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**David Daiches. *The Paradox of Scottish Culture: The Eighteenth-Century Experience*. London. Oxford University Press. 1964. vii + 97 pp. 10/6.**

Alastair MacDonald  
*Memorial University of Newfoundland*

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STUDIES IN SCOTTISH LITERATURE

David Daiches. *The Paradox of Scottish Culture: The Eighteenth-Century Experience*. London. Oxford University Press. 1964. vii + 97 pp. 10/6.

The Union of the Scottish and English Parliaments in 1707 was an incorporating and not a federal union. It meant certain political and economic advantages for Scotland at the cost of some measure of national and cultural identity. In this book, the published Whidden Lectures for 1964, Dr. Daiches brings out the complex effects of this amalgam. From the point of view of cultural as well as economic and other matters, the Union, he suggests, was not an unmitigated benefit to Scotland. Progress and development after 1707 tended to be imposed from without rather than to develop organically from within. The loss of political identity in 1707 reinforced the effect of the loss of the Court in 1603. When sophistication and patronage as well as Parliament moved to London, it was natural that Scotland should look south for example and models. Or else, at home, it had to be content with native tradition and culture, which, in these very circumstances, must tend to become folk tradition and culture rather than national. It was Scotland's sad dilemma that for survival it had to turn away from itself. It had to take on, more and more, an English, or Anglified, culture to ensure it an audience in the world, and subdue native tones to accents which must ever remain somewhat foreign to it.

All this Dr. Daiches considers with an insight and perceptiveness which can in no way be suggested by the above simplifications. The book consists of three sections: I. "The Cultural Consequences of the Union," II. "National Institutions: The Church and The Law," III. "The Heavenly City of the Edinburgh Philosophers." In the first, he argues that while Scotland certainly gained from the Union in some ways, improvement in matters industrial, agricultural, economic were at first "doctrinaire," and only gradually more spontaneous. Improvement met with a resistance paralleled in some of the arts; as Burns' resisting the advice of Edinburgh *literati* to accommodate his genius to fashionable poetic modes. Watson's *Collection*, marking the start of an eighteenth-century Scottish literary revival, gave a wide but confused picture of a poetic tradition. In the eighteenth century, the Scots language, a real language—Middle Scots—in the time of the *makars*, finally gave way to English for literary purposes; and spoken Scots degenerated into various regional dialects. Allan Ramsay's attempts to set up as Scottish wit and man of letters were largely based on English models:

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the London club and coffee-house personality and writing. His uncertainty in taste as editor of song collections gave authority to much bad verse, of both rustic coarseness and insipid neo-classical elegance. Through a growing consciousness of its heritage of song, however, eighteenth-century Scotland "registered its national feeling."

The second section treats of the two national institutions the Union left Scotland: the Church and the Law. The church of Knox, by its democratic organization from "outlying parts to the centre," could be more truly representative of public opinion, in spite of disruption, than the Parliament had ever been. But while bearing "some of the responsibilities of a lost nationhood," it could not be a patron of the arts: indeed, it was often inimical to them. The Law here was more successful. Education for the Law was in Scotland also a liberal and gentlemanly education. Some of the country's great eighteenth-century lawyers were also men of culture and letters, as well as, often, notable personalities and even "characters": Lord Kames, Lord Monboddo, Lord Auchinleck, Lord Braxfield. The last section shows that by the middle of the eighteenth century there had grown in Scotland such a sense of place in a wider "British" and even European cultural context, that Edinburgh sought an actual embodiment of this Enlightenment in stone. Craig's New Town became a symbol of the rational, civilized ethos of this eighteenth-century. "Athens of the North." This was Scottish patriotism on a wide plan. But, as Dr. Daiches stresses in more than one place, it was a patriotism which, paradoxically, at the same time ignored, for example, a contemporary Gaelic culture, while getting excited and misled over Macpherson's "Ossian." It would if it could, through the *litterati*, have refined all originality out of Burns. It ignored Fergusson. It failed properly to understand Hume, who was content to compromise with lesser minds than his own.

This small book (small in size only, for it is concentrated and scholarly) is a valuable and distinguished study and reconsideration of the effects of Union. Of literary figures, there are the original and authoritative considerations one would expect. And also, the historical, economic, and sociological conditions behind the literature are assimilated and presented with helpful succinctness and clarity. The work usefully corrects often vaguely formulated and thoughtlessly perpetuated views on such matters as Jacobitism, aspects of Burns, sentimental Scottishness, the "torrent of tartanry." Dr. Daiches' bias is rather against the Anglicizing influences which started in the eighteenth century, and towards the strong, native Scottish talents and genius which the Union partly caused to be thwarted or diverted. They had

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to atrophy, or degenerate into the quaintness, sentimentality, or pawkiness that too much since the nineteenth century have made up part of the Scottish image—at least outside the country. As the title suggests, the idea of paradox gives Dr. Daiches a structural and thematic basis for his deliberations. It is true he seems to find paradoxes everywhere. But they are in the situations as well as in the lectures. And he does not give the impression that arguments are being too forced, or an intellectual game of paradoxes played to the end. Perhaps because the three sections of the book were lectures, there remains some repetition. But in the interests of reiteration and emphasis, this, in print no less than in the lecture room, has its force and effectiveness.

*ALASTAIR MACDONALD*

*MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND*