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The Political Poetry of Derick Thomson

Politická poezie Dericka Thomsona

TEZE DISERTAČNÍ PRÁCE

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RATIONALE AND OVERVIEW

This dissertation focuses on the political verse and journalism by the Scottish Gaelic poet, scholar, publisher, and activist Derick Thomson (Ruairaidh MacThòmais, 1921-2012). The chosen set of themes can be broadly described as “political issues”, although Derick Thomson should not be regarded only as a political poet in the narrow sense of a propagandist, nor does his political poetry deal with elections and campaigns. The political aspect of his poetry is much broader, including concerns with language and power, and in the dissertation the term “political” is used in this wider sense.

Politics represent the connection between Thomson’s multiple activities, and therefore a suitable framework in which to explore them. In comparison to other writers who may have been violently squeezed into the nationalist box and analysed in terms of the Scottishness and political awareness of their writing with little to justify such a decision, apart from the fact that they lived in Scotland and wrote in one (or more) of its languages, Thomson, with his pronounced lifelong interest in political issues, his active engagement in nationalist politics, and also the fact he addressed political issues in his writing, justifies such a design. Quite paradoxically, this framework, so prominent and in some opinions over-exercised in Scottish literary criticism, has not been applied to one of the people for whom it is truly relevant.¹ So far, the prevailing framework for studying Thomson’s works has been the poetry of place, a concept deeply rooted in the Gaelic tradition, and both popular and critical attention was paid especially to his Lewis verse and, to a less extent, to his writing about Glasgow. In my own research, I have been systematically attempting to bring forward overlooked aspects of Thomson’s career – such as his contribution to *Gairm*, his research on the Ossian controversy, or religion as a theme in his poetry – and this thesis constitutes one part of this long-term project.

In relation to Thomson’s poetry, one of the first associations with “political issues” would be Scottish nationalist politics. Thomson remained a committed nationalist throughout his life and was an active member of the Scottish National Party (SNP). The frequently applied but not much explored labelling of Thomson as a stalwart nationalist invites examination as to its actual contents. In contrast to the prevailing tendency not to connect Scottish nationalism with a specific language and a cultural agenda, Thomson has always retained a double, intertwined commitment: to an independent Scotland in Europe and to a

¹ For a criticism of the prevailing tendencies in Scottish literary studies, see Whyte, “Introduction,” *Modern Scottish Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

thriving Gaelic language and culture within such an independent Scotland, that would provide safe space for the development of its many languages and cultures. As Thomson never published any definitive theoretical treatise presenting of opinions on these topics – the closest match would be his essay “The Role of the Writer in a Minority Culture” and the booklet *Why Gaelic Matters*, which are both given due attention –, his approach needs to be traced in his poems, journalism, and academic writing.

This dissertation strives to provide answers to the following questions – Which political issues can be traced in Thomson’s poetry? What were his main concerns? How does he handle politics in his poetry? Are there poems where a political interpretation might be constructed, but that also allow other ways of reading? What were Thomson’s actual political convictions, as far as we can reconstruct them from his published works? How does he negotiate his double commitment, to the Gàidhealtachd and to Scotland as a whole? What sort of future does he envisage for the Gàidhealtachd and for Scotland? What sort of nationalism does he promote?

Apart from the relevance of this project for the general rehabilitation of Thomson to his place in Gaelic culture and Scottish culture in general, it is also topical as a study of politics in the works of a man who left a significant mark on Gaelic Scotland, at the time when the position of Gaelic in Scotland and the position of Scotland in Europe are both hotly debated issues.

The methodological section offers a broad discussion of various theories of nationalism and of general questions concerning the relationship of politics and poetry, providing frameworks, concepts and vocabulary for the following enquiry. Chapter 2 introduces various contexts: a discussion of the development of Scottish nationalism, with special focus on the twentieth century and figures and movements with direct relevance for Thomson; an overview of political issues in the works of Sorley MacLean and George Campbell Hay, Thomson’s immediate contemporaries and both politically engaged Gaelic poets; and finally Thomson’s biography, as no such comprehensive overview is available online or in print. Chapter 3, the most extensive part of the thesis, presents a chronological discussion of Thomson’s poetry with a focus on political issues. Chapter 4 explores Thomson’s Gaelic journalism, mainly his editorials and other articles for the Gaelic quarterly *Gairm*, and its relation to his poetry. The concluding Chapter 5 brings together the findings of the thesis concerning Thomson’s politics and his political poems, and casts an eye back over the whole work, its benefits and limitations, and an eye forward to possible areas of future research.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

