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GLASGOW

A History of the City

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Image: 'Great white hope'

THE OPENING ceremony for the new Glasgow School of Art took place on December 15, 1909. Presiding over it was Sir James Fleming, who for a quarter of a century had been chairman of the board of governors. Once a student at the school, he afterwards rose to be the city's main manufacturer of crockery. He made a fortune that allowed him to patronize a wide range of charities – a typical curriculum vitae for someone of the Glaswegian commercial elite. Another dignitary present was Sir John Stirling Maxwell, a scion of the older landed class, an even more eminent public figure with even wider artistic interests, including the superb collection of Spanish paintings he kept at his residence of Pollok House. Sir John moved a vote of thanks to the architect of the school, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, saying he 'had the real faculty of being able to adapt a building for the purpose for which it was really intended', the present example being 'a conspicuous success of that kind'.[1] Mackintosh expressed his thanks and on behalf of his firm, Honeyman & Keppie, presented Fleming with a jewelled silver casket containing a decorative signed scroll – probably of his own design, for it was in the style of the Viennese Secession, the avant-garde artistic movement

that counted him as one of its own, though it was otherwise little known in Glasgow.

The celebrations went on for three nights, centred around packed performances of a masque, *The Growth of Art*, put on by the director of the school, Francis Newbery. Glaswegians love to party, so we can assume they made these revels something to remember. Nobody seems to have paid any attention in London, but the events would have been noted among the circles of Mackintosh's friends and admirers in Paris or Vienna, in Brussels or Turin. There was a review in New York's modernist journal, *International Studio*:

> The architect… a former pupil, has impressed his strong individuality on the building. At the same time the evidences of care and thoughtfulness in adapting the various parts to their special purposes are many and striking. The system of lighting has been carefully considered, and a novel kind of window introduced. The studios are large and well planned, and every possible facility is provided for careful study. A special feature of the celebrations was the exhibition of work by eminent artists who studied formerly at the school, or who have been identified with its work.[2]

Glasgow was by now a city of European rank, in fact the continent's fourth biggest in terms of population, and could play its own part in international cultural developments.[3] Along with Barcelona, Hamburg, Paris, Prague, Riga or Vienna, it had become a powerhouse of Art Nouveau – the reaction against the academic art of the previous age, inspired instead by natural forms and structures. Glasgow's own input, the Glasgow Style, also arose from synthesis, of bourgeois enterprise and artisan respectability, of ostentatious sophistication and delicate naturalism. To other influences we must add a sense of this being an industrial community with aesthetic requirements of its own.

The city felt proud of the engineering feats it paraded before the world at international exhibitions in 1888 and 1901, then at a Scottish national exhibition in 1911. The concept of craft here meant skill and precision, different from the rival Edinburgh's blend of vernacular and manual. Both stood in contrast to England, where the leader of the Arts and Crafts movement, William Morris, called the Forth Bridge 'the supremest specimen of all ugliness'[4] – not a sentiment comprehensible in Scotland. Glasgow's wealth arose from metallurgy in its various applications, and Glasgow Style was pervaded by the possibilities of bending, puncturing, welding and moulding matter through art as well as science. The city fathers, with their fabulous riches now a century old, had the leisure and the level of cultivation to offer generous patronage. Yet, unlike the middle class of Edinburgh, which was dominated by the learned professions, the equivalent Glaswegians were even yet a precarious and volatile bunch who respected lucre, not lineage or land. Economic base determined cultural superstructure, and wealth needed to be shown off.[5]

For Mackintosh, the prime practitioner of Glasgow Style, the challenge was to clothe 'in grace and beauty the new forms and conditions that modern developments of life – social, commercial and religious – insist upon'.[6] At the School of Art he, a man of humble origin, one of a dozen children of a policeman at Townhead, had been able to cultivate his aesthetic sensibilities. Newbery took the student under his wing and sent him on a travelling scholarship to study the art and architecture of Italy. That connected Mackintosh to a classical tradition of European and of Scottish creativity that he was to transform in his own ways.

There had up till now been two main styles of architecture in Scotland. One was the Scottish vernacular, or baronial: picturesque yet at bottom utilitarian, inherited from the builders of medieval castles, but also to be found in other public buildings of olden times – tolbooths, townhouses, trades halls and the like. Glasgow

had contained plenty of this kind of architecture before it was swept away by the civic improvements of the nineteenth century. Even then it began to be replaced by modern imitations, put up in Saltmarket and High Street, as the centre of the city was rebuilt.[7]

The classical tradition took over. It had arrived in Scotland rather late by European standards. Not before the end of the seventeenth century did it put in an appearance thanks to William Bruce, the first Scot to make architecture his profession. His finest achievements were the restored Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh and the magnificent residence he erected for himself on the other side of the Firth of Forth, Kinross House by the shore of Loch Leven. Bruce spent his whole creative career in the east of Scotland, so far as we know. But at one stage, during his work on Hopetoun House in West Lothian from 1699 to 1703, he may have employed as a young apprentice William Adam, son of a family of stonemasons at Kirkcaldy. Adam grew up to be the second of Scotland's great classical architects, responsible for buildings in every region, country houses such as the House of Dun in Angus and Duff House in Banffshire, or public buildings such as Robert Gordon's Hospital in Aberdeen and the Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh (of which mere fragments remain). He worked his way west, too, to build the duke of Hamilton's hunting lodge of Chatelherault and the old parish church in the nearby burgh of Hamilton, even penetrating the Highlands with his plans to reconstruct Inveraray for the dukes of Argyll. Then he designed, within the modern boundaries of Glasgow, Pollok House for the Maxwells (though it is unclear how much of the original is preserved in the present mansion). He turned up at last inside the city itself, where in 1744 he erected the New Library for the university – which vanished, alas, with the rest of its beautiful buildings when the entire complex was demolished in 1870.[8]

It could, then, have been some personal connection with Glasgow's commercial elite that brought two big commissions

for the most renowned of Adam's three sons, Robert: the Royal Infirmary and a new Trades Hall, both built 1791–4. The Infirmary lasted a century, to be replaced by the present complex on the same site, but the Trades Hall survives to this day. It may not be Robert's greatest work but it is full of his characteristic motifs. It follows the Palladian formula imported into Scotland from the aristocratic mansions on the *terra firma* of the Republic of Venice, with a rusticated ground floor under a *piano nobile* and then an attic storey on top of that. It features several kinds of Adam's favoured 'movement' in the lines of the parapet, the deep-set Venetian windows and the projecting raised portico, with a central window flanked by pairs of Ionic columns. Here as elsewhere, he makes free play with the various classical elements rather than following any particular model from antiquity.[9]

