



Broun, D. (2022) Rethinking medieval Scottish regnal historiography in the light of new approaches to texts as manuscripts. *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 83, pp. 19-47.



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Deposited on: 26 April 2022

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## Rethinking Medieval Scottish Regnal Historiography in the Light of New Approaches to Texts as Manuscripts

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It is not difficult to find medieval texts recounting the histories of kings and peoples that, on the face of it, correspond with many of the European nations that we are familiar with today. This large and varied body of material has been systematically discussed and analysed by Norbert Kersken, who referred to these works as ‘national histories’.<sup>1</sup> The use of the term ‘nation’ is not straightforward, of course. Although it is less problematic if it is considered simply as an idea, this is not a particularly workable solution on its own. ‘Nation’ can readily be conflated with statehood; it also encourages us to think exclusively of the antecedents of modern nations, and how ‘nation’ might be defined today. For this reason, Susan Reynolds preferred the term ‘regnal’ to ‘national’ in a medieval context.<sup>2</sup> Although not all peoples or self-governing units in the Middle Ages were kingdoms, kingdoms were regarded as the preeminent form of political community.<sup>3</sup> As Reynolds pointed out, ‘the idea of the permanent and objectively real nation ... closely resembles the medieval idea of the kingdom as comprising a people with a similarly permanent and objective reality’.<sup>4</sup>

The idea of a kingdom and people as an enduring entity was expressed and sustained vividly in what can be termed ‘regnal historiography’ — that is, texts whose principal focus is the history of a particular kingdom. This did not necessarily map directly onto a political entity: a kingdom’s origins were often explained in terms of geography, such as an island (real or imagined).<sup>5</sup> Also, the focus was not necessarily exclusively on the kingdom’s own story; this would often be set (to some extent, at least) within the context of ‘universal history’. Regnal historiography need not take the form of a connected narrative. There are minimal texts lying beyond Kersken’s comprehensive study that consist mainly of a list of names and reign-lengths, or a genealogy (sometimes with additional detail). These could be the seed-corn for a major work; they could also be how an extensive narrative was consumed in condensed form by scribes and readers. In whichever form they took, these texts are a crucial source for a

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<sup>1</sup> Norbert Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der ‘nationes’*. *Nationalgeschichtliche Gesamtdarstellungen im Mittelalter*, Münstersche historische Forschungen (Köln, 1995); the title may be translated as ‘Writing History in the Europe of *Nationes*. A Comprehensive Survey of National Histories in the Middle Ages’. (I am grateful to Simon Taylor for his help with this.) A summary in English is: Norbert Kersken, ‘High and Late Medieval National Historiography’, in *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, edited by Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (Leiden, 2003), pp. 181–215.

<sup>2</sup> Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900–1300*, second edition (Oxford, 1997), pp. 253–54; eadem, ‘The Idea of the Nation as Political Community’, in *Power and the Nation in European History*, edited by Len Scales and Oliver Zimmer (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 54–66 (p. 56).

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>4</sup> Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*, p. 252.

<sup>5</sup> See Dauvit Broun, ‘Rethinking Scottish Origins’, in *Barbour’s Bruce and its Cultural Contexts: Politics, Chivalry and Literature in Late Medieval Scotland*, edited by Steve Boardman and Susan Foran (Woodbridge, 2015), pp. 163–90 (pp. 171–73 and 185–88). For Spain, see Kersken, ‘High and Late Medieval National Historiography’, pp. 185–86.

detailed understanding of how regnal identities were constructed and maintained. More generally, the very idea that a kingdom and its people had a continuous story could be regarded as one of the most fundamental contributions of the Middle Ages to the modern era — a continuous story, moreover, that could be told with the authority of the written word on the scale of a codex. It is with these larger-scale texts that this article is primarily concerned, taking histories of the Scottish kingdom and people written in Latin as a test case.

The way we engage with this material in printed scholarly editions naturally differs from how it would have been encountered as manuscripts in the Middle Ages. This inevitably limits or distorts our understanding of it. In the case of medieval vernacular literature John Dagenais has vividly described how, when early in his career (in the 1970s) his research led him to manuscripts, he realised that what he had been studying until then as edited texts written by a ‘canon of authors’ was not the medieval literature he encountered in the manuscripts, which was ‘more fluid and dynamic’.<sup>6</sup> This experience is shared, to some extent at least, by all fields of medieval written culture, in Latin as well as in other languages.<sup>7</sup> This is not to deny that many scribes reproduced the text of their exemplars closely and often sought to achieve a ‘correct’ text (which could involve more than one exemplar).<sup>8</sup> Regnal historiography may have been particularly prone to textual flexibility, however, at least in the vernacular.<sup>9</sup> Daniel Wakelin has speculated that, in the case of the English prose *Brut* (a particularly popular example of regnal historiography), a relative absence of scribal corrections in a small sample of manuscripts could be because ‘the gist of the history mattered more than the wording’; at the same time, he noted that ‘even in this fluid textual tradition, we find influidity and exactitude in attitude if not in achievement’.<sup>10</sup>

Although this inherent flexibility is increasingly recognized and discussed, the dominant and most accessible form in which we encounter this material is in print as editions of specific works.<sup>11</sup> As a result, it is difficult to appreciate properly the inherent flexibility and physical variety in the Middle Ages of extended writing on the history of a kingdom. Without this, our understanding of regnal historiography and the way we use it as historians is fundamentally incomplete. These texts are not only works by an author (who may be anonymous); they pass through the quills of scribes who could — to a greater or lesser degree — make significant changes; as Matthew Fisher has observed, ‘history writing invites participation’.<sup>12</sup> As it stands, however, it is difficult to see from printed editions how far a particular text has been

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<sup>6</sup> John Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture: Glossing the Libro de buen amor* (Princeton, 1994), p. xvi.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Lene Schøsler, ‘The Copyist at Work: How did he Work? What are the Consequences for Linguistic Research and for Editorial Policy’, in *Überlieferungs- und Anzeignungsprozesse im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert auf dem Gebiet der westmitteldeutschen und ostfranzösischen Urkunden- und Literatursprachen*, edited by Kurt Gärtner and Günter Holtus (Trier, 2005), pp. 55–73; David C. Parker, *Textual Scholarship and the Making of the New Testament* (Oxford, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Wakelin, *Scribal Correction and Literary Craft: English Manuscripts 1375–1510* (Cambridge, 2014). In four manuscripts of Fordun’s history (**FB**, **FE**, **FG**, and **FH**: see diagram on p. 7, below) alternative readings have been added from another exemplar (a manuscript of *Scotichronicon* in the case of **FB**; in the case of **FE** and **FG** the alternative readings were added after **FE** had been used as the exemplar of **FB** and after **FG** had been used as the exemplar of **FA**). I hope to discuss this in more detail on a future occasion.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew Fisher, *Scribal Authorship and the Writing of History in Medieval England* (Columbus, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Wakelin, *Scribal Correction*, p. 133 and p. 51.

<sup>11</sup> For a lucid account of the increasing awareness of the significance of a manuscript-focused approach to text, see Matthew James Driscoll, ‘The Words on the Page: Thoughts on Philology, Old and New’, in *Creating the Medieval Saga: Versions, Variability and Editorial Interpretations of Old Norse Saga Literature*, edited by Judy Quinn and Emily Lethbridge (Odense, 2010), pp. 87–104 (pp. 90–95).

<sup>12</sup> Fisher, *Scribal Authorship*, p. 188.

negotiated and potentially rewritten.<sup>13</sup> An apparatus, if it is too comprehensive, can be overwhelming; if a work is extensively revised, this can readily reach a point when the reworked text cannot be accommodated in the edition, and is set aside to be published separately, if at all.

This problem could be solved if we were able to read and study this material in a different scholarly format. On the face of it, digital editing has the capacity to provide direct access to the variability of manuscripts, both textually and physically, in ways that would be impossible in hard copy.<sup>14</sup> If this were achieved, regnal historiography could be investigated for the first time in a way that more fully reflects its medieval habitat, creating an opportunity to provide fresh perspectives and a deeper understanding of regnal (or ‘proto-national’) identity in the Middle Ages. This would be a herculean task, however. An obvious challenge is how to determine what to include in a consistent and manageable way. This leads to a deeper problem: can this be achieved within the parameters of our current understanding of ‘text’? A compelling range of contrasting approaches has been developed in digital editing.<sup>15</sup> It is argued here, however, that if we are fully to understand regnal historiography as a medieval phenomenon, then what is required is not digital technology as such — welcome though this is — but a different way of thinking about this material. A new frame of reference is needed that would give primacy to neither ‘text’ nor the physicality of manuscripts, but brings these together equally. A key source of inspiration is at hand in recent work on cartularies which analyses their contents as scribal activity rather than static text.<sup>16</sup>

A useful starting point is to consider how different regnal historiography can be when viewed from the perspective of manuscripts rather than edited works. A brief survey of late medieval Scottish regnal historiography along standard lines could begin with the nine-volume edition and translation of Walter Bower’s *Scotichronicon*, published between 1987 and 1998 by a team of scholars led by Donald Watt (1926–2004).<sup>17</sup> Walter Bower (1385–1449) was abbot of Inchcolm on the Firth of Forth from 1418 until his death;<sup>18</sup> his *Scotichronicon* is a history of the Scots in Latin in sixteen books from their origins to the assassination of James I in

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<sup>13</sup> For example, it is helpfully made clear in *William of Malmesbury, Historia Regum Anglorum*, edited and translated by R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom, 2 vols (Oxford 1998–99), 1, xxvi, that ‘no deductions should be drawn from silence [in the apparatus] as to the reading of any individual witness’.

<sup>14</sup> For critical discussions of the field, see Elena Pierazzo, *Digital Scholarly Editing: Theories, Models and Methods*, 2014 <<http://hal.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/hal-01182162/document>>, and Patrick Sahle, *Digitale Editionsformen: Zum Umgang mit der Überlieferung unter den Bedingungen des Medienwandels*, 3 vols (Norderstedt, 2013) <<https://kups.ub.uni-koeln.de/5351/>> <<https://kups.ub.uni-koeln.de/5352/>> <<https://kups.ub.uni-koeln.de/5353/>>. (These and all other weblinks were last accessed 29 October 2021).

<sup>15</sup> On the spectrum between digital archive and edition, and the debate over this terminology, see Pierazzo, *Digital Scholarly Editing*, 207–15; Kenneth M. Price, ‘Edition, Project, Database, Archive, Thematic Research’, *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, 3.3 (2009) <<http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/3/3/000053/000053.html>>. An example of an archive-edition cited by Pierazzo is the Samuel Becket Digital Manuscript Project, which describes itself ‘both as a digital archive and as a genetic edition’ (<<http://www.beckettarchive.org/editorial.jsp>>, opening sentence). This is organized by work (see, for example, the protocols for citation at <<http://www.beckettarchive.org/cite.jsp>>). On the database and hypertext potential of the digital medium, see Edward Vanhout, ‘Defining Electronic Editions: A Historical and Functional Perspective’, in *Text and Genre in Reconstruction: Effects of Digitalization on Ideas, Behaviours, Products and Institutions*, edited by William McCarty (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 119–44, downloadable at <<https://www.openbookpublishers.com/download/book/69>>.

