



ISSN 1754-1514

The Bottle Imp

Issue 13, May 2013

Scotland and the 19th-Century World
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Rodopi, 2012

'I have already a better method—the kinetic'
Robert Louis Stevenson

Late twentieth-century criticism of Scottish Literature often seems bedevilled by the past even as it tries to retrieve it for a new future. Since the 1990s, increasingly critics have recognised the remarkable achievements of a range of Scottish authors denigrated by their predecessors for their necessary engagement with Britishness. Walter Scott, Margaret Oliphant, even the Kailyard look different when we can step beyond the anxieties of English influence that motivated the Celtic Renaissance. And yet the resistances of that moment keep us tied to assumptions about quisling Victorian authors with their hapless aesthetics, mercenary goals, and local reach. Again and again these prove the default positions for commentary on authors, ideas and aesthetics whose complexity deserves a more thoughtful consideration. Perhaps it is the resurgence of confidence allowed by the Scottish parliament that is finally producing not just a revision but also an expansion of our critical view.

'The present book', says the introduction, 'seeks to ... add its many voices to the steadily growing chorus declaring the falsity of this opposition [between national interest and international engagement, relevance and stature] so mercilessly imposed on Scotland and the nineteenth-century world' (34). A noble aim—though we critics should not forget our own part in it. And these authors do not. The volume celebrates Douglas Gifford, and he continues his many contributions to the study of Scottish literature with an opening chapter

that at once seems haunted by the critical past, yet determined to move on. The Kailyard still takes its knocks, but Gifford cracks open the canon he helped establish in the 1988 *History of Scottish Literature* to reveal a cornucopia of alternate authors, texts, and critical perspectives.

Subsequent chapters demonstrate a wide range of possibilities for a venture Gifford characterises as post-Bakhtinian. He writes:

a full and mature national literature would ... express the uncertainties, dilemmas, and challenges of its social and historical contexts. ... [In] a post-modern and post-Bakhtinian age we should now appreciate the diversity of our older voices. (27)

Clusters of essays focused on Scotland's literary relations with America, her expression of military and imperial dynamics, her participation in a European discussion on language, folklore and philosophy manifest the variety of nineteenth-century Scottishness, its reach, its interest, and its contribution to international affairs and aesthetics.

The most complete cluster considers Scotland's transatlantic relations. This is of course a field of study, led by two luminaries who appear in the volume—Andrew Hook, and the lamented Susan Manning. This cluster shows how far the sub-field has come, and models possibilities as scholars track Victorian Scots and their cultural interactions elsewhere. Hook tracks the rivalries but also the lines of influence between two marginalised cultures. If Sydney Smith's off-hand remark in the *Edinburgh Review* 'Who reads an American book?' might translate forward into the American (Scots) resentment of T. S. Eliot's 'was there a Scottish literature?' nonetheless the two literatures modelled national possibilities, each for the other. In 1820 the *Edinburgh Magazine* anticipated a moment when 'we, in our turn shall be gaping for new novels and poems from the other side of the Atlantic ... when ... we shall have Ladies of the Lake from Ontario, and Tales of my Landlord from Goosecreek' (47).

Pam Perkins reviews the complexity of authorial and aesthetic transatlanticism in a fascinating essay on Jeffrey abroad, which considers the shifts, starts and misunderstandings when personal and political lives interact. Suzanne Gilbert listens for echoes in border ballads not just either side of the Marches, but across the Atlantic and across the American plains. Susan Manning's fine ear

catches resonance between Melville's 'Bartleby' and Robert Fergusson's career—whispering through lines of these scribes comes a compelling theory about the deathliness, and yet the potential to rewrite relations, transatlantic and otherwise, of the act of imitation, the reality of influence. '[The] more exact the copy or mimic is', she hints, 'the closer it may come to undoing the priority, perhaps the existence, of an "original". The result is a kind of reciprocal haunting' (116).

Reciprocal haunting is what this book achieves. Trevor Royle, Michael Fry and Richard Finley extend consideration of Scotland's nineteenth-century world across the empire and back. Military campaigners, Scottish colonial linguists, missionaries in Africa at once appropriate and vibrate to the worlds they engage. Johnny Rodger, Ritchie Robertson, Kenneth Simpson and Sarah Dunnigan pursue Scotland's philosophical and aesthetic relations in Europe. And here, too, these prove interestingly circular. European possibilities are reworked in Scotland, returned, renewed, recirculated, and vice versa. Stevenson spoke for more than himself when he touted his method as 'the kinetic' (231).

This is not, then, the Scotland of the Kailyard. It is not local, not inward. And it begs one question of this book that so helpfully expands the margins of study for Scottish literature. Perhaps the Kailyard, too, is not what we have taken it to be. If there is an omission in the volume, it might be a consideration of precisely this shibboleth for Scottish criticism. In an otherwise inclusive book, *Whistle Binkie* is abjured at the start; the Kailyard soon after. And yet by means of them Scottish culture circulated strenuously and influentially in the late Victorian imperial market. Andrew Nash has pointed to the cultural and aesthetic importance of this neglected literature. Perhaps it is time to bring a dispassionate criticism to bear, too, on this stepchild of Scottish studies. It conquered other worlds. An assemblage of scholars such as Carruthers, Goldie and Renfrew have assembled can figure out why. And the answers may open yet another new range to our appreciation of Scottish literature in its global context and operations.

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ASLS is supported by Creative Scotland



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The Bottle Imp is the ezine of the Scottish Writing Exhibition www.scottishwriting.org.uk
and is published by the Association for Scottish Literary Studies www.asls.org.uk