seas, 50
 Climbs up and whistles between the hills,
 With all the weather gives

Of snow and rain and thunder,
 Is a single circle spun
 By the sun's bright heat and guided by 55
 Earth's spin and shapes of the ground.

Lapping on the turfs,
 Or bursting down the narrow glen
 I can listen to the waters
 Long - and not long - enough. 60

Hush, hush, Joyce, and let me not hear
Anna Livia's lilt,
But the Wauchope, the Esk and the Ewes again,
Each with its own rhythms in it.

--ooOoo--

The quoted definitions in the notes which follow
 are from Jamieson's Dictionary of the Scottish
Language, abridged by J. Johnstone and revised and
 enlarged by Dr. Longmuir, with Supplement to which
 is prefixed an introduction by W. M. Metcalfe, D.D.,
 F.S.A. Scot (Paisley, 1927). 'Water Music' appears to
 have been composed with the aid of this dictionary
 (see Vol. I, p.325).

--ooOoo--

Dedication: William Johnstone (1897-1982), a Scottish painter and art-critic much admired by MacDiarmid, was a cousin of F. G. Scott's. Each of the two Clann Albann poems which appeared as pamphlets in 1932 - Tarras (Edinburgh) and Second Hymn to Lenin (Thakeham) - had a frontispiece portrait of MacDiarmid by his friend. The second of these pamphlets bore on its cover a drawing of the poet by the American artist Flora MacDonald, then married to Johnstone.

--ooOoo--

Introductory Stanza

1. 1: 'Joyce': Writing on November 12th 1932 in 'At the Sign of the Thistle', the 'weekly causerie' he contributed to the Free Man, Grieve hotly disputed the view that his citation of Joyce in 'Water Music' indicated that his art was influenced by the example of the Irish novelist:

The other instance concerns a review of my latest book in the "Daily Record and Mail". It is signed by "E. de B." and ridicules the volume, contending that I am for the most part incomprehensible but, where I am comprehensible, don't write poetry. In next day's issue an unimportant rhymester was highly commended, and the following day a couple of columns was given to some crude doggerel by W. D. Cocker. "E. de B." says I am increasingly under the influence of James Joyce. I know too much about Joyce not to know the full absurdity of that remark. A village idiot with half an eye could see that neither in technique nor in subject-matter have Joyce and I one iota in common; the silly fellow merely said so because I mentioned Joyce - which is probably all he knows about him.

1. 3: It is idiomatic in Scots to omit the definite article when speaking of a river.

I

1.1: 'arrachin': To 'aras', or 'arrace', means to 'pluck away by force' or to 'raise up'.

1.2: 'allemand': I have substituted an adjective for this infinitive in my 'translation'. To 'allemand' means 'to conduct in a formal or courtly style'.

1.5: 'Louch' appears in Jamieson only as a noun, meaning 'a cavity containing water'. MacDiarmid appears to have intended a word opposite in meaning to 'lively'. See note to ll. 53-4 of 'By Wauchopeside' (below, p. 473-4).

1.8: Jamieson translates 'bightsom' as 'implying an easy air, and at the same time activity'. 'Aftergait' is recorded not as a noun but as an adjective, to which the following meanings are ascribed: '1. proper, fitting, 2. Tolerable, moderate.' In the Hugh MacDiarmid Anthology (p.142) Michael Grieve and Alexander Scott gloss 'aftergait' as 'outcome'.

1.11: An Atchison is a copper coin washed with silver, worth eight pennies Scots, or two-thirds of an English penny.

1.14: Fiddleton Bar and Callister Hall did indeed 'open and steek' when Grieve knew them. The former, a toll bar on the Hawick Road, marked the outer limit of James Grieve's postal run. The latter was an inn on the Lockerbie Road in the Wauchope Valley.

1.17: 'Boutgate' is a noun, meaning 'a circuitous road'.

1.21: 'Brade-up': Jamieson records 'braid-up' only as a verb, 'To braid-up the head. To toss it as a high-mettled horse does, or to carry it high'.

1.24: 'bebbles': 'Bebble' is a verb rather than a noun. To 'bebble' is to 'swallow any liquid in small but frequent draughts'.

11.25-8: Is there a faint echo here of the celebrated opening stanza of Lewis Carroll's 'Jabberwocky'?:-

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogroves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

(The Annotated Alice, edited by Martin Gardner (Harmondsworth, 1970), p.191)

To 'tove' is to 'talk familiarly, prolixly, cheerfully...'. 87

ll.33-4: 'Cougher, blocher, boich and croichle,/
Fraise:' Present participles are substituted
for these infinitives in my 'translation'.

l.36: 'Beggar's-broon' is Scots snuff, 'a light
brown snuff made from tobacco stems'.

ll.36-7: MacDiarmid may have had these lines in
mind when, in a note accompanying 'Balefire Loch'
on that poem's appearance in the Stony Limits
collection, he stated that 'passages' of both
'Water Music' and 'Scots Unbound' (C.P. I, p.340)
were 'primarily...exercise(s) of delight in the
Scots sense of colour' (C.P. I, p. 458).

l.45-8: The climbing movement of these lines
is echoed in Part II, ll.51-4.

l.54: 'Partan's tae' literally means 'crab's
claw'.

l.55: 'Creel' literally means 'basket'; to be
'in a creel' means to be in a state of perplexity.

II

1.5: 'slughorn': Jamieson has

Slughorne, sluggorne, s.l. The watchword used by troops in the field, S; slogan, S.A. Doug.
 2. Hereditary description; appellation of a tribe, Bellenden - Ir. sluagh an army, and corn a horn. 3. A peculiar quality viewed as inherent in those of one family or race. Ruddiman.

1.6: MacDiarmid should have written 'Sightmen' rather than 'Sightsmen'.

11.13-16: These lines should be read in the light of the conviction, repeatedly expressed in The Muckle Toon, that Creation in its totality, rather than in anthropocentric combinations of its aspects, forms the true theme of poetry (see Vol. I, pp.383-4).

1.18: 'lamoo': 'To gang down like lamoo , to be easily swallowed. Fr. le mout, new or sweet wine, or from the wassail bowl (ale, nutmeg, sugar, apples) in English called lamb's wool.' MacDiarmid seems to be concerned here, however, with the appearance of the streams rather than

with the ease of their flow: the reference to striped satin ('railya') is meaningless unless we ignore the idiomatic meaning of 'like... lamoo' and translate it simply as 'like lamb's wool'.

1.19: Passing references here and in 11.35-6 to boyish pastimes partake of The Muckle Toon's general concern with childhood (see Vol.I, pp. 415-22). Symbolically charged references to children's games can be found in 'Charisma and My Relatives' 1.17 (C.P. I, p.301; M.T., p.41) and in 'Water of Life', 11.34-5 and 42-3 (C.P. I, p. 315; M.T., pp. 112, 113).

1.22: Literally 'Or pours clay pipe-stems and old wives'.

1.25: 'the Bigly Burn': Bigholm Burn joins with Logan Water to form the Wauchope.

1.33: Unthank Farm is situated about six miles from Langholm on the Hawick Road.

ll.35-6: 'Pillie-winkie' is a barbarous sport against young birds among children in Fife. The proverbial phrase, 'He's aye at pillie-winkie wi' the gowdnie's eggs', means 'He is always engaged in some mischief or other'. 'Gowdnie' means 'golden-eye duck'. (See note to 1.19)

l.37: Here and in 'Water of Life', ll. 132-3 (C.P. I, p. 318; M.T., p. 116), the Water of Life takes on a urinary aspect.

ll.45-6: In these lines MacDiarmid refers to the following:

Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1854), celebrated German meteorologist, explorer and ecologist.
Luke Howard (1772-1864), English meteorologist.
Matthew Fontaine Maury (1806-1873), American pioneer of hydrography and oceanography.
Hugo Hildebrandsson (1838-1925), Swedish meteorologist and climatologist.
George James Symons (1838-1900), English meteorologist and climatologist.

1.51: 'Clims up': The climbing movement which begins here echoes that in ll.45-8 of Part I. These climbing movements are situated ten lines from the end of Parts I and II respectively, thus helping to unify the two sections of the poem.

From 'Lucky Poet' (2) (L.P., p. 218;
M.T., p. 20)

The great freeze-up of the Esk took place early in 1895 when Grieve was two-and-a-half years old: it is difficult to accept that he had never been out-of-doors before that date. A broad expanse of the Esk can be seen from Arkinholm Terrace, where the poet spent his earliest years.

Cattle Show (C.P. I, p. 462; M.T., p. 21)

First published in 1922 in Northern Numbers, Third Series, this lyric reappeared twelve years later in the Stony Limits collection. Other Grieve poems appropriated by MacDiarmid in the years 1931-34 (viz. 'Beyond Exile', C.P. I, p. 305; M.T., p. 3, and 'Hymn to Sophia: The Wisdom of God', C.P. I, p. 455 - see Vol. I, p. 366) related to either the autobiographical or evolutionary themes of The Muckle Toon. It is not unlikely that the poet considered including 'Cattle Show', which was almost certainly inspired by memories of Border agricultural fêtes he had attended as a boy, in Clann Albann's opening volume.

Country Folk (C.P. I, p. 306; M.T., p. 22)

Published in First Hymn to Lenin and other poems. 'Country Folk' evinces MacDiarmid's unease with the probing of origins upon which he is so centrally engaged in The Muckle Toon. See Vol. I, pp. 504-7.

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of 10
The V

The material in this section relates to Langholm's great summer festival. The Common Riding, incorporating the Crying of the Summer Fair, is held on the last Friday of July each year (see Vol. I, pp. 32-7). John Elliot, who cried the fair for forty years until his retirement some years ago, and who was on friendly terms with the poet in the nineteen-sixties and seventies, has described the events of Common Riding Day as follows:

The proceedings begin at 5 a.m. when the Flute Band leads the way to Collin's turn on the Northern spur of Whita Hill to see the hound trail. This is a race between specially trained foxhounds over a ten-mile circuit and is one of the oldest in the history of this sport, having been initiated at Langholm Common Riding in 1845. At 8.30 the Cornet musters his supporters, generally between 140 and 160 horsemen and women, in the Market Place, where the town's standard is presented to him by the Provost. Headed by the Town Band and the barley bannock the

Cornet leads the procession round the town and on a return to the Market Place the first part of the Fair is cried. Now follows what must be one of the most spectacular incidents at any Common Riding when the Cornet leads his followers in a helter-skelter gallop up the steep Kirk Wynd en route to the Castle Craigs, the furthestmost outpost of the Marches. Here the Fair is again cried and refreshments, in the shape of barley bannock and salted herring accompanied by a "nip" of "mountain dew", are served. The horsemen now move to the summit of Whita Hill where they encircle the 100-foot obelisk erected to the memory of Sir John Malcolm. Down the steep descent they come and on arrival at Mount Hooley they are met by the Band, the thistle and crown and hundreds of boys and girls, each carrying a heather besom. The spade now makes its appearance, bedecked with heather new pulled from Langholm commonty. The procession moves off again, the Cornet and his followers being led by the Town Band and the children by the Pipe Band. Back to the Market Place where the second part of the Fair is cried, and from there to the Kilngreen and the Castleholm where more boundary sods are cut by the spade-carrier, and thus Langholm's rights are again preserved against all encroachments. The sports then begin, the first event being the Cornet's Chase when the Cornet, given a fair start, goes off round the course carrying the flag and at a given signal his followers are away in pursuit, yet another thrilling and spectacular item. The rest of the day is spent in horse racing, wrestling and the usual pedestrian events. In the evening the young folk,

and the "auld yins" too, join in a dance on the green and the light fantastic is carried on with great enjoyment until the Cornet and his right and left hand men get mounted and lead the crowd back to the town. A halt at the Kirkgreen for a polka, another at the Crown for another polka and down to the Townfoot for another polka, then back to the Market Place where the Cornet hands the flag back to the Provost. Three cheers for the Cornet, a final verse of Auld Lang Syne played low and slow by the Band, a verse of the National Anthem and the Common Riding is over for another year.

(John Elliot, Langholm, no date, no page number)

From 'Lucky Poet' (3) (L.P., pp.221-2;
M.T., p. 23)

p. 23: 'gathering more than the raw material
of jam, too, ...': MacDiarmid here inserts
the six lines which appear in the present
compilation as 'From To Circumjack Cencrastus
(2)' (C.P. I, p. 271; M.T., p. 157).

p. 24: 'most of Europe': See note on opening
clauses of 'My Native Place' (above, pp.252-3).

From 'Lucky Poet' (4) (L.P., p. 222;
M.T., p. 25)

The significance of the Common Riding
emblems is discussed in Vol. I, pp. 35-7.

The Common Riding (poem) (C.P. I, p. 97;
M.T., p. 26)

These lines from A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle were published as an independent lyric, under the title, 'The Common Riding', in MacDiarmid's Selected Poems of 1934.

--oo0oo--

l.l: 'Walligate is not a street in Langholm but I used it since there are all sorts of street-names ending "gate" in Scottish burghs...'
(letter from the poet to John C. Weston, quoted in a footnote on p. 25 of Weston's

edition of A Drunk Man (Massachussets, 1971)).

In fact MacDiarmid took the first line of his poem from an old song traced by Hamish Henderson:

Ra-ra-rae, the nicht afore the Fair
The drum's i the Walligate, the pipe's i the
air.

Silk an saiteen,
Goold an naiteen;
Tig! for the morn's the Fair Day.

(See Ruth McQuillan, 'A Look at the Langholm Thistle', Calgacus, Spring 1976, p. 15)

The Common Riding (story) (M.T., p. 27)

Published in the Glasgow Herald on March 12th 1927, this is the only story which can be said with absolute certainty to have been intended for the 'prose Muckle Toon' (see letter to Neil Gunn quoted in Vol. I, p. 61).

John Elliot, who knows scarcely less about the Common Riding than the protagonist of the present story, has assured me that the story's focal incident has no basis in historical fact.

If Yiddy Bally's achievement seems improbable, and its telling sentimental, there can nevertheless be little doubt that Yiddy himself - the little man

who gives his life in the service of the emblem
of his nationality - is a MacDiarmid-type figure
(see Vol. I, p. 37).

The Monument (C.P. I, p. 386; M.T., p. 40)

Neither on its original publication in the Free Man on December 6th 1932 nor on its reappearance two years later in the Stony Limits collection was this poem ascribed to The Muckle Toon. Nevertheless, on suggesting that 'The Monument' should be recast, 'in the language of the tombstone, saying exactly what you're saying here, in even more severely measured terms', and that the poem should itself take 'the shape of the Whitha (sic) monument', F. G. Scott observed:

That would be one interesting page more
to 'Clann Albainn'!

(Letter to the poet, July 19th 1932)

Scott went on to suggest that the reworked poem should then be presented to the public within an obelisk shape: 'Picture and all! Why not a

picture or two in the story?' Though MacDiarmid made only minor changes in 'The Monument', he attempted, by having the poem printed in the Free Man in the rectangular lower half of a crude monumental design (the upper half of which more or less resembled an obelisk), to register part, at least, of his friend's advice.

The monument referred to in the poem is the hundred foot high obelisk on Whita Hill which was erected in 1835 to commemorate General Sir John Malcolm, K.C.B. (see Vol. I, p. 17). The Cornet and his followers circle the monument on horse-back during the Common Riding. The present piece may have been thought of by MacDiarmid as a 'hill poem' (see Vol. I, pp. 471-2). An alternative position might therefore have been found for it in Section VII of the Text, where The Muckle Toon's poems of place are collected.

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1.1: 'Few ken': In his letter of July 19th 1932 F. G. Scott suggested this alternative to MacDiarmid's 'Nane kens'.

1.2: General Sir John's admiral brother -
Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm - is commemorated
by a statue which stands next to the Post Office
and Library Building in which Grieve grew up.
It is singularly unlikely that the poet did
not know in whose honour the Whita memorial
was erected.

11.3-4: The very lengthy inscription can be
read easily to this day.

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These writings are concerned with questions relating to the influence of family, and of biological and cultural heredity, on the author's development. The evolutionary themes glimpsed here are more fully and more impersonally treated in the Water of Life poems of Section VI.

Charisma and My Relatives (C.P. I, p. 301;
M.T., p. 41)

Published: in First Hymn to Lenin and other poems.

Title: MacDiarmid may have had the scriptural meaning of 'charisma' in mind when he chose the term for use in this poem. It is a term which is employed in the New Testament, most usually in its plural form, 'charismata', to denote the grace (literally, the 'spiritual gifts') whereby the Holy Spirit aids those engaged in continuing the work of Christ on earth (see e.g., St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, 12:1-31). The spiritual gift in question here is genius, the enhanced awareness which distinguishes the poet from his Langholm relatives. Secular application of sacred terminology is a characteristic of The Muckle Toon (see Vol. I, pp. 439-40).

Dedicatee: William McElroy, a London coal and iron merchant, was Peggy Grieve's lover at the time of her divorce. McElroy helped the poet by putting up some of the Share Capital he needed to join the directorate of the Unicorn Press (see Vol. I, pp. 117-18).

--ooOoo--

1.1: 'here': A family photograph?

1.2: The reference to Christ is not gratuitous, as it not only accords with (and confirms) the scriptural overtones of the title, but also introduces a characteristic Muckle Toon sleight whereby attempts at the extension of consciousness are measured against the achievement of Jesus (see Vol. I, pp. 430-5)

11.5, 27: 'epopteia': Strictly speaking, this Greek word refers to the third and final stage of illumination into the Greater Eleusinian Mysteries. MacDiarmid applies the term more loosely, as a label for the

visionary experience towards which he feels himself impelled. See Vol. I, pp. 386-400, and Commentary, pp. 409-10.

11.9-18: These lines offer The Muckle Toon's most explicit exploration of the symbolic significance of the poet's Border heritage (see Vol. I, pp. 479-83). MacDiarmid here values Lowland pugnacity for its usefulness in the fight for higher consciousness.

1.17: 'plays at sodgers': This dismissive representation of the historical achievement of the Border's 'fechters' is one of The Muckle Toon's symbolically charged references to boyish pastimes. The others occur in 'Water Music', Part II, 11.19, 35-6 (C.P. I, 336; M.T., pp. 18-19) and in 'Water of Life', 11.34-5 and 42-3 (C.P. I, p. 315, M.T., pp. 112, 113). The notion of childhood elaborated in the Langholm poetry is discussed in Vol. I, pp. 415-22.

1.19: Compare to 'Water of Life', 1.56 (C.P. I, p. 316; M.T., p. 113).

11.31-6: See Vol. I, pp. 383-6.

11.40-2 : Compare to 11. 34-6 of 'The Burning Passion' (C.P. I, p. 304; M.T., p. 140)

Andy (M.T., p. 43)

This story was published in the Glasgow Herald on October 22nd 1927. 'Andy' is MacDiarmid's most direct treatment of the theme of sibling rivalry (see Vol. I, pp. 41-4). A sensitive account of the poet's relationship with his brother can be found in Gish, pp. 13-15. Michael Grieve has told me that the poet generally referred to his brother as 'Graham' rather than 'Andy'.

The incident which provides the focus of the present story is recounted as follows on p. 225 of Lucky Poet:

(O)ne day...my brother and I were angling. He had hooked a trout and was greatly excited. My father nipped over to advise him in playing it, but by the time he reached my brother's side the trout had got off the hook. Instantly there was a tremendous splash; my brother had plunged into the pool after it.

--oo0oo--

p. 44: 'Andy was his mither's Jacob': See Vol. I, p. 42.

pp. 48-9: 'His face...the horror it covered': In this story from 'the prose Muckle Toon' Andy is described in terms of the imagery which MacDiarmid would exploit to elaborate the dominant symbolism of the poetic Muckle Toon four years later.

The Hole in the Wall (C.P. I, p. 308; M.T., p.53)

This poem from the First Hymn to Lenin collection complements 'Charisma and My Relatives (C.P. I, p. 301; M.T., p. 41). Ll.17-32 further that poem's argument with regard to a sort of metaphysical application of the fighting skills which MacDiarmid has inherited from his Border ancestors.

--oo0oo--

1.1: 'No' the love o' women': The Langholm poetry's negative attitude towards sexual love is examined in Vol. I, pp. 491-8.

1.3: The tendency towards self-portraiture manifested here is discussed on p. 356 of Vol. I.

ll.5-12: Compare to ll. 91-120 of 'From Work in Progress' (C.P. II, pp. 1149-50; M.T., p. 13) and to ll.38-48 of 'The Burning Passion' (C.P. I, pp. 304-5; M.T., p. 140).

ll.9-12: These are perhaps the only truly colloquial lines in The Muckle Toon.

ll.13-16: MacDiarmid here seems to be alluding to the evolutionary philosophy of Henri Bergson. See Vol. I, pp. 372-3.

l.15: 'maist o' us ken': Hardly to be taken literally.

ll. 17-32: See Vol. I, pp. 479-83 for an account of MacDiarmid's attitude to his Border heritage as delineated in The Muckle Toon.

l.17: 'a fechter': A fighter, i.e., a Borderer.

ll.21-2: See note on p. 7 of 'My Native Place' (above, p.253).

ll.37-45: This delightful surrender to a rhythmical impulse is most uncharacteristic of MacDiarmid's discursive poetry.

From 'Lucky Poet' (5) (L.P., p.2; M.T., p. 55)

'I resemble him physically...and facially...':

See Vol. I, pp. 354, 356.

"'Aye amang the lassies'": See Vol. I, pp. 49-50.

Pedigree (C.P. I, p. 303; M.T., p. 56)

On its publication in First Hymn to Lenin and other poems, 'Pedigree' was accompanied by the following footnote:

For account of Oliver see pp. 136-140 A. and J. Lang's Highways and Byways in the Border. Billy Marshall the Caird of Barullion, King of the Gypsies of the Western Lowlands, died 1792, aged 120. He had been seventeen times lawfully married and was, after his 100th year, the avowed father of four children by 'less legitimate affections'. See note in Scott's Guy Mannering and Mr. James Murray MacCulloch of Ardwall's letter, Blackwood's Magazine, August, 1817. For Forbes see the story of this sequel to the burning of Congarf in Picken's Traditional (sic) Stories of Old Families.

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1.4: Auld Ringan Oliver: Highways and Byways in the Border, to which the poet directs us in his footnote, relates that Oliver was a Covenanter of enormous physique and legendary bravery. The vicissitudes of the seventeenth century religious wars ensured

that he spent much of his life as a fugitive. He enjoyed a peaceful old age, however, until a young man who had once been antagonised by his honesty became Marquess of Lothian and resolved to use his newly acquired rank to assuage his sense of grievance. The marquess led a hunt again and again through Oliver's crops until the latter in exasperation shot one of the hounds. The Sheriff was called to arrest Oliver, who barricaded himself in his house. The siege lasted until the killing of his servant girl by a stray bullet prompted Oliver to leave the house:

Then the lust of battle seized him, blind fury filled his breast, and he thought only of revenge. He forgot his age, forgot that his fighting days should have been long over, forgot everything but the mad desire to clutch the throats of his foes and choke the life out of them. So, tearing down the barricades of his door, he rushed out on his enemies like a wild bull charging. But alas for Ringan! part of the discarded barricade caught his foot as he burst over the threshold, and down he came with a crash. Before he could struggle even to his knees, the enemy was on him, and he was down again on his face, half a dozen men swarming over him. Even yet, however, old and hopelessly outnumbered as he was, the fight for a time was not so very unequal, and he might in the end have cast off the crowd that strove to hold and bind him. An ill day it would have been for some of them had he succeeded. But a treacherous pedlar, who had joined the fray for the sake of hire, watching his chance, came behind, and with

a blow from a hammer smashed Ringan's jaw and brought him to the ground, stunned. The old man was taken then, bound hand and foot, and carted off to Edinburgh.

(Highways and Byways in the Border (London, 1913),

pp. 140-1)

Oliver spent eight years in jail in Edinburgh and died in 1736 soon after his release.

1.4: The Caird o' Barullion: The letter in Blackwood's Magazine to which we are directed by the poet's footnote discusses Billy Marshall's longevity, character and rise to power, and includes a description of a meeting with him in his last years (issue of August, 1817, pp. 462-5). An 'Additional Note' to Sir Walter Scott's Guy Mannering includes the following information on the Caird o' Barullion:

He was born in the parish of Kirkmichael, about the year 1671; and as he died at Kirkcudbright, 23rd November, 1792, he must then have been in the one hundred and twentieth year of his age. It cannot be said that this unusually long lease of existence was noted by any peculiar excellence of conduct or habits of life. Willie had been pressed or enlisted in the army seven times; and had deserted as often; besides three times running away from the naval service He had been seventeen times lawfully married and besides such a reasonably large share of matrimonial comforts, was, after his hundredth year, the avowed father of four children by less legitimate affections. He subsisted in his extreme old age by a pension from the present Earl of Selkirk's grandfather. Will Marshal

is buried in Kirkcudbright Church, where his monument is still shown, decorated with a scutcheon suitably blazoned with two tups' horns and two catty spoons.

