Books Noted and Received

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Cover Page Footnote

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This list covers books received or noted since publication of SSL 39 in September 2013. Inclusion in this list need not preclude possible fuller discussion of a book in a subsequent review or review essay.


—Perhaps improbably, usage statistics show Turkish readers making significant use of the digital SSL. This modest pamphlet presents poems about Turkey by ten Scots writers from William Lithgow and Lord Byron, through Edwin Morgan and Liz Lochhead, to John Purser, Bashabi Fraser, and the two editors, together with translations into Turkish, mostly printed on facing pages; in the case of Donald MacAulay’s poem in Gaelic, there are also two English translations, by Derrick McClure and Alan Riach. The brief biographical notes on each poet and the short introduction, explaining the origin of the project for an international conference in Istanbul, are also given in both languages.


—This collaborative book analyses a variety of data on the phenomenon of Scots’ dispersal overseas from the 18th to the 20th centuries, presenting both statistical and more conventional documentary setting ethno-cultural factors in emigrant identity alongside the economic and political factors in emigration, and concluding with a model “Immortal Memory,” neatly introduced as “not the essential, but the essentialist diasporan
experience.” While shorter and less comprehensive than Tom Devine’s recent To the Ends of the Earth: Scotland’s Global Diaspora, 1750-2010 (2011), this book includes a valuable comparative discussion of social-scientific models for studying diaspora, and of objections to use of the term for the Scottish overseas experience, with implications for those studying Scottish literary influence in particular emigrant communities.


—While there has long been a core of serious Buchan commentary, Buchan’s popular success and his prodigious output in many other genres make it easy to underestimate his achievements as a novelist. This book, a modestly-presented but detailed look at the first and best-known of his Richard Hannay thrillers, includes a brief biography, interesting studies on such aspects as the geography, literary, and South African background to the novel, brief summaries of all Buchan’s novels, and a selective survey of Buchan scholarship.


—No, not that Allan Ramsay (or not mostly). This handsomely-illustrated, large-format book accompanied a major exhibition at the University of Glasgow’s Hunterian Museum to mark the tercentenary of the Scots painter Allan Ramsay, junior (1713-1784). Unlike most art exhibitions, however, this one explored, alongside Ramsay’s paintings, his background and context, and the second substantial chapter is a helpful essay by Melanie Buntin and Rhona Brown on the relation between the younger Ramsay and his father, the poet and editor. The whole volume should be of interest to students of eighteenth-century Scottish culture, for its essays on the women Ramsay painted and on his sense of classical heritage, as well for stunning full-colour reproductions from Ramsay’s portraits of a Scottish aristocracy that was intellectual as well as social.

Crawford’s book, an exploration of the relation of poetry to national politics, charts across seven centuries how “authors from Scotland and beyond,” both major and minor, have constructed “a resilient and adaptable ‘political imaginary,’ … articulating the link between Scottish independence and the literary imagination.” While earlier writers (Barbour, Blind Hary, Douglas) get briefer treatment, Burns gets a full-length chapter, Scott and Jane Porter get summarized, MacDiarmid gets extended coverage, and more recent writers (including Morgan, Gray, Lochhead, Kelman, Patterson) also get considered, alongside such influential Bannockburn legacies as the Corries’ “Flower o’ Scotland,” Mel Gibson’s Braveheart, and occasional references in Alex Salmond speeches. As in Crawford’s earlier and more comprehensive Scotland’s Books, the individual page-by-page readings are often subtle, cautious, or even cagey, and readers across the Scottish political spectrum will find it a book worth their attention.

—This anthology collects 101 of the best entries, roughly ten poems a year, from the annual McCash competition for short poems in Scots, run jointly since 2003 by the University of Glasgow and the Glasgow Herald. While SSL does not regularly review new writing, this anthology seems worth note both as a largely-extramural counterpoint to campus-based creative writing and because the collection includes poems by Rab Wilson, Alan MacGillivray, and Aonghas MacNeacail.

