The Role of the Scottish Renaissance in the (Re)construction of a Multilingual Identity Reverberating Internationally

*Le rôle de la Renaissance écossaise dans la (re)construction d'une identité
plurilingue à la résonance internationale*

Arnaud Fiasson

Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesecossaises/1396>

ISSN: 1969-6337

Publisher

UGA Éditions/Université Grenoble Alpes

Printed version

ISBN: 978-2-37747-047-1

ISSN: 1240-1439

Electronic reference

Arnaud Fiasson, « The Role of the Scottish Renaissance in the (Re)construction of a Multilingual Identity Reverberating Internationally », *Études écossaises* [Online], 20 | 2018, Online since 01 April 2018, connection on 08 September 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesecossaises/1396>

This text was automatically generated on 8 September 2020.

© Études écossaises

The Role of the Scottish Renaissance in the (Re)construction of a Multilingual Identity Reverberating Internationally

Le rôle de la Renaissance écossaise dans la (re)construction d'une identité plurilingue à la résonance internationale

Arnaud Fiasson

- 1 The Scottish Renaissance originated in the Celtic Twilight guided by Patrick Geddes, the author of the article “The Scots Renaissance” published in *Evergreen* in 1895. Nevertheless, the inter-war movement is to be distinguished from the Celtic Twilight and the search for a golden age. Whereas both movements searched for the roots of the national spirit, the Renaissance found in cultural precedents a new way to engage Scottish society with its present and its future. This article focuses on the role of the actors of the Scottish Renaissance and examines their private correspondence and their contribution to the intellectual and literary scene in Scotland. It reveals that the programme of the Scottish Renaissance endeavoured to liberate Scotland from the influence exerted by English culture, to break with the artistic traditions that had relegated Scottish identity to the ostensible sentimentalism of Highlandism, the Kailyard and the imitation of the poetry of Robert Burns, and to promote the international stature of Scottish culture in the 1920s and 1930s. It will also be argued that the linguistic diversity characteristic of the Renaissance mirrored the various political ambitions of its actors who played a more or less active role in the multifaceted nationalist movement in Scotland.

Deconstruction: a necessary procedure to reconstruct Scottish identity

- 2 The Scottish Renaissance endorsed a cultural and political agenda that sought the decolonisation of Scottish national consciousness through the regeneration of national idiosyncrasies. According to Roderick Watson, the Renaissance is indeed part of “the wider and later postcolonial process by which other cultures developed counter-discursive strategies against dominant European or anglocentric claims to universality, wary of essentialism, and alert to the dangers of simply replacing the ‘centre’ with the ‘margin’” (2009, p. 81). In the early days of the Renaissance, Alexander M’Gill noted that one of the central concerns was to reject the English tradition which was seen as being “alien” to Scottish culture.

There is so much in the general attitude towards Scottish national culture that must be destroyed if our country is ever to regain its lost soul, and without the recovery of that soul through a distinct intellectual enthusiasm there will be little life and reality in purely political strivings. It is absolutely necessary to destroy the contemptuous derision of ill-informed alien critics [...] as well as to remove the heartless neglect of the denationalised Scot.¹

- 3 The anglicisation of Scottish education, which was deemed responsible for the intellectual colonisation of Scotland and the production of a denationalising process that had forced the Scots to conceive their national identity through the lens of the parochial designation “North Britain”, can be traced to the *Education (Scotland) Act 1872*. A similar reform had been implemented two years earlier in England (*Elementary Education Act 1870*) and was a source of concern to those who feared that the English component would predominate in the homogenisation of educational systems in the United Kingdom. As Tom Devine points out, state intervention was in line with the weakening of the Kirk’s influence on Scottish society. Schooling became compulsory for children aged 5 to 13, the Kirk transferred the curriculum and the management of parish schools to school boards—composed of the local clergy and civil servants—and to the Scotch Education Department (SED) which was in charge of overseeing the implementation of the reform. Anxieties about the anglicisation of Scottish education were raised by the fact that the SED was located in London and was pulling both the administrative and financial strings that ensured the strict implementation of the reform (Devine, 2006, pp. 397–8). In other respects, Scotland’s native languages were ignored by the successive reforms of the Scottish educational system—at least until 1918 as far as Gaelic is concerned—and English became the normative language of education in Scotland.
- 4 In the early twentieth century, James Huntington Whyte, editor of the *Modern Scot* which published the work of authors, composers and artists of the Renaissance, assessed the consequences of the seemingly omnipresent English culture and language:

[...] education in Scotland today is by no means propaganda-free: whilst the teacher may profess no personal opinions on the matter, the ‘system’ does its best to make the children little Union Jack-waving Imperialists. To urge Scottish children to think of themselves as Scots would be propaganda: to help them to forget their native speech, to neglect their traditional culture, misread their nation’s history—that is not propaganda in the eyes of the Scottish Education Department. (Quoted in Crawford, 2014, p. 167)

- 5 In her private correspondence with journalist (and later Scottish National Party candidate) George Dott, Anna Augusta Whittal Ramsay claimed that the position of the teaching staff evidently allowed for the spreading of ill-informed opinions. These eventually shaped the historical consciousness of pupils in Scotland, as evidenced by the comments in some of the Leaving Certificate papers.² According to Thomas Henderson, anglocentrism was not confined to Secondary Education and it extended to Scottish universities.

