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"We must protest that our inheritance is within us": Robert Morrison MacIver as sociologist and Scotsman

John D. Brewer

My purpose in this paper is in part dictated by the setting in which it is delivered, a reassessment of the philosophical writings of John Macmurray, in that I intend to acquaint philosophers and historians of Scottish thought with the sociological work of Robert Morrison MacIver – one suspects for the very first time (he is a novelty to most sociologists too). I intend to use the contiguity of MacIver and Macmurray as an opportunity to reflect on the disengagement between Scottish sociology and philosophy. My primary concern however, is to offer a preliminary analysis of MacIver's work that seeks to locate his sociology in the 'spaces of selfhood' in which he lived and wrote. Specifically the paper will suggest that his Scottish upbringing had an enduring impact on his conception of sociology, despite having spent all but four years as a sociologist living and working outside Scotland.

There is a broader relevance to these questions. Many Scottish intellectuals from diverse fields and disciplines migrated to distant parts and assisted in the circulation of intellectual elites, ideas and knowledge. The intellectual diaspora in Scotland is relatively neglected but in as much as it involved the movement of ideas as well as people, and was often a normal expectation amongst intellectual elites, diaspora networks were one of the key social networks by means of which ideas circulated across intellectual boundaries. It is likely that if Scottish intellectuals abroad kept a sense of place and identity with Scotland and formed a self-conscious community of Scots, the capacity will be enhanced for diaspora networks to assist in the globalization of ideas. It is also interesting to speculate on whether this sense of place in their work gave the writings special resonance back in Scotland, and the British Isles generally, to affect how their work was read and received there; ideas have spaces of reception as much as production (a point illustrated in Livingstone, 2003 with respect to various scientific ideas). However, these questions are for the future. This paper will begin to paint one tiny part of the bigger canvas, namely, the representation of place in the early work of MacIver.

MacIver is worthy of special attention because he became one of the world's leading sociologists. Born in the Outer Hebrides in 1882, after studying

classics in Edinburgh and Oxford, MacIver joined Aberdeen University in 1907 as a lecturer in philosophy. Between 1911–15 he taught lectures under the title of sociology. Despite his classical training, MacIver was a very early and enthusiastic convert to the relatively new subject of sociology (which had been first introduced in Britain to the London School of Economics in 1904 and Liverpool in 1905). In his autobiography,[1] he describes his 'lone battles to get sociology established in Scotland and Canada', a subject 'regarded by pundits as outside the pale, a bastard, a quasi subject with a bastard name' (1968: 65).[2] He worked hard at trying to legitimize it in Aberdeen for he was publishing in Britain's only specialist journal, *The Sociological Review*, as early as 1913 and 1914, and his first book in 1917 was on the central sociological idea of community.[3] In 1915 he left to join the University of Toronto, moving to the University of Columbia in 1925. He retired in 1950 but was persuaded to become President of the New School of Social Research in New York between 1963–65 and its Chancellor for 1966–7.

On any measure he obtained the best of glittering prizes during his career. He has been accorded the honour of revitalising sociology at Columbia. One of the figures he was influential in appointing there, R. K. Merton, himself eventually to become a luminary in world sociology, once described MacIver as the 'Dean of American sociologists', and MacIver could count John Dewey amongst his closest friends. MacIver was President of the American Sociological Association in 1940 (for his presidential address see MacIver, 1941[4]), received numerous prizes for his publications and was awarded eight honorary degrees. He was the author of nearly twenty books in a period when

[1] It seems germane at this early point to refer to the contradictions within MacIver (as in us all). The title *As A Tale That Is Told* is taken from Psalm 90 verse 9–'we spend our years as a tale that is told'–and his work is replete with Biblical references and metaphors, yet he detested religion, regaled against it, and saw himself as an atheist, although to make my point he died in the Presbyterian Medical Center in New York, May 1970, and his funeral was under the rites of his parents' faith.

[2] In 'Reminiscences' (MacIver, 1960: 2–3), a short manuscript in the MacIver Archive in Columbia University, dated 10 February 1960, he refers to sociology as being perceived as an 'upstart modern' subject, but in one sense not modern at all, since he dates it to Aristotle. I am grateful to Cairns Craig for providing me with some items from the archive.

[3] His affection for the subject was clearly passed down the bloodline: his daughter went on to marry the famous sociologist Robert Bierstedt, who spent some of his own career this side of the Atlantic.

[4] A draft of the speech, with MacIver's handwritten corrections in the margin, is in the MacIver archive at Columbia University, dated 27 December 1940 under the title 'Some reflections on sociology during a crisis'.

publishing was not a full time occupation in the academy. For a time these works became some of the standard texts in sociology. One text was being reprinted on almost a two-yearly basis over thirty years after its first publication; there are many senior sociologists still active who cut their teeth on his textbooks. His career took him to significantly different sorts of cultural milieux and social spaces. It is a challenging case to argue that Scotland left a permanent footprint throughout his sociological work because his autobiography denudes his Stornoway upbringing of any influence. Indeed, in a biographical note written in the mid-1930s on a visit back to Stornoway, he wrote tellingly, 'we must protest that our inheritance is within us' (MacIver, 1968: 263). Let us first dwell on Macmurray however.

The Macmurray-MacIver Disconnetion

Scottish sociologists and philosophers have tended to live in separate worlds. This is surprising given that sociology emerged in eighteenth-century Scotland out of moral philosophy, and these philosophical roots gave the Scots' proto-sociology a distinct edge over other possible precursors of the discipline, such as Mandeville, Vico, Montesquieu and Rousseau (with respect to the impact of civic humanist ideas on Ferguson's anticipation of themes from nineteenth-century sociology see Brewer, 1986). The wide acclamation, by philosophers and sociologists alike, of that early generation of Scottish philosophers-come-sociologists, Ferguson and Millar in particular, disguises the professionalization of the disciplines since that has separated their interests into distinct fields. Fast forward to the very beginning of the twentieth century, when scholarly practices avoided the contemporary fashion for excessive citation and demonstrations of multi-disciplinarity, and Scottish sociologists and philosophers appear to occupy parallel universes. John Macmurray and Robert MacIver are cases in point.

