POETRY AND PAINTING: ARTS OF RESISTANCE
EDITORIAL

History is the common theme that unites many of the articles in this issue of Perspectives. But this is not history in any dry academic sense, but rather history that connects intimately with today and informs our views about the future we want to see, and (hopefully) make happen through our political activity. Indeed, as David Purdy argues in his latest Keywords on individual(ism), “in order to become autonomous, individuals must be capable of subjecting the various pressures and norms that confront them to critical scrutiny, so that they can form intentions and make decisions on the basis of independent, rational reflection.” History is surely part of that process.

Two articles mark the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Spanish Civil War. Willie Thompson looks at the international context in which the Republican government was challenged and eventually overthrown by the deeply reactionary Nationalist forces led by Franco. Willy Maley follows by writing of the Scots (including his own father) who went to join the International Brigades, fighting in support of the Spanish republic. He reminds us that anti-fascist struggle is as necessary now as it was then.

Back on home ground, Alexander Moffat and Alan Riach write about their recently published book, Arts of Resistance (shortly to be published in a paper-back edition), in which they argue that the Scottish education system has failed to engage our young people with the rich seam of artistic and literary culture that connects so specifically with the diverse geographical areas that make up this country. This is a plea to make history again connect with the present, and future – which might help us all make the best of our lives.

And history has also caused an upset in the academic world when it became apparent that the Higher history syllabus in Scotland had no requirement for the teaching (and learning) of Scottish history. That is about to change and Larry Cheyne of the SQA outlines what will happen from 2011.

With the general election looming on the horizon, Stuart Fairweather looks at the political options, reminding us that “we need to remember we are campaigners as well as voters.”

Morag Parnell, in a riposte to many of the contributions we have published recently on the current crisis, argues major areas on concern are often missing from the analyses proffered.

The death, earlier this year, of Marilyn French, author of The Women’s Room, is marked by short pieces by three women, recalling the impact that reading the book first had on them.

Thanks to all contributors.

Sean Feeny
Editor
In June, Queen Margaret University, where I work, gave an honorary degree to Sathyu Sarangi, an activist in Bhopal with whom I have been working over the last few years. Sathyu abandoned a PhD in 1984 when the Union Carbide gas leak happened, and devoted his intellectual skills and the next 25 years of his life to the struggle for justice in Bhopal. It is appropriate that an academic institution should honour the intellectual work of an activist committed to social justice.

Universities are public institutions; they have a responsibility to service the social good through their research, education and other activities. This has been done in many ways in the history of higher education: the settlement movement, university extension, sciences shops etc. It still is occurring but is becoming increasingly difficult in our marketised and bureaucratised higher education system. Targets for increasing the participation in higher education of under-represented groups are good, but tend to focus on putting working class, disabled and black bums on the same seats without much questioning of issues such as the production of the curriculum, individualised measures of achievement, pressures on productivity and the complicity with the structures which exclude the working class, disabled people and BME communities. Recognition for the intellectual work of a committed activist is an important stand in the right direction.

I’m trying to do my bit within the constraints of the system, with a new course in Social Movements and Political Change this autumn. It is a good time to start teaching this as it happens, with plenty of movement activity to get active in: from the Gude Cause women’s suffrage march and climate justice convergence in October; through the G20 finance and NATO summits in November, leading to the Bhopal 25th anniversary on December 3rd and Copenhagen climate conference the following week.

Whilst Sathyu was in the UK, he also addressed activists in Edinburgh and in Teesside where the UK’s highest concentration of polluting industries are adjacent to some of the poorest communities. He spoke to trade union safety reps and relatives of those killed at work, at the National Hazards Conference in Manchester. And in Staines we joined the Yes Men for an action at Dow’s headquarters. The Yes Men are film makers and artisans of the political stunt – look out for their new film The Yes Men Fix the World. On this occasion they staged a product promotion for a new mineral water: B’ea pal, purporting to come from Hand Pump #1 Atal Ayub Nagar, Bhopal. Water which was analysed from this pump was found to contain unsafe levels of organochlorines related to insecticide production, clearly continuing to leach from the former Union Carbide site which the new owners, Dow, refuse to clean up.

Closer to home, a significant local victory was won in East Lothian. On 1st September, East Lothian Council’s Planning Committee voted unanimously to reject Viridor’s application for an Energy from Waste Incinerator in Dunbar, against the recommendation of their planning officers. Councillors referred to many representations from concerned constituents. There were 50 formal objectors and eight of them spoke at the meeting, including me representing East Lothian Green Party. It is encouraging when democracy works in favour of justice. As one more incinerator proposal bites the dust and pressure on landfills continues, perhaps this will force Scotland really to take the steps necessary to reduce drastically the volume of waste (government consultation on Scotland’s Zero Waste Plan is out until 13th November) by focusing on those who produce it and an economic system based on cheap oil and its plastic by-products and the global transportation of goods.

Eurig Scandrett is a Green activist and member of Democratic Left Scotland.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS
Climate Justice Convergence, 24th October
G20 finance ministerial, 7th–8th November, St Andrews
Stop the War coalition demonstration against NATO conference, 14th November, Edinburgh
Alternative summit, 15th November
Bhopal 25th anniversary, 3rd December
Copenhagen climate summit, 6–18th December
The UK general election is due by spring next year at the latest. With neo-liberalism still kicking, Stuart Fairweather sketches an agenda to bring about lasting change.

No one can be in any doubt that we are experiencing the impact of a government and a party that has lost its way. New Labour continues to be moribundly connected to a neo-liberal world view: the market and the protection of markets is all that matters. At present avoiding electoral defeat is paramount. So, if a tough stance on the public sector is required, Labour will deliver.

However this approach will fail to address the interconnected crises that we face – a situation that Labour has helped to create. We face a crisis of capitalism where the belief in continuous growth based on credit is no longer tenable; a global environmental crisis that endangers the planet, at a time when US economic and military domination is no longer assured; and a domestic political crisis that is pulling Britain and its communities apart.

One of the most ludicrous aspects of our electoral system is that we do not know exactly when the general election will be called.

WORSE UNDER THE TORIES

Against this background we will see a Labour campaign that correctly highlights the fact that things would be worse with the Tories. Additionally the spectre of the far right will be raised in a Britain confused about its own identity. Above all Gordon thinks we can get back to a position where the market delivers all our needs – where the rich get richer, and community is under the constant strain of accommodating uncaring individualism. The approach to the election will see a damaged and embittered Labour Party fighting on a number of fronts, armed with a desperate language that blames others but offers no clear way forward for the majority. The cannibalising of the public sector, fighting the wars that cannot be “won” and uncritically defending the United Kingdom are not the stuff of modernity. New Labour will no longer be new. Despite the claims at the TUC conference to defend frontline workers, will our public sector be safe in Labour’s hands?

For the left this raises a serious question. How can we respond to the conditions we face and begin to move in the direction of organising things differently? One of the most ludicrous aspects of our electoral system is that we do not know exactly when the general election will be called, but we know it is coming. Support for the SNP, the Greens or any independent left group will, by itself, not create change across Britain. Locating more than a few Labour Party candidates that oppose the excesses of multi-national capitalism and warmongering is sadly no easy task. Those organisations and individuals that have a track record of defending working people and promoting democratic rights deserve support, but again this alone will not be enough to move us to a position that puts people before profit.

VOTE WISELY

Realistically the chances of any individual candidates that pose an alternative to the neo-liberals winning under first-past-the-post look limited. But where there is the possibility there is the need to work together. We need to support people to use their one vote wisely, opposing those that say there is no alternative to market rule.

Strangely some have suggested that this will be a good election for Labour to lose. This view of politics dislocates what happens at Westminster from real lives. The mess that has been made of the financial system needs to be responded to but not at the price of yet another ideological onslaught on the remaining social infrastructure, or the continued...
abuse of the planet. We do not need new Thatcherism: Cameron wielding the knife. If there are any doubts, refer back to the remarks of Boris Johnson and others about the banking reforms suggested by Adair Turner. The Tories may try to talk nice but when their world is challenged we see that they have not given up class war.

**HUNG PARLIAMENT**

The left’s position should not be about simply giving Labour yet another chance; we need to push for an agreed minimum programme of reforms. Resisting an automatic Cameron victory means reconstructing political agency: people’s collective ability to affect change. This means that our politics also require social and cultural dimensions. The groups and individuals that make up the left need to speak to each other and to generate popular ideas. In this context a hung parliament would be a democratic “victory”, opening the door to ongoing campaigning. It would provide some balance against the power of the party machine and the vested interests to which Labour is so much in thrall. Similarly, an election result that propels further devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland would weaken the relationship between the major governing party and the centralising power of the British state. This would create the conditions for a realignment of politics across Britain, differentiated on the basis of distinct political geographies and raising the “English question”. This more “localised” politics would allow a range of responses to the failings of capitalism and the crises mentioned above.

The left should not fear, and indeed should support a political and cultural “federalism from below”. It should work for an exchange of ideas and experience across Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales. It should look to extend this further, establishing an agreed European democratic sovereignty that contributes progressively to global relations.

The role of our trades unions in pushing for greater industrial democracy is not disconnected from the suggestions above. Understandably in recent times the priority has been to push on wage demands and the defence of rights. These sectional interests will require to be accommodated after the election but in the context of economic restructuring, wage militancy alone will be counter-productive. But the recent sit-ins from Prisme in Dundee to Vestas on the Isle of Wight have shown there is the political imagination for a wider struggle. A worker-led discussion with citizens about the nature of responsive public services and green manufacturing may sound far-fetched but if we are to win the labour movement for democratic change then we need to think radically. The welcome call by Mark Serwotka, and other trade unionists, for electoral reform at Westminster needs to be campaigned for before, during and after the election. Calls by trade unionists for the removal of Trident and an end to war are also essential.

**LABOUR REMAINS REMOTE**

When the election comes we need to remember we are campaigners as well as voters. Pressingly, in parts of England the priority will be the need to challenge the influence of the far-right, minimising their vote and their growing localised corrupt legitimacy. Candidates that stand up against fascism must be supported. The denial of full participation in society because of identity needs to be continually challenged in communities and workplaces. Sadly, Labour remains remote from this struggle. Labour will attempt to win the election again on the imagined soil of Middle England.