In his youth he occasionally took an evening walk on the highway, with the purpose of assisting travellers by relieving them of the weight of their purses. On one occasion, the Caird of Barullion robbed the Laird of Bargally, at a place between Carsphairn and Dalmellington. His purpose was not achieved without a severe struggle, in which the Gipsy lost his bonnet, and was obliged to escape, leaving it on the road. A respectable farmer happened to be the next passenger, and seeing the bonnet, alighted, took it up, and rather imprudently put it on his own head. At this instant, Bargally came up with some assistants, and recognising the bonnet, charged the farmer of Bantoberick with having robbed him, and took him into custody. There being some likeness between the parties, Bargally persisted in his charge, and though the respectability of the farmer's character was proved or admitted, his trial before the Circuit Court came on accordingly. The fatal bonnet lay on the table of the court; Bargally swore that it was the identical article worn by the man who robbed him; and he and others likewise deponed that they had found the accused on the spot where the crime was committed with the bonnet on his head. The case looked gloomily for the prisoner, and the opinion of the judge seemed unfavourable. But there was a person in the court who knew well both who did, and who did not, commit the crime. This was the Caird of Barullion, who, thrusting himself up to the bar, near the place where Bargally was standing, suddenly seized on the bonnet, put it on his head, and looking the Laird full in the face, asked him, with a voice which attracted the attention of the Court and crowded audience - "Look at me, sir, and tell me, by the oath you have sworn - Am not I the man who robbed

you between Carsphairn and Dalmellington?" Bargally replied, in great astonishment, "By Heaven! you are the very man." - "You see what sort of memory this gentleman has", said the volunteer pleader: "he swears to the bonnet, whatever features are under it. If you yourself, my Lord, will put it on your head, he will be willing to swear that your Lordship was the party who robbed him between Carsphairn and Dalmellington." The tenant of Bantoberick was unanimously acquitted, and thus Willie Marshal ingeniously contrived to save an innocent man from danger, without incurring any himself, since Bargally's evidence must have seemed too fluctuating to be relied upon.

While the King of the Gipsies was thus laudably occupied, his royal consort, Flora, contrived, it is said, to steal the hood from the Judge's gown; for which offence, combined with her presumptive guilt as a gipsy, she was banished to New England, whence she never returned.

(Guy Mannering (London, 1906), pp. 426-7)

11.5-10: This double-edged compliment to Peggy Grieve is discussed in Vol. I, pp. 492-3. It is notable that the poet 'wales' for his wife an ancestor who is not only psychologically but also geographically appropriate - Drimminor, like Peggy's birth-place, Cupar, is in north-eastern Scotland. Auld Ringan Oliver and the Caird o' Barullion, like Grieve himself, were Borderers.

1.8: 'Her infernal depths': MacDiarmid here seems to be echoing a phrase from Prince D. S. Mirsky's A History of Russian Literature from the Earliest Times to the Death of Dostoyevsky (1881) (London, 1927), a work quite clearly drawn upon for his poem 'The Church of My Fathers' (C.P. I, p. 397; M.T., p. 60) - See below, p.313. Discussing Dostoevsky on p. 342 of his History, Mirsky wrote:

To the years 1862-3 belongs his liaison with Apollinaria Suslova, the most important love-affair of his life. After the suppression of Vremya he travelled with her abroad. It was on this journey that he lost for the first time heavily on the roulette. Mlle. Suslova (who afterwards married the great writer Rozanov) was a proud and (to use a Dostoyevskian epithet) "infernal" woman, with unknown depths of cruelty and evil. She seems to have been to Dostoyevsky an important revelation of the dark side of things.

1.10: 'his beard in Drimnor': The story of John Forbes' beard appears in Picken's Traditionary Stories of Old Families (MacDiarmid's footnote gets both the title of this book and the name of Corgarff Castle wrong). Corgarff was a Forbes castle burned in 1551 by a party sent by the Gordons to claim it for Mary, Queen of Scots. The lord of the castle was absent,

but his lady, daughter, three sons and twenty-three others were killed in the fire. Picken takes up the story:

Subsequent to the tragical affair at Corgarff, a meeting for reconciliation took place between a select number of the heads of the two houses, in the hall of an old castle in these parts, probably Drimminor.

After much argument, the difference being at length made up, and a reconciliation effected, both parties sat down to a feast in the hall, provided by the Forbes' chief. The eating was ended, and the parties were at their drink - the clansmen being of equal numbers, and so mixed, as had been arranged, that every Forbes had a Gordon seated at his right hand.

"Now," said Gordon of Huntly to his neighbour chief, "as this business has been so satisfactorily settled, tell me if it had not been so, what was your intention to have done."

"There would have been bloody work - bloody work," said Lord Forbes - "and we would have had the best of it. I will tell you: see, we are mixed one and one, Forbeses and Gordons. I had only to give a sign by the stroking down of my beard, thus, and every Forbes was to have drawn the skein from under his left arm, and stabbed to the heart his right hand man", and as he spoke, he suited the sign to the word, and stroked down his flowing beard.

"God Almighty!" exclaimed Huntly, "what is this?" - for in a moment a score of skeins were out, and flashing in the light of the pine torches held behind the guests. In another moment they were buried in as many hearts, for the Forbeses, whose eyes constantly watched their chief, mistaking this involuntary motion in the telling of his story for the agreed sign of death, struck their weapons into the bodies of the unsuspecting Gordons.

The chiefs looked at each other in silent consternation. At length Forbes said, "This is a sad tragedy we little expected - but what is done cannot be undone, and the blood that now flows on the floor of Drimminor will just help to sloaken the auld fire of Corgarff."

(Andrew Picken, Traditional Stories of Old Families,
2 vols. (London, 1833), Vol. I, pp. 38-9)

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(Andrew Picken, Traditionary Stories of Old Families,
2 vols. (London, 1833), Vol. I, pp. 38-9)

Another Turn of the Screw (C.P. I, p. 310;
M.T., p. 57)

This poem, which appeared in the First Hymn to Lenin collection, seems to be based on the Bergsonian notion of material reality as the embodiment of the failure of the élan vital to express itself (see Vol. I, pp. 372-3). Poetry and humanity are alike presented by MacDiarmid as species whose self-perpetuation frustrates the upward advance of 'Life'. The poet gives 'another turn' to the 'screw' of the philosopher's argument by reflecting that the cognitive processes themselves are no less arbitrary and temporary than any other expressions of the creative impulse, and are therefore of little use in the quest for metaphysical certainty.

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11. 13-16: These lines affirm MacDiarmid's faith that the pugnacity he has inherited from his Border ancestors will stand him in good stead in his fight for higher consciousness. See Vol. I, pp. 470-83.

11.17-20: Compare to 11.13-16 of 'Museum Piece' (C.P. I, p. 300; M.T., p. 68), where poetry is again viewed as an independent life-form.

From 'Lucky Poet' (6) (L.P., p. 16; M.T., p. 58)

These pages deal, more directly than anything in The Muckle Toon proper, with the 'actual significance' of the Border for MacDiarmid. See Vol. I, pp. 479-80.

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p. 58: 'the Laidlaws': See Vol. I, p. 20.

The Church of My Fathers (C.P. I, p. 307; M.T., p.60)

This piece from First Hymn to Lenin and other poems is modelled upon a translation by MacDiarmid's friend Prince D. S. Mirsky from an original by the Russian poet Fyodor Ivanovich Tyútchev (1803-1873). On p. 168 of Mirsky's A History of Russian Literature from the Earliest Times to the Death of Dostoyevsky (1881) (London, 1927), we find the following:

Tyútchev was famous for his wit, but he made his prose epigrams in French, and he was rarely capable of making his wit collaborate with his art of Russian verse. But he has left several masterpieces in a more serious style of wit, such as the following poem on the Lutheran service (1834):

I like the church-service of the Lutherans,
 Their severe, solemn, and simple rite.
 Of these bare walls, of this empty nave,
 I can understand the sublime teaching.
 But don't you see? Ready to leave,
 Faith is for the last time with us;
 She has not yet crossed the threshold,
 But her house is already empty and bare.
 She has not yet crossed the threshold;
 The door has not yet closed behind her
 But the hour has come, has struck....
 Pray to God:
 It is the last time you will pray.

I am indebted to Ruth McQuillan for drawing my attention to the Tyútchev poem.

The 'Toonfit Kirk', officially known during the poet's years in Langholm as the South United Presbyterian Church, is now used as a bandroom. It still sports 'pea-green wa's' (l. 3).

Religion and Love (C.P. I, p. 307; M.T., p. 61)

This piece was published in First Hymn to Lenin
and other poems.

The Prostitute (C.P. I, p. 307; M.T., p. 62)

This poem from the First Hymn to Lenin collection expresses the characteristic Muckle Toon notion that the poet must transcend a merely personal or human viewpoint if he is to achieve vision. See Vol. I, pp. 383-6.

On Coming Home (C.P. I, p. 381; M.T., p. 63)

The first three stanzas (those on M.T., p. 63) appeared as a separate poem with the title, 'On Coming Home', in the Free Man of June 17th 1933. When they were re-printed in Scottish Scene the following year they were accompanied by the four italicized stanzas reproduced on M.T., p. 64, and by three vituperative quatrains in roman type (C.P. I, p. 382). The forty-line poem thus constituted was given the title 'Envoi'.

The Free Man poem appeared along with 'The Scots Renaissance' (C.P. II, p. 1274; M.T., p. 151) and 'The Kernigal' (C.P. II, p. 1275; M.T., p. 152) under the heading 'More Poems from "The Muckle Toon"'. A note explained:

The last three volumes of poems Mr. MacDiarmid has published have consisted of short separable items from "The Muckle Toon", which is the first of the five volumes of "Clann Albann", a long poem in the course of production.

I have appended the italicized stanzas of 'Envoi' to the three stanzas originally published as 'On Coming Home' here, as they make use of the characteristic evolutionary imagery of The Muckle Toon.

A poem called 'On Coming Home', which is discussed at some length in a letter sent by F. G. Scott to MacDiarmid on July 28th 1932, seems to have borne little resemblance to the present work.

--ooOoo--

1.3: 'Minor prophets': 'Nihum-Nahum' (see 1.8 of 'At a Humble Grave', C.P. II, p. 1251; M.T., p. 91) is presumably one of these.

11.5-6: See Vol. I, pp. 429-30.

Religion and the Scottish Renaissance (M.T., p. 65)

This fragment appeared in the Scots Observer on June 9th 1932 in the course of an article entitled 'Religion and the Scottish Renaissance Group' by 'C. M. Grieve ("Hugh MacDiarmid")'. The full text of the article is given here:

I read with great interest - and broad agreement - Mr. Moray M'Laren's article, "Is the Scottish Renaissance Hostile to Religion?". But it will be observed that here I do not say "Scottish Renaissance" but "Scottish Renaissance Group." I make this limitation not only because of Mr. M'Laren's phrase - "if sometimes it seems that the voice of the group is anti-Christian" - but because of the uncalled-for insinuations of his subsequent explanation that "it is the destructive voice that is the most vociferous, and which receives the sensation-hunting adulation of the yellow press." It would have added greatly to the interest of his article if Mr. M'Laren, instead of throwing out such a suggestion in general terms, had named those members of the group who have secured an undue share of the limelight in this way. The frequency with which disgraceful innuendoes of this kind are made by those defending, or, at least, professing conventional religious sentiments is, to say the least of it, a disturbing consideration. If I myself have on occasion indulged in very violent personalities, equally violent

personalities have been flung at me by well-known Scottish ministers and prominent laymen, and I am entitled not only "to expect something different from them," in view of their explicit professions with which such intemperate utterances ill accord, but I think I may rightly say that the test in relation to the Scottish Renaissance is not a question of Christian or Anti-Christian or any of the blends of both which are far more common than either of these (if, indeed, they are ever to be found in "pure" form at all), but of evaluations in other fields altogether. Much of the confusion is due to the fact that the term "Scottish Renaissance" has been widened until it has become practically meaningless; any Tom, Dick, or Harry can claim to be in it, no matter how (tricky word!) "humbly"; it is being expanded to cover all manner of views and activities, a process which, in contradistinction to the efforts of some of us to adscript it to certain strains of activity and make it not a process of "advancing in all directions and in none," but a specific movement in the sense that "Cubism" and "Surrealism" are (or were) movements, is surely conducive to that "woolliness of mind" which Mr. McLaren believes is not one of the Scot's faults but which I and most of my friends regard as his predominant and insuperable characteristic. My propaganda to keep the Renaissance Movement on narrow and thoroughly defined lines (internally, whatever its external manifestations and "lack of consistency" may be) has been greatly misunderstood and called a matter of an "irritatingly superior clique" and so forth, but it really proceeds from the very modest and practicable desire to get something specific done, and not allow the definite effort to degenerate into something that, like statistics, "proves anything."

LAZINESS OF THOUGHT

In broadening the basis of the "movement" in the way in which he accepts, is not Mr. McLaren supporting on another plane that very "laziness of thought and action" which, in the form of a vague pantheism, he hopes may have no place in the Scotland of the future? Let him reflect on the fact that ideas are known by the company they keep, and that the wide generalities,

without any exact definition of terms, in which he involves the discussion, are by no means the best way in which to promote his professed ideals of clarity and decision. Take his phrase: "Religions of the Devil - Communism and Satanism," for example. What of the hundred and one things it might mean, does it, if it is not just meaningless or sensation-mongering for conventional religious minds or (most probably) the expression of a personal political prejudice or misunderstanding of the Russian situation grotesquely collated to a loose use of the term "Satanism," which, properly used, has very precise connotations, actually mean? Again, take his conclusion, in which he says that if the Scottish Renaissance does not combine both faith and intellectual integrity it is doomed. Everything terrestrial is doomed; great movements that have combined both faith and intellectual integrity have lapsed into oblivion or are more or less completely overshadowed by other movements lacking, or with far less of both. Mr. M'Laren is "talking big"; some of us are reasonably content enough to produce a poem or a musical setting or a play which is a definite contribution to a particular stream of creative activity at a given moment, and it seems to me that the Scottish Renaissance Movement will be far better advised to tackle such little things to its hand than embark on attempts at omniscience.

So far as poets, composers, and artists generally are concerned, it is wrong to expect orthodoxy of them. Didn't the vagabond, Verlaine, write great religious poems? Was not the decadent Baudelaire profoundly religious? Did not Burns express certain sentiments here and the very opposite ones elsewhere? Must we be identified with the views we express rather than have it recognised that, instead of being really ours at all, we have only used them because we saw they could be turned into an excellent poem? Does it matter that Dante's or Milton's "systems" are obsolete? Does it matter, in short, whether our work is Christian or anti-Christian so long as

it has aesthetic values which either outlast or are independent of changing conceptions and beliefs or, if that is the best we can do, seems to us to have at least a temporary measure of such autonomous validity and value?

A LIMITED VIEW

The proof of the pudding is in the preein' o't. Mr. M'Laren does not condescend to instances. Preferring to take an extremely limited view of the Scottish Renaissance Group (which, with the exception of one or two younger men associated with "The Modern Scot" and "The Free Man," has, in my view, the same personnel as it had when it first began to attract attention), I personally would have answered the editor's question - "Is the Scottish Renaissance Hostile to Religion?" by saying that co-existent with hostile elements in their work there are other elements in the work of the artists in question which are probably the only real religious creations Scotland has manifested in their respective spheres since the fifteenth century. The preoccupation with religious issues characteristic of the members of the group carries its own message - no matter what the variant conclusions arrived at by them in different pieces of work may be. What more glorious religious song-setting has Scotland produced than F. G. Scott's of Dunbar's "Rorate Coeli"; what contemporary Scot has given profounder study to religious themes than Edwin Muir; what periodical in Scotland has joined issue more intensively with Karl Barth, Maritain, Peter Wust, and other modern religious leaders of thought than "The Modern Scot"? Scores of Catholics have expressed to me their appreciation of one particular small lyric of mine, and daily since it appeared some ten years ago I have had the prayers for "her wild poet" of a certain Reverend Mother, although I have expressed diametrically opposite attitudes to the religious belief in question in many other poems. I have all along been conscious that - however blasphemously I inverted it - I could no

more get rid of my Protestant heredity than James Joyce can get rid of his early Roman Catholic training, and, just as many Russians who were opposed to Bolshevism have now accepted it as at least a major fact in Russian history which must be accepted on patriotic grounds, so, more recently, I have been driven in my work to adopt an attitude to the Church of Scotland (despite my membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain) analogous to that of certain Russian writers who accepted the Russian Church not because of its tenets, but because the Russian people believed them, and this accounts for the fact that I devote a whole section of "Clann Albann" to the Scottish Church, my father's and mother's beliefs and practices, and allied themes, and am forced to conclusions which I express, inter alia, in such terms as these:-

"...but ave ahint
Sic changin' thochts the countrv
o' my birth
Claims me. means mair to me. till
a' the thochts
I e'er can hae seem naething set
aside
Religious history in Scotland here -
My secret. devious. and persistent guide.
The facts prevail: and hoo that compares
Wi religious history in ither lands.
And my approval here and disapproval
there.
At last my spirit hailly understands
Is vain and trivial. My spirit
understands
Altho'. like surface water owre
still deeps.
My thochts gang helter-skelter,
and faur ben.
My nature its ain stubborn coonsel
keeps,
Owreborne. acceptin' since it can
nae ither,
This complex and unanswerable poo'er,
But never reconciled to it - at best
Deeply alane for ever as best
freends endure."

The answer then to the question - Is the Scottish Renaissance Hostile to Religion? - is, simply, both "yes" and "no".

From 'Lucky Poet' (7) (L.P., p. 224; M.T., p. 66)

p. 67: The poem reproduced at the end of this extract is one of the interpolated lyrics of To Circumjack Cencrastus (see C.P. I, p. 189). Misprinted in Lucky Poet, it has been corrected here. The poem was accompanied on its original publication by a note explaining that the 'day' in question was 'The day of Christ's crucifixion' (C.P. I, p. 189).

Museum Piece (C.P. I, p. 300; M.T., p. 68)

This lyric was published in First Hymn to Lenin and other poems. The poet here combines the evolutionary doctrines of Solovyov and Bergson (see Vol. I pp. 365-78) with his own wry attitude to women in a highly individual, if not wholly serious, defence of 'difficulty' in poetry. The poem hinges on the notion that life-forms which do not help nature towards self-consciousness are phased out of the evolutionary drama. The Muckle Toon's characteristically negative outlook on sexual relations (see Vol. I, pp. 491-8) is softened somewhat by humour in 'Museum Piece'.

--ooOoo--

1.4: 'Its original place': This allusion to the biblical account of the creation of Eve from Adam's rib (Genesis 2: 21-3) is one of a number of references to Genesis in The Muckle Toon (see Vol. I, pp. 441-2). Compare to ll. 5-6 of 'Lynch-Pin' (C.P. I, p.332: M.T., p. 69).

1.7: 'the woman in me': 'Clann Albann: An Explanation' states that the third volume of MacDiarmid's 'five-fold scheme' was to be 'bipsychic (or Tiresiasian)' in character (M.T., p. 239). In 'Vestigia Nulla Retrorsum', published in the Free Man on December 30th 1933 (i.e., within a few months of the 'Explanation') the poet wrote of the 'gynandromorphic moods' he shared with Rilke (see C.P. I, p. 417). Iain Crichton Smith's essay, 'The Golden Lyric' interprets MacDiarmid's poetic development in terms of a conflict between the male and female elements of his psyche:

I believe that what happened to MacDiarmid is as follows. He began as a poet with both a masculine and feminine sensibility and eventually allowed the masculine elements in himself to dominate his work, therefore to a great extent becoming less human than he once was.

For what we find in the early MacDiarmid and miss in the later is a real tenderness, a real feminine love.

(A Critical Survey, p. 135)

11.13-16: Compare to 11. 17-20 of 'Another Turn of the
Screw' (C.P. I, p. 310; M.T., p. 57).

Lvnch-Pin (C.P. I, p. 332; M.T., p. 69)

This lyric was published in the Dublin Magazine of October-December 1932, and collected in Scots Unbound and other poems. 'A. E.' (George William Russell), to whom it is dedicated, had reviewed MacDiarmid's first three books and published 'The Irish in Scotland' (C.P. I, p. 207) in his periodical, the Irish Statesman, before the two men met in Dublin in 1928. Russell contributed an introduction and a frontispiece portrait of the author to First Hymn to Lenin and other poems. He wrote in the Introduction that on first coming across 'Ballad of the Five Senses' (C.P. I, p. 36) he felt that he had found a poet 'born under the same star'. 'But', he continued,

I soon found that the circle of our beings intersected only at that one point, and, instead of the attraction of affinities, I began to feel the attraction which opposites have for us. I turned to other pages of Sangschaw and found the MacDiarmid who grew into The Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle (sic) or the poet of To Circumjack Cencrastus - a sardonic rebel snarling at the orthodoxies with something like old Carlyle's rasping, cantankerous, oracular utterance. It was no spiritual kinsman of mine....

MacDiarmid may have intended 'Lynch-Pin' as an apologia pro vita suo in response to these remarks by the Irish poet. See Vol. I, p. 323.

--ooOoo--

11.5-6: 'no'/In any woman hidden': This second reference to the creation of Eve from one of Adam's ribs - the first occurs in 1.4 of 'Museum Piece' (C.P. I, p. 300; M.T., p. 68) - partakes of the Genesis motif discussed in Vol. I, pp. 441-2.

1.10: 'To embody a' creation': The significance of this phrase is discussed in Vol. I, pp. 92-3.

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MacDiarmid wrote in 'Clann Albann: An Explanation' that The Muckle Toon would include 'poems...about my first contacts with...Death' (M.T., p. 236). All the writings collected in this section, with one exception, relate to such 'contacts'. The exception is 'Homage to Dunbar' (C.P. II, p. 1265; M.T., p. 94), one of the most difficult to place of the pieces ascribed to Clann Albann. It appears here because it deals, like some of the other poems, with a grave - albeit an unknown one - and because it shares the spirit of the elegy on John Davidson ('John Davidson', M.T., p. 93) which precedes it.

I am indebted to Ruth McQuillan for the suggestion that the prevalence of graveyard settings and grave-stone imagery in MacDiarmid's work relates to the practice of

paying Sunday-afternoon visits to cemeteries which was customary among Scottish families in the Victorian era.

The Graves of My Race (C.P. II, p. 1250; M.T., p.70)

The words 'From "Clann Albann"' appeared in brackets under the title when this poem was published in the Scottish Educational Journal on July 17th 1931.

Old Miss Beattie (M.T., p. 71)

This story appeared in the 1927 issue of the Gallovidian Annual.

'Old Miss Beattie' is alone among the more autobiographical pieces of 'the prose Muckle Toon' in giving expression to the macabre side of MacDiarmid's imagination. A situation very similar to that presented here is treated naturalistically in 'Maria' (M.T., p. 82). 'Tam' in the latter story is far less worldly-wise than the Langholm boy depicted in this sketch. Both stories like 'Andy' (M.T., p. 43), offer us a view of family life which, in its externals at least, closely resembles that of the Grieve household. The brother figure in all three sketches is far less studious and imaginative than the boy who holds centre-stage (and, be it said, far less studious than the historical, bursary-winning Andrew Graham Grieve). This, however, is the only

story in which the younger boy's lack of enthusiasm for book-learning is shown as a source of concern for his parents. It is also the only item from 'the prose Muckle Toon' to reflect anything of the piety of James and Elizabeth Grieve.

Old Miss Beattie appears again in "'Holie for Nags"' (M.T., p. 228).

--oo0oo--

p. 72 : 'I managed no' sae bad wi' the lassies': 'Murtholm Hill' (M.T., p. 180) does not bear out this boast.

p. 72 : 'I'd learned the knack...a vera different view': Compare to opening of 'Murtholm Hill' (M.T., p. 180).

From 'Lucky Poet' (8) (L.P., p. 4; M.T., p. 79)

p. 79: 'the queer old churchyard of Crowdieknowe':
See note to 'Crowdieknowe' (below, p. 336).

