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**STUDIES  
IN  
SCOTTISH  
LITERATURE**

**Volume V**

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# STUDIES IN SCOTTISH LITERATURE

*EDITED BY G. ROSS ROY  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA*

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# STUDIES IN SCOTTISH LITERATURE

VOLUME V    NUMBER 2    OCTOBER 1967

## CONTENTS

### EDITORIAL

PAGE 75

MARK DILWORTH  
THE LATIN TRANSLATOR OF  
*THE CHERRIE AND THE SLAE*

PAGE 77

JAMES ANDERSON  
SIR WALTER SCOTT  
AS HISTORICAL NOVELIST

PART V

PAGE 83

JAMES F. KILROY  
NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN  
*THE MASTER OF BALLANTRAE*

PAGE 98

WILLIAM MONTGOMERIE  
A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE  
SCOTTISH BALLAD MANUSCRIPTS  
1730-1825

PART IV

PAGE 107

### NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

PAGE 133

### REVIEWS

PAGE 137

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## EDITORIAL

Byronism, it has been said, was a more potent force in English and European literature than were the works of Byron, and this may also be said of Christopher Murray Grieve, better known as Hugh MacDiarmid, who was honored at his seventy-fifth birthday last August. Like Byron, MacDiarmid has become a legend in his own lifetime.

It was past time for the followers of the Kailyard tradition to be replaced by something more alive, something vitally aware of the twentieth century, when MacDiarmid began his crusade which became the Scottish Renaissance. In the first work to bear his name, *Northern Numbers* (1920), an anthology of contemporary Scottish poetry which he edited and in which he included a selection of his own poetry, there was, however, little to suggest the direction his work was to take. Two years later Grieve founded *The Scottish Chapbook* which lasted through seven numbers, long enough to see Hugh MacDiarmid launched on his poetic career. In it we find his first published poem "The watergaw" one of the finest he ever wrote. It was in this publication, too, that Grieve first addressed himself in print to the problem of updating the use of lallans, when he wrote of extending "the vernacular to embrace the whole range of modern culture."

*Sangshaw* (1925) and *A Drunk Man looks at the Thistle* (1926) firmly established MacDiarmid in the forefront of Scottish poets, but this achievement represented only one facet of his work. He was variously newspaper columnist, editor, lecturer, political organizer for the Scottish Nationalist Party. This last preoccupation has remained one of his major concerns; he firmly believes that in domestic affairs the Scottish nation should have autonomy. Education is an area in which MacDiarmid feels that very little has been done and that a great deal

needs to be done. Scottish literature and history, he thinks, should play the major role in schools as well as universities, and that to a far larger extent than at present the teaching of these subjects should be in the hands of Scots.

Naturally enough these ideas have earned MacDiarmid his share of detractors; he has been at the center of a major proportion of the literary and political controversy which has become a part of the Scottish Renaissance, and rightly so. There are those who suggest that he is politically naïve, just as there are those who claim that his championing the use of the vernacular is time wasted on a lost cause. In the larger sense, however, the literature of any country has need of giants who act as leaven to the age.

Hugh MacDiarmid is such a giant to modern Scottish letters. *Studies in Scottish Literature* joins the world in congratulating him.