

CLOSER



21 Revolutions:

New writing and prints
inspired by the collection at
Glasgow Women's Library

21

Revolutions

Copies of the limited first edition, award winning 21 Revolutions are now available to buy. Order your copy online today at womenslibrary.org.uk

£25 (+p&p)

Special 10% discount for Closer readers quoting this voucher code **21Revs**

"Buy it for your daughters, mother and grandmothers, but make sure your son reads it too"

Dr Elspeth King, Director, Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum

Glasgow Women's Library
23 Landressy Street
Glasgow G40 1BP
0141 550 2267

21 Revolutions brings together in one publication a remarkable group of 21 women writers and 21 women artists who are amongst the most significant creatives in Scotland. Including work by artists Sam Ainsley, Claire Barclay, Karla Black, Ciara Phillips, Lucy Skaer and Corin Sworn and writers, Janice Galloway, Muriel Gray, Jackie Kay, A. L. Kennedy, Denise Mina and Louise Welsh.



CONTENTS

Welcome to the third issue of Closer, the print off-shoot of Bella Caledonia. Issue 1 looked at power and innovation. Issue 2 looked at participatory democracy. Issue 4 will be after September and will be looking back, and forward whatever happens. The ideas in this issue are an expression of the role and imaginings of women throughout Scotland surfing this wave of energy and awakening. These are like field notes on democracy. Reading them reminded me of Arundhati Roy’s notion: ‘Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.’

OPEN LETTER TO WOMEN IN SCOTLAND	2	Marsha Scott, Lesley Orr, Nel Whiting
STRONG ROOTS	3	Lillias Kinsman Blake
MY JOURNEY TO YES	4	Jacqueline Gallagher
MY JOURNEY TO YES	5	Hazel Frew
WEAN’S WORLD	6	Abi Cornwall
WE ARE NOT	8	Vonny Moyes
YOU WHIPPERSNAPPER	9	MF Corall
DESIGNING DEMOCRACY	10	Lauren Currie
WORLD UPSIDE DOWN	11	Rachel Campbell
IT’S UP TO US	12	Lesley Riddoch
BIG YES NOW	14	Rosie Balyuzi
WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT LEADERSHIP	16	Laura Eaton Lewis
A FEMINIST SCOTLAND	18	Cat Boyd and Jennifer Morrison
A GREEN YES	20	Alison Johnstone
A TREE ON FIRE	22	Tessa Ransford
MY JOURNEY TO YES	25	Sara Sheridan
I’M IRISH AND I WANT TO TALK	26	Elaine Mulcahy
BELLA CALEDONIA	27	Kirsten Sterling
LIBER TAE	28	Dhivya Kate Chetty

CONTRIBUTORS’ NOTES Nel Whiting has worked in the violence against woman sector for the past ten years. Dr. Marsha Scott is a feminist activist, researcher and bureaucrat who has done everything from emptying the bins in her local refuge to presenting on women’s rights at the UN. Lesley Orr is a feminist historian and activist from Edinburgh and has worked for many years in movements for gender and social justice. Lillias Kinsman-Blake is an artist who contributed to the Bella poster competition. Jacqueline Gallagher is a 48 year old woman who lives in the North of Glasgow with her No voting, husband and her wee dog Abi Cornwall is a writer and freelance commentator. Vonny Moyes is a regular contributor to Bella Caledonia. Lauren Currie is the co-founder of Snook and people know her as Redjotter: a trailblazing, inspiring innovator and a very vocal advocate for giving the service design. Rachel Campbell is a graphic designer who was recently featured in Frame Publishing’s Masterclass: Graphic Design. Lesley Riddoch is a writer, broadcaster and general tour de force. Rosie Balyuzi is from London and has lived in Scotland for twelve years.

Laura Cameron-Lewis is a cultural leader, arts director, artist and educator. Cat Boyd is a trade union activist and co-founder and joint spokesperson for the Radical Independence Campaign. Jenny Morrison is completing a Phd on women’s involvement in the referendum at the University of Glasgow. Alison Johnstone is a Scottish Green Party MSP. Tessa Ransford has been an established poet, translator, literary editor, reviewer and cultural activist on many fronts over the last forty years. She founded the Scottish Poetry Library in 1984. Sara Sheridan is a writer from Edinburgh, who created the 1950s cosy crime noir series The Mirabelle Bevan Mysteries and also writes a set of stand-alone historical novels based on the lives of late Georgian and early Victorian adventurers. Elaine Mulcahy has a PhD in Bioengineering from the University of Strathclyde and is a former editor of nanotechnology magazine, NANO. Kirsten Stirling’s Bella Caledonia: Woman, Nation, Text was published by Rodopi (2008) Dhivya Kate Chetty works in documentary filmmaking, whose work pays homage to French political art.

OPEN LETTER TO WOMEN IN SCOTLAND

“Should Scotland be an independent country?” This question invites us to imagine a new future, one that just might transform the lives of women and girls. But as 18 September approaches, we must not allow the breadth of our vision to obscure the stark consequences of a No vote. For those still on the fence, let us be very clear: A No vote is not a vote for the status quo.

Let us remind ourselves about the easy nature of political promises – promises previously unkept – and the importance of relying on ourselves to make change rather than hoping that others will do so. Let us think calmly about the likelihood of a feminist agenda progressing in any Westminster government of the near future. And let us imagine the costs we are already paying for austerity, multiplied many times by a Westminster whose power would be unchecked by the possibility of a Yes vote.

We think you should vote Yes on 18 September. Not because we think independence will guarantee gender justice, but because our fore Sisters organised and argued, campaigned and cared, risked and rebelled to ensure that Scotland has used its devolved powers to make a better nation for women.

We think you should vote Yes on 18 September because, standing on their shoulders, we can imagine a Scotland that embraces the politics of dignity, justice, and care, in which all participate, animated by the spirit of equality and liberation.

Feminists have long advocated for different approaches to those taken by successive Westminster governments – to the economy, to international development, to human rights, to immigration and asylum, to international relations, to abortion and reproductive rights, to employment and the labour market, to access to justice, to nuclear weapons, and to anti-discrimination law.

Independence will bring decision-making on these critical issues closer to Scottish women. Independence will bring new opportunities for the voices of Scottish women to resound in the places of decision-making.

We vote Yes with hope rooted in the courage and resilience of Scotland’s women. We vote Yes with determination to bring forth a better nation.

Yours Sincerely,
Lesley Orr
Marsha Scott
Nel Whiting

**STRONG
ROOTS
FREE-
DOM
TO
GROW**



L. Kinsman Blake

MY JOURNEY TO YES

Jaqueline Gallagher

For many thousands of people the indyref campaign has been the very first time they have been politically engaged at all. Courage and confidence mingles with fear and anger as the audience takes the stage.

UP UNTIL LAST year I wouldn't have described myself as politically active. I was never a member of any political party. I was always 'aware' and interested but would actively avoid political debate and would never read a newspaper. I felt a million miles away from political decisions and had complete apathy about politics in general as it all seemed so hopeless.

The transformation I have experienced was a slow steady one and brought about by my lifelong desire for an independent Scotland. Saying that I always wanted Scotland to be independent doesn't mean I just leapt blindly onto the Yes bandwagon. In fact it was the very opposite. I felt this was a huge responsibility and I had to make sure I was doing what was best for this country and for the right reasons.

Suddenly politics became interesting and felt relevant to me and my life. For the first time there was an opportunity for change and there was light at the end of the tunnel.

It all started with a conversation about independence at a festival, where I dared to ask questions. I thought I would be laughed at for my ignorance, but that didn't happen. I became fascinated by why people were voting one way or another and found that most Yes voters were armed with lots of reasons which struck a chord with my own beliefs and ideals. On occasion I felt a little intimidated by No voters who would rattle off a list of questions at me when I told them I was voting Yes, and would tell me I was a dreamer and that it would never work (didn't they say the same thing about votes for women?). So I was cautious about discussing independence openly.

That took me online, where I felt I could observe discussions from a safe distance, and shut the laptop if it all got too scary. I found a few aggressive and abusive sites but finally found ones where debate was intelligent and civilised. There were some very supportive and inspiring people on these grassroots

sites. I learned so much from other people's debates, great shared articles and questions answered honestly and respectfully. I realised I was not alone in not having the answers and I started to ask some questions of my own, and engage slowly in discussions with other people online. To my relief I wasn't shouted down or laughed at, even though I wasn't as eloquent as some of the others.

It felt very empowering that my opinion was considered valid and I realised that we don't need to have all the answers to have an opinion or indeed a vote. My new-found courage only extended to online debates at this point but I was engaging on a daily basis and learning so much about the referendum, economics, defence, oil, Trident, the currency, food banks and all the issues that people feel passionately about. I even read the McCrone report and felt enraged by it, and wondered why I had never been aware of it before.

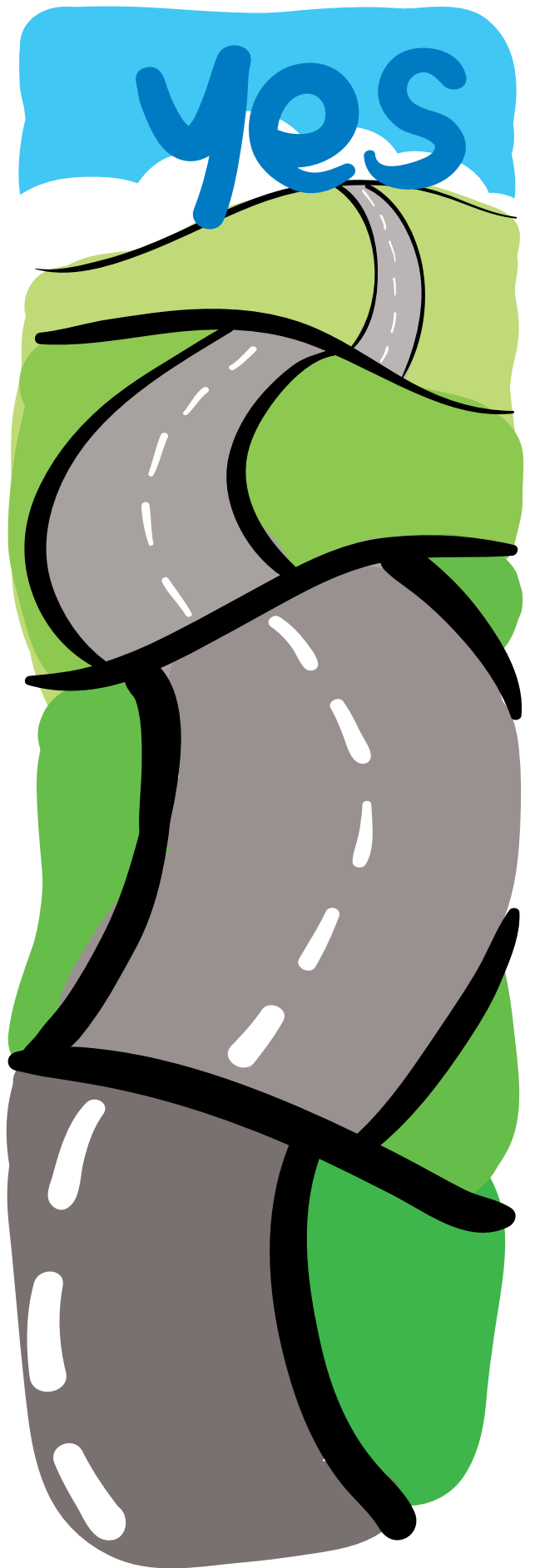
Finding my courage and confidence online led me to dip my toe in "face to face" discussions about independence. Initially this was with other Yes voters, then I dared to talk with mibbies. To my surprise I could answer some of their questions and point them in the direction of civilised informed debate online to help them make their decision. I even attended my first political talks, aye talks. I had to pay someone to cover my shift to attend and I loved every minute of it.

I think women in particular are wary of discussing politics and being shouted down or ending up in a heated discussion, but in the last few months I have noticed a rise in the number of women speaking up and like me finding their voice and confidence. My confidence has grown to the point where I can now have full-on discussions with No voters. I am happy to engage with them, safe in the knowledge that I don't have all the answers and neither do they. I wear my Yes badge daily, not dreading but hoping people will ask me about it. I know that I am voting Yes for the right reasons and I have great confidence in the politically awakened people of Scotland to work hard to make independence work. Our future is in our hands and I don't believe we will hand that back on 18 September.

Instead of feeling scared I feel excited about the future and the possibilities ahead of us. Through this journey I have learned that so many of the issues I once thought were crucial in making my decision to vote Yes were now no longer that important to me. Somewhere along the line I seemed to have moved on to a much simpler question: should we govern ourselves or let someone else do it for us? It was like an epiphany; all the doubts and questions I had about finance, oil, defence and economics were minor details in the shadow of the real question.

Scotland has all the ingredients required for independence. All we need now is a little confidence just like I gained. Then we can roll up our sleeves and sort out the rest of it. ■

*Somewhere along the line
I seemed to move on to a simple
question: should we govern
ourselves or let someone else do
it for us? It was like an epiphany.
All the doubts and questions
I had about finance, oil, defence
and economics were minor details
in the shadow of the real question*



MY JOURNEY TO YES

Hazel Frew

This is a thirty year journey to Yes, that will be familiar to many – through apathy, a sense of dismay at being Scottish, to a new found optimism and resolution.

MY 1984 SELF and my 2014 self would not have agreed on Scottish independence. Looking back it is hard to pinpoint where and when I changed my mind. Sometime in the mid-to-late 'oos I radically altered my opinion. That optimism for a different, independent Scotland has recently, through the Yes Campaign, become an overwhelming passion.