After this accomplished start, classicism became the dominant style in Glasgow. Most other British cities preferred Victorian Gothic, and even Edinburgh has more of that than its western rival does. Glaswegian churches are something of an exception, following the ecclesiastical fad that started with ritualism in England and in Scotland produced an archaizing desire to link Presbyterianism, hitherto scornful of passing fashion, with medieval antecedents. But this trend did not pick up till later in the century, and earlier examples are rare: the Catholic Chapel (now Cathedral, 1814–7) of St Andrew by James Gillespie Graham and the Ramshorn Kirk (1824–6) by Thomas Rickman. Instead Glaswegians of all denominations worshipped in classical churches – at St Jude's Episcopal (1838–9), Elgin Place Congregational (1855–6), Trinity Duke Street United Presbyterian (1858), St George's-in-the-Fields (viz. Woodside) built by the Church of Scotland in 1885–6. Later, a more Italianate local version of the original classicism developed, much as in Italy itself, because Glaswegians also liked to lighten the Latin austerity: it is to this we owe the John Street United Presbyterian Church (1858–60), but above all the magnificent

culmination of the City Chambers. The most imposing example of all, Kelvin Hall, is no longer with us because it burned down in 1927. Yet on the whole for such a show-off city, Glaswegian classicism remained chaste.[10]

Glaswegian classicism had suffered, however, one real violation. In 1868, Edward, prince of Wales, and his wife Princess Alexandra of Denmark came to the city to lay the foundation stone for its new university.[11] This was to stand on Gilmorehill, a drumlin or small hill among several others dotting the landscape to the west. Each assumed the shape of a shallow cone, and on this particular drumlin a thousand labourers had been employed for a year removing earth to flatten the top ready for the university's buildings. As soon as the prince had performed his own duty, the builders would be able to make a start.

The city marked the royal visit with a holiday, and conferred its freedom on the prince and princess. They then drove west cheered by huge crowds. About 20,000 people had gathered on Gilmorehill itself, a multitude 'so great as to be, to a certain extent, beyond control'. Stands erected for the occasion sagged under the weight of spectators crowding on to them; those who had paid for seats found many already taken by 'boys, servants, workmen about the place and so on'. Still, the actual ceremony went off without a hitch. The lord provost, James Lumsden, gave a lunch for the royal couple. They left straight afterwards, though not without handing over 100 guineas as a contribution to the construction; later Queen Victoria would send £500. That evening the corporation of Glasgow held a civic banquet where the guest of honour was the principal of the university, the Revd Thomas Barclay, a Shetlander by birth whose long beard made him look, so his students said, like the reformer John Knox.[12]

It would still be a couple of years before the first classes could be held amid the wide open spaces of Gilmorehill. Meanwhile the university needed to carry on regardless at its cramped original

site on the High Street. The buildings here, two centuries old, were exquisite examples of native Scottish architecture that had developed, under the influence of the Auld Alliance, out of French styles adapted to a cold climate. But by now this quarter of the city, once picturesque and charming, was a slum. Rich people had abandoned it for salubrious residences on the surrounding drumlins, leaving the poor behind them. The general council of the university minuted that it was 'one of the last places in the city which one would now propose for professors to reside in, or for students to frequent'. The site posed a moral and an economic hazard, because 'owing to the progress of the city westwards, the present buildings are no longer conveniently situated for those classes of society in Glasgow which are most interested in the university'. The move to Gilmorehill would 'bring university education more generally within the reach of those citizens who are in the best condition and circumstances to avail themselves of it'.[13]

In 1870 the new building on Gilmorehill at last opened. Even so, it was not quite ready and would need another two years before it was finally completed. No matter, the moment had come for the move from the High Street. On April 29 that year's session closed and the students met in the common hall of the college to take their leave. On July 29, the senate convened there for the last time. It would next day hand over possession to a railway company intent on clearing the site for a goods yard. The entire library was shifted to its new home without the loss of a single book. The removal men took more interest in the silver – a fine, antique collection built up over centuries, since it was the custom for graduates to donate a piece to their *alma mater*. Somehow, along the three miles from the High Street to Gilmorehill, this collection vanished except for one loving cup, two tassies and three candlesticks.[14]

It was by contemporary standards a gigantic edifice waiting out on Gilmorehill to be filled with the academic paraphernalia. Its length of 540 feet, with tower and spire 100 feet high, made it the

largest public structure erected in Britain since the completion of the new Houses of Parliament at Westminster ten years earlier. Like them it was built in Gothic style, putting a certain stamp on the urban environs. Even today it dominates all views of the western side of Glasgow. We have got used to it now, but at the time many thought it an unhappy addition to the architecture of Scotland's biggest city.[15]

Vehement protests had arisen against the destruction of the college in the High Street. The reason for this act of vandalism was supposed to have been that in strict financial terms it would be difficult to do anything else. The university had not enough money to restore the original fabric, and the one way it could realize funds was to sell up and build on a new site. Still, the official excuse did not account for the course matters then took. The university had appointed a building committee that came to be dominated by Allen Thomson, professor of anatomy. He was a skilled chairman, but he also wished to make his number in academic circles in London (where he would soon move). In architectural terms he cultivated a special interest in the Gothic revival – itself all the rage in London, as we still see in the Houses of Parliament, Foreign Office and other novelties of the period. The architect of the Foreign Office was George Gilbert Scott. Thomson wanted him for the University of Glasgow too. Before any decision on a new design there was supposed to be a competition. Thomson sidestepped the prescribed procedure and offered the commission straight to Scott. The architect would later explain his work in these terms: 'I adopted a style which I may call my own invention… It is simply a thirteenth-century or fourteenth-century secular style with the addition of certain Scottish features peculiar in that country to the sixteenth century, though in reality derived from the French style of the thirteenth and fourteenth century.'[16]

In Glasgow and elsewhere there were those who still thought the style alien and phoney. Scotland possessed Gothic buildings

of its own, genuine ones dating from the Middle Ages. But nothing of note had been built in this style after Parliament House in Edinburgh during the 1630s. Architectural innovation went on, with the native tradition developing into the baronial style that would be given a modern impetus by, above all, Queen Victoria's rebuilding of Balmoral. Meanwhile, prestigious new construction tended to reflect the impress on the national culture of its philosophical concerns with individual and civic virtue, in the classical style recalling the country's intellectual debt to the ancient world. This could be seen in the cities and right round the country, in great structures and in humble ones.[17]

The same was true of churches – for even Scottish religion had turned rational, at its higher levels anyway. By the Presbyterian way of thinking there could be nothing to associate religion especially with the Gothic style, as in the minds of the English architectural gurus of the age, John Ruskin, Augustus Pugin and George Gilbert Scott himself. They held the Gothic style to be uniquely Christian, indeed Catholic: Scott was born a Catholic, Pugin converted and Ruskin was tempted. Scots did not share this outlook. They had since the Reformation built kirks in various styles, the main requirement being the adaptation of the historic types of structure to Presbyterian worship, focussed on pulpit rather than altar. In the west of Scotland examples existed from the sixteenth century in the Old West Kirk at Greenock, from the seventeenth century at Fenwick, from the eighteenth century at Killin.[18] By the turn of the nineteenth century Scots were putting up places of worship that followed the forms of Greek Revival too. For Glasgow, this would continue longer than elsewhere with the work of Alexander 'Greek' Thomson in the form of the three churches he built for his own United Presbyterian sect, in St Vincent Street, Caledonia Road and Queen's Park. Only the first remains intact; the second is a ruin and a German bomb destroyed the third in 1943.