Again, it is but fair to say that, on the whole, the [Scottish Education] Department's questions in Literature are more humane and intelligent than those the Universities set in their corresponding papers at their Preliminary Examinations. This is not surprising in the light of the Universities' own handling of the subjects of Scottish History and Literature. Scottish history has, of late years at least, been treated somewhat more generously, though it has a long way to go ere it can claim anything like equality of treatment with English History. But Scottish Literature! There might almost as well be no such subject, so far as the Universities are concerned. Such treatment as it gets is, in the strictest sense, incidental, as a mere episode in the vastly more important story of English Literature. (Henderson, 1932, pp. 154-5)

- 6 The dismissal of Scottish Literature lamented by Henderson echoed Thomas Stearns Eliot's answer to a question asked less than fifteen years before. In his article "Was there a Scottish Literature?" (1919), Eliot concluded that Scottish literature, being multilingual and historically fragmented, did not meet all of the five criteria he regarded as constitutive of a national literature. As a result, he considered that Scottish Literature had itself been a continuation of the English tradition. The gauntlet had been thrown down and the actors of the Scottish Renaissance picked it up. Each in their own ways and in keeping with their conceptions of the political future of Scotland, they set out to reassess the cultural value of Literature and the Arts in Scotland.

The cultural revitalisation of a multilingual nation

- 7 The ideology and the programme of the Scottish Renaissance endeavoured to politicise the literature, the arts and the languages of Scotland and they found an expression in the intellectual forum generated by the publication of numerous journals and magazines, most notably in those edited by Christopher Murray Grieve/Hugh MacDiarmid: *The Scottish Chapbook* (1922-1923), *The Scottish Nation* (1923) and *The Northern Review* (1924) (Riach, 2011, p. 37). Other periodicals contributed to the dissemination of the ideology of the Renaissance. William Power edited the *Scots Observer* from 1926 to 1934 and the *Scots Independent*, founded in 1926, would become the organ of communication of the Scottish National Party. James Huntington Whyte edited the *Modern Scot* from 1930 and to 1936, when it merged with *Scottish Standard* (1935) to give birth to *Outlook* (Normand, 2000, p. 41). Furthermore, and as evidenced by letters signed by Lewis Grassie Gibbon, it is interesting to note that the authors read and commented one another's work³ and that their private correspondence, as well as their contributions to periodicals and the literary scene, ensured that they remained informed about the evolution of the literary movement when some of its proponents had moved to live in remote locations.⁴
- 8 The slogans "Not Traditions – Precedents!" and "Not Burns – Dunbar!" advocated on the front page of the first issues of the *Scottish Chapbook* in 1922 and in *Albyn* (1927)

epitomised Grieve/MacDiarmid's strategy of breaking with literary tradition. In other words, even though Burns's poetry "revitalised the Scots language as a medium for verse [...] [while] its success virtually 'type-cast' poetry in Scots until modern times" (Watson, 2009, p. 227), MacDiarmid recommended that the artistic border be extended beyond the imitations and the cult of Robert Burns and to the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century makars such as Robert Henryson, William Dunbar or Gavin Douglas. In an article published under the pseudonym Dane M'Neil, Neil Gunn confirmed that the Renaissance was closely linked to "the existence within the nation itself of that aptitude for greatness out of which genius naturally flowers" and explained that "the harking back to Dunbar is professedly not a harking back for language so much as a harking back for greatness. [...] It is this lost greatness that the renascent Scot would strive to be restored".⁵

- 9 When MacDiarmid established the "Theory of Scots Letters" in the issues of the *Scottish Chapbook* published from February to March 1923, he laid the groundwork for a language whose words were selected from John Jamieson's *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* (1808), derived from sensory experience,⁶ or invented⁷ to bridge the gaps of a historically fragmented and stigmatised language. Notwithstanding its artificiality, MacDiarmid's linguistic experimentation in *Sangschaw* (1925), *Penny Wheep* (1926) and "A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle" (1926) allowed for the expression of poetry in Scots firmly set within an international and modern context.

