



## DAVID LINDSAY AND HIS *PARNASSUS POETICUS*

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THE REGRETTABLY DEFICIENT BIBLIOGRAPHY of *The Early Imprints at New Norcia* was reviewed in this journal, with a tactful admixture of frankness and forbearing, by John Fletcher in 1987.<sup>1</sup> Item 619 of *The Early Imprints* lists *Parnassus poeticus* [. . .] *opera Dav. Lyndesiadae natione Scoti* (Venetiis, apud Ioan Baptistam Combum, 1629). In their Introduction the compilers claim that 'Although relatively few of the early imprints at New Norcia are in English, an extremely rare collection of Sir David Lindsay's poems is held [. . .] The *Parnassus poeticus* is not mentioned in NUC or the British Museum Catalogue' (p.18). Citing the treatment of this book as an example of a 'lack of editorial tightness' in *The Early Imprints*, Fletcher points out that 'The work is in fact at BM 238:12 and, in other frequent continental imprints, at NUC 421:84' (p.77).

The compilers' claims are more thoroughly mistaken than Fletcher allows. They imply that the book is in English: as its title suggests, it is in Latin. They call it a collection of poems: it is not. They attribute it to Sir David Lindsay, presumably the Scots poet (1490-1555): but the *Parnassus poeticus* was not published in any form until some forty years after the poet's death and was not edited by its David Lindsay until some seventy years after the poet's death. In one of their errors the compilers have distinguished company: the Beinecke Library at Yale also misattributes a later edition of the Lindsay *Parnassus poeticus* (Venice, 1648) to the poet Sir David Lindsay.<sup>2</sup> The plethora of error has at least the value of provoking correction. If the book is not what it is claimed to be, then what is it? If it cannot be the work of Sir David Lindsay the poet, then who is the 'David Lindsay, Scottish by nation' who contributed to this emanation of late Renaissance literary studies?

The full title of Lindsay's book is *Parnassus poeticus, Seu potius Parnassofficina poetica* [*A Poetic Parnassus, or rather, A Poetic Parnassian Workshop or Training School*]. To anyone versed in the discourse of Renaissance humanism, the title presages a manual designed to aid the student in the task of composing verse in the classical tongues, as in the celebrated *Gradus ad Parnassum*. The term 'Officina' also occasionally designates books of this kind.<sup>3</sup> The *Parnassus poeticus* is indeed an example of such a pedagogical aid, its practical purpose being declared on its title page: 'ut adolescentibus uno quasi intuitu totam ac integram rei Poeticæ suppellectilem oculis perlustrare, suisque usibus in componendis, pangendisque versibus adhibere valeant' [so that young people are able to scan with a single glance (as it were) the full and complete resources of the poetic art and to consult them for their own use when planning and composing verses].

In accordance with this aim, the *Parnassus poeticus* offers the student a vocabulary of Latin poetic idioms from which he might select and models of style that he might imitate when composing his own poems. Under the title

*Sacra poesis* there is a supplementary list of Biblical persons and dogmatic terms, with illustrations drawn from early Christian poets, such as Prudentius and Fortunatus, and Renaissance Latin poets, such as Mantuan and Vida. Under the title *Echo* there is a rhyming manual for use in devising those Renaissance curiosities, echo poems. Under the title *Officina poetica* there are examples of the classical verse forms, including a number of Psalms cast into classical metres and set beside verses from Horace in the same metres.

Like many a successful schoolbook, the *Parnassus poeticus* was a collaboration, corrected and updated over a lengthy career. The title page explains that the book

a Nicolao Nomesio Charmensi Lotharingo primum miro artificio congesta, à Ioanne Buchlero deinde emendata, et aucta est[.] Opus sane necessarium, et infinitam utilitatem, facilitatemque adolescentibus allaturum, cuius quidem instituti rationem qui perdiscere cupiat, is legat epistolam nostram ad lectorem, ubi eam perfecte cognoscet, Opera Dav. Lyndesiadæ Natione Scoti.

[Was first compiled, with remarkable skill, by Nicolaus Nomesius of Charmes in Lorraine and next corrected and enlarged by Joannes Buchler. An absolutely essential work, which will provide infinite utility and convenience to young people. Whoever desires to gain a full knowledge of the principle on which it is planned, let him read our epistle to the reader, where he will gain full knowledge of it; the work of David Lindsay Scottish by nation.]

Three compilers are thus named on the title page; to these, three more must be added.

(1) The *Parnassus poeticus* was originally published under the sole authorship of Nicolaus Nomesius at Rome in 1595-96 (the double date appears on the title page). As the *Parnassus poeticus* declares, Nomesius was born at Charmes, in Lorraine; nothing else seems to be known of him.

