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Written and Unwritten Pasts: Scottish Historiography in Highlands and Lowlands, 1400-1650

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In Scotland between 1100 and 1400, Gaelic speech retreated significantly on the ground as English – which in time came to be called Scots – advanced in the south and east, eventually resulting in the creation of linguistic zones which corresponded roughly to the physical realities of Highlands and Lowlands.[1] This hugely important but poorly understood phenomenon carried consequences for the historiography of the Scots, as for much else. Down to the later thirteenth century, Scottish historiography continued to operate within a milieu which was significantly Gaelic. The key prose texts which defined the kingdom's history – royal genealogy, king lists and origin legend – largely derived from Gaelic originals, even if their written expression was increasingly orientated towards Latin. The texts themselves pointed unequivocally to a Gaelic template for Scottish origins. The preservation and promulgation of these texts was primarily the responsibility of a Gaelic scholarly caste at whose apex was the king's poet.[2] After 1300, and particularly once we reach John of Fordun in the later fourteenth century, mainstream presentations of the history of the Scots passed to overwhelmingly non-Gaelic historians based in non-Gaelic speaking Scotland, and working in another genre, the continuous narrative chronicle, usually in prose.

The most momentous of these changes was in personnel. An argument for continuity in this respect can hardly be sustained on the basis of the unknown historian active in the later thirteenth century who seems to have known Gaelic, and to have been responsible for an intermediate stage in the evolution of the chronicle to which John of Fordun gave final form;[3] or of George Buchanan, whose *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* was published in 1582, and who knew Gaelic, but who would surely have baulked at any attempt to claim him as a Gaelic

historian, given his own highly negative comments on the Gaelic approach to history.[4] In other respects, the continuities were significant. These prose chronicles were Latin works, although sometimes accompanied, come the sixteenth century, by parallel versions in Scots, while Scots was also the language of composition of a number of shorter independent chronicles. They incorporated the substance of the texts of the middle ages, sometimes verbatim. As this implies, and even if much of the detail was rejected by Buchanan and his predecessor John Mair, the late medieval national chronicle tradition remained wedded to the Gaelic version of Scottish origins, and to belief in the Gaels as the *prisci Scoti* or aboriginal Scots. In Mair's words, 'we trace our descent from the Irish … at the present day almost the half of Scotland speaks the Irish [i.e. Gaelic] tongue, and not so long ago it was spoken by the majority of us'.[5] The same mindset explains why Bishop William Elphinstone and his protégé Hector Boece saw the likeliest repository of sources upon which to base their patriotic explorations of the Scottish past as the Gaelic west, and specifically Iona, 'where also are preserved the sepulchres of our ancient kings and the ancient monuments of our race'.[6]

However, this did not preclude – indeed, it may have encouraged – a diametrically opposed attitude towards the more recent Scottish past. The Gaelic contribution was to have provided deep roots and antiquity to the Scots as a people, and to their monarchy in particular; and thus to the kingdom as a whole. In subsequent history, insofar as they featured at all, the role of Gaelic Scots became that of inveterate troublemakers or enemies of a realm whose political centre of gravity had come to be located in non-Gaelic or Lowland Scotland. The Gaels had become a stereotype inhabiting the margins of the history of the kingdom to which, so that history still asserted, they had given birth and autonomous existence; the very history which they themselves had once authored and nurtured.[7]

From the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries onwards, written accounts of the past became increasingly accessible in Scotland, leading to a gradual increase in historical awareness among the people. Building on the king-lists that were first composed in the ninth century, and the annalistic entries kept in religious houses by anonymous scribes, the later Middle Ages in the Lowlands saw the development of Scottish historical writing into coherent and creative narrative. Historiography in Latin, although predominant in this period, was complemented by histories written in the Scots vernacular. Histories in both languages, just as is the case in other literary genres, were influenced in their style and presentation of facts by current politics and literary fashions on the one hand, and the author's own purpose and agenda, imagination and love of story and description on the other. In what might be called an established canon of historiographical works, however, some areas are still awaiting detailed study, and most histories have seen no recent scholarly edition.

The *Chronica gentis Scotorum* ('The Chronicle of the Scottish People') of John of Fordun (died ca. 1384) is the earliest surviving single-author narrative of the history of Scotland from the beginning.[8] According to Walter Bower, his successor in the field of Latin historiography, Fordun travelled widely throughout Britain and Ireland in order to collect information which, following the Wars of Independence, was scarce within Scotland itself.[9] Not all of what we find in his work is the result of his own research, however; the work of Professor Dauvit Broun has shown him to have incorporated into his work an unidentified, now lost, historical account written in Scotland in the second half of the thirteenth century.[10] While this earlier chronicle is the text that must be seen as the first step towards a presentation of Scottish history in continuous narrative, the account that we know as Fordun's history remains the work from which we have to start here. Written in a competent mediaeval Latin style, it presents the history of the Scots in five books and a half, beginning with the origins of the Scots in Greece and Egypt and ending with the reign of David I (1124-1153).

The starting point of Fordun's account, with its exotic locations, is based on one of several versions of what is known as the Scottish origin legend, a tale that aims to trace the origin of the Scottish people back to antiquity. Strongly political in its purpose, this myth existed in different versions. That found in Fordun is based on an Irish narrative and presents Ireland as the homeland of the Scots. It follows the idea that it was the marriage of the exiled Greek prince Gathelos with the Egyptian Pharaoh's daughter, Scota, and their subsequent journey first to Ireland and then to Scotland where they finally settled, that started off the new Scottish nation and the dynasty of Scottish kings. They brought with them the stone of Scone, which would from then on play a part in the initiation of Scottish kings. Their arrival in Scotland coincides with that of the Picts, whose true status of inhabitants of much longer standing is thus turned into that of competing newcomers; relations predictably worsen and culminate in the conquest and destruction of the Picts by Kenneth Mac Alpin in 839. The history of Scotland is then continued until the reign of David I.

While much of Fordun's account cannot be said to be based on fact, it offers a version of the past that could be set confidently against those of other countries, especially that of England. In 1286, when the death of the Scottish king Alexander III resulted in a succession crisis, Edward I of England embarked on a campaign to establish English overlordship over Scotland, drawing on a British origin myth that was best known in its presentation in Geoffrey of Monmouth's (ca. 1100–ca. 1155) *Historia regum Britanniae*.[11] According to this, Brutus, great-grandson of Aeneas of Troy, took possession of an island named Albion, named it 'Britannia' after himself, and at his death arranged for it to be divided among his sons Locrinus, Albanactus and Camber, who thereby inherited England, Scotland and Wales respectively. The legend chosen by Fordun, which began with the victorious Greeks rather than the defeated Trojans, conveyed an image of a nation whose origins were built on success.

Fordun's work owes its fame, and indeed its survival, to the fact that in the 1440s it was copied, expanded and continued by Walter Bower, born in Haddington in 1385, and abbot of Inchcolm from 1418 until his death in 1449. Under the title of *Scotichronicon*, Bower produced a historical account in which both Fordun's chronicle and his own additions are clearly marked as such, allowing for the reconstruction of Fordun's original text.[12] Due to his high ecclesiastical rank it is likely that, from James I's return from captivity in 1424 onwards, he attended parliament and meetings of the king's council. Bower's greater political awareness, his decidedly anti-English point of view and support of the king's decisive rule, his more vivid Latin style and firm moral guidance meant that his expansion and rewriting greatly added to the impact of Fordun's original work. The *Scotichronicon* survives in a comparatively large number of manuscripts, as does an anonymous re-writing probably undertaken shortly after Bower's death, which is known as *Liber Pluscardensis*.[13] Other abbreviated versions, too, were popular until the sixteenth century, when Hector Boece's *Scotorum historiae* (1527) took its place as the most widely read historical account in Latin.

