

Poetry

Scotland

Number Three



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Edited by MAURICE LINDSAY

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J. F. HENDRY, MAURICE LINDSAY, DOUGLAS YOUNG, and ROBERT HERRING
Designs by Andrew Taylor Elder (p. 2), Marie de Banzie (p. 9), Donald Bain (p. 10)



EDITORIAL LETTER

BY the time an undertaking such as POETRY-SCOTLAND makes its third appearance, its Policy should be assuming definite shape.

First and foremost, POETRY-SCOTLAND aims at making the poetry of the Scottish Renaissance as widely known as possible, not only in Scotland and the rest of Britain, but throughout America and the Dominions—especially Canada, where the Gaelic and Scots are still proudly preserved.

POETRY-SCOTLAND will gladly print new poets as and when they appear. Contrary to the expectations of one Edinburgh newspaper, new poets of real worth are by no means two-a-penny, although imitative versifiers are as plentiful as rowans in Autumn. But our main task must be to present the best new work of Scotland's known poets.

Far too much time is still wasted on futile discussion as to whether Scots is or is not the proper language for a Scots poet to employ. Scots and Gaelic have existed side by side, more or less peaceably, for several hundred years. They are the languages of two distinct peoples who have gradually merged in a common nationality. (It is a mistake to stress the sub-divisions which, to some extent, still persist in modern Scotland.) Since the Union, an increasing number of Scots have been brought up on English: English "with a difference," having an unmistakably national flavour. This development, in the opinion of many, is to be deplored. Whether so or not, only a fanatic would deny its existence, and only a lunatic try to alter the situation by wishing that it were not so!

Quite naturally, this section of the Scottish community has also a literary voice, and, in fact, has produced several of our younger poets. Their language, technically, is English; but their atmosphere and background are Scottish, and their work shows unmistakably Scottish characteristics, of feeling, imagery and colour. Of course some of them take to the Scots or Gaelic for certain purposes. Others, for various reasons, confine themselves to Scoto-English. Now, it is becoming something of a fashion for supposedly patriotic reviewers (as opposed to objective critics, of whom we have singularly few in Scotland!) to sneer at the work of these poets, and exalt, by way of comparison, thoroughly mediocre pieces whose sole merit is that they are couched in the Doric. From the point of view of national poetry, Scots, on its own account, is of no value—witness Edward's well-forgotten volumes published towards the close of the last century. (From the point of view of stimulating the national spirit, Scots is of considerable value, irrespective of the purpose to which it is turned. I am concerned here with artistic, not political standards.) The value of a poem is its effectiveness as a whole, be it in Gaelic, English or Esperanto.

I stress this point at some length because it is disappointing to find that members of the Saltire Society are apparently being fed on false doctrine—the doctrine that there is an inherent value in all Scots writing. At a lecture which he gave recently to members of the Society in Glasgow, Dr. J. W. Oliver "touched on" (I quote from the printed report of the meeting) the important work of several Scottish writers ranging from Marion

Angus to Douglas Young. But the list of those so mentioned is entirely unbalanced, and contains the names of at least two writers whose work scarcely, if ever, rises above the level of newspaper jingle : whereas the names of Adam Drinan and G. S. Fraser, to mention only two of many, are conspicuously absent. It is even more disappointing to find that a Saltire Society pamphlet purporting to inform the world upon modern Scottish literature, dismisses all the younger poets with the "safe" remark that much of their work is "not very easily judged yet." And it will remain in the "not very easily judged yet" category, as far as Mr. J. M. Reid is concerned, until the poets emigrate in disgust to a more encouraging soil, or give up writing altogether ! It is to bodies like the Saltire Society, and the literary societies of the Scottish Universities, that the younger poets look for constructive and intelligent criticism.

I do not wish my attitude to this language question to be misconstrued. I wholeheartedly believe in the urgent need for preserving and reviving the Scots and Gaelic tongues. I am only pleading that the quality of a poem, and not the choice of language isolated from all criteria, may be the touchstone for criticism of new Scottish work. Inferior writing harms, not strengthens a language. Brilliant Scots cannot turn a bad poem into a good one. Since Scots and Gaelic are no longer our only languages, English must have its place in our future literature. (Hugh MacDiarmid is a notable example of the poet who gives the English language a Scottish twist. His English poems are no more English than Angus.)

Let us, at all costs, avoid the danger of falling in with the modern whistlebinkieists, whose narrow and conservative clamour does nothing at all for Scotland. Let us see modern Scotland in all her many aspects and keep clear heads when we judge her new poetry.

POETRY-SCOTLAND now hopes to appear bi-annually. By then, too, its editor will have been released from the Army. During the last two years, many prospective contributors have submitted manuscripts, and heard no more of their fate. Carrying on POETRY-SCOTLAND whilst a busy Staff Officer has not been an easy task. The inevitable mobility of Army life has resulted in the loss of innumerable papers and poems. To those who have suffered, I can only offer my sincere apologies—and the promise that from the appearance of this issue, all manuscripts will receive prompt and careful attention.

During the last six years there has been a great revival of interest in contemporary poetry. It is to be hoped that this interest will be sustained far into the future. Poetry and music are usually amongst the first casualties in times of economic hardship ; and, once neglected, they are not so easily revived. Poets cannot develop without support and encouragement.

POETRY-SCOTLAND will go on publishing the best new work in Gaelic, Scots or English. Scottishness is an essential characteristic, but not enough in itself. There must be high quality by international standards. By that policy, POETRY-SCOTLAND will stand or fall.

Since the last issue of POETRY-SCOTLAND was published, Scotland has lost William Jeffrey, one of the earliest poets of the Scottish Renaissance, and Catherine Carswell, the biographer of Burns. We offer our sympathy to their relatives.

MAURICE LINDSAY.

INTRODUCTION.

By ERIC LINKLATER

IT is just twenty years since Mr. MacDiarmid published his first book of poems, called *Sangschaw*, and it is interesting to compare the literary produce of Scotland during this period with the work of Scottish writers in the twenty years that followed the appearance, in 1891, of J. M. Barrie's first long novel, *The Little Minister*. I have no intention of deriding yet again such kailyard honeysuckle as *Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush*, nor do I forget that *Weir of Hermiston* and *The House with the Green Shutters* come within the earlier decades, with the poetry of John Davidson and Rachel Annand Taylor and the romantic novels of Neil Munro. But boldness and a consuming appetite were not characteristic of our authors then. The best were not much given to capering, strutting, and flinging hubristic bonnets over the moon; the weaker were inclined to look with a wistful eye at the vanished past, to staunch a tear, and bravely summon a small joke for their neighbours' consolation; and the era came gently to its conclusion, in 1911, with the domestic laughter of *Bunty Pulls the Strings*.

Now soon after Mr. MacDiarmid arrived on the scene he wrote this poem, called *Blind Man's Luck* :

He just sits oolin' ower the fire
And gin a body speak t'him, fegs,
Turns up the whites o's een
Like twa oon eggs.

"I've ripped the bike o' heaven," quo' he,
"And whaur ma sicht s'ud be I've stuck
The toom doups o' the sun
And mune, for luck!"

The conception is violent, the image a sorcerer's condensation of poetic vision, and with its companion pieces the poem fell with a splash into the calm water of the local reservoir. The surface of the water was troubled, and little waves ran shoreward. In the years that followed Mr. MacDiarmid wrote, among other things, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* and a noble translation of *The Birlinn of Clanranald*, concerning which, in this context, it is only necessary to remark the author's freedom from a domestic limitation of his interest, from fireside tears, and from any inclination to be apologetic. In this new era the lamented Lewis Grassie Gibbon wrote his *Scots Quhair*, Neil Gunn his Highland novels, and James Bridie emerged from a thinly peopled past as Scotland's first major dramatist. The *Scots Quhair* was a deliberate experiment in writing and a notable achievement; Neil Gunn, in the best of his work, has written with such a blissful assurance that he might be the world's first story-teller to whom genius had been vouchsafed and an audience gathered by the magic of his eye; and James Bridie, manipulating his eloquent puppets—Jonah and Tobias, his Anatomist and his Colonel, Lancelot and the Devil—all from as confident a finger as ever Calvinist pointed to elected saint and predestined

sinner—has put on the stage a series of plays in which ideas leap like Nijinsky and intellect wrestles with the plot like the Angel with Jacob.

Add to these names the poetry and criticism of Mr. Edwin Muir, Mrs. Mitchison's *The Corn King and the Spring Queen*, some of Mr. Bruce Marshall's work, Miss Agnes Mure Mackenzie's histories, and the produce of the *Sangschaw* period displays a difference from that following *The Little Minister* which appears to have been created by an access of confidence, a more widely pervasive intellectual interest, a larger appetite, and higher spirits. It is primarily in search of these qualities—since they appear to be typical of the period—that I have been reading the first two numbers of POETRY-SCOTLAND, which contain the work of younger Scottish writers and therefore should have news of the present state of the impulse: whether it is diminishing, increasing, or even now producing new riches. The search has not been dull.

“ For I am corn and not chaff, and will neither
be blown away by the wind, nor burst with the flail,
But I will abide them both
And in the end prevail,”

says Mr. MacDiarmid, who has earned the right to make such a bold Whitmannerly statement. But what of Mr. J. F. Hendry, for example, whose so-called apocalyptic style implies a comparable arrogance? It would be foolish to deny his quality to a man who can write of “ Promethean coinage clipped like fruit from the tumbling sun,” but while this and its neighbouring images do cast a light upon fragments of his thought, I find that the juxtaposition of his fragments and the arbitrary syntax in which they are confined produce dazzle rather than illumination; and to be dazzled is not a satisfactory apocalypse. The revelation accorded to St. John, though mysterious, is coherent in its mystery.

In the *Prelude to a Ballad for Heroes* occur the lines:

Arabia spills around us Time in to-morrow's galleon
Wrecked astride a long white ribbon of beach . . .
White with the shells of old forgotten creeds,

and this is something seen by the true eye of a poet. But for a purpose of his own Mr. Hendry is using a prism to break the light of his thought into its component colours, which he then presents in disorder. Here is poet's hubris, and hubris may well be part of the poet's endowment; but if his poems are to be reflected from the mirrors of memory and common knowledge—Lorca was not too difficult for the people nor Blake for memory—the spectrum must become light again.

The macaronics of Mr. Douglas Young—*A Letter to Hugh MacDiarmid*—are not merely an excellent entertainment but truly native, I think, in the scholastic tradition of Scotland, where learning has often been worn like a rather cumbrous ornament; and as my dictionaries fell fast and faster to the floor I seemed to hear “ the clapper is up again, and they rap with a flap, till a threefold clap made the sound to rebound ”—and in came the Duke of Mantua to meet a re-incarnation of that engaging polymath the Admirable Crichton.

But the scholar's enthusiasm has its dangers, and sometimes, when Mr. Young is determined to make his Scots as broad as the type will stand, the consonants stammer a little and the vowels, protesting, bleat. Read the lines :

leams your cheeks' blee saftlie sheenan, even and fou . . .
Deil tak your hinny-gowden blee,
mair wud nor onie bee tae pree,

and almost can you see the black-faces coming out of the hillside mist, a native breed, but mutton.

Mr. Young is an accomplished polyglot, but when less experienced cooks try to season their dishes with alien spice the result may be disastrous, as Mr. Sydney Goodsir Smith unhappily shows in *Halloween*. This remarkable poem opens superbly :

Rin an rout, rin an rout,
Mahoun gars us birl about,
He skirls his pipes, he stamps his heel,
The globe spins wud in a haliket reel.

It proceeds to witch's blasphemy :

We kenna hert, we kenna heid,
The deevil's thirled baith quick and deid,
Jehovah snores, an Christ himsel
Lowps i' the airms of Jezebel.

It concludes, or nearly concludes, with four great hammer-strokes of a seer's denunciation :

For want o luv we live on hate,
For want o heaven praise the State,
For want o richts we worship rules,
For want o gods the glibbest fules—

and in the midst of this magnificence it plants the dreadful couplet :

Thrawn, through the hellish orchestra
They yall wi Baudelaire " Je ne veux pas ! "

Now what is Baudelaire doing in this galley ? A little scholarship, a delicious gem from over the sea ? But to pin a bit of French paste on the good Scotch rags of Halloween !

Mr. MacDiarmid, who throws his bonnet higher than most, has sometimes to retrieve it from a more fearful swamp ; as witness his *Lamh Dearg Aboo*. It is addressed to Stalin, and he writes :

Suddenly we know what one meant who cried
" Montrose fought for more than his king—he fought for all men,"
And see the underlying meaning of 1645
And 1745 leap up in us again
—Lamh dearg aboo !

1645 saw Montrose's unavailing attempt to establish constitutional monarchy in place of a sectarian tyranny ; in 1745 the lost causes of Scotland's pastoral culture and the Stuarts' dynastic ambition went out together to their brave defeat—and Mr. MacDiarmid now sees the events of these years as precursors of Marshal Stalin's militaristic, totalitarian,

overwhelming statecraft! "Sometimes," said the White Queen, "I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

Oh, the vagaries of a poet's bonnet! Even the judicious Mr. Lindsay can fling it so far astray as to write: "England, the decadent paper enemy glowering envy across the fence." *Decadence* at the very conclusion of Mr. Churchill's immortal lustrum—*envy* in a people so conspicuously less given to it than any other of the civilised nations! "He said he *would* come in," the White Queen went on, "because he was looking for a hippopotamus. Now as it happened there wasn't such a thing in the house, that morning."

Hurriedly I pass to a very striking statement of what may be the major part of a poet's business:

Since on a scaffold of the times,
My ladders lead me from the rooms
Of quiet origin to encounters
On holy parapets and the world's rafters.

This mystical stanza leans boldly out of a poem called *The Children of Lanarkshire* by Mr. W. S. Graham. I like the stanza and I cannot wholly understand the poem—but I do not propose to blame Mr. Graham for my lack of comprehension, because I have done with fault-finding. The faults I have exhibited are of a kind, and that is why they have been exhibited. They are faults of exuberance. They are the faults that a man makes who is overplaying his hand. They are the back-door answer to the search I was making for confidence, high spirits, appetite, and intellect: Mr. Lindsay's poetic mansion is full of these qualities, and I have merely gathered a few orts—crusts and rind—because they are easy to carry.