Crowdieknowe (C.P. I, p. 26; M.T., p. 81)

Though at first sight 'Crowdieknowe' appears to be one of the more conventional of the 'early lyrics', the poem seems to have derived from no less peculiarly linguistic an impulse than the most obviously experimental pieces in Sangschaw and Penny Wheep. The extract from Lucky Poet on pp. 79-80 of the present compilation, like the reference to 'croodit clay' in the seventh line of the poem, suggests that the lyric grew from MacDiarmid's interpretation of the meaning of the place-name 'Crowdieknowe' as 'Crowded Knoll'.

'Crowdieknowe', however, does not mean 'Crowded Knoll', and is not the name of a graveyard.

'Crowdie' is a thin gruel akin to porridge.

'Crowdieknowe', which might loosely be translated into English as 'Porridge Knoll', is the name of a

farm adjacent to Middlebie Kirkyard. A fortuitous (or wilful?) misreading of the farm's homely name, and misapplication of it to the neighbouring churchyard, resulted in the present poem.

Last day poems are traditional in Scottish literature. Of the many references to the end of the world in MacDiarmid's work perhaps the most impressive is to be found at the climax of 'Lament for the Great Music' (see C.P. I, pp. 481-2).

Maria (M.T., p. 82)

This story was published in the Glasgow Herald on August 27th 1927. See note on 'Old Miss Beattie' (above, p.333). I have been unable to ascertain whether this perceptive study of a child's response to being present at the death of an old woman is based on an incident in Christopher Grieve's early experience.

--ooOoo--

p. 85: 'It gied...muckle doonsin' e'e': MacDiarmid's Langholm writings make a number of references to his boyhood fascination with chestnuts. See note to p. 7 of 'My Native Place' (above, p.253).

p. 86: 'up on the golf course': Langholm's golf links are situated on the braes of Whita Hill.

p. 86: 'Shairly it took mair courage...roon' the hill':
Such uneasy self-justification is no less typical of
the mature MacDiarmid than of his fictional representations
of his youthful self. See Vol. I, pp. 40-4.

Fatherless in Boyhood (C.P. II, p. 1250; M.T., p. 89)

The words 'From "Clann Albann"' appeared in parentheses under the title when this poem was published in the Scottish Educational Journal on July 31st 1931.

This poem and the one which follows it in the present compilation take up the theme of James Grievie's death which is introduced in ll. 37-73 of 'From Work in Progress' (see C.P. II, pp. 1148-9; M.T., p. 11-12).

--ooOoo--

ll. 6-7: Other Martian comparisons can be found in l. 3 of 'A Dumfriesshire Boy' (C.P. I, p. 384; M.T., p. 1) and ll. 33-6 of 'From Work in Progress' (C.P. II, p. 1148; M.T., p. 11).

At My Father's Grave (C.P. I, p. 299; M.T., p. 90)

This poem from the First Hymn to Lenin volume, like 'Fatherless in Boyhood' (C.P. II, p. 1250; M.T., p. 89), develops the meditation on the significance of James Grieve's death inaugurated by ll.37-73 of 'From Work in Progress' (see C.P. II, pp. 1148-9; M.T., p. 11-12).

James and Elizabeth Grieve are buried in the old part of Langholm Cemetery. Their famous son is buried some yards away in the extension to the graveyard. In 1931, when this poem was written, the poet's father had yet to be joined in his resting-place by his wife. Before the addition of a line to commemorate Elizabeth Graham, the older Grieve's headstone read:

I H S

In Loving Memory

of

James Grieve

(Ewes Postman for 27 years)

who died at Langholm

3rd February 1911

Aged 47 years

I am indebted to Dr. McQuillan for the information that the poet paid to have the headstone cleaned in the nineteen-sixties.

--oo0oo--

1.5: 'the great darkness o' your death': It is arguable that this line is echoed in 1.2 of 'Of John Davidson' (C.P. I, p. 362; M.T., p. 92).

11.7-8: These lines constitute, on one level at least, an attack upon quasi-mystical attitudes to death such as that which, as I have suggested in Vol. I, pp. 387-92, is implied at certain points in The Muckle Toon. The following sentence from a letter sent by the poet to Edwin Morgan on January 15th 1975 may be worth quoting here:

While then I have no use whatever for 'the brotherhood of man' or 'my fellow-men' or anything of that kind - derivatives all from the notion of the fatherhood of God - I must tell you that 'The Watergaw' was not written about my dying father - or the dying of any other person - and suffers I think because it can be read in that way, whereas my actual 'inhuman' attitude is much more truly expressed in 'At My Father's Grave'.

(Letters, p. 677)

At a Humble Grave (C.P. II, p. 1251; M.T., p. 91)

The words 'From "Clann Albann"' appeared in brackets under the title of this poem when it was published on August 14th 1931 in The Scottish Educational Journal.

Though it is by no means certain that this curiously ungrammatical piece refers to the burial place of James Grieve, I have placed it immediately after 'At My Father's Grave' as l.1 seems to point back to another graveside poem.

--ooOoo--

1.3: 'That': Omission of this word would make the first stanza more meaningful.

1.6: This line strongly recalls the closing sentence of 'At My Father's Grave', strengthening the case for regarding the present poem as a sort of addendum to that celebrated lyric.

1.7: What is the object of the verb 'credit'? A reference to 'thochts profounder than I ha'e' may be understood, but in that case the poet could have inserted 'them' after 'credit' without doing violence to the metre.

1.8: 'Nihum-Nahum': One of the 'minor prophets frae vennel and wynd' of 'On Coming Home' (C.P. I, p. 381; M.T., p. 63), perhaps? Nahum was an Old Testament prophet.

Of John Davidson (C.P. I, p. 362; M.T., p. 92)

On its appearance in the New English Weekly of August 11th 1932, this poem, the more robust of the pair of slight elegies on Davidson published by MacDiarmid in 1932, was said to be 'From "Clann Albann"'. The poem was collected in the Scots Unbound volume.

John Davidson (1857-1909) was described by the author of The Muckle Toon as 'the only Scottish poet to whom I owe anything at all, or to whom I would be pleased to admit any debt' (Selected Essays, p. 197). MacDiarmid admired Davidson's work chiefly for its ambitious scope and restless intellectuality. We have seen in Vol. I (pp. 374-6) that the evolutionary vision of the Langholm poetry owes something to Davidson's thought. Not until the later thirties,

however, would the younger poet follow his compatriot's lead in exploring the poetic potential of the scientific outlook in a deliberately 'anti-poetic' style.

W. B. Yeats, who was acquainted with Davidson through his membership of the Rhymers' Club, was struck by his 'Scottish roughness and exasperation' (Autobiographies (London, 1955), p. 168). 'When I heard...that he had drowned himself', wrote the Irish poet, 'I knew that I had always expected some such end' (ibid., p. 318). The response of Christopher Grieve, who can have known little of the character and personal circumstances of the object of his adolescent adulation, was very different. He recalled in 1961:

I did not know him personally, but I remember as if it were yesterday how the news of his suicide by walking into the sea off Penzance in March 1909, when I was a lad of seventeen, affected me. I felt as if the bottom had fallen out of my world.

...

Young as I was, it had already become obvious that I was destined to become a poet, and my parents were alarmed at the thought that I was about to devote my life to so unprofitable a business - a business in which there was no money and no security. They, and other friends, were already representing to me that versifying should be kept, if at all, merely as a spare-time affair. In Davidson's death, coming on top of such anxieties as to the course my life was to take, I probably had a premonition of what Muriel Stuart, a subsequent Scottish poet friend of mine, wrote in this connection:

Thou knowest at what cost
 Thy sleep was taken on those awful hills -
 What thou hast gained, and lost;
 Thou knowest, too, if what thou art fulfils
 The pledge of what thou wast,
 And if all compensates the poet's wreath
 That wounds the brow beneath.

(Selected Essays, pp. 197-8)

The Introduction to The Poems of John Davidson (edited by Andrew Turnbull, 2 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1973)) comprises a valuable essay on the poet's life and work. Turnbull's account of Davidson's death (op. cit., Vol. I, pp.xvi-xvii) fills in the background to the present poem:

Davidson disappeared on March 23, 1909. Leaving the house to post a parcel of literary material to Grant Richards, he went to a local hotel where he had a glass of whisky and a cigar and was not seen again until his body was recovered from the sea six months later. Though his revolver and two cartridges had disappeared along with him, and the body carried marks, in the skull, of the possible entry and exit of a bullet, the inquest on the poet's death, through insufficient evidence, returned a verdict merely of 'Found Dead'.

There seems little doubt, however, that Davidson committed suicide. The preface to the posthumously published Fleet Street and Other Poems, the MS. of which came to light soon after his disappearance, hints strongly at the poet's intention of taking his own life:

The time has come to make an end.
There are several motives. I find
my pension is not enough; I have
therefore still to turn aside and
attempt things for which people
will pay. My health also counts.
Asthma and other annoyances I have
tolerated for years; but I cannot
put up with cancer.

Further statements in both Davidson's later poetry and his letters support this conclusion. Though there is no evidence that Davidson actually had cancer, the fear of such a disease, coupled with other hardships, acting on an obviously unstable mind, could well have driven the poet to suicide.

Davidson, according to his own wishes, was buried at sea, some seven miles off Penzance, on September 21, 1909.

'Of John Davidson' is written not in Scots but in English, the language of all its subject's poetry.

1.2: 'and darker': This phrase was probably intended
as an echo of 1.5 of 'At My Father's Grave'
(C.P. I, p. 299; M.T., p. 90).

John Davidson (M.T., p. 93)

This little lyric, missed by the compilers of the Complete Poems, was published in the Free Man on July 2nd 1932. Though accompanied there by no note ascribing it to Clann Albann, it was almost certainly intended for that work. The other elegy on Davidson (see C.P. I, p. 332; M.T., p. 92), after all, had been assigned to the 'five-fold scheme', and the characteristic Muckle Toon concerns with Scottish pugnacity and with the meaning of death make an appearance here.

--ooOoo--

ll.1-5: See Vol. I, pp. 479-83 for a discussion of the notion, which recurs in the Langholm poetry, that the fighting skills of the Borderers have been misapplied.

11.5-6: The relation of these lines to the philosophical thanatopsis which is implied, but never fully disclosed, by the Muckle Toon poetry is considered in Vol. I, p. 388.

1.9: I have removed from the end of this line the semi-colon which appears in the original printing of the present poem.

Homage to Dunbar (C.P. II, p. 1265; M.T., p. 94)

The words 'From "Clann Albann"' appeared in brackets under the title of the present poem on its publication in the Scottish Educational Journal on August 26th 1932. The poem may have been intended for one of the later volumes of MacDiarmid's 'five-fold scheme'. While there seems little point in trying to relate its ostensible subject-matter to the Langholm experience of Christopher Grieve, I have placed it here because of its concern with a burial-place and because it corresponds in both mood and outlook with the second elegy on John Davidson (M.T., p. 93). Dunbar here, like Davidson there, serves MacDiarmid as a means of highlighting the cultural desolation of twentieth-century Scotland. The medieval poet receives a very generalised tribute which eschews specific reference to either his life or his work.

William Dunbar (?1460-?1521?), perhaps the most celebrated of the late medieval Scots 'makars', was called by MacDiarmid, 'the greatest poet Scotland has yet produced whether in Gaelic, Scots, Latin or English' (Selected Poems of William Dunbar, edited and introduced by Hugh MacDiarmid (Glasgow, 1955), p. 7). Grieve's desire to re-intellectualise Scottish poetry was encapsulated in the early slogan of his Renaissance Movement:

Not Burns - Dunbar!

Half a century after coining that battle-cry,
MacDiarmid reflected:

'Not Burns - Dunbar!' The choice of Dunbar was an obvious one, but not necessarily the right one. Dunbar was a great technician of verse and had language at large. From certain angles his work seemed surprisingly modern. It appealed to the taste of many young poets in a way that the work of the other great makars failed to do. But this was a transitional phase.... (I)n the critical atmosphere prevailing today it is clear that Henryson...is the greatest. Our Gaelic poets and our Latin poets are not under consideration in this context.

(Henryson, selected by Hugh MacDiarmid

(Harmondsworth, 1973), Introduction pp. 7-8, 14)

A short critical account of Dunbar's achievement can be found on pp. 53-76 of Kurt Wittig's The Scottish Tradition in Literature (Edinburgh and London, 1958)

1.5: 'Brankstone's deidly barrow': Burial site of the Scots who fell at Flodden.

1.7: The reference here is to 'The Flowers of the Forest', a lament for Flodden best known in the version by Jean Elliott (1727-1805). The defeat of James IV at Flodden in 1513 was one of the great disasters of Scottish history.

1.9: 'The bells o' Ys': There is a sea-faring tradition that Atlantic mariners can sometimes hear bells tolling from the drowned city of Ys.

The promise made in 'Clann Albann: An Explanation' that MacDiarmid's Langholm volume would contain 'poems about' his 'first contacts with Love' (M.T., p. 236) was not fulfilled (see Vol. I, p. 491). There is almost nothing in the vast MacDiarmid canon on the subject of the author's early amorous experience. While the three pieces collected here were not (with the possible exception of the first) written with The Muckle Toon in mind, they come closer than anything else in the Complete Poems to meeting the 'Explanation's' commitment with regard to 'first contacts with Love'. 'Murtholm Hill' (M.T., p. 180) might have been included in the present section on the basis of its depiction of an adolescent boy's uncertain responses to the opposite sex. However, the story's coy resolution, which has 'Peter' tobogganning down the braes of Warblaw accompanied not only by the minister's pretty niece but by the minister himself, made a place in Appendix B, among the lesser items of 'the prose Muckle Toon', seem more appropriate.

The very skimpy evidence with regard to Grieve's early involvement with girls is considered in Vol. I, pp. 49-50, 57, while the characteristic Muckle Toon attitude to sexual commerce is discussed on pp. 491-8.

First Love (C.P. I, p. 434; M.T., p. 95)

This lyric was published in the European Quarterly on May 1st 1934 and collected later the same year in both the Selected Poems and Stony Limits volumes. It appeared in the latter book as a replacement for 'Edinburgh Town' (C.P. I, p. 483), deleted at the insistence of a timorous Victor Gollancz. The Stony Limits version, sent by the poet to Gollancz on April 9th 1934, has a different last line:

But now - cold, cold!

than the others:

Except for the cold.

Dr. W. R. Aitken, to whom I am indebted for the information contained in this note, chose the Stony Limits version of 'First Love' for inclusion in the Complete Poems, and this is the version which is reproduced here.

It is conceivable, given the fact that it was published less than a year after 'Clann Albann: An Explanation', that 'First Love' was intended by MacDiarmid for inclusion in The Muckle Toon.

From 'The Kind of Poetry I Want' (C.P. II, p. 1032;
M.T., p. 96)

These lines from The Kind of Poetry I Want (1961), a catalogue poem made up for the most part from passages which had appeared twenty years earlier in Lucky Poet, convey MacDiarmid's characteristic distaste for physical relations between men and women (see Vol. I, pp. 496-8). They are remarkable for their coarseness and for their implication that the poet found sexuality repulsive even in his adolescent years.

Of My First Love (C.P. II, p. 1046; M.T., p. 97)

This poem was published in Poetry Scotland, No. 3 in 1946. Who is the subject of this piece? It cannot be Peggy Grieve, whose hair was dark. I have been unable to ascertain the colour of Minnie Panton's hair (see Vol. I, p.57).

--ooOoo--

l. 1: 'the Eas-Coul-aulin': A note by MacDiarmid reads:

The beautiful Fall of Coul - the highest waterfall in Scotland - its name meaning, in Gaelic, tresses of hair.

This section includes the core philosophical poetry of The Muckle Toon. All the major Water of Life writings appear here, with the exception of 'Water Music' (C.P. I, p. 333; M.T., p. 16) and the pieces concerned with MacDiarmid's crisis of inspiration. (These latter can be found in Section VIII.) See Vol. I, pp. 273-81 for a discussion of the Water of Life emblem.

First Hymn to Lenin (C.P. I, p. 297; M.T., p. 98)

MacDiarmid dedicated the First Hymn collection's title-poem to Prince D. S. Mirsky, an expatriate Russian intellectual to whom he had been introduced by Edwin Muir. An admirer of Bolshevism, Mirsky is thought to have been liquidated after his return to his homeland in the nineteen thirties. This aristocratic Communist's books on Russian literature are echoed at three points in The Muckle Toon (see Commentary, above, pp. 307, 313 and below, p. 439).

In 'Clann Albann: An Explanation' MacDiarmid argued for the relevance of his first two 'Hymns to Lenin' to The Muckle Toon (the 'Third Hymn' (C.P. II, p. 893) belongs to a later period and is not closely related to the others):

The hymns to Lenin which have occasioned controversy have their natural part in their (sic) first book because they are in logical sequence from the radicalism of that Border burgh and my father's pronounced Trade Unionist and Co-operative sympathies, while, in a wider sense, the return to thoughts of Langholm and my boyhood represents a "return to the people" which has its bearings on the motives which impelled me to use braid Scots and have led me at this stage in my career to my present political position.

(M.T., p. 238)

However, he cautioned his readers against construing that position on the basis of the 'Hymns':

I would...warn all who may be tempted to regard such poems, or those which deal with religious questions, as expressions of my own opinions, to remember that they only form parts of the first volume of this very big scheme and are placed thus early in it of set design - in other words, presented merely as starting points for the attitudes developed from book to book.

(M.T., p. 238)

The political vision of The Muckle Toon is discussed on pp. 401-14, and MacDiarmid's treatment of Lenin on p. 380 and pp. 431-7, of Vol. I.

--ooOoo--

1.7: Of the three British political personalities MacDiarmid compares to the Gospel's centurions, two are very famous while the third is now virtually unknown. The famous are Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965), whose greatest achievements, as Britain's war-time Prime Minister, still lay well in the future when this poem was written, and the newspaper proprietor and government minister, Lord Beaverbrook (1879-1964). The more or less forgotten figure is the Right Honourable Godfrey Locker-Lampson (b. 1875), who served as Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs from 1925 to 1929.

Lord Beaverbrook played a minor part in the story of the poet's sojourn in England. On January 6th 1930 Grieve wrote to George Ogilvie:

Senator Oliver St. John Gogarty has been bringing special pressure to bear upon Lord Beaverbrook with whom he has been staying with regard to what he considers the 'Shameful way in which I have been frozen out' and I have just had an extraordinarily kind letter from Lord Beaverbrook in which he expresses the greatest admiration for my works and says that he is arranging for an early meeting.

The poet's hopes of advancement through his contacts in high places were not to be fulfilled. He complained to Helen Cruickshank on August 19th 1932:

Beaverbrook won't help me - regards me as a distinctly dangerous monomaniac....

11.16-18: MacDiarmid may have had the following texts in mind here: Mark 6:7 ff (possibly also Mark 9:36ff); Luke 7:18-28, especially v. 28; Matthew 16:24ff; Matthew 21:22 ff; John 16:12ff; Mark 16:14-18; John 5:20 ff; and John 14:12 ff. Father Seán Quinlan, Professor of New Testament Scripture at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, has written to me that he has 'no doubt that the lines in "First Hymn to Lenin" arise from the above texts, and not a specific, single text'. Only in John 14:12, however, do we find wording close to MacDiarmid's:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

But as capable of such complete assimilation and
 surrender,
 So all-inclusive, unfenced-off, uncategoried,
 sensitive and tender,
 That growth is unconditioned and unwarped....

('Third Hymn to Lenin', C.P. II, pp. 900-1)

1.43: The reference here is to Matthew 18 : 2-3:

And Jesus called a little child unto him,
 and set him in the midst of them, and said,
 Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted,
 and become as little children, ye shall not
 enter into the kingdom of heaven.

11.46-7: These lines comprise a variation on Marx's
 famous dictum that religion is the opium of the people.

11.49-54: The issues raised by this stanza are discussed
 in Vol. I, pp. 409-14.

1.49: 'As...insignificant...as death': A theory of
 death is hinted at here, as at a number of other points
 in The Muckle Toon. See Vol. I, pp. 387-92.

1.51: The Cheka was the Bolshevik secret service,
 its Russian initials standing for 'All-Russian
 Extraordinary Commission For Combatting Counter-
 revolution and Sabotage'. The G.P.U., or 'State
 Political Administration', replaced the Cheka in
 1922, nine years before this line was written.

1.55: Compare to 1.54 of 'The Burning Passion'
(C.P. I, p. 305; M.T., p. 140).

1.58-60: David Craig has commented (in his essay
'MacDiarmid the Marxist Poet', The Real Foundations
Literature and Social Change (London, 1974), p. 240)
that the poet here 'puts into verse one of the deepest
thoughts in Capital'. The 'thought' in question,
which he ascribes to Capital, I, Chap. I, Section 4,
'The Fetishism of Commodities', 91-2, Craig reproduces
as follows:

The religious reflex of the real world can...
only then finally vanish, when the practical
relations of everyday life offer to man none
but perfectly intelligible and reasonable
relations with regard to his fellowmen and
to nature. The life-process of society,
which is based on material production,
does not strip off its mystical veil until
it is treated as production by freely associated
men, and is consciously regulated by them in
accordance with a settled plan.

From 'Lucky Poet' (9) (L.P., p. 3; M.T., p.100)

p. 100: 'my faith has always been...': While MacDiarmid retained almost a rustic's horror of big-city life (see Vol. I, pp. 203-4, and Edwin Morgan, Hugh MacDiarmid (Harlow, 1976), p.3), it is true that he felt more at home with the small-town life of Langholm than with the ethos of the Dumfriesshire countryside. See Vol. I, pp. 452-3.

p. 101: 'I have not lost the faculty...': See Vol. I, p. 459.

Water of Life (C.P. II, p. 1251; M.T., p. 102)

The words 'From "Clann Albann"' appeared in brackets under the title when this poem was published in the Scottish Educational Journal on September 4th 1931.

This is one of two Muckle Toon poems with the title, 'Water of Life'. The other, more important piece appears in C.P. I, p. 314; M.T., p. 112. The title had previously been used by Grieve for an early poem, only a fragment (C.P. II, p. 1213) of which was published. That fragment's relationship to the Muckle Toon's 'Water of Life' poems is discussed in Vol. I, p. 281.

--ooOoo--

11.13-16: These are among the lines in The Muckle Toon which seem to imply a philosophical thanatopsis. See Vol. I, pp. 387-92. A vessel and water analogy such as that provided by these lines can be found in the fifth paragraph of 'The Waterside' (M.T., p. 107).

The Waterside (M.T., p. 103)

This story was published in the Glasgow Herald on April 16th 1927. By virtue of its symbolic treatment of Langholm's rivers, 'The Waterside' is more closely related than any other item in 'the prose Muckle Toon' to the Clann Albann writings of the early thirties. It is also perhaps MacDiarmid's finest exercise in imaginative prose.

The central incident of 'The Waterside' is retold as follows in Lucky Poet (pp. 224-5):

We were, indeed, in Langholm in excelsis the 'hairy ones'. The best Langholm story, perhaps, is that of a day when the Esk was in great spate and threatening to carry away the Suspension Bridge. It was a Sunday, and in the afternoon, just as the children had come out of the parish church Sunday school and crowded onto the Bridge, it suddenly

broke in two and precipitated all the bairns into the boiling torrent like, as an eye-witness put it, 'jawin' a wheen tea-leaves into a sink'. The news spread like lightning, and in a few seconds - almost before the children touched water - a crowd had collected, human chains of linked fathers and mothers were made, and soon the children were being rescued. One woman in her excitement, however, grabbed a little girl, gave her a look, saw it wasn't her own child, and - threw her in again! That woman was a Langholmite of the first water.

In John and Robert Hyslop's Langholm As It Was (Sunderland, 1912), pp.682-3, the historical event which underlies 'The Waterside' and the extract from Lucky Poet - the collapse of the Boatford Brig - is recounted as follows:

The Bridge was finished and ready for the opening. It was a brilliant day in the August of 1871 when the barriers were removed and a large number of people, amongst whom were many children newly out of the schools in the Free Kirk Entry, crowded onto the Bridge. In the grounds of the Established Kirk, Messrs. Carruthers were waiting to take a photograph of the scene. The crowd naturally spread itself along the near side of the Bridge, and the moment of suspense had arrived, when the photographer puts his head under the cloth, then the Bridge suddenly gave way, and the people were tumbled into the river amidst a mass of broken timber. Fortunately it went down very gently, and just as fortunately the river was low, otherwise there would have been a heavy death-roll,

as the current is very powerful at that part. Naturally there was a scene of intense excitement. Such an occurrence had never before been witnessed in Langholm. Stories, mostly legendary I think, were told of frantic mothers rushing into the river, picking up a child and, finding it was not theirs, dropping it again in and passing on. Several people were hurt, one of them being an old lady of 92...and another was one of my own boys. He had hung by the wires, but losing his presence of mind, fell among the broken timber.

