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Alexander Scott
Glasgow University

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NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

“The Poetry of Sydney Goodsir Smith”— A Rejoinder

Thomas Crawford, in his article “The Poetry of Sydney Goodsir Smith” (SSL, Vol. VII, Nos. 1 & 2, pp. 40-59), dismisses the work of earlier critics of Goodsir Smith and his contemporaries as “a few faint cheeps” and “feeble peeps [which] proceed all too often from those who are relatively innocent of modern critical method.” Later he quotes—or rather, misquotes—a few sentences on Goodsir Smith’s Edinburgh verse abstracted from my early article, “Daylight and the Dark: Edinburgh in the Poetry of Robert Fergusson and Sydney Goodsir Smith,” which appeared in the poetry magazine *Lines* as long ago as 1953, and he then proceeds to demonstrate the critical inadequacy of those sentences as comments on two poems published years later, “The Grace of God and the Meth-Drinker” (first collected in *Figs and Thistles*, Edinburgh, 1959) and *Kynd Kittock’s Land* (Edinburgh, 1965).

Unless “modern critical method” expects critics to possess the gift of prophecy, it is impossible to see the point of Mr. Crawford’s discussion here. The view of Goodsir Smith’s Edinburgh verse which I expressed in 1953 naturally derived from his poems written up to that date, not from those composed afterwards, and if some of his work since 1953 differs from the poems written earlier that does not invalidate criticism of the earlier work made before the later was available. Goodsir Smith’s more recent poems, including “The Grace of God and the Meth-Drinker” and *Kynd Kittock’s Land*, are discussed in my latest article on his work, “Sydney Goodsir Smith: The Art of Devilment” (*Akros*, IV, May 1969). But “modern critical method” compels me to admit my inability to prophesy what he will be writing in another five or ten years’ time.

ALEXANDER SCOTT
Glasgow University