<sup>16</sup> See below, pp. 16–17.

<sup>17</sup> *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower in Latin and English*, general editor D. E. R. Watt, 9 vols (Aberdeen and Edinburgh, 1987–98). The only previous edition is *Joannis de Fordun Scotichronicon cum Supplementis et Continuatione Walteri Boweri*, edited by Walter Goodall, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1759); for discussion, see *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower*, IX, edited by Watt, pp. 219–25.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 205–7.

1437. He was prompted to write the work by a local landowner, Sir David Stewart of Rosyth, beginning in 1441, and finishing a first draft a few years later.<sup>19</sup> Bower's manuscript — written by an amanuensis — survives as Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 171.<sup>20</sup>

Bower identified a certain John of Fordun as *autor* of most of the first five books (up to David I's death in 1153) and part of Book VI.<sup>21</sup> Our principal information on John of Fordun himself comes from an early manuscript of Bower's *Scotichronicon*, where he is referred to as a 'chaplain of the church of Aberdeen' (that is, the cathedral).<sup>22</sup> Bower evidently regarded Fordun as a rather obscure figure.<sup>23</sup> Fordun's work, in Latin, ran in five books from Scottish origins to the death of David I in 1153, followed by an incomplete sixth book (mainly on kings of England from Alfred the Great to the Norman Conquest); he completed Book V sometime between 1384 and 1387.<sup>24</sup> A critical edition was published in 1871 by William F. Skene (1809–92) from manuscripts which give the work independently of Bower's *Scotichronicon*; a translation by W. F. Skene's nephew, Felix Skene (1843–1927), was published the following year.<sup>25</sup> W. F. Skene's edition goes beyond David I's death, however, and continues to 1385: his arrangement of the text follows no particular manuscript.<sup>26</sup> He dubbed this post-1153 material *Gesta Annalia*, and regarded it as Fordun's incomplete draft (as did Bower).<sup>27</sup> It can, however, be shown to be two separate texts that were joined together

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 208 and 210–13. Sir David Stewart died in early 1444 before it was completed: *ibid.*, pp. 354–57.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 211–12; for a description of the manuscript (which is now divided into MSS 171A and 171B), see *ibid.*, pp. 148–49 and 154–57.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 4 and 10 (comment on lines 70–72).

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 2–3 (MS 'R': London, British Library, Royal 13 E.x, datable to 1447 × 1455).

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 2–5, where he recounts how, in his presence, an old scholar who knew Fordun said he was a simple man (*simplex homo*), and not a graduate of any school, to which someone responded that the work itself was proof of Fordun's scholarship. (It is ironic that much of the prose attributed to Fordun was probably taken by him from an earlier work, and may originally have been penned in the 1260s by Master Richard Vairement: see below.)

<sup>24</sup> Dauvit Broun, *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain from the Picts to Alexander III* (Edinburgh, 2007), p. 262. For the older view that Fordun wrote his work in or soon after 1363, see n. 30 below.

<sup>25</sup> *Johannis de Fordun Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, edited by William F. Skene, *The Historians of Scotland*, 1 (Edinburgh, 1871); *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, translated by Felix J. H. Skene, *The Historians of Scotland*, 4 (Edinburgh, 1872). It had previously been published only from Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O.9.9: in full in *Johannis de Fordun Scotichronicon Genuinum*, edited by Thomas Hearne (Oxford, 1722), and in *Historiae Britannicae, Saxoniae, Anglo-Danicae, Scriptores XV*, edited by Thomas Gale, 2 vols (Oxford, 1687–91), 1, 562–699 (but only as far as Book V, Chapter 11). For discussion of these editions, and the manuscripts of *Scotichronicon* from which Hearne printed some extracts in his edition, see *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower*, IX, edited by Watt, pp. 215–19. Although William Skene took another manuscript as the base text for his edition (Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Guelf. Helmstedt. 538), he appears to have created this by collating it with Hearne's text: *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower*, IX, edited by Watt, p. 226; Dauvit Broun, *The Irish Identity of the Kingdom of the Scots in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 16–18: a new edition of the origin-legend material in Fordun's history is given at pp. 33–62. Skene's edition, despite being adjudged to be 'slipshod' (*Scotichronicon by Walter Bower*, IX, edited by Watt, p. 26), can still be readily recognized as an impressive attempt to bring a highly complex situation into intelligible order. The complexity of what might be dubbed the 'Fordun tradition' is discussed below: Skene was the first to draw attention to this, and to attempt to describe what is found in the manuscripts: *Johannis de Fordun Chronica*, edited by Skene, pp. ix–xxx.

<sup>26</sup> This was first brought to light by Donald Watt in *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower*, III, edited and translated by John MacQueen, Winifred MacQueen, and D. E. R. Watt (Edinburgh, 1995), pp. xvi–xvii; *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower*, IX, edited by Watt, pp. 226–27. See further Dauvit Broun, 'A New Perspective on John of Fordun's *Chronica Gentis Scotorum* as a Medieval "National History"' (forthcoming), which draws attention to a manuscript which has come to light, damaged in the Cotton library fire on 23 October 1731, that shows there was, in fact, a medieval parallel for Skene's decision to give the text of Books I to V of Fordun's history followed by *Gesta Annalia* from 1153.

<sup>27</sup> *Johannis de Fordun Chronica*, edited by Skene, pp. xxx–xl. Bower, in the prologue to his *Scotichronicon*, said that Fordun, as well as his five-book work, also left much written material (*multa reliquit in scriptis*) with

before being added to Fordun's history.<sup>28</sup> One is the remnant of an otherwise lost history from Scottish origins to (probably) 1304 (referred to now by scholars as 'proto-Fordun'): all that survives is a continuous history of English kings from Alfred to the Norman Conquest, and then kings of Scots from St Margaret's husband, Mael Coluim III (1058–93), breaking off after the embassy that set sail on 2 February 1285 to find Alexander III a wife in France.<sup>29</sup> (This is sometimes referred to by scholars as '*Gesta Annalia I*'.) The other text (sometimes referred to as '*Gesta Annalia II*') runs from 1285 to originally 1363;<sup>30</sup> in some manuscripts it is extended haphazardly to 1385. It has been argued that 'proto-Fordun' subsumed a lost work by Richard Vairement, probably written in the 1260s; Vairement, not Fordun, therefore, may be regarded as the author of the first continuous history from Scottish origins until the reigning dynasty.<sup>31</sup>

The next significant work of Scottish history in Latin after Bower's *Scotichronicon*, completed in 1461, is known as the 'Book of Pluscarden'; it was partially edited and translated by Felix Skene.<sup>32</sup> The text, consisting of eleven books, is an accomplished

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which his work could be continued (*Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower, IX, edited by Watt, pp. 2–3). This evidently refers to more than the fifteen chapters (and preface) that Fordun left of an incomplete Book VI (and are preserved in three manuscripts, as well as *Scotichronicon* itself: see *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower, III, edited and translated by MacQueen, MacQueen, and Watt, p. xvi).

<sup>28</sup> For what follows, see Dauvit Broun, 'A New Look at *Gesta Annalia* Attributed to John of Fordun', in *Church, Chronicle and Learning in Medieval and Early Renaissance Scotland*, edited by B. E. Crawford (Edinburgh, 1999), pp. 9–30; idem, *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain*, pp. 215–68; John Finlay Young, "'A Nation Nobler in Blood and in Antiquity": Scottish National Identity in *Proto-Fordun* and *Gesta Annalia II*', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (University of Edinburgh, 2018), Chapter 1; and Dauvit Broun, 'Scotland's First "National" History? Fordun's Principal Source Revisited' (forthcoming).

<sup>29</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Before it was appreciated that *Gesta Annalia* is not Fordun's work, its original ending at 1363 was taken as evidence that he may have died in or soon after that date (for example, *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower, IX, edited by Watt, p. 9).

<sup>31</sup> This means that Scotland should no longer be regarded as the only instance where a 'national-historical' tradition was established in the fourteenth century, as outlined in Kersken, 'High and Late Medieval National Historiography', p. 208. Vairement's work probably ran as far as Mael Coluim III (1058–93) and his queen, St Margaret (d. 1093): see Broun, *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain*, pp. 257–58; Nicola Royan, 'Hector Boece and the Question of Veremund', *Innes Review*, 52 (2001), 42–62. William Skene was the first to draw attention to the possibility that the history attributed to Veremundus by sixteenth-century authors may actually have existed, and that Veremundus is likely to have been Richard Vairement: *Johannis de Fordun Chronica*, edited by Skene, p. xxxviii, n. 1. Richard Vairement first appears as chancellor to Marie de Couci, Alexander II's second queen, and presumably arrived in Scotland in 1239 as part of her retinue. He is found as a member of the Céli Dé at St Andrews (by then a royal college) in 1251, and last appears in record in January 1268: see *People of Medieval Scotland*, no. 7155 (<<https://www.poms.ac.uk/record/person/7155/>>); G. W. S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots*, second edition (Edinburgh, 2003), pp. 192–93. His putative history can be dated to sometime after 1259: Broun, *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain*, pp. 253–60.

<sup>32</sup> *Liber Pluscardensis*, edited by Felix J. H. Skene, *Historians of Scotland*, 7 (Edinburgh, 1877); *The Book of Pluscarden*, translated by Felix J. H. Skene, *Historians of Scotland*, 10 (Edinburgh, 1880). The first five books and first fourteen chapters of Book VI were not included in Skene's edition on the basis that they are too similar to Fordun and *Scotichronicon* (*Liber Pluscardensis*, edited by Skene, p. xxiv): significant additions and alterations are noted in *ibid.*, pp. xxv–xlvi. The date of writing is given in Book VIII, Chapter 17 (as first pointed out in *Johannis de Fordun Chronica*, edited by Skene, p. xx, and explained more fully in *Liber Pluscardensis*, edited by Skene, pp. x–xi); there are reasons, however, for supposing that it began to be written in the second half of the 1450s: see Sally Mapstone, 'The *Scotichronicon*'s First Readers', in *Church, Chronicle and Learning in Medieval and Early Renaissance Scotland*, edited by Crawford, pp. 31–55 (p. 48, n. 23). The title is derived from a reference to the text as the 'Book of Pluscarden' by George Buchanan in Book X of his *Rerum Scotticarum Historia* (originally published in Edinburgh in 1582): see *Liber Pluscardensis*, edited by Skene, pp. xi, n. 1, and xviii. Pluscarden Priory was united with Urquhart, a cell of Dunfermline Abbey, in 1454 (Ian B. Cowan and David E. Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses: Scotland* (London, 1976), p. 61), and could readily have obtained a copy of the work that now bears its name. One, probably two, extant copies were produced at Dunfermline Abbey: see *Liber Pluscardensis*, edited by Skene, pp. x–xi and xii–xiv.