Their dates are contiguous, Macmurray 1891 – 1976 and MacIver 1882 – 1970, both were born in rural Scotland (Maxwellton and Stornoway respectively) into moderate wealth rather than poverty, sharing a strict Presbyterian upbringing to which both reacted negatively (MacIver by rejecting God, Macmurray by rejecting institutionalized religion). And they had Aberdeen in common, both having lived in the city at the same time, Macmurray as a schoolboy at the local Grammar and Robert Gordon College, MacIver a lecturer in philosophy and then sociology at the University (see Costello, 2002 for an excellent biography

of Macmurray). But it is at the level of ideas that perhaps they come closest to one another, making their disconnection all the more evocative of disciplinary closure.

MacIver made the idea of community central to his sociological perspective, establishing in his first book, published in 1917 (a time when Macmurray was at Oxford and then the Somme, and MacIver in Toronto), that the notion of community was the 'fundamental law of social life', a phrase that provided the book's subtitle (see MacIver, 1917). A review by 'VVB' (almost certainly Victor Verasis Branford[5]), in the fledgling sociology journal in Britain, *The Sociological Review*, described it thus: 'the author brings a comprehensiveness of knowledge, a depth of insight, a clarity of vision, a cogency of argument, a simplicity of language and a dignity of style, such as are not often found together. The combination of qualities bids fair to make his book a landmark in the development of sociological thought' (VVB, 1917: 109). In his famous Gifford Lectures in 1953–54, delivered at the University of Glasgow but co-sponsored by the University of Aberdeen, Macmurray arrived at a similar conclusion about the importance of community (which has resulted in both authors being unfortunately associated posthumously with the controversial set of ideas known as communitarianism). This idea was taken considerably further in the two-volume treatise *The Form of the Personal*, volume 1 published in 1957 under the title *The Self as Agent* and the second in 1961 as *Persons in Relation*. Seen as his most mature and complete philosophical works, and written at an age when he was at the height of his reputation, Macmurray wrote in the first volume of the self as an agent both whose actions and sense of personhood were constituted intersubjectively by the relationships people have with others. These relationships occur within a framework whose parameters are clearly sociological, in that Macmurray argued in the second volume that persons relate within the context of community, society and religious communion.[6]

[5] I am grateful to John Scott for information on Branford, whose middle name was probably not a misspelling of the Latin *veracis*, giving Branford the illustrious name of Victor Veracis, 'conqueror of truth', but in honour of an Italian Count, who it was hoped might further his father's social climbing via his interest in horse breeding and racing. Branford would almost certainly have known MacIver, who Scott informs me was external examiner at the London School of Economics during Branford's time. Branford spent some time in Edinburgh and may have met MacIver there.

[6] These ideas are familiar in sociology where they are associated with the philosophical traditions of American pragmatism, such as John Dewey, and the Symbolic Interactionism of George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer, all of which pre-date Macmurray's formulation. This reinforces the argument about parallel universes

Writing in the Foreword to Conford's (1997) study of Macmurray's writings on self and society, Prime Minister Tony Blair paid Macmurray the immense tribute of describing him as a philosopher who dealt with 'the critical political question of the twenty-first century: the relationship between individual and society'. It was at the beginning of his career in 1914, when still in Aberdeen (but by which time Macmurray was in Oxford), that MacIver made the first of many forays into explicating the same link between individuals and society. In a series of two articles (MacIver, 1913, 1914), in Britain's new sociology journal, MacIver laid out what he saw as the intellectual terrain of the new subject in an attempt to establish it professionally.[7] The first paper cleared away the grounds for confusion between sociology and social psychology, much as did the French sociologist Emile Durkheim only a few years earlier in his 1895 explication of the rules of sociological method and his famous depiction of 'social facts'.[8] Group minds or collective psyches are not the same entities as communities MacIver asserts (1913: 153), and such notions are incapable of explaining social life. This was a theme MacIver pursued elsewhere in the

but the paper does not explore the apparently even more surprising separation of Scottish and North American philosophy.

[7] It has sometimes been thought that MacIver was dismissed from the University of Aberdeen in 1915 because his professor of moral philosophy and head of department took exception to his sociological writings, since he was after all in a department of political science and philosophy and came originally to teach political philosophy. MacIver addresses this incident in his autobiography (1968: 74–5) and explains his departure as the result of interpersonal difficulties arising from a negative review he wrote of a book on Hegel, which, although not written by the unnamed professor to whom MacIver was an assistant, was taken by him as a veiled personal attack since he was also a Hegelian. Clues elsewhere in the autobiography indicate that it was the then professor of moral philosophy, which the University Calendar for the year reveals to be James Black Baillie (later Sir James), who was professor in the University of Aberdeen between 1902–1924 before becoming Vice Chancellor of the University of Leeds. He died in 1940, years before the autobiography was written, but MacIver still protected his anonymity. It was another famous Scottish philosopher, James Seth, who recommended the post in Toronto to MacIver and wrote in support of his appointment. In 'Reminiscences' (1960: 5–6), MacIver is a tad more blunt, describing himself as 'annexed' to the chair of moral philosophy, for whom he did 'chores' as well as lecturing in political theory, with the occupant taking a 'bitter dislike' to him, being unwilling to provide MacIver with a 'decent testimonial', and not acknowledging his existence when passing in the quad. 'I did not realise', he wrote, 'that you can seldom criticize doctrines without being offensive to those who hold them' (1960: 6). The man still goes unnamed however.

