

New Cosmopolitanism, Democracy and the Place of Scottish Studies

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There are forces at work in the world, of many kinds and different intentions, directing our thoughts to what are called the evils of nationalism in order that our sight and our reason may get suitably befogged.¹

Space: Cosmopolitanism in Theory and Practice

Cosmopolitanism is the hippest new theoretical 'ism' on the academic block. From Sociology to Political Philosophy, International Relations to the study of Literature, there is currently a wealth of academic capital invested in cosmopolitanism theory.² Cosmopolitanism, for many intellectuals, offers a progressive global solution to the continued problem of what they see as the aggressive and irrational atavism that is nationalism. Stan van Hooft, for instance, claims that 'nationalism is one of the chief enemies of cosmopolitan societies', and he cites Ulrich Beck, the guru of cosmopolitanism theory, to substantiate his assertion.³ For van Hooft cosmopolitanism is the theoretical expression for the exercise of a truly 'global ethics'.⁴ He defines cosmopolitanism as 'the view that the moral standing of all peoples and of each individual person around the globe is equal', and with somewhat Manichean zeal states plainly that, while 'nationalism is a dangerous ideology', 'Cosmopolitanism is a virtue'.⁵ But if, as Fredric Jameson has suggested persuasively, postmodernism signifies

¹ Neil M. Gunn, 'The Essence of Nationalism', *Scots Magazine*, 37 (June 1942); reprinted in Alistair McCleery (ed.), *Landscape and Light: Essays by Neil M. Gunn* (Aberdeen, 1987), 144.

² See, for instance, Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (London, 2006); Ulrich Beck, *The Cosmopolitan Vision* (Cambridge, 2006); Gillian Brock and Harry Brighouse (eds), *The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism* (Cambridge, 2005); Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (eds), *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* (Minneapolis and London, 1998).

³ Stan van Hooft, *Cosmopolitanism: A Philosophy for Global Ethics* (Stockfield, 2009), 21.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 4, 38, 8.

the ‘cultural logic of late capitalism’,⁶ then contemporary cosmopolitanism is surely the socio-theoretical cracked looking glass of recent neoliberal politico-economic attempts at global cultural convergence. Current is a ‘new cosmopolitanism’ espoused by postnational and anti-nationalist critics influenced by ‘post’-theories, particularly poststructuralism. Whilst many of these often Left-leaning academic ‘new cosmopolitans’ distrust cultural and political borders, they are, nonetheless, no doubt in earnest in their opposition to the ill-effects of globalisation. I would suggest, however, that their cosmopolitanism is not substantially different in its theoretical aims and intellectual inheritance from the radical neoconservatism that they might like to believe their position contests. As David Harvey argues, the ‘universal claims’ of ‘Liberalism, neoliberalism, and cosmopolitanism’—for Harvey, interrelated concepts and political practices—‘are transhistorical, transcultural, and treated as valid, independent of any rootedness in the facts of geography, ecology, and anthropology’:

Theories derived from these claims dominate fields of study such as economics (monetarism, rational expectations, public choice, human capital theory), political science (rational choice), international relations (game theory), jurisprudence (law and economics), business administration (theories of the firm), and even psychology (autonomous individualism). These universal forms of thinking are so widely diffused and so commonly accepted as to set the terms of discussion in political rhetoric (particularly with respect to individualism, private property rights, and markets) in much of the popular media (with the business press in the vanguard), as well as in the law (including its international human rights variant). They even provide foundational norms in those fields of study—such as geography, anthropology, and sociology—that take differences as their object of inquiry.⁷

Although not mentioned by Harvey, the study of literature, particularly under the guise of critical theory, is also informed by a neoliberal-inflected cosmopolitanism.

From Francis Fukuyama’s ‘End of History’ and its neoliberal project we emerged into the branded neon-signed glare as post-Enlightenment

⁶ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991; London and New York, 1993).

⁷ David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (New York, 2009), 98.

consumers.⁸ Yet this is a project premised precariously, and paradoxically, on an Enlightenment faith in the neutral Kantian subject, and its political aims continue to be the ultimate dismemberment of distinct and troublesome nationalities and cultural traditions by US-centric Westernisation. The cosmopolitan ideal goes back to the ancient Greeks, most famously Diogenes of Sinope's supposed statement when questioned on his origins that he was a 'citizen of the world': *kosmopolites*. The influence of the cosmopolitan thinking of the Greek Cynics can be found in the Roman Stoics, for whom, according to Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held, 'there are discoverable laws of nature and ... through human reason, we can locate and comply with these laws. The implication is that if there are universal laws of nature and if we can understand these axioms through the universal capacity for reason, then it is also possible to generate universal human laws that are in harmony with these natural laws'.⁹ As Wallace Brown and Held go on to point out, this Stoic tradition of using human reason to seek alignment between nature's laws and universal human law, justice and right is pivotal to the Enlightenment project.

In this regard, Immanuel Kant is seminal to modern cosmopolitanism.¹⁰ In 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch' (1795–6) Kant argues for 'a constitution based on *cosmopolitan right*, in so far as individuals and states, coexisting in an external relationship of mutual influences, may be regarded as citizens of a universal state of mankind (*ius cosmopoliticum*)'.¹¹ For Kant, Enlightenment reason will lead to a republican confederation, a league of nations grounded in cosmopolitan law. The perfection of this cosmopolitan constitution, the perpetual peace of universal Enlightenment rationality and cohabitation, is a reflection of nature's laws, and is indeed guaranteed by 'the actual mechanism of human inclinations'.¹² In his earlier essay 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose' (1784) we see even more clearly Kant's Enlightenment belief that history is moving towards its consummation in line with the laws of nature. The essay's Eighth Proposition

⁸ Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History', *National Interest* (1989), and *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, 1992).

⁹ Editors' Introduction, Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held (eds), *The Cosmopolitanism Reader* (Cambridge, 2010), 5–6.

¹⁰ For instance, Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held, as well as David Harvey, begin their respective volumes, *The Cosmopolitanism Reader* and *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, with sections on Kant.