reworking of Bower's *Scotichronicon*, ironing out many of its contradictions and inconsistencies, and focusing the text more clearly on Scottish history. As a literary work, it offers the most compelling narrative of the entire span of Scottish history that was written in the late Middle Ages. Unfortunately its author is unidentified: all that is known is that he was commissioned by the abbot of Dunfermline.<sup>33</sup>

Taking these works together, there seems to be a clear development from Fordun to the expansion of his history by Bower, arriving finally with the compelling reworking of Bower's *Scotichronicon* in the 'Book of Pluscarden'. This has been seen as constituting a 'Fordun–Bower–Pluscarden canon'.<sup>34</sup> This remained the dominant account of Scottish history in Latin until the earliest Scottish historical works to be published in print: John Mair, *Historia Maioris Britanniae, tam Angliae quam Scotiae* (Paris, 1521), and Hector Boece, *Scotorum Historiae a Prima Gentis Origine* (Paris, 1527).<sup>35</sup>

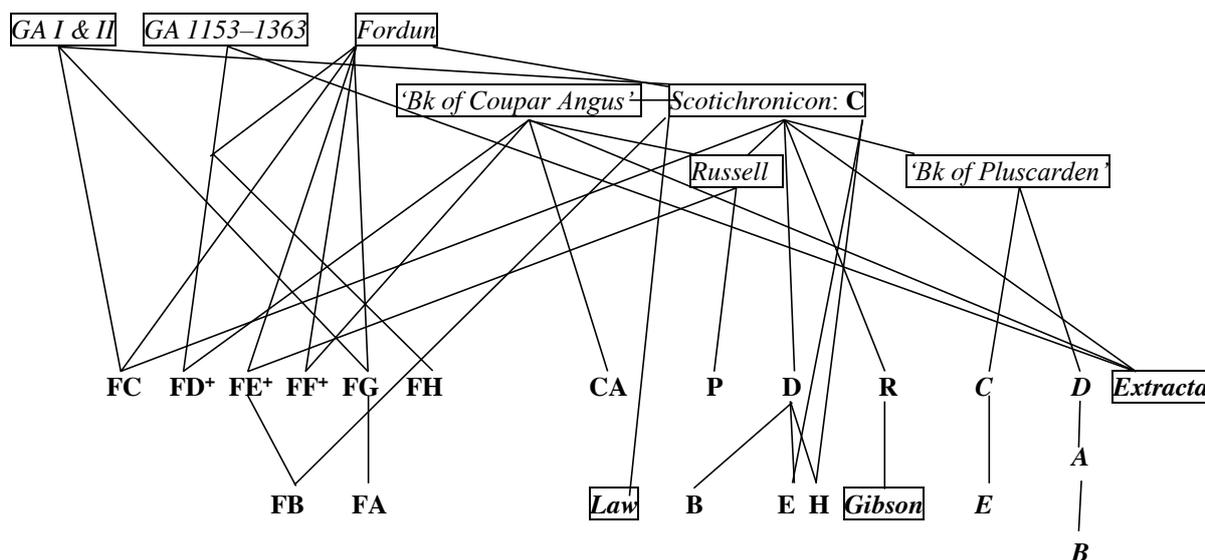
If medieval manuscripts rather than modern editions are placed centre stage, however, this material seems fundamentally more flexible than might be suggested by a 'canon'. The textual relations (as currently understood) suggest a more complex picture: this can be represented schematically in a diagram (with a *siglum* in bold for each extant manuscript, and each significant version of all or part of the text boxed: *GA* stands for *Gesta Annalia*).<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> As explained in the work's preface found in two manuscripts: *Liber Pluscardensis*, edited by Skene, pp. 4–5. The author was identified as Maurice Buchanan in William F. Skene, 'Notice of the Probable Author of the Unpublished History of Scotland, Erroneously Attributed to Bishop Elphinstone of Aberdeen', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 9 (1870), 447–51; this was accepted by Felix Skene in his edition, and by Marjorie Drexler, 'The Extant Abridgements of Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon*', *Scottish Historical Review*, 61 (1982), 62–67 (pp. 63–64). It is now known that Buchanan was dead by 1438: Mapstone, 'The *Scotichronicon*'s First Readers', p. 48, n. 25; she tentatively suggested Sir Gilbert Hay as a possible author (p. 35), but recognized that this is problematic. Skene, 'Notice of the Probable Author', p. 448, pointed to evidence that the author was a Gaelic-speaker.

<sup>34</sup> Dauvit Broun's contribution to Nicola Royan with Dauvit Broun, 'Versions of Scottish Nationhood, c. 850–1707', in *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature*, 1, *From Columba to the Union (until 1707)*, edited by Thomas Owen Clancy and Murray Pittock (Edinburgh, 2007), pp. 168–83 (p. 174).

<sup>35</sup> For a brief summary, see *ibid.*, pp. 177–79. The date of publication is sometimes given as 1526: see, for example, John Durkan and Anthony Ross, *Early Scottish Libraries* (Glasgow, 1961), p. 144. The earliest extant work in the vernacular on a similar scale is Andrew of Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle*, written in Scots verse in eight books sometime in the period between 1408 and 1424: the most recent edition is *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, edited by F. J. Amours, Scottish Text Society, 6 vols (Edinburgh, 1903–14); for the dating see Broun, *The Irish Identity*, p. 96 and n. 40. This is essentially a compendium of historical material translated from Latin, ranging from universal history to local legends. From the eleventh century its focus tightens on Scottish history, using the same or similar raw material as underlies the histories of Fordun and Bower (especially between 1285 and the early 1330s: see *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, edited by Amours, 1, 91–113; Broun, 'A New Look at *Gesta Annalia*').

<sup>36</sup> The most recent work on those with a *siglum* prefaced with **F** is Broun, *The Irish Identity*, pp. 20–31 (although note that the misreading of a numeral in **FE** led to a mistaken view of the relationship between **FE** and **FB** at p. 29), and *idem*, 'A New Perspective on John of Fordun's *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*' (where the original **FD** is identified as the earliest, datable optimally to the 1430s); for all others not italicized see *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower*, IX, edited by Watt, pp. 186–202. For witnesses of the 'Book of Pluscarden' see *Liber Pluscardensis*, edited by Skene, pp. xx–xviii. **Law** is Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Library, Dc. 7. 63 (John Law's pocket book, datable to 1521). It was discussed, with edited extracts, in John Durkan, 'St Andrews in John Law's Chronicle', *Innes Review*, 25 (1974), 49–62. The abridgement of *Scotichronicon* is fols 44<sup>r</sup>–127<sup>v</sup>: it is unclear whether Law used *Scotichronicon* itself or a reworking of it. **Gibson** is Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv. 35.6.8 (completed in 1502): Skene included it in his discussion of manuscripts of Fordun's history: *Johannis de Fordun Chronica*, edited by Skene, p. xxiv, and noted its derivation from **R**. The earliest manuscript of *Extracta* (Edinburgh, NLS, Adv. 35.6.13) was edited for the Abbotsford Club: *Extracta e Variis Cronicis Scocie from the Ancient Manuscript in the Advocates' Library at Edinburgh*, edited by W. B. D. D. Turnbull (Edinburgh, 1842). It is discussed in Mapstone, 'The



**Outline of the relationships between codices in the ‘Fordun–Bower–Pluscarden’ tradition c. 1430–c. 1530**

Lines do not necessarily indicate an immediate relationship. Extant manuscripts are referred to in bold using Donald Watt’s *sigla*: these do not include manuscripts of the Book of Pluscarden (which are given using Felix Skene’s *sigla* in bold italics), Gibson’s and Law’s autographs (*Gibson* and *Law*), or the earliest manuscript of *Extracta e Variis Cronicis Scocie* (*Extracta*). There are three manuscripts of Fordun’s history (or part of it) which were extended, at some point before c. 1530, by the addition of books from another version: these are indicated with the addition of a plus sign (e.g., **FD**<sup>+</sup>). Fresh versions (abridgements, rewritings or expansions) are, with two exceptions, given in boxes: the exceptions are Richard Striveling’s extension of **FE**, and the anonymous scribe who added or created an abridgement of the ‘Book of Coupar Angus’ when he expanded **FF** in 1509: these are not given a box simply because of lack of space.

It could be said that this complexity is exaggerated because Fordun’s history ran only as far as 1153, leaving up to three centuries of the kingdom’s history untold. There is only one manuscript (**FB**) where it appears that no attempt was made before the mid-sixteenth century to continue the narrative.<sup>37</sup> It is striking, nevertheless, that there were five different responses to the challenge of continuing Fordun’s history, rather than one or two established solutions: the addition of *Gesta Annalia* I and II (in two different configurations), *Gesta Annalia* beginning only at 1153, Bower’s *Scotichronicon* itself, his reworking of this in what is referred to by scholars as the ‘Book of Coupar Angus’, an abridgement of the ‘Book of Coupar Angus’, and an abridgement of Patrick Russell’s abridgement of the ‘Book of Coupar Angus’.<sup>38</sup> Examples of each of these are found in manuscripts produced when not only *Scotichronicon*, but also the ‘Book of Pluscarden’ were available. This flexibility hardly compares with the extraordinary complexity found in the neighbouring traditions of regnal historiography exemplified by the prose *Brut* in England or *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* in Ireland. Lister Matheson, in his prodigious study of the prose *Brut*, discerned nineteen versions,<sup>39</sup> while Mark Scowcroft, in an impressive tour-de-force of textual scholarship, has constructed

*Scotichronicon*’s First Readers’, pp. 35–37; Drexler, ‘The Extant Abridgements’, pp. 66–67. On the ‘Book of Coupar Angus’ see *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower, IX, edited by Watt, pp. 12–19 and 193–96.

<sup>37</sup> This manuscript has been damaged, however. Its current arrangement includes the *Gesta Annalia* section that was originally part of **FH**. This was probably added by Sir Robert Cotton (1571–1631) who owned both manuscripts: see Broun, ‘A New Perspective on John of Fordun’s *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*’.

<sup>38</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Lister M. Matheson, *Prose Brut: The Development of a Middle English Chronicle* (Tempe, AZ, 1998).

a remarkable criss-crossing stemma for *Lebor Gabála Érenn* which brings together fourteen hypothesized recensions: this includes a recension combining three and leading to three more, another combining two and leading to three others, and four that combine two recensions and lead to two other recensions.<sup>40</sup> Compared with these, the ‘Fordun–Bower–Pluscarden’ tradition seems much less complex.

