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## Brief Notices

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## Brief Notices

Walter Scott. *The Heart of Midlothian*. Ed. Tony Inglis. London: Penguin Books, 1994. lvi + 793 pp.

Scott lovers and/or scholars will be gladdened by the availability of this expertly collated, fully annotated variorum edition of one of the Scott novels most consistently respected by critics. Besides the complete text of the 1818 edition plus Scott's introductions and notes, Tony Inglis of the University of Sussex provides over two hundred fifty pages comprising introduction, exhaustive bibliography, chapter-by-chapter editor's and textual notes, and glossary, enough to satisfy and edify experienced scholar and beginner alike. Inglis' labor on this edition must have taken years and could have been inspired only by genuine love of the subject. In the light of such an accomplishment it would be quibbling to complain of an occasional tautology, multiple-source note, or unsupported critical assertion.

Inglis' introduction surveys the ups and downs of Scott's critical reputation, fortunately concluding with the current ups; it sympathetically seeks to reconcile some seemingly incongruous narrative modes in the novel. The notes explain Scott's many literary and historical allusions in a way sure to increase admiration for the learning of both novelist and editor. The painstaking collation of the textual notes gives a clear account of Inglis' choice of readings.

Scott admirers disheartened by his long neglect should be glad that a publisher sees a demand for such a work, and its appearance should impress many of the unconverted. Although publishers cannot be blamed for not trying to

create a demand when none exists, one cannot help wishing that a scholarly edition like this might in time be complemented by a “popular” one, aiming at ready accessibility rather than textual authenticity. With such alternative editions available, Scott might in time approach the continued esteem accorded a novelist of comparable breadth, humanity, and social relevance—Dickens.

LIONEL LACKEY  
*Charleston, SC*

Roderick Macdonald. *Trilingual Poetry*. Trans. Joyce P. Collie and J. Derrick McClure. Insch: The Burns-Gaelic Trust. 1995. [vi] + 65 pp.

This book is the brain-child of Roderick Macdonald and is the first of the Burns-Gaelic Trust Publications. The author of the original Gaelic poems in the book and, in 1978 Bard of An Comunn Gaidhealach, Macdonald has translated the whole of Burns’s poetry into Gaelic. He is therefore engaged in building bridges between Scots and Gaelic, an activity of importance. In this book there are English versions of the Gaelic originals as well as versions in Scots by two different translators who share the poems between them.

The Gaelic poems are about topics such as nationalism, religion, modern wars such as the one in Bosnia. The author, who is himself a minister, has a gift for analogies and resemblances and compassion too for the victims of our sometimes terrifyingly pitiless twentieth century. Sometimes however the poems are too didactic. Nevertheless there is much wisdom here.

The Scots language of course can deal quite comfortably with the Gaelic originals. At one time we thought of Gaelic, English and Scots as being divisive rigid alternatives. Now there is a movement to think of these languages as evidence of riches rather than division and when one considers the range of vocabulary in this book in the three languages one sees much sense in this view. This small book of sixty pages shows a wealth of vocabulary which is most heartening. It is this treasury of language that made MacDiarmid a great poet (he even did translations from Alexander Macdonald and Duncan Ban Macintyre). Modern poets and novelists are learning this and adding variations such as the Glasgow patois. A huge galaxy of words shines over Scotland. This book is well worthwhile as showing a section of it.

IAIN CRICHTON SMITH  
*Taynuilt, Argyll*

William McIlvanney. *Docherty*. Trans. Christian Cividri. Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble. 1994. 350 pp. Collection Motifs Ecosais.

Translation is a difficult enough art when dealing with a "mainstream" text, but if it is written in, or is being translated into, a dialect these difficulties are compounded. The problem is nothing new to Scots; Gavin Douglas had already tackled it in the early sixteenth century when he translated the *Aeneid*, and so did Allan Ramsay and other eighteenth-century poet-translators. Translating *from* Scots has its problems, too, as we see in the efforts (not always felicitous) to render Burns into another tongue.

This has not daunted Christian Cividri. William McIlvanney's *Docherty* was first published in 1975, following two earlier novels and a collection of poetry. It quickly established the author as a major voice in Scottish fiction. Although the break with "kailyard" fiction had come in 1901 in George Douglas Brown's *House with the Green Shutters*, that novel was set in a village, whereas in *Docherty* McIlvanney portrays the industrial west of Scotland, with a significantly different vocabulary to that of rural areas. But can a translator, or should he, transform a regional novel into a regional novel in another language?

It is evident that Cividri did not wish to do so. Some examples, chosen at random, make the point. "'Ah'll luk roon the morra,' he said" (1st edn., p. 95) becomes standard French "'Je repasserai demain', dit-il" (p. 100). Not only does McIlvanney reproduce the accent here, but he uses a typically Scottish (or Irish) expression "the morra" for "tomorrow."

As far as dialect is concerned, one of the most interesting passages in *Docherty* occurs when the young son Conn gets into a fight at school, skinning his nose. When asked how this happened, he replies, "'Ah fell an' bumped ma heid in the sheuch"; asked to repeat, the boy uses the word "sheuch" again whereupon the teacher lands him a heavy blow to the ear and says, "That, Docherty, is impertinence. You will translate, please, into the mother-tongue" (p. 109). Later Conn reflects on the "irrelevance" of school and he writes down various words as he used them, beside which he entered their English equivalent. The first word on the list was "sheuch"; its equivalent, "gutter." This situation rings completely true. I witnessed a similar event in 1950 in Alsace, when the French government was heavy-handedly trying to force the population to speak French. Two youngsters who were speaking their dialect during recess were sternly admonished by the principal that only French was acceptable.

This chapter must have given the translator pause. He renders Conn's conversation: "'J'suis tombé et j'me suis cogné la tête dans le koulyou . . ." (p. 117). Like McIlvanney, Cividri keeps the reader uninformed until Conn establishes his list. A footnote tells the reader that in the original the dialect words are in Scots or Lallans and that in the French edition the dialect of Picardy has

been substituted. In my opinion this is an excellent solution to a crucial passage in the novel.

McIlvanney is not through with Conn and English, though; the boy now wants to, "write things that he couldn't find any English for" (p. 113), but he somehow intuitively recognizes the gulf which separates the two forms of speech and abandons the list.

Every language has words to which it does special things, and the Scots "wee" is one of these. It can have quite contrary meanings according to the context of its use, even the inflection it is given in speech can impart a subtle difference. Not surprisingly the word is not as polymorphic in French, but Civardi has done the best that one could expect in his renderings.

*Docherty* appears in the series *Motifs Ecossais* published by the University of Grenoble Press. The aim of the series is to present modern Scottish fiction in contemporary translations to a large segment of the French public. Readers of McIlvanney's novel will recognize that there is an important vein of regional literature which deserves a wide audience.

GRR