As Donald Meek notes, Thomson was “totally committed to the cause of Scotland, even when it was unfashionable to be committed to Scotland.”² He adhered to this persuasion throughout his life and saw the gradual transformation of Scottish nationalism from a rather obscure political movement to a major and respectable force in Scottish and UK politics. Before his death in March 2012, Thomson saw the return of the parliament to Edinburgh and the promise of an independence referendum in the near future.

Thomson’s writing may be seen as a protest on behalf of the threatened Scottish Gaelic community in Scotland, and the Scottish community in Britain. In Thomson’s case, one may thus observe two principal interrelated loyalties: to the Gàidhealtachd and to Scotland as a whole. It has been pointed out in the festschrift in the poet’s honour that the “width of the background awareness [...] makes his political nationalism Scottish rather than Gaelic.”³ In terms of political affiliation, Thomson remained faithful to the Scottish National Party throughout his life, supported the efforts to separate Scotland from the United Kingdom, and did not experiment with founding any new political parties which would focus on Gaelic Scotland only. For Thomson, a sovereign Scottish national state was a framework in which the different Scottish languages and cultures could flourish. It can therefore be argued that there are two sorts of nationalism in Thomson’s writing: Scottish nationalism, focused on politics, and Gaelic nationalism, focused on cultural and linguistic revival.

What Thomson emphasises as the most important components of “being a Gael” was either a command of or a willingness to learn Gaelic, and also historical and cultural awareness. It was this cultural basis of his conception of what it means to be a Gael that allowed him to welcome to the Gaelic world people who learnt the language as adults and came to the culture from the outside, to whom it was not their lot by birth but a choice of free will, such as the historian Ian Grimble who is one of the august company of heroes in *Sùil air Fàire*, together with Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair (and coming from Thomson, that is some praise indeed). Belonging to this Gàidhealtachd / Scotland, the two communities Thomson pledged his loyalty to, was in his view not governed by blood right or any other

² Meek, Donald. “Appreciation of Professor Derick S. Thomson: funeral oration, as delivered,” Passages From Tìre [Donald Meek’s personal blog] 5 April 2013, <<http://meekwrite.blogspot.cz/2013/04/appreciation-of-professor-derick-s.html>> Accessed 15 November 2014.

³ “Dedication,” *Feill-Sgrìbhinn do Ruaraidh MacThòmais / Scottish Gaelic Studies* XVII (1996): 3.

inherent quality, but by commitment to the cause. In this way, Thomson's thought exhibits features of voluntarism.

In relation to Scotland, Thomson's nationalism is a civic one, inclusive and multicultural, imagining the independent state that would nurture its various cultures and languages. However, even seemingly pure cultural patriotism presupposes a myth of ancestral origins and shared historical memories of the homeland that defines the ethnic basis of a supposedly entirely civic nation. Regarding the Gàidhealtachd, Thomson comes closest to what Anthony D. Smith delineates as cultural or linguistic nationalism, as he promoted the idea that full socialisation in the host language and culture can gain people not born or brought up with them full acceptance into the community. When Thomson seems to lapse into ethnocentric positions, such as in the problematic sections of "Meall Garbh" and in some *Gairm* editorials which include harsh critique of the English and their cultural and economic crimes against Scotland, it is arguably not criticism of the English as a unified ethnic group that would be inherently vile but rather of the United Kingdom and the Tory policies.

