

On the carrying stream into the European mountain

Roots and routes of creative (Scottish) ethnology

Ullrich Kockel

Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh

Mairi McFadyen

Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh

ABSTRACT: Since 2016, a diverse network of academic researchers, creative practitioners and cultural activists has emerged in Scotland, keen to explore the potential of a “creative ethnology”. This is in part a response to the politico-cultural and wider intellectual climate in the aftermath of the referendum on Scottish independence in 2014, and to ongoing debates in the arts and academia. As activists in this network, and ethnologists at almost opposite ends of our respective academic journeys, but who share similar perspectives and concerns, we reflect in this article on the margins and intersections of (European) ethnology in Scotland through mapping our personal trajectories in terms of geographical location, institutional contexts, research foci and methodological experimentation. Given limitations of space, we concentrate on aspects highlighting the specific contexts we have found ourselves living and working in, thus illustrating the positionality of (European) ethnology in Scotland through our individual trajectories in their relationality, rather than attempting a comprehensive account of the field. Our focus here is on that emerging “creative ethnology” and its potential contribution as non-hegemonic anthropologies are becoming increasingly recognized.

KEYWORDS: EUROPEAN ETHNOLOGY, NON-HEGEMONIC ANTHROPOLOGIES, SCOTTISH POLITICAL CULTURE, PLACE WISDOM, REFLEXIVE TRADITION.



Ethnological being-in-the-world

European ethnology “originated in the political struggles [...] for ethnic recognition through certain culturally distinctive features” (Dégh 1975: 114). While one can take issue with the purposes motivating much of this earlier ethnology, the *raison d’être* of ethnological studies of Europe in different regional and national contexts was never exclusively antiquarian, but intensely political. This connection between ethnology and national resurgence is not necessarily driven by and supporting an exclusive nationalism elevating one culture vis-à-vis every other – and some Others in particular (Herder 2017). The reinvention of European ethnology as cultural anthropology in different national contexts since the 1960s has generated new ways of imagining the world and our place in it (Kockel 1999). We *dig where we stand*; our own personal roots, as well as our own local place, are a part of our research apparatus (McIntosh 2008; Byrne 2012; Fenton, Mackay 2013). Often the focus is our relationship with the past and how we make sense of it in the present; ethnology has thus been closely associated with the history, collection and study of folklore in relation to cultural belonging (West 2012; Kockel, Nic Craith, Frykman 2012).

Considering questions of belonging in Scotland and Europe at this historical juncture cannot avoid engagement with the reshaping and potential relocation of “central” and “peripheral” sites of knowledge production; nor can we ignore the devastation neoliberalist policies are inflicting on the conditions for production of anthropological knowledge – from mounting student debt to the precarisation of the academic workforce (see Martínez introduction). In contrast to continental Europe, folklore and ethnology are, in institutional terms, virtually absent from UK universities. Scotland stands out here. Pivotal for the development of ethnology in Scotland was the founding, in 1951, of the School of Scottish Studies, based at the University of Edinburgh, to collect, archive and promote the cultural traditions of the nation (Fenton 1990), encouraged, like the Folklore Commission in Ireland two decades earlier, by visiting Nordic scholars. During the post-war period, smaller, more remote communities, seen as last refuges for everything from language and dialect, songs and stories to customs, beliefs, craft, industry, living conditions, social organization and material culture, provided an impetus for collecting. Calum MacLean, brother of poet Sorley MacLean, was one of the first fieldworkers for the School of Scottish Studies in the Gaelic context, soon joined by Hamish Henderson, who largely focused on Scots language material. The story of tradition in this place – Henderson called it “the carrying stream” (Bort

2010) – has been a fascinating and international one. Staff and students of the School have played an active role in the cultural life of the nation. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the School was a key contributor to the Folk Song Revival, and in the 1980s it introduced the first university degree in Scottish Ethnology (Aberdeen followed in the 1990s). Ethnologists have been highly visible in the public sphere, from advising government to developing and supporting public and community engagement with the traditional arts in Scotland and beyond.

The emerging network of creative ethnologists arose from reactions on social media to Gary West's inaugural lecture as Professor of Scottish Ethnology at the University of Edinburgh. For some, "creative ethnology" is about finding more imaginative ways to share our research through creative production and performance (West 2012). For others, it is about how we engage in vital dialogue – cultivating sympathy, synthesis and synergy (Patrick Geddes; see McFadyen 2015b) – with other fields, such as ecology (Kockel 2012). Implicit in "creative ethnology" is the notion of creative practice. Rather than drawing on the creativity of the artist as *someone else*, there is a sense that *we* ought to liberate *our own* creative instinct, become artists ourselves. This reflects an expanded anthropological notion of art, echoing the invocation by artist Joseph Beuys ("everyone an artist") of the power of the human body and spirit to transform and be transformed in a constant, creative process he referred to as "social sculpture" (Walters 2012). This ethnological being-in-the-world, recognizing our vital role in social movement and change, necessitates an activist orientation in our scholarly commitment. In developing such practice, we share a desire to inspire re-engagement with a broader notion of culture *in this place*, as part of a future-oriented project.

