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Books Noted and Received

Patrick Scott

University of South Carolina - Columbia

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BOOKS NOTED AND RECEIVED

This list covers a second group of the books received or noted since publication of *SSL* 43:2; further titles from this period will be noticed along with more recent items in a future issue. Reviews here contributed by Tony Jarrells are marked [A.J.]. Inclusion in this list need not preclude possible subsequent discussion in a more formal review.

Linden Bicket, *George Mackay Brown and the Scottish Catholic Imagination*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017, 2019. Pp. viii + 200. Hardback, ISBN 9781474411653; paper, ISBN 9781474445764.

—As the symposium in this *SSL* indicates, there is current critical significant interest in interpretations of Scottish literature that take the writers' religious beliefs on their own terms. The "Muir-MacDiarmid thesis" dominant in the early 20th twentieth-century Scottish renaissance excoriated Calvinism, and argued for the greater national authenticity of pre-Reformation Scottish culture, but it did not for the most part lead to explicitly Catholic literary criticism of the kind that was perhaps more common in American reviews. David Tracy's privileging of imagination over doctrine has gained traction in Catholic criticism of poetry and the visual arts, but the most prominent 20th century Scottish novelist convert, Muriel Spark, like her English convert contemporary, Graham Greene, attracted wide non-Catholic, indeed non-religious, readerships and yield much to non-Catholic critical approaches. Nor was twentieth-century Scottish Catholic belief, practice, and culture always and everywhere as uniform as secular criticism has often assumed.

Linden Bicket's study of the Orkney poet, novelist, and short story writer George Mackay Brown, a Catholic convert, is to be welcomed for recognizing such issues, for taking Brown's religious beliefs seriously, and for tracing sympathetically their presence in his work. In her biographical chapter, she draws significantly on Brown's papers in the Orkney Library. Brown still shows up regularly in Scottish syllabuses, at both secondary and university level, so that Bicket's book will often be consulted for its comment on individual poems and stories. For many *SSL* readers, however, what may be of equal or greater interest is its substantial opening chapter

(pp. 1-46), which offers a skilful survey of twentieth-century Scottish Catholic writers and debates (including Compton Mackenzie, Patrick McGill, Fionn Mac Colla, George Scott-Moncrieff, A.J. Cronin, Muriel Spark, and George Friel), arguing that “the Catholic literary imagination” is “far more nuanced and geographically and culturally determined” than many critics have allowed, and that Scottish Catholic writing, “energised, imaginatively stimulated and provoked by Reformed Christianity,” “borrowed, translated and augmented the ideas of religious writing from far beyond Scotland, making this a truly magpie fiction of emulation, engagement, and exchange.” Some readers might demur at Dr. Bicket’s brave assertion that the work of Brown and his peers is “a major chapter in the story of Catholic artistic and cultural production across the globe,” but she has made a convincing case for reassessing and valuing this “rich, diverse and experimental body of work.”

John Caughie, Trevor Griffiths, and María A. Vélez-Serna, eds, *Early Cinema in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018. Pp. 272, with 30 black and white illustrations. Hardback, £75.00. ISBN 9781474420341. Paper, 2019. ISBN 9781474452236.

—“By 1929 Glasgow had 127 cinemas, and by 1939 it claimed more cinema seats per capita than any other city in the world. Focusing on the social experience of cinema and cinema-going, this collection of essays provides a detailed context for the history of early cinema in Scotland, from its inception in 1896 until the arrival of sound in the early 1930s.” These data alone should justify this book, which provides an introduction, nine essays on specific aspects of cinema history (one on *Rob Roy* as “Britain’s first feature film”), and a filmography.

Cairns Craig, *The Wealth of the Nation: Scotland, Culture, and Independence*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018. Paperback, £16.99/\$19.95. ISBN 9781474435581.

—Cairns Craig’s new book discusses a variety of ways in which Scottish culture has remained distinctive since 1707, and still remains distinctive, despite the globalization of many cultural media. His analysis rests on two key arguments, first that for much of the 19th and earlier 20th century, Scottish culture had defined itself in terms of the British empire, so that the end of empire allowed a new examination of Scotland’s past on its own terms; and second, that the crucial factor in late 20th century political nationalism was cultural, not political or economic, “founded on a cultural revival that began in the 1950s and 60s but gained momentum from resistance to the outcome of the 1979 devolution referendum.”

Whether or not these arguments are fully accepted, anyone working in Scottish literature will learn much from this book. Craig’s introduction

provides a stunning, dazzling, rapid-fire survey of new or revived Scottish cultural institutions, from the 1960s onwards, both literal buildings, in art galleries, museums, and theatres, and in less literal institutions, particularly literary publishing, arguing that these cultural institutions constitute the Wealth of the Nation. Ch. 1, again bristling with particulars, discusses how Scottish emigrants brought cultural and intellectual capital that translated into a “Xeniteian empire” in higher education around the world. The briefer Ch. 2 discusses the race issue in Scottish enlightenment and Victorian writing (as in e.g. Carlyle, Robert Knox, Scott, and J.G. Frazer). Ch. 3 is on the Scottish uses of historical and cultural memory, from Hume onwards, pithily denouncing the early 20th century’s denunciation of their Victorian predecessors:

The so-called “Scottish Renaissance” became, in effect, the gravedigger of the Scottish past, devaluing the cultural capital which the country had built up through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (p. 181).