While my 16-year-old self would no doubt be surprised at this shift, the core political values that I had then and now have not really changed.

I grew up in Ardler, Dundee, in the early 1970s and then in Broughty Ferry. In the 1980s Dundee East was an SNP safe seat. My family were not SNP sympathisers, quite the opposite. My mother in particular had very strong anti-SNP views, dismissing their MPs as tartan Tories, holding nationalism in contempt, equating it with fascism, jingoism and warmongering.

I wasn't overly proud of the Scots language either. My brother and I were brought up not to use words like 'ken' or 'dinnae'. Mum thought speaking in colloquial Scots held you back, identified you as lower class and thick, just as certainly as lazy intonation did. So it was mince and potatoes in our house – definitely not tatties. I had always aspired to posh English accents, feeling a lower class citizen because of my Scottishness.

So I was neither a natural SNP voter, nor was I particularly patriotic or proud to be Scottish. I considered myself British first and Scottish second. I was never a fan of fake Scottish tourist culture. I longed for a real Scotland, not a made-up one cobbled together from manufactured legend, the Broons and sad Hogmanay shows.

The first time I found that sense, out with the power of the land beneath my feet and the shuck of the North Sea hitting Broughty harbour, was in literature. We were given *Sunset Song* in English to read towards our Higher. Lewis Grassie Gibbon's book changed my life. It gave me a romantic but grounded sense of physically coming from a land and what that really means – the real belonging. The real belonging to your country is not a state of mind, or anything to do with politics, it is a visceral tie. As real as the bond we have with our mother. It is alive in us and stirred like recognition of a familiar face. It's in the ploughing of the land.

I grew up in a staunch Labour home. My family on my mother's side had been shipbuilders, Red Clydesiders and political agitators from Linthouse. My father's family were miners from rural Lanarkshire. Dad first went down the pit to work when he was 15. He moved from mining to roofing, eventually becoming self-employed and setting up his own business. The 1970s could be hard, sitting round the gas cooker with the oven door open and burners on to keep warm during power cuts, and going to the loo by candle-light. During the 1980s I watched my father struggling to keep afloat in the face of Thatcher's small business initiatives and YOP-YTS schemes, competition meaning a constant, deliberate underpricing of jobs.

When I first set out to vote I did so with a sense of power and optimism. I was voting Labour, battling

against monetarism, striking Thatcher a fatal blow. I had no sense at that time that who I was voting for – who any of us in Scotland were voting for – was irrelevant. My vote could not change anything, least of all the hegemony of the Conservative Party in Westminster that I so longed to change.

I started studying politics at Dundee University and was dismayed to hear the prevailing theories that Britain's political system would become increasingly Americanised, increasingly centralised, until right and left converged. It sat so badly with my old fashioned sense of socialism and social justice that I couldn't accept it, refused to believe it.

In 1986 not only was I not expected to pay fees or for my own keep but I was buffered by the state welfare system, aka social security, while I was at university. I received a full grant, a free overdraft and was able to sign on during the summer and receive housing benefit. During term time I was able to claim housing benefit towards the cost of my rent. I only just missed, by a year, the provision of unemployment benefit and full housing benefit during Christmas and Easter holidays. That was the way most of us lived, sometimes taking jobs, but mostly just being young, living and thinking – for free. In 2014 our generation would be labelled benefit scroungers and malingerers. All that it meant to me was the space to think.

Things have moved so far away from that education system, one where those from poorer backgrounds but with ability could genuinely make it, be educated and leave debt free, to the current model of debt wheel subscription. A free education system swapped for an American model of profit making and corporate pleasing. One based not on learning for the pleasure of it but for a purpose in the labour market, fitting more and more students in and making more and more profit. In 2014 I doubt I would have had the chance to take my education to another level, to study politics, philosophy, psychology, social policy, sociology and anthropology in two of Scotland's best universities, for free.

After such initial confidence my falling out of love with the Labour Party came with their rejection of unilateral nuclear disarmament. Afterwards, I found New Labour under Tony Blair intolerable. While friends

were celebrating his election, I felt sickened by the man and what he meant for the party and Britain. The invasion of Iraq was my final disillusionment.

I became apathetic, alienated by politics, disenfranchised; betrayed by years of adversarial, patriarchal jousts. I continued voting but there seemed to be no clear answers. I hated politics; there were no honest politicians; and there were no decent political parties. Despite this I was drawn most consistently to vote SNP, firstly because of their commitment to independence and secondly, and most importantly, getting rid of Trident. Nuclear weapons have no place in our small country.

When I was growing up I got used to a sense of apathy, a sense of dismay in being Scottish, feeling colonised, being told what to do by a distant parliament. My parents and grandparents, their friends and neighbours would sit at New Year and sing songs tinged with sadness and a longing for a shared, lost sense of country and history. I grew up watching men crying into their whisky over that. 'Flower of Scotland' was emblematic of Scotland being a nation but not a nation, a nation out of sorts.

I have always loved England and having English friends. But it would be silly to deny that there are huge differences in earnings, outlook, lifestyle and voting preferences between Scotland and England. Scotland votes differently. Here the majority still adhere to social inclusion and fairness and aspire to a fairer distribution of wealth and strong public services.

I envisage a much more representative parliament after independence. Based on our small population we can have smaller political wards, more representative MPs directly accountable to the local communities they represent.

All sensible, global advice is telling us to live in an environmentally aware way using renewable energy sources. Scotland has the chance to be at the vanguard of that. Local, seasonal, organic produce. A small, nuclear free country, using its vast wealth for the benefit of its citizens. New political parties and a new system of government. The chance to start again. The chance to include everyone.

Voting No only leads us to more of the same. More of what we have been putting up with, more of what we hate, more of what we rail against. A government we didn't want or elect dosing us with austerity, wage freezes and foreign wars. These are certainties, not conjecture.

Recently I've been thinking about how my grandmother and mother would be voting if they were both still alive. I know that grandma would be a resounding No. Stubborn and too set in her ways to change, she would needlessly be fretting about her pension and housing rebate. I have a feeling, however, that my mum would be a Yes. I am sometimes glad she isn't here to witness the Conservative and Lib Dem coalition. At least she was spared the knowledge of food banks and the Bedroom Tax, all of which would have appalled her. On 18 September I will vote Yes – for her, for me, for my children. For the future. ■

All sensible, global advice is telling us to live in an environmentally aware way using renewable energy sources. Scotland has the chance to be at the vanguard of that. Local, seasonal, organic produce. A small, nuclear free country, using its vast wealth for the benefit of its citizens.

WEAN'S WORLD

Abi Cornwall

Bairns not Bombs goes the slogan but what would the childcare proposals mean in reality?
Where's the word 'father' in all of this? And can things really change?

AS I WRITE THIS, my three year old daughter Ida is about to start her first year in the local school nursery. She will be part of the first generation to make use of the Scottish Government's increased free nursery places – one element of the *Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014* which was passed earlier this year.

When my six year old was eligible for his free nursery place in 2011 all children aged 3-4 were entitled to 475 hours per year. From 1 August 2015, this will increase to 600 hours to strengthen early years support in every household.

In essence, this is great news for all parents. Nobody would knock the opportunity to have even more free childcare in place. But it's not always the most practical solution and it's clear that more work needs to be done.

Luckily for us, as parents, we were able to make use of the free childcare allowances since my son reached the age of three. But this was only because we're fortunate enough to work for flexible employers who have allowed us to work from home on certain days and because we have generous, willing and able parents who share some of the childcare as doting grandparents. There are many households who do not have such arrangements and cannot make use of the somewhat limiting hours and location of the nursery whilst out working. These parents often top up childcare by using the services of a childminder or a private nursery (assuming they have agreed to transport the child to and from the school nursery – many are unable to) which still means paying for a full day's childcare costs, even when their child spends part of the morning or afternoon out of the top-up provider's care.

Of course, it's very easy to pick holes in policy. People's lives are complex and it's almost impossible to find a solution that supports national consistency, but by being responsive the Scottish Government is definitely on the right track. With the average cost of childcare sitting at £94.35 per week, any help to lower that cost is welcome. It is no wonder parents work around a complicated jigsaw from Monday to Friday to accommodate working lives around their child-care. Most people will be reimbursed childcare costs if their child is at a private nursery or childminder, although not quite the full equivalent due to the differing costs between the public and private sectors.

AN INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND is regularly compared to our friends in Scandinavia. We could do worse than looking their way to learn from the infrastructures in place for childcare.

Take Norway for example. On paper their childcare provisions are pioneering and seem out of this world compared to what we currently have in place. Yet, they are a fairly new development compared to their own Scandinavian neighbours. Norwegian childcare looked very much like our current set-up until the early 1990s, but from 1995 they started to focus on bringing about radical change in childcare and in turn the workplace.

Parental leave is shared after birth between the

THE AVERAGE COST OF
CHILDCARE PER WEEK IN
SCOTLAND IS, WHICH EQUATES
TO 27% OF HOUSEHOLD
INCOME

£94.35

*The dialogue is now open for us
to work towards achieving truly
transformational early learning
and childcare policies within a
progressive government.*

mother and the father and is most commonly allocated at 80-100% of the salary for one full year after birth. Therefore, formal childcare provision is usually taken up from age 1 until the formal school age (6 years) and is available on a part-time or full-time basis Monday to Friday depending on requirement. Childcare is predominantly state funded, with very low costs to the parents. Parents pay a monthly fee which is capped at a maximum of around £250 (worked out on a sliding scale so the monthly amount is often much lower than this). If a household has more than one child attending childcare there is a reduction in costs, rather than a doubling (or tripling) of costs as here in the UK.

Since 2010, this has rolled out to include a provision for

PERCENTAGE
OF MOTHERS
WITH CHILD UNDER
AGE OF 5 WORKING FULL OR PART
TIME IN NORWAY AND SCOTLAND

59%

children aged 6-9 years who require after-school care. With this in mind, it's not surprising that 86% of Norwegian mothers work – either full-time or part-time. Compare this with 59% in Scotland and it's easy to see that with a better developed childcare system Scottish women would have more opportunity to enter the workforce. It seems obvious that while the current policy on childcare is a step in the right direction, there is still a long path to walk along. So where do we go from here?

The UK Government hasn't outlined the future of childcare beyond 2015. Current entitlement is for 475 hours per year (15 hours per week) for every child aged 3-4, including around 40% of two year olds in certain circumstances (primarily deprived or at risk). There is also a plan to introduce a new tax-free childcare scheme in late 2015 to support working families, details of which are still to be announced.

The Scottish Government, however, has outlined a future for childcare in the White Paper *Scotland's Future, your guide to an independent Scotland* that reaches

out over the next
ten years and beyond.

It states:
"We will:

- in our first budget [2016] provide 600 hours of childcare to around half of Scotland's two year olds.
- by the end of the first Parliament [around 2021] ensure that all three and four year olds and vulnerable two year olds will be entitled to 1,140 hours of childcare a year (the same amount of time as children spend in primary school)
- by the end of the second Parliament

[around 2026] ensure that all children from one to school age will be entitled to 1,140 hours of childcare per year”

These plans are a significant change for an average household and are indeed revolutionary. A recent report estimated an annual saving on childcare of between £4,000-£5,000 for a family with two children between two and four and as much as £7,000 if you have a child under one and another under four.

What’s interesting here, is that the progressive childcare plans are centred around a somewhat outdated idea of equality – in the home and in the workplace. The assumption seems to be that equality is about getting both parents out to work and bringing extra money into the household while boosting the economy. Today’s equality isn’t about the simple fact of being able to do what men can do, although ensuring women earn the same as men might be a good step in the right direction for those women who do work. It’s about giving everybody the same opportunities to make the right decisions for themselves and their family.

Little is being said for the thousands of parents who do not feel that the best thing for their children is to send them away to be looked after by (mainly) other women whilst they go out to make a living. Stay-at-home dads and mums are not rewarded, or at the very least compensated for their decisions to forego the workplace – decisions which are centred on how they wish to parent and what they think is best for their children. They are penalised financially by the state for what is seen as a lifestyle choice not to work. This isn’t just an attitude to be found at governmental level, there is a definite current throughout society – all you have to do is listen to a discussion about parenting between a working mum and a stay-at-home mum. No matter how subtle it might be, it should be fairly easy to catch on that both sides feel discomfort, guilt and tension when discussing their reasons.

There is still a lot of work to be done to establish what today’s equality actually

There is absolutely no mention of the word ‘father’ anywhere in the action plan in the White Paper. The implication is that it is the women who are the ones who should go out and achieve equality

FREE CHILDCARE HOURS PRE-2014 FOR 3 AND 4 YEAR OLDS

475

FREE CHILDCARE HOURS FROM AUGUST 2014 FOR ALL 3 AND 4 YEAR OLDS AND SOME 2 YEAR OLDS

PROPOSED FREE CHILDCARE HOURS FOR ALL 3 AND 4 YEAR OLDS AND VULNERABLE 2 YEAR OLDS BY 2020 AND PROPOSED FREE CHILDCARE HOURS FOR ALL CHILDREN

AGED 0-5 BY 2026

1,140

means and create positive policy around it, but it is interesting that there is absolutely no mention of the word ‘father’ anywhere in the action plan in the White Paper. The implication is that it is the women who should go out and achieve equality,

as well as juggle the decisions about childcare

and deal with any of the emotional and mental fall-out that comes with it, while the men

are busy getting on with their work as they always were. Again, there seems little support for encouraging fathers out of the workplace and into childcare, something that needs to start changing if equality is to be tackled head-on. It would be interesting to know how things might be if the provision of childcare was seen to be a role taken on primarily by the father or at least split between both parents. In which case, would we be having this conversation at all?