"To be truly creative", writes Norman Bissell (2014: 5), "we must adopt [a] sensitive awareness and openness to the world, and work at it consciously in our various fields of endeavour – whether in music, writing, visual and other arts or sciences or combinations of these". In a series of essays on cultural renewal, the poet Kenneth White (2004: 145) postulated "a new poetic anthropology". "The real work", he wrote, "consists in changing the categories, *grounding a new anthropology*, moving towards a new experience of the earth and of life" (White 2004: 22; our emph.). White called this approach "geopoetics", and in 1989 established the International Institute of Geopoetics as a center for a Global Network, based in France. His writings had helped us each on our own journey, and in June 2017, a conference on the Isle of Seil in the west of Scotland presented an opportunity to explore creative ethnology as a form of geopoetics with other participants. This

essay draws on some of the threads from that exploration. More than other humanities and social science fields, ethnology is rooted not just in a national and regional, but, crucially, in the local milieu – that is, in *specific places*. That brings inevitable political and wider responsibilities, which require that we see both the trees and the wood, as well as understanding, at least in principle, what is going on beyond the forest. We are mindful of the significance of nationalism in modern societies, that there is nothing “natural” about nation-states, and that confining studies to geopolitical entities can be counterproductive (Wimmer, Glick-Schiller 2003); however, we contend that grounding ethnological understanding in place does not inevitably procure methodological nationalism (see, inter alia, Ribeiro 2007), and may indeed be a safeguard against it.

In his introduction to a collection of essays on anthropological studies of contemporary Britain, Nigel Rapport noted that such studies were “conducted in the shadow of a more proper anthropology elsewhere” (2002: 4). However, Rapport (2002: 7) contended, an anthropology in and of Britain

has the potential [...] of providing some of the best that the discipline can offer because an anthropologist thoroughly at home in linguistic denotation, and familiar with behavioural forms, is more able to appreciate the connotative: to pick up on those niceties of interaction and ambivalences and ambiguities of exchange, where the most intricate (and interesting) aspects of sociocultural worlds are constructed, negotiated, contested and disseminated.

Concluding that collection, Cohen (2002: 326) pointed out that “people live most of their lives in circumstances of particularity”, arguing that anthropology’s role derives from its “competence [...] to substantiate, inform and signal reservations about large-scale statements” (2002: 327). Not the generalizations attempted by early folklorists and anthropologists are the purpose of inquiry, but description and analysis of specificity, difference. An anthropology “at home”, defined in these terms, converges with ethnology as defined by Frykman (2003), and draws on empirically grounded continental European approaches. From the perspective of this European ethnology, studying one’s own society and culture is entirely comparable to the “more proper anthropology elsewhere” (Rapport 2002: 4) that Strathern’s (1987) critique of an anthropology “at home” appeared to defend.

The Scottish context

Both globally and locally, cultural industries are progressively taking over traditional forms of creation and dissemination, bringing about changes in cultural practices (Nic Craith 2004). In the UK policy framework, “culture” is currently devolved to the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Government,

through Creative Scotland as its agency, seeks to implement an instrumentalist paradigm of development, prioritizing “creative industries”. Within cultural policy, “heritage” has become a major factor. What constitutes “heritage” is increasingly officially defined, governed by philosophical ideas that originate in a Euro-American way of thinking about the relationship between past and present, including a desire to order and categorize, and a late-modern obsession with vulnerability, uncertainty and risk (Noyes 2010; see also Logan, Nic Craith and Kockel 2016).

The adoption by UNESCO in 2003 of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), which draws on “earlier conversations in folklore studies” (Noyes 2015: 299), has illuminated the role of public participation in the inventorying, presentation and conservation of cultural heritage, and the need to re-conceptualize tangible and intangible heritage as connected, interactional aspects of the heritage whole. Noyes (2015: 300) notes that the inextricable intertwining of “social, political, academic, and policy lines of attention to traditional expressions [...] for at least four hundred years [...] excites considerable anxiety among folklore scholars” who are often reluctant “to align with local-level activism and insights, or in moments of professional necessity argue for the utility of convergence with UNESCO and/or the state”.

The Convention encourages state support for the living performance of cultural traditions in the communities in which they are practiced, emphasizing the intrinsic value and national importance of traditional music and its value to local and community life. In the current constitutional set-up, however, Scotland has no direct pathway to official UNESCO recognition; the convention recognizes only States Parties; the UK has not ratified the convention and is unlikely to do so any time soon (Nic Craith, Kockel and Lloyd 2018). This freedom from official bureaucracy, however, has provided an opportunity to interpret policy differently. Drawing on the civic national model of citizenship laid out by the Scottish Government, cultural heritage policy – unlike elsewhere in Europe – embraces and recognizes the diversity of cultures found in Scotland, which includes the indigenous languages of Scots and Gaelic as well as that of immigrant communities.

