Event this evening: Favourite Scottish Books

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This evening (**Wednesday 17 September**) at **7pm** NLS hosts the discussion **Favourite Scottish Books**. Share your favourite Scottish poems, stories, and books at this informal evening event. Bring along something special to read aloud to others, or just relax over a coffee and discover new favourites.

To start you thinking, here are some books from our literature case which could be contenders for favourite Scottish book:

'Not Burns – Dunbar!' - The Scottish Renaissance

Christopher Murray Grieve (1892-1978), who wrote under the pen name of **Hugh MacDiarmid**, is easily recognisable in the caricature which appears on the dustjacket of the third edition of his masterwork **A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle** from 1956 (the first edition, from 1926, is also on display). He spearheaded the 20th-century movement known as the 'Scottish Renaissance' with the cry 'not Burns – Dunbar!' Rejecting what he saw as the artificial sentimentality of Burns' later followers, MacDiarmid reclaimed and recreated the Scots language to voice his dazzling play of ideas. In the process he kickstarted a new Scottish literary scene.

Sorley Maclean, *Dain do Eimhir*.

Sorley Maclean's collection *Dain do Eimhir*, (Glasgow, 1943), consisting mainly of love poems set against the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War, is seen by many as the greatest Gaelic poetry of the twentieth century. But it originally faced trials getting into print. Fellow-writer Douglas Young describes how he went through 'some vain attempts to find a publisher complete with a setter of Gaelic type and with paper to print upon', owing to paper shortages during the Second World War. This edition, with striking illustrations by William Crosbie, includes English translations by Maclean himself, Young, and others.

Scott and the novel

Walter Scott's novel ***Waverley*** was certainly not the first Scottish novel. By the time it was published anonymously in 1814, Scottish men and women had played a part in the thriving trade in novels published in Scotland and London. In terms of its appearance, Waverley looks very much like any other novel of the day, published in three volumes which could be bound to suit any owner's taste. But inside, it is a revolutionary text, inventing the historical novel as we understand it today as it goes along.

Scott's novels were global best-sellers. Later Scottish novelists were happy to publish their books in London, America, or anywhere else that ensured the biggest possible readership – and quintessentially Scottish novels, which found a financial reward. On display beside *Waverley* is a shelf of some Scottish novels which found a Scottish publisher for the first time in the **Canongate Classics** series.

On the shelf: **John Galt**, *Ringhan Gilhaize, or The Covenanters*, Edinburgh, 1995 [1st ed. 1823]. **George Douglas Brown**, ***The House with the Green Shutters***, Edinburgh, 1996 [1st ed. 1901]. **Catherine Carswell**, ***Open the Door***, Edinburgh, 1996 [1st ed. 1920]. **Naomi Mitchison**, *The Corn King and the Spring Queen*, Edinburgh, 1990 [1st ed. 1931]. **Lewis Grassic Gibbon**, ***Sunset Song***, Edinburgh, 1988 [1st ed. 1932]. Nancy Brysson Morrison, ***The Gowk Storm***, Edinburgh, 1988 [1st ed. 1933]. **Edward Gaitens**, *Dance of the Apprentices*, Edinburgh, 1990 [1st ed. 1948]. **George Friel**, *A Glasgow Trilogy*, Edinburgh, 1999 [1st ed. 1964-72]. **Iain Crichton Smith**, ***Consider the Lillies***, Edinburgh, 1987 [1st ed. 1968].

You can find out more about many of these authors at the BBC **Writing Scotland** website and the NLS **Digital Library** **The Write Stuff** web feature.

I couldn't put my own favourite Scottish book in the exhibition as there is no Scottish edition of it. I'd vote for Catherine Carswell's *The Camomile* - and not just because it's set in a library (the **Mitchell** in Glasgow).