There is a plan in place for a public consultation in 2015 on the increased childcare provision and all other aspects of the *Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. This should give us the opportunity to discuss and review the other elements of the

Act including free school meals for all children in Primary 1 to Primary

3; placing a definition of ‘wellbeing’ into legislation; and the controversial plan to provide a named contact for all children and young people up to the age of 18

. It would also be the time to delve deeper into ideas for an even more flexible approach to the type of childcare we need as individuals – one that can include rather than penalise those who wish to stay at home to care for their children, those wishing to home school, or those who have children older than five in need of after-school care.

As the old saying goes, the devil is in the detail. Here, the

Scottish Government has developed a framework that reflects, by and large, the needs of the modern world – and it’s one where parents can really flourish in the workplace. The dialogue is now open for us to work towards achieving truly transformational early learning and childcare policies within a progressive government. It’s up to us to make sure that dialogue stays open and relevant to what we need in our own lives.

On one hand we are being given a vision of the future and an opportunity to help shape and inform elements of it. On the other hand, what’s on offer from the UK Government in terms of childcare solutions is not particularly progressive, nor is it due to move on from its current shape. It’s a one-size-fits-all option for everybody, with no real plan to adapt, change or progress.

By addressing the issue of childcare, the Scottish Government and supporters of an independent Scotland have shown us that our future is being thought about very carefully. Here we have just one of hundreds of examples of what is achievable in our future as an independent nation. I know with certainty that somewhere in my own hectic and chaotic jigsaw I will be making some time on the 18th September to put my cross next to the only real choice for change.

Yes. ■

SOURCES:

UK Government child care outline:
www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-the-quality-and-range-of-education-and-childcare-from-birth-to-5-years
 Information on Norway’s Childcare:
www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/03/4564/9
<http://78.110.165.228/index.php/scottish-news/9663-independence-childcare-plans-will-save-families-p5000>



We are not a glossy magazine. We are not HIS WIFE. We are not SKINNY JEANS, flattering cuts and calorie controlled diets. We are not BIKINI BODIES or little black dresses. We are not playgroups, and playdates and playparks. We are not girls-nights-in, rom coms or IT bags. We are not the FAIRER SEX. We are not fat-free lattes, lip-gloss or walking home in bare feet after a big night out.

If this is what you think of us, what hope do we have
for a fairer politics beyond the referendum?



WE ARE NOT YOUR IDENTIKIT ASSUMPTION, and your attempt to belittle us into ignorance is poor. With diversity comes INFINITE OPPORTUNITY. We have beliefs, values and skills that you cannot afford to ignore.

We women are 51% of the population; a majority demographic.

You won't silence us, at the ballots or beyond.

Vonny Moyes
Writer and Activist

My chance, aged almost 100, to be politically mature

Sir,

I am a 98-year old great grandmother and I am depressed that there are people in Scotland who lack all ambition for themselves and their country to the extent they are prepared to vote No in the Scottish independence referendum and so maintain Scotland's subservient position within the Union.

I have lived through 26 British governments and none of them has shown they understand or care about Scotland. Does the 68-year-old whip-

persnapper of a grandmother (Letters August 9) think it acceptable that male life expectancy in parts of Glasgow is a mere 54 years? This places Scotland alongside developing African countries while Iceland with which Scotland is often compared has male life expectancy of 81 years.

The reasons for this appalling state of affairs are poverty and lack of political representation; born of the politics of both Conservatives and Labour. For the past 40 years Scotland has been at the heart of the European oil and gas industry and yet still poverty and ill-health plague the nation. With at least another generation of oil and gas to be extracted we cannot afford to let this continue. A vote for independence will drive the

double-dealers out and give Scots the chance to make decisions in their own interest and, yes, be responsible for good and bad results.

I acknowledge there are uncertainties but this is always a necessary part of large political acts. Indeed recent experience of global economic disaster has amply demonstrated that if uncertainty is the major worry there is no alternative but to keep your head beneath the blankets and pretend the real world does not exist.

Our 68-year-old might not yet have the courage to grow up but I have. At almost 100 I am at last being given the opportunity to be politically mature.

M F Corall,
Aberdeen

DESIGNING DEMOCRACY

Lauren Currie

Lauren Currie helps people re-design their world, now she's realised that she can too. She's living proof that a human centered design process can be at the heart of the new politics too.

APPARENTLY, ALEX SALMOND has a 'woman problem'. Only a fifth of us are planning to vote yes compared to a third of our male counterparts. I disagree. The problem Alex Salmond does have, and one we all need to acknowledge, is a 'human problem'.

Today in Scotland, two families will wake up to the living nightmare that begins when somebody they love takes their own life. Death by suicide is the biggest killer of young men aged 20 to 49 in Britain. That's more than road deaths and all the other dangers that face our young people. John Carnochan, former head of the violence reduction unit notes that "from the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 up to October 2010, 43 Scottish service men lost their lives... In the same period 5,624 men in Scotland committed suicide."

My 'female perspective' on this? Psst... why do people always ask me that? We are not a breed nor a species – we don't all think the same. Anyway, as a daughter, a sister and hopefully one day a mother I want to firstly understand. The academics and scientists out there have evidence. Proof. That Scottish masculinity and it's consequences in every direction are unique. We Scots like to shout from the rooftops how different we are. How there's nobody else like us. Well, so be it.

I want to understand the Glasgow crisis of confidence and understand the words of Jimmy Reid. Secondly, I want to help. Perhaps I am naive or 'too enthusiastic' as my Scottish elders like to often remind me to think I can even attempt to help. But I will strive to nonetheless. This happens in two places. The first place is at my work and the second place is the polling station on the 18th of September.

I'm a designer. A new form of designer who doesn't fashion furnishings nor craft objects – I design experiences. Call them journeys, services or experiences but they are what happens when you visit your GP, sign on at the brew, drop your child off at school or visit a care home. I believe all these services can be better. More often than not they are broken and cost us time and money. I believe that the design process can help all of us tackle social problems and imagine how things could be better. There are others like me, working around the globe, using design as a catalyst for change. MindLab in Denmark is a cross-governmental innovation unit which involves citizens and businesses in creating new solutions for society. They create physical space – a neutral zone for inspiring creativity, innovation and collaboration. Participle in London are designing the next generation of public services by tackling challenges like isolation. My team at Snook are reimagining public services in Scotland. We work with problem drinkers, people caring for relatives with dementia, unemployed young people, drug addicts, entrepreneurial minds, older people giving up their cars, civil servants in government, chief executives, young adult carers, social workers, the list goes on.

Design is no longer a matter of surface appearance, design is integral to the DNA of each and every public service. It unlocks imaginations and gives people the



tools and the confidence they need to imagine a new future for themselves, their neighbours and their communities. Snook take these stories and turn them into opportunities, developing improved and new offerings for our clients to change Scotland for the better. Whether that's redesigning the Care Information landscape in Scotland, co-producing a route map in Muirhouse to improve the future for children and families with Edinburgh Council, developing our own venture with Young Scot, which gives young people the opportunity to learn employability skills or piloting MyPolice, a digital platform allowing the public to feedback to the police, we're challenging the status quo and making sure people are at the centre of this.

How is design different from other activities? Well perhaps the most obvious attribute of design is that it makes ideas tangible, it takes abstract thoughts and inspirations and makes something concrete. In fact, it's often said that designers don't just think and then translate those thoughts into tangible form, they actually think through making things. This ability to make new ideas real from an early stage in developing products or services means that they have a greater chance of becoming successful more quickly.

Another, sometimes less obvious, attribute of design is that it is human-centred. Designers are sometimes

caricatured as self-obsessed, but the truth is that really great designers care hugely about the real people who will use the product, service, building or experience they are developing. This focus on users inspires great ideas and ensures that solutions meet real needs, whether the users are fully aware of them or not.

This pragmatic process of making ideas tangible and then trying them out with users means that design has a particular ability to make things simple. Anything that is too complicated to understand, communicate or operate is soon exposed. Perhaps this is why really great design can seem as obvious as common sense.

Finally, design is collaborative. The dual qualities of tangibility and human-centeredness mean that the design process is very good at engaging others. Design processes are increasingly being used as a way to enable groups of designers and non-designers to work together to tackle big issues.

A human centered design process is one that focuses on really understanding deeply the needs of communities or people that you are trying to serve. My company Snook do this by spending time with communities, through observations and interviews, and through that gain a set of insights that help us understand what some of those needs and opportunities are. And you bet it can be applied to any problem you can think of...

Male suicide charity CALM worked with design agency Theobald Fox to launch a campaign to break down the "cultural barrier" that prevents men from seeking help. The charity is also calling on the public to create their own entries as part of the #mandictionary itself. Some of the entries include Manxiety; the fear that comes from attempting to live up to society's ideals of a man. Mantithisis; bucking the man trend, making a stand against lad behaviour in spite of the inevitable berating.

The second place this happens is in the polling station on September 18th. They tell me 'the creatives' are all voting yes, because we lean towards imagination, optimism and hope rather than informed pragmatism. Which is really their polite way of saying we don't know what we are talking about, not like people with proper jobs. But if what I see around me today is the outcome of rational thought I'm staying put in my creative camp.

Yes it will be uncomfortable and scary at times and many of the changes I hope independence brings will never happen. But that's not the point. The point is now is the perfect moment to ask why. Why do we talk about depression the way we do? Why do visit our GPs the way we do? Why does my 70 year old neighbour, Jim, feel I'm the only person he can talk to?

Put simply, the Independence debate allows us to explore every aspect of our national life and ask ourselves the question – 'does it have to be like this?' The referendum is a one-off chance for everyone to question assumptions and imagine a different future. And it doesn't have to be like this – the boys and men of our country deserve better. Yes, we are voting yes to build a Scotland fit for our children but first and foremost let's make sure it's fit for each other. ■

The independence debate allows us to explore every aspect of our national life and ask ourselves the question – 'does it have to be like this?' the referendum is a one-off chance for everyone to question assumptions and imagine a different future. And it doesn't have to be like this

Yes



**SAME
SCOTLAND
DIFFERENT
APPROACH**

IT'S UP TO US

Lesley Riddoch

In our 'post-feminist' Scottish society women continue to be excluded. We urgently need to change our game if we want to emulate the more equal, affluent Nordic nations – and a Yes vote gives us that chance. But after independence will we create a “feminine” or a “masculine” state?

PICK A PAPER -- like the Scotsman. Pick a day -- like today. April 24th 2013. Here are some headlines; “UK jobs market is female unfriendly. Peter Dawson on the men-only policy at Muirfield. Glasgow – most violent city in UK.”

Is there a gender dimension to these news items – just a lot.

Is there a gender dimension to Scottish public life – apparently not at all.

Strange isn't it.

News testifies every day to the gendered and unequal nature of Scottish society – and yet try to raise issues of women's representation, men's health, women's pay, men's violent behaviour or gender divisions in modern Scotland and you find yourself talking to the collective hand. We live it seems, in a “post-feminist” society.

The first Scottish Parliament had (almost) gender parity and half the main party leaders are currently female. No woman must endure the difficulties faced by her mothers or grandmothers. Contraception has changed women's lives. Equal numbers at university will work through to general equality in the next generation. Men will get overtaken in a world of soft skills (though evidently not quite yet). Society is gradually equalising and women demanding quotas and reserved places on boards are greedy, slightly embarrassing and just plain wrong.

We know how the script goes.

Women in a man's world do see ourselves “as others

see us.” Constantly. We detect the whining offence caused by “special pleading”. We feel the wince, hear the sigh and watch the eyes glaze over. All women do. It's why so many shut up, smile, buy women's magazines and channel creativity and effort that could energise society, policy, community-building, politics, business and job-creation into weight/hair/wrinkles/sex-life and star-signs instead.

Politics are always about bigger things, more universal things or more distant things. Any thing. Just not the age-old division of labour and share-out of power between the sexes.

Gender is still the easiest predictor of who commits violent crime, runs a business, goes fishing or dies prematurely. Whether it's setting new records – or settling old scores – men are still the actors in Scottish society and their actions create, destroy, shape and inform. Women generally have a different role.

We facilitate, research, nurture, write reports, whinge a bit but never seriously threaten the status quo. And it's gone on for so long, the divvy-up feels quite natural.

Men make news, report it and analyse it. Women stand back and watch. One sex is the arbiter of almost everything that matters in Scotland's public world – the presence of a few exceptional women doesn't mask and even validates that underlying reality.

50% of humanity – is judge, jury and executioner. And that wouldn't matter one iota if gender distinctions were trivial. After all, as a blue-eyed person I'm perfectly happy to be represented by someone with brown, hazel or green eyes. But gender is not a trivial distinction.

Not in Scotland. Not anywhere.

Every day male values, preoccupations and outlooks shape front pages and determine the spending and political priorities of the nation. And that's not just unfair – it's stultifying. The exclusion of women doesn't just narrow the pool of talent available to play the existing game – it excludes the most likely game-changers. And Scotland needs to change not raise its game if it wants to emulate our more equal, affluent Nordic neighbours.

Don't believe me. Believe a Dutchman.

MACHO CALEDONIA

Geert Hofstede wrote a seminal book called *Cultures and Organisations* in 1980 which is still being used to compare societies today. From 1967 to 1973, while working at IBM as a psychologist, Hofstede collected and analysed data from over 100,000 employees in forty countries. From those results, and later work, he developed a model for comparing cultures. The entire book makes fascinating reading. But let's cut to the chase.

By Hofstede's calculations, the UK is a masculine culture and our small northern neighbours are feminine – with Sweden the most feminine of the lot. If Scotland was to become an independent country right now it would also sit on the masculine end of the graph. How come?

