



Marie-Odile Pittin-Hédon (ed.), *Women and Scotland
(Literature, Culture, Politics)*

Besançon, Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2020

Cyril Besson



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- 1 Since at least the 1990's, gender has occupied an increasingly greater part of the reflection on society, which can be viewed as a matrix distributing roles and assigning places in a self-perpetuating strategy passing for "the way things are". What followed was a much-needed, if certainly slow and incomplete, gradual reassessment of the very rules by which we live our daily lives, and also of the way in which an altogether not negligible part of mankind had throughout history not been given its due in economic, political and cultural matters. The situation, of course, is evolving, and this particular field of enquiry seems to reconfigure itself in terms of its findings but also conceptually every so many years, making it one of the most dynamic arenas of research in the field of the human sciences.
- 2 The collection *Women and Scotland* edited by Marie-Odile Pittin-Hédon, the third in the Philippe-Laplace-edited collection, "Caledonia. Regards sur l'Écosse", is an excellent way of taking stock of where the debates were at in Scottish Studies as far as the theme of women was concerned at the time of publication. After a brief introduction mentioning the main references in recent Scottish Women's Studies, the volume is divided into three parts covering the field as thoroughly as space allows. The first part, "Scottish Women in History and Myth", provides a varied account of the historical situation, and only very occasionally indulges in the pitfalls of allegorisation and the

subsequent dangers of fetishisation. In this section, Christine Ferrere's chapter on female *makars* will be of particular interest for readers of *Études écossaises*.¹ The second section, "Women in Politics and Culture", examines the current political context, most interestingly as far as the devolution and independence movements are concerned, in what is probably the part of the book with the widest appeal. The paper by Alison McCleery on "Living Culture in Scotland" is especially important for those who want to understand the ways in which Scotland negotiates its place on the international scene, with the way it negotiates its uses of the UNESCO concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage, and a resistance to the "museification of cultural processes" (p. 176). The adeptness at blending micro-history and reception theory in the paper by McCleery, Finkelstein and Fleming on "Women Readers and the Scottish Imaginary" is also very impressive, and its methodology appears particularly sound. In theory, the third part, on "Contemporary Scottish Women's Literature", might look less innovative methodologically speaking, but in addition to strong papers on this field, Glenda Norquay, in "Mothers and Daughterlands in contemporary Scottish Women's Literature", provides a new (to this reviewer at least) concept that looks particularly promising for future research, and Camille Manfredi offers a very informative and insightful reflection on "Women Writing the Wild" in a lucid paper questioning the uses of the rewriting of the "Scottish Wild". This final paper in a sense completely opposes the earlier view of things discussed in Jean Berton's article on the uses of the allegorical figure, "Caledonia", from the first section, thus showing how much ground is covered in the course of the volume. The sheer variety (and quality) of contributions ensures that everyone will find several papers of interest in this collection.

NOTES

1. See her paper, "Le rôle des *Makars* contemporains dans la reconstruction de l'identité écossaise", *Études écossaises*, no. 20, 2018, <<https://doi.org/10.4000/etudeseccossaises.1414>>.

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