

Scott Lyall, 'Translating Modernism: The Scottish Renaissance Movement and German-language Modernism'

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The Scottish Renaissance Movement of the 1920-30s was a response to what many literary artists of the period saw as Scotland's provincialisation within the United Kingdom and the British Empire. Hugh MacDiarmid, arguably the main protagonist of the movement, saw the greatest threat to the hope of an internationalist culture in Scotland in what he regarded as the detrimental Anglicisation of Scottish society. The Scottish Renaissance Movement, particularly but not exclusively in MacDiarmid's conception, is often seen as having been influenced in its post-British, anti-colonialist themes by the Irish Literary Revival. Yet MacDiarmid and others of this period in Scotland, especially Edwin and Willa Muir, were equally influenced by German-language Modernism as a means to inspire the revival of Scottish letters. Both MacDiarmid and Edwin Muir began as adherents of Nietzsche, having first read the philosopher's work in translation in A. R. Orage's journal *The New Age*. Muir, who would later become a Christian, renounced Nietzsche's influence, but with his wife Willa, he would travel to Germany in the early 1920s, living in Dresden and staying at Hellerau, the progressive school run by the Scot A. S. Neill. The Muirs were the first to translate Kafka into English, as well as Gerhart Hauptmann, Lion Feuchtwanger, and Hermann Broch, amongst others. Equally, MacDiarmid would freely translate the likes of Rilke, Stefan George and Else Lasker-Schüler, adapting these poets' work for use in his own poetry. This paper will explore the influence of German-language Modernism on the writers of the Scottish Renaissance Movement and suggest that it played a vital role in the Europeanisation of the movement; helping, in MacDiarmid's words, 'To bring Scottish Literature into closer touch with current European tendencies in technique and ideation.'