The Lyndsay Letters: the Public Correspondence of a Poet and Herald in in Early Sixteenth-Century Scotland
Abstract

Because we are all keenly interested in the study of early Scottish history, it is probable that the name of Sir David Lyndsay, as well as some facts about his career, and one or two of his works, are familiar to us. Some of us may link Lyndsay with heraldry, aware that he compiled Scotland’s earliest official armorial manuscript and possibly was involved in redesigning the royal crest in 1536. A few among us may have been lucky enough to have seen a performance of Lyndsay’s superbly entertaining political morality play, Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis. There have been several Edinburgh Festival productions since the first gave its audience such an exhilarating experience in 1948. At that time the play had not been performed in Edinburgh since 1554, when the dowager Queen, Marie de Guise, had been among the audience. She could have understood only too well the play’s astute commentary on the current state of Scottish society—weakened by intermittent war with England, troubled by religious and political division—as by then it certainly was. There had been an even earlier performance of Ane Satyre at which Lyndsay himself may have been present. This 1552 version was played on his home territory of Cuper in Fife, and contained many wickedly specific references to its residents. But these two performances came at the end of Lyndsay’s life. What preceded them?

Keywords

Scottish literature

Full Text:

Yet Irish, Scots, and Welsh writers have contributed enormously to English literature even when they have written in dialect, as the 18th-century poet Robert Burns and the 20th-century Scots writer Alasdair Gray have done. In the latter half of the 20th century, interest began also to focus on writings in English or English dialect by recent settlers in Britain, such as Afro-Caribbeans and people from Africa proper, the Indian subcontinent, and East Asia. Even within England, culturally and historically the dominant partner in the union of territories comprising Britain, literature has been as... Most Old English poetry is preserved in four manuscripts of the late 10th and early 11th centuries. ENLIGHTENMENT. The 17th century was one of the most stormy periods of English history. The political situation in the country was complicated. The growing contradictions between the new class, the bourgeoisie, and the old forces of feudalism brought about the English Bourgeois Revolution in the 1640s. As a result of the revolution, the king was dethroned and beheaded and England was proclaimed a republic. Though very soon monarchy was restored, the position of the bourgeoisie had changed. The 18th century saw Great Britain rapidly growing into a capitalist country. It was an age of intensive...