Ch. 4, titled with another Greek term, “Theoxenia” (that is, an openness to the foreign or exotic, p. 217) is more conventionally literary, tracing Scottish philosophic and scientific influence on Scottish literary resistance to realism (discussing *inter alia* Gray’s *Lanark*, Spark’s *Robinson*, and Edwin Morgan’s poetry). Ch. 5, on Culture and Scottish Independence, relates modern Scottish cultural institutions to early 21st century Scottish political developments, including the 2014 referendum debates, looping back to Adam Smith and the definition of wealth, to conclude:

The wealth of the nation resides in its aesthetic value, and if poverty is ugly, opulence is not to be confused with beauty.... Without cultural independence a country ceases to exist: the achievement of Scotland since 1707 or, more recently, since 1979, is that it has established the value of the culture on which its independence, whatever its political environment, can be maintained (p.191).

Over the past forty years, Craig has himself been a player in these cultural developments, in Scottish publishing as well as in higher education and Scottish literary studies. “Scottish culture” in the argument here is primarily high-cultural and institutional, rather than sociological or diffused—more “modern Scottish writers and artists” than popular media. Hardnosed economists or political commentators might not see publicly-subsidized literary publishing or university-based creative writing as quite so central or unproblematic. Many taken-for-granted aspects of Scottish culture with a small c (say newspapers and newspaper reviewing, both general and academic publishing outside the reserved areas of Scottish history and literature, and the bulk of television or popular music) brand themselves as Scottish, but are arguably significantly less distinctive, and

less economically independent, than they were fifty years ago. Without the global market, in higher education and tourism, many Scottish cultural institutions would be vulnerable to competition from other legitimate priorities within Scotland, both for public funding and private spending. That global market itself influences cultural provision within Scotland. But recognition of this need not undercut Craig's more general case, which he mounts from many years of involvement and from a broad perspective. Arguably, being over-invested in the independent significance of culture, even of literature, *vis a vis* economics, is better than relegating it to marginality, impotence, or irrelevance.

Ian Duncan, *Human Forms: The Novel in the Age of Evolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019. Pp. 304. Hardback, \$35.00. ISBN 9780691175072.

—Ian Duncan's first book, *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel* (1992) sought, among other things, to recover the work of three immensely popular writers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and to explain how it was that their achievements in fiction somehow failed to find a place among various rise-of-the-novel histories of the form that dominated novel studies in the 1970s and 80s. His second major book, *Scott's Shadow* (2007), focused on one of these immensely popular writers, Walter Scott, and showed how a new theory of fiction flourished, first, in the writings of Scottish Enlightenment philosophers and later in the institutions and genres—the historical novel foremost among these – that made Edinburgh a central site of Romantic literary production. Duncan's latest book, *Human Forms*, is a less Scottish-focused book than *Scott's Shadow*, though it does, interestingly, reexamine some of the terrain of *Modern Romance* through the philosophical-historical lens developed so successfully in that second book. *Human Forms* follows the novel's rise from the 1740s, when philosophical accounts still posited human nature as unified and stable, up through the 1870s, by which time human nature was understood to be historical and capable of development. Duncan again attends to novelists whose work does not quite fit with the established canons of realist writing, including Mary Shelley, Scott, Victor Hugo, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot, and he argues that the novel not only reflected the big scientific debates of the day but actually contributed to the making and shaping of new scientific knowledge. Given its own changing nature and ability to transform itself in the face of other forms, the novel is uniquely fitted for engaging the complicated subject of human nature. As Duncan explains, the novel in these years 'reorganizes itself as the literary form of the modern scientific conception of a developmental, that is, mutable rather than fixed human nature' (8). There are excellent chapters on the work of Dickens and Eliot (chapters 4 and 5). However, readers of

this journal will likely be most interested in Duncan's discussion of conjectural history (in chapter 1), of *Waverley* as Scott's national-historical take on the emergent category of *bildung* (in chapter 2), and of Scott's last novel, *Count Robert of Paris*, as a work that "shatters" (87) the classical form of the historical novel that Scott himself is often seen as having invented [AJ].

Angela Esterhammer, ed., *Three Short Novels: Glenfell, Andrew of Padua, the Improvisatore, and The Omen*, by John Galt [The Edinburgh Edition of the Novels of John Galt]. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020. Pp. 216. Hardback, £80.00. ISBN 9781474402088.

—This volume in the new Edinburgh edition provides an introduction, texts, and annotation, for three works that are "virtually unknown": *Glenfell* is Galt's "first publication in the style of Scottish fiction for which he would become best known"; *Andrew of Padua, the Improvisatore* is draws on Galt's "experiences with theatre, educational writing, and travel"; and *The Omen* is "a haunting gothic tale." (*to be fully reviewed in a future issue*).

