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Review of Maurice Lee, Jr., *The Heiresses of Buccleuch: Marriage, Money and Politics in Seventeenth-Century Britain*

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Maurice Lee, Jr. *The Heiresses of Buccleuch: Marriage, Money and Politics in Seventeenth-Century Britain*. East Linton: Tuckwell Press, Ltd., 1996. xi + 143 pp. £14.99. ISBN: 898410-49-6.

Maurice Lee has had a distinguished career as a historian of early modern Scotland and England, particularly focusing on the career of James VI and I. His most recent book, *The Heiresses of Buccleuch*, is rather a departure for him in a number of ways. It is set in the later seventeenth century, and for the most part focuses on interesting but much more minor characters of court politics. Francis Scott, 2nd Earl of Buccleuch, died young after entailing his estate on his two surviving daughters, Mary and Anna. Lee describes their marriages and their ultimate destinies.

The first part of the study focuses on the struggle of their strong-minded mother, Margaret Leslie, to keep the estate from the machinations of the girls' uncle, John Hay, 2nd earl of Tweeddale, and on the illegally early marriage she arranged for Mary at the age of eleven. Mary died soon after, and the study becomes of more general interest when Lee focuses on the marriage of the younger daughter, Anna, to Charles II's illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth. Though this marriage was not celebrated until the young people reached the age of consent (twelve for Anna, fourteen for James), they were still very young and in no sense chose each other. Anna proved to be a loyal and faithful wife, but it was not a successful marriage. Both husband and wife were extravagant. Monmouth flaunted his mistresses and his bastards. Anna did everything she could to keep Monmouth loyal and reconcile him to his father and later his uncle, but she failed. She then worked hard to protect her children's rights once Monmouth was found guilty of treason and executed. Anna was only thirty-four at her first husband's death. She remarried and lived to be eighty years old.

Lee's study is interesting and gives us some fascinating insights into Monmouth and some of the people who surrounded him and his wife. He provides a thoughtful portrait of a subtle Charles II, who though he wished to be comfortable, also wanted to rule. One also sees, for example, the significance of the royal touch to cure disease. Margaret Leslie brought Mary to London to be touched by Charles II. Charles touched to cure with great regularity as a means to demonstrate his royalty. Monmouth, in his attempt to prove his legitimacy, also touched to cure during his father's lifetime, both in 1680 and 1682.

It is, however, a little difficult to understand the audience at whom this book is aimed. Though he provides a family tree and a list of characters, the beginning especially is filled with so many names of minor Scottish nobility that it is hard to follow, and even the rest of the text, focusing on Anna's marriage to Monmouth, is probably not of great interest to the non-specialist. Lee in his forward is oddly defensive, discussing how history in its early and most enduring form is storytelling, yet is no longer "cutting edge," and narrative has only recently returned to favor if it is part of "thick description." Lee, however, calls his study of the heiresses of Buccleuch "thin description," (ix) or story telling for its own sake, though he admits he also uses the story to discuss seventeenth-century aristocratic marriages, Scottish politics, and Charles II's court, and does refer to and debate recent historians on these topics. Yet Lee made the decision "to eschew scholarly apparatus" (ix), even admitting he would be criticized for it, and a book with no footnotes is frustrating to read, and of far less use to scholars. One wishes Lee had provided at least some scholarly citations; it would have made an interesting study far more useful.

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