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Alexander Scott

Scottish Poetry 1974-1976



For poetry in English, the major event of the period, in 1974, was the publication by Secker and Warburg, London, of the *Complete Poems* of Andrew Young (1885-1971), arranged and introduced by Leonard Clark. Although Young had lived in England since the end of the First World War, and had so identified himself with that country as to exchange his Presbyterian ministry for the Anglican priesthood in 1939, his links with Scotland where he was born (in Elgin) and educated (in Edinburgh) were never broken, and he retained "the habit of mind that created Scottish philosophy, obsessed with problems of perception, with interaction between the 'I' and the 'Thou' and the 'I' and the 'It'."¹ Often, too, that "it" was derived from his loving observation of the Scottish landscape, to which he never tired of returning.

Scarcely aware of any of this, Mr. Clark's introduction places Young in the English (or Anglo-American) tradition, in "the field company of John Clare, Robert Frost, Thomas Hardy, Edward Thomas and Edmund Blunden. . .Tennyson and Browning may have been greater influences." Such a comment overlooks one of the most distinctive qualities of Young's nature poetry, the metaphysical wit that has affinities with those seventeenth-century poets whose cast of mind was inevitably moulded by their religion. Fastened upon Scotland by the Solemn League and Covenant, that "old-time religion" has thrown long

shadows over succeeding ages. The parallels which have been drawn between Young's best poems and some of those on natural themes by the most distinguished of contemporary Scottish poets writing in English, Norman MacCaig,² rest upon more than literary discipleship. They result from three hundred years of Scottish history, from a way of thinking impressed upon generation after generation by the paradoxical speculations of theological metaphysics.

Perhaps Young was also essentially Scottish in being "a late developer," taking many long years to find his own voice, to discover what was in him to write and to learn how to write it well. Although his first collection, *Songs of the Night*, was issued as early as 1910, and he published some half-dozen slim volumes during the twenties, it was not until the appearance of *Winter Harvest* in 1933, when he was forty-eight, that he may be said to have acquired what has since become recognised as his own distinctive style, that synthesis of simplicity and subtlety, innocent-eye vision and sophisticated wit, which made his brief nature lyrics unique in their own period--he went on writing them until 1950--and has kept the best of them vividly alive into ours.

During his lifetime Young permitted only a handful of the pre-1933 poems to be reissued, and from their reappearance for the first time in *Complete Poems* it is not difficult to see why. Much of this early work is marred by a fulsome and overblown religiosity, and some of it is irritatingly arch. It took much time before he learned to see "eternity in a grain of sand," but those decades of literary apprenticeship also taught him how to strip his style of grandiloquence and match his vision of the natural order with the strictest control of form (which was still capable of the unexpected) and with an idiom which seemed to be at once inevitable and surprising. If, as Mr Clark suggests, "He saw nature in the larger setting of life itself, with that life always governed by the religious principles which he firmly believed," his style was at the opposite pole of expression from the Rev. Dr. Dryasdust, its puckish humour lighting the themes with novel illumination.

There can be few readers of Young's work who will disagree with Mr Clark's estimate of him as "a superb miniaturist. . . who could compress vivid experience into a small space and yet not lose a drop of its essential life-blood. . .for, by going into minute detail, he could produce a poem which was strongly suggestive and evocative," or with the view of him as having been, in his best work, "close to the earth, realistic, ironical, aware of the contradictions inherent in existence, as well as being a visionary." Yet there is something less than entirely satisfactory in the statement that "By introducing

fancies and conceits into his poems, he could shock his readers into a realisation of some fact or significant thought which, until that moment, had escaped notice and consideration." This gives the impression that the introduction of such fancies and conceits was a kind of conscious exercise in shock-treatment, rather than an inevitable expression of the witty irony with which Young had learned to contemplate the paradoxicality of the human condition as he saw that reflected in, or contradicted by, the natural order.

His best work constitutes the expression of major themes through the medium of minor forms--in itself, of course, yet another paradox. When he attempted to construct larger artefacts--as in the mystery play *Nicodemus* (1937) and the late extended religious speculations *Into Hades* (1952) and *A Traveller in Time* (1958), which he regarded as the crowning glory of his literary career--he tended to retrogress into the fulsomeness of his earliest work, where the religious expression had also been more overt than in the short poems of his middle period with their oblique approach. But it may be that there are insuperable obstacles in the way of any poet who attempts to give words to the ineffable in a language shaped by such an era of disbelief as our own.

The great virtue of this present volume is that, for the first time, it allows us to see Young's work as a whole, enabling us to appreciate the immense advance from the sentimental emotionalism of the early poems which the spare scintillations of the middle period represent. His achievement there is a continuing delight, even although the comparative narrowness of his range of form and subject-matter denies him major stature. Read in bulk, even the middle period poems give an impression of sameness. But the best of them are so profound in the subtlety of their apparent simplicity that it is impossible not to believe that they will continue to find readers in future years. In giving a voice (his own) to the creatures of earth and air and water, he has made their mysteries echo those of mankind in a fashion that transcends the merely fashionable.

It is unfortunate that the arrangement of the poems in the collection is back-to-front, with the earliest printed last, and with no indication in the contents list of their dates of composition or of the various volumes in which they first appeared. The bibliographical note at the end of the book is much too cursory, and too sparse in the vital matter of dates, to be truly helpful. It is to be hoped that those matters will be rectified in the further editions which interest in Young's work is bound to adduce.

Norman MacCaig (b. 1910), having learned from Young--in how to combine evocation of landscape with witty analysis of its

relationship to the observing eye and the brooding mind, and how to express that combination through cadences at once impeccable and unexpected--has shown an admirable capacity to extend his range of themes, forms, styles and attitudes throughout the two decades since the appearance of *Riding Lights* in 1955 gave witness that he had sloughed off the Apocalyptic mannerisms of his earlier work. His 1974 collection, *The World's Room* (London: Chatto and Windus and The Hogarth Press), is remarkable for its empathy with others--a girl in love in "Body Walking," a Highlander in liquor in "Hogmanay," Hebridean islanders in hospitality in "Return to Scalpay," a dead crofter in "Stag in a Neglected Hayfield." All of these fuse compassion with wit; and the wry humour of his picture of "that comfortable MacCaig" in "Private" is as sharply penetrating as the disenchanting evocation of the world's grief in "Progress." These poems sing with a melody as rare as it is spare.

Apparently-effortless technical command is also a feature of the work of Edwin Morgan (b. 1920), who began his career in 1952 with a translation of the Anglo-Saxon epic, *Beowulf*. This is the only modern English version of the poem which captures more than the merest mite of the resilient strength and muscular movement of the original, in lines which meet Morgan's own requirement that they be "able to contract to terseness and to expand to splendour." He went on to translate, with undiminished craftsmanship and imaginative sympathy, "the sophisticated glancing half-lights" of Montale's Italian poems (1959), and in *Sovpoems* (1961) he provided not only "direct and effective" versions of Brecht, Pasternak and other writers from the Soviet bloc done into English but effected the astonishing *tour de force* of transmuting Mayakovsky's Russian into Scots. When Maurice Lindsay, quoted above, remarks on "the extent and penetration of (Morgan's) versatility,"³ he is writing with studied moderation. Collected in 1972 as *Wi the Hail Voice*, the Scots versions of Mayakovsky were praised here as "the finest translations of Mayakovsky's powerfully provocative works into any of the languages currently written in Britain."⁴

In Morgan's volume of selected translations, *Rites of Passage* (Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1976), all of the foreign poets mentioned above appear, together with many others--from Russian: Voznesensky, Yevtoshenko, Vinokurov, Pankratov, Rozhdestvensky and Tsvetayeva; from Spanish: Lorca, Cernuda and De Campos; from German: Holderlin, Von Platen, Enzenberger and Gomringer; from Italian: Quasimodo, Leopardi, Braga and Balestrini; from French: Guillevic, Prevert and Michaux; from Anglo-Saxon: the unknown authors of the great elegies "The Seafarer" and "The Wanderer"; and from English into

Scots: Shakespeare. This is a book of such varied insights and such dazzling technical proficiency in so many different modes that only a polymath of Morgan's own accomplishment is properly qualified to discuss it.