There is, however, little sense of a particular version of the ‘Fordun–Bower–Pluscarden’ material eventually being preferred above others. A striking illustration of this is that Henry Sinclair of Roslin (1508–65), bishop of Ross, owned four codices in the diagram above: copies of Fordun’s history with *Gesta Annalia* I and II (**FG**) and of Patrick Russell’s abridgement of the ‘Book of Coupar Angus’ (**P**), as well as the oldest (and possibly original) manuscript of *Extracta e Variis Cronicis Scocie* and John Gibson’s abridgement of the Paisley manuscript of *Scotichronicon*.<sup>41</sup> These passed to his nephew, Sir William Sinclair of Roslin, who embarked on a careful study of the variant readings in these and similar manuscripts in his possession, including three of *Scotichronicon* (**B**, **D**, and **R**), and the only extant manuscript of the ‘Book of Coupar Angus’ in full (**CA**).<sup>42</sup> It is striking that someone with such a keen interest in Scottish regnal historiography should embrace its accumulated flexibility so wholeheartedly.<sup>43</sup>

Putting all this together, it appears that Scottish regnal historiography in Latin can best be understood as a narrative framework which could assume a variety of textual manifestations, some more elaborate and developed than others. Fordun’s history seems to have been regarded as a kind of bedrock for those wishing to copy or read a substantial narrative up to David I’s death in 1153, but even his prose was not regarded as complete or immutable.<sup>44</sup> If we wish to get closer to understanding this material through the eyes of medieval scribes and readers, then our natural inclination to prioritize major works and to treat abbreviations as secondary becomes problematic. Crucial questions can only be answered by considering the corpus of codices as a whole, giving particular attention to all the abridgements. Was there a ‘core’ that all versions included? Were there elements that related explicitly to the kingdom’s history that were particularly susceptible to being rewritten or omitted? It is only by prioritising abridgements that we can gain a sense of which parts of the general narrative were more flexible than others.

It is not only abridgements that assume greater importance; codices are placed centre stage in defining the corpus. It would be inconsistent, therefore, to highlight textual variety but ignore

<sup>40</sup> R. Mark Scowcroft, ‘*Leabhar Gabhála*, Part I: The Growth of the Text’, *Ériu*, 38 (1987), 81–142 (p. 100, and esp. pp. 90–101). For a slightly modified analysis, published as four stemmas, see idem, ‘Mediaeval Recensions of the *Lebor Gabála*’, in *Lebor Gabála Érenn: Textual History and Pseudohistory*, edited by John Carey, Irish Texts Society (London, 2009), pp. 1–20 (pp. 2–18).

<sup>41</sup> H. J. Lawlor, ‘Notes on the Library of the Sinclairs of Rosslyn’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 32 (1897–98), 90–120 (pp. 97–102). He also owned a copy of the most recent version of Scottish regnal history at this time — John Bellenden’s history in Scots (based chiefly on Hector Boece’s *Scotorum Historiae*): Durkan and Ross, *Early Scottish Libraries*, p. 54; T. A. F. Cherry, ‘The Library of Henry Sinclair, Bishop of Ross, 1560–1565’, *Bibliothek*, 4 (1983), 13–23 (p. 17). He also owned an abridgement of Wyntoun’s *Original Chronicle* (BL, MS Lansdowne 197): *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, edited by Amours, I, lxxvi–lxxvii; Lawlor, ‘Notes on the Library of the Sinclairs’, p. 110.

<sup>42</sup> Mapstone, ‘The *Scotichronicon*’s First Readers’, pp. 36–37.

<sup>43</sup> He also owned a copy of Hector Boece’s *Scotorum Historiae*: Durkan and Ross, *Early Scottish Libraries*, p. 144.

<sup>44</sup> Bower in his *Scotichronicon* made significant additions (carefully identified by the word *scriptor*); in the ‘Book of Coupar Angus’, however, he omitted chapters (see the collation with *Scotichronicon* in *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower, IX, edited by Watt, p. 194). Additions and alterations to Fordun in the ‘Book of Pluscarden’ are noted in *Liber Pluscardensis*, edited by Skene, pp. xxv–xlvi.

other differences between the codices themselves, such as their size and appearance. It is striking that four of the five largest and finest extant codices are copies of Bower's *Scotichronicon*, exhibiting some of the most limited textual flexibility in the corpus. (Their size is not because the work was long: *Scotichronicon* is also found in medium-sized manuscripts, too.)<sup>45</sup> In order of height they are: London, British Library, Royal 13 E.x (**R**) at 44 × 29cm; Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Library, 186 (**E**) at 41 × 25cm; Edinburgh, National Records of Scotland, GD45/26/48 (**B**) at 38 × 27cm; Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv. 35.1.7 (**CA**) at 38 × 26cm; London, British Library, Harleian 712 (**H**) at 36 × 27.5cm.<sup>46</sup> Although abridged texts are crucial for identifying what may be regarded as 'core' elements of regnal historiography, therefore, the size and quality of manuscripts offers a contrasting view of what would in medieval eyes have been seen as the most 'important' texts in the corpus. Prioritising abridged versions of regnal historiography need not, therefore, mean that we should turn completely on its head the view of abbreviations as lesser works, according them primacy over more extensive texts.

Overall, then, it is useful to look at the corpus in different ways, textually and physically, without assuming that any particular text or codex is intrinsically less important than another. Ostensibly this brings us closer to understanding this material as it would have been experienced in the Middle Ages. It is important to be bear in mind, though, that our awareness of the corpus of extant manuscripts and our ability to study it is a phenomenon of the present and future, not of the late medieval past. It would have been beyond the capacity of even an ardent bibliophile like William Sinclair to absorb all the variety of the 'Fordun–Bower–Pluscarden' tradition. An interested reader or scribe might have been aware of textual flexibility to a limited extent only, not only as owner or reader, but as scribe or rubricator.<sup>47</sup> In that sense, an unknowable number of scribes and readers would have had their own knowledge of this material, each forming an individual corpus of experience that overlapped with others in a fundamentally random way. There is a limit, therefore, to how far a codex-based approach to regnal historiography can bring us nearer to seeing and understanding this material through medieval eyes.

Can a way of editing a corpus be envisaged that would make its flexibility fully accessible, both textual and physical? Even taking the textual dimension on its own, it is difficult to see how this could be achieved in book form. Looking beyond Scotland, R. A. S. Macalister's edition of *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* stands as a terrible warning of how problematic it can become to edit a body of multiply variable regnal historiography. As John Carey puts it,

Macalister's attempt to accommodate all of the branching divergences of the medieval versions within the framework of one edition resulted in a text remote in form and appearance

<sup>45</sup> The 'Donibristle manuscript' (in private ownership in Darnaway Castle) is 30.5 × 21cm; Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 171 is 29 × 21cm: *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower*, IX, edited by Watt, pp. 149 and 187.

<sup>46</sup> These are the dimensions given *ibid.*, pp. 186–93 (except for **CA**, which Watt gives as 38.5 × 26cm). The largest manuscript that is not Bower's *Scotichronicon* or his own reworking of it in the 'Book of Coupar Angus' (in full) is a manuscript of Fordun's history, continued with a slightly abridged version of the 'Book of Coupar Angus': Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Library, Scottish Catholic Archives, MM/2/1 (**FF**), which is 33 × 23cm. One of the smallest in the 'Fordun–Bower–Pluscarden' tradition, apart from the highly individual pocket book of John Law, is the oldest manuscript of *Extracta e Variis Cronicis Scocie*, Edinburgh, NLS, Adv. 35.6.13, which is 18.5 × 13cm.

<sup>47</sup> Archbishop William Schevez in the 1480s owned copies of Fordun, Bower's *Scotichronicon*, and the 'Book of Pluscarden'; his copy of Fordun, moreover, has additions from Bower's *Scotichronicon*. See Broun, *The Irish Identity*, pp. 22–23. Magnus MacCulloch copied two manuscripts of Bower's *Scotichronicon*, but from different exemplars (or combinations of exemplars): *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower*, IX, edited by Watt, pp. 188–90. James Gray, who rubricated one of the copies of *Scotichronicon* by Magnus MacCulloch (see *ibid.*, p. 191), copied a range of material on the kingdom's history into his commonplace book (see below, p. 18).

from any single manuscript, whose presentation of material can sometimes be deciphered only at the cost of prolonged effort and concentration.<sup>48</sup>

The ‘Fordun–Bower–Pluscarden’ tradition does not match the bewildering variety of *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, but still presents similar challenges.<sup>49</sup> In order to avoid the difficulties of Macalister’s approach, the edited text would need to be anchored in the context of each manuscript. This would have the merit of establishing a tangible link with the reality of the medieval codices. It would, however, be a vast undertaking, and would still be extremely difficult to present in a coherent and usable way.

Donald Watt’s edition of *Scotichronicon* helps to illustrate how far a print edition can go in representing a corpus of regnal historiography in a more manageable way. For Watt, the manuscript produced under Bower’s supervision (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 171) (to which he gave the *siglum* C) was an obvious base text. Detailed attention was also paid to describing its physical appearance.<sup>50</sup> What is of particular interest is how Watt provided an array of information on how C relates to a large part of the corpus. This included not only comparing C with the text in Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv. 35.1.7 (the ‘Book of Coupar Angus’) (CA), but also with Fordun’s history (referencing W. F. Skene’s edition), the ‘Book of Pluscarden’ (referencing Felix Skene’s edition), and *Extracta e Variis Cronicis Scocie* (referencing the edition of the oldest manuscript, NLS, Adv. 35.6.13). He also included some variants from the only complete manuscript of Patrick Russell’s abridgement: NLS, Adv. 35.6.7 (P). Although all this was reported selectively, many of the more significant textual differences are carefully reproduced.<sup>51</sup> These can, however, only be accessed from the viewpoint of C (which is as Donald Watt intended). Most of this information, moreover, is tucked away in the textual endnotes or apparatus.<sup>52</sup> The description of other manuscripts was also provided separately, in the normal way.<sup>53</sup> The edited text itself does not attempt anything unusual, such as highlighting areas of verbal coincidence with other versions.<sup>54</sup> Very occasionally, in the translation of the final section (dealing with events

<sup>48</sup> John Carey, *A New Introduction to Lebor Gabála Éirenn, The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, edited and translated by R. A. Stewart Macalister, Irish Texts Society (London, 1993), p. 15; pp. 9–15 is an account of Macalister’s work on his edition, stretching over 48 years, and its critical reception. It was published in five volumes by the Irish Text Society between 1938 and 1956, and reprinted in 1993.

<sup>49</sup> Andrew Gillman in the 1870s planned to use CA as the basis for an edition of the ‘Continuators of Fordun’ (see *Johannis de Fordun Chronica*, edited by Skene, p. xli, n. 1); whatever these plans were, it appears that they proved to be unacceptable to the publishers, leading to the commissioning of Felix Skene to edit the ‘Book of Pluscarden’ instead (as is rather painfully acknowledged in *Liber Pluscardensis*, edited by Skene, p. xxiii). Andrew Gillman, who was based in London, was evidently an important scholar of the ‘Fordun–Bower–Pluscarden’ tradition, providing W. F. Skene with collations of the two Fordun manuscripts he was aware of in the then British Museum: *Johannis de Fordun Chronica*, edited by Skene, p. xlvi. Unfortunately nothing more is known of Gillman’s plans; this might therefore be another sad indication of the difficulties of trying to conceive a workable edition of this varied material.

<sup>50</sup> *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower, IX, edited by Watt, pp. 148–51 and 154–85.

<sup>51</sup> The basis for this is briefly explained in *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower, VIII, edited by Watt, pp. x–xi.

