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Preface to SSL 43:1

Patrick G. Scott

University of South Carolina - Columbia

Tony Jarrells

University of South Carolina

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PREFACE TO *SSL* 43:1

In the past two prefaces, we have noted that *Studies in Scottish Literature* aims to publish scholarship across the full range of Scottish literature from all periods. Sometimes this is a goal difficult of attainment. There are more students, more researchers, and more submissions, in some areas than in others. The daily download statistics remind us also that there are more readers for articles in some areas than in others. Increased focus in teaching and research on contemporary Scottish writing, on both sides of the Atlantic, reinforces the journal's long-time commitment to publishing essays on recent works and authors, which often attract the most immediate on-line attention, and which may well be among the first consideration the authors have received in a scholarly journal. In many courses Scottish literature now effectively starts, at the earliest, in 1707. The balance of periods is difficult to maintain in an individual journal issue, though we try to maintain it across a year or volume.

We are pleased therefore that after two issues in 2016 with no essays on pre-18th century literature, this year's volume offers two very substantial articles, one medieval (David Parkinson on Barbour's *Bruce*), and one Renaissance (Jamie Reid Baxter on a Renaissance presbyterian dialogue, accompanied by an edition of the manuscript).

The symposium that opens the issue also bears on the question of chronological range and categorization. Guest-edited by Juliet Shields of the University of Washington, and titled "Scottish Literature and Periodization," it examines the extent to which traditional literary periodization fits or does not fit current understandings of Scottish literature. To a surprising extent, the shorthand period labels we use still derive from general histories or anthologies of English (or British) literature. Professor Shields's contributors scramble these conventions, bridging period boundaries as well as coming from both sides of the 1707 divide. On the earlier side, Andrew Klein looks at a stanza form that crosses the medieval-Renaissance border, and Rivka Swenson examines a seventeenth-century Scottish work that anticipates techniques literary

historians normally link to the 18th-century novel. On the modern end, Eric Jaccard argues for looking at recent Scottish fiction in a global context, and Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson describe some of the ways Scottish literature can be studied with undergraduates in the North American context. And Michael Newton's essay shows how generic continuities in Gaelic literature conflict with period-based analysis.

The remainder of the issue also attests both to the chronological reach of current activity in the field and to the value of looking across chronological boundaries. The medieval and Renaissance articles already noted are followed by two shorter essays on late Victorian and early 20th century novelists, by distinguished previous contributors, David Robb on R.L. Stevenson's *jeu d'esprit*, *The Dynamiter* (though alert also to its disturbing contemporary resonance), and Ian Campbell on Lewis Grassie Gibbon and the declining 20th century influence of the established Kirk (though with one eye also on an earlier novelistic parallel in Galt's *Annals of the Parish*). The final article, by a Czech scholar Petra Johana Poncarová, her first contribution to the journal, moves into Gaelic and the middle years of the 20th century, by discussing some of Sorley MacLean's less-known poems on the Clearances of the 18th and 19th century. Slightly to our surprise, the only item directly on an 18th or early 19th century text is the latest in the series of notes on Burns manuscripts from the Roy Collection, this time on "Ay Waukin O." The volume is rounded out by William Donaldson's review of a new Andrew Lang edition, a review of Corey Gibson's book on Hamish Henderson, and the usual short notices.

We continue to experiment with the best format for the journal, aiming to balance symposia or special issues (now planned through fall 2018) with a strong representation of research and critical discussion from varied periods, genres, and scholarly approaches. The journal remains open to contributions on any aspect, author, period, or topic within the broad field of Scottish literature, as well as to comparative or interdisciplinary articles in which Scottish literature has a significant presence. We welcome the opportunity to consider well-researched submissions from scholars at any stage of their career, and we try very hard, with the help of the advisory board and other specialist referees, to provide timely responses to the articles we are offered. We expect the journal to go through further changes in the volumes to come, but its core mission remains to ensure that high-quality, professionally-refereed articles and shorter notes on Scottish literary topics can reach publication and be made available to students and the scholarly community.

Patrick Scott
Tony Jarrells