

THE FIRST BLAST

To promote a woman to beare rule, superioritie, dominion, or empire above any realme, nation, or citie, is repugnant to nature; contumelie to God, a thing most contrarious to his reveled will and approved ordinance; and finallie, it is the subversion of good order, of all equitie and justice.

In the probation of this proposition, I will not be so curious as to gather what soever may amplifie, set furth, or decore the same; but I am purposed, even as I have spoken my conscience in most plaine and fewe wordes, so to stand content with a simple prooffe of everie member, bringing in for my witness Goddes ordinance in nature, his plaine will reveled in his worde, and by the mindes of such as be moste auncient amongst godlie writers.

And first, where that I affirme the empire of a woman to be a thing repugnant to nature, I meane not onlie that God, by the order of his

creation, hath spoiled woman of authoritie and dominion, but also that man hath seen, proved, and pronounced just causes why it so shuld be. Man, I say, in many other cases blind, doth in this behalfe see verie clearlie. For the causes be so manifest, that they cannot be hid. For who can denie but it repugneth to nature, that the blind shall be appointed to leade and conduct such as do see; that

the weake, the sicke, and impotent persones shall norishe and kepe the hole and strong; and finallie, that the foolishe, madde, and phrenetike shal governe the discrete, and give counsel to such as be sober of mind? And such be al women, compared unto man in bearing of authoritie. For their sight in civile regiment is but blindnes; their strength, weaknes; their counsel, foolishnes; and judgment, phrenesie, if it be rightlie considered.

JK



Dr Johnson, the silly old Cham! When he toed that rock he mistakenly thought that logic and rhetoric were one and the same. –Thing is, a sore toe might persuade *him* he was right, but it couldn't prove anything.

And the rock on which all rhetoric stands, as John (or is it Jhon?) Knox reveals above, is a 'rightlie considered' point. How to manage a balancing act on such a rock (or, what is 'rightlie considered' a rock) is rhetoric's job.

To do this it has first to rely on an assumption of the rock's a priori existence. (eg. women are blind, weak, foolish and frenetic) Thus there is always an element of the given and a move from there to the novel. Rhetoric accordingly suffers of two main types: firstly, the use of new words to say the same old things; and secondly, the same old words to convince us of the correctness of a new state of things.

And these two types of rhetoric are largely and respectively what we encounter in the discussion below of 'Truth, Justice, and The Appian Way' by Michael Coyne, and 'A' Moladh na Rèiseamaid' by Ruairidh MacIver. We find it not surprising given the work to control and persuade that is inherent in rhetoric that these articles both deal with a reconciliation to imperial destiny.

In his analysis of Hollywood's Ancient Worlds Coyne builds his house on a rock. He is an enthusiast and a believer. But hey, who isn't? – the 'quintessential American genre', as he has it, the blowsy billion-grossing blockbusters of the 20s-60s showed Hollywood had a 'capacity unrivalled' to dominate global pop culture. The interesting thing however is the codified references and parallels Coyne finds in those

ancient epics which spoke to live political issues in the new Republic (–or is it Empire?). In the Biblical context for example, the 'Chosen People' nods to 'American Exceptionalism', and the 'Promised Land' helps patriots work up to the 'Manifest Destiny'. Like the Scottish Covenanters whose 17th century whiggish zealotry was codified in the flinty, opaque language and content of Old Testament, the Americans sublimated the infamies of their enthusiastic polity to leave onscreen earnest and be-toga'd avatars to dream them beyond McCarthy, the Nazis, and slavery.

The Highlanders, or the Gaels, in a sense are the Cretans of Scotland. It's only too appropriate, the bigoted Lowlander might say, that the most successful worldwide cultural export the Gaels ever had was a liar and a fake. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries the rest of Gaeldom followed James MacPherson by taking their poetry out across the world. This time it was the real McCoy, as we see in MacIver's article, it was the original Gaelic forms, not meant for strangers' consumption, and the poets going out to all the corners of the Empire with the British Army.

The martial poetry of an allegedly warrior race turned its *bròsnachadh* and its *moladh* – incitements and praises – on a privately educated British colonial officer class rather than on ethnic and tribal chieftains. Could they convince themselves in a plethora of ancient, set, and recognisable forms, that the pride of the British Army needed such bolstering? Yet it's easy to feel smarter than the Gael –indeed it's a rhetorical trope the rest of this archipelago has been practising for a long while.

JR



Dodging pickpockets, latches and informants against 'counterrevolutionary' behaviour, Miriam Ross' walk from her casa to Havana's Karl Marx theatre is not so much a stroll as a Hogarthian progress. We see little evidence of the plucky-pinko roarin' moose of Cuban legend but a starved and haemorrhaged society. The ICAIC may be revered throughout the film world but by her own admission, Ross wants to get off the island as soon as its ideal, rarefied atmosphere dissipates.

Part of it must be fatigue, and not just hers. She notices how all that fist clenching tires out the hand and forearm, even if the spirit is willing;

. . . he [Miguel Littin] fills his acceptance speech with rousing calls for a new generation of inspiring filmmakers. The crowd claps, with polite, muted applause. It seems that after thirty years of film festival rousing speeches and fifty years of a continuing revolution, they have heard it all before

Throughout her account the smell of the shite left uncleared in the street continues to waft into the auditorium. So when Alfredo Guevara calls for solidarity and warns prosaically against political leaders appropriating 'the audiovisual' we can understand why Ross is a little distracted. If Cuba's ailments are so pungent, the discussion of first principles seems almost wilfully self-obsessed.