Translation features again, although more modestly, in the latest collection by George Mackay Brown (b. 1921), *Winterfold* (London: Chatto and Windus and The Hogarth Press, 1976). When Mackay Brown published his two previous volumes, *Fishermen with Ploughs* and *Poems New and Selected*, in 1971, the present reviewer expressed the opinion that "many of the poems seem to emanate from a kind of medieval religious dream, beautiful and delicate, but remote from any actuality experienced by the reader, while others express a Viking paganism equally distant from contemporary feeling."⁵ In an introductory note to *Winterfold*, the author attempts a defence from such criticism, arguing that "It should not be obligatory for poets to celebrate, as best they can, only *the greyness of contemporary life* (italics mine). Some of the poems in this book are swatches cut from here and there in the one weave of time." It is saddening to see such a fine poet discovering no more than "greyness" in his own century, but that attitude provides an explanation (however unfortunate) of Mackay Brown's determined flight to the past--or to what he likes to imagine the past to have been--in his most recent work. In two sequences, "Winterfold" and "Stations of the Cross," concerned respectively with the Nativity and the Crucifixion, he writes variations on New Testament themes, but these suffer from the inevitable comparison with their source. As the poet Lorn M. Macintyre has commented, "I do not find these poems satisfactory. . . . In Mackay Brown's haste to share the experience, echoes of Dylan Thomas' diamond and hour-glass series 'Vision and Prayer' are heard. It is a dangerous form of poetics, with the music of language urging on the 'free flow' creative consciousness, and with the poet hoping that his unprocessed imagery will somehow hang together, letting the epiphany shine through."⁶ For Macintyre, the "unprocessed imagery" (in which he sees reflections of Eliot, Kafka, Muir and Hopkins as well as Thomas) evidently has failed in its attempt to evoke epiphany, and the lush purple of the derivative style of these poems is equally unconvincing to the present writer.

As befits their theme, the verses expressing Viking brutality are much more direct; but the opposition between pagan violence and Christian peace which Mackay Brown presents so frequently has long since begun to appear too simplistic in its contrivance to the reader who is unable to share this poet's religious views.⁷ The few poems in the book on themes which are at once present and perennial--"Sea Widow," "The Desertion of the Women and the Seals," "Unpopular Fisherman," "Sea Vil-

lage"--are all the more appealing in their lyrical economy of style and their sympathetic penetration of approach for their freedom from a kind of mysticism which has come to seem too apparently affected by sectarian preconceptions. The volume also contains a modern English version of the great Anglo-Saxon elegy, "Deor," which the present reviewer--having himself attempted a translation into Scots⁸--finds remarkable for its incantatory rhythms. This is a far cry from the original, yet the cry is piercingly bitter-sweet.

Another islander, Iain Crichton Smith (b. 1928), has written perceptively on the relationship between Andrew Young and Norman MacCaig--from both of whom he has learned, as his many fine poems on the Highland scene testify. A number of these feature among the "other poems" in *Orpheus and Other Poems* (Preston: Akros Publications, 1974), demonstrating that this author's gift for evoking the glittering beauty ("Kilnave Churchyard, Islay"), the dark melancholy ("The Procession") and the religious repression ("The Voice") of his native environment is as flawlessly precise as ever. The title poem, however, fails to find a homogenous style for its attempt to express the relationship between life and death in actuality and in art, and so it swithers uneasily between stateliness and slang. Some of the other pieces, on more domestic themes, are too deliberately throw-away in their technique to make as much impact as the writer seems to have intended. Yet even the least successful contain felicities. The same is true of the shorter poems in *The Notebooks of Robinson Crusoe* (London: Gollancz, 1975), although the attempt to interweave the styles of Defoe and Joyce in the title-sequence is curious rather than compelling.

Robin Fulton (b. 1937) is an admirer of Crichton Smith,⁹ and in some of the verse which he produced in the late sixties he showed distinct (and distinctive) signs of mastering the art of landscape-evocation--although even then his work lacked the human sympathy of the elder poet, its marked self-concern, allied to a dry intellectualism, limiting its relevance and emotional impetus. In *Tree-Lines* (New York: New Rivers Press, 1974) that self-concern has become compulsive while the dryness has withered into sterility. The depression of spirit to which the book testifies is all too depressingly reflected in the verbal dullness of the verse. Neither is there much verbal sparkle, or adroitness, in *Love or Nothing* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974) by Douglas Dunn (b. 1942), where the autobiographical verses have nothing but the irregular lengths of their lines to distinguish them from prose. Most of the non-autobiographical pieces appear to be so pointless as to defy discussion. But perhaps this is intended to be their point?

Point is equally to seek in the two narrative poems, grotesquely brutal in their surrealism, which occupy most of *The Happy Crow* (Loanhead: M. Macdonald, 1974) by David Black (b. 1941). In "Melusine," which has a medieval setting, the hero marries a lady who takes tea and turns into a fish, the unlikelihood of this latter event being increased by the utter impossibility (given the historical period) of the former. In "Peter Macrae Attempts the Active Life," the protagonist deliberately cripples himself, seduces and impregnates his sister, and incinerates his parents, all for the good of a cause which remains as incomprehensible at the work's conclusion as at its commencement. While Black's verse is sufficiently explicit to leave little to the imagination, verse-tales where the techniques of the theatre of the absurd and the theatre of cruelty are driven over the precipice that plunges abruptly into the ludicrous put a strain upon the willing suspension of disbelief which others besides the present writer may find too demanding. However, the book's title-poem is an economically effective religious parable (in the modish Eastern sage manner) on the perils of pleasure, and some of the more naturalistic poems, on St Andrews, are simple, sensuous, and not unpassionate.

That "late developer" Aladair Maclean (b. 1926), has also been much concerned with cruelty, and in his second collection, *Waking the Dead* (London: Gollancz, 1976), he has returned to the themes of his sixties poems, distrust, despair and death. But where the earlier examples had freshness of imagery and energy of impact, the later are mainly repetitive and limp. (He has even spoiled a chilling early poem, "Question and Answer," by rewriting and extending it.) An exception is "Screams of a Summer Evening," a surrealist ballad which is at once elegant and appalling. Among all these dirges, some attempts at comedy strike various jarring notes, often borrowed from Amis and Auden. His one celebratory poem, "Fiona with a Field-mouse," has a light lyrical charm, and a fine extended work, "Out of Africa," expresses an acceptance of experience absent elsewhere.

Distrust is again a major theme with James Aitchison (b. 1938), but too many of the poems in strict form included in *Spheres* (London: Chatto and Windus and The Hogarth Press, 1975) are too reminiscent of MacCaig, in cadence, rhythm, phrasing, and even in attitude, to rank as individual achievements. There are others, however, which bear witness to a truly personal talent--the ironical love-poem, "Gates," the brutally dramatic "Rehearsal," the savage repudiation of the consolations of legend in "That Myth Again" (which is, incidentally, a satirical riposte to Edwin Muir's "Labyrinth"), the lyrical evocation of "Landscape with Lapwings," the shrugging

self-criticism of "Keep Talking, Darling." Sometimes Aitchison's habitual pessimism appears too mannered--for the reader who is some years older than the author there must be an element of the risible in a poet who writes about "the gloom/of another easter and my thirty-fourth year"--and there are more than a few occasions, particularly when he writes in free verse, that his distrust of the over-confident statement results in a flatness of style lamentably lacking in sensuous force. When his subject-matter itself possesses high emotional tension, however, as in the agonised elegy, "The Other Face," the unadorned attack of the verse is striking.