[8] There is no citation to Durkheim although MacIver did know his work and engages in debate with him only the following year about their different ways of representing the relationship between individuals and society (see MacIver, 1914: 60).

pages of *The Sociological Review* when reviewing books on psychology for the journal, writing in 1920 (in the non-gender neutral fashion of the day): 'the life of men in society cannot be explained without relation to their environments, and a psychologist who relies purely on the psychological approach is utterly unable to explain the concrete reactions of men to specific situations in time and space' (MacIver, 1920: 142). Nor are there intellectual grounds to argue that social psychology studies the individual and sociology the social, for MacIver argues there is nothing that is purely individual without social influence (1913: 155). This argument is the instigation for the second piece, entitled 'Society and "the Individual"' (MacIver, 1914), which constituted the very first published statement of MacIver's enduring idea about the indivisibility of individuals and society and the essential sociability of the human personality. Its contents seem to epitomize that Scottish sociology and philosophy existed out of time and space with each other.

In the article MacIver disputes the idea that society is a system separate from its members, *sui generis* as Durkheim famously put it, or that, in terms of the famous organic analogy popularized by the English sociologist Herbert Spencer in the nineteenth-century, it has a life of its own; more peculiar still that it had a soul and thus was some kind of divine design or was the outworking of a now obsolete 'social contract' as argued by Rousseau and Locke in their different ways.[9] Individuals never exist outside of society, so there can be no original state of nature where we might discover people unaffected by social processes; and society does not exist outside of individuals, so there can be no social process that is not dependent upon persons relating, to use Macmurray's later terminology. Society is inside people; people are inside society. He begins his paper by saying, 'there are no individuals who are not social individuals and society is nothing more and individuals associated and organised' (1914: 58), and ends restating the same principle when concluding that 'only in society is personality at home . . . society is nowhere but in its members' (1914: 64).

This statement of principle still leaves the sociological task of investigating the forms of association and organization by which society is constituted through the actions of its members and makes essential also the job of charting

[9] That Adam Ferguson had already disabused sociology of all these false notions in his 1767 book *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, without acknowledgement by MacIver, opens up an interesting interrogation of the connections between MacIver's sociology and that of his eighteenth-century Scottish sociological forebears that is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper.

both the social relations that occur between people and the balance of individual and communal interest that these relations display. For all his emphasis on community, MacIver makes plain right at the beginning of his sociological journey, that social life evinces 'social disharmonies, social sacrifices and social tragedies' (1914: 63) and that the discipline should never suppose that people will always conform to communal norms. There is, he writes, a 'profound sense of final failure [that] accompanies all individuality which detaches itself from social service' (1914: 63), for 'only in a highly developed society can the social initiates, the children of society, develop their potentiality; only in serving society can the developed member attain the further fulfilment of life' (1914: 64). However, MacIver does not romanticize communal life; he argues against the doctrine proposed by some nineteenth-century sociologists (such as Comte) and philosophers (such as Fichte) that people should subsume their individuality within the community. Nor does he reproduce the conservative and anti-modernist idea of much of late nineteenth-century sociology that close knit communal life is the most desirable social form (a notion described as one of the discipline's five 'unit ideas', see Nisbet, 1967). 'Society has no life but the life of its members', MacIver writes (1914: 58), 'no ends that are not their ends, and no fulfilment beyond theirs', so individuality should not be suppressed by excessively oppressive and regulated communities; but neither should collective interest be made subservient to individual self-interest. Sociality and individuality develop *pari passu*, as 'VVB' (1917: 111) put it in the review of MacIver's later book on community that expanded these notions, or in more modern phrasing, individuals express and fulfil themselves only in society but without individuality, society is oppressive to the point of instability and decline.[10]

MacIver took this basic sociological principle through to its inevitable end by exploring the various types of social formation and the diversity of social life. Formulation of the idea that the self is social took Macmurray on much the same task and in a similar direction but oblivious to MacIver. In *Conditions of Freedom* (1947), for example, Macmurray writes that 'we become persons in community in virtue of our relations to others. Human life is inherently a common life' (1947[1993]: 37). This led him naturally to seek to clarify the various forms of social organization, and he developed further the notion first expressed in the 1935 *Reason and Emotion* that 'society' and 'community' could be distinguished (whereas MacIver treats them as indistinguishable): as

[10] Again it is remarkable that Ferguson is not acknowledged as a direct Scottish precursor of the same idea.

a form of human association society was constituted by a common purpose, community by a common life. He ventured further into sociology's territory by claiming that politics was the vehicle by which common purpose was pursued, religion the source of the shared life that people had in common. He understood religion in a very sociological way, redolent of Durkheim's famous 1912 study *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, wherein religion was socially constructed for the purpose of social solidarity–allowing society, in Durkheim's infamous phrase, to worship itself. In Macmurray's philosophy of personal relations, religion was both helpful in creating and cementing community life and was itself the social outcome of people's need for sociality, of our need for communion with others; a sentiment one might have expected from the atheist MacIver not the Christian Macmurray. 'We may define the function of religion', Macmurray writes in *Persons in Relation*, 'as being to create, maintain and deepen the community of persons and to extend it without limit' (1961: 163); ideas developed in the 1965 Swarthmore Lectures published as *Search for Reality in Religion*.

The point I am sure is now laboured: Scottish philosophy and sociology meet in the modern era in the persons of Macmurray and MacIver but there is no evidence they knew of each other and they made no references to the other's work. Beyond disciplinary closure, a further possible reason for this is the existence of the Atlantic Ocean; physical as well as disciplinary boundaries kept Macmurray and MacIver apart despite Macmurray being an indomitable Scot and MacIver being a very Scottish writer. It is to this claim that I now turn, beginning first with some basic biographical details.