William Gillies and Donald E. Meek, eds., *Iasad Rann A Borrowing of Verses. Original Gaelic Poems and Translations by John Maclean* [Scottish Gaelic Texts, 25] (Glasgow: Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 2018). Pp. iv + 232. Hardback, £25.00. ISBN 978-0903586092.

—It is not often that a schoolmaster gets commemorated by his former pupils, not as a teacher, but as a poet, and rarer still that resulting volume should be edited by not one, but two, former pupils, both distinguished professors at Scottish universities, and be published by a society chiefly devoted to scholarly editions of older texts.

John Maclean (1909–70), born on Raasay, educated in the classics in Portree, Edinburgh, Cambridge, and Vienna, was a scholar who spent his career in teaching, first in Edinburgh at the Royal High School, then in Inverness, and finally, after a several years as an H.M.I., as Rector of Oban High School from 1950-1966. Unlike his brothers, the poet Sorley Maclean and the folksong collector Calum Iain Maclean, John Maclean will be unknown to most *SSL* readers, yet the two introductory essays show him as an extraordinary role model to his brighter pupils of what learning could mean, both in the classical languages and Gaelic, and of how a scholar could at the same time be a poet. Perhaps Maclean's ability to substitute when needed for the senior teachers of Latin and Gaelic should be taken without comment, but how many heads of secondary schools now, one wonders, could do that convincingly, and how many would or could gladly teach sixth form Greek when the senior classicist was too busy?

This book focuses, though, on Maclean as poet. The opening section of original Gaelic poems (pp. 63-90) includes elegies for his brother Calum, who died in 1960, and for the young Gaelic scholar James Carmichael Watson, who had followed his father in the Edinburgh chair of Celtic (and so also a predecessor of Professor Gillies), who had joined the navy in World War II, and was lost at sea in 1942.¹ Professor Meek judges Maclean's panegyric *Iain F. Ceanaideach* (pp. 69-72), first published in 1964, to be "the finest Gaelic elegy of its kind composed in traditional form in the twentieth century" (p. 23).² Maclean's translations into Gaelic from Scots and English, of Burns (three poems), Scott, Stevenson, and the ballads, as well as Shakespeare (10 sonnets), Milton, Yeats and others (pp. 91-120), show the breadth of the translator's literary interests. His Gaelic translations of English hymns (pp. 121-128; "Immortal, Invisible," as well as Isaac Watts, but also the Latin carol *Adeste Fideles*) suggest some breadth of religious sympathy from a regular attendee at Gaelic Free Kirk services in Oban. As one might expect, the volume includes a substantial section (pp. 129-191) of translations into Gaelic from Latin (Catullus, Horace, and others), Greek (Homer, Sappho, Pindar, Aeschylus), and even German (Goethe).³ Some of Maclean's occasional pieces, in Greek, Gaelic, and English, for the retirement of a colleague or a school centenary, may seem perhaps only of local interest, but they give a sense of Maclean's humanity.

Though the volume is clear about Maclean's importance as a Gaelic poet, not only as translator, Professor Gillies's introduction explores the importance also of this multilingual tradition combining composition and translation, and contributes his own verse translations into English and Gaelic of one of Maclean's poems in Latin. Much that is printed in this volume has never been previously published. This volume is of course primarily a tribute to the remarkable gifts and achievements of one remarkable man, but it is hard not to feel that the volume is also an elegy, not just for a vanished chapter in the history of education, but for a cultural flowering, a unique cultural moment, worth pondering in its own right.

¹ A 1968 recording of Maclean singing this elegy, which he composed to the tune of part of Patrick McCrimmon's pibroch "The Lament for the Children," is online from Tobar an Dualchais: <http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/107713>. Appendix 3 of the book gives details of over twenty recordings of his own poems and translations that Maclean made for the School of Scottish Studies Archive, for which his brother had been appointed as the first field collector in 1951.

² Maclean's own English translation of selected verses from this elegy follows in a later section, on pp. 196-198.

³ For a full (336 page) volume of Maclean's Homer translations, and his English essay "Translating Homer," see Iain MacGilleathain, *Odusseia Homair* [*Clo-bhualaidhean Gairm*, Leabhar 42] (Glaschu: Gairm, 1976).

Ralph Hanna, ed., *The Taill of Rauf Coilyear* (Scottish Text Society, 5th ser., 16]. Woodbridge: Boydell Press for the Scottish Text Society, 2019. Pp. x + 147. Hardback, \$70.00. ISBN-13: 978-1897976371.

—As he recounts in his preface, it is now fifty-five years since Ralph Hanna began his serial reediting of successive component works from F.J. Amours's *Scottish Alliterative Poems in Riming Stanzas* (STS, 1892-97). This volume, following his STS editions of *The Awntyrs of Arthure* (1975), *Golagros and Gawane* (2008), and *The Buke of the Howlat* (2014), concludes his project, since he does not plan to reedit the fifth of Amours's texts, *The Pisitil of Susan*, already treated by Thorlac Turville-Petre and others.