Academic requirements are different from religious ones, but it

comes as no surprise that Thomson felt incensed at what arose on Gilmorehill. He took it as an insult to the city's own architects that an ancient Scottish university had turned its back on enlightened Scotland to ape the medievalism of Oxford and Cambridge. He unburdened himself to the Glasgow Architectural Society in a lecture 'On the Unsuitableness of Gothic Architecture to Modern Circumstances'. In particular he dismissed the idea of the Gothic style being uniquely Christian: 'This might have some weight in the Romish Church, but to Protestants of any sort, and more particularly Presbyterians, and still more particularly Presbyterian dissenters, the argument seems very absurd, for what has the philosophic Christianity of the Reformation to do with the sensuous ritual of the middle ages? The architecture, which was a consistent part of the latter, is diametrically opposed to the former.'[19] Lest he be suspected of Glaswegian parochialism, he went on to draw some comparisons with recent developments in the classical capital: 'Donaldson's Hospital in Edinburgh, of which great things were expected, fails to excite even a passing remark; while the High School, the fragments of the National Monument, Dugald Stewart's Monument, the Surgeons' Hall, and the Institution on the Mound, continue to illuminate their respective localities with the light of truth and beauty, giving to our northern metropolis an air of refinement which no other city in the kingdom possesses.' Thomson dismissed Scott's claim that he had employed a native style in Glasgow's new university: 'For all that remains of Scottish architecture in the new design, it might as well have been left out altogether.'[20] On the contrary, Scotland's architectural tradition had been betrayed, in predictable consequence of denying any local practitioner the chance to design one of the most important public buildings likely to be put up in Glasgow during the nineteenth century. Even if classicism was to be spurned – absurdly – as not learned and academic enough, it should have been possible to build something in the alternative Scottish Baronial style.

Though the University of Glasgow lacked cultural confidence in its architectural choices, this could not be said of the Victorian city as a whole. Greek Thomson's work was central to it.[21] In a Britain now given over in its building practice to Gothic gargoyles or bombastic battlements, he protected Glasgow from tasteless excess. His was not a classicism preserved in aspic, still less as slavish imitation: he embellished the basic style with elements alien to it in any purist sense, though always harmoniously blended into it. He realized that a genre now two millennia old, and represented everywhere from Philadelphia to Bombay, could lend itself to infinite variation. All he had to do was make sure that in Glasgow it reflected the character and tradition of the city.

For this boomtown Thomson designed every type of building, decorated by an encyclopaedic diversity of classical and pre-classical motifs. He laid out whole suburbs at Langside and Regent's Park, where he himself lived. He created grand terraces along the Great Western Road and gave them majestic interiors. He planned a huge tenement in Eglinton Street and lesser ones elsewhere. He built individual dwellings in the form of suburban villas, the Knowe at Pollokshields or Holmwood House at Cathcart, today run by the National Trust for Scotland as a memorial to the man and his work. This work reached its climax in his three United Presbyterian churches. They adapted a classical idiom to demanding sites, sloped or otherwise irregular. Out of the challenges there emerged not just Greek Revival but, more to the point, controlled compositions balancing diverse geometric masses. It was an achievement novel and modern, unlike anything else built in this era. The huge elongated dome at Queen's Park offered the most striking feature of all; its loss is a great tragedy. And while creating these extraordinary structures, Thomson felt happy to furnish an industrial city with the workaday edifices also necessary to it: offices and warehouses such as the Grosvenor Building, Grecian Buildings, Egyptian Halls and Buck's Head.[22]

Thomson was not a lonely genius, but exerted a deep effect on his city. He showed it how to channel its wealth into modern architecture monumental in its Graecism yet lightened by exotic elements – Egyptian, Romanesque, Persian, Indian. The mixing of genres was what made him Romantic as well as classical. In other hands the transition might have faltered and dissolved into a jumble of alien, eccentric and unreadable features. But he could accomplish with aplomb the abstracting shift from classical theme to Romantic variation. And his whole oeuvre showed there might be historical inspiration even in the task of building for an industrial society – by erecting not mock temples and mausolea, and not only churches either, but also bourgeois villas, proletarian tenements and commercial premises.[23]

With so much of Victorian Glasgow gone,[24] it is hard to see now how Thomson shaped the city in its heyday – including the influence he still exerted after his death in 1876. It is seen at its best round Queen's Park, where the partner in his practice, Robert Turnbull, carried on working for a further quarter of a century.[25] Though Glasgow underwent protean change, there remained a civic coherence, vigorous elegance and spontaneous order in its evolution, often swanky with swagger, even bombast. It all added up to more than the inchoate mass of similar industrial conurbations. The journal, *British Architect,* wrote of Thomson in 1888: 'The strong influence of his work is apparent in nearly all Glasgow architecture, giving to it – the city – a character unique among the large cities of this country.'[26] While he was trained in Glasgow and seldom left it, he saw himself as a European rather than Scottish architect. He was homebred but outward-looking, just as he was classical but Romantic. Inventive and theatrical, steeped in cosmopolitan history and inspired by evangelical religion, he brought exotic allure and cultural distinction to Victorian Glasgow's wet, grimy streets.[27]

Glasgow was now a big city yet it still, like the other Scottish cities, in some respects retained the character of a small town. Thomson

would not have got as far as he did without cordial contacts among the urban establishment, in particular with the Blackie family whose eminence was as much political as commercial. We have already noted that Thomson built and decorated lord provost John Blackie's own house at 7 Great Western Terrace. He also designed the firm's printing works in Stanhope Street (demolished in 1967). In return Blackie published a number of Thomson's plans in his compendium of *Villa and Cottage Architecture* (1867), intended as a handbook for all those about to transform British landscapes with sprawling suburbs. Blackie's son Robert, who acted as art director for the firm, together with his successor Talwin Morris, figured among the first in Glasgow to recognize the developing genius of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, and to use his designs in their production. It was for another of the clan, Walter Blackie, that Mackintosh built his most striking example of domestic architecture, Hill House at Helensburgh.[28]

While a student, Mackintosh won the travelling scholarship Thomson endowed in his will. After his return from Italy the young man exhibited his own watercolours in a student show. Its judge was the portraitist, James Guthrie; when told some drawings were by an architect, he turned to Newbery and said, 'This man ought to be an artist' [that is, a painter].[29] Mackintosh would carry on painting right through his life and at the end return to it as his main preoccupation. He and his wife Margaret, with their in-laws, Herbert and Frances McNair, formed a clique known as The Four or, in jest, the Spook School, with reference to their use (in various genres) of mystifying symbolist motifs. A case in point was the posters Mackintosh drew for the *Scottish Musical Review*, quite shocking to the taste of the time. The magazine *The Studio* leaped to their defence but had to admit 'Mr Mackintosh's posters may be somewhat trying to the average person'.[30] Since it was hard to make a living as an artist, he went from the architectural classroom to join the practitioners, Honeyman & Keppie. He had also learned,

like many young Glaswegians, to drink and smoke too much. That did not stop him working: on the contrary, he would stay up all night at his firm's offices refining his plans, emptying a bottle of whisky as he did so.