Because of the way different IBM cohorts answered the same questions.

Britain sits in 62nd place on Hofstede's index and typifies a masculine society driven by competition,

achievement and success, with success defined as having winners in a field (with less importance attached to overall or average performance).

Sweden sits in 1st place and typifies a society in which the dominant values are feminine – caring for others, achieving a high quality of life for all and not necessarily wanting to stand out from the crowd. Hofstede's model divides societies by what motivates people – wanting to be the best (masculine) or liking what you do (feminine). The masculine society prefers achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material reward for success and tends to be competitive. A feminine society prefers cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life and tends to be consensual.

In Sweden (only marginally more “feminine” than the other Nordic nations) it's important to maintain a life/work balance and make sure all are included. An effective Swedish manager is supportive to his/her people and ensures decision making is achieved through involvement. Managers strive for consensus and people value equality, solidarity and quality in their working lives. Conflicts are resolved by compromise and negotiation and Swedes are known for their long discussions until consensus has been reached. Incentives such as free time and flexibility over working hours and place are favoured. I can absolutely vouch for this. During a radio interview with the manager of Europe's largest recycling plant at Helsingborg in Sweden an unknown woman selflessly held her umbrella over us as it started to rain – getting fairly wet herself. After the interview I turned to thank her and was introduced to the Mayor. On another occasion, turning up on time (very important for Swedes) to meet a local radio station manager in Visby on the Swedish island of Gotland I had to wait for an (unthinkable) half hour as the most important meeting of the week was finished – between union and management representatives.

Sweden gives a whole new dimension to “flat” management – professors clear their lunch trays along with everyone else in university canteens, dads push prams and consensus is the name of the game. Above all, people work to live – not the other way round. On a visit to Kirkenes in Arctic Norway just 13 kilometres from the border with Russia I visited the world's northernmost iron-mine run by new Australian owners. They were finding it hard to adjust to the climatic extremes of near permanent darkness and light – but even harder to get local Norwegians to work shifts. Almost no monetary reward was enough to tempt locals away from their

Every day male values, preoccupations and outlooks shape front pages and determine the spending and political priorities of the nation. And that's not just unfair – it's stultifying

MASCULINITY/FEMININITY, CHILD WELLBEING & GDP COMPARED				
Country	Country Feminine rankings (Hofstede 1980)	Child Wellbeing rankings 2003 (Unicef)	Child Wellbeing rankings 2013 (Unicef)	GDP per capita Ranking 2010 (OECD)
Sweden	1	1	4	11
Norway	2	5	2	2
Netherlands	3	3	1	5
Denmark	4	4	6	9
Finland	7	2	3	15
France	27	6	8	18
USA	56	20	21	4
UK	62	20	16	16
Germany	63	7	5	14
Ireland	66	12	8	8

sacrosanct leisure and family time. This gave an additional spur to the campaign for a visa free zone around the border which would let the mine recruit hard-working Russians with less value placed on leisure time.

Swedish culture is based around the concept of 'lagom', which is hard to translate but means not too much – not too little or too noticeable. Everything in moderation. Lagom ensures everyone has enough and nobody goes without. Some feel this discourages individual effort and creativity – and they could be right (though try arguing that with the founder of IKEA).

There are swings and roundabouts. Sweden has a tendency to conformity – Britain to creativity. Feminine societies have a tendency to rate friendliness over brilliance, make the average not the best student the norm, praise the weak not the excellent and regard failure in school as a minor incident. The point is that every system has downsides – and the downside of being British is inequality of a kind that cannot easily be eradicated within the existing system and mind-set. It would be hard for Britain to change – it might be easier for Scotland. But only if our political and civic leaders consciously choose a new path.

With every male-only panel and “shovel-ready” investment plan, it’s becoming more and more obvious that Scotland isn’t on the High Road to a “feminine” Nordic society. Instead, Scotland looks set to become a pale version of Britain’s masculine society – oriented towards individual success with advantages for the few and downsides for the many. A new boss just like the old boss. Independent or devolved.

Hofstede noted that

In comparison to feminine cultures such as the Scandinavian countries, people in the UK live in order to work.

Currently Scotland is no different. When Scotland outperforms England in health, happiness or wellbeing, back-slapping is best avoided since all parts of the “masculine” UK are half a league table below our “feminine” Nordic neighbours. We should be aiming much higher.

A “feminine” society is defined by its outlook and values – not by random policies grafted onto a “masculine” model. So which kind of society do we want?

If you are “old school” you will not favour any restrictions on your freedom to do whatever you want with your tax and within your family. The promise of more high quality social goods – like childcare, elderly care, education and affordable public transport – will impress you less than the promise of more cash in your own pocket. Even if you know that can’t buy you a “good society.”

On the other hand, if you believe the early years shape human destiny and want the widest pool of people available for jobs you’ll want a feminine society which operates consensually to deliver high levels of child wellbeing, more equally shared wealth and more local organisation.

Which is really more desirable for Scots – a tartan version of the “masculine” UK or a Scottish version of the “feminine” Nordics? Are those options so very different? You betcha.

Scotland isn’t on the High Road to a “feminine” Nordic society. Instead, we look set to become oriented towards individual success with advantages for the few and downsides for the many. A new boss just like the old boss

You could make many relevant comparisons between Denmark and Scotland – here are two.

Firstly, childcare costs around £1,400 for two toddlers full time in Edinburgh and £500 in Copenhagen (despite a far stronger Danish currency.) Thus more women in Denmark work – 74.4% in 2010 against 65% in Britain. (Figures for men were 79% and 76% respectively.) The British welfare model puts family support into complex behaviour modifying tax credits whilst the Danes put almost the same amount directly into services and childcare subsidies instead – to much greater social and economic effect. A British think-tank, the Resolution Foundation, has calculated that the crippling cost of childcare here means a million women are “missing” from the UK workforce. And yet despite sympathy, warm words and support for some of the poorest mothers, Scotland has done little to tackle this massive imbalance.

Secondly, Denmark regards the welfare system as a way of redistributing income across the lifetime of each individual (sometimes putting in, sometimes drawing out) as well as redistributing income between people. This means providing high quality services for all as a way to keep welfare attractive for the affluent and affordable for the less affluent.

Even though Social Democrats in each Nordic state have lost their monopoly on power – and even though free schools and private providers are more common, no new governing parties have questioned this basic model. There is no political “ping pong” or pendulum swinging with the election of a new government every five years.

There is general political and social consensus.

Danish Professor Jon Kvist has put it succinctly; “without high levels of female employment there’s not enough tax income to fund the Danish welfairytale.” No-one seriously disagrees.

Scotland, hand on heart, cannot say the same. Yet.

A Yes vote on September 18th will allow Scots to create a new state.

Will it be “feminine” or “masculine” in character – that too, at long last, will be up to us. ■

Extract from Blossom – what Scotland needs to Flourish by Lesley Riddoch. Published by Luath £11.99

1 Richard Wilkinson & Kate Pickett in the Spirit Level (Penguin 2010) make similar correlations.

2 In editions of Hofstede’s work since 2001, scores are listed for 76 countries and regions, partly based on replications and extensions of the IBM study on different international populations.



SCHOOL AND





WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT LEADERSHIP

Laura Eaton-Lewis

The movement that's brought us to the brink of Yes has learned hard political lessons about process and 'democracy in the room'. These lessons mustn't be lost as we move forward. We need a whole new way of doing this that reflects us all, equally, now.

THERE'S RICH DEBATE taking place right now in Scotland that has revolutionised people's participation in politics and the governance of our society. People who until now have not been admitted access to mainstream political processes have grasped the possibilities the independence referendum has brought about for future change. The public have themselves devised and led actions which are spreading like wildfire across the nation. It's a fertile time. We're all thinking about leadership, the way we want to be represented in politics, and how we might participate in the processes of governance in the future.

Regardless of the outcome of the Independence vote on the 18th of September, we can't go back to how things were.

For everyone, but particularly for women and subjugated others, the independence discussion has been a massively positive experience: we have found our voice, reached out to our neighbours, activated our networks, and discovered the power and influence that each of us could have. We must maintain the level of engagement that we are currently experiencing.

The potential for societal change is within our grasp, and yet this collective enlightenment has also thrown light on problems that still exist, and which we cannot allow to be perpetrated any further.

With boldness and a thirst for justice many of us proclaim that we want to make Scotland a nation of equals – where each of us has the power to participate in the shaping of her future. Yet we cannot forget where we are now, that we continue to experience a deeply unequal relationship to power.

Whether yes or no, we must rebuild and we cannot begin to create the blueprint of a new nation, its principles or architecture, until we accept that the very process by which we write this future must enshrine the actions of equality at its core.

What do I mean by that?

I mean that, right now, we have a serious problem with leadership. There's a problem with how it looks, how it sounds, what we believe it to be, *how* we think it gets done... and *who* we choose to do the job. Because ultimately, at the moment we *don't* get to choose.

'But hang on... this was meant to be about democracy... wasn't it?'

Take a look around, note who are our current leaders... by a long way you'll find they are white middle class men who hail in disproportionate numbers from private education. You look at any platform in even the 'social justice' agenda of the referendum debate and the speakers also, overwhelmingly, represent that same demographic. Many of the people in leading campaign roles are self-appointed, others appointed sideways from similar jobs, and here we see the same demographic again. Now why is this? Are rich white boys better at leading than the rest of us? Is it inevitable that if Scotland votes to remove the Old Boys club we will end up replacing them with the New Boys Club?

That doesn't have to happen. If it did, it would

undermine the purpose of the whole independence movement, so we can safely assume that, amongst those supporting the social justice agenda behind the independence campaigns, *no one* wants that to happen. I don't think for a second that any of the intelligent and inspiring men that I work with are intentionally aiming to withhold power from women and minority groups. I really feel for our Good Men (of whom there are many), it's very difficult when you are a member of a privileged group to see the ways in which you unconsciously perpetrate structures and processes that continue to promote and maintain your privilege.

So how do we get out of this deadlock – what do we need to do?

First of all, we need to call it as we find it and realise that trying to resolve a problem is not going to put the end goal in jeopardy. It's not a spanner in the works, it *is* the works. It's a design problem, and we need to recognise it when we see it and give voice to it. It doesn't mean that those who are perpetrating it are bad people, no-one should be automatically vilified; what it *does* mean is that we have a responsibility to address it now.

Not at some point in the utopian future, not after September the 18th... Now.

So let's look at the ways in which this everyday power grab is happening within even the most progressive of circles and this is the science bit, numerous workplace studies which have shown the following:

1. MEN TEND SIGNIFICANTLY TO TAKE CREDIT FOR WOMEN'S WORK Whether that's taking credit for their ideas, using their words without credit, using their research or concepts without credit.

2. MEN TEND TO DELEGATE THE ADMIN WORK TO THE LADIES Ah, the time honoured practice of treating a woman as if she is your secretary. Come on dude, you're a grown-up... write your own emails and book your own taxi.

3. MEN ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO SELF-SELECT FOR THE SPOTLIGHT 'Because we need someone up there that *knows* what they're doing' ... Guys, it shouldn't be news that women have a head for economics, negotiating and strategic thinking.

Whether yes or no, we must rebuild and we cannot begin to create the blueprint of a new nation, its principles or architecture, until we accept that the very process by which we write this future must enshrine the actions of equality at its core

4. MEN OFTEN LEAVE THE SHITTY JOBS TO 'SOMEONE ELSE'

This can be a subtle one, the menfolks don't tend to put themselves forward to do jobs unless they are the important ones. So often, to make sure things get done *properly* and the mission of the project succeeds, women feel they have to put themselves forward when no one else will to make sure the graft gets done. So in an attempt to work their way *up to positions of power*, women end up effacing themselves by taking on the grunt work while the men take the spotlight and do the public-facing appearances and, again, take the credit. As councillor Martha Wardrop of the Scottish Greens said, 'women need to stop making themselves busy'.

5. MEN ARE VERY LIKELY TO TALK OVER WOMEN Men frequently bellow in meetings, they interrupt, they don't leave space in the conversation or look to women to give them the opportunity to talk, in short...

6. MEN WILL USUALLY IGNORE A WOMAN SAYING THE SAME THING AS A MAN The classic scenario where a woman says something over and over again, maybe another woman picks up on the point and yet *the point isn't noted until a man says the same thing*. Then of course the man gets credit for her idea (see point 1). I've personally seen this happen hundreds of times. (see above: The Fast Show sketch 'The Amazing Invisible Woman')

7. MEN WILL TEND TO OFFER 'OPINION' AS ARGUMENT, YET DEMAND 'EVIDENCE' FROM WOMEN Women are held to a higher standard of performance and accountability than their male counterparts. Follow this up with the situation where a woman presents a storming case...

8. MEN OFTEN IGNORE THE VALIDITY OF EVIDENCE AND ARGUMENTS PRESENTED BY WOMEN I don't know why this happens, this is one of the things that makes me most angry. Present a rational position please, but if you're not a man, the only way to make your argument visible is to get assertive about it because (point 6) 'men ignore women'. And we all know what an assertive woman is, that's right, an emotional one. Sorry lady, you didn't convince us with your 'facts' because you got all 'bossy'.