MacAulay remarked that Thomson's Gaelic activism, such as the foundation and maintenance of *Gairm* and Comhairle nan Leabhraichean (Gaelic Books Council), spring from the same motivation that pushed him into active participation in nationalist politics, for he saw those activities as "offering at least a marginal possibility of the survival of Gaelic culture."⁴ In the words of Crichton Smith, Thomson saw "the salvation of his own culture as dependent on an independent Scotland,"⁵ and believed that "for the Highlander to survive as a real human being" there must be a way of making Scotland into an independent state.⁶ In the article "Gaelic in Scotland", Thomson wrote that only a Scottish Nationalist government could be expected to adopt efficient Gaelic policies, since "no other political party has committed itself significantly in this area," and the full realisation of Gaelic potential is unlikely to be achieved without a political revolution of a particular kind.⁷ An independent Scotland, in charge of its own natural resources and economic policies, would in Thomson's view provide a safer environment for the further development of the individual languages and cultural traditions.

⁴ Donald MacAulay, "Introduction," *Derick Thomson: The Far Road and Other Poems / Lines Review* 39 (December, 1971): 4.

⁵ Iain Crichton Smith, "The Poetry of Derick Thomson," *Towards the Human* (Edinburgh: Macdonald Publishers, 1986) 141.

⁶ Crichton Smith, "The Poetry of Derick Thomson" 142-143.

⁷ Derick Thomson, "Gaelic in Scotland: Assessment and Prognosis," *Minority Languages Today*, ed. E. Haugen, D. J. McClure, and D. Thomson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981) 20.

In his view, an independent Scotland was important for Gaelic, but Gaelic was also important to Scotland. In the pamphlet *Why Gaelic Matters*, he describes Gaelic as “one of the touchstones of Scottish cultural and political pride,” points out that “the resurgence of interest in Gaelic has close links with various political aspirations for Scotland”⁸ and that “a gradual withering away of a vital part of Scottish history and culture, is not to be regarded with equanimity by anyone who has the full interests of Scotland at heart.”⁹

In spite of the general prominence of traditional culture and literature in the Gaelic world, including academia, Thomson’s revival did not use folklore as the wellspring of nationhood. As an academic, he engaged with traditional culture and even contributed to what was to become the School of Scottish Studies by a number of Gaelic folk songs in his own renditions,¹⁰ but did not rely on folk culture as the basis of his revival. His revival was remarkable for its focus on the issues of the present and the future, such as finding vocabulary for modern subjects and situations and publishing new books appealing to children and young people, rather than going back to old songs and etymology.¹¹ There are traces of looking for a golden age in some of Thomson’s poems with references to the times when Gaelic was the official language of the royal court, but his priority was keeping the language alive in the twentieth century, and he welcomed the culture which emerges from using the language in the new situations and contexts. The aim of Thomson’s pragmatic approach was not resurrecting “a golden age” but producing new culture.

Another idea which seemed to be rather controversial from the point of view of the more traditional revivalist was Thomson’s refusal to believe that the best way to support Gaelic was to move to one of the remaining communities where the language is still used to some extent on a daily basis: “[...] that only by living in a strong Gaelic community can a poet be a spokesman of the Gaelic community. This is palpable nonsense, but it exists.”¹² Thomson spent most of his life in Glasgow and never went back to live in his native Lewis. This pronounced intellectualism of his revival (which he tried to, with more or less success, temper in *Gairm*), his exacting standards and preference for high culture could result in conflicts with those who failed to meet his standards and worked for the Gaelic revival in a more local context and with a less cosmopolitan agenda. This refusal to become “a voice of

⁸ Thomson, *Why Gaelic Matters* (Edinburgh: The Saltire Society, 1983) 23.

⁹ Thomson, *Why Gaelic Matters* 33.

¹⁰ These recordings of Thomson’s singing are freely available through the open-access online archive *Tobar an Dualchais / Kist o Riches* (Thomson’s ID as a contributor is 1092).

¹¹ Thomson, “Tir na Gàidhlig ann a Linn na h-Ola” 210.

¹² Derick Thomson, “Poetry in Scottish Gaelic 1945-1992,” *Poetry in the British Isles: Non-Metropolitan Perspectives*, ed. Hans-Werner Ludwig and Lothar Fietz (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995) 159.

the region”, to come and live in a Gaelic-speaking area and engage in local issues on a daily basis may be one of the reasons why Sorley MacLean overshadows Thomson’s reputation.