¹¹ Immanuel Kant, 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch' in H.S. Reiss (ed.), *Kant: Political Writings*, H.B. Nisbet (trans.) (Cambridge, 1991), 98–9 (italics in original).

¹² *Ibid.*, 114.

begins: ‘*The history of the human race as a whole can be regarded as the realisation of a hidden plan of nature to bring about an internally—and for this purpose also externally—perfect political constitution as the only possible state within which all natural capacities of mankind can be developed completely.*’¹³ According to Kant, ‘enlightenment gradually arises’, and, in a phrase which foreshadows contemporary neoliberal arguments for the universal diffusion of Western democracy, he claims: ‘It is a great benefit which the human race must reap even from its rulers’ self-seeking schemes of expansion, if only they realise what is to their own advantage.’¹⁴ Kant’s Enlightenment eschatology finds ‘the highest purpose of nature [in] a universal *cosmopolitan existence*, [which] will at last be realised as the matrix within which all the original capacities of the human race may develop’.¹⁵ In the Ninth Proposition of ‘Idea for a Universal History’ Kant finds the seeds of this glorious cosmopolitan end-of-days in the Greeks. Indeed, since the ancient Greeks we have seen ‘a regular process of improvement in the political constitution of our continent (which will probably legislate eventually for all other continents)’.¹⁶ History, for Kant, begins with the Greeks: ‘Beyond that, all is *terra incognita*’—otherly, Barbarian, unknown territory.¹⁷ And history, by ‘*providence*’, has a ‘cosmopolitan goal’.¹⁸

David Miller, a critic of cosmopolitanism, hints at the historical connections between cosmopolitanism and imperialism when he says that ‘Stoic philosophy played an influential part in the ideology of the Roman Empire, and it is easy to see why: if what really matters is one’s membership in the cosmic city and not the territorially bounded human city, then imperial conquest—at least by the wise and the good—does no wrong, and may do some good’. Miller asks: ‘Does cosmopolitanism, then, have implications for worldly politics, and might it be said always to lend support to (benign) forms of imperialism?’¹⁹ For Harvey, thinking specifically of Iraq, there has been nothing benign about U.S.-led, neoliberal imperialism, and there is a disastrous disparity between the ethics of Kant’s cosmopolitan ideal and the realities of its neoliberal, on-the-ground ‘application’—a flaw fundamental to

¹³ Kant, ‘Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose’ in Reiss (ed.), *Kant: Political Writings*, 50 (italics in original).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 51 (italics in original).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 51 (italics in original).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 52 (italics in original).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 53 (italics in original).

¹⁹ David Miller, ‘Cosmopolitanism’, in Wallace Brown and Held (eds), *The Cosmopolitanism Reader*, 377.

‘all universalizing projects’.²⁰ The term ‘globalisation’ – perhaps not a synonym of cosmopolitanism, but a close relation nonetheless – is, for Harvey, an ideological front for the manner in which ‘Neoliberalism became ... hegemonic as a universalistic mode of discourse’ – not least in the critical industry of the humanities.²¹

As John Gray states, ‘A global free market is the Enlightenment project of a universal civilization.’²² Gray is perhaps the most notable metropolitan writer in Britain to recognise that we now inhabit a post-Enlightenment age. Clearly, academic ‘post’-theories have also identified this paradigm shift, one that was underlined heavily by the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Gray, however, is arguably unusual in his willingness to subordinate theory to the lessons of history and to point out that those who pursue an Enlightenment consensus are seeking a perfectibilism against nature which frequently entails tragic human and environmental costs and consequences. Whilst Gray acknowledges that particular national histories helped to fashion different national Enlightenments – the sceptical, ‘more modest’, Scottish Enlightenment; the revolutionary idealism of the French – he believes that an overarching grand Enlightenment narrative can still be identified: ‘In the political theories of the Enlightenment, the universalist content of classical political rationalism reappears as a philosophy of history which has universal convergence on a rationalist civilisation as its *telos*. The idea of progress which the Enlightenment project embodies may be seen as a diachronic statement of the classical conception of natural law. This is the modern conception of human social development as occurring in successive discrete stages, not everywhere the same, but having in common the property of converging on a single form of life, a universal civilisation, rational and cosmopolitan.’²³ Gray shares with much postcolonial theory the understanding that the ‘philosophical anthropology’ of the Enlightenment project seeks the transcendence of ‘cultural difference’, seeing such diversity as ‘an ephemeral, even an epiphenomenal incident in human life and history’.²⁴ For Gray, though, ‘human identities are always local affairs’; indeed, ‘cultural difference belongs to the human essence’.²⁵

²⁰ Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 8.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

²² John Gray, *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism* (1998; London, 2002), 100.

²³ John Gray, ‘Agonistic Liberalism’, *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 12 (1995); reprinted in *idem*, *Enlightenment’s Wake: Politics and Culture at the Close of the Modern Age* (1995; London and New York, 2007), 100, 97.

²⁴ Gray, *Enlightenment’s Wake*, 98.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 119; Gray, *The Undoing of Conservatism*, (London, 1994); reprinted in *Enlightenment’s*

Whilst Gray's criticism of neoconservatism is valuable, his pessimism, or 'anti-universalism' as he calls it, is founded on traditional conservatism.²⁶ Yet he is right, I would argue, to point to national and cultural identities—and he sees the two as being decidedly bound together—as irremediably part of the human make-up and, for better or worse, not something, as the 'post'-theorists and 'new cosmopolitans' would have us believe, that we can change like a suit of clothes. According to Gray, under current market philosophy,

cultural difference is seen through the distorting lens of the idea of *choice*, as an epiphenomenon of personal life-plans, preferences and conceptions of the good. In the real world of human history, however, cultural identities are not constituted, voluntaristically, by acts of choice: they arise by inheritance, and by recognition. They are fates rather than choices. It is this fated character of cultural identity which gives it its agonistic, and sometimes tragic character.²⁷

That 'tragic character' of particular inherited identities being confronted by totalitarian identity politics has been at no time more prevalent than in the twentieth century. For Beck, 'cosmopolitanism has been forgotten... transformed and debased into a pejorative concept', due to 'its involuntary association with the Holocaust and the Stalinist Gulag'.²⁸ As Beck points out,

In the collective symbolic system of the Nazis, 'cosmopolitan' was synonymous with a death sentence. All the victims of the planned mass murder were portrayed as 'cosmopolitans'; and this death sentence was extended to the word, which in its own way succumbed to the same fate. The Nazis said 'Jew' and meant 'cosmopolitan'; the Stalinists said 'cosmopolitan' and meant 'Jew'. Consequently, 'cosmopolitans' are to this day regarded in many countries as something between vagabonds,

Wake, 161.