The Man, His Life and Work

Robert Morrison MacIver was born in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides in 1882. The family was Gaelic speaking and strict Presbyterian but otherwise not conventional for the area. Stornoway was the largest urban settlement on the Island and the family were merchants of Harris Tweed and were thus moderately wealthy for the district and fully bilingual; in the unpublished 'Reminiscences' (1960: 1) MacIver refers to the family as petit bourgeois, with an atmosphere that combined a great belief in education with a fervent religiosity. His father was 'country born', his mother 'town bred' (MacIver, 1968: 2), the latter more sophisticated, less tradition bound and more liberal in her religion (MacIver, 1968: 4). It was his mother who encouraged his reading

of classic Victorian literature (1968: 4); he writes in one of his unpublished papers, 'we had a respectable library and reading was encouraged, especially the classics of English literature' (1960: 2). There were more material trappings of wealth too. The family had a servant, who also worked in the family shop, and a nursemaid, and they later acquired the first automobile on the Island, MacIver's father adding car hire to his business establishment. He lived a close-knit family life, with two maternal aunts and a maternal uncle living next door. Robert was a studious and ambitious boy, considering himself ahead of his teachers, and easily won a bursary at the relatively tender age of sixteen to study classics at Edinburgh University. Looking back seventy years later in his autobiography, he puts into the youngster's mouth the following reflection as he waited for the steamer to the mainland: 'I was sure I would never make my home on that Island again' (1968: 42). He was a prodigious scholar and succeeded easily. He was awarded his MA in 1903 and DPhil in 1905. He studied for a BA in Greats at Oriel College, Oxford, awarded in 1907, the year he joined Aberdeen University as a lecturer in philosophy. Between 1911–15 he taught lectures under the title of sociology before moving to North America where he stayed the rest of his life to pursue a very successful career in sociology.

It is necessary to point out here however, that MacIver remained a political philosopher as much as sociologist–the Lieber Chair he occupied at Columbia was jointly in Political Philosophy and Sociology–and he continued to greatly value the Greeks for their political ideas, reflecting his early training. In many ways he was a polymath, writing the entry on sociology in the very first *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences* in 1934, alongside studies of government, juvenile delinquency and International Relations, amongst many other things. He continued to write political treatises and on topical issues in a manner that today we would label 'public sociology',[11] and he thought of himself as a social scientist rather than sociologist (1960: 4).

[11] His major publications are: *Community: A Sociological Study* (1917), *Labor in a Changing World* (1919), *Elements of Social Science* (1921), *The Modern State* (1926), *Relation of Sociology and Social Work* (1931), *Society: A Textbook in Sociology* (1937; a new edition was published in 1950 under the title *Society: An Introductory Analysis*, with Charles H. Page), *Leviathan and the People* (1939), *Towards an Abiding Peace* (1939), *Social Causation* (1942, revised edition in 1964), *The Web of Government* (1947), *The More Perfect Union* (1949), *Democracy and the Economic Challenge* (1952), *Academic Freedom in our Time* (1955), *The Pursuit of Happiness* (1955), *The Nation and the United Nations* (1959), *Life: Its Dimensions and Bounds* (1960), *The Challenge of the Passing Years* (1962), *Power Transformed* (1964), *The Prevention and Control of Delinquency* (1966), *As A Tale That Is Told* (1968, his autobiography), *Politics and Society* (1969), *On Community, Society, and Power: Selected Writings* (1970).

A Scottish Intellectual Abroad?

At the time of his death, United States' sociologists appropriated MacIver as one of their own. Biographical and encyclopaedia entries emphasize his contribution to North American sociology. An obituary in *The American Sociologist* by a former doctoral student never mentioned that he taught sociology in Aberdeen or Toronto (Komarovsky, 1971). Obituaries gave only passing comment to his Scottishness and none pondered whether Scotland had a lasting effect to connect his life and work. This idea has not been developed since because he was very quickly forgotten. Like many sociological figures whose reputation is rapidly put in perspective retrospectively, citations to MacIver's work fell off almost immediately after his death and thus far he waits to be rediscovered anew by later generations. Elzbieta Halas (2001) has suggested that MacIver was forgotten precisely because of his placement firmly in US sociology, since its obsession with grand theory and abstract empiricism made the discipline develop in the United States in ways inimical to MacIver's interests (MacIver complains about these trends in his autobiography, where he writes that he was 'generally out of line with the prevailing notions and doctrines of American sociology', see 1968: 110; also see the unpublished paper 'Reminiscences', 1960: 10-11). It was common amongst US sociologists at the time of his death to portray MacIver as a link between Europe and North American sociology and he is featured in the so-called Europeanization thesis, which points to the large number of émigrés in US sociology, although the concentration was on German and continental émigrés; Scotland did not figure in much of the debate. Today MacIver is neglected in sociology, although outside the academy environmental activists occasionally utilise his writings on community as part of their discourse on local sustainability and some defenders of the Gaelic language have appropriated his work on community to argue that vibrant languages require particular kinds of social relations.

It is interesting to speculate about the extent to which his *oeuvre* carried the imprint of Scotland and the Outer Hebrides in particular. There are at least two possible influences of Scotland on his intellectual work, one substantive, the other theoretical and methodological, which I can address here only at a very general level. With respect to substantive influences, MacIver's sociological work shows a fascination with the relationship between individuals and society, between individual autonomy and tight-knit communities, or put another way, the compatibility of individualism and strong social organization. He portrayed societies as evolving from highly communal societies to states

and saw that these higher forms of social organization needed to retain deep roots in the former. These were enduring themes in early sociology as observers wrestled with the nature of the social bond within the context of emerging individual freedoms and rights and as they sought to conceptualize the evident changes occurring in the nature of social organization. The proto-sociological work of the eighteenth-century Scots had the same problematic during the effervescence of Scotland's Enlightenment a century and a half earlier, and MacIver's work needs to be fully interrogated for the influence of his eighteenth-century forbears for how he conceptualized social progress. It may well be that MacIver's sociological writings are shaped by Stornoway as mediated through urban Toronto and up-town New York, in that his personal acquaintance with close knit communal life in the Western Isles and the individualized living of an urban metropolis may have given him particular insights into the relationship between individuals and society.