Mackintosh could not be called a classical architect, though he had the inherent discipline of classicism. His early work showed some sympathy for it, but he soon turned away to follow the seductive lines, the exotic forms and sinuous elegance of Art Nouveau. Little that was visible then remained of any aesthetic influence Thomson might have exerted on him. Leaving the classical rules behind him, Mackintosh carved out a new sphere for himself. This explains why, though architecture is the most public of all the arts, in Mackintosh's hands Glasgow Style often achieved its most authentic expressions in the private sphere. He left a fine example with the interior of his own house in Southpark Avenue at Hillhead, which he recast after moving there in 1906. Demolished in 1963 by the university, it was reconstructed within the Hunterian Art Gallery.[31] We need to look outside the city for houses Mackintosh built entire. He found at Kilmacolm in Renfrewshire a patron, the merchant William Davidson, who in 1900 gave him his first chance to create both interior and exterior of a complete building, Windyhill. He and Margaret designed the furniture, fireplaces, panelling, glass, lighting, decoration, even the storage, where they brought their designers' skills to bear on built-in cupboards. Then in 1902 the publisher Walter Blackie commissioned from Mackintosh a new home overlooking Helensburgh down the River Clyde. On the outside, Hill House was modernized Scottish Baronial, with harled bartizan and steep gable, reminding us how Mackintosh admired this national style so different from his own – he had for it, he said, an 'instinctive affection'.[32] Yet on the inside all was Art Nouveau enhanced by *Japonisme*. Attention to detail even extended to prescribing the colour of cut flowers the Blackies might place on a table in the living room, so as not to clash with the décor.

Just as dazzlingly domestic were the tea rooms Mackintosh created for another generous patron, Catherine Cranston. They became a Glaswegian institution, spots in a male chauvinist city for women to get away from husbands or fathers. The Glasgow Art Club, for which Mackintosh signed off the drawings, offered a sort of equivalent to the more aesthetic type (rather rare) of Glaswegian male. For the real men of the city's hard school of journalism, he designed the old office of the *Herald* in Mitchell Street with its dramatic water-tower, now a centre for design and architecture. He also projected the printing works of the *Daily Record*, almost hidden off Hope Street between Renfield Lane and St Vincent Lane.[33]

Mackintosh got a different opportunity with his commission for a church at Queen's Cross – a small site by the junction of Garscube Road and Maryhill Road in a proletarian quarter. There appeared nothing much avant-garde about the building from the outside. The congregation was of the Free Church, and wanted a plain place of worship. It consented to a dominating window that was Gothic in inspiration, but this allowed Mackintosh the chance to work in a big floral motif. He could then do more of what he wanted with the pulpit, galleries and communion table, in discreet supplement to Presbyterian sobriety. The church with its distinctive massing more than holds its own in a row of tenements, confronted as it is today with modern tat. In the elements there is profusion but no confusion: the faithful reflection of the interior in the exterior is one thing that makes Mackintosh an heir of Greek Thomson.[34]

The rest of Mackintosh's personal legacy lay in educational buildings. He designed two schools, one the Martyrs' School at Townhead (in the street where he grew up), the other at Scotland Street in Govan. Local school boards had simple and obvious requirements for classrooms, a hall and so on, and the marvel is to see how he worked with them to flood the buildings with light, then to decorate them in Art Nouveau on doorways, ironwork and woodwork. Both need to be imagined in their original environment

of close-packed tenements, all vanished today to leave the Martyrs' School on its own with an adjacent church and backdrop of New Brutalism – though at Scotland Street this isolation perhaps even enhances the view of the school's glittering towers from the nearby motorway. The third example was Mackintosh's masterpiece, Glasgow School of Art on Garnethill. His firm won the contest to design it in 1897. It was built in two stages, the first in fluid Art Nouveau, the second in 1907– 9 in purer geometric forms, heralding the European Secession movement. The design is eclectic in a second and typical sense, for the straightforward, rational shape of the whole forms the setting for an infinity of internal adornment in timber, stone, iron, tiles, glass – at its finest in the library, with its air of a medieval scriptorium for all its unmistakable modernism.[35]

Now that Mackintosh has grown famous and his style familiar, it becomes possible to identify further works in which he seems to have taken a hand even though the collective practice of his firm kept his contribution anonymous. His output at any rate always differed in appearance from that of the senior partner he reported to, John Keppie, who favoured the more ornamental 'beaux-arts' style.[36] For example, to Mackintosh are now ascribed, on account of their asymmetry, the medical hall at Queen Margaret College and the Ruchill Free Church Halls. Mackintosh besides left designs never realized in his own time, from which some modern buildings have been derived – the 'Artist's Cottage and Studio' at Farr in Inverness-shire and the 'House for an Art Lover' in Bellahouston Park, Glasgow.

In 1913 Mackintosh quit Honeyman & Keppie to set up his own architectural practice. But this perfectionist insisted on controlling every project down to the tiniest detail, and found it hard to obtain work. In 1915 he and Margaret left Glasgow for Suffolk in England, where he was arrested as a German spy because local yokels could not place his thick accent.[37] Still prosperity eluded the couple, till in 1923 they abandoned architecture and moved to France to devote

themselves to painting. They stayed two years before Mackintosh's worsening health forced a return to London. In 1928 he died at the age of sixty from cancer of the throat. He had had his hours of triumph, but the difference between his career and those of Robert Adam a century before, or of Alexander 'Greek' Thomson in an older generation, was that his genius won little recognition in his own nation in his own time. Yet he put Scotland at the forefront of the architectural avant-garde. It was an extraordinary achievement in a nation with no state and so no official patronage of the most public of arts: not that his work would have appealed much to the average politician or civil servant.

So much grew clear as, with the transition from patrician to plebeian urban government in Glasgow, public regulation took over from private enterprise as the main determinant of its architectural style or styles. It is true that, in the centre of the city, the period up to 1939 saw a new generation of monumental commercial buildings modelled on the neo-classicism of the United States (another country where the tradition had continued to flourish and develop).[38] But the suburbs grew apace, not least because of the explosion in council housing. After 1945, the huge peripheral schemes started going up. Pollok, Easterhouse, Castlemilk and Drumchapel grew from a plan for independent satellite townships with a mixture of housing and amenities arranged in neighbourhoods on the pattern of the contemporary New Towns, to which they were intended as an alternative. But the city never had enough money to finish the job. People who moved out from the centre felt lost amid the low-density, semi-rural housing. In the amorphous schemes the schools and the churches (in pairs for Protestant and Catholic) were often the sole buildings that identified individual neighbourhoods. Since other facilities did not materialize, the monotonous tenement blocks seemed desolate. Nor did things improve when the city's high-rise blocks, more than 100 of them at one time or another, added vertical to horizontal isolation.

