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Christopher A. Upton

National Internationalism: Scottish Literature and the European Audience in the Seventeenth Century

The following volumes are on all our bookshelves: *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, *The Penguin Book of Italian Verse*, *The Faber Book of Modern Verse*, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, *Delitiae Poetarum Scotorum huius aevi illustrium*.¹ Well, perhaps not all of them . . .

The anthology has been with us for so long, it seems, that we never stop to consider where the concept originates, or of the apparently eternal categories into which it falls. In fact, selections or anthologies are ruthlessly hounded from the academic's working press, who requires complete works and editions. When did you last see *Palgrave's Golden Treasury* cited in a literary journal? Nevertheless, such works are an important barometer of changing tastes and fashion, especially if they are contemporary collections. I want to say something about the eighteenth and nineteenth century development of the genre, before back-peddalling to the early seventeenth century where my main subject lies.

In 1793 the antiquarian and scholar Joseph Ritson published the first volume of *The English Anthology*. He claimed in his preface to be presenting a collection "upon a plan hitherto unattempted, at least in this country."² Though by adding that none of his selections had previously appeared in *A*

¹ Amsterdam, 1637.

² Joseph Ritson, ed., *The English Anthology* (London, 1793), I, ii.

*Select Collection of English Songs*³ of ten years earlier, Ritson was admitting that his originality was not total. It was in arranging his collection in a chronological series that Ritson was breaking new ground in England. There were two subsequent volumes, but doubts over the exact dates of many of the more recondite choices, the decision to devote the third volume to extracts from longer poems and the inclusion of anonymous works and ballads, meant that the chronological pattern was not rigorously followed.⁴ We may note a couple of features of Ritson's work. The quotation "Dulce est decerpere flores" on the title page reflects the revival of the Greek *anthologia*, Latin *florilegium*, for the process involved. Ritson was not the first to use the term in English, but was the first to use it in a title other than a translation of the *Greek Anthology*. Second, the engraving above the first selection (a poem by Thomas Wyatt) shows four notable English bards gathered in a grove before a figure that serves both as a muse and Britannia. Britannia proffers a crown of laurel, but to whom is uncertain. Chaucer and Dryden jostle for position.

Ritson's choice of flowers is also intriguing. Shakespeare is represented only by one sonnet—"When forty winters shall besiege they brow," not included either in the twenty sonnets of Quiller-Couch's *Oxford Book of English Verse*⁵ or in the twelve of the London Book.⁶ John Donne appears with the decidedly Elizabethan "Come live with me and be my love." For Marvell there is the sickly "Nymph complaining for the death of her fawn." One doubts whether any of these poems would be anthologized now. Milton, by contrast, receives twenty-pages, including the whole of *Lycidas* and *L'Allegro*.

Seventy years after Ritson, in 1861, Francis Turner Palgrave published *The Golden Treasury*,⁷ and this much-loved and reprinted work sets the mould for a century of anthologies. Again the patriotic theme is to the fore: Palgrave dedicates what he believes to be "a true national anthology of three centuries" to Tennyson as Poet Laureate. Though arranged in four parts cor-

³Joseph Ritson, ed. *A Select Collection of English Songs* (London, 1783).

⁴Ritson was by nature an antiquarian and many of his collections follow a chronological arrangement.

⁵Arthur Quiller-Couch, ed. *The Oxford Book of English Verse 1250-1900* (Oxford, 1900).

⁶Herbert Read & Bonamy Dobree eds., *The London Book of English Verse* (London, 1949).

⁷Francis Turner Palgrave, ed. *The Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language* (Cambridge & London, 1861).

responding to centuries, Palgrave tells his reader that "a rigidly chronological sequence rather fits a collection aiming at instruction than at pleasure" (p. v). He aims at the heart, not the head: "Within each book the pieces have been arranged in gradation of feeling or subject." *The Golden Treasury* spans the period from Wyatt to Shelley; unlike Ritson, there is no attempt to hunt for earlier flowers. Palgrave knows that the inclusion of unmodernized medieval writers such as Chaucer and Langland, as Ritson had done, would alienate the kind of audience he was trying to reach.

We may let Ritson and Palgrave represent the two poles of instruction and delight, between which the anthology oscillates. Of course those qualities are truisms of classical literary criticism. There is a third factor—will it sell? For the Anthology is, above most literary enterprises, aimed at the marketplace.