With respect to theoretical and methodological influences, MacIver's work straddled political philosophy and sociology and he could not separate the social from politics and power. His overall theoretical approach was inspired by classical liberal thought, as was common in the early twentieth century, but he gave his liberalism a pronounced eighteenth-century Scottish twist, in that he adopted the position of Ferguson, Millar and the early Smith in seeking to establish social restraints on the market, constraints that Ferguson called civil society and the early Smith moral sentiments. This is quite contrary to the way liberalism developed in nineteenth-century England and to the kind of liberalism that passed into early twentieth-century sociology in the United States via Herbert Spencer's dominating influence. Shortly after moving to Toronto he was nearly dismissed as a 'dangerous radical' after speaking out against the 'evils of unrestrained capitalism',[12] the campaign against him leading to the President of the University, Sir Robert Falconer, to mount his own defence of academic freedom, stating that universities should have 'no prescribed or proscribed ideas'. At this time MacIver was being described as a political economist but one clearly in the mould of the Scots not the English. This suggests that his philosophical and sociological writings justify being analysed in great depth in order to gauge the extent to which his classic liberalism was drawn from eighteenth-century Scotland not nineteenth-century England.

[12] In his autobiography he refers to his affections for the 'oppressed, the poorer classes, the powerless classes' (1968: 131), and how in the United States, the 'FBI-minded patriots would in their simplicity have labelled me a "pinko" for my pains' (1968: 134).

In methodology he was opposed to abstract empiricism and general theorising. And in this regard he may have influenced a young sociology lecturer at Columbia at this time, Charles Wright Mills, who made these the twin motifs of his infamous criticism of mid-twentieth-century US sociology in *The Sociological Imagination* (see Mills, 1959, although the archive of Mills's letters in the public domain makes no mention of MacIver). MacIver's approach – in political philosophy and sociology – was to focus on social problems (such as delinquency) and real world events (such as the installation of the United Nations, the changing nature of the state, and threats to academic freedom), and to locate them in a broader intellectual framework; this was also the approach adopted by eighteenth-century Scottish writers who used their proto-sociology to engage real issues around social change in commercial Scotland. 'Real sociological investigation begins', he wrote in his autobiography, 'where the statistics end' (1968: 129); and he discloses what was 'real' in the following remark: 'society [is] an exceedingly complex structure but it is still beset by rending divisions … My urge to write took its direction and its major incentive from these considerations. I was eager to explore the problems of the social condition' (1968: 177).[13]

I am deliberately couching these Scottish traces in very general and highly speculative terms, but the ground is firmer with respect to MacIver's treatment of the notion of community, and this is worth deeper consideration because it is terrain shared with Macmurray. Writing his autobiography at age eighty, he was very critical all those years later of his upbringing, island life and the social structure of the Isle of Lewis generally. Yet he discloses in many subtle ways throughout his autobiographical narrative that he remained all his life very much a Scottish intellectual abroad, for his portrayal of his life's work as the exploration of the nature of the social bond, and the way he conceived that bond, drew heavily on his Scottish roots. Stornoway proved a critical 'space of selfhood' to lasting effect. In so arguing one confronts an autobiographical conundrum since MacIver's narrative denudes the Isle of Lewis of any positive influence. At one point he recognises that 'every scholar bears the stamp of his time and environment' (1968: 151), but assiduously avoids to write himself into this approach, save

[13] In one of his unpublished papers in the Columbia University archive, entitled 'The Scholar in Society' (MacIver, nd: 2), he notes with approval that 'nowadays the scholar is drawn into the vortex of social debate and conflict. Even the philosopher escapes no more', and that the true scholar 'endeavours to apply the knowledge he acquires to the problems of human living, of human beliefs and human values' (nd: 10).

perhaps as a negative when he writes, 'we must protest that our inheritance is within us' (1968: 263).

"We Must Protest That our Inheritance is Within Us"

The autobiography on which the following analysis is based is very traditional in its deployment of chronology to order events and achievements and in its neglect of reflexive narrative to make his own connection between his life and work. However, there are three levels at which this legacy operates: the attention he gave to the importance of community, for which the Isle of Lewis was positive; the way he came to conceive of community as carrying the dangers of moral oppressiveness and the crushing of individuality, resulting in him giving the Island a negative hue; and the enduring tokens of Island life and upbringing he carried with him that impacted on the diaspora intellectual networks he was part of.[14]

In the autobiography he writes on one occasion of how he envisages the social bond, views unchanged from the early articles in *The Sociological Review* a half century before:

> Society is about belongingness, community, interdependence, intra and inter-group relations; the individual is an individual only because society creates and shapes and informs his being…the fact that human beings belong together in groups, classes, nations, brotherhoods of all kinds means more than that they feel alike, behave alike. They have as unities a common feeling invoked by their togetherness. They are social animals…Community has always been the central theme of my work and thus the title of my first book was prophetic as a life interest (1968: 129–30).

It cannot be puzzling that he came to such a view of the centrality of communal life after experiencing island life as the quintessential communal upbringing.