—This useful collection differs from most others in its series, in bringing together introductory essays that cover a very wide time-span and that bridge the often-separate worlds of Gaelic and Scots literature, and of folklore, oral tradition, song studies, and published literature. Contributors include folklore scholars such as Margaret Bennett and Lizanne Henderson, the ballad scholar Emily Lyle, literary historians such as Sarah Dunnigan on the early modern period, Valentina Bold on the 18th century, and Suzanne Gilbert on the romantic period, Katherine Campbell and Kirsteen McCue on lowland song, and Corey Gibson on the modern folk revival.

—This compulsively-readable collection of autobiography, memoirs, essays, prefaces, interviews, and tributes to Gray’s friends or collaborators is important because it is Gray’s account of his own (writing) career. It also constitutes an informal, and surprisingly wide-ranging survey of the past fifty years of Scottish literary and cultural history. While much of the material is previously published, it is reprinted here with sidenotes giving Gray’s explanation of each item. Researchers should note that occasionally (as in the tribute to Philip Hobsbaum) additional material has been inserted in a reprinted text.


—This new Burns selection, offering a broad range of material in the texts and sequence of its first publication, will be welcomed by Burnsians for its sensible introduction and detailed, up-to-date annotation. The songs from Johnson and Thomson are accompanied by (reengraved) music, “Tam o’ Shanter” is paired with the Alloway Kirk engraving from Grose’s *Antiquities*, “The Jolly Beggars” is given complete, together with three songs from the *Merry Muses*, and the small print and thin paper also allow inclusion of Burns’s letter to John Moore, and Mackenzie’s review from the *Lounger*. While some teachers will prefer a complete Burns, this selection provides a plausible rival for class use to Carol McGuirk’s well-established and still valuable Penguin selection.


—This volume, a festschrift honouring J. Derrick McClure, contains an appreciation and bibliography of McClure’s distinctive role in Scots language studies, with some thirteen substantive essays that, in the range of their contributors and topics, are in themselves evidence of his wide influence. In addition to essays on Scots dictionaries, Scots usage in literary texts (notably in Stevenson), and Scots language influence overseas (in North Carolina and Australia), the volume includes three essays on translation into and from Scots by Gavin Douglas and others (another of McClure’s continuing interests), a contribution from James Robertson on contemporary Scots-language publishing, and a concluding
essay by John Kirk on a Northern Ireland civil service response to the 1992 European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.


—“Stevenson in the classroom,” one thinks: well, nowadays, that pretty much means *Jekyll and Hyde*. This jam-packed volume includes several essays on that now-iconic text, but it is both more varied than one might expect and probably more useful than many in its series. While the editor’s helpful opening survey of Stevenson scholarship is puckishly headed with his advice “There is but one art, to omit,” the volume that follows is wide-ranging. There are indeed contributions on *Jekyll and Hyde*, on Stevenson and theory, on gender, and on film adaptations, as one might expect, but also on the Scottish adventures, the essays, *Treasure Island*, short stories, poetry, *A Child’s Garden*, travel writing, and writing from and about the Pacific. Among the thirty contributors are Jenni Calder, Ian Duncan, Penny Fielding, Matthew Wickman, Oliver Buckton, J. Derrick McClure, Scott Hames, Roderick Watson, Alan Riach, H. Aram Veeser, and Thomas Richardson.


—Duncan Ban MacIntyre (1724-1812) is one of the best-known (and most widely available) of eighteenth-century Gaelic poets. Previous translators of this poem include J.S. Blackie, Hugh MacDiarmid, and Ian Crichton Smith, as well as by several modern Gaelic scholars. Alan Riach’s new translation is here paired with a brief introduction and biographical notes, several small illustrations by Sandy Moffat, the musical setting by Anne Lorne Gillies, and an unsourced reprint of the Gaelic text.