So what about us in Scotland? Again, like everyone else, we will get one Westminster vote. The SNP, Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens will all be on the ballot. In some places the SSP and/or Solidarity might be added. Voting for those best placed to challenge neo-liberalism and war might not be immediately obvious but candidates’ records of campaigning might be an indication. November will see action against NATO and the G20 in Scotland. This gives those in political parties and those in campaigning organisations the opportunity to connect local inequalities to their global causes. It provides a clear backdrop against which to paint the kind of Scotland we want to see in a different type of world.

We should not be ridiculously utopian, at the same time we require not to fetter the political images and action that will foster change. The Scottish Nationalist minority administration, which has been at least as progressive as Labour and the Liberals at Holyrood, has added a referendum on self-government to its legislative programme. They appear to be open to a third question. The point for the democratic left is what settlement will allow people here to develop a working alternative to free market fundamentalism and militarism? The point is not fundamentally about London or Edinburgh but about what social, democratic, cultural and environmental conditions will persist. We should not be denied a vote in a referendum on our future. But that vote, if it happens, and the debate surrounding it, should be about what kind of Scotland we want to see and about our relationships with the others on these islands and the planet.

The promise of a referendum will see some use a vote for the SNP as a kind of insurance against Cameron. What is more important is beginning a discussion now which acknowledges our multi-layered politics (global/Westminster/Holyrood/local). By building connections between communities, workplaces and political parties we can turn society away from greed and destruction and towards a different view of the world.

\[\text{Stuart Faiweather is convener of Democratic Left Scotland.}\]
THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Willie Thompson considers the international context of the Spanish Civil War while, on page 9, Willy Maley writes of the Scots who went to fight in defence of the fledgling republic.

THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT
The Spanish Civil War of 1936–9 had its roots in the global economic, social and political chaos which followed upon the First World War. The world economy was disrupted, two of its key prewar components, Germany and Russia, were disabled for different reasons; world-wide depression quickly set in, and following a brief limping recovery in the mid-twenties, tipped over in 1929 into catastrophic slump. Global trade came close to total paralysis, unemployment soared to astronomic figures.

Traditional ruling elites – landowning, commercial, industrial – who enjoyed property and privilege and had, except in Soviet Russia, contrived to survive and hold their positions despite the war and the chaos which followed it, were terrified. They were particularly terrified that the upheavals would open the door to social revolution and their own displacement from property, power and privilege, not least because revolution had established a territorial base in the former Tsarist empire, containing a sixth of the world’s population.

There were other reasons to fear the worst. In the aftermath of the war, apart from the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian empire, part of the United Kingdom had forcibly seceded, Germany saw several attempts at communist insurrection and soviet regimes were briefly established in Bavaria and Hungary. Italy and what remained of Austria were in turmoil and quasi-civil war and Finland torn apart with a full scale one. By the early thirties the German communists (KPD), having given up attempting insurrections, were threatening to overtake the safe social democrats (SPD) both in numbers and electorally as the principal workers’ party.

In these circumstances it comes as no surprise that the attitude of European elites towards Mussolini and Italian Fascism was – virtually unanimously – a highly approving one. He was held to have prevented a communist takeover in Italy (though the principal target of his thugs had been in fact the more widely supported socialists). Such approval was expressed by Churchill and even (briefly) by Hugh Dalton, at that time a rising Labour politician. When Hitler seized power in 1933 he was viewed in more or less the same light, for more or less the same reasons, if somewhat more cautiously in view of his slaughter of the SA leaders in the following year without pretence of trial and the rabid character of Nazi anti-Semitism.

Correspondingly, the guiding star of foreign policy in all European states, democracies and otherwise, was anti-Sovietism (the Weimar Republic was a partial exception on account of secret military agreements). It had nothing to do with the internal character of the regime – after Stalin established full control around 1928 it became a horrible tyranny, but it would have made no difference if the USSR had been a communist Sweden; it was viewed by ruling Establishments both as a scary example of successful social revolution and a dangerous base for repeat performances elsewhere.

THE SPANISH LABYRINTH
What occurred in Spain has to be seen in this context. It was an economically impoverished country, a monarchy governed by fanatically reactionary elites. Spain was an economically impoverished country, a monarchy governed by fanatically reactionary elites.

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the late dictator’s son, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, a charismatic young man who had been much impressed by his visits to Italy and Germany. It was a combination of several tiny factions and claimed to represent the interests of the masses as well as the ruling class. Primo de Rivera probably believed that himself – at any rate he told the bourgeoisie that it would have to make sacrifices for the sake of public welfare.

It claimed that its ideology was “national syndicalism” (as its German equivalent was “national socialism”) – syndicalism having deep roots in the Spanish labour movement; indeed one of the component factions called itself the “Fighting Councils of National Syndicalism” (usually referred to by its initials JONS). However it remained until the outbreak of the civil war mainly confined to bourgeois university students in Madrid, the only trade union to affiliate being that of the capital’s taxi-drivers.

**POPULAR FRONT AND MILITARY REVOLT**

The Popular Front elected in February 1936, a coalition of different left wing groups, with the communists at that time being relatively marginal, commenced a modest programme to address some of the worst inequities in both rural and urban spheres and strengthen the position of agricultural and industrial workers against their employers, as well as reducing the power of the Church and instituting national autonomy in the Basque country and Catalonia.

Employers, landowners and right-wing elements responded with violence and were answered in a similar manner. In Madrid itself the Falange began a terrorist campaign, resulting in Primo de Rivera’s arrest. Exaggerated and invented tales of left wing atrocities were spread abroad (nuns being burned alive was a favourite version). Undeniably there was severe social disorder and escalating upheaval, provocation from the right being the principal culprit. Foreign governments saw the Popular Front’s programme – moderate though it was – and the mayhem as opening the door to communist takeover, with the President, Manuel Azaña, in a Kerensky role. The election of another Popular Front government, in neighbouring France in June, intensified their suspicions and fears.

In the middle of July the long-planned military coup went into action. In Spanish Morocco, Francisco Franco took over the Army of Africa and the Spanish Foreign Legion, which were subsequently the rebels’ main striking force. Military units also rose on the mainland but were for the most part resisted successfully. What had been intended as a speedy putsch developed instead into prolonged civil war once Franco got his army over to the mainland.

His two fellow senior generals, one of whom, Sanjurjo, was the actual rebel leader, both died conveniently in mysterious plane crashes, while the captured Primo de Rivera, no less conveniently, was executed by the Republicans, leaving Franco as the sole caudillo. Meantime the Falange, which, at Primo de Rivera’s urging had called for support to the rebels, acquired many members in the areas under their control. Franco appreciated the Falange’s support: it provided him with an ideological focus which the rebellion otherwise lacked, and Primo de Rivera supplied a very useful icon.

However he made sure that it was kept in a very subordinate position as a sort of ideological mascot and was allowed no influence on policy. In technical terms, the dictatorship installed after his victory was not fascist but ultra-reactory traditionalist. However in practical terms that made little if any difference, it was as bad as any fascist regime (excepting the Third Reich) could have been and was probably worse even than Mussolini’s. It is said that Heinrich Himmler himself expressed reservations about the

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**GUERNICA**

The most iconic image to emerge from the Spanish Civil War, Pablo Picasso’s huge canvas, 3.5 metres wide, was commissioned for display at the Paris International Exposition of 1937 by the Spanish Republican government in reaction to the bombing, by German and Italian military planes, of the Basque town of Guernica on April 26th, 1937. It subsequently travelled extensively, being exhibited round Europe and in North and South America, ending up in New York’s MoMA. After Franco’s death it was returned to the newly democratic Spain and is now on display in the Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid.
number of Spaniards Franco was executing – no doubt he felt they could have been better killed by being forced to serve in Spanish military units fighting alongside Germany.

**THE DICTATORS AND THE DEMOCRACIES**

Without supplies and military support from Italy and Germany the reactionaries could not have won the war. Hitler and Mussolini were however at first hesitant about offering assistance, for they were uncertain that the rebellion could succeed and of course did not want to be associated with failure. However they were soon persuaded that unless they did something Bolshevism was likely to triumph in Spain with resulting communist regimes at both ends of the continent, while on the other hand their intervention could make the difference.

Mussolini, with his usual exaggerated bluster began by declaring that a few units of the Blackshirt militia would be all that was necessary, but when these were soon annihilated, regular troops were poured in on a daily basis and Italian submarines sank neutral shipping carrying supplies to government ports. Hitler’s principal contribution was in aircraft rather than ground troops, especially the infamous Condor Legion which destroyed Guernica.

The only two states to support the Republic were Mexico and the Soviet Union, both very distant countries. The USSR sent supplies and military advisors (most of whom were subsequently killed in Stalin’s purges) although its ability to influence the outcome was necessarily limited. Consequently the significance of the Spanish Communist Party was greatly increased, and it in fact came to dominate Republican policy and strategy.

Debate still continues as to whether the communist-inspired policy of first winning the war and then addressing far-reaching social reform was the right one. The Republicans would have had a better chance, it is argued, if they had inspired popular support and enthusiasm with a programme of immediate social revolution, especially in the countryside. That remains an open question, but appears unlikely that this was the decisive factor; the Republicans were divided while their enemies were united – and they faced impossible odds.

There was in fact a “civil war within the civil war” when communist-led troops crushed an uprising in Catalonia by anarchists and the semi-Trotskyist POUM (the events which George Orwell wrote about). Stalin, certainly, was determined that whatever happened in Spain his opponents to the left should never find a territorial base there and must be eliminated.

The impossible odds were not merely a result of the German/Italian intervention but the attitudes of the ruling elites in Britain and France, who did everything in their power, short of intervening themselves, to ensure a Franco victory. A Spanish diplomat was decades later to acknowledge that without the British government’s underhand support his side could never have won.

It was the British “National” (i.e. Conservative) government, led then by Stanley Baldwin, later Neville Chamberlain, which was responsible for the notorious “Non-Intervention Committee” comprising European states and the USA, ostensibly to prevent foreign involvement but in fact allowing the fascist dictators a free hand while the Republican government was denied the arms and supplies it needed. Thus was the French Popular Front administration of Leon Blum, also under great pressure from its own domestic reactionaries, prevented from assisting its legitimate neighbour government.