Rauf Coilyear differs from most older works in that the sole source for the text is not a manuscript, but a printed edition (St. Andrews: Robert Lepreuk, 1572), itself known in a single copy in the National Library of Scotland. The 1572 edition was reproduced in facsimile, ed. William Beattie, in 1966, and the poem has been reedited by, e.g., Felicity Riddy (in Bawcutt and Riddy, *Longer Scottish Poems*, 1987), Elizabeth Walsh (1989), and Alan Lupack (1990).⁴ The strength of the new edition lies in Hanna's commentary, with wide-ranging cross-reference, not only on language and metrical issues, but also on parallel textual problems observed in the manuscript transmission of other works. Readers used to the conventions of editing later printed texts may find Hanna's medievalist usages ("witness," not copy, "print," for book or edition) temporarily distracting. He provides a full bibliographical description of the NLS copy, assembles the material on Lepreuk's career as printer, and introduces interesting evidence from how Lepreuk's shop ("team") handled a different work for which the printed text can be compared with extant manuscript evidence. Nonetheless Hanna approaches the text itself much more as a palaeographer and manuscript editor than textual bibliographer, as evidenced in his attitude to conjectural emendation:

I find myself at variance with virtually all my predecessors, who ... seem to me to have been unduly accommodating to the *textus receptus*. Indeed, I find their absence of inquisitiveness sobering.... Few seem to have considered that, while *lectio difficilior* may be a guide to editorial practice, passages admitting ... only last-gasp explanations might simply communicate erroneous readings (23).

True, of course, and it is certainly an editor's task to identify and explain error, rather than explain it away. What is also sobering is how distant this

⁴ *Three Middle English Charlemagne Romances* [TEAMS Middle English Text Series] (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1990), online at: <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/lupack-three-middle-english-charlemagne-romances-tale-of-ralph-collier-introduction>.

seems from almost any current approach to editing printed texts. Most literary editing from works that reached print, including that of Renaissance texts, is now dominated by social-text theory, privileging the text as first published, and most recent critical editions in the Greg-Bowers tradition relegate all but the most obvious conjectural emendations, however well-informed and well-argued, to the apparatus. This sharp contrast in editorial cultures is not necessarily timidity or a lack of inquisitiveness by the bibliographers, but the preservation of a bright line between textual evidence and scholarly comment. Indeed, other STS volumes for texts known from a single printed edition have followed the social text model, choosing a photographic or digital reproduction, with commentary, as in Harriet Harvey-Wood's Watson's *Choice Collection* (STS 1977, 1991), or Sally Mapstone's digital *Chepman and Myllar Prints* (STS 2008, etc.). There are, of course, now other routes, both print and digital, for students to access the text, and even the typography, of the 1572 edition. Most scholars will not use Hanna's edition in isolation, but alongside its several recent predecessors. His well-honed skills as an interrogator of textual transmission, normalization, and degeneration perhaps justify his decision to reedit, rather than reproduce, Lepreuk's text. Even if this STS volume is unlikely to win easy acceptance as the definitive version of the *Rauf Coilyear* text, it should clearly be recognized as among the most learned and authoritative textual commentaries on the poem.

Andrew Hook, *From Mount Hooly to Princeton: A Scottish-American Medley*. Glasgow: Kennedy and Boyd, 2020. Pp. xiv + 516. Paperback, £19.95, \$27.50. ISBN: 978-1849211895.

—On his 70th birthday Walt Whitman famously wrote that “the fancy comes for celebrating it by a special complete final utterance” of his previously-published poems “in one handy volume ... sprinkling all with portraits,” and asserting that the result was “more a PERSON than a book.” More modestly, Andrew Hook has waited into his eighties to collect a “medley” of his unpublished writings, and, given his regular reviewing, it is not his final utterance. But the book is personal. As the title more than hints, it brings together personal essays, on his childhood in Wick (Mount Hooly was the family house) and his distinguished academic career in Scotland and America (where he first went as a graduate student, to Princeton), with a range of his writing on Scottish and American literature and cultural interchange, and on higher education. The result is always acute and readable, tinged with a few excusable reservations about the 21st century to salt his generally positive approach to life and to the books he discusses.

For *SSL* readers, it is important to know that, among the more personal essays and reviews, the book includes a number of substantive scholarly papers and conference talks, on Scots in America, and especially Scots with Princeton and Glasgow connections: these include “Glasgow and the American Revolution” (pp. 55-62), “Scotland and the South in the Eighteenth Century” (pp. 63-70), the very important essay on Giannone’s *Civil History of Naples*, Jacobitism, and the Scottish Enlightenment (pp. 95-106). “Scott and America” (pp. 145-157), an essay on “Scotland and South America,” on Cunninghame Graham (pp. 158-168), and one on a Scottish chemistry professor at Princeton (pp. 209-218). Some of the reviews provide a succinct and well-informed perspective on long-contested issues in the broader field. There is a separate short section of pieces on F. Scott Fitzgerald. These important contributions are not likely to get individually noted in library catalogues or search engines, nor will they be accessible online to the surfing researcher. It would be a pity if the items listed above get overlooked by other scholars.

