

1993

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### Recommended Citation

(1993) "Brief Notice," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 28: Iss. 1.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol28/iss1/18>

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## Brief Notices

Edwin Morgan. *Nothing Not Giving Messages*. Ed. Hamish Whyte. Edinburgh: Polygon. 1990. 277 pp.

When I first read this book on its publication two years ago (1990), accepting it perhaps as part of the events marking the poet Edwin Morgan's 70th birthday, its occasionality did not unduly worry me. The poet had interesting things to say, even if they often came out almost by accident, as a result of the not always very skilful interviewers' questions.

Interviews are normally meant to be heard once, magazine articles awarded a single reading. Going through the book a second time, I found the occasionality more obvious, the inevitable "Well, yesses," "I thinks," "I means" and so on, decidedly distracting. Too much is insufficiently explained. The poet gives his top-of-the-head answer to a question, but often there is no follow-up. The interviewer moves on to the next question on his list.

Since Morgan has become something of a cult figure among the young, no doubt there are some readers who may be fascinated by the shape and contents of the poet's living room and the list of the books he read between 1927 and 1940, occupying eight pages of small type. Most poets, after all, are well-read, like Morgan, the diet beginning with Henty, Rider Haggard and Ballantyne, and moving on to harder stuff.

If the manner of presentation seems somewhat jerkily off-putting, Morgan gives his views on a wide range of topics from structural devices which can govern poems:

I've always felt that its [*sic*] important to find or to have structures, and sometimes it can be a use of existing structures like the sonnet or rhyming couplets which are still available and can be done something with; they don't really disappear. At other times, I suppose in some kinds of concrete poetry, you are searching for new ways of structuring which are perhaps harder to combine with traditional ways of thinking about poetry. but, yes, I think structure has always been important—maybe a structure of ideas, maybe a structure of events, a narrative, or whatever, but yes, I have thought a lot about structure.

to homosexuality, university poets, modernism in architecture and the translation of poetry.

Translating is searching for the English (or Scots) equivalent, but an equivalent of what? Not, apparently (and in this I can only appeal to what other translators have experienced), the words of the foreign language so much as the words of *the poem itself*, which has attained some sort of non-verbal interlinguistic existence in the mind.

Morgan's best poems, i. e. his most structurally traditional—with their sweeping paragraphs and wide range of human sympathies—are as good as anything written in English during the second half of the twentieth century. His translations, particularly of Mayakovsky (into Scots) and Montale (into English) are living "re-creations" of the first order. No one can question the large and generous nature of Morgan's achievement. Flashes of the thought-process that lay behind it certainly emerge in the pages of this book. To cult devotees, doubtless it will be a "must." I think, however, that in the long term, its main role may be as a valuable source book to whoever in due course eventually writes a critical biography of this important and enjoyable poet.

MAURICE LINDSAY

Donald Sultana. *From Abbotsford to Paris and Back: Sir Walter Scott's Journey of 1815*. Stroud, Gloucestershire, and Dover, NH: Alan Sutton. 1993. xiv + 210 pp.

Just after the victory of Waterloo, Scott visited the battlefield, then went on to Paris to take part in the victory carnival, and to view what was perhaps the biggest assemblage of VIPs ever brought together, headed by Emperors and Kings; although he himself, we now know, was really Number One in that brilliant throng. His travel book, *Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, is the subject of this recent publication.

It is not an edition of *Paul's Letters*, but a study or commentary; Dr. Sultana sets out to show that the book, supplemented by much other relevant material, is an epitome of the man Walter Scott. Taking the text point by point, he shows how everything in it is related to, and characteristic of, the whole of Scott's life and work. The result might be called "Walter Scott: a Profile on a Novel Plan," in which the usual plodding progress from 1771 to 1832 is dropped in favor of a sort of kaleidoscope or rag-bag, which holds the reader's interest because he never knows what is coming next. How well the mass of material thus presented may "gel" in the reader's mind may be doubtful, but at any rate the job has been thoroughly done; Scott's text has been well dredged. For example, the influence of Scott's 1815 experience on his later work is traced out in great detail. If Scott's imaginative work is ever traced completely to its innumerable sources, the result will be a world's wonder, and this little volume is a contribution to that end.

Dr. Sultana's English style lacks bite, but is free from the shocking jargon employed by a class of contemporary students.

We have some yapping at the heels of Lockhart, as is usual nowadays; Boswell, Lockhart, and Mrs. Gaskell are the great: we are their epigoni; but Dr. Sultana's offense is not so rank as that of the man who said "There has been no satisfactory biography of Scott."

There are quite a few printing errors, especially in French words—always a death-trap. The worst case is "Nôtre Dame," because someone has wantonly inserted a circumflex where no circumflex should be. (This is not nit-picking—the book is about France.)

