

**Vernacular Literary Culture
in Lowland Scotland, 1680-1750.**

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Abstract

Vernacular Literary Culture in Lowland Scotland, 1680-1750.

This thesis examines literature that because of the frequency of its printing, and social relevance, might be called prevalent examples of a tradition. The strength of these traditions over time, and the way in which they reflect values of Lowland Scottish society are also examined. Vernacular literary tradition faced a period of crisis during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and its survival seemed uncertain. Its vitality, however, was reaffirmed mainly because it was able to evolve. The actions of several key individuals were instrumental in its maintenance, but ultimately, it was the strength of the traditions themselves which proved to be most influential.

Examined are such innovative new works as Allan Ramsay's elegies done in the vein of Francis Sempill's "Habbie Simson," as well as old standards like Blind Harry's *Wallace* and *The Prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer*. Also dealt with are popular almanacs, as one of the most prevalent examples of Scottish chap-book literature in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Works exemplifying the carnival experience, such as "Peblis to the Play" are investigated in conjunction with a look at Scottish popular culture. In all instances, the analysis of these works is undertaken with an agenda of understanding the ways in which they reflect contemporary society and politics.

Works of a strictly devotional nature are not examined, largely because the Scots vernacular revival was not consumed with a desire to proselytise. However, the ways in which current religious practice and government affected common culture, as reflected in vernacular literature, is illustrated. Here, such pieces as Ramsay's "Marrow Ballad" and "John Cowper, Kirk treasurer's Man" find their relevance.

Literary and cultural movements standing in opposition to the vernacular revival receive attention here, the chief being the so-called "improvement movement" which dictated that social elevation, and the reading and speaking of standard English went hand in hand. How early eighteenth century vernacularists

like Ramsay, and others, came to terms with this philosophy are examined, as are some of the relevant literary forms themselves. But it is demonstrated that even some of these writings, rendered in standard poetic English, paid tribute to Scots tradition.

The over-riding theme of this thesis is the progressive nature of the vernacular revival, which built upon the literary traditions of the past, but evolved to suit present conditions. Thus, as this thesis demonstrates, old and established works are given new words and themes. In some cases, the stories remain the same, such as in the case of the *Wallace* and the *Bruce*, but the language is updated to accommodate a new audience comprised of readers of English. This thesis charts the course of the shift from literary Scots towards a new “Anglo-Scots” in the works of Blind Harry and John Barbour, as well as the way in which the literary cult started by them provided the material necessary to help fan the flames of eighteenth century Scottish nationalism, one expression of such being Jacobitism.

Finally, this thesis suggests some of the ways in which these early efforts at redefining native literary culture helped inspire later vernacularists such as Robert Fergusson and Robert Burns. A line thus was drawn between the literature of the medieval and renaissance eras, and that of the modern age. The mid point of this line was the period concentrated upon by this thesis, a critical stage in the development of Scots literary culture.

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List of Abbreviations

The following abbreviations were used consistently throughout the text, notes and citations, and bibliographical lists in this thesis.

<i>APS</i>	<i>Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland.</i>
AUP	Aberdeen University Press.
EETS	Early English Text Society.
ESTC	English Short Title Catalogue (CD-ROM)
EUP	Edinburgh University Press.
GUL Spec. Coll.	Glasgow University Library, Special Collections.
HMSO	Her (His) Majesty's Stationary Office.
Mitchell	Mitchell Library, Glasgow, Scottish Literature Collection.
NLS	National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.
OUP	Oxford University Press.
<i>RSCHS</i>	Records of the Scottish Church History Society
<i>SHR</i>	<i>Scottish Historical Review.</i>
SHS	Scottish History Society.
STS	Scottish Text Society.

Introduction

“Scotland, 1680-1750”

The key concern of this thesis is the durability of Scottish tradition, how it faced transition, and how it interacted with its host society. The tradition under examination is Lowland vernacular literary culture, which does not appear to have been static during the period under investigation, and may have been sustainable largely because it was able to adapt in the face of certain political and social events. The thesis will suggest that the literary forms under discussion had predecessors in earlier times, while many survived beyond 1750. Perhaps there was never a total break from the past, yet the reality of the present also appears to have been a determining factor in shaping Lowland Scotland's vernacular tradition. Examples representative of prevalent literary types, such as items known to have enjoyed wide circulation and/or to have reflected relevant contemporary themes, will be considered to give an account of the way in which they interacted with and impacted upon Lowland society. Concurrently, attention will be paid to finding probable precursors, both within the literary realm itself, and in society at large. This undertaking will demonstrate that vernacular literary culture survived, and though not entirely unchanged, in most cases became progressively attuned to the society which sustained it.