²⁶ Gray, *Enlightenment's Wake*, 161 (italics in original).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 187 (italics in original). Whilst he does not allude to her here, Gray, like Simone Weil, understands the human need for cultural and national roots: 'To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognised need of the human soul', Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties Towards Mankind* (first published in French as *L'Enracinement*, 1949, then in English, 1952; London and New York, 2003), 43.

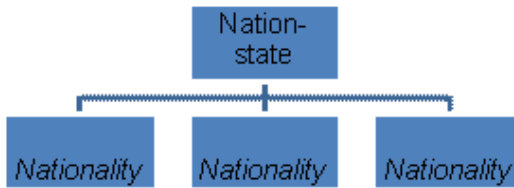
²⁸ Ulrich Beck, *The Cosmopolitan Vision*, Ciaran Cronin (trans.) (2006; Cambridge, 2012), 3.

enemies and insects who can or even must be banished, demonised or destroyed.²⁹

In Scotland, the clash between cosmopolitanism and its foes has been mercifully non-violent. But when, at the 1962 Edinburgh Writers' Conference, the poet Hugh MacDiarmid allegedly called the novelist and heroin addict Alexander Trocchi 'cosmopolitan scum', thus sounding his own bleak Stalinist note, a cultural split was revealed between rooted nationalism and exiled cosmopolitanism, tradition and individualism, that arguably continues to inform Scottish literary criticism today.³⁰

Place: The Question of 'Scotland'

For 'new cosmopolitans' such as van Hooft, nationality is to be worn lightly. 'One's nationality', he argues, 'is nothing more than one's membership of the nation-state of which one is a citizen.'³¹ What van Hooft neglects to understand, however, is that the nation-state carries the historical co-ordinates of the cultural, educational, institutional particularity of the nation which its state represents; this is something none of its citizens can ignore, running as such particularity does through the national lineaments of their identity. Van Hooft writes as if the traditional top-down nation-state 'produces' nationality:

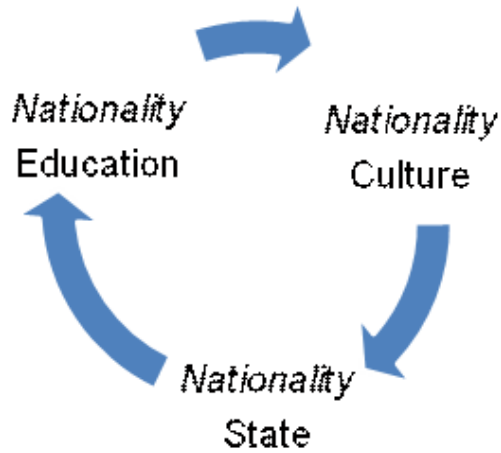


Actually, nationality and its aforementioned various vectors, of which the state is only one, informs/deforms/reforms statehood and, indeed, nationality itself:

²⁹ Ibid., 3.

³⁰ See Andrew Murray Scott, *Alexander Trocchi: The Making of the Monster* (Edinburgh, 1991), 108; Trocchi gave as good as he got, calling MacDiarmid an 'old druid', *ibid.*, 107.

³¹ Van Hooft, *Cosmopolitanism*, 37.



This second model of nationality has been identified by Alex Thomson as belonging in its intellectual heritage to the Herderian romantic nationalism that categorises the literary in distinct national histories: ‘A nation is a spiritual and explanatory principle, to be deduced in circular fashion from those institutions and the imaginative writing that best exemplify it.’³² In his online article “‘You can’t get there from here’: Devolution and Scottish Literary History’ Thomson seeks to distinguish between the disinterested critical-aesthetic task of the literary *critic* as an interpreter of an autonomous art and the ‘interpretative framing’ of literature in a national canon instigated by the literary *historian*, a framing which in the Scottish context has drawn strong links between literature, politics and the state of the nation—explicitly, the absence of a nation-state: ‘The writing of historiography in the national style does not describe the reaffirmation of national identity: it hopes to enact it.’³³ The danger of the second model, although by no means its inevitability I would argue, is, certainly, the potential over-determination of identity and an attendant exclusivist identity politics. Thomson points out correctly that this has been acknowledged by those Scottish theorists who, whilst determined to historically imagine a distinctly Scottish narrative tradition, have emphasised the supposed hybridity, Bakhtin-infused or otherwise, of ‘Scottish’ imaginative

³² Alex Thomson, “‘You can’t get there from here’: Devolution and Scottish Literary History’, *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, 3 (2007) <http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/issue3/thomson.htm>, accessed 6 November 2009.