Scott's poem *The Field of Waterloo* and his *Napoleon* receive much attention, as well as the basic *Paul's Letters*, but it is not made clear that these three are among the least regarded works of the master, so that the "Profile" is knocked off the straight. To adjust matters we need something like the lines attributed to Thomas, Lord Erskine:

On Waterloo's ensanguined plain  
 Lie tens of thousands of the slain;  
 But none, by sabre or by shot,  
 Fell half as flat as Walter Scott.

There is a looseness about Dr. Sultana's grasp of history: it needs to be tightened up especially in chronology. The following statements will not do as they stand: a Baliol was ancestor of a dynasty of mediaeval kings of Scotland; James IV was king in the "Middle Ages"; Normandy belonged to the English in the late Middle Ages; the Duke of Buccleuch stormed Carlisle Castle to release Kinmont Willie (can't you see His Grace the Duke sklimming up the scaling-ladder?); Robert Paterson, who had been a persecuted Calvinist, took the name of Old Mortality (three errors here); the Edict of Nantes was issued after the Bartholomew massacre; the French wars of religion were fought during the Reformation; the battle of Waterloo was all over bar the shouting by the time the Prussians arrived; Charles Bell discovered the human nervous system. Concentration on minutiae can open the way for grosser errors.

To sum up: there is a lot of work in this book, and with a bit of collaboration it could have made an addition to the Scott library even more attractive than it is. But I wish Dr. Sultana had cast his work in the form of an edition of *Paul's Letters* with copious notes; few readers have this neglected work on their own shelves. All the same, he has been better employed than in tinkering up the text of the Waverley Novels.

JAMES ANDERSON

Diane Speed, ed. *Medieval English Romances*. 3rd edn. 2 vols. Durham. 1993. Durham Medieval Texts, No. 8.

*Rauf Coilyear* is the only Scots romance Speed includes. This third edition brings the introductory material, bibliography and notes up to date. Volume 1 contains the introductory material (7 pages), bibliography and text, volume 2 the notes and glossary. All are adequate, although the appearance of three editions of *Rauf Coilyear* in a three-year period after eighty years of almost total neglect is little short of startling. The first edition of Speed appeared in 1987, the same year as Bawcutt and Riddy's *Longer Scottish Poems*; Eileen Walsh's edition was published in 1989. Speed's introduction,

though considerably shorter than Walsh's, is intelligent and presents a lucid exposition of the most important issues raised by *Rauf Coilyear*. Speed's text, especially the punctuation, does not follow Lekpreuik as closely as Walsh's, and is not quite as easy to read as that in Bawcutt-Riddy. Unlike the other recent editors, Speed does not number the stanzas, an unfortunate oversight. The notes while adequate are not as informative as those of Bawcutt-Riddy, especially on linguistic matters (Walsh's notes are, if any thing, too numerous). The glossary is a bit less easy to use than Walsh's (Bawcutt-Riddy gloss at the foot of the page only), but is competent, a judgment which applies with equal validity to the edition as a whole.

WALTER SCHEPS

J. Lasley Dameron and Pamela Palmer. *An Index to the Critical Vocabulary of "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine," 1830-1840*. With introductory essays by Kenneth J. Curry and J. Lasley Dameron. West Cornwall, CT: Locust Hill Press, 1993. xxi + 277.

It has long been recognized that early nineteenth-century literary culture depended on periodical criticism, and that *Blackwood's* was of special significance in defining a conservative romanticism for readers of the 1820s and 1830s. Dameron and Palmer have compiled what is essentially a concordance to selected critical terms from the literary criticism that 'Maga' published over a single decade, the eighteen-thirties. There are long entries, with several hundred citations, on such standard terms as beauty, genius, nature, and originality, but some of the most interesting entries are the shorter ones where a new or uncomfortable concept edges into Blackwoodian vocabulary (as, for instance, in entries on phantasmagoria or plagiarism). One surprising gap I noticed is the lack of an entry for sympathy, which Isobel Armstrong has argued is a major literary concept in this period. In addition to the main index, the volume contains a brief introduction to *Blackwood's* by the veteran Romanticist Kenneth Curry, short biographical notes by Dameron on the major Blackwoodian critics, and an annotated bibliography of the articles indexed. It seems a little arbitrary to choose a single decade from so long-lived a periodical, and to index only identifiably literary-critical articles from a journal that mixed genres so freely, but, because the eighteen-thirties was a period of intergenerational shift, almost any student of nineteenth-century criticism will find useful references and be pro-

voked to fresh critical responses by the information Dameron and Palmer have provided.

