

22nd International SFEE Congress

Contacts and Intercultural Exchanges

16-18 November 2023

Chambéry, Université Savoie Mont Blanc



The 22nd International Congress of the French Society for Scottish Studies (SFEE) will be held from Thursday the 16th to Saturday the 18th of November 2023 at the Université Savoie Mont Blanc (Chambéry, Jacob-Bellecombette campus).

This conference will explore the various – often contradictory – facets of contacts between cultural and geographical areas, as well as the intercultural exchanges that can spring from such contacts. The congress committee therefore encourages participants to discuss the socio-cultural, linguistic, literary, historical and political contacts that Scotland has had over the centuries with its neighbours and with the host countries of its diaspora, be they friendly and fraternal or tense and confrontational.

This could for instance involve discussing fruitful relationships between Scottish and Irish authors, such as the correspondence exchanged between Sir Walter Scott and Charles Robert Maturin, in which the baronet offered the Gothic author his encouragement and advice.⁹ In the fields of drama and literature (historical, detective and spy fiction, travel literature, etc.), participants are welcome to explore the complex nature of Scotland's contacts with its neighbours, contacts that may have led to paradoxes, tensions and reappropriations.

More specifically, conference papers could analyse the characteristics of the Celtic identity that part of Scotland shares with Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, the Isle of Man and Brittany. It could also mean looking at the efforts these Celtic nations have made since the nineteenth century to preserve this common heritage, even though it is not rooted in its own nation-state. Likewise, the conference organisers invite proposals which examine to what extent the relations between Scotland and the British state stimulate, or on the contrary impede, the shaping of Scottish culture. It would therefore be interesting to explore how the land borders and the seas lying between Scotland and its neighbours have shaped their relationships.

⁹ Fannie E. Ratchford and William H. McCarthy (eds.), *The Correspondence of Sir Walter Scott and Charles Robert Maturin*, London: Routledge, 1980.

Special emphasis will be placed on the study of the Scottish diaspora – whether this has resulted from emigration or colonisation¹⁰ – and more precisely on the forms of communication and on the intercultural exchanges that the global Scots have established to maintain contact with the motherland. Based on the results of the latest population survey, Scotland has a total population of approximately 5.5 million.¹¹ In comparison, there are between 40 and 60 million diaspora Scots in the world, i.e. between 8 and 12 times more than there are Scots in Scotland.¹²

In a study carried out in 2020, Paul Malgrati and Brian Aitken created an interactive map of the world which inventoried over 2,500 *Burns Supper* events organised in nearly 150 countries across the 6 continents. As one of the key Scottish celebrations which annually commemorates the heritage of Robert Burns, Scotland's national poet,¹³ this type of event leads to a fusion of culinary, musical, linguistic, literary and sartorial traditions between diaspora Scots and their host countries. The congress will therefore serve as an opportunity to examine how interculturality influences the (re-)construction of Scottish culture, and how various interpretations of Scottish culture may coexist and indeed interact with each other.

Scotland has not exclusively focused on having intercultural interactions with its neighbours and with the countries where its diaspora has settled. As migrations have increased since the late twentieth and the early twenty-first centuries, Scotland has presented itself as a welcoming and inclusive nation, where over 170 languages are spoken, including Punjabi, Cantonese and Polish.¹⁴ Just like Humza Yousaf, an SNP MSP representing Glasgow, one may swear allegiance to the British monarch in Urdu in the Scottish Parliament whilst wearing a kilt.¹⁵ The conference organisers therefore seek to better understand to what extent Scottishness is not a monolithic culture, but a malleable one which evolves through contact with other cultures. How have people from a different background living in Scotland contributed to the shaping of Scottish identities?

In a report published in October 2019, Prof. Murray Pittock explores the economic impact of Robert Burns with the support of Dr Joel Ambrosine. Over two centuries after his death, the cultural heritage and the values associated with Burns are still inherently part of Scottish

¹⁰ Stephen Mullen, 'Ae Fond Kiss, and Then We Sever', *Variant Magazine*, 35, summer 2009 <<http://www.variant.org.uk/35texts/AeFondKiss.html>> [last accessed on 15 December 2022].

¹¹ 'Mid-2021 Population Estimates Scotland', *National Records of Scotland*, 3 August 2022 <<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/mid-year-population-estimates/mid-2021>> [last accessed on 14 January 2023].

¹² 'The Scottish Diaspora – The Global Scots', *Scottish Tartans Authority*, n.d. <<http://www.tartansauthority.com/global-scots/>> [last accessed on 6 October 2022].

¹³ *Interactive Map of Burns Suppers*, 2020 <<https://burnsc21.glasgow.ac.uk/supper-map/>> [last accessed on 6 October 2022].

¹⁴ 'Safety and Inclusivity', *Scotland.org*, 2022 <<https://www.scotland.org/about-scotland/safety-and-inclusivity>> [last accessed on 6 October 2022].

¹⁵ 'Pakistan-origin politician Humza Yousaf takes Scottish parliamentary oath in Urdu', *YouTube*, 13 May 2016 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AI3cz07hF8s>> [last accessed on 6 October 2022].

culture and are believed to generate approximately 203 million pounds annually for the Scottish economy.¹⁶ In the marketing sense of the notion of contact, i.e. the people exposed to advertising at a given time, the conference organisers also suggest examining how Scotland has been relying on a partnership between the public and the private sectors to increase its visibility on the global stage. This will involve distinguishing between the use of *nation branding* by the Scottish government and that of *consumer nationalism* by some brands which have emphasised the national origin of their products to help boost their sales. This conference could thus shed light on the characteristics of the nation-brand that Scotland has been developing to distinguish itself from the rest of the United Kingdom.

Possible topics for proposals may include, but are not limited to:

- collaborations between Scotland and the United Kingdom
- interactions between Scotland and the Celtic nations
- tensions between Scotland and the United Kingdom
- multilingualism and language contact
- interculturality
- convergences and divergences between various interpretations of Scottish culture
- convergences and divergences between various forms of nationalism
- Scotland's colonial past
- links between Scotland and its diaspora, including the role played by emigrants in the birth of the Kailyard school
- literary and artistic inspirations and exchanges between Scotland and the world
- Scotland's nation-brand and its economic impact
- ...

Paper proposals in French or English (300-400 words) together with short biographies are to be sent **by the 28th of April 2023 at the latest** to Lauren Brancz-McCartan (lauren.brancaz-mccartan@univ-smb.fr), Anne-Lise Perotto (anne-lise.perotto@univ-smb.fr) and Emma Bell (emma.bell@univ-smb.fr).

¹⁶ Murray Pittock, 'Robert Burns and the Scottish Economy', *University of Glasgow*, October 2019, p.7 <https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_707867_smxx.pdf> [last accessed on 6 October 2022].