Another poet who distrusts the too-fine phrase, Roderick Watson (b. 1943), has assembled his first fullscale collection, *True History on the Walls* (Loanhead: M. Macdonald, 1976) by adding more recent verse to the work already published in his pamphlet *Poems* (1970) and in the three-poet anthology *Trio* (1971). Discussing the first of these, the present reviewer commented on "a singular angularity of vision, a kind of macabre grace encompassing both horror and beauty"¹⁰ and Watson's "Springsong" still seems remarkable for its expression of those qualities, while "The New Newgate Calendar," first collected in *Trio*, has stood the test of time as "a savage ironical study of crime and punishment, murder and execution, in the nineteenth-century Australian bush, which remains grimly relevant to the reality of human violence, and man's inhumanity to man, to-day and everywhere."¹¹ Appropriately enough for a native of Aberdeen--a city which one of its modern makers has described, with conscious ambiguity, as "the hert o stane"¹²--Watson is much concerned with stony images, his "Three Stones" providing a well-fitted triptych of death, industry and art. In "Granite City Eclogue" ("Shines like frost quartzhard is worked with difficulty") he sketches incisively the hard handsomeness of his hometown and the endurance of its folk, and his concern with family here recurs with equally ironical effect in the repudiation-yet-acceptance of ancestor worship in "Foveran Sands." But while Watson, at his best, writes with admirable economy of means, there are times when his determined endeavour to avoid the slightest suspicion of rhetoric results in an unevocative barrenness of style. On the other hand, the attractiveness of his most winning poems is often due to their refusal to claim to express more than the bare minimum of reality, and their corresponding persuasiveness in coaxing the reader into accepting that reality as experienced fact.

A first "slim volume" by Robin Monro (b. 1946), *Shetland, like the World* (Kincardineshire: Triangle Press, 1974), too often reminds the reader of the Orkney poems of Mackay Brown, but the clean simplicity of the style here promises much.

Munro is more individual when outside than when inside the Shetland scene, and there is incisive irony in "The Clyde Coast" ("watching/my childhood/ become a development") while "David" expresses a novel disenchanting view of the Goliath myth. In his second collection, *The Land of the Mind* (London: Dent, 1975), he attempted to widen his range to encompass political themes, but succeeded only in descending from the simple to the banal. Again, a maritime sequence, "The Silver Ship," reads less like an imitation of Mackay Brown than an unconscious parody. When he writes with his eye on the object, as in "Gannet," he achieves both firmness and discernment, but unfortunately--as the title of this volume indicates--he shows an increasing tendency to substitute for observation a kind of abstract comment both clumsy and unconvincing.

Another first collection comes from the young composer, John Pursler (b. 1942). *The Counting Stick* (Isle of Sky: Aquila Publishing Company Ltd, 1976) consists of occasional poems on rural life in the related but contrasting scenes of highland Scotland and Italy. Wittily aware as most of these verses are, most have not yet succeeded in matching content and form. The major exception is the unhappily-entitled "Sore Udder in Summer," which marries sense and sound in a recreation of the process of milking which is also a keenly critical analysis of the relationship between animal and man.

Other occasional pieces, this time in Scots, constitute *Poems and Translations* (Preston: Akros Publications, 1975) by J. K. Annand (b. 1907), a slender collection which nevertheless covers a time-span of almost fifty years--the earliest items date from the author's student days in 1927, the latest from as recently as 1973. As the fly-leaf indicates, the present reviewer has had occasion in the past to praise Annand for his ability to "combine complete simplicity of style with considerable passion," but although the original poems in this new collection are as direct as always, most are lacking in rhythmical urgency and imagistic sparkle. Standing out from the others are "Mountain Pule," a highly sensuous expression of intellectual depth, and "Sic Transit Gloria Mundi," a mock-elegy which is at once racy, elegant, off-hand, funny and pathetic. The translations, from German, medieval Latin, and French, range in theme from the tragic through the celebratory to the ceremonial, and in style from the stark through the robust to the aureate. All deserve the highest praise that can be accorded to any translation, the statement that they possess the impact of true poems.

Impact is also a notable quality of *Gowdspink in Reekie* (Loanhead: M. Macdonald, 1974) by Sydney Goodsir Smith (1915-1975), which was published only a few weeks before the maker's much-lamented death on 15th January of the latter year. This

extended poem in Scots, where the modern poet makes a tour of Edinburgh's taverns with the ghost of Oliver Goldsmith--brothers *in the spirit*, as it were--is a characteristically bravura creation, at once hilarious and melancholy, roisteringly realistic and wryly romantical, displaying Goodsir Smith's bewilderingly swift transitions between the aureate style and the demotic and his mastery of both. No poet in contemporary Scotland has had fewer illusions about himself, and none has shown more genial courage in "exposing himself to the enemy" (the public) in all the human weaknesses which were inextricably interwoven with the strength of his passion. His loss is irreparable.

This last work to be published in his lifetime, however, shows him at his naughtiest in more senses than one. For while the poem is now dated from "Embroun, 1974," it first appeared in print as long ago as Autumn 1955, in the fifth issue of *Saltire Review*, then edited by the present writer. At that time it was dated from "Embroun, 1954" and entitled "Gowdsmith in Reekie." Apart from some simplification of spelling, and the addition of a few lines, the two versions are virtually identical. No doubt future bibliographers will have a series of field-days with this fruitful source of confusion, which is worse confounded by another of Goodsir Smith's extended poems, *The Vision of the Prodigal Son*, a work commissioned for broadcasting on Burns Night 1959 and published by M. Macdonald (then of Edinburgh) in 1960; for Section IV of *Gowdspink* (or, more properly, "Gowdsmith") is the basis, often repeated word for word, of Section III of *The Vision*. Readers unaware of *Gowdspink's* (or "Gowdsmith's" first publication in 1955 are bound to fall into the error of thinking that it is the *Gowdsmith* section that is self-plagiarism--whereas the truth is the exact opposite. Perhaps it is not uncharacteristic of Goodsir Smith's drollery that he should have left scholars with this tangle to try to unravel. The situation certainly adds piquancy to his inscription on the presentation copy he was good enough to send me, "To Alex Scott--for auld lang syne and long memories."

Goodsir Smith's death occurred while his *Collected Poems* (London: John Calder, 1975) was still in the press, and thereafter his fellow-makar Tom Scott (b. 1918) "was asked. . .to proof-read the galleys and provide a few notes."¹³ The result is a book riddled with so many misprints that, in effect, we are left without definitive and/or authoritative texts of Goodsir Smith's poems, for it is now impossible to be reasonably sure that any of those texts represent the author's own final intention. The arrangement of his individual volumes, too, is haphazard in the extreme, bearing no ascertainable relationship either to the chronology of their

composition or to their original publication, while some poems have been transferred elsewhere from the collections in which they first appeared, and *Godspink in Reekie* is again misdated 1974. Here is a *Collected Poems*, then, which fails to provide the reader with a meaningful insight into the writer's development.

Although Goodsir Smith was a Scot on his mother's side, he was a New Zealander by birth, while his education was English, and it was only when he settled in Edinburgh after leaving Oxford that, in his middle twenties, he became a convert to Scottish life and letters--and, more particularly, to Scottish nationalism and the so-called Scottish Renaissance movement inaugurated some fifteen years earlier by Hugh MacDiarmid with his remarkable poems in synthetic Scots (i.e. a Scots literary medium which was a synthesis of elements from various regional dialects and from literary and lexicographical sources). Unlike MacDiarmid, however, Goodsir Smith was not a native Scots speaker, and his first attempts to write in that medium were (understandably) unfortunate. Only fourteen of the forty poems in his first collection, *Skail Wind* (1941), reappear in the *Collected Poems*, but they are fourteen too many, of interest only as showing that a bad start need not be crippling to a poet's future progress. Some of these verses, while ostensibly in Scots, are still largely English in idiom and vocabulary, although occasional Scotticisms are scattered here and there like groats in a plum pudding; and others are in a Scots so densely archaic as to be well-nigh--or entirely--incomprehensible.

The title-poem of his second collection, *The Wanderer* (1943), consisted of inflated political rhetoric, hysterically over-written, and Goodsir Smith has been wise to omit all but two of its twelve sections from the *Collected Poems*. Yet this pamphlet also contained his first fully-achieved poem, the tender love-lyric, "Whan the Hert is Laich," where the Scots is beautifully controlled, expressing despair with poignant simplicity. In the *Collected Poems*, however, this is printed as the second item in *The Deevil's Waltz* (1946), where the best poems use archaisms sparingly and the verse is eloquent without being over-wordy. In only five years, the makar has already climbed high. The book's themes are love, war, and the struggle for liberty, themes of universal relevance. In expressing them, Goodsir Smith's imagery, though seldom startlingly novel, is often apt, while the authenticity of the passion which his verse conveys, and the subtle yet driving rhythms through which that passion is transmitted, make the poems vibrate with life.

