

11-15-2014

Prelims, Preface to SSL 40

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Recommended Citation

Scott, Patrick G. and Jarrells, Anthony (2014) "Prelims, Preface to SSL 40," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 40: Iss. 1, i–vi.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol40/iss1/1>

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Studies in Scottish Literature

founded 1963



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**STUDIES
IN
SCOTTISH
LITERATURE**



Volume 40

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Founding Editor
G. Ross Roy

University of South Carolina Libraries
2014

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Journal website: <http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/>

ISBN: 978-1502557414
ISSN 0039-3770

PREFACE

This is the fourth 'new' volume since the reappearance of *Studies in Scottish Literature*, and with this volume the journal seems to be fully reestablished. Certainly, we have been pleased with the range and quality of the articles offered this year for possible publication. In range, the volume once again includes articles on pre-1707 topics and on 20th/21st century literature, as well as on Scottish writing of the 18th and 19th centuries. The volume includes the first articles about dramatic texts since we took over the editorship, and the first article in *SSL* about a contemporary Scottish young adult novelist. In terms of scholarly approach, the volume ranges from traditional textual and literary-historical scholarship to interdisciplinary articles linking Scottish literary topics to religious, environmental, and feminist studies. We are again pleased to include among the contributors a number of well-established Scottish literature scholars, and we welcome their support for the journal's continuance, but we are equally pleased to be publishing work from several recent PhDs.

This year's symposium takes up the rise of creative writing programs in Scottish universities and their impact on the teaching of Scottish literature. This growth has its analogues in many literary traditions, as for instance in Canadian literature or in Southern Literature in the U.S., but it has special resonance for Scottish literary studies because of the continuing impact of MacDiarmid and his circle on the teaching canon and because the growth-period for creative writing programs in Scottish universities ran in parallel with the development of Scottish literature into a distinct academic subject. The symposium provides a variety of accounts and perspectives on the issue, from contributors who bridge the two teaching areas.

An important element in reestablishing the journal has been digital availability, and we have been gratified by the amount of use the journal is now getting in digital form. With the remaining volumes of the original series added to the web site in March 2014, *Studies in Scottish Literature* now makes freely available to researchers over 850 articles covering all periods of Scottish literature. This past year saw a single article, Jonathan Glance's 1993 essay on Hogg's *Confessions*, break the

barrier of 1000 fulltext downloads, and by September this year, total fulltext downloads from *SSL* had exceeded 120,000.

Digital use underlines that the study of Scottish literature is now a global phenomenon. Predictably, the majority of those using the site come from the U.S. and Scotland, and from the traditional communities of the Scottish diaspora in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. Less predictably, the *SSL* monthly statistics show not only the growing European interest in Scotland, from Germany, France, Italy and Spain, but also significant interest from Turkey, Russia, the Ukraine, India, China, and elsewhere.

The new series has benefitted greatly from the contributions and advice of its expanded editorial board. One of the continuing board members who helped us with *SSL*'s transition was the Burns and Smollett scholar Kenneth Simpson, who died in September 2013, aged 70. Best known for his wide-ranging study *The Protean Scot* (1988), Ken spent his career at Strathclyde, and in retirement taught for Glasgow. Ross Roy's splendid last volume was dedicated to Ken; he coedited the Roy festschrift that became *SSL* 37; and he published one of his last Burns essays in *SSL* 38. He was a knowledgeable and scrupulous colleague whose advice will be much missed.

Joining the *SSL* Advisory Board this year are Penny Fielding, Grierson Professor of English Literature at the University of Edinburgh, and Gerard Carruthers, Francis Hutcheson Professor of Scottish Literature at the University of Glasgow. Professor Fielding's books include *Writing and Orality* (1996) and *Scotland and the Fictions of Geography* (2008), and, alongside her role as general editor of the new Stevenson edition in progress from Edinburgh University Press, she continues to write on a broad range of critical topics. Professor Carruthers's research has spanned literature since 1707, from Ramsay to Spark, with books on *Robert Burns* (2005) and *Scottish Literature* (2009), edited volumes including the recent *Cambridge Companion to Scottish Literature* (2012), and a long-term commitment as general editor for the multivolume Glasgow/Clarendon Burns edition. We are grateful for their willingness to help, as for continued support from our other distinguished board members.

Patrick Scott
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