<sup>52</sup> Particular attention is also given in the apparatus to the ‘Donibristle MS’ (D), which was copied from C, and is used to supply lacunae caused by damage to C; occasionally variants from other manuscripts of *Scotichronicon* are also noted in the apparatus. See *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower, VIII, edited by Watt, p. x.

<sup>53</sup> *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower, IX, edited by Watt, pp. 186–202. (This is limited to manuscripts of Fordun’s history, Patrick Russell’s abridgement, and the ‘Book of Coupar Angus’.)

<sup>54</sup> An exercise like this has only been attempted with this material on a much smaller scale in a section of origin-legend which is found in Fordun’s history, Andrew of Wyntoun’s chronicle, and Thomas Grey’s *Scalacronica* (written in French, completed in 1363). There a system of italic, bold, and underlining is used to indicate notable textual similarities and contradictions between them. See Broun, *The Irish Identity*, pp. 98–103; also pp. 86 and 89 (Fordun), and pp. 87–88 and 90 (Grey). The edition in *ibid.*, pp. 33–62, of all the origin-legend material in Fordun’s history is also notable for using braces to highlight where the manuscript witnesses leave us with uncertain readings, rather than deciding on what is best and limiting the discussion to the notes.

in Bower's own time), material from the 'Book of Coupar Angus' (**CA**) is included (in square brackets) — presumably because this is Bower's work, too.<sup>55</sup>

Theoretically the whole corpus in Latin could be marked up to show where there are notable similarities as well as degrees of variation between the texts in each codex. If each manuscript were to be treated equally, however, then this would involve transcribing all twenty-three in the diagram above, comparing the text of each against the others, and devising a way to display multiple degrees of variation. It could be argued that some manuscripts might be omitted (such as those, like **FA**, **FB**, and **B**, whose text seems to vary only slightly from their probable extant exemplars: **FG**, **FE**, and **D** respectively).<sup>56</sup> A case could even be made for reducing this further by including only one manuscript each of *Scotichronicon* and the 'Book of Pluscarden', bringing the number of codices down to thirteen.<sup>57</sup> By the same token, it might be possible to devise a simplified way of presenting text so that readers would be immediately aware of whether it is found in all manuscripts, a few, or only one. Even so, the task would be prodigiously demanding for anyone to attempt, even using electronic text as an aid. A description of the physical aspects of each codex would of necessity be confined to an introduction or appendix. Hard copy publication by codex would be a massive multi-volume project that would surely be too cumbersome to use.

The only way to imagine producing an edition that could allow users to experience the textual flexibility and physical variety of the corpus more directly would be by using digital methods. This could take as its starting point Matthew Driscoll's suggestion that

rather than mere electronic versions of printed texts what we ought possibly to be thinking of are interactive text archives, where the user determines to a much greater extent the nature and scope of the content and how that content is presented.<sup>58</sup>

Once all the transcriptions had been completed, the techniques of big data searches might be adapted in order to reveal where chunks of text appear in more than one manuscript, and show how many manuscripts are involved. It would presumably be feasible to construct a digital edition so that the corpus as a whole could be seen in relation to each codex in turn, or to limit the search to specific codices.<sup>59</sup> This could also make it possible to integrate

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<sup>55</sup> For example, *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower, VIII, edited by Watt, p. 245, where additional comment appears in **CA**. On the nature of the 'Book of Coupar Angus' as Bower's work, see *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower, IX, edited by Watt, pp. 193–96 and 207–8.

<sup>56</sup> For **FB** as potentially a copy of **FE**, see above, nn. 8 and 36. The inherited idiosyncracies that show that **FA** is a copy of **FG** are noted in *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower, IX, edited by Watt, p. 200, and in more detail in Broun, *The Irish Identity*, p. 28. *Scotichronicon B* as a copy of **D** is explained in *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower, IX, edited by Watt, p. 189.

<sup>57</sup> Because of the various versions of post-1153 material in manuscripts including Fordun's history, this part would need to be transcribed in **FC**, **FD**, **FE**, **FF**, **FG**, and **FH**. **CA**, **P**, **Gibson**, **Law**, and **Extracta** would need to be transcribed, plus perhaps **C** for the 'Book of Pluscarden', and for *Scotichronicon C* (with lacunae filled from **D**, as in Watt's edition). In the course of editing *Scotichronicon*, Donald Watt transcribed (or arranged to be transcribed) ten manuscripts: all but one of *Scotichronicon*, four of Fordun's history, and also the abridged versions in **CA** and **P**.

<sup>58</sup> Driscoll, 'The Words on the Page', p. 104.

<sup>59</sup> A number of intertextual research tools that could be the basis for this approach are discussed in Chris L. Nighman's guide <<http://web.wlu.ca/history/cnighman/page13.html>>. The options include *Juxta*, an open-access tool for 'comparing and collating multiple witnesses to a single textual work' (to quote its webpage); it also allows the user to 'switch the base text at will' (second paragraph in <<http://www.juxtasoftware.org/about/>>). There is also *Factotum*, an intertextual research tool that was developed initially in relation to a project on the thirteenth-century Latin text, *Speculum Morale*: <<http://www.webfactotum.duckdns.org:4277/>>. Another tool, eTRAP (the electronic Text Reuse Acquisition Project: <<https://www.etrapp.eu/>>), enables verbal similarities to be detected across a wide range of textual material (including Latin); they are researching how to do this across different languages.

information about each codex's physical properties so that the corpus could be investigated from, say, the perspective of size or handwriting styles. A particular challenge would be how to design a way of displaying degrees of variation, both textual and physical, without bamboozling the user.<sup>60</sup> The edition's range of functions could be expanded further by marking up the transcriptions. Mark-up could also allow the placement of text in a manuscript and other palaeographical and codicological information to be integrated where necessary (for example, in the case of additions). In short, the skilled work of transcription and description would be done by scholars, who, in collaboration with technical developers, could create a series of codex-based views of the material, leaving the user to explore and experience the edition's possibilities.

It is one thing to outline how such an edition might be produced and what it might look like; it is another matter to work out how to achieve this in practice.<sup>61</sup> Above all, how would users — and the editors themselves — understand it in a way that would prevent it from becoming a disorientating mess? Although digital editing might seem a natural medium for making the textual flexibility and physical variability of this material immediately accessible, there are no obvious models on which to draw.<sup>62</sup> An impressive amount of work and thinking has gone into how to create and theorize digital editions of text in its material setting (that is, as a 'document' or 'artefact') and in relation to 'works' — with some debate between the two approaches.<sup>63</sup> Different versions of the same work have been linked together digitally, as

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<sup>60</sup> The risks of 'a model based on variation and plurality of manifestations and representations' are highlighted in Elena Pierazzo, 'Modelling Digital Scholarly Editions: From Plato to Heraclitus', in *Digital Scholarly Editing. Theories and Practices*, edited by Matthew James Driscoll and Elena Pierazzo (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 41–58 (p. 50), downloadable at <<https://www.openbookpublishers.com/download/book/527>>.

<sup>61</sup> An example of some of the conceptual and visual challenges of this approach and possible solutions, even when dealing only with text — without noting any of each manuscript's physical aspects — can be seen in the 'dynamic edition' model developed by a team led by Alice Taylor: see Dauvit Broun, Paul Caton, John Reuben Davies, Ginestra Ferraro, Geoffroy Noël, Alice Taylor, and Joanna Tucker, *The Declaration of Arbroath: A Dynamic Edition*, King's Digital Lab, London (first edition, 2020) <<https://www.cotr.ac.uk/texts/declaration-arbroath>> + <<https://www.cotr.ac.uk/guidelines/declaration-arbroath>> and *A Dynamic Edition of Regiam Maiestatem*, King's Digital Lab, London (first edition, 2021) <<https://cotr.ac.uk/texts/regiam-maiestatem/>> + <<https://cotr.ac.uk/guidelines/model-dynamic-regiam/>>.

<sup>62</sup> For this purpose a tight definition of digital edition is particularly useful in searching the vast range of available material. Patrick Sahle and others, *A Catalog of Digital Scholarly Editions*, <<https://www.digitale-edition.de/exist/apps/editions-browser/index.html>> is invaluable in this regard. (His catalogue was initiated in 2008 and is regularly updated: when updated on 13 October 2021 it gave information on 774 digital editions; on 8 June 2018 it had information on 428.) For his careful definition of what is included, see Patrick Sahle, 'What is a Scholarly Digital Edition', in *Digital Scholarly Editing*, edited by Driscoll and Pierazzo, pp. 19–39. For example, his catalogue includes only those 'guided by a digital paradigm in their theory, practice, and method' (p. 28), and does not therefore include editions of texts that have been digitized with minimal functionality. This would explain why the digitized edition of neo-Latin poetry (selected from *Delitiae Poetarum Scotorum* (Amsterdam, 1637): <<https://www.dps.gla.ac.uk/electronic-resource/>>), or digitized edition of *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707* (<<http://www.rps.ac.uk/>>) have not been included; also, the catalogue excludes projects which have not yet substantially published their intended editions (such as the digital edition of 'original' Scottish charters before 1250: <[www.modelsofauthority.ac.uk](http://www.modelsofauthority.ac.uk/)>). For a much wider approach to digital editions, see Greta Franzini, Melissa Terras, and Simon Mahony, 'A Catalogue of Digital Editions', in *Digital Scholarly Editing*, edited by Driscoll and Pierazzo, pp. 161–82 (esp. pp. 166–67).

<sup>63</sup> For example, Peter Robinson, 'Towards a Theory of Digital Editions', *Variants*, 10 (2013), 105–31, advocates (p. 123) that 'a scholarly edition must, as far as it can, illuminate both aspects of text, both text-as-work and text-as-document', arguing that there is an exclusive emphasis on 'text-as-document' in Elena Pierazzo, 'A Rationale of Digital Documentary Editions', *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, 26.4 (2011), 463–77, and Hans Walter Gabler, 'Theorizing the Digital Scholarly Edition', *Literature Compass*, 7.2 (2010), 43–56. This resonates with a longer-standing intellectual tension between what has been described as the 'archival' and 'editorial' dimensions of editing: see Paul Eggert, 'The Reader-Oriented Scholarly Edition', *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*, 31.4 (2016), 797–810, who proposes (p. 798) 'leaving the representational question on hold

have manuscripts with printed editions.<sup>64</sup> Impressive progress has been made in integrating the changes made by an author in drafting and revising their work.<sup>65</sup> It has also been possible to conceive of combining some of these approaches to form a ‘multi-perspectival edition’.<sup>66</sup> Textual flexibility and physical variety have, therefore, been embraced editorially, but only within the parameters of author, work, and ‘document’.<sup>67</sup> The kind of flexibility that can be seen in a corpus of medieval regnal historiography challenges us to think beyond these categories. If this challenge is not met, then we risk remaining largely in the world of the edited works that have hitherto dominated the way we encounter this material, and how we understand it.