Such vibration thrills through his masterpiece, *Under the Eildon Tree* (1948: revised edition 1954), which is the

greatest extended poem of passion in the whole Scots tradition. Consisting of twenty-four related elegies on the pursuit of an obsessive love, in effect the work is one poem, the study of an individual who has devoted himself, body and soul, to that pursuit, and is agonisingly aware of both the exaltation and the degradation that his course involves. The view that such a work is merely a late echo of the celebration of illicit love which pullulated in the English poetry of the nineties is dispelled both by the modernity of *The Eildon Tree* and by its sense of tradition. On the one hand, the poem presents the pursuit of passion in terms of contemporary society, against a background of war and a confusion of conflicting ideologies--and any such background is entirely lacking from nineties verse, which is also devoid of Goodsir Smith's uproarious sense of the ridiculous. That appreciation is often exercised at his own expense, as in his self-portrait as the Oblomovian lazy-lout, "Sydney Slugabed Godless Smith" in Elegy V, or as the Villonesque drunk involved with the publicans and sexual sinners of Leith Street in the incomparably bawdy Elegy XIII.

As well as writing autobiographically, however, he has also given greater depth and richness to his theme by presenting it in terms of those love-stories of the past which have gathered fine accretions of legendary feeling around them--Orpheus and Eurydice, Burns and Mary Campbell, Tristram and Iseult, Aeneas and Dido, Antony and Cleopatra. In Norman MacCaig's words, this poem "can be coarse, violent, lyrically tender, comic, profoundly moving, and pedantic all in a couple of pages . . . Smith's feeling for the rhythmical force that runs straight through a poem, and, more important, for the rhythmic balance of its parts, gives each paragraph, each poem and the total work its complete and formal unity."¹⁴

The lyrics in Goodsir Smith's next volume, *So Late into the Night* (1952), belong to the same period as *The Eildon Tree*, 1944-8--although there is no indication of this in the *Collected Poems*--and are concerned with the same theme. Considered as a collection, the lyrics are somewhat more uneven than the twenty-four elegies, but the best of them have even greater concentration of emotional power, and their effect is to reveal passion breaking like a lightning-flash through clouds of polite pretence. The makar's swift and subtle rhythms, and his cunningly-contrived stanza forms, with their abrupt transitions and their darting and pausing, convey the impression of exceptional emotional energy--and exceptional emotional honesty too.

For the present writer, those two related volumes, composed in Goodsir Smith's early thirties, represent the peak of his achievement. The love-lyrics in the fifties pamphlets, fine

as some are, add little to those published earlier, and such poems on the low life of Edinburgh as *Gowdspink in Reekie*, "To Li-Po," and *Kynd Kittock's Land*, while both moving and amusing, essentially remain variations on the theme of *The Eildon Tree's* thirteenth elegy. In some of the poems in *Figs and Thistles* (1959), the makar attempted to widen his range to encompass political attitudes, but the turgidity of "Declamation," the derivative histrionics of "Vox Humana," and the clumsy flatness of "Three Texts on Perpetual Opposition," where he was genuflecting towards the contemporary cult of "commitment," indicate a lack of artistic conviction through their dull rhythms and conventional images. Likewise, the political passages of *The Vision of the Prodigal Son* were the least imaginative.

Yet some of the individual poems written after 1948 break new ground in an impressive way. In *Figs and Thistles*, "Credo" combines resignation and triumph in striking quatrains; "A Bairn Seik" is the most heart-rending, and the most technically adventurous, of all his poems of political disenchantment; "The Twelve," a version of Blok's great Russian poem on the Revolution, is much closer to popular Scots speech than is usual with Goodsir Smith, and its dramatic evocation of the mixed motives and moods of the ordinary folk whose impulse shattered the power of the Czar is itself shatteringly powerful; and in "The Grace of God and the Meth-Drinker" his horrified sympathy is extended to the outcast whom he sees as himself in other circumstances. Again, in *Fifteen Poems and a Play* (1969), he was able to transcend his political disillusion far enough to write "Three" (on Lenin's dictum, "Three men make a revolution"), a poem which is both pro- and anti-political, putting a whole revolutionary tradition to the question by means of a sequence of queries which are at once loaded, deadly and direct.

During his last decade, he wrote a number of other poems on novel themes, but these were uncollected during his lifetime and unfortunately they have not been given the place they deserve in the *Collected Poems*--although some have already made their way into the anthologies. Instead, Tom Scott has seen fit to include four poems from *The Deevil's Waltz* and two from *So Late into the Night* which, he tells us, "were deleted by the author but, in view of his untimely death, have been added for the sake of completeness." Presumably Goodsir Smith deleted them because, in his view, they had not stood the test of time over the past thirty years. If so, he was right, and it is improper on Tom Scott's part to have taken the post-humous opportunity to impose his own different opinion upon a makar who is no longer able to maintain his own choice.

Tom Scott's phrase, "for the sake of completeness," is

echoed on the back page of the book's cover, which claims that it "contain(s) everything that the author wished to preserve." There is not a hint of this in Goodsir Smith's own foreword, and in view of the fact that the collected volume contains nothing from the last decade of his life--the *Fifteen Poems* were written earlier--one must beg leave to doubt it. Had Goodsir Smith been spared, there is every reason to believe that such fine extended poems as the "Millennial Ode to Hugh MacDiarmid" and "The Riggins o Chelsea," and other shorter pieces composed after 1965, would have appeared in a further collection following the *Collected Poems*.

Goodsir Smith was our greatest modern Scots poet of love, liquor and political disenchantment, and fine poems on those themes are to be found in all his volumes except the very earliest. But the present collection, marred by innumerable misprints and an arrangement (or disarrangement) of its contents which is arbitrary in the extreme, makes an unsatisfactory memorial. The whole huge task will require to be undertaken again, if Goodsir Smith's life's work is to be given to the public in a form permitting an accurate assessment of the prodigious achievement of a makar who, although Scots was not his native tongue, nevertheless made himself a master of his own Scots literary medium and wrote in that most idiosyncratic of languages the poems which have given him a place alongside MacDiarmid, Burns and Dunbar.

Tom Scott's own 1975 collection, *Brand the Builder* (Epping, Essex: The Ember Press), a sequence on St Andrews and selected inhabitants thereof, is in the nature of a "spin-off" from the well-known title poem, which was first published in *Scottish Poetry 1* in 1966 and has since been frequently anthologised. In a recent article on Tom Scott, Thomas Crawford has stated that this poem "was actually written at Knightsbridge as early as 1951 and shown to Edwin Muir at Newbattle Abbey in 1953,"¹⁵ but he offers no documentary evidence to confirm this, and Muir, who died in 1959, can no longer either substantiate or deny it. Comparison of "Brand the Builder" with poems in Scots by Tom Scott which were in fact published in the early fifties reveals such a marked contrast between its expertise and their awkwardness that one cannot but doubt the claim for "Brand's" early composition, which Mr Crawford would appear to qualify later in the same article, when he writes that "the title poem was *begun* as early as 1951"¹⁶ (italics mine). An unpublished first draft is a very different matter from a fully-achieved poem such as the 1966 version of "Brand the Builder" most assuredly is.

The point is of no little importance, for Mr. Crawford uses it--mistakenly, in the present writer's view--to argue that a 1951 version of "Brand" shows that Tom Scott's "command of the

vernacular is no late development but something the poet has absorbed naturally from the recollections of early years."¹⁷ On the contrary, almost all of this poet's early published poems in Scots display a lack of command remarkable in someone who can claim to be a native speaker of the tongue, his first full-scale collection, *The Ship and Ither Poems* (1963), being marked--and marred--by Scots which is "sometimes plodding, sometimes lame, and sometimes immovably clogged, its images frequently inappropriate, its anger and irony often uncontrolled, its attempts at sublimity sometimes drowned by an unconscious inclination towards the art of sinking."¹⁸ It is to the poet's credit that, in some of his work of the later sixties and the seventies, he has managed to master those faults, but it would be misleading to overlook either their existence in the past or their frequent persistence into the present, as exemplified by many of the items in the current volume. Tom Scott's development as a poet in Scots has been not only late but also extremely erratic.