In a brilliant poem called *The Pterodactyl and Powhatan's Daughter* Mr. Donald Macrae concludes an examination of Scotland with the modest resolve to

nourish—
If we have heart—some slight sober hope
Of to-morrow.

I, reading Mr. Macrae and his companions, find myself nourishing a much larger hope. I read again the translations of Mr. Sorley Maclean's *An Trom-laighe*, and the epigram *Knightsbridge of Libya*:

Though I am to-day against the breast of battle, not
here my burden and extremity; not Rommel's guns and
tanks, but that my darling should be crooked and a liar.

This is so good that the Gaelic original may well have something of the wrought perfection of Meleager or Simonides. I catch a glimpse of Miss Main's "tan horse leaning on a slant of sun," of the wild things in the dark of Mr. Fraser's mind, that

"Struggle like swans, half-blind with snow,
And the dying swans sing."

I return, as to a magician, to Mr. Sydney Smith and the witches' dance of *Halloween*; I am cold as desolation in the shadow of Mr. Montgomerie's

Epitaph, and humbled before that tremendous image of the drowned sailor's head sifting the sea-sand like a lost hour-glass.

Mr. Jeffrey, as often before, delights me with the measured beauty and clear-sighted dignity of his lines, and I am captured again, as I was when I first read *The Men of the Rocks*, by the enchanting individualism of Mr. Drinan's rhythmic statement. In its delicate yet decisive novelty it reminds me—not because they are alike, but because each has the novelty of something new-born, but born to a tradition—of the cunning running melodies of F. R. Higgins. I re-read the others—Ruthven Todd, Francis Scarfe, Tom Scott—and recognise admiringly the justification of Mr. Lindsay's venture. Scotland has poets again, and they are poets who put intellect in service to their passion, whose appetite is large, and their spirit high. If one can believe their evidence the *Sangschaw* period, now coming of age, is not yet coming to an end; but is about to enter some fine sturdy years.

ERIC LINKLATER.





NORMAN McCAIG

Quadrilles—Jig Time

THE Graces and the planets and everything
that goes lucky and beautiful in numbers
have a high feather and a bold song.
And there's a song here fluttered in rivers
that never halts on a weary foot
or flags in courage or wants wit.

O the leap of flame, the smoke dancers,
the curling and pointing to a dark roof!
Music and movement dirl in rafters
blackened by a labouring life,
and delft shining in the music's river
is twinkling with crochets and quavers.

Outside, grass nourishes the calf,
sea feeds its weeds, corn thrusts
smooth tubes of flutes through a sour tith ;
herrings strangle in nets, the breasts
of gannets dash the sea in sparkles
and petrels hang in the water-sprinkles.

All these water-haunting islands
make rhythm with the sea, whose time troubles
the pulse of a clock. And all the winds
of heaven stroking all their fiddles
lift their excitement to the black rafters
of night and its subtle fiery dancers.

And inside, the thumb-smear'd light
shakes with the violence of planets dancing,
symmetrical, vivid, exquisite in wit.
Every leap and turn is God's praising,
is a fury of worship, a devoting look,
a solitary leaping before the holy Ark.

The green sea walks through the room
swaying the pendulous briny light.
The wind shakes quavers, and from
corners the earth thrusts lamps of fruit.
And eight people have become nine Muses,
seven wise men, three lucky wishes.

Albatross

Now falls the bird where all the battle
of flacking oars splatters in the sea.
The glowing wings that wrestled three years away
crumple upon the brittle
and lazy diagrams of a bulging wave.
Fine drum-songs for his grave.

Bird no more blazing in my mind
I'll follow your hollow bones to the sea-foot.
I'll build you chambers of sand, I'll be sea's throat
and overcome of wind,
calling long choruses round the naked land
with combs of my long hand.

What wind will mutter in the double
desire of bright sun and lamenting moon
now that your slackened wings are folded down
and moused by a lipping ripple?
Wind's use is dead. But litanies of sand
will grow from my hollow hand.

Lark in the Air

THE tree on the green hill it dances and plays
and air is a garden where a goddess walks
and air is a garden honeyed with the sun's praise,
and no dream enchants the quiet river.

Glass walls are glittering round the groves of heaven,
the ambling of quiet beasts and the singing of birds.
Each planet makes verses of its turning stone
riming time and distance.

In this close corner summer is its temple.
Trees hold up histories in their holy hands.
I watch in the praising world grown therefore simple
the summer, the trees gravely dancing.

SYDNEY GOODSIR SMITH

Pompeii

VESUVIUS petrified a toun,
The lava frae her scarrie paps
Mither an bairn thegither hapt,
Maister an man, lyart an loon
In sarks o stane. Nou draps
Anither manna wi oor doom.

But nou the flesh is no the aim
Agin the free-mind nou they draw,
The saul o man they'd cage in braw
Neat, polished, menseless bane,
They'd pent in gray the watrigaw
And smoor the licht i the een o weans.

Blake said frae Caesar's diadem
Cam the strangmaist pyson kent,
We souk it down, daith's sacrament
That petrifies the wull, an then
Caesar we worship innocent
Astride the backs o his leal men.

Loch Leven

TELL me was a glorie ever seen
As the morn I left ma lass
Fore licht i the toun o snaw
And saw the daw
O' burnan crammassie
Turn the gray ice
O' Mary's Loch Leven
Til sheenan bress,
—An kent the glorie and the gleen
Was but the waukenan o her een ?

Hamewith

MAN at the end
Til the womb wends,
Fisher tae sea,
Hunter tae hill,
Miner the pit seeks,
Sodjer the biel.

As bairn on breist
Seeks his first need
Makar his thocht prees,
Doer his deed,
Sanct his peace
An sinner remeid;

Man in dist is lain
And exile wins hame.

ADAM DRINAN

To Fame

DYE your flaxen hair, you business-girl, Fame,
to brown and silver ;
and steady your sly bright eyes like those of my love
that x-ray my will !

As a lad your enticing legs I used to chase
round the street-corners ;
and the pale curve of your cheek has often checked
my worthier thoughts.

But now that at last you are coming and giving yourself,
gladly and gaily undressing,
saluting me and loving me, about at once
to serve and possess,

what do I find you but a fat, stupid child
that stares and listens ;
the dream is a nightmare body or hand can do
nothing to release.

Stop up your cauliflower ears, and shut your muttering mouth.
How do you find enchantment
in the sweet song of my voice and the parts of my playing ?
I am a sham.

My body is ugly with hate, and my voice hides contempt
of the rich and the tyrannic.
My spirit is infected with the sickness of families
driven from their land.

My heart is diseased for my people that can live only by death ;
and you praise verses !
I am dead for my country that is dead, and you adore
the liveliness of my words !

But if instead you could join me and curse with me in this
my suffering and hating,
out of the muddle and the malice then I would open my arms,
would be wooing you, Fame.

If you came to me as my love comes and lies beside me
supple with understanding,
the way she knows, then peace, of a sort, in the night
I would hold in my hand.

Love Song

SOFT as the wind your hair,
gull-gleaming your breasts.
I hoard no treasure there.
I do not grope for rest.
I seek you as my home,
that all your sensitive life
may fuse into my own,
and the world match with my wife.

I carry you out of this
to no enchanted isle.
Blood is tart in our kiss,
and no dream in your smile.
Bitter, bitter the hours
and coasts of our patrol,
Foggy this Minch of ours.
But I sail with your soul.

I come to you in the flame
of a burst and broken land.
There is acid in my brain
and withering in my hand.
Your touch will plot us wise,
your quiet keep it true ;
and joy be the starlight
to what we have to do.

The Last Wolf

HERE was the last wild wolf
shot ; the enemy silenced.
Hills run down into pools.
Sea-echo widens.
No more for him reivings
nor thievings of life ;
nor for us terror on the brae by night.

Resting the hunters stood,
a ring of breath, thinking.
One sneered " Last of the wolves ! "
and another kicked him.
No more for this one
vigil over lambs ;
no more goings with hate in their hands.

Their trophy carried they home
entire as the wolf used to.
They tore it bone from bone.
They burned and abused it.
They put a solemn finish
to filching and force
and the glowering red eye of self-thought.

All our land had peace
and security from famine.
Joy lit in our feet
laughter and lanterns ;
and men had cause to honour
the song of a good heart,
dignified, delicate in the art.

Yet here by night and by day
over the hill she fitters,
an old she-wolf, they say,
mother of fierce brigands ;
her dried dugs dunting
like buttons of horn,
acid to the eyes in the mist of dawn.

A smudge on the pebbles of the shore,
moodily she wanders,
and no fangs to her jaws,
and little the strength on her.
Nothing yields to her muscles,
and nothing to tear ;
but neither is it death to her anywhere.

No eye fiercer than hers,
 although she is feeble.
Who hunts? Nobody dares,
 nor man nor eagle;
 at sight of her dodging
 the opposite way,
eagle out of sky, man off brae.

And still as she prowls and she stops
 and she howls to the echoes,
we shelter in bald crofts
 and starve together.
 The last enemy's gone,
 but who'll be the one to boast
he shot the legend of a glowering ghost?

GEORGE BRUCE

A Man of Inconsequent Build

In memoriam H. G. B. (1873-1941)

I

FOR the few only time has gifts,
For most ignoring her crack.
They cultivate a shell resistant
To the taps, and willing deafness
Hear no news of death or life
Till at the brittle end.
But for the choice few
Participants, patient, unsheltered,
And tender to the fine point;
They have time's gifts.

II

Almost bankrupted, business tied,
The office held him to his chair,
He sweated, hoped, lost heart,
Yet through it noted his own suffering.
And with this art the casual seas
That made his trade, were legends,
Babbled the jingling river stones,
The flowers, that fringe the wave, stared out,
Books with their different names
And title deeds to recognition were grateful
For his eye. His Odyssey the trains between
Two ends of telephone; his giants competitors
But these became a man who limped,
Or interesting because he'd news from other parts,
Or held odd notions about signing cheques.

III

The roads to the port struggle from their enclosures
 Down and flatten clear to the spatulate piers—
 Ten fingers of them seaward—
 And a long encircling wall to with-hold surge.
 To—fro in summer on a pier point coils
 Of horse-drawn lorries, klaxoned motor power lorries
 Unwind in dust in a stretch up home
 To kipper sheds and yards, and down again.
 At the dead centre a man
 Manipulating the machinery of events
 Sucked so far within that shipmasts,
 The swinging arms, cursing ratchets,
 The shafts of airward steam,
 Shutter the sky. So far within—above
 The Jew bargains with a closed fist,
 The markets slip, dust spirals,
 So far within at the dead centre
 A man of inconsequent build.

IV

High upon a three-legged stool the small man
 With broad pale brow lined deep as if the pen
 Held tight in hand had pressed its ink
 In strokes. The office low-roofed, flaking plaster,
 And he absorbed in computation stares on ink.
(Sleep, sleep the wound in the brain.)
 A corrupting worm has fed upon the wood
 Of stool and floor. He calculates. *(Sleep, sleep.)*
 The low white light of morning breaks
 With birds, and still his eyes reflect only
 What the creatures of the day have seen,
 The white, the red, the gray of dawn.
(Sleep, sleep the dust.)
 Perilous, he pauses, ignorant of peril and,
 With acetylene's force upon the steel, stares
 On memory. *(Sleep the worm.)*
 Eyes open on micaceous beach,
 Islands assorted in their seas,
 The air talk talks of gulls,
 He stares without the pointed fear.
(Sleep, sleep the dust ; the wound, the worm in the brain.)

V

All held in a hand, all
 Emanating from a head—God's Head,
 Fish, antelope and star, held
 And scattered each to his kind.
 O to look equally on all, to stare
 Even where His effulgence breaks in kind,

Bursts as a hurtling night
 In a holocaust on a sail—
 A boat broken on an ancient pier
 With thrust of seeding water.
 Did he learn to look
 On jacket and sea boot cast with plasm,
 Watch in the beam of his intelligence
 The worm in the chrysalis and the old
 Woman on the stairs go from him,
 And not regret their difference ?

VI

To see without fear, to be
 A face in stillness. Latterly
 Catarrhs, deafness, rheumatics occupied
 His body ; unconfined anxieties
 Rummaged his tattered landscape.
 Only his will remained in eyes
 Time drawn. And then one day
 The stuccoed ceiling gave, dissolved
 To winter blue and in these airs
 Becalmed perhaps he saw
 The balance of his life—a gull
 Remote and small, distinct and hovering,
 Momentarily still with the apparent stillness
 Of the distant waterfall ; yet he at once
 In the enjoyment of distance
 And where his look fell,
 Winged, equable, far-seeing, benign, full,
 As if had been projected from the body
 The filled soul. He was there
 Totally it and its difference.

ROBERT GARIOCH

A Ballad of Robbie Burns

THE Christ sat high in Embro Toon
 skailin his bluid-rid wine :
*Oh whaw sall slorp this guidly drink,
 this winedark bluid o mine ?*

Up spak a sonsie minister,
 a learned saunt wiz he,
 he wiz geynear the best-leir'd man
 thit iver wan D.D.

