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Foreword

Avant-propos

David Leishman and Cyril Besson



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Foreword

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- 1 While much of Scottish identity, culture and politics is informed by the relationship between Scotland and England, this polarization has resulted from their geographic situation as two neighbouring peoples and countries sharing a land border within a single geographic territory. Underpinning this relationship and shaping so much else about Scotland, therefore, is the maritime nature of a territory bounded everywhere else by water. Of course, the insularity of Great Britain, and the subsequent peninsularity of Scotland, should not be thought of in a pejorative sense, given the wealth of connections afforded by the sea at a time when it offered a privileged means of cultural, diplomatic and commercial exchange. Glasgow tobacco merchants in the USA, Scottish colonial administrators in India, or Scottish brigades in Sweden during the Thirty Years' War have all been dependent on the sea for advancing their individual prospects and extending the wealth and reach of Scotland. But as Gunn's *The Silver Darlings* (1941) recounts, Scots have viewed the sea in a profoundly ambivalent manner—as much as the herring of the novel represent a bountiful resource, the sea itself is often synonymous with loss and displacement. As both boundary and vector, surface and depth, the sea can be seen to incarnate this essential duality which, from Hogg to MacDiarmid, has often been seen as a fundamental trait of the supposed Scottish character. It is certainly true that the sea plays a federating role, binding local and regional specificities within a subsuming, shared experience. From the former shipyards, ports and naval bases of the Forth and Clyde to the seal-watching tours, ferries and oil terminals of the Shetlands, the Scots continue to share a common history bounded by the sea.
- 2 The thematic section of this issue of *Scottish Studies/Études écossaises* is related to the current focus of the research centre, ILCEA4 (Institut des langues et cultures d'Europe, Amérique, Afrique, Asie et Australie) on “Migrations and Borders”, with papers addressing how Scotland has been shaped by its proximity with the sea, with a particular focus on maritime communication and cultural transfer.

- 3 The first part of the thematic section deals with the cultural representation of maritime communities. In his paper on “Surviving the sinking of the *Iolaire* on the Isle of Sorrow”, Jean Berton explains how, following the accidental sinking of SS *Iolaire* a mile from Stornoway harbour in the night of Hogmanay 1919, the whole community of Lewis and Harris had to face the loss of 205 boys who had survived the war and the Spanish flu. He explores the role of literature in handling the people’s mourning, through speech and distancing, and the subsequent exploitation of the tragedy two or three generations later, the disaster becoming a metaphor of the evolution of Scotland, now regenerated and with a strong culture, reaching the gates of independence. In keeping with this notion of literature as consolation and consolidation, André Dodeman’s study of Highlanders and Maritimers in Alistair MacLeod’s “Clearances” addresses maritime displacement of a specific Scottish diaspora community, and more precisely the role played by the ocean in the preservation of a Scottish heritage and how it partakes in the restoration of a cultural continuity between Cape Breton and the Scottish Highlands.
- 4 The sea is also a backdrop against which cultural change can be measured in Scotland’s relation to itself. In “The Silver Darlings: An Emblem of the Scottish Sea and History”, Danièle Berton-Charrière presents a context-based approach to various artistic works on the silver darlings, whether belonging to the domains of literature such as Neil Gunn’s *The Silver Darlings*, or of cinema and drama with adaptations of Gunn’s novel to the screen and to the stage, or of realistic photography, or of history painting, or of popular traditional tales, music and songs, and to other arts such as James Maskrey’s glasswork. Through the examination of historical landmarks and selected interrelated semiotic and textual networks, she investigates the dialogical links between reality, legends and art forms, between the force of collective unconscious and the construction of a myth—between an emblematised fish and the identity of a nation. Appropriating the sea’s bounties, in ways literal or more symbolic, can also allow a perception of Scotland “in extension”, as the history of maritime commerce to and from Scotland shows, although it notoriously resulted in the nation’s greatest failure: Sophie Jorrand, in “From ‘the Doors of the Seas’ to a Watery Debacle: The Sea, Scottish Colonisation, and the Darien Scheme, 1696–1700” shows how in the context of Scotland’s greatest attempt at colonial expansion in its own right, before the 1707 Union of Parliaments, far from being perceived as an obstacle, the sea had a crucial part to play, both as a means of reaching the Americas and as a way of furthering overseas trade. But enemies too could come from the sea, and for many of the survivors of Spanish retaliation and tropical fevers, the Caribbean and the Atlantic were not only a way of escape, but also a watery grave, in an ambivalent reversal of what had first appeared as a dazzling opportunity.
- 5 A more imaginative extension might prove more beneficial, blurring the lines between here and there, leading to a reassessment of Scotland by itself on a less local, if not quite global, scale. Céline Savatier-Lahondès’s “The Inner Seas in *Deirdre of the Sorrows* by John Millington Synge” examines what role the inner seas motif plays in Deirdre’s story of travel from Ireland to Scotland and back to Ireland after seven years of exile, exemplifies how the characters will live their lives fully and decide to face their inescapable tragic fate, exemplifying one of the differences between Greek and “Celtic” tragic heroes, and the associated character in both senses of the word: in a classic tragedy, the main character struggles to avoid his fate whereas the “Celtic” one is determined to embrace it. Synge fully develops the theme of fate, adding a philosophical aspect to the original myth, questioning Man’s existence and meaning too, in the awakening of the modern era,