Brand the Builder begins with "Johnny Brand's Prologue," setting the St Andrews scene, as in Mr Crawford's view it presents "a town's spirit rendered as notably as Sydney Goodsir Smith did in [?] Edinburgh's in *Kynd Kittock's Land* [1964] or as Alexander Scott treated Aberdeen in *Heart of Stone* [1966]."¹⁹ If that were an accurate description, *Kynd Kittock's Land* and *Heart of Stone* would consist of pedestrian doggerel, for this prologue provides nothing more.

The Toun Hall carved abuin its porch
Is hard by, fit for dances, boxin,
Concerts, plays and the darg o cooncillors
Efter the day's caain in o siller
In their bits o shops and ither businesses,
And no far hyne the Secondary Schuil
Madras College, set in its ain park
Ahent the ruins o a bleck friars' chapel.

Such writing, as the Scots poet Alastair Mackie has remarked, "never rises above competence and too often relapses into an unrelieved plod . . . Tom Scott's linguistic range is not a fowth [richness] of language. His moral concern, his bent for invective, don't release an equivalent verbal pungency in Scots. Not infrequently the former is simplistic and the latter simply a deave [repetitive monotony]."²⁰ Perhaps Mr Crawford, who shares with Tom Scott a committed left-wing stance, would deny that the poet's moral concern is simplistic; but who except a fellow-enthusiast could refuse to hear the "deave" in the characteristic passage quoted above?

Only two of the ten contributions to *Brand the Builder* are

without major blemish. The title poem, on the mason himself, has long been recognised as its author's most effective creation, a synthesis of satire and sympathy at once subtle and strong, which pulses with organised energy and pictorial power. In "Johnny Brand" the protagonist appears to be a likeness of the poet himself. This portrait of Brand the son is a "coarser" work than the poem on the father, for it is drawn from the point of view of "bodies" like those in Douglas Brown's novel *The House with the Green Shutters*, mean gossips who see nothing but the worst in any subject of their scandal-mongering, but the satirical edge of the verse has polish as well as point. At the opposite extreme of effectiveness from these is "Brand Soliloquises," which--as Mackie has commented-- is "ostensibly the heart"²¹ of the whole work, but presents an overlong and arid sequence of prosaic patter where the character is unrecognisable and the style undistinguished. Even the concluding poem, "The Daeth o Brand," which attempts lyricism, falls over its own feet.

The heidstanes in this plot o grund
 Nae mair nou will ken his hand
 Carve the dictates o his brain:
 But nae tears coorse frae the hert o stane.

Incredibly, Mr Crawford calls this unmetrical mish-mash of a poem (with its concluding phrase "lifted" from the work of another contemporary makar) "essentially Burnsian"!²² It resembles Burns about as closely as a cart-horse resembles a Derby winner.

Another longish work in Scots *Abbey Craig tae Stirlin Castle* (Larkhall, Strathclyde: Fingerpost Publication, 1974) by T. S. Law (b. 1910), rises above prosaic doggerel only as far as pastiche of the rhythms of *Hiawatha*. Law is seen to better advantage in some of the contributions to his two sonnet-sequences. *Aftentymes a Tinkler* and *Whyles a Targe* (Larkhall, Strathclyde: Fingerpost Publications, both 1975), although even here there are all too many occasions when "the strict form seems to have contorted the syntax, with ambiguous or obscure results. A sticky movement, a grammatical awkwardness, an oddly rebarbative presentation . . . erect unnecessary barriers."²³ He emerges into the lucid most effectively when expressing domestic themes, as in "The Rocket" and "The Bairns," although at least one of the political sonnets, "The Hero," has clarity as well as passion.

Much more accomplished, Alastair Mackie (b. 1925), in his poignant sequence of eighteen Scots poems on the Highland scene, *At the Heich Kirk-Yaird* (Preston: Akros Publications, 1974), shows admirable mastery of free-verse forms as well as

of regular stanzas. These studies of physical and spiritual desolation are as overwhelming in their melancholy as the rain-shrouded moors and mountains which they evoke with such powerful effect through the most economical means.

Yet another landscape sequence in Scots, this time from industrial Lanarkshire, "A Journey Past" by Duncan Glen (b. 1933), originally published as a pamphlet in 1972, reappears in his collection *A Cled Score* (Preston: Akros Publications, 1974). In this case, the style is too economical altogether, too unfigurative to spark off an adequate response from the reader--or, at least, from this particular reader--who is unfamiliar with the scene that the author is attempting to portray. The book also contains some difficult but not wholly unrewarding poems on philosophical and scientific themes.

The metaphysical musings in Glen's next publication, the extended poem *Mr and Mrs J. L. Stoddard at Home* (Preston: Akros Publications, 1975), are too abstract in expression, and too awkward in movement, to make much poetical impact, and his tributes to other poets, although gratifying to those concerned--among whom the present writer is flattered to be one--may seem rather less than compelling to other readers. However, the sequence beginning "The makar stauns alane" (published separately, under the title of "The River," in the anthology *Scottish Poetry 8*) successfully blends the sensuous with the imaginative in compelling rhythms. Where this is a poem of intellectual and emotional autobiography, the reminiscences in *Buits and Wellies* (Preston: Akros Publications, 1976) are much more down-to-earth, the best of them displaying "a quirky humour and an eye for telling domestic detail"²⁴ which relieve the deliberate unadornment of the style. In *Spoiled for Choice* (Preston: Akros Publications, 1976), Glen plays variations on themes from thirty American poets from Emerson to Snyder. All of those variations are in the "Glesca" idiom, none is less than ingenious, and some are sharp in their "aff-takkan" wit, but read in bulk they create the impression that the employment of the reductive idiom in order to reduce the work of other writers to something not far (if at all) short of absurdity scarcely justifies such extended treatment.

When the four publications discussed above were closely pursued by *Follow! Follow! Follow! and Other Poems* (Preston: Akros Publications, 1976), your reviewer had the feeling that perhaps it was not entirely advantageous to Duncan Glen to be his own publisher, with opportunities to rush his every poetical effort into print denied to the rest of us, who enjoy the antithetical advantage of time in which to reconsider, to rewrite, or even (on occasion) to suppress. Although not without some felicitous passages, the title poem of *Follow! Fol-*

low! Follow!, which "is no less than an attempt to bring the football terraces to metaphysics and to use the language and the chants of the supporters to explore the nature of being,"²⁵ is more remarkable for the eccentricity of its ambition than for the altitude of its achievement. As Roderick Watson comments, the work "moves with lead boots and the fusion of contraries becomes merely grotesque."²⁶ Some of the "other poems," too, appear to be closer to misspelt English prose than to verse in any viable form of Scots. Yet this collection, although so largely misconceived, contains one of the most hilarious Scots poems of the decade, "The Hert o Scotland," a witty self-analysis which is also a devastating dissection of the lunatic fringe of Scottish chauvinism. What the critic Douglas Gifford has called "Glen's discovery of an oblique, self-deprecating and genuinely funny idiom"²⁷ has subsequently enabled him to produce the most successful of all his verse-sequences, "Traivellin Man," which received wide periodical and anthology publication during 1976. Glen may have produced and printed much too much in the past ten years, but his best work, however slender a proportion of the huge whole, nevertheless represents a real--and idiosyncratic--achievement.