³³ Thomson, ‘You can’t get there from here’.

products.³⁴ In his ‘Phrasing Scotland and the Postmodern’, however, he censures Cairns Craig and David McCrone for their loose use of a postmodern nomenclature, ‘which serves to elide the decision which has been taken in advance and presumed by both writers, as to the legitimacy of the [Scottish] nation itself, a decision which is both epistemological and political’.³⁵

For Thomson literary history that is written within the parameters of a single national culture can only ever be *nationalist* literary history, however much it may exhibit its approval of multicultural heterogeneity; and a nationalist literary history can never be truly critical. Thomson claims that ‘The paradox of being “national” yet “anti-nationalist” is the challenge faced by any national literary history which seeks to face up to its political responsibilities’.³⁶ What exactly are these ‘political responsibilities’? Thomson does not say, yet clearly part of the critical remit is to be ‘anti-nationalist’ – a critical position that is no more objective and neutral than that which Thomson regards as the largely nationalist framework of Scottish literary history. Continuing his conflation of national with nationalist, Thomson, like the cosmopolitan van Hooft, writes of ‘the potential violence of nationalist literary histories’, as if the denial, suppression or mere neglect of a national literary culture represents a more democratic critical position, and one that is in itself any less potentially violent.³⁷ Responding to Liam McIlvanney’s contention that novelists in contemporary Scotland have acted as ‘unacknowledged legislators’ in a stateless nation, Thomson claims that in fact ‘it is the critic whose interpretative framing “invents” the nation’: literary art is autonomous, while literary history, written in what Thomson calls the ‘Scottish style’, is ideological.³⁸ Thomson rightly points out ‘that there is nothing natural about the national narrative’, and that an over-emphasis on national literary history can sideline other important angles of critical inquiry, such as class, gender and form.³⁹ He objects to the “national style” in literary historiography’ in Scotland, seeing this as a means of ‘smuggling in political principles masquerading as aesthetic categories’,

³⁴ Thomson is here concerned primarily with Cairns Craig and Robert Crawford.

³⁵ A. J. P. Thomson, ‘Phrasing Scotland and the Postmodern’ in Eleanor Bell and Gavin Miller (eds), *Scotland in Theory: Reflections on Culture and Theory* (Amsterdam and New York, 2004), 81.

³⁶ Thomson, ‘You can’t get there from here’.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Thomson, ‘You can’t get there from here’. McIlvanney’s argument is from ‘The Politics of Narrative in the Post-War Scottish Novel’, in Zachary Leader (ed.), *On Modern British Fiction* (Oxford, 2002), 181–208.

³⁹ Thomson, ‘You can’t get there from here’.

these political principles being nationalist.⁴⁰ Yet his own preference in “‘You can’t get there from here’” is for a British critical context, disguised as critical neutrality, that in actuality is no less fraught with political principles and the idea of a particular national/historical narrative.

Thomson contrasts Robert Crawford’s *Scotland’s Books: The Penguin History of Scottish Literature* (2007), for Thomson an example of nationalist literary historiography, with Richard Bradford’s *The Novel Now* (2007), which ‘is explicitly concerned with British fiction’.⁴¹ Thomson argues that ‘Bradford’s approach is certainly more sympathetic towards the views of Scottish writers themselves’ because it refuses to place authors such as A.L. Kennedy in a specifically Scottish tradition, seeing this as delimiting to their art. However, as Thomson quotes Kennedy citing the influence of ‘Chekhov, Ibsen, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, Eliot, magic realism, and Irish writers’, surely the label ‘British’ is just as misleading as that of ‘Scottish’.⁴² Indeed, does ‘British’ apply to the Scottish Republican Alasdair Gray, or the libertarian socialist James Kelman, also examined in Bradford’s book? Britishness also constitutes a national and nationalist narrative, as well as a political decision, and Thomson, who has argued for a British as opposed to a Scottish Modernism, indulges in a well-worn sleight-of-hand in seeking to cast Britishness as a wider realm of critical disinterestedness, whereas the ‘Scottish style’ is critically Luddite, stuck in a narrow and oppositional marginality and obsessed with history.⁴³ Ironically, it is this very approach, with its bias towards a conservative and elitist Anglo-British and upper-middle class cultural hegemony – a status quo ante that many people within the United Kingdom, not least in Scotland, are steadily rejecting – and its disregard of under-studied Scottish traditions, which has led many Scottish critics to reject a British context for a Scottish one. Thomson seeks in both articles to weaken the link between literary culture in Scotland and the drive by many Scottish cultural intellectuals, particularly in the decade after the 1979 devolution referendum, for political devolution and independence – surely, itself, as much a political decision as a critical or theoretical one. Thomson actually wants a critical theory in and of Scotland that ultimately resists the political capture of Scotland. Like many ‘new cosmopolitans’ Thomson is here

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Alex Thomson, ‘Hugh MacDiarmid, Wyndham Lewis and the Differentiation of British Modernisms’, a paper delivered at the Scottish Network of Modernist Studies symposium, ‘Scottish Modernisms: Relationships and Reconfiguration’, University of Strathclyde, 8 October 2011.

reflecting Derrida's 'impossible-possible'; as defined by Philip Leonard, 'this cosmopolitanism acts as [a] non-predicative concept that seeks to hold open the futurity of the future'.⁴⁴

Whilst the public in Scotland have voted to establish Scottish devolution with, currently, a Scottish National Party-controlled Scottish government, some recent cultural critics have embarked on what they see as the necessary task of de-essentialising Scottish identity, a tactic often involving the placing of Scotland in inverted commas. Thomson's essay 'Phrasing Scotland and the Postmodern' appears in Eleanor Bell and Gavin Miller's edited volume *Scotland in Theory*, a title which plays with the idea of theory being practised in Scotland as well as indicating that the nation itself is a theoretical concept—Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community'—with a future that is open to debate. 'Scotland in theory' means that Scotland's potential futures in political or cultural terms are up for grabs and should rightly be subject to theoretical analysis; however, also under speculation is Scotland's very being as a legitimate polity or cultural reality.⁴⁵ When Scotland and Scottish are put in quotation marks these scare quotes are designed to alert us to the instability, indeed the ontological non-existence, of nation and identity. Thomson believes that those critics who argue for a Scottish tradition are in the double-bind of framing literary art in Scotland within a make-believe national(ist) narrative that only exists because they invent it. Yet surely those 'new cosmopolitans' who question the very existence of Scotland are in an equally absurdist, perhaps even hypocritical situation of putting in inverted commas the country of their birth and/or domicile, and through which, as an object of cultural enquiry at, in many cases, a Scottish university, they earn their livings.

