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Emigrating from North Britain: The Importance of Little Magazines in the Interwar Movement for Scottish Renewal

Margery Palmer McCulloch

> Don't put N.B. on your paper; put *Scotland* and be done with it. Alas, that I should be stabbed in the house of my friends! The name of my native land is not *North Britain*, whatever may be the name of yours.[1]

This scolding is from a letter written by Robert Louis Stevenson in April 1888 to the novelist S. R. Crocket, author of *The Lilac Sunbonnet* and one of a group of late Victorian Scottish writers most often characterised as 'kailyard' (or 'cabbage-patch') writers. Stevenson's comments are interesting for a number of reasons: for their confirmation that in the late nineteenth century 'North Britain' was still in currency as the unionist name for Scotland, despite a growing movement for Home Rule; and that it appeared to be accepted as such by Stevenson's kailyard correspondent, thus suggesting that there is indeed a relationship between provincial status and parochial writing. The quotation is interesting on another level also for the temptation it offers to characterise Stevenson himself as a kind of honorary or proto-interwar Scottish Renaissance writer committed to the recovery of a distinctive self-determining national identity for his country.

Yet, it is not quite accurate to enlist Stevenson in the ranks of MacDiarmid and Company on the basis of this letter, tempting as it might be. Stevenson, in his novels and short stories, clearly pointed towards the Modernist world of psychological fiction. However, as a Scotsman, and despite his obvious attachment to his native land, he more characteristically shared Walter Scott's aim of 'tracing the evanescent manners of his own country' rather than the active regenerative impulse of the interwar revival movement.[2] For example, in his introduction to the Scots-language poems in his 1887 collection *Underwoods*, Stevenson commented that 'the day draws near when this illustrious and malleable tongue shall quite be forgotten; and Burns' Ayrshire, and

[1] Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew (eds), *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson* (8 vols., New Haven and London, 1995), VI, 156.

[2] Sir Walter Scott, 'Postscript' in *Waverley* (1814; London, 1976), 478.

Dr MacDonald's 'Aberdeen-awa', and Scott's brave, metropolitan utterance will be all equally the ghosts of speech'. And he added: 'Till then I would love to have my hour as a native Maker, and be read by my own country-folk in our own dying language: an ambition surely rather of the heart than of the head, so restricted as it is in prospect of endurance, so parochial in bounds of space.'[3] And however enjoyable they may be to read, the character of the Scots-language poems in *Underwoods*, formally and in ideas, points us to the past rather than towards a revitalised future.

Stevenson's elegiac plea for Scotland's distinctive language – a plea which could be extended metaphorically as an elegy for the distinctive identity of Scotland itself – is completely at variance with the ambitious aims of the revival movement of the 1920s, given impulse and direction by C. M. Grieve/Hugh MacDiarmid in the years immediately after the end of World War I, but soon attracting and involving a wide range of writers and other activists committed to working for a new Scotland. What made this literature-led revival movement (a movement which soon became popularly known as 'the Scottish Renaissance') unique among Scottish cultural movements was the belief of those involved that any regeneration of the nation's artistic culture could not be separated from revival in its social, economic and political life. This was something new in Scottish affairs and essentially different from earlier patriotic attempts by writers such as Scott and Stevenson to preserve something of vanishing Scottish traditions; and different too from the turn of the century 'Renascence' associated with Patrick Geddes and his *Evergreen* magazine, which did not have an ideological agenda which involved self-determination but did have a relationship with the backward-looking Celtic Twilight movement and the writer William Sharp/Fiona Macleod. Neil Gunn's critique of Walter Scott's fiction during his *Scots Magazine* review of Edwin Muir's *Scott and Scotland* in 1936 makes clear the distinction between these earlier Scottish patriots and the new interwar movement. Speaking of Scott's historical novels, Gunn said:

> It was not that the history was untrue or was inadequate subject matter for his genius; it was that it no longer enriched or influenced a living national tradition; it had not even the potency of pure legend; it was story-telling or romance set in a void; it was seen backwards as in the round of some spyglass and had interpretive bearing neither upon

[3] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Note to the Scots Poems in *Underwoods*' (1887) in *Poems by Robert Louis Stevenson* (2 vols, London, n.d.), I, 99.

