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Preface to SSL 43:2

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PREFACE TO *SSL* 43:2

Slightly to our surprise, this single issue of *Studies in Scottish Literature* has turned out to be bigger, with a wider range both of topics and contributors, than some of the full volumes with which we started the new series. Part of this was deliberate: the journal has needed to establish broader connections with scholars outside Scotland and the US, and with Scottish literature scholars who have built their careers in the early 2000s, with little opportunity at that time to publish in this, the first international refereed journal in the field. The thirty contributors to this issue come from eight different countries; they list current affiliations with twenty-three different universities, and the thirteen full professors are balanced by a number of mid- and early career scholars, by three librarians, and three contributors who have combined advanced research degrees with careers outside academe.

Part of it, though, was opportunistic: last year's BBC Scotland poll on "Scotland's Favourite Novel" sparked the idea of asking some of the scholars, in Scotland and elsewhere, who have written recently on Scottish fiction, to argue for the significance of their own favourite novels.¹ Professor Willy Maley, of Glasgow, who had helped select the short list of thirty titles for the BBC poll, has provided an introduction about list-making, highlighting the difference of approach taken here. This is not a rival list, but a dialogue with other lists that we have called a debate. Voting in the BBC poll had been limited to those with Scottish ISP addresses and to the thirty titles on the ballot; write-in votes, and votes from non-Scottish readers, were not allowed. The approach taken here means that some admired recent Scottish novels are not discussed, because our invited contributors felt they were already adequately recognized.

Studies in Scottish Literature has often been the first, or one of the first, scholarly journals to publish a critical assessment on a Scottish writer or work later accepted as canonical. Of the eighteen novels discussed, eleven were not included among the BBC's thirty titles, and only three were in the poll's top ten. The novels discussed could be from any period, but the

¹ The full curated list and the results of the popular ballot are available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/2ClzCqc45kb6xffl0bfD2w2/the-results-of-the-vote-to-find-your-favourite-scottish-novel>.

debate has a distinctly 21st century tone; half the novels discussed here were published in or since 2000. Contributors include some long-established scholars and some writing for the first time in this journal. Debate contributions have been kept deliberately short, in the hope that readers will in browsing come on some works they haven't previously encountered, not just on those that are familiar.

Editorial opportunism also brought to the journal a second, shorter group of articles, the first *SSL* Research Symposium. The four papers are from a workshop on "New Developments in Burns Bibliography," at the National Library of Scotland in March. Convened by Robert Betteridge of NLS and Gerard Carruthers of the Glasgow Burns editorial project (who has provided an introduction), the workshop marked online release of Craig Lamont's Egerer revision, phase 1, and laid out some markers for ongoing work. Burns has been relatively well-served, bibliographically, over the years, but for many major Scottish authors the bibliographical underpinnings are still disarmingly slight or outdated, so the workshop has some relevance beyond Burns. *Scottish Literature* is pleased to offer the opportunity for timely publication.

The ongoing core mission of the journal, of course, is to provide a refereed publication venue for research-based articles, from varying critical perspectives, of works, authors and topics from all periods of Scottish literature. This issue includes a full complement of five regular articles: one early modern (on Gavin Douglas), two in the eighteenth-century (on James Beattie and Robert Burns), and two in the twentieth (on Tom Scott and Anne Marie Di Mambro). With so much material in earlier pages, the remaining sections may seem a little truncated, and we have deferred the next installment from the ongoing series illustrating Burns manuscripts in the Roy Collection. Nonetheless, Notes and Documents includes a useful detailed guide by Ralph McLean of NLS to digital resources in Scottish Neo-Latin Literature, as well as a brief follow-up note to Jamie Reid Baxter's article in *SSL* 43: 1, and the Reviews section includes Carla Sassi on a post-colonial critique of anglophone writing about the Highlands, as well as the usual round-up of recent books.

For 2018, *Studies in Scottish Literature* will be less opportunistic, but we hope no less representative of current activity in the field. We have a well-planned symposium next spring on Russian-Scottish literary connections, and a special issue next fall, on the afterlives, influence and reworkings of Scott's fiction. We welcome articles, notes, and documents, from all periods.

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