The British ruling elites were stuffed with fascist and even Nazi sympathisers, for example the mad Admiral Sir Barry Domvile, a former chief of Naval Intelligence. Chamberlain on one occasion told the King that the UK and Nazi Germany were the “twin pillars” in Europe of resistance to Bolshevism. One of their parliamentarians referred to Franco as “a gallant Christian gentleman”. After the outbreak of war with Germany, Lord Lloyd wrote a pamphlet, *The British Case*, in which the main accusation against Hitler was that he had teamed up with Stalin in the Nazi-Soviet Pact. This pamphlet carried an introduction by no less a person than the Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax.

Their publicists assiduously propagated stories of Republican atrocity, and a Church of England commission led by the Bishop of Chichester which investigated and reached a different conclusion was treated to abuse much like the sort directed against the Scottish government today.

Edgell Rickword’s poem of 1938 on the consequences of Non-Intervention contains the uncannily prophetic lines:

In Hitler’s frantic mental haze  
Already Hull and Cardiff blaze,  
And Paul’s grey dome rocks to the blast  
Of air-torpedoes screaming past

Yet after 1945, and with the execution of Republican prisoners still continuing, British and US governments, with Ernest Bevin to the fore, gearing up for the Cold War, took active steps to prevent the downfall of Franco’s regime. It was safely anti-communist. Although not respectable enough to be admitted to NATO it soon became a Western ally and host to US nuclear bases.

**Willie Thompson grew up in Shetland, attended Aberdeen and Strathclyde universities and lived in Glasgow from 1962 to 2001. He taught history at Glasgow Caledonian University and its predecessors 1971–2001, finally as professor of contemporary history. He joined the Communist Party in 1962 and remained a member until disbandment. He currently lives in Sunderland, and is a member of the Green Party.**
Seventy years on from the end of the Spanish Civil War, as the spectre of fascism rears its head again, Willy Maley, son of International Brigader James Maley, remembers the Scottish contribution to the anti-fascist struggle.

The plaque on the statue repeats a famous phrase from La Pasionaria: “Better to die on your feet than live forever on your knees.”

The statue of La Pasionaria at Glasgow’s Custom House Quay is a landmark for the left and a clear marker of Scottish internationalism and anti-fascism, standing out against the Scottish skyline that so many volunteers for liberty from these shores would never see again.

Paul Preston, the leading authority on the Spanish Civil War, has written of Ibarruri: “In both her private life and in the political arena, the essential characteristics of Pasionaria were empathy with the sufferings of others, a fierce determination to correct injustice, strength, realism, flexibility, and, as the years passed, a touch of cynicism and an obsession with the unity of the Spanish Communist party.”

The plaque on the statue salutes “the courage of those men and women who went to Spain to fight Fascism 1936-39”, and remembers the sixty-five Glaswegians who died defending democracy. It repeats a famous phrase from a speech by La Pasionaria broadcast on the 3rd of September 1936: “Better to die on your feet than live forever on your knees.” Those words moved my father, James Maley, a Communist from the Glasgow’s East End, to go to Spain.

SUICIDE HILL
In December 1936, James Maley left from George Square in a bus. Six weeks later he was a prisoner of war, captured at the Battle of Jarama in February 1937, while covering the retreat on Suicide Hill with No. 2 Company, the machine-gun company of the British Battalion of the International Brigade. They were outnumbered three to one, fighting alongside the Dimitrov Battalion – made up of Greeks and others from the Balkans, one of whose commanders was later better known as Marshall Tito – and the Abraham Lincoln Battalion. The British Battalion was also known as the “Saklatvala Battalion”, after Shapurji Saklatvala, the British Indian who

SPANISH CIVIL WAR MEMORIALS IN SCOTLAND
There are currently two ongoing financial appeals for new Spanish Civil War memorials in Scotland: One is for the eight men and women from the Perth area who went to Spain, for which the contact is Paul Philippou at 3 Graham’s Place, King Street, Perth PH2 8HZ. The other is for three Brigaders from Blantyre who were killed in Spain: Thomas Brannan, William Fox and Thomas Flecks. The contact for this appeal is Bill Ramsay, 84 Albert Avenue, Glasgow, G42 8RD. Cheques should be made out to East Kilbride Trades Council Spanish Memorial Appeal.

The unveiling of the Blantyre memorial, by sculptor Frank Casey, will take place on Saturday 24th October at 11am.
became the first Communist MP (on a Labour ticket) for Battersea North in 1922, and later stood unsuccessfully for Glasgow Shettleston, my father’s constituency, in 1930. Saklatvala had died in January 1936 but as an internationalist his name resonated with the International Brigades.

My father turned twenty-nine in a Spanish prison, and died in Glasgow seventy years later, a lifelong activist. He was never one for harping on the past, and as an internationalist he certainly wasn’t one for putting things into national boxes, but he did believe that real citizenship meant an end to empire and monarchy. Subjects can’t be citizens, only ever slaves. Raised in the Calton district of Glasgow, the son of an Irish father and Glaswegian mother, my father’s politics were forged on Red Clydeside – forged too at Parkhead Forge, where he worked on his return from Spain. Many Scots were and are socialists and internationalists, republicans and anti-imperialists. They don’t hold with invading and occupying countries; theirs is a spirit of radical resistance and international solidarity. Seventy years down the line that same fighting spirit, that same rage against injustice, and that same hope for a better future persists. My father never regretted going to Spain, and remained resolute in his passionate support for anti-fascist, anti-imperialist struggle to the end of his long and active life.

MOTHER COURAGE
Although not an official war memorial – thanks to Britain’s shameful policy of non-intervention – the statue of La Pasionaria on the Clydeside has since 2004 been a “B” listed building according to Historic Scotland. It was commissioned in 1974 by the International Brigade Association, which raised the £3000 fee with the help of the Labour movement in Scotland, and was finally unveiled on 5th December 1979 after the usual right-wing red-baiting. The sculptor, Arthur Dooley, was, like my father, and like the subject of his Glasgow commission, a communist. A Liverpudlian, Dooley is best known for his sculpture of the Beatles in his hometown, which depicts the Madonna cradling the band with the inscription: “Four lads who shook the world.” Dooley had a few church commissions in his portfolio, including one at Toxteth, and there’s a religious feel to La Pasionaria’s upraised and imploring arms. She is a kind of Madonna figure, and the men and women she salutes also shook the world.

RED WATCH
Discussion of James Kelman’s recent remarks on Scottish literature has focused on what he has to say about genre fiction, but Kelman’s comments on the neglect or wilful misrepresentations of Scotland’s radical past are far more important. Kelman mentioned John MacLean and James Connolly, but he might also have referred to the many ordinary working-class men and women who supported the internationalist efforts against Franco’s fascists, backed by Hitler and Mussolini. Gregory Burke is one of several Scottish writers and intellectuals who have been influenced by Kelman, but in a recent interview Kelman stated that – although he admitted he hadn’t seen Black Watch – he was very suspicious of its warm reception in the United States and wondered how deep was its analysis of Anglo-American imperialism. David Archibald, albeit from a more informed perspective, has also questioned the play’s politics.2

Whatever the merits of Black Watch – and it is clearly a significant dramatic work – a National Theatre of Scotland that overlooks the country’s radical history in favour of a history of empire, invasion and occupation is not doing justice to the nation’s anti-imperialist traditions. John McGrath’s The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black, Black Oil is a drama of a different order, as is Kelman’s own powerful depiction of two martyred Scottish radicals, Hardie and Baird. With the right rampant again, there was never a greater need for the radical popular theatre of 7:84, Wildcat, and Borderline, and the passing of Mayfest in the 1990s was a real loss.
In Scotland there’s the Black Watch, but there’s also the Red Clyde. The British are back in Kandahar where they were over a century ago when Arthur Conan Doyle wrote his first Sherlock Holmes story, featuring a wounded and sunburned Dr Watson fresh from the frontline, as Holmes – in his inimitable elementary fashion – deduced. The same old story can’t be retold without a radical critique. In this context, with history threatening to repeat itself, reflecting on the Spanish Civil War, a watershed moment and movement in world history as well as the history of activism and political commitment in Scotland, is timely.

The same old story can’t be retold without a radical critique.

DA SANG O DA RIDER
by Federico García Lorca

Cordoba,
fa’r awa an lanery.

Black pony, foo mòn
an olives i mi saddle bag.
Although I keen da roddahs ahead
A’ll niver win ta Cordoba.

Trowe da wind, trowe da plain
black pony, rid mòn.
Daeth is watchin me
fae da tooers o Cordoba.

Ah, foo lang da rodd is!
Ah, mi brave pony!
Ah, foo daeth waets for me
afore I win tae Cordoba!

Cordoba,
fa’r awa an lanery.

Translated into Shetland dialect by Christie Williamson.

Federico García Lorca
was a poet, dramatist and theatre director. Born in 1898, he was murdered at the outset of the civil war in 1936, almost certainly by supporters of the Nationalist cause. Franco’s fascist regime banned his work until 1953, when a censored Complete Works (sic) was published.

A prolific poet, his best-known plays include Blood Wedding and The House of Bernarda Alba, which has recently seen a new production by the National Theatre of Scotland.

Controversy surrounds the circumstances of his murder: was he a supporter of the Republican cause or apolitical (he had friends in both the Republican and Nationalist camps); was his homosexuality a factor?

Last year a Spanish judge opened an investigation into García Lorca’s death.

HOMAGE AGAINST THE DYING OF THE LIGHT

When my father died in 2007 there was the feeling of a cord being cut, and when Steve Fullarton, the last of the Scottish International Brigaders died last year there was a real sense of a generation passing out of history, too late to touch their sleeves as they brushed past. But in Barcelona in October 2008, at an event to commemorate those who fought fascism, I met the sons and daughters, nieces and nephews and grandchildren, of men and women who had served and suffered alongside my father in Spain.