(2) A revision under the joint authorship of Nomesius and Joannes Buchler appeared at Cologne in 1604. There was another edition of the book in this form (Venice, 1613), and an edition incorporating Buchler's *Officina poetica* as well as *Echo* (Leiden, 1612), which antedates the apparent first publication of the *Officina* as a separate work (Cologne, 1619). Buchler was born at Gladbach, near Cologne, taught at Wickrath, near Düsseldorf, and died about 1640.<sup>4</sup> An energetic educationist, Buchler specialised in manuals of proverbs and aphorisms, the most widely reprinted of which was *Sacrarum profanarumque phrasium poeticarum thesaurus* (London, 1624). In the seventeenth and eighteenth editions of the *Thesaurus* (London, 1669, 1679) there appeared an early exercise in English literary history, the *Compendiosa enumeratio poetarum* of Edward Phillips, nephew and pupil of Milton.<sup>5</sup>

(3) As announced on its separate title-page, *Echo* is the contribution of Janus Dousa, or Jan van der Does (1545-1604), the great Dutch scholar and statesman

who was founding curator of the University of Leiden.<sup>6</sup> Dousa's *Echo* was printed with Nomesius' book in five editions (Mainz, 1604, 1608, 1614; Leipzig, 1615; Cologne, 1641), as well as in the combination with Nomesius and Buchler mentioned above (Leiden, 1612) and in the two editions edited by Lindsay.

(4) In the epistle to which the reader is directed by the title page, David Lindsay introduces another contributor:

Cum duo animadvertem esse rei poeticae subsidia ac ornamenta, phrasium scilicet poeticarum varietatem, nec non epithetorum abundantiam: cumque illam Parnassus Poeticus, hanc Textoris Epitheta abundè suppeditaret: sed cum illa separatim divisim libris reperirentur, iudicavi studia adolescentum inde aliqua ratione retardari: saltem si uno volumine coniungerentur, longè faciliori via, ac maiori emolumento, nec non certiore profectu promoveri posse. (sig.\*3)

[Since I observed that there are two resources and ornaments of poetic art, that is, variety of poetic phrases and also abundance of epithets, and since the *Poetic Parnassus* amply supplied the needs of the first and the *Epitheta* of Textor the needs of the second, but since they had to be consulted separately in different books, I formed the opinion that therefore the studies of young people were impeded for an obvious reason, and if the works were at least joined together in one volume young people would be able to make progress on a much easier path and with greater rewards and also with more certain success.]

The 'Textoris Epitheta' must be the *Epithetorum Ioannis Ravisii Textoris epitome* [Summary of the epithets or adjectives of Joannes Ravisius Textor]. An abridgement of the author's *Specimen epithetorum* (Paris, 1518), this book reappeared posthumously at Leyden in 1541 and in many further editions down to 1682. Lindsay appears to claim that he has conflated it with the original *Parnassus poeticus*. 'Textor' is the Latinized name of Jean-Tixier de Ravisi (1480-1524), born at Saint-Saulge in the province of the Nivernais in central France, professor of rhetoric and later rector at the Collège de Navarre in Paris.<sup>7</sup>

(5) Who was the David Lindsay who set his name to the augmented *Parnassus poeticus* of 1629? Lindsay's epistle supplies our only clues:

cum non semper integrum permissumque sit adolescentibus properantibus, omnes poetarum versus a principio unius dictionis ad calcem usque lustrare, ac perlegere, propterea eorum commoditati facilitatique consulendum duxi, ut in margine sensum seu sententias, phrases seu modos loquendi poeticos versibus contentos quidem, e regio ne [sic] carminum expressos describerem, hæc igitur fuerunt instituti nostri rationes ac momenta principaliora, quæ si vobis grata acceptaque erunt, sicut elapsis quidem temporibus studia, ac labores Patris mei, viri solertissimi, nunquam utilitatibus ac commodis vestris defuere. (sig.\*3<sup>v</sup>)

[Since it is not always suitable or permissible for busy young people to survey and read through every line of a poet from the beginning to the end

of a speech, I have therefore considered their convenience and ease in consulting, and in the margin I have noted the meaning or the intent, the style or the poetic modes of speech, contained in the lines, and printed this directly opposite the poems. These therefore were the reasons for and the more important causes of our procedure. If they are pleasing and welcome to you, then the study and labour of my father, a most clever man, will never be lacking to your use and convenience, no matter how much time has passed.]

In preparing for publication his revision of the *Parnassus poeticus*, then, Lindsay was making use of work originally undertaken by his father, but not published by him. It seems that his father's contribution is the marginal index, which one can imagine a studious reader adding to his own copy of a book like the *Parnassus*. The full conflation of the *Parnassus* and the *Epitheta*, likely to have been undertaken only by someone preparing it for publication, is probably the son's contribution. The David Lindsay we are seeking is thus a Scot, active around the third decade of the seventeenth century, learned in classical literature and the son of a man similarly learned.

