David Daiches had an enormous impact on Scottish literature throughout his long life, even though all but six years of his professional career was spent furth of Scotland. His work (perhaps most centrally *The Paradox of Scottish Culture* (1964)) was an inspiration to many in the field, and the near thirty years of retirement spent in his beloved Edinburgh made him seem the Scottish academic institution that he had never been in reality. Not that that was his choice: Alan Riach’s sly sharp poem in this collection shows how Daiches’ desire to make Scottish literature central to the Scottish universities helped to lose him a job at least one of them (‘Dear boy, can’t you see?/There are English girls taught here!/That must never be!’ (pp. 138-39). Pertinently, Riach currently holds what to this day is the only established chair of Scottish literature in Scotland. Despite much progress towards self-respect for our national literature, there are still places in the Scottish university system where the brilliance of a Daiches might find itself at a disadvantage by virtue of this specialism. Prophets without honour have always been a Scottish specialism, if not uniquely so.

Insofar as this is no longer true, David Daiches did much to help bring it about, and this is reason enough for a collection in his honour. Nonetheless, *A Celebration* is rather unfocused: more of a ceilidh than a seminar. It is not a *festschrift*, though some of its essays could find a place in one; it is not a biography, though some of its reminiscences belong in one; it makes little attempt to define Daiches’ achievement or its limits. *Two Worlds* (1956), Daiches’ own autobiography of his Edinburgh childhood, deservedly has a central place, and there is some allusion to the doubleness of his experience as a Jew in Scotland rendering him alert to the many doublenesses...
of Scottish culture; but anyone expecting a discussion of Daiches’ vis-à-vis G Gregory Smith or Karl Miller will be disappointed.

A number of the authors want to claim him centrally as a Scottish critic; a number understandably stress his contribution to English literature. Yet the man himself, the centre of his achievement, remains elusive. Even at the end of his long and distinguished life, his 90th birthday was celebrated by literary Scotland mainly because BBC journalist David Stenhouse made a proposal to the Association of Scottish Literary Studies to do so: the original impulse did not come from the academy. In life, Daiches never quite became the literary lion whom all adore; he eluded some of the marks of distinction or recognition that might have been expected. The Masson Professor at Edinburgh in the 1980s, Wallace Robson, achieved an entry in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography; Daiches is still without one, though his father Salis has an entry. This collection celebrates David Daiches, but it does not try to define his importance or evaluate his achievement: and that is what needs to be done.

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