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Foreword

Avant-propos

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- 1 It is an immensely fortunate stroke of serendipity that, as this issue was being compiled, the journal received for reviewing the volume *Gaelic Scotland in the Colonial Imagination*, by Silkie Stroh (Northwestern University Press). Rarely has the case for the vision of Scotland as internal “other” within the boundaries of the United Kingdom been made more cogently than in this book discussing the merits of a postcolonial approach as far as “Caledonia” is concerned. Although not all will agree with the view of Scotland as an internal colony, or even that it was *purposefully* fashioned in discourse and actions as a marginalized other so as to better put into relief contrastively the professed homogeneity of the rest of the British state (a convenient means of ensuring the political and cultural hegemony of England), Stroh’s presentation of Scotland as “Janus-faced between margin and periphery within the UK and its empire” sums up and rationalizes an assessment that is too often taken unquestioningly, while interrogating the notion of “Celtic fringe” as an operative concept.
- 2 The notion at the core of this year’s issue comes precisely from a response to this very widespread view of things, “Scotland-as-internal-other”; questioning this notion was never intended as an indictment, but rather, as an incentive to step back and see the uses that the “Scotland-as-other” trope could be put to when a change of scale was brought about—difference not so much *produced*, as it is *productive*, if you will. Perhaps this is the other “wealth of nations” after all: the ascription of their perceived identity configures imaginatively a contrastive model, entailing an understanding of the world as a mosaic of states and cultures, but conversely, this oppositional existence could be seen as forming some sort of symbolic capital for each, now an essential element of the whole as the integrity of each piece of the system can only be guaranteed by differentiation. In this scenario, otherness becomes part of identity, and “Scotland from elsewhere” turns into, not a suppressed Other, but an integral part of the process that leads to thinking of oneself through divergence.

- 3 What purposes has Scotland, envisaged from elsewhere, served, in representational, artistic, literary, political or even legal terms? What is the signifier, “Scotland”, the name of in other cultures? Conversely, can this exotopic detour lead the way to a reassessment of Scotland by itself? Those are some of the questions addressed by the contributors to this year’s issue of *Études écossaises / Scottish Studies*.
- 4 The first alternative route that can be taken for a functional definition of “Scotland” is disciplinary; simply put, it can present a challenge to accepted norms constitutive of the apparatus of types of knowledge. David McCrone thus examines the ways in which “Scotland” has long presented a challenge to “sociology”. It may have helped to found the discipline in its very early incarnation, but it did not fit the conventional notion of “society”, sociology’s core concept. This predicament, paradoxically, has led in the last fifty years to its relevance in the re-examination of the assumption of the link between nation and state, especially in the context of an “atrophying of Anglo-British sociology, built upon the assumption of a homogeneous ‘British society = British state’ [dictum]”, leading McCrone to conclude that “[a] sociology of Scotland is not only possible, but necessary in the 21st century”. Rodolphe Dumouch addresses the legal aspect of things, analysing the interplay of Common Law and Roman Law and the way in which it creates overlapping areas of competence leading to a paradoxical form of “legal indetermination” on some marginal fields. Some of these grey areas are geographical, and some, generational; it is no surprise that the question of the acquisition of legal capacity at this most indeterminate and unstable of ages, adolescence, should involve both, the latter indulging in a sort of “maximisation” of the former (ambivalence of the framework does after all usually benefit the part that did not draft it). This paradoxical liminal disposition, Dumouch views as having cognitive and philosophical consequences for the very essence of Scotland, the cultural trace of which would be Stevenson’s *Bildungsromane*.
- 5 Culture is the next stage of this roundabout way of envisaging Caledonia. First, with some adaptations of *Macbeth*, a play of which it can be said that it has encapsulated the ambivalence of Scotland to itself for well over four hundred years. Anne-Lise Marin-Lamellet studies Justin Kurzel’s claim of bringing “the Scottish Play” back to where it belongs in his 2015 adaptation. Many iterations of *Macbeth* have presented *detrterritorialised* variations, but Kurzel’s was mostly shot on Scottish location. The film belongs to an alternate tradition of “caledonianising *Macbeth*” yet refuses the ready-made visual apparatus of Tartanry to focus on authentic landscapes, allowing the director’s bold treatment of the Shakespearian canon in a truly cinematic style, substituting visual for verbal poetry. This process is not without ambivalence, chiefly aesthetically, for it is a “Scotland from elsewhere” that is presented here, expressing its post-*Braveheart* Highlandism through its intertextuality with the western genre, while offering a great “chthonian” adaptation reinforcing the cosmic element present in the original play, negotiating the relevance of Shakespeare for the contemporary world. Chloé Giroud, as for her, examines the very recent adaptation by Joel Coen, *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (2021), which offers the opportunity to reconsider the other side of the spectrum in terms of *Macbeth* adaptations, those shot in black and white and in a studio. Coen’s adaptation is bound to bring up another one with similar formal constraints, Orson Welles’s (1948). Taken together, they offer to revisit *Macbeth* and the vision of Scotland inseparable from it from an American perspective. Giroud interrogates the ways in which the directors have referenced Scotland without actually

showing it (a problem that is particularly acute given modern cinema's naturalism). Scotland is deterritorialised here, and even de-historicised—which can be seen as a way of leaving Scotland behind only to get closer to *Macbeth*.