The discussion will concentrate on the years between 1680 and 1750, although this time frame should be regarded as a guideline, rather than a definitive period. As this is an interdisciplinary study, the methodology employed combines literary criticism and deconstruction, together with historical discourse based upon parliamentary and privy council records, kirk session records, and socially and politically orientated pamphlets. From there, the yielded results of this literary

deconstruction will be considered in conjunction with an analysis of the major social and political events of the period.

In addition, the focus here will be upon secular writing, largely excluding that body of literature which mainly had a proselytising purpose, or a strictly devotional nature. Few, if any, of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century vernacularists seemed overly concerned with producing devotional material. And furthermore, although a vast number of religiously-motivated pamphlets were produced, these dealt with issues of church government and the lofty doctrinal debates of theologians. Obviously however, certain religious qualities could seep into literature which would not normally be referred to as "religious pieces." The majority of literary examples analysed here are classifiable primarily as pieces of entertainment, though they could contain didactic elements.

The subject of the literary language of Scotland, during the later seventeenth through to the middle of the eighteenth century, is analysed in chapters one and two. It seems well established that literary Scots was challenged by a gradual process of anglicisation stimulated by the Reformation, and monarchical and parliamentary union. Following this lull, it appears that writers such as Allan Ramsay took it upon themselves to begin working with Scots again. Chapter one begins with a critical look at opinions surrounding this so-called vernacular revival, in an effort to clarify the meaning of the term, and establish the factors motivating such participants as Ramsay. It might have been the case that revival was a misnomer, since writing in Scots never completely stopped, and those few pieces produced prior to Ramsay can be regarded as highly influential.

The sustained contact with English, led to the fashion for self-improvement, which dictated that one key way in which to raise oneself was through the personal cultivation of higher manners, morals and – especially – language. It has been argued that this ideology was later a central concept of the Enlightenment, which is generally associated with the latter half of the century. The impact of, and reaction to, certain aspects of self-improvement will be elucidated; while some current, and contemporary, attitudes towards language, and improvement, are also examined.

The evolving character, and relevance of vernacular writing is discussed in chapter two, where it will be suggested that though it had ceased to be the official language of the nation, Scots still had much to offer as a creative tongue. Some ways in which traditional forms manifested themselves, however, are of prime interest. While the vast majority of works noted were indeed rendered in English, a surprising number were still in a form of Scots, and a representation of these will be discussed.

Ramsay is often praised for helping to rescue Scots. If this is meant to be taken that he completely resurrected it, then the implication is clearly erroneous, since Scots was by no means dead when Ramsay discovered it. If his efforts as a collector of old Scots poetry are to be seen as his most useful work with the vernacular, as critics such as Wittig have asserted,¹ then once again, it will be asserted that this is not wholly correct. Ramsay may have appropriated many older types, but he was not content to simply store them on a shelf, solely in a preservation effort. Instead, he worked progressively with the medium, intent upon producing a new form of colloquial-based poetry, inspired by contemporary observation of

¹ K. Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (Edinburgh, 1958), p. 171.

common lifestyle played out on early eighteenth century Edinburgh's streets. The search for the progressive aspects of Ramsay's Scots poetry is one of the central veins running through chapter two. Similarly, the efforts of other authors are examined for characteristics which might also hold a significance for contemporary society.

When critics discuss early modern poetry in Scots, inevitably they turn to poems which depict folk festivity. These poems, typified by such works as "Christis Kirk on the Grene," "The Blythsome Bridal," "Peblis to the Play," and "Habbe Simson," are held to be representative of works charged with folk energy. What is meant by this? Are these works actual representations of folk activity; or are they writings inspired by ideas about folk festivity? The second hypothesis is advanced in chapter three. Evidence concerning folk-based festivity offered by such documentary sources as the burgh records, is examined in an effort to qualify the poetic account. These records reveal an increasing tendency for regulation of communal festivity, whereas some of the literature, conversely, seems to be saying something else. The instances when the literary account did, and did not, appear to coincide with the historical account, are illustrated and commented upon.

Such poems as "Peblis to the Play," and "Habbe Simson," are often regarded as having contained an element of carnival, and this subject will also be investigated. The more visible ways in which the entire carnival experience relates to certain examples of early modern Scottish poetry is the issue here. Of importance is the concept of inversion, and since in Scotland, regulation of folk events seemed to be the norm, perhaps literature displaying carnivalesque aspects served as a bulwark against restraint.