9. MEN FREQUENTLY VALUE WOMEN IN DIRECT RELATION TO THEIR PERCEIVED 'ATTRACTIVENESS' Don't pretend for a second that this isn't true. Look at the shit Hilary Clinton has put up with, even though it's pretty well accepted that she was the brains behind Bill C... she gets judged on what she's wearing, her age, and the worst... her *fuckability*. Just last week, a colleague of mine was in a discussion about the referendum, only to be interrupted (point 5) by a man who said 'I have to tell you how beautiful you are', and when she said that was irrelevant to anything she was actually saying, he repeated himself (point 7) and then to ensure she was under no illusion that her ideas weren't wanted and that only *his experience of her face* warranted discussion... repeated his line again (points 6, 7 and 8)

10. MEN USUALLY INSIST ON SYSTEMS OF DISCUSSING THINGS THAT ALLOW THEMSELVES TO EXPRESS DOMINANCE VIA POINTS 1 TO 9...

The following systems have the effect that only the few who are *already in positions of power (rich, white men)* can have voice: Head to head debates favour the shoutiest; Panel presentations to an audience favour self appointed 'experts' who place themselves above the audience; Questions from the floor allow the experts to 'teach' those of us in the audience, and questions generally come only from people (usually men) who already feel privileged and therefore confident enough that their voice will be valid when they face the 'experts'; round table meetings are usually conducted with a combination of all of the above – presentation, questions from floor, and head to head debate conventions, with the added problem that the agenda of what can be discussed is usually set by the leader

11. SO HOW DO YOU GET TO BE THAT LEADER? See above list of points 1-10, be warned though that if you are not already a rich white man, you'd best do a bloody brilliant job at imitating one.

If we're really interested in creating a socially democratic model of leadership, we have a great opportunity to do so in Scotland right now. With all this energy and engagement coming from the usually 'invisible' women and minority group leaders, it's a timely moment to rewrite the governance models that underpin the systemic prejudice outlined above.

'Sounds a bit hopeless' you might say,

'Why would any woman want to be a leader if that's what you have to put up with?'

Or maybe you think, 'But we need to get things done! It's not like there's another way of doing things... is there?'

YES. ANOTHER WAY IS POSSIBLE.

It's entirely achievable to create a high functioning culture if we begin as we mean to go on. We can reap the benefits of diverse knowledge by representing *all* of our talent in leadership roles, putting the best of our minds together. But to do this properly, we have to tackle this problem now, and to do that we have to see that the problem has at least four dimensions:

- It's systemic – the way we do things needs to change
- Cultural – the way things have always been done has created a self-fulfilling prophecy that favours the same people over and over again. To re-programme this we need to actively select leaders on a positive bias from amongst those who are currently invisible
- Behavioural – we need to set a new social contract about how we expect to conduct ourselves. We can't leave politeness only to the ladeeeezzzz.
- Modelled on a pre-existing template of what 'success' looks like. So we need to create new narratives and promote other models of success.

A four dimensional proposal might be:

SYSTEM Based on a consensus model, big participation from many in small groups which allow quieter, diverse voices to present knowledge and feedback decisions and

findings to the greater group. Decisions are taken by achieving consensus or as near to consensus as possible. Ensure questions are asked for clarity without jumping to stereotyped conclusions; then actually find a way to listen to the answers. Find a place to 'bank' suggestions and motions that are not for action 'right now' so that diverse ideas and voices are documented, even if they can't be achieved straight away.

CULTURE Quotas for representative / leadership positions and opportunities for development, will over time redress the cultural effect of one group having dominated the power and the narrative for so long

BEHAVIOURAL Simply make the above list of points unacceptable behaviours, and set mutually agreed terms of engagement. If we feel that there's a time and a space where these behaviours are essential, only with the consent of others, demarcate a time-limited space which allows expression in those ways towards a specified goal. For

example, it's not that head to head debate is never useful, but it should not be the day to day mode of leadership or persuasion.

MODELS Present and promote a range of possible templates for leadership, a range of flexible methods of working which admits the experience and processes of women, disabled people, people of diverse cultural backgrounds, ages and sexual identities. Transactional leadership processes replaced by transformational models.

BUT

That's jumping the gun.

We can't *decide* that's what we're going to do without the consent and participation of those who are invisible right now, because we need them to create and define our future constitution and processes. We need proportional numbers of women and people of protected characteristics to comprise our leaders and negotiators on the morning of September 19th.

This is going to mean some of these lovely rich white boys stepping aside and giving 'their' place to someone else on their team, *or* making an extra place at the decision making table for women and other missing voices.

I can't overstate the importance of this. Representation affects everything, not just the 'equalities bit' of the process. Representation is the foundation of governance.

We need to *be the leaders designing the architecture*, not be told which safety net might catch us when we fall off it.

In Scotland we've all been changed by the great decision that we face on the 18th September. We've been changed by the discussions we have had, we've taken it upon ourselves to find the information we need to uncover the complexity of the issues and make our own choice. We've been changed by the way that we've led our own action, volleyed perspectives and possibilities with people we love, founded new allegiances and discovered new ways of working.

We have been changed because we have taken politics back into our own hands and we are representing ourselves and our communities.

We don't need to wait until we are 'allowed' to be leaders, we are doing it already. Shift your bum a bit and make space for us. We don't want to do the shitty jobs, we belong at the table.

We have a voice... now let us use it. ■

References:

Masculinity at Work: The Experiences of Men in Female Dominated Occupations, Dr Ruth Simpson, Brunel University
Should Women Applicants "Man Up" for Traditionally Masculine Fields? Effectiveness of Two Verbal Identity Management Strategies
Jennifer L. Wessel 1†
Nao Hagiwara 2
Ann Marie Ryan 3
Christine M. Y. Kermond 3,
Psychology of Women Quarterly
Gender, Status and Power in Discourse Behavior of Men and Women, Peter Kunsmann (Freie Universität Berlin)
Working patterns in Wales, WAVE wales



A FEMINIST SCOTLAND

Cat Boyd and Jenny Morrison

The independence campaign has been characterised by strong articulate women in positions of leadership, finding voice and finding a space whether it is in communities, political parties or campaign groups.

AT THE END OF the last Radical Independence Conference in November 2013, the closing message was clear: independence is a class issue. With class at the heart of the referendum campaign, let's remember that at heart of class politics lies gender. We wrote our intervention into this debate, keeping those things in mind.

Our case for Yes is both reasonable and revolutionary. Feminism needs to reimagine the independence debate. Vague promises of change, fairness and equality provide nothing for women particularly in an age when Louise Mensch makes the ludicrous statement that the Tories are "relentlessly focused on social justice". The language of liberation has been absorbed by the establishment while the message has not. The Yes campaign has faltered on the question of gender. Women know that "change" if it does not explicitly include women usually means "change for men". The question of childcare, while welcome, shows precisely what is wrong: it's very framing as a "women's issue" is a problem- let's begin to question why our lives are still structured by antiquated gender stereotypes.

The reality of women's lives in Scotland and Scotland as part of the UK is shaped by the history that surrounds us, the cultures we grow up in, our access to work, being a woman in a military society and our ability to redress the imbalance of power. For us, these issues are all linked together in a history of domination by Empire, a culture where women come second, a hegemonic economic doctrine that punishes women, an obsession with military power, and systems of government which

consistently shut women out. We see independence as breaking away from these realities, opening the door for a different type of society.

We have our concerns about the SNP model for a future Scotland, particularly for women. However, the opposition to the Westminster consensus can be used to find alternative pathways. The book we have written is not a manifesto nor is it a definitive work for feminists in Scotland but rather aims to provide ideas for systematic change. This depends on a re-democratised and political feminist movement. We have a strong feminist tradition to pull on and an emerging youth feminism that is already focused on exposing old power relations.

We are living in what Beatrix Campbell neatly describes as a "neoliberal neo- patriarchy." Our society is happy for its girls to aspire to become doctors, astronauts, or even prime minister. But when it comes to genuine, real and radical reforms of the sexual division of labour, all avenues for change close up in front of us

Our critique of the current economic, social and political system aims to expose the reality for women in the UK, a reality that goes down to the roots of how our society functions. Ultimately, this involves talking about class; it is here that we distinguish ourselves from the other feminist publications we have mentioned. The problem of reorganisation of labour between the household and the paid workplace is not one of will; it is one of opposing interests between labour and capital as well as men and women, which is of course also deeply racialised.

We are living in dangerous times. We are living in what Beatrix Campbell neatly describes as a "neoliberal neo- patriarchy." Our society is happy for its girls to aspire to become doctors, astronauts, or even prime minister. But when it comes to genuine, real and radical reforms of the sexual division of labour, all avenues for change close up in front of us. Neoliberalism destroys social settlements, the public good and the power of the collective in favour of the markets, privatisation and the untold rights of the individual.

This new settlement is the enemy of women, and it is the enemy of feminism because it abandons the very source of the power for changing society for women; our social solidarity and security. Feminism dies as these things, which are its life source, are cut off. Our feminism is then used as rhetoric to justify invading other nations, for selling us shower gels, to bomb Muslim women, to keep rape convictions low, to sell us vibrators, to boost TV ratings, to make us hate other women. Along with every other social solidarity, our language of liberation has been traded on the markets, and sold back to us, neatly packaged. Because of this, there will be women who do not recognise the realities we describe in this book. But they will surely recognise this: the gap between men's and women's money, time, power, respect and access to resources is getting larger year on year.

Britain is typical of neo-liberal neo-patriarchy: it is an archaic and masculine state. We think that there women should vote yes as a matter of urgency. Britain is inseparable from its neoliberal institutions, which have systematically shattered and dismantled any sense of collective struggle for women's equality. Britain has duped women into thinking they've won some concessions for equality, but it has in reality set us back.

Breaking up Britain can help stop this trajectory, and it opens up a tiny crack for new struggles to ferment, and for new radical victories. By using some of the reforms set out in this book, we think that women can be empowered in their everyday lives, to take on new challenges and new battles. A Yes vote means the creation of new institutions for a new state: a new media, a new legal system, a new economy, and of course, a new parliament. We want to shape these institutions, to dramatically and radically change how our society looks and functions. We want women to be at the centre of all demands for a new type of egalitarian society. ■

This is an excerpt from Scottish Independence; A Feminist Response (published by Word Power Books)





ALISTAIR DARLING BACK FROM THE BRINK

A GREEN YES

Alison Johnstone

A Green Yes offers us a unique opportunity to change Scotland in ways more fundamental than we imagined, community by community. We can begin to live up to the historic crises we face – with answers that we know have broad support.

EVER SINCE THE Scottish Greens voted to campaign for a Yes, our messages have focused on how independence offers the opportunity for transforming Scotland's political culture, affording us the chance to fulfil our huge potential.

As well as supporting Yes Scotland, we established the Green Yes campaign to ensure our distinctive messages had a platform. In doing so we have spoken to a wider audience than ever before about how Green policies seek to tackle poverty, build sustainable industry and end inequality.

Greens have taken part in events all across Scotland – some well-used to public debate, others finding their voice for the first time, inspired to share their own vision as each of us contemplates what kind of society we aspire to create.

Green Yes has also published a series of 'briefing notes' at www.GreenYes.info in which we set out ideas for some steps our society can take to transform lives for the better in practical terms, beyond vague promises of creating a more just and equal country.

CITIZEN'S INCOME

We recently outlined our proposals for a Citizen's Income as a new way of providing social security in an independent Scotland. We advocate a universal payment, providing enough income to meet the basic needs of everyone, replacing almost all benefits and the state pension. This would be cheaper to run, remove the complexity of the current system and make the lowest-earning 70% of households better off.

The benefits retained would be all disability benefits and carer's allowance for those needing additional support, and housing benefit and council tax reduction for people otherwise facing homelessness.

The UK Government labels people on benefits "scroungers" and "shirkers" – language designed to stoke tension and prejudice. People are pitted against one another by successive governments as they target social security for swingeing cuts. With a Citizen's Income, everyone would have the opportunity to change jobs, raise children, care for loved ones, pursue education or start a new project – without ending up on the breadline.

The late feminist economist, Professor Ailsa McKay, made clear that a Citizen's Income benefits women in particular by recognising the "diverse roles of women as wives, mothers, carers and workers". Engender recently highlighted that "since 2010, 74% of cuts to benefits, tax credits, pay and pensions have been taken from women... This rises to 81% of the 'savings' realised by the Treasury in 2014-15".

EMPLOYMENT LAW

One reason that women are disproportionately affected by failings in our systems is the 'traditional' division of labour down unacceptable gender lines through inequality in employment. Men receiving higher pay than women for the same job reinforces the role of men

as primary bread-winner, meaning much of the extra work within the domestic economy falls to women. Life as an unpaid carer for relatives, for example, leaves women in a particularly vulnerable position, even without the devastating effects of austerity and withdrawal of state services.

In the event that responsibility for employment law comes to Scotland, our polling shows over 75% support a requirement for private sector employers to ensure pay equality. On average, women earn 13% less than men in full-time jobs, almost 34% less in part-time, and a clear desire exists to close this shameful gap. With employment laws reserved to Westminster however, public opinion being reflected in political will in the Scottish Parliament cannot yet be enough to effect necessary changes.

The hostility in Westminster to the right of workers in general – to organise and have the means to secure improved terms and conditions – also exposes Scotland's powerlessness to repeal anti-trade union laws. As well as promoting a legal requirement for employers to pay a living wage to all, Greens are committed to legislating for stronger trades unions and envisage a major role for them in promoting economic democracy.

Key to this must be the role of unions in helping to roll back privatisation of services and utilities. With independence, we would be in a position to oppose deals like the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), which would prevent Scotland from reversing privatisation, but is currently reserved to the UK to negotiate as EU member state.

The opportunity we have now is to take responsibility for decisions like these in Scotland. Immediately following a Yes vote, the work would begin to determine how we wish to use our responsibility.

GREATER EMPOWERMENT

Independence shouldn't simply mean devolution of responsibility from Westminster to Holyrood either. This debate is an opportunity to promote ideas of decentralising power further within Scotland, and we are encouraged to see wider calls for more local decisions, greater accountability and public participation.