"Synthetic Scots" is not simply an attempt to valorize the Scottish language in spite of the necessary inauthenticity of such a project, nor, on the other hand, is it a personal invention of MacDiarmid's; it is rather a strategy by which Scots (of all kinds) can be remobilized to produce a new kind of poetic language whose characteristics are an effect of, and effect, the political and ideological structure in which MacDiarmid's work is situated. (Grant, 1992, p. 198)

- 10 However, the question of Scotland's languages was also the source of tensions within Renaissance circles. In 1936, they came to a head when Edwin Muir, highly influenced by Eliot's monolithic vision of Scottish culture, wrote that

[...] a Scottish writer who wishes to achieve some approximation to completeness has no choice except to absorb the English tradition, and that if he thoroughly does so his work belongs not merely to Scottish literature but to English literature as well. [...] The prerequisite for an autonomous literature is a homogeneous language. (1982, pp. 4, 7)

- 11 The growing gap separating the two literary figures did not close and exerted an influence on the Scottish scene that reinforced their antagonist positions, as indicated by Muir in a biting criticism of Grieve and the Scottish Renaissance while accepting Douglas Young's invitation to give a speech on Scottish literature.⁸

- 12 The cultural regeneration attempted by the Scottish Renaissance was not restricted to the revitalisation of Scots and included the emancipation of Gaelic. In the words of James Huntington Whyte,

[t]o return to the Gaelic is not to inhibit our powers of expression, it is to widen our consciousness and to express, as we can in no other way, the fundamental spirit of our race. It is for that reason that M'Diarmid and others have, after years of experiment with the vernacular, come to realise its innumerable limitations, even in the form of so called Synthetic Scots, and have come to the Gaelic as the only satisfactory Scottish medium of expression.⁹

- 13 Although the second part of his statement praises the Gaelic novels published in the early twentieth century—Iain MacCormaic, Aonghas MacDhonnchaidh and Seumas

MacLeòid respectively wrote *Dùn Aluinn no An t-Oighre 'na Dhiobarach* (*Duneline or the Banished Heir*, 1912), *An t-Ogha Mór* (*The Great Grandchild*, 1913) and *Cailin Sgiathanach* (*Skye Girl*, 1923)—it is debatable since, towards the end of his literary career, MacDiarmid gradually favoured English over Gaelic and Scots. Yet, Whyte's comments show that the linguistic question represented a major concern. According to Alan Riach, the inclusion of words in English, Scots, Gaelic, Latin and French in MacDiarmid's *The Golden Treasury of Scottish Verse* (1940) is part of the recognition that Scotland is multilingual. In other words, Scottish literature does not reflect the experiences of a nation expressed in a single language; it expresses the multiple identities of a multilingual nation.¹⁰

The locality and multiplicity of a Scottish voice aspiring to international recognition

- ¹⁴ It would be reductive to consider that the Scottish Renaissance hinged solely on the revitalisation of Scotland's languages. Indeed, Neil Gunn denied that the exclusive use of vernacular languages was essential to the conception of Scottish nationhood, even though he admitted that Scots remained the most adequate language to express national poetry in an international context.¹¹ The cultural momentum the Renaissance tried to instil aimed to revive a dormant national sentiment and to generate a popular and social movement that would meet the national and international ambitions of the nation. The actors of the Renaissance resisted the marginalising pressures of an inward looking culture. Gunn notably stated: "Thinking about his own country in any sort of fundamental way does not make a writer what is called 'provincial'. Quite the opposite."¹² Here, Gunn emphasised a founding principle of the Renaissance, namely that the universal themes explored in literature both transcended national characteristics and grounded the Scottish literary scene in an international framework. In that respect, Willa Muir's assessment of her novel *Imagined Corners* (1931) is worth noting.

I was not trying to write a Nationalist novel. I was trying to illumine life, not to reform it; to follow my own light, not deliberately to expose blind-alleys in Scotland; although, being Scottish, my approach to any universal problem is bound to be by way of Scottish characters, and, if I illumine life at all, the illumination must shine into a few blind-alleys, especially, perhaps, in Scottish life! Well, well, wait till my next one. It will be Scottish too, but I hope it will be more universal.¹³

- ¹⁵ As it were, the exploration of national idiosyncrasies was considered as a preliminary step in the expression of international values opposed to and distinct from a narrow-minded vision of Scottish culture.
- ¹⁶ The recognition of Scotland's participation to Modernism in Europe was confirmed in 1924 by French academic Denis Saurat.¹⁴ In other respects, it should be noted that Scottish theatre and its supportive structure "worked both through strong native traditions and openness to international influence" (Hutchison, 2007, p. 148). The Scottish Community Drama Association (SCDA), founded in 1926, boasted 25 amateur companies during the first festival it organised. By 1936, that number had risen to 1,000 companies and more than 25,000 amateur players (Campbell, 1996, p. 101). Gunn, whose play *The Ancient Fire* was first performed by the Scottish National Players (1921–1947) at the Lyric Theatre in 1929, deplored the absence of a national theatre and the attraction

