Introduction: Materializing Scottish Cultures

By Anne Stapleton

In January 2022, the LLC (Languages, Literatures, and Cultures) Scottish Forum was delighted to host two panels at the annual convention of the Modern Language Association, held in Washington D.C. The eight essays published in this special issue of The Bottle Imp developed from papers delivered virtually during the convention, the first four in a panel called 'Materializing Scottish Cultures', which I had the honor to moderate, and the second four in the panel entitled 'Diverse Scotlands', over which Padma Rangarajan affably presided. The Forum is grateful to the Association for Scottish Literature (ASL) for this collaborative opportunity, with special thanks to Duncan Jones and Pip Osmond-Williams for their invaluable work on this Bottle Imp supplement.

When the Scottish Forum's Executive Committee first met to discuss panel topics for the 2022 convention, we took to heart MLA President Barbara Fuchs's invitation to highlight multilingualism and the complex histories and erasures that shape individuals and communities, envisioning many possibilities in Scotland's diverse voices and cultures. Our discussions unfolded early in January 2021, shortly after vaccines for COVID became available, and we were hopeful that, a year later, we would be able to meet in-person and explore the abundant cultural offerings in the D.C. area. Alas, shortly before the 2022 convention, a surge in COVID cases caused by the Omicron variant influenced our decision to hold virtual panels. While our in-person experience never materialized, panelists did an excellent job utilizing the Zoom format to explore the rich diversity of Scottish literatures and cultures evident in the following papers.

Materializing Scottish Cultures

Imagining a panel with interdisciplinary crosscurrents, the Executive Committee invited essays that address global manifestations and embodiments of (and allusions to) Scottish literature across the visual arts, public monuments, architecture, theatrical performance, and music. We were grateful to receive several strong proposals, four of which promised – and delivered – particularly

fruitful connections.

Leith Davis spans the greatest historical period (1695–2010) and offers the rich historical case study of Darien to examine how media and mediation – from manuscript letters and printed letter pamphlets to the digitized UK Memory of the World Register – play an integral role in the process of inscribing national memory. She deftly tracks how shifts in media between the late seventeenth century and the nineteenth century aligned with new narratives about the Darien Colony and Scottish identity. John Hill Burton's discovery of documents and reshaping of the Darien memory 'to write a narrative not of English political betrayal, but of Scottish colonial ineptitude', as Davis explains, is a striking nineteenth-century example. The essay concludes with an enticing gesture to other examples of the 're-alignments involved in the making of Britain's collective memory' available to scholars who plumb digitized documents in the UK Memory of the World Register.

Likewise tracking Scotland's fluctuating position in a global network but moving to the media of music, Sarah Clemmens Waltz considers how Germans' knowledge of Scottish music during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was acquired primarily through the imagined music of antiquity portrayed in literature, rather than from the music that listeners encountered. Waltz points out that literary descriptions such as James Macpherson's Works of Ossian and Percy's Reliques dominated interest in a 'new, northern vision of ancient music'. Tune publications, travelogues, and traveling virtuosi also informed enthusiasts' understanding. As Waltz shows, cross-cultural comparisons and literary influences between 1770 and 1830 ultimately heightened German expectations about Scottish music as universal, ancient, and powerful.

Craig Lamont addresses the embodiment of and allusions to the literary accomplishments of Robert Louis Stevenson, focusing on manifestations of his worldwide legacy. Lamont astutely maps out how RLS's 'cultural memory' developed over generations. Born into a culture fascinated with the past, Stevenson himself received scant commemoration until after his death, perhaps because of his own attitude about memorials and statues, as Lamont notes. Abundant now, and existing from Scotland to Tahiti, statues, plaques, portrait medallions, monuments, paintings, houses, and even parks create 'part of the great web of cultural memory surrounding Stevenson'. Closing with attention to Stevenson's literary works, Lamont reminds us of other, perhaps more powerful,

memorials – public events that engage readers and give Stevenson's words new prominence, whether the One Book One Edinburgh initiative, book groups, or other literary activities.

Highlighting a different late nineteenth-century Scottish literary celebrity, John Corbett investigates the 'material incarnation' of kailyard author Ian Maclaren (pen name for the Reverend Jon Watson) during his transatlantic tours to the United States. Specifically, Corbett considers how and where Maclaren performed Scottishness, as well as the enthusiastic American reception of this popular author, who gave ninety-six lectures in the U.S. in the fall of 1896! Shaped at the pulpit, Maclaren's public persona deliberately appealed to his congregation's sentiments and evoked their sympathy, leaving nary a dry eye in the house, as Corbett convincingly shows. Skepticism also appeared, however, colorfully depicted in a cartoonish parody following Maclaren's visit to Boston, revealing tension and changing attitudes in the reading public as they encountered both author and narratives valuing a Scottish theology of moral sentiment.

In the discussion that followed their presentations during the 2022 MLA convention, Davis, Waltz, Lamont, and Corbett made fascinating connections as they explored the interplay between materiality and text, giving meaning to Scottish literatures and cultures within the specific contexts they discussed. Likewise, this supplement offers readers the opportunity to enjoy the panelists' intellectual inquiries and innovative approaches to Scottish literary studies as authors engage with the complexity of materiality across centuries and continents.In January 2022, the LLC (Languages, Literatures, and Cultures) Scottish Forum was delighted to host two panels at the annual convention of the Modern Language Association, held in Washington D.C. The eight essays published in this special issue of The Bottle Imp developed from papers delivered virtually during the convention, the first four in a panel called 'Materializing Scottish Cultures', which I had the honor to moderate, and the second four in the panel entitled 'Diverse Scotlands', over which Padma Rangarajan affably presided. The Forum is grateful to the Association for Scottish Literature (ASL) for this collaborative opportunity, with special thanks to Duncan Jones and Pip Osmond-Williams for their invaluable work on this Bottle Imp supplement.

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