While historiography in the Latin language was developing into a more creative form of literature, the subject was also embraced in the Scots vernacular. A number of shorter Scots prose chronicles – brought together in a recent edition[14] – were made to make history more widely accessible; a full translation of the *Scotichronicon* or even of an abbreviated version into Scots prose was never made. The other, quite different, type of vernacular history composed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was written in verse. Out of these, only one account is comparable in its coverage to the *Scotichronicon.* This is the *Original Chronicle,* written between 1408 and 1424 by Andrew of Wyntoun (ca. 1350-ca. 1424), an Augustinian canon and from 1390 prior on St. Serf's Inch, Loch Leven. Written at the request of his patron, Sir John of Wemyss, Wyntoun's work gives an account of the history of the world from the creation and Scotland's place within it up to ca. 1420. The first five books

make no mention of Scotland, showing here, and elsewhere in his chronicle, a mind that was interested in many other global issues besides Scotland, and to a lesser degree concerned with national politics and ideology. Besides making use of orally transmitted Gaelic tales and motifs, Wyntoun had access to written sources now lost, such as a Stewart genealogy by John Barbour and the great register of St. Andrew's priory. For the history of Scotland from 1325 to 1390 he used an anonymous source, supplied by an un-named contributor. Wyntoun's work was highly popular, as is obvious from its nine surviving manuscripts. Although its literary merit is not considered to be high, some of his imagery is evocative and memorable. The often-quoted eight lines of verse on the death of Alexander III in 1286, beginning 'Quhen Alexander our kynge wes dede', are also found in his chronicle, although they were possibly not his own composition.[15]

Contemporary with such global coverage of time and subject, which can be traced back to the fourteenth-century English writer Ranulph Higden's influential large-scale *Polychronicon,* there were other historical works written in the Scots vernacular that were focussed more narrowly on certain episodes and persons. John Barbour's *The Bruce* and Blind Hary's *The Wallace* are verse epics centred on the Wars of Independence. While they are formally works of literature and include fictional material, their focus on a historical rather than fictional protagonist means that they straddle the boundary between history and romance in a way that has almost no parallel in other verse romances.[16] Their influence on Scottish perceptions of nationhood and kingship was at least as strong as that of the *Scotichronicon,* and possibly more enduring.

John Barbour (ca. 1330-1395) was archdeacon of Aberdeen from 1356 onwards, but was also pursuing studies in England and France after this date. He wrote *The Bruce,* an epic of almost 14,000 lines, between ca. 1372 and 1375, covering Robert Bruce's fight for independence, the Scottish victory at Bannockburn, and Bruce's subsequent reign in

Scotland.[17] Barbour had a strong attachment to king Robert II, and his epic on Robert I is not

his only work written in honour of his patron's family; he is also believed to have written the

the genealogy of the Stewarts that was used as a source by Andrew of Wyntoun.[18] Its style

and idealistic portrayal of its protagonists shows the influence of French romances, although

women, as has been pointed out, have no role in it at all. Barbour's focus on a single ruler and

his leadership in Scotland's fight for independence creates in Bruce a personification of

Scotland and Scottish identity. He, too, gave to the world a memorable, often-quoted passage

on freedom, beginning 'A, fredome is a noble thing!'[19] His epic also raises the subjects of

good kingship on the one hand – showing in Bruce a hero whose heroic potential is checked

by his responsibilities as a leader – and of loyalty to the king on the other. To the Scots, it

serves as a reminder that their country's independent status was largely the achievement of a

member of the current dynasty, and to the troublesome contemporary Douglases, that their

ancestor Sir James Douglas was – in his presentation here – Bruce's most loyal supporter.

Roughly a century later, Blind Hary's *The Wallace,* written in the 1470s, likewise

concentrates on the achievements of a single man in the fight for Scottish independence.[20] It

highlights in more dramatic narrative than the *Bruce* the extremes of warfare and of

dedication to a cause. Its use of longer Scots pentameter lines provides more scope for

individual expression than the shorter lines of Barbour and Wyntoun. It is based on the works

of Bower and Wyntoun and on 'gestes' of Wallace, but a good deal is also supplied by Hary's

own imagination. William Wallace is here charged with the task of liberating Scotland by

Saint Andrew and the Virgin Mary – a direct divine inspiration that stands in contrast to

Bruce's more implied divine support as the rightful king of the Scots – and pursues this aim

with single-minded idealism. His own and his followers' nobility of character and purpose,

and his martyr-like end, appear here in sharp contrast to the unjust ambitions of the villainous

enemy. In contrast to Barbour's depiction of a hero whose adversaries are found both outside

Scotland and within, some of the *Wallace's* popularity rests on the fact that Wallace's fight is very clearly against the English, revealing on Hary's part a greater concern for the fortunes of the Scottish people than for those of the Scottish king. While Barbour's epic celebrated king Robert I and through him his royal dynasty, Blind Hary (ca. 1440–1492 or thereafter) is thought to have belonged to a section of society that disagreed with the pro-English politics of James III, so that his *Wallace* is both a reminder of the immense struggles it cost the Scottish people to achieve its independence, and a call to defend it in the present times. The work's great and lasting popularity, which surpassed that of Barbour's, can also be attributed to its more vivid style, and to the greater proximity of its language to that spoken at the point at which printing began in Scotland. It was one of the first works to be published by Scotland's first printers, Walter Chepman and Andro Myllar, in ca. 1508, was printed again in 1594 and 1601, and in the wake of the Union of the Crowns of 1603, saw thirteen further editions during the seventeenth century. It also served as the basis of a controversial play, *The Valiant Scot,* printed in London in 1637, by an author whose initials 'J.W.' have not been identified.[21] Barbour's work, in contrast, was printed only six times until the end of the seventeenth century, although it, too, inspired another literary piece in the shape of a long verse epic by Patrick Gordon of Ruthven, *The famous historie of the renouned and valiant Prince Robert surnamed the Bruce King of Scotland*, which was published in Dordrecht in 1615.[22]

The early sixteenth century saw the beginnings of a different approach to Scottish historiography as it was now in the hands of authors who were increasingly influenced by humanist ideas. The first of these was John Mair (ca. 1467–1550), born near North Berwick in East Lothian. He studied in Cambridge and Paris, remained in Paris until 1518 where he acquired fame as a teacher, and then returned to Scotland to teach in Glasgow. Here, he wrote the *Historia Maioris Britanniae* (printed in Paris, 1521). Although often described as a

logician with a scholastic background, he was also touched by elements of early humanism. He was an industrious author who by the time of his return to Scotland had a sizeable list of philosophical publications to his name.[23] History was only one of many interests of his, and he made no attempt to present a new factual account based on his own research; rather, he treated the existing record as an object for analysis and criticism. The modest format and length of his history, a volume of 146 leaves printed in the same quarto format in which other works of his were published, signals from the start a sober, matter-of-fact approach. His stay in England as a student, and his more objective interest in Scotland brought on by long absence, may also have been factors that contributed to his rather novel point of view. Rather than continuing the presentation of Scotland as a country forever under threat from an overbearing neighbour and thus forced keep intact its physical and ideological defences, Mair argued for the two countries to form a union of equals: he thought that there was little to distinguish them, and dismissed both the English and the Scottish origin myths as fabrications. Watching with some suspicion the development of new humanist fashions of history writing – which were enthusiastically followed by the next historian, his contemporary Hector Boece – John Mair advocated a truthful and unemotional account of history, where a simple style ensured that the account was not falsified through colourful language.

To be clearly and universally understood was an important aim; in fact it has been commented that Mair 'narrowly … missed writing in the vernacular'.[24] The work is dedicated to the nine-year-old King James V, not so much as a manual of good kingship, but in the hope that an understanding of history will help him to avoid many mistakes; in the book, events and their causes are at times helpfully analysed. Concerned, like his predecessors, with the relationship between king and people, Mair was the first historian to question the concept of the divine right of kingship, that is, the idea that kingship was conferred on a ruler and his

dynasty by God so that only a strict adherence to the law of primogeniture could be seen as being compliant with God's will. Instead, there are signs that he favoured a conciliarist approach, where legitimacy was reduced in importance and the king could forfeit his kingship if his rule was incompetent or damaging. His rule was seen as resting on the consent of the people, and he could be deposed by them if he showed himself to be unsatisfactory. Although in his narrative Mair finds little opportunity to demonstrate the workings of such a principle in practice, one historical figure who he thinks entirely lost all claim to kingship is John Balliol, for surrendering the throne to Edward I, which raises, once again, the Wars of Independence to a highly significant period in Scottish history.

