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**Late Medieval Scots Poetry: A Selection from the Mkars and their Heirs down to 1610. (The Poetry Bookshelf. General Editor: James Reeves.) Edited, with an Introduction, Notes and Glossary, by Tom Scott. New York. Barnes & Noble. 1967. \$4.00. London. Wm. Heinemann. 1967. vii + 207 pp. 21 shillings.**

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## Reviews

*Late Medieval Scots Poetry: A Selection from the Makars and their Heirs down to 1610.* (*The Poetry Bookshelf*. General Editor: James Reeves.) Edited, with an Introduction, Notes and Glossary, by Tom Scott. New York. Barnes & Noble. 1967. \$4.00. London. Wm. Heinemann. 1967. vii + 207 pp. 21 shillings.

Mr. Scott's "Selection" of Scottish poetry from *The Kingis Quair* to that of the first decade of the seventeenth century is an attractive and valuable addition to *The Poetry Bookshelf* series. Certainly, for presenting in convenient and accessible form a body of verse composition "superior to most poetry produced in England" from 1400 to the reign of Elizabeth—as its jacket not without justice declares—it is to be welcomed not only by readers of this journal but by all students of the literature of the time and indeed by all devotees of poetry. Its choice of poems and its editorial apparatus have been largely determined by the audience to which the whole series is addressed—one composed chiefly of general readers and of neophyte students of literature. In this instance, one may assume, Mr. Scott addresses also a more particular audience—one made up of the lay members of the worldwide Scottish community and of more advanced students of the literature, history, and culture of Scotland and its neighbors, whose acquaintanceship with the work of "the Makars" and their successors may be limited or lacking in recency.

Such an audience will find Mr. Scott's "Selection" to be not only a serviceable but a worthy and noble anthology. Specialists in Dunbar and Douglas, Henryson and Lyndsay, will no doubt enter exceptions to specific inclusions and omissions. Such exceptions and counterclaims are inevitable, indeed necessary and fruitful, in the achievement of the enduring and sacred canon of any body of letters. It will still remain to Mr. Scott's honor to have been among the first to point to the "heart's core," the essential inner corpus of the work of "the Makars and their Heirs."

The editorial apparatus provided by Mr. Scott for the lay reader is, in his introduction at least, generous in its fullness and for the most

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part useful in matters of detail. The degree of illumination it offers might indeed have been increased if he had limited his treatment of somewhat tangential issues and so made possible a considerable extension of his glossary and of his instructive commentary upon specific poems. The lay reader, one may guess, would also have welcomed marginal or footnote annotations and glosses. Admittedly, the use of such devices is not always under the control of the editor of an individual volume in a general series, in which considerations of utility must often be waived for those of uniformity and elegance of format. Of obvious usefulness are the more justly proportioned bibliographical and biographical notes and the observations upon "Some Features of Scots." (Yet it is curious that one so perceptive and informed should stigmatize Chaucer's language as "bastard Anglo-Norman"!.) Admirable also is Mr. Scott's exactitude — apart from some understandable transliterations of v's and u's — in adherence to his textual authorities.

The true and final purpose of the making and annotation of a canon, our editor would surely agree, is the realization and the communication of the canon's own distinctive essence, its inherent authority, the timeless relevance of its utterance. Mr. Scott exhibits fully the essential — if Lowland, non-Celtic — "Scottishness" of his poets. Although he by no means underestimates their great debt to Chaucer, he is able to demonstrate through his balancing emphasis upon general medieval and French influences and especially upon native and generic origins and traits, the inadequacy of their usual designation as "the Scottish Chaucerians." Yet to this reader at least, the members of Mr. Scott's anthology — whether drawn from *The Kingis Quair*, Dunbar, Douglas, Lyndsay, or their successors — in theme and mood and style and language still seem in great part to issue from and to voice the centuries-old and profoundly tragic yet often most fruitful tension between Scotland and her cousin-kingdom England.

The *authority* of "the Makars" as voices of Scotland and of humanity, no sensitive and informed reader needs to be told, derives from their integrity and their truth, their sense of their high role as members of the noble company of poets of the "Comoun Weill" of Scotland, their mastery of cadences ranging from the grave beauty of the aureate poems through the robust measures of the satires and the flytings to the simplicity, the intensity, of the laments and the threnodies.

Sadness is in truth a recurring mood of these Scots poets — as of all poets. It is one also, and for a variety of causes, evoked again and again in their readers. The contemplation of this canon, as of the

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canonical rolls of later periods of Scottish literature, must arouse in all of Scottish blood the feeling of a profound historical pathos. Yet justly weighed, the pathos of Scottish letters is not that of the unrealized, the unfulfilled: it is rather that of a tragic national and human condition confronted from Henryson through Burns and beyond to MacDiarmid and his successors with dignity of spirit, firmness of mind, and often too with merriment of heart. Witness for the poets of this earlier time, out of a great company that might be summoned, Henryson's epitaph for Cresseid, Dunbar's "Lament for the Makaris" and his less familiar "Meditatioun in Wyntir," Lyndsay's "Complaynt of the Comoun Weill of Scotland," Maitland's verses "On the New Yeir 1560" — verses all that have relevance, and not only for lands "Scottis" and "Inglis," in our own time of troubles. It is Mr. Scott's achievement, it is to his honor, that through his pious endeavors we are able to hear once more the voices of these strong witnesses.

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Archie Hind. *The Dear Green Place*. London. New Authors Limited. 1966. 231 pp. 25 shillings.

This novel takes its title from the Gaelic "Gles Chu," the "dear green place" which is Glasgow. There is, however, nothing idealised about Hind's portrayal of his city, for the closest to pastoral is a scene in the spoiled fields of Rutherglen, and the characters are mainly from the lower middle class who live drably among "the oldest industrial landscape in the world," (p. 21). *The Dear Green Place* is remarkable for its realism in portraying the life of the city, not just in its topographic exactness, or even in an accumulation of finely observed details, but in reflecting a changing relationship and awareness of place in the mind of the hero. In this respect Hind goes far beyond Alan Sharp's *A Green Tree in Gedde*. Sharp's Greenock was only a well portrayed background; here the city is the novel.

Hind's plot is simple and unoriginal. His hero, Mat Craig, is trying to write a novel about the history of Glasgow. He quits an office