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Front Matter

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*Studies
in Scottish
Literature*



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G. Ross Roy

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Keying and formatting of text

Sej Harman

DEDICATED

“WITH THE GREAT LOVE OF COMRADES”

TO

PATRICK SCOTT

AND

KENNETH SIMPSON

FOR THE GIFT

OF

FRIENDSHIP

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NOTE: In making up earlier issues of *Studies in Scottish Literature* I strove for balance in arranging the order in which articles appeared. But how to decide priority of place when considering a poem and an article? So I determined to let Chance be the arbiter and all the names, with one exception, were placed in a pot and drawn. The one exception was Iain Crichton Smith's "Murdo Comes of Age," which I felt would be particularly appropriate to finish out the volume. I believe that Iain would have appreciated the irony of terminating this volume with a work which was written just months before his own life ended.

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Writing 30

Kenny Rogers sings a Gambler's song with a chorus which goes in part: "You've got to know when to hold 'em / Know when to fold 'em / Know when to walk away / Know when to run." The time has come for *Studies in Scottish Literature* to "fold 'em." The decision was not taken easily, but age and indifferent health have made this necessary.

Looking back over the more than four decades since *SSL* was conceived and brought into being one can see that much has changed in the field of Scottish studies. There is now a Department of Scottish Literature in the University of Glasgow, but that is the only one. There are undergraduate and graduate courses taught in the field, and the number of Master's degrees and PhDs awarded in Scottish literary subjects has increased in Scotland and out-with the country. Finally, the number of articles and books devoted to major Scottish authors has also increased substantially.

What I have said applies, unfortunately, only to a small number of major Scottish authors—Barrie, Burns, Dunbar, Scott and Stevenson, to name the most prominent of them. But what of many others? What of Ramsay, Macpherson, Fergusson—even MacDiarmid in his early years? Of course many Scottish writers harkened to Samuel Johnson when he advised them that "the noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees is the high road that leads him to England." This was true especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In academia this held true in a double sense: chairs in humanistic disciplines in Scottish universities were rarely held by Scots, who in turn had to

move south of the border to find academic employment. It is pleasing to be able to state that this situation has improved dramatically since *SSL* came into being, although it must be said that *SSL* had nothing to do with this change for the better.

Like any reputable academic publication *SSL* rarely solicited contribution. When I wrote to academics telling them of my plan to launch a quarterly I was offered enough material to set *SSL* well on its way. I did write to Tom Scott asking if he would contribute an opening essay on the present state of Scottish literary studies. He replied with "Observations on Scottish Studies" (*SSL*, I, 1). I sent a copy of Tom's article to Sydney Goodsir Smith who countered with "Trahison des Clercs, or the Anti-Scottish Lobby in Scottish Letters" (*SSL*, II, 2), in my opinion one of the finest essays to appear in this publication.

Over the years mature scholars have sent major articles for publication and we have also published the first fruits of coming scholars. It is nice to know that some academic novices have been assisted in this way and that *SSL* was the organ through which this has been brought about.

The quality of work which has appeared in *SSL* over the years speaks for itself; this is so because major scholars have chosen to submit important articles to this publication. The importance of *SSL* lies not with the Editor but with the contributors.

On a personal note, my editorship has brought me into contact with a large group of the foremost scholars in the field of Scottish literary studies, and several of these people have become my friends.

I am grateful for the assistance I have received from Texas Tech University and the University of South Carolina. Several of my Graduate Assistants have become interested in Scottish literature through the work they have done for me, and this has resulted in MAs and PhDs in various Scottish fields.

This is to be the final regular issue of *Studies in Scottish Literature*, although it may be followed by a comprehensive Index. Knowing this, I decided to break with precedent and include some creative work. Alasdair Gray, in addition to contributing a chapter from an unpublished novel, has enlivened the binding in his inimitable manner. I requested that he design the front endpaper, but the choice of subject was entirely his own. And William McIlvanney agreed to record his reading of "Burdalane" which is here published for the first time. Especially helpful have been Sej Harman, Elizabeth Sudduth and Thomas Keith. And without my wife Lucie's help and encouragement this volume would not have been here today.

I know when to walk away, but I don't have to run.

GRR