*Oh A ne'er loo'd the taste o wine,
nir let it ding ma pride,
bit wud a pree the saut, saut bluid
thit rins frae yir riven side.*

*The Christ syne glowred on Embro Toon,
an angry man wiz he,
Whit richt hae ye ir yir fusty feres
thit ye ettle ti mell wi me?*

*Ye fuils an blin, aye, warse than blin,
A cud raise ye frae the deid,
gin thit ye werena si unco wersh
thit ye'd neither ken'd nir heed.*

*A wiz crucifeed bi a hanile o scribes
the livin spit o ye ;
the sodger whaw paiked me wi his spear
wiz a polisman in yir pey.*

*Ye dinny ken, ye daurna tell
whit dool A had ti bear,
nae mair ken ye it wiz yirsel
thit gar'd me suffer thayr.*

*Sin aye ye guzzle doon the dool
in sorrow-brimmin cups
thit I vicariously tholed
frae yir masochistic whups.*

*Yir glisk o life's a torture-rack,
yir drink a bitter bree,
yir food the flesh o yir murdered freen
an yir crest a gallows-tree.*

*Frae misty isle an sheilin come
dour ministerial ganters
whaw greet through thir nebs like the girnin drones
bit froom on the cheery chanters.*

*G'awaw an pauchle in the stuir
o a fusty Hebrew text,
bit mell nae mair wi live bricht men
in this world ir the next.*

*Sin up an spak a poet lad
thit Januar got in Kyle,
his shy bricht een like wishing-wells,
wi smeddum in his smile :*

*Oh A hae sooked the clover's life
an gethert floo'rs aff thrustles,
but aye some barren fig-tree perched
firnenst a kist o whustles
wud gar me tumble in the jags,
ir scrub me wi pig's brustles
in the bluid o the Lamb,
syne coup me, cleansed, back ti the bussles
frae whilk A'd clam.*

*They bid iz aw luve yin anither,
si luve A did, wi deil a swither,
atween braw sheets ir in the hither
it wiz aw yin,
bit damned they'd hae me awthigither
fir sic a sin.*

*A pray ye, Lord, whaw wan ti Hiven
a hanile o yir strength be given
ti this puir prentice
whaw sair ti yase this life hiz striven
thit Gode hiz lent iz.*

The Christ looked at the poet lad,
an kindly wiz his ee :
*Thou'rt fairly welcome, Rabbie lad,
ti the very life o me.*

McAlister

NOW I remember you, McAlister,
with whom I played those games of solemn chess,
moving our wooden stylised kings and queens
over a battlefield of polished wood,
safe, in your very comfortable room :
your fire-screen, your domesticated fire,
your draught-screen, screened by curtains from all draughts
that sneaked, by rare chance, past close-fitting doors
good Scottish tradesmen of the Regency
made, out of honest wood, for such as you.
Yes, you were cautious, never accepted gambit,
guarded your king behind three permanent pawns,
trapped in his own defence, till I, your guest,
would with crude tactics ding his castles down,
and shabbily give him checkmate in his keep.
You would set out the board, glance round the room,
take reassurance from your rows of books
that formed an inner padding on your walls ;
an antiseptic contact with the world :
Rimbaud and Dostoyevsky, cleanly wrapped,

no fester-stain, no epileptic froth ;
 a white-paged Burns, no trace of mud on him ;
 Beowulf, edited, with clever notes,
 well aired, without a whiff of fishy smell.
 The processed world, within your library,
 condensed into ideas, pasteurised,
 nourished your mind. But did you realise
 how Shelley felt ? Yes, you were sensitive.
 —But was it real to you ? I would insist.
 (Here you would readjust your well-carved knight,
 enjoy its surface with your finger-tips.)
 I would be aware of my vulgarity,
 feel like a draught that somehow had sneaked in.
 You would shiver slightly, make a cautious move,
 adjust the fire-screen :—Are you warm enough ?
 The fire would glow, and all be well again.
 Now a slow letter brings me news ;
 last May, I read, your room, your books, and you
 received a direct hit from a very large bomb.
 Strange ! whereas on these snow-covered plains
 of Central Europe I cough, and cough, and cough.

HUGH MACDIARMID

Listening to a Skylark

ARE you, bricht sangbird, o' the earth or sun ?
 Or baith ? and tell me, gin the last, O ! can
 A like sublime duality—in life,
 No' daith !—no whiles be won to by a man ?

For when, as noo, you soar in silence 'gainst the clear
 Plate o' the midday sun I only ken
 You're there gin you ootshine its licht
 Wi' some quick move, syne melt into't again.

Yet when your gowden sang comes glitterin' doon
 I ken at aince that oor pair human clay
 Can whiles, unlike a' ither mortal life but yours,
 Tak fire and soar and sing divinely tae.

Even as, O bird ! your fedderome can tak' on
 The *hail* sun's licht, shine ane wi't, or ootshine,
 Oor lourd flesh, God, has poo'ers to mak' oors tae
Maist o' the glory that else 'ud still be nocht but Thine.

Nearer, My God, to Thee

WHATNA peety it is, an auld Scot said,
Maist folk canna see mair o' oor country.
Nae man can be an atheist wha spends his life
' Mid the glories o' the mountains, believe you me !

To associate sport and the things unseen and eternal
—Sae close to the auld sportsmen—soonds nonsense noo, may be.
Yet there's really naething like shootin' a wheen grouse
For pittin' a man in touch wi' the Deity.

Boon Companions

TO sit with them and drink with them night after night
Gives me a rough pass into the kingdom not
Of their minds, their souls, their emotions, but rather
Of a kind of diffused being they have then got
In common. Different in appearance and personality
As in age, nevertheless in the social hour
There is an elemental commonalty between them
As between leaf and grass and wayside flower.

Of my First Love

O MY first love ! You are in my life forever
like the Eas-Coul-aulin* in Sutherlandshire
Where the Amhainnan Loch Bhig burn
Plunges over the desolate slopes of Leitir Dubh.
Silhouetted against grim black rocks
This foaming mountain torrent
With its source in desolate mountain tarns
Is savage in the extreme
As its waters with one wild leap
Hurl over the dizzy brink
Of the perpendicular cliff-face
In that great den of nature,
To be churned into spray
In the steaming depths below.
Near its base the fall splits up
Into cascades spreading out like a fan.
A legend tells how a beautiful maiden
In desperation threw herself
Over the cataract—the waters
Immediately took on the shape
of her waving hair,

* The beautiful Fall of Coul—the highest waterfall in Scotland.

And on moonlight nights she is still to be seen
Lying near the base of the fall
Gazing up at the tremendous cascade
Of some six hundred feet !

O my first love ! Even so you lie
Near the base of my precipitous, ever lonelier and colder life
With your fair hair still rippling out
As I remember it between my fingers
When you let me unloosen first
(Over thirty chaotic years ago !)
That golden tumult forever !

RUTHVEN TODD

Six Winters

SIX winters since, I dandled on my knee
The neat-tooled toy that was my son,
That yet was more than toy and more to me
Than all the herodian innocents rolled into one,
Or that child whose mother fled by the Egyptian sea.

Now I am gallows where no mandrake grows,
No bryony twines up my splintering grey shaft ;
Though hanging history creaks as the gale blows,
My sole possessions are the leaves that drift
This sodden autumn, waiting cementing snows :

Or else my fancy says I am explorer still,
Haunting the fringes of a never travelled land,
The hypochondriac dreamer, torn by an untrue ill,
Who dare not drop the guide-book from his hand,
Nor venture more than eye's length from the closest hill.

For these six winters of a war which stole
This that I loved so much, have also taken
Much that my time thought good, thought real,
Been X-ray shewing the diagnostic much mistaken,
Disclosed the gentle hand grown horned and cruel.

Easter 1945

THIS Easter when our time runs out
Before us like a road, the squalid
Shuttering of our minds encloses
What the heart wished for—the roses,
The past clamped down like a screw-on lid,
And the mild disquiet of a half-felt doubt.

In hedges where the blackthorns burst
The cruel spurs are hidden in the white.
Unlucky to house the crowning thorn,
To watch the women who sit and mourn
For a world less firm than a dream in the night,
Or a faith that was faithless from the first.

The sledge of time has fixed the nails
Too deeply for the saw and file
Which the enquiring surgeons hold
To separate warm flesh from cold
Intolerable metal. He will remain while
Clocks run down, while all hope fails.

So now we pause to check the hour,
To wonder whether dreams survive
The agony that knows no end ;
As if our time can ever bend
Back to greet those who were alive,
The unhappy, the crooked, and the poor.

Who hang upon our grinning world,
Without the prospect of a further day
To give them back the lives they spent,
Watching the skies' explosives rent,
While temples crashed and love grew grey
Among the words that hatred hurled.

ALBERT MACKIE

Weary Atlas

(from the German of Heine)

I'M a wanchancy Atlas that maun cairt
The mapamund o' misery on my shooother,
And bear what's no be borne, until my hert
Is crushed intill a pooother.

Och, pridefu' hert, ye bude to hae your wey,
Ye socht a happiness that kent nae morrow,
Or else a misery that would lest for aye,
And noo—ye hae the sorrow.

She Lauch'd and Skirled

(from the German of Heine)

THEY baid thegither like hose and brogue.
She was a randy and he was a rogue,
When to his pliskies he was thirled,
She plumped on the bed and she lauched and skirled.

The day gaed by in fun and feast,
At nicht she cosied him till her breist.
And when to the jile she saw him birlid,
Aside the lozen she lauched and skirled.

He sent her a letter—"O come to me
Your mou I hunger sair to pree.
Wi' love for you my heart is dirled."
She shook her heid, and lauched and skirled.

At sax in the mornin his neck they thrawed,
At seeven they streekit him under the sod,
And jimp as the 'oor o' aicht was tirlid,
She drank rid wine, and lauched and skirled.

DOUGLAS YOUNG

To a Friend on a Campaign

YE'RE aff and awa, meikle the dreid
lest the faemen shoot ye.
Ye've taen the warld under your heid
on cauldruif muir and lanely glack,
and it's dreich without ye.
I'll aye think lang while ye be back.

Merry we hae been thegither,
mair delyte and lear
frae ye I've had than onie ither
chiel that ever I hae kent.
Nane has come sae near
my ain ingyne's orra sclent.

Ye first outhoundit me to sclim
our Scottish Helikon,
and shared my ilka ploy and whim
in Gaelic poetry and in Scots,
forbye kept me on
the anely course for patriots.

I ken that gin I dinna see
yoursel onie mair
the lave o my life canna be
crouse as it has been sae lang,
blyth and free o care,
like the owrecome o an auld sang.

For a Wife in Jizzen

LASSIE, can ye say
whaur ye ha been,
whaur ye ha come frae,
whatna ferlies seen?

Eftir the bluid and swyte,
the warsslan o yestreen,
ye ligg forfochten, whyte,
prouder nor any queen.

Albeid ye hardly see me
I read it in your een,
sae soft blue and dreamy,
mindan whaur ye've been.

Anerly wives ken
the ruits o joy and tene,
the march o daith and birth,
the tryst o love and strife
i the howdumbdeidsunsheen,
fire, air, water, yirth,
mellan to mak new life,
lauchan and greetan, feiman and serene.

Dern frae aa men
the ferlies ye ha seen.

Sodger's Sang i the Aist

til the melodie i Der Zupfgeigenhansl, Es dunkelt schon in der Heide.

(*frae the German o Erich Fried*)

THE gloaman comes owre the muirland,
it's time to haud back hame:
we've boozed up aa the reid wine,
we lea the whyte alane.

I heard a heuk douncaaan
the corn wi 'ts reeshlan duint:
I heard a corbie crawan,
'My honour I hae tint.'

And hae ye tint your honour?
Sae tint I my guid faith.
Our weird has gien the baith o us
a bluidreid reekie daith.

A croun as reid as roses
whaur I hae stuid sall faa :
the braid houms o Ruskinland
are smoot wi an unco snaw.

The snaw is thowan rowthie,
it rowes wi graimfu spate :
it rairs at my sweethairt's chalmer,
sae she maun lowse the yett.

It thrangs my sweethairt's gairden,
whaur's neither lass nor loon.
She suldna byde on me mair,—
soom hame, my wee reid croun.

The Bairns' Slauchter o Bethlehem

(*frae the German o Erich Fried*)

eftir the portraict by Pieter Breughel

BETHLEHEM is a Fleming toun.
Word comes the bairnies maun be slain.
Ae squad bydes at the corse, and round
the houses the lave grip ilk wean.

The snaw scrunches atour their shuin,
and thows in dubs throu ilka chalmer . . .
An auntran skreigh or a graimfu din . . .
Syne calm as eeswal, ay, or calmer.

A man can thole rowth o dule,
wi dragoons standan along the street
to speir for grace wald set a fule.
But the weemenfowk byde and greet.

They canna lea their bairns ligg,
they speir at the trees, the dogs, the snaw.
The lyft and the yird around sae big
and the reid daithwound sae smaa ?

Can ye credit—a blaw that brings nae bluid
is eneuch, or ae straik o a knife ?
And sae sune duin ? The Lord beguid
to tak a day to mak thon life.

The bairnie's dozent and maks nae quhither,
the mortclaith-lyft smoores aa the place
wi clorty smytes, and the frichtit mither
blaws them aff the cauld wee face.

W. S. GRAHAM

Definition of My House

HALFWAY victim to the many, halfway victorious
Orator of infant earth's all nations all nature's
His halls and heights, weathers and contraries ;
My arms my walls fend off, my vaned roof ferries
The firearmed day.

For a while the hill, the stroller by us all
Shoulders makes mortal my loaded found, and angel
Easier thundering books breadcrumbs at my sill,
More easily wakens wide earth's window from exile.

It's no room lost for less than the whole advance
Into all sides. Dwelling there shelter's innocence
Halfway keeps off my own, halfway keeps once
And changing all, my work and what it fountains.
The foamarmed sea

At each stonerolling corner corks me higher
From flood to dove, the food of Heaven's flower
That follows, locked in never weather ending fire,
Me through the thunder of my surrounding hour.

Each stone has cornered my breath and the flying cave
At once keeps whole in bone my table and the grave.

Definition of My Brother

EACH other we meet but live grief rises early
By far the ghost and surest of all the sea
Making doorway to within me. My bowed-down holy
Man of the watchman minute begs that reply,
Your voice or mine.

One another I leave into Eden with. I commit
The grave. Poverty takes over where we two meet.
Time talks over the fair boy. His hot heartbeat
Beats joy back over the knellringing till defeat.