The youngest of the younger generation of MacDiarmid's disciples, Donald Campbell (b. 1940), has produced as his third collection a pamphlet of only fourteen poems, *Murals* (Edinburgh: Lothlorien, 1975), which still ranges widely in content, mood and style. An ironical beast-fable, "Jist Shows Ye!," on the theme of the early bird and the worm, combines comedy and pathos in its quaint reversal of the customary moral; the satirical dramatic monologue, "Hauf-roads up Schiehallion," demonstrates an impeccable ear for the nuances of contemporary Scots speech as well as insight into the tragicomic complexities of what is euphemistically described as "young love;" "Betrayal in Morninsaide" makes effective--and unusual--use of the reductive idiom in order to reduce the stature of the writer himself; and "In the Tenement of my Mind" dares to employ the actualities of tenement life in singing a lament for "the long littleness of life." Other verses display a kind of brash rhetoric lacking the sensitivity to evoke a poetic response, but when Campbell eschews exclamation and allows his subjects to speak for themselves he achieves a striking interplay between the imaginative and the real.

Also numbered among the MacDiarmid makars, the present writer (b. 1920) is the author of *Selected Poems 1943-1974* (Preston: Akros Publications, 1975). Since this is being reviewed elsewhere in *SSL* by Norman MacCaig, no commentary is required here.

All of the Scots poets discussed above write, to a greater

or lesser extent, in so-called "synthetic" Scots, Flora Garry (b. 1900) belongs to a different tradition, that of Charles Murray (1864-1941), writing about the folk and the landscape of the North-East in the local Buchan dialect. As with Murray's *Homewith*, much of the work in her *Bennygoak and Other Poems* (Preston: Akros Publications, 1974) is competent versified prose rather than compelling poetry, and some of it, like his, is marred by the sentimentality of the exile; but she has a sharper eye than Murray for the "coarser" aspects of country life, and a deeper imaginative sympathy. In "Village Magdalen" and "Snow and Sea" she shows that it is still perfectly possible to create, in a language close to the spoken tongue of a single area, a poetry which is at once emotionally profound and intellectually provocative, and in "Figures Receding" she has written an elegy for a dying way of life where regret is finely controlled. While her subject-matter, and the language in which it is expressed, are most often local, some of her themes are universal, and through that combination she transcends, at times, the usual "kailyard" level of most regionally-rural verse. So great is her popularity in her native North-East that the small press of her original publisher, Duncan Glen, has been unable to cope with the demand for her little book, the third edition of which has been issued by Rainbow Books, Aberdeen.

Some characteristic poems by Duncan Glen himself are included in an anthology edited by the Scots makar Robert Garioch (b. 1909), *Made in Scotland* (Cheadle, Cheshire: Carcanet Press, 1974), a volume which is described on its cover (inaccurately) as "an anthology of fourteen Scottish poets." Of those fourteen, four are English--although sometime residents north of the Border--and hence lie outside the limits of this article. About those four, and the other ten, Garioch informs us in his introduction that "their work has not been published separately or in anthology, by a major publisher, loosely defined." One wonders just how loose a definition can be, since Tom Buchan (b. 1931) has published a fine collection from London, *Dolphins in Cochin* (1969), while Robin Fulton's translations into English of Tomas Tranströmer's poems in Swedish have appeared in Penguin Books (1974). Of the rest, Roderick Watson shared a three-poet anthology published in New York (1971), while Glen and Charles Senior (b. 1918) were anthologized--alongside Buchan and Fulton, among others--by Norman MacCaig and the present writer in *Contemporary Scottish Verse 1959-1969* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1970).

Of Garioch's other Scottish contributors, James Rankin (b. 1939) is represented here by inferior work--concise English prose printed as verse; Forbes Macgregor (b. 1904), whose medium is Scots, shows little evidence of individual talent;

Billy Kay (b. 1951), a beginner in Scots, shows even less; and copyright difficulties appear to have prevented any choice from the best collections by Donald Campbell and Liz Lochhead (b. 1948), both of which were published in Edinburgh by Reprgraphia in 1972. As a picture of contemporary Scottish poetry, *Made in Scotland* is odd as well as idiosyncratic.

There is comparable idiosyncrasy, if less downright oddity, in the third edition of Maurice Lindsay's well-known anthology, *Modern Scottish Poetry* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Ltd., 1976), which appears with the sub-title *An Anthology of the Scottish Renaissance 1925-1975*. This is in line with the sub-title of the first edition of 1946, *An Anthology of the Scottish Renaissance 1920-1945*, and that of the second (1966), simply *An Anthology of the Scottish Renaissance*. But those descriptions were never strictly accurate, and the present one is even less so than its predecessors. It does not seem that Lindsay ever intended the phrase "an anthology of the Scottish Renaissance" to be interpreted as meaning "a selection of verse by poets associated with a Scottish Renaissance Movement that is concerned to revitalise Scottish traditions in literature," for even his first edition featured poets like Andrew Young, Edwin Muir and W. S. Graham whose concerns lay elsewhere and even some--like Sir Alexander Gray, G. S. Fraser and Ruthven Todd--who had expressed active hostility towards the "Renaissance" movement's aims. In bringing the second edition of 1966 up to date, Lindsay proceeded further along the same course, for more than half of the fourteen new contributors stand (or fall) outside the "Renaissance," while some have even achieved notoriety by treating it with ridicule. It seems evident, then, that by "the Scottish Renaissance" Lindsay does not mean "the Renaissance Movement" as such, but rather the general improvement in the quality of Scottish poetry which may be seen as having begun after the First World War, and hence any poet whom he regards as having contributed to that improvement is eligible for inclusion in his anthology, whatever his or her approach to the art of verse may be.

That said, however, it still has to be added that the description of the new edition as having been selected from work of the years 1925-1975 is misleading, the first four poets in its pages having published the great bulk of their verse before the period began. Their presence here is, of course, a hang-over from the first edition, which started in 1920, but the eleven pages now devoted to their work makes chronological nonsense of the new sub-title. In some ways, too, that sub-title is contradicted by Lindsay's introduction, which makes the personal nature of his choice of poems crystal-clear--"I have relied upon Dryden's view: 'The chief, perhaps the only aim of poetry, is to delight.' . . . I have used Dryden's

touchstone as honed against my own sensibility. . . . Nor have I thought it necessary to allow considerations of age, location, period of production, or choice of Scots, English or Gaelic, to hamper my sensibility in bringing to these pages its objects of delight." This specifically disavows any intention of attempting to present an over-all picture of the development of Scottish poetry throughout the relevant half-century.

Such being the case, it follows that one's view of the adequacy of this anthology as an introduction to the poetry of the period will depend upon one's opinion of the breadth and depth of the editor's response to the wide range of poems from which he has had to select. Since Lindsay and I have been friends for thirty years, and colleagues on various literary projects at different times throughout those decades, it is evident not only that I must declare an interest here but also that his sensibility is not entirely out of tune with my own. Nevertheless, there have been a number of occasions when we have had to differ, and this edition of *Modern Scottish Poetry* is one of them. When we first met in 1946, shortly after the appearance of the anthology's first edition, both of us were writing verse in Scots as well as in English, and both were involved in critical and/or journalistic activity designed to increase interest in the development of a literature in the first of those languages. Thirty years later, however, Lindsay's position has radically changed, an alteration heralded by the now notorious preface to his collection *Snow Warning* (1962), with its total repudiation of "Lallans" (Lowland Scots) as either a language or a literary medium.