Since 2010, traditional arts activities – music, song, storytelling, dance – has been supported in the mainstream by the funding body Creative Scotland. The traditional arts community comprises both professional performers and amateurs, an ecology of community organizations, a vibrant culture of community-based festivals happening at the grassroots, and highly successful international festivals, such as the Scottish International Storytelling Festival or Celtic Connections. In the context of the booming

creative industries, forms of local culture are offered up for global consumption. This throws up a conundrum: framing traditional arts as both an export brand and as a set of cultural practices in need of safeguarding due to the threat of globalised commodification. French (2009) has accused the Scottish Government of commodifying the traditional arts while at the same time privileging “specific cultural expressions that aid the government’s political project of constitutional change”. Pragmatically, the traditional arts benefit from this situation, but sit precariously and uncomfortably within such an ideology.

Recent work by TRACS (Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland) has highlighted the creative potential of cultural heritages in local communities across Scotland (and their global connections) as a potential pathway to both “local ownership of cultural resources and to creative inspiration” (McFadyen 2015a: 1). With sympathetic implementation, ICH policy could raise awareness and support the sustainability of those cultural practices that define the diverse groups, communities, regions and national identity of contemporary Scotland. Noyes (2015: 309) warns that even with UNESCO designation of their practice, “for the foreseeable future, most subaltern practitioners and marginal communities are on their own”, and asks if it might be possible for scholars on the margins “to imagine an intervention from below that would work not upon the local but upward – toward and beyond the state?” This is part of what “creative ethnology” stands for. Where its concern is with heritage policy, creative ethnology follows folklore studies and “the longer and broader sociocultural work of modernity in singling out local traditions as identity markers” (Noyes 2015: 299). Its efforts are connected to the formation of its nation-state as well as to grass-roots resistances to the standardisation this entails, and to holding the resulting tensions in creative confluence.

The constitutional question came to a head during the referendum for Scottish independence in 2014. Given Scotland’s cultural and political heritage, there was a sense that the traditional arts community had a responsibility to contribute to the national debate, irrespective of political leanings or differences of opinion. In a climate of rising political tension, however, public arts organizations and networks involving traditional arts were careful to avoid taking an explicit position. Contributions had to come from individuals and independent groups. Mairi was an active campaigner at this time, taking a lead in catalysing the campaign group *TradYES*, part of the wider non-party creative cultural campaign National Collective (McFadyen 2018). The tone of this campaign was explicitly positive, inclusive and outward-looking, drawing upon an emerging traditional arts

discourse and reflecting both the ethos of the wider Yes campaign and the Scottish Government's inclusive, civic nationalism. Far from recreating binaries of exclusionary nationalisms of the European past, traditional music was presented literally as a "welcome table" for "new Scots" (MacKenzie 2014). By 2014, almost all public statements from this community, reflecting a trend in the wider arts community, advocated an independent Scotland. While this very public alignment of the traditional music community with support for independence in cultural and political discourse might give a skewed view of the opinions of the wider society, it is noteworthy that not since the Scottish Folk Revival and anti-Polaris movement of the 1960s has this community been so politically active.

Most commentators regard the referendum campaign as a progressive, creative and formative period in Scottish politics, leaving a legacy of cultural confidence that has fed into an emerging sense of cultural possibility (Harvie 2016; Kockel 2017). Since 2014, Scotland has seen more "folk culture" made visible in the mainstream, such as the 2016 film *Hamish the Movie*, about the cultural influence of Hamish Henderson, or the performance of Martyn Bennett's GRIT at the Edinburgh International Festival (McFadyen 2016). The run-up to the referendum catalyzed artists and cultural activists into a large-scale participatory democratic process, transforming the political and cultural landscape through embodied and creative ways of engaging in the debate, and opening up alternative, grassroots spaces. In post-referendum Scotland, it has become common practice for citizens to demand new ways of grassroots participation in politics and policy-making, challenging the pervasive neoliberal model, and seeking a different alignment between culture, politics and the public. Such a renewal of cultural policy "centres on the need for praxis – for theoretically informed, critically reflective action [...] oriented towards social justice across the integrated economic, political, cultural, kinship and ecological spheres of our existence" (French and Asher 2012).

Against this backdrop, "creative ethnology" emerged as a movement bringing together cultural activists and academic researchers to explore new ways of engaged practice. The politico-cultural and wider intellectual climate of post-devolution, pre-independence Scotland, together with the historical situation of European ethnology here, provided a particularly fertile ground for this development. Like the small European nations of the nineteenth century, Scotland is a country in search of itself, but its political culture is much more outward-looking, and the spirit of the independence campaign overall has been inclusive. Unlike nationalistic ethnologies of the past (see, e.g., Rihtman-Auguštin 2004 on Croatia, Dow and Bockhorn 2004

on Austria, and the contributions to Nic Craith, Kockel and Jöhler 2008 on other parts of Europe), Scottish ethnology has been shaped by intellectuals like Hamish Henderson with his left-of-center internationalist outlook that has encouraged an approach to studying culture at once rigorous and playful, and connected with elsewhere, both in Europe and beyond. The public folklore agencies in the U.S., working with practitioners and communities to secure funding and venues, but also to enhance resilience in the face of change (Noyes 2015: 309; see also Kodish 2012), are part of this wider context.