The book is an attractive demonstration of how much scholarship, like writing for the general reader, relates to the writer’s broader life experience. One might say that scholarship, like poetry, survives in the valley of its making; audiences affect what we write. Not just for formal citation, but to understand better how the individual essays came about, I’d have welcomed basic information, in a discreet footnote, or in a final small-print listing, of the date and original venue or periodical for which each item was written. But the volume is attractively produced, cheap enough even for individual scholars to buy and enjoy, and certainly cheap enough that no library can seriously refuse a purchase recommendation.

Robert P. Irvine, ed., *Annals of the Parish* [The Edinburgh Edition of the Novels of John Galt], Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020. Pp. 224. Hardback, £80.00. ISBN 9781474442336.

—This first volume in the new Edinburgh Galt edition, tackling what is surely Galt’s best-known, and most frequently-taught novel, provides a full-scale introduction, text, explanatory notes, and appendices on Galt’s real-life sources and the historical and church background to his novel (*to be fully reviewed in a future issue*).

Ema Jelínková and Rachel Sumner, eds., *The Literary Art of Ali Smith: All we are is Eyes* [Transatlantic Studies in British and North American Culture, 31]. Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019. Pp. 166. Hardback, \$56.95. ISBN 9783631811412.

—This edited collection features ten essays on the work of one of Scotland’s most innovative and distinctive contemporary writers, Ali Smith. After a brief introduction in which Smith’s work is contextualized

in relation to the tumult of twenty-first-century Scottish politics and the growing centrality, starting in the 1980s, of women's voices in Scottish literature, the contributors to the volume address major themes in Smith's work and offer comparisons with other women writers from Scotland, including A.L. Kennedy, Denise Mina, and Kate Atkinson [A.J.].

Clark McGinn, *The Burns Supper: A Comprehensive History*. Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2019. Pp. 564. Hardback, £50.00 [heavily discounted, as of August 2020]. ISBN: 9781912147786.

Clark McGinn, *The Burns Supper: A Concise History*. Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2019. Pp. 288. Paper, £9.00. ISBN: 9781912147830

—Burnsians have long been fascinated by the Burns movement as well as by the poet it commemorates. As early as 1819, the Rev. Hamilton Paul included an appendix to his edition of Burns's *Poems and Songs* telling the story of the first Burns suppers held in Alloway, in the cottage where Burns was born. Following the centenary of that birth, James Ballantine produced a *Chronicle* boasting that 872 celebrations that had been held that year (though, as McGinn points out, Ballantine actually listed 1,039). In 1985, the Burns Federation published a 250-page centenary history of itself by the late James Mackay. More recently, of course, Christopher Whatley, in his *Immortal Memory: Burns and the Scottish People* (John Donald, 2016), has explored the crowded festivals, lengthy dinners, and fulsome speeches, that accompanied the unveiling of Burns statues throughout Victorian Scotland, setting the statue phenomenon in a social-historical context seldom considered in more intramural histories of the Burns movement. John Cairney provided much informal history in his collection of supper speeches, *Immortal Memories* (Luath, 2003). Clark McGinn himself included some basic historical information in his earlier Luath volume, *The Ultimate Burns Supper Book* (2007), and contributed a well-researched chapter on the Burns Supper as worldwide phenomenon to Murray Pittock's *Robert Burns in Global Culture* (2011).

Clark McGinn's two new books, especially the *Comprehensive History*, are however history of a different order with regard to Burns Suppers, and certainly not simply a rereading of old ground. Based on what seems to have been a remarkable Glasgow Ph.D., the book investigates old topics, like the evidence on the earliest suppers, and fresh ones, like the antecedents or emergence of each of the now-standardized elements in the "Orthodox or Institutionalized" supper ritual (though both Cairney and McGinn himself have protested against such standardization), and on each topic, as on the history of the Burns supper around the world (including

both in the U.S. and in the U.S.S.R), he has something new to say, introducing new material that even long-time Burnsians will not previously have encountered. The interpretative frame placed over this research is sometimes debateable; the research certainly is not, the arrangement of material is clear, and unlike many Ph.D.'s the writing is direct and readable.

The two books follow the same outline, and cover the same material, and both include references. The *Concise History* is a quicker, cheaper, easier read that will satisfy many Burnsians, but I should, nonetheless, strongly recommend the *Comprehensive History*, certainly for libraries and Burns researchers, but for individual purchase also. It will provide anyone who has a sustained interest in the Burns phenomenon, not only with authoritative research, but with countless hours of delighted browsing.

Gerard Lee McKeever, *Dialectics of Improvement: Scottish Romanticism, 1786-1831* [*Edinburgh Critical Studies in Romanticism*]. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020. Pp. 232. Hardback, £75.00. ISBN 9781474441674.