With a Yes, we would like to embed the status of local decision-making in a written constitution. For example, Germany forbids national Government

from interfering with tax rates set by local authorities for raising revenue. Further Green proposals include creating a greater number of smaller municipalities, and a Land Value Tax to give a fairer way of funding vital services than Council Tax.

The referendum debate has captured the imagination, and capitalising on that can mean increased participation and turnout at elections. We have an opportunity to address the democratic deficit and spark a revival in local democracy, bringing politics closer to people, instead of councils like Highland governing an area the size of Belgium.

Other opportunities we've highlighted include Green ideas for creating a jobs-rich economy, painfully-overdue banking reform, and ensuring digital rights are seen as civil rights.

Scotland has the skills and opportunity to create well-paid, secure jobs, in many areas such as shipbuilding, energy, digital technology, construction and engineering that can thrive across Scotland with investment and attention. We need to offer more than insecure jobs and low wages.

With a Yes, we can decentralise ownership of land and infrastructure that renewable energy depends upon, as well as developing a large, publicly-owned energy company and networks of local banks with communities' interests at heart. The renewables industry has enormous potential to create the jobs required, but its prospects are damaged by Westminster's determination to saddle us with astronomical costs and environmental damage from nuclear and fracking.

Decentralisation of responsibility must also be seen within the context of embracing a more responsible position internationally. The internet is moving towards a point when everyone on Earth should soon have access to the sum total of human knowledge. Governments and societies must collaborate to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead – including protecting against invasions of privacy.

Internet legislation remains with Westminster, and through Scotland taking responsibility, Greens see greater opportunity for a Digital Bill of Rights, democratic control of intelligence functions, a Scottish communications regulator, and a public forum for debate about the future of global society and technology.

DEFENCE

As a Green, I see an opportunity to reframe narratives of "defence" in terms of what security threats people actually face. While a Yes vote should consign Trident to history, we must also challenge the notion that Scotland should seek the moral hypocrisy of joining the NATO nuclear club, or, as the SNP intend, devote twice as much to military spending as to international development.

Major global threats facing humanity involve scarcity of food, water and land, as well as digital crime, and while Greens want a smaller defence sector, there will continue to be significant need for infrastructure and hardware for humanitarian and development work. We also want to see skilled workers deployed in the rapidly

"With a Yes, we can decentralise ownership of land and infrastructure that renewable energy depends upon, as well as developing a large, publicly-owned energy company and networks of local banks with communities' interests at heart."



growing renewables industry, and see this opportunity as part of a long-term economic diversification agenda.

Key factors needing addressed by a government serious about people's security within its borders involve health and wellbeing, domestic and sexual violence, poverty and working conditions. Immediately post-independence, we should begin by looking at what measures the government must take, particularly in terms of spending decisions, to alleviate the real threats facing people every day.

While this debate offers the opportunity to consider measures to enhance security and wellbeing that we could implement with new powers, we must also seriously consider why we would spurn the opportunity to crack down on tax dodging by corporations and rich individuals, or end the inhuman sanctions regime forcing hundreds of thousands into foodbanks and crisis loans.

I wasn't always of the view that independence was vital, but the debate has made clear that the path Westminster continues along is failing us all, and the genuine will that exists to do things better is matched in Scotland by a once in a lifetime opportunity to make it happen.

Another issue affecting powers already devolved is immigration. There is no one-size-fits-all policy for attracting new citizens – particularly in areas like healthcare and education, and those coming to Scotland face unacceptable hostility from Westminster, no matter how much those in Holyrood urgently want to change that.

I wasn't always of the view that independence was vital, but the debate has made clear that the path Westminster continues along is failing us all, and the genuine will that exists to do things better is matched in Scotland by a once in a lifetime opportunity to make it happen.

2014 can mark the beginning of a radical transformation of our economy and communities. I will vote Yes because I believe we must accept further responsibility, then we can push ahead to create a society that works for all, now and in the generations to come. ■

A TREE ON FIRE

Tessa Ransford

Women have always made poems, but the internet and self-publishing has given them opportunities unthinkable 30 years ago.

HAMISH HENDERSON WAS in the midst of things all his life and desired that his poetry be life, become people. What could that mean? His phrase ‘Poetry becomes people’ is borrowed from Heinrich Heine’s statement that ‘Freedom must become people.’ Heine also stated, in the 1830s, that when books are burnt, people will be burnt too. This is inscribed in the Bebelplatz in Berlin, where a hundred years later the Nazis did burn books. The phrase also reminds us of ideas from the Sardinian Communist thinker Antonio Gramsci about culture forming its own ‘society’ and affecting politics to the extent that it can almost be claimed that ‘the politics follows the culture’. If we think about this we can see that it is true. Without a culture of service and subservience there can be no empire, and no mafia, for instance. Without a culture of poetic vision, creative thinking and steady building of infrastructures, there can be no freedom becoming people.

There are individual people and there are groups of people, societies of people, communities of people, nations of people, the world of people. Poetry needs to be ‘in the midst of things’ in all these circles within circles – for the individual to individuate and live in hope, for the community to have vision, openness and freedom from fear, for nations to operate on principles of freedom, cooperation and acceptance of diversity rather than fear, prejudice and deterrence.

Long ago in 1982 I made a rough survey of the state of poetry in Scotland, as described in this extract from my unpublished book, *My Story of the Scottish Poetry Library*:

POETRY SURVEY AND THE SPL (1982)

In my kitchen one day in the spring of 1982, I received a phone call from the European Commission in Brussels asking me to attend a conference about poetry in Europe and to bring statistics, under various headings, about the poetry situation in Scotland: a tall order, given that no-one kept any statistics. Scotland was to be represented for/as itself at this conference – or would be if I could get there with the information by the autumn. I asked Douglas Mack, of Stirling University Library, who had been to some of our committee meetings for the setting up of the Scottish Poetry Library, if I could do the research from there, in order to give it more status. Day after day during a very wet and dismal summer, I drove to Stirling and worked on the research, sending out questionnaires and collating the answers into what would become the Scottish Poetry Library Association, Action for the Promotion of Poetry in the European Community, Preliminary Data.

The final document ran to 28 pages, typed out by me, with appendices. The findings make astounding reading now, when few people will remember the situation for poetry and poets in the decades before the founding of the Scottish Poetry Library. In some respects things were better then. For instance, there were 15 literary reviews publishing some poetry, and 17 small presses. In Edinburgh alone there were Canongate, Gordon Wright, Paul Harris Publishing, the Ramsay Head Press, the Salamander Press,

Stramullion Cooperative Ltd, William Blackwood & Sons, and Macdonald Publishers, Edinburgh.

The questionnaire was sent to 77 poets in Scotland, out of which 43 replied, of which three were under 30, 33 were male and 10 were female. Seventeen of these had published themselves at some time between 1975 and 1982. The point is made that “even well-known Scottish poets have not had their collected works published until after their death, eg Robert Garioch, Sydney Goodsir Smith, Hugh MacDiarmid.” It lists occasional translation work – Garioch, Edwin Morgan, Alistair Mackie, Derek Bowman, Stephen Mulrine – but the research found no anthologies had been translated. One hundred bookshops were circulated and 18 claimed to stock an average of 3% poetry, of which 32% was contemporary. All, except for two in arts centres that occasionally ordered from Scottish publishers, ordered only from the main English publishers. There is the bald statement that “there is no central organisation for the promotion of poetry in Scotland”.

The document states that all Library Headquarters were sent the questionnaire and 57% replied. “They keep no records whatever of poetry books bought or lent.” Newspapers supported poetry better than they do now. Six newspapers published poems on an average of twice a month. Three papers had staff who acted as poetry editors. Seventy-eight books of poetry were reviewed in all the papers in one year, which was 10% of all books reviewed. Radio and television admitted that no records or statistics for poetry programmes were kept, nor was any audience research done for these programmes. There were 60 sound recordings at the Mitchell Library, 25 of which were of 20th century poets. Seven poets were on video.

There are sections on schools showing that, on average, Scottish and contemporary poetry represented 20% of the poetry syllabus, which is 10% of the English syllabus. Eight universities ran courses in Scottish and/or modern poetry for undergraduates, and three ran such courses for postgraduates. The Scottish Arts Council spent 1.2% of its total budget on poetry. Poetry spending between 1975 and

Long ago I talked of cultural husbandry and cultural ecology. When the soil and environment are right plants will flourish. So with the arts. These concepts are far removed from the hollow world of big names connected to commercialism and managerialism, such as we see in the endless recitation of the millionaire authors ‘who have put Scottish literature on the map’

1982 was £447,862. At the first Edinburgh Book Festival in 1983 there were a total of 74 events, one of which was Sorley Maclean reading his poetry. Other Scottish events featured naturalists, novelists, short-story writers, children’s books, and whisky. Of women there is the statement: “Only one woman poet has been a writer-in-residence or had a writer’s fellowship or travel exchange for poetry between 1975 and 1982.” (That was Liz Lochhead.)

The document covers research into ‘the reading population’, and ‘reading through libraries and through secondary school libraries’. There is also an assessment of income and ‘the social situation of professional poets.’ Strategies for pilot projects are then suggested. Of these, festivals, university courses, poetry workshops in arts centres and the Scottish Poetry Library have to some extent been developed since the research in 1982.

Although the research was only a beginning, it represented a step forward for the nourishment of poetry in Scotland. I went to the conference in Brussels, made my report, and enjoyed meeting representatives from Wales and Ireland. The effort was not wasted, because it gave me a realistic picture of the poetry scene before I started my work in the Scottish Poetry Library. This was invaluable. It gave me an authenticity that I could not otherwise have had.

I wrote *My Story of the Scottish Poetry Library* immediately after I retired in 2000. The scene now is very different. It appears that women poets are everywhere, there is more acceptance of Scottish literary studies, festivals abound, workshops flourish, grants are available. The main change is of course the internet, which allows poets to share their work freely and to publish themselves. Online catalogues have allowed poems to be accessed much more easily. There is an emphasis on multimedia work and international connections, both of which were aspects we deliberately encouraged through the Scottish Poetry Library. We also helped to initiate an online catalogue of Scottish Literature through the ages in translation (Bibliography of Scottish Literature in Translation), which is based at the National Library of Scotland.

At the millennium, however, a new tide of commercialism was seeping through the world of the arts, which was forced to seek justification for funding by proving useful socially or as a source of jobs and income. ‘The Writing Factory’ and ‘The Arts Industry’ were some of the terms in use. Many of the small, dedicated publishers of poetry books – prepared to make a loss as is inevitable with the small runs of poetry that are printed in any edition – and the literary magazines, which had made it possible for Scottish poets to aspire to seeing themselves in print, could no longer continue.

Yet many people were still taking poetry seriously, attending workshops and seeking to share their work. Pamphlets seemed the answer. Thanks to a series of helpful meetings with far-sighted people, I managed to organise an annual award to a publisher of a poetry pamphlet in memory of my late husband (who had been

a publisher of poetry since the 1950s and also of the magazine *Lines Review*): the Callum Macdonald Memorial Award. The award is for the best pamphlet taking into account content and production. The aim was to encourage publishing by poets themselves or by those who became publishers of pamphlets for others. This is administered by the National Library of Scotland. We also ran a website where we sold pamphlets online and we held pamphlet poetry fairs around the country. Now the fairs are reduced to one at Christmas, but the idea of small book fairs was adopted by others. The fairs and website, however, helped to create an energy field where poets saw and understood how the success of each was to the advantage of all. Poetry was becoming people.

Now 14 years later, producing your own pamphlet is accepted as a sensible way of starting out as a poet or putting something out quickly and efficiently at any stage in your career. The award flourishes, with between 30 and 50 entries a year. The standard of content and production is high. The diversity is astounding. Pamphlets have freed up poets to write long sequences, to explore family or local history or industry, to recollect travel and exploration, to use photography, art or music in relation to their poems, to use Scots, Gaelic, Shetlandic. Our award was for those with a connection to Scotland through publisher, poet or content. The prize cheque is sufficient to produce another pamphlet. So successful were we that after 10 years a similar award was established by our sponsor at The British Library. This is for the UK and offers two awards – one for the poetry and one for the production, where the prize money is much larger.

An energy field is what is required for anything to thrive. For literature that means flourishing publishers, experienced librarians, a diversity of bookshops, academic infrastructure in study and research, the encouragement of internationalism, translation (including what I call 'internal translation' between the many languages now used within Scotland) and inter-arts projects, plus a supporting online presence. It also requires an interested education system and media. These are the way that 'poetry can become people'.

Long ago I talked of cultural husbandry and cultural ecology. When the soil and environment are right plants will flourish. So with the arts. These concepts are far removed from the hollow world of big names connected to big sales, commercialism and managerialism, such as we see in the endless recitation of the millionaire authors 'who have put Scottish literature on the map'. We need to 'think local and act global' with poetry as with everything else, putting poets whose home is Scotland at the centre and reaching out to the world. Pamphlets help to create an infrastructure which is lasting and energised.

When you have a sustaining environment for literature, women will be included. In the past they were clearly excluded. Sandy Moffat's painting of seven poets in the pub showed them as all male. I asked him, in 1983, when he was going to paint seven women poets. "Are there?" he asked. I have repeatedly asked the Scottish National Portrait Gallery to commission such a portrait, but they say they have portraits already of any woman poet of stature. They are missing opportunities all along the way.