to the London stage. Nevertheless, he applauded the efforts of the Scottish National Theatre Society: “On the long list of printed names, only a small minority is Scottish Nationalist in politics. It is as if it had been decided to approach the national problem from an international point of view.”¹⁵ The Scottish National Theatre Society did not set out to establish a national theatre whose repertoire would be limited to the production of plays about selected aspects of Scottish life, written by Scottish playwrights and performed by Scottish players; it proposed the establishment of a national structure that would train professional players and produce internationally acclaimed plays. Accordingly, the goal was not to establish a national, parochial and inward-looking structure but rather a national theatre celebrating international influences. The 1940s saw part of such a vision being achieved: Glasgow Unity Theatre operated from 1941 to 1951, James Bridie founded the Glasgow Citizens’ Theatre in 1943 and the first College of Drama of Scotland in 1950, and the Edinburgh International Festival has attracted international and national companies since its inception in 1947.

- 17 Scottish art also went through a revival that emphasised the anchoring of its national character within international influence. The inclination towards bypassing the artistic centre in London was emblematic of the Scottish Colourists and was followed by the painters associated with the Scottish Renaissance. In addition to his editorship, James Huntington Whyte ran an art gallery in St Andrews which acted as an artistic counterweight to the predominantly literary forum of the *Modern Scot*, although the periodical reproduced some of the works of Scottish artists. The gallery featured paintings by the Scottish Colourist, James Cowie and William Gillies, and also by less internationally acclaimed artists such as Douglas Percy Bliss, Edwin Calligan, Sydney d’Home Shepherd, or Graham Murray, among others (Normand, 2000, pp. 50–3). A place was also given to Scottish art in the form of collaboration between writers and artists. For example, MacDiarmid’s poem “From Another Window in Thrums” (*To Circumjack Cencrastus or the Curly Snake*, 1930) was inspired by William McCance’s *From Another Window in Thrums* (1928) painting and John Duncan Ferguson designed ‘decorations’ to be published in MacDiarmid’s *In Memoriam James Joyce* (1955). These interactions between several figures of Modernism in Scotland show that the revitalisation of Scottish culture was open to international influence and that it was not restricted to a particular field. As a result, it could be argued that the Scottish voice was multilingual, both literally (it finds an expression in different languages) and figuratively (given its aesthetic diversity). This argument could also be applied to other forms of art, such as music (Francis George Scott, Ronald Stevenson), architecture (Robert Lorimer and the Scottish War Memorial, 1927) or sculpture (James Pittendrigh Macgillivray, Pilkington Jackson).

Reconstructing the boundaries of an independent Scotland

- 18 The cultural claims on the agenda of the Scottish Renaissance were closely linked to political and socio-economic issues raised by the emerging nationalist movement in Scotland and the ideological environment in Europe in the inter-war years. The plurality of the Scottish voice extended from various artistic fields to the multiple political convictions which drove Scottish nationalists (with a small “n”). For instance, several literary figures of the National Party of Scotland (1928–1934) were candidates in

various elections. Poet Lewis Spence was selected to stand as the first candidate of the party but lost the Midlothian and Peebles by-election in 1929. Compton Mackenzie succeeded to former Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin as rector of the University of Glasgow in 1931. In 1933, Eric Linklater lost the East Fife by-election and subsequently provided a satirical portrait of the Scottish Renaissance in *Magnus Merriman* (1934). Furthermore, an examination of the private correspondence between literary figures reveals that they did not share the same political ideology. Whereas Lewis Grassie Gibbon “loath[ed] Fascism” and struggled to join the Communist Party of Great Britain,¹⁶ James Bridie remained sceptical about the essentialist vision of the nationalists who sought the construction of a “Gaelic State”¹⁷ while stretching the search for the national spirit to extremes. Prior to becoming leader of the Scottish National Party (1942–1945), Douglas Young declared in 1939: “If Hitler could neatly remove our imperial breeks somehow and thus dissipate the mirage of Imperial partnership with England etc. he would do a great service to Scottish Nationalism.” (Quoted in Bowd, 2013, p. 131) This dissonance among literary figures was further exemplified by Neil Gunn’s article in which the novelist shun the essentialist conception of Scottish identity and focused his energies on making the socio-economic case for the creation of the Highland Hydro-Electric scheme and how it could be beneficial to the Highlands, and particularly to Glen Affric.¹⁸