--oo0oo--

p. 107: 'They were like a puckle water when a jug
braks': Compare to 'Water of Life', ll.13-16 (C.P. II,
p. 1251; M.T., p. 102).

p. 108: 'thocht's a dryland thing': Compare to l.11
of 'The Dog Pool' (C.P. II, p. 1252; M.T., p. 161).

Water of Life (C.P. I, p. 314; M.T., p. 112)

This poem from the First Hymn to Lenin collection is the more important of The Muckle Toon's two 'Water of Life' pieces (see above, p. 370). It is presented here as it appears in First Hymn to Lenin and other poems and the Complete Poems, i.e., as a poem predominantly of six-line stanzas (the seventh stanza being exceptional in having an extra line), with four italicized quatrains interpolated between Stanzas Sixteen and Seventeen. The quatrains have an independent title, 'Excelsior', printed in a smaller face than the title of the surrounding poem. The editors of the Collected Poems and the Hugh MacDiarmid Anthology present ll.1-97 as 'Water of Life', and 'Excelsior' and ll.98-145 as 'Excelsior'. In the Penguin Selected Poems the difficulties are compounded by the reprinting of ll.1-97 and the exclusion of

'Excelsior' and the 'Water of Life' stanzas which follow it. This editorial confusion has hampered appreciation of one of MacDiarmid's finest poems. The best critical account of 'Water of Life' is to be found in Gish, pp. 140-7. Gish treats ll. 1-145 and 'Excelsior' as 'a single piece united by images and themes' (p. 140), without realising that her intuition is sanctioned by bibliographical fact.

--ooOoo--

1.2: The Noah's Flood aspect of the Water of Life links The Muckle Toon's major symbol to the Genesis motif. See Vol. I, pp. 276-7 and 441.

1.6: While 'ploutered' can mean 'waded' or 'floundered', it is probable that MacDiarmid used the word here in its sense of 'paddled' in accordance with the characteristic Muckle Toon identification between childhood and early stages of evolution. See Vol. I, pp. 415-22.

ll.7-10: See 'The Liquid Light' (C.P. I, p. 306; M.T., p. 117).

ll.10-12: Levels of meaning in these lines, which echo St. John, are considered in Vol. I, pp. 309-10. See Vol. I, pp. 491-8 for a discussion of MacDiarmid's attitude to sexual relations in the Langholm poetry.

ll.25-49: The sexual encounter which provides the subject of this unusually 'confessional' passage is recalled with horror by MacDiarmid not only because sex reminds him of mankind's slimy beginnings but also because his relationship with 'yon Eastern whore' belongs to an outmoded phase of his personal development. Ll.34-6 and 40-4 assert in their very tribute to the woman's passion and beauty that such things are of no more use to the poet in his quest for illumination than games played with bits of leather and broken mirrors are to the conduct of conventional adulthood. See Vol. I, pp.420 and 495.

1.29: The reference to the cities of the plain, the story of whose destruction is recounted in chapters 18 and 19 of Genesis, contributes to a major motif in the Langholm poetry. See Vol. I, pp. 441-2.

11.50-5: This stanza comprises one of The Muckle Toon's many apparent references to a theory of death. See Vol. I, pp. 387-92.

1.56: Compare to 1.19 of 'Charisma and My Relatives' (C.P. I, p. 302; M.T., p. 41).

11.68-71: Compare to 11.117-21 of 'Whuchulls' (C.P. II, p. 1092; M.T., p. 155).

1.74: 'yon': The relationship described in 11.25-49, presumably.

11.80-91: The conviction which underlies these remarkable lines is discussed in Vol. I, pp. 383-6.

1.88: The Fairy Loup is a small waterfall on the road between Langholm and Canonbie.

11.96-7: An echo of Bergson's Creative Evolution?
- see Vol. I, pp. 373-4.

Excelsior (C.P. I, p. 317; M.T., p. 114)

This interpolated lyric's title means 'higher still': it was probably intended to refer to the climactic 'Water of Life' stanza which precedes it, and to proclaim MacDiarmid's determination to edge even further towards epopteia.

--ooOoo--

11.8-12: Compare to 11.77-80 of 'Second Hymn to Lenin' (C.P. I, p. 325; M.T., p. 143).

--ooOoo--

11.100-1: These lines are a variation upon the Langholm saying which serves as the title of the present study.

1.110: The Factory Gullets are described in 'The Waterside' (M.T., p. 104).

1.110: The Skipper's Pool is a pool in the Esk just below the Skipper's Bridge, where the Carlisle road crosses to the west bank of the river.

11.120-1: Compare to 11.13-18 of 'The Dog Pool' (C.P. II, p. 1252; M.T., p. 161)

1.124: The Buck and the Crown are hotels on Langholm's High Street.

11.131-3: A happier linking of urination to the Water of Life than that of l. 37 of 'Water Music's' second section (C.P. I, p. 336; M.T., p. 19). These lines constitute one of The Muckle Toon's many references to St. John's Gospel (see Vol. I, pp.277-8 and 440-1). MacDiarmid's joke here may owe something to the 'Ballad of Joking Jesus' chanted by Buck Mulligan in James Joyce's Ulysses:

If anyone thinks that I amn't divine
 He'll get no free drinks when I'm making the wine
 But have to drink water and wish it were plain
 That I make when the wine becomes water again.

(Ulysses (Harmondsworth, 1969), p.25)

The original of Buck Mulligan, Oliver St. John Gogarty, was a prized acquaintance of the Scottish poet.

MacDiarmid considered the Irishman 'one of the keenest intellects of my time' (Lucky Poet, p. 423). Gogarty warmly reviewed A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle for the Irish Statesman (January 8th 1927, pp. 431-3) and introduced Yeats to one of its lyrics, ('O Wha's the Bride...?' (C.P. I, p. 102). He later wrote to Grieve that Yeats was 'amazed that there should be such writing and he unaware of it' (letter dated September 4th 1951, quoted in Kenneth Buthlay's Hugh MacDiarmid (Edinburgh and London, 1964), p. 120). On his 1928 visit to Dublin Grieve stayed in Gogarty's house in Ely place. He wrote excitedly to Neil Gunn on August 27th:

Home again after a splendid fortnight in Ireland.... Item: A flight in...(a) ...5-cylinder plane and about 1,000 miles motoring with Gogarty (the 'Buck Mulligan' of Joyce's Ulysses)....

ll.134-45: These lines are not to be understood in isolation from 'The Waterside' (M.T., p.103). Ll.135-9, in particular, are complemented and illuminated by pp.105-8 of that story. This suggests that at a certain level of his mind MacDiarmid perceived no distinction between the Langholm project of the early thirties and some of the material he had written for 'the prose Muckle Toon' a few years earlier.

ll.140-5: A. R. Orage's puzzling remarks on this stanza are discussed above, p. 248 .

l.141: Rebecca was the wife of Isaac and the mother of the twins, Jacob and Esau. (Grieve saw his relationship with his brother Andrew in terms of the rivalry between this biblical duo - see Vol. I, p.42). In citing Rebecca, MacDiarmid continues the thread of allusion to Genesis (see Vol. I, pp.441-2). However, there is in Genesis 24 ff., where we read of Rebecca, no mention of a shawl of slime. Norman MacCaig has told me that he drew the poet's attention to this fact only to be told that the name Rebecca was chosen simply to fit the metre! Grieve's sense of fun was responsible in its day for worse mischief

than this reply, however, and in fact 'Water of Life's' reference to Rebecca is not unduly mysterious. Dr. McQuillan has argued (in conversation with me) that Rebecca may be one of the 'figures seen on fountains whiles' of 1.135. A statue of Rebecca at the Well (see Genesis 24) would be appropriate at a water pump or fountain and might indeed be covered by a 'shawl' of slime. The use of the word 'sly' possibly links Rebecca to the woman featured in 11.25-49, who is described in 11.48-9 as 'slarried by/The infernal sly'.

1.143: There is a strong echo here of the last line of the following famous sonnet by Wordsworth:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
 Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
 Little we see in Nature that is ours;
 We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
 This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
 The winds that will be howling at all hours,
 And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
 For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
 It moves us not. - Great God! I'd rather be
 A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
 So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
 Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
 Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

(William Wordsworth: The Poems, edited by
 John O. Hayden, 2 vols. (Harmondsworth, 1977),
 Vol. I, pp. 568-9)

Hayden points out (op. cit., p. 991) that Wordsworth's line has a prototype in l.245 of Spenser's Colin Clouts Come Home Againe:

Triton blowing loud his wreathèd horne.

There are a number of echoes of Wordsworth in The Muckle Toon, all of which are noted in the Commentary.

Parallels between Wordsworth and MacDiarmid are explored in Vol. I, pp.537-49 . This may be the most appropriate point in the present study to mention that William and Dorothy Wordsworth visited Langholm on September 23rd 1803, at the end of a celebrated tour of Scotland. Dorothy recalled

The town, as we approached from the hill, looked very pretty, the houses being roofed with blue slates and standing close to the river Esk, here a large river, that scattered its waters wide over a stony channel. The inn was neat and comfortable, exceedingly clean; I could hardly believe we were still in Scotland.

(A Tour in Scotland in 1803 (Edinburgh, 1981),
p.272)

(That last observation might have amused MacDiarmid!)

The fact that the Esk has a stony channel cannot be

discerned from afar. The description of the river in the above passage seems to present a view of the Factory Gulleys as seen from the Waterside. It may have happened that the English poet stood with his sister on the spot where MacDiarmid's imagined Triton would attempt to blow his Spenserian-Wordsworthian horn!

The Liquid Light (C.P. I, p. 306; M.T., p.117)

This little jest from First Hymn to Lenin and other poems takes its cue from ll.7-10 of 'Water of Life' (C.P. I, p. 314; M.T., p. 112). The Muckle Toon's jaundiced view of women is discussed in Vol. I, pp.491-8.

From 'Lucky Poet' (10) (L.P., p. 64; M.T., p.118)

This extract is included because of its concern with MacDiarmid's physical appearance (see Vol. I, p. 356) and because its story of 'vestigial bracts' offers a diverting variation on the evolutionary themes of The Muckle Toon.

From 'To Circumjack Cencrastus' (1)

(C.P. I, p. 216; M.T., p. 120)

The significance of this extract to The Muckle Toon is discussed in Vol. I, p. 87. An account of the Curly Snake sequence's other Langholm references is given in Vol. I, pp. 84-8.

--ooOoo--

1.3: 'the hird in the Noctes': The 'Ettrick Shepherd', James Hogg (1770-1835) - see Vol. I., pp.20 and 457 - was both one of the authors and one of the characters in Noctes Ambrosianae. The latter work is described in The Oxford Companion to English Literature, Fifth Edition, edited by Margaret Drabble (Oxford, 1985) as

A series of dialogues, which appeared in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine from 1822 to 1835. The series was devised by J.G. Lockhart, and bears some resemblance to his own Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk, in which the scene of the Noctes, Ambrose's Tavern, first appears. The conversations take place between various friends, largely based on real people, such as 'Shepherd' (J.Hogg) and 'Christopher North' (John Wilson). Wilson wrote more than half the 71 dialogues, but Lockhart, Hogg, and Maginn also contributed. The conversations, which cover a wide range of subjects, and present a romanticized and whimsical view of Scotland, were extremely popular.

The Seamless Garment (C.P. I, p. 311; M.T., p. 121)

This poem was published in the First Hymn to Lenin collection. MacDiarmid here develops from his observation of the making of tweed in a Langholm factory a symbol for the integrity of social organisation which, as a Communist, he desires, and for the unity of political and artistic purpose required of him as an engagé poet. In naming his symbol after the seamless garment of Christ for which the Roman soldiers cast lots after the Crucifixion (John 19 : 23-4), he combines two of The Muckle Toon's characteristic strands of scriptural reference (see Vol. I, pp. 239-41).

MacDiarmid tells us in Lucky Poet (p.20) that this poem is set in 'that factory mill in Langholm in which my grandfather and several of my uncles and

cousins were employed'. The mill - Reid and Taylor's - is situated directly across the Esk from the Waterside, overlooking the Factory Gullets. Though the name William is common on the paternal side of the poet's family, and though a number of his uncles and relatives worked in Reid and Taylor's, no cousin of his of that name was employed there.

The quotation from Coleridge comes from the following poem:

Reason

("Finally, what is Reason? You have often asked me; and this is my answer":-)

Whene'er the mist, that stands 'twixt God and thee,
Defecates to a pure transparency,
That intercepts no light and adds no stain -
There Reason is, and then begins her reign!

But alas!

- "tu stesso, ti fai grosso
Col falso immaginar, si che non vedi
Cio che vedresti, se l'avessi scosso."

Dante, Paradiso, Canto 1.

(The Viking Portable Library Coleridge, edited
by I.A.Richards (New York, 1950), p.215)

--ooOoo--

11.8-9: See Vol. I, p. 268

11.25-30: MacDiarmid's treatment of Lenin is examined in Vol. I, pp.431-7.

11.31-6: There are many references to Rainer Maria Rilke in MacDiarmid's poetry. One of the more remarkable passages in Cencrastus is a free translation into English of the Austrian's 'Requiem Für Eine Freundin' (C.P. I, p. 197). 'Vestigia Nulla Retrorsum' (C.P. I, p. 416) is at once an elegy on Rilke and a meditation on the bleak rockscapes of Shetland (see Vol. I, pp.192-7, 397). In 'Rainer Maria Rilke', an essay published in New Britain on February 28th 1934, MacDiarmid enthused:

Rilke is in many superlatively important directions by far "the furthest point yet" of human consciousness and expressive power - a lone scout far away in No Man's Land, whither willy-nilly mankind must follow him, or abandon the extension of human consciousness.

1.37: Compare to 1.29 of 'First Hymn to Lenin' (C.P. I, p. 297; M.T., p. 98). Notions of Godhead in The Muckle Toon are considered in Vol. I, pp.426-8.

11.43-8: The Water of Life figure makes three fleeting appearances in this stanza, in the clichés of 11.43 and 45, and again in 1.47.

1.56: The coopers of Stobo in Peeblesshire were legendary for their excellence in their craft.

11.65-9: Compare to 11.85-92 of 'Second Hymn to Lenin' (C.P. I, p. 325; M.T., p. 143).

1.80: This line is discussed in Vol. I, p. 314. Compare to 11.161-2 of 'Second Hymn to Lenin' (C.P. I, p. 328; M.T., p. 145).

1.89: 'Ailie Bally': Is this chatterin' female related to Yiddy Bally ('Bally for Ballantyne'), hero of 'The Common Riding' (M.T., p. 27)?

11.93-4: These lines are discussed in Vol. I, p. 311. In Lucky Poet (p. 22) MacDiarmid quoted the last line-and-a-half here to illustrate the point that

when I want to clinch the matter - when
I rise to the height of my theme - I do
not pass into English because Scots is
inadequate, but I pass from dialect Scots
little different from English into the real
Mackay!

11.95-100: Compare to 'From "Scots Unbound"'

(C.P. I, p. 343; M.T., p. 160). The significance
of these lines is considered in a note on the latter
extract on p. 465 below.

Cheville (C.P., I, p. 353; M.T., p. 124)

This lyric, which was published in Scots Unbound and other poems, presents the Water of Life in its Deluge aspect (see Vol. I, pp. 276-7). Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji (b. 1892), the composer to whom it is inscribed, had dedicated his lengthy composition for piano, Opus Clavicembalisticum (1930), to the poet (see Wright, p. 52). For further information on Sorabji, see The Company I've Kept, pp. 38-70.

Title: Chambers Twentieth Century English Dictionary (Edinburgh, 1972) defines 'cheville' as 'a redundant word or expression used in a verse or sentence for purposes of metre or balance only'. See note on l. 12 below.

--ooOoo--

11.7-8: The possible significance of these lines is considered in Vol. I, p. 389.

1.12: On September 9th 1933 the poet wrote to the anthologist Maurice Wollman:

As to the usage of the word cheville in the last line of my poem, I imply that any attempt on the part of man to ascribe anything of which he is conscious to a divine source is, in view of his limitations, no more than equivalent to a misuse of words, a fumbling after a term which in the nature of things he is incapable of finding with a consequent falling-back upon an approximation which is hopelessly wide of the mark.

(Letters, p. 504)

The Oon Olympian (C.P. I, p. 354; M.T., p.125)

When this poem was published in the New English Weekly on July 21st 1932, no reference was made to Clann Albann. It had already been ascribed to the 'five-fold scheme', however, during the course of a 'special interview' with the poet:

As to his work, Mr. Grieve said two new very long poems of his were appearing shortly, both in English periodicals - the "Second Hymn to Lenin" in the "Criterion", and "The Oon Olympian" in the "New English Weekly". Both were in Scots, and parts of his huge poem, "Clann Albainn".

(The Free Man, April 30th 1932)

MacDiarmid's attitude to Goethe seems to have undergone a transformation while the Langholm poetry was being written. We have seen (Vol. I, pp. 89-97) that Clann Albann appears to have been originally visualised as 'a sort of Scots "Faust"'. Perhaps

the hullabaloo which accompanied the centenary of the Olympian's death in 1932 helped turn the poet against a writer he had been willing to take as his model a year earlier. MacDiarmid's growing involvement with Douglasite economics seems to have contributed to his antipathy to Goethe, too. The following passage is taken from an essay, 'Poets, Consider', which MacDiarmid contributed to the New English Weekly of December 7th 1933 and collected the following year in At the Sign of the Thistle (pp. 110-16):

(T)he great instrument which can destroy the ubiquitous falsities of our times belongs to poetry and must be recovered and used by poetry. The future of poetry depends upon it. I refer to Satire. And the subject is Money. The great traitor of poetry was Goethe. See Faust, Part II, Act I, where he goes fully into the matter:

The hoards of wealth untold, that torpid sleep
 Within the Empire's borders buried deep,
 Lie profitless. The thought's most ample measure
 Is the most niggard bound of such a treasure.
 Not fancy's self, in her most daring flight,
 Strain as she will, can soar to such a height;
 Yet minds that worthy are to sound the soundless
 A boundless trust accord unto the boundless.

Then he falls to the level of a Ramsay MacDonald and his message to humanity becomes:

I hoped for heart and will to new endeavour,
 Who knows ye though will lightly read ye ever,
 Well do I see, though treasures on ye pour,
 Ye still are, after, what ye were before.

It was one of the most appalling and deliberate betrayals in the history of human consciousness. It is still the attitude of most people. All the

other modern poets echoed it, or dodged the great issue - dodged, in other words, poetry's main task. The challenge to "minds that worthy are" remains; Douglasism has, however, long since taken the measure of the Goethe attitude. Burns with all his defects came nearest to it of all the poets until recent years; then we had men like John Davidson and D. H. Lawrence with his satirical cry: "Make money or eat dirt," and hints and tentative efforts in others, but no sign of anyone fit to bend this bow of Ulysses. Poetry cannot redeem itself until it successfully addresses itself to this task.

F. G. Scott told Grieve that this poem was 'more likely to do harm to you than to Goethe' (letter to the poet, July 28th 1932).

'The Oon Olympian' was collected in Scots Unbound and other poems. I have placed it after 'The Seamless Garment', which deals with Lenin and Rilke, MacDiarmid's emblems of true genius, because of its portrayal of Goethe as a representative of false genius (see Vol. I, pp. 380-1).

--ooOoo--

1.15: 'The general mind o' Man': A (fortuitous?)
echo of one of Wordsworth's poems on Burns. Ll.47-8
of 'Thoughts Suggested the Day Following, on the Banks
of Nith, near the Poet's Residence' read

Deep in the general heart of men
His power survives.

(William Wordsworth: The Poems, edited by John O.

Hayden, 2 vols. (Harmondsworth, 1977), Vol.I, p.591)

See above, p. 384.

1.47: Goethe's underestimation of the poetry of
Friedrick Hölderlin (1770-1843) is legendary.

1.48: Jean Paul was the nom de plume of Johann Paul
Friedrich Richter (1763-1825), a novelist whose keen
attention to the details of everyday life presumably
appealed to the communist in MacDiarmid.

1.54: See Vol. I, p. 381.

1.57: See Vol. I, p. 388

11.73-111: Goethe is pilloried in this digression for his spuriously philosophical distaste for the blind forces which underlie consciousness. MacDiarmid implies that the author of Faust is no more 'Olympian' than the canny church-goers of 'Prayer for a Second Flood' (C.P. I, p. 299; M.T., p. 131). The Scottish poet's anti-rationalism is discussed on pp. 382-3 of Vol. I.

11.100-1: See Vol. I, pp. 276-7, 441.

11.102-11: Compare to 11.2-9 of 'By Wauchopeside' (C.P. II, p. 1083; M.T., p. 162).

1.118: Gelegenheitsgedicht: 'Poem of Occasion', a genre developed by Goethe.

11.118-19: On February 27th 1818 Keats wrote to John Taylor that, 'if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all' (Letters of John Keats, selected and edited by Stanley Gardner (London, 1965), p. 79).

11.120-3: A reference may be intended here to the following stanza from Burns' 'To William Simpson, Ochiltree':

The Muse, nae Poet ever fand her,
Till by himself he learn'd to wander,
Adown some trottin burn's meander,
An' no think lang;
O sweet, to stray an' pensive ponder
A heart-felt sang!

(Burns: Poems and Songs, edited by James Kinsley
(London, 1969), p. 74)

1.144: Goethe devoted much of his energies in the years 1805-8 to the Farbenlehre (i.e., Theory of Colour), a work on optics.

11.149-50: This self-rebuke is perhaps MacDiarmid's most explicit rejection of the validity of The Muckle Toon's concern with origins (see Vol. I, pp.504-7). There is an echo here, as in 11.100-1 of 'Water of Life' (C.P. I, p. 317; M.T., p. 115), of the Langholm saying which provides the title of the present study.

1.173: 'the Fortwirkende': 'that which continues to be effective', presumably the evolutionary impulse.
See 1.178.

11.176-7: MacDiarmid applies this test to himself in 11.16-28 of 'Second Hymn to Lenin' (C.P. I, p. 323; M.T., p.141).

11.192-3: The allusion to the nursery-rhyme, 'Humpty-Dumpty', accords with The Muckle Toon's use of childhood as a symbol of evolutionary backwardness. See Vol. I, pp. 415-22.

11.196-7: See Vol. I, p. 388.

1.204: 'Lunatscharskies': This presumably abusive term is not a German word. MacDiarmid may be alluding to Anatoly Vasilyevich Lunacharsky (1875-1933), the Bolshevik Commissar for Education who did much to preserve works of art during the civil war of 1918-20.

11. 206-7: See Vol. I, p. 165.

Prayer for a Second Flood (C.P. I, p. 299; M.T., p. 131)

This poem from the First Hymn to Lenin volume asserts the necessity of acknowledging the debt of consciousness to non-conscious forces. Compare to ll. 73-111 of 'The Oon Olympian' (C.P. I, pp. 356-7; M.T., p. 127) and see Vol. I, pp. 382-3.

'Prayer for a Second Flood' offers The Muckle Toon's most energetic statement of the Deluge theme, an important aspect of the Water of Life symbol (see Vol. I, pp. 276-7, 441). The theme is sounded in 'Cheville' (C.P. I, p. 353; M.T., p. 124) and in ll. 100-1 of 'The Oon Olympian' (C.P. I, p. 357; M.T., p. 127), and is present, in a diffuse way, throughout 'Water of Life' (C.P. I, p. 314; M.T., p. 112).

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1.26: 'The Divine Retreat': See the passage from A Drunk Man quoted in Vol. I, p.367 for a cursory account of Solovyov's notion of the Divine Retreat.

Antenora (C.P. I, p. 361; M.T., p. 132)

This poem was published, without comment, in the Free Man on June 11th 1932, and collected in the Scots Unbound volume later the same year.

In Dante's Inferno (Canto 32) the Pit of Cocytus is the name given to the Ninth Circle of Hell, a circle into which all the waters of the underworld descend before freezing. The damned are trapped in the ice. The circle's second ring is called Antenora, after the Trojan traitor Antenor, and is reserved for the spirits of those who betrayed their fatherland while on earth. MacDiarmid's poem depicts the Waters of Life rather than those of the underworld frozen over in Scotland's denationalised capital.

Depth and the Chthonian Image (C.P. I, p. 346;
M.T., p. 133)

MacDiarmid dedicated this very problematical work, which appeared in Scots Unbound and other poems, to John Macnair Reid (1895-1954), a Scottish journalist and novelist.