Women are making poems, as they have always done, but are publishing now in a way that was unthinkable

thirty years ago. It is hard to have enough confidence in oneself to 'go public'. This is where workshops and fairs help. Poetry, like the other arts – and I define it as an art-form – is manifested in a variety of forms and styles. There isn't 'good' and 'bad' poetry, as we have been led to believe. Poets, men or women, need to find their own voice and seek their own truth and learn all the time as they go along, experimenting and, above all, thinking. The Germans have a saying 'Dichten und Denken': to make poems and to think. To think is in fact a poetic activity. Other kinds of thinking are not thinking – they are calculating or analysing or arguing. All art-forms comprise elements of thought, form and rhythm. How these are balanced and nuanced gives the infinite variety we enjoy when we have a lively energy field.

I end with a poem I wrote to the 'Poet as Woman' (I don't use the term 'woman-poet', as we are poets first and all else is secondary). It encapsulates a theory of mine that women are expected to separate head from body, as shown in the story

THE POET AS WOMAN

Poets as women are self-destructive like Plath, who felt flayed alive, or Sappho, her poetry valued only for the womanhood, the pretty face or silly passion, deviance or distress its maker can profess.

Germaine falls over backwards to maintain women both think and feel in treatises on how our bodies suffer, especially if we do not offer them severed from our heads but take our books to bed.

The poet as woman must write trustingly, aroused mentally and lustingly. She creates her children, her satisfaction word by word, her own conception: the lineaments of gratified desire – mind that joy: it is a tree on fire.

(from *When it works it feels like Play*, Tessa Ransford, Ramsay Head Press 1998).

See also Medusa Dozen and other poems, Ramsay Head Press 1994 and Not Just Moonshine, new and selected poems, Luath Press 2008)

of Medusa for instance, where her headful of creative serpents petrifies men and has to be severed. My poem also refers to Blake's question, 'what do women most desire?' and the answer: 'the lineaments of gratified desire', which has the word 'lines' in it!) The 'tree on fire' alludes to the burning bush where Moses heard the name of God. It burns, but is not consumed, just as the goddess of wisdom Sophia, (in the Apocrypha) makes all things new but remains in herself. This is the secret of all creation. ■



Voices from Beyond the Wall

20% off
SPECIAL OFFER
for Closer readers use code
birdstone at checkout

'A Bird is Not a Stone is a fabulous, landmark collection, an example of poetry's ability to transcend borders, cultures and languages in order to celebrate our shared humanity.'

Carol Ann Duffy, British Poet Laureate

'It is no surprise that great art is born out of its suffering... Therefore this exquisite book of poems must be all the more welcomed – by all those who love art, who would denounce oppression, and who want to read the songs of those living behind the wall.'

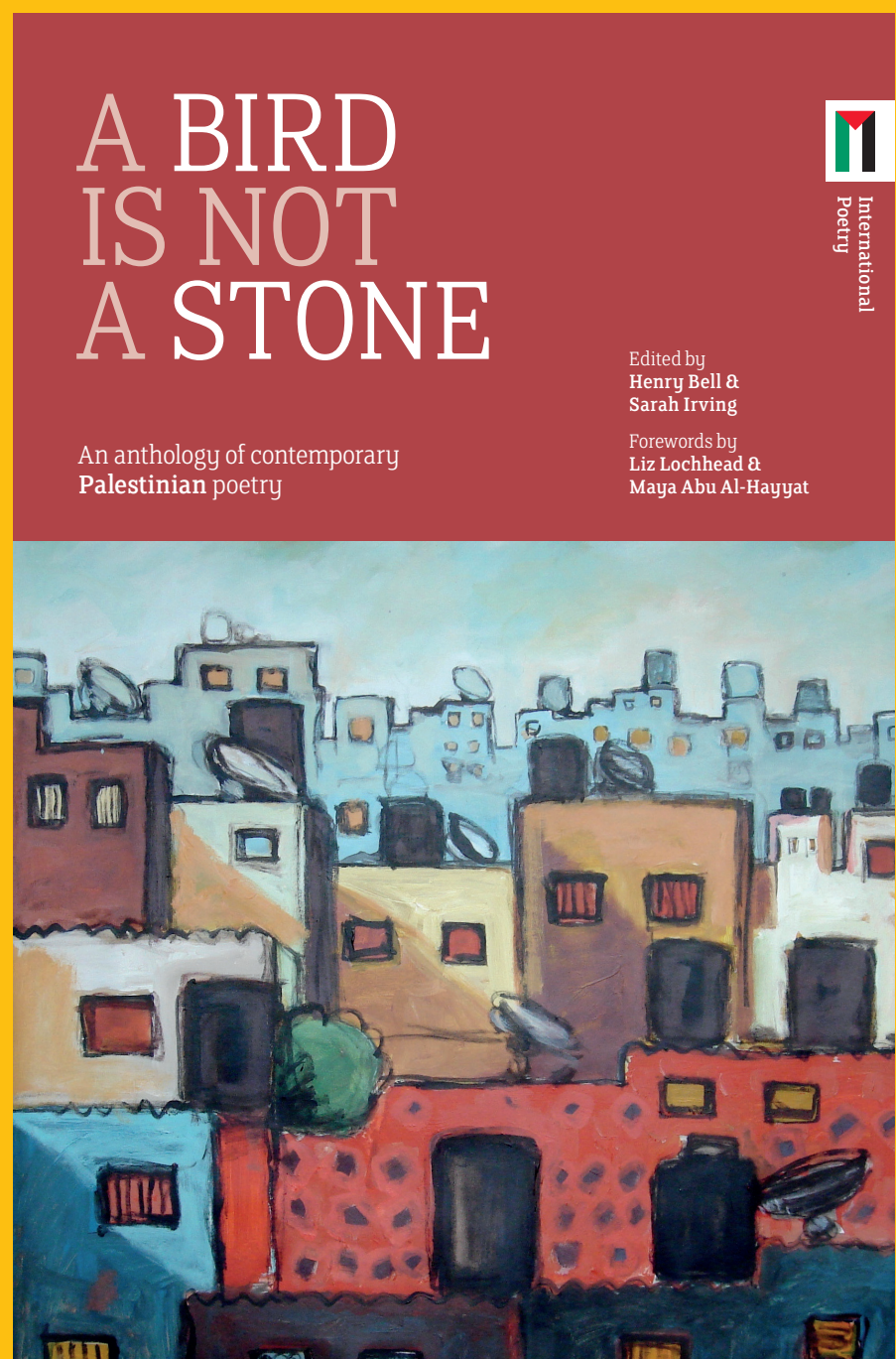
Emma Thompson, Oscar-winning actor

'Angry, celebratory, bawdy and moving, these are poems by fine poets, translated by fine poets. They feel like the first offerings of the Cafavys, Nerudas and Lorcas of today, brought fresh to the modern reader.'

Andrew Marr, journalist and political commentator.

A Bird is Not a Stone is the UK's first major collection of contemporary Palestinian poetry, translated into English, Scots, Gaelic and Shetlandic by 29 of Scotland's very best poets including Alasdair Gray, Liz Lochhead, James Robertson, Jackie Kay, William Letford, Christine De Luca, Ryan Van Winkle, Aonghas MacNeacail, DM Black, Kathleen Jamie, Tom Pow, Ron Butlin and John Glenday.

Buy *A Bird is Not a Stone*
from **freightbooks.co.uk**
RRP £9.99



MY JOURNEY TO YES

Sara Sheridan

The referendum campaign has stirred intense discussions about identity and personal history. But whether you are English, Irish, Welsh, Scottish or ancient Japanese, it's more important to focus on our destination than where we've come from

WE ARE AWASH with conversations about our national identity right now in Scotland. What does it mean, after all, to be Scottish at this seminal time in our history? A few friends who are voting No in the upcoming referendum talk about their sense of being British as a reason for their vote. I find this confusing. As a Yes voter, I identify with being British too – and not only because of my passport. Our history is where we've come from, the cultural material from which we're made, so it's no wonder. As eminent historian Tom Devine said last week, "It is the Scots who have succeeded most in preserving the British idea of fairness and compassion... Ironically, it is England... which has embarked on a separate journey" It is this sense of Britishness with which I identify (and about which I write in my series of murder mysteries) but there is no doubt that I'm Scottish too. 'Don't you find that duality confusing?' someone asked recently as if I was wearing a summer dress with a winter jacket – two things that shouldn't go together – as if I ought to jettison one of them. 'No. I wish that I had only two identities,' I replied. 'It's far more complicated than that.'

When I think about it, I've always found my cultural roots confusing. I was born in Edinburgh of a Scottish/Russian/Jewish mother and an English/Irish/Catholic father – there is no form of guilt to which I was not subjected in my childhood. Members of my immediate family live all over the world in a diaspora of cousins, aunts, uncles and more in a dizzying mix. My family spans many world religions, ethnicities and nationalities.

The truth is that I don't have one identity or even two, or for that matter three. And none of my identities dictate directly how I ought to vote. I'm Scottish, British, European, Humanist, Atheist and in part at least, culturally Jewish. To add more confusion to this mixture last year I took a DNA test as part of the Scotland's DNA project. After a long wait, it turned out that the mitochondrial DNA of which I'm made is 'vanishingly rare'. So rare, in fact, that so far they've only found three other people who share it in the whole country. I spring from a female line that developed 17,000 years ago in the area around Japan's most northerly island and on the mainland just opposite. The stuff I'm made of at base is Japanese, Siberian and Mongolian with all the rest of it added on top.

With my DNA results arriving like a love letter from a long lost many-times great grandmother, you can imagine how much it bemuses me when I hear people are concerned about distance from their families down south, in the event of a Yes vote. It's only a few miles (the number of miles won't change) and when it comes down to it, the ties that bind run through generations and cross all borders. None of us are only one thing. Not in today's world. There's nothing that will hinder us loving across boundaries or make the journey to visit our loved ones impossible. At the base of it, family ties endure always – you carry them with you across time. That's epic! With a yes vote we'll be dissolving a political union – a decision



about our government microscopically less long-lived than our genes or for that matter, many of our other ties.

My discovery about my DNA has taught me a whole load more than that, though. It made me realize how much I project my identity – how tempting it is to add 'glamour' to ourselves (in the old sense of the word, which is 'magic') by telling stories about where we came from. The truth is that I had envisaged Jewish ancestors who had survived slavery in Egypt, not on the Steppes and that vision created many self-stories about, for example, why I take a tan well and am not fond of pork belly. Side by side with that, I identify just as much with the part of me that is Scottish. My near obsession with vintage cashmere and seafood, all add to the sum of

With my DNA results arriving like a love letter from a long lost great grandmother, it bemuses me when I hear people are concerned about distance from their families down south, in the event of a Yes vote. It's only a few miles

where I've come from. Perhaps, because I'm a novelist, it's not surprising that I told myself stories but those stories were important to me and when the DNA test came through it took months to shift my perspective on them. The reality is that the way I did so is by telling myself a different set of stories from the ones I started out with. The experience has made me realize that not only do I write fiction but I am fiction too. We all are.

It's impossible to say exactly what 'Scottish' or 'British' is in this context. Identity is so random. After all, my DNA arrived in Europe due to an ancient slave route that runs along what is now the southern border of Russia. If my particular ancestor (all I know about her is that she was a woman) had succumbed to injury or illness, if she had, for whatever reason, not had sex (or been forced to have sex) on a particular day (or night) I wouldn't be here. There are generations of happy and unhappy accidents that lead up to each of us. My husband (a tall, broad, white bloke from Greenock) recently had his DNA tested too and discovered that way back the stuff he is made of came from what is present day Pakistan. Neither of us would be where we are, here in Edinburgh, if these random ancestors of ours hadn't taken decisions that would be impossible to second guess. Each one of them chose a path that made sense to them at the time and here we are, at a not dissimilar crossroads that will affect our kids and grandkids – the generations that continue.

If there's one thing I've learned from the experience of having my personal identity shaken up, it's that you can't rely on what went before. You are made of history but you have to go forwards. And when you do so, you bring everything that's gone before with you. I hope we are about to claim that – to make a little history of our own. To bequeath our children a better Scotland and thereby a better world. In the face of that, discussions about being Scottish or British or ancient Japanese (in my case) aren't important – we have to focus on our destination, not where we've come from because the stuff of life is where you're going and the only thing that's inevitable is that movement. No empire or indeed, union, endures without change. In the scale of things the decision we are making is small – our Referendum is only about political administration – but for us, living through it, it will have a huge (and I hope) positive impact.

At this moment of great history, what I always come back to is that I'm a woman born and living in Scotland and sometime some hundreds or even thousands of years ago my many times great grandmother travelled west from a Japanese/Siberian/Mongolian village, carving a path for her many times great granddaughter towards Edinburgh. And I feel free – a lot freer than she did because it is most likely she was enslaved.

To have responsibility for yourself, in the end, is a huge privilege and we each have that – we are free to make our own decision. I am very aware that where my identity goes from 18th September is up to me, and I'm proud to be voting Yes. And when I do so I'll be bringing my entire identity with me – British, Scottish, Japanese and all – into a new and I hope better Scotland. ■

I'M IRISH AND I WANT TO TALK

Elaine Mulachy

The assertion that the Yes campaign has been based on anti-southern, anti-Cameron and Osborne, anti-Eton and anti-London sentiment betrays a complete misunderstanding of a whole movement's aims and values. It's not about England, or even the rest of the UK. It's about us.

THIS FEELS LIKE A dangerous article to write. As an Irish person living in Scotland, I will have a say in the forthcoming independence referendum on 18 September. British people living in the rest of the UK will not be able to vote on whether or not Scotland stays or leaves the United Kingdom. As support for the Yes vote continues to gather pace and a realisation that this might actually happen, there is a sense that some people in the rUK are becoming incensed.