Elizabethan and Jacobean England and Scotland got surprisingly close to producing national anthologies of vernacular poetry, without quite achieving it. In Edinburgh in the 1560s, George Bannatyne devoted much time to transcribing vast quantities of Scots verse for his own pleasure and consolation. The collection was not printed until the eighteenth century. Educational practice encouraged scholars to produce their own treasuries of golden passages or conceits for recycling in their own writing. Collaborative ventures were common: on the model of the *Pleiade*, English song-writers produced collections of lyrics, often anonymously. Or a third party, like the editors of *Tottel's Miscellany*, *Englands Helicon* or *The Phoenix Nest*, assembled poems or prose "full of varietie, excellent invention and singular delight." What these books lacked was any desire to be comprehensive, any chronological range or a need to be anything but delightful. In addition, they aimed very specifically at a home market. Although a number of the editors were becoming aware of a national tradition or body of poetry, there is no sense of competition with other European vernaculars. If there was a literature to challenge, it was that of Greece and Rome. Again, their customers had the same expectations.

Ironically, it was in the field of Neo-Latin poetry, a pan-European language if ever there was one, that the concept and promotion of national talent began in earnest. The key figure here was Janus Gruter or De Groot, a Dutch scholar and publisher. Like any good entrepreneur, Gruter identified a market and exploited it. From the 1550s onwards, the Latin poetry of a number of Italian writers had begun to appear in anthologies in Paris and elsewhere. Implicit in them was the belief that the best Latin verse came from Italy; but the high noon of Italian Neo-Latin had now passed and editions were no longer easily available. Selections from the writings of five or more well-known poets would be popular.

Gruter went one better, or rather 195 better. In two volumes he collected the poems of 200 Italian Latinists as *Delitiae CC Poetarum Italarum*.⁸ These two 16mo books (sometimes subdivided again as four volumes) were as down-market as such a genre could be. Cheap and pocket-size, they were aimed, not at the library, but at the popular end of the market. Sophisticated book collectors (for example, William Drummond of Hawthornden, who has frequently been linked with the Scottish *Delitiae*) avoided them: they were difficult to open and almost impossible to read, and lacked even rudimentary engravings or end-pieces. As a *delicia* (delight) they were questionable, but where else could you get the works of 200 poets for the price of one? Not only was the work cheap to print, editorial control was kept to a minimum. extracts ranged from a single poem by Sanga to 159 pages from Sannazaro. This was not the picking of flowers but wholesale harvesting: Gruter printed whatever he could get his hands on. Poets were arranged alphabetically: the anthology as encyclopaedia. In only one area are there signs of a significant editorial decision. Perhaps the two most popular Neo-Latin works of the age—Mantuan's *Eclogues* and Marco Girolamo Vida's *Christiad*—are omitted, though their authors themselves are present. Perhaps the market for these works was already full.

The *Delitiae Poetarum Italarum* opened the floodgates to a series of national anthologies, all in Latin, all entitled *Delitiae*, all printed in Frankfurt. Along came collections for France, Belgium, Germany, Hungary and Denmark.⁹ The German anthology, outstripping even the Italian for sheer bulk, comprised some 8,000 pages and over 200 poets. With the exception of the Danish volume, all were published between 1608 and 1619.

There was a strange irony in all this. Neo-Latin was, of course, the international language *par excellence*, transcending national boundaries. Its exponents travelled relatively freely across the continent, and there was considerable cross-fertilization. Writers journeyed, wrote and published abroad. Their audiences were Europe-wide and Frankfurt was an ideal center for the dispersal of books throughout the continent. Yet the collections clearly had competitive, nationalistic ambitions. It was as if the new chauvinism and confidence of the Renaissance vernacular languages had been diverted into Neo-Latin. This was perhaps the only way in which the writers of one na-

⁸Ranutius Gherus (Janus Gruterus), ed. *Delitiae CC Poetarum Italarum* (Frankfurt, 1608).

⁹Janus Gruterus, ed., *Delitiae C. Poetarum Gallorum* (Frankfurt, 1609); *Delitiae Poetarum Germanorum* (Frankfurt, 1612); *Delitiae Poetarum Belgicorum* (Frankfurt, 1614); *Delitiae Poetarum Hungaricorum* (Frankfurt, 1619). *Deliciae quorundam poetarum Danorum collectae* (Leiden, 1693) was edited by Frid. Rostgaard, following the format of the earlier collections.

tion could be compared directly with those of another, even if it was more by weight than quality.

There was a further irony in that the age of Neo-Latin was virtually over. Fewer and fewer writers were employing it as a medium for communication. In only one or two European countries did Latin continue to hold sway over the native language in popularity and prestige. One of those was Scotland.