But then we in Scotland know all about that sort of Disruptive behaviour. History may come to view the history of Cuba between Castro and Battista as an exercise in pure rhetoric, testament to how a mad, bad period (colonialism) can screw us up long after we've forgotten the details. One detail Ross does not forget was how her own gender marked her as a legitimate target. The refrain of loitering male badauds (or bawbags, if you prefer . . .) reveal more than just municipal rot; 'Hey lady, hola, you bad educated?'

Us guys . . . ever since Daddy Knox showed us the way, we have been very keen to teach uppity or deviant women a lesson. Take another post-colonial corner of the world, where rapes committed against South African lesbian women go largely unpunished. As one upstanding, normal man tells the Beeb, it is a good thing for strong men to show women

what their hole is actually for.

The three men – Drouth editors – who contributed this issue's reflections on the Scottish ideal know better than to be too complacent over these things. Is the relative absence of women in this instalment of *Suns of Scotland* indicative of a cultural trend in this country, or our own chauvinist obsessions with father figures? Maybe we suffer the same oversight Owen Dudley Edwards detects in Harvie's conception of forgotten or non-entity Irish women in the work Shaw.

We hope – and submit, it is the former not the latter, but even if so, Elke Weissman's *Words for Women* seem less an homage to past struggles than a crucial regrouping against the resurgence of old bad habits. In her series of social documentary photographs, Alexandra Demenkova explores a post-socialist milieu that seems to loom, inevitably, in Cuba's future through Russia's institutions and those officially designated as 'marginal'.

Whereas Guevara translates real concerns over media manipulation into dry socialist euphemism of the old school, Weissman's forceful, committed lines speak of bodies and intimacies and secrets under duvets – a dominion where rhetoric is tried and tested against the flesh. Demenkova poses this same question, at a collective level, though the soft folds described in a middle aged woman's bare back reject any notion of neat divisions, between the personal and the social, or a woman's dignities and *The Rights of Man*.

The question for us is whether we make this testing of our principles a scourge or a bond? These days *Patria o muerte* seems like the war-cry for some Kamikaze run, especially if you reject the rather questionable 'or'. Weissman, Demenkova – Tom Leonard's Renfrew poets – speak of a painful effort to recover balance, retaining our values but paying heed to our own, common-sense-of-smell when the shite starts to pile up outside. The Scots of the 1980s who came together to make a claim of right had to make their own verbal commitments against old bonds that tore and bit. Cuba was far away, but the question for them was the same as for the Cubans walking home from a night down the Karl Marx Theatre, or the Drouth reader taking it all in – what now?

MM



In 'Carter 100: Changing Time' the Scottish composer Iain Matheson – whose own work has received many national and international performances – offers us a profound glimpse at the very long and creatively active life of the American composer Elliott Carter who turned 100 years of age in December 2008. His is a life touched by all of the classic stages of Modernism and Postmodernism as they became/become manifest in music. As Matheson eloquently points out, Carter has to date dedicated much of his artistic life, to reflecting upon and discovering new strategies for the shaping and expression of musical time; probably music's most fundamental dimension and often overlooked by composers as their primary canvas – since – as Xenakis pointed out – music ceases to exist outside of time. His was a life that became entwined with such legendary early 20th century US composers as Charles Ives, Carl Ruggles and Henry Cowell and witnessed the first US performances of seminal works by Stravinsky and Schoenberg in the 1920s. Strange to think in these days of Hyper-communication, that such art took more than a decade to reach across the Atlantic. And, as Matheson points out, Carter's long life continues to be touched by musical luminaries such as Pierre Boulez, Milton Babbitt and Daniel Barenboim. Carter's multi-dimensional approach to the layering of perceived musical time and his careful sculpting of musical rhetoric, offers the listener a rare experience of phenomenological complexity.

In his, 'Music, Modernity and The Sacred' James MacMillan – surely Scotland's most famous living composer – invites us to reflect upon the age-old relationship between music and religion and its continued vitality despite the prevalent triumphalism of commodity-driven, contemporary societal secularism. Ours is – on the face of it – a 'cultural (?)' situation, oppressive of religious practice and expression, either by way of tacit marginalization, or as a result of the sheer power of monopolistic, mass-fetishistic design and desire. However, MacMillan points towards the urgency by which

artists should still be dedicated towards the offering of "gifts of beauty to the world" and where the work of art can act as a "kind of bridge" to faith-like experience for the uninitiated; not least because of the dimensions and questions of mystery that such results of creativity confront us with.

Furthermore MacMillan asserts the continued validity of Adorno's (now) historic criticisms of popular music and its associative 'culture industry', which is inviting of "... superficial ... predictability, ... [and] cliché[d] ... sameness." Surely it goes without saying that the vast majority of the output from this industry "narrows curiosity" and – ironically (despite the often 'angry young man' posturing by some of its subjects) – promotes societal conformity, in a neo-Imperialistic fashion. MacMillan points to one tragic by-product of our continued bombardment of the same (or very similar) sonic structures time and again, is the loss – to a great many of us – of the ability for deep listening. A state of mind that can offer us something "beyond ... materialism."

He also (perhaps all too briefly) draws our attention to the many profound ways in which music of the last 100 years – contrary to today's – often smugly – dominant [post-?] secular academic *credo* – has been touched and shaped by religion: from [the silence of] John Cage, [the rhythmic and modal structuring of] Olivier Messiaen, [the musical dramaturgy of] Arnold Schoenberg through to the spiritual, sonoristically iconographic works of composers from post-Communist states, such as Gorecki, Gubaidulina and Ustvolskaya. Suggesting that religion has in fact played a vital part in the "essence of musical modernity."

Throughout his essay, MacMillan *invites* us to move beyond "contemporary banality" and perhaps thereby enabling us to re-discover for ourselves the idea of the sacred – "what it means to be human."

SD