I moved to Scotland to attend university in 1997. I met my husband to be and then, in 2001, emigrated to Australia for five years before returning to the country that me and my children call home – Scotland. I am Irish and refer to myself as such. I will always be Irish. I did not change my name when I got married as I like my difficult-to-pronounce surname. It is part of my identity. My children call themselves Scottish and do not seem to have any sense of what being British is. Maybe this sense of “Britishness” is something that comes with age as they learn about their position in the world. Right now, at the ages of two and four, they love to shout “Come on Scotland” louder than I can shout “Come on Ireland”.

As a non-Scot who has studied, lived and worked in Scotland, I have views on independence and, although I do have a vote, have been a bit reluctant to speak out. After reading Fiona Laird's comment article in the Guardian recently ('I'm British and I want to talk about Scotland's independence vote'), I felt I needed to. I do want Scotland to leave the UK. But I take great offence to the suggestion that supporters of the Yes movement are primarily motivated by the ruling parties in Westminster. The primary motivation of the Yes movement is about Scotland, not England, or even the rest of the UK. What I'm trying to say is – it's not you, it's me.

The assertion that the Yes campaign is based on an “anti-posh south-easterners sentiment; anti-Tory; anti-Cameron and Osborne; anti-Eton; and anti-London” and worst of all “not pro-Scottish” demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of the real yes movement that is happening in Scotland.

The Yes campaign is absolutely pro Scotland. It is not about anti-English sentiment. The suggestion that the increasing support for the yes vote in Scotland is purely based on anti Tory rhetoric, suggests a bigoted, naive electorate in Scotland. That is simply not the case.

The people of Scotland do not underestimate the magnitude of the referendum ahead of them. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for a nation to have a say in how they want their country to be governed. Opportunities like this do not come about peacefully and democratically very often, as us Irish folks know all too well.

The 19th C Irish politician Daniel O'Connell strived for independence “attained not by the effusion of human blood, but by the constitutional combination of good and wise men”. Ireland could not realise O'Connell's aspirations of a peaceful resolution; Scotland can.

Because of the magnitude of the decision we face, people are asking questions, town hall meetings are popping up all over the country. Artists, academics,

business people, hairdressers, friends are all talking about it and searching out qualified information that will help them make their decision. Personally, I have carried out a lot of my own research; looked for answers to questions that are important to me. I have a copy of the Scottish Government's White Paper on independence. I would love an equivalent from Better Together, but there is none. The Better Together campaign's message to people living in Scotland is that things will get worse for us if we go independent. The message from the Yes campaign is that things will be better – regardless of who is in power in Westminster.

Scotland is a wealthy nation. Based on GDP per capita, the Scottish Government estimates that Scotland will be ranked the 14th wealthiest nation in the world after independence. It is worth noting that Ireland, which is smaller than Scotland in area and population and, despite recent difficult times, is currently the 12th wealthiest nation in the world, above Australia, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark (figures obtained from the World Bank). Ireland is positioned well above the UK at 24. I point this out because it supports the belief that Scotland can survive economically as an independent nation. Scotland has a lot more valuable oil and renewable resources than Ireland and is not recovering from the troubles that plagued Ireland for many years in their independence hangover.

While we're on the subject of money – the insistence by George Osborne that there will be no currency union post independence does not seem to be in the best interests of rUK. On the one hand we are told we are better together – but apparently this does not apply to economics if Scotland votes for political independence. For me it doesn't add up and the tactics of Better Together don't help. They have preached from on high and don't appear to be making any effort to speak to the people that live in Scotland. This is how it will be. No negotiation. No discussion. No respect.

It is a fact that Scottish voters have very little influence on which party controls the Westminster parliament. The UK has a population of 60 million people. With a population of 5 million, Scotland represents just 8% of this. While I have a dislike of the UK strategy of concentrating investment in the South East of England to stoke the flames of a massive financial firehouse, in reality I find it understandable that UK government does little for Scotland. Politics is politics.

There are nuclear weapons on the Clyde. Near Glasgow. We really do not want them there but as part of the UK our protests are about as useful as a moth trying to break through the glass of an energy-efficient light bulb

And when it comes to Westminster, the Scottish vote doesn't make a blind bit of difference. So why should they waste time trying to appease the Scottish voter? There are nuclear weapons on the Clyde. Near Glasgow. We really do not want them there but we can jump up and down about it as much as we like. As part of the UK our protests are about as useful as a moth trying to break through the glass of an energy-efficient light bulb.

To Fiona Laird I would like to say that I agree that this referendum is too important to be fought on such a narrow prejudice as anti-Englishness. And to suggest that is the case is frankly insulting, but also evidence of a lack of understanding of the real conversations that are happening in Scotland. Maybe you do need to be here to really get a sense of the reality of the issues and the debate. Yes Scotland is not a sound piece for the SNP. It is a collective voice of people across all political parties in Scotland. Yes Scotland are arguably not even the most influential voice in the independence debate either. Independent, non political groups such as Women for Independence, Bella Caledonia, Business for Scotland and the right-wing Wealthy Nation group are providing valuable information to educate the debate. People are engaged in this debate like no political event I have ever experienced. And we are not ignorant or naive. For the past three years my family and I have taken our summer holiday in England rather than travel abroad. My husband frequently travels to London as he works for a global investment bank. This will not change if Scotland becomes independent. I love England, it is a wonderful country with wonderful people. We are important allies and friends and will continue to be if Scotland votes for independence. Our strong ties will not dissolve overnight.

Scottish independence offers opportunities for people across the UK to examine their lot. We are only going to get one shot at this – I for one, do not plan to point the shotgun at my foot. The impact of the Scottish independence movement is already being felt across the UK as it is forcing people to question the way they are governed. If others in the UK feel strongly about their fate, they need to stand up and shout about it. Desperately hanging onto Scotland so that we can collectively have no voice is not working for any of us.

In the eloquent words of Irish President Michael D Higgins on his recent historic address to the UK Houses of Parliament, “We can and must reflect on the ethical importance of respecting different, but deeply interwoven, narratives. Such reflection offers an opportunity to craft a bright future on the extensive common ground we share and, where we differ in matters of interpretation, to have respectful empathy for each other's perspectives.” ■

Background information sources:
World Bank 2014 GDP per capita ranking:
http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD?order=wbapi_data_value_2012+wbapi_data_value+wbapi_data_value-last&sort=desc
Michael D Higgins speech:
<http://www.president.ie/news/address-by-president-higgins-to-the-houses-of-parliament-westminster/>

BELLA CALEDONIA

Kirsten Stirling

With her elegant looks and infant mind, Alasdair Gray's creation Bella Caledonia has been interpreted as a disturbing allegory for the contradictions at the heart of Scottish national identity. But the character also possesses vital qualities of innocence and idealism, opening a door to possible new narratives of women.

THE LABEL "Bella Caledonia" below the portrait of the main character on p. 45 of Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* (1992) – surely familiar to readers of this journal – suggests that Gray wants us to read the character Bella Baxter as a female personification of the Scottish nation, in same tradition as Britannia or France's Marianne. Bella's "tall, beautiful and full-bodied" exterior would seem to qualify her for the statuesque role of national figurehead, and her external integrity and beauty form the shell that contains the essence of the nation and the political structures of the state. She sits, with a plaid over one shoulder and thistles on her hat, in a recognisably Scottish landscape (we see the Forth Bridge over her right shoulder). However, since the Frankenstein-like narrative of *Poor Things* tells us that Bella has literally been constructed by Dr Godwin Baxter, it seems that beneath her elegant exterior this personification of Scotland must be in some way monstrous.

Female personifications of nation are always conceptually deformed in some way, if only because symbolically elevating the female figure at the same time symbolically disenfranchises women from the role of national citizen. The Scotland-as-woman figure, however, is subject to additional distortions due to Scotland's particular political situation. She is pulled in different directions by the clash of national and political boundaries, and this is reinforced by a critical tradition that sees Scotland and Scottish culture as essentially divided.

Gray dangles the "Bella Caledonia" tag tantalisingly in front of the reader but leaves it up to us whether to engage with its implications. There are many other paths of enquiry to pursue in *Poor Things*, and its multi-layered narratives support – and indeed encourage – a number of different readings and interpretations. "Bella Caledonia" may be an incitement to locate Bella in the tradition of women as nation, but if we were to dismiss the nickname as mere hyperbole, as indeed the lady herself insists that we must on p. 251 ("if you ignore the Gainsborough hat and pretentious nickname it shows I am a plain, sensible woman"), then it would be possible to read the entire novel without imposing a nation-as-woman reading upon it. But the suggestion of a nationalist subtext is reinforced by the design hidden under the dustjacket of the hardback edition, which has a pattern of Saltires and elongated Scottish thistles with the legend "Work as if you live in the early days of a better nation", a slogan which recurs in a number of Gray's books. The Frankenstein plot suggests, however, that this nation is a construct, and probably a monster.

In *Why Scots Should Rule Scotland* (1992), Gray proposed a possible female figurehead to represent Scotland:

"Since the 18th century sculptors and political cartoonists have often represented nations as single people,

usually robust and beautiful women with names like La France, Italia, Germania. If Scotland were so depicted the head would have to be shown attached to the body by a longer neck than the poor lady's height; moreover the head would also be attached by a neck of normal length to a different and much stronger body. No wonder many Scottish limbs and organs are underfed, numb and disconnected from each other. Too many of them cannot act without orders from a remote head which is distinctly absent-minded toward them because it must first direct a far more urgent set of limbs and organs." (58-59)

In this passage we can see how Gray arrives at his monstrous version of Scotland. He associates Scotland with other nation-states whose essence is contained within the vessels of their institutional female figureheads. But the stretched and deformed Scotland-as-woman described by Gray conflates the chaste, whole and aesthetically attractive body-shell of the female nation with the much more visceral imagery of the metaphor of the body politic, most famously used in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651), where the state is described as an "artificial man", whose head governs the rest of the body, whose joints are magistrates and other legal officers, and so on. When Gray pursues this conflation of metaphors, Scotland becomes represented as a deformed female body. In fact, he suggests that she must be deformed in two ways at the same time: both a "longer neck than the poor lady's height" and the monstrous existence of "a different and much stronger body." While this imagery is used to make a point about the effect on Scotland of being part of the United Kingdom, and to suggest that monstrous political processes are at work, it also rather suggests that Scotland is necessarily deformed in some way. According to Gray's rather brutal logic, if Scotland is to be represented as a woman, she cannot be anything but deformed, intrinsically divided between Scottishness and Britishness.

Such a deformed body would be quite difficult to write into a work of fiction, but in the figure of Bella Baxter (Bella Caledonia) Gray is able to demonstrate the metaphorical distance between her head and her body without resorting to physical monstrosity. Godwin Baxter creates Bella by placing the brain of an infant within the body of an adult woman: this is what makes her monstrous, and able to incarnate the monstrous and deformed body of state. At the same time, Bella's external beauty masks a monstrous political reality, as does the traditionally accepted photogenic and attractive appearance of Scotland.

In *Poor Things*, Gray uses Bella to



Jain Gray

comment on the plight of a country which has lost touch with its sense of history. Early in the novel Bella envies a lady described as "a woman with a past", and realises that she herself will have to acquire "a lot of past fast" (*Poor Things*, p. 61). Her education, like that of Frankenstein's monster, is largely acquired in unorthodox ways, most particularly on her European tour. In the course of her travels Bella meets a Dostoevskyan Russian gambler who tells her that "people who care nothing for their country's stories and songs [...] are like people without a past – without a memory – they are half people". Bella, whose infant brain has no memory of her body's earlier life, immediately sees a personal parallel in this: "Imagine how that made me feel! But perhaps, like Russia, I am making up for lost time" (p. 116).

Just as Bella's mind is younger than her body, so Scotland's modern national consciousness is younger than the nation and the nation's cultural heritage. But the allegory also works for the state-nation dichotomy. The parliament of an independent Scotland would be much younger than its mother nation, since it has been interrupted for 300 years. The current devolved Scottish parliament is indeed in its infancy and has been transplanted into the body of a mature, post-industrial nation. The connotations of the baby's brain in the adult body are not entirely negative. Bella has an attractive innocence and a political idealism resulting from her lack of social conditioning. She becomes the first female doctor to graduate from Glasgow University, and opens a clinic run on socialist principles, although she is ridiculed by the press. Although the theme of monstrosity suggests political imperfections in Scotland, Bella is not the same kind of monster as the two-necked monster of *Why Scots Should Rule Scotland*. Her social conscience may be read as a potential future for Scotland. Monstrosity is translated into potential. Bella's infant brain may represent "the early days of a better nation" of Gray's recurrent slogan.

In *Poor Things* Gray takes a tradition of seeing Scotland as essentially divided and transforms its allegorical potential into something still monstrous yet potentially positive, reappropriating the celebratory approach to the Caledonian antiszygy found in Smith and MacDiarmid. The deformed body of Bella Caledonia need not be read negatively. Gray highlights the discourses of monstrosity in the cultural and literary construction of Scotland and proposes an allegorical body in which different constructions of Scotland can co-exist. He opens the door to new narratives of Scotland in which both Scotland and women can be theorised without being critically deformed in the process. ■

This is an edited extract from Kirsten Stirling's *Bella Caledonia: Woman, Nation, Text* (Rodopi 2008), with special thanks to the author.



France 1789
liberté
égalité
fraternité ...

Scotland 2014
liber tae
egali tae
fraterni tae



practical idealism

the Common Weal book
from www.allofusfirst.org





**1928 was the year we
won the full vote**

**Make 2014 the year
we vote to enhance
our rights and build
our futures**