Among the many distinguished branches of the Lindsay family and the many literary Lindsays, the strongest candidate is Sir David Lindsay of Balcarres, later David Lord Balcarres (1586-1641). The dates of this David Lindsay would put him in his early forties when the work was published. His peerage was conferred in 1633, a date that would explain why his title was not used in the *Parnassus poeticus* in 1629. His interests qualify him for the task of editing a scholarly poetic manual. He 'devoted much attention to the study of alchemy and kindred sciences, and left in manuscript several volumes of transcripts and translations from the works of the Rosicrucians. He also possessed keen literary tastes, and was a correspondent of Drummond of Hawthornden and Scot of Scotstarvet.'<sup>8</sup>

(6) David Lindsay's parentage also provides a suitable candidate for the last contributor to the *Parnassus poeticus*. His father was John Lindsay, Lord Menmuir (1552-98). Menmuir studied at Cambridge and Paris and gained distinction in several fields—as constitutional lawyer, diplomat, financial adviser to the Scottish crown, and expert in minerals and mining. He was also a man of letters: 'besides Latin, he also had a good knowledge of French, Italian, and Spanish [. . .] and according to Scot of Scotstarvet and Sir William Alexander, Earl of Stirling, he was a master of the art of epigrams.'<sup>9</sup> He would thus qualify as sufficiently learned and sufficiently interested in poetry to have carried out the work of indexing or annotating drawn on by David Lindsay. As the *Parnassus poeticus* was first published in 1595-96, Menmuir could have begun this work only in his last years. Lindsay's remark about the lapse of time between his father's labours and the reader's use of them, in part a claim for the book's permanent value, might also in part allude to the passage of thirty-odd years between the death of Menmuir and the appearance of Lindsay's edition.

The publication of a Scots author by a Venetian press is difficult to explain. No strong Italian connection can be established for Sir David Lindsay, though a couple of facts suggest the possibility of such a connection. First, Lindsay travelled and lived 'in France and elsewhere' between about 1607 and 1612.<sup>10</sup> 'Elsewhere' would very likely have included Venice, a more congenial destination for a travelling Protestant than most of Italy, since the Venetian republic was in the forefront of resistance to the political claims of the papacy.<sup>11</sup> Second, William Drummond's correspondence with Lindsay includes thanks for Lindsay's 'gift of your Amiratus'.<sup>12</sup> This gift is doubtless a book of Scipione Ammirato (1531-1601), the Italian historian. Lindsay's possession of such a book, though not strikingly out of the way for a learned Scot, does suggest an interest in Italy or a contact with Italian publishing.

Sydney

#### NOTES

1. John Hay and David Bean, *The Early Imprints at New Norcia: A bibliographical study of pre-1801 books in the Benedictine Monastery library at New Norcia, Western Australia*, Western Library Studies, 9 (Perth: The Library, Western Australian Institute of Technology, 1986). Review by John Fletcher, *BSANZ Bulletin*, 11 (1987), 76-79.
2. NUC 421, 84 (NN 0290957).
3. The *Gradus ad Parnassum* was first published (Cologne, 1680) under the authorship of the Jesuit Paul Aler (1656-1727). It went through innumerable revisions and republications down to 1914—an appropriate terminus for an epitome of humanist educational practices. The Anglican bishop Edward Maltby (1770-1859) published a *Greek Gradus* (London, 1830) that was reprinted through the nineteenth century. Joannes Ravisius Textor compiled an encyclopaedic collection of information for students under the title *Officina* (Paris, 1520). On Ravisius, see further below.
4. *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (Leipzig, 1875-1900), III, 483.
5. Translated as *Edward Phillips's History of the Literature of England and Scotland*, ed. Daniel G. Calder and Charles R. Forker, Salzburg Studies in English Literature, English Drama, 21 (Salzburg, 1973).
6. Johannes Meursius, *Athenae Batavae* (Leiden, 1625; repr. Westmead, 1970), s.v. Dousa.
7. *Biographie universelle*, 2nd edn. (Paris, 1854-65), XXXV, 250.
8. *Dictionary of National Biography* (London, 1885-1900), XXXIII, 1161.
9. *DNB*, XXXIII, 1182.
10. Lord Lindsay, *Lives of the Lindsays* (London, 1849), II, 3.
11. In his Italian travels of 1573-74, for example, Sir Philip Sidney spent most of his time in Venice and Padua and was strongly discouraged by his mentors from visiting Rome: M.W. Wallace, *The Life of Sir Philip Sidney* (Cambridge, 1915), pp. 128-39; J.M. Osborn, *Young Philip Sidney 1572-1577* (New Haven and London, 1972), pp. 104-28.
12. *Lives of the Lindsays*, II, 4.