Thomson placed great emphasis on the necessity to communicate with the European tradition and to fight provincialism and narrow-mindedness, to which Gaelic Scotland in his view understandably tended as a result of social and economic development. Thomson opined that firm nationalist persuasion not only did not conflict with pronounced internationalism, but even required it.¹³ In analogy, it may be said that in his view, a confident national state is built on supporting rather than submerging regional identities and indigenous languages. Thomson’s revivalist efforts are based on a conviction that development of Scotland’s languages and cultures should contribute to the self-confidence of the national state. In Thomson’s view, such a double commitment to regional cultural nationalism on the level of the Gàidhealtachd and civic nationalism on the state level does not exclude openness towards Europe and the world – such confident and diverse national states that support their various cultures and traditions should inspire and enrich one another, especially in terms of cultural exchanges.

Although the concern with the Gaelic language is omnipresent, Thomson was not essentialist: he considered Gaelic a unique part of Scottish identity which should be embraced and promoted, but he also made it clear Scotland could exist without Gaelic, although the loss of the language would reduce its diversity and also impoverish it economically. Some traces of Romantic nationalism may be observed in Thomson’s early poems and articles, but his oeuvre in general can be interpreted as a turning point: as an attempt to overcome Romantic nationalism and its idealistic nature and substitute it with a more pragmatic notion of the Gaelic revival, very flexible, future-oriented, and open to impulses from abroad, turning cultural revival into a political problem. For Thomson, the only framework in which Gaelic can survive is a politically independent Scotland firmly linked with Europe.

When one attempts to evaluate Derick Thomson as a political poet, there are two essential virtues: that of consistency and authenticity. According to MacInnes, “Thomson’s political commitment to Nationalism has remained essentially constant for forty years although the tone of his political poetry has become progressively bleaker, more sceptical, more sophisticated.”¹⁴ There are no sudden shifts, changes of allegiances, or abrupt leavetaking of previously held ideals. Thomson is a political poet who consistently supported

¹³ Derick Thomson, “Reflections after Writing *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry*,” *Lines Review* 49 (June, 1974): 15.

¹⁴ John MacInnes, “The World through Scots-Gaelic Eyes” [a review of *Creachadh na Clàrsaich*], *Lines Review* 85 (1983): 18.

two main causes throughout his life – the national independence of Scotland and the revival of Gaelic language and culture, which in his view were intertwined. There are also clear links between the convictions and concerns expressed in the poems and Thomson’s activities – when he writes about the threatened position of Gaelic, it resonates with the fact he was the moving spirit behind numerous initiatives to support the language, and when the prospect of Scottish independence is discussed, the reader likely know he supported the cause unfailingly throughout his life, as a cultural activist, SNP voter, and also by direct involvement in SNP campaigns.

Arguably, the biggest political gesture in literature Thomson ever made is to write in Gaelic and to write about everything in Gaelic. It was not a decision of artistic necessity, but a political choice. Thomson himself commented on the topic in the article “The Role of the Writer in a Minority Culture”: “One often senses, among writers in such a situation, a feeling of communal responsibility and pride in the work they are doing. The role of the writer acquires some extra-literary characteristics.”¹⁵

As the discussion of the collection *Saorsa agus an Iolaire* demonstrates, in many of the poems which are suggested as political, Thomson delights in puns, obscurity and ambiguities. Whyte remarked in relation to Thomson’s poetry in general that he “set vehicle and tenor oscillating, shimmering in a tension which, as his poetry matures, refuses to let either side preponderate, creating in the process a richness and uncertainty of meaning which are profoundly modern in tone.”¹⁶ One is led to believe there is a political meaning, but the references are so particular or the wordplay so intricate that the poems would hardly work as a call to action for a great number of readers, because they would simply fail to understand it. Some poems are also only political “by proxy”, by being placed in a certain collection or a section – inclusion among more openly political poems inspires the reader to read political meanings into them too.

Thomson wrote poetry in Gaelic and the Gaelic world in the second half of the twentieth century was, in terms of the number of speakers, a shrinking one. The target group of Thomson’s political deliberations would thus be a rather small group of fluent Gaelic-speaking intellectuals with literary leanings. It thus seems Thomson’s political poetry was not a means of persuading other people to follow a course of political action, but a rather private way to meditate about politics, using a different form than an essay, newspaper article, or a

¹⁵ Derick Thomson, “The Role of the Writer in a Minority Culture,” *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* XLIV (1964-1966): 267-269.