It's a contrary son I'm of. My wave-felled kin
Steal out on the worlding waters farback again
Away to the whirling beaches to reach his alone
Lost eyes and sprinkled miracles of destruction.
Beggar to shine
In once the whalesway wearing the starboard freights,
I promise I'll ship the mad nights to bright benefits
To that seastrolling voice in waves and states
Not mine but what one another contrary creates.

Or do we know a prince bleeding more gently
Away to best the morning at its gates ?

MAURICE LINDSAY

The Exiled Heart

TWO purple pigeons circle a London square
as darkness blurs and smudges the shadowless light
of a winter evening. I pause on the pavement and stare
at the restless flutter of wings as they gather flight,
like rustling silk, and move out to meet the night.

And my restless thoughts migrate to a Northern city—
fat pigeons stalking the dirty cobbled quays,
where a sluggish river carries the cold self-pity
of those for whom life has never flowed with ease,
from a granite bridge to the green Atlantic seas :

the bristling, rough-haired texture of Scottish manners ;
the jostling clatter of crowded shopping streets
where lumbering tramcars squeal as they take sharp corners :
the shared-room slum where a drunken husband beats
his pale girl-wife in one of his weekly fits :

where my heart first jiggled to the harsh and steady sorrow
of those for whom mostly the world is seldom glad,
who are dogged by the flat-heeled, footpad steps of to-morrow ;
for whom hope is a dangerous drug, an expensive fad
of the distant rich, or the young and lovesick mad :

where chattering women in tearrooms, swaddled with furs,
pass knife-edged gossip like cakes, and another's skirt
is unstitched with sharp words, and delicate, ladylike slurs
are slashed on the not-quite-nice or the over-smart
till smoke to the eyes is a hazy, prickled hurt.

I remember Glasgow, where sordid and trivial breed
from the same indifferent father ; his children side
with the mother whose sour breasts taught them first to feed
on her hot, caressing hates that sear and divide,
or swell the itching, distended bladder of pride.

Yet my guilty sneers are the tossed-down, beggar's penny
which the goaded heart throws out, in vain, to procure
the comfortable forgetfulness of the many
who lie in content's soft arms, and are safe and sure
in the fabled Grecian wanderers' lotus-lure :

who forget the sullen glare of the wet, grey skies,
and the lashing Northern wind that flicks the skin
like a whip, where poverty's dull and listless eyes
are pressed to the window, hearing the friendly din
of the party, watching the lights and laughter within.

But oh, I cannot forget, so I wait and wonder,
how long will the thinly dividing window hold,
how long will the dancing drown the terrible anger
of those, the unwanted, who peddle their grief in the cold,
wrapped in their own despair's thick and unkindly fold ?

Yet evil is no pattern of places
varied, like terraces from town to town,
A city's charms and individual graces
are but the sculptors' bleak and basic stone,
the photographic face without a frown.

The wound is in this bewildered generation,
tossed on the swollen, analytic mood,
its compass point no longer veneration
of that lost God who rewarded the simple and good,
vivid and real, now, only in childhood.

For we, the children of this uncertain age,
breathing its huge disasters and sad airs,
have seen that our warm, humanitarian rage
is impotent to soothe war's animal fears,
can never quell the lonely exile's tears.

So the heart, like a wounded seabird, hungers home
to muffled memories on faintly-beating wings
which once climbed over history's clouded foam
to that clear sky where each new hero flings
the careful stone that fades in slow, concentric rings.

Munelicht

NICHTERTALE a siller net
cast oot bi the mune
dods upo the blirtie swaul
affshore frae Dunoon.

Aince, a fisher-laddie stude
bi anither sea,
watched anither sort o net
kaim Lake Galilee.

He wha wi a raip o tow
pu'ed a muckle haul,
reaped a kaithan aa unkennt
o the human saul.

Twice a thousand years hae passed
sin he keppit Christ ;
lang ower sin anither catch
sud hae been enticed.

Mindan o the haufan creeds
hinderan frae ocht
worth the haean i the yird,
nichtertale I'm flaught. . . .

Wha's tae say that I'll no pull
frae yon dreepan net
sic a sudden sclent o trith
years'll never ket?

SOMHAIRLE MACGHILLEATHAIN

Do Bhoirionnach Briagach Coirbte

NA robh mise marbh san Fhàsaich
—Mar a b'fheàrr leat gu robh—
Nach e do bhriagan a bhiodh fàsghor
Iomadhathach air mo chorp?

Air gach bruan de ghainmhich thioram
A thacadh mo bhial's mo shùil
Bhiodh briag agadsa m'a coinneamh
—Cha b'e Himeimat an dùn.

Cha bhiodh corp eadar El Ràgail
Is Eleut El Tàmar an sgrios
Leis nach b'fheàrr a luchd gainimh
Mar chòmhdach na do bhriag chlis.

'N déidh t'adhaltranais 's do ghille-mirein
A shaobh thu le airgead blàth
'S ann a chuireadh do bhriag ealamh
Cleòc air salchar do chàs.

TO A DEPRAVED LYING WOMAN

If I were dead in the Desert—as you would like me to be—would not your lies be luxuriant, many-coloured on my corpse. For every grain of dry sand choking my mouth and eye, you would have a lie to match it—Himeimat would not be such a pile. There would not be a corpse between El Ragil and bloody Eleut El Tamar who would not prefer as clothing his load of sand to your nimble lie. After your adultery and Nancy-boy who misled you with his warm money, your ready lie would put a cloak over the sordidness of your vicissitudes.

* El Ragil : near where we were in violent action in September, 1942.

† Eleut El Tamar : where we had a bad day, June 2nd, 1942.

‡ Himeimat : the “ mountain ” on the edge of the Quattara Depression.

DEORSA CAIMBEUL HAY

Clann Adhaimh

SUD bàrca beag le antrom gaoithe siorruidh
'na siùil chaithte, a' dìreadh cuain gun chòrsa,
s i leatha fhéin an cearcal cian na faire,
is gul is gàireachdaich troimh chéil' air bòrd dhith.

Tha Bròn, Aoibh, Aois is Oige, Sàr is Suarach
a' tarruing nam ball buan a tha ri 'bréidibh ;
tha Amaideas is Gliocas, Naomh is Peacach
air a stiùir mu seach, is càch 'gan éisteachd.

Fo speur tha uair grianach, uair sgreunach,
—clais is cìrein—fèath is doinionn—théid i,
gu faire nach do leum saidh riamh no sùilean,
s a lorg s a h-ùpraid ghuth 'dol bàs 'na déidhse.

Ceangal

Sud i is brù air a siùil s i 'deuchainn gach sgòid,
long àrsaidh le sunnd is sùrd is léireadh air bòrd,
faire làn rùn nach do rùisgeadh fo cheann a croinn-spreòid,
is cop uisge a stiùrach a' dùnadh s 'ga chall sa' mhuir mhòir.

ADAM'S CLAN

Yonder sails a little bark, with the grievous burden of an eternal wind on her worn sails, climbing an ocean that has no coast, with a confusion of weeping and laughter aboard her.

Grief, Joy, Age and Youth, Eminent and Of-No-Account are heaving at the everlasting gear that trims her canvas ; Folly and Wisdom, Saint and Sinner take her helm in turn, and all obey them.

Under a sky now sunny, now lowering—trough and crest—calm and tempest—she goes on to a horizon that neither stem nor eye yet overleaped, and her track and her tumult of voices die astern of her.

Envoi

Yonder she goes with a curve on her sails, putting each sheet to the test, an ancient ship with bustle and cheer and suffering aboard her ; a horizon full of secrets unrevealed under her bowsprit head, and the foam of her wake closing and losing itself in the great sea astern.

Oran

GRÀDH nan gruagach, o'n dh'fhàs i fuar rium,
cha n-eil dol suas domh no suain 'na déidh,
o'n chuir i suarach a' bhruidhinn chluaineis
s gach coinneamh uaigneach dh'fhàg luath mo cheum.
Eiridh 'n latha is a' ghrian le 'gathannaibh,
éiridh 'n ceathach rith' o'n achadh réidh,
éiridh 'n driùchda bharr fhlùr is gheugan—
och, c'ùin' a dh'èireas mo chridhe fhéin ?

Shiubhail mi anmoch fonn dall is garbhlach,
sios leis a' Gharbh Alld s mi falbh gu sgith,
gus an d'ràinig mi'n cnocan càrnach
os cionn na fàrdaich a b'àros di ;
an ciar a' mhochthrath s an speur ag gormadh
chaidh an t-eun gu gairm ann a baile shìos,
chunnaic mi'n smùid teachd o thaigh mo rùinsa,
shil mo shùilean is thionndaidh mi.

Tha tasgaidh luachmhor am falt mo ghruagaich,
mar bheairteas uaislean 'na chruachan ann,
òr nan cuilean os cionn a gruaidhse,
am pailteas ruadh-òir 'na chuachan trom ;
fion dearg a beul is e ruiteach leusach,
s a muineal glégheal mar éiteag thonn,
mar aiteal gréine air chathadh bheuchthonn,
no sneachd 'ga shéideadh air sléibhtean lom.

Nuair thig a' ghaoth bharr an àilein bhraonaich
bidh fàile mhaothlus s i caoin 'na beul,
is cridheil faoilidh thig oiteag chaoilghlinn,
roid an aonaich s am fraoch 'na sgéith ;
ma's gaoth a deas i a thig g'ar tatadh
o shlios an cadaltach blàth ri gréin,
thig smuain mo ghràidh leath' is smuaircean cràidhte,
a' ghaoth a thàinig o 'h-àite fhéin.

SONG

Day will rise and the sun from eastward,
the mist in his rays from marsh and plain,
the dew will rise from the bending branches—
och, when will my own heart rise again ?
For a treasure shines on the head that haunts me,
like old kings' vaults or the spoils of Spain,
gold hair falling about her shoulders,
the red gold pouring like burning rain.

Her mouth is the sun through red wine shining,
lips that are tender and fine with pride,
White is the neck where the ringlets cluster,
like a white stone under the running tide,
like a burst of sun on broken water
when the mad wind scatters the spindrift wide,
or the drifting snow that the wind is blowing,
whispering, cold on the bare hillside.

By night I travelled rough lonely places,
and down by Garvalt I took my way,
till I reached at dawning the rocky summit,
above the town where my darling lay ;
the stars were fading, the sky was paling,
the cock told loud in her home of day,
I saw the smoke from her hearthstone rising,
I wept, and sighing I turned away.

From showery meadows the wind comes softly
with a scent of blossoms and tender grass ;
heartsome the breezes from narrow valleys,
myrtle and heather they breathe, and pass ;
but the south wind singing, that comes to lull us,
from sleepy hillsides and seas of glass,
brings to me thoughts of care and sorrow
out of the airt where dwells my lass.

J. F. HENDRY

Flutes

CAN it be true the world is a skeleton or cage
Ringing the robin in the blood
Or that the birds of heaven nest
In singing and in rage ?
Then the wild briar of imprisoned fury
Called the heart in the breast
Seals up war and flood.
And starshells over our darkening stage
Weave in leaves of tinsel for the troops of mercy,
Blood and tenderness and mercury.

Mills of steel and ice, in a frozen girdle,
Churning saint and criminal
Music through the stream,
Lock love up in fiords.
Their harps are straw. Their effigies in the grange
Wreck in dread ritual.
Eternity and dream.
To carve a stone ear of shells, where echoes range,
Great wheels of anguish, tearing wild seabirds
Round the heads of the deranged.

Then clothe the beggar in the ice of clarity.
He is the mourner for the monk :
An idiot in the tatters of the town
The ruins of immortality.
Lop the steeple, cap and bells, peal out :
—Tower, tumbling clown,
Conceit and politics are drunk :
Inferno is the Mint of cast-off charity :
Shake pride, scorn and anger down : shout
Broken is Earth's roundabout !

Horns

LUST in the centre of love beats out this whirligig kingdom
Bedded in smoked-out villages slaving bees and rum.
Science, squint as a dunce, mints money of excrement.
Glory's a fairground. War lights the trinkets of government.
The whore on her guillotine honeymoon kissing the blarneystone
Beheads the generations, seats Inferno on the throne
Who writes with whirling knives, not pencil stumps of pity.
The tyrant from her tower condemns to death responsibility
His iron rice on the marriage hearse would widow Eternity.
He holds the electric chair in the madman's University.

Love's head lies on a charger. Veiling the Chair of Humanity
Salome mirrors the married statue, Herod as a faun.
Deaf to holy fountains, blind as the dead dawn
In her windows' immaculate hospitals glittering inanity
He blows his bubble philosophies decreeing martyrdom.
Gaudeamus igitur! Drown him in pit and drum!
Ring his sunless soul its paced and terrible circus!
Sawdust shears his nerves. The trapeze swings, his rack for the saint.
Distempered in the innocence of children, mad as paint,
Her clown, festooned in camouflage, strips, a blood-stained tiger.

The People's hands sound tuning-forks where Revolution whistles.
The white bread of peace is locked in the popcorn prison of whores.
Slobbered in the bowels of murder, their eyes open swingdoors
Into the wilderness where banners of heroes emblazon thistles.
Whose Hands chalk up the bribes of man's assassin, money.
Who sells Love's wreath? Who can buy Albion's pardon?
Darling let us light up Hell where corpses ground in honey
Wander warrens of fear planting terror for a garden.
In this Pompeii of banks and girders they are sandbags burst at the seams.
Say: "O the air is wide, brother, and there is room for dreams!"

Castanets

HAIL and farewell! Cast off these windlass hours!
To-day drops overboard a rescue-buoy
Imprisoning the empty song of the sea
For a sailor quiet as a toy
In a cage that held no bird.
Our spools are waterfalls and gallant mornings
Breasting the blinds like bandages or swans
To-day the soldier is frozen as an acorn.
The surgeon has chloroformed cloud.
Hail and farewell in a proud swathe you mowers.