Mair's history, at odds with popular feeling, may yet have fared better if the young king and the world at large had not so soon afterwards been presented with a far more appealing history of Scotland. Mair's successor in the field – and a man who fits rather well the description of the type of author at whom he aimed his stylistic advice – was Hector Boece (ca. 1465–1536). He was born in Dundee, one of several sons of a wealthy burgess, and studied in Paris where he enjoyed the friendship of Erasmus and other humanists from Scotland and elsewhere. After he had achieved his M.A. he initially, like Mair, remained in Paris to work as a teacher and to study for a degree in theology; in 1497, however, he was invited by Bishop William Elphinstone to teach at the newly-founded King's College in Aberdeen, and in 1505 he became the College's first principal. Boece's *Scotorum historia a prima gentis origine* – not his only, but his most important work – was printed in Paris in 1527.[25] It was thus published only six years after Mair's history, very probably begun and planned before Mair's work appeared, and followed none of Mair's recommendations for a more pared-down and less imaginative narrative. Divided into seventeen books, and coming down to the murder of James I in 1437, it is written in a classical Latin style and models itself on Roman historiography. Not only does it display the dramatic diction that Mair believed to

be out of place in a history, but it also adds digressions, ethnographical matter and speeches in battle and council, and includes a lengthy re-telling of the Scottish origin myth. Divided into long books but with no further subdivision, it is nevertheless an accessible historical reference work due to the helpful name index at the front. While this gave Boece's work an impeccably humanist face, it is in many ways far more traditional than Mair's. It was printed in folio format with a highly decorated title page and is monumental in length – over 400 leaves – as well as size. It was dedicated to the young King James V, and that good kingship is one of his concerns becomes evident in the sequence of exemplary narratives that illustrate the reigns of the early kings of Scotland. In the absence of a more detailed historical record, Boece uses the opportunity to develop these rulers out of single-line entries in king-lists into either model kings or tyrannical, weak or immoral rulers, drawing on the traditional *speculum principis* literature of instruction for young rulers. While the subjects of Boece's kings have a duty of loyalty, they also have the right to criticise or depose bad kings for the good of the country, and frequently make use of it. Like Mair, Boece shows an awareness of conciliarist ideas, but does not argue for this practice to be applied in modern times. Ridding the country of evil rulers was in keeping with the virtuous ideals of the ancient Scots, who were, besides, not yet following the law of primogeniture: this he presents as a much later development. The portrayal of the ancient Scots in his work as 'noble savages' shows the influence of classical sources such as Tacitus's *Agricola* and *Germania,* the latter newly discovered in his time and creating a certain fashion for northerly ethnography that was also taken up, for example, by the Swedish author Olaus Magnus in his *Historia de gentibus Septentrionalibus* ('History of the northern peoples'), first printed in Rome in 1555.

Further, Boece does not share John Mair's view that Scotland and England would benefit from forming a union. Instead, his account serves as a reminder that it is within Scotland itself that some effort at bringing different groups closer together might be made: in

the Gaelic-speaking Scots Boece found a large demographic group that had long existed only at the fringes of the country's historical narrative. Later medieval Lowland Scottish historiography had until now been composed by writers whose origins lay east of the Highland line in counties such as East Lothian and Fife. These saw Scotland, correctly, as divided into Lowlands and Gàidhealtachd, but their attitude towards the Gaels was one of prejudice and suspicion: their barbarous neighbours, they felt, were nothing but trouble, and there is no acknowledgement that it was to the Gaels that Scotland owed the existence of any early historical record at all. John Mair, whose knowledge of them is more detailed than might be expected, had expressed himself in a more differentiated way; he had seen different degrees of integration into the kingdom within the Highland population, and moreover much admired their playing on the harp[26]. Ownership of the Scottish past, however, was claimed for the Lowlands, while the original preservers of its records were sidelined and rarely brought into the narrative unless as troublemakers. Boece, on the other hand, according to his own account in his preface to James V, was in contact with Highlanders. Possibly on the grounds of the information accessed with the help of these contacts, he presented the Gaelic Scots as those that still preserved the original virtue and austerity of the ancient Scots; this fitted in well with the ideals expressed in Tacitus's *Germania,* and similarly results in a juxtaposition in his work of archaic Highland virtue and Lowland greed and unmanliness.[27] But although his humanist heart seems to be with the virtuous Highlanders, their lifestyle is unfit for modern times: both writer and reader have to accept that, regrettably, it is sophisticated Lowland decadence that will cause less embarrassment to the nation. Moreover, the difficulties for a Lowlander of access to Highland history, which for a great part remained preserved only in Gaelic oral tradition, meant that Boece did not change the established narrative record into a history that showed a more positive interaction between Highlands and Lowlands.

Boece's history proved highly influential on future historians. Later reprints published in 1574 and 1575 by Giovanni Ferrerio added two further books left incomplete at Boece's death. By then three different translations into Scots had been written. The best known among these was ordered by King James V to be made by the poet John Bellenden (ca. 1495-between 1545 and 1548); it may be noted that the king apparently did not commission a translation of Mair's history.[28] Bellenden's translation was first presented to the king in manuscript in 1533, and a revised version was printed in Edinburgh in the later 1530s. Two other translations into Scots – a verse translation by William Stewart, and an anonymous prose translation known as the Mar Lodge version – were written within the same timeframe but not published.[29] Bellenden's translation, which makes some substantial changes to the original narrative and also adds material from other sources, turned Boece's work into the first universally popular prose history in Scotland, after Barbour's and especially Blind Hary's verse epics. For much of the sixteenth century, subsequent historians tended to add to, rather than question, what was considered the accepted account of the Scottish past both in Scotland and abroad. Raphael Holinshed's historical work, the *Chronicles of England, Scotlande and Irelande,* first printed in London in 1577, shows its absorption into historical accounts in England: its version of the story of Macbeth was based on that of Boece/Bellenden, and then in itself provided the basis for Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

So far, historians had been able to take for granted a religiously and – on the whole – politically united Scottish readership. Although the authors' regional loyalties had always had a bearing on their presentation of certain events,[30] the impact of the Wars of Independence, and for the later authors also the battle of Flodden, meant that there was never any doubt that the main enemy was to be found outside Scotland. This did not mean, of course, that they had been unanimous in their treatment of fundamental constitutional and political themes. Views on the rights of kingship, the sacredness of the dynasty, the duties of a king and the role of

the people varied greatly throughout the histories. While the older authors celebrated the shift

from the Gaelic succession practice to the law of primogeniture, which had eventually

resulted in a successful outcome of the Wars of Independence under the current dynasty, their

sixteenth-century successors tended to regard national success as an achievement of the

people and – following the *Institutio Principis Christiani* of Erasmus and similar literature for

the education of princes[31] – emphasised the duties, rather than rights, of the king. They had

been able to express such views in relative security, and there had been no expectation of

their political theories ever being seriously acted upon.

However, the *Scotorum historia*, along with its translation, was the last work in the

genre to be written before the Scottish reformation, and before the forced abdication and later

execution of Mary Queen of Scots. The historians of the later sixteenth century and beyond,

whose accounts extended that of Boece into their own times, were of necessity taking sides

both religiously and politically, and neither was without danger. It had not been uncommon

for the earlier historians to end their accounts a safe number of decades before their own

times in order to avoid a variety of criticisms; now, however, some authors did not publish

their works at all for fear of reprisals. An example is Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie (ca. 1532–

ca.1586), whose history is a continuation of Bellenden's Scots translation of Boece's work,

from the death of James I in 1437 to 1575. It was not printed in his own lifetime, possibly

because of the author's anti-Douglas sentiments; the first edition was published by Robert

Freebairn in 1728 under the title *The history of Scotland; from 21 February, 1436, to March,*

1565. However, the fact that sixteen manuscripts survive suggests that the work must have

been well known through private circulation, although only one of these goes beyond 1565.

Three further printed editions followed; Aeneas J.G. Mackay's scholarly edition, published

by the Scottish Text Society in three volumes, 1899–1911, used the title under which it is

now better known, *The historie and chronicles of Scotland.*[32] Pitscottie used Bellenden and

other sources until he reached the times when his own political awareness began, around the year 1555. Some source material was probably supplied by the poet and Lyon herald David Lyndsay of the Mount, his relative, whose poetry Pitscottie also quotes. However, much of his contemporary narrative is based on hearsay and oral accounts, giving his history its feeling of immediacy and closeness to the spoken word. Although there is a pronounced pro-Protestant bias in his work, which contributes to the general untrustworthiness of his history, Pitscottie is less polemical than his contemporaries Knox and Buchanan. He continued to support the Stewart dynasty, and about Mary Queen of Scots, out of the country since 1568, he finds little to say, perhaps out of consideration for her son James VI.[33] With all its faults, Pitscottie's history is generally considered to be a likeable book and a vivid, enjoyable read.