JAMES GREIG

*Burns for Bairns and Lads an' Lassies an' a'.* Ed. Irving Miller. Darvel: Alloway Publishing. 1990. 112 pp.

When requested to review *Burns for Bairns* I was apprehensive lest the poems had been "translated" for young folks, as Burns's works were rendered into English by W. K. Seymour in 1954. I was pleased to find that the language of the text had not been altered; words which bairns and adults alike might not recognize today have been conveniently glossed on the page, but the text is that which the poet wrote himself.

The purpose of this compilation is to make available poems and songs for recitation and singing in the classroom and elsewhere. The late Irving Miller was well qualified for the task of making the selection as he was for many years associated with the Burns Federation in running the Burns Schools Competition. He taught elocution and has arranged his selection with delivery in view by giving short directions on how each poem should be declaimed. Most of the suggestions on speaking are useful, as we see in the hint for "Willie Wastle"—"Unlimited scope for character and humour in this poem." But there are occasions when it is difficult to understand what sort of delivery Miller had in mind. What, for instance, is the reader to make of "Here point out the old architecture is much sturdier than the new" when reciting "The Brigs of Ayr"?

My most serious reservation about this collection is that, in an attempt, no doubt, to include as many poems and songs as possible, Miller has published excerpts of several of the longer poems; in one or two instances the poems are so truncated as to give the reader little sense of the entire work. There are two separate selections from "Tam o' Shanter" consisting of 26 and 42 lines out of a total 224, with no discernible reason for the division because the first selection ends at line 78 and thirty pages later the second one begins with line 79. To make matters much worse, this extract is made up of six passages without indication that lines have been omitted. Unfortunately some of the omissions tend to emasculate the poem. For instance one selection ends at line 200, senselessly dropping the next two splendid lines: "Ah, *Tam!* Ah, *Tam!* thou'll get thy fairin! / In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin!"

Despite this smorgasbord approach to the longer poems, Miller's selection is an admirable one, presenting school children with a wide variety of Burns's poems and songs. Almost every page has a pen drawing by Margaret Irving Miller and the front cover has a joyful composite illustration in color.

JOHN DAVIDSON

Edwin Morgan. *Glasgow Poets Past and Present: The Story of a City*. Hamilton, NZ: University of Waikato. 1993. 16 pp. Scottish Studies Association, Avizandum Editions No. 1.

Edwin Morgan, despite his retirement from the University of Glasgow, continues to lead a very active life as poet, critic and lecturer. This book contains the text of a lecture delivered at the University of Waikato in 1992, when an honorary doctorate was bestowed upon him. Morgan is the quintessential Glaswegian, born there, educated there, he has taught and retired there. And in this lecture he considers how Glasgow has shaped its poets, and its poets shaped Glasgow.

Morgan devoted the first half of his talk to pre-1900 poets. He maintains that there was a "fairly general tendency for poets to avert their eyes from the real Glasgow until the 20th century." Given that the Glasgow region was the Scottish center of demands for reform from the time of the French Revolution on (Thomas Muir was the son of a Glasgow merchant) one may wonder at Morgan's assertion. Expectedly, Morgan stresses early poems which extoll Glasgow, but he also quotes a poem by Alexander Rodger of 1818 on the introduction of savings banks, entitled "Shaving Banks, or, Matthew's Call to the Worthless, to Come & be Shaved o their Siller" with its opening stanza:

Ho! ye poor worthless, thriftless trash;  
Worthless, because ye haena cash—  
Thriftless, because ye try to dash  
    Like your superiors;  
Come hither, till I lay my lash  
    To your posteriors.



Morgan also mentions a nineteenth-century woman, Marion Bernstein, who catalogues the hard lot of the Glaswegian wife, ending her poem with this advice:

Exert your common sense  
And form a combination  
For mutual defence  
Against assassination.

Predictably, when Morgan turns to the twentieth century the names are better known: William Montgomerie, William Jaffrey, Hugh MacDiarmid and others, mostly writing poems which paint the bleak hopelessness of Glasgow, the city of slums. But, as Morgan points out, the 1960s saw the emergence of "a new group of Glasgow poets [who]. . . coincided with the massive & even traumatic physical renewal" of the city. The poems run the gamut of emotions, from good-natured gibes at religion like Tom Leonard's "The Good Thief" who at the time of the Crucifixion addresses Jesus, "heh jimmy," to Morgan's own celebration of the city's renaissance in "The Second Life":

Is it only the slow stirring, a city's renewed life  
that stirs me, could it stir me so deeply  
as May, but could May have stirred  
what I feel of desire & strength  
like an arm saluting a sun?

The pamphlet concludes with a short list of sources. *Glasgow Poets* is attractively laid out; a good start in the series.

GRR