> a present nor a future.[4]

In other words, while Scott and Stevenson looked elegiacally to Scotland's past, the objective of the interwar reformers, in literature and in life, was to create a Scotland that would throw off its acquired dependent status as a North British province and move forward to retake its place as a self-determining European nation.

There were therefore two different but related aspects of the movement for national renewal begun in the years immediately after the end of World War I. First of all, there was its identity as a Scottish manifestation of Modernism as evidenced in its artistic activities, and especially in the literature of the post-1918 period. Secondly, there was the agenda for national renewal, not just in the arts, but in the social, economic and political life of the nation. In this regard, 'the condition of Scotland' became a major theme of the period in discursive as well as creative writing. What both elements needed in order to make progress was some public forum for the dissemination and discussion of new ideas and the challenging of outworn traditions.

With regard to the avant-garde art of the Modernist period generally, this role was undertaken to a large extent by the numerous small magazines emanating from the cities of Europe, from London and from the USA: publications that were irreverent, most often short-lived, but which created an atmosphere receptive to change. There was nothing of this nature in Scotland. The great days of the *Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood's* were over, although *Blackwood's* achieved a temporary period of increased popularity as part of the war propaganda machine during the First World War. Hugh MacDiarmid's letters from Salonika and Marseilles during the war make it clear that he was very aware of new developments in London as well as in Europe, such as, for example, the editing and writing activities of Ezra Pound and the founding of Wyndham Lewis's *Blast* magazine in response to the success of Marinetti's Futurist manifestos and campaigns. In the first 'Causerie' (as he termed his editorials) of his new *Scottish Chapbook* magazine in August 1922, MacDiarmid ironically lamented Scotland's lack of such 'phenomena recognizable as a propaganda of ideas'; and he continued:

> None of these significant little periodicals – crude, absurd, enthusiastic, vital – have yet appeared in Auchtermuchty or Ardnamurchan. No new

[4] Neil M. Gunn, 'Review of *Scott and Scotland*', *Scots Magazine*, 26 October 1936, 73.

> publishing houses have sprung up mushroom-like . . . It is discouraging to reflect that this is not the way the Dadaists go about the business![5]

His response, as so often in his life, was to provide his own solution to the problem, and the revolution he instigated through a series of Scottish little magazines was orchestrated from the small east-coast town of Montrose: a Modernist revolution from the periphery of what had become a peripheral nation, as opposed to one emanating from a European metropolitan centre. His little magazines, however, played a similarly challenging role in Scotland to that of their counterparts in the wider world.

In this short discussion, I will limit detailed discussion of the new interwar literary magazines to MacDiarmid's *Scottish Chapbook*, and in particular to its important role in the revival of the Scots language as a literary language for a new, modern–and Modernist–Scottish literature. I will then move on to the role played by little magazines and periodicals of a more general nature in the attempt to revitalise the wider social, economic and political life of Scotland.

The Scottish Chapbook appeared in 1922, that memorable year of Joyce's *Ulysses*, Eliot's *The Waste Land* and the establishment of the *Criterion* magazine under Eliot's editorship. MacDiarmid's *Chapbook* just beat the *Criterion* on to the periodical stage, its first issue appearing in August 1922 prior to the *Criterion's* appearance in October. With its red cover, lion rampant cover-image and motto, 'Not Traditions–Precedents', the *Scottish Chapbook*'s aim was overtly revolutionary. Among its aims were: 'to encourage and publish the work of contemporary Scottish poets and dramatists, whether in English, Gaelic or Braid Scots'; and 'to bring Scottish Literature into closer touch with current European tendencies in technique and ideation'.[6] This second aim is significant because it makes clear that at the very outset the movement's agenda was an international and non-parochial one, as opposed to the charges of something called 'national essentialism' so often raised against it by present-day cultural critics and literary theorists. Similarly, the aim to encourage writing in all three of Scotland's languages shows that, even if these activists had not yet had the opportunity (like their later critics) of reading Bakhtin in translation, they were themselves already well attuned to Scotland's polyphonic language situation.