Although the term “creative ethnology” was used before (West 2012), it acquired wider currency and meaning following Gary West’s (2016) inaugural lecture on “Performing Testimony: towards a creative ethnology for the 21st century”, when Ullrich used the hashtag *#CreativeEthnology* in a congratulating tweet. West had opened his lecture with extracts from a play he had written, based on a private oral history archive bequeathed to Edinburgh’s School of Scottish Studies. Within a few days, a meeting of interested individuals had been arranged. At that meeting, West observed that “[m]any people with ethnological background and training are also working in different creative ways”, and drew parallels with ICH and “the overlap between performance and heritage as a creative process”; he also noted that while he had used “creative ethnology” in the title of his inaugural lecture, he had “never really intended [...] this as a term in itself” (McFadyen 2017: 3). However, the term clearly captured a momentum that had been building. *A Creative Ethnology Studio* had already been initiated as a joint workshop series run by Heriot-Watt University’s Intercultural Research Centre and the University of Edinburgh’s School of Scottish Studies, “with the aim of facilitating a network of researchers interested in exploring the creative aspects and potentials of ethnological practice” (ibid: 5), and involving network members from across Scotland; events have since covered visual art, poetry, walking as method, theatre, and graffiti.

Furrows in the ethnologic field

At its inaugural meeting, the “creative ethnology” network noted that it was “rooted here in this place but not confined to this part of the planet” (ibid: 1). We have already commented on the contextual specificity that created conditions for this movement to emerge in Scotland at this time, and the significance of rootedness in place cannot be overstated (see Ribeiro 2007; Kołodziejczyk 2010). Focusing on issues of place brings certain risks – the ghosts of a “blood and soil” ideology, thriving on folklore, are always

looming in the background (Kockel 2012). Moreover, the vision of “newly indigenous”, implicit in the inclusive concept of the “new Scots”, may have romantic appeal, but how does an emphasis on local specificity and active cultural engagement sit with the concept of a disinterested, rigorous, objective academic inquiry? Nearly half a century ago, Feyerabend (2010 [1975]) made a powerful case *Against Method*, arguing for epistemological anarchy on the grounds that rigid scientific methodology impedes new insights. This would suggest that, instead of rigid epistemologies, ethnologists should creatively combine empathetic ethnography with critically-aware theory. Arguably, “all logics are ethnologies” (Kan and Turner Strong 2006: xvi), and thus it makes sense to speak of ethnologies in the plural: despite the entirely justified critique of “methodological nationalism”, there is a place for the acknowledgement of context and specificity. While we may have to adjust our choice of methods to our subject of inquiry, and keep an open mind with regard to interpreting what we might find, what matters most is that we seek to ground our theorising in the lived *emic* experience of the people we are studying, rather than in some fashionable *etic* discourse. In searching for new ways of looking at the world, we can draw on a rich tradition of critical thought in our immediate cultural context. Constraints of space only allow us to indicate a few of these deeper wells.

Hamish Henderson

The legacy of the aforementioned Hamish Henderson was an integral part of Mairi’s undergraduate studies in Scottish ethnology at the School of Scottish Studies, where she later gained her PhD. Ullrich first encountered Henderson’s work indirectly, while immersed in the folk “scene” of the 1970s and 1980s, through conversations with singer-songwriter Hamish Imlach in Hamburg, and later with Christopher Harvie in Tübingen, whose history of Scotland in the twentieth century, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes* (Harvie 2016), took its title from a line in one of Henderson’s poems (Henderson 1948: 19). He never met Henderson personally, but became intrigued by this culturally and politically complex character – a polyglot Scot, at once a Scottish nationalist and an internationalist socialist with strong intellectual and personal connections to Germany and Italy, who translated Gramsci’s *Prison Letters* into English. Henderson was a folklorist, collector, folk revivalist, a poet, songwriter, political activist, translator and public intellectual. Lamenting the isolation of the artist in modern society, he sought to overcome the distance between the poet and “the people”. As Gibson (2015: 1f.) notes, Henderson “envisaged the role of the artist in

society as one caught between an absolute submission to the collective tide of human experience” and “the need to absorb and recreate this collective force according to an individual or personal credo” – a tension embodied in the famous “flytings” between Henderson and poet Hugh MacDiarmid in the pages of daily newspapers, a crucial contribution to our understanding of the cultural landscape of Scotland in the second half of the twentieth century. Henderson was part of the very “folk process” he sought to understand, bringing the phrase “the carrying stream” into cultural consciousness, and writing songs like “Freedom Come All Ye”, connecting socio-cultural struggles in Scotland with the Anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa (McFadyen, Nic Craith 2019).