- ¹⁹ MacDiarmid added fuel to the ideological discord and proved to be a controversial figure within the nationalist circle of the National Party of Scotland, especially to Tom Gibson who claimed that the “idiotic statements of Grieve”¹⁹ had led to the formation of a rival political formation advocating home rule for Scotland—the Scottish Party. John McCormick wrote that “C. M. Grieve has been politically one of the greatest handicaps with which any national movement could have been burdened” (2008, p. 35). Most notably, MacDiarmid expounded a “programme for a Scottish Fascism” that sat uncomfortably in the eyes of the nationalist movement.²⁰ It is worth pointing out that, to some extent, his programme mirrored the agenda of the Scottish Renaissance since it aimed to liberate Scotland from the influence of the English centre through the construction of a new political ideology that hinged on the reclamation of the land and aspired to combine Scottish nationalism with a form of international socialism.²¹ MacDiarmid was expelled from the National Party of Scotland as a result of his communist inclination and then expelled twice from the Communist Party due to his nationalist convictions. As David Goldie argues, the position of MacDiarmid in the margins of literary conventions and political ideology allowed for “the possibility of eventually recentring his political and cultural practice in a reconstituted sense of Scottishness” (2011, p. 126).
- ²⁰ In spite of the ideological diversity that was in existence, a shared impetus drove the cultural ambitions of the Scottish Renaissance and the political demands of the nationalist movement. A few years before he was imprisoned as a result of his involvement in the Scottish Neutrality League at a time when Nazism was threatening Europe, Arthur Donaldson lamented the marginal position of Scotland within the UK political landscape and he protested against the supremacy of a Parliament dominated by English parliamentarians. He also argued that the reconstruction of the economic, political and social borders of a self-governing Scotland were inseparable from the revitalisation of a Scottish culture which had been overcome by Anglicisation as well as by its sentimentalised and bucolic representation in Kailyard literature.²² Less

than a year later, he held the view that while support was low for the Scottish nationalists, momentum was building thanks to “a decided quickening everywhere of Scottish national spirit”²³ at a time when Scottish industry was hit particularly hard as a consequence of the Great Depression. He was joined in his analysis of the cultural situation of Scotland by Muirhead who concurred with the programme of the Scottish Renaissance as he wrote that “what is needed more than anything else is to awaken sleeping Scots men and women to the servile condition in which they are living and permitting themselves to be hustled hither and thither by the English dominated House in London”.²⁴ The matter of educating the youth was partially addressed when the National Party of Scotland approved the creation of a New Youth Movement reserved to individuals aged 16 to 26 and destined to revitalise the ranks of the party.²⁵

- 21 The authors of the Scottish Renaissance recommended the harking back to the foundations of Scottish literature, rejected what they viewed as the ostensibly damaging sentimentality of Victorian Scotland, and established a cultural continuity that neutralised an allegedly deformed version of Scottishness produced by unionist-nationalism. Although the medium of expression and the languages used by the actors of the Scottish Renaissance differed, they operated in the margins of the English artistic and literary frames. The Scottish modernists aimed to transgress the boundaries of Scottish identity fixed by unionist-nationalism and their works claimed to be universal through their localism. Similarly to Robert Burns and Walter Scott in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the use of the languages of Scotland represented an act of cultural resistance. But in the twentieth century, Scotland’s linguistic diversity was underpinned by the claims to political autonomy and independence promoted by nascent nationalist organisations. As a result, the linguistic flexibility gave the Scottish modernists, some of whom were more or less closely associated with the nationalist movement, an idiom that contributed to the cultural reclamation of Scotland’s political identity through processes of national construction and deconstruction.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

National Library of Scotland

Acc. 3721, Papers of the Scottish Secretariat and of Roland Eugene Muirhead.

Acc. 5927, Papers of George Dott.

Acc. 6419, The Papers and Correspondence (1915–1973) of Douglas Young.

Acc. 11309, James Bridie.

Dep. 209, Neil M Gunn LL.D.

Works cited

BOWD Gavin, 2013, *Fascist Scotland*, Edinburgh, Birlinn.