Lallans was a brave last-ditch attempt to restore to Lowland Scotland its ancient language. It failed to arouse any measure of popular support. During the 'Fifties, the Scots tongue receded more rapidly than ever before under the impact of television, and has now been reduced to a mere matter of local accent. It is utterly unthinkable that this poor wasted and abandoned speech, however rich in theory its poetic potential, can possibly express what there is to be expressed of the Scottish *ethos* in the age of the beatnik and the hydrogen bomb. The fact is that Lallans has not been used with contemporary significance by any writer during the greater part of the last decade. It has now become an excuse in the hands of some writers for not saying anything, and in the hands of others who extol its supposed virtues but have long since ceased to employ it, a polemical threat without substance.²⁸

In view of the emergence of a whole new generation of Scots-writing poets in the fifteen years since those words were published, Lindsay is probably now prepared to qualify that extreme view of the situation, to admit that Scots *has* aroused a measure of popular support, and that there are parts (or even one part, the North-East) of Scotland where it has *not* "been reduced to a mere matter of local accent." But he would still seem to be of the opinion that it "has not been used with contemporary significance by any writer during the greater part of the last decade," for poems in Scots on specifically contemporary themes are conspicuous by their absence from those parts of his third edition devoted to the work of the last ten years--although a considerable number of the many such poems have already appeared in other anthologies, including some where Lindsay has been a co-editor.²⁹ His omission of such poems from *Modern Scottish Poetry* is in line with his introductory statement that "the impetus of the Scottish Renaissance--though not, of course, the continuing validity of its achievement--may now be on the wane," but it is very far from being in line with the facts of literary developments in Scotland since the appearance of his second edition in 1966. The so-called "second wave" of younger poets writing in Scots who dominated the forties has been followed since the mid-sixties by yet a "third wave," while a number of the Scots makars of the forties have published new collections in the course of the decade. There is scarcely any sign of this in Lindsay's selection, where the choice from Goodsir Smith's work ends in 1950 and (interest again!) from Alexander Scott's--in Scots if not in English--in 1954, and where recent production by Tom Scott, Glen and Campbell is represented by only one poem each. (Alastair Mackie is luckier, being allotted two; while Robert Garioch is allocated three, all in styles where contemporaneity is scarcely a major feature.) Lindsay's loss of sympathy with Scots has resulted in a narrowing of his range of response which has had the most unfortunate effect upon the linguistic balance of his anthology.

Another balance has been adversely affected by his decision that "those whose best work is perhaps yet to come are given merely token representation." This represents a marked change of attitude from the 1946 edition, where the younger generation--including no fewer than eighteen poets, one of them Lindsay himself--occupy half the book some seventy pages, while now the young have only twenty-six out of two hundred and twenty-eight. Perhaps it is not very surprising that an editor should be more in sympathy with the work of his own contemporaries than with that of his successors, but the extreme paucity of the present representation of the young indicates a further limitation of Lindsay's range of response,

as yet another is suggested by the total absence from his pages of such poets as Tom Leonard (b. 1944) and Roderick Watson. Himself a writer of "occasional" lyrics, Lindsay may well be more open to the appeal of overt lyricism than to the attractions of those varieties of verse which skirt the extremities of prose, but when it seems that such verse has no attractions for him at all one can only deprecate a too rigorous exclusiveness.

As distinct from those various weaknesses, the main strength of this anthology--apart from its placing of the work of MacDiarmid and Muir in some kind of perspective--lies in its selection from those of the editor's contemporaries who write in English. Despite Lindsay's introductory statement about not allowing "period of production" to influence his choice, in this matter at least he has taken great care to range across the complete time-scale of his authors' work. In contrast to those of the Scots makars whose representation is amputated in the fifties, the selection from George Bruce begins in the early forties, with such poems as "Inheritance" and "Kinnaird Head," and comes up to as late as 1975, with "Under the Moon," while Norman MacCaig begins with "November Night, Edinburgh" in the mid-fifties and ends with "Composers of Music" in 1976. Again, the examples given from George Mackay Brown and Iain Crichton Smith range over some twenty years in either case, and those from Alexander Scott's English verse over a quarter-century. The greatest extended English poem of the period, W. S. Graham's "The Nightfishing," is given in generous extracts, no less than nine poems are drawn from Edwin Morgan's two major collections of original verse, and the graph of the late Burns Singer's achievement is accurately plotted throughout the single decade of his poetic career. If Lindsay had been able to extend this kind of sympathetic acumen to the work of those other modern Scottish poets with whom he has less in common, he would have produced a much more truly representative anthology.

Lindsay is also one of the co-editors of the annual *Scottish Poetry* anthologies, three volumes of which appeared during the period, his colleagues on those occasions being Alexander Scott and Roderick Watson. On *Scottish Poetry 7* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 1974) the English critic Derek Stanford commented:

Invidious, perhaps to name names in a volume of such variety and vigour as *Scottish Poetry 7* since here is a roll-call of 47 poets. . . . "To bring together in more permanent form the best work of the preceding year including poems which have appeared in magazines and newspapers" has been the plan of the triumvirate. Poets

have been allotted from one to four poems apiece, and work in "all three of Scotland's languages" has found a place.

Poems that gave me particular pleasure were David Neilson's vernacular versions of Catullus. . . . Edwin Morgan's thoughts on education ("School's Out"), Tom Leonard's Glaswegian reverie among the tombs . . . "The sad sudden death" of Professor Douglas Young . . . is lamented in an elegy by Alexander Scott . . . *Scottish Poetry ?* . . . presents no case for the critics to engage in any "lament for the makaris."³⁰

Scottish Poetry 8 (Cheadle, Cheshire: Carcanet Press, 1975) was reviewed by the Scottish critic Ian Campbell.

. . . on modern uses of Scots, seeking a new idiom, *Scottish Poetry 8* produced a delightful new poem by Tom Leonard, whose "The Good Thief" seemed not to have been followed by anything so successful. Well, now it is: "Feed Ma Lamz" is a wittily outrageous parody of the Ten Commandments, wickedly translating them into Glasgow schoolboy misconceptions and far more . . . This is not to make extravagant claims for the occasional, sometimes quite difficult achievement of the verbal double-entendre, and phonetic transcription, in which Tom Leonard and other Glasgow poets (think of Alexander Scott's Scotch epigrams) can be, and are, often so successful . . . But they work, they are original, and fresh.

The mixed diet, though, is found easily in the pages of *Scottish Poetry 8*. David Black on David Hume, Alan Bold on fences, George Mackay Brown's excellent poem on a sea village, Liz Lochhead on her rival, her prospective in-law, Norman MacCaig in praise of a collie, Iain Crichton Smith's penetrating self-examination in "Return to Lewis," a welcome monument to Sydney Goodsir Smith in "Stormy Day and a Cat, November," Rory Watson's self-examining poem on poetry, "Rhymer"--*Scottish Poetry 8* more than repays repeated reading. What *is* interesting is that the successful poems in this anthology are widely spread through the varieties of loose and tightly-constructed verse, through formal and informal language, and yes, through Scots and English, and diverse Scots at that. They are witty poems many of them, but serious.³¹

On *Scottish Poetry 9* (Manchester: Carcanet/Scottish Arts Council, 1976), announced as the last of the series, Grizel Donaldson wrote:

In *Scottish Poetry 5* Alexander Scott defined Scotch Optimism as "Through a gless,/ Darkly," and Scotch Pessimism as "Fient the/ Gless." I was reminded of these by *Scottish Poetry 9* . . . the total impression left in the mind is anger, scorn, frustration, almost despair.

There is no lack of energy. George Bruce mordantly sees modern angels as the visions of blind business men, generals, scientists and politicians and grimly concludes: "Would God the skies were empty again!" W. S. Graham seeks the loch of his childhood and finds "It is a colder/ Stretch of water than I remember." . . . Alexander Scott "From Inside the Cage" deploras the over-survival of medicated humanity, "a Pullulation of people/ as healthy as hell/ demanding heaven," and Andrew Greig in an SF vision likens human experience to an unwilling fall into water . . . Here we are confronted by images expressing unquenchable discomfort with the human condition, good compressed sharp stuff reflecting vigorously the times we live in . . .

The angry poems are perhaps the best; Alexander Scott's lament for Sydney Goodsir Smith, refusing to let him go gentle into that good night and vainly resenting that "here in this beuk for bairns,/ the dates hae doomed ye" . . . Ellie Macdonald's "Smeddun" courageously railing against ill-luck . . . and Liz Lochhead most fiercely and brilliantly rendering the tumult of emotions roused by an old love's letters . . .

There is less personal anger in Alastair Mackie's re-handling of the Crucifixion but it is still sharp and alive as the Scots onlooker narrates each detail with sardonic sympathy . . . And Maurice Lindsay's anger is there under the classic discipline as he records the deceptions and uncertainties, the electric supermarket, the hedgehogs and crows dead on the road, the trees ravaged for logs . . .