John Lesley, bishop of Ross (1527–1596), remained a Catholic and through much of his career acted as supporter and negotiator on behalf of Mary Queen of Scots. After her defeat and abdication he left Scotland for the Continent in 1573, and never returned. He wrote a *Defence of the honour of the right highe, mightye and noble Princesse Marie Quene of Scotlande* (1569), and a continuation of Hector Boece's work, entitled *De origine, moribus et rebus gestis Scotorum libri decem* (Rome, 1578). Lesley follows Hector Boece's account of the early Scottish kings, but in his narrative of better documented times his presentation is informed – sometimes in direct contradiction to what he repeats from Boece – by his own interest in the cause of Mary Queen of Scots. He advocates firmly the law of primogeniture, the divine right of kingship, and the justness of the Catholic cause. Also, although he adopts Boece's view that the Highland Scots are those that preserve ancient Scottish virtue in Scotland, his account of more recent times contains frequent references to them as savages, an interesting fact in view of the Highland location of his episcopal see.

George Buchanan (1506–1582), a protestant and one of Scotland's greatest humanists, wrote his *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* in the years leading up to 1582, but died while the work

was in the press. Three years previously, he had already presented his views on kingship in his *De jure regni apud Scotos dialogus* (Edinburgh, 1579), but in his history the subject is taken up again. Relying on Boece's presentation of kings ruling by popular consent among the ancient Scots, Buchanan was strongly opposed to the rule of Mary Queen of Scots, and in favour of the deposition of unsuitable monarchs or even of tyrannicide. As for the presentation of the Highlanders, Buchanan, who was himself a Highlander from the Lennox with a knowledge of Gaelic, gives a similar account of the Gaels to that found in Boece. It is, however, enriched by more detail, and while he retains Boece's image of the Highland Scots as the preservers of the austere virtue of the ancients, his ethnographical account lacks Boece's corresponding presentation of the Lowlanders as decadent and anglified. The reader is thus left with an impression of Scotland's cultural distinctness, for which the Highlanders are living proof, rather than its similarities with England that had led Mair and others to argue for a union with England.

In subsequent decades, Lowland historical writing showed a tendency to become more specialised and narrowed in its scope by subject or period. Genealogies, family memoirs and sometimes also heraldic works outlined the history of families and individuals against the background of more generally known historical fact. Protestant church histories, such as John Knox's *History of the Reformation in Scotland* (published 1587)*,* and David Calderwood's *The True History of the Kirk of Scotland* (published posthumously in 1678), were limited chronologically as well as in their choice of subject. Thomas Dempster's flawed but nevertheless valuable *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Scotorum* (Bologna, 1627) is a Catholic expatriate's attempt to chart the cultural rather than political achievements of the Scottish nation.[34] Rather than presenting a historical narrative, Dempster compiled an encyclopedia of – mostly – Catholic Scottish authors and their works, and although many persons on his list are wrongly identified as Scots, much of his information is still of great

interest and was much copied until the early eighteenth century. Local history and topography, too, began to gain ground until, in the second half of the century, early Enlightenment scholars like Robert Sibbald began to assemble on a larger scale the country's topographical picture.

What can be said of the expression, function and social significance of history between 1300 and 1650 in Gaelic-speaking Scotland? Did the process of Gaelic linguistic contraction and then retrenchment in the centuries after 1100 have any discernible impact upon Gaelic views of Scottish origins, or of more recent history? Was the predominant vision pan-Gaelic, extending to Ireland as the homeland of the Gaels, or 'national' in a Scottish sense, or more narrowly focused upon the regional and local? Did agency and authorship continue to be vested purely in learned professionals – the intellectual if not the biological heirs of the king's poet – and employing the same genres?

If answers to these questions are to be sought in prose texts committed to the written or printed word within this timeframe, then in terms of texts in Gaelic, virtually nothing has survived, and the contrast with contemporary Gaelic Ireland – replete with annalistic and genealogical compilations, and much else besides – could not be starker.[35] Even taking into account the two other written languages in use in Gaelic-speaking Scotland in the era, Latin and Scots (which in time increasingly conformed to English), the improvement is marginal, and the contrast with Lowland Scotland no less stark. To a very few genealogical texts, mainly in Gaelic, can be added a very few chronicles orientated towards Latin and then Scots, essentially annalistic in form, highly localised in perspective, and associated with particular churches. One such chronicle survives in the famous early sixteenth century miscellany, mainly of Gaelic poetry, known as the Book of the Dean of Lismore, whose centre of

compilation was the parish church of Fortingall in eastern Highland Perthshire. The Book of the Dean of Lismore also includes various Latin and Scots texts relating to the kingship of the Scots, and insofar as their origins have been identified, they derive from the Lowland chroniclers.[36]

It is only after 1650 that the situation changes as a productive and enduring genre of genealogical or clan history comes into full visibility, composed in manuscript and overwhelmingly in English.[37] Even then, the authors of these works make liberal use of Fordun and his successors while occasionally lamenting the dearth of indigenous written antecedents available to them.[38] On that basis we might assume that they, and perhaps therefore the compilers of the Book of the Dean of Lismore before them, turned to the Lowland historians to fill the vacuum left by the absence of a homegrown alternative. However, this was not the case. The clan histories offer a means of reconstructing a model, however tentative, of the shape and nature of historical enquiry within Gaelic Scotland in the later middle ages, and when this is complemented by other evidence, the unequivocal conclusion is that this was a society steeped in the knowledge of its own past. In the words of the author of one clan history, writing in the early eighteenth century, 'no people have their History so exactly keept by Tradition as the Highlanders'.[39]

Why then had a profoundly historicist society left such a paltry written legacy to bear witness to the fact? Explanations proffered in the early modern clan histories ranged from the unlikely – ingratitude towards their patrons, or simple ignorance, on the part of the historians concerned – to the more plausible assertion of destruction of manuscripts. Evidence for specimens now lost – Beauly and Bunchrew from Easter Ross, possibly Iona – may hint that the maintenance of local annalistic texts in ecclesiastical environments was fairly widespread in the late medieval Highlands.[40] Some of the clan histories were able to draw upon earlier texts apparently in the same mould as themselves, and which have failed to survive

independently. Three Macintosh manuscripts had testified to 'the antiquity of the family and their pedigree', the earliest of them bringing the story down to c. 1500, and reputedly authored around that date by the chief of the clan, Fearchar Macintosh, then a prisoner in southern Scotland.[41] Loss has also undoubtedly diminished the written legacy left by those professional learned lineages in late medieval Gaelic Scotland which included history in their repertoire. The names which stand out are MacMhuirich, Ó Muirgheasáin, MacEwen and Beaton, all based in the west highlands and islands. They were ultimately of Irish origin (this is less clear-cut in the case of the MacEwens); in regular contact with the professional classes of Ireland, including their own kinsfolk; and espoused the so-called 'classical tradition' of Gaelic scholarship on lines which were consistent with Irish practice, including the use of the high-status literary dialect of Gaelic, and of Gaelic script, for manuscript composition. A MacEwen poem alludes to 'sein-leabhruibh suadh', *the ancient books of the learned'*,[42] but we have no surviving archive to speak of for them or for the Uí Muirgheasáin, while that of the MacMhuirichs has apparently suffered grievously from attrition.[43]

Yet this is very far from the whole story. According to the clan histories, the professional cultivation of history was not the preserve of these four lineages, but well-nigh universal: the MacLeans 'had their shenachies and bards as every family of distinction in the Highlands had'.[44] Within the 'classical tradition', 'shenachie' or *seanchaidh* was the appropriate technical term for a professional historian. Another history adds the gloss that 'the senachie was the prose writer, and the bard the poet, but very oft the bard supplied the place of both'. It goes on to define the primary function of these poet-historians as:

> to hand down to posterity the valorous actions, conquests, battles, skirmishes,
> marriages and relations of the predecessors by repeating and singing the same at
> births, baptisms, marriages, feasts and funerals, so that no people since the curse of

the Almighty dissipated the Jews took such care to keep their tribes, cadets and branches, so well and so distinctly separate.[45]

On this basis, two complementary explanations for the lack of written prose history in late medieval Gaelic Scotland can be offered. History was primarily conceived of as genealogy, and with material of this order, the preferred modus operandi was oral and aural. All this is present in the praise accorded Gilleasbuig Campbell, fifth earl of Argyll in 1567 by Eoin or John Carswell, first Protestant bishop of the Isles, for his devotion to scripture rather than ancestral history:

> … oir is mo do chuir tu a suim an ni do dhearbh an soisgel diadha dhuit ina meid
>
> oirrdhearchais *t*h'aoisi, agas fad an ghnathuighe do-chualais do bheith ag na
>
> sindsearaibh onoracha do-chuaidh romhad …
>
> *… for you have considered that which the divine gospel has proved to you of more*
>
> *account than the glory of your age and the old-established customs which you have*
>
> *heard were followed by your honourable ancestors who preceded you ….*[46]

Secondly, Gaelic poetry and song was a fitting medium for rehearsing and memorialising history. An early sixteenth century poem addresses the chief of the MacGregors thus:

> Mithigh a rádh réd rorg glas,
>
> éistidh, a Eoin, réd sheanchas,
>
> ríomh do fhréimhe – cá meisde? –
>
> ríoghdha séimhe saoirtheisde.