Patrick Geddes

Beyond Henderson’s internationalist Scottish ethnology, another beacon on our respective intellectual journeys has been Patrick Geddes, whose work we first discovered at different times and from different personal angles: Ullrich through an extra-curricular foray into landscape architecture while working on his undergraduate dissertation, Mairi during postdoctoral research at the Institute for Advanced Studies (IASH) in Edinburgh. Geddes’ work on local and regional planning influenced Ullrich’s early research on endogenous regional development, a concern he returned to with his inaugural lecture as Professor of Ethnology and Folklife at Ulster (Kockel 2008a), where, drawing on the Geddesian triad of “Place-Folk-Work”, he explored connections between culture and nature through the ethnological prism of “place”. Mairi’s interest was in Geddes’ cultural-ecological imagination and his role in the late Victorian Celtic Revival. Her research, with a particular focus on the vital role of traditional arts in cultural renewal, fed into a series of talks and workshops at the Scottish Storytelling Centre’s Celtic Summer School during 2014–2016.

Described variously as a Victorian polymath and synthesising generalist, Geddes was looking for connections and patterns, and the intellectual tools to bring disparate ideas into relation. Having spent time in India and formed a lifetime friendship with Bengali polymath and poet Rabindranath Tagore (Fraser 2005), he saw Eastern philosophy as necessary complement to Western thought. His famous “thinking machines” (Meller 1990: 45-52) are rich examples of his integrated perspective and synthetic world-vision; his three-dimensional “Notation of Life” reflects the dynamic process of people living in, reacting to and acting upon the environment. Not merely descriptive or analytic, it represents a call to action – a methodology for

enabling and sharing new knowledge. Geddes' ability to think from the perspective of culture enabled him to utilize elements from history and tradition to achieve benefits for his contemporary world. He believed art, as an expression of place, embodies folkloric and creative elements of a society's collective memory. His cultural-ecological imagination is perhaps best embodied in his seasonal magazine, *The Evergreen*, a mouthpiece for the Celtic Revival, which brought together artists, writers and thinkers who shared the belief that Scotland could only be a creative nation when it was actively seeking to implement its own vision of a "commonweal", with collectivity, creativity, rootedness in place, and community involvement at its heart. This rather Romantic understanding that rootedness in a specific locality is the fundamental condition for a truly international and global vision was the very basis of Geddes' thinking.

Kenneth White

In our introduction, we noted the poet Kenneth White's postulate, developed in a series of "essays on cultural renewal", of a "new anthropology" that ought to move "towards a new experience of the earth and of life" (White 2004: 22). Describing Romanticism as "a radical crisis in the Western conception of the world, a criticism of its systems, values and ambitions, an encyclopedic [sic] search for knowledge in all directions and the groundwork for a new epistemology, as well as a tremendous outburst of creativity", he invoked an aspect of the Romantic Movement that infused early approaches to what we nowadays call (European, Scottish etc.) ethnology – "the "transcendental travelogue" ... [that] ... moves through a spiritual topography ... [on] a journey from [...] confusion and ignorance to a cosmopoetic reading of the universe" (White 2004: 96). A key aspect of these travelogues is their method, guided by the idea of giving "a sense all along the way of what is open and flowing and cannot be defined in any cut-and-dried fashion".

Attempts to develop the kind of "deep anthropology" White postulated have been frustrated by a fashionable Cultural Studies concentrating on the chaos and confusion we encounter on the façade of our everyday, and shackled by an increasingly constrained funding regime valuing instrumental uses that can be readily established over longer-term fundamental insights that may only be speculated on at present. Thus the ethnological fieldworker, like the modern citizen White describes, finds her- or himself "in a civilization which, having no deep culture, tries to camouflage its [...] lack by making a lot of noise and flashing a lot of images", living "complacently in a well-filled mediocrity" (White 2004: 59).

To counter this complacent mediocrity, an epistemological and ethical reorientation of anthropology is necessary; any ethnological study of culture that abandons the field is in danger of, literally, “losing the plot”. The challenge is to engage actively with forms of understanding that can be found outside the disciplinary canon, for example in art, in so far as it is “founded and grounded, [not] just another aspect of the circus” (White 2004: 59). This is not to eschew universal statements, but to ensure such statements retain resonances of the local roots and dispositions that make them relevant and applicable to the local context (Kockel 2008a). That curious specificity of the universal is a guiding intuition of “geopoetics” as proposed by Kenneth White. In this, White’s poetic cosmopolitanism meets and merges with the rootedness emphasized by Geddes.

Nan Shepherd

White’s geopoetics requires an openness and readiness to both recognize and consciously abandon inherited concepts, philosophical assumptions, cultural baggage, language and discourse, to quasi clear the way for a direct encounter with the world. Such clearing we find, for example, in Nan Shepherd’s autobiographical work, *The Living Mountain*, which has been described as something of a “geo-poetic quest” (MacFarlane 2011: xiv). Her way “into” the mountain is by use of all the senses as well as the mental faculties, combining learned knowledge with physical experience. She writes of moments when she is “not bedevilled by thought” (Shepherd 2011: 93), “living in one sense at a time to live all the way through” (*ibidem*: 105). As James McCarthy (2017) observed: “She was in good company with that other unrecognised geopoet, [...] John Muir, who said that “going out is actually going in””.