Two cornerstones of early modern Scots writing were Blind Harry's *Wallace*, and John Barbour's *Bruce*. The relative popularity of these two, both in relation to each other, and within the corpus of Scottish publishing, is the subject of chapter four. Perhaps Harry's book was the more popular of the two, if importance is ascribed to its greater printing run. Because both the *Bruce* and *Wallace* were published over a protracted period and at regular intervals, the texts of successive editions seem appropriate for an examination designed to chart any progressive changes in lexicon. Any noted shift might allow certain conclusions to be made regarding the accepted standard of the printed word in Lowland Scotland. Related to this, questions regarding the general populace's ability to read these books, are also addressed in chapter four. It is further suggested that the so-called English translations of both the *Bruce* and *Wallace*² should be seen primarily as representatives of literature which appealed to those devoted to self-improvement.

The remainder of this chapter looks at the relationship between certain key social and political events associated with the early eighteenth century, and their interaction with the legendary figures of Wallace and Bruce. The former appears to have stood as a symbolic beacon for such causes as independence, freedom in the face of impending parliamentary union, and Jacobitism, while his very name stood as a synonym for courage and strength. Robert the Bruce, on the other hand, seems to have held a mystique relevant to the Jacobite cause of returning a Stewart monarch to the combined thrones of Scotland and England.

² Chiefly, William Hamilton's *Wallace*, and John Harvey's *Bruce*.

The publishing record tends to indicate that one of the most commonly printed books in Scotland was the popular almanac.³ Reasons why this might have been the case are addressed in chapter five. The contents of the popular almanac appear somewhat eclectic, but nevertheless seem based upon a standard formula from which deviation was infrequent. Some typical pieces of information found in the almanac included advice related to the passing of the days and seasons, weather forecasts, tide tables, medicinal lore, plus the inclusion of abridged histories or “chronologies of memorable events.” The significance of this last feature is dealt with to some extent, and the question is posed: why would a book devoted to forecasting future events, also concern itself with relating the past? It was a feature of much folk literature that the future was as knowable as the past. Certain it is that prophecy formed the basis of the Scottish almanac, whose core purpose was to forecast future events. Thus, within this chapter the whole nature of prophetic statement, its application to a higher purpose, and some of the dangers associated with prognostication, are also discussed. An example of how prophecy might be exploited by those in power, is indicated by a discussion of *The Prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer*, which was printed several times.

The over-riding theme of this thesis, is concerned with the vernacular. Thus, items representative of both common language and common culture, will be the topic of discussion. However, certain ways in which these indicators of common

³ In the period up to the end of the seventeenth century, this might be suggested by the evidence in H.G. Aldis, *A List of Books Printed in Scotland Before 1700* (1904; reprinted with additions for 1700, Edinburgh, 1970).

language and culture, dovetail into higher aspirations will also be introduced, in an effort to present some idea of the entire picture.

Chapter One

“Prelude to a new Scots Literary Language.”

The onset of political union with England is seen as the final step in a succession of events which all but eliminated the Scots literary language. The first occurrence in this chain of events was the Scottish Reformation, which because of the lack of a liturgy in Scots resulted in English being used to confer the (reformed) Word of God. Then as a result of the loss of court patronage after James left for England, native writing lost a key avenue of support. The loss of Scotland's parliamentarians in 1707 worsened this situation, as English became the official language of bureaucracy and commerce.¹ Scots concerned with fears of a resultant loss of political, social, and economic opportunity believed themselves compelled to adopt English as their written tongue. Many appeared successful, though the adoption of English as a spoken tongue may have been more difficult.

This process of English adaptation is commonly referred to as "improvement," a term which has implication for more than just language alone, but for manners as well. Improvement in language, probably was ongoing in England before 1707, but parliamentary union brought Scotland solidly into contact with it.² Charting and discussing this contact between Scots, and the compulsion to adopt polite (i.e. English) manners and language, finds significance since improvement tended to stand in opposition to the vernacular.

Concurrent with political events like union, and interrelated phenomena such as improvement, literary Scots made a protracted comeback in the hands of certain individuals. The most visible person in this respect was Allan Ramsay, and the analysis of his motives and abilities, both as a poet, and as a collector and editor of Scots poetry, forms of body of opinion that is at times coherent and consistent, and

¹ Numerous persons echo these thoughts, in varying degree of emphasis. The most visible, and the one who seems to have been the most influential, is D. Daiches. His views on the subject are discussed below.

² Though again, writing in English was going on in Scotland before 1707: some of Patrick Gordon's writings were very anglicised, and even utilised a quasi-Augustan style. See GUL Spec. Coll., Mu.48-i.29; Patrick Gordon, *The Famous History of the Renown'd and Valiant Prince Robert, surnamed The Bruce, King of Scotland and of Sundry other Knights, Both Scots and English. Enlarged with an Addition of the Scottish Kings lineally descended from Him to Charles now Prince ... Set forth and done in Heroic Verse* (Glasgow, John Hall, 1753), *passim*.

at other times contradictory. A representation of modern opinion regarding the renewed interest in Scots will now be presented to suggest that persons typified by Ramsay still regarded Scots as a progressive medium, capable of being relevant to the times.

