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

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REVIEWS

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

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job in order to have time to write—the narrative is interspersed with his recollections of childhood—he works in a slaughterhouse and after repeated failure achieves an awareness of his real subject matter—the dear green place which is his knowledge of life as it is in contemporary Glasgow. This, then, on one of its levels, is a novel about the writing of a novel, and on this semi autobiographical level it has least success. Mat Craig, when he strives to be intellectual, is a bore (i.e., p. 69, p. 172).

Craig's family and friends, and his relationships with them, on the other hand, are very much alive. The conflicts and harmonies are poignantly observed and are set down with deliberate restraint. As Hugh MacDiarmid writes in the dust jacket blurb, "[The novel] is true throughout of Glasgow life today, and skilfully blends aspiration and disappointment, comedy and tragedy."

The most memorable sections of *The Dear Green Place* are those where we come to an understanding of the characters in terms both of their family backgrounds and of the way the city has made them—heredity and environment in one sharp focus. The large set scenes, such as that of Mat's slaughterhouse labour (pp. 101-111) have been praised for their verisimilitude, and they are well done, but the novel's moving moments are those in which Mat Craig looks out at the city and its people, and in looking out, rediscovers himself.

New Authors Limited, a subsidiary of Hutchinson of London, exists to make first publication easier for promising new writers. If Archie Hind lives up to the promise of *The Dear Green Place*, for which he won *The Manchester Guardian* fiction prize for 1966, he may well make an interesting contribution to Scottish literature.

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