Both MacDiarmid and F. G. Scott held this poem in the highest regard. The composer, who usually applied the most exacting standards to the material sent him by his former pupil, seems to have found none of 'Depth's' many obscurities objectionable. He wrote to Grieve on July 19th 1932:

'Depth and the Chthonian Image' is almost a 'Seamless Garment' and very good indeed. You seem in this to have risen to your high theme.

Such a tribute did not exhaust Scott's enthusiasm; he added in the margin, 'I hope I've praised it enough'. Armed with this commendation, the poet

wrote to Helen Cruickshank on August 10th (the 'new book' referred to is the Scots Unbound collection):

One of the poems in this new book - one of the longest I have ever written, and one which F. G. Scott regards as one of my very best, is called 'Depth and the Chthonian Image', and is designed as a perfectly clear and comprehensive expression of my whole aesthetic, political, and general position - a complete statement of 'the faith that is in me'.... It is in ten verses of 24 lines each - 240 lines in all - with an elaborate rhyme-scheme and little difficult Scots and only odd words of Latin, German and Greek.

The poem, however, is neither so lucid nor so highly organised as this account suggests (see Vol. I, p. 301 for a discussion of its stanzaic structure).

The ponderous title is the first obstacle the poem sets in the way of the reader's understanding. The following lines from 'On a Raised Beach' may help clarify the meaning of the word 'Depth':

What experience has any man crystallised,
 What weight of conviction accumulated,
 What depth of life suddenly seen entire
 In some nigh supernatural moment...?

(C.P. I, p. 429)

MacDiarmid seems to hope that exploration of the realm of the Chthonian powers will yield an apprehension of

'depth of life suddenly seen entire'. The Chthonian deities are the gods of the underworld to whom homage was paid in ancient times at the Eleusinian Mysteries. The Greater Eleusinia were celebrated every third year. The final stage of illumination into the mysteries was known as epopteia. Significantly, that word, already encountered in ll.5 and 27 of 'Charisma and My Relatives' (C.P. I, p. 301; M.T., p. 41), recurs at the climax of the present poem (l.196). Little is known of the precise nature of the illumination granted the initiate at Eleusis. The New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology (London, 1968), p. 155, comments:

It is not easy to understand the exact meaning of these mysteries. They were, however, probably more than a simple commemoration of the legend of Demeter and must also have had to do with the problem of future life, the revelation of which the initiated awaited from the goddess.

When I asked MacDiarmid whether epopteia in his usage had Eleusinian connotations or was employed merely as a synonym for 'the extension of consciousness', he replied:

The use of the word 'epopteia' covers both the possible references you mention - with main emphasis of course on the sense of 'general illumination' than (sic) on the recondite transmission of the secrets of the dead.

(Letter to the present writer, November 21st 1977)

This reads like a polite rebuttal of the suggestion that 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' alludes significantly to the Mysteries of Eleusis. Yet the coincidence of the words 'chthonian' and 'epopteia' in one work can scarcely have been fortuitous. There is ample reason to believe that the author of The Muckle Toon aspired towards an illumination which promised disclosure of the meaning of death. The argument is pursued in Vol. I, pp. 387-92, and 397-400. (The relation of the present poem's title to the earth motif of The Muckle Toon is considered on p. 477 of Vol. I.)

The poem's subtitle, 'On looking at a ruined mill and thinking of the greatest' is no more readily comprehensible than the title. In the course of the poem MacDiarmid appears to contemplate a purely figurative mill which grinds human experiences and

achievements for their germ of value. I asked the poet if he had had in mind a real mill, situated in his home town. He answered:

As to your question, there is no ruined mill at Langholm. There is, ironically, a ruined distillery which has not been producing the stuff in my lifetime.

(Letter to the present writer, November 21st 1977)

That cheerful reference to Langholm's ruined distillery may not be without significance. Miss Jean White, the poet's cousin, has told me that the Muckle Toon's distillery had a water-wheel. The most successful passages in the present poem are those in which a vast mill-wheel is visualised.

I have already suggested (Vol. I, pp. 167-8) that the 'greatest' of the poem's subtitle refers to MacDiarmid's own

sense o' the greatest man can typify
And universalise himsel' maist fully by.

(11.172-3, C.P. I, p. 351; M.T., p. 137)

1.1: 'Absolvitur ab instantia': 'It (or he) is freed from the present instant'.

1.3: 'Yours': i.e., 'the greatest's'.

1.21: 'Urphanömen': The 'ur-phenomenon' or 'original phenomenon' is an important term in Goethe's philosophy, appearing frequently in Faust. The Urphanömen approximates to the Platonic Idea. In the present poem MacDiarmid's imagined mill stands in relation to the actual mill he contemplates as the 'original phenomenon' does to the natural object. The early visualisation of Clann Albann as a 'sort of Scots "Faust"' (see Vol. I, pp. 89-97) is recalled here.

11.45-8: See Vol. I, pp. 427-8

11.52-72: See Vol. I, pp. 390-1

11. 95-6: These lines suggest that 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' may have been the fruit of MacDiarmid's desire, expressed in a letter written to Blackwoods on

January 27th 1932, to compose a long poem called 'Alone with the Alone'. See Vol. I, pp. 123-4.

11.117-18: In the first part of 'The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea', published in the Modern Scot in July 1931, MacDiarmid wrote of

Shestov's accounting the things of this world as an inferior reality, indifferent, adiaphora, so that religious standards can in no way be brought down to measure them, and so that, when he has to do with the world of ordinary experiences, with the conduct of men and the facts of history, his religious immoralism and irrationalism become inapplicable and unnecessary and he falls back on the most ordinary...common sense....

(Selected Essays, p. 65)

Leo Shestov (1866-1938) was a Russian philosopher admired by MacDiarmid.

11.120-31: The language of this passage is discussed in Vol. I, pp. 336-8.

11.124, 128-30: These lines exploit The Muckle Toon's symbolism of childhood. See Vol. I, pp. 419-20.

11.132, 137-42, 147-154: The Water of Life.

11.141-2: Compare to 'The Burning Passion', 11.49-52
(C.P. I, p. 305; M.T., p. 140).

11.145-61: The meaning of this passage is discussed
on pp. 161-8 of Vol. I.

1.146: This line gains resonance in the context of
MacDiarmid's imaginative concern with his native
place.

11.162-7: See Vol. I, pp. 427-8.

11.168-70: Writing under the pseudonym of A. K. L.
(see above, p. 246) in the Scottish Educational
Journal on September 9th 1932, Grieve quoted John
Gawsworth on Wyndham Lewis' view of Hitler:

Hitler himself is Ein Mann aus dem Volke.
He is typical. One feels should he fall
tomorrow the movement could still 'proceed
without him'.

Grieve was reviewing Gawsworth's Apes, Japes and
Hitlerism, which had been published by the Unicorn
Press (see Vol. I, pp. 117-18).

11.171-3: See Vol. I, pp. 167-8.

11.174-6: Writing under his own name in the Free Man on July 23rd 1932, in the course of an earlier review of Gawsorth's book (see note on 11.168-70 above), Grieve quoted Wyndham Lewis on Hitler:

I myself am content to regard him as an expression of current German manhood - resolved, with that admirable tenacity, hardihood, and intellectual acumen of the Teuton, not to take their politics second-hand, not also to drift, but to seize the big bull of Finance by the horns, and to take a chance for the sake of freedom.

1.177: This line may be a vestige of MacDiarmid's plan to write a long poem based on Goethe's Faust. See Vol. I, pp. 92-3.

1.186: 'Similia similibus rotantur': 'Likes are turned by likes'.

1.187: Ereigniswerden means 'something which becomes an event'. There may be an allusion here to the fourth line of the 'Chorus Mysticus' upon which Goethe's Faust closes;

All things corruptible
Are but a parable;
Earth's insufficiency
Here finds fulfilment;
Here the ineffable
Wins life through love;
Eternal Womanhood
Leads us above.

(Goethe, Faust/Part Two, translated with an introduction by Philip Wayne (Harmondsworth, 1959), p. 288.)

The phrase Wayne translates as 'finds fulfilment' appears in the original as 'wird Ereignis'.

1.192: 'Elschaddai. Emelachan': MacDiarmid appended the following footnote to his poem:

Elschaddai, the Self-Sufficient One.
Emelachan means: 'Your spirit is tranquil and silent, your soul is delicate, your flesh and blood are strong, both easily roar like the waves of the sea, then gentleness speaks in you: come and be calm.'

The use of water imagery in the explanation of the meaning of the second of these Hebrew words should be noted.

11.192-3: There may be an allusion to the philosophy of Henri Bergson here. Frederick Copleston has quoted as follows from the French philosopher's La pensée et le mouvant:

(T)he matter and life which fill the world are also in us; the forces which work in all things, we feel them in ourselves; whatever the intimate essence of that which is and of that which makes itself may be, we participate in it.

(A History of Philosophy, Vol. 9, Part I
(New York, 1977), p.223)

MacDiarmid's relationship to Bergsonian philosophy is considered in Vol. I, pp. 148-54, 372-4.

l.204: 'The terrible crystal': This phrase, which crops up again in l.79 of 'The Point of Honour' (C.P. I, p. 390; M.T., p. 166), became increasingly important to MacDiarmid after 1932 (see, e.g., C.P. II, p. 1094 and L.P., p. 35). Though Alan Bold has traced the term to Ezekiel 1:22 (see Bold, title-page), it is likely that a letter from R. W. Dixon to Gerard Manley Hopkins was the source of the poet's usage of it. (See note on ll. 78-9 of 'The Point of Honour', below, p. 480).

ll.218-17: These lines are quoted with reference to Langholm in Lucky Poet (p. 219; M.T., p. 15).

ll.224-8: The prophetic significance of these lines is considered in Vol. I, p. 395.

ll.232-4: MacDiarmid may have been sincere in making this startling observation. See passage from 'Poets, Consider!' quoted on pp. 398-9 above.

11.234-5: A letter from Gerard Manley Hopkins to Coventry Patmore is echoed here. On May 6th 1888 Hopkins wrote to his fellow-poet:

Since I last wrote I have reread Keats a little and the force of your criticism has struck me more than it did. It is impossible not to feel with weariness how his verse is at every turn abandoning itself to unmanly and enervating luxury.

(Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins (including his correspondence with Coventry Patmore), edited with notes and an introduction by Claude Colleer Abbot (London, 1938), p. 237)

11.238-9: Compare to 11.45-51 and 168-9 of 'Whuchulls' (C.P. II, pp. 1090, 1093; M.T., pp. 154, 156). See Vol. I, pp. 488-90, for comment on MacDiarmid's affirmation of the absolute metaphysical status of works of art.

The Burning Passion (C.P. I, p. 303; M.T., p. 139)

Published in the First Hymn to Lenin collection, this is a key poem with regard to the link between MacDiarmid's private quest for epopteia and his public commitment to revolutionary politics. The argument of 'The Burning Passion' is examined in Vol. I, pp. 406-10, while the poem's Romantic character is noted on p. 544. The reader should be alert to the connection between the epithet of the title and the epigraph's reference to Hell.

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l.21: 'The shinin' presence': Compare to l.159 of 'Whuchulls' (C.P. II, p. 1093; M.T., p. 156).

ll.34-6: Compare to ll.40-2 of 'Charisma and My Relatives' (C.P. I, p. 302; M.T., p. 42).

11.38-48: Compare to 11.91-120 of 'From Work in Progress' (C.P. I, pp. 1149-50; M.T., p. 13) and to 11.5-12 of 'The Hole in the Wall' (C.P. I, p. 308; M.T., p. 53).

11.43-8: See Vol. I, p. 496 for a discussion of these lines.

11.49-52: Compare to 11.141-2 of 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' (C.P. I, p. 350; M.T., p. 136).

1.54: 'the full floo'er o' Lenin': Compare to 1.55 of 'First Hymn to Lenin' (C.P. I, p. 298; M.T., p. 99). A note by MacDiarmid tells us that 'full' should be 'pronounced to rhyme with English "gull"' (C.P. I, p. 305).

Second Hymn to Lenin (C.P. I, p. 323; M.T., p. 141)

This poem was published in T. S. Eliot's journal, the Criterion, in July 1932. Two months later Valda Trevlyn published it as a pamphlet in an edition limited to one hundred copies. The poem was collected in 1935 in Second Hymn to Lenin and other poems, and included twenty-two years later in Three Hymns to Lenin. An Author's Note to the pamphlet edition reads:

Like the contents of my volume 'First Hymn to Lenin and other poems' (Unicorn Press, Ltd., 1931), this poem is a short separable item in my long poem 'Clann Albainn' now in course of preparation.

MacDiarmid's treatment of Lenin is examined in Vol. I, pp. 380 and 431-7. See also second paragraph of note on 'First Hymn to Lenin' (above, pp. 362-3).

Dedication: Naomi Mitchison (b.1897) is a well-known Scottish novelist.

11.5-16: This passage can profitably be viewed as a defense of The Muckle Toon in particular, rather than of poetry in general.

1.5: A phrase reiterated by Socrates in Plato's Apology.

11.6-8: The significance of these lines is considered in Vol. I, p. 507. 'Country Folk' (C.P. I, p. 306; M.T., p. 22) gives homelier expression to an analogous insight.

1.6: 'Burke': Edmund Burke (1729-1797), rhetorician, political thinker and statesman. It is typical of MacDiarmid's idiosyncratic politics that he should salute the architect of one revolution by quoting the most eloquent critic of another.

11.8-11: 'Joyce...is richt' : Strictly speaking this should read '"A.E." is richt', as the allusion here is to a remark attributed to the mystic and poet in the 'Scylla and Charybdis' chapter of Joyce's Ulysses:

- All these questions are purely academic, Russell oracled out of his shadow. I mean, whether Hamlet is Shakespeare or James I or Essex. Clergyman's discussions of the historicity of Jesus. Art has to reveal

to us ideas, formless spiritual essences. The supreme question about a work of art is out of how deep a life does it spring. The painting of Gustave Moreau is the painting of ideas. The deepest poetry of Shelley, the words of Hamlet bring our mind into contact with the eternal wisdom, Plato's world of ideas. All the rest is the speculation of schoolboys for schoolboys.

(Ulysses (Harmondsworth, 1969), p.185)

An account of MacDiarmid's friendship with 'A.E.' is given on pp. 328-9 above.

11.10-14: These lines are related by their imagery to the Water of Life figure.

1.15: 'Morand's richt': The reference is to Paul Morand (1882-1976), the French novelist quoted on the title-page of To Circumiack Cencrastus (C.P. I, p. 179).

11.17-24: This is perhaps the only passage in The Muckle Toon other than 11.149-62 below to lend credence to the poet's statement in 'Clann Albann: An Explanation' (M.T., p. 238) that his 'return to thoughts of Langholm and my boyhood represents a "return to the people..."'. However, see Vol. I, pp. 482-3.

11.21-4: T. S. Eliot apparently expressed unease about this stanza. The Scottish poet wrote to him on February 18th 1932:

I quite see your point about the quatrain to which you take editorial exception and I am, of course, quite prepared that it should be omitted from the poem as it appears in The Criterion. I also agree with you with regard to the personal criticism you make of the phrase 'win through' and am greatly obliged to you for the useful suggestion that it might be put in quotes with the implication of being used sardonically. I have been thinking about this and failing anything more effective occurring to me in the way of altering that first line I will certainly adopt your suggestion when I restore the stanza for any subsequent publication of the poem in book form.

(Letters, pp. 443-4)

Eliot overcame his scruples and published the stanza unaltered.

1.28: In an essay entitled 'Robert Fergusson: Direct Poetry and the Scottish Genius' (1952) MacDiarmid wrote:

I remember W. B. Yeats and other Irish poets admiring to my astonishment a line in my 'Second Hymn to Lenin which reads,
Ye heard what I said!
and coveting the power of making such direct statements in Scots, which cannot be done at all in modern English (though Barnes, Doughty and others have achieved it in some of the English dialects), and while completely removed from the whole modern English conception of the 'poetic' can have a far greater poetic power than any of the contrivances of English verbalism.

(Selected Essays, pp. 142-3)

MacDiarmid tampers with the evidence here by substituting 'Ye' for 'You'. 'You heard what I said' is one of almost forty lines of standard English in the 'Second Hymn'. It is true nonetheless that the line's stark directness of utterance could not have been achieved outside of the context of the colloquial Scots which is the poem's dominant idiom.

1.33: In response to my query as to the biblical allusion in this line, Father Seán Quinlan, Professor of New Testament Scripture in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, listed four texts - Leviticus 19:9ff ; Judges 21:20ff ; Isaiah 3:14ff; and Jeremiah 12:10ff - and commented:

Taking the whole Lenin bit into account, and using the clue-words, it seems to me that the above four texts, a single one, or a remembered atmosphere, a conflation of impressions of all four, best fit.

1.43: An unfortunate characterisation in view of the circumstances of Trotsky's murder eight years after the 'Second Hymn' was written. It has been suggested, with some justice, that despite this lampoon MacDiarmid delineates in the 'Second Hymn' a position with regard to the relationship between art and politics much closer to Trotsky's than to Lenin's (Frank Kermode

and John Hollander, Modern British Literature (New York, 1973), p. 564).

1.49: See Vol. I, pp. 434-5.

1.71: One of the Muckle Toon poems is modelled on an original by Alexander Pushkin. See Commentary, p. 439, on 'Why I Became a Scots Nationalist'.

11.77-80: Compare to 11.8-12 of 'Excelsior' (C.P. I, p. 317; M.T., p. 115).

11.81-4: The notion that 'mankind is yet in its boyhood' (Clann Albann: An Explanation, M.T., p. 239) is central to The Muckle Toon. See Vol. I, pp. 415-22.

11.85-92: Compare to 11.65-9 of 'The Seamless Garment' (C.P. I, p. 313; M.T., p. 122).

1.93: Montéhus (d. 1953) was the son of a Communard. He achieved fame among the working-class of Paris during the early years of the twentieth century as a singer of radical songs. I am indebted to Edwin Morgan for this information.

11.109-12: This stanza is discussed in Vol. I, pp.421-2.

11.113-14: The Water of Life figure is glimpsed here.

1.116: In the first part of 'The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea', published in the Modern Scot in July 1931, MacDiarmid quoted a letter from Allan Cunningham to Sir Walter Scott on the subject of the former's Songs of Scotland, Ancient and Modern:

I have not been very sensitive about our free old songs. I have not excluded all that is overfree and glowing. I wished to preserve an image of the livelier moments of the Lyric Muse when she sang without fear, without scruple, and without sin.

(Selected Essays, p. 65)

11.121-32, 141-8: See Vol. I, pp. 383-5.

1.126: 'Beaverbrook': See note on 1.7 of 'First Hymn to Lenin' (above, pp. 364-5).

1.127: 'Jimmy Thomas': J. H. Thomas (1874-1949), English politician and trade unionist whose decision in 1931 to join the National Government coalition led by Ramsay MacDonald lost him support among the British Left.

11.129-32: These lines provide an interesting illustration of MacDiarmid's practice of making the words of another writer his own by means of a few subtle changes. His model in this case is a sentence from a letter written by Rainer Maria Rilke to his wife, Clara, on October 17th 1907. The Austrian poet is discussing Baudelaire's poem 'Une Charogne':

The creator is no more allowed to discriminate than he is to turn away from anything that exists: a single denial at any time will force him out of the state of grace, make him utterly sinful.

(Quoted by M. D. Herter Norton in a note to his translation of Rilke's The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge (New York, 1964), p. 222)

For a note on MacDiarmid and Rilke, see comment on 11.31-6 of 'The Seamless Garment' (above, p. 392).

11.133-4: The word 'disinterestedness' appears also at the climax of 'English Ascendancy in British Literature', an essay by MacDiarmid published in the Criterion of July 1931. However, 'our profoundest word yet' is no less cryptically used there than in the poem:

The old balance or conflict between the North and the South has been violently disrupted by the emergence of Russia and the Soviet concept of things. That constitutes a third side; where is the fourth to come from - not from England; but whence else if not from Gaelic culture - the fourth side upon which European civilization can re-establish itself, just as, to switch the argument into other terms, the old duality of Man versus Nature having been disrupted by the emergence of the Third Factor - the Machine - balance can only be re-secured by a fourth factor, the effective emergence of 'disinterestedness'.

(The Uncanny Scot p. 134)

The poet seems to have borrowed both the term and its mystery from A. R. Orage, who wrote in the New Age in 1918:

Exercises in culture are simple... in comparison with the master-problem of 'disinterestedness'. I know no word in the English language more difficult to define or better worth attempting to define. Somewhere or other in its capacious folds it contains all the ideas of ethics, and even, I should say, of religion. The Bhagavad Gita (to name only one classic) can be summed up in the word. Duty is only a pale equivalent of it. I mention it here because it has lately been referred to by one or other of my colleagues, and to direct attention even more closely to it. Whoever, I venture to say, has understood the meaning of 'disinterestedness' is not far off understanding the goal of human culture.

(Orage as Critic, edited by Wallace Martin (London 1974), pp. 33-4)

11.137-40: Compare to 11.123-4 of 'Whuchulls' (C.P. I, p. 1092; M.T., p. 155) and 11.86-7 of 'The Point of Honour' (C.P. I, p. 390; M.T., p. 166). See Commentary on the latter lines (below, pp.480-1).

11.149-62: See note on 11.17-24 above.

11.154-6: See Vol. I, pp. 388-9.

11.159-70: The Shelleyan tenor of these lines is considered in Vol. I, pp. 554-5.

11.161-2: Compare to 1.80 of 'The Seamless Garment' (C.P. I, p. 313; M.T., p. 123).

1.169: 'bairns' play': See Vol. I, p. 422.

The material collected in the present section relates to the spirit of place. Earth rather than water provides the dominant poetic symbol here. See Vol. I, pp. 443-78, particularly pp. 471-8.

'The Back o' Beyond (C.P. I, p. 331; M.T., p. 146)

No reference to Clann Albann accompanied this poem on its publication in the September-October 1932 issue of the Decachord. 'The Back o' Beyond' was collected in Scots Unbound and other poems.

Tarras (C.P. I, p. 337; M.T., p. 147)

This poem was published in the Free Man on June 25th 1932. Some weeks later it appeared as a pamphlet, in an edition limited to twenty copies, under the imprint of that journal. It was collected in Scots Unbound and other poems.

MacDiarmid rated 'Tarras' very highly. On June 24th 1932 he wrote to Neil Gunn:

I think you'll agree that stuff like ('Water Music' and 'Tarras') is ample to offset a great deal more of my more questionable tricks than I propose to inflict upon the readers of "Clann Albann".

In a letter published in the Scots Observer on January 7th 1933 he berated a reviewer of the Scots Unbound collection:

(H)e fails to mention one of the poems in "Scots Unbound" which is free of most of the "faults" of which he accuses me, but which is generally regarded by those whose opinions I respect as one of the very best things I have yet done. I refer to "Tarras".

The poet here reproduces, almost verbatim, F. G. Scott's response on seeing the poem in the Free

Man:

C'est magnifique! - the very best thing you've ever done.

(See Vol. I, pp. 128-9)

Tarras Moor, a wide upland bog situated about four miles north-east of Langholm on the road to Newcastleton, has been described as

a desolate moss ... where the reivers and their families used to retreat when outraged authority came in force to wreak vengeance on them.

(George MacDonald Fraser, The Steel Bonnets (London, 1974), p. 24)

Sir Robert Carey, a representative of outraged English authority, wrote early in the seventeenth century that the Tarras wilderness was

of that strength, and so surrounded by bogges and marshi ground, with thicke bushes and shrubbes, that they (i.e., those who sought refuge there) fear no force nor power of England or Scotland.

(ibid., p. 172)

'Tarras' makes no reference to the hardy Borderers who turned the remoteness of its eponymous bog to advantage.

The poem that praises the moor was written in Thakeham in the late spring of 1932, and, so far as we can judge from F. G. Scott's letters to the poet, extensively revised through May of that year.

The major references to 'Tarras' in Vol. I are on pp. 299-300, 324-5, 333-5 and 475-7.

The poem is set in italics presumably to signify that it gives voice to a point of view which may be countered at another point in Clann Albann (see Clann Albann: An Explanation, M.T., pp. 238-9).

--oo0oo--

ll.1-11: The significance of this stanza for the Muckle Toon scheme is considered on p.269 of Vol. I.

l.1: 'doon to the grun': Literally!

11.5-6: Compare to 11.5-8 of 'Whuchulls' (C.P. II, p. 1089; M.T., p. 153).

11.23-33: This stanza is discussed in Vol. I, pp. 497-8.