This raises a more fundamental question about how far the potential of digital editing can transcend our experience of text. In a discussion of whether digital technology had led to new approaches to editing, Barbara Bordalejo concluded that ‘there is no such thing as digital scholarly editing. There is only scholarly editing, which can be published in print or digital format’.<sup>68</sup> Peter Robinson has also observed that ‘digital scholarship remains bound by the model of print’, and has challenged scholars to ‘imagine otherwise’.<sup>69</sup> There are limits,

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(how the edition represents the work and the methodologies used to achieve that) and considering the edition instead primarily as a transaction with its readers—those print-counterparts of the digital crowd’.

<sup>64</sup> For example, Franz Fischer, ‘All Texts are Equal, but... : Textual Plurality and the Critical Text in Digital Scholarly Editions’, *Variants*, 10 (2013), 77–90, discusses his ‘hyperstack’ edition of St Patrick’s *Confessio* and edition of an unedited work by William of Auxerre. Another notable medieval example is the Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded *Online Froissart. A Digital Edition of the Chronicles of Jean Froissart* <<https://www.dhi.ac.uk/onlinefroissart/index.jsp>>, led by Peter Ainsworth and Godfried Croenen. Users are able to access an individual manuscript transcription of each chapter, which would allow the flexibility of the text to be researched, albeit laboriously rather than digitally.

<sup>65</sup> For an example from Romantic literature, see Stuart Curran, ‘Different Demands, Different Priorities: Electronic and Print Editions’, *Literature Compass*, 7.2 (2010), 82–88; two examples from twentieth-century literature are discussed in Pierazzo, ‘Modelling Digital Scholarly Editions’, p. 49. Note also the proof of concept for encoding Proust’s notebooks developed in 2012 principally by Elena Pierazzo: Elena Pierazzo, ‘Of Time and Space. Unpacking the Draft Page: A New Framework for Digital Editions of Draft Manuscripts’, *Variants*, 11 (2015), 29–46. This is referred to sometimes as ‘text-as-process’: see, for example, Joris van Zundert, ‘Barely Beyond the Book?’, in *Digital Scholarly Editing*, edited by Driscoll and Pierazzo, pp. 83–106 (pp. 99–100), where he discusses text-as-process in relation to the ‘*avant-texte* phase’ of production of a work; he also applies this to the process of creating a digital edition itself by crowdsourcing, or as a ‘social edition’ involving allowing readers/users to add their knowledge (much as envisioned by Peter Robinson, ‘Electronic Editions for Everyone’, in *Text and Genre in Reconstruction*, edited by McCarty, pp. 145–63 (pp. 152–59)).

<sup>66</sup> This is the stated aim of the Arts and Humanities Research Council and German Union of Academies project to produce a digital critical edition of the works of Arthur Schnitzler (1862–1931) from 1905 to 1931: <<https://www.arthur-schnitzler.org/project/>>.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, Bichitra: Online Tagore Variorum, led by Jadavpur University, Kolkata: <[http://bichitra.jdvu.ac.in/about\\_bichitra\\_project.php](http://bichitra.jdvu.ac.in/about_bichitra_project.php)>. This describes itself as ‘the biggest integrated knowledge site devoted to any author in any language to date’, and includes most versions of the works of Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) in Bengali and English. A particular feature is a ‘collation engine’ that shows the extent of similarity and difference between versions of a work at three levels (chapter, paragraph, and ‘detailed wording’). It does not, however, show the text itself, merely the percentage that is the same between versions per level. See <[http://bichitra.jdvu.ac.in/bichitra\\_collation\\_guide.php](http://bichitra.jdvu.ac.in/bichitra_collation_guide.php)>. A concept that has not been discussed in relation to digital editing is *scriptum*, ‘a concrete, unique, unduplicatable, physical manuscript together with the writing, both textual and trivial, it contains’: Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture*, p. 20. Note, however, the range of specific textual features for each selected manuscript that is being incorporated into the new *Editio Critica Maior* of the Book of Revelation: Garrick V. Allen, ‘Text and Tradition: David Brown and New Testament Textual Criticism’, in *The Moving Text: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on David Brown and the Bible*, edited by Garrick V. Allen and others (London, 2018), pp. 3–16 (pp. 4–6).

<sup>68</sup> Barbara Bordalejo, ‘Digital versus Analogue Textual Scholarship or The Revolution is Just in the Title’, *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures*, 7.1 (Spring 2018), 7–28 (p. 24)

<sup>69</sup> Robinson, ‘Electronic Editions for Everyone’, p. 156.

however.<sup>70</sup> Elena Pierazzo has observed that ‘digital mutability may respond well to textual mutability but only if the latter is recognised and embraced’, but that this has not yet been achieved.<sup>71</sup> Joris van Zundert has urged that, for this to happen, it is necessary to bring ‘theoretical concepts pertaining to the fluidity of text’ and ‘text relations’ fully into the common language shared by editors and technical developers; this common language, however, ‘is currently geared towards representing a text-as-document...’.<sup>72</sup> If we turn to examples of digital editing of medieval material, we may recall Driscoll’s image of ‘interactive text archives’, but this was only offered as a suggestion.<sup>73</sup> The emphasis of other leading practitioners in the field of medieval studies, by contrast, is on the potential of digital methods to advance a stemmatic approach to text.<sup>74</sup> In this context, textual change is viewed either within a paradigm of transmission or through the prism of a ‘best text’. This would be unlikely to make accessible or comprehensible the more extensive flexibility revealed by a codex-based approach, as envisaged across the corpus of the ‘Fordun–Bower–Pluscarden’ tradition.

Scholars of oral literature have arguably embraced more fully the possibilities of digital editions to create a more flexible view of text. They may only have done so, however, insofar as they see digital and oral modes as sharing essential features with which they are familiar. To quote John Miles Foley (including his emphasis), ‘in contrast to the fixed spatial organization of the page and book, the technologies of oral tradition and the Internet *mimic the way we think* by processing along pathways within a network’.<sup>75</sup> In light of this, it might be asked how far a digital edition of a corpus of medieval regnal historiography would be miming the way that anyone engaged with this material in the Middle Ages. Could it end up being so alien to any known practice or experience that it would be bewildering for users today, and anachronistic as a representation of past interactions with the corpus? On the other hand, the putative edition could hardly claim to disrupt the idea of text as the written word on parchment or paper. Indeed, the inherent flexibility of text can readily be seen as an expansion of the ‘essential mobility of the medieval text’.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, it may be

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<sup>70</sup> For a general discussion of this, with references to philosophical perspectives, see Broun, ‘Rethinking Scottish Origins’, pp. 179–90.

<sup>71</sup> Pierazzo, ‘Modelling Digital Scholarly Editions’, p. 58. Note also Driscoll, ‘The Words on the Page’, p. 104: ‘Zumthor, Cerquiglini and the “new” philologists have all argued that textual instability (*variance, mouvance, “unfixedness”*) is so fundamental a feature of chirographically transmitted texts that rather than trying to bring order to this chaos we should celebrate it. Here, finally, we have a means of doing so’.

<sup>72</sup> van Zundert, ‘Barely Beyond the Book?’, p. 105.

<sup>73</sup> See above, p. 11. On digital archives as editions, see Pierazzo, ‘Modelling Digital Scholarly Editions’, pp. 49–50.

<sup>74</sup> Fischer, ‘All Texts are Equal’, p. 77, argues that, in the digital medium, ‘a critical text can serve as a standard reference, as an ideal text to start with and as a portal to access the variety of textual manifestations of a particular work’; Tara L. Andrews, ‘The Third Way: Philology and Critical Edition in the Digital Age’, *Variants*, 10 (2013), 61–76 (p. 71), explains that ‘the history of the text lies in its witnesses, and the historian of the text must seek to uncover that history’. Note that she also argues (p. 70) that ‘it is the practice of deep and/or large-scale text analysis, rather than that of textual criticism itself, which must drive the development of digital editions in all their potential’. Both are potentially combined in the interactive digital edition of the New Testament based on a new approach to stemmatics developed by Gerd Mink: Klaus Wachtel, ‘The Development of the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM), its Place in Textual Scholarship, and Digital Editing’, in *The Future of New Testament Textual Scholarship: From H. C. Hoskier to the Editio Critica Maior and Beyond*, edited by Garrick V. Allen (Tübingen, 2019), pp. 435–46 (p. 446). (Gerd Mink’s introductory presentation of The Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (2009) can be downloaded from <WWU Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung (uni-muenster.de)>.)

<sup>75</sup> John Miles Foley, *Oral Tradition and the Internet: Pathways of the Mind* (Urbana, IL, 2012), p. 5.

<sup>76</sup> Driscoll, ‘The Words on the Page’, p. 92, translating the famous phrase ‘mobilité essentielle du texte médiéval’ from Paul Zumthor, *Essai du poétique médiévale* (Paris, 1972), p. 171.

recognized as bringing us into a zone somewhere between ‘work’ and ‘document’ (or ‘artefact’) which has not been experienced in practice before.<sup>77</sup>

Be this as it may, it is likely that an edition that was true to the flexibility of regnal historiography, if it could be achieved, would transform our understanding of this material simply by allowing us to experience it in a new way.<sup>78</sup> The most obvious likely change would be that abridgements would play a more prominent role. There is a serious risk, however, that if there is insufficient clarity about what the edition is, and how this is conceptualized, unhelpful assumptions might be encouraged. Referring to ‘core’ text, for example, invites the unspoken thought that other text is peripheral. If an edition depends on developing its principles as it proceeds, it risks being too confusing and challenging for anyone to use effectively.<sup>79</sup> At the very least, some kind of ‘working’ frame of reference would need to be established from the outset.

This lack of a convincing framework is highlighted by two further significant ways in which this imagined digital edition of a corpus of regnal historiography is limited, and potentially misleading. Both problems relate to the central place given to histories as codices. Up to this point the proposed rethinking of regnal historiography depends on taking narratives of the kingdom’s past on the scale of a bound volume as its starting point, rather than edited works. This potentially runs into difficulties when it is thought of as a corpus. The range of manuscripts available for study depends on the vagaries of what survives. The imagined edition showing the degree of variation between the texts in each codex can therefore never claim to represent the corpus as it might have been in the late Middle Ages. It can only present the corpus as it is today. It is always possible that another codex could be discovered.<sup>80</sup> Allowance would also have to be made for missing or damaged folios in extant codices.<sup>81</sup> Our view of the corpus, moreover, is not only incomplete, but skewed. It was suggested above, for example, that Sir William Sinclair had access to nearly all the forms the corpus could take, and that he showed a remarkable awareness of its flexibility. It needs to be borne in mind, however, that as much as a third of what survives may only do so because it was once part of his library.<sup>82</sup> This reinforces the point that it is impossible for us to know the

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<sup>77</sup> For example, the inter-relational aspect of text is not integral to Patrick Sahle’s highly tuned ‘pluralistic text theory’: Patrick Sahle, ‘Die Edition und ihr Text: Textbegriff, Elektronischer Text, Transkription’, in Patrick Sahle, *Digitale Editionsformen: Zum Umgang mit der Überlieferung unter den Bedingungen des Medienwandels*, III, *Textbegriffe und Recodierung* (Norderstedt, 2013), pp. 1–60 (summarized in Fischer, ‘All Texts are Equal’, pp. 78–79). Sahle identifies three ‘main perspectives’ (put crudely, these are texts as idea, texts as document, and text as a specific expression or linguistic code): the first two can be seen as more precise formations of texts-as-work and text-as-document — although note that texts as work (with a clear structure) is one of three ‘intermediate positions’ (the others being texts as different versions and the physical appearance of text). He does, however, discuss whether the digital medium means a new concept of text, including ‘dynamic, variable and collective text’: Sahle, ‘Die Edition und ihr Text’, pp. 81–98 (pp. 87–89).