Waking the cobbles like waves in a winepress street
Dropping the sun in a pail with oranges
The cracked and strawberry mouth of pride and defeat
Discovered hearts that beat their weaving shreds
Into the canvas vineyard of a shroud of heirs.
It was blood they mined in the colliery, not stars.
Treading the truce of want and lit with kissing
They heard the world's iron music through sweet fog
Toll war for the dead and the damned and the missing
Floating in the bridal path of ships.

To-day unveils the statue of love in the beggar's eyes
And moves the stone hand of his terrible grief
Shining like the coin of a child in the fountain,
Into the pride of exile in an age of sighs.
Singing the dead and the betrayed black psalms,
The weathercocks of Hell are crowing.
The archaeologist buried in his broken amphitheatre,
The jeweller confined in the lights of madness,
Bleed their diamonds beyond human aid.
For them this foliage of water and white palms.

WILLIAM JEFFREY

George Bannatyne (1545–1608)

GOD'S truth, my George! It seemed a waesome day
When, happit to the e'en, you fled the toun,
The Egyptian plague there breenging forth in soun
O' bairns and kimmers, stinkand in decay!
Your merkit gone, you stumpit north o'er Tay
(Your mither's banes ootcrying: come, puir loon!)
And there in Newtyle doucely sat ye doun,
And damned the warld to birl upon its way!

A bumper to you, auld George Bannatyne!
In nichts o' mirk within that Angus bield
Your quill compilit routh o' sangs divine
Frae "copies auld, markit and vitillat,"
Conserving frae the brack the Muse's field,
Dunbar's reid rose, and Henryson's gib cat.

STEWART C. HOOD

Genetics

So my charmer, you choose to conjure—
Shuffle and stack the pack again ;
Let's hope there's a lucky gene for joker
Or royal flush with ace, king, queen.

May the hand be played with fine finesse
That runs rich seamed in your mining stock
And taking a lead from my recklessness,
Hope in hazard, gambler's luck.

Take your time then, gentle juggler,
Plot the points until it's planned ;
Carry it safely, cunning smuggler,
And then lay down the perfect hand.

Love

LOVE'S a dumb idiot
Till its fingers pry
Spelling with blind man's palps
The body's Braille ;
Then where our glib
Unwithered tongues would fail
It speaks into the dark
Its deafmute's cry.
But there's no power
In your Protean thighs
To make my muffled heart's
Tapped code reveal
How your breasts' magnets
Twist its buried steel—
Shrapnel from Spain
Whose haemorrhage never dies.

God's Mills Grind on Lethe

On a mass grave near Kharkov
(From the German of Erich Fried)

A corpse-jammed river full in spate
Flows in my dreams throughout the night.

Its broken reaches white with foam
Are lines of bleached skulls in my dream.

And all the wrack its waves drive down
Are bones and hair swept on and on.

The horror of its pothole's shoal
Where worm fish drift has filled my soul.

The drops that fill the bank-high stream
Are corpses—man and wife and wean.

The river roaring in my ear
Is the long constant note I hear.

It flows through stark hard frozen ground
Yet on its pools no ice is found.

The greatest mill-wheel time has seen
Is driven by that channelled stream.

It drives the mill both night and day,
The mill grinds to the miller's cry.

The miller shouts, the great mill groans ;
There's not a seed escapes its stones.

And no fine seed is ever lost—
The mill-stones grind it down to dust.

The miller laughs, the millstones grind ;
The waters fill my night and mind.

KEITH DOUGLAS

Leukothea

WHEN you were alive, my *Leukothea*
your loveliness was puzzling
and only I knew the processes
by which my ornament lived and breathed.
And when you died
I was persuaded to store you in the earth,
and I remember when they put you there
your too expressive living eye
being covered by the dark eyelash
and by its lid for a cerement.
At that moment those who looked at you
wondered, I know, how you could be made
in such exquisite material,
and I would not explain for the world.
Even when they put the soil above you
they saw its unusual texture. The very grass
was a strange plant, precious as emeralds.

So all these years I have lived securely. I knew
I had only to uncover you
to see how the careful earth would have kept
all as it was, untouched. I trusted the ground
I knew the worm and the beetle would go by
and never dare batten on your beauty.

Last night I dreamed and found my trust betrayed
only the little bones and the great ones, disarranged.

These Grasses, Ancient Enemies

THESE grasses, ancient enemies
waiting at the edge of towns,
conceal a movement of live stones,
the lizards with hooded eyes
of hostile miraculous age.

It is not snow on the green spurs
of hilltops, only towns of white
whose trees are populous with fruit ;
with girls whose velvet beauty is
handed down to them, gentle ornaments.

Somewhere in the hard land
and vicious scrub, or fertile place
of women and productive trees
you think you see a devil stand
fronting a creature of good intention,

or fair apples where the snake plays—
don't you ? Sweet leaves but poisonous,
or a mantrap in a gay house,
a murderer with a lover's face
seem to you the signs of this country ?

But devil and angel do not fight,
they are the classic Gemini
for whom it's vital to agree
whose interdependent state
this two-faced country reflects. Curiously

though foreigners we surely shall
prove this background's complement,
the kindly visitors who meant
so well all winter but at last fell
unaccountably to killing in the spring.

SEUMAS C. STEWART

The Salmon

YE were the athel, the lord o the river,
Blythe was the glint o yere scales in the licht.
Ye were a makar 'at sang life for ever
In the lowp 'at dang gems frae yere lire sae bricht.

Wi yere ergh siller flaucht frae the ring-runklt watter
Ye sang o the blude-baub asteirin in youth :
Ye sang o aa joy in yere emerant spatter,
Ilk aiker ye made was a ballant o truth.

An laich in the pule neth the rax o the arn,
Soondless ye soomt in the yird-marlt gloam,
Onkytht in a wint, airchin eident an yarn,
Ye kentna the dule whilk ye dowtna tae goam.

—Reid gantin chollers an drowie reid een
an a reid arlitch scart whaur the fish-heuk had taen.

SYDNEY D. TREMAYNE

Comfort Me Now, My Love

COMFORT me now, my love, for what I hoped
Drags at my backward heart its heaviness.
The sky forgives no wings their weariness ;
The faltering dove has gained no rock to rest,
And I have fears that man is loneliness,
Is lust and loneliness that drapes with dreams
His death's too pitiful ungainliness
And falls with his illusions. Oh my darling,
Be near me in this callous spring's unfurling,
Teach me that last year's bird and last year's bomb
Plunged down in a distant land beyond our time
And love keeps faith to pay the debt of living.
Pluck from my heart, too small to hold the world,
This love in-driven deep, a thorn of grieving,
And take it, only take it, for your own ;
Train it to grow a garland of forgiving
Nursed by your hands from this unkindly soil.
Oh take it all, and take and take it all,
That it may grow in richness of its giving.

The wolf of self destroys, the wolf is poised
To tear my human likeness to the stone,
The wolf of love denied, the wolf of evil,
That strips the heart's nobility and levels
Our will to what we are. And I am small,
So small and frail of fear and bitterness.
Do not abandon me to my own likeness.
Bear with me now, my love, for what I hope
Is farther than my spirit's lonely reach,
Yet at your finger's touch my heart may catch,
As raindrops catch the light, a gentleness.

G. S. FRASER

The Black Cherub

Per la contradizione che nol consente.—DANTE

BECAUSE the contradiction does not allow
Us to be happy and also to know how
I will give a penny to anyone who begs
And say my prayers at night to a girl's legs,

Because the contradiction does not consent.
That what we say resemble what we meant
My sonnets perish in a burning shower,
My prose preserves the balance of the power,

Because the contradiction thinks it well
That casuists on the whole should go to hell
I shall balance revolution against heaven
And die a bourgeois still, and still unshriven,

Because the contradiction does not permit
Hegels to find a resolution for it
Hitlers who seek to unify the world
Shall be in the southernmost flames of hell curled,

With all the other fraudulent counsellors
Who tell the wicked how to cast down towers,
Who sell for gold the city or the girl,
And for whom now hell's farting bagpipes skirl,

For they all go down to the teeth and the claws and the ice
Where Judas and Brutus realise they are not nice
And the great poets wander and sniff from high
At the smell of hell's ineffable canaille,

And the only lucky are like Uberto who
Thought that they knew more than they really knew,
And swell up erect from their bed of pain,
"As if they held the Inferno in great disdain,"

Or the scholarly old homosexual who still
Retains a pride in his grammatical skill
And though he must dodge the column, and cannot choose,
"Runs like the sprinters who win, and not who lose."

Since our pride is not from God, by our own will
We can keep ourselves from the filthiest pouches still :
From the lake of pitch where the devils bite like curs
Or the sea of shit that engulfs the flatterers,

But at night we may go down on our cold knees :
"To-morrow, God make me not a drunkard, please :
But let me have the pleasure of being drunk,"
And the contradiction has us, and we are sunk,

Or, "Let my love be pure and gentle at last :
And let it be cleansed from the stains and the pains of the past :
And let the girl come easily to my bed,"
And the black cherub holds the hairs of our head.

But worse than us the hypocrites who cry,
"Let the world have peace, and let the starving die :
Let the rich lie in an easy bed at nights :
Let the fat dog sleep whom the wicked flea bites,

"O, let us have peace and let the heart be still :
The cold and the empty of heart will never kill :
Let the poor know how strong are the bars of the cage
That they may not shake them in their futile rage !"

But from love alone, and not from the cold grease
Of your rich tables, will you build peace,
Nor with your poverty constrain God's plenty :
Per la contradizione che nol consente !

WILLIAM J. TAIT

Rondel

(*Villon in Shetlandese*)

DAETH, I curse dy cruel haund
'At took da lass I loved frae me,
An' yit will no contentit be,
'Less I stey langsome in da laund
O' weary livin', an' demaund
Whit faut shu iver did ta dee,
Daeth.

Tho' we wir twa, ee hert we awned ;
If hit be daid, dan I man dee,
Or geng on livin' lifelissly
Lack an auld pictir puirly drawn,
Daeth.

SHAUN FITZSIMON

Easter Bells

WHO, God-reft, from his own height flung
in doubt-deadening mind hour,
has heard Sunday-pealing clang bells
twilight wept hilled and valleyed
through the memory-sodden sobbing air,
and saw Christface peer
with deep thorned gaze
from belled-alive dark bush
and bell-trembled gentle tree
and from out His poem-packed eyes saw
all meaning richly teem,
and no longer alone would not be glad ?

Wind-tongued cleavers of evil
love-ennobled iron clang
flash of Him hurled, as eyes baring
the impoverished roots of us,
toll this half of earth white
like cleansing draught of Christ-gaze ;
reach out to them who living kill,
who dying weep perhaps,
ring out of the aching air
their laughter as they walked here,
from the fields and the rocks ring
echoes of them which sleep there ;
let them hear who, alone, sigh.
This be THEIR resurrection.

The Two Minutes Silence

(11th November, 1945)

AS though from a long, a grieving sleep,
to the cenotaph and quietly
they come ; some to pray, some to weep,
others to stand silently.

Laughter is a far sound, is negation
in this shuffling crowd November-gloomed,
waiting as in time of dispensation,
the sun a rock reeling doomed.

And how did she fare ? that grey one there—
did it seem like years, or just a day,
then night ? since stunned with the words of war
she felt her life slip away.

And that limping soldier—did he walk
the farthest mile with calm endurance
for cowards, who, fearing action, talk ?
their wrongs his bitter penance.

And she with grief-probed face young mothers have,
when loud as crack and thunder of Springthaw,
they hear in heart's high-ceilinged, two-mouthed cave,
the harped veins' song plucked raw.

And the waded shallows of her face,
ripples of memory seem to light,
as when something loved beyond a fence,
unloved passes out of sight.

O for whom here now is meaning left,
in those things that have meaning once ?
Gone O blown on what wild tide's long drift,
the child-broomed wishes of once ?

And gone for them is a word as wide,
as the emptiness it sounds, when graves
are opened to the sky to take, and hide
Leprosy each with each grieves.

Now in the silence they are ageing ;
knock hearts on hungered ribs one drum
invoking war drom depths with feet, a thing
shaggèd with masses of time

Warding off the silence with great hands,
while its shapes in convolution roll
back the dead, there on the square it stands—
and the silence is its soul.

TOM SCOTT

To X

NOT because your body is lovely or your hair
Nor those wombs of light where love suffers openly
Nor only for the sphere our bodies make at night
Though these contribute, dear, and flow toward.

But because of the tears and our human needs
Because we met in the dark and bred a flame
That kindled in the ribs of each though never together
Fires that joined light across the seas that severed.

Because love is not ours to command or commend
But a wreath of fulfilment offering us
Ourselves through the gift of surrender :
Not to be coldly treated ever but made at home.

And because the heart mumbling over its isolation
Rehearses death in desiring all its fears
Till love unlocks its tethered floods
Unfolding slowly the humble mother and compasses.

DONALD G. MACRAE

From Fifth Century A.D.—The Poet in His Garden

IN his garden the old man plants cucumbers, tends
his seedlings and cuttings, watches
with attentive eye the condition of fruit-trees, sweeps
prunings from paths with a straw broom, feels
an insinuating sun warm his back, refresh
stiff joint and sinew, renew
the winter blood with spring.

On the path the sideways bird hops and considers,
leaves answer light and unfold, stems
are now stronger pulses, escalate air,
the vine uncoils.

The letter to be written in the studious room,
the fragment of verse to be polished in quiet,
the correct grey melancholy, gentle dissipation—
obviously poetical—
to be infused carefully,
the whole to be sealed, sent to the boyhood friend
grey in his retirement too.

These the pattern of life between garden and evening ;
the salad, the admirable wine,
the legions broken, retreated,
some sixty miles to the east.

EDWIN MUIR

Song of Sorrow

I DO not want it so,
But since things so are made
Sorrow, sorrow,
Be you my second trade,
I'll learn the workman's skill
And mould the mess of ill
Until I have it so, or so,
And want it so.

I must have it so
Unless I freshly make
A pact with sorrow
For joy and sorrow's sake,
And wring from sorrow's pay
Wealth joy would toss away ;
Till both are balanced, so, or so,
And ever go.