Fit time it is to state to thee, thou of the blue eyes – listen, Eoin, to thy history – the enumeration of thy line – what harm therein? – a line royal, gentle, of noble repute.[47]

As this makes clear, Gaelic verse was also geared towards the spoken rather than the written word. Nevertheless, insofar as a corpus of late medieval historical writing in Gaelic has come down to us, it is provided by verse rather than prose. This might be explicable by the lottery of survival, above all else the poetry-centred Book of the Dean of Lismore; but it could equally be argued that it is no accident that within that source, the verse is overwhelmingly Gaelic, the prose monopolised by Latin and Scots.

This is an appropriate juncture to return to the clan histories, for whenever their authors enlarge upon their sources, mention is made of oral informants of high social status, typically characterised as 'sensible old men of the last generation', 'the most intelligent and best informed men yet alive', or 'the oldest and wisest, not only of my own but of all our neighbours' families'.[48] Thus, inherited Gaelic oral narrative underpins these English prose texts. The clan histories further imply that these aristocratic amateurs were one element in a threefold engagement with history in Gaelic Scotland in the later middle ages, the others being the professional poet-historians, and all society viewed as a single consciousness sharing a 'collective memory'.[49] Noble laymen such as the Macintosh, Campbell and MacGregor chiefs already mentioned could hardly avoid imbibing what the specialists taught them, or being immersed in the history of their own lineages and clans. Such laymen were pivotal to cultural interchange and recycling across social strata, ideally placed to combine all three spheres of indigenous historical activity, and to initiate the process by which the results were committed to writing, in anticipation of what happened on a general and more deliberate scale after 1650. It was to men of this class that the term *seanchaidh* came to be applied in the later seventeenth century, as the professionals previously so designated died out.[50]

To summarise thus far, the practice of history in Gaelic Scotland in the later middle ages turned upon orality, and the noble lineages which exercised lordship over society. Professionals preserved and pronounced the history of these lineages, and instructed them in it, resulting in a lay aristocracy which was very historically minded. Individual members of this class may have developed reputations as amateur historians in their own right, and enjoyed greater latitude for experimentation and synthesis of sources which potentially included the 'vulgar traditions' of the people below. The two putative poles of this putative historical world were the chief's court, and its demotic mirror-image, the forerunner of the *taigh-chèilidh* or ceilidh house familiar from the fuller record of the modern era. In the seventeenth century, the changing self-perception and self-expression of the social elite generated an imperative for new history. In the van were the Campbells, initially offering patronage to non-Gaelic specialists in disciplines such as medicine and visual art as well as literature. William Bowie commenced *The Black Book of Taymouth* in 1598, a history of the Campbells of Glenorchy embellished with full colour portraits of the chiefs of the lineage.[51] Also of Lowland authorship was *Information anent the Pedigree of the Noble and Antient House of Lochow*, written in 1634, and treating of the main Campbell line.[52] However, as the genealogical history genre came to full flower after 1650, so indigenous authorship reasserted itself, but with a difference. With the professional historical class in advanced and terminal decline, the amateur *seanchaidh* now came into his own as the de facto 'new historian', putting history into writing in English and within a broader comparative framework, thereby acknowledging that outside audience which itself signified part of the rationale for change.[53]

The surviving evidence, with the poetry looming large, suggests that late medieval Gaelic Scotland depended upon history for its sense of self, order and ethos. The past was accessed via the rungs of genealogy, represented in the first instance by the mini-pedigree (*sloinneadh*) of two, three or even four generations which constituted part of the everyday

naming system by which those of social standing were known. These pedigrees linked or associated the individual with the main chiefly line of a particular clan, whose genealogy and deeds were maintained by the professional historians. These clans in their turn were the limbs of the great *craobhsgaoileadh* or 'branching-tree' of the Gaels as a people: 'the race of the Gaels from the land of Greece'. This conceptualisation of the past as a domain inhabited first and foremost by those to whom one was related, and whose personal name one might well share, must have fostered social inclusion and collectivism, and made for a highly permeable frontier between the living and the dead. Blood was a finite and sacred commodity entrusted to the latest generation: 'fuil Ghrantach mád ghruaidh mar fhuil' (*'the blood of Grants is the blood that is in thy cheek'*), as one chief was reminded.[54] The kin-based past must necessarily be held in reverence, and in constant employ as a benchmark of morality and compass for action: 'ionnan moltar igcathaibh / Torcul is a athair áirmheach (*'praise equal to his renowned sire's doth Torquil win in battles'*); 'a mheic Aileín, ná toill féin / taibhéim nachar thoill Ailéin' (*'thou son of Ailean, do thou thyself no reproach that Ailean earned not'*); 'cuimhnigh nach tugsad na fir / umhla ar uamhan do Ghallaibh / cia mó fá dtugadh tusa / umhla uait an dula-sa?' (*'remember that these men made no submission for dread to Saxons; why shouldst thou, more than they, make submission now'*?).[55] For Gaelic Scotland, the past was not only present in the personal naming system per se, but in one type of epithet attached to ancestral names appearing in the pedigree of the clan's ruling line. Forms such as 'Gill-easbuig Arann', *'Gilleasbuig of Arran'* or 'Cailéin na gceann',*'Cailean of the Heads'*, were shorthand for known historical events, and precisely analogous to place-names of the order of *Linn na Lùirich* ('the Pool of the Mailcoat'), *Loch MhicMhàrtainn* ('MacMartin's Loch') or *Coille na Baintighearna* ('the Lady's Wood').[56] While the origins and points of reference of these kinds of nomenclature may have been aristocratic, they became universals, part of the landscape and soundscape inhabited by all.

Ireland was the historic homeland of all Gaels, and the Scottish poet-historians existed to bear witness to 'the tribes who came from Ireland to Scotland and became heads of families and chiefs of clans'.[57] Texts relating to kindreds whose origins were understood to be impeccably Irish, such as the MacDonalds and MacDougalls, are dense in allusion to Irish history and pre-history; of one later fifteenth century MacDougall chief it is said that 'gaisgeadh is eineach Éireann / 'gá nasgadh ''na luaithbhéimean', (*the valour and honour of Ireland are knit in his swift blows*').[58] Such was the inescapabilty of the relationship that even in cases where an Irish connection was non-existent or called into question, such would need to be found or reasserted, to render or maintain that lineage as a fully functioning limb of the Gaelic tree. Coinneach Cam, chief of the MacKenzies in the early seventeenth century, and for whose kindred an ultimately Norman ancestry had come to claimed (via the spurious Colin (Fitz) Gerald, who had supposedly prevented a stag from killing King Alexander III while hunting), was informed by MacLean's genealogist that he was 'not descended of the Geralds but of the Kings of Ireland, as the most of the clans of the west and south west parts of Scotland were'.[59] The Stewarts' roots in Brittany are nowhere visible in the characterisation of the fifteenth-century 'Eoin Stiúbhairt a crích Raithneach / a lámh Gaoidheal as fear buaidh … A Chú Chulainn cloinne Ghaltair … a shíl shlat ó chathach Chonn' (*'John Stewart from the bounds of Rannoch, thou whose hand has more virtue than all the Gael … thou Cú Chulainn of Walter's clan … thou scion of the princes of warrior Conn's race'*).[60] The MacLeods of Lewis were of indubitably Norse descent, and around 1500 a poet could acknowledge that the MacLeod chief Torcul might bestow upon him 'ó Charraig Bhoirbhe / séad as soirbhe fhuair file' (*'from the Rock of Bergen, a jewel the most precious that poet ever won'*).[61] But this was only one item in a wish-list comprising Fionn mac Cumhaill's shield and the horses of Cú Chulainn and Conall Cernach, for Torcul was

endowed with a generosity equal to that of the revered Guaire son of Colmán, king of

Connacht, as well as the endurance of Cú Chulainn.[62]

There were established tropes and pathways by which the connection to Ireland could

be made, and the resultant descent groupings gave primary structure to Gaelic society in

Scotland. At the level of individual clan pedigrees, the segment from the present chief back

as far as the eponymous ancestor, from whom the clan derived its name, remained largely

stable. The segment beyond the eponym, including the link to Ireland, became less strictly

historical in its farthest reaches, and susceptible to alteration. Different origins might be

claimed for the one clan, in response to variables such as the affiliation and intent of the

genealogist involved, or the clan's changing fortunes and allegiances across time. Pedigree

manipulation reinforces rather than diminishes the status of genealogy as the determinant of

history, and confirms the intimacy of the relationship between past and present. Current

political realities carried genealogical consequences and needed genealogical justification.