11.36-41: Taking the storm and the sunshine for lover with equal abandon and indifference, the bog avoids what for MacDiarmid is the characteristic human failing of choosing between, rather than containing, opposites. See Vol. I, pp. 383-5.

1.37: This seems to have been suggested by Scott as a replacement for MacDiarmid's feeble:

She turns to shine and storm by turn
(Letter from Scott, May 15th 1932)

11.45-62: This passage can be read as an irreverent approach to the powers invoked in 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' (C.P. I, p. 346; M.T., p. 133).

1.55: 'whey': This word was substituted by Scott for MacDiarmid's 'white'. The following paragraph is taken from the letter sent by the composer to the poet on May 15th 1932:

The last stanza here gives me a real find. I felt there was another word instead of white in the 4th line but 'waff' isn't it and I had a real thrill when 'whey' suddenly flashed on me. Isn't it the one inevitable word in the whole Scottish and English dictionary with all kinds of associations and suggestions about it?

'Their paramuddle is whey to her heather'.

If I get any more finds like that I'll be wanting the Jamieson dictionary back and start off a-making my own poetry!

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Why I Became a Scots Nationalist (C.P. I, p. 339;
M.T., p. 149)

This poem was first published in the Decachord, September-October 1932. By presenting it as Part II of 'Tarras' in the Scots Unbound collection, MacDiarmid identified his reluctant mistress, Scotland, with the stubborn feminine spirit of Tarras Moor. The heroic quality of the poet's dedication to his country is thus enhanced: only he, it is implied, is equipped to 'come vauntin' (his) poustures to her' ('Tarras', l.54, C.P. I, p. 339; M.T., p. 148).

The Scots Observer of January 7th 1933 includes not only a letter from C. M. Grieve attacking that periodical's review of Scots Unbound and other poems (see above, pp.433-4,) but also one from Valda Trevlyn defending her future husband's literary practices in a prose style remarkably similar to his own. As a 'test' of the reviewer's 'competence to lecture MacDiarmid' Miss Trevlyn asks:

1.13: After seeing a manuscript version of the poem

F. G. Scott wrote to MacDiarmid (May 7th 1932):

In the last line your 'tak's the hill' would
have my preference, over the 'sweeps' or
'scours'. It's quite clear what you mean
- Mons Veneris!

Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton (C.P. I, p. 331; M.T., p.150)

This poem was published in the Dublin Magazine of October-December 1932, and dedicated to the founder and editor of that periodical, the poet Seamus O'Sullivan (1879-1958). 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton's relevance to Clann Albann is asserted in Lucky Poet (p. 20), where, referring to his native place as a 'secret reservoir' drawn upon in the creation of many of his 'best later poems', MacDiarmid includes the lyric in a brief inventory of pieces 'directly concerned with' Langholm. 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton' was collected in Scots Unbound and other poems.

Mrs. Valda Grieve relates that the poem was composed in The White Lion public house in Thakeham at the end of an evening's drinking. The poet demanded paper and Mrs. Grieve procured a sheet

of toilet-paper onto which MacDiarmid wrote 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton' extempore. (The story is to be found on p. 56 of Wright.) The poem on the toilet-paper can, however, have been no more than a draft version, for a letter (dated July 8th 1932) from F. G. Scott to Grieve shows that l.6, at least, was altered before 'Milk-Wort' was submitted for publication.

The earth-goddess of 'Tarras' (C.P. I, p. 337; M.T., p. 147) is revealed under a gentler aspect in the present poem (see Vol. I, pp. 477, 496-7). The following explanatory comments on the lyric were included in a letter sent by MacDiarmid to the anthologist, Maurice Wollman, on January 26th 1934:

You are right about C'wa (sic) - it means come away. We similarly use G'wa meaning go away. The poem is addressed to the Earth - a personification of the Earth. The Milkwort however is not the harebell, but a very tiny, very beautiful, moorland flower. Milkwort is its correct English name; I do not know of any special Scots name for it. I don't know what you call bog-cotton in England - the English dictionary gives canna (which we also use in Scotland - it is simply our Gaelic name for it, cannach) and defines it as

cotton grass, so that may be what you call it in English. It is just a straight grass stalk or small red¹ which at the flowering season has a tassel of silky white stuff flying from its top.

(Letters, pp. 504-5)

The following verses from St. John's Gospel provide an interesting context for a consideration of the darkness and light dichotomy elaborated in 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton':

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

(John 3 : 19-21)

It is not unlikely, in view of the quite specific references to the Fourth Gospel which occur elsewhere in The Muckle Toon, that MacDiarmid had these verses in mind when composing the present poem. See Vol. I, pp. 277-8, 440-1. See also note on 1.3 below.

--ooOoo--

¹Presumably this should be 'reed'.

1.3: This line echoes the phrase from John 3: 8 quoted in 'Clann Albann: An Explanation' (M.T., p. 234):

The spirit blows where it listeth.

There may be a faint allusion here also to the biblical account of the moment when the primordial ooze became the Water of Life:

And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of
the waters

(Genesis 1:2)

(The Muckle Toon's references to Genesis are considered in Vol. I, pp. 441-2). Kenneth Buthlay has detected 'a small but very appropriate echo of Wordsworth' in the line under discussion (see 'The Appreciation of the Golden Lyric: Early Scots Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid', Scottish Literary Journal (July 1975), p.60):

Nor is it I who play the part,
But a shy spirit in my heart,
That comes and goes - will sometimes leap
From hiding-places ten years deep;
Or haunts me with familiar face,
Returning, like a ghost unlaid,
Until the debt I owe be paid.

These lines, as Buthlay informs us, come from 'The Waggoner', The Poetical Works of Wordsworth, edited by T. Hutchinson (London, 1904), p.182. There are a number of echoes of Wordsworth in The Muckle Toon (see above, p. 384).

The Scots Renaissance (C.P. II, p. 1274; M.T., p.151)

This poem was published along with 'On Coming Home' (C.P. I, p. 381; M.T., p. 63) and 'The Kernigal' (C.P. II, p. 1275; M.T., p. 152) in the Free Man on June 17th 1933. A heading described the three pieces as 'More Poems from "The Muckle Toon"', and a note explained:

The last three volumes of poems Mr. MacDiarmid has published have consisted of short separable items from "The Muckle Toon", which is the first of five volumes of "Clann Albann", a long poem in the course of production.

Work on The Muckle Toon seems to have been suspended long before the appearance of this note (see Vol. I, pp. 135-6). The copy of the present poem returned by F. G. Scott to MacDiarmid on July 8th 1932 may have

been the final draft, as the lines the composer objected to (ll.24-5) - the only lines quoted in his letter - are unchanged in the printed version.

This densely allusive poem may be thought of as a companion piece to 'Pedigree' (C.P. I, p. 303; M.T., p. 56). That poem traced the origins of MacDiarmid's mentality to certain picturesque characters of Border folklore; this one sardonically conjectures a wild Lowland ancestry for the Scottish Renaissance Movement of which the poet was the driving-force in the nineteen twenties. But where 'Pedigree' came to the reader complete with a list of the sources of its allusions, 'The Scots Renaissance' was accompanied on publication by no threat to its unabashed obscurity. That obscurity is not endangered by the notes which follow.

--ooOoo--

l.4: Tarras Moor: This 'wowf place' is the setting of 'Tarras' (C.P. I, p. 337; M.T., p. 147)

ll.5-6: 'the Rhinns o' Galloway': This peninsula marks

Scotland's most southerly point.

1.6: 'des secrets pour changer la vie': 'The secrets to change life' - the quotation is from Rimbaud's Une Saison en enfer. The Foolish Virgin, a caricature of Verlaine, recalls the author:

Next to his dear sleeping body, how many hours of the night have I stayed watching over him, wondering why he so wanted to escape from reality! Never had a man such a wish. I could recognise without fearing for him that he could be a serious danger to Society. Maybe he has secrets to change life.

(Translated from Oeuvres de Arthur Rimbaud, Préface de Paul Claudel (Paris, 1929), p. 279)

The words 'changer la vie' are italicized in the original.

1.9: Sime: it is possible, in view of the probable references to contemporaries of Robert Burns in ll. 20 and 26, that MacDiarmid is alluding here to John Syme, Distributor of Stamps in Dumfries. Burns lived above Syme's office. Alternatively the reference may be to one of the chiefs of the Armstrong sept. Many leaders of that notorious Border family were called 'Sim'. The name 'Symmie' is also recorded. See George MacDonald Fraser, The Steel Bonnets (London, 1974), p. 350.

11.14-16: See note on l. 26 below.

11.16-17: "'Geele, / Whaur a'body's insane"' : Geel (sometimes spelled 'Gheel') is a town in northern Belgium. An Irish martyr, St. Dympna, was buried there in the thirteenth century. Her tomb was thought to possess powers curative of mental illness. The numbers of deranged pilgrims in search of cure had so swollen by the fourteenth century that local people began to take the afflicted in as lodgers. The tradition thus inaugurated is maintained, under state supervision, to this day.

1.20: 'Armstrong': John Armstrong (1709-1779), a physician and poet born in Liddesdale? Or MacDiarmid may be referring to a member of the Armstrong clan (see note on l.9 above).

1.22: The poem cited here is translated as 'The Little Priest of the Fen' on p. 38 of Alexander Blok: Selected Poems, translated from the Russian by Jon Stallworthy and Peter France (Harmondsworth, 1974). See Vol. I, pp. 369, 435-6.

1.26: 'Blacklock's work': Dr. Thomas Blacklock (1721-1791) was a blind Edinburgh clergyman and poet, a native of Annan in Dumfriesshire, whose letter of encouragement to Burns in 1786 is said to have dissuaded the bard from emigrating to the West Indies. One of Blacklock's works was an Essay Towards Universal Etymology. The mysterious 'Oliver' of 11.14-16 above seems to have been a blind enthusiast of language such as Blacklock.

11.29-30: 'Crowdieknowe' (C.P. I, p. 26; M.T., p. 81) communicates a more cheerful sense of earth as a corpse-gorged element. These lines are discussed in Vol. I, p. 392.

--ooOoo--

For further information on the contemporaries of Robert Burns mentioned in these notes, see Maurice Lindsay, The Burns Encyclopedia (London, 1980).

The Kernigal (C.P. II, p. 1275; M.T., p. 152)

This poem appeared in the Free Man on June 17th 1933. See first paragraph of note on 'The Scots Renaissance' (above, p. 445).

The place of 'The Kernigal' in MacDiarmid's plan for The Muckle Toon is examined on pp. 471-5 of Vol. I.

Carlingill Wood, a narrow wood which runs along the eastern slopes of Warblaw, is popularly known as the Kernigal. Its southern end approaches to within a few hundred yards of Langholm Cemetery, while its northern edge is a similar distance from Wauchope Kirkyard. The graveyard evoked in the poem is almost certainly the latter, as that burial ground above the steep banks of the Wauchope is dominated

as no other by

Firs ranked in gloomy corridors,
Tall too'ers each drilled to its straight height
By its close neighbours' command....

(11.16-18)

The trees, however, belong not to the Kernigal but to a smaller plantation, set lower on the braes of Warblaw, which obstructs the view from the cemetery to the wood of the poem's title. If the poet's memory was at fault, the fault was an understandable one.

Christopher Grieve's maternal grandparents are buried in Wauchope Kirkyard.

An alternative position for this poem might have been found in Section IV, among the graveyard poems of The Muckle Toon.

--oo0oo--

11.1-13: See Vol. I, pp. 391-2

11.14-20: See Vol. I, pp. 474-5.

Whuchulls (C.P. II, p. 1089; M.T., p. 153)

On its appearance in the Modern Scot in January 1933 this poem was said to be, 'From "In the Caledonian Forest"'. No reference was made to Clann Albann. On December 9th of the same year a 'Synthetic English' piece called 'In the Caledonian Forest' (C.P. I, p. 391) was published in the Free Man along with the letter quoted on p. 163 of Vol. I of the present study. The poems do not appear to be related to each other or to 'The Key to the Situation' (C.P. II, p. 1253), a satirical lyric printed in the Free Man of August 6th 1932 which includes the following lines:

The feck

O' folk are hopelessly lost in the Caledonian Wud.
 - But, a' at aince, there's a rent in the green-black
mists,

And, look, a shaft o' sunlight irradiates
The glade in this primeval forest of fists.
The crown and centre of the bayonets!

A discussion of the present work's possible relationship to a 'suite' of hill poems planned by MacDiarmid in the

summer of 1932 can be found in Vol. I, pp. 471-5.

The central ideas of 'Whuchulls' are examined in Vol. I, pp. 486-90. To my comments there it is perhaps worth adding the observation that, by balancing conscious and non-conscious existence against each other, MacDiarmid develops a theme in this poem which is stated less centrally in ll.43-62 of 'Tarras' (C.P. I, pp. 338-9; M.T., p. 148), in ll.11-12 of 'The Dog Pool' (C.P. II, p. 1252; M.T., p. 161), and in the following wry reflection from 'The Waterside':

(T)hocht's a dryland thing and a gey recent yin
at that.

(M.T., p. 108)

It is instructive in this regard to compare 'Whuchulls' to the most celebrated of the Shetland writings, 'On a Raised Beach' (C.P. I, p. 422). The non-human is represented in 'Whuchulls' by the remembered profusion of foliage in Langholm, in the later poem by the immediately apprehended austere topography of Shetland. The comparatively sensuous appeal of the geographic focus of MacDiarmid's meditation in 'Whuchulls' - an appeal registered by the clusters of alliterative

Scots vocables which enrich the texture of the verse - may account in some measure for the fact that this poem is less severe, less insistent on the lightness of the human side of the balance, than 'On A Raised Beach'.

The language of 'Whuchulls' is discussed on pp. 336-41 of Vol. I.

--ooOoo--

Title: A footnote by MacDiarmid explains that 'Whuchulls' is the, 'Local pronunciation of Whitshiels, a wood near Langholm'. The poet's spelling of the wood's name is misleading, as it suggests a hard Scots 'ch': his cousin, Miss Jean White, has told me that 'Whutshulls' is closer to the parlance of the Muckle Toon. The wood in question, which is considerably smaller and less lush than one might expect after reading the poem to which it gives its name, is situated just outside Langholm at the junction of the Hawick and Newcastleton roads.

Epigraph: 'There can be no progress (really, that is to say moral progress), except in the individual and by the individual himself'. Baudelaire's words establish 'Whuchulls'' concern with MacDiarmid's quest for epopteia (see Vol. I, p. 486). The quotation from the French poet is taken from the 'Journaux Intimes' (Charles Baudelaire, Ceuvres Posthumes (Paris, 1908), p. 104).

--oo0oo--

11.5-8: Compare to 11.5-6 of 'Tarras' (C.P. I, p. 337; M.T., p. 147)

11.6-7: Compare to 11.15-16 of 'Excelsior' (C.P. I, p. 317; M.T., p. 115)

1.30: 'Gorded fullyery': 'Gorded' means 'frosted'. The epithet 'gorded' is used with 'fullyery' ('foliage') in a passage from A Drunk Man Looks At The Thistle in which the stars are likened to the rigging of a ship:

What gin the gorded fullvery on hie
And a' the fanerels o' the mighty ship
Gi'e back mair licht than fa's upon them ev'n
Gin sic black ingangs haud us in their grip.

(C.P. I, p. 156)

The comparison between branches glistening with frost and stars shining in a winter sky is highly apposite. But in 'Whuchulls' the phrase 'gorded fullyery' is used with less exactness: from its context one would expect the phrase to mean something like 'gorgeous foliage', i.e., the opposite of 'Bare sticks'.

l.42: 'Hide' was substituted for 'scho' in the Penguin Selected Poems (1970). That volume's 'Note on the Text' explained that the change 'was made at MacDiarmid's request'. The editors of the Hugh MacDiarmid Anthology (1972) retained 'hide' but 'scho' has been restored in the Complete Poems (see Glossary for 'scho').

ll.45-9: Here, as in ll.168-9 the poet appears to claim that works of art have an absolute status and inevitability which remove them from the spatio-temporal, random domain of human affairs. See Vol. I, pp. 488-90.

ll.62, 69: Compare to ll. 28-33 of 'By Wauchopeside' (C.P. II, pp. 1083-4; M.T., p. 162).

1.75: See Vol. I, p. 382.

11.102-7: These lines provide an eloquent apologia for the poet's literary and political nationalism. Natural variety - whether of plants, animals or cultures - must be preserved against attempts to impose upon other life-forms the qualities proper to one. Miss White was told by her cousin that 'Whuchulls' was 'the most Scottish nationalist poem' he 'ever wrote'.

1.111: MacDiarmid appended the following footnote to this line:

'There are poets little enough to envy even a
poet-laureate.'

- Gray

11.117-21: Compare to 11.68-71 of 'Water of Life (C.P. I, p. 316; M.T., p. 113).

11.119-26: See Vol. I, p. 450.

11.127-8: These lines comprise a variation on the saying, 'Oot o' the world and into the Langholm!'

1.132: Is there a vestige here of MacDiarmid's plan to write of his 'first contacts with Love' in his Langholm book (see Vol. I, p. 491)?

11.136-40: A local authority dump is soon to be sited in Whitshiels!

11.158-9: Compare to 11.70-1 of 'The Point of Honour' (C.P. I, p. 389; M.T., p. 165).

11.168-9: Compare to 11.238-9 of 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' (C.P. I, p. 353; M.T., p. 138).

From 'To Circumjack Cencrastus' (2) (C.P. I, p. 271;
M.T., p. 157)

MacDiarmid quoted this passage in Lucky Poet (p. 221) between the passages which comprise p. 23 and p. 24 of the present compilation. The Langfall is a wooded rise situated between the Esk and the Ewes, in the policies of the Duke of Buccleuch, about a mile from the Muckle Toon. See Vol. I, pp. 84-8 for a discussion of the Langholm references in Cencrastus.

From 'Francis George Scott: An Essay'

(F. G. S., p. 42; M.T., p. 158)

MacDiarmid's Essay appeared in 1955, on the occasion of his former teacher's seventy-fifth birthday (see Vol. I, pp. 27-8).

The Curly Snake is now wholly obliterated. The copse through which it wound still exists. The bank on which the copse stands is so low, and the level of the fields so quickly reached, that the path must have been very short indeed. One concludes that Grieve was quite a small boy when this item of topography impressed itself upon his imagination (see Vol. I, pp. 38-9).

In view of the fact that 'The Curly Snake' was chosen as sub-title for MacDiarmid's 1930 sequence only at the very last moment, when the poet was under

extreme pressure from his publishers to furnish an explanatory alternative to 'To Circumjack Cencrastus' (see Letters, pp. 354-6), the claim contained in the second of the present extract's two sentences must be treated with caution. (See Vol. I, p. 85 for a discussion of the Curly Snake's relevance to Cencrastus).

I have substituted 'Eight' for 'Night' in the second-last line, on the recommendation of Dr. W. R. Aitken who points out that an error in the original has been preserved in all reproductions of this passage.

In the Langfall (C.P. II, p. 1269; M.T., p. 159)

This lyric was published as the first of a group of 'Three Poems by Hugh MacDiarmid' in the Free Man on April 8th 1933. 'Yellow Belly' (C.P. II, p. 1270) and 'North and South' (C.P. II, p. 1271) were the accompanying pieces. No reference was made to Clann Albann.

'In the Langfall' may have been intended to take its place among a group of 'hill poems' in a 'suite' mentioned in the poet's correspondence during the summer of 1932 (see Vol. I, pp. 471-5).

The poem owes its position in the present compilation to two factors. Firstly, like the two pieces which precede it, it makes reference to the woods of the Langfall. Secondly, while maintaining the imaginative involvement with place characteristic

of the poetry of this section, it anticipates the next section's typical concern with a crisis of inspiration. As in 'The Point of Honour' (C.P. I, p. 387; M.T., p. 164), MacDiarmid makes a less than lucid admission to an obstruction of his creative powers and turns to the landscape of his boyhood for reorientation.

--ooOoo--

Dedicatee: Valda Trevlyn, the poet's second wife.

--ooOoo--

1.1: 'The path': The Curly Snake?

The spectre of an imminent failure of poetic energy haunts the poetry of this concluding section. MacDiarmid's sense of the exhaustibility of the Water of Life is discussed in Vol. I, pp. 501-4 .

From 'Scots Unbound' (C.P. I, p. 343; M.T., p. 160)

This passage on the Esk forms a welcome digression from the linguistic themes of 'Scots Unbound'. The title-poem of MacDiarmid's 1932 collection is a two-hundred-and-twenty line attempt at once to argue for and to demonstrate the sensitivity of the Scots language to the senses of colour, taste and smell.

In these lines the waters of Langholm symbolize the unity of purpose MacDiarmid requires of his life and work. Closely-woven Border tweed serves as a figure for the same aspiration in ll. 95-100 of 'The Seamless Garment' (C.P. I, p. 314; M.T., p. 123). Such yearnings after integrity of achievement may indicate a fearful awareness on the poet's part that his 'separate works' lack an 'underlyin' unity'.

--ooOoo--

1.6: 'and a' that. mak's it helps mak': This phrase is syntactically unclear. It is possible that a line has been lost between 1.6 and 1.7.

The Dog Pool (C.P. II, p. 1252; M.T., p. 161)

The words 'From "Clann Albann"' appeared in brackets under the title when this poem was published in the Scottish Educational Journal on September 11th 1931.

The Dog Pool is situated in the Esk immediately downriver of the Stane Brig. It is the first of the three pools which the young Grieve could see if he 'leaned owre' the bridge on his way from the Post Office and Library Building to Langholm Academy. (The others are the Cat Pool and the Kitten Pool.)

--ooOoo--

l.1: This Langholm saying is echoed in ll.100-1 of 'Water of Life' (C.P. I, p. 317; M.T., p. 115), ll.149-50 of 'The Oon Olympian' (C.P. I, p. 359; M.T., p. 128) and ll.127-8 of 'Whuchulls' (C.P. II, p. 1092; M.T., p. 155).

ll.2-6: The poet similarly expresses his sense of the poverty of his poetry in comparison to the natural wealth it celebrates in ll.24-5 of 'By Wauchopeside' (C.P. II, p. 1083; M.T., p. 162).

ll.7-8: These lines, like the opening line of 'Tarras' (C.P. I, p. 337; M.T., p. 147), humourously describe landscape in terms of MacDiarmid's socialist enthusiasms. James Maxton (1885-1946), dark-haired leader of the Clydeside group of Independent Labour M.P.s in the House of Commons, was famous for his fiery oratory. Grieve claimed in a letter to George Ogilvie (August 20th 1916) to have been a 'great friend' and 'co-propagandist' of Maxton before the War. David Kirkwood, later Lord Kirkwood, was another prominent Red Clydesider. The poet was involved politically with Kirkwood long after the Muckle Toon poems were written (see letter to Helen Cruickshank, January 23rd 1945).

11.11-12: Compare to, 'And thocht's a dryland thing
and a gey recent yin at that' ('The Waterside',
M.T., p. 108).

11.13-18: These lines on the drying up of the Esk
may be read as an expression of the poet's fear that
an interruption to his inspiration is imminent.
Compare to 11.112-19 of 'The Point of Honour'
(C.P. I, p. 391; M.T., p. 167).

11.17-18: MacDiarmid's sense of silence and action
as alternatives to utterance is discussed in Vol. I,
pp.154-5, 158-64. These lines should be read in
the light of that discussion.

By Wauchopeside (C.P. II, p. 1083; M.T., p. 162)

This poem was said on its publication in the Modern Scot in April 1932 to be, 'From "Clann Albann"'. A draft version of the poem in the Morris Library of the University of Delaware is similarly ascribed to MacDiarmid's 'five-fold scheme'. The manuscript is dated, '27/1/32'. 'By Wauchopeside' appears therefore to have been composed during the lull between the creative bursts which produced the poetry of the First Hymn to Lenin and Scots Unbound volumes. The fact that the poem is written in a very loosened version of the 'Muckle Toon stanza' suggests that MacDiarmid may have struggled to maintain a uniform stanzaic mould for the major Clann Albann pieces before deciding that a variety of forms would better suit his purpose.