—This study, offering both a general case about Scottish romanticism and studies of a variety of major authors, argues that Scottish literature of the Romantic period was dominated by the concept of improvement. The introduction defines improvement as “a series of dialectical relationships encompassing both theory and practice, in a collision between—at its most basic—the old and the new, a key component of the culture of modernity,” and the collision “helped to precipitate a series of innovations in Scottish literature between 1786 and 1831, including approaches to the politics and potential of the aesthetic itself” (pp. 2, 4). The four substantive chapters that follow discuss four different genres and five different Scottish authors: poems of Robert Burns, short fiction by James Hogg and Walter Scott, the dramas of Joanna Baillie, and the Scottish novels of John Galt. Each of these examples, McKeever suggests, “involves improvement in a conception of the literary aesthetic:: Burns as a “medium of secular belonging,” Hogg and Scott as a “vehicle of indefinite exchange,” Baillie as an “educational tool,” and Galt as a “theoretical guide to history” (p. 186). A final short chapter uses some of Carlyle’s essays to look back at Romantic improvement, concluding that improvement should be viewed, “not simply a key theme or environmental background for literary texts, but also of real consequence to the period’s formal innovations” (p.186). Occasionally, the author suggests either that improvement itself is very various, or that it is present in the literature in very general terms, but he pursues his theme with enthusiasm, offering interesting rereadings of his chosen authors.

Murray Pittock, ed., *The Scots Musical Museum: Pt. 1: Introduction and Text; Part II: Notes and Appendices* [The Oxford Edition of Robert Burns, vols 2 and 3]. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. xiv + 727, viii + 318. Hardback (as a set), \$390. ISBN: 9780199683895.

—Professor Pittock’s new edition of James Johnson’s *Scots Musical Museum* (6 parts, 1787-1803) is a landmark for Burns studies, both in the amount of information that it brings together, and in finding a way to move beyond some of the polemic that has bedevilled past discussion. Over the years, editors of Burns’s songs have faced two difficulties. One difficulty has been uncertainty about which songs are “by” Burns, and to what degree. The second is the varied nature of the sources, for words as well as music. The two major song-groups, those published in James Johnson’s *Scots Musical Museum* (1787-1803) and those published in George Thomson’s *Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs* (1793-1818), both engaged Burns’s enthusiastic participation, but neither gave him total control over his own text, and the musical arrangements they provide were very different. For the most part, modern Burnsians have favoured, even romanticized as more authentic or democratic, the visually and musically simpler versions in Johnson, over the more elaborate arrangements in Thomson, even though both were mediating and constructing a song tradition, in words and music, not merely transmitting it.

The textual policy of the Oxford Edition of Robert Burns sets out to provide Burns in the form in which his works were first available to his contemporaries. Pittock’s edition reproduces the very first, Catch Club, edition of the *Scots Musical Museum*, page for page, from high-quality scans (cf. his earlier edition of James Hogg’s *Jacobite Relics*). While these volumes appear in the Burns edition, and make clear Burns’s central role in the *Scots Musical Museum*, the result is being edited here as a cultural, even national, event, with impact and consequences as a totality, not as the creation of a single writer.

Astonishingly, the earlier facsimiles of Johnson most of us have been using turn out to have been made from later printings, or even from the Victorian reengraving. Variations in the text from manuscript or later print occurrences, or the quest for an earlier, or simpler, or more “authentic,” version of a tune, are strictly irrelevant to this edition’s purpose, though Pittock provides much evidence on such sources in his notes on each song in the separate volume of commentary. Further manuscript evidence, for songs that will reappear later in the Oxford edition, will be covered in the relevant volume (see “Note on the Text,” II: xii).

Where the Oxford edition is dealing with texts that Burns himself did not publish, as for much of vol. I, the Commonplace Books and other prose, edited by Nigel Leask (2014), the edition normally reverts to editing from manuscript, rather than from later published texts. The current

volumes, for instance, provide, as Appendix 1 (III: 212-238), a new transcription from Burns's (and Riddell's) manuscript notes in the interleaved copy *Scots Musical Museum*, including the separated leaves from it in Edinburgh and more recently identified at the Birthplace, rather than relying on the first published version of the notes in Cromek (1809) or later transcriptions (cf. the note on text at II: 10).

The decision to reproduce *The Scots Musical Museum* as a whole means that Pittock provides all the songs, not just those he judges Burns wrote, or rewrote, or expanded, or improved. Initial publicity for these volumes highlighted Pittock's assessment that at least fifty songs that previous editors had treated as "by Burns" should no longer be treated as his, but this headline oversimplifies. The edition makes available *all* the songs from the *Museum*, and Pittock's annotations lay out the evidence whether or not and how much Burns was involved with each song, as author, editor, or collector, summing up the authorship evidence in an eight-point rating scale from I (wholly Burns) to VIII ("in which Burns had no hand"); successive judgements on individual songs are tabulated in Appendix 3 (III: 243-250), allowing direct comparison with Kinsley, though there using verbal rather than numerical assessments, and the briefer Appendix 2 (III: 239-242) provides a classified listing of the songs Pittock suggests have previously been miscategorized. Many years ago, the late R.D. Thornton criticized song editors who just wave through as Burns's all the traditional and cumulative attributions, asserting that any future editor "should make his own mind about each of these songs *and make his own reasoning upon them known.*"⁵ Pittock meets those criteria more fully even than Dick or Kinsley. Not every Burnsian will agree with every rating, but Pittock is the most forthcoming of any editor to date about this issue, and no one is being deprived of a song about which to make their own decision.