¹⁶ Christopher Whyte, “The Gaelic Renaissance: Sorley MacLean and Derick Thomson,” *British Poetry from the 1950s to the 1990s*, ed. G. Day and B. Docherty (London: Macmillan, 1997) 158.

public speech. It is safe to say that the political appeal of the *Gairm* editorials, which were often openly persuasive and tried to move the readers to a certain course of action, was much bigger. The very fact that the magazine was able to exist for so long without being affiliated to the Church or to any big players on the Gaelic scene suggests it actually reached a number of people who, by buying the magazine, already showed some interest in the cause.

In his discussion of Auden's poetry, Huddleston distinguishes the proleptic and the commemorative function of poetry, the latter denoting the poet's capacity to reflect on historical events from multiple perspective.¹⁷ Thomson's reflective poems which touch on political topics, but address them, in the space of a collection, from different points of view – the Gaels are victims of injustice and oppression, and at the same time are held responsible for being complicit in their own miseries. The decay of Gaelic is mourned and criticised, but in combination with a broader perspective of incessant linguistic and cultural change in human history. The prevailing mode of Thomson's political poetry seems to be observation, reflection, and criticism of the current situation, rather than suggesting specific solutions. Thomson may be described as one of the poets who, in Stroh's words, "employ historical perspectives as a means to encourage present and future resistance and revival."¹⁸ The political poems are characterised by mediated persuasion – the reader of the poems is alerted to certain topics and connections and can therefore start to think about them in a political manner.

Although one should exercise caution and not equal too readily the poetic persona with the author, in the case of this analysis, where the objective is to provide an overview of Thomson's political opinions, it seems fruitful to combine findings from his journalism and scholarly activities with a close reading of his poetry, bearing in mind the historical context and the time of the publication. Such an approach also offers a possibility to explore how Thomson treated identical topics in different media. It has been pointed out that due to the obscurity and playfulness of the poems, their campaigning potential is very limited, but for the audience which they reached, their persuasiveness would likely have been increased by the awareness of the author, his stature and credibility as a person. Thomson's authority in the Gaelic world and the example of his personal activism increase the authority of his politically and socially engaged comments.

¹⁷ Robert Huddleston, "Poetry Makes Nothing Happen: Auden's Struggle with Politics," *Boston Review* 25 February 2015, <<http://bostonreview.net/poetry/robert-huddleston-wh-auden-struggle-politics>> 19 July 2017.

¹⁸ Silke Stroh, *Uneasy Subjects: Postcolonialism and Scottish Gaelic Poetry* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009) 251.

When one compares his poetry about Gaelic and his articles and *Gairm* editorials, it seems Thomson moves between the positions of the committed activist and the cautious, often pessimistic poet. Thomson's opinions of course developed throughout his life, and so did the situation of Gaelic, yet there seems to be a more general pattern in Thomson's work and thought. It is as if Thomson the poet had the luxury, or the painful duty, of ruminating over dilemmas and questions Thomson the activist and journalist did not ponder on so much, as his aim was to encourage his fellow Gaels to action. It seems that in his poetry he afforded himself the space to view these matters from different angles, to treat his doubts and fears, and to point out the weaknesses and shortcomings of the strategies and ideas he is trying to promote. Many of the poems concerned with Gaelic either see it dying, imagine the future without Gaelic and its survival as a mere relic or a dead language such as Latin, or express concern about the directions into which the Gaelic revival is moving and the results it produces.

Apart from occasional slips into the "we and them" mentality, such as in "Meall Garbh" and some of the angrier *Gairm* editorials, Thomson resolutely disapproves of nationalism of that sort, as his comments on an Orange Parade in *Smeur an Dòchais* show. He was also greatly concerned with ethnic violence in former Yugoslavia, in Africa, and elsewhere. He does not follow the tradition of pronounced anti-English or anti-Lowland sentiment, as expressed for example in some works of Mary MacPherson and William Livingstone, who sought to strengthen Gaelic identity at the time of its acute crisis by defining themselves negatively against Lowlanders and against the English. He is also far from victimising the Gaels and the Scots, and he is always quick to point out their failures and shortcomings, their own complicity, by lack of commitment and awareness, in the decay of their own nation. They are the target of most of his criticism, not the English.