A year ago I sat with Daniel Gray in a small studio in Glasgow and watched some footage that Don Coutts had recorded back in the early 1990s of the then surviving Scottish members of the International Brigades. My father was among those interviewed, but there were one or two that weren’t immediately identifiable. That brought home to me the importance of recording and remembering the memories, stories and voices of those who fought in Spain. Since then, STV has broadcast a two-part documentary, The Scots Who Fought Franco, based on those tapes, and Daniel Gray’s important book, Homage to Caledonia: Scotland and the Spanish Civil War (Luath Press), has added invaluably to our knowledge of that crucial passage in Scottish radical history.

Steve Fullarton’s recollections stand out among many gritty, witty passages in Homage to Caledonia. Fullarton remembers a scene at the Battle of the Ebro when a Brigader shot in the foot cried out for help, only to be told by the sergeant to shut up or he’d give their position away. Back came the reply: “Well, if I haven’t already given my position away, then some bastard must’ve told them where I am.” Fullarton learned from others’ mistakes. Wounded in the stomach he crawled into a hole and kept quiet, clutching two grenades.

Daniel Gray’s book is also important for bringing to life some of the Scottish women who went to Spain, including Annie Murray, and Chris Dolan’s fictionalised biography of another remarkable figure, An Anarchist’s Story: The Life of Ethel MacDonald (Birlinn, 2009), shows that the fighting spirit of Dolores Ibarruri burned brightly in this country. Seventy years on from the Spanish Civil War, thirty years on from the statue’s unveiling, a year after the last of the Scottish volunteers for liberty has passed away, La Pasionaria still watches over Red Clydeside, reminding us of a radical history, a history of political commitment, and urging us to be vigilant, and to guard against a return of the fascist threat.

Willy Maley is Professor of English Literature at the University of Glasgow. He was the founder, with Philip Hobsbaum, of the university’s creative writing postgraduate programme. Willy has published widely on early modern English literature and on modern Scottish and Irish writing. He is also a playwright and former Fringe First winner at the Edinburgh Festival. His plays include From The Calton to Catalonia (1990), a dramatised account of his father’s experiences as a POW during the Spanish Civil War, co-written with his brother, John Maley.

NOTES
In summer 2007, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) consulted the History community on a proposal to make Scottish history a compulsory part of the Higher course. By a majority of nearly two to one, respondents supported this change. Scottish history will form the source-based Paper 2 from the 2011 diet onwards.

While the changes are part of SQA’s ongoing maintenance and review of its courses, the consultation was prompted by concerns expressed at the position of Scottish history in this course. This arose out of comments on the 2005 Higher question paper where, for perfectly valid reasons relating to the sampling of the paper, there was no essay question on Scottish history in the Later Modern section of the paper. There were such questions sampling the Medieval and Early Modern sections of the essay paper. Moreover, there were two complete, source-based Scottish topics in Paper 2, out of a total of nine source-based Special Topics. It was possible for candidates to cover Scottish history, therefore, in the British section of Paper 1, Paper 2 and in their extended essay i.e. 75% of the course. At comparable levels, some element at least of the national history was compulsory. Scotland was unique in not requiring at least some national history to be taught.

Surveys of 200 candidates per year over the period 2001–04 indicate that 13 candidates (out of 800) answered questions on the former topic; only two answered on the latter. Even when an option of an essay on Scottish history in the Later Modern was offered, very few candidates took it up.

This low uptake may be due to several reasons:
1) The essay topics offered by SQA in the Later Modern period were unattractive to candidates; they may have been taught them by centres, but chose not to revise them or to answer questions on them.
2) The vast majority of teachers went through university or college before the 1990s, in a period where academic interest and research into Scottish history was at a relatively low level. Teachers/lecturers were relatively loath to teach topics about which they knew relatively little, especially given the other pressures in centres.

NATIONAL HISTORY GIVEN GREATER PROMINENCE
Research undertaken by SQA revealed that other comparable awarding bodies give rather greater prominence to their own national history. Our Development Officer investigated curricula in comparable nations/regions, including Wales, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and New Zealand, as well as two boards in Australia, the German curriculum and the position in England. At comparable levels, some element at least of the national history was compulsory. In some cases, national history dominated the curriculum. Scotland was unique in not requiring at least some national history to be taught (and examined).

SQA examined various models for incorporating Scottish history into the Higher course. The simplest, but most radical, was to change Paper 2, currently the source-based paper offering options including the Crusades, the Atlantic Slave Trade and the Cold War, to become a paper on Scottish history, with the cur-
rent non-Scottish topics becoming essay-based topics to be examined in Paper 1. This idea came from SQA’s History assessment panel, a representative group of subject practitioners. It had several features to recommend it:

1) Two of the existing special topics in Paper 2 were entirely Scottish; for centres already studying these there would be no change.
2) The existing Scottish topics could serve as a model for further ones in development.
3) As the unit on Scottish history is source-based, there exist wide opportunities for centres and candidates to use Scottish resources, both national and local, as found in libraries, archives, museums and galleries, and the built environment.
4) The development could be supported by Learning and Teaching Scotland with resources for each of the Scottish topics. These could be state-of-the-art electronic and/or multi-media.
5) The emphasis on a balanced coverage ranging from local and Scottish history, through British history and on to European and world history, as well as the range of potential learning experiences chimed in with contemporary developments in A Curriculum for Excellence being developed by the Scottish government and promoted by HMIe. Indeed the development of the new Higher history has been funded by the Scottish government.

FORMATION OF THE SCOTTISH NATION
The Qualifications Design Team charged with the review identified five areas of Scottish history that were both intrinsically interesting and which also were major issues in the formation of the Scottish nation. These are:

- Migration and Empire, 1830–1939: A study of population movement and social and economic change in Scotland and abroad between 1830 and 1939, illustrating the themes of empire, migration and identity.
- The Impact of the Great War, 1914–1928: A study of conflict and its political, social, economic and cultural effects, illustrating the themes of conflict, change and identity.

Detailed descriptions of the content of each of these can be found on pp 44–48 in the Arrangements document, on the SQA website (www.sqa.org.uk).

Other changes consequent to this are the movement of former source-based, non-Scottish topics into the essay based Paper 1. Descriptors for Paper 1 have been clarified and standardised. This has given the opportunity to prune content areas that, while often worthy, were seldom answered by candidates or, one suspects, taught by centres. It also gave the opportunity to examine the relative demand of each essay-based topic in the light of the development of the former source-based topics into essay-based ones. In short, the essay paper is now an issue-based syllabus rather than a content-based one. Each of the six parts of each essay context (for example, Germany 1815–1939 or The Cold War, 1945–1989) requires the student to make a judgement, either on the causation of an event of development, or an assessment of its importance or effectiveness. As well as being designed to make these parts of the course more stimulating and focused, a side effect is that the questions asked in the examination become more predictable than in the past. To balance this out, and hence maintain national standards, candidates will now have to answer one essay question from a choice of three in each of their chosen contexts, rather than one from four or five (from what were usually much larger content areas, a number of which could not be covered reasonably in the 40 hours allotted to teaching each unit).

One aspect of the course that will not change is the extended essay. This is a popular part of the course with both teachers/lecturers and candidates. It gives candidates the opportunity to choose an issue from the course, research it, prepare a plan and use this to write an essay under controlled conditions in a continuous period of two hours. This is the type of activity at the core of the Curriculum for Excellence.

In summary, the new Higher history course has two underlying principles: parity and clarity. The level of demand in each topic is now demonstratively on a par with its peers. Likewise, the course specifies in detail not previously given exactly what is in the course, and hence what is not. Neither teachers/lecturers nor candidates should be surprised by any question that comes up in the examination. This leaves greater scope to concentrate on the process of learning, rather than covering a wide variety of topics in case something does, or does not, come up in the examination.

Larry Cheyne has been Qualifications Manager for History with SQA since 1999. Till 1998 he taught in Victoria Drive Secondary School in Glasgow, and before that in Lochend Secondary. From 1984 to 1986 he was Field Development Officer for Standard Grade History with the former Scottish Examination Board.

Larry is the author of Changing Scotland and Britain, 1830 – the Present, published in three editions by Hodder Headline, a textbook for Standard Grade History, as well as joint author of Slavery by the same publisher. He was consultant for the BBC TV programme Bitesize History (also for S Grade History). He also played bass guitar for Yesterday’s Men till an acrimonious split in 2007.
All art, whether poetry, painting or prose, represents and interprets the world. It resists the numbing of the senses, it helps us to live more fully, engaged with the world and critical of it. *Arts of Resistance* takes the form of a series of conversations between the two of us, Alexander Moffat, artist, and Alan Riach, poet, both vitally concerned as teachers and practitioners, about the work the arts do, especially through the twentieth century, resisting all the efforts to confine and limit our creative potential in an age of distraction. These conversations are focused particularly on the arts of Scotland as a completely distinctive national tradition.

No national literature is more connected to particular locations than Scottish literature, and the twentieth-century poets of Scotland have specific associations with geographical areas from which they derived great strengths and virtues. Hugh MacDiarmid, both from his native Border landscapes and from the Shetland islands where he lived in the 1930s; Sorley MacLean, from the small island of Raasay and its neighbouring Skye; Norman MacCaig, both from Edinburgh where he lived and worked as a teacher and from the north-west of Scotland, around Assynt and Lochinver, where he spent many summers; George Mackay Brown from Orkney; Edwin Morgan from Glasgow; Robert Garioch and Sydney Goodsir Smith from Edinburgh; Iain Crichton Smith from Lewis – all the poets discussed in this book drew from their hinterland of different geographies, different imaginative landscapes, seascapes, cityscapes.

**EXPLORATION AND EVOCATION**

The geography of the imagination is what this book sets out to chart. So *Arts of Resistance* is an exploration and evocation of these different parts of Scotland, their enduring and reliable shapeliness and strengths, their rapidly changing aspects through a century most typified by rapid alterations and speedy movement. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but perspectives change in time and depend on where you are and how fast you’re moving. Our poets and artists are our best guides to how shapeliness can be seen and understood, how the challenges of modernity can be addressed and how we can make the best of our lives. Their work is to help us to live.

And yet, our education system in Scotland has for many generations failed to introduce our young people to the great artists and poets of our country, people who have painted and written in our...
own languages, about our own earth.