A full review would offer its own contribution or additions to Pittock's notes on individual songs, but that still seems a bit premature. Pittock's annotations are particularly strong in identifying sources, both for words and tunes, in the many printed song collections of the period, and by comparison with most scholarly editions on this scale, he is more willing to venture, generally appreciative, literary comment. As with any published scholarship, there will be additional information, a few newly-recovered or newly-located manuscripts, maybe even a few corrections over the coming years, but this is the most comprehensive, and most authoritative, scholarship on this phase of Burns's song-writing to date. Pittock's

⁵ R.D. Thornton, in *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 28 (1993): 234-250 (240: emphasis added): <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol28/iss1/17/>.

magisterial, substantial, slyly subversive, and quite readable introduction (II: 1-40) constitutes in itself a major contribution, not only to scholarship on Burns and Johnson, but to critical understanding of Scottish song in this period, as well as a sustained justification of his own editorial approach, and it should be of lasting interest. These volumes are essential for any serious study or sustained exploration of Burns's songs and song culture.

Arun Sood, *Robert Burns and the United States of America: Poetry, Print, and Memory, 1786-1866*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan/Springer International AG, 2018, Pp. viii + 275. Hardback, \$89.99, ISBN: 978-3319944449; paper, \$59.99, ISBN 978-3-030-06853-0.

—Reception studies, or influence studies, how other people, or later people, or people elsewhere, responded to an author, have often seemed unidirectional, and therefore secondary to the study of an author's own works. For an author whose popularity spread as widely and as quickly as Burns's did, it has often seemed sufficient to reference his international reception, the admiring things said in published comment or public bloviation, as a catena of evidence for his literary significance. Examination as to which of Burns's works were being read and valued, when, where, and by whom, and what was being said about those works, often greatly complicates the picture.

Arun Sood's book on Burns and America is the first full-length monograph on its topic, though there have been individual scholarly essays and chapters on the topic, and many an Immortal Memory or other talk to an American Burns audience has adumbrated some of its themes and the outline of the story.⁶ The book quite properly begins, after a brief general introduction, with the significance of America for Burns himself, and the poems in which he wrote about it (including a lengthy discussion of his "Ode to for General Washington's Birthday," though that would lie largely unpublished for 80 years after it was composed). But while Burns's positive comments on America, and the United States, helped his transatlantic popularity in the longer term, they were not among the reasons his works first appealed to American readers. One of Sood's strengths is an attention to publication history, but one difficulty with tracking that appeal is that at the start of Sood's story American readers

⁶ For a well-written and scholarly introduction, see James Montgomery, "How Robert Burns Captured America," *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 30 (1998): 248, but see also, e.g., important contributions by Carol McQuirk in *Robert Burns and Cultural Authority*, ed. Robert Crawford (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997), 136-159; and by Robert Crawford, Susan Manning, Leith Davis, Rhona Brown and others in *Robert Burns and Transatlantic Culture*, ed. Sharon Alker, Leith Davis, and Holly Faith Nelson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

still bought imported books, not only from Edinburgh or London, but also Irish reprints, and newspaper editors freely pirated poetry to fill their columns. The earliest American printings of Burns's works in book form, in Philadelphia and New York in 1788, were slow to be followed by further editions. But it was soon clear that Burns's appeal to Americans lay in his colloquial style, his pithiness and quotability, his social position as farmer, and his assertions of liberty and equality. In the early 19th century, Burns also provided a model for American writers different equally from the neoclassical poetry of the Connecticut wits and the genteel romantic lyrics of drawing room song; while Sood's treatment is necessarily selective, he discusses two early 19th century Ulster-Scots American poets writing on American themes in the Burns style and metre.

In some respects, the emphasis on book history and publication data, welcome though it is, only makes one wish for more. Sood charts the occurrences of newly-dated book reprintings, city by city, across the decades and continents (see, e.g. ch. 4, and the list and maps in Appendices A and B respectively). These reprints are not always distinct editions: multiple printings, with different imprints and dates, often in quite short print-runs, could be economically produced from a single set of plates, and publishers sold duplicate stereotype plates to printers in other cities. In some ways the maps in Appendix B show less the spread of Burns's poetry than the westward spread of American book production carrying Burns with it. Even within the printed record, editions are not the only important source. Newspapers, anthologies, even dictionaries of quotations were equally important in spreading Burns's influence and constructing American ideas of him. It seems very likely, not just that there are unrecorded newspaper printings of Burns's own poems in the antebellum decades, and comment about him, but also further Burns-influenced verse. Mining such material might seem unmanageable, even with digitization, and once found it might prove difficult to integrate into a coherent narrative, but it is tantalizing to think what else might be there to find.

Where Sood is on stronger ground is in looking for Burns's influence in a wider variety of readers than earlier reception studies. He looks at the tributes paid to Burns by the New England writers, Whittier and Longfellow and Holmes and Lowell and Emerson, but he also comments on how Carlyle's Burns influenced Emerson, at Lincoln's references to Burns, at the use of Burns by abolitionists, and the sustained use of Burns by Frederick Douglass, whose first book purchase after escaping north was a volume of Burns. There is less here on Whitman than one might expect, but Whitman's essays on Burns fall outside the scope of this book (and Sood has written separately on them elsewhere); arguably the impact of Whitman on such late Victorian Scots as Robert Louis Stevenson, or

George Douglas Brown, was among the factors that influenced their reappraisal of Burns.