In her *Questioning Scotland* (2004) Eleanor Bell (who imagines that Benedict Anderson, theorist of nationalism, is a nationalist⁴⁶) argues that 'this ability to

⁴⁴ Philip Leonard, *Nationality Between Poststructuralism and Postcolonial Theory: A New Cosmopolitanism* (Basingstoke, 2005), 46.

⁴⁵ This is not to claim that all of the book's contributors fall in behind the implications of the book's double-edged title.

⁴⁶ See Eleanor Bell, *Questioning Scotland: Literature, Nationalism, Postmodernism* (Basingstoke, 2004), 56. Benedict Anderson's position is, admittedly, difficult to pinpoint: a post-Marxist Marxist, sympathetic to postcolonial forms of revolutionary nationalism, is arguably closest. In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York, 2003) he describes Tom Nairn as 'heir' to the 'vast tradition of Marxist historiography and social science'. *Ibid.*, 3. This would be a valid description of his own, and brother Perry's, intellectual lineage. Like Nairn and others of the original *New Left Review* generation, since the first publication of *Imagined Communities* in 1983 Anderson has seen the theoretical claims of Western

postpone the definitive “capturing” of the nation ... is an ethical imperative’.⁴⁷ (‘Capture’, a word I used above, specifically the resistance to political capture, is a concept employed by poststructuralists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.) But this theoretical openness to plurality and radical freedom, armed with cosmopolitan ethics akin to van Hooft’s, actually implies closure for on-the-ground public democracy, firstly, because power is always captured by some particular political grouping, however much the theorists may wish to rise above such taking-of-sides, and secondly, because those who vote presumably do not want anarchic openness and theoretical non-capture but rather a particular political party to govern a particular and existent state in law. Scotland as ‘Scotland’ implies not the liberation of the nation from nationalist ideology, but rather the imperialist imprisoning of a culture within a globalised, transnational cosmopolitan theory. This is ironic, given the sympathy many ‘new cosmopolitans’ feel for ‘post’-theories such as postcolonialism that critique Enlightenment universalism. Bell, for instance, wishes Scottish critics to be more open to postmodernism, but finds herself in the contradictory position—a contradiction which haunts her whole argument—of inviting Scottish Literary Studies to come to terms with the idea that ‘distinctive forms of national identity are under erasure in the postmodern world’ whilst clinging in her enquiry to the cultural framework of Scottishness, a framework that would be decimated by the complete acceptance of postmodern relativism.⁴⁸ Scottish literature, *Questioning Scotland* argues paradoxically, should embrace postnational theories that intellectually spell its demise in order to broaden its horizons and grow as a specialism, in order, as Bell argues in ‘Postmodernism, Nationalism and the Question of Tradition’, to ‘avoid further marginalisation’.⁴⁹ The marginalisation of Scottish Studies is, however, substantially intrinsic to the power relations of the United Kingdom, something an anti-nationalist position could not hope to seriously rectify.

In *Questioning Scotland* Bell argues for an ‘ethics of deterritorialisation’ which will ‘strive for a condition where borders eventually become less problematic, where territory, in becoming less centred, is also less violently contested’.⁵⁰ Bell

academic Marxism crumble with the historical collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the recrudescence of a supposedly irrational nationalism anomalous to Enlightenment progress.

⁴⁷ Bell, *Questioning Scotland*, 5.

⁴⁸ Bell, *Questioning Scotland*, 43.

⁴⁹ Eleanor Bell, ‘Postmodernism, Nationalism and the Question of Tradition’ in Bell and Miller (eds), *Scotland in Theory*, 94.

⁵⁰ Bell, *Questioning Scotland*, 131.

sees such deterritorialisation as being necessary in a postmodern landscape of globalisation. Citing Ulrich Beck, Bell writes of the ‘detraditionalisation’ that follows from globalisation, a detraditionalisation that, along with a growing individualism, signals that we inhabit a postmodern, global consumer society.⁵¹ For Bell, the detraditionalisation of postmodernism ‘may prove inconvenient and problematic to cultural nationalist readings’ in Scottish Studies.⁵² Bell argues that ‘The concept of deterritorialisation may be closely linked to postnationalism, referring to broad changes now taking place in the understanding and organisation of communities at national and transnational levels. Deterritorialisation, therefore, refers to the ways in which identity can no longer be taken for granted, taking into account the effects of globalisation and cosmopolitanism.’⁵³ The definition of key terms here—globalisation, postmodernism, cosmopolitanism—remains blurry. One unfortunate side effect of this lack of definitional clarity is that it sometimes appears that Bell is merely arguing that Scottish Studies should adopt such discourses in order to keep up with contemporary developments; there is very little committed sense of why this might be beneficial, other than the rather vague argument that it may help to open up or undermine traditional nodes of (Scottish) identity. The often brutally violent realities of neoliberal globalisation and the enforced deterritorialisation of those living on the so-called peripheries of Western power are passed by in silence. Bell hopes that Scottish Studies will seek ‘a way of negotiating between the discourses of nationalism and cosmopolitanism, [in] a form of ethical interrogation that will critique the seeming binary opposition between the two’.⁵⁴ But her argument often seems to be moving in two different, perhaps mutually exclusive directions at once, as when she says ‘The general move into postnationalism and deterritorialisation that is being advocated here is consequently one that will be able to critique previous formulations and structures of nationalism, without abandoning either the foundations of national identity or that of the nation-state’.⁵⁵

Such contradictions, the ‘cultural contradictions of capitalism’ examined by Daniel Bell, are rife in a theoretical industry that likes to believe that it is intellectually and politically in the radical vanguard, but actually grows almost solely in the hothouse of the contemporary corporate university.⁵⁶ McKenzie

⁵¹ Ibid., 134.

⁵² Ibid., 134.

⁵³ Ibid., 137.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 135.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 140.

⁵⁶ Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (1976; New York, 1996).