In *Arts of Resistance*, there is a clear commitment to an openness of mind and an endorsement of the capacity for self-extension to which human nature is healthily prone. There is a sense of encouragement for people to look further – to read Rabelais, Flaubert, Dante, as well as Melville and Shakespeare, George Eliot and Emily Dickinson, to study the work of Picasso, Munch, Jack Yeats, Turner, to listen to Sibelius, Richard Strauss, Mahler. But there is an equal emphasis that we should never neglect or scorn the work of our own people.

Everyone in Scotland should be able to express the informed opinion that Raeburn, Wilkie, the Colourists, Johnstone, Gillies, Eardley are great artists, that Carver, McEwen, Chisholm and Scott are great composers and that Henryson, Dunbar, Burns, MacDiarmid are great poets. They should be able to express why and what is great about their work, the pleasures it gives, the knowledge it brings, the help it offers to the lives we lead.

**DEPRIVATIONS OF DULLNESS**

Until all the schools in Scotland are fully enabled to provide this knowledge, confidence and enjoyment, until every university in Scotland has an established Chair of Scottish Literature and an established Chair of Scottish Music, until every art history department and every school of art pays full attention to the whole inherited file of Scottish cultural production, people will continue to suffer the deprivations of dullness and ignorance to which we have become so long inured. If more people understood how great the artists, composers and writers of Scotland are, what a difference that would make to their self-confidence. *Arts of Resistance* attempts to redress this wrong.

The book opens with the end of the nineteenth century, the beginning of Modernism and the role of art in the modern world. Above all, from the 1920s on, Hugh MacDiarmid is acknowledged as the pioneer and driving force of
the Scottish literary renaissance, leading to a renewal of understanding and revaluation of all the arts in modern Scotland. His vision, so hard-earned, has borne unquantified fruit in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

MacDiarmid lived a long life – from 1892 to 1978. He literally came out of the nineteenth century. He was born in the decade of the Battle of Wounded Knee and he died in the nuclear era, when a small country like New Zealand could reject the technology of nuclear weapons and nuclear power, by virtue of its own statehood and self-determination.

VIRTUAL EXILE

MacDiarmid’s life runs through two world wars and the rise of mass-media and globalisation. He joined the British army for the First World War, thinking, he said, like thousands of other young men, “Here comes Armageddon, let’s join the party!” Yet when he heard of the Easter Rising in 1916 in Ireland, he said that if it had been possible he would have deserted the British Army and joined the Irish fighting British imperialism. He was at the centre of Scottish artistic, literary and intellectual life in the 1920s, but was in virtual exile and isolation in the Shetland islands in the 1930s, writing some of the most profoundly enquiring poems of the century, counting the cost, asking deep questions about what life is worth and how much it has been wasted. And in the 1940s, 1950s and later, he was still producing great, epic poems, finding ways to celebrate the languages of the world, the ways people speak, live and all the different cultures we produce in all the different places of the earth.

The foundation of his praise is the nation: the idea that national self-determination can fuse and ignite art, safeguard its provision, be the ground from which self-knowledge, love of others and the intrinsic optimism of curiosity, can grow. To be truly international, he would say, you have to be national to begin with. The ethos of his work provides the foundation by which all of us have derived benefit. The principle he set forth was that to see Scotland in its entirety it was essential to consider it from the point of view of Scotland and the people who live in Scotland, and not from the Anglocentric or Anglo-American perspective that dominated broadcasting media and cultural analysis for most of the twentieth century.

MacDiarmid’s presence and example informed, abraded, catalysed and spurred his contemporaries. The poets – and many of the artists – discussed in the book were all, in varying degrees, friendly with him.

The second part of the book considers the poets of the highlands and islands and the third part looks at poets of the city. To some extent, there is an arbitrary allocation of Norman MacCaig to this section, for he is better known as a poet of the natural world of the Highlands, writing about toads, frogs, basking sharks, lochs and mountains. But when he calls a thorn bush “an encyclopedia of angles”, a country-bred wiliness is blended with a city-sophistication.

His finely-modulated voice, his careful use of tone and register, are among the steeliest instruments on the tray. MacCaig’s Edinburgh is as vivid as his vision of Highland landscapes and people. The ambivalence of his comprehension, accommodating both country and city, indicates an essential aspect of modern Scotland’s story.

LAST SURVIVOR

The nineteenth century began with most of Scotland’s population living in the country. It ended with most of us living in cities, especially in industrialised Glasgow. So while most of our poets come from rural locations – Langholm, Stromness, Stornoway, Skye – relatively few, pre-eminently Edwin Morgan, are completely urbanised. Perhaps this suggests one way in which Morgan has been lastingly and widely enabling and influential on a younger generation of poets rising in the 1980s and 1990s. In 2009, at the age of 89, Morgan is the last survivor of that great generation and the first National Poet of Scotland, appointed on 16 February 2004 by the First Minister of the newly-resumed Scottish Parliament. But Arts of Resistance looks at the
whole generation of poets in that marvellous constellation of which Morgan was one, and to consider their strengths and qualities singly and in context.

The artist closest to MacDiarmid throughout his long life was his fellow-Borderer William Johnstone and there could be no doubt that MacDiarmid’s views on the visual arts were often influenced by Johnstone. MacDiarmid also collaborated with William McCance and J.D. Fergusson though his friendship and admiration for W.G. Gillies appears to have gone unnoticed by the art world and unmentioned by literary critics. Gillies, seriously underestimated at the present time, is in many ways MacDiarmid’s equivalent. His interpretations of both the Highlands and Lowlands, in thousands of drawings, watercolours and oil paintings, give us a new look at our country, making us more aware of, and so enriching, the life around us.

RADICAL NATURE
The Colourists, Fergusson, Peploe, Cadell and Hunter, have also been misrepresented in recent years, perhaps because of their success in the auction houses, and the rising prices their paintings now command. This popularity has obscured understanding of the radical nature of their early works. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom. By stressing light and colour as essential, they swept away centuries of Presbyterian gloom.

No other attempt has been made to cover so extensively the territory of Scotland’s poetry and painting through the twentieth to the twenty-first centuries.INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT
The book begins with the visionaries of architecture and town-planning, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Patrick Geddes, and the idea that their work sets the precedent for an internationalist and a distinctively Scottish identity. Geddes founding the Scottish College in Montpellier and Mackintosh being lionised in Berlin and Vienna in the early twentieth century are part of an international story that is too often neglected. That international context begins the trajectory of the book, which runs through to the 1960s, when Alexander Moffat and John Bellany, as students, first met MacDiarmid, and to the 1970s, when Alan Riach also met him. MacDiarmid’s example and influence crosses to the young Glasgow painters of the 1980s, as noted, and remains a potent force in the twenty-first century. As one Whitehall censor, intercepting MacDiarmid’s letters from Shetland in the 1930s, put it, “The man is a menace”!

GREATNESS NOT DIMINISHED
Arts of Resistance is studded with anecdotes and stories, meetings between poets and artists, between the authors and the subjects of their discussions. This humanises and helps make immediately accessible the actual lived experience of the artists and writers themselves. But it also emphasises the distinction of their work. The greatness of their art is not diminished by a human understanding of their foibles and eccentricities, and a social understanding of their interactions over decades makes the book a kind of social history of the arts of modern Scotland, as well as an engagement with the value of creativity in the modern world.

Arts of Resistance is lavishly illustrated with over 100 full colour reproductions from artists from Henry Raeburn to Douglas Gordon.

No other attempt has been made to cover so extensively the territory of Scotland’s poetry and painting through the twentieth to the twenty-first centuries, and the book is intended to carry the questions and the message forward, to generations of people to whom it will all be new. The Times Literary Supplement has already hailed Arts of Resistance as “a landmark book”.

If our education system in Scotland still fails utterly to systematically embed Scottish literature and art as an entitlement for all our young people, perhaps it is only through books like this that the resistance to such ignorance can be effected. For beyond all the individual arts discussed in the book, it’s the people they’re for that matter in the end.

Alexander Moffat was until his retirement Head of Painting and Printmaking at the Glasgow School of Art, and is perhaps best-known for his series of portraits of Scottish poets painted from the late 1970s through the early 1980s, and their culmination in the group-portrait Poets’ Pub, now hanging in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh.

Alan Riach holds the Chair of Scottish Literature at Glasgow University and is the President of the Association for Scottish Literary Studies, with five books of poems and various critical books and essays to his name. His most recent critical book is Representing Scotland in Literature, Popular Culture and Iconography (Pulgrave Macmillan) and his most recent book of poetry is Homecoming: New Poems, 2001–09 (Luath Press).
The death of Marilyn French in the spring of this year reminded many of the huge influence her 1977 novel *The Women’s Room* had on a generation of feminists. *Perspectives* asked three women to briefly recall what reading it meant for them.

**Zoë Strachan**

“All men are rapists”. It’s still possible to find people who believe that this is a core tenet of feminism. Of course it isn’t. It’s a line uttered – with good reason – by a fictional character, Val, in Marilyn French’s 1977 novel *The Women’s Room*. I’ll resist calling it a seminal work for obvious reasons, but it’s telling that a single line of dialogue has become so firmly entrenched in our cultural lexicon. Ironic too that it’s a phrase that the author would never herself have uttered.

When I was growing up, the F word went unsaid in school classrooms, and although the idea that as a girl I was as capable as a boy was drummed into me from an early age, it was a while before the bigger picture began to shift into focus. So what if in every house I visited, the mother/wife ensured that the dinner was on the table for the man coming home, that the house was clean, that the children went to the dentist, and that she herself went to work? So what if a topless woman greeted you when you opened the *Daily Record* each day, but girls at school who were curious about sex were labelled as sluts? That was the way things were.

At that time, the library in Kilmarnock, the Dick Institute, had a carousel of green-spined Virago paperbacks and various other “women’s” books. I learned a lot as I read my way around that carousel, and it was there, in the late 1980s or early 1990s, that I entered *The Women’s Room*. It’s one of the few books that have ever shocked me. It was a revelation, a horrible, vivid revelation, that women should endure so much. It might have been set in America in the 1950s, but it wasn’t about an older generation of women, or women elsewhere, or women without my liberal upbringing. It was about any woman. Every woman. Most unsettling of all, it was about real life, and it didn’t have a happy ending.