I can't want it so !
For joy was all my trade
Till sorrow on sorrow
Unmade what joy made.
O joy must still renew
Both joy and sorrow too,
Else I'd have nothing, so, or so,
And all must go.

The Window

WITHIN the great wall's perfect round
Bird, beast and child serenely grew
In endless change on changeless ground
That in a single pattern bound
The old perfection and the new.

There was a tower set in the wall,
And a great window in the tower,
And if one looked, beyond recall
The twisting glass kept him in thrall
With changing revivals hour by hour.
There on a day we looked and saw
Marsh, mere and mound in anger shaken ;
The world's great side, the giant flaw,
And watched the stately forests fall,
The white ships sinking in the sea,

The tower run toppling in the field,
The last left stronghold sacked and taken,
And earth and heaven in jeopardy.
Then turning towards you I beheld
The wrinkle writhe across your brow,
And felt Time's cap clapped on my head,
And all within the enclosure now,
Light leaf and smiling flower, was false,
The great wall breached, the garden dead.

Across the towering window fled
Disasters, victories, festivals.

HAMISH HENDERSON

Dialogue of the Angel and the Dead Boy

(From the Italian of Corrado Govoni).

*To my poor Aladino,
barbarously put to death by Nazi-fascists
24th March, 1944.*

The Angel.

Let us go, come! Fly! Remain motionless!
It is early, it is late, it is the hour.
Not yet, and now for ever.
All alone with you; you alone with me!

The Dead Boy.

Help me then
in the first drunken paces
of my poor stiffened limbs
because I am like a blind man.
You must tell me where there are hedges and rocks,
bridges and fords, ascents and abysses:
you do not know what a weight I am carrying
of senses not yet burnt out to ashes.

The Angel.

Follow me, hurry, don't be frightened!
There are no longer the obstacles you imagine.
Don't you hear my voice—don't you see me?

The Dead Boy.

How can I comprehend you, angel,
like this, all of a sudden, when the warmth
still flowers redly in the garden of my severed
veins, and such sweet fetters
still bind me closely to my senses?

I am too confused and absorbed
in my sleep of dead childhood,
and the insistent rumour of being
has not stopped yet: it is still filling
my brain with syllables and visions:
there are "mother" and "sun" . . . and "brother" . . .

After the avalanche
of onrushing blood that was opened
in my neck by a thunderbolt of murder. . . .

In my clairvoyant blindness
is it you then, new angel,
who are this breath of light
I find here on my first steps of darkness?

The Angel.

In the black kingdom
of sun, ice and the dead, with one single
face, these syllables, country, mother and brother
have no longer any meaning:
one with
the rapt cloud,
and the fixed tree.

If life on earth was no more than
a tiring and troublesome learning
to say "flower" and "tree," to say "sun" and "mother"
there will be no more here than an easy
and a quick forgetting.
Only then will you comprehend me
in my form of perfect angel.

The Dead Boy.

The crown of glass of my mother
and no longer the thin cord of torment
binds over my breast the little bones
of hacked-off hands.
You tell me to walk forward quickly
and me not knowing how to fumble in this dark!
How can I if my head is still . . .
you know, angel, how it exploded
and was full of the detonation of the mine
which at one blow brought down on me in ruin
the whole weight of blood
of the Ardeatine caves, the shambles?

The Angel.

Mother, blood, birthplace,
laborious words
soaked in sunlight
that you learnt slowly on the earth—
they have no longer any sense here.

It is as if someone among the living should say
cemetery of the wind.
Less than nothing, of that nothing
(floating mildews, proliferations
of will o' the wisps) which for your human
was the stellar silence above them.

The Dead Boy.

But to abandon like this for always
the sweet memory of life, with its sweet
pain . . . to be deaf even to the sweet dreams
for always, and to those sweet
voices of the earth. . . .
sweet life, sweet earthly. . . .

The Angel.

Did you think that *that* was paradise
where even the pure coruscating fire
must leave its ugly ashes?
Where the more the bright flower of legend
glows, dreams and is fragrant, the more hateful
and foul is its tiny canker?
Are you still regretting that life of men, condemned
to wander about like prisoners in a compound
between the earth and the rain: with their weary
mask, with the shafts of sun, moon and starlight?
And your own life, made up
of inert and deluded yesterdays
which was form and almost the patient
suffering of mnemonic coral
of which the dead and submerged tree is
the entire future?

The Dead Boy.

—Help me, angel, do you not see
how inexpert I am at dying?
No-one had given me any warning
to prepare myself for learning this eternal
death, which was always
a word in my head without face or echo.
I thought of it only as a free-moving shadow,
in flight from men like a shame or scandal
or kept quiet like some tremendous guilt
already expiated at birth's climax.

The Angel.

Do not fear! Fly! Walk forward!
And remain motionless for ever.
Soon you will learn me,
when seeing without eyes will turn into
a vaster seeing
and your stone deafness will be infinite hearing.
You will know very soon
what sweet labour it is to learn
the illiterate language of silence.

The Dead Boy.

I feel a light around me, and a heat
still moist and human
which persists and will not leave go of me.
It brushes against my cheek like a kiss
and it fills my hand with sunlight;
it is she, carrying her poor candle of suffering,
it is my dear mother: she searching for me, and groping
through the frozen darkness.
I will come with you then, my angel,
but if you do not want me to linger
let me cry out once more, so loudly
that the whole earth will hear it, the sweetest
name: mother
which on earth is all—is country, love, Jesus.

The Angel.

You know that I cannot weep any more . . . come!

The Dead Boy.

Blind, deaf and unknown angel
why do you answer no longer?
Now at last I feel and know, I cold and in darkness,
that you have already entered into me for ever:
indifferent angel of emptiness,
angel nothing but wall.

ROBERT HERRING

A Challenge to Sleep

MEPHITIC Sleep, slow mantler of man's might,
draw now your drowsy poison through each vein.
Steal through the blood, wherein the red and white
joust in the Civil War they make my brain.
Drug, too, that Douglas that must drag his fight
across my Border of the barely sane—

destroy all borders in me ! Let marauders each
side lay down arms, heads, hands and simply lie
(semblance of Life alone in that)—O, reach
narcotic finger's nightshade to my eye !
Embroider my heart in hemlock ; be the leech
licking my limbs till all deaths in you die.

Yes, be the pawing dragon that we kill—
for know, O Sleep, you are not wooed as friend.
You were our foe in foetus—are so, still—
threatening in thrall that, ere we live, we end.
A death yet, though—being the thing we will,
but learn to use, no more to mar but mend,—

not as you think it, Sleep ! Our ravelled sleeve
is from the shoulder torn, past knitting. Skin is bare.
You bite to bone, poor asp. By Macbeth's leave,
find bone absorbs you first. Cleopatra's care
is now turned turvy ; you no nurse bereave.
'Tis we your fang drain of its vialled snare.

You do not lull, although you numb with rest.
We do not love, although to you we yield.
You wait to strike until we are oppressed,
worn by the weight of what we ought to wield.
The single witch that snaps our will's behest—
We bow, but bend you ; sicken, but are healed.

For you are our old enemy and all your arts
of seeming slumber while the mind's at war
we spurn. We know your skill upon our parts
bodily is but bait to let brain whore
down Messalina's by-ways, or our hearts
to smear with dreams that smart our daytimes more.

Not for your gifts we summon, nor your wiles.
We, not you, lure—to kill you, Lilith-snake.
Yielded to you, nought more on earth beguiles ;
poisoned, our power by purging can awake,
the rebel rise by what he now reviles,
the broken from destruction himself make.

All of our elements, flesh, will and sense ;
blood against brain, and hand at, not on, heart ;
the constant conflict, split self in suspense,—
call you but out of weariness, to start
by outer enmity, aggression ; whence
factions unite, that once were held apart.

All enemies, before a battle's joined,
holding aloof, are yet made one by Night—
opposing piers beneath dark's arch engroined.
So, 'neath your tenting, we await the fight.
You take no power from us. We have purloined
your own, to keep our weapons' honour bright.

For, as two rival armies held at bay
by Night, are both within its cover brought,
so flow you o'er our forces, whether they
be limb or aspiration, deed or thought :
but, like all soldiers, use the time till day
to marshal powers with which Death may be fought.

How small that Death, to be so like to you !
And you, its effigy, much smaller yet !
Miniscule monster ! Can you still play true—
toxically triumph, fiercely our frame fret,
furl and not feel your therapy turned rue,
since we but fall to find what you forget ?—

Day !
Then, be armourer. Nought else can you be.
Tinker with tanks, our flame-throwers refill—
we pierce through Sleep for peace. Sleep sets us free
to fight reality, not dream-selves ; only kill
the us in us that will not let us see.
Fighter yourself, Sleep, fight !—and no ill-will.

NICHOLAS MOORE

The Perfect Beauty

(*For Priscilla*)

I TOO recall at times the passionate past.
I know familiar ghosts that there inhabit
The country of our peace, the crags and lochs,
Familiar peaks that now the gulls inherit,

Or the wild flapping heron in its flight
Down to the estuary in search of fish.
That once romantic country was our own,
Real as the glistening water on your flesh.

And now, my darling, dreaming back to that,
Those ghosts sometimes seem realer than the present.
For there we had our own unparalleled
Peace, and that land, and all we thought, was pleasant.

Yet, pleasant though it seemed, now in my mind
The scene is ghostly, as though made of glass.
We stand, two lovers, broken by the wind,
And smashed into small pieces of what is.

I seem to lift the pieces in my hand,
And, lying there, those glass dolls move to pity . . .
Yet here and now in all the dark of war
You offer me a stronger, perfect beauty.

EMANUEL LITVINOFF

To My Unborn Child

(On Embarkation)

YOU who are the flower of my love
budding under the heart of my darling,
who will know separation from your hour of birth
and the shadow of this time of war staining
the bright autumn of your coming,
to you I send the promise of my faith.

Sometimes by twilight, by the sorrowing hour,
suckling your milk you will find tears
falling like hopeless prayers upon
the hopeful petals of your face,
to be remembered like a sombre dream—
this your heritage, grief for your innocence?
Not this alone, not only history and war,
but sweeter things—the golden mercy of the sun,
wind in the wild trees, stars, rain
like a soothing murmur on the earth
and the sweet honey of love flowing
from the breast of her who loves us both,
and suffers for it. . . .

Also, another day will see the soldier
step from a picture frame, the look of war
gone from his quiet face and inward eyes,
and he will hold you as a father should,
bring Spring excursions, picnics in the Summer,
the precious, ordinary ways of speech
like a song of exhilaration,
the casual gestures of each day like movements
in a dance universal as the dance of trees.
Meantime he sends his blessing from afar,
praying an exile's prayer that God
will hold you in the shelter of His Hand.

DORIAN COOKE

Poem made on the Shores of the Sea of Galilee

TWO thousand years of legend break
Bitter and bowed ; the old
Sun's eyes are bent and bald
On the hairless waters of the lake.

Only the ancient houses breathe.
The hill sides, brown and green,
Are bloodless in their pain.
Only the lake stones suck and seethe.

O ! Let me stand and stare to sea
While the light dims like a grave.
Not yet shall the day's wave grieve
With shadows what the eye can see.

NOTES ON A POETRY OF RELEASE

By W. S. GRAHAM

1

THE original diseases and cures of those fictional problems of Morality (involving Politics and our each illusion of a Liberty) live in each of us and express through how we lift a cup, walk, or blow the dandelion seeds into the air to tell the time. Let me be the poet writing in a disguise of the 1st person about the intricate marriage between those problems and the poem and the searching reader. Though those problems move me as a man to varied action I try to put them out (at least as a conscious direction) when I begin to make my poem. Those problems move me and work to successfully direct the outside accidents and me through accident. With words my material and immediate environment I am at once halfway the victim and halfway the successful traveller. There is the involuntary war between me and that environment flowing in on me from all sides and there is the poetic outcome. I am not the victim of my environment. History does not repeat itself. I am the bearer of that poetic outcome. History continually arrives as differently as our most recent minute on earth. The labourer going home in the dusk shouts his goodnight across the road and History has a new score on its track. The shape is changed a little. History as a crowd divides and divides into its population where I am a member and at last I am left to say my history has my eyes and mouth and a little likeness of my father. Time and time again I am scored by the others and their words and the diseases and cures war and change in their part of me. First I'll put them aside for my poem is to be a successful construction of words, a construction in which anyhow those cures will act whether the poem is about a pinhead or Lanarkshire.

The most difficult thing for me to remember is that a poem is made of words and not of the expanding heart, the overflowing soul, or the sensitive observer. A poem is made of words. It is words in a certain order, good or bad by the significance of its addition to life and not to be judged by any other value put upon it by imagining how or why or by what kind of man it was made. It is easy to strive to make a poem out of the wrong material like a table out of water. It is easy to mistake a poem for a different thing with a different function and to be sad when it does not put out what it is not. In the end then are those still words on the paper and arranged half-victim to the physical outside, half-victim to my Morality's origins, out of this dying and bearing language. All the poet's knowledge and experience (as far as the people who wait outside his gates are concerned) is contained in the language which is obstacle and vehicle at the same time. The shape of all of us is in this language. Our riches and poverties have affected every word. For the language is a changing creature continually being killed-off, added-to and changed like a river over its changing speakers. The language changes along with all of us and is headline litmus record wreckage pyramid shame and accomplishment of all we do and have done and (through Poetry) might do. Each word is touched by and filled with the activity of every speaker. Each word changes every time it is brought to life. Each single word uttered twice becomes a new word each time. You cannot twice bring the same word into sound.

It is a good direction to believe that this language which is so scored and impressed by the commotion of all of us since its birth can be arranged to in its turn impress significantly for the good of each individual. Let us endure the sudden affection of the language.