The anger in Duncan Glen's derisively measured account of the Burns temple at Alloway in contrast with the honesty of the Auld Brig has a splendid scorn that warms the heart to glee . . . Edwin Morgan, with a similar rejection of the artificial, angrily rejects the jade suit of a Chinese princess and the bandages of a mummy in favour of the free flight of Chou en Lai's ashes over the earth . . .

There are quite static poems too, but in their heart we can feel disquiet. Iain Crichton Smith writes of sorrow in its chair rocking like an old woman in the evening, with calm imagery which ends with a gentle troubled warning . . . Derick Thomson's clear and peace-

ful northern islands have their inbuilt loss and limit too, in both Gaelic and English . . . Even Angus Nicolson's playground games bring an aftermath of anger in encountering reality: "it was later we learned/ about Glenceoe." In the same poet's ironic "The Healers" we see clearly the trap in which we are caught; the doctor and the minister play chess to banish for a while the drab images of death, indigestion, the old folks' home, stalemate . . . Disquiet, discomfort, realism--"Fient the Gless" again.

Perhaps I was wrong in singling out *Scottish Poetry 9* as being especially aware of the human predicament. The anger has been there from the beginning of the series and has flowered into most articulate diversity in this last volume, a fit conclusion. The poets rasp the reader's mind today with necessary vigilance, providing objective correlatives for our personal unease.³²

The catholicity of the *Scottish Poetry* anthologies is matched in the younger of our two poetry magazines, *Akros*, edited by Duncan Glen. The April 1974 issue featured, among much else, the whole of Alastair Mackie's Scots sequence "At the Heich Kirk-Yaird," eight poems in English and three in Scots by the present writer, and extended essays on two very different Glasgow poets, Maurice Lindsay and Tom Leonard, by Donald Campbell and Tom McGrath respectively. In the August issue, the extended essays were "Scottish Poets since Stevenson" by Duncan Glen and "Alexander Scott, Makar Extraordinary" by Lorn M. Macintyre, while the poetry included Edwin Morgan's brilliant sequence of "Ten Theatre Poems," nine pieces of Leonard's ironical demotic Scots, and three sub-acid expressions of femininity by Liz Lochhead. But *Akros* is international as well as national, and the December issue contained work by eight American poets (chosen by George Bruce while teaching creative writing in the States) alongside ten Scots.

Internationalism was the *raison d'être* of the "Sicilian-Scottish Issue" for April 1975, with translations into English of work by sixteen poets of the Sicilian "Antigruppo" movement appearing alongside verse in English and Scots by twenty Scottish writers. The next issue, No. 28, was the "Tenth Anniversary" number, celebrated by six extended essays on the development of poetry in Scotland throughout the decades since the advent of MacDiarmid in the early twenties, while No. 29 found space for the work of no less than twenty-two poets who were appearing in the magazine for the first time, together with two comprehensive essays on the respective works of George Bruce (by the present writer) and Duncan Glen (by T. S. Law). In 1976, the first issue was concerned with "the Anti-Lit or

with poetry outside the Establishment of literature."³³ Since ten of the poems in this number were contributed by the present reviewer, it can hardly be lack of sympathy with "Anti-Lit" attitudes which compels him to confess that most of the articles on anti-establishment writers struck him as being bad prose about worse verse, the one shining exception being a brilliant series of parodies of contemporary Scottish stereotypes. Contributed anonymously, this wicked expose of poetasters' piffle has since been revealed as the work of the magazine's editor, whose emergence as a notable comic writer in the course of the period has been among its most enjoyable features. In No. 31 the magazine again broke new ground, bringing in as guest-editor the distinguished Gaelic poet and scholar, Derick Thomson, to introduce his own selection of contemporary verse by nine authors from Gaeldom, while poetry in Scots was represented by the work of four younger makars and by essays on Sydney Goodsir Smith's *Collected Poems* and on the verse of Tom Scott, Kenneth Buthlay writing with his usual acumen on the former and Thomas Crawford with much less than his customary perception on the latter. On the other hand, almost all the verse in No. 32 was in English, pride of place being given to the work of Edwin Morgan, Ken Morrice (b. 1924) and the present writer, while Morgan also featured in an informative interview, and Norman MacCaig and George Mackay Brown were discussed by W. Stuart Porter (discriminating) and Philip Pacey (enthusiastic) respectively. In the annals of Scottish poetry-magazine publication, *Akros* has earned an incomparable reputation.

Our elder poetry magazine, *Lines Review*, on the contrary, has largely lost touch with the most vital developments in its country of origin, perhaps because its editor, Robin Fulton, now lives in Scandinavia. The recurrence of the same few names in Fulton's contents lists reflects the narrowness of his critical range, which is apparent again in his partisan "critical" study, *Contemporary Scottish Poetry* (Loanhead: Macdonald Publishers 1974). Here the revelation of his *idée fixe* that poetry consists of patterns of ideas goes some way towards explaining both the verbal flatness of his own verse and his uninformed hostility towards the Scots tradition (which he misunderstands even on the few occasions when he praises some of its practitioners). After a ten-year editorial stint, Fulton resigned with the issue of *Lines Review* for January 1977. It is greatly to be hoped that his successor will adopt a different approach.

NOTES

1. Thomas Crawford, "Tom Scott: From Apocalypse to Brand," *Akros*, Vol. 11, No. 31, p. 64.
2. See Iain Crichton Smith, "A Note on Andrew Young," *Lines Review*, No. 22 (Winter 1966), pp. 28-32.
3. "Edwin Morgan," *Contemporary Poets of the English Language* (Chicago and London, 1970), pp. 775-7.
4. "Scottish Poetry in 1972," *SSL*, Vol. XI, Nos. 1 & 2 (July-October, 1973), p. 15.
5. "Scottish Poetry in 1971," *SSL*, Vol. IX, No. 4 (April, 1972), p. 246.
6. "Rose and Rock," *The Scottish Review*, Vol. I, No. 3 (Summer 1976), p. 35.
7. This reviewer's judgment may be adversely influenced here by his finding these poems too reminiscent of his own earlier verse drama on this theme, *The Jerusalem Farers* (1950).
8. "Makar's Lament," *The Latest in Elegies* (Glasgow: Caledonian Press, 1949).
9. *Contemporary Scottish Poetry* (Loanhead: M. Macdonald, 1974).
10. "Scottish Poetry in 1970," *SSL*, Vol. VIII, No. 4 (April, 1971), p. 234.
11. "Scottish Poetry in 1971," *SSL*, Vol. IX, No. 4 (April, 1972), pp. 249-50.
12. Alexander Scott, "Heart of Stone," *Cantrips* (Preston: Akros Publications, 1968).
13. Tom Scott, "Letter to the Editor," *Akros*, Vol. 11, No. 33 (April, 1977), p. 124.
14. "The Poetry of Sydney Goodsir Smith," *Saltire Review*, Vol. I, No. 1 (April, 1954), p. 18.
15. "Tom Scott: From Apocalypse to Brand," *Akros*, Vol. 11, No. 31 (August, 1976), p. 58.

16. Ibid., p. 67.
17. Ibid.
18. Alexander Scott, "Literature," *Whither Scotland?*, ed. Duncan Glen (London, 1971), p. 193.
19. Crawford, p. 64.
20. "Change and Continuity in Modern Scots Poetry," *Akros*, Vol. 11, No. 33 (April, 1977), p. 26.
21. Ibid.
22. Crawford, p. 69.
23. Edwin Morgan, *Akros*, Vol. 11, No. 31 (August, 1976), p. 95.
24. Roderick Watson, "The Soul as Goalie," *Scottish Literary Journal*, Supplement No. 3 (Winter 1976), p. 51.
25. Ibid., p. 50.
26. Ibid.
27. *The Scottish Review*, No. 2 (Spring 1976), p. 37.
28. Arundel: Linden Press, 1962.
29. See the *Scottish Poetry* anthologies, Nos. 1-9.
30. *The Scotsman*, 2nd November 1974.
31. *Akros*, Vol. 11, No. 31 (August, 1976), pp. 111-112.
32. *Akros*, Vol. 11, No. 33 (April, 1977) pp. 121-123.
33. Duncan Glen, "Editorial," p. 3.