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Preface to SSL 42:2

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This year, with the support of the advisory board, *Studies in Scottish Literature* has moved from annual publication to publishing two shorter issues a year. In the event the issues are not turning out to be much shorter. Any apprehensions we had that there might be a shortage of good contributions has so far been unfounded.

This issue, the second since the change, begins with the fifth in the ongoing symposium series, on "Spatial Humanities and Scottish Studies." The *SSL* symposia, inaugurated in volume 38, have allowed us to balance the traditional in-depth articles on specific authors, texts and literary topics with a group of shorter contributions focused on a current issue or emerging research mode likely to be of cross-period disciplinary interest. In their introduction, the symposium's guest editors, Michael Gavin and Eric Gidal, point out the special significance of the mapping and construction of place in Scottish literary studies, providing a brief and well-referenced introduction to developments in Spatial Humanities. In criticism across a range of literatures, there is a "spatial turn," but much geo- and ecocritical discussion is still often surprisingly localist or impressionistic; digitally-referenced mapping, linked to text-coding and text-mining, has dramatically changed and complicated how we can chart and understand ideas of place we often take for granted. In *Postmodern Geographies*, Edward de Soja argued that late nineteenth-century historicism "occluded, devalued, and depoliticized space as an object of critical discourse," and that renewed geographical interest should help us break from the "carceral historicism" of conventional critical theory.[16]

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[1] Edward de Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), 4, 1.

This symposium explores some of the practical issues and possibilities in such critical reorientation and gives preliminary findings on some fascinating projects. In addition to the guest editors' introduction and their own substantial contribution on topic-modeling from a corpus of 18th and 19th century Scottish geographical texts, the symposium has contributions on the cultural mapping of early 18th century Edinburgh, on matching documentary and map research for an 18th century traveler in the Highlands, and the mapping of real and fictional places in Scott's *Redgauntlet*. Trendspotters may think it significant that all the symposium contributions are coauthored, and all are among the preliminary outcomes of grant-funded research.

The preface to the spring issue (SSL 42:1) warned that twice-a-year publication was likely to mean that individual issues would no longer include articles from all literary periods. This issue makes available some important and accessible articles, but for perhaps the first time since the journal was founded, this issue contains no full-length article on any period before the later 19th century. Earlier periods feature in the briefer notes and the notices of recent books. Articles in the pipeline, under review or revision, should help balance this better in upcoming issues. We would welcome a wider range of short research-based contributions for "Notes and Documents." For the record: we continue to welcome scholarly articles on *all* periods of Scottish literature, from medieval to contemporary, and we welcome also comparative or interdisciplinary articles involving Scottish literature and literary studies.

Finally, we are pleased to report that, as this issue reaches completion, the digital *Studies in Scottish Literature* has passed another milestone: since the first volumes went online in August 2012, the journal has had over 200,000 full-text article downloads.

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