Wark, lamenting the breach between the high theory now ubiquitous in academia and genuinely anti-establishment political and cultural action, states: theory ‘found its utopia, and it is the academy’.⁵⁷ Wark goes on to mock the crudely opportunistic multiculturalism and the fossilisation of radicalism in the theory pursued in the contemporary neoliberal university:

In the United States the academy spread its investments, placing a few bets on women and people of color. The best of those—Susan Buck-Morss, Judith Butler, Paul Gilroy, Donna Haraway—at least appreciate the double bind of speaking for difference within the heart of the empire of indifference. At best theory, like art, turns in on itself, living on through commentary, investing in its own death on credit. At worst it rattles the chains of old ghosts, as if a conference on ‘the idea of communism’ could still shock the bourgeois. As if there were still a bourgeois literate enough to shock. As if it were ever the idea that shocked them, rather than the practice.⁵⁸

For Wark, the very presence of theory in the academy instantiates its uselessness as a radical political tool: the institutionalisation of theory marks the end of theory.

Rather than being ahead of the game, academia is often decades behind in its theoretical formulations (and deformations) of what others have achieved (or failed to achieve) in history. For example, postcolonial theory entered the academy in the 1970s with Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), establishing itself in the 1980s and 1990s during the rise to power of the New Right in America and Britain. Yet post-colonial nationalist movements—truly oppositional historical moments that much postcolonial theory’s opposition to nationalism intellectually de-legitimises—happened in history mainly between the wars and immediately after the Second World War. Referring to the revolution manqué that was Paris, May 1968, Wark writes of theorists (presumably poststructuralists) who belong to ‘those groups which made a profession of turning failed revolutions into literary or philosophical success’.⁵⁹ Theory, in academia, typically does not precede practice, but follows fitfully

⁵⁷ McKenzie Wark, *The Beach Beneath the Street: The Everyday Life and Glorious Times of the Situationist International* (London and New York, 2011), 2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2. ‘The Idea of Communism’ refers to a 2009 conference at Birkbeck’s Institute for the Humanities, and was subsequently a Verso book (London and New York, 2010) of the same title edited by Costas Douzinas and Slavko Žižek.

⁵⁹ Wark, *The Beach Beneath the Street*, 5.

after—fashionably *late*. As noted mordantly by John Gray, ‘in the life of the academic mind, the owl of Minerva seldom flies as early as dusk.’⁶⁰ This concept of lateness—late-Marxism, late-capitalism, late-nationalism—indicates the stubborn continuance of a political phenomenon whose life should have been, theoretically speaking, long since extinguished. ‘New cosmopolitanism’ exists in the historical era of late-nationalism, and flourishes in the bourgeois confines of the neoliberal university.

It was during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s that, according to David Harvey, ‘Neoliberalism became ... hegemonic as a universalistic mode of discourse’.⁶¹ For Harvey, the term ‘globalisation’ ‘performs a masking function as to the power relations involved’ in neoliberalism, which is the contemporary form of capitalist imperialism.⁶² In academia, especially in the humanities, the discourse of globalisation has been nowhere more conspicuous than in the centrality of critical and cultural theory to university curricula and scholarly interpretations.⁶³ The success of the theory industry has rested on its ability to universalise itself and claim a transnational status (and hence a largely anti-nationalist politics), in spite of the often local origin and application of particular theories (for instance, Mettray is for Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) the origin of the modern French penal system, yet the ‘disciplinary society’ which he believes to have grown from such local beginnings now apparently encompasses the whole post-Enlightenment world). Although theory is ostensibly radically oppositional and anti-market, its anti-nationalism is not on the whole Marxist but is actually a warped mirror of the anti-nationalism of capitalist-imperialist globalisation. The theory industry, much in the manner of capitalist show business, even throws up its own oft-cited celebrity figures. This is ironic, perhaps, given theory’s objection to the supposed tyranny of the single author. All the more paradoxical is Foucault’s starry status since the author-as-genius has apparently been routed by Foucauldian discourse and Foucault’s question ‘What is an Author?’⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Gray, ‘Why the Owl Flies Late: The Inadequacies of Academic Liberalism’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 July 1992; reprinted as ‘Notes Toward a Definition of the Political Thought of Tlön’, *Enlightenment’s Wake*, 22.

⁶¹ Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 57.

⁶² Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 58.

⁶³ I have deliberately not capitalised critical theory so as not to confuse my conception here, which is the generic humanities-based post-Marxist, postmodern modular subject, with that of the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School.

⁶⁴ Michel Foucault, ‘What is an Author’ in Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (London, 1986), 101–20.

The transnationalism of theory, with its undermining of the idea of national traditions, is a reflection of the transnational academic job market in an era of globalisation. When job-seeking academics need to pack their bags and sell their intellectual labour practically anywhere in the world, knowledge of a specific local culture or national tradition is unlikely to be terribly marketable – unless of course that knowledge be of one of the imperial cultures. Under the terms of globalisation, cosmopolitan critical theory has necessarily replaced local knowledge in the transnational academic's toolkit. Just as the feel-good rhetoric of multiculturalism is expressive of the transnational ethics behind much theory, so cosmopolitanism is a 'structure of feeling' of the professional class that deploys such discourse. The hegemonic rise of the university 'new cosmopolitans', indicative of their class position as a professional academic caste, is connected to their lack of connection to the town or city that their employing university usually bears the name of and trades on. The University of Duncairn, to utilise the name of Lewis Grassie Gibbon's imagined city in *Grey Granite* (1934), may be situated in the city of Duncairn, but it is no more local in its current corporate, neoliberal guise than any other university.

Stefan Collini, in *What Are Universities For?* (2012), is one of a number of recent commentators to be concerned by the changes taking place in higher education, changes that signal 'a kind of mercantilism of the intellect'.⁶⁵ The university, Collini argues, has moved towards a much more market-driven model that sees 'higher education as an extension of globalization'.⁶⁶ According to Collini,

from the late nineteenth century onwards the existence of European empires naturally led to the transplanting of domestic models to other parts of the world. But what may have been relatively new in the last couple of decades of the twentieth century, and even more marked in the past ten years, is the simultaneous transformation of the scale of higher education in almost all 'developed' (and some 'developing') countries, along with the concomitant introduction of similar organizational and financial arrangements which cut across, and have sometimes signalled major departures from, existing national traditions.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Stefan Collini, *What Are Universities For?* (London, 2012), 17. For other examples, see Michael Bailey and Des Freeman (eds), *The Assault on Universities: A Manifesto for Resistance* (London, 2011), and Thomas Docherty, *For the University: Democracy and the Future of the Institution* (London and New York, 2011).