Does it bear re-reading? Few of the books that move us deeply when we’re teenagers do. The style isn’t as compelling as we remember, or the message seems a little heavy-handed. The same goes for *The Women’s Room*, but it’s still a vital book. As the cover blurb famously said, a novel that changes lives. The anger that infuses it is as pertinent today as it was when it was first published. Leafing through the pages serves as a salient reminder and, perhaps, a call to arms.
Morag Parnell

The “French Revolution” started a very long time ago, ever since women and men failed to reconcile the conflict between their biological and their social roles.

I read Marilyn French at a time of turmoil in my own life. Also, I had spent the past 20 years listening to the stories of the many women who came to see me at work. They were seeking medical treatment because they felt ill. I recognised what later Ann Oakley aptly described as a great tragedy of the 20th century: the medicalisation of women’s unhappiness. I also recognised that what I saw in these women applied to me.

I read academic texts and learned reports. They gave intellectual justification and support for what I was doing. But when I read Marilyn French, I got real comfort and satisfaction. She was telling every woman’s story in a way that every woman could recognise. I challenge any woman to read this book and still not find much about herself on every other page.

However, it was contact with other women – the discussions and exchange of experiences and feelings that was the real revolution, and still is. But French legitimised and reinforced our resistance to what we saw and felt was wrong in women’s lives.

Dear men, we will go on loving you as we have to, but be prepared, the revolution is far from over.

P.S. A good friend, sadly no longer here, borrowed my copy. He said it made a difference but he still allocated the tea making to the women at our local meetings – he said we were better at it. However, he did say that thenceforth he would replace the toilet roll if he had used the last piece of toilet paper. Progress indeed!

Ouaine Bain

I spent the 60s (my twenties) immersed in left politics – the peace movement, the Communist Party. I came lateish to the Women’s Movement, to a feminist perspective that wasn’t filtered through male politics. It wasn’t till the mid-70s that I took the plunge into Spare Rib, Red Rag and something called The Women’s Bookclub with a monthly reading list to choose from – international feminist fiction and non-fiction.

I lived in Glasgow but spent summer breaks in Shetland. I had long summer nights to immerse myself in books after the daughters had gone to bed. I plunged in and swam voraciously. Feeling the sharp, salt water on my skin. Feeling at home. My perceptions clicking into place. I started to make sense of myself.

It was while I was swimming in this sea that I bumped into The Women’s Room. I remember the day I finished it because I set off up the cliffs and wrote this poem – straight from the heart, as they say, but also from the head ... This is its first public airing!

I still feel intensely grateful to the women who were active in both waves of the Women’s Movement and feel myself very lucky to have found myself in their company.

Ouaine Bain

The sea thrift’s stalk is
Tough and springy, with
Crooks and crimps like the
Memories held in an
Untangled wire
So that the flowers
Bob and birl – but
Never bend in
Any cliff-top wind.

Grow crooked and wiry, sisters!
Keep your kinks
There’s no future in
Going straight.

Other flowers have stems that
Keep in line and
Hold them properly
Vertical – only to
Bow, compliant, in a
Breeze’s sigh.

Grow crooked, and
You’ll keep your faces
Up to the sun.
The Latin word *individus* means indivisible. It translates the Greek *atomos* – literally, uncuttable – which gives us the word “atom”. Until the late seventeenth century, “individual” was used in English only as an adjective, meaning singular or idiosyncratic, usually in a pejorative sense. The noun form (“an individual”) emerged in the specialised fields of biology and logic, denoting a single member of a species or class. Not until the nineteenth century was the phrase “the individual” used to talk about human beings in abstraction from social relationships, though what exactly this means has been a puzzle ever since.

A “representative” human being would have to be ageless, sexless, classless and otherwise devoid of social characteristics. Yet when we speak of a human being we do not simply mean a living organism, but a person who can think, feel, be moved, decide, respond, enter into social relationships with others and so on. And all this implies a language together with a related set of ways of experiencing the world, interpreting one’s feelings, understanding one’s relations to others, to the past, to the future, to nature – in short, a culture. Now culture is an inherently social creation. It is not that our experience could be entirely private and just needs a public medium to be communicated. Our experience is shaped by the way we interpret it and this depends on the terms available to us in our culture. Moreover, some of our most important experiences are not possible outside of society because they relate to objects of a social nature: taking communion, voting in an election, cheering the home team.

But if persons are embodied selves, shaped by and participating in some specific form of social life, what sense can it make to abstract from social forms? One suggestive answer, originating in the Christian tradition, is that “the individual” is not a descriptive, but an ethical term, an affirmation that social distinctions – St Paul mentions husbands and wives, masters and slaves, Jews and Gentiles – are of secondary moral importance compared with our common humanity. For Christians, what ultimately matters is not our corporeal, earthly existence, with its suffering, injustice and tragedy, but an ideal “kingdom” ruled by God, which all may enter, regardless of who they are. We are all, so to speak, “individuals-in-relation-to-God”. Once located in the ethereal beyond, after the Reformation the “City of God” was steadily secularised, inspiring worldly philosophers and their followers to dream of universal human emancipation – from want, fear, ignorance, superstition and so on.

But what does this Enlightenment ideal have to do with radically atomistic versions of “individualism” such as psychological egoism (the belief that individuals always act in their own self-interest), moral relativism (the belief that there are no objective moral standards), and economic liberalism (the belief that a competitive, private enterprise economy is the foundation of personal freedom)? Let me try to explain.

**WHAT THE INDIVIDUAL IS NOT**

Consider first the antonyms of “individual” – group, collective, society and community. These terms overlap in usage, but their core meanings diverge. In general, a human group is simply a number of persons belonging or classed together, with no suggestion that its members have any aim, interest or purpose in common or see themselves as a group. Collective action implies a common purpose, as with collective bargaining or collective security. The word “society” comes from the Latin *socius* meaning partner, associate or ally, usually in a joint commercial or military venture. The sense of joining forces in a common cause survives in the titles of associations such as The Society of Friends or The Royal Society, but from the seventeenth century onwards the word came increasingly to be used to refer to people living together in a self-governing political unit – normally a nation-state – or to the complex of institutions and norms which shapes their common life.

“Community” refers to a sub-set of social relationships which are more intense, direct and significant than the more abstract and functional relationships of society or state. To form a community, which need not be geographically close, a human group must share certain understandings of themselves as a group, derive a common identity from their shared life-world and perform roles which are interdependent and mutually recognised as such. The word is invariably used in a favourable sense, though communities can be stifling or oppressive when they refuse to tolerate internal expressions of difference or dissent and attempt to impose uniformity of behaviour or belief. And some uses of “community” are tendentious, as when Western leaders invoke the “international community” in order to ostracise “pariah” states or express outrage at “barbaric” acts and practices.

**INDIVIDUALISM AS AN IDEOLOGY**

The emergence of “the individual” as an abstract idea reflects the break-up of the medieval social, economic and religious order. With the ending of feudalism, the conception of society as a divinely ordained, hierarchical organism (the “body politic”) in which...
everyone has a fixed and recognised place or function, gave way to the idea that society is a human artefact which exists for the sake of the individual, not the other way round. The word “individualism” can be used simply to mark this reversal of values, with no implication that modernity is better than classical antiquity or the Middle Ages. The anthropologist Louis Dumont (1986), for example, compares the divergent development of East and West over two millennia in order to trace modern Western ideology back to its roots in Christian theology. Where the individual is a paramount value, he speaks of individualism. In the opposite case, where paramount value lies in society as a whole, he speaks of holism.

More often, however, the term “individualism” comes with attitude. Steven Lukes (1973) surveys the wide variety of ideas with which it has been associated over the past two centuries. In the earliest known use, the Catholic counter-revolutionary, Joseph de Maistre, spoke in 1820 of “this deep and frightening division of minds, this infinite fragmentation of all doctrines, political Protestantism carried to the most absolute individualism.” This negative sense of individual isolation and social disharmony is echoed by other nineteenth-century French thinkers, including the socialist Saint-Simon and the sociologist Emile Durkheim. In the US, by contrast, individualism was celebrated as an adjunct of free market capitalism and liberal democracy, evolving in opposition to socialism, but sharing the latter’s positive emotional charge.

In Britain, three ideologies contended. Liberal thought, which takes the individual as the starting point for social and political inquiry, was criticised by conservatives such as Edmund Burke. Condemning the French Revolution as a fatally misconceived attempt to reconstruct society according to abstract general principles, Burke hailed the role of traditional institutions, both formal like parliament and the church and informal such as customs and the “spirit of the constitution”, in promoting social cohesion and embodying the collective wisdom of generations. Liberalism was also attacked by socialists, notably by Marx (1859, p. 23) who poured scorn on the notion of the individual as an asocial atom. “Man … can develop into an individual only in society. Production by isolated individuals outside of society – something which might happen as an exception to a civilised man who by accident got into the wilderness and already dynamically possessed within himself the forces of society – is as great an absurdity as the idea of the development of a language without individuals living together and talking to one another.”

**SORTING THE WHEAT FROM THE CHAFF**

What are we to make of these arguments? Lukes (op. cit.) enumerates the various ideas which at one time or another have been dubbed “individualist”, and appraises them one by one. Some are deeply flawed. The abstract individual of liberal thought, for example, obliterate the distinction between human nature in general and human nature as modified in each epoch or culture, leaving the thinker imprisoned in a time capsule, unable to imagine any world other than his own. The doctrine of “methodological individualism” is similarly disabling. According to this, all attempts to explain social phenomena are to be rejected unless they are couched wholly in terms of facts about individuals. But if historians and social scientists were debarred from appealing to social forces, structural features of society, institutional factors, cultural patterns and so on, they would be hard pressed to make any sense of past or present.

Other “individualist” ideas, however, must be taken seriously. Four in particular, Lukes argues, are essential to understanding the concepts of liberty and equality and the relationship between them. The ideas of autonomy, privacy and self-development represent the three faces of liberty, while the idea of human dignity or respect for persons lies at the heart of equality. Taken together, these four elements constitute a compelling moral ideal.