- 6 Thankfully, more authentically Scottish texts have circulated abroad, especially in France and, if it cannot be said that this was a reactivation of the Auld Alliance, a sort of intercultural dialogue emerged from the Gallo-Scottish connection. Ruggero Bianchin's paper on William Dunbar's *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy* can be seen as indirectly taking part in an ongoing discussion on the point of translation, and as a case in point against Walter Benjamin's views about translation in his 1921 essay about "The Task of the Translator".¹ For him, translation "ultimately serves the purpose of expressing the central reciprocal relationship between languages", which leads him to posit a "suprahistorical kinship of languages". This causes Benjamin to advocate for a rather counterintuitive vision of

[...] a new and higher justification for free translation; this justification does not derive from the sense of what is to be conveyed, for the emancipation from this sense is the task of fidelity. Rather, for the sake of pure language, a free translation bases the test on its own language. It is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work. For the sake of pure language he breaks through decayed barriers of his own language.

- 7 As Bianchin establishes in the case of Jean-Jacques Blanchot's translation of Dunbar's *Flyting*, such transparent transferability is perhaps not so easy. William Dunbar's *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy* has long been seen both as one of the most representative texts written in *low style* in Older Scots poetry, and a prime example of *flyting*, a distinctive Scottish poetical genre in which two poets harangue each other using all their linguistic skills. The poem's prominent alliteration, as well as the use of words and expressions typical of late medieval Scottish life and society, make it a particularly challenging text for translators aiming to convey its metrical and lexical features. A French translation was included in an anthology featuring the complete works of Dunbar in French, curated by Jean-Jacques Blanchot and published by Ellug in 2003. Bianchin's article highlights the main strategies Blanchot adopted by discussing and comparing register and metre in Older Scots and French, using relevant lexicographical and corpora resources. It focuses specifically on the argotisms, spoken French patterns, and overt vulgarities that Blanchot used to render Dunbar's *low style*, arguing that the choices adopted were functional to the intention of presenting an older text with a more modern register. Here, Benjamin's notion of translation as "inaccurate transmission of an inessential content" becomes relevant again.
- 8 But it is not just national productions that provided a link between Scotland and France; travel literature expressed a more directly experiential connection between French and Scottish sensibilities. In his paper on *Souvenirs d'Écosse* by Frédéric Mercey, Paolo Dias Fernandes examines how nineteenth-century French authors contributed to the birth of a Scottish literary myth within French letters. From Chateaubriand to Victor Hugo, Scotland considerably influenced the poetics of the French Romantics in their representations of a distant and mythical Caledonia. Frédéric Mercey was one of the travellers who surveyed Scotland and its northern islands during the Romantic century, writing four accounts of these journeys, published in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, great evocations of a paradoxical fascination for the Scottish nation and its territory.

- 9 Another transnational connection, perhaps one too little explored, is the link between Scotland and Canada. Hugh MacLennan saw himself as the country's national novelist, and the ambivalent portrait of the Highlander he draws in *Each Man's Son* (1951) can be perceived as a way of positing Canadian specificity in light of its difference from its Scottish heritage. André Dodeman's paper proposes to study the novelistic representation of the descendants of Scottish Highlanders who were forced to immigrate to Cape Breton after the eighteenth-century Highland clearances. They eke out an existence of resignation and defeat in the year 1913 and this study purports to delve into the narrative's ambivalent portrait of Cape Breton Highlanders who are either characterized by a strong attachment to their Scottish heritage or criticized for their inability to break free from its haunting past—an experiential anxiety of influence that, perhaps, can be found at the level of the novel itself. The links between Canada and Scotland are not limited to literature, however: in his paper, Pierre-Alexandre Beylier proposes to analyse the way in which the Quebecois press saw the referendum that took place on the independence of Scotland in September 2014. It reveals a comparative process at play in addition with a re-appropriation phenomenon and highlights some kind of common cause which links Quebec's sovereigntist movement with its more successful Scottish counterpart, the referendum representing a climax in this affinity.
- 10 This issue concludes with a short review of three books of great interest with a pluridisciplinary approach: the aforementioned *Gaelic Scotland in the Colonial Imagination*, by Silke Stroh; *Women and Scotland (Literature, Culture, Politics)*, edited by Marie-Odile Pittin-Hédon; and *L'eau en Écosse / Water in Scotland*, edited by Tri Tran.
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NOTES

1. A version of which can be found at <www.ricorso.net/rx/library/criticism/guest/Benjamin_W/Benjamin_W1.htm> (last consulted 28 February 2023).
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