In summary, this is a book that breaks some new ground, and from which even those who know some, or much, of the story can learn. Because Burns is often absent or vestigial in the American teaching canon, American literature scholars may have as much to learn from Sood as Scottish ones. Most earlier commentary on aspects of Burns's American impact is in journal articles, essays in edited volumes, or as chapters in more general studies. In addition to its distinctive emphases and contribution, a standalone monograph like this one will make its topic both more visible and more widely accessible.

Greg Thomas, *Border Blurs: Concrete Poetry in England and Scotland* [*Liverpool English Texts and Studies*, 79]. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019. Pp. xiv + 299. Hardback, £90.00, ISBN: 978-1-789-62026-9.

—By now, the concrete poetry movement of the 1960s has merged for most critics into broader and less programmatic interest in the relationship between poetic language and its visual presentation, and it is salutary to be reminded how different, and challenging, the claims made for it were in its early years. This book sets out to offer both a history, and a comparative study, not so much of concrete poetry, but of how four poets, two Scots and two English, responded enthusiastically to what was an international movement originating in Brazil. Greg Thomas is himself an enthusiast for poetry of this period, but his opening chapter provides a very useful introduction even for non-enthusiasts to the movement's modernist roots and its contemporary connections with post-War communication theory, McLuhanite mass media theory, and sixties counter-culture. Readers of *SSL* will be most interested in the chapters on Ian Hamilton Finlay and Edwin Morgan, and these seem to me the strongest, because the poets, especially Morgan, increasingly took concrete poetry on their own terms. The two English poets, Dom Sylvester Houédard and Bob Cobbing, seem to have been more programmatic.

The sixties saw an extraordinary outpouring of self-consciously countercultural "publication." In a period of small poetry magazines and broadsheets, production and distribution were radical, as well as the texts/images themselves. Thomas's focus is critical, and he only mentions briefly the bibliographical or book-historical aspects to the concrete poetry phenomenon, how concrete poetry was actually produced. Most small magazines could find purchasers even though they were typed on mimeo stencils, perhaps with an IBM golfball typewriter (introduced in 1961), or pasted up from cut-outs and Letraset stick-ons (also from 1961), for the

newly-available technology of offset photolitho. Publications from regular presses often adopted a standard “typewriter font” to signal unconventionality. Much of what was produced was ephemeral, jokey or jokily transgressive, or portentous. Though there were examples of concrete poetry beautifully printed on hand presses, it more often also looked ephemeral, so that in-depth collections tend to be in archives, rather discoverable item by item in regular library catalogues. Thomas notes that for this study he relied heavily on archival research. Much concrete poetry, especially if poorly produced in the first place, is difficult to reproduce well, and a monograph is not a picture book, but I should have welcomed more full-page illustrations.

Thomas’s focus on just the two major Scots figures could certainly have been expanded, though with a risk of blurring the picture he gives. Scottish precursors would surely include W.S. Graham’s early surrealism, in the 1940s. I remember, also, G.S. Fraser and his Vaughan College students producing a collection of concrete poems ca. 1968 (and I remember Morgan coming to give a talk). I would have gladly dumped Dom Sylvester, prominent though he was in the sixties, for a chapter on the influence of the poet, printer, and typographic designer, Duncan Glen (1933-2008). Despite his admiration for MacDiarmid, Glen seems to have been fascinated by concrete poetry, publishing Morgan’s *Gnomes* (1968), and *The Horseman’s Word* (1970). A special “Visual issue” of Glen’s magazine *Akros* (vol. 6, no. 8, 1972) featured concrete poetry, including not only poems, but essays by Morgan and Stuart Mills. *Akros* publications, and Glen’s other imprints, spanning a broad range of print technologies, deserve reconsideration in the history of modern Scottish poetry. The book wisely limits its discussion of concrete poetry in America, or comparison with the striking, if less theorized, typographic elements in Ginsberg and the *City Lights* poets, also relevant to Morgan’s work, or more recent American theorizing on visual poetry, as in the work of Joanna Drucker.

Incorporating such connections or expansions would of course have made for a different, and less focused, book, but they do indicate some of the ramifications and continuing interest of the broader concrete poetry movement. Criticism of concrete poetry, like that of the visual in poetry more generally, is still often explanatory or appreciative, by comparison with the complexity of criticism focused on text. The more definite focus on the two Scottish poets of recognized stature deflects scepticism about the poems, and the reliance on narrative also makes critical commentary on individual poems less open to niggling. Thomas writes clearly and well about the two Scottish poets, and about their knowledge of, relation to, and growing differences from, the original Brazilian theorists of the movement. Though I hope it will not be the last book, or Thomas’s last book, on this

phase of Scottish poetry, this is an important book that breaks new ground, its introductory chapter on the history of the movement will be particularly useful, and it is likely to remain the standard book on its topic for Scottish readers.