Alan Riach 2005: *Representing Scotland in Literature, Popular Culture and Iconography: The Masks of the Modern Nation.* Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 280 pp.

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Over the last decades there has been a growing interest in Scottish studies, manifested by both academics and readers worldwide. Recent publications in the field, particularly the texts concerning the relevance of postmodern and postcolonial theory in Scotland (Murray and Riach 1995; Schoene 1995, 1998; Bell 2004), have contributed to making these texts participant in international debates, transcending the specificities of the nation by comparing them with other contexts. On the other hand, the unquestionable impact caused by the Devolution of the Parliament has contributed to placing Scottish culture and politics in the international arena, two decades after Alasdair Gray, James Kelman, Tom Leonard or Liz Lochhead became agents of new forms of literature in the "second Scottish Renaissance" of the 1980s (Gardiner 2002). In *Representing Scotland in Literature, Popular Culture and Iconography*, Alan Riach, Head of the Department of Scottish Literature at the University of Glasgow, moves ahead and manages to situate Scotland internationally from the previously unexplored standpoint of Cultural Studies. A specialist in twentieth-century literature, he has combined his literary and academic career and published several collections of poems, such as *This Folding Map* (1990), *An Open Return* (1991b), *First and Last Songs* (1995) and *Clearances* (2001). Following the publication of his academic texts *Hugh MacDiarmid's Epic Poetry* (1991), *The Radical Imagination: Lectures and Talks by Wilson Harris* (1992), and *The Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid* (1999), Riach offers an innovative insight into the cultural icons of one of Europe's most distinguished traditions, "internationally bankable and unusually stable for a long time" (19).

   Representing Scotland is part of an editorial interest, typified by Duncan Petrie's *Screening Scotland* (2000), Duncan Macmillan's *Scottish Art 1460-1990* (1990), or John Purser's *Scotland's Music* (1992), but it is also the first serious attempt at revising the signs of Scottish culture and their evolution through time from an interdisciplinary approach that is half way between specialised academic research and general interest. Even though there are previous works dealing with Scottish culture, such as Ross Birrell and Alec Finlay's *Justified Sinners: An Archaeology of Scottish Counter-Culture (1960-2000)* (2002), the scope of Riach's text is much wider and comprehensive. With a broad understanding of culture that ranges from 'high' forms of expression to more popular ones, such as "[w]hat remains popularly available—on the airwaves, on screens in homes and cinemas, in advertising imagery, in newspapers and magazines, in conversations between people" (16), Riach studies diverse sources in order to unveil the "masks of modern Scotland", defined by him as those symbols offering the "comfort of stability and the reassurance of conservative continuities across time and especially through times of political upheaval", and which "can serve more than one political purpose, from

reactionary conservatism to progressive futurism" (xiv). Bearing in mind the new stage inaugurated with the Devolution, Riach states in his preface that the motivation behind *Representing Scotland* is also political, and consequently economic and social: "In a nation whose statehood has become imaginable again for the first time in 300 years, this book is intended to remind ourselves that what is wanted is an economy that allows us to sustain those energies and give forms to their animation" (xxiii).

Structured into three main sections, the book covers over four hundred years of Scottish cultural history through a consciously—and irremediably limited—selection of sources. Riach anticipates hypothetical criticism and apologises for the "little attention" (8) paid to further elements, such as architecture, Gaelic forms of culture, or the abundance of texts written by women in the last decades. Nevertheless, the combined analysis of different forms of art makes the book a particularly interesting piece where key moments in the history of the nation are studied from the iconographic representation that has transcended to the present: The Union of the Crowns in 1603, The Union of the Parliaments in 1707, and the more recent two 'renaissances' of the twentieth century. Riach establishes comparisons between the meanings attached to these "masks" at given times, as for example, the case of Edinburgh's most outstanding symbol, its castle and Old Town. Thus, taken as depictions of Scotland's predominant ideology, Riach reflects on the representation of the space in the nineteenth century and interwar periods in Alexander Nasmyth's "Edinburgh from Princes Street with the Royal Institution under Construction" (1825), and William Crozier's "Edinburgh from Salisbury Crags" (1927). The omission of what was considered a noxious influence and an obstacle to the progress of the nation, typical of what has been termed nineteenth-century "Unionist Nationalism" (Haws 1989), is epitomised in Nasmyth's canvas by a focus on the prosperity of modern times: "promising to become more than it already is" (12). Riach's comparison of the work with Crozier's painting allows him to emphasise a shift in the perception of the space during the Scottish Renaissance, when reconciliation with the past required a redefinition of its icons: "this is a painting about the present impact and immediate relevance of the past" (14).

