

Editorial: 'Round the spaces where the buildings were'^[1]

This issue of *IJSL* looks to the rune, the copy and the manifesto as means of defying time, and to the implication of ruin in every cultural revival – the cleared space before and after the building.

Articles centred mainly on the twentieth-century address a modernist primitivism uniting skaldic permanence with Bergsonian *durée réelle*, the overtly textualised double as national allegory, repetition as the basis of urban ethos, and the false dawn of the Renaissance before the Renaissance.

Neil Rhind's essay on *Poor Things* disentangles the novel's playful web of mimetic aporias, paying special attention to the 'double fabrication' of Bella's story and its tripling by her pictorial rendering as an idealised national icon. Anchored in an almost nostalgic Victorian Kelvingrove, Gray's bold re-mediation of *Frankenstein* and the Shelley circle fuses with a metafictional commentary on Glasgow 1990, drawing the apparently monumental symbolism of 'Bella Caledonia' directly into the cultural politics of devolution.

Manfred Malzahn offers a tour d'horizon set firmly within the boundaries of the Scottish and urban, from the dullard minstrels of a hellish late-medieval Edinburgh to the city's 'bourgeois reconquista' in the age of *Trainspotting*, and the shift from a city of pungently communal, contested territory to one experienced only as 'blind space' through which the individual makes a meaningless (if not frictionless) passage.

But perhaps Edwin Muir's sense of the repressed desire of a Scottish street crowd, and its 'apparently unmotivated intentness', has no more to do with Calvinism than the pointed question of T.S. Eliot's pageant play *The Rock*, first performed in the same year *Scottish Journey* appeared (1934):

When the Stranger says: 'What is the meaning of this city?
Do you huddle together because you love each other?'

What will you answer? 'We all dwell together
To make money from each other'? or 'This is a community'?[2]

If Eliot turned to Catholic tradition as a citadel against the empty-handed disenchantment of 'an age which advances progressively backwards', his fellow convert George Mackay Brown found an austere ritual quality in Norse kennings. But Brown's skaldic modernism, Michael Stachura shows, constantly plays the objective image off the intuitive sense; as in Pound's Imagism, the infrangible thing-ness of the runic carving is also a figure for subjective becoming and the unceasing progress of death.

Julian Hanna's essay on the twilight dawn of the little magazine *Evergreen* suggests that Patrick Geddes and William Sharp's short-lived project reflected the omnipresence of degeneration and renewal in *fin de siècle* literary culture throughout the British Isles, its taste for the vitally urban tempered by consciously neo-romantic Celticism. In a brilliant pen-sketch of keening Edinburgh, Geddes evokes the Scots as an 'unconquerably resurgent people' most fully themselves in the 'hushed assemblage' of collective mourning. Sharp's own curious doubling of self and gender remains mysterious; was the 'otherness' of Fiona Macleod merely a stratagem suited to the taste of the 1890s?

Finally, Stefanie Preuss's occasional paper takes us back to the canon wars, and their belated function as a vehicle for literary nationalism in contemporary Scotland. Various efforts to rig-up a national list, shelf or smorgasbord of officially Scottish books suggest a lasting insecurity about the status and reality of Scottish literature itself, and implicitly affirm the channels of institutional power from which such lists always seem to emerge. Building such exclusive developments on ostensibly populist and democratic foundations only obscures the effort and presuppositions of those clearing the space, and staking out the boundaries of what goes up next.

This will be the last number of *IJSL* in its current form. The next issue will appear in 2014 with a renewed format and remit, under slightly revised editorial arrangements. Ian Duncan will formally step into the shoes of Eleanor Bell as co-editor, a role he has fulfilled for the past two issues. Special thanks to Jacqui Ryder for her fine work as reviews editor, and to all the contributors, reviewers and members of the advisory board who assisted with the past — that is, the first — eight issues.

The 'internationalism' of this journal, we hope, has never simply been about bypassing the national paradigm or looking askance at its suppositions. Our aim has been to expand the scholarly discussion about Scottish literature and to step beyond the worn grooves of established debates in the field. This being said, Scottish literature has little choice but to be a campaign as well as a field of literary criticism. While this final issue draws on critics from Portugal, Austria, Canada and the United Arab Emirates, their origins and locations are not the 'international' point. Building a space in which new questions and critical arguments can take root in the field – without ignoring its tacit assumptions and investments – will remain the aim of the 'new' journal when it re-emerges.

Back issues of the journal will be archived online indefinitely, and will remain free to access. In the meantime, we are very pleased to receive proposals for future submissions and special issues at scott.hames@stir.ac.uk.

NOTES

[1] See the quotation from Tom McGrath's poem 'Maryhill' in Manfred Malzahn's article.

[2] T.S. Eliot, *Selected Poems* (London: Faber, 1954), p. 117.