The profound commitment to Gaelic did not prevent Thomson from appreciation of other traditions in Scotland and he never claims that Gaelic is in any way superior to them. In the poem "Dà Chànan" (Two Languages), Gaelic and English are compared to two encroaching but separate trees in one garden that live in harmony, in spite of their vast differences. Thomson values different languages and cultures, but he does not want them to erase their distinguishing features – he would prefer them to remain distinct and to coexist peacefully. When he writes about the multicultural vortex of Glasgow from 1990s onwards, he is not appalled by the presence of people of different ethnic origin and by the multitude of languages that may be heard on Glasgow streets, but rather attracted to them. Sometimes he is curious as to what will become of the world he will not see, sometimes he is wary of the

cultural melange, especially as he thinks his own nation is losing its self-awareness: through its own lack of confidence and effort, not under the pressure of the immigrants.

In many of his political poems, Thomson seems to be driving at a similar point to the one Gwyn Williams makes in his book *When Was Wales?:* “Wales is an artefact the Welsh produce. If they want to.”¹⁹ Neal Ascherson, who quotes Williams in his *Stone Voices*, develops this thought further: “Perhaps they no longer want to. [...] if they continued to lose their sense of history, then no more artefacts would be produced.”²⁰ Thomson’s worries are the same: he is aware of the fact that Scotland is continually performed and created, that its history is a narrative whose plot differs according to the storyteller. If people forget about the history and culture, Scotland will cease to be produced, or such a form of Scotland will emerge as Thomson would be no longer able to subscribe to it.

According to Meek, Thomson took his opportunity “to stamp his own vision on Gaelic and on Scotland. It is not too much to say that that vision made Gaelic what it is today, with its numerous means of enlightened support, but it also went some way to making Scotland what it is today,” and adds that those who are trying to support Gaelic are, “by and large, doing no more than finessing the templates which Derick Thomson and his team created all those years ago.”²¹ Thomson himself made a list of the most important tasks of the writer in a minority culture: “to increase the range of writing in that language, to provide a minimum bulk of such writing, to express the ethos of his society but also to interpret the outside world to it, and to satirise it periodically.”²² In all these, he succeeded admirably.

As Whyte noted when the volume *Creachadh na Clàrsaich* emerged, “the publication of Derick Thomson’s collected poems makes it clear yet again that that the material for the creation of Scottish consciousness there is in great richness and abundance.”²³ Thomson’s poetry and his overall career certainly provide ample material for developing an open, outward and forward-looking vision of the Gàidhealtachd and of Scotland where minority cultures are supported and where both tradition and cultural exchange are encouraged. Whether Thomson’s poems transcend their maker and the immediate context of their making, as suggested in Auden’s elegy for Yeats, or whether they will come to seem too tied to a particular time and cause, remains to be established.

¹⁹ Gwyn Williams, *When Was Wales?: A History of the Welsh* (London: Penguin Books, 1985).

²⁰ Neal Ascherson, *Stone Voices: The Search for Scotland* (London: Granta Books, 2003) 37.

²¹ “Appreciation of Professor Derick S. Thomson: funeral oration, as delivered,” <<http://meekwrite.blogspot.cz/2013/04/appreciation-of-professor-derick-s.html>>.

²² Thomson, “The Role of the Writer in a Minority Culture” 271.

²³ Christopher Whyte, “Derick Thomson: Reluctant Symbolist,” *Chapman* 38 (1984): 6.

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Iolaire, BBC Alba <http://www.bbc.co.uk/alba/tbh/iolaire/an_call/>

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Stornoway Historical Society <<http://www.stornowayhistoricalsociety.org.uk>>

Tobar an Dualchais / Kist o Riches <<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/>>

Mgr. Petra Johana Poncarová:
Overview of Academic Activities

PUBLICATIONS

Books

Air an Spiris: Taghadh de Rosg Ruairidh MhicThòmais. Brig o' Turk: Clann Tuirc, 2020. (forthcoming, edited).

