

## Launch of Ian Hamilton Poetry Collection

Keble College Library

5 November 2014



### Messages to be read on the Night

*Ian was a wonderful poet, and a marvellously intelligent and scrupulous man, whose good influence continues to grow. It's great news that his family donated his library to his old college, and also great news that Keble knows what a significant gift this is. I wish I could be with you to celebrate the hand-over this evening, but send my warm good wishes and congratulations.*

Andrew Motion

*I have a vivid memory of standing with Ian and talking about contemporary poetry just outside of Keble, in 1960 or 61. It was late afternoon and we must have gone on for about an hour. How fitting that his personal poetry library will be at Keble from now on. He was a legendary critic and editor, of course, but his poems are altogether special and will keep his name alive forever (a formulation I can hear him mocking in his characteristically lethal way). My wife Ruth Leys joins me in congratulating the College and the family for a brilliant arrangement.*

Michael Fried

*When I was a naive and wet behind the ears student in my first year at Keble, I met Ian and he opened my eyes to so many issues, books and discussions – he was an obvious and unique talent even then. Our relationship lasted two years and was often magical, then separate digs and challenges meant we drifted away from one another. Every time I saw Ian's name in the public arena, it was celebrated with affection. Thanks Ian.*

David Collyer (Keble 1958)

*Our personal libraries are fingerprints. On our shelves, we leave an impression of our intellectual intentions, the scope of our pursuits, and the depth of our curiosity. The collection presented here tonight provides a glimpse into the working collection of one of the most widely talented minds of his generation. As a reader and admirer of Ian Hamilton's work, I would like to thank the family for their generous gift. As a scholar and researcher, I am in their debt. As a librarian, I praise them for ensuring the permanence of Ian's collection for decades to come.*

Ryan Roberts

*Like the books he wrote, the books he owned are lasting evidence of Ian's love for the poetry he admired. He could sometimes be sardonic about the poetry he didn't admire, but that was part of his charm, which we all miss so much. This memorial collection of the books he worked from will give the next generation at least some idea of his formidable intellect. For how much fun he was, there is the evidence provided by the unmatched wit and rhythm of his own writings; and by our memories, in which he is still there, still editing our manuscripts and still sighing with pity as he draws a line through a cliché. It was a measure of his charisma that we all seemed to enjoy the punishment and lined up for more. But really it was a measure of his seriousness about the subject; the biggest subject of all; poetry. He was the embodiment of the art he practised, and a lot of us, our own time growing shorter now, are still thinking of him every day, and wondering whether what we are writing now would quite measure up to the standards that he stood for then, in those wonderful times at The Pillars of Hercules.*

Clive James





*I am so sorry that we are unable to come to the launch. Al would of course have wanted to. He loved Ian's work and Ian too.*

Anne Alvarez on behalf of Al Alvarez

*I'm afraid I can't get to Oxford on the 5<sup>th</sup>. I shall raise a glass to Ian instead.*

Julian Barnes

*I'm delighted that Ian Hamilton's poetry library has remained intact and has found a safe home at his old college, Keble. It was here, as an undergraduate, that he started out, both as poet and editor, on one of the most fruitful and fascinating literary careers of our generation. His generosity to other poets was balanced – notoriously – by a keen and sceptical intelligence and a desire for the highest standards. He valued an honest line and could tell a fraudulent one at a mile. Those like myself who knew and loved him will be immensely pleased to think that his spirit will remain with us in between the pages of these books. With best wishes for your opening celebration, and in the knowledge that every glass you raise on the night will please the ghost that now has found a proper home in your library.*

Ian McEwan