At first sight thus it does appear strange that his autobiographical narrative is dominated by critique against the Isle of Lewis. Even though he was brought up in a more liberal religious setting than most Islanders and in

[14] The remarks about diaspora networks will be restricted in this paper to his time in Toronto. It is intended to consult further the MacIver archive in Columbia University to expand these arguments to his years in New York.

relative prosperity, MacIver regales against the rigidity and austerity of attitude he found in his home, leading him, he writes seventy or so years later, to a 'painful struggle against these authoritarian pressures' (1968: 33), a 'feeling of moral oppressiveness in our home atmosphere' (1968: 46). In 'Reminiscences' (1960: 1), MacIver states that the Island's religious orthodoxy 'became for me hopelessly at war with nature'. In his autobiography, he referred to his religious upbringing as indoctrination and to Christianity – and all religions – as 'ancient myths bred on the union of Eastern mysticism and the ranker of Calvinist superstition' (1968: 125). He was eager to leave home and move to cosmopolitan Edinburgh: 'I longed for a freer air … I wanted to belong to this greater world, away from the inhibitions and prohibitions of home, I wanted new opportunities and challenges' (1968: 33); 'living at home had lost much of its appeal' (1968: 36). Hence he puts into the nervous little youngster's mouth while waiting with trepidation for the ferry to leave, the prophetic comment 'of one thing I was sure, I would never make my home on that Island again' (1968: 42). On arriving in the city he recalled, so many years later, 'I felt emancipated, adult, independent … I could wander where and when I wanted' (1968: 43).

Emphatic as they are, these views mellowed with age from those contained in Appendix 3 of the autobiography, which is a contemporary account of his feelings about visiting the Island again in the mid-1930s. MacIver made a trip home in 1921 and visited family on mainland Scotland as late as 1949, but Appendix 3 records his feelings at the time on making his last visit to the Island. By now his parents were dead, his siblings scattered, and he felt a stranger on the Island, 'so much alone' (1968: 255) in his experiencing of a 'lost world of the smells of earth and sea' (1968: 257). Nostalgia aside – and one can only imagine the intensity of emotion as he walked through his past like this – it was a crueller tongue that lashed. Such a land had bred its own people he recognised, 'with little appreciation of human brotherhood' (1968: 261). Social change was appearing on the Island – slate roofs were ousting thatch, the car banishing the jaunting car and the steam drifter had replaced the old wherry – but the people remained 'gloomy, repressive, bitterly orthodox. There is no beauty in its holiness or gladness in its praise' (1968: 261).

> Instead it seeks to close every avenue of escape. It abhors dance and gaiety. It regards art and beauty as lures of the devil or at best as profane pursuits unworthy of the seriousness of life. It includes the most natural diversions under the formidable and unarguable name of sin. It is the enemy of youth, making men and women old before

> their time…The association of the body with sin poisons the mental atmosphere…The countryman drowns his melancholy in liquor. He is the desperate drinker who drinks, not to enjoy himself but to feel free (1968: 261–2).

He says he would be sorry to overestimate the part played by repression and reaction in the life of this Island people, but, remembering 'here in my own youth', 'my spirit protested within me against these mighty and oppressive claims, I remember the growing sense of relief, of spiritual emancipation' from beliefs, habits and traditions 'bred in the darkness' of the Islanders' 'suffering and ignorance' (1968: 263). He announced himself someone who did not belong to those who always deplore the decline of the ancient spirits and superstitions; better that customs should pass and that institutions change 'than that a people should preserve them in its own decay' (1968: 260).[15]

It might reasonably be argued that MacIver's anger was limited to the Island's religion and that it was his atheism rather than his sociology that motivated this complaint. His diatribe at one level is mostly against the persistence of religion on the Island–the Isle of Lewis 'more than most' has preserved religion's social hold–but ever much the sociologist, which by disciplinary nature reduces religion to the social purposes it fulfils and to the social structure that embeds it, MacIver ends his reflections in such a way as to make clear to himself (for the personal statement was not intended for any audience but himself, at least at the time) that religion on the Island was synonymous with the social structure that it upheld and through which it worked. In the final paragraphs he writes:

> Now, looking backward, I perceive that the thing which was hard to struggle against was not the creed itself. As soon as one permits oneself to think freely, its hold relaxes. The difficulty was with that which checked one's thought, the compulsion of the social influences which guard the creed…He who denies the faith is outcast, but he who deserts it is anathema…They are in truth, in their interests as in their thoughts,

[15] I am very grateful to Geoff Payne for bringing to my attention an interesting vignette. Patrick Geddes's son Arthur did fieldwork on the Isle of Lewis in 1919 and again some years later (Geddes, 1955). In personal correspondence with me, Payne describes Arthur Geddes adopting a stance deeply sympathetic to the Lewis people, their religion, traditional customs and the Gaelic language so unlike MacIver. This may be due to generational differences between the two as well as biographical differences, deriving from MacIver's deeper and longer experience of the place.

> still remarkably remote. The spirit of industrialism has never touched this island… to such a folk, what do the great names of capitalism and socialism matter? (1968: 264)

For all its evocation of communal living, of togetherness and interdependence, qualities that MacIver came to see as marking the social bond, the Isle of Lewis demonstrated another sociological truism. The dense social structure of the Island that gave people the compulsion to conform to the social bond, including to the social institution of religion, that effected the myriad of social influences that conditioned people's thought and behaviour, could suppress individuality and lead to moral oppressiveness. Without directly acknowledging it his autobiographical narrative therefore, MacIver's Stornoway upbringing was critical to the way he came to envisage sociology, both for the centrality he accorded the notion of community and also for the way that the social bond was conceptualized as requiring a balance of sociability and individuality, independence and interdependence, communal togetherness and individual autonomy. This does no more than restate the central concern of sociology down the centuries (and aligns him with Macmurray) but this age-old sociological paradox was lived by MacIver as a biographical experience. His life and his work were thus more closely related than his protestations against the 'inheritance within him' would suggest.