Unlike other thinkers mentioned in this section, Shepherd, a teacher and writer, lived all her life (1893-1981) in Peterculter, near Aberdeen. Her writing is deeply immersed in the local ecology of the Cairngorm mountains in her native Scottish Highlands. In all of Shepherd’s work, this regional landscape is an important feature, yet her writing should be understood as parochial only in the most expansive sense, as expressed by the Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh, who suggested that “the parish was not a perimeter, but an aperture: a space through which the world could be seen” (Macfarlane 2016: 62), writing that “to know fully even one field or one land is a lifetime’s experience. In the world of poetic experience, it is depth that counts, not width” (quoted in MacFarlane 2016: 63). Shepherd’s is a voice that opens up possibilities for conveying modes of experience existing

beyond the constraints of everyday life. Her engagement with the natural world is a direct, embodied encounter with the elemental, opening up a new space outside of our habitual experience, re-framing our perception of the world, and our relationship with it. Thus, her writing upsets habitual and hegemonic ways of seeing and understanding the world, and reveals the hidden ideological nature of the dominant discourses of science, history, romanticism and landscape aesthetics that have come to define the Scottish landscape. Instead of depicting a “world out there”, Shepherd presented a world that is, as Tim Ingold might say, “meaningfully engaged with” (1995: 58).

Bashabi Fraser

Indian-born Bashabi Fraser was until recently Professor of Creative Writing and Director of the Scottish Centre for Tagore Studies at Edinburgh Napier University. She is also a poet who engages with the personal and cultural experience of migration and post-colonialism. Ranging “across the territories” (White 2004), much of her work represents a geopoetic approach, although not explicitly so. This is particularly evident in her epic poem *From the Ganga to the Tay* (Fraser 2009), in which a dialogue unfolds between the two big rivers of India and Scotland, encompassing history, culture and tradition as well as the experience of migration, echoing Henderson’s “carrying stream”. As an author, she embodies Indian-Scottish cultural relations, and her research includes the correspondence between Tagore and Geddes (Fraser 2005) as an early twentieth-century cross-cultural meeting of minds.

Beyond the binaries

One feature uniting these thinkers is their non-parochial outlook, which is in stark contrast to old-style folklore studies as represented, for example, by the controversial “folk studies of linguistic islands” (*Sprachinselvolkskunde*; see Weber-Kellermann 1959 for an early critique). Even Nan Shepherd’s literary and non-fiction work is conscious of the holographic character of place – at once particular and universal. Each place in its distinctiveness is also a mirror of the world, not in the imperialist sense of being a glorious example for all elsewheres, but in the deep ecological sense of a unique expression of the confluence of all these elsewheres. Ultimately, “our parish is the cosmos” (McIntosh 2012: 34). Conventional binaries that separate the “scientific” from the “non-scientific” in a hierarchical manner appear from this perspective as the power-political constructs they are: the

etic categories of a hegemonic “scientific community” can no longer claim superiority to the *emic* categories of a subaltern “local community”; *oighreachd*, cultural heritage “from above”, is balanced – and often challenged – but *dualchas*, cultural heritage from below. But this challenge of established hierarchies and mutually exclusive viewpoints is only the beginning. Indicated in our use of another language – Scottish Gaelic – in this context is the recognition that the world may look different through different linguistic lenses (Nic Craith 2008). The superior position of the scientific method that Feyerabend railed against in the 1970s may be less pronounced in other cultural universes. Although the pressures of globalization may have blurred these distinctions somewhat in the political practice of how inquiry is supported by public funds, it remains worth pondering whether and, if so, why the *Kulturwissenschaften* have a notably higher standing in German-speaking countries than *cultural studies* have in Anglophone funding regimes.

Locating creative ethnology within Europe – and Beyond

In his 2008 election statement for the presidency of the Société Internationale d’Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF), Ullrich noted that ethnology was facing “significant challenges in terms of disciplinary identity and [...] location within academia. One major challenge is to maintain the traditional strengths of our field while being proactive in developing contemporary and future-oriented fields of inquiry” (quoted in Kockel 2013: 2). While this is true across Europe (and beyond), it is particularly pertinent in the British context, where (European) ethnology has historically struggled to establish itself even as a niche subject at university level (Kockel 2008b), and the anthropology of European societies has fared only marginally better, surviving often by individual symbioses in departments devoted to other disciplines. The ESRC Seminars in European Ethnology (2001–03), which Ullrich coordinated while at the University of the West of England, were an attempt to develop a broader basis for the field across the UK and help dispel its image as an amateur antiquarian pursuit (Kockel 2008b). While scholarly associations – both within ethnology and folklore, such as the ISFNR or the AFS, and beyond – have long provided international networking opportunities for individuals working largely in isolation at their home institution, two such associations have played a major role in locating UK-based ethnologist explicitly within a European and wider global framework – SIEF and EASA (European Association of Social Anthropologists). The latter emerged in the late 1980s partly as a European-based reaction to the global

hegemony of North Atlantic-centric (Ribeiro 2007: para 27) anthropological theorizing, while the former arose from a succession of bodies closely associated with the League of Nations and, later, UNESCO, where it became affiliated to the anthropological sciences and in 1966 adopted a European profile for political reasons (Rogan 2008).