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[5] *Scottish Chapbook*, 1.1 (August 1922); reprinted in Alan Riach (ed.), *Hugh MacDiarmid: Selected Prose* (Manchester, 1992), 7.

[6] See 'The Chapbook Programme', printed in the first and subsequent issues of the magazine; reprinted in Margery Palmer McCulloch (ed.), *Modernism and Nationalism: Literature and Society in Scotland 1918–1939* (Glasgow, 2004), xii.

The contents of the *Chapbook* itself included poetry in English and Scots, a play in Gaelic, creative prose and translations of MacDiarmid's Scots-language poems into French. There were also references to European philosophers and biographies of Scottish writers, the latter an important item for a revival aimed at educating its readers in a new Scottish literature and new Scottish authors. This was therefore a magazine for a revival that was to be neither parochial nor North British provincial, but one which would bring a distinctive Scottish presence onto the European stage.

MacDiarmid and Edwin Muir had both been educated in what one might call 'European Studies' by the *New Age* magazine, edited in London by A. R. Orage from the early years of the century. Muir had become a regular contributor, with his first book *We Moderns* of 1918 having initially been published as a series of articles in the *New Age*. As a result of its success in America, he obtained a contract with the American *Freeman* magazine which enabled him and his wife Willa to travel in Europe in the early 1920s and so to acquire a first-hand as opposed to a print-based knowledge of European affairs. Some of his contributions to MacDiarmid's *Chapbook* and to his second magazine *The Scottish Nation* were sent from Europe during this period. MacDiarmid too had acquired much of his knowledge of European philosophers and artists via the articles in the *New Age*, although he himself did not become a regular contributor to it until the mid-1920s. Orage's magazine was, however, a strong influence on his own approach to periodical publication.

As it happened, however, it was the second magazine, *The Scottish Nation,* which proved closer to the *New Age* 'in technique and ideation'; for the *Scottish Chapbook* soon became the centre of a controversy as to whether the Scots language could be revived for literary purposes; and it is therefore for the editorial arguments leading to 'A Theory of Scots Letters' in the spring of 1923, together with the appearance of the new Scots-language poet 'Hugh M'Diarmid' in its third issue of October 1922, that this first Scottish Renaissance, or Scottish Modernist, periodical is chiefly significant.

The Scots-language controversy had initially come about as a consequence of the London Robert Burns Club proposing in March 1920 to establish a Vernacular Circle of the Club in the attempt to stop the decline of the Scots language: a proposal strongly supported by prominent Scots such as John Buchan and the poet Violet Jacob.[7] This proposal therefore came from a similar impulse to revive distinctive features of Scottish life as did MacDiarmid's

[7] See McCulloch (ed.), *Modernism and Nationalism*, 11–13.

new ventures, but the promotion of Scots-language speaking and writing competitions in schools was not the Modernist revolution he had in mind. In relation to this, it is useful to remember that MacDiarmid's postwar literary ambitions for himself and his country initially had little place for the Scots language as an avant-garde literary language. He argued that most Scottish literature 'is, of course, and must continue to be, written in English. But it is not English on that account. . . It is no more English in spirit than the literature of the Irish Literary Revival, most of which was written in the English language, was English in spirit'.[8] In an acrimonious correspondence in the *Aberdeen Free Press* in late December 1921 and January 1922, some months before the founding of the *Scottish Chapbook*, he attacked the London Burns Club for its interference in attempting to revive Vernacular Scots and insisted that 'any attempt to create a Doric "boom" just now. . . would be a gross disservice to Scottish life and letters.'[9] Inconsistency in relation to language is one of an array of such charges regularly levied against MacDiarmid, but I think it is often forgotten that his postwar aim in relation to literature was to bring about a revival where a distinctive *modern* Scottish literature – and he himself as a distinctive *modern* Scottish poet – could take a place alongside avant-garde writers such as Eliot, Pound, Yeats and a French poet such as Valéry. The narrative of his conversion to Scots is an intriguing and sometimes a controversial one, but one has to remember that what he was primarily interested in was Scots as a literary language able to produce a modern, forward-looking literature that was distinctively Scottish; not a revival of demotic Scots for everyday purposes.