There is another sense in which MacIver remained Scottish, for his autobiographical narrative discloses the tokens of Scotland and his upbringing that he kept throughout the later 'spaces of selfhood' in Toronto and New York. I mean this in two senses – symbolic tokens of remembrance, and the diaspora networks of Scottish intellectuals he participated in. The symbolic tokens of remembrance were many and multifarious. He expressed no great affection for his parents but later named his twins after them. He was eager to collect items from his old home on the death of his parents, 'including photographs, a few books, and particularly the great Bible containing our family records' (1968: 215). He admits that it was his Scottishness that initially made Canada attractive – 'a Scot is not unlikely to feel more at ease migrating to Canada than living in England' (1968: 78) – feeling more at home there clearly than in Oxford, and his family built a summer house on a lakeside that must have replicated the Isle of Lewis in scenery and remoteness (but not cultural oppressiveness), that they maintained well after moving to the US and only sold when a similar summer house was established on Cape Cod. They even had a maid imported from Scotland for their Canadian lakeside retreat

(1968: 91). And he describes Cape Cod – interestingly another island fishing area (at least then) – in terms that replicate the Isle of Lewis. The distinctions of his upbringing between country-born and town bred Islanders that he refers to directly in his autobiography (1968: 2) were replicated in Cape Cod, whose residents were up-side Islanders or down-side (1968: 168), marking a social distance and a mental map that was reminiscent of his parents' kinship network and which he obviously lived with happily for long summers for much of his later life. It is perhaps thus no surprise that in 1920, he wrote a letter to Graham Wallas, LSE professor of political philosopher and a fellow Scot, asking him to keep MacIver abreast of any appointments he knew to be forthcoming in Scotland; clearly he wanted to return.[16]

There is no hint of this in his autobiography but he does use the self-appellation of 'Highlander' on several occasions, including a selection of photographs in the book that are emblematic of his life, one of which has him in full Highland dress, with MacIver clan kilt. He notes that for all his travels he retained throughout a strong Scottish accent, refusing to adopt the intonation of North Americans. While at Aberdeen he joined the Gordon Highlander Territorials as first lieutenant (from which dates his possession of Highland dress and the photograph). This is indicative of the social networks he immersed himself in while in Aberdeen. While he came to consider the Territorials as too militaristic – 'a feeling of revulsion gradually came over me' (1968: 69) – his intellectual networks at Aberdeen were Highland. At Aberdeen his circle of friends was restricted to a group of 'Highland scholars', as he calls them, a collection of 'kindred scholars' (1968: 245), people like himself in background, from places in the West of Scotland even remoter than Aberdeen was to become (he fails to see the irony of someone from the Outer Hebrides describing Aberdeen as remote, see 1968: 72). Within sociology he knew émigré Scots in England, such as Patrick Geddes, and through him Branford ('VVB'), who had spent twenty-five years or so growing up in Edinburgh. He also knew James Seth, Professor at the University of Edinburgh, who assisted him in obtaining a position in Canada.

It is diaspora networks like this that took him to Toronto. There had been a general migration to Canada of dispossessed crofters during the nineteenth-century clearances but the intellectual diaspora was as dramatic, even if not on the same scale. With a concern to resist the Americanization of the University of Toronto, its early founders deliberately recruited from Britain (see Friedland,

[16] The letter forms part of the Wallas papers at the LSE and I am grateful to John Scott for bringing it to my attention.

2002); the first principal was an Irishman (John McCaul, formerly of Trinity College Dublin), and at the time of MacIver's appointment the principal was Sir Robert Falconer, a Charlottesville-born Presbyterian clergyman and New Testament scholar, who has been described as scouting the ground in Britain on frequent hiring trips (Falconer, 2002: 120). The University of Toronto had a long tradition of Scots working on archaeology, anthropology and ethnology, dating from Sir Daniel Wilson, who had been a member of the Society of Antiquarians of Scotland and had worked on Scotland's prehistoric archaeology, a link taken further by Thomas McIlwraith, who followed Wilson some years later and who although was Canadian had spent the First World War in the King's Own Scottish Borderers. It is unclear how well MacIver knew the Scottish ethnologists and anthropologists in Toronto – he was in a department of political economy – but MacIver's first head of department in Toronto, James Mavor, was himself a Stranraer-born son of the manse, and much favoured hiring academics from Britain. Mavor returned to Scotland on retirement and was well known to the Scottish ex-patriots who dominated early British sociology. Patrick Geddes's obituary of Mavor (Geddes, 1926: 155–6), described his department of political economy as 'the most comprehensive and fully sociological in the world', and it is clear from Mavor's autobiography (Mavor, 1923) that he was conversant with the discipline. Together Mavor and MacIver were instrumental in appointing social scientists from Britain, such as the social geographer Patrick Dobbs, a nephew of the Webbs at the LSE, and the social philosopher Edward Johns Urwick, another LSE man with whom MacIver had a close relationship, and who helped found the department of social work in Toronto. When in England, Urwick had published a little in sociology and was an associate of Geddes and Branford in the early Sociological Society and went on to assist in the establishment of *The Sociological Review*, to which MacIver was an early contributor.[17]

[17] I am grateful to John Scott for pointing out to me the friendship between MacIver and Urwick and that Urwick was appointed to the University of Toronto on the sponsorship of MacIver. I am grateful to David Livingstone for information on the Scottish connection with anthropology and ethnology in Toronto. MacIver describes in one of his unpublished papers that he took over 'direction of a school of social work under the auspices of the University' and that it was through this – as well as his own teaching – that he tried to establish sociology in Toronto (see MacIver, 1960: 9). Moffat (2001) has published an account of the history of social work in Toronto University. The Geddes-MacIver association also bears further investigation. In his autobiography MacIver mentions meeting Geddes, whom he describes as 'the great pioneer in the planning of cities' (1968: 58), spending two weeks with him on one occasion on holiday in Torquay, and later MacIver wrote an unpublished paper 'The