Then from 1979 housing policy shifted once more in favour of the private sector. In the centre of the city dozens of redundant warehouses were turned into apartments. Otherwise there was no improvement on the housing scene. Scattered round Glasgow, estates now stand of small houses of a sort to be found in any town and village in Britain, built meanly in brick rather than in the red sandstone of local tradition. Interspersed are blocks of flats clearly not belonging to the public sector – like those visible from Kingston Bridge – but still in a different way unsightly. None has any feeling for siting or for Glasgow's particular character.[39]

The city was so well furnished with public buildings from the nineteenth century that few new ones proved necessary for the twentieth century. One was the Sheriff Court (1986), designed by Keppie, Henderson & Partners, a descendant of Mackintosh's old firm. Here they pallidly recalled his legacy in internal chequered screens supposed to have been inspired by him, though overborne by a 'dumb monumentalism' achieved at 'vast cost'.[40] Then there was the extensive gallery in Pollok Park built to house the Burrell Collection (1983), the eclectic assemblage of 8,000 objects bequeathed to the city by Sir William Burrell in 1944, on condition of their being given a home of their own. The 'low and rather wandering building largely of glass, stainless steel and smooth pink stone from Dumfriesshire' is by Barry Gasson.[41] Finally the Royal Concert Hall (1987), closing the upper end of Buchanan Street, represents the work of Leslie Martin, who long before had designed the Royal Festival Hall in London (1951). It seems obvious the two are from the same hand.[42]

Though by the turn of the twenty-first century Glasgow had fresh cultural aspirations, architecturally they needed to be fulfilled from outside Scotland. This was true, in particular, of three striking buildings that arose along the now-deserted banks of the Clyde below the centre of the city. One was the Armadillo, or Clyde Auditorium, designed by Norman Foster in his characteristic

materials of steel and glass. An undistinguished Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre already stood by the site, and the auditorium, with 3,000 seats, was intended to increase its capacity. It opened in 1997, at once acquiring its nickname. Comparisons have been made with the Sydney Opera House – though we are assured this was not the architect's inspiration, which came rather from the abstract concept of an interlocking series of ship's hulls, in reference to the local maritime heritage.[43]

On the opposite bank lay Pacific Quay, which as dockland had been left high and dry by the onset of containerization. The media were attracted to this accessible site, above all BBC Scotland, which had been occupying a jumble of buildings in the West End since before the Second World War. At the quay it engaged the English architect, David Chipperfield, to build a brand-new headquarters. His exterior, a steel cube, did not win universal admiration, but his interior was stunning. Resembling a Tuscan hill-town or an Assyrian ziggurat, it might have dwarfed spectators with its implied corporate power, yet it also beckoned them into the creative spaces of its various open plans (in sharp contrast to the warrens of most broadcasting buildings). The bad news came in 2004 when the BBC, chanting the mantra 'on time and on budget', booted Chipperfield off the project halfway through, and to finish the job hired Keppie Design (a further generation of Mackintosh's firm). Glasgow has treated too many architects, famous or not, in a cavalier fashion. Here was an egregious example, but Chipperfield took it with admirable composure.[44]

Back on the northern bank, the Riverside Museum arose in 2011. The architect, Zaha Hadid, had won her international reputation by liberating her art in expressive, sweeping, fluid forms that offer multiple points of perspective and evoke in a fragmented geometry the chaos and flux of modern life. The museum is a good example, contrasting the line of the roof with its jagged range of peaks and troughs (like a distant view of the Highlands from the same spot)

with the space beneath in the form of a Z-shaped tube, one end invisible from the other. It is purpose-built for the city's collection of transport, previously housed at Kelvin Hall. It stands on the site of a former shipyard next to the confluence with the River Kelvin, so that a Victorian clipper can also be exhibited on the water alongside. But its layout can disconcert visitors who also complain that many of the vehicles on display are mounted on platforms at too great a height to be inspected; car buffs recall how in Kelvin Hall the exhibits were set out at ground level, allowing visitors to look inside and admire the polished antique dashboards or gleaming gear-levers. While the museum adds distinction to Glasgow, it is achieved by connecting to international developments in architecture rather than by rekindling a local creative spirit. There is value in doing so, but in the end Glaswegians would be better finding once again for themselves a place at the forefront of architectural modernity.[45]

It was through Glasgow's overseas links that the second great genre of the visual arts, painting, had started to flourish here during the Enlightenment, in that the merchant elite became the main source of the necessary patronage. Edinburgh, it would be fair to say, remained the capital of the nation in the arts as in other things. But there the three great painters who formed the core of the Scottish classical school, Alexander Nasmyth, Henry Raeburn and David Wilkie, found no successors of equal quality. Instead, after the foundation of the Royal Scottish Academy in 1826, the local artistic scene tended to get bogged down in the sort of institutional squabbles typical of the place. While its painters bickered among themselves about whose pictures should be accepted for exhibition and how high they should be hung, artists from other parts of the country had little chance of a look in. Those in Glasgow grew so exasperated at being ignored that they agreed among themselves to spurn the Royal Academy. These were the Glasgow Boys. Their city would not possess a purpose-built public gallery of its own till

Kelvingrove was erected in 1897–1901. Meanwhile the McLellan Galleries in Sauchiehall Street, put up by a rich merchant to house his own collection of paintings and bought by the corporation of Glasgow in 1856, had to serve.[46]

The Glasgow Boys forged ahead, painting in styles different from the academic production Edinburgh had sunk into. If they hardly added up to a distinct school by themselves, they did operate as a group in the sense of influencing and supporting one another. They were all friends and took working holidays together. They would fan out from Glasgow, to the Borders or indeed to the east of Scotland, where they seemed to find a greater wealth of scenes they wanted to paint. With them, formal portraits, ideal landscapes and historical scenes gave way to realism and naturalism, not limited by any requirement of decorum or dignity in the subjects. The Boys captured many facets of Scotland never painted before. It helped that they worked in the open air: the people they painted were real people in real places, not models in galleries. And the Boys opened themselves to the rest of the world. They embraced change and they created modern art in Scotland.[47]

Many of their paintings have become as familiar as the works of the preceding classical period. James Guthrie's large, sombre canvas of a *Funeral Service in the Highlands* sets a scene that would have been foreign to Lowlanders at the time and is no longer to be witnessed at all today, while his *Hind's Daughter* captures, in a little girl at the menial task of harvesting cabbages, a kind of self-confident dignity. W.Y. Macgregor's best-known work is his *Vegetable Stall*, but his townscapes repay attention: they make Crail or Melrose or Oban or Stirling look as if they were somewhere in *la France profonde*. E.A. Walton (brother of the George Henry Walton who worked with Mackintosh) does the same for Helensburgh, David Coventry for Highland fishing villages. In contrast, *The Druids Bringing Home the Mistletoe*, by George Henry and E.A. Hornel, carries the viewer far away in time, as is emphasized by

a canvas gorgeous with polychrome and gold; later they would carry him far away in space too, when they went to the Far East and fostered the minor Scottish school of *Japonisme,* something to which Arthur Melville later contributed. Of all the Glasgow Boys, John Lavery comes closest to the French impressionists: the mood of *The Tennis Party* is summed up by an elegant young man in plus-fours leaning on a fence and smoking his pipe, while sunlight dapples the lawn. Can this be Newlands? But Lavery did not dally in Glasgow. He was commissioned to portray Queen Victoria when she came to visit the international exhibition of 1888. This launched his career as a painter to high society, and he moved to London soon afterwards.[48]

It is surprising that the potential pictorial drama of industrial Clydeside appeared to leave all these painters cold. If they were the Glasgow Boys, where might we find their images of Glasgow? It was a matter of their city allowing and impelling them to be what they were, rather than giving them subject matter to paint. For a start, only Glaswegian wealth made their work possible. One or two had a merchant or a shipbuilder for a father, and so the means and confidence to pursue their artistic careers. For the rest, the local opulence created a market for paintings, and a discerning one. Captains of industry could invest their fortunes in them, as they did in the international market for art just when it began to develop. The shipping magnate Sir William Burrell became the most memorable example after donating to the city of Glasgow his vast collection, including works by Cézanne, Degas and Rodin, now housed in the gallery named after him. Against such competition the Glasgow Boys were put on their mettle, but they rewarded the patronage that came their way.[49]

