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Brief Notice



David Buchan, ed. *A Book of Scottish Ballads*. London & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1985. xi + 232 pp. The Scottish Series.

David Buchan's collection was reviewed by W.F.H. Nicolaisen when it first appeared in hardback (*SSL* 13), but its reappearance in paperback should not go unnoticed. It is without question the best collection of Scottish ballads in print, and at a price which makes it available to students. With his book about ballads, *The Ballad and the Folk* (1972), Buchan showed himself to be one of the foremost interpreters of the Scottish oral tradition of his generation.

The editor has selected 72 ballads for this collection. These are divided into three general categories: The Oral Tradition; The Tradition in Transition; and The Modern Tradition, itself divided into two groups. In his short Introduction Buchan sets out his reasons for concentrating on the collections of three tradition-bearers of the Northeast of Scotland—Anna Brown, James Nicol and Bell Robertson—because it is only in this region that one can "see clearly the three evolutionary stages of a ballad

tradition: from oral to transitional to modern." With the exception of the Bothy Ballads (Nos. 64-72) all but one of Buchan's selections are to be found in Child; there are five instances where the editor prints two variations of the same ballad, which gives the reader a good chance to study some of the variations which one can find in a text.

G.R.R.

Wen Mei-hui, ed. *Studies in Scott*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Teaching and Research Publishing House. 1982. 2 leaves + 2 + vii + 326 pp.

This anthology with translations from English, Russian, French, Hungarian, Italian, and Danish is divided into three parts. In the first are general commentaries on Scott by William Hazlitt, Mario Praz and others. In the second part are analytical articles by Francis Jeffrey, David Cecil and others on Scott's poetry, novels and short stories. In the third part are articles by Scott himself on his experience as a writer and about other writers such as Henry Fielding, Horace Walpole and Tobias Smollett.

Sir Walter Scott was known to the Chinese readership as early as 1905 when his *Ivanhoe* was translated into classical Chinese by Lin Xu and Wei Yi. Though an inaccurate translation, it had a fairly profound influence on the Chinese novelists and dramatists of the day.

According to the editor who is representative of present-day Chinese readers, one of Scott's most important contributions is his authentic description of the acute and complex struggles and contradictions of English and Scottish social life on a grand scale. Though obviously not very well planned, his historical novels formed a fascinating picture of English and Scottish society from the medieval age to the bourgeois revolution and inspired great writers in different parts of the world in their creative efforts. Most outstanding are his Waverley novels. His awareness of the progressive historical trend can be keenly felt. In *Ivanhoe* he expressed his support for the building of a united kingdom through national reconciliation, and in *Quentin Durward* he showed his favor for centralized government in smashing the

feudal separatist forces, without overlooking, however, how the working people suffered under their rulers. He was good at lending local color to his description and historical traits to his characters, whose lives were closely related to historical and social upheavals. Scott's drawbacks are his conservatism as well as his partiality to ancient chivalry, the patriarchal clan system and feudal society. Distasteful also are his conventional pattern, long-winded and jumbled structure and outworn moralizing. His central figures are usually pallid, not so well-drawn as the ordinary people in his novels.

Peng Fumin

Gillian Hughes, ed. *Papers Given at the First James Hogg Society Conference (Stirling, 1983)*. [Stirling]: James Hogg Society. [1983]. 48 pp.

When André Gide praised Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* in his Preface to the novel in 1947, that work was almost unread by the public of the time. Today it is beginning to take its place as one of the major works of fiction of the nineteenth century. What has been significant about the growth in interest in the poetry and prose of Hogg has been that recognition has come as much from outside Scotland as within—of the first three books on Hogg to be published in this century, one was by an English woman and two by Americans. But Scotland has provided the guiding force behind the James Hogg Society in the person of Douglas Mack, at whose university (Stirling) the Society held its first conference.

The international reputation of Hogg may be gauged from the papers here assembled: there are two papers from England, one each from Canada, France and Scotland. One additional paper delivered at the conference by Douglas Gifford, one of the foremost Hogg scholars, is promised for a later date. Not surprisingly, the work most discussed in these papers is the *Justified Sinner*, although there is increasing appreciation of Hogg's other fiction, particularly *The Three Perils of Woman*. This does not seem true of the poetry on the other hand, although in his own day Hogg's poetry was far better known than his fiction. *The Queen's Wake* went through more than eleven

editions in Hogg's lifetime, but seems to have gone the way of all the long poems of the nineteenth century. A reading of Hogg's short poems confirms the high estimate Wordsworth had of his work. Considering the great interest there is nowadays in the oral tradition, and that Hogg drew his poetic (and fictional) material from that tradition, we may anticipate even greater interest in the *Etrick Shepherd* in the future. The papers of this conference are a good start.

Alexander Fraser

Iain Gordon Brown. *Poet & Painter: Allan Ramsay Father and Son 1684-1784*. Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland. 1984. 51 pp.

Not only does the National Library of Scotland mount important exhibitions of their holdings, but they often accompany these exhibitions by authoritative catalogues also. Iain Gordon Brown has produced one such based on an exhibition held in the National Library to celebrate the tricentenary of the birth of Allan Ramsay, father, and the bicentenary of the death of Allan Ramsay, son. Ramsay the poet had a long-standing interest in the visual; in 1729 he was one of the Edinburgh citizens who sponsored the School of St. Luke, founded for "the encouragement of . . . Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, etc." We can see the poet's sense of design in the books which he published. Even the sort of chapbooks which he bound up helter-skelter into volumes have a more than averagely pleasing look to them, and of course he sold prints in his bookshop as well as organizing sales of art works.