In the early seventeenth century, Scotland was going through a bad time. In 1603 she lost her king to England, along with a procession of courtiers, writers and intellectuals: a heart transplant for which the donor was not dead. What appeared to be a vernacular revival after the disruptions of civil war, occupation and religious division turned out to be a Prague Spring. The King's departure and Scotland's increasing isolation as a cultural force led to the virtual collapse of vernacular poetry for two centuries. We can isolate three after-effects of this situation: 1) the continued success and encouragement of Latin writing; 2) an embattled but proud nationalism, focussed on culture rather than politics; 3) a nostalgia for earlier achievements.

Much of this feeling centered on the figure of George Buchanan, a man of John Knox's generation, who died in 1582. Perhaps Scottish hearts no longer swell with pride at the mention of his name, but in his day and for a century after, an immense figure. Buchanan was widely considered the foremost poet of his age, and was so dubbed by the great Parisian printer, Henri Estienne.¹⁰ His Latin poetry, mostly written and printed in France, had a European circulation. His metrical version of the Psalms was thought by many to be the best. Scotland was a trilingual nation, but it was clear from the fame of Buchanan upon which language her international reputation was to be built. Any Scottish poet with a yearning for fame and fortune had to walk in the great man's shadow. There was an anxiety of influence here, but at least the European market was aware of the potential. No English poet could stand on the shoulders of a comparable figure.

We have here, as you may be anticipating, the seeds of a *Delitiae Poetarum Scotorum*. The actual origins began obliquely, probably in the mind of John Leech, a Scottish poet wandering Europe in search of patronage and a position. Leech knew from personal experience that Scots poets and their works lay scattered across Europe, driven there by the lack of advancement and prospects at home. He may well have been the first to see that situation as a matter of pride as well as regret. From Italy to Poland, even as far as Scotland, Scots were composing Latin poetry, but lacked a cultural focus. In 1620 Leech believed he had found that focus. Another wandering scholar, the Latinist Arthur Johnston, published in that year a defense of Buchanan's

¹⁰See I. D. McFarlane, *Buchanan* (London, 1981), p. 171.

Psalm Paraphrases against attacks motivated more by political and religious disagreement than by literary criticism.¹¹ Ever since Mary Queen of Scots had termed him "a lewd man and an atheist," the reputation of Buchanan in royal circles had been low. Associated in the King's mind with the deposition of Mary and enlightened regicide, it was nigh impossible to be objective about his poetry. There were attacks on him by George Eglisam, John Dunbar and George Craig, and it may well be significant that all three were not included in the Scottish anthology.¹² But Buchanan had been dead thirty-eight years, and his reputation was high everywhere except in Scotland. Leech addressed a poem to Johnston, heralding him as the new Scottish laureate, champion of Buchanan and defender of the tradition. "I commend all the poems to you," wrote Leech, "with open net collect the scattered parts . . ." (*Necte soluta collige sparsa*).¹³

Sadly and somewhat surprisingly, Johnston's answer was no. Instead, Leech turned to another friend, who had the time, motivation and, most importantly, the money to undertake the Herculean labor. John Scot of Scotstarvet, a Fife laird and a dilettante poet himself, had the education and finances to win friends and influence people, particularly in Europe. What makes the subsequent enterprise of special interest is the fact that we have a detailed account of its progress, for Scot scrupulously preserved all incoming mail, whether associated with the *Delitiae* or his other project, a geographical atlas of Scotland. The correspondence, now in the National Library of Scotland, reveals a great deal: how Scot accumulated and edited the material and why it took almost twenty years before the *Delitiae* found its way into print.¹⁴

From about 1619, the year of publication of the latest national anthology, the Hungarian one, Scotstarvet had been collecting and receiving specimens of Scottish latinity. Composition had picked up considerably from the royal visit to Scotland in 1617, when any writer who could put together a verb, a noun and three adjectives, had gushed forth effusive praise of the King and his home town.¹⁵ Letters to Scot from the early 1620s show that

¹¹ Arthur Johnston, *Onopordus Furens* (Paris, 1620).

¹² See W. D. Geddes, ed., *Musa Latina Aberdonensis*, 2 vols. (Aberdeen, 1892), I, 14-5 for a discussion of what Geddes calls "a useless expenditure of fury." However, the intensity of the argument reflects its importance to contemporary Scots.

¹³ John Leech, *Musae Priores* (London, 1620), sig. B5.

¹⁴ National Library of Scotland, Adv. MS. 17.1.9.