For striking images of industry on Clydeside we need to look to a later generation, one which at last found in this aspect of Glasgow not just drama and interest but even a kind of beauty. In the years before the First World War, the vigorous etchings of Muirhead

Bone conveyed the awesome complexity of it all, and the dwarfing of the individual in the vast productive hive that yet furnished matter for common achievement and pride. Bone, like Mackintosh, studied at Glasgow School of Art and served an apprenticeship in an architectural office, but in his case his draughtsmanship became more or less the same as his etching. Much more than any Glasgow Boy he was the chronicler of the city. In him the austerity of black and white proved good not just for recording architecture but also for capturing the mood of a community defined by its labour.[50]

Yet it was colour, rather than black and white, that in the same period started to distinguish the nation's painting above all. A new generation of artists rejected the Victorian cultural legacy – the nostalgic sentimentality of the kailyard in writers like J.M. Barrie and its visual counterpart in the paintings of 'cabbage patch and cottar' by Guthrie and Hornel. In contrast, they wanted their native art to engage with a wider world, especially with the concerns of international modernism. The group that came to be known as the Scottish Colourists would often have been found in Paris during the years before 1914 – they were young men still defining themselves as painters and perfecting their technique in the city where all the world's aspiring artists came for example and inspiration. Here art was ceasing to be earthbound, as it threw off the shackles of classicism or indeed of realism and naturalism to engage with the new subjects and forms of expression.[51]

Painters went on to explore and extend the inherent qualities of discrete elements in their art. This is what the Scots did with colour, and so made a promising start to the nation's painting of the twentieth century. Perhaps it was coming from such a cold, gloomy country that prompted them to concentrate on that, to subvert the classical use of tone and texture in portrait and landscape, then to react into a blaze of brightness.[52]

The Colourists count as a national school, yet two of them, John Duncan Fergusson and Leslie Hunter, had close links with Glasgow

and the west of Scotland. Fergusson was the most public face and voice of the group: 'Everyone in Scotland should refuse to have anything to do with black or dirty and dingy colours, and insist on clean colours in everything. I remember when I was young any colour was considered a sign of vulgarity. Greys and blacks were the only colours for people of taste and refinement... Well! let's forget it, and insist on things in Scotland being of colour that makes for and associates itself with light, hopefulness, health and happiness.'[53] His wife Margaret pioneered modern dance in Scotland, and his exuberant canvas of *Les Eus* is a testimony to them both. Hunter had done the shrewd thing for a youngster in Paris by getting to know Alice Toklas and Gertrude Stein – though then they shocked him by introducing him to the painting of Matisse.[54] Considering what Matisse was achieving at the time with his *Portrait de Madame Matisse* or his *Nu Bleu, souvenir de Biskra,* let alone what Picasso was achieving in his Blue Period and his Rose Period, the Scottish Colourists indeed remained a trifle tame.[55] If they could be confident and vibrant in the use of strong colour, it was still a rather timid range of subjects they chose compared to their French and other continental counterparts – insular landscapes, domestic interiors, fashionable models. And they never ventured into the seamy side of life, as the Parisian impressionists had once been happy to do: no can-can, no absinthe here.

But once home again, the Colourists showed that what they had learned in the paradisal, pre-war Paris might be adapted to a distinctive Scottish idiom. Indeed they transformed the national pictorial traditions. Each in his own style, they redefined the qualities of light and colour in one medium and another. In Scotland, alas, this was by no means a recipe for instant popularity and success. They could not count on much of a sympathetic public to encourage them and buy their paintings, so it was hard for them to earn a living. All the same we can appreciate, a century later, how they renewed the art of their country and

made a contribution to the continued autonomy of its figurative achievement.[56] They saw themselves as modern European painters, yet their example of dedication and independence helped the succeeding generations in Scotland to find a way forward in a new world of art without signposts, where it was possible to journey in almost any direction.[57]

The steady material development of the Victorian era fell victim after the First World War to recurrent depression. But it brought a cultural reaction in the shape of the Scottish Renaissance, founded on a feeling that the decline of the nation and its assimilation to the larger United Kingdom had gone on for too long and at too high a price, symbolized by the terrible sacrifices on the battlefields of Europe. Scotland needed to change course, then. Amid the exhaustion of the people, their society and their economy, some necessary impetus might arise from creative spirits. In the event the Renaissance was first and foremost a literary and political movement, bringing a Scottish vernacular voice to the universal concerns of modernism. But it also had an artistic side.[58]

On a personal level, the man today reckoned the leader of the Renaissance, the poet Hugh MacDiarmid, venerated the teacher who had recognized his talents while still a schoolboy at Langholm in Dumfriesshire, F.G. Scott. They met again after the war, and Scott introduced MacDiarmid to the painter William McCance, a graduate of Glasgow School of Art who practised a bold post-impressionism. They shared a belief in their nation, and McCance persuaded MacDiarmid that this belief might be manifested in its art, too. It should no longer be art for a land of the mountain and the flood, but also embrace and align itself with modern movements in Europe – cubist, abstract, mechanistic and so on. Scottish art might then take its place in the vanguard, while in a progressive modern culture developing interests of its own.[59]

MacDiarmid was at this stage of his life a non-stop scribbler, while McCance would during much of his career depend for income

on his work as a critic, so the pair of them were ready and eager for intellectual exchange or collaboration. Writing about McCance in 1925 in the *Scottish Educational Journal*, MacDiarmid said they both felt impressed with the 'necessity of coming to terms with the third factor, the Machine, and no longer confining ourselves to the overpast condition of affairs in which only two factors had to be reckoned with, Man and Nature'. The post-war Renaissance in Scotland would entail at once an 'alignment with ultramodern tendencies manifesting themselves internationally' and an 'accord with fundamental elements of distinctive Scottish psychology'. In an acid aside, he conceded that for the time being the cleft between these two aspects remained too wide: 'Let us no longer alienate our engineers from art. Let us advise our sentimentalists in art to migrate to spiritualism or let us equip an expedition for them to explore the possibilities of the Celtic Twilight… let them give up cumbersome paint and canvas and take to photographing fairies on an uninhabited island.'[60] Yet, while England and even France now had decadent cultures, Scotland was poised for renewal, which could indeed start from the huge part played in national life by heavy engineering, in anything from the Forth Bridge to shipbuilding on the Clyde. These feats of technology were the modern works of Scottish art. They promised a culture from which sentimentality was banned while art and science worked in harmony. McCance did not ramble on at MacDiarmid's length, but in essentials he agreed. He voiced similar propositions in an essay, 'The Idea in Art', published in 1930:

> In my opinion Scotland is the great white hope of European art… When the Scot can purge himself of the illusion that art is reserved for the sentimentalist and realise that he, the Scot, has a natural gift for construction, combined with a racial aptitude for metaphysical thought and a deep emotional nature, then out of this combination can arise an art which

> will be pregnant with Idea and will have within it the seeds of greatness. Beside the awareness of this potentiality, however, the Scot must break through his narrow provincial barriers and gain a knowledge of what is actually taking place in the world.[61]