The Scottish Chapbook was therefore launched as a monthly magazine in August 1922 in the context of this developing dispute over the viability of Scots as a modern literary language. Its 'Causerie' sections between this first issue and March 1923 provide an intriguing demonstration of its editor's shifting position – and of the usefulness of little magazines in the furtherance of new directions such as this. What precisely brought about MacDiarmid's change of view is not certain, but his own successful experimentation with Scots in the short lyrics published in the magazine from October 1922 onwards must have had something to do with it; as also, perhaps, had the recognition that, as with other small countries, a distinctive

[8] C. M. Grieve, 'Scottish Books and Bookmen', *Dunfermline Press*, 5 August 1922, 6; McCulloch (ed.), *Modernism and Nationalism*, 24.

[9] C. M. Grieve, *Aberdeen Free Press*, 15 December 1921 and 30 January 1922; Alan Bold (ed.), *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid* (Athens, 1984), 755.

language could be a signifier of a distinctive nationhood. MacDiarmid's biographer Alan Bold suggests that it is very probable that he obtained an early copy of James Joyce's *Ulysses* when it was published by Sylvia Beach in Paris in February 1922 and that his excitement at Joyce's linguistic experimentation encouraged his own experiments with the Scots language.[10] Whatever lay behind his change of heart, what he stressed again and again in his editorials was the importance of the 'modern'; any use of Scots had to be able to take both language and ideas into the modern world.[11] At the same time, and in accordance with the interest in mythology and the primitive which was also part of the Modernist cultural experience, his own experimentation appears to have uncovered the psychological potential in Scots: 'the extent to which it contains lapsed or unrealised qualities which correspond to "unconscious" elements of distinctive Scottish psychology'.[12] By February and March 1923, in the series of Causeries titled 'A Theory of Scots Letters', while he was still insisting that any revival of the Scots language must be alive to the needs of the modern world and not lead to 'a sort of museum department of our unconsciousness', he was sufficiently confident to proclaim that 'the Scots Vernacular is a vast storehouse of just the very peculiar and subtle effects which modern European literature in general is assiduously seeking.' He described Scots as 'an inchoate Marcel Proust – a Dostoevskian debris of ideas – an inexhaustible quarry of subtle and significant sound.'[13]

MacDiarmid's second periodical *The Scottish Nation*, a weekly magazine on the pattern of Orage's *New Age* and with an explicitly international agenda, was founded in May 1923 and ran in parallel with the *Scottish Chapbook* until December 1923 when both ceased. Both were edited, published and financed by MacDiarmid himself from Montrose where he was a journalist with the *Montrose Review*. This may have given him significant editorial freedom, but commercially it was not a sustainable situation. His next periodical was the *Northern Review*, founded in May 1924, which returned to a monthly format. This was published in Edinburgh with the help of two assistant editors and a London agent, but lasted only until September 1924.

Although these little magazines founded and edited by MacDiarmid were

[10] Alan Bold, *MacDiarmid: Christopher Murray Grieve: A Critical Biography* (London, 1988), 130.

[11] See, for example, *Scottish Chapbook* 1.3 (October 1922), 62–3; 1.7 (February 1923), 182–3; McCulloch (ed.), *Modernism and Nationalism*, 24–5, 26–7.

[12] C. M. Grieve, *Scottish Chapbook* 1.3 (October 1922), 62; McCulloch (ed.), *Modernism and Nationalism*, 25.