These sorts of diaspora networks in Canada justify further interrogation. We are certain at this stage however, that MacIver felt Canada was attractive as a place to which to emigrate because of its Scottish links, its ease as a place to live compared to England (1968: 78) – 'for a Highland Scot, England, in its most traditional enclave, was like a foreign country' (1968: 58). On leaving for Canada he says in his autobiography that 'I had no expectation of ever remigrating to my native land. It was a total renunciation of the associations I held dear, of the treasured home of all my memories … my natural optimism rebounded to thoughts of the new experiences, the adventures, the "fresh woods and pastures new" that Canada would hold for me' (1968: 77), although the 1920 letter to Wallas expressing his wish to return shows how unreliable old people's reflections on their youth can be. Yet paradoxically, in his autobiography MacIver implies that it was its Scottishness that alienated him from Canada. After ten years his diaspora experience 'did not develop into a genuine belongingness' (1968: 78), although such a comment reinforces the importance he placed both in sociology and his personal life on achieving belongingness somewhere. 'I came gradually to recognize I was not only in a new land but among a different people, a conjuncture of heterogeneous migrations, unwelded by common traditions' (1968: 78). He found a nation united only in antipathy to the United States and people who 'looked across the ocean for their spiritual home', seemingly thus too locked in the diaspora experience (he noted in passing that Ontario was dominated by Scots and Scots-Irish migrants), so much so that 'although I enjoyed my life in Canada and made good friends, I never attained the warmth of a permanent attachment' (1968: 79). At one point in his autobiography he describes ice-skating as the 'one joy I owed to Canada alone' (1968: 241).

This may represent a desire to escape his own diaspora experience by leaving Scotland further behind, as if it were its Scottishness that made Canada problematic, or an attempt to resolve it by seeking somewhere better to recreate the sense of permanence and belonging that he once had in Scotland. The move to the United States in 1925 only intensifies the paradox, for his work had little circulation in US sociology at the time; amidst a litany of glowing reviews of his first book *Community*, the leading US sociology journal carried an appraisal by Robert E. Park, by this time one of the country's most famous sociologists, that damned it as thin, vague and insubstantial, adjectives wounding enough for MacIver to still feel their hurt in his autobiography fifty years

Approach to Social Planning', a copy of which is in the Columbia University archive with marginal corrections in MacIver's hand throughout.

later (see 1968: 87). Nor was the department he moved then in great shape, for Columbia – 'that troublesome department' (1968: 137)[18] – was racked with factionalism and backbiting, and colleagues like Lynd and Lazersfeld he later panned for their distortion of 'real sociology' and by implication their substitution of true scholarship for 'fact-finding' (see his unpublished paper, 'The Scholar in Society', nd: 4; these are criticisms familiar to followers of Columbia's other sociological rebel, Charles Wright Mills, see Brewer, 2004). The autobiographical narrative makes no comment on New York as a space of selfhood and provides no clue to the attractiveness of the move to the US. Like the exit from Stornoway and then Aberdeen, the narrative is couched in the negative: it was what was wrong with Canada. The unpublished paper 'Reminiscences' (1960: 9) says only that he 'had always a hankering for the intriguing but indeterminate subject of sociology, which in all the institutions of learning I had known had been regarded as a kind of bastard seeking recognition'. It was only on his move to the US that he found himself in a department bearing the bastard's name; and yet he found the approach to sociology there unsatisfying. 'I have often felt uneasy – I feel so today – concerning the way the subject of sociology was being pursued. It has been largely an American subject … it easily became the victim of a series of fads and fashions … I have a deep respect for sociology as a subject of inquiry, but much less for what is done in its name' (1960: 11). Sociology he describes as 'his primary love', yet he lived with her 'always uncomfortably' (1960: 11).

The wish to consummate that passion may well be all that there is behind his move to the United States and while the relationship with sociology was painful he experienced none of the intellectual restlessness of his Columbia colleague C. Wright Mills, for MacIver notes in his autobiography, at a stage of his life which he captures in the chapter title as 'mid career', 'nor was I disturbed by the sense of the unattained, the falling short of the mark, with the concomitant urge toward creative activity. I had become established as of some account in the profession. I seemed to be moving more or less contentedly' (1968: 133). The one disruption to self-satisfaction was unhappiness over the backbiting in his sociology department (1968: 134). In the absence of a diaspora narrative (although this is said without yet consulting his private letters), one can only conjecture that he had at last found, despite his troublesome colleagues, the sense of belongingness that marked the fault with Canada and that his upbringing in Stornoway had placed within him. The New York intellectual

[18] Sociology at Columbia has generated a considerable literature, for a selection see Halas (2001) and Wallace (1991).

networks he was part of bear further study to explore whether they had the same character as those in Aberdeen and Toronto, so that we might more fully place MacIver as sociologist and Scotsman.

Conclusion

It is worth emphasizing that the puzzle MacIver presents us as a sociologist and Scotsman is of his own making. His autobiographical narrative is enigmatic. It denudes, vociferously, Stornoway of positive effects on his life and work, protesting at one point against any inheritance within him, yet he articulates fulsomely an approach to sociology and its substantive focus – one that he bases around community and the need for the social bond to manage the tension between individuality and sociability – that clearly bears the imprint of his upbringing. This suggests that Scotland remained a significant 'space of selfhood' that connects his life and work, a space of production – and perhaps also a space of reception – that mediated his biography and sociology. There are hints at this in the autobiographical narrative in the traces of remembrance of Scotland it reveals and in the disclosures about the diaspora intellectual networks he was integrated into during the early part of his career. Protestations about the inheritance within him may disguise his all-too-well awareness that he kept more of Scotland through his life than its accent. That the brogue was all he was prepared to admit to as Scotland's footfall adds more dimensions to the paradox and justifies exploring further this exemplar of the Scottish intellectual diaspora. Ideas get universalized as they circulate amongst intellectual elites, adding to their globalization, yet in one sense we construct the globalization of ideas in local spaces and only thereafter strip them of their local production and reception. We elide the local and the global when it comes to ideas and MacIver's case suggests we would profit from disentangling them.

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