It was fortunate for the young Ramsay to be born into this milieu sympathetic to all forms of art. The young artist showed an early felicity in drawing, and Brown suggests that it may have been a drawing of his father made when he was just a lad which served the engraver Richard Cooper for the frontispiece for the fourth edition of Ramsay's *Poems*. I cannot accept Brown's dismissal of the date of this edition of Ramsay's *Poems* (1727), claiming it was rejected by Burns Martin, when in fact Martin merely "assumed" that none of the copies *he had seen* were of that date. The bibliography of Ramsay senior is much too

complicated for us to do anything but postulate.

There is little to regret in the fact that the older Ramsay's drawings or the younger man's verses have not been published, but it really is a pity, as Brown points out, that Ramsay did not follow the repeated exhortations of Boswell and write a life of his father, to fill in more details about a remarkable father and son.

G.R.R.

Alanna Knight. *The Robert Louis Stevenson Treasury*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 1985. xiii + 359 pp.

I fear that the title of this useful Stevenson handbook may be misleading and ultimately hurt sales of a work which all scholars and lovers of RLS should own. We usually think of a "Treasury" as a work which contains a selection of works by the subject of the collection, but this compilation by Mrs. Alanna Knight has been put together so that the reader of Stevenson will have at fingertips all that he or she may need to know about RLS, and quite probably a good deal which he did not already know. In addition to being a good reference book, this *Treasury* is a fascinating browsing book.

There are eight parts to this compilation: People, Places and the Printed Word; Unpublished Manuscripts; Fictional Characters and Places; Index of Letters from Stevenson; Index of Poems and Musical Settings; Films, Television and Radio; Classified List of Stevenson's Published Work; Further Reading. Of these sections by far the longest is the first with 255 of the total of 359 pages. In it we find that one A. Patchett Martin was RLS's first fan, of whom we learn that he was "an Australian who . . . in 1877 sent Stevenson a volume of his own verses, entitled *A Sweet Girl Graduate and Other Poems*." Not many people know that, I'm sure.

The question of balance in an *omnium gatherum* such as this is a difficult one to resolve to the satisfaction of users. Are the three pages devoted to W.E. Henley enough? And if they are, should one of them be almost entirely devoted to quoting the RLS dedication of *Virginibus Puerisque* to Henley? And if we are interested in the Stevenson-Henley collaboration should we

be informed only that four plays were written in collaboration, but be unable to find what they were unless we look up the entry *Plays*? And should we not be told if we look up *Long John Silver* that Henley served as Stevenson's model for this cunning villain? (We would, of course, find this under *Henley*, but to the uninformed user of this work that discovery would have to be serendipitous.)

There are nuggets to be teased out of this work, such as the account of the first draft of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* which Stevenson burned, as recounted by Lloyd Osbourne, when the latter's mother objected that the tale as it then read had "missed the allegory," and of RLS completely rewriting the work (64,000 words) in six days. And there are bald facts stated: *A Child's Garden of Verses*, "a collection of poems, first published by Chatto & Windus, 1885" and the Dedicatory poem (but lacking the last four lines) to his nurse "Cummy." As an entry that seems sparse for what may be the finest collection of children's verse of the century.

The *RLS Treasury* is made more interesting and more useful by several photographs, maps of Stevenson wanderings, and a useful chronology.

Arthur Davidson Ross

A.C. Spearing. *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1985. viii + 369 pp.

A.C. Spearing's book treats the development of English poetic history from medieval to Renaissance with chapters entitled "Chaucer," "The Chaucerian Tradition," "Outside the Chaucerian Tradition," "Henryson and Dunbar," "Skelton and Hawes," and "Wyatt and Surrey." Though Spearing is necessarily selective, the writers and works he considers are important. Of interest here is the lengthy chapter on Henryson and Dunbar. Spearing sees Chaucer as a Renaissance poet, who reflects what he considers to be the two main ideas of the Renaissance—dignity of man, and dignity of poetry—at a time when England was not yet ready for a poetic Renaissance. Henryson and Dunbar, as well as the other poets he discusses, are seen in the context of Chaucer's Renaissance qualities. Spearing shows Henryson and

Dunbar to be Renaissance in their attitude toward poetry. Referring to *The Testament of Cresseid* he states, "Henryson is hovering on the edge of a fully Renaissance outlook, in which the poet is seen as a creator, and originality is one of his great merits" (p. 167). Henryson feels free to invent his own ending to the Cresseid story, in contrast to Chaucer who adhered to the sources. Spearing believes that Henryson uses the word "invention" for the first time in English to mean "literary creation." Of Dunbar Spearing asserts that "one of the ideas which act as a focus of feeling in Dunbar's poetry is that of poetry itself; and this belongs to the most Renaissance side of his work" (p. 203). The Renaissance idea of poetry reflected in Dunbar's work is that poetry is enduring in a transient world. In "To the King" Dunbar argues that his work will outlast that of other craftsmen. This claim for the endurance of poetry is, Spearing suggests, the first such for poetry in English.

Spearing's book provides excellent readings of some of the major works of these two poets including "To the King," "Thrissill and the Rois," "The Tretis of the tua Mariit Wemen," "The Testament of Cresseid," and the "Moral Fables." He believes that Dunbar and Henryson experienced "a real advantage in geographical distance from Chaucer and in the possession of a different national culture as the basis for a different poetic identity" (p. 164).

Laurel Ensminger