The first part of the book includes an atypical account of the historical trajectory of Scotland's representation that might be considered a bit dispersed as Riach himself acknowledges in his introduction. After a brief description of the book's aims and terminology, chapter two analyses Shakespeare's work in relation to Scotland, as a leading figure in the arts after 1603, a date that is significant to Riach because it represents "the dawn of modernity" but also "the diminishment of Scotland's political authority" (10). He discusses whether Scots characters are to be interpreted as intended caricatures in the history plays—Douglas in *Henry IV* and Captain Jamy in *Henry V*—or if it was later adaptation that translated them into simpletons with benign features: "belligerent, proud, strong, skilled, susceptible, yet resilient and elusive" (37). Similarly, *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest* are studied as examples of divergent images of a newly-established state, Britain, and its internal division. Following Mary Floyd-Wilson's essay "Delving to the Root" (2002), Riach considers *Cymbeline* as part of a necessary political construction of Britishness where internal difference was ignored in favour of an anglicised identity. On the contrary, *The Tempest* represents to the author the obvious tensions caused by the Union of the

Crowns, allegorically showing Scotland and Ireland's marginal status within this new order. A less detailed analysis of *Macbeth* as a political text legitimising the succession of James I to the crown after Elizabeth's death, which is based on Lillian Winstanley's association of Denmark and Scotland (1921), serves as a transition to the most remarkable part of the chapter, "Scotland's Shakespeare". Norman MacCaig's "Go Away, Ariel" (1983) as well as Edwin Morgan's "Caliban Falls Asleep in the Isle Full of Noises" (1979) and "Ariel Freed" (1997) are used to exemplify some of the ways Scottish artists have succeeded in writing back to an overall anglicised culture: "The Scottish poets, subtly, by implication and quiet suggestion, reinterpret the Shakespearian legacy and break into a new time, new affinities and new aspiration towards self-determination" (52).

Shakespeare is irrefutably considered the father of modern English literature, but modern Scotland's foundational texts still remain controversial in our times. Thus, this first part of the book finishes with a chapter on one of Scotland's most complex periods, "the overlap between the Enlightenment and the Romantic era, in the transition from Burns's world to that of Scott" (53). In 1952, David Daiches established the three parallel traditions in the literature of the period: the Lowland Scots tradition, the Gaelic tradition and finally "the eighteenth-century tradition of Edinburgh literati, the Enlightenment philosophers, academics and novelists who were to foster an Anglocentric style" (in Riach 2005: 70). Based on this categorisation and as an introduction to the second part of *Representing Scotland*, the main characteristics of the time are highlighted:

> In the absence of a self-determined nation, there are four major qualities in Scotland's cultural character in this foundational era: the transition and overlap between oral and written culture; the divisions between the three literary traditions within Scotland; the changing dynamics of Scotland's relationship with England, both politically and linguistically, at the beginning of the century of Empire; and the sense of the rapidly expanding world stage, the international arena in which Scotland's self-expression— Scotland's masks—might find wider dialogue. (72)

The second part of the book concentrates on the shift from a popular preference for poetry over other genres to a general taste for long prose narratives, and the way this change affected the representation of Scotland in literature, which connects with previous analyses by Benedict Anderson (1983) and Cairns Craig (1999). Firstly it focuses on Scotland's most prestigious novelist in the transition from the Enlightenment to Romanticism, Sir Walter Scott. Traditionally considered a conservative unionist nationalist and a defender of modern progress, his texts have been read as examples of Britain's dominant ideology at the time. Riach discusses some of the fissures in Scott's literary production, such as the Whistler episode in *The Heart of Midlothian*, frequently obliterated by critics, as an interstice where Britain's unresolved conflicts emerge in the shape of a monstrous presence. He also considers another cultural icon created by a Scottish author in this period, *Treasure Island*, a text that has become a universal classic and whose analysis occupies the following section of the book. Other contemporary studies of Robert Louis Stevenson's work tend to focus on *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and in the symbolic representation of the split in the mind of the Scots,

frequently from a political standpoint (Nairn 1997). For his part, Riach chooses *Treasure Island* to lament the political state of Scotland: "A nation without statehood is the condition of childhood" (94), which, according to him, explains the existence of a long tradition of texts for children written by Scottish authors. Likewise, he polemically argues that "in post-Union Scotland national identity can be fully inhabited only in childhood, because with adult recognition of political structures Scotland's status within the United Kingdom relegates the idea of an autonomous national identity to the realm of fantasy" (92-93). Similar ideas have been expressed before, for example by Cairns Craig: "The failure of a tradition that leaves every individual isolated from the past leads to sentimentality and escapism, and the psychological flaw of a persistent dualism that subverts coherent creativity: these are the terms in which Scottish culture has been analysed" (1996: 17).

Sherlock Holmes stands as another central figure in the cultural history of Britain, yet his Scottish connections are revealed here. Created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, "Scottish by birth, Irish by descent, British by self-determination" (101), his character belongs, according to Riach, to "a long line of independently licensed heroes operating between the law and criminality, from Holmes through Richard Hannay to The Saint and James Bond" (101-102). Conan Doyle closes the second part of *Representing Scotland* occupying a central space not always assigned to him in other studies, in his role as transitional figure in multiple senses, that range from his bridging the position between Victorian and Modern ethics and aesthetics and between imperial and post-imperial times. Riach concentrates mainly on *The Lost World* in order to establish comparisons with later authors, Amos Tutuola and Wilson Harris, advancing the international connections of Scottish culture that are developed in the final part of the book.

