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**George Lauder (1603-1670): Life and Writings, Alasdair A. Macdonald, Woodbridge, D.S. Brewer, 2018. ix + 432 pp., £75 (hardback), ISBN: 978-1-84384-506-5.**

Upon consulting the index of the 1987/88 standard reference work in this field of studies, the Aberdeen *History of Scottish Literature*, the reader will find no entry for the seventeenth-century Scottish poet and soldier, George Lauder (1603-1670). The 2007 *Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature*, more inclusive in its approach, is similarly lacking any notice of this person. These curious facts need explaining in light of Alasdair Macdonald's one-volume monograph and edition of George Lauder, containing in the first part a full biography, literary-critical assessment, and description of his library; and in the second, over 6,000 lines of Lauder's verse, carefully edited and annotated, and some supporting material such as correspondence. Some urgent questions present themselves: who was George Lauder, what do his works have to offer to Scottish, British, and European literary studies, and how is it possible that such a productive Scottish poet has escaped attention for so long?

Virtually all Lauder's poetry was public, occasional, and topical, reflecting his professional commitments to other people or events in his life, and also engaging with immediate political developments of the time. This means that Lauder's works and life are unusually bound up, and must therefore also be read in tandem. They are edited here from prints (mostly pamphlets) and a single extant manuscript: Macdonald's conservative transcriptions appear clean; the bibliographical history prefacing the poems offers a very helpful route through the bibliographical maze; and the poems are lightly annotated.

Macdonald divides Lauder's corpus in three broad periods. During the first, his apprenticeship, he wrote a series of anti-papal satires (*The Popes New-Years Gift*, 1622; *Anatomie of the Romane Clergie*, 1623) as well as 'Lauder's Farewell': espousing neo-Stoic values and a valediction to the poet's 'natiue shore', his family, and friends. In his early twenties Lauder travelled first to London, but the single love poem from his pen, 'The Unconstant Lover' — a petulant denial of constancy from a 'lover / at my libertie' — was 'written in Paris, 1624' (223). The Middle Period contains works of three kinds, military, moral, and political. Macdonald explains with care how Lauder was a poet and a soldier, but not a typical soldier-poet. Two works, *The Soldiers Wishe* and *The Scottish Souldier* remain unmarred by the grit of early-modern warfare, but instead allow for more detached observation of Scottish military achievement; the past roles of Scots armies in British and European conflicts, and even expansionist fantasy, e.g. of Charles I's campaigning in Europe and striking fear into the 'sometimes Empress of the World, old Rome', a city which he lays to waste before conquering 'the mis-beleeving brood of Mahomet' (229). Lauder would serve almost the remainder of his life: in France, Germany, and Scandinavia, but principally in the Low Countries. Lauder was never averse to pass political comment. He was always a staunch royalist, and his 1649 *Most Horrid and Terrible Treason* expresses true dismay at the regicide. Lauder never abandoned his belief in the British union either: in *Tweeds Teares* (c. 1639), the poet propagates that well-worn pun of 'Albion' and 'All-be-one' (258), and if in this work and in *Caledonias Covenant* the poet became increasingly distressed by the civil war arising from Charles I's disastrous policy, he never blamed the king directly, but instead his bad advisers. Other poems commemorate continental conflicts, for instance *Wight* which deals with the heavy losses and unfortunate outcome (for the Brits) of the Duke of Buckingham's campaign at Île de Ré. *Tears on the Death of Evander* commemorates '2000 Nedderlanders' (245) who perished at sea under their Scottish commander Sir John Synton. Yet other

works from this period eschew British concerns completely, as Lauder eulogised various Dutch rulers: Stadholder Frederick Henry of Nassau, Prince of Orange, William II (his birth celebrated in a poem ghost-written by Lauder on behalf of Anna of Nassau), and William III. Other poems tie Lauder to his environs in other ways, for instance the short Latin elegy on André Rivet, the theologian, court preacher, but also provost of a college at Breda, where Lauder lived nearly forty years. Perhaps the best-known of Lauder's poems from this period addressed his fellow poet and Scot William Drummond of Hawthornden. This poem, *Damon* (c. 1650), in Macdonald's words 'the one perhaps most likely to find immediate favour with the modern reader' (140), is a pastoral elegy in Theocritean (and quasi-Spenserian) mould. A short passage may here exemplify Lauder's craft:

And *We*, whose tender Hearts were ta'en with Tears  
At first, to be made Fools [...]  
Now reap for Thanks Disdain, Contempt, and Scorn,  
Hostility and Hate of Knaves forsworn;  
And were it not the Hope they have at Home,  
To see their Prince, to save his People, come,  
The Swains would all for Sorrow faint and fly,  
As many do for Grief and Anguish die,  
Of which, alace! old *Damon* was the First,  
Whose Royal, Loyal, Noble Heart did burst,  
To see these Stirrs ... (291)

Lauder here hyperbolically relates Drummond's death to that of Charles I: a fact which allows the poet to prefigure this encomium to Drummond's memory and position in Scottish letters with some sharp observations about the current state of Scotland. Italicized *We*, all Scotsmen but also the other tenderhearted swains bewailing Drummond's loss, tie Lauder, who had been absent for twenty years, to a 'virtual coterie' (68). To Lauder's Late Period, finally, belongs *Hecatombe Christiana*, a work in which the poet turned not to his friends or secular rulers but to his heavenly Maker. This life of Christ is read by Macdonald either as the logical continuation of much elegiac poetry, 'the ultimate elegy on the ultimate heroic commander', or a poem 'revealing the very apotheosis of *arete*' (a particular preoccupation of Lauder's) (143). Both views are supported given the work's numerical significance, following its title, consisting of one-hundred ten-line stanzas, amounting to a perfectly rounded 1,000 lines.

Despite the obvious importance of Lauder's military service abroad, Macdonald situates this poet's oeuvre squarely in a Scottish tradition, and most strongly so in the chapter on 'Lauder as Poet'. I feel that at times, this chapter aims to do too much (we don't perhaps need, on two facing pages 114-115, long lists of writers respectively of English and neo-Latin verse in Scotland). In those moments it feels a little like Lauder's works provide the lens through which to view an entire tradition of Scots literature: a colossal back-history where Lauder disappears from view a little. Then again — so much of Macdonald's vast historical, literary, and philological learning that is on display in this book is exceptionally apt, and even readers new to early-modern Scottish literature could do worse than dipping into parts of this book as their primer.

It is particularly fortuitous that a record of Lauder's personal library has survived, in the form of a printed sales catalogue of 1674. This reveals 1,030 volumes, principally books in Latin, French, and English: a very respectable library indeed for a soldier who was often on the move, and someone who, in Macdonald's words, 'does

not really qualify as an intellectual' (158). The list covers *belles lettres* in neo-Latin and European vernaculars, religion, historiography, philosophy, and some science and military handbooks. As Lauder's reading and learning can be reconstructed from a library list only imperfectly, Macdonald treats these matters with great circumspection, also because not a single book is today known to have survived. Collating Lauder's books with his own works therefore remains mostly an 'impressionistic' exercise, but none the less fascinating, not least in light of the English and Scottish poets who featured in the library, many of whom (e.g. Drayton, Donne, Herbert, Carew, Davenant, Herrick, Shirley) were so very different from Lauder. Since only a single copy of the catalogue has been discovered and that in a German library, this reader wished for an appendix or transcription included with this book, but this would equally make a research project in its own right. Macdonald's discovery of the catalogue is great *coup* for Scottish book historians. If Lauder marked his ownership, it is very much to be hoped that in the future some of his books will be rediscovered, perhaps in continental libraries where they have never before been looked for.

The above resumé of Lauder's career and works explains something about how he has been ignored for so long. Any Scottish poet who made 'a principled decision to write in English' (104) and edited out remaining Scotticisms from his early work would not endear himself to later generations of nationalist scholars. His royalism and implied Episcopalianism might have smacked of conformity with a king who became ever more unpopular (Charles I), even though it was hardly unusual at the time among ambitious Scots, and Lauder was clearly critical of royal religious policy. Given that so much of the poetry was occasional and addressed, by way of the favourite genre of the verse epistle, to people or events with little obvious connection to Scottish culture, Lauder has never been seen as subscribed to the great Scottish project in any obvious way. Moreover, the seventeenth century is still somewhat unexplored territory in Scottish literary terms: the number of monographs in this field are exceptionally few, and so we are simply lacking scholarly contexts in which to fit Lauder's work.

Creating such interpretative contexts virtually from scratch makes Macdonald's book a profoundly important intervention. When the next *History of Scottish Literature* will be compiled, its future editors will no longer be able to ignore George Lauder. This is a fact solely down to this book and its achievements; Macdonald's highly accessible edition of Lauder's poetry; his full account of Lauder's life and library; and most pertinently, Macdonald's cogent argument that despite all Lauder's European credentials — or perhaps even *because of them* — Lauder's place in the canon of Scottish and British seventeenth-century literature must now be acknowledged.

Sebastiaan Verweij, University of Bristol