Such manipulation had to be intellectually credible, necessitating the skills of the poet-

historians who maintained the pedigrees both of their own employers and of others, and their

knowledge of the Gaelic branching-tree in its entirety.[63]

As long as this caste remained in life, it asserted a vision of Scotland or *Alba* as the

homeland of the Gaels beyond Ireland, and of *Alba* as an undifferentiated Gaelic entity.

Whereas the Gaelic vernacular literature which becomes properly visible in the seventeenth

century acknowledges a physical and cultural divide in Scotland between Gael and non-Gael,

there seems to have been no comparable updating of the world-view of the Scottish Gaelic

professional literati. To be a Gael in Scotland was to own Ireland as motherland and Scotland

as fatherland. If Gaelic hero figures such as Fionn mac Cumhaill were charged with the

protection of Ireland, the present-day chiefs of Scottish clans bore exactly the same

responsibility towards Scotland. An abiding sense of the Gaels as one people, of ultimate

Gaelic unity and solidarity, was not irreconcilable with the acknowledgement and maintenance of two homelands of equal weighting. In Scottish sources, whoever held *ceannas nan Gàidheal*, the 'headship of the Gaels' had the right and bounden duty to marshal the whole people to protect either Ireland, or Scotland, or both. The concept is absent from Irish sources, which see Scotland as an aberration, and the sovereignty of the Gaels as inseparable from Ireland and the high-kingship of Ireland.[64] The kingship of the Scots may have been a crucial legitimator of Scottish growth from Irish roots, a genealogical counterpart to the sense of place provided by *Alba*. Gaelic society in Scotland was in natural harmony with a royal dynasty claiming Irish origin, and a number of Scottish clans subscribed to the particular pathway in question, via the ruling stocks of Dalriada, the embryonic kingdom of the Gaels in Scotland. The Book of the Dean of Lismore is a witness to the degree of interest in the ramifications of the royal house, and thus a marker of the desirability of being able to associate one's pedigree with that of the kings of Scots.

For late medieval Gaelic Scotland, history was no less than the morality of the present, providing explanations, warnings, encouragement and lessons. It was a repository of virtues, as embodied by archetypes, heroic and real, to whom one must aspire. The ultimate reward for the exhibition of virtue was a place in the past, and the collective Gaelic consciousness: to shine immortal as 'éinrinn ghaisgidh Gaoidheal nGréag', a '*unique star of valour among the Grecian Gael*'.[65] As one poet reminded his patron in an argument of perfect circularity, what deed was more lasting than the hospitality bestowed by Guaire, the seventh-century king of Connacht, upon Senchán Torpéist and his train?[66] The past began and ended with one's own kin, for 'eineach is eangnamh is iocht / do cheangladh ar a sliocht riamh' ('*generosity and prowess and mercy have been bound on their lineage ever*');[67] but role models could be

drawn from anywhere in Gaelic history, prehistory and mythology, as well as the Biblical or classical worlds. Another poet, clearly an aristocratic amateur, demonstrates his immersion in Gaelic heroic literature by seeing solutions for his condition in the wealth represented by the most conspicuous cattle-droves and horse herds from the sagas, the weaponry of Fionn and Cú-Chulainn, the gold of Éibhear and of Éireamhón, the harp of Cuircheól and the ship of Laoimean.[68] In its moral aspect the past was shorn of the depth and distance created by time and space, and became akin to a flat screen or mirror in which the honoured dead of every generation gone vied equally for the attention of the living.

Holding up the mirror were the arbiters of worth, the poet-historians. Their texts shuttle ceaselessly between present and past, the relationship formalised into the *úrsgeul* or comparative apologue, the point of transition effected by a statement such as 'do-chuala mé go roibh sin / uair éigin Inis Incin / fá smacht ag fine Fomhra' ('*I have heard that on a time Ireland was under the rule of a Fomorian race*'; or 'do chuala mé fada ó shoin / sgéal as cosmhail rér gcumhaidh' ('*I heard long ago a tale like unto our lament*').[69] This last is from an elegy for Aonghas Òg, son of Eoin MacDonald, lord of the Isles, who was assassinated in 1490. The apologue, concerning the inadvertent death of Conlaoch at the hands of his father Cú Chulainn, provides an historic scale for present grief, and points a learned finger of suspicion.[70] The successive stages involved in the forging of the sort of reputation required to enter the pantheon of the past are staked out in the vocabulary of the poetic mission: approach and find; experience and know; estimate and pronounce. One to pass the test was Torcul MacLeod: 'adéara mé dhá h-aithle / d'éis a aithne is a éolais / nach dtánaig fear a aoise / as fearr ná an rí-se Leódhuis' ('*I shall assert thereafter, after acquaintance and knowledge, that there hath come no man of his age who is better than this king of Lewis*').[71] The same agency which recognised and validated virtue could then spread reputation wherever Gaelic was spoken and heard. The words of an Irish poet are equally applicable to the Scottish poet-

historians as keepers of the gateway to the past, for 'muna leasaighdís laoidhe / a ndearnsad, gér dheaghdhaoine / le i bhfad a-nonn do bhiadh brat / ar Niall, ar Chonn, ar Chormac' ('*if poems did not preserve all that they had done, even though they were noble heroes, there would long since have been a cloak of silence upon Niall, Conn and Cormac*').[72]

In Lowland Scotland, historical writing in this period, with its increased availability through publication or distribution in manuscript, ensured that knowledge of history became more widespread. It resulted in an awareness of the nation's past and of past achievements, cultural discreteness and identity, and worked its way towards becoming part of the nation's general knowledge. However, outside the more explicitly political works its influence on Scottish literature is not always easy to define, and may sometimes merely result in an author's discernible feeling of pride in his nation's antiquity and success. In other cases events from the past may be used in order to advise on the present, and sometimes this happens within the historical works themselves. Political prose and poetry made more direct reference to the historical framework of current events. A few examples for this are Richard Holland's *Buke of the Howlat*, Walter Kennedy's parts in *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedie*, and several of the works of Sir David Lyndsay, especially *The Testament of the Papyngo* and *Ane dialoge betuix experience and ane courteour*.[73]

Some of the histories mentioned here were influential as works of literature in their own right. Some of them, such as the accounts of Hector Boece (through Bellenden's translation) and Lindsay of Pitscottie, contain masterpieces of storytelling that inspired those that followed them; as we have Boece to thank, so Pitscottie's history provided inspiration for Walter Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather.* Others, such as John Barbour and Blind Hary, wrote epics that not only were most influential in the development of Scottish national feeling, but also have their firm place in the canon of Older Scots verse literature.

Between 1400 and 1650, Gaelic Scotland's approach to history was distinguished from its Lowland counterpart by the greater weight accorded to orality in transmission, dissemination and performance, the greater degree of overlap with literature in terms of personnel, form, content and intent, and the greater role of professionalisation and patronage. Writing in the later sixteenth century, Eoin Carswell and George Buchanan launched reformed and humanist critiques of a genre susceptible to the fallibility of memory, coloured by heroic literary narrative, and obsessed with singing the praises of great men and their ancestors. Gaelic historians replied in their turn after 1650, castigating Buchanan, Boece and their ilk as 'partial pickers of Scottish chronology and history', who portrayed Gaelic Scots either negatively or not at all.[74] Yet underlying difference and dissonance was a shared concern with legitimacy and constitutionalism. Just as Lowland historiography was preoccupied with Scottish sovereignty, and the rights and duties of kings and subjects, so too can the corpus of Gaelic poetry bear analysis as a sustained commentary on Scottish Gaelic identity, and the contractual relationship between chief, land and people, with the past as the touchstone.