- CAMPBELL Donald, 1996, *Playing for Scotland: A History of the Scottish Stage, 1715–1965*, Edinburgh, Mercat Press.
- CRAWFORD Robert, 2014, *Bannockburns: Scottish Independence and Literary Imagination, 1314–2014*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- DEVINE Thomas Martin, 2006, *The Scottish Nation: 1700–2007* [1999], London, Penguin Books.
- GOLDIE David, 2011, “Hugh MacDiarmid: The Impossible Persona”, in S. Lyall and M. P. McCulloch (eds), *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, pp. 125–35.
- GRANT Rena, 1992, “Synthetic Scots: Hugh MacDiarmid’s Imagined Community”, in N. K. Gish (ed.), *Hugh MacDiarmid: Man and Poet*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, pp. 191–206.
- HENDERSON Thomas, 1932, “This Vulgar Tongue: The Problem of the Vernacular”, in D. C. Thomson (ed.), *Scotland in Quest of Her Youth: A Scrutiny*, Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd, pp. 144–57.
- HUTCHISON David, 2007, “Theatre Provision in Twentieth-Century Scotland”, in I. Brown (ed.), *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature*, vol. 3, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, pp. 142–50.
- MACCORMICK John M., 2008, *The Flag in the Wind: The Story of the National Movement in Scotland* [1955], Edinburgh, Birlinn.
- MUIR Edwin, 1982, *Scott and Scotland: The Predicament of the Scottish Writer* [1936], Edinburgh, Polygon.
- NORMAND Tom, 2000, *The Modern Scot: Modernism and Nationalism in Scottish Art, 1928–1955*, Aldershot, Ashgate.
- MCCULLOCH Margery Palmer (ed.), 2004, *Modernism and Nationalism: Literature and Society in Scotland, 1918–1939. Source Documents for the Scottish Renaissance*, Glasgow, The Association for Scottish Literary Studies.
- RIACH Alan, 2011, “C. M. Grieve/Hugh MacDiarmid, Editor and Essayist », in S. Lyall and M. P. McCulloch (eds), *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- WATSON Roderick, 2007, *The Literature of Scotland: The Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- WATSON Roderick, 2009, “The Modern Scottish Literary Renaissance”, in I. Brown and A. Riach (eds), *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Literature*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, pp. 75–87.

NOTES

1. NLS, Dep. 209/26, Alexander M’Gill, 20 November 1923, “The Scottish National Theatre”, *The Scottish Nation*, p. 3.
2. “Anyhow don’t you think it is absurd to have an Englishman teaching Scottish children history? Once in a Leaving Certificate examination I got a whole batch of papers from a well-known Glasgow school, where all the candidates soberly informed me that Bannockburn was a great misfortune for Scotland, and Edward I the most enlightened man in the whole course of British history, and one child actually described Bannockburn as an English victory, and Bruce as a commander of the English army!!! I discovered a little later that the history mistress in this

school was an English woman.” (NLS, Acc. 5927/1, letter from Anna Augusta Whittall Ramsay to George Dott, 20 August 1929, p. 3.)

3. Lewis Grassic Gibbon comments on Neil Gunn’s historical novel, *Butcher’s Broom* (1934), are worth noticing. “I love your coolness and clarity, your charity, and your exquisite English. (All qualities I don’t possess myself.) Butcher’s Broom is Greek and heroic and dreadful in the original meaning of dreadful. But after I finished the book last night I went a walk [sic] and thought about it all and forgot aesthetic appreciations and was merely filled with anger and pity for those people of yours—detachment in these matters is impossible for me, I’m too close to those folk myself. Great book.” (NLS, Dep. 209/17/2, letter from Lewis Grassic Gibbon to Neil Miller Gunn, 30 October 1934, p. 1.)

4. “Grieve’s back in the Shetlands, complete with wife and son. Address: Whalsay, S. I. Whisky has been *his* bane, but I think he’s been taken himself in hand. Why do Scots Nationalists all go and live on islands and moon romantically? Why not live in the Gorbals of Glasgow or the rot-gut stinks of Dundee and really get close to the Soul of the People? Mackenzie, Linklater, Grieve, and (next year) the Muirs... You’re an exception.” (NLS, Dep. 209/17/2, letter from Lewis Grassic Gibbon to Neil Miller Gunn, 2 November 1934, pp. 1–2 [original italics].)

5. NLS, Dep. 209/9/146, Dane M’Neil [Neil Miller Gunn], June 1933, “The Scottish Renaissance”, *Scots Magazine*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 203–4.

6. “In regard to the sense of smell, in particular, Braid Scots is an infinitely more intimate medium than the subtlest English. [...] Braid Scots [possesses an] infinitely greater acuity in skill [and] in sensual discrimination (particularly when unpleasant) [...]. If Braid Scots alone of European languages or dialects has a vocabulary which enables us to discuss olfactory sensations in their subtler aspects, then in that respect, if no other, it has still an indispensable contribution to make to the future of mankind.” (NLS, Dep. 209/26, Hugh M’Diarmid, 15 May 1923, “Braid Scots and the sense of smell”, *The Scottish Nation*, p. 10.)

7. “What he [MacDiarmid] has to do is to adapt an essentially rustic tongue to the very much more complex requirements of our urban civilisation—to give it all the almost illimitable suggestionability it lacks (compared, say, with contemporary English or French), but *would have had if it had continued in general use in highly-cultured circles to the present day.*” (Christopher Murray Grieve, extract from *The Scottish Chapbook* (October 1922), reproduced in McCulloch (2004, p. 24) [original italics].)

8. “I shall speak, but not on ‘The Scottish Renaissance’ at any price, for it means speaking mainly about Grieve, and I am not in a state to speak about him objectively, and in any case an audience which knew anything about our quarrel would not believe I was doing so, even if I did my best. I suggest ‘Some problems of Scottish Literature’, which is elastic enough, though I confess it does not sound very exciting; but then neither does ‘The Scottish Renaissance’, to me, at least. I suppose I’ll have to mention Grieve then too; the man’s a nuisance.” (NLS, Acc. 6419/38b, letter from Edwin Muir to Douglas Young, 31 January 1940, p. 1.)

