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William Blackwood & Sons Ltd. 1967. 298 pp.**

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Although Gavin Douglas' reputation rests upon his translation of the *Aeneid*, three very interesting short poems traditionally are associated with his name—an elaborate dream vision, *The Palace of Honour*, a brief moral work, *Conscience*, and a dramatic allegory, *King Hart*. Priscilla Bawcutt's volume, *The Shorter Poems of Gavin Douglas*, brings together these poems in a convenient form and completes the Scottish Text Society editions of the Douglas canon. Together with D. F. C. Coldwell's text of the *Aeneid*, her volume makes Douglas' long out of print works again accessible in their entirety to the modern reader.

In dealing with the three poems, Mrs. Bawcutt considerably improves upon the editions of her predecessors. Her most valuable contributions are found in her texts of *The Palace of Honour* and *King Hart*. Without exception, all of the editions of *The Palace of Honour* before hers had been based on the 1579 Edinburgh text of Henry Charteris with occasional emendations from a London edition of c. 1553, the only other complete extant edition of the poem. The first to question the long-held superiority of the Edinburgh text, Mrs. Bawcutt carefully re-examines the relationship of the two editions and demonstrates that in many cases the readings of the London version are preferable. She thus prints the two texts side by side in parallel columns along with the fragments of a third 16th century edition, providing the student and scholar for the first time with a solid textual basis for further work on the poem. Likewise, her edition of *King Hart* is superior to the earlier texts of the poem. It is more accurate in its readings and judicious in its emendations than the transcripts of John Pinkerton and John Small. At the same time, it supersedes the competent though drastically abbreviated version of G. G. Smith by printing the poem in its entirety. Finally, it supplies the critical apparatus and punctuation absent in the earlier STS edition of the poem by Sir William Craigie.

In addition to her textual contributions, Bawcutt also provides a much needed revaluation of the three poems. Prior to her edition, discussion of *The Palace of Honour*, *Conscience*, and *King Hart* at best was limited to brief acknowledgments of the poems' merits followed by rather pedestrian summaries of their allegorical content. Even such sympathetic critics as C. S. Lewis and T. F. Henderson did little to rescue the poems from centuries of critical debris. Rightly Bawcutt

attempts a more serious analysis of each work in terms of its date and attribution, literary backgrounds, significance, style, and verse. Her commentary generally is useful in isolating the problems involved in these works and occasionally is incisive in its specific observations, particularly with reference to the allegory and verse form of *The Palace of Honour* (pp. xxxvii-xlv; l-lii) and the structure of *King Hart* (pp. lxvii-lxviii).

The edition, however, is not without serious weaknesses. In dealing with the literary background of the poems, Bawcutt often is misleading. Typically, she strains to find remote and tenuous sources for the works while overlooking more immediate influences. Thus, she stresses the parallels to the procession of lovers in *The Palace of Honour* with Andreas Capellanus' *De Amore*, Nichole de Margival's *La Panthere d'Amours*, Deschamps' *Le Lay Amoureux* without mentioning *The Kingis Quair* or Lydgate's *Temple of Glas*. She cites numerous French sources for Venus' court in *The Palace of Honour*—Jean de Conde's *Messe des Oisiaus*, *Le Parlement d'Amour*, Alain Chartier's *Les Arrets d'Amour*—and ignores entirely the English 'Courts of Love'. Finally, she devotes undue attention to the rather superficial similarities between Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* and *The Palace of Honour* and touches only lightly upon the more important influences of *The House of Fame*. Conversely, when a detailed examination of the European backgrounds of *The Palace of Honour* and *King Hart* would be useful, for example, in dealing with the poems' ornate style, Bawcutt is strangely silent. She is content to classify Douglas' language according to its rhetorical figures rather than to examine its relationship with the aureate traditions of earlier literature.

On occasion, Bawcutt's editorial conclusions are equally tenuous. In attempting to account for the differences between the Edinburgh and London editions of *The Palace of Honour*, for example, she underplays two very important factors, scribal error and changes on the part of the 16th century editors, Charteris and Copland, and instead offers an explanation which, by her own admission, has no foundation whatsoever, that of revision by Douglas himself. Straining to tie up loose ends in her discussion of the texts, she suggests that Douglas either rewrote the poem, or at least Book II, or vacillated between different versions of his material, an assumption more questionable than either of the hypotheses she dismisses.

Finally, it is disturbing to find in an edition of this quality a number of misleading or confusing notes. In many cases, particularly in dealing with the often corrupt text of *King Hart*, Bawcutt's commentary obscures rather than elucidates textual problems and leaves the reader bewildered. A striking example is found in her remarks on lines 70-72

of *King Hart*. In this long note, Bawcutt offers a series of alternative suggestions, in part based on the readings of former editors, in part original, each of which she immediately undercuts and then caps the series with the least satisfactory emendation of all, one which involves repetition of a rhyme word and compression of a line. In other cases, Bawcutt's notes distract the reader with extraneous information while failing to provide the facts essential to an understanding of the line. Both the glossary and the note to line 858 of *King Hart*, for example, define the puzzling word "sow" as a structure used in mining or sapping, a meaning not directly relevant to the stanza in question. In the note, Bawcutt further refers the reader to a passage in the *Bruce* where the word is used, but she makes no mention of Barbour's and other Scots writers' more specialized use of the word as a war engine designed to hold armed men, a meaning which immediately clarifies Douglas' line.

Despite these limitations, *The Shorter Poems of Gavin Douglas* is, in the final analysis, a useful edition. It supersedes the work of previous editors and should provide the impetus for a much needed reconsideration of the poems.

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