--ooOoo--

l.1: ll.118-20 of 'From Work in Progress' (C.P. II, p.1150; M.T., p. 13) are overtly recalled here.

ll.2-9: These lines constitute perhaps MacDiarmid's most explicit identification of his own creative processes with Langholm river-life. The fountain imagery of this passage should be compared to that of 'The Oon Olympian', ll.102-11 (C.P. I, p. 357; M.T., p. 127).

l.10: MacDiarmid was to expand upon this intuition in the second verse-paragraph of 'On a Raised Beach' (see C.P. I, p. 423).

ll.24-5: See ll.2-6 of 'The Dog Pool' (C.P. II, p. 1252; M.T., p. 161) for another articulation of the poet's sense of the meagreness of his verses when set against the beauty of the natural objects they praise.

ll.26-7: There is a hint of satisfaction in this recognition of the river's durability. Like the poet's delight in the anti-human obduracy of the bog in 'Tarras' (C.P. I, p. 337; M.T., p. 147),

MacDiarmid's attitude here can be said to anticipate to some extent the outlook of his Shetland poetry. Identification of mute longevity with personal integrity is central to 'Stony Limits' (C.P. I, p. 419) and 'On a Raised Beach' (C.P. I, p. 422).

ll.28-33: Compare to ll.62, 69 of 'Whuchulls' (C.P. II, pp. 1090, 1091; M.T., p. 154).

ll.39-40: Contrast with ll.11-12 of 'The Hidden Scotland' (Vol. I, p. 110).

ll.41-54: MacDiarmid here seems to envisage a poetry which will chart the evolution of consciousness. The vast aspiration which underlies To Circumjack Cencrastus (see Vol. I, pp. 156-8) is thus reasserted. We can only agree with the poet (ll.51-2) that memories of Langholm cannot help him to bring his very rarefied conception of 'true poetry' (l.50) to life. This valediction to the Muckle Toon theme and the Water of Life symbol, however, is purely rhetorical: it is impossible to think of anything that could 'help' MacDiarmid celebrate

Revolutions in the dynasty of live ideals.

11.41-4: There are traces of MacDiarmid's interest in Spengler here (see Vol. I, pp. 230-1).

11.45-6: See Vol. I, pp. 442.

11.53-4: A characteristic sleight of MacDiarmid's poetry - of the 'early lyrics' in particular - is the illumination of an abstract concept by means of an image drawn from the realm of the most basic human emotions. The instance provided by these lines is marred by uncertainty over the meaning of 'louch'. The glossary in A Lap of Honour (1967), where 'By Wauchopeside' appeared for the first time since its original publication in the Modern Scot, translates the word as 'come-hither'. The Penguin Selected Poems (1970), however, renders the word as 'clouded'. John Manson, co-editor of the latter volume, has subsequently stated, 'MacDiarmid glossed "louch" as "dour" when I asked him in June, 1969' ('Water of Life: Some Hugh MacDiarmid poems of the Early Thirties', Akros: Special Double Hugh MacDiarmid Issue (August, 1977), p. 82). The editors of the Complete Poems seek to avoid controversy by giving two meanings

for 'louch', viz., 'come-hither' and 'downcast'. 'Come-hither' is undoubtedly the more poetically appropriate meaning: a sexually beckoning glance implies vastly more than it states, just as the 'true poetry' envisaged in this passage would have to do. Jamieson's Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language, source of the more arcane elements in MacDiarmid's poetic diction, does not record 'louch' as an adjective at all, but as a noun meaning 'a cavity containing water'.

'Louch' occurs also in 'Water Music', Part I, 1.5 (C.P. I, p. 333; M.T., p. 16), where the context suggests it means dull and slow, i.e., the opposite to 'lively'.

It is evident from the draft of 'By Wauchopeside' in the Delaware Manuscript that MacDiarmid had trouble with the ending of his poem. The version is substantially the same as the published one for the first fifty-three lines. There seem, however, to have been two lines after 1.53, rather than one as in the published poem - though it is impossible to

be certain of this due to heavy crossing-out. It is clear nevertheless that the author was dissatisfied with a now illegible epithet to 'look' and replaced it with 'thrawn', the word which opens the poem. 'Louch' appears therefore to have been chosen as a last resort.

The Point of Honour (C.P. I, p. 387; M.T., p. 164)

On July 28th 1932 F. G. Scott sent MacDiarmid a detailed criticism of a draft version of this poem. 'The Point of Honour' was published two years later in the Stony Limits volume. The date of the letter is significant, as it establishes that the poem was close to completion almost a year before its author's departure for Whalsay. The poet was therefore employing English as a medium for the poetry of his deepest preoccupations well before his imagination responded to the magnificent desolation of the northern isles. 'The Point of Honour's' status as MacDiarmid's most nearly explicit account of the central artistic dilemma of his career suggests that his reversion to English may have been related to that sense of the undependability of creative energy which is repeatedly articulated in The Muckle Toon. The motivation behind the poet's virtual

abandonment of Scots is considered in Vol. I, pp. 248-56.

As if to underscore its concern with a crisis of inspiration, 'The Point of Honour' is deeply indebted to a number of prose sources. Some of these have been identified, and the uses to which MacDiarmid puts them examined, in Kenneth Buthlay's essay, 'Shibboleths of the Scots' (see Akros: Special Double Hugh MacDiarmid Issue (August 1977), pp. 45-7).

See Vol. I, pp. 343-4 for some comments on the language of 'The Point of Honour'. The poem's strongly Wordsworthian character is discussed in Vol. I, pp. 545-7 .

--oo0oo--

11.3-4: Buthlay has observed:

There are...echoes of...remarks made by the Russian critic, Mirsky, about Ivanov and about Yazykov, whose poems (said Mirsky, following Pushkin) are "cold and seething like champagne, ...vivid and impulsive in their cold crystalline splendour".

(op. cit., p. 45)

11.5-8: F. G. Scott commented (letter to Grieve, July 28th 1932) that, 'at present there's more of the pure improvisation than the perfection of craft! in both of us'.

11.25-63: These lines can be seen as an attack not only on the 'water music' of 11.5-16, but on that of 'Water Music' (C.P. I, p. 333; M.T., p. 16) itself. Buthlay has noted (op. cit., p. 47) that this passage 'is a rhymed adaptation, at second hand, of a...review' of a book called Sound and Meaning in English Poetry.

1.53: There is an echo here of Hamlet, Act. I, Scene II, 11.133-4:

How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,
Seem to me all the uses of this world!

(The Annotated Shakespeare, edited by A. L. Rowse, 3 vols. (London, 1978), Vol. III, p. 201)

1.57: This line alludes to Wordsworth's celebrated statement, in his 1802 Preface to Lyrical Ballads, that

Poetry...takes its origin from emotion
recollected in tranquillity.

(William Wordsworth: The Poems, edited by John O. Hayden, 2 vols. (Harmondsworth, 1977), Vol. I, p. 886)

1.59: Christ's rebuke to his mother at the wedding feast of Cana is echoed in this line:

Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine
hour is not yet come.

(John 2 : 4)

There may be a faint, ironic allusion to the Water of Life motif here, as Christ turned water into wine just after uttering these words. See 'Water of Life', ll.131-3 (C.P. I, p. 318; M.T., p. 116), for another reference to the first miracle of Jesus. The Muckle Toon's allusions to St. John's Gospel are discussed in Vol. I, pp. 277-8 and 440-1.

1.60: 'to spring like a salmon': Compare to 1.14 of 'Second Hymn to Lenin' (C.P. I, p. 324; M.T., p. 141).

1.61: The contemptuous attitude towards Goethe expressed in 'The Oon Olympian' (C.P. I, p. 354; M.T., p. 125) is recalled here.

1.69: Dionysos was the Greek god of wine, ecstasy and fruitfulness. Astarte was a West Semitic fertility goddess. The antithesis between these deities suggested by MacDiarmid's line is unclear.

11.70-1: Compare to 11.158-9 of 'Whuchulls' (C.P. II, p. 1093; M.T., p. 156).

11.78-9: These lines clarify the meaning of the poem's title. Buthlay observes (op. cit., p. 46) that MacDiarmid is 'quoting now from R. W. Dixon's letter about the "terrible pathos" he found in Hopkins' poetry'. On October 26th 1881 Dixon wrote to Hopkins:

I can understand that your present position, seclusion and exercises would give to your writings a rare charm - they have done so in those that I have seen: something that I cannot describe but know to myself by the inadequate word terrible pathos - something of what you call temper in poetry; a right temper which goes to the point of the terrible; the terrible crystal.

(The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon, edited with notes and an introduction by Claude Colleer Abbot (London, 1935), p. 80)

See note on 1.204 of 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' (above, p.417).

11.84-7: Kenneth Buthlay has pointed out (op. cit., p. 45) that these lines were modelled on the following passage by Ralph Waldo Emerson:

It is not metres, but a metre-making argument,
that makes a poem - a thought so passionate
and alive, that, like the spirit of a plant
or an animal, it has an architecture of its
own, and adorns nature with a new thing.

MacDiarmid changes the meaning of Emerson's sentence significantly, for he attributes the creative thought not only to himself but to natural objects - in this case the river Esk - as well. The American's plant and animal each has a spirit with an architecture of its own. The Scot is more emphatic, for his plant and beast are passionate and alive. Here, as in 11.102-3, we see in an early form the poet's attraction to the anti-human self-possession of natural objects which would be explored in the greatest of the Shetland poems, 'On a Raised Beach' (C.P. I, p. 422). Compare to 11.137-40 of 'Second Hymn to Lenin' (C.P. I, p. 327; M.T., p. 145) and 11.123-4 of 'Whuchulls' (C.P. II, p. 1092; M.T., p. 155).

11.102-3: This evocation of the pebbles on the bed of the Esk provides a foretaste of the poetry about the metaphysical essence of stones which MacDiarmid would write in the Shetland Islands. Its appearance at the

climax of the poem in which the poet bids farewell to the Esk gives 'The Point of Honour' a unique place in MacDiarmid's development, as the poem can be said to be concerned both with the Water of Life and with the stone symbol which replaced it as the imaginative focus of MacDiarmid's art. The 'terrible crystal' of l.79 should be seen in the context of the geological imagery of these lines.

l.111: The second half of this line appears to have been substituted, on the advice of F. G. Scott, for the original

not revelation; a robin.

See letter from the composer to the poet, July 28th 1932.

l.112: 'them': the 'shoals of fishes' of l.105.

ll.112-19: These lines on the drying up of the Water of Life should be compared to ll.13-18 of 'The Dog Pool' (C.P. II, p. 1252; M.T., p. 161).

From 'The War with England' (C.P. I, p. 454;
M.T., p. 168)

This piece was first published in the Modern Scot in July 1933 and collected the following year in Stony Limits and other poems. Its subject matter and date of publication suggest that it was written very soon after MacDiarmid's arrival in Shetland.

'Riding in the Fog' (C.P. II, p. 1289) and 'The Frontier: or The War with England' (C.P. II, p.1296) - which appeared in the Modern Scot of April 1933 and the Free Man of March 31st 1934 respectively - were also ascribed to 'The War with England'. The second of these two poems was

accompanied on publication by the following note:

This is the first section of a long poem under the above title which Mr. MacDiarmid is now writing, as a companion volume to "A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle".

See Vol. I, pp. 479-80.

Though 'From "The War with England"' does not, strictly speaking, belong to The Muckle Toon, it provides a fitting 'envoi' to that project: 1.3 can be read as a farewell to Langholm, while 11.5-9 can be construed as a weary acknowledgement of the slow pace of the Water of Life.

--oo0oo--

11.28-9: MacDiarmid's poetic achievement constitutes perhaps the strongest single argument against his persistent claim that Scotland is culturally desolate.

APPENDIX A

This appendix includes material which the poet ascribed to Clann Albann but which has very little in common with the poetry expressly written for the first volume of that work.

Dante and Douglas (C.P. II, p. 1262; M.T., p. 169)

When this piece appeared in the New English Weekly on December 8th 1932 it was said to be, 'From "Clann Albann"'. No reference to its part in a larger scheme was made when the poem was reprinted in the Free Man on April 8th 1933.

The Douglas celebrated by MacDiarmid here is Major Clifford Hugh Douglas (1879-1952), the Scottish economist who pioneered the Social Credit movement. The poet's almost life-long involvement with Social Credit was at its most intense in the early thirties: he associated with Douglas in London in 1932 and acted as editor of the Free Man,

a Douglasite periodical, on his return to Scotland.
See The Company I've Kept, pp. 105-13.

--oo0oo--

ll. 23-4, 28: The Water of Life?

ll. 41-46: This passage comprises a translation of part of a discourse by Virgil on the nature of Love and Charity (Purgatorio, Canto 15, ll. 77-74).

Wallacetown (C.P. II, p. 1279; M.T., p. 171)

No reference to Clann Albann accompanied this poem on its publication in the Free Man on August 26th 1933. The following sentence from a 'Special Interview' with the poet published in the same periodical on April 30th 1932 accounts for the inclusion of 'Wallacetown' in the present compilation:

No - "Clann Albainn" contains few personalities (I am reserving these for a very outspoken "Autobiography of a Scots Poet", which I am now writing), but I have taken occasion to deal very fully and in a far more devastating fashion than I have yet been able to command with the Duke of Montrose, Sir Iain Colquhoun of Luss, and one or two other people I regard as particularly mischievous and mindless.

The Duke of Montrose and Christopher Grieve were among the most eminent personalities behind the launching of the National Party of Scotland in 1928. William Wallace (1272-1305), Scotland's national martyr, was a leader in the wars against the English.

'With a Lifting of the Head' (C.P. I, p. 489;
M.T., p. 172)

On its publication in the Modern Scot in July 1933 this poem was ascribed to Clann Albann's fifth volume. See Vol. I, pp. 137-8.

APPENDIX B

This appendix contains stories which appear to have been intended for 'the prose Muckle Toon' (see Vol. I, pp. 61-5) but which have too little in common with the symbolism and the declared or manifest themes of the Langholm poetry, or are of too low an order of artistic ambition, to be included in the main body of the Text. These stories' relation to folk tradition is considered in Vol. I, pp. 454-6.

The contents of Appendix B are arranged in chronological order of publication.

A Dish o' Whummle (M.T., p. 173)

This story was published in the Scots Observer on March 19th 1927. When it was reprinted as 'Wound-Pie' in New Tales of Horror (edited by John Gawsorth (London, 1934)) it included a number of alterations made to accommodate a mistranslation of 'wund' (wind) as 'wound'. The sentence:

'Naething beats a dish o' whummle'

(M.T., p. 178)

was replaced by:

'Naething beats a wound-pie'.

The conclusion was changed to:

"And what's wound-pie?" I asked.
"I recollect aince readin' o' cannibalism," said he,
and stumped off doon the close.

Murtholm Hill (M.T., p. 180)

This, the longest of the Muckle Toon stories, appeared in the Scots Magazine of April 1927. Though 'Murtholm Hill' contains passages of considerable psychological acuity I have excluded it from the main body of the present compilation because of the sentimentality of its dénouement (see above, p. 355).

--ooOoo--

p. 185: 'Bobby Price': John Elliot has told me that a Langholm contemporary of the poet's called Bobby Price was killed in a charabanc accident at the Hawick Common Riding in 1919.

A'Body's Lassie (M.T., p. 203)

This story appeared in the Scots Observer on
May 14th 1927.

The Moon Through Glass (M.T., p. 213)

This story was published in the Glasgow Herald on July 16th 1927. An autobiographical dimension to 'The Moon Through Glass' is suggested by the close parallel between the protagonist's relationship with her sister and mother and that of Tammy with his brother and mother in 'Andy' (M.T., p. 43). The relevance of the latter sketch's exploration of the theme of sibling rivalry to an understanding of the emotional development of Christopher Grieve is considered in Vol. I, pp. 41-4. However, as the situation portrayed in 'The Moon Through Glass' could not have had an exact precedent in the Grieve household, and as the main character seems essentially feminine despite the attributes she shares with her creator, the story is presented in Appendix B rather than in the Text proper.

The Visitor (M.T., p. 221)

This story was published in the Scots Observer on
October 1st 1927.

"Holie for Nags" (M.T., p. 228)

The fact that this Langholm story appeared almost a year after the last of the others suggests that it may have been written later than the rest of 'the prose Muckle Toon'. "Holie for Nags" was published in the Scots Observer on September 22nd 1928.

In its concern with childhood games this sketch complements a number of the Clann Albann poems. See ll. 19 and 35-6 of Part II of 'Water Music' (C.P. I, p. 336; M.T., pp. 18 and 19), l. 17 of 'Charisma and My Relatives' (C.P. I, p. 301; M.T., p. 41), and ll. 34-5 and 42-3 of 'Water of Life' (C.P. I, p. 315; M.T., pp. 112 and 113). See also Vol. I, pp. 415-22.

--ooOoo--

p. 228: 'the twae auld Miss Beatties': The older of these - Mina, in whose company the speaker felt 'like a

flea in the presence o' the Queen o' a' the spiders'
- is the fearsome subject of 'Old Miss Beattie' (M.T.
p. 71).

p. 231: 'It's sic an unlikely thing, a chestnut...':
See note on p. 7 of 'My Native Place' (above, p. 253).

p. 233: See Vol. I, p. 63 for comment on the cosmic
imagery employed here.

115
- 12
p. 7
p. 5
See
p. 1
Index

APPENDIX C

'Clann Albann': An Explanation (M.T., p. 234)

MacDiarmid's 'Explanation' of his long poem of the early thirties was published in the Scots Observer on August 12th 1933. Major references to the piece are to be found on pp. 139-41 and 346-58 of Vol. I.

--ooOoo--

p. 234: "'the spirit blows where it listeth'": These words of St. John's are echoed in l. 3 of 'Milk-Wort and Bog-Cotton' (C.P. I, p. 331; M.T., p. 150). See above, p. 444.

p. 236: "'Fier Comme un Eccossais'": MacDiarmid characteristically misspelled this phrase, adding a second 'c' to 'Eccossais'. This proverbial French simile (which translates 'High-spirited as a Scot') appears to have held

considerable appeal for the poet. He used it as a refrain in the following passage from A Drunk Man:

Fier comme un Ecosais.

If a' that I can be's nae mair
Than what mankind's been yet, I'll no'
Begink the instincts thistlewise
That dern- and canna show.

Damned threids and thrums and skinny shapes
O' a' that micht, and su'd, ha' been
- Life onyhow at ony price! -
In sic I'll no' be seen!

Fier comme un Ecosais.

The wee reliefs we ha'e in booze,
Or wun at times in carnal states,
May hide frae us but canna cheenge
The silly horrors o' oor fates.

Fier - comme un Ecosais!

(C.P. I, pp.154-5)

The phrase cropped up again in 1929 as the title of a collection of poems unsuccessfully submitted for publication to Blackwoods of Edinburgh (see Vol. I, pp. 77-80).

p. 236: "'Demidium Anima Meae'": This should read 'Dimidium Animae Meae'. The Latin phrase (which means 'Half of My Soul') recalls the following tribute to Virgil in the first stanza of the third ode in Horace, Odes I:

Navis, quae tibi creditum
Debes Virgilium finibus Atticis,
Reddas incolumem, precor,
Et serves animae dimidium meae.

(Horace: Odes, edited with an introduction and notes by T.E. Page (London, 1959), p.4)

The Horatian salute is echoed twice in A Drunk Man.

The protagonist broods:

The munelicht is my knowledge o' mysel',
Mysel' the thistle in the munelicht seen,
And hauf my shape has fund itsel' in thee
And hauf my knowledge in your piercin' een.

(C.P.I., p.112)

The second allusion is more sardonic:

Hauf his soul a Scot maun use
Indulgin' in illusions,
And hauf in gettin' rid o' them
And comin' to conclusions
Wi' the demoralisin' dearth
O' onything worth while on Earth....

(C.P.I., p.157)

Writing to George Ogilvie on January 30th 1928, Grieve claimed that, in addition to labouring over Cencrastus, he was 'simultaneously working away at several volumes of lyrics'. He gave 'Demidium Anima Mea' (sic) as the title of one of these. Thus the first three volumes of Clann Albann were to be given titles the poet had considered for other books in the late twenties.

p. 237: "'The Uncanny Scot'": See Vol. I, p. 348.

p. 237: "'With a Lifting of the Head'": See Vol. I, p.348.

p. 237: "'Goodbye To All That'": Robert Graves' autobiographical prose work, Goodbye to All That, was published in 1929.

De 529

De 53

De 5

auto

Wau

GLOSSARY

NOTE

The definitions which follow apply to specific usages of Scots words as they appear in the prose and verse collected in the present volume. The Glossary is designed solely as an aid to reading the Text and Appendices.

In an attempt to avoid repetitiveness, nouns have been given only in their singular forms, and the comparative and superlative degrees of adjectives omitted. Exceptions were made to these rules wherever they appeared necessary. Similarly, the present participle endings '-in' and '-in'', and the past tense ending '-it', are recorded only in the case of verbs which might otherwise cause difficulty for a reader unfamiliar with Scots.

The vocabulary of 'Water Music' (C.P.I., p.333; M.T., p.16), examined in detail on pp.263-77 of the Commentary, is not incorporated here.

a': all
 a' a'e 'oo': all one
 wool
 abee: be
 a'body: everybody
 about: about
 abreest: abreast
 abreid: asunder
 abune: above
 accoont: account
 aclite: awry, turned
 to one side
 acresce: grow, accrue
 adhantare: phantom
 adreigh: at a distance
 ae, a'e: one
 afa': awful, awfully
 aff: off
 affin'm: off him
 afflufe: in an off-hand
 manner

aff'n: off
 afore: before
 aforehand: beforehand
 aforehaun': beforehand
 aften: often
 agone: ago
 aheid: ahead
 ahint: behind
 aiblins: perhaps
 ain: own
 aince: once
 ainsel': own self
 aipple: apple
 airm: arm
 airt: direction, point
 of compass; 'a' airts'
 means 'in all directions'
 alane: alone
 along: along
 alongside: alongside
 alist: alive
 allryn: weird, unearthly
 alluterlie: utterly
 almaist: almost
 alood: aloud
 alow: below
 altho': although

amang: among
 amidwart: towards the
 middle
 an': and
 ance: once
 ane: one
 aneness: oneness
 aneth: beneath
 anither: another
 antrin: occasional,
 rare
 apairt: apart
 arena: are not
 argie: argue
 argyment: argument
 a'richt: all right
 ark: the masonry in
 which the water-wheel
 of a mill moves
 arnuts: pig-nuts
 aroon': around
 a'roon: all round
 array: arraign (?)
 arselins: backwards
 aside: beside
 assopat: slatternly
 athegether: altogether
 athegither, a'thegither,
 a'-thegither: altogether
 a'thing: everything
 atween: between
 aucht: eight
 aucht-fit: eight-foot
 auld: old
 aumrie: cupboard,
 repository
 ava, ava': at all
 aw: flat board attached
 to each stud of an undershot
 or breast water-wheel
 awa': away
 awfu': awful
 awn: own
 awte: grain along which
 stone or wood splits
 aye: always, yes

ba': ball

backfa': the side-slucice
of a mill-lade where the
water runs off when the
mill is not in action

back-grun': background

backspang: back current

bairn: child

bairnliness: childishness

bairnly: childish

bait: grain along which
stone or wood splits

baith: both

balapat: a pot in a
farmhouse for the family
but not for the reapers

balk and burreal: land
ploughed into alternate
high ridges and barren
spaces

bane: bone

bannock: a round, flat
cake made of oatmeal

barley-box: small
cylindrical box for
carrying samples of
grain (frequently used
as a toy)

bate: postpone

battle-grun': battleground

baudron: cat

bawbee: halfpenny

becam': became

beek: shine brightly

begood: began

belang: belong

ben: in

benmaist: innermost

besom: broom

besom: contemptuous term
for a woman

bide: remain, stay

big: build

bike: nest

bird-mooth'd: unwilling
to speak out

birk: birch

birlin': whirring

birsled: shrivelled,
withered

birrsy: bristly

bit: but

bit: small (used
contemptuously or endearingly)

bit: quandary

blackie: blackbird

blainy: empty	boon: excellent, merry
blanderin': babbling	boond: bound
blate: backward, unsophisticated	boss: front of body from chest to loins
blaud: fragment	bourach: mound
blaw: blow	boutgate: roundabout way
bleezin': flaring	bouzie: bushy
blether: talk garrulous nonsense	brae: hillside
blin': blind	braid: broad
blin'fauld: blindfold	brain-prood: rationalistic
blink: glimpse	brainch: branch
blithe: cheerful	brairds: sprouts
Blotty O: schoolboys' game, played on slates or with pencil and paper	braith: breath
bluid: blood	brak, brak': break, broke
bobby: policeman	braw: fine
bode: waited	brawly: finely, well
bodle: twelve-penny piece, equivalent to one sixth of an English penny	breek-bottom: trouser-cuff
bonnie: pretty	breeks: trousers
bonny: pretty	breenge: burst
'bood: have to, had to	breid: bread
book-lear: book-learning	breist: breast
bools: marbles	bricht: bright
	brig: bridge
	brither: brother
	brocht: brought
	broke: broken
	broon: brown

brunt: burnt
 buffer: chap, fellow
 buik: body
 buirdly: well-built
 burn: brook
 bycome: bastard
 byordinar': extraordinary
 byssim: disreputable
 woman

ca': call	catched: caught
caird: card	catch't: caught
caird: gypsy	catsiller: mica
cairdboord: cardboard	caukered: iron-rimmed
cairret: carried	cauld: cold
cairrit: carried	cauldly: coldly
cairry: carry	caur: car
cairtwheels: cartwheels	cautelle: stratagem
cam': came	certes: certainly
candent: glowing with heat	chap: knock
can'le: triangular piece, <u>i.e.</u> , horse-chestnut leaf	cheen: chain
canna: cannot	cheenge: change
canny: agreeable, frugal, prudent, sly	cheeny: china
cant: jerk	cheep: cry
carefu': careful	chiel: follow
carriet: carried	chip in: join in, interject
ca's't: calls it	chop: knock
	chunners: murmurs
	claes: clothes
	claith: cloth
	clam': climbed
	clammer: clamour
	clappit: pressed
	clarty: dirty
	clay-davy: clay marble (<u>lit.</u> , agricultural labourer)
	clean-flypit: turned completely inside-out
	clearer: more clearly

cleek: clique
 clim': climb
 climin': climbing
 clip: cut
 clish-clash: tittle-
 tattle
 cloakt: cloaked
 clood: cloud
 clour: batter
 clout: cloth
 clud: cloud
 cod: pillow
 colour-de-roy: purple
 columbe: blue
 coo'ered: bent down,
 covered
 cooncil: council
 coont: count
 coonter: counter
 coontless: countless
 coonty: county
 coorse: coarse, course
 corbie: black
 corcolet: lichen
 (lit., the purple dye
 made from the lichen,
 'corkie')

corkin': playing with
 'cats' tails'
 corky-heidit: giddy
 cosh: neat
 couldna, couldna': could
 not
 coulna: could not
 coup: knock over
 couthless: unkindly
 cowds: moves with a
 gentle, rocking motion
 cowzie: boisterous,
 terrific
 crackin': chatting
 cracksie-pig: type of
 marble
 craitur: creature
 crammasy: crimson
 crancrums: confusing,
 difficult to understand
 crancrums and stour:
 obscured
 cranglin': winding
 cratur, cratur': creature
 craw: crow
 creel: state of confusion
 cried: called

crine: shrink
critter: creature
crood: crowd
crookit: adj., crooked
crookit: vb., limped
croon: crown
croun: crown
crowdles: crawls
cud, c'ud: could
cuddum: domesticate,
subdue, tame
cuit-deep: ankle-deep
cully: big marble
selected for shooting
at others in a ring
cul-ture: 'cul'
means 'testicle'
cundy: covered drain
curjute: overthrown
cuttedly: laconically
cwa': come away

da': dawn
 dackle: hesitate
 dae: do
 daen, da'en, dae'n:
 doing
 dae't: do it
 daffin': flirting
 daigie: game of
 marbles played by
 throwing a 'pitcher'
 at marbles placed in
 a row against a wall
 so that the pitcher
 rebounds
 dainty-davie: fastidious
 person
 daith: death
 dandy: neatly
 daur: dare, defy
 daurken: darken
 daurker: darker
 daurna: dare not