Fergusson at length also came to join this cultural constellation, but it took till the 1940s for him and MacDiarmid to collaborate on the journal *Scottish Art and Letters.* MacDiarmid also wrote a long essay, *Aesthetics in Scotland,* which owed a great deal to Fergusson (completed in 1950, it did not get published till 1981, once Alan Bold discovered it in the poet's papers after his death). Again, it showed both artists sharing some significant attitudes. In particular, they held the great ships of the Clyde to be products of skill in the dignity of co-operative labour, the modernist equivalent of a medieval cathedral as the collective artwork of anonymous craftsmen.[62]

The way things had stood by the First World War, the best Scotland could show in the way of modern painting was the work of the Glasgow Boys. But Fergusson felt forced to the conclusion that they finally failed the test of their times, fading out as a force in Scottish art because they never surmounted the academic conservatism ruling the roost at home. The task for a younger generation was not just to emulate the scene in Paris but also to inspire fresh artistic achievement in Scotland. A love of colour and its skilful manipulation remained with Fergusson for the rest of his life, as did the use of rhythmic line he absorbed from his wife Margaret Morris as a pioneer of modern dance. But he was something more than a Colourist, too. He came to share modernist concerns found right across Europe, especially the need to get on terms with the mechanistic civilization in which contemporary art had to function. He gave evidence of this in his *Damaged Destroyer* (1918), housed today at Kelvingrove, half industrial scene, half geometric abstraction. He later summed up his endeavour: 'The modern movement in art was an attempt to

get down to truths, to fundamentals, and start afresh to create a free art, or an art freed from the academic imbecilities which at that time dominated the world.'[63]

Fergusson resumed his contacts with the European avant-garde once he returned to France after 1918. This was where he would spend most time for the next two decades, often clad in just a dookie on the Côte d'Azur. He said he 'decided to persist in being what I considered an artist, and a Scots artist, and the art atmosphere and the painting I was surrounded with in Scotland, in my opinion, were not Scots at all'. Scottish art now had tasks beyond the traditional landscapes and portraits: 'The new goal for the modern artist was to find ways of expressing the interior life.'[64] While pursuing this programme in France, Fergusson also returned home from time to time, if to a rather bemused public.

Today the two poles round which Fergusson's art revolved can be observed in the museum set aside for it in 1992 at Perth, in the county from which his family originally hailed. In the exquisite classical rotunda (1830) by Adam Anderson, first built for the city's waterworks, the collection is displayed on two floors. On the ground floor are works from Fergusson the modernizing Scottish painter, such as the female portraits – *Le Manteau Chinois*, *Hat with the Pink Scarf* and the like – restrained if falling far short of glum. There are landscapes too, tending towards abstraction though in a vivid way, which might have disconcerted the original viewers used to more sombre Highland scenes; here for the nation was a modest bounce into cultural modernity. But on the upper floor of the gallery at Perth we emerge into the sunlight of Provence, as it falls on the shades of pink and gold of female flesh stretched out amid exuberant vegetation. Fergusson had in fact been painting nudes since the turn of the century. Often on a large scale, they became, in a manner novel in Scottish art, almost his central subject matter. That might have been all very well for France but it would never do in Scotland, where at first he kept this impulse under wraps.[65]

But Fergusson was able to renew his modernizing mission at home after he returned at the outbreak of the Second World War. Himself a Leither by birth, he chose Glasgow as his place of retirement because of its tradition of heavy engineering, because it was a Celtic city and because it did not suffer from what he saw as the stultifying artistic tradition in Edinburgh, dominated by the academies. He wrote: 'It is not natural for them [Glaswegians] to be academic. What we would like to see is West Coast Glasgow art in the same class as the Queen Elizabeth [the liner launched on the Clyde in 1938].'[66]

Once back, Fergusson and his wife found a number of people with whom to make common cause. Repelled by the existing Glasgow Art Club because it would not admit women, he established the New Art Club in 1940 for discussion and exhibition. Out of it grew the New Scottish Group of artists, which held an annual show from 1943 to 1948 and again in the 1950s.[67] One of the group was William Crosbie, a surrealist somewhat tamed by the public art commissioned from him, his murals for the Empire Exhibition (1938) and for the police headquarters (1940). Having accepted the principle that an artist must engage with the realities of his culture at large, he worked with Margaret in designing theatrical sets for the Celtic Ballet she founded in 1947. She had the unsettling habit of leading her students out from her studio in Blythswood Square to dance barefoot in the gardens. This was all the same congenial to a Glasgow that in cultural terms defied the austerity of wartime and its aftermath, as it did in other spheres with the inauguration of the Cosmo Cinema in 1939, the Unity Theatre in 1941 and the Citizens' Theatre in 1943. The publisher Bill McLellan, nationalist and socialist, was an important ally of Glasgow's artists and poets: he brought out editions of the poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid and of Sorley MacLean, among others, while Crosbie designed his dust-jackets. Fergusson was in his element here. All the same, though he enjoyed some recognition, his personal circumstances did not

match it: he sold seldom and never made enough to live off his art.

In 1943, McLellan also published Fergusson's book, *Modern Scottish Painting.* It revealed an author somewhat beleaguered but not letting this get him down. After all, no other Scottish painter of the twentieth century gathered and put on paper his thoughts, beliefs or commitments to art and politics (nationalist politics at that). Each chapter prompts variations on a central theme of painting and freedom – freedom from the tyranny of academic authority, artistic conventions and social priorities, freedom also from political pressures to conform in the British state. Fergusson's belief in Scottish independence runs right through these pages (not in its time a formula for a wide or appreciative readership). But for him the appeal lay in a link with artistic modernism, because both entailed renewal. To Fergusson's mind all this had to be articulated, as in his book, and not just practised: in no other way could conceptual progress start winning a public for modernism.[68]

Modern Scottish Painting appeared in the same year as Hugh MacDiarmid's autobiography, *Lucky Poet: A Self-Study in Literature and Political Ideas*, and Sorley Maclean's *Dàin do Eimhir*, which showed Gaelic poetry could be modernist too, even from within its own traditions. Taken together, these three books signal points of reference for a regenerate Scotland: Fergusson, MacDiarmid and MacLean might be seen together as artists whose shared vision of the nation has ever since nourished and inspired its cultural and political life. In furtherance of that project Fergusson's manifesto could be only a start, since there were few institutional or any other arrangements to rally Scotland's artists to a common cause. But for Glasgow in particular, it is perhaps not far-fetched to trace a path of development that fulfilled the new ideals he set, with painting as part of a modernist vision for Scottish culture, while also representing the people's dignity amid so much physical and social deprivation.[69]

These ideals did appeal to a younger generation in Glasgow,

among them Joan Eardley, who graduated from the School of Art in 1943. In her paintings and drawings she achieved sympathy without sentimentality, while depicting patience, endurance and even suffering. These gave an exceptional quality to her images of street children in the city and the nearby industrial towns, Greenock and Port Glasgow. In *Back Street Bookie* (1952), she seeks some deeper quality to a typical scene of life in the slums, though her human figures get somewhat lost in the formal arrangement of the picture. *Children, Port Glasgow* (1955) is more ambitious and successful. The colours of the ragged clothes – greys, browns and reds – together with their flat treatment and uneven outlines express the kids' impish vitality. It is reflected in the surroundings, so as to create out of the ensemble an urban habitat realistic in spirit if not in the actual image. In later pictures Eardley integrated other elements, including graffiti and collage, while adopting a freer technique enhanced by rich colour. These are pictures with a strong social inspiration, yet not idealist: they celebrate individuality in a setting where it might not be expected to flourish. The critic Cordelia Oliver observed that for Eardley 'a truly successful painting had to go deeper than a mere visual record, no matter how accurate… Her success lay in her ability to combine the acute, uncompromising painter's eye with a warm human sympathy and understanding.'[70]