⁶⁶ Collini, *What Are Universities For?*, 15.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 13–14.

As Collini points out, because ‘scholarship and science are inherently supranational activities, there have always been instances of universities in one country learning from or imitating those in another’.⁶⁸ However, whilst scholarship may in some measure be ‘supranational’, the function of the university, first-and-foremost, should be to serve the good of the local and national communities. As John Macmurray states, ‘The business of a university is to be the cultural authority of the region that it serves.’⁶⁹

The lack of representation of the local population in what Collini calls the ‘global multiversity’ is tellingly allied with the sparse attention paid to the national intellectual tradition.⁷⁰ As Cairns Craig writes: ‘The critic’s right to judgement is no longer based on values deriving from an argued philosophy or from a cultural tradition: it is based instead on the ability of the critic to stand beyond the boundary of culturally conditioned value systems.’⁷¹ Andrew Lockhart Walker protests in *The Revival of the Democratic Intellect*, published in 1994, that ‘The only thing Scottish about half our universities is their geographical location’, and that ‘At least half our universities have in fact acquired colonial status’.⁷² Clearly, Lockhart Walker is deeply influenced by the Anglicisation thesis argued by George Davie.⁷³ But the change towards a more specialised university system in Scotland in the nineteenth century away from a generalised philosophical tradition, examined by Davie in *The Democratic Intellect* (1961), and the crisis-point Davie believes was reached in this process in the twentieth century, which he elucidates in *The Crisis of the Democratic Intellect* (1986), may now be seen as part of a geographically wider process of cosmopolitanisation and corporatisation in higher education and society more generally.

Gerard Carruthers identifies what he calls the tradition of “‘generalist” Scottish literary criticism’, which says ‘attempts to describe the [cultural] continuity, or lack of this, in a way that is concerned with an over-determined or over-anxious sense of tradition’.⁷⁴ Nation and culture are symbiotically linked

⁶⁸ Collini, *What Are Universities For?*, 13.

⁶⁹ John Macmurray, ‘The Idea of a University’, *TESS*, 4 December 1970; quoted in Andrew Lockhart Walker, *The Revival of the Democratic Intellect: Scotland’s University Traditions and the Crisis in Modern Thought* (Edinburgh, 1994), 285.

⁷⁰ Collini, *What Are Universities For?*, chapter 1, ‘The Global Multiversity?’, 3–19.

⁷¹ Cairns Craig, *Intending Scotland: Explorations in Scottish Culture since the Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 2009), 219.

⁷² Lockhart Walker, *The Revival of the Democratic Intellect*, 241.

⁷³ For a critique of Davie’s thesis, see R.D. Anderson, *Education and Opportunity in Victorian Scotland: Schools and Universities* (Oxford, 1983), 25.

⁷⁴ Gerard Carruthers, *Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh, 2009), 10, 10–11.

in the generalist tradition, each illustrating and informing the perceived health (or sickness) or existence (or non-existence) of the other. For Carruthers, this generalist tradition is influenced by Matthew Arnold's essentialised conception of Celticism, and is demonstrated in the work of G. Gregory Smith, Edwin Muir, John Speirs, Kurt Wittig, David Craig and David Daiches. The generalist tradition has been characterised by pessimism as to Scotland's ability to achieve or sustain an organic culture, which is in turn caused by and illustrates Scotland's precarious national status. For Muir, if the Scottish writer 'wishes to add to an indigenous Scottish literature, he will find there ... neither an organic community to round off his conceptions, nor a major literary tradition to support him, nor even a faith that a Scottish literature is possible or desirable'.⁷⁵ According to David Craig, 'there did not emerge with modern Scotland a mature, "all-round" literature. Sheer social forces—centralisation, emigration, the widespread wasting away of the regional and the vernacular—were against the sustained output of anything like a *separate* literature for Scotland'.⁷⁶ Speirs, in his preface to the 1962 edition of *The Scots Literary Tradition*, first published in 1940, admits to 'the pessimism of the book's conclusion' that Scotland had 'lost consciousness' of itself in having lost the linguistic resources of the past, although that *The Scots Literary Tradition* first appeared as essays in the Leavisite *Scrutiny* somewhat accounts for Speirs' pessimism as to Scotland's apparent failure to uphold an organic literary culture.⁷⁷ Carruthers acknowledges that 'A number of critics and commentators in the last twenty years ... have begun to provide alternatives to the pessimism of the generalist' tradition.⁷⁸ He then contends: 'A true paradox resides in the fact that (largely well-meaning) critics seeking to explore Scottish literature further have, *due to their idea of a tightly-bound literature and nation*, found Scottish literature ultimately to be unsustainable.'⁷⁹ I would argue, rather, that it is those critics with a theoretical and cosmopolitan bias who have questioned the existence of Scottish literature and indeed Scotland itself. Just when some twentieth- and twenty-first-century critics have sought to overcome the negativities of what Carruthers terms the generalist tradition, and to do so within the context of a national tradition, the concept of a national tradition has been exploded from a different angle:

⁷⁵ Edwin Muir, *Scott and Scotland: The Predicament of the Scottish Writer* (1936; Edinburgh, 1982), 4.

⁷⁶ David Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680–1830* (1940; London, 1961), 14 (italics in original).

⁷⁷ John Speirs, *The Scots Literary Tradition: An Essay in Criticism* (London, 1962), 14, 161.

⁷⁸ Carruthers, *Scottish Literature*, 24.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 24 (The emphasis is mine).

as for the idea of the (independent) nation, so for the idea of the national culture—both are deemed irrelevant in the current neoliberal, cosmopolitan world order. The real paradox is that the ‘new cosmopolitans’ have inherited the national nihilism of the generalist tradition they would reject.