Another point of contact was the impact of religious reformation and political rapprochement with England, which shook the entire edifice of Scottish historiography in the sixteenth century. Whether the same applied to the deposition of Mary Queen of Scots cannot be gauged for lack of evidence on the Gaelic side, although George Buchanan was quick to justify the act by reference to Gaelic conciliarism and succession practice past and present. In the early 1540s, John Elder, a Gaelic Scot and (at this stage) committed Protestant who had the ear of Henry VIII, rejected the Scottish for the British origin legend in order to locate Scotland within an English Protestant imperium which should be cemented forthwith by dynastic union. Writing in the shadow of Boece as well as Mair, Elder extolled the atavistic Spartanism of his fellow Gaels in order to emphasise their fitness to fight for Henry and the

true faith. Rather than importing the Scots from Ireland, Elder gaelicised the Picts, and naturalised Columba as a proto-Protestant, Gaelic-speaking Pictish bishop.[75] In 1567 Bishop Carswell advanced the Bible and the printing press as the twin bases of authority for a Scottish Gaelic Protestant nobility and its intelligentsia, including 'gach seancha gan seanchas saobh' ('*every historian without false history*').[76] A Catholic riposte came in 1626 in the form of a letter in Latin from the chief of the MacDonalds of Clanranald, Eoin Muideartach, to Pope Urban VIII.[77] This text recalls the Declaration of Arbroath in its depiction of the Scots as a conquering and unconquered people who even now had still not completely submitted to the English. Unlike Arbroath, however, it adheres to the older orthodoxies that the Scots were of Irish stock and arrived from Ireland, and that it was from Ireland – rather than through the agency of St Andrew and Bishop Palladius, which became the standard narrative in later medieval Scottish historiography – that they first received the faith. Hence it is in conjunction with their Catholic Irish brethren that the Gaelic Scots will exercise their historically attested military capability to bring counter-reformation to all Scotland.

Both historiographies were now exhibiting signs of diversification and specialisation, while still adhering to the templates operative across the later middle ages. A case in point, which also exemplifies many of the themes discussed in this chapter, is Sir Robert Gordon's *Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland* (1630). Gordon surely made use of Gaelic traditions and informants to write with such authority about a Gaelic world whose language he nonetheless condemned elsewhere in the most virulent terms. Education and travel gave him access to the Lowland chroniclers, the classics and sources drawn from across the continent, all contributing to a truly European historical vision governed by neo-stoicism and Tacitean realpolitik.[78] Gordon's masterpiece hinted at an increasingly liberated and creative Scottish historiography, on the cusp of modernity. Nevertheless, this was a

manuscript history steeped in the culture of kinship and the feud, written to legitimise the

contested Gordon claim to lordship in the northern mainland, and to educate the next earl in

the glory of the house and name whose honour and heritage he must at all costs uphold.

NOTES

[1] See Chapter 1, 'Languages of Scotland' pp. xxx-xxx.

[2] John Bannerman, 'The king's poet and the Inauguration of Alexander III', *Scottish Historical Review* 68 (1989), 120-49; John Bannerman, 'The residence of the king's poet', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 17 (1996), 24-35; and Dauvit Broun, *The Irish Identity of the kingdom of the Scots in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1999), pp. 3-5.

[3] See Broun, *Irish Identity*, p. 262; Dauvit Broun, *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain from the Picts to Alexander III* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 260; and also Dauvit Broun, 'Attitudes of *Gall* to *Gaedhel* in Scotland before John of Fordun' in D. Broun and M. MacGregor (eds), *Mìorun Mòr nan Gall, the Great ill-Will of the Lowlander? Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands, Medieval and Modern* (Centre for Scottish and Celtic Studies: University of Glasgow 2009), p. 77.

[4] George Buchanan, *Rerum Scoticarum historia* (Edinburgh: Alexander Arbuthnot, 1582). The most recent translation, by Dana F. Sutton, can be found on the *Philological Museum* website (http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/scothist/contents.html, accessed 28 August 2013).

[5] John Mair, *A History of Greater Britain, as well England as Scotland,* transl. by A. Constable, with a Life of the Author by Aeneas J.G. Mackay, Scottish History Society, 1st ser., vol. 10 (Edinburgh, 1892), p. 50.

[6] *Hectoris Boetii Murthlacensium et Aberdonensium Episcoporum Vitae*, ed. J. Moir, New Spalding Club (Aberdeen, 1894), p. 99.

[7] Martin MacGregor, 'Gaelic Barbarity and Scottish Identity in the Later Middle Ages', in Broun and MacGregor (eds), *Mìorun Mòr nan Gall,* pp. 7-48.

[8] For an edition of Fordun, see W. F. Skene (ed), *Johannis de Fordun Chronica Gentis Scotorum* Historians of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1871) and F. J. Skene (trans.), W. F. Skene (ed) *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, Historians of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1872). For the problems with these editions, see Broun, *Irish Identity,* pp. 16-20.

[9] Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon* gen. ed. D. E. R. Watt, 9 vols (Edinburgh and Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press and Mercat Press, 1987-98), vol. 9, p. 13.

[10] Broun, *Irish Identity*, esp. pp. 63-81.

[11] This is accessible in Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. and trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966). A more recent edition is Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain* ed. M.D. Reeve, trans. N. Wright (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007).

[12] See Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 3, p. 343, vol. 9, pp. 3, 7, 13 and 15.

[13]*Liber Pluscardensis*, ed. W. F Skene, trans. F.J.H. Skene, Historians of Scotland vols 7 and 10 (Edinburgh: Paterson, 1877-80).

[14] D. Embree *et al.* (eds). *Short Scottish Prose Chronicles* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012).

[15] *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun,* ed. F.J. Amours, 6 vols., Scottish Text Society, 1st ser., vols. 50, 53, 54, 56, 57 and 63 (1903-1914).Book vii, ch. 10; but see also Chris Jones, '*Inclinit to diuersiteis*: Wyntoun's song on the death of Alexander III and the "origins" of Scots vernacular poetry', *Review of English Studies* 64, no. 263 (February 2012), 21-38.

[16] See Nicola Royan, 'A question of truth: Barbour's *Bruce,* Hary's *Wallace* and *Richard Coer de Lion*', *International Review of Scottish Studies* 34 (2009), 75-105 for further discussion of the genre of these texts.

[17] John Barbour, *Barbour's Bruce*, ed. M. P. McDiarmid and J.A.C. Stevenson, 3 vols, Scottish Text Society 4th Ser, 12, 13, and 15 (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1980-5).

[18] The source for Barbour's authorship of a Stewart genealogy is found in Wyntoun Bk III, chap. III (vol. 2, p. 315 of the Amours edition; see also vol. 1, pp. lxxv-lxxvi of the same edition).   See also Stephen Boardman, *The Early Stewart Kings: Robert II and Robert III 1371-1406* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1996), pp. 59-60. (Reprinted Edinburgh: John Donald, 2007).

[19] *Bruce,* Bk I, ll.225ff.

[20] *Hary's Wallace* ed. M. P. McDiarmid, 2 vols., Scottish Text Society 4th Ser. 4, 5 (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1968-9).

[21] I. W., Gent, *The Valiant Scot* (London: Thomas Harper for Iohn Waterson, 1637)

[22] Patrick Gordon, *The Famous Historie of the Renouned and Valiant Prince Robert surnamed the Bruce King of Scotland e&c, & of sundrie other valiant knights both Scots and English. ... A historye both pleasant and profitable set for the and done in heroic verse* (Dordrecht: George Waters, 1615).

[23] For more detailed discussion of Mair's philosophies, see A. Broadie, *The Circle of John Mair: Logic and Logicians in Pre-Reformation Scotland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) and J.H. Burns, *The True Law of Kingship: Concepts of Monarchy in Early Modern Scotland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Roger A.Mason, *Kingship and the Commonweal: Political Thought in Renaissance and Reformation Scotland* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998).

[24] *A History of Greater Britain*, p. lxxviii; see also Mair's own preface, p. cxxxv.

[25] Hector Boece, *Scotorum historiae a prima gentis origine XVII libri* (Paris: Iodocus Badius Ascensius, [1527]). A translation of the 1575 edition by Dana F. Sutton can be found on the website *The Philological Museum* (http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/boece/, accessed 26 August 2013.)

[26] *A History of Greater Britain*, Bk 1, ch. viii.

[27] See in particular Boece's preliminary discourse or "exhortation" concerning the ancient and modern Scots before Book 1 of the *Scotorum historia,* "De Scotorum priscis recentibusque institutis ac moribus paraenesis Hectoris Boethii accommodatissima", ff. 17v-20v.

[28] A modern edition of the manuscript version can be found in John Bellenden, *The Chronicles of Scotland compiled by Hector Boece,* eds. R.W. Chambers, E.C. Batho and H. W. Husbands, 2 vols. STS 3rd Ser, 10, 15 (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood for the Society, 1938 and 1941); the print version is edited in John Bellenden, *The History and Chronicles of Scotland* ed. T. Maitland, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Tait, 1821).

