

Scottish Studies Profile: Professor Graham Tulloch

By Graham Tulloch

With a name like Graham Tulloch and a love of reading it was, I guess, inevitable that I should end up interested in Scottish Studies but the road was not a straightforward one. It is true that my father was an Australian of Scottish descent but he had reacted against some of the previous generation who, although born in Australia of Australian parents, considered themselves to be Scottish. He was proud to be Australian. My mother, on the other hand, was English and during my childhood spoke of England as 'home' (although that changed later). From her copies of Dickens I learned to love English literature. Nevertheless, at about the age of twelve, my Scottish ancestry caught up with me when my great aunt lent me her favourite Waverley Novel, [*Peveril of the Peak*](#). *Peveril* is not Scott's most popular novel but I loved it (it's still a favourite of mine). I moved on to [*Ivanhoe*](#) and then, through my teenage years, read all of Scott's fiction and poetry along with lots of Stevenson.

That I began my reading with two of Scott's English novels had important consequences for me. Firstly, I have always admired Scott's non-Scottish novels as much as the Scottish ones, against the trend of Scott criticism for much of the twentieth century. Secondly, I never really thought of Scott as a Scottish writer — likewise with Stevenson. It is no surprise in these circumstances that when I came to Britain to do my PhD on Scott I chose to write about the language of Scott's medieval and renaissance novels (of which only a few are set in Scotland, of course). Moreover I chose to go to England rather than Scotland (it seems an astounding choice to me now) although I was lucky enough to have an outstanding supervisor in Ken Phillipps, an expert on the language of Scott's contemporary, Jane Austen.

The turning point in my interest in Scottish literature as *Scottish*, came on my return to Australia where my professor, Ralph Elliott, encouraged me to write a book on Scott's language and I decided to add another whole section on the Scottish novels to the material in my thesis. Now, at last, as I began to work on

Scott's Scots, I really started to see him as a Scottish writer and to realise how limiting it was to see him only in the context of English literature. From Scott's language I moved on to Scots language (this is liable to confuse people when I say it, but is clear enough when written!) never expecting to end up writing a book on Scots translations of the Bible. In fact it was only when I began to write broadly about Scots language in the nineteenth century that I stumbled on the work of H.S. Riddell, [P. Hately Waddell](#), and, most impressive of all, [W.L. Lorimer](#). One minute I had almost no idea this large field of Scots existed; the next minute I was writing a book on it.

H.P. Cameron, a Scotsman who came to live in Sydney in the 1890s, was one of the many translators of the Bible into Scots. Probably because he lived and died in Australia, I became fascinated by his life — rather a sad one as it happens — and this led me into another unexpectedly large field, Scottish writers in Australia. Some very famous Scots have visited Australia — Robert Louis Stevenson came from his home in Samoa and set parts of [The Wrecker](#) in Sydney. [Naomi Mitchison's](#) *Not by Bread Alone* stems from coming to Australia and Iain Crichton Smith's *The Search* derives from his visit (during which I was fortunate enough to meet him). Much more recently, indeed only a few days ago, I chaired a session at Writers Week in Adelaide with [Denise Mina](#) and [James Meek](#).

However, for me, less famous writers (often unknown in Scotland) can provide almost equal interest. Nineteenth century Australian novels are awash with Scottish characters, speaking good literary Scots. Australian poets wrote in Scots. In Sydney John Service wrote whole novels in Scots (an experiment not, at that stage, tried in Scotland). Cameron translated Genesis and Thomas - Kempis into Scots. The field is surprisingly large. Recently I have become very interested in the expression of Scottish identity in Australia through literature. Even the map bears witness to this with placenames like Mossgiel, Ellangowan and Abbotsford. Meanwhile I began editing texts, including *Ivanhoe* and Hogg's Scottish counterpart to *Ivanhoe*, the exuberant [Three Perils of Man](#). Just now, with Judy King, I am finishing an edition of Scott's shorter fiction. Nothing brings you as close to literature and its language as editing a text.

I have taught for many years at [Flinders University in Adelaide, South Australia](#), where I am Professor of English and acting Head of the School of Humanities — which means my life is a juggling act. I teach Scottish literature (and Old English), edit Scottish (and Australian) texts, write about Scots language and

literature, and study Scottish-Australian writers.

Reading, researching and teaching Scottish literature and language in Australia has its rewards and its frustrations. Australians are very interested in Scotland (as the enthusiastic reception of a 'Window on Scotland' session with Denise Mina and James Meek showed). Many Australians of Scottish ancestry arrive in my classes already well disposed to Scottish literature. However, in the years before Devolution, Australians, accustomed to state parliaments with state governments, found it hard to understand the existence of a country with a separate government (the Scottish Office) but no separate parliament. The distinctions too between Highlands and Lowlands and Scots and Gaelic are not always clear at a distance. For a researcher in Scottish Studies to be so far from Scotland and particularly from the [National Library of Scotland](#) is difficult at times (although the internet helps a lot nowadays). Despite this I count myself very lucky to be still able to read and write about a literature and language I first began to enjoy nearly fifty years ago, even if I didn't then conceptualise it as Scottish.

(c) The Bottle Imp