



Enlighten: Theses

In this section

The fin-de-siècle Scots Renaissance: the roles of decadence in the development of Scottish cultural nationalism, c.1880-1914

Shaw, Michael (2015) *The fin-de-siècle Scots Renaissance: the roles of decadence in the development of Scottish cultural nationalism, c.1880-1914*. PhD thesis, University of Glasgow.

Full text available as:



PDF

[Download \(6MB\)](#) | [Preview](#)

Printed Thesis Information: <https://eleanor.lib.gla.ac.uk/record=b3109728>

Abstract

This thesis offers a cultural history of the Scots Renaissance, a revival of Scottish identity and culture between 1880 and 1914, and demonstrates how heavily Scottish cultural nationalism in this period drew from, and was defined by, fin-de-siècle Decadence. Few cultural historians have taken the notion of a Scots Renaissance serious and many literary critics have styled the period as low point in the health of Scottish culture – a narrative which is deeply flawed. Others have portrayed Decadence as antithetical to nationalism (and to Scotland itself). The thesis challenges these characterisations and argues that there was a revival of Scottish identity in the period which drew from, and contributed to, Decadent critiques of 'civilisation' and 'progress'.

The thesis considers literature alongside visual art, which were so interdependent around the 1890s. It focuses on three main cultural groups in Scotland (the circle that surrounded Patrick Geddes, the Glasgow School and writers of the Scottish Romance Revival) but it speaks to an even wider cultural trend. Together, the various figures treated here formed a loose movement concerned with reviving Scottish identity by returning to the past and challenging notions of improvement, utilitarianism and stadialism.

The first chapter considers the cultural and historical background to the Scots Renaissance and reveals how the writings of the Scottish Romance Revival critiqued stadial narratives in order to lay the ground for a more unified national self. The second chapter demonstrates how important japonisme and the Belgian cultural revival were to the Scots Renaissance: Scottish cultural nationalists looked to Japan and Belgium, amongst other nations, to gain inspiration and form a particular counter-hegemony.

The final three chapters of the thesis explore how a unifying myth of origin was developed through neo-Paganism, how connections to an ancestral self were activated through occultism, and how such ideas of mythic origin and continuation were disseminated to wide audiences through pageantry. In doing so, the thesis charts the development and dissemination of the Scots Renaissance, while situating it within its historical and international contexts.

Item Type:	Thesis (PhD)
Qualification Level:	Doctoral
Keywords:	Cultural nationalism, decadence, fin de siècle, Scotland, Patrick Geddes, Robert Louis Stevenson, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, William Sharp, Margaret Macdonald, John Duncan, Glasgow, Edinburgh, paganism, occultism, Japonisme, romance revival, pageantry, Maeterlinck.
Subjects:	D History General and Old World > DA Great Britain > DA Fine Arts > N Visual arts (General) For photography, see TR > P Language and Literature > PR English literature
Colleges/Schools:	College of Arts > School of Critical Studies > English Literature

Supervisor's Name:	Pittock, Professor Murray and Ferguson, Dr. Christine
Date of Award:	2015
Depositing User:	Dr Michael Shaw
Unique ID:	glathesis:2015-6395
Copyright:	Copyright of this thesis is held by the author.
Date Deposited:	01 Jun 2015 10:47
Last Modified:	29 May 2018 09:51
URI:	http://theses.gla.ac.uk/id/eprint/6395

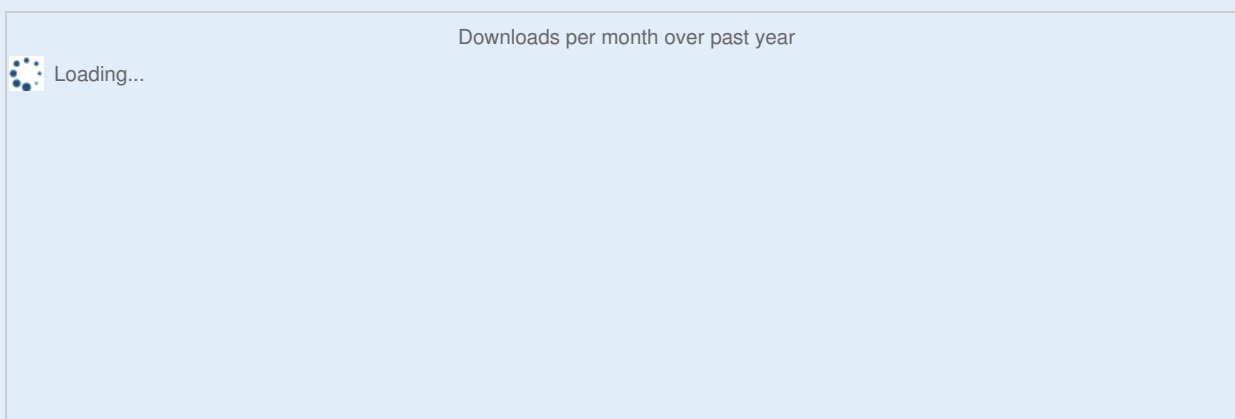
Actions (login required)



[View Item](#)

[Download Statistics](#)

Downloads



[Back to top](#)

Enlighten

- [> Contact us](#)
- [> Privacy notice](#)

The University of Glasgow is a registered Scottish charity: Registration Number SC004401

Annesley, James 1996. Decadence and Disquiet: Recent American Fiction and the Coming Fin de Siècle. *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 30, Issue. 3, p. 365. Anarchy in the U.K.? Ideas of the City and the Fin de Siècle in Contemporary English Film and Literature. *Albion*, Vol. 28, Issue. 4, p. 635. Modernism and Cultural Conflict, 1880–1922. CrossRef. Google Scholar. Simpson, Kathryn 2004. Pearl-diving: Inscriptions of Desire and Creativity in H.D. and Woolf. *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 27, Issue. 4, p. 37. The Victorian fin de siècle was an age of tremendous change. Art, politics, science and society were revolutionised by the emergence of new theories and challenges to tradition. Arguably the most radical and far-reaching change of all concerned the role of women, and the increasing number of opportunities becoming available to them in a male-dominated world. With educational and employment prospects for women improving, marriage followed by motherhood was no longer seen as the inevitable route towards securing a level of financial security. A new air of sexual freedom also emerged in the fin d... No Cover Image. The Fin-de-Siècle Scottish Revival: Romance, Decadence and Celtic Identity. Michael Shaw. Series: *Edinburgh Critical Studies in Victorian Culture*. Copyright Date: 2020. Published by: Edinburgh University Press. In one of the key essays of fin-de-siècle Scottish cultural revivalism, Patrick Geddes's 'The Scots Renaissance', published in the first volume of *The Evergreen* in 1895, Geddes calls for a revival of the nation's cultural health and collective national identification with Celtic literature, arts and tradition. As archetypal role models for this revival of nationality, Geddes selects and equates two figures that are rarely considered together by contemporary critics: Robert Louis Stevenson and John Stuart Blackie.