Fully centred in the twentieth century, the last part of *Representing Scotland* is organised in three main chapters, each dealing with specific features of contemporary Scottish culture. The first one is concerned with the diverse means found to achieve a differentiated, yet internationalist, identity from the inter-war period. From an initial account of the most relevant aspects of the Scottish Literary Renaissance, Riach reflects on the obstacles faced by artists in the constitution of a national tradition, denouncing that the main one until the 1920s was a lack of co-ordination: "the different fields of creative endeavour were related and overlapped, but without a corresponding or effective political dimension" (145). There have been many studies of this movement in the last decades, but most of them have focused their attention either individually on Hugh MacDiarmid's work, or on other writers of the period (Hagemann 1994; Kerrigan 1994). Riach's innovation resides in his interesting transversal inclusion of significant painters and musicians that are seldom mentioned in other analyses, and his tracing of their influences to the present. Furthermore, his open conception of "internationalism" that transcends the "Anglo-American establishment" (158), makes it possible to access authors and works from the Scottish diaspora or texts by foreign visitors describing their impressions on the culture of the nation, which are rarely given importance because of their hybrid position between two predominant cultures. Yet his approach is not only descriptive but political: "our practices must attend equally well to cross-cultural or trans-cultural texts, drawing strengths from conditions formerly considered debilitating" (159). Secondly, the following chapter analyses

the growing assurance of Scottish authors in the configuration of a distinctive identity since 1945, which Riach identifies with three initial premises: a rise in mass produced forms of culture, the influx of romanticism on them, and the general influence of American culture. Exemplifying his thesis with a selection that includes Alan Sharp's work in Hollywood, James Bond's Scottishness, reinforced by Sean Connery's performance, the more recent novels of Iain Banks or the most distinguishable Scottish comic, *The Bogie Man* (1989-90), he shows an evolution in the way Scotland is perceived both internally and in the international scene. The revival of Scottish arts in the 1980s and 1990s leads him to state that nowadays:

> The culture of America bleeds into Scotland, but this can bring a strange transfusion of health, with an enhancement of sharp wit and caustic, derisive laughter. If the character of our epoch is one of intertextuality, a mixing and mingling of genres, then cultural distinction is not to be found in isolation but in confident modes of dialogue and counter-appropriation, a more assured use of the masks made newly available after 1945. (194)

In the 1990s there was a "raising tide of national self-confidence in Scotland" (196), associated with the works of Alasdair Gray, James Kelman, Liz Lochhead, Janice Galloway, or A.L. Kennedy, among others. The final chapter of *Representing Scotland* studies the way more popular forms of art of the period, such as comics, film and television productions have affected the representation of Scotland in a globalised, capitalist world. Cultural productions at this point have already reworked previous identities so that newly-produced collective definitions can "lead to a cautious but affirmative positioning … where the liabilities, embarrassments and clichés of the past can be seen in a critical but sympathetic light, and the potential for a more comprehensive understanding suggests a ground of unprecedented possibility" (197). Riach considers how foreign influences have been incorporated by Scottish artists in order to reflect the inevitable hybridisation of cultures at the end of the twentieth century. In this sense, *Representing Scotland* shows an original approach where the representation of the nation highly depends on its capability to negotiate its difference as well as the influences it receives in the international market of culture. The marginalisation of contemporary Scottish writing to a final chapter of conclusions allows for the exploration of other forms of art in the closing part of the book. From two clearly identifiable texts, specifically the films *Braveheart* (Mel Gibson, 1995) and *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996), each standing as a commercialised vision of Scotland's past and a post-punk depiction of its present, Riach constructs a chapter where both internal and external renderings of the nation are studied. Thus, John Byrne's plays and scripts *Tutti Frutti* or *Your Cheatin' Heart* are included here to illustrate how the American influx of the post-war period has become an integral part of Scotland's working-class culture (201), along with works by foreign film directors, such as Ken Loach or Lone Schergig. In its interdisciplinary approach, the chapter also deals with the close relationship between different arts like the theatre and the television, principally concentrating on John McGrath's influential *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* (1979) and Troy Kennedy Martin's *Edge of Darkness* (1990). It is also remarkable how Riach studies the representation of Scotland in comics, for example the 1998 *Batman:*

The Scottish Connection, since international collaboration becomes more evident in this field. Alan Grant's *The Bogey Man* epitomises the efforts to represent Scotland in this popular form of culture, but Riach also demonstrates the abundance of Scottish artists participating in international projects, as in the case of Eddie Campbell, Grant Morrison, or John Wagner, helping to reconfigure Scotland, as Riach concludes, as a home that "is not place but also the expression of people, the representation of the people, in relation to that place and to each other", where art, in its broadest sense becomes:

> a kind of home too, but never one to feel complacent about. We might occupy *this* home more naturally and truly, only by making the same necessary sacrifices, and understanding their value. That is perhaps the only way to reach the point from which we might begin to render the account in full, to begin to offer our partial repayment on a debt we will never want to close. (244)

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