<sup>78</sup> For an especially pertinent example of this in a different context, see Garrick V. Allen, ‘The Possibilities of a Gospel Codex: GA 2064 (Dublin, CBL W 139), Digital Editing, and Reading in a Manuscript Culture’, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 140. 2 (2021), 409–34.

<sup>79</sup> Again, Macalister’s edition of *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* serves as a grim reminder of what can happen if an edition develops as it goes along, as observed in Scowcroft, ‘Medieval Recensions’, pp. 1–2.

<sup>80</sup> Such as the identification of BL, Cotton Otho B.iii\* in 2005, which has subsequently been recognized as the remains of **FH** Books I–V: see Broun, ‘A New Perspective on John of Fordun’s *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*’.

<sup>81</sup> Particularly notable losses have been suffered by two manuscripts of Fordun (**FB** and **FH**), damaged in the fire that engulfed the Cotton library on 23 October 1731 (see Broun, ‘A New Perspective on John of Fordun’s *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*’), and by BL, Royal 13 E X (**R**), whose losses in Books IV, V, and VIII are enumerated in *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower, IX, edited by Watt, p. 186.

<sup>82</sup> See above, p. 8, which includes those manuscripts that were at some point in his possession. Lawlor, ‘Notes on the Library’, pp. 97–102, 104, and 111–13, reckoned that five of the manuscripts definitely came from his library, and a sixth was at least ‘carefully examined by him’ (p. 111).

range of what used to exist, or gauge or guess how far any scribe or reader may have been aware of its flexibility.

It may be argued that this problem would only vitiate the effectiveness of a putative digital edition of the corpus of Scottish regnal historiography in Latin if its results were interpreted in too definitive a way. For example, it would be unwise to assume that, just because a section of text was found unchanged in every manuscript, it was therefore unsusceptible to being omitted or revised. This brings us back to the need to use terms like ‘core’ carefully, or preferably not at all. Perhaps this is inescapable as long as text is our frame of reference. Another lurking danger is the tendency for any impressive digital collection of data to give its users the illusion of comprehensiveness.

The other problem arising from the exclusive focus on histories as codices is that this limits our view of what regnal historiography in Latin would have meant to scribes and readers in the Middle Ages. Accounts of the kingdom’s past could be chronologically extensive without being on the scale of a bound volume. They might fill only a few gatherings or folios. If abridgements are to be one of the focuses of particular attention, then it might be supposed that shorter texts would assume even greater significance — all the more so the shorter they are. It might be argued that limiting the corpus to histories that formed a codex in their own right would have the advantage of preserving a basic sense of comparing like with like. The tension between this and the heightened importance of abbreviated texts is undeniable, however. Once these briefer versions are admitted, other problems immediately arise. There are Latin abridgements derived from material other than the ‘Fordun–Bower–Pluscarden’ tradition.<sup>83</sup> If we wish to understand what regnal history meant to scribes and readers of Latin generally, all these shorter works, and not just those within the ‘Fordun–Bower–Pluscarden’ corpus, need to be included.<sup>84</sup> There are also a number of short versions of the kingdom’s history in Scots and French.<sup>85</sup>

It is one thing to acknowledge this in general terms; it is another to embed all these dimensions of textual and physical variation into our thinking. A solution is offered by recent work on cartularies by Joanna Tucker.<sup>86</sup> She has developed a new methodology which

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<sup>83</sup> For example, there is a brief ‘summary chronicle’ which runs from Mael Coluim III (1058–93) to the late fourteenth century (or beyond) which appears differently in each manuscript: Spikkestad (near Oslo), The Schøyen Collection, 679, 25<sup>r</sup>–29<sup>r</sup>, which runs to 1390; Edinburgh, Edinburgh University, 27, running originally to 1385, where it has been added onto the front two flyleaves and in gaps in 231<sup>v</sup>–233<sup>v</sup>; and most fully in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Fairfax 23, 110<sup>r</sup>–116<sup>r</sup>, running to 1393. (I am very grateful to Steve Boardman for alerting me to the latter and providing scanned photocopies.) The original text represented by all three seems to have run as far as about 1380.

<sup>84</sup> One small scale work within the ‘Fordun–Bower–Pluscarden’ tradition is *Nomina Omnium Regum Scotorum*, found in Edinburgh, National Records of Scotland, GD45/31/1, 24<sup>r</sup>–35<sup>v</sup>, which has been dated to around 1500 (see Michael Chesnutt’s discussion of the manuscript in *Historia Norwegie*, edited by Inger Ekrem and Lars Boje Mortensen, translated by Peter Fisher (Copenhagen, 2003), pp. 28–31). It has been edited by Dan Embree and Edward Donald Kennedy, with translation from Latin by Susan Edgington, in *Short Scottish Prose Chronicles*, edited by Dan Embree and others (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 156–227 (pp. 59–61 for introduction, pp. 75–76 for the manuscript). The edition is presented in parallel with a version in Scots from Edinburgh, NLS, 16500, 124<sup>r</sup>–136<sup>v</sup>, dated to 1513 × c. 1533: see *ibid.*, pp. 76–77.

<sup>85</sup> Four manuscripts datable to the century after the 1440s with texts of the kingdom’s history in French, and four in Scots, are listed, and their texts edited, in *Short Scottish Prose Chronicles*, edited by Embree and others: see pp. 73–79 for the manuscripts.

<sup>86</sup> Joanna Tucker, ‘Understanding Scotland’s Medieval Cartularies’, *Innes Review*, 70 (2019), 135–70; Joanna Tucker, *Reading and Shaping Medieval Cartularies: Multi-Scribe Manuscripts and their Patterns of Growth. A Study of the Earliest Cartularies of Glasgow Cathedral and Lindores Abbey* (Woodbridge, 2020).

integrates textual and physical evidence.<sup>87</sup> In the context of cartularies, this allows scribes to take their place more fully in how we think about the texts we read and the manuscripts we see and touch. In the case of manuscripts which grew over time,

the cartularies have been primarily viewed [in her methodology] not as assemblages of texts but as collections of scribal interactions. The scribes, therefore, not the texts they copied, have been placed centrally ... as readers as well as contributors.<sup>88</sup>

Although cartularies are fundamentally different from regnal historiography, this move away from text as the primary focus to scribal activity offers a powerful point of reference for thinking about the totality of variables encountered so far, both textual and physical. In the case of Scottish regnal historiography, manuscripts are not only witnesses or embodiments of a text, but are primarily scribal responses embracing the full textual spectrum — from minimal variation to radical abridgement or reworking — as well as the physical aspects of writing on paper or parchment that affect how it looks and feels.

Joanna Tucker has also led the way in emphasizing how, instead of appealing for new editions of cartularies, we can instead aim to achieve ‘a new way of working with the existing printed resources, one that is grounded in an awareness of the medieval cartulary as a dynamic manuscript that could take a variety of forms’, aided by the increasing availability of digitized manuscripts.<sup>89</sup> This could equally be said of regnal historiography on the scale of a codex, as well as more generally.<sup>90</sup> To paraphrase a comment she makes on cartularies, this would help regnal historiography to be understood best as essentially a creative, personal, and responsive activity that differed depending on its context.<sup>91</sup> Modern editions (and, increasingly, digitized manuscripts) may offer only a limited view of this. They are unlikely, for example, to capture the full range of correction and textual marginalia found in every manuscript. We can, nevertheless, at least attempt to read what is available in print or on screen as dimensions of scribal activity first, and only secondarily as a work or a version of a work, and think of Scottish regnal historiography not as a ‘canon’ of texts but as a field of scribal interactions with the kingdom’s written history.<sup>92</sup>

Unfortunately only a few scribes are known by name. If ‘scribal activity’ is the central idea, however, then it would be important to consider other individuals connected with the creation of each manuscript apart from the person whose handwriting we have the opportunity to read. There are those who initiated its production, like Simon Finlay, a chaplain of St Giles church in Edinburgh, John Walker (possibly a dean of Christianity in the diocese of Glasgow), and

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<sup>87</sup> Tucker, *Reading and Shaping Medieval Cartularies*, pp. 38–90, and pp. 187–222 for the insights yielded by this methodology.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>89</sup> Tucker, ‘Understanding Scotland’s Medieval Cartularies’, p. 136, and p. 159 on the digitization of the cartularies in the National Library of Scotland’s Advocates’ Manuscripts collection, representing about 50% of extant cartulary manuscripts relating to Scotland (listed on pp. 169–70).

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, in a different context the observation by Allen, ‘The Possibilities of a Gospel Codex’, p. 434, that ‘features that print culture sidelined for a host of legitimate reasons can now be reconnected to editions in the digital realm’.

<sup>91</sup> Tucker, ‘Understanding Scotland’s Medieval Cartularies’, p. 157: ‘The cartulary is best understood, therefore, as essentially a creative, personal and responsive activity that differed depending on time, place, or archival environment.’

<sup>92</sup> Compare the comment in Tucker, ‘Understanding Scotland’s Medieval Cartularies’, p. 158, that “‘the cartulary’” could be understood as something more flexible and open, as a concept for exploring a single phenomenon: the act of copying documents in the medieval period’.

William Schevez, archbishop of St Andrews, who each commissioned a copy of Bower's *Scotichronicon*.<sup>93</sup> Others might also be known to have been involved in its production, such as James Gray (Schevez's secretary) who rubricated a manuscript of Bower's *Scotichronicon*, or Thomas Monimail, sacrist of Dunfermline Abbey, under whose direction a manuscript of the 'Book of Pluscarden' was produced for Archbishop Schevez.<sup>94</sup> Although the individual scribe's work is what we are most conscious of, and can study most closely, their action in creating the manuscript embodied specific relationships or associations with all who were directly involved in its production. The only exception would be a commonplace book which was essentially private: an example is James Gray's, which includes a gathering where the kingdom's history is reduced to a series of lists.<sup>95</sup> Even here it could, as a vade mecum, reveal those aspects to which he wished particularly to be able to refer when in discourse with other people.