2

I must begin with first the illusion of an intention. The poem begins to form from the first intention. But the intention is already breaking into another. *The first intention begins me but of course continually shatters itself and is replaced by the child of the new collision.* I try to have the courage to let the last intention be now a dead step and to allow myself to be taken in hand. Yet I must not lose my responsibility, being that explorer who shoots the sun, carries samples of air back to civilisation, and looks his forward. The poem is more than the poet's intention. The poet does not write what he knows but what he does not know. A man's imagining suddenly may inherit the handclapping centuries of his one minute on earth. He has to explore the imagination by using the language as his pitch. On it he must construct (intuitively to an organic as true as a tree) an apparatus which will work and to a special purpose. It is no help to think of the purpose as being to "transfuse recollected emotion" or to "report significantly" or indeed to think of it as a putting-across of anything. The poem itself is dumb but has the power of release. Its purpose is that it can be used by the reader to find out something about himself. Words are ambiguous. He must face it that words are ambiguous, but realise that this has to do with the fundamental force of poetry and is to be used to a positive end. The poem is not a handing out of the same packet to everyone, as it is not a thrown-down heap of words for us to choose the bonniest. The poem is the replying chord to the reader. It is the reader's involuntary reply.

What is to be done? To bisect the angle between God and Man and find the earliest distance between heart and head. To join Man and Word and project his consciousness of the prophetic in the language into the world. To be the labourer carrying the bricks of his time and on the scaffolding of an unknown construction. To bring about the reader's Involuntary Belief. To present before him an addition to the world like this which Blake made where the reader is left not to agree or disagree as to its rightness but to answer from a new cave flooded to light,

"For every thing that lives is holy, life delights in life ;
Because the soul of sweet delight can never be defil'd.
Fires inwrap the earthly globe, yet man is not consum'd ;
Amidst the lustful fires he walks : his feet become like brass,
His knees and thighs like silver, & his breast and head like gold."

I go my way. Then I find the muse laughing her fill in the Atholl Arms, fixing her face genteel not to be thought the whore she is. She's drunk and says, "give us Kevin Barry," but singing's stopped this long time, and the bar is thumped like a drum at the least hint of a note. Glasses go over and we are all at words. Shapes of language (right out of the gasp and gesture of speech) spill round our ears and I am at once the man of technique who books the phrases of drinking and affection so that later I might explore the mechanics of their memorableness and vitality. Down

the page I've written, "fairly his mile," "anyhow here's Mary will tell you right," "have you lately heard tell;" and like the unrehearsed possibilities of a dream beginnings, endings, and those swift metaphors of the moment break into sound in the ear. An organic rhetoric is built up which charges and maintains the formal mechanics of poetry. The syntax holds and a poem's infinite number of overtones are magnified to a greater memorableness. A poem is charged to that power of release that even to one man it goes on speaking again and again beyond behind its speaking words, a space of continual messages behind the words like behind Joyce's words like this :

"It's something fails us. First we feel. Then we fall. And let her rain now if she likes. Gently or strongly as she likes. Anyway, let her rain for my time is come. I done me best when I was let. Thinking always if I go all goes. A hundred cares, a tithe of troubles and is there one who understands me? One in a thousand of years of the nights?"

I try to remember those adventures along those lines of words. Though do I move along words in a poem when, after all, as I am at the last word and look back I find the first word changed and a new word there, for it is part of the whole poem and its particular life depends on the rest of the poem. The meaning of a word in a poem is never more than its position. The meaning of a poem is itself, not less a comma. But then to each man it comes into new life. It is brought to life by the reader and takes part in the reader's change. Even the poet as a man who searches continually is a new searcher with his direction changing at every step.

For ever as the seeker turns
His worshipping eyes on prophetic patterns
Of shape arising from all men
He changes through, he shall remain
Continually stripped and clothed again.

Let the poem be a still thing, a mountain constructed, an addition to the world. It will have its own special function and purpose, to be that certain mountain. And there is the reader going on to it with his never-before exploration after his perfect hunger's daily changing bread. A poem is a mountain made out of the containing, almost physical language, and with the power to release a man into his own completely responsible world larger than that outward solid geography.

"Man setteth an end to darkness,
And searcheth out to the furthest bound
The stones of thick darkness and of the shadow of death.
He breaketh open a shaft away from where men sojourn;
They are forgotten of the foot that passeth by;
They hang afar from men, they swing to and fro."

(The Book of Job)

It is a good direction to believe that this language which is so scored and impressed by the commotion of all of us since its birth can be arranged to in its turn impress significantly for the benefit of each individual. Let us endure the sudden affection of the language.



MAURICE LINDSAY

RUTHVEN TODD

DOUGLAS YOUNG

SYDNEY GOODSIR SMITH



C. M. GRIEVE (Hugh MacDiarmid)
at work in the ammunition factory where he was employed
during part of the war

PAGES FROM HUGH MACDIARMID'S NOTEBOOK

1

“WE are condemned,” wrote R. L. Stevenson, “to avoid half the life that passes us by. . . . They give us a little box of toys and say to us, ‘You mustn’t play with anything else.’” Stevenson continued nevertheless to play with the box of toys and avoid real life. So has every subsequent Scottish writer, and nearly every writer of every other country too.

2

The Scots, who “knew full well the fraud of the English,” five centuries ago protested that their king, James I, had acquired in the south “a corruption of manners falsely called politeness.”

3

If I emphasize the values of first-hand experience and thorough knowledge (not only because “it is the study of the stray pup to know the smell of every lamp-post, and I am a stray pup”) it is because it has always been my purpose to resemble a Canadian friend of mine of whom it was recently written that “the peculiar gusto of his writing comes from nothing more than his frank, plain speech and free, vigorous speech rhythms. He is quite happy to use the language of his country. At his best he stands like Whitman delivering one of Roosevelt’s fireside chats. Most of our Canadian poets” (and the same thing is true of 99 per cent. of Scotland’s versifiers) “on the other hand sound like Tennyson reading the Governor-General’s speech from the throne.” And it has all along been my main concern to avoid the infantilism which characterises almost all Scotland’s prose-writers to-day, of the great majority of whom pretty much the same sort of thing must be said as Mr. George Orwell recently said of one of them (Mr. Bruce Marshall, who is by no means the worst in this respect even among the best-known of them) apropos his novel, *Delilah Upside Down*, viz: “*Delilah Upside Down* is elegantly written, but its subject-matter is silly. . . . A girl of eighteen pursues a middle-aged man, trying to tempt him with such remarks as ‘Would it excite you if I took all my clothes off?’ However, nothing ‘happens’ in the end. This is the book of a man who knows how to write without being certain what he wants to write about.”

4

To those who have attacked me for what they erroneously took to be my attacks on Burns, instead of on the Burns cult, that bourgeois conspiracy to keep the workers from Burns and to distort Burns’ message. I would reply: “Whoever censures me for this, let him hear his character from Horace:

“Ingeniis non ille favet, plauditque sepultis,
Nostra sed impugnat; nos nostrarque lividus odit.”

(i.e., *He favours not dead wits, but hates the living.*)

It was upbraided to that excellent poet that he was an enemy to the writings of his predecessor, Lucilius, because he had said, “*Lucilium lutulentum fluere*” (i.e., *that he ran muddy*); and that he ought to have

retrenched from his satires many unnecessary verses. But Horace makes Lucilius himself to justify him from the imputation of envy, by telling that he would have done the same, had he lived in an age which was more refined, viz. :

Sic foret hoc nostrum fato delapsus in aevum,
Detereret sibi multa, recideret omne quod ultra
Perfectum traheretur, etc.

and if those who have thus ventured to rebuke me know their Burns well enough, they will find just as easily a passage in which Burns himself justifies me exactly the same way.

5

Scott himself foresaw truly what all the special pleading of Sir Herbert Grierson and other would-be Scott-refurbishers to-day cannot lessen by one iota, when he wrote : “ It is written that nothing shall flourish under my shadow. Nature has written on my brow : ‘ Your shade shall be broad, but there shall be no protection derived from it to aught you favour.’ ” And verily the abandonment of which Mr. Edwin Muir speaks of “ both freedom and responsibility ” in the Scott novels only parallels the same thing in every sphere of Scotland, politically, socially, and culturally, under the influence of the Union and its intended sequelae of progressive Anglification and complete incorporation.

Burns, on the contrary, had hold of the right end of the stick. “ By the by,” he wrote, “ It is singular enough that the Scottish Muses are all Jacobites. I have paid more attention to every description of Scottish song than anybody living, and I do not recollect one single stanza or even the title of the most trifling Scots air which has the least panegyric reference to the families of Nassau and Brunswick, while there are hundreds satirising them.”

6

As soon as one makes a wholesale statement condemnatory of English literature or England’s role in history one is at once assailed with appeals—“ Oh, you cannot condemn all Anglo-Scottish culture in this sweeping fashion—you must allow a little merit to this and that and the other thing.” I am reminded of the story of the late Mr. Alan Andrews, Inspector of Schools. He was engaged one day in going over a pile of school writing-books, with a twitteringly-anxious headmaster at his elbow. Andrews tossed one exercise-book after another aside with an exclamation of “ Tchach ! ” Finally, the headmaster could stand it no longer. Another copy-book was on the point of being flung aside like the others. “ Now, surely, Mr. Andrews,” said the headmaster, “ You cannot call *this* bad writing ? ”

“ Tchach ! ” was all Mr. Andrews said.

Another book hurtled away. “ Really, now, Mr. Andrews, *this* is very good writing ! ”

“ Tchach ! ”

Again, “ Now, now, Mr. Andrews ! ”

“ Tchach ! ”

“ But why,” persisted the headmaster, “ do you condemn all these books like this ? Surely most of the writing is really quite good ? ”

“Aye,” said Mr. Andrews, “Maist o’ the writin’ is guid eneuch nae doot. That’s no’ what’s fashin’ me. It’s juist the damnable mediocrity o’ the hail thing.”

And that’s just what fashes me about Anglo-Scottish culture too. It is a matter of more or less polite accomplishments, mere veneer, imitation, trying to be superior—all damnably mediocre; all without a single spark of real life in it.

7

As to the Scots vernacular, another Inspector of Schools, who said he could not see the argument (for the revival of Scots) nearly so clearly in regard to words, told me he must admit the national cleavage (between Scotland and England) was most marked and most important—important practically, that is, i.e. in relation to teaching, singing in schools, etc.—in regard to music. In this respect, as in all others, the real life of Scotland is being denied. He gave me many striking instances from his own experience of experiments with children in senior classes when pseudo-Scottish work by very competent English or Anglo-Scottish composers was at once spotted by the children as “not the real thing,” and in one case, though the children could not explain just what was wrong, a setting of Reid’s poem, *Kirkbride*, was tried on them in which the first two lines were set in the Scottish folk-song tradition and the next in an English medium. They felt at once, however, that there was something very queer and not in keeping about this setting—as well they might, since it switched back and forward from one country to another, from one tradition to another radically different one. *Which* tradition made all the difference in the world to the whole-hearted responsiveness of the children—their ability to reach to what, in Jeeves’s phrase, is really “of the essence”—and this difference was *not* in favour of teaching English songs in Scottish schools. The children could not really enter into the spirit of English songs and sing them with any authentic effect. This must be taken as an analogue of what has happened, and is still happening, in all directions in Anglicised Scotland, and a convincing index to the immeasurable loss sustained. Our national life has been reduced to a shadow of its former self, and what little vitality still remains is being continually sapped by the English connection.

8

I owe to the following note in M. Jacques Barzun’s *Romanticism and the Modern Ego* a reminder of two sentences of William Blake’s which underline one of my main contentions in *Lucky Poet*, and a quotation from another source which puts in a nutshell precisely what I was getting at in all I said in that volume about my desire for a literature of scientific knowledge and of fact. The note reads: “There is Blake’s reiterated statement that ‘to generalize is to be an Idiot. To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit.’” Blake’s tone of invective should not detract from the wide applicability of his aesthetic faith. At the opposite intellectual pole, we find the nineteenth-century academic historian, Auguste Trognon, saying of his own period: “We have come to feel extreme distaste for systems and a lively affection for facts. . . . Local colour serves not only to arouse dramatic interest but to make intelligible the bearing of facts.” (*Etudes sur l’Histoire de France*, 1822, 6, 9.)

BOOK REVIEWS

SEA TALK By GEORGE BRUCE (*William Maclellan, Glasgow 6s.*)

THESE poems are impregnated with the spirit of the east coast of Scotland. They are also at times reminiscent of W. H. Auden. This however seems to me less the result of Audenesque influence than an accident of environment. Auden, we remember, was at pains to describe himself as Scandinavian and went to Iceland. Mr. Bruce does not have to go that far.

Whether the crisp, clear light of these seas is in fact Scandinavian is of course a matter of doubt. I should have thought Sidney Keyes' *Troll Kings* much more Scandinavian. In Mr. Bruce's case, therefore, I prefer the adjective, "Scottish."

The verse is extremely accomplished technically, and at times, very moving, yet withal, as native as the granite, and the whitewashed walls, and the steely-gray light on the seas of eastern Scotland.

In Memory of a Submarine Officer was one of the better poems of the war, in its restraint and gravity.

Voyage is equally fluent and pervasive. At his best, however, Mr. Bruce reproduces with unerring beauty and facility the east coast landscape, and what, for want of a better word, we must call the "Landgeist," older and more enduring than the "Zeitgeist."

Yet the technique shows potentialities of steady development, and the further work of this poet should be interesting to watch. It is already a pleasure to read.

Work such as this makes us begin to believe in the final reality of the oft-heralded Scottish "renaissance."

J. F. HENDRY.

WOMEN OF THE HAPPY ISLAND By ADAM DRINAN (*William Maclellan, Glasgow. 6s.*)

There are echoes in this book of such divergent personalities as Burns, Auden, MacNeice, and Eliot.

First, Burns :

"O Lord, my God, whom last night I called in the rain
To curse that pig of an Annie Campbell. . . ."

This is exactly the tone of *Holy Willie's Prayer*.

MacNeice :

"My club-foot sister has a disability grant."

This is the rhythm, and the bitter satire, of *Bag-Pipe Music*.