Glasgow School of Art has remained Scotland's finest educational institution in its field, and one of the leaders in Europe. Much of the subsequent work in setting and maintaining its exemplary standards fell to Sandy Moffat, who was appointed to the staff in the 1970s and by 1998 had become head of painting. The best known of his own pictures is *Poet's Pub* (1980), which shows MacDiarmid, Maclean and half a dozen others engaged in their favourite activity apart from literary composition: drinking. Moffat was generous to rising generations of painters. He is himself a realist, but that did not stop him encouraging a range of dramatic and original

innovations, especially by a group dubbed the New Glasgow Boys. Its novelty lay in its general challenge to the prevailing abstract and conceptualist trends in European art; it revived the figurative and narrative, without being bound by older traditions. The canvases often attained a large scale, borrowing from fantasy and myth to leaven the realities of contemporary life and thought. The most prominent of these painters were Steven Campbell, Ken Currie, Peter Howson and Adrian Wiszniewski.[71]

Steven Campbell forged his reputation during the early 1980s in New York, where he went immediately following his graduation from Glasgow. He had made a late start as an artist, after leaving school at sixteen to get his first job in the steelworks at Cambuslang. Only a decade later did he enter Glasgow School of Art, but he soon made up for lost time. It was a period there, during the late 1970s, of intense ideological and aesthetic debate, that made exceptional creative work possible. The energetic and hard-working Campbell took full advantage, producing a body of work that went well beyond the student norm. His degree show met, however, with a mixture of incredulity and hostility. Undaunted, he made the decision to leave for New York, where his career took off in sensational fashion. Having exhibited all over the United States and Europe, he surprised everybody by coming home to Glasgow in 1987. He said: 'I wanted to give myself more space coming back to Scotland… In New York it was all happening so fast. You could get yourself in an awful mess.' His return reconnected his native city with the international avant-garde. A flamboyant, even outlandish figure, Campbell looked as if he had arrived from the Paris or Vienna of the late nineteenth century. His paintings – crowded, colourful canvases – were spaces or theatres of the mind where the viewer would meet and experience bizarre utopias and dystopias.[72]

Peter Howson, who studied at the School of Art from 1975 to 1979, seeks to use the rhetoric of historical painting, problematic though this has become. Scotland after all had had few cultural

links with the hotbed of this kind of art during the early twentieth century – the Soviet Union, in its efforts to idealize the proletariat. In Glasgow, it can be hard to separate the proletarian from the degraded, at least if the individual is also to be separated from the historical, as Howson wishes. He looks for inspiration in the streets of the city and its working-class masculinity. A striking example is *The Heroic Dosser* (1987), an ambiguous figure isolated and burdened, yet proud, strong and defiant. Still, there are places other than Scotland that bring out with greater force the human condition of steadfastness amid tragedy. Howson found as much when in 1992 he received a commission from the Imperial War Museum in London to be an official artist for the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. In Bosnia-Herzegovina he produced some of his most shocking and controversial work, not flinching at the atrocities of a savage civil war – as in his paintings of *Plum Grove* (1994) with its grisly pastiche of a crucifixion, and *Croatian and Muslim* (1994) with its explicit images of rape; this the museum refused to accept for being too brutal.[73] Pain has been a prime force in Howson's life and work. He felt it during a traumatic childhood and responded to it in adulthood via the typical Glaswegian defensive mechanisms of drink and drugs. At last, in 2000, he found solace in conversion to Christianity. In subsequent work, spiritual change appears as the answer to the questions of existence for his rebellious, immoderate or eccentric subjects.

Ken Currie graduated from the School of Art in 1983. He is if anything even more political, again often in an intense, powerful and provocative manner. There is at the same time another side to him, drawing aesthetic inspiration from the European tradition of portraiture. Old Masters such as Velazquez, Goya and David fascinate Currie, and his own work has often recalled them. At his best he has been able to produce the haunting, luminous painting *Three Oncologists* (2002) and a searing nude self-portrait, *Unfamiliar Reflection* (2006). Just as important, he had while still a student

discovered the socially committed realist painting of Otto Dix and George Grosz, who worked in Germany during the doomed Weimar Republic, and of Diego Rivera, who developed the genre of public murals depicting the everyday life of the Mexican people. Currie's own paintings in this vein deal with matters of working-class solidarity and self-improvement, but also bring out his despair at contemporary conditions; Glasgow offers ample subject matter. In 1987, he received a commission to paint a memorial ceiling of eight panels at the People's Palace. It was a while since much by way of historical painting had been produced in Glasgow, least of all anything of a socialist interpretation. This was itself, however, deeply problematic: moved by the revolutions in Eastern Europe from 1989, Currie began to depict decaying and damaged bodies as a response to what he felt was the universal sickness of modern society.[74]

We must not imagine the New Glasgow Boys to be a uniform group, however. In contrast to their habitual figurative grimness stands the work of Adrian Wiszniewski, who trained at the School of Art from 1979 to 1983. He soon shot to prominence with huge, exuberant paintings at once redolent of fantasy or myth and attuned to modern life or thought. With him we pass from the dark and contorted suffering of Howson's or Currie's muscular human images into a bright and colourful world of almost Arcadian serenity. Here ideal youthful figures pose in surreal, dream-like landscapes full of kaleidoscopic colours and symbolic objects. Wiszniewski does not confine the harmony of his creative optimism to painting. From the outset he had a versatile career, taking a hand in everything from the design of parking garages to multi-media events to writing novels. His best-known work is the mixture of neon lighting and oil on canvas that forms *Gentleman's Club* (2005) in the atrium of the Gallery of Modern Art. After that he worked with the Scottish Philharmonic Orchestra in the production of a musical narrative *The Girl, the Boy and the Hag*

(2007), as well as illustrating a book of the show. He brings the same creative energy to printmaking, sculpture, furniture and even wallpaper, while exploring new media as a central means of communication. He reminds us that, bleak as Glasgow might be at times, it is also a city where, in reaction, original spirits feel they must take wing.[75]

Indeed, in artistic terms Glasgow has defined itself it by transcending its harsher realities. As on the global scale one industrial revolution succeeds another, many cities fall into phases of decay. The best seek to recover. Some may do it by meretricious means, which has to some extent been true of Glasgow too. It has not treated its built environment well, and the buildings that remind us this was one of the finest Victorian cities are also the survivors of massive destruction. Glaswegians, once self-conscious about their slummy environment, now see how the remaining older buildings can still offer examples of elegance, construction and durability hard to find in their successors. It could well be argued that modernism has helped to liberate the city from its inferiority complexes. In its School of Art, Glasgow possesses one of the finest such institutions in the world, now more than a century old and today rising from the ashes of a disastrous fire of 2014. The city has less confidence about architecture, but its urban history and its openness to international contacts create future scope for renewal of the typical Glaswegian combination of swagger and style.

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