¹⁵ *The Muses Welcome* (Edinburgh, 1618) was the largest collection commemorating the visit.

his informants were as yet unsure of the extent and scope of the proposed anthology. Probably Scotstarvet was too. News came of unpublished verse by Buchanan; learned opinion was offered over who could be claimed as the first Scottish poet. Clearly the implication was that the work would be thoroughly antiquarian and chronologically comprehensive, perhaps even accompanied by a treatise, after the manner of John Bale or Henry Savile. In addition, a number of writers, getting wind of the project, sent speculative poems to Scotstarvet, hoping for inclusion. Most were to be disappointed.

By 1626 an anthology was ready. The collection was to be *huius aevi* (of this age), though one writer of Buchanan's generation crept in, probably because his poetry had not been published separately elsewhere.¹⁶ Buchanan himself was not to appear, perhaps for the same reason that the Italian collection had avoided Mantuan. A few poems in praise of Scotstarvet were to appear: he permitted himself a little vanity. But the kind of occasional verse that was the mainstay of Neo-Latin was not. The nature of a European audience was paramount; the material had to be comprehensible without the need for editorial notes, which the *Delitiae* format did not allow for.

Scot was primarily a collector and coordinator; for the basic editorial work he sought the assistance of Peter Goldman, a doctor from Dundee. Leech was too sporadic a correspondent and too chaotic a personality to be trusted. As an editor, Goldman himself had disadvantages: he did not own a red pencil. He was reluctant to emend Scot's own verses as a social superior, and considered the text of other poets "non aliter quam functorum voluntates ultimas sacrosanctas" (as inviolable as the last wishes of the dead). After all, he added, there is plenty of bad verse in the Italian and French anthologies too.¹⁷

Scot chose as publishers the firm of Blaeu in Amsterdam. They were specialists in *libri manuales*, the small-format volumes used in the other national anthologies. Negotiations began and rapidly floundered. Willem Blaeu clearly anticipated that the work would be bigger, close in size to the French *Delitiae*, and quoted a price accordingly.¹⁸ Scot did not like the price, but more importantly, having made various editorial decisions as to its scope, did not have enough copy. Business was halted and Scot and Leech began to trawl for new material. It would be a long fishing trip.

It must have seemed a little irksome when in 1632 Arthur Johnston, the man who had earlier washed his hands of the affair, published a poem en-

¹⁶This was Florence Wilson (Volusenus), whose *De Animi Tranquillitate* (Lyons, 1543) contained verse.

¹⁷NLS, Adv. MS. 17.1.9, fol. 14.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, ff. 140, 188.

couraging Scotstarvet to hurry up and complete the job. Unlike Goldman, he advocated a stringent use of the red pencil.

Sumere fas limam, fas est eradere naevos,
Nec pudor, his numeros substituisse novos.
Quae minus apta vides, indignaque vivere, cara
Sint licet auctori, carmina dede neci.

(It is right to take up the file, right to eradicate the faults. Don't be ashamed to substitute new verse for these. Whatever verse you see as in appropriate or unworthy, get rid of it, though it be dear to its author.)¹⁹ The difference between Johnston's and Goldman's attitude to the text throws interesting light on the conventions of Renaissance editorial control.

The final product, when eventually it came off Blaeu's presses, had all the signs of a hasty, last-minute revision. By the mid-1630s, Scotstarvet did not have the time to give the project the attention it needed. His first textual editor was dead, and Arthur Johnston was at last enlisted to supervise the printing. (Ironic then that Johnston's name should appear as sole editor in all subsequent bibliographies.) A number of recently printed collections by Scots were uncritically imported into the anthology to give it bulk, including much by Johnston himself. Work by thirty-seven poets was finally chosen. Many of those included had made a name for themselves abroad: James Crichton in Italy, George Crichton in Paris, Thomas Dempster almost everywhere; John Barclay's Latin novels were widely read in Europe; John Johnston used European presses almost exclusively; Andrew Melville was well-known among Continental Calvinists; James Halkerston wrote witty epigrams on the Pope and Henri III. Throw in a few Scottish schoolmasters and the odd politician and lawyer, and you have *Delitiae Poetarum Scotorum*.

There were many more to choose from, but by then it was more important to get the book in the shops. By 1637 the market was dwindling. The work avoided overt antiquarianism which by this time would probably have lacked popular appeal. Still Scotstarvet could be proud of his labors; the text was sound and Blaeu did it justice. In the next century, Samuel Johnson would call it "a collection to grace any nation." Perhaps the greatest satisfaction to those who produced it was that the English never had the like. But then the English have never been Europeans, have they?

Central Library, Birmingham

¹⁹ Arthur Johnston, *Parerga* (Aberdeen, 1632), p. xxx.