[29] *The Mar Lodge Translation of the History of Scotland by Hector Boece*, ed. G. Watson STS 3rd Ser 17 (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood for the Society, 1948): only one volume was produced. For the metrical version, see William Stewart, *The buik of the cronicles of Scotland*, ed. William Turnbull, Rolls Series (London: Longman, 1858).

[30] For an example of this, see Stephen Boardman, 'Chronicle propaganda in fourteenth-century Scotland: Robert the Steward, John of Fordun and the "Anonymous Chronicle", *Scottish Historical Review* 76 (1997), 23-43.

[31] Erasmus's work can be read in translation in *Erasmus. The Education of a Christian Prince, translated by Neil M. Cheshire and Michael J. Heath, with the* Panegyric for Archduke Philip of Austria *translated by Lisa Jardine.* Ed. by Lisa Jardine. Cambridge texts in the History of Political Thought . (Cambridge 1997).

[32] Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie, *The Historie and Cronicles of Scotland from the slauchter of King James the First to the ane thousand five hundreith thrie scoir fyftein zeir*, ed. Ae. J. G, Mackay, 3 vols, Scottish Text Society First Ser, 42, 43 and 60 (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood for the Society, 1899-1911).

[33] Grace Wilson, 'History and the common reader? Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie's *Cronicles'*, *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 29 (1993), 91-110.

[34] The title of Dempster's work, modelled on the Venerable Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* and somewhat misleading in more than one way, was probably coined by his posthumous editor Matteo Pellegrini.

[35] For a lost 'Gaelic chronicle of the kings of Scotland down to King Robert III' see M. Pía Coira, *By Poetic Authority: The Rhetoric of Panegyric in Gaelic Poetry of Scotland to c.1700* (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2012), p. 71, n. 87.

[36] Martin MacGregor, 'The View from Fortingall: the worlds of *The Book of the Dean of Lismore'*, *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 22 (2006), 35-85.

[37] Martin MacGregor, 'The genealogical histories of Gaelic Scotland', in A. Fox and D. Woolf (eds), *The Spoken Word: oral culture in the British Isles, 1500-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 196-239.

[38] *Genealogical Collections Concerning Families in Scotland Made by Walter MacFarlane*, ed. J. T. Clark, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1900), vol. 1, pp. 118-19; *c.f.* A. Campbell, *Records of Argyll* (Edinburgh, 1885), p. 4.

[39] 'The Genealogical and Historicall Account of the Family of Craignish', ed. H. Campbell, in *Miscellany of the Scottish History Society* (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1926), vol. 4, p. 193.

[40] MacGregor, 'The genealogical histories of Gaelic Scotland', pp. 89-90, 211-12, 225 and nn. 89, 90, 110, 208.

[41] Ibid., p. 209.

[42] W.J. Watson, 'Unpublished Gaelic Poetry-IV., V', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 3 (1929-31), 152-9, at 156-7.

[43] J.W.M. Bannerman, 'The MacLachlans of Kilbride and their Manuscripts', *Scottish Studies* 21 (1977), 1-34, at 17; Henry Mackenzie (ed.), *Report of the Committee of the Highland Society of Scotland, appointed to enquire into the nature and authenticity of the poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Co., 1805), pp. 275-9; Derick S. Thomson, 'The MacMhuirich Bardic Family', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 43 (1960-63), 276-304, at 297, 302.

[44] MacFarlane, *Genealogical Collections*, vol. 1, pp. 118-19; *c.f.* C. A. Gordon, 'Letter to John Aubrey from Professor James Garden', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 8 (1955-8), 18-26.

[45] 'The Genealogical and Historicall Account of the Family of Craignish', p. 190.

[46] R.L. Thomson (ed.). *Foirm na n-Urrnuidheadh: John Carswell's Gaelic Translation of the Book of Common Order* (Edinburgh: Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1970), p. 175.

[47] W. J. Watson (ed.), *Scottish Verse from the Book of the Dean of Lismore* (Edinburgh: Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1937), pp. 212-13.

[48] MacGregor, 'The genealogical histories of Gaelic Scotland' p. 209.

[49] Ibid., pp. 204, 215, 224.

[50] Ibid., pp. 210-12, 224; Martin MacGregor, 'Writing the history of Gaelic Scotland: a provisional checklist of "Gaelic" genealogical histories', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 24 (2008), 357-79.

[51] *The Black Book of Taymouth*, ed. C. Innes (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1855).

[52] Archibald Campbell, *Records of Argyll* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1885), pp. 3-12.

[53] MacGregor, 'The genealogical histories of Gaelic Scotland', pp. 224-5.

[54] Watson, *Scottish Verse*, pp. 216-7.

[55] Ibid., pp. 100-1, 180-1, 162-3.

[56] Ibid., pp. 162-3; *Highland Papers*, ed. J.R.N. MacPhail, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1914-34), vol. 2, p. 92; 'Account of the Family of Craignish', pp. 213, 218.

[57] *Highland Papers*, vol. 1, pp. 198-9.

[58] Watson, *Scottish Verse*, pp. 182-3.

[59] A. MacDonald, 'Fragment of a MacKenzie MS.', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 36 (1931-33), 204-5.

[60] Watson, *Scottish Verse*, pp. 186-9, 192-3.

[61] Ibid., pp. 102-3.

[62] Ibid., pp. 100-3.

[63] W.D.H. Sellar 'Highland Family Origins: Pedigree Making and Pedigree Faking', in *The Middle Ages in the Highlands* (Inverness: Inverness Field Club, 1981), pp. 103-13.

[64] Pia Dewar, 'Kingship Imagery in Classical Gaelic panegyric for Scottish chiefs' in W. McLeod, J.E. Fraser and A. Gunderloch (eds), *Cànan & Cultar / Language and Culture: Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig* 3 (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2006), pp. 39-55.

[65] Watson, *Scottish Verse*, pp. 204-5.

[66] Ibid., pp. 100-1.

[67] Ibid., pp. 208-9.

[68] Ibid., pp. 194-5, 297.

[69] Ibid., pp. 158-9, 88-9.

[70] Thomas Owen Clancy, 'Court, king and justice in the Ulster cycle', in Helen Fulton (ed.), *Medieval Celtic Literature and Society* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), pp. 163-82.

[71] Watson, *Scottish Verse*, pp. 100-1.

[72] N.J.A. Williams (ed.), *The poems of Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe* (Dublin: Irish Texts Society, 1980), pp. 210-11; Katharine Simms, 'Images of Warfare in Bardic Poetry', *Celtica* 21 (1990), 608-19, at 610.

[73] Richard Holland, *The Buke of the Howlat,* in *Longer Scottish Poems, vol 1., 1375-1650,* ed. Priscilla Bawcutt and Felicity Riddy (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987), pp. 43-84; *The Poems of Walter Kennedy,* ed. Nicole Meier (Woodbridge: Scottish Text Society, 2008), pp. 88-179 and *passim.* Lindsay's works can be found in *The Works of Sir David Lindsay of the Mount, 1490-1555,* ed. Douglas Hamer, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1931-1936), complemented by more recent editions of individual works that are easily accessible.

[74] *Highland Papers*, vol. 1, p. 10; Ulrike Morét, 'Some Scottish humanists' views on the Highlanders', in G. Caie et al (eds) *The European Sun: Proceedings of the Seventh International conference on Medieval and Renaissance Scottish Language and Literature, University of Strathclyde 1993* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2001), pp. 323-332; Ulrike Morét, 'Histories and languages: medieval and humanist views of Celtic Britain', in Terry Brotherstone and David Ditchburn (eds), *Freedom and Authority: Scotland c. 1050-c. 1650. Historical and historiographical essays presented to Grant G. Simpson* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000), pp. 60-72.

[75] *Collectanea de Rebus Albanicis* (Edinburgh: The Iona Club, 1847), pp. 26-7; Roger A. Mason, 'The Scottish Reformation and the Origins of Anglo-British Imperialism', in Roger A. Mason, *Kingship and the Commonweal: Political Thought in Renaissance and Reformation Scotland* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998), pp. 242-69, esp. pp. 252-3.

[76] Thomson, *Foirm na n-Urrnuidheadh*, pp. 13, 181.

[77] J.L. Campbell, 'The Letter sent by Iain Muideartach, Twelfth Chief of Clanranald, to Pope Urban VIII, in 1626', *Innes Review* 4 (1953), 163-82.

[78] David Allan, 'Ane Ornament to Yow and your Famelie: Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun and the Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland', *Scottish Historical Review* 80 (2001), 124-44.