The specific circumstances behind producing an abbreviated version or obtaining a copy of an existing work are, however, rarely clear. As texts, they are commonly read as part of a 'War of Historiography' whose initial shots were fired by Edward I in justifying his overlordship of Scotland,<sup>96</sup> each manuscript, however, is less easily seen as simply an act of propaganda. Although it has been suggested that an abbreviated version of the kingdom's history was produced as part of diplomatic negotiations,<sup>97</sup> there is otherwise no apparent immediate connection between regnal historiography and political events. The scribal activity we can investigate most fully seems to belong to a more general written social and cultural context. As Tucker and Dagenais have highlighted in different ways, scribes are also readers.<sup>98</sup> This view of the context for regnal historiography could be explored further through incorporating readers' reactions to the text, following Murray Tod's research into underlining and other ways of highlighting passages in each Latin manuscript of Scottish regnal historiography.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Finlay commissioned **D**; Walker **E**, and Schevez **H**: *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower, IX, edited by Watt, pp. 187–92.

<sup>94</sup> For Gray as rubricator, see *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower, IX, edited by Watt, p. 191; for Monimail, see R. J. Lyall, 'Books and Book Owners in Fifteenth-Century Scotland', in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375–1475*, edited by Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 239–56 (pp. 246–47); *Liber Pluscardensis*, edited by Skene, pp. x–xi; *Johannis de Fordun Chronica*, edited by Skene, p. xxi.

<sup>95</sup> Edinburgh, NLS, Adv. 34.7.3, fols 17–28: up to fol. 24 this consists of the royal genealogy, lists of kings, and lists of battles and other significant events. The lists of kings up to Lulach (1057–58) are edited in Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, second edition (Edinburgh, 1980), pp. 264–68.

<sup>96</sup> This is a central theme in R. James Goldstein, *The Matter of Scotland: Historical Narrative in Medieval Scotland* (Lincoln, NA, 1993); for wide use of this idea, see, for example, Emily Wingfield, *The Trojan Legend in Medieval Scottish Literature* (Woodbridge, 2014), p. 11; Katherine H. Terrell, *Scripting the Nation: Court Poetry and the Authority of History in Late Medieval Scotland* (Columbus, OH, 2021), p. 16.

<sup>97</sup> This is *La Vrai Cronicque d'Escoce*, arguably datable to 1464, which survives in four fifteenth-century Low Country or French manuscripts (one belonging to Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy (1419–67), another to Jacques d'Armagnac, duke of Nemours, who was executed in 1477). Kathleen Daly has suggested it was written as a 'briefing note for diplomats' serving Louis XI of France for negotiations that were due to take place at Saint-Omer with the English in 1464; in three manuscripts it is accompanied by other material that was prepared for these negotiations: see *Short Scottish Prose Chronicles*, edited by Embree, Kennedy, and Daly, pp. 33–34 (and pp. 27–28 for the manuscripts, and 81–109 for edition and translation).

<sup>98</sup> Tucker, *Reading and Shaping Medieval Cartularies*, pp. 211–13. John Dagenais began his discussion of marginalia in the three manuscripts he discussed in detail by observing that 'Scribes are our first readers of the *Libro*': Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture*, p. 153.

<sup>99</sup> Murray Andrew Lucas Tod, 'The Narrative of the Scottish Nation and its Late-Medieval Readers: Non-Textual Reader Scribal Activity in the MSS of Fordun, Bower and their Derivatives', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (University of Glasgow, 2005).

How does this change our understanding of the development of regnal historiography? It will be recalled that, in the case of Scotland, this has been presented in terms not only of extant texts that have been edited, but also lost works that were the ancestors of those that survive.<sup>100</sup> The only recourse to manuscripts, according to this approach to the material, has been to check readings, clarify W. F. Skene's editorial decisions, and edit newly discovered texts. Scottish regnal historiography is thus understood as beginning modestly with a number of discrete king-lists which were gradually combined; in one case origin-legend material was added, leading to a sequence of texts that were used in different extant works. It was also used in the first extensive narrative of the kingdom's history, datable probably to the 1260s. This was, in turn, enlarged in 'proto-Fordun', and became Fordun's history in 1384 × 1387, initiating what has been described as the 'Fordun–Bower–Pluscarden canon'. This 'canon' was eventually challenged by fresh approaches to writing the kingdom's history by John Mair in 1521 and Hector Boece in 1527. Seen on its own terms, this portrayal of medieval Scottish regnal historiography may seem unexceptional. It is, however, fundamentally limited, and even distorted, because it provides little sense of the way this material was experienced or understood in the Middle Ages. In particular, its view of regnal historiography seems rather disembodied, with each text leading to another without regard to its wider reception or physical form.

This can be transformed without recourse to a digital edition simply by thinking of this material from the perspective of scribal activity. Instead of an orderly progression of works, a landscape of accumulating textual flexibility comes into view, with an almost limitless potential for criss-crossing textual interactions. A key factor is the kind of material used, with the advent of paper offering a cheaper medium that allowed the tempo of activity to increase, especially on the scale of a codex; the use of print, on the other hand, initiated a new landscape in which 'copies' (in the fullest sense) became the predominant feature. The significance of this change initiated by print is heightened by the tendency previously for (what were mainly intended as) 'copies' of texts to be associated with the most formal, high-quality codices. Seen in this light, the absence of any extant manuscript of Vairement's history, or of the full text of 'proto-Fordun', can be understood as a function of the production and survival of high register manuscripts, rather than as an indication that these texts had been generally superseded by the fifteenth century.<sup>101</sup> In the domain of less formal manuscripts it could be said that Fordun's history simply represented a stage of textual flexibility based on Vairement's work — an approach to Vairement's text that was already apparent in 'proto-Fordun'.<sup>102</sup> Far from being set aside, therefore, the material written by Vairement and 'proto-Fordun' could be regarded as flourishing not as static texts but as a living tradition of regnal historiography well into the sixteenth century.

This manuscript-based perspective can only claim to offer a rather general view of the development of Scottish regnal historiography. If we want to be able to read this material in any detail in a similarly embodied way that takes some account, at least, of its textual and physical variability, and make this the basis for future research, this depends on the availability of freely accessible digital images of manuscripts. This will, of necessity, be limited to the period when manuscripts survive; it will not, therefore, provide direct access to

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<sup>100</sup> This is summarized in Royan with Broun, 'Versions of Scottish Nationhood', pp. 168–74. It is developed in a series of publications between 1999 and 2007: Broun, 'A New Look at *Gesta Annalia*'; Broun, *The Irish Identity*; and Broun, *Scottish Independence*.

<sup>101</sup> Hector Boece, at least, seems to have had access to a copy of Vairement's history when writing his *Scotorum Historiae*: see Royan, 'Hector Boece and the Question of Veremund', and Broun, *Scottish Independence*, pp. 252–58.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 248–52 and 258–61.

the development of Scottish regnal historiography earlier than the 1430s. It should, however, lead to an understanding of this material that would inform our assumptions about its nature in this earlier period, allowing us at least to sense the shadow of a three-dimensional body of activity, rather than being limited to imagining only a two-dimensional progression from one work to another.

Thinking of regnal historiography in general — in Scotland and elsewhere — primarily as a corpus of scribal activity rather than as works does not only help to embrace its inherent flexibility; it also has the potential to enable this material to be used more effectively by historians for the study of regnal solidarity or (proto-)national identity as a cultural, social, or political phenomenon. Seeing this through the lens of scribal activity allows it to be recognized more readily as primarily a body of material that was brought to life in various forms by scribes and those who commissioned or supervised their work. By examining it in this light, we might become more attuned to what was significant in the eyes of contemporaries, leading to a deeper understanding of the role of history writing in relation to regnal solidarity or ‘national’ identity. This could allow this material to be seen more clearly as a forum for expression and mutual reinforcement in a particular cultural and social context, rather than as a medium for creating and sustaining political or legal entities. It could, moreover, begin to be understood specifically as a ‘community of practice’, with the kingdom’s history as its ‘joint enterprise’, and the varied corpus of regnal historiography as its ‘shared repertoire’.<sup>103</sup> Scribe-focused ‘communities’ in this sense could also be revealed by other corpora of manuscripts displaying notable degrees of textual flexibility. In a Scottish context the manuscripts of the ‘old laws’ and *Regiam Maiestatem* surviving from the late fourteenth century, could point to a ‘community of practice’ relating to the kingdom as a legal-historical entity, offering another dimension to regnal solidarity from a medieval perspective.<sup>104</sup>

All in all, although we will never be able to investigate with any intimacy what regnal identity meant to individuals who were not scribes or readers, a scribal frame of reference for understanding regnal historiography has the potential to encourage a more detailed and nuanced investigation of this material. By getting closer to regnal historiography in this way, there is the potential to see regnal identity or (proto-)nationality not as a ‘given’ of the medieval past, but as a historical force sustained by the participation of interconnected individuals. In that sense, it could be argued that the main difference between modern and medieval national identities is the nature of that participation — the forms it takes, degrees of compulsion, and structures involved.<sup>105</sup> Be this as it may, we do not need to wait for a barely imaginable and dauntingly laborious digital edition to be created in order to investigate these issues. The key challenge is conceptual rather than technological. The digital age has, indeed, seen innumerable manuscripts become more accessible, and has offered innovative ways of highlighting textual flexibility. The potential for new research using regnal historiography in

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<sup>103</sup> For the history of the concept of a ‘community of practice’, and the possibilities of a broader application with less emphasis on ‘mutual engagement’, see Andreas H. Jucker and Joanna Kopaczyk, ‘Communities of Practice as a Locus of Language Change’, in *Communities of Practice in the History of English*, edited by Andreas H. Jucker and Joanna Kopaczyk (Amsterdam, 2013), pp. 1–16 (pp. 4–8).

<sup>104</sup> *The Laws of Medieval Scotland: Legal Compilations from the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, edited and translated by Alice Taylor, Stair Society, 66 (Edinburgh, 2019); eadem, ‘What Does *Regiam Maiestatem* Actually Say (and What Does it Mean)?’, in *Common Law, Civil Law and Colonial Law: Essays in Comparative Legal History from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, edited by W. Eaves and others (Cambridge, 2021), pp. 47–85.

<sup>105</sup> On this, see further Dauvit Broun, ‘Statehood and Lordship in “Scotland” before the Mid-Twelfth Century’, *Innes Review*, 66 (2015), 1–71 (pp. 67–71).

all its forms, however, can begin by rethinking this material primarily as a corpus of scribal activity rather than as texts or codices.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> I am extremely grateful to Joanna Tucker for discussing the ideas in this article and reading an earlier version, and for her feedback and corrections. I am also very grateful to Alice Taylor for commenting on an early draft, and for many improvements to the refereed text by the journal's Editor. I am entirely responsible for any inaccuracies or shortcomings that remain. I am grateful to the Royal Society of Edinburgh Research Workshop project, *Researching and Curating Active Manuscripts: Scotland's Medieval Cartularies* (award no. 60266, 2018–2019: PI Joanna Tucker) for discussions of manuscripts and research in the digital age, and to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for the project that provided the occasion for this article to be written: *The Community of the Realm in Scotland, 1249–1424: History, Law and Charters in a Recreated Kingdom* (AH/P013759/1, 2017–2021: PI Alice Taylor). For the purpose of Open Access, the author has applied a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) licence to any Author Accepted Manuscript version arising from this submission.