[13] McCulloch (ed.), *Modernism and Nationalism*, 27–8.

short-lived, they, like many small avant-garde magazines of the period, had an impact out of all proportion to their short lives. By the mid-1920s the name 'Scottish Renaissance' was regularly used to describe the new movement in literature and culture, and the principal Scottish newspapers published letters and articles on the new developments. A significant departure took place in May 1925 when the *Scottish Educational Journal* commissioned MacDiarmid to write a series of assessments of Scottish literary figures. This caused much controversy in the journal's pages, but the commercial support it was able to offer did much to further public awareness of MacDiarmid himself, the writers he discussed, and the objectives of the revival movement. MacDiarmid's own Modernist Scots-language lyrics and his long dramatic monologue *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* were the outstanding artistic outcomes in the 1920s of the language debates and the Scottish and European material reviewed in his own magazines as well as in the pages of other such periodicals. At the same time the Porpoise Press, a small publishing company founded in 1922, was bringing a number of recent and new poets into publication, most of them writing in Scots and encouraged by the new climate to experiment with language and poetic form.

Another important effect of the MacDiarmid magazines and the climate of change that they encouraged was the appearance of other new periodicals, not edited by him and not specifically literary or avant-garde in nature, but all committed to regeneration in various areas of Scottish life: social, economic and political as well as cultural. These included the *Scots Observer,* 'A Weekly Review of Religion, Life and Letters' founded in 1926 with the support of the Scottish Protestant Churches. It was edited by William Power who had greatly assisted the literary revival when on the editorial staff of the *Glasgow Herald* and it covered cultural matters of a quality nature as well as the Kirk's preoccupation with the slums of Scotland's cities. *The Scots Independent*, a nationalist political magazine, was also founded in 1926, and provided a platform for the growing nationalist movements (the Nationalist Party of Scotland was founded in 1928), while the *Pictish Review*, which was published briefly from 1927 to 1928 was edited by the Celticist R. Erskine of Marr whose inaugural editorial proposed 'to present a Pictish view of things in general; to re-elucidate the values implicit, and explicit, in Pictish history and civilisation'.[14] His later book, *Changing Scotland*, which set out his ideas for a Scotland which would be entirely Gaelic-speaking with a distinctive identity based on the country's

[14] Hon. Erskine of Marr (ed.), *Pictish Review* 1.1 (November 1927), 1.

Celtic culture, was adversely received by an anonymous reviewer in the *Modern Scot* in its winter 1931 issue.[15]

The *Modern Scot* was itself founded in St Andrews in 1930 by the young American James Whyte, whose private income gave the magazine a much more secure foundation than the periodicals edited earlier by MacDiarmid. Whyte took over MacDiarmid's avant-garde role in periodical publishing from 1930 to 1936, his magazine maintaining the links with Europe which were an important element in the Scottish Renaissance programme, as well as giving a platform to the new writing and criticism being produced in Scotland and Britain as a whole. As he was able to pay his contributors, Whyte had a more extensive group of writers to call upon, both from Scotland, London and at times from the continent. Many of the Renaissance writers – for example, Edwin and Willa Muir, Lewis Grassic Gibbon, Catherine Carswell, Naomi Mitchison, MacDiarmid himself – were both contributors to the magazine and had their work reviewed in it. The *Modern Scot* also contributed to the social and political questions of the time, discussing the difference between 'national' and 'nationalist' literature, and severely criticising Wyndham Lewis' supportive book on Hitler. In 1936 it merged with the *Scottish Standard* to form *Outlook*, and in this manifestation it carried the pre-publication excerpts from Edwin Muir's infamous *Scott and Scotland* which proposed that the only language for an ambitious writer in Scotland to use was English, and so provoked a breach between him and MacDiarmid which was never healed. Follow-up articles on the controversy by both Muir and MacDiarmid (which give Muir's position, as seen by himself, a slightly different aspect from that now considered almost 'canonical' in Scottish criticism) were later published in the *Bulletin* newspaper in January 1938.[16]

Another new magazine in the early 1930s was the *Free Man*, founded in 1932 by Robin Black which, although clearly sympathetic to the nationalist cause, claimed to be 'attached to no party, nor . . . thirled to any particular policy'.[17] It included a wide range of social, economic and cultural articles which analysed Scotland's current situation and proposed remedies, including the series 'Whither Scotland?' in the October 1932 issue with contributions

[15] Unsigned review of *Changing Scotland*, *Modern Scot* 2.4 (winter 1931), 345–7; McCulloch (ed.), *Modernism and Nationalism*, 177, 287–8.