People are autonomous to the extent that their thoughts and actions are not determined by agencies or causes outside their control. Autonomy is not something we are born with: we attain it only by degrees as we grow and develop, and our progress towards it may stall or never even get going if the requisite material, emotional and cultural support is missing. In particular, in order to become autonomous, individuals must be capable of subjecting the various pressures and norms that confront them to critical scrutiny, so that they can form intentions and make decisions on the basis of independent, rational reflection. People also need private spaces within the public world where they are free to think and do whatever they choose, or in John Stuart Mill’s words, “to pursue their own good in their own way”. And people develop as active selves to the extent that they acquire and exercise some characteristic human excellence – theoretical or practical, intellectual, moral or aesthetic, as the case may be.

What distinguishes the human person (a moral agent) from the human animal (a biological organism)? Precisely the capacity for autonomous choice and action, the capacity to engage in valued activities that require private space, and the capacity for self-development. Of course, in the world as it is, there are wide inequalities in the distribution of these capacities. Nevertheless, a world in which the degree of freedom people enjoy has ceased to be skewed by class, gender, race, nationality and other sources of social division could exist and is worth striving for. In that sense, personhood is an essentially egalitarian status. And what does respect for persons consist in?
Treating people as actually or potentially autonomous, requiring private space and being capable of development. Where respect, thus defined, is lacking, a person’s freedom will be endangered: his or her autonomy reduced, privacy invaded and development stunted.

SOCIAL INDIVIDUALISM

By removing dogmatic, obscurantist or merely superfluous excesses from the concept of individualism, while paying due regard to the social framework of human life, Lukes shows how freedom and equality fit together. Social individualism, as we might call this synthesis, marks an important conceptual advance. It acknowledges the much-vaulted distinction between negative and positive liberty – that is, between freedom from control by others and freedom as self-determination – but denies that this distinction creates a philosophical Berlin Wall between liberal and authoritarian worldviews. There are no two concepts of liberty, as that Cold War liberal, Isaiah Berlin, maintained. Rather, negative and positive freedom are simply separate ranges on a continuous scale.

Far more significant is the distinction, unacknowledged by liberals, between different sources of freedom. The libertarian philosopher Robert Nozick (1974) accepts that a society of self-owning free agents who hold diverse views about the good life would not be viable without at least a minimum state: anarchy is not an option. At the same time, he insists, the only legitimate role of the state is to protect individual liberty by defining and enforcing property rights and generally maintaining free market institutions. Progressive taxation and welfare policies aimed at lessening market inequalities are a form of legalized theft and an infringement of freedom. Other liberals resist this conclusion, notably John Rawls (1972) whose theory of justice seeks to strike a principled balance between the competing demands of freedom and equality. Both writers assume, however, there is a “trade off” between these values. If society “chooses” more of the one, it must accept less of the other.

One problem with this whole debate, as the late Gerry Cohen (1995) pointed out, is that the distribution of property is itself a distribution of liberty. The owner of something is free to use it – others are not. Furthermore, material possessions are only part of the story. For the degree of freedom someone enjoys depends not just on the resources at their command, but also on the time at their disposal – free, that is, from the demands of earning a living and caring for others – and on the opportunities they encounter and the capabilities they acquire as they make their way in the world. With four freedom-enhancing assets to be distributed – resources, time, opportunities and capabilities – it is no longer obvious why the pursuit of equality entails the sacrifice of freedom. Indeed, unless we know what values people attach to these different types of asset, it is no longer clear what this claim means.

Suppose people were less addicted than they are today to getting and spending, preferring to devote less time to paid work and more to unpaid activities, whether playing with their children and relaxing with friends or playing an active part in civil society and broadening their horizons. Provided changes in patterns of time-use are not blocked by vested interests, there should be no problem in reducing material inequality while simultaneously enhancing personal freedom. Stretch this thought further and imagine a society in which public policy is dedicated to expanding the scope of real freedom for all. You are, I suggest, now entering the ideal world of communism. And if this is a mental step too far, try pondering the clarion call of the young Karl Marx (1844, p. 251): “The criticism of religion ends with the doctrine that for man the supreme being is man, and thus with the categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions in which man is a debased, enslaved, neglected and contemptible being.”

Whether the idea of social individualism has the mass appeal to become a “material force” is another matter. One formidable obstacle is the asocial, not to say anti-social, individualism spawned by the neo-liberal revolution of the past thirty years. The financial crash that tipped the global economy into recession has shaken public confidence in prevailing economic orthodoxy, but it has hardly destroyed it, let alone undermined faith in the capitalist system. People have not suddenly ceased to believe that owning, earning and spending hold the key to personal happiness. In this situation, we need all the philosophical criticism, counter-cultural resistance and political creativity we can muster.

David Purdy is a regular contributor to Perspectives and a member of Democratic Left Scotland.

REFERENCES

HEALTH CRISIS: WHAT HEALTH CRISIS?

The left may want to change the world, but just hanging on to it needs to become the name of the game. And what about the 52% of the population (women) who continue to be seriously disadvantaged despite legal advances? Morag Parnell argues that major areas of concern are missing from much of our discussion and analysis of contemporary political issues.

We will probably never know all the factors that influence our lives and our life choices. While I appreciate the discussions in Democratic Left Scotland (DLS), and elsewhere – detailed, thoughtful, powerful, clever and thought-provoking analyses of the historical, economic, political, social and cultural factors that shape and govern our lives – I am still perplexed. I find that two major areas of concern are still often missing, or at best are given secondary consideration. Yet they are of primary importance if we are to improve the quality of lives, even if we are to survive. These are 1) that although major changes have occurred in women’s lives and hence in the lives of everyone, women are still seriously disadvantaged, and 2), we need a better understanding of the importance of how to relate to the rest of the natural world.

WOMEN’S LIVES AND BODIES DISRUPTED

World War II brought major changes to women’s lives, both in the labour market and in the roles they assumed in their communities. Post-war, when pressures were put on women to return to their domestic roles, they were only partly successful. Women’s demands became more vocal as the Women’s Movement of the 60s and 70s developed. This resulted in the Abortion Act of 1962, the first Equal Pay Act of 1970, and its subsequent amendments, and the introduction of Women’s Aid centres. However, there is still a large pay gap and much evidence of other inequalities. In 2007 Rowena Arshad, the then Equal Opportunities Commissioner for Scotland, said: “52% of Scotland’s population is female yet only 33% of our MSPs are. Thirty years after the Sex Discrimination Act, women rightly expect to share power, but it is still not the reality. We all pay the price when our workplaces, public services and national institutions are unrepresentative.”

In addition, differences in women’s biological status and in their social roles mean that the deep seated problems in society have an impact on women’s lives that is considerably different from that on men. This is often overlooked, but certainly not by Barbara MacLennan in her clear assessment (Perspectives 21, Spring 2009) of the effect of the current economic crisis on women’s lives. Women, and men, are having some serious thoughts about how we manage our dual roles.

Over the last fifty or so years there has been a growing awareness of major health problems affecting women. Ill health is too often seen as a random event, as inevitable, as bad luck, or of not living our lives wisely, according to what current received wisdom considers “wisely” to mean. Or we are told that rising cancer incidence rates are mainly because of an ageing population, ignoring the fact that they are increasing in all age groups, including in children.

Along with the huge post-war expansion of the chemical and nuclear industries, oral contraceptives and hormonal therapies for symptoms occurring through puberty, menstruation, contraception, childbearing and menopause became freely available to women. Women became the ultimate marketing opportunity for pharmaceutical companies. Much of this was seen as liberating, despite the fact that hormonal oral contraceptives and HRT have major ill-health implications and are now classified by the WHO as human carcinogens.

DES AND BPA

The scandal of Diethylstilboestrol (DES), a synthetic oestrogen, is a symbolic tale worth telling. Between the late 1930s and 1971, when it was banned, mil-
lions of women were treated with DES for a range of obstetric and gynaecological conditions, but largely for threatened miscarriages. It turned out that there was no rationale for this, and, tragically, it was found that clusters of rare vaginal cancers and a range of other serious reproductive abnormalities appeared in young adult daughters of the treated women. Further research found that some sons also showed reproductive abnormalities, including those now thought to predispose to testicular and prostate cancer. The mothers, daughters, and more recently the granddaughters, have been found to have an increased risk of breast and other reproductive cancers. This third generation effect has been confirmed in animal research.

About the same time as DES was developed, another oestrogenic pharmaceutical with similar biological action was developed – bisphenol A (BPA). It was abandoned as a pharmaceutical, but was later used to produce polycarbonate plastic and some resins. It is widely used today in the production of many everyday objects, including baby feeding bottles and cups, medical and dental products, and food containers. BPA can leach into food and drink. About 95% of people tested have BPA in their bodies. It has been shown to interfere with normal hormone function in numerous animal studies, effects that are increasingly being seen in humans. A growing number of states and manufacturers have recently banned its use. WENS is now urging the Scottish government to take action.

**WE’RE NOT WINNING THE BATTLE AGAINST CANCER**

In addition to the list of known or suspected chemical and radioactive cancer causing agents (the International Agency for Research on Cancer of the WHO lists over 400), there are several hundred chemicals in products in everyday use that are known to be hormonally active with the potential to affect both female and male reproductive function, immune response, and physical and mental growth and development, notably of the foetus and the young child. Not only is this associated with a range of childhood illnesses, including childhood cancer, it is now recognised that the pre-conditions for a number of future diseases in adulthood, including cancers, are laid down during foetal development.

Yet only a very small percentage of the 100,000 commercially available chemicals in the EU have been adequately tested for potential harmful health effects – hence the need for the strongest possible REACH legislation.

Up-to-date research shows the special vulnerability of the foetus, of the infant and young child and of the pubertal and adolescent boy and girl. An average of 287 toxic industrial chemicals have been isolated in the umbilical cord blood of newborns, and about 400 foreign chemicals have been isolated in breast milk. Other milk is also contaminated and does not have the many protective factors that human breast milk has for human babies. Hence we emphasise that breast is still best. But it must be better.

Ill health statistics show one aspect of a picture, but they cannot show the anguish, pain and suffering that loss of potential and of life represents. To illustrate the scale of the cancer problem, please bear with a few statistics:

1:2.5 of us will get cancer in our lifetimes, i.e. 40% of the population. In real numbers, that is in the UK, 293,601 new cases (in 2006) and 155,484 deaths (in 2007) – in Scotland 26,866 new cases and 15,274 deaths.