SIEF and European anthropology

Despite the field's weak institutional basis, ethnology in the UK has long had a strong presence at SIEF conferences, largely through its Scottish participants. Kockel (2008b: 149) noted that, by contrast, English institutions were represented at the 2001 conference in Budapest primarily by non-English scholars. Under the theme "Liberating the Ethnological Imagination", SIEF's 2008 congress, hosted by the University of Ulster's Academy of Irish Cultural Heritages, took up the challenge of engagement with other fields and creative practices, a concern also reflected in that Academy's doctoral programme, which produced several innovative theses, supervised by Ullrich, that, with hindsight, deserve the label of "creative ethnology" (including McIntosh 2008; Walters 2012). Characteristic of these works was a deep engagement with place, which led to the establishment in 2009 of a SIEF "Place Wisdom" Working Group, and inspired the title of SIEF's 2011 congress in Lisbon, "People Make Places". The format of creative workshops, introduced for the 2008 congress, has since become a regular and popular feature of SIEF conferences, and has also been adopted by EASA congresses.

While EASA, set up in 1989 to advance anthropology in Europe, initially included few European ethnologists, the pattern differed between countries, possibly reflecting an element of methodological nationalism, or, less drastically, simply nuances in disciplinary evolution. Over the years, a certain osmosis occurred between EASA and SIEF as dual membership increased, helped without doubt by the adoption of a policy, by both organizations within a few years of each other, to encourage presenters at their major congresses to become members. Membership statistics therefore reflect this policy and are not an indicator of an actual convergence of fields. However, there are other clues.

At the 2011 SIEF General Assembly in Lisbon, the perennial question of the society's name was raised once again — should it continue to refer to "ethnology" and "folklore", or should the latter be deleted and the designation "European" be added to ethnology instead? Throughout the history of the association, this issue has created tensions between the various communities of practice and tradition represented within the SIEF,

reflected at the 2001 General Assembly in Budapest as one professor, emphasizing that in his country there were seven chairs in folklore, was met with an exasperated cry from the floor: “I hate folklore!”. The German-speaking countries in particular have since the 1960s witnessed agonizing debates over the positioning of *Volkskunde* (“folk studies”; see Bendix 2012). For many younger members of SIEF, the link with folklore had long been problematic; some departments had reinvented themselves as cultural anthropology, and new generations of researchers gravitated towards EASA partly to escape the perceived stuffiness of folklore. Some ethnologists see this as an existential threat to their discipline (Hann 2008: 77).

Anthropology as cosmopolitan project

With its emphasis on drawing global anthropological insights from consciously situated ethnological perspectives (Nic Craith 2008), creative ethnology in Scotland is one of what Gledhill (2016) calls “world anthropologies’ in practice. But how does it resonate with the new cosmopolitanism in anthropology? Ribeiro (2007: para. 24), distinguishing a “metropolitan provincialism” ignorant of what happens outside its core from a “provincial cosmopolitanism” versed in hegemonic discourse due to linguistic power imbalance, notes that “anthropologies without history” (Krotz) are rarely taught in their home countries. Similarly, Fardon (2008: 238) suggests that much of the literature on cosmopolitanism privileges the experience of “Europe’s language majorities and their settler societies”, whereas minorities actually need cosmopolitan sensitivity “to feel any sense of belonging to [their] own national project”. Although part of the dominant Anglosphere, Scotland finds itself peripheral within the UK, which may go some way towards explaining the global aspect of creative ethnology’s grounded approach that emphasizes Gaelic and Scots, challenging a monolingual hegemony that impedes a postcolonial “polycentric global anthropology” (Ribeiro 2007: para. 26). Hann (2008) contrasts the comparative cosmopolitanism exemplified by Radcliffe-Brown and, more recently, Kuper, with Herderian cosmopolitanism that recognizes “the central significance of local attachments” (Nielsen 1987: 383; see also Herder 2017), and such a “rooted cosmopolitan anthropology would be a true synthesis” (Hann 2008: 80). Keeping local attachments intact may indeed be a key step towards emancipation (Nielsen 1987). There is nowhere more local than the Self, and Rapport’s (2007) introspective cosmopolitanism therefore chimes with the rooted cosmopolitanism of creative ethnology, as McFadyen (2012) exemplifies it.