[16] 'For the Vernacular Circle', articles by Hugh MacDiarmid and Edwin Muir, *Bulletin*, 24 January, 1938, 13; 25 January 1938, 20; 27 January 1938, 18; reprinted in *Scottish Literary Journal*, 6 (2005), 59–73.

[17] Editorial, *The Free Man: a Journal of Independent Thought*, 1.1, 6 February 1982, 1; *Modernism and Nationalism*, 242.

from literary figures including Edwin Muir, Naomi Mitchison, Eric Linklater, William Soutar, Compton Mackenzie and James Whyte. It produced some of the clearest explanations of Douglasite economics in the magazines of the period, discussed schemes for assisting the unemployed through the provision of allotments and, in the international context, published articles warning of the increasing dangers of fascism by the nationalist Nannie K. Wells and other contributors. *The Free Man* was also important for its articles on the condition of the Highlands, the decline of Gaelic and proposals for regeneration.

Some of the most important little magazine contributions of the 1930s were the articles written by Neil M. Gunn in the *Scots Magazine*, which acquired a kind of Scottish Renaissance status under the editorship of J. B. Salmond by virtue of Gunn's energetic writing about literature, nationalism and internationalism, the condition of Scotland generally, and, especially, the need for economic, social and cultural renewal in the Highlands.

An important development from outside Scotland, in addition to the increasing number of books coming out from London publishers on Scottish topics, was the editorial policy announced by the *Spectator* magazine in October 1933 of regular coverage of Scottish affairs because 'developments are in progress in Scotland that are far too little understood or discussed outside Scotland. . . The cultivation of Gaelic and the conscious development of a modern Scottish literature are movements demanding not only observation but discussion.'[18] Many of Edwin Muir's articles on Scottish literature in the 1930s were published in the *Spectator*, as were reviews of Scottish work by Catherine Carswell.

In 1934 Routledge followed the *Spectator's* lead with the initiation of the *Voice of Scotland* series, initially under the general editorship of Lewis Grassic Gibbon but passing to MacDiarmid after Gibbon's early death. This important series of books succeeded MacDiarmid and Gibbon's *Scottish Scene or The Intelligent Man's Guide to Albyn* (1934), and included Edwin Muir's *Scott and Scotland*, Willa Muir's *Mrs Grundy in Scotland*, William Power's *Literature and Oatmeal* and Compton Mackenzie's *Religion in Scotland*. Equally, there were many other serious, questioning books about the condition of Scotland emanating from London publishers at this time which owed their existence to the new climate created in the previous decade and created to a large extent as a result of the forum for debate provided by the little magazines.

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[18] *Spectator*, 6 October 1933, 434.

My final little magazine of the 1930s brings MacDiarmid back into periodical publishing with *The Voice of Scotland*. He edited this from 1938 until the outbreak of war in 1939 from the Shetland island of Whalsay with the support in Edinburgh of a young assistant editor, W. R. Aitken, who saw it through the publishing process. This was a very different magazine from the *Scottish Chapbook* which began MacDiarmid's editorial career. Although it still published new and challenging poetry – often his own which he had difficulty in placing elsewhere – its pages seem dominated by the competing political ideologies of the time, by the fears of a coming war, and by its editor's own political and artistic frustrations.