The influences of Eliot and Auden are apparent almost anywhere in the book. Undoubtedly this, and not, as was claimed at the time, the Celtic atmosphere, was responsible for the "accueil" given to the book by the critics. It appeared to combine the new imaginative approach with the (poetically) bankrupt approach of the thirties. Its realism was therefore much appreciated.

However much this realism was necessary, poetically it is not the most valuable part of the book. It obscures both Mr. Drinan's real talent and his specifically Scottish contribution. Early notices seem to me, therefore, to have been unfair and wrongly motivated.

More "Left," because at once more human, more European and more poetic, are the lines beginning :

"Old woman calling in Gaelic to her dear, thin hens in the rain."

This might have been written by any good European poet, living among the peasantry, Lorca, say, or Rimbaud at 18, or Verhaeren.

Unfortunately to say this is to be accused of being national. Mr. Orwell presumably would prefer *Stanzas on a Tube-Ticket* as being closer to life. The fact is Mr. Drinan is truer to life when he writes of what unites us, than of what divides us. He has given in these poems a poignant picture of a life that has hitherto caused only amusement. I hope he may do more, and look forward to his next volume.

J. F. HENDRY.

POETRY (LONDON) BOOKS

THE GLASS TOWER. By NICHOLAS MOORE. (Poetry (London). 8s. 6d.)

HOME TOWN ELEGY. By G. S. FRASER. (Poetry (London). 6s.)

2ND POEMS. By W. S. GRAHAM. (Poetry (London). 6s.)

Three of the several important books issued during the past year by our English cousins are of particular interest to Scottish readers.

Nicholas Moore is, of course, an Englishman. But I include him here with the two Scotsmen because he is a St. Andrian (having been at the University in pre-war years with his friend Fraser), because in many ways he is Fraser's English counterpart, and because he is an uncommonly attractive poet. The publishers claim that he sees life through the eyes of childhood. Up to a point, that is true. Yet he is very conscious of the sociological influences and events which work themselves out around him. He is not an inspiring poet by any means. The charm of his verse lies in its freshness and simplicity. However, the "innocence of childhood" approach occasionally leads to nothing more or less than plain childishness. But his poems have always a natural, musical quality, and when he does not allow his thought to become too diffuse, his images take the imagination with delight and surprise.

G. S. Fraser's poems are much more taut in construction than Moore's. His somewhat defeatist philosophy reflects the terrible malaise which settled upon his generation (and mine, although I came in at the tail end of it) during the years before the war. It was a loss of belief in the worth of humanity, bred from the certain knowledge that we were growing up for war, that war was an evil and ultimately a useless thing, and that its arrival on top of us was as certain as to-morrow's dawn. Seen in retrospect, that feeling does not now seem so false as it might have done if victory in conflict had been achieved without the advent of the atomic bomb! Mr. Fraser's poems are full of delicate and lovely things, and I commend this book to all Scottish poetry-lovers. He may become a major Scottish poet, a 20th century Byron, if he does not allow the southward-slanting yearnings of his heart to master him. If he turns himself into an Englishman no doubt Scottish themes and images will disappear from his work, and it will lose much of its charm and distinctiveness.

Either you like poetry which consciously (or rather, *self-consciously*!) discards meaning and is constructed with words as a house is built with bricks; or you dislike it. I dislike it! A builder must see beyond the business of bricks and mortar. Poetry cannot effectively rival music as sound, or architecture as shape. Mr. Graham's poems try to achieve both these impossibilities anew in *2nd Poems*. There are many lovely lines which mean something, and at least one whole poem which nearly means something (*Many Without Elegy*). For me, the other poems are tantalising, and in the end, exhausting. When I had finished the book, I rushed to my gramophone and put on Mozart's G Major Quartet—to reassure myself that Mozart could offer much more intelligible sounds and far more satisfying shapes than Mr. Graham! Those who enjoy paddling in this novel back-water of Celtic literature (for I cannot conceive the existence of Mr. Graham's work without the previous existence of the more mellow poems of the Welshman, Dylan Thomas) *2nd Poems* will be a teeming source of pleasure. Alas! I am one of those tedious people who refuse to allow meaning in poetry to be brushed aside as a quaint, outmoded vagary of the feeble-minded. So Mr. Graham is not for me.

MAURICE LINDSAY.

THE SEVEN JOURNEYS. By W. S. GRAHAM. (*William Maclellan, Glasgow.* 6s.)

THE ACREAGE OF THE HEART. By RUTHVEN TODD. (*William Maclellan, Glasgow.* 6s.)

Frankly, the perusal of Apocalyptic is, for me, an arduous and tedious progression, as of one traversing a rocky ridge densely covered with overgrown whins. Here and there, however, one is rewarded by stumbling upon a small sward embellished with a clump of mushrooms, perhaps, or an elegant fern, or a chime of harebells, for a few of our Apocalyptic occasionally come away with some imagery or juxtaposition of words to take the mind for more than a moment. But for the most part I personally am compelled to conspue the plethora of Apocalyptic piffle which passes for Poetry at present.

A finished poem is simply or subtly compounded from a variety of elements—its content of thought or feeling, its imagery and allusiveness, its melody and rhythm. When it is finished there is a spine through it, and an impulse of motion, poise, balance, integrity.

Our Apocalyptics have pose rather than poise. They do not bother, or do not know how, to finish their well-meaning experiments. Grasping hold of a single element of Poetry, they deave us to death with its exaggeration. Among what they dish up we find scarcely any well-compounded satisfying bree, but scunnersome overloads of bewildering imagery, a mere frothy ebullience of condiments, vaguely evocative perhaps, but spinelessly neglectful of rhythm and but spasmodically mindful of melody.

Sydney Graham attempts in amorphous verse the verbal evocation done well and importantly by James Joyce in his later prose. In a kindly guideword to *The Seven Journeys* William Montgomery tells us that "the pleasure is kinaesthetic." Not for me, friends. To lapse momentarily into Apocalypse, I report my dyspepsia as ilingistic and skotodineutical, and this although I appreciate what Sydney Graham is at.

From jumbles of stuff in riverside yards men make boats, which when finished take the water. So from words Sydney Graham tries to build and launch his verbal vessels on strange or banal seas of thought or neurosis. The mischief is that they are not finished and they do not float. Some of his abrupt purposeful beginnings I rather fancy, but then comes shipwreck and a formless welter of vocables.

*"I build an iliad in a limpet dome.
I lay my tributary words in lovers' lakes
tangled and tied in a knot of eels
melodiously patterned in a pitch-black shell
that whorls my ruddering heaven in grammars of tide."*

James Joyce knew how to streamline his ocean-going liners. He eschewed, if one may emulate his catachrestic neology, the zigzagonal and chop-sticky rafts Sydney Graham at present splashes into his stagnant puddles. It will be a good day when this image-heaper takes trouble over other things that matter in Poetry. Meantime, he sings but as the limpet sings, a limp and limping limpet, in diffuse strainings of pre-meditated artfulness.

Ruthven Todd's pieces are less vague and therefore more evocative, more melodious and more rhythmical, but very seldom finished. He is good at *vers d'occasion* :—

*"Two at a table talking in the mirrored room,
watching the cradled bottle run down towards its dregs,
two of the woof on the world's vast loom,
watching their lives shuttle as the evening goes. . . ."*

*"O I shall remember the beautiful witch in the corner,
when I was one of a pair in the mirrored room,
when my shyness was more than the truth in the bottle,
but less than my happiness glowing in the gloom."*

A fair sample of his work here is this reportage :

*"Bodies in death are not magnificent or stately,
bones are not elegant that blast has shattered ;
this sorry, stained and crumpled rag was lately
a man whose life was made of little things that mattered."*

Sydney Graham, though following a foreign fashion, is fundamentally a Scot, as was Sir Thomas Urquhart, but Ruthven Todd is more obviously and more consciously Scots :—

*"Autumn, lifting potatoes and stacking peats
on Mull, while the Atlantic's murky blue
swung sluggishly in past Jura, and the hills
were brown lions, crouched to meet the autumn gales."*

He is not really happy in English, for instance :—

*"I trust that you will find
Joy only, that sorrow no years can ever add."
"Only, my heart, I would nurse with all my cope
the unfortunate foundling whom I once called Love."
"And the magician found when he had woken
his people killed, his gay pots broken."*

I find some of his pieces satisfactory, such as *Watching You Walk*, and *Various Ends*, which have appeared in issues of *Poetry Scotland*, but many come croppers on some banality of thought or expression. For instance, the *Personal History: For My Son* sustains its interest well till we come on this passage:—

“ I am a Border keep, a croft and a solicitor’s office,
a country rectory, a farm and a drawing board :
in me, as in so many, the past has stowed its miser’s hoard,
won who knows where nor with what loaded dice.”

After his stimulating build-up of the variety of elements in his and his son’s pedigree, the poet lets us down with the banal *non sequitur* of his miser’s hoard and loaded dice, the defeatist and pejorative attitude towards the latent potential of varied talents concentrated in a new personality by multiple generations of social evolution.

The collection ends with a few pieces of literary or artistic reference, mostly vivid and concise and to the point, on William Blake, Kafka, Chirico, Paul Klee, and others from a wide and interesting range.

DOUGLAS YOUNG.

SELECTED POEMS. HUGH MACDIARMID. With an Introduction by R. CROMBIE SAUNDERS. (*William MacLellan, Glasgow. 6s.*)

Much of this review will be taken up with a matter not strictly pertinent to consideration of MacDiarmid’s poetry, for I must say at once that I have come to the conclusion that I seem to myself to be the last person who should review this book—though I would be the first to read it or any other by the author. To read, however, is not the same as to review. Though I may read with pleasure and benefit a poem of which I do not understand the purely verbal meaning, to review such a poem may seem impertinent; my non-knowledge of Scots is bound to introduce irrelevancies. Nevertheless, the process by which I came (I hope) to discard them, may furnish some clue, if not provide criticism.

The introduction did not make me happier by saying, most properly, that it is in the Scots lyrics that the poet’s “power is at its purest and most intense.” That being true, it chilled me to find on the first page that in one line there were two words which I had to look up. It made no difference to my appreciation of the verse:—

“The moonbeams kelter i’ the lift,
An Earth, the bare auld stane,
Glitters aneath the seas o’ Space,
White as a mammoth’s bane.”

but it was a pity that I did not, originally, know that “kelter i’ the lift” meant “undulate in the sky.” Harder still for me was the opening of *The Watergaw* (itself “an indistinct rainbow”):

“Ae weet forenicht i’ the yow-trumble,”

for, though even I could reach “early evening” in “forenicht,” until I looked up the glossary, “yow-trumble” did not mean to me “cold spell at the end of July, after the sheep-shearing.” The imagery of this as “ewes-trembling” is itself so poetic that at this point a reader’s blood is up; he is likely to be so delighted with the implications of this and such other words as “how-dumb-deid” for “the very dead of night”, that his conscious attention chases after such words and the imagination which gave birth to them—and that imagination is not, after all, that of the poet here using them. Such a chase deflects from the use he makes of them, and from the purpose of the poem as a whole.

This preamble will be unnecessary, as well as irritating, for readers who are at home in Scots, but for those many whom MacDiarmid reaches who are not, it will be understandable and will explain why one turns next to the poems in English, although warned that these are not held to be so “individual.” And the warning is true, for whereas in the Scots lyrics one is aware of no one but MacDiarmid, in the English poems one is apt to be reminded of Blake, Frost and of Whitman—which is only to say, of vigour, generosity, enthusiasm, impatience with petty-mindedness. But by examining the words MacDiarmid chooses in English, one can return to the Scots poems more able to gauge his true eloquence and vision.

There is no doubt of the eloquence in English, as in the passage adapted from Rilke in *To Circumjack Cencrastus*, the aweing *Moment in Eternity* or *O Ease My Spirit* with its moving last lines, from the *Second Hymn to Lenin*. Yet I think that even an English-only-reading reader may feel qualified to say that these are of a different quality from the *First Hymn to Lenin* and *Depth and the Chthonian Image*. And this, too, is a sign of size, for MacDiarmid is not simply bi-lingual but as one might say, bi-mental; he uses English words for an approximately English content—I mean, for a spiritual level within reach of English perception—and when he writes in Scots, he writes what could not, I feel, be written in any other way or with any other words. Which is to say that those poems are complete and final in themselves.

And so, one returns to those Scots words, seeing them not as exotic but as embodying conceptions necessary but peculiarly their own. “Dry-gair-flow” for instance, “a place where two hills join,” and “awte” as “the direction of grain in wood or stone.” Even the words which do not express something for which English has no single word, but are simply different sounds for the same thing, such as “stishie” for “rumpus,” seem to me to enable things to be said, or an approach made to the saying of them, possible in no other language. These Scots lyrics of MacDiarmid seem to me poems that could have been written in no other way and by no other man. So that, finally, even though debarred immediate access, one feels that this use of Scots achieves for all of us an expression for a region of the human spirit not otherwise accessible. They are so clear, so sharply-seen, so purely-felt—and, speaking as a Celt, surely I may say, so un-Saxon in the sense that English lyrics are often sloppy, incomplete, and devitalised in both thought and expression. To read *Somersault*, *Milk-Wort* and *Bog-Cotton*, *The Man in the Moon* is to be left with a sense of breathlessness, or rather a feeling of heightened breath, as of high mountain air.

And of the other poems, one is left with what? Gratitude and respect for their love of mankind, their intellectual strength, masculine gentleness, freedom from pretence (particularly in emotional matters) and for the hatred of the waste of littleness in which most men pass their lives. For all that makes up “stature”. This is not to say that all the poems in the book seem worthy of their companions: in some, passion droops into sentimentality and anger into impatience, but I would quote the poem which the editor has so cunningly put last in the book:

“ I found a pigeon’s skull on the machair,
All the bones pure white and dry, and chalky,
But perfect,
Without a crack or a flaw anywhere.
At the back, rising out of the beak,
Were twin domes like bubbles of thin bone,
Almost transparent, where the brain had been,
That fixed the tilt of the wings.”

The name of that poem is *Perfect*, and it seems to me to be.

ROBERT HERRING.

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