9. NLS, Acc. 5927/1, letter from James Huntington Whyte to George Dott, 9 October 1930, p. 1.

10. Alan Riach, 30 June 2014, “Interview with Alexander Moffat and Alan Riach”, Glasgow (unpublished).

11. “If we regard poetry as literature’s highest expression, then literature still remains a national affair, for to this day great poetry does not bear translation from its own tongue in any other. Even in a country like Scotland, which has been doing its best, or worst, with English for some centuries, we are forced to recognise that the poetry which has achieved more than national reputation has been written in Scots.” (NLS, Dep. 209/9/90, Neil Miller Gunn, July 1936, “Literature: Class or National?”, *Outlook*, pp. 54–5.)

12. NLS, Dep. 209/10/2k, Extract from a typescript entitled ‘Renaissance’ and reproducing Neil Gunn’s interview by an individual identified only by the initials J. W. [James H. Whyte?]. Date and origin unknown.

13. NLS, Dep. 209/18/5, letter from Willa Muir to Daisy and Neil Miller Gunn, 29 July 1931, pp. 2–3.
14. “Un nouveau mouvement littéraire se prononce en Écosse, qui est une des choses les plus intéressantes et les plus riches en promesses dans le groupe des littératures anglo-saxonnes à l’heure présente. [...] Il prétend d’ailleurs se rattacher à un renouveau du sentiment national écossais. [...] Puisant dans tout le passé de la culture européenne, du romantisme religieux jusqu’au cynisme d’après guerre [sic], y ajoutant l’humour et le réalisme propre à leur race, ces nouveaux venus s’imposent à l’attention du monde cultivé. Il va falloir veiller à ce qui se fera en Écosse.” (NLS, Dep. 209/24/1, Denis Saurat, April 1924, “Le groupe de la « Renaissance écossaise »”, *Revue anglo-américaine*, pp. 1, 13.)
15. Neil Miller Gunn, December 1938, “Nationalism in Writing: The Theatre Society of Scotland”, *Scots Magazine*, vol. 30, pp. 195–8.
16. “I’m not really anti-Nationalist. But I loath Fascism, and all the other dirty things that hide under the name. I doubt if you can ever have Nationalism without Communism. By the way, I’m not an official Communist. They refuse to allow me into the party!” (NLS, Dep. 209/17/2, letter from Lewis Grassie Gibbon to Neil Miller Gunn, 2 November 1934, pp. 1–2.)
17. “I am not gay to quarrel with you about Scottish Nationalism or about anything else. Only I hate and fear a Gaelic State. I don’t believe a single one of the real evils we suffer from would be remedied by a parliament in Edinburgh.” (NLS, Acc. 11309/1, letter from Osborne Henry Mavor [James Bridie] to Neil Miller Gunn, n. d., pp. 1–2.)
18. NLS, Dep. 209/9/142, Neil Miller Gunn, 3 November 1944, “Scots Are Critical Too Soon”, *The Daily Record*, p. 2.
19. “I know that sometimes we were forced into this position by our so-called extremists in our own party, and that the rise of the Scottish Party was due to the idiotic statements of Grieve and others who in addition deliberately invented the lie that such statements were the policy of the party.” (NLS, Acc. 3721/93/55, letter from Tom H. Gibson to Roland Eugene Muirhead, 14 January 1934, p. 2.)
20. “Mr. Grieve is a very clever man and some of his matter is very apt. I agree with his view that it is to the young men of the Party that we must look for vigorous leadership in the future, but I do not agree with Grieve in his idea of Fascism, further, I think it will be time enough to consider underground methods of organisation after we have really made an earnest endeavour to make use of the powers we have.” (NLS, Acc. 3721/5/76, letter from Roland Eugene Muirhead to Arthur William Donaldson, 16 June 1930, p. 1.)
21. “Fascism must incline to the Left [...] It may seem absurd to say, for example, that the revival of the Scots Vernacular depends upon the establishment of some form of Socialism in Scotland; but it will be apparent to all who take the time to go into the matter that this is so. [...] Fascism needs most urgently to be almost exactly reproduced in Scotland in so far as agrarian policy is concerned. Its agrarian policy is summed up in the maxim, *the land for those who work it*. [...] The entire Fascist programme can be readapted to Scottish national purposes and is (whether it be called Fascist or pass under any other name) *the only thing that will preserve our distinctive national culture*. Mere Parliamentary devolution is useless.” (NLS, Dep. 209/26, Christopher Murray Grieve, 19 June 1923, “At the sign of the Thistle. Programme for a Scottish Fascism”, *The Scottish Nation*, p. 10 [original italics].)
22. “Summarizing briefly, we are seeking to begin the reconstruction of Scottish National life, politically, economically, socially and culturally. We set the political goal of complete self-government for Scotland within the British group of nations, recognizing that the first step towards reconstruction of Scotland is the regaining of her right to independent and national action. We trace the economic and social evils from which our country is suffering to misgovernment as a result of the smothering of the Scottish opinion and Scottish legislation in the overwhelmingly English Parliament in London. Culturally, the lack of a living Scottish politics, the Anglicizing of our education and of our press and platform, and the deadly