Worldwide in 2008 there were 12.4 million new cases and 7.6 million deaths. On current trends this is expected to rise by 2030 to between 20–26.4 million new cases and 12.9–17 million deaths per year.¹

Only a very small percentage of the 100,000 commercially available chemicals in the EU have been adequately tested for potential harmful health effects.

Women started campaigning because of the alarmingly rapid increase in the incidence of breast cancer from about 26,000 new cases in the UK in 1970 to 45,822 in 2006, (4,009 of them in Scotland). It soon became clear that breast cancer was the canary that alerted us to other cancers and other conditions. Our breast cancer campaigns became a fusion of campaigning for women’s human rights, for social and environmental justice and for the right to live in an uncontaminated environment. We call for primary prevention of what are largely preventable diseases to be at the top of the health agenda.

Devine, Pearmain and Purdy have highlighted in Feelbad Britain² some significant research about the state of our mental health, our perceptions of happiness and its relationship with our current way of life. Past and current general health statistics add more and show clearly just how callously destructive the capitalist model is on the lives and welfare of all living organisms as well as on our physical environment. Records from the last century show growing epidemics in the industrialised world with the most advanced showing the highest incidences of cancers, particularly hormone related cancers, reproductive disorders, infertility and a host of other disorders. Such diseases have been shown to be associated with workplace and environmental exposure to toxic chemicals – carcinogens and endocrine disrupting chemicals, neurotoxins, and repro-toxins, with ionising radiation and probably with electro-magnetic fields, as well as to a number of life style factors. As other countries follow our economic model, so too do their health statistics.

Humans have created these toxic substances and it is well within the capacity of humans to change them for better ones, thus
We have failed to take into account how the physics, chemistry, biology and the cycles both of our planet and of our bodies are the primary context for everything in our lives.

We should marvel that any of us are happy and healthy. But nature and evolution, in their wisdom, have conferred on us the ability to resist, remove or repair the damage done by insults hurled at every cell of our bodies and our minds, as well as at our societies, by malign physical, social and economic forces. But the current state of human health, and of the rest of the natural environment, suggest we have reached dangerous levels of damage that are not being and cannot be repaired. Some scientists are now talking of possible human extinction as a result of the effect of hormonally active chemicals on male reproductive function.

**EXTERNAL POLLUTION, INTERNAL POLLUTION:**

**SICK PLANET, SICK PEOPLE**

We work in the workplaces, we breathe the air, we drink the water, we eat the food, we use the products in our homes and on our bodies, and we take the medicines. Those in the dirtiest jobs, in the least salubrious neighbourhoods and with the least resources, fare worst in the health league tables. Interestingly, this is not now the case for breast cancer, where the incidence is highest in social class 1 and lowest in social class 5, although the figures for deaths are the reverse.

The other side of this same coin is climate disruption. The pollutants responsible for both these problematic areas come largely from fossil fuels. Most of the substances that are damaging our health are petroleum-derived synthetics that didn’t exist before World War II. The health and climate change crises are not the ultimate causes of our malaise. They are, like the hundreds of other problems that engage our minds, symptoms of the pathology of a terminally sick and dysfunctional global politics.

The way we have chosen to improve the material lot of the rich world has cost too high a price through needless suffering, loss of lives and in destabilising our climate. We are now at a level of 387 ppm of CO₂. Scientists say the limit for avoiding dangerous events is 350 ppm. Considering that computer modeling predictions tend to follow linear patterns and that biological and physical systems in real life do not and are subject to suddenly arising new emergent properties, how do we make sure we avoid disastrous climate change? We may not know when we have reached climate-tipping points until we see the effects. Then there will be nothing we can do to avert further disaster. But we can see people suffering and dying from preventable illness, here and now, and we can do something to stop it.

Perhaps it is the time to look at William Blake’s view of a world worth striving to protect: “To see a world in a grain of sand, and a heaven in a wild flower. To hold infinity in the palm of your hand and eternity in an hour.”

The following lines are an extract from a poem that tries to reflect that view, and deplores how science is being abused: “… high priests of science, tied to the men with gold, compelled by thoughts of conquest, domination, greed. They’ll break down the last integrity of living things, discarding caution as to where it all might lead. Although Timeo scientii et dona ferentes, we cannot let them carry on in their nefarious ways; for if we have the will, we’ll find the power to keep the grain of sand, to keep the flower, intact. Then we can watch our children grow and play, enjoying an eternity in every hour.”

— Morag Parnell is a retired general practitioner and member of Democratic Left Scotland.

**NOTES**

1. From ISD of the NHS, Cancer Research UK and IARC (WHO)
2. Feelbad Britain, Pat Devine, Andrew Pearmain and David Purdy (editors), Lawrence & Wishart, 2009
People and politics

In Scotland, as in the rest of Britain, there is widespread disillusionment with politics. The mainstream parties have lost touch with ordinary people and issues are trivialised and distorted by the media.

We are continually told that “there is no alternative” to global capitalism. Yet this is doing untold damage to our environment, our communities and the quality of our lives, while millions of people remain poor and powerless because the market dominates our society and we do too little to protect and empower them.

Democratic Left Scotland is a non-party political organisation that works for progressive social change through activity in civil society – in community groups, social movements and single-issue campaigns – seeking at all times to promote discussion and alliances across the lines of party, position and identity.

Political parties remain important, but they need to reconnect with the citizens they claim to represent, reject the copycat politics that stifles genuine debate and recognise that no single group or standpoint holds all the answers to the problems facing our society.

We are trying to develop a new kind of politics, one that starts from popular activity – in workplaces, localities and voluntary associations – and builds bridges to the world of parties and government, on the one hand, and the world of ideas and culture, on the other.

What does Democratic Left add?

Our approach to politics is radical, feminist and green.

Radical because we are concerned with the underlying, structural causes of problems such as poverty, inequality, violence and pollution and aspire towards an inclusive, more equal society in which everyone is supported and encouraged to play a full part, within a more just and sustainable world.

Feminist because we seek to abolish the unequal division of wealth, work and power between men and women and to promote a better understanding of the intimate connections between personal life and politics.

Green because we believe that our present system of economic organisation is socially and environmentally destructive, and that a more balanced relationship between human activity and nature will be better for us, for our descendants and for the other animal species with whom we share the planet.

Who can join Democratic Left Scotland?

Membership is open to anyone who shares our general outlook and commitments. Whilst many of our members are involved in a range of political parties, others are not.

Joining and supporting Democratic Left Scotland

I support the aims and values of Democratic Left Scotland and have decided to join and/or to support the organisation. (Please tick as appropriate)

- I wish to join Democratic Left Scotland

  Please indicate the level of annual membership you wish to pay (from £5 unwaged to £60 high waged)

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  - one-off

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Payment for membership and/or support for our campaigning work can be made either by cheque, payable to Democratic Left Scotland, or banker’s order. If neither method is suitable, please let our office know and another arrangement can be made.

- I enclose a cheque to the value of £ ________
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In which **Owen Dudley Edwards** dons *The Hat* and reflects on Arthur Ransome.

He secured interviews with Lenin and Trotsky, tried to keep the UK Foreign Office up-to-date with his findings, was informed by the British military attaché that he ought to be shot …

**T**reasure is the key-word showing Stevenson’s life-long impact on Ransome (is his Captain Flint in his stories for children the only self-portrait to derive from a parrot?). Ransome’s “critical study” of Stevenson lost its urgency (apart from its publisher losing his nerve) when Ransome made his first journey to Russia in 1913, resulting in his charming *Old Peter’s Russian Tales* (1916) and his reporting the Russian revolution for the *Daily News* and *Manchester Guardian*. He secured interviews with Lenin and Trotsky, tried to keep the UK Foreign Office up-to-date with his findings, was informed by the British military attaché that he ought to be shot, and ultimately married Trotsky’s secretary. All of this has been long known, above all from professor Hugh Brogan’s magnificent biography, the work of a major British historian in his own right. TARS dovecoats have fluttered a feather or two with the recent publication of Roland Chambers’s *The Last Englishman – The Double Life of Arthur Ransome*. Chambers graduated in English literature from Edinburgh, with no noticeable effect on his treatment of Ransome’s novels for children, most of which seem closed books to him. His historical skills are revealed in such sentences as: “To be so close to a gang of cut-throats who longed to save the world was so exciting that Ransome sometimes forgot he was writing news at all, confusing the Bolsheviks with *Treasure Island* pirates …” (p.193). He wants to say Ransome failed to realise the Bolsheviks were cut-throats, but what in fact he says was that Ransome called them cut-throats. Chambers had been persuaded at the last moment to make an appearance at TARS and sign his book, but hopes of further foot-in-mouthery were dashed when he fled after two minutes, taking refuge behind his autograph hunters. But many of his reviewers have swallowed his diatribe, regurgitating it in their own names.

What Ransome actually did was to keep Bolshevik plans before the western powers, and to let information flow as fully as possible from the unknown revolutionaries to the UK. To call him a double agent is nonsense: what secrets could he have told Lenin and Trotsky? He derided Winston Churchill’s military intervention in Russia, but readily critiqued Bolshevik arguments. Trotsky’s fall ended Ransome’s active interest in the USSR but he and his wife can hardly have missed Churchill’s ferocious denunciation of Trotsky, given book form in his *Great Contemporaries* (1938). Hence the opening of *Secret Water*: “The First Lord of the Admiralty was unpopular at Pin Mill”. The book had been in draft since early 1938 but it was not sent to the publishers until 7th September 1939, four days after Churchill became First Lord. Chapters one and two were being reworked at the demand of Ransome’s wife whose “terrific” hostility to the existing text was apparently thus mollified, the first sentence in its final form probably winning the book her passport for its publication. (She would later hold up *The Picts and the Martyrs* for several months.) *Secret Water* is thus a much more political work than the rest, its urgent demands for peace (among the children) sending pro-Munich signals written before World War II broke out. I had missed this in my recent *British Children’s Fiction in the Second World War*, which pleased me since, as I pointed out to TARS, my lecture to them could not now be limited to pleas that they purchase the work in question. They very kindly bought it anyway.

**Owen Dudley Edwards is an Honorary Fellow in History, University of Edinburgh.**
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