Closer to home: “Nordic” Scotland

Given the historical influence of Scandinavian scholars on Scottish ethnology (Fenton 1990), it is worth noting briefly the recent popularization of a “Nordic perspective” on Scottish affairs by broadcaster and writer Lesley Riddoch and others. The think-tank Nordic Horizons, founded by Riddoch in 2009, examines the suitability of Nordic social and political models for Scotland (Riddoch 2014; Riddoch, Bort 2017). While not a new trope, the contemporary interest in a “Nordic Scotland” reaches beyond the shared Viking heritage evident especially in the Northern Isles and the Hebrides. It builds on historical links, seeking to interpret them for the twenty-first century, projecting Scotland as “the most accessible, second most populous, fertile, ethnically diverse and southern part of the Nordic region” (Riddoch 2011). Such visions, inspired by geographical and historico-cultural propinquity, have been augmented by a discursive reconstruction of Scotland as a haven of social democracy (Keating and Harvey 2015: 123). This debate has been alert to practical imperfections in the Nordic model, but, in a spirit of critical engagement and mutual learning, has been feeding into a broader reimagining of Scotland (Kockel 2017), looking further afield for its self-definition than the “auld enemy” south of the border. Creative ethnology is contributing to this reimagining, for example through “New Connections Across the Northern Isles”, which forms the practice element of a PhD project “linking people & heritage through the diverse maritime cultures across Orkney & Shetland, co-curating & researching culture as resource for sustainable development” (@NorthernNousts).

Into the mountain

Creative ethnology as it has been emerging in the Scottish context — drawing on these wider trends and influences as well as on its local roots both geo-cultural and socio-political — is an attempt to hold the global and the local, thinking and action, in creative confluence through engaged praxis rooted in place. Given the resurgence, across Europe and beyond, of populism across the old political spectrum, and the correlate rise in xenophobia, it is not surprising that critical researchers have regarded emphasis on place categorically as a retreat into territorial tribalism, or at best reactionary relapse into a rural idyll. Ribeiro (2007: para. 28) cautioned against “nativist” perspectives projecting “the periphery” as the essential source of unparalleled authentic creativity and radicalism, rejecting this vision of “pristine otherness” in favour of an “openly dialogical and heteroglossic” one. Transnational narratives of the local evoke Eastern Europe, one

of Europe's internal others, as what Kołodziejczyk (2010) calls a "phantasm that renders cosmopolitan Europe parochial through a playful and self-mocking ideology of provincialism". As one of the UK's internal others, Scotland is in a similar position, and creative ethnology provides substance to its transnational narratives.

Place is a key dimension of human being, which is always a "being *there*" (Frykman 2003; our *emph.*), in a specific place. How we are there, in the places we make by dwelling in and with them, both physically and spiritually, is an important question. Interesting answers are likely to come from a radical ethno-/anthropology mining the intangible cultural heritages of Europe (and indeed the wider world) for alternatives to prevalent misconceptions of how this world works – not out of romantic hankering for paradise lost, but from an acute sense of ecological responsibility. On their own, the wisdom and ability to do this will not solve any problems, be they local or global; but grass-roots engagement is a vital part of any solution (Noyes 2015: 311). What the eponymous SIEF working group describes as "Place Wisdom" stems from locally-grounded – even if itinerant (Kołodziejczyk 2010) – practice. Finding new articulations of "Scotland" requires sensitive translation that, while sustaining the original complexity of the locally specific, makes it accessible for other interpretive idioms through an "indigenous cosmopolitanism" (Kołodziejczyk 2010). Creative approaches to ethnology and anthropology, aiming to achieve such translation, are in the ascendant globally, and approaches that "build up deep, long-term knowledge" (Macdonald 2015: 493) to support such endeavors have been common in various traditions of European ethnology and folklore. However, where hegemonic European anthropology tries to maintain an objective (or should that be: objectified?) distance from the local ecology, it may be more walking "up" the mountain – instead of "into" it, as Nan Shepherd advocated: exploring ourselves *in* and *through* the place, and vice versa, to understand how we make the world through the places that make us. To do that, and "reclaiming the human through introspection" (Rapport 2007), is key to the geopoetic anthropological intuition of a creative ethnology.

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Ullrich Kockel is Professor of Cultural Ecology at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, Emeritus Professor of Ethnology at Ulster University and Visiting Professor of Social Anthropology at Vytautas Magnus University Kaunas. A Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences and Member of the Royal Irish Academy, he also serves on the boards of Learning for Sustainability Scotland, the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics, and the Alliance for Intergenerational Resilience.

u.kockel@hw.ac.uk

Mairi McFadyen is an Associate Member of the Intercultural Research Centre (Heriot-Watt University). Her PhD, undertaken at the University of Edinburgh, explored the aesthetics, poetics and transformative power of the traditional ballad and won the 2012 Michaelis-Jena Ratcliff Prize for ethnology and folklore. Outwith academia, Mairi has worked with various organisations, including Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland (TRACS) and ethnological community enterprise Local Voices.

hello@mairimcfadyen.scot