Derick Thomson. Scotnote Series. Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2020. (forthcoming)

Chapters in Collective Monographs

“Ruaraidh Erskine of Mar: Scottish Aristocrat, Gaelic Revivalist.” *Between Cultures, Between Languages. Essays in Honour of Professor Aniela Korzeniowska*. Ed. I. Szymańska and A. Piskorska. Warsaw: Semper, 2020. (forthcoming, spring 2020)

“Ruaraidh MacThòmais is *Gairm*.” *Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig 9*. Ed. M. Bateman and Richard Cox. Sleat: Clò Ostaig, 2019. 281-290.

“Derick Thomson’s *An Rathad Cian* (The Far Road, 1970): Modern Gaelic Poetry of Place between Introspection and Politics.” *Place and Space in Scottish Literature*. Ed. M. Szuba and J. Wolfreys. Palgrave MacMillan, 2019. 209-229.

“The Best Scottish Gaelic Novel? Reception and Analysis of Tormod Caimbeul’s *Deireadh an Fhoghair*.” *Imagining Scottishness: European and Domestic Representations*. Ed. A. Korzeniowska and I. Szymańska. Warsaw: Semper, 2017. 304-314.

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Essays in Journals

“Snake Women and Hideous Sensation: The Strange Case of Detective Short Stories by Ruaraidh Erskine of Mar.” *Scottish Literary Review* (forthcoming, spring 2020)

“Eadar Canaan is Garrabost: Religion in Derick Thomson’s Lewis Poetry.” *Studies in Scottish Literature* (forthcoming, spring 2020)

“Derick Thomson and Ossian.” *Anglica: An International Journal of English Studies* (forthcoming, spring 2020)

“As Ancient Oak that Grows on Heath Alone: S. S. Blicher and Macpherson’s Ossian in Denmark.” *Hradec Králové Journal of Anglophone Studies*. Vol 6: 2, December 2019.

“An Druim bho Thuath: Tormod Caimbeul’s Last Vista of Gaelic Scotland.” *Litteraria Pragensia: Studies in Literature and Culture* 28: 54 (2018).

“The Gael Cosmopolite: Tormod Caimbeul and *Shrapnel* (2006).” *Litteraria Pragensia: Studies in Literature and Culture* 27:53 (2017).

“Sorley MacLean’s Other Clearance Poems.” *Studies in Scottish Literature* 43: 1 (2017).

Edited Special Issues of Academic Journals

Litteraria Pragensia: Studies in Literature and Culture 28: 54 (2018). With Radvan Markus.

Cultural Exchanges in Scottish Literature. *Litteraria Pragensia: Studies in Literature and Culture* 27: 53 (2017). With Martin Procházka.

INVITED TALKS

“Ruaraidh Erskine of Mar and Derick Thomson: Gaelic Innovators.” University of Glasgow, 18 June 2019

“Modern Scottish Gaelic Literature: Writing in a Dying Tongue?.” University of Hradec Kralove, 8 November 2017

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS (SELECTION)

Creative Archipelagos (Association for Scottish Literary Studies Annual Conference), Skye, Scotland, June 2018.

2nd World Congress of Scottish Literatures, Vancouver, Canada, June 2017.

Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig (Researching Gaelic), Skye, Scotland, June 2016.

1st World Congress of Scottish Literatures, Glasgow, Scotland, July 2014.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

“Literature of the Scottish Islands.” Elective seminar, Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Winter Term 2019/2020

GRANTS AND OTHER PROJECTS

June 2019 – present: participation in the *Edinburgh Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Writers*, contributing entries on Gaelic writers; chief editors: Prof. Alan Riach and Prof. Caroline McCracken-Flesher, chief Gaelic editor: Prof. Ronald Black

May 2018 – present: researcher, project KREAS “Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World” (Operational Programme Research, Development and Education), supported by the European Regional Development Fund-Project

June 2017 – present: congress manager for the 3rd World Congress of Scottish Literatures (Prague, 2020)

2015-2018: main investigator of the Charles University Grant Agency grant nr. 2915, “Modern Scottish Gaelic Literature”, final assessment: “exceptional project”, main outcome: Czech translation of the seminal Scottish Gaelic novel *Deireadh an Fhoghar* by T. Caimbeul