(the) day: today
 deaved: stunned with noise
 dee: die
 de'ed, deed: died
 deemless: innumerable
 deevil: devil
 deid: dead
 deidly: deadly
 deil: devil
 deliverly: continuously,
 incessantly
 dennertime: dinner-time
 dern: hide
 devauld: fallen
 didlin: shaking
 didna, didna': did not
 ding: knock, smash
 dinna: do not
 dirl: blow
 dirlin': rippling, throbbing,
 trembling, vibrating
 dish o' whumple: dish of
 nothing, nothing
 disna, disna': does not
 div: do
 dizen: dozen
 dochter: daughter
 docken: dock-weed, anything
 worthless

dod: euphemism for
God in exclamation

doesna': does not

doited: crazy, stupefied

doitit: crazy, stupefied

donnart: dazed, stupid

dooble: double

dookin, dookin': bathing

dooly: type of child's
marble

doon: down

doonhurled: hurled
down, knocked down

doonsin': dancing

doot: n., doubt

doot: vb., doubt,
suspect

dorts: sulks

dottlin': doting

douce: sedate

doup: breech

drap: drop

droon: drown

drulie: muddy

drumlie: muddy

dry-gair-flow: place
where two hills meet

duffie: spongy

dumfoonderin': dumbfounding

dumfooned: dumbfounded

dune: done

dung: knocked

dunt: thump

easy-ozie: easy-going
 e'e: eye
 een, e'en: eyes
 efter: after
 efternune: afternoon
 eidently: diligently,
 eagerly
 eindoon: downright
 elf-bore: hole left
 in wood after the
 removal of a knot
 emmle-deugs: tatters
 fluttering from clothes
 empty-haundit: empty-
 handed
 en': end
 eneuch: enough
 enow: enough
 erst: in the first
 place
 ettle: attempt, guess
 even on: continuously

fa': fall
 fa' owre: fall asleep
 facey: little face
 fuddom: fathom
 faem: foam
 faimily: family
 faimly: family
 fain: eagerly
 fair: completely, quite
 fairmer: farmer
 faither: father
 faitherhood: fatherhood
 faithfu': faithful
 fa'n: fallen
 fan': found
 fankled: tangled
 farle: curly flake
 fash: bother
 faun: fallen

faur: far
 fause: false
 feart: afraid
 fecht: fight
 fechter: fighter
 fechtin, fechtin': fighting
 feck: majority, most, plenty
 feech: exclamation of disgust
 fegs: in faith, truly
 fell: exceedingly
 ferlie: marvel, wonder
 fey: doomed (of grain:
 decayed, reduced in substance)
 fided wi': worried about
 figger: figure
 fike: fuss over trifles
 fike-ma-fuss: person busy
 with trifles
 fiky: troublesome
 fin': find
 fir-burr: fir-cone
 fit: foot
 fithaud: foothold
 flair: floor
 flare: cajole, coax
 flaughter-spade: two-handed
 spade for turf-cutting

fleein': flying	forrit: forward
fleggit: frightened	forritsome: of a forward disposition
flegsome: frightening	for't: for it
flichty: flighty	fou': drunk
floc'er: flower	fower: four
floor: flower	frae: from
flosh: swamp	freen: friend
floss: leaves of reed canary grass, the common rush	freend: friend
fly: smart	freendlier: friendlier
flytin': jeering	freenly, freen'ly: friendly
focht: fought	fremit: strange
fog-theekit: moss- covered	fremt: estranged
fog-wa': moss wall	fribble: trifler
foraye: forever	frichtened: frightened
forbye: besides	fu': full
fordel: progressive, ready for future use	fug: moss
foremaist: foremost	fule: fool
forenenst: against, in front of	fullyery: foliage
forenune: forenoon	fund, f'und: found
forgaed: gave up	fupple: loose, drooping underlip; 'hingin' the fupple' means 'looking glum'
forgrantit: for granted	
forhooied: abandoned	

gae: go	gecks: looks fondly
gaed: gave, went	gest: conceited gesture
gae'd: went	gether: gather
gaen, ga'en, gaen': going	gey: considerable, rather
gair: patch	gey and: rather
gaird: guard	gie, gi'e: give
gairden: garden	gied: gave, given
gairdener: gardener	gi'en: given
gan': go, going	gien': giving
gane: gone	gies, gi'es: gives
gang: go	gie't: give it
gantin': gaping, yawning	gin: if
gar: cause to, compel to	gird: scoff
gar't: caused to, compelled to	girdle: griddle
gate-en's: gate-ends	girn: snare
gaun: going	glass-ba's: glass balls
gear: material wealth	glaur: mud
	gleg: keen
	gleid: spark
	gless: glass
	glessy: glass marble
	glisk: flash, glimpse
	gloghole: deep hole
	glozin': deluding, flattering

glug: onomatopoeic
word

glunsh: sullen look

go-aff: start; 'the
first go-aff' means
'the start'

goon: gown

gorded: frosted,
covered with crystallizations

gowd: gold

gowd-bestreik: streaked
with gold

gowden: golden

graipin': groping

grat: wept

gratefu': grateful

greetin': weeping

grue: shudder with
revulsion

grun': ground

grund: ground

guddlin': catching trout
by groping with the hands
under the stones or banks
of a stream

gudeman: husband

gudesake: for God's sake

guid: good

Guidness: Goodness

Guid sakes: for God's
sake

guisin': masquerading

gundy: voracious

gurly: rough, surly

ha': have
 hach: hah
 hadna, hadna': had
 not
 hae, ha'e: have
 haen: had
 ha'en: having
 haena: have not
 hag: brushwood
 haille: whole
 haille: wholly
 hain: keep
 hairst: harvest
 hame: home
 hands: adepts
 (a) hantle: a good deal,
 much
 hard-hack: clay
 marble

harnpan: skull
 hasna: has not
 hatter: state of confusion
 haud: n., hank
 haud: vb., hold
 haud'n: holding
 hauf: half; a 'wee hauf'
 is a small whisky
 hauf-waesome: half sad
 haun': hand
 haund: hand
 haurd: hard
 haurdly: hardly
 havers: nonsense
 hayruck: small haystack
 hed: had
 hedna: had not
 heels-owre-gowdy: head
 over heels, topsy-turvy
 heich: height, high
 heicher: higher
 heicht: height
 heid: head
 heidstrang: headstrong
 herried: plundered
 hersel': herself
 hert: heart
 het: hot

hie: high

Hieland: Highland

himsel, himsel': himself

hindmaist: hindmost

hine: raspberry

hing: hang

hingin' the fupple:

looking glum (see
'fupple')

hird: shepherd

hirple: hobble

hoar: white-haired

hoast: cough

hognamayin': celebrating
New Year's Eve

Holie for Nags: victory
cry in marbles

hoo: how

hoose: house

hoosewife: housewife

horse-punckin: print
left in soft ground by
horse's hoof

hotchin': swarming

howe: hollow

howkin': digging out

hunder: hundred

hunkers: hams

hunner: hundred

hustle-farrant: clad
in tatters

i': in
 ilka: each, every
 ill to: difficult to
 ill-to-dae-wi': difficult
 to manage
 ill-wull: ill-will
 inalow: in below
 in'd: in it
 instead: instead
 in't: in it
 inta: into
 Irishman's rise: the
 sack
 ither: other
 itsel': itself

jalouse: guess, suspect

jaup: splash

jaw: wave

Jessie-like: effeminate

jig: dance boisterously

jiggle-jiggled: rattled

jing, (by) jing, (by)

jings: mild oath

jirblin': spilling
liquid

jobblin': jumbling

josser: fellow

jouk: dodge

jow: ripple, surge

juist: just

kye: cows

kyth: appear, emerge,
make known

kaimin': combing

keek: peep

keepit: kept

kelterin': undulating

ken: know

kennin': knowing

(a) kennin': a little

kent: knew, known

kep: keep

kin: kind

kink: bend

kirk: church

kirk-door: church door

kirkyaird: churchyard

kist: chest

kittle: unpredictable

knoul-taed: swollen

toed

knurl: knotty projection
of a tree

lade: watercourse
 leading to a mill
 laich: low
 laichest: lowest,
 smallest
 laired: buried
 laithsome: loathsome
 lamoo: to 'swallow
 like lamoo' is to swallow
 easily
 lane: lone, lonely
 lang: long
 lang-sighted: long-
 sighted
 lang syne: long ago
 laroach: ruin
 lauch: laugh
 lave: remainder
 lear: learning
 leein': lying

leeve: live
 leid: language
 lets-a-be: ?
 leuch: laughed
 licht: light
 lichtnin': lightning
 lichtsome: lively
 lift: sky
 lightlied: slighted
 limmer: wild, undisciplined
 girl
 lippened to: depended upon
 'll: will
 lood: loud
 lookin'-gless: looking-glass
 loon: boy
 Losh: deformation of
 'Lord'
 louch: dull (see
 Commentary, pp. 473-4)
 loup: leap
 lowin': glowing
 lown: stillness
 lug: ear
 lum: chimney; a 'lum
 hat' is a 'chimney-pot'
 hat

mair:	more	mavies:	variegated
mairch:	march	marbles	
mairk:	mark	may-puddock:	young frog
mairket:	market	mebbe:	maybe
mairrage:	marriage	mebbes:	maybe
Mairriage:	marriage	mebbie:	maybe
mairriet:	married	meenister:	minister
mairshal:	marshal	meenit:	minute
maist:	most	meent:	meant
maister:	master	micht:	might
maistly:	mostly	michty:	mighty
maitter:	matter	midricht:	midnight
mak, mak':	make	mill-hand:	mill-hand
'mang:	among	mim:	demure
marriet:	married	mind:	realise, remember, remind
marrow:	equal	mind o':	be reminded of, think of
masel':	myself	mistak':	mistake
maun:	must	mither:	mother
mauna:	must not	mony:	many
		mools:	earth of a grave
		moosewob:	cobweb
		mooth:	mouth
		(the) morn:	the morning, tomorrow morning
		moss-boil:	fountain which boils up in a moss

mou': mouth

muckle: big, great,
large, much

mudgeon: facial
movement

multure: toll of meal
taken by a miller for
grinding corn

mumpin': grimacing

mune: moon

munelicht: moonlight,
moonlit

mureburn: annual burning
of hillside heather

mysel': myself

na: no
 nae: no
 naebody: nobody
 naethin': nothing
 naething: nothing
 naewhaur: nowhere
 naewhere: nowhere
 naitural: natural
 nane: none, no-one
 narraw: narrow
 natheless: nevertheless
 natur': nature
 nearhaun', near haun':
 near
 near-haund: nearly
 neebor: neighbour
 needfu': necessary
 needna: need not
 neep: turnip
 neist: next
 nesty-like: nasty-like,
 nastyish
 neth, 'neth: beneath
 neuked: having corners,
 crooked
 new-shuled: newly removed
 from its casing
 nibby: walking-stick
 with a crooked head
 nicht: night
 (the) nicht: tonight
 nicht about: through the
 night
 nieve: fist
 nit: nut
 no: not
 no': not, do not
 nocht: nothing
 noo: now
 nooadays: nowadays

o': of
 ocht: anything
 ongauns: ongoings
 onies: any
 ony: any, at all
 onybody: anybody
 onyrate: any rate
 onything: anything
 onyway: anyway
 onywey: anyway
 onywhaur: anywhere
 onywhere: anywhere
 'oo': wool
 oon: addled
 oor: our
 'oor: hour
 oorie: bleak, disquieting

oors: ours
 oorsels: ourselves
 oot: out
 ooter: outer
 ootgrown: outgrown
 ootlet: outlet
 ootline: outline
 ootlook: outlook
 ootrin: outrun
 ootshine: outshine
 ootside: outside
 ootsucken: freedom of a
 tenant from 'thirlage' to
 a mill. 'Ootsucken multure'
 refers to the duties payable
 by those who come voluntarily
 to a mill
 ootwith: beyond, outside
 of
 or: before
 ordinar': ordinary
 ord'nar: ordinary
 ort: scrap
 o't: of it
 ower: over
 owre: over, too
 owreborne: overborne
 owrecome: overcome
 owreshadow: overshadow
 oaxter: armpit

paikie: doubled animal-skin used to protect turf-cutters' thighs from his peat-spade
 paircel: parcel
 pairt: part
 pairtly: partly
 pairtner: partner
 pang fu': crammed full
 paramuddle: blood supply, red tripe
 peacefu': peaceful
 peel: peel-tower (see 'peel-too'er')
 peel-too'er: small square tower of type built in the Borders in the sixteenth century
 peen: pin
 peerieweerie: very small organism

peughle: cough in a stifled manner
 pey: pay
 picter: picture
 pinkie: little finger
 pirn: reel
 pit: put
 pitiet: pitied
 pitten: put
 plaister: chatter (?)
 pled: pleaded
 ploom: plum
 plooman: ploughman
 plouter: flounder, paddle, splash
 pock-shakin's: the youngest and weakest of a family (lit., the last shakings of a (tobacco) pouch)
 pooer, poo'er: power
 pooerlessness: powerlessness
 pooky-hair: thin, scraggly hair
 poored: poured
 poortith: poverty
 port: lively bagpipe tune
 pousture: bodily ability, power
 pow: head of hair
 pownie: pony

prentice: apprentice,
novice

prood: proud

pu': pull

puckle: small quantity
of, few

pu'd: pulled

puggy: monkey

puir: poor

puirer: poverty

puirly: poorly

puirness: poverty

pulpitfu': pulpitful

punk-hole: hole in a
moss

purale: poor classes

rabble: confused mass
 radgie: in a state of
 excited readiness
 raither: rather
 rallyin': bantering
 ramel: brushwood, small
 branches
 ratch: wrench
 rax: reach, stretch
 reck: take heed
 reelin': confused,
 intoxicated
 reenge: range
 reens: reins
 reft: tore
 regaird: regard
 reid: red
 reider: redder
 reivings: plunderings
 reiver: freebooter,
 plunderer
 rice: twig
 richt: right
 richtfu': rightful
 riddlin': piercing
 rin, rin': run
 ringan: used intensively,
 as in 'a ringan deil' (a
 very devil)
 rinner: runner
 rinnin, rinnin': running
 rive: rend, tear, tug
 roon, roon': round
 roond: round
 roon's: round us
 roostit: rusted
 row: roll, turn, wrap
 row'd: wrapped
 rowed: rolled
 rowin': rolling, turning
 rung: reeled
 runkle: wrinkle

- sae: so
- sae-ca'd: so-called
- saft: soft
- sair: adj., sore
- sair: vb., serve
- sak: sake
- sang: song
(by) sang; by blood
(makin' a) sang:
creating a fuss
- saumon: salmon
- saut: salt
- savie: type of marble
- sax: six
- saffy: scavenger
- scamp: skimp
- scannachin: glance of
light, gleam
- scansin': glancing
- scart: scratch
- schafftmon: measure of
fist with thumb extended
(i.e., six inches)
- scho: This seems to be an
unusual spelling of 'shog',
meaning to shake, swing
to and fro, wobble, or
vacillate.
- schule: school
- sclaffer: shuffle
- scour: run of water
- scouth: freedom, scope
- scrievin': writing, scraping
- scrog: stunted tree,
thorn-bush
- scrunt: anything stunted
or worn
- secund: second
- seeck: sick
- segg: broad-leaved rush
- sel': self
- ser, ser': serve
- shaddaw: shadow
- shair: sure
- shairly: surely
- shak': shake

shamefu': shameful

shear: cleave

sheeny: shiny

sheepeik: sheep-grease

sheer: singular

sherp: sharp

shochles: contemptuous
term for legs, especially
unshapely ones

shoo'er: shower

shoogly: insecure,
unsteady

shot-houch: steep bank
from which the surface
has fallen through being
undermined by water

shouder: shoulder

shouldna, shouldna':
should not

shud: coagulated

shug-bog: bog which
shakes underfoot

sic: such

sicht: sight

sicna: such, such a

siller: silver

simmer: summer

sin, sin': since

sing: blow

sinsyne, sin syne: ago,
since then

sirse: exclamation of
surprise

skail: scatter, spill out

skelp: blow, smack, splash

skilly: skilful

skitin': sliding suddenly

slap: gap

slarried: bedaubed

sli'in: sliding

sly: green slime

sma': small

sma-bookin': reducing,
shrinking

smeddum: mettle

smiddy: smithy

smirr: drizzle

smout: small speckled
trout

snaw: snow

snawba': snowball

sned: lop off

sneith: smoothness	spraichle: scramble
socht: sought	spreid: spread
sodger: soldier	stan': stand
somehoo: somehow	stane: stone
sook: sought	stannin, stannin':
sook: suck	standing
sooker: piece of wet	stany: stony
leather with a string	staunin': standing
through the centre, used	steek: <u>n.</u> , stitch
by boys as a suction toy	steek: <u>vb.</u> , close
soom: swim	steer: state of commotion
soon': sound	steeve: sprain (?)
scond: sound	stell: fix
sort: tidy	stent: outstretched
sough: hollow murmuring	stert: start
+ sound; a 'calm sough'	stirk: bullock, stupid
means a 'quiet tongue'	fellow
soupler: more	stookie: bullock, propped
flexible, suppler	sheaf of corn, stucco figure,
spankin': bounding	stupid person
speir: ask, inquire	stoond: resounding noise
search	stottit: staggered
spelderin': sprawling,	stound: thrill
stretching out (her)	stoundin': throbbing
legs	stour: dust
spiel: climb	strang: strong
spier: ask, inquire	straucht: straight,
splairge: splash	straightaway
spleet-new: brand new	

'keep a calm sough': preserve your equanimity

strauchten: straighten
 strauchtway: straightaway
 streenge: strange
 strop: string of objects
 threaded together
 stude: stood
 stupidit: stupid
 sud, s'ud: should
 sumph: slow-witted
 fellow
 sune: soon
 sunlight: sunlight
 surroondin': surrounding
 swaw: ripple, wave
 sweer: reluctant
 sweesh: swish
 sweetie-pokes: bags
 of sweets
 swith: swift
 swither: n., dilemma
 swither: vb., hesitate
 syne: ago, since, then

tae: to	thegither: together
tae: too	themsels, themsel's: themselves
tae: two	thereabouts: thereabouts
taen, ta'en: taken	thimblefu': thimble-full
ta'en-forgrantit: taken for granted	tho': though
taet: small quantity	thocht: thought
tak, tak': take	thole: bear, endure
tap: top	thoom: thumb
tashed: soiled	thoosan': thousand
tech: exclamation of surprise	thoosand: thousand
tell't: told	thowless: spiritless
telt: told	thrang: <u>adj.</u> , busy, preoccupied
tent: attention, care. To 'tak' tent' is to take care or pay heed	thrang: <u>n.</u> , throng
tenty: heedful	thraw: throw
thae: those	thrawart: perverse, stubborn
	thrawn: cross-grained, stubborn
	threid: thread
	thriddin': threading
	throughither: among each other
	thunder-plump: heavy
	thunder-shower
	ticht: tight
	tile: hat

till: to
tine: forfeit, lose
tinin': losing
tint: lost
tippence: twopence
tittlin': prating, **whispering**
tongue-tackit: tongue-tied
too'er: tower
toom: empty
toon: town
toonfit: town-foot
toots: tush
tost: tossed
trammelt: trammelled
trauchlin': struggling
trett: treated
trig: trim
tripenny: threepenny
troked wi': had dealings
with
troosers: trousers
troot: trout
twa: two
twae: two
twal': twelve
tweel: twill

'ud: would

ugsome: horrible

unco: extraordinary,
extraordinarily, weird

undergang: undergo

underhaundit: underhanded

understaund: understand

undune: undone

unkent: unknown

uphaud: uphold

uppermaist: uppermost

usk: water (?)

utmaist: utmost

veesit: visit

vera: very

verra: very

vannel: alley

wa': wall	wax: state of anger
wabblin': wobbling	wean: child
wad: would	wecht: weight
wadna: would not	wede: withered
wae: <u>adi.</u> , sorrowful	wee: small; 'a wee' means 'a little while'
wae: <u>n.</u> , woe	weel: well
wacsome: sad	weemun: women
waesomely: sadly	weer: smaller
wale: choose	werena, werena': were not
wallop: dance crazily	werna: were not
wan: won	wha: who
wark: work	whaeever: whoever
warld: world	wha's: whose
warslin': struggling, wrestling	whasae: whosoever
warst: worst	whatna: what kind of
wasna, wasna': was not	whaur: where
wauken: awake, awaken	when: few
waur: worse, more difficult	wheenged: whined
	wheep: sharp, shrill sound
	wheesht: hush
	whiles: sometimes
	whilie: little while
	whumme: upset, capsize (see 'dish o' whumme')
	whummled: turned upside down
	whummlin': tumbling
	whup: whip

whustle: whistle
wi': with
wice: wise
wight: fellow
wimmen: women
win': win
winda: window
winna: will not
wis: know
wisna: was not
withoot: without
wonderfu': wonderful,
wonderfully
wowf: disreputable,
melancholy
wrang: wrong
wrocht: worked,
wrought
wud: wood
wull: will
wumman: woman
wun: won
wunderin': wondering
wund-pie: wind-pie,
i.e., nothing
wynd: narrow lane
wYTE: fault

yaird: yard
yalla: yellow
ye: you
yersel, yersel':
yourself
yestreen: last night
yett: gate
yin: one
yince: once
yoke on: turn on with
hostility
yont, 'yont: beyond
yorlin: yellow-hammer
yoursel': yourself