stagnation that results from mere provincial status have destroyed the individuality of Scotland's culture and left the nation grovelling in the mud of the Kailyard." (NLS, Acc. 3721/5/76, letter from Arthur William Donaldson to Thomas Hogarth, 9 January 1930, p. 1.)

23. NLS, Acc. 3721/5/76, letter from Arthur William Donaldson to M. McOuat, 31 December 1930, p. 1.

24. NLS, Acc. 3721/5/76, letter from Roland Eugene Muirhead to Arthur William Donaldson, 16 June 1930, p. 1.

25. NLS, Acc. 7295/1, letter from N. N. C. Jack to the National Party of Scotland, Glasgow, 26 July 1932, p. 1; National Party of Scotland, 20 August 1932, "New Youth Movement. Decision of Sub-Committee of National Council", p. 1.

ABSTRACTS

This paper establishes that the agents of the Scottish renaissance took it on themselves to revive the dormant national feeling so as to trigger a national movement that might match the national and international expectations of the Scottish nation. Many Scottish modernists contributed to the transformation of the intellectual outlook of Scotland while simultaneously expressing their political convictions, thus participating more or less directly to the nationalist movement. As a consequence, the polyphonic nature of Scottish modernism, devised from an artistic ideology with multiple echoes and related to the fragmentation of the nationalist movement, breeds a new vision of Scottish identity.

Nous montrons que les acteurs de la renaissance écossaise entreprennent de raviver le sentiment national dormant afin de provoquer un mouvement social à la hauteur des aspirations nationales et internationales de la nation écossaise. En effet, nombre de modernistes écossais contribuent à la transformation du paysage intellectuel en Écosse dans le même temps qu'ils expriment leurs convictions politiques et qu'ils participent de manière plus ou moins active au mouvement nationaliste. Par conséquent, la nature polyphonique du modernisme en Écosse, élaborée à partir d'une idéologie artistique aux résonances multiples et contingentes à la fragmentation du mouvement nationaliste, génère une nouvelle vision de l'identité écossaise.

INDEX

Mots-clés: renaissance écossaise, modernisme écossais, nationalisme et littérature, art et idéologie

Keywords: Scottish renaissance, Scottish modernism, nationalism and literature, art and ideology

AUTHOR

ARNAUD FIASSON

Université Toulouse – Jean Jaurès.

Arnaud Fiasson completed a PhD thesis (*Territorialité et nationalisme : le rhizome du sentiment*)

national (1707-2011)) in July 2017 and he currently teaches at Université Paris 13. His research explores the evolution of Scottish national sentiment and focuses more particularly on the mechanisms of identity formation and how they relate to the conception of Scottish territory. He is a member of the French Society for Scottish Studies (SFEEc) and some of his published works include two articles in *Études écossaises*:

- “Territorialité politique, nationalisme et traversées constitutionnelles en Écosse”, *Études écossaises*, no. 18, 2016, pp. 51–67. Available on <<http://etudeseccossaises.revues.org/1069>>;
- “Les appellations du nationalisme politique écossais au vingtième siècle”, *Études écossaises*, no. 17, 2015, pp. 153–72. Available on <<http://etudeseccossaises.revues.org/1013>>.

Arnaud Fiasson a soutenu une thèse de doctorat (*Territorialité et nationalisme écossais : le rhizome du sentiment national (1707-2011)*) en juillet 2017 et enseigne actuellement à l'université Paris 13. Ses recherches portent sur l'évolution du sentiment national écossais. Il se concentre plus particulièrement sur les modes construction de l'identité écossaise et sur la manière dont ils participent à la conceptualisation du territoire. Il est membre de la Société française d'études écossaises (SFEEc) et ses travaux publiés incluent deux articles parus dans *Études écossaises* :

- « Territorialité politique, nationalisme et traversées constitutionnelles en Écosse », *Études écossaises*, n° 18, 2016, p. 51-67. Disponible sur <<http://etudeseccossaises.revues.org/1069>>;
- « Les appellations du nationalisme politique écossais au vingtième siècle », *Études écossaises*, n° 17, 2015, p. 153-172. Disponible sur <<http://etudeseccossaises.revues.org/1013>>.