—Pittock’s new study is both a specific study (of Jacobite relics, objects and iconography, examined as evidence for ‘seditious memorialization’), and an exemplary or methodological study, encouraging literary and historical scholars to interpret material objects with the kind of cultural
complexity traditionally applied to written or published texts. In the
nature of things, it can be difficult to know whether the particular items
that survive for modern discussion are representative of a much wider
material culture that was hidden or suppressed, and at which point such
memorialization morphed from being seditious (as with some of the
earliest relics or medals) to eccentric or even sentimental (as perhaps with
the post-1766 teapot illustrated on p. 147 and as plate 8), but Pittock’s
deep sense of context provides persuasive readings of a wide variety of
evidence, and his brief conclusion tackles the question of distinguishing
the “treacherous” objects that are his focus from contemporary non-
seditious Hanoverian memorabilia and later Jacobite kitsch. The book
concludes with a formidable bibliography of recent Jacobite scholarship
and a very useful glossary of Jacobite mottoes, terminology and in-group
cant.

Preuss, Stefanie. A Scottish National Canon? Processes of Canon
—This fascinating and substantial study surveys a variety of documentary
or empirical evidence on the late 20th-century canon of Scottish literature,
as shown in e.g. anthologies, literary histories, publishing and reprint
series such as the Canongate Classics, bestseller lists, university
prospectuses and syllabuses, government reports, and set texts at the
secondary level, in an attempt to disentangle ideological or essentialist
(ethnocentric and nationalist) canon-formation from a more descriptive
state-based or geographical canon. The preliminary survey of earlier
scholarship on the canon sometimes seems to dismiss or misread previous
writers, but the study includes acute observation on e.g. the dominance of
20th century writing in the secondary classroom, and the relatively thin
and traditional canon of earlier Scottish literature at university level.
Whether or not Preuss’s more general argument commands general
assent, the wealth of material assembled and surveyed here makes this an

Raffe, Alasdair. The Culture of Controversy: Religious Arguments in
978-1-84383-729-9.
—This richly-detailed account of religious controversy in Scotland
examines the modes and media of argument used by Presbyterians and
Episcopalians, especially in the period after 1689 leading up to the Act of Union. The persuasiveness of its general case (a counterargument to cultural-political theories of the “public sphere”) rests in juxtaposing more formal aspects of controversy, in print media, with the role in religious controversy of informal cultural performance, in preaching, oral exchange, manuscript, and print ephemera, as in satiric Episcopalian anecdotes on prominent Presbyterian clerics. Raffe, an historian, writes readably and knowledgeably, and his book will repay attention from literary scholars of the period.


—Robert Hartley Cromek (1770-1812) has a dual significance in Scottish literary studies, first as editor of the *Reliques of Robert Burns* (1808), an important follow-up collection often found bound as a fifth volume to Currie’s *Works*, and then for his collection *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song* (1810), in which he was damagingly dependent on Allan Cunningham. Read’s useful study is primarily focused on Cromek’s relations with William Blake and involvement in the contemporary engraving market, but devotes chapters to Cromek’s two Scottish projects.


—This brief illustrated guide combines photographs and descriptive paragraphs on 60 literary sites, arranged by geographic region, with a fold-out map and very brief biographical notes on each of the writers mentioned.


—The German-language reception of Burns has been of special importance in disentangling the nature of his extraordinary influence. Rosemary Selle’s preface tells how this study, a long-unpublished 1981 Heidelberg PhD thesis, with English text but with most quotations in German, had “slumbered” in typescript for over thirty years before it was resurrected and brought to print by a group of Göttingen seminar students under Dr. Frauke Reitemeier. The body of the book (pp. 13-393) presents the original study unaltered, while a series of short sections by the book’s rescuers (pp. 395-406) comment on Burns’s German reception, 1980-2013. Selle’s critical focus is on the practice and theory of translation, but she also comments on contextual and political issues as they affected attitudes to Burns; one intriguing section is the contrast in the inter-war years between the internationally-respected research of Hans Hecht, forced out of his Göttingen chair as a Jew, and that of his pro-Nazi contemporary Reinald Hoops, who in 1933 (when Hoops was teaching at Glasgow) published an essay in *Englische Studien* on the Scottish Renaissance and what it could learn from Germany about national renewal. Researchers should certainly check for more recent scholarship, but as a whole Selle’s work holds up remarkably well, and this volume will be an indispensable resource for subsequent discussion of Burns’s role in the development of European romantic nationalism.