Berthold Schoene’s *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (2009) acknowledges some of the problems associated with cosmopolitanism, such as the class privileges—privileges that extend to the national haves and have-nots—behind ‘traditional cosmopolitanism’.⁸⁰ For Schoene, therefore, cosmopolitanism in an age of globalisation cannot justifiably be a mere ‘lifestyle option’ of rich Westerners, but instead ‘must be definitive of ethical responsibility and firm political commitment’—a difficult task, surely, when ‘what cosmopolitanism is, or might be, remains as yet to be clearly defined’.⁸¹ However, Schoene dates the beginning of ‘new cosmopolitanism’ (a phrase he too deploys) to the attacks on the World Trade Center, the moment at which the United States of America was violently forced to confront the fact that the whole world was not in agreement with the New Right’s ‘End of History’-conception of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism.⁸² Schoene also believes that, alongside 9–11 in America, the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 and the devolution referendum in Scotland on 11 September 1997 ought to ‘be cited as determining Britain’s contemporaneity’.⁸³

Schoene’s reference to the devolution referendum is crucial to his analysis of James Kelman’s *Translated Accounts* (2001) and *You Have to Be Careful in the Land of the Free* (2004). These are, at the time of writing, the only Kelman novels to be set wholly outside of Scotland: *Translated Accounts* in an unspecified zone of conflict with its ensuing migration of political refugees, and *You Have to Be Careful in the Land of the Free* in the USA. Their respective geographies and their post-devolution publication dates allow Schoene the liberty of arguing that these novels are a critique of Scotland’s international role and responsibilities. Schoene claims that the setting and subject-matter of *Translated Accounts* is

⁸⁰ Berthold Schoene, *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (Edinburgh, 2009), 3.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 7, 2. Similarly, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Carol A. Breckenridge and Dipesh Chakrabarty argue that as an emerging theoretical concept cosmopolitanism is currently indefinable, indeed that to seek to define cosmopolitanism would be ‘uncosmopolitan’: ‘As a historical category, the cosmopolitan should be considered entirely open, and not pre-given or foreclosed by the definition of any particular society or discourse’, ‘Cosmopolitanisms’ in Breckenridge et al (eds), *Cosmopolitanism* (Durham, 2002), 1.

⁸² Schoene, *The Cosmopolitan Novel*, 8.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 6.

Kelman's tangential way of beating post-devolution Scotland over the head for its continuing complicity with Anglo-American imperialism and Scottish literature for its continuing Scoto-centric parochialism: 'As far as Kelman is concerned, it is time post-devolution Scotland looked beyond its own legendary suffering, which is at risk of becoming inauthentic through so much reiteration. It is time the nation grasped its new ethical responsibility in the world.'⁸⁴ The 'new cosmopolitan' Schoene shows his political hand with his sardonic reiteration of the phrase 'It is time ...', used by the SNP in their 2006 party political propaganda-claim that 'It's time ...' for Scotland to vote for the SNP and achieve independence. Without independence, however, Scotland cannot grasp fully its new international ethical responsibilities, as the devolution settlement does not allow the Scottish state to control its own foreign policy. Yet, this political fact fails to deter Schoene, who goes on to attack Scottish culture: 'It is time Scotland ceased to provide Scottish literature's sole focus and subject matter. It is time the country acknowledged its relatively powerful and influential position and started paying attention to the fate of the rest of the world.'⁸⁵ Is this really Kelman's point with *Translated Accounts*, or is this actually what Schoene wants to reduce this complex, sophisticated novel to in order to make his own political speech? Even when a Scottish writer writes about something other than Scotland the anti-nationalist, 'new cosmopolitan' critic takes this as an excuse to belittle Scottish culture: a novel Schoene wants to classify as a cosmopolitan novel is still somehow implicitly aimed at and about Scotland. Ironically, Schoene fails to see that this is everything he claims Kelman is claiming Scotland should move beyond. He makes a similarly inverted value-judgement when calling Mark Renton's 'Ah hate the Scots'-rant in Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993) an 'infamous anti-nationalist speech', when in fact Renton thinks that Scotland has been colonised by the English; by inference, one could argue justifiably, the Scots are a 'wretched, servile, miserable, pathetic' people precisely insofar as they *do not* rebel against their subordinate position.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Ibid., 74.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 74.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 73; Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting* (1993; London, 2004), 78. Renton's 'speech', as Schoene calls it, is actually internal monologue in the novel; it becomes a, somewhat awkward, set-piece speech in Danny Boyle's 1996 film, as the scene is displaced from pub to symbolically-touristy Scottish countryside. Renton's self-condemning attitude is reminiscent of Roddy Doyle's *The Commitments* (1987; London, 1998), where Jimmy Rabbitte says the Irish are 'the niggers of Europe', although in voicing the words of James Brown, 'I'm black an' I'm proud', there is a measure of opportunistic (multi)

Schoene concludes *The Cosmopolitan Novel* with the concern that literary art is in demise, and that the way the novel is currently marketed, sold and taught is fundamentally responsible for literature's continuing marginalisation in the face of market standardisation. Yet what if literary art is dying, as Schoene intimates, because of the very cosmopolitanism he valorises; because different—not discrete—national cultures and traditions are being worn away by globalisation? What if literature *is* national in origin and inspiration, as Neil M. Gunn suggests? 'The small nation has always been humanity's last bulwark against that machine [of political and commercial standardisation], for personal expression against impersonal tyranny, for the quick freedom of the spirit against the flattening steam-roller of mass. It is concerned for intangible things called its heritage, its belief and arts, its distinctive institutions, for everything, in fact, that expresses it. And expression finally implies spirit in an act of creation, which is to say, culture.'⁸⁷

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cultural expressiveness lacking in Renton's national self-loathing. *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸⁷ Neil M. Gunn, 'Nationalism and Internationalism', *Scots Magazine*, 15 (June 1931); reprinted in McCleery (ed.), *Landscape and Light*, 179.