In the 1930s, MacDiarmid had managed to be expelled from both the Scottish National Party for his communist affiliations and from the Communist Party for his nationalism; yet from his early years onwards there had been no contradiction in his own mind between nationalism and socialism – as with nationalism and internationalism they were to him two sides of the one coin. Now, the first editorial of the *Voice of Scotland* proclaimed 'The Red Scotland Thesis' and 'Forward to the John Maclean Line: The End of Scottish Nationalism and the Beginning of the Social Revolution', an editorial which attacked English imperialism and the dangers of fascism, calling instead for a return to John Maclean's idea of a Workers' Socialist Republic in Scotland.[19] Such anti-English sentiment was further developed by Wendy Wood in an article which demanded Scottish neutrality in any coming war with Germany: 'He who in the coming war chooses to die for fascist England is a traitor to world democracy'.[20] Throughout its short life, the editorials continued to have a hectoring style: 'This is not a Communist periodical although the editor is a member of the Communist party. But it will be restricted to left-wing writers'.[21] At the same time, attacks were made on the left-wing English poets of the thirties, while 'the fact of the matter is that scarcely anything has been made of the class struggle yet in Scottish literature'.[22] The impression left by this late magazine is one of overwhelming frustration and anger – both in relation to its editor's loss of literary opportunities and at what seems to be irreconcilable political crises at home and especially abroad. It closed with the June – August issue of 1939 and without MacDiarmid's angry anti-Chamberlain/anti-appeasement poem of 1938 ever having been published in

[19] *Voice of Scotland*, 1.1 (June – August 1938), 7.
[20] Ibid, 17.
[21] 'Notes of the Quarter', ibid, 24.
[22] Ibid, 26.

its pages, despite numerous discussions of the feasibility of such a publication (under the pseudonym of A. K. Laidlaw) in letters between him and his assistant editor. Yet, 'When the Gangs Came to London', with its wonderfully belittling rhyme: 'Even littler/Than Hitler', perhaps gives a truer indication of his deeper political views at that time than the impetuous and polemical editorials of *Voice of Scotland*.[23]

Despite the *cul-de-sac* nature of MacDiarmid's late *Voice of Scotland*—perhaps even because of it—I would emphasise the importance of studying at first hand the little magazine culture of the 1920s and 1930s if one wants to gain a more reliable understanding of the interwar national revival movement than can be found in many of the recent cultural histories which use this period as an exemplar of a delayed 'romantic nationalism' or an inward-looking 'national essentialism'. This was a very complex historical period, nationally and internationally, politically and artistically; a period of new movements springing up and of changing viewpoints as these movements themselves changed direction. Fascism at the beginning of the 1920s did not mean the same thing as the fascism of the late 1930s; the excitement aroused by the Russian Revolution in 1917 had become more uneasy by the later 1930s. The Spanish Civil War was both a human nightmare and an event which destroyed the sense of easily discernible political boundaries. (MacDiarmid's angry poem 'The Battle Continues' of 1937 attacking Roy Campbell's support of the fascists in the war could not find a publisher until 1957, when its impact was mostly lost with the loss of its original context—no doubt one of the reasons behind MacDiarmid's *Voice of Scotland* frustration.) Little magazines can catch in their periodical articles the particular moment of such crises and changes in political thought, as well as the movement of an individual's ideological or artistic thought processes, with an immediacy not available in the after-the-event account. And they never fail to produce the unexpected insight into the spirit of the artist and his or her period.

Scotland's little magazines of the interwar period chart a brave attempt to escape from both a parochial and a provincial North British status, artistically and in relation to the social, economic and political life of the nation. The movement they supported produced in its own time much fine modern—and Modernist—literature in particular, while its investigations and arguments about

[23] See Margery Palmer McCulloch, '"Littler than Hitler": Hugh MacDiarmid's Unknown Attack on Chamberlain', *Times Literary Supplement*, 17 March 2000, 15, and idem., '"When the Gangs Came to London": Hugh MacDiarmid's Anti- Appeasement Poem', *Scottish Studies Review*, 1 (2000), 94–8.

the condition and future of the country laid the foundations for the increasingly confident and outward-looking Scotland we take for granted today.

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