A good amount of modern opinion has been devoted to the so-called vernacular revival – in which Scots was said to have been rescued from oblivion – its nature, the men who were at its centre, and their motivations. For example, Henderson’s opinion of a vernacularist like Ramsay is that he was a borrower of poetic tradition (and actual pieces), with no extraordinary creative capabilities. These traits were best exemplified by his vernacular portrayals of the “low-life.” His ineptitude and the difficulties he experienced as a poet may have been, in addition, exacerbated by his attempts at walking a linguistic and stylistic tightrope between two genres:

If not the victim of the contradictory poetic models, English and Scots, which he sought combinedly to imitate, Ramsay, except in the case of *The Gentle Shepherd*, was nothing advantaged, either as [a] Scots or English versifier, by any compensating result of the twofold influence.³

However, these “contradictory poetic models” appear to be organic to Simpson’s and Watson’s more recent “multiplicity of voice,”⁴ stemming from the eighteenth century, in which the chameleon-like author⁵ assumes more than one poetic persona, separately or concurrently. Assuming that these latter opinions are accurate, we might be led to disagree with Henderson, and say that there was probably very little “contradictory” about Ramsay’s use of both English and Scots, concurrently or otherwise, for it was really a question of which persona he chose to

³ T.F. Henderson, *Scottish Vernacular Literature*, 3rd ed, (Edinburgh, 1910), pp. 403-04.

⁴ K. Simpson, *The Protean Scot* (Aberdeen, 1988), p. 2; R. Watson, Dialects of ‘Voice’ and ‘Place’: Literature in Scots and English from 1700,” in P.H. Scott (ed), *Scotland a Concise Cultural History* (Edinburgh, 1993). However, Watson, in particular, would probably argue that there was nothing destructively “contradictory” about these “voices” whatsoever.

⁵ This chameleon nature is the cornerstone of Simpson’s “protean man.” It is debatable whether his protean Scot was still a reality – apparently Simpson was more willing to question his own hypothesis once it became available in print.

assume. As a writer of English, he might have thought of himself as an enlightened man of civility, with the flourish and polish of the best men of wit; as a vernacularist, he was participating in a literary tradition established by the best bygone scholars of the nation (such as Blind Harry and Robert Henryson), men of great accomplishment, humanity and morality,⁶ to which Ramsay appears to have been intent upon giving new meaning. As far as his concurrent use of Scots and English in *The Gentle Shepherd* is concerned, it might have been that this was designed to heighten the “fruitful opposition” between the rural and urban spheres, inherent to the pastoral tradition.⁷ Thus, in *The Gentle Shepherd*, the use of English is equatable with the refined urbanite, whereas Scots is associated with the rural rustic – the result being that the differences between these two “classes” are immediately apparent through the language they employ. These observations might highlight an important difference between the two tongues, related to the way they might be employed by the writer.

English and Scots were two very closely related languages, but perhaps best used by the writer in different ways: English, with its massive vocabulary was a language of precision; Scots, because of its relative sparseness,⁸ was a language of “feeling.” English was an explicit language; Scots an implicit one. A single word in Scots could substitute for whole phrases, even sentences in English; but this, by nature, precluded any hopes of universality for Scots. The adjective “dreich” when applied to the weather, certainly refers to dreariness and bleakness, but the word’s broader meanings of long-lasting, persistence, tedious in its dullness, and being hard to bear, combine in serving to invoke a much more powerful image, and convey much more feeling, than is provided by a statement like “I tired of the unrelenting

⁶ Henryson was, after all, the writer of a whole series of *Moral Fabelis*.

⁷ T. Crawford, *Society and the Lyric, A study of the Song Culture of eighteenth century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1979), p. 71.

⁸ Sparse though the Scots vocabulary was, according D. Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680-1830* (London, 1961), p. 61, it still “consisted of about 50,000 words,” ever since the eighteenth century. This would presumably refer to both spoken and written Scots, since, as will be related below, Ramsay’s written vocabulary numbered about 1,500 words.

rainy days we were experiencing.” The problem is that not everyone might understand the meaning of a word like dreich.

When we move to the comments of Wittig we are faced with a whole new set of circumstances. He is of the opinion that the word “revival” was not necessarily the best way to describe what had happened to the Scots language commencing with the onset of the eighteenth century:

Literary historians speak of a “revival” of Scots poetry in the eighteenth century. If this is meant to imply a recovery after a period of poor health it is perfectly correct, for though the stream of Scots poetry had dwindled to a mere trickle – of which here a song, and there a longer poem, or perhaps elsewhere a dance, are all that come to