at a time when the revival of the Irish culture was strongly felt in the Irish artistic expression. Elizabeth Mjelde examines in “Littoral Travel and Aesthetic Representation in Scotland and Asia in William Daniell’s ‘Periplus’” how as a practitioner of picturesque discourse, Daniell approached the production of landscape imagery according to aesthetic rules derived from the study of paintings by seventeenth-century Continental artists, but rather establishes how the imagery he produced for *A voyage round Great Britain* is based on compositions that he had constructed while traveling in Asia. His observations of people and land in Asia informed his descriptions of Britain’s shores, not because of actual similarities of topography but due to the aesthetic priorities he employed when seeking out views. This identification of the national self through an “other” is more explicitly present in Claire McKeown’s “The Sea Kings of the North: Scandinavian Scotland in Nineteenth Century Literature”, where she argues that modern Scottish culture demonstrates a keen interest in Scandinavian connections, not only through literature and television, but also through potential political links. During the lead-up to the independence referendum, comparisons between Scotland and Scandinavia acknowledged similar geographic positions and social settings, as well as the evocative power of older traditions. In examples ranging from literature and travel writing, Scotland takes on the role of a bridge between cultures, representing at once the distant Northern reaches of Britain, and a sense of connection with other, more exotic, Northern places. This creates a tension between similarity and difference specific to two cultural spheres which are historically linked, and share some contemporary lifestyle and landscape features, in a context of shared history and inherited identity. This extension dynamics further leads Scotland to global modernity if we consider Alexandra Campbell’s “Sound Waves: ‘Blue Ecology’ in the Poetry of Robin Robertson and Kathleen Jamie”, an article which presents new ecocritical readings of two contemporary Scottish poets in response to the recent rise of “blue cultural studies”. It suggests that contemporary Scottish poetry exhibits a distinct concern with oceanic environments, Jamie’s and Robertson’s collections contributing to a growing field of modern Scottish poetry that attends to the cultural, historical, and material interplay between the seas, oceans, and islands of the Atlantic archipelago. Engaging the “tidalectic” qualities of “blue ecology”, Jamie and Robertson’s respective works encourage us to fathom new relationships with saltwater bodies as a means of establishing new relationships with the nonhuman world. The article further suggests that these sea-facing collections engage an “archipelagic” sensibility that enables a critique of the cultural models which have long cast Scotland as a “marginal” or “fringe” literary space.

- 6 The second part of the journal is a miscellany of material not literally related to the main theme, but that still retains some convergence with it.
- 7 David Leishman, in “‘Original and Best’? How Barr’s Irn-Bru Became a Scottish Icon”, details how Barr’s Irn-Bru plays a considerable cultural role in Scotland as an ingrained element of Scottish quotidian consumption habits, representing a semiotic shorthand for “authentic” Scottish identity. Our understanding and reception of such commercially-rooted objects is inevitably conditioned by their historical grounding, which is important given that Barr’s Irn-Bru, through its packaging design and advertising, has built up a twin discourse linking the nation and the origins of the drink. However, it can be shown that the carbonated drink known as Iron Brew, the former name for Irn-Bru, is not innately Scottish. By investigating the drink’s true historical origins, D. Leishman is not challenging Scots to spurn inauthentic practices, but simply reaffirming how the cultural

appropriation of markers of national authenticity always involves a degree of institutionalized forgetting.

- 8 The remainder of the volume is dedicated to a selection of papers from the Scottish studies workshop held at the SAES conference in Lyon in 2016, the theme for which was “Confluences”.
- 9 Alice Lemer-Fleury examines the ways in which Scottish immigration towards British North America (c. 1783–1815) made it possible for the British government, in addition to preventing Scotland from the risks of a “redundant” population, to present as convergent the needs of Canada and Scotland through emigration. Most of our prejudices on the policies concerning the migration policies of “the centre” are here shown to be erroneous, as the measures taken in London for the “peripheries” (at least in the case of Scotland and Canada) were fundamentally convergent. Clarisse Godard Desmarest studies how Lord John Bruce (c. 1671–1711), the son and heir of Sir William Bruce (c. 1630–1710), *Surveyor-General and Overseer of the King’s Works in Scotland*, travelled on a “petit tour” of the continent from October 1681 to July 1683. This article situates his education travel within the context of gentleman education in the 17th century and highlights the significance of such a tour as regards the building works at Kinross, an estate purchased by Sir William Bruce in 1675 and situated in Kinross-shire, Scotland. Marie-Odile Pittin-Hedon examines the many ways in which Jackie Kay’s writing is about confluence: as a Scottish writer with a Nigerian father, as a lesbian poet, as an adopted child, she is situated at the crossroads of our cultural, societal, racial landmarks, looking more precisely at her latest collection of short stories *Reality, Reality*, as well as to her memoir *Red Dust Road* and some of her poetry. Philippe Laplace, in “Confluences et renaissance dans *Highland River* (1937) ? Chronotope, allégorie et idéologie” first studies the novel in light of Bakhtin’s theory, before turning to the ideological elements that Gunn meant to express through his use of the chronotope, leading to an allegorical project that has so far been totally silenced by the criticism on the author. Lastly, in “The Uncanny in *Writing the Picture* (2010) by John Fuller and David Hurn”, Aurélien Saby contends that the uncanny is one of the points of confluence between Hurn’s and Fuller’s aesthetics, exploring the strangeness, oddness or weirdness characterizing the photos and how they are harnessed by the poet, but also examining Freud’s “unheimlich” as a way to better grasp the complex interactions between the pictures and the poems.
- 10 We would like to sincerely express thanks to all the contributors, whose varied and thought-provoking papers testify to the vitality of Scottish studies.

AUTHORS

DAVID LEISHMAN

Université Grenoble Alpes

CYRIL BESSON

Université Grenoble Alpes