—This substantial and very readable study of Shetland writing, over two hundred years, discusses Scott’s *The Pirate*, MacDiarmid’s “To a Raised
Beach,” and poetry by Robert Alan Jamieson, but its strength is in the recovery of many writers, virtually unknown outside Shetland, who created their own literary community. The islands had two weekly newspapers, including the publisher of this volume, in addition to specialized periodicals such as The Shetlander (in the 1920s) and The New Shetlander (from 1947), and Smith makes a good case for the quality of what got written, and published locally, over several generations. Writers who seem of potential interest to the wider study of Scottish literature include three near-contemporaries of Scott, Margaret Chalmers, Dorothea Campbell, and Thomas Irvine; the Shetland poet and novelist J. Haldane Burgess (1862-1927); and John Peterson (1895-1972), Excise officer and lifelong communist, who wrote poetry and a novel about his trenches experience in the First World War. Based on what was clearly a very good PhD thesis, with significant archival research, this book unobtrusively relates Shetland writers to wider critical discussion of e.g. the Kailyard or the modern Scottish Renaissance, but it also constitutes an unanswerable argument for the value of studying regional literatures within Scotland, as in other national literatures.


—Unlike the study of song or folktale, the persistence (and mutations) of Scottish dancing have attracted relatively little attention from literary scholars, yet in many ways Scottish dancing diverged from the broad 19th-century shift that recentered dance from the community to the couple, from minuet to waltz. As Anne McKee Stapleton attests in her introduction, Scottish dancing also remains a distinctive part of many Scottish emigrant communities. This book focuses on literary depictions of dancing, with the longest chapter devoted to the novels of Walter Scott and Christina Johnstone, and a chapter to three post-Scott women novelists Amelia Beauclere, Susan Ferrier, and “Rosalia St. Clair” (Agnes Scott Hall). Other chapters explore the dance’s social symbolism, as in the opening chapter on John Skinner, Neil Gow and “Tullochgorum,” and its role as national marker, in the discussion of Queen Victoria and Scottish dance and in the fascinating section on Scottish dancing by Highland regiments in the Boer War. Stapleton has more to say about the gender implications of dance history than its increasing entanglement with class (and fashion), but the book is in many ways a useful pioneer study providing a context for future study of other texts and issues.

—This study is primarily concerned with English writers on rural life, but it includes a chapter (pp. 123-153) that compares agrarian reform and community in Burns, Bloomfield, and Clare and stresses the extent of social change underlying “The Cotter’s Saturday Night.”


—Researchers are sometimes surprised by how much important archival material is still privately owned, and so untraceable through the usual online resources, just as they are shocked by the quantity of material in institutional libraries that remains invisible on the Web or even uncatalogued. This beautifully-produced exhibition catalogue marked both the bicentenary of Scott’s *Waverley* and the formal opening of Dr. William Zachs’ research library in Edinburgh, looking out towards the Scott monument, which has holdings in depth not only on Scott but other Scottish writers of the long 18th century. The three dozen items selected for exhibit (and illustration) include manuscripts (John Ballantyne’s ledger for 1820-1821, an early transcript of Scott’s *Don Roderick*, the passage “Breathes there the man” in Scott’s hand, and letters real and forged), iconography (Fox Talbot photographs of Abbotsford and a version of the Raeburn portrait), and memorabilia (a lock of Scott’s hair, Mauchline Ware, a manuscript poem by Felicia Hemans), as well as first editions and inscribed books from the library’s much larger Scott holdings. Though this is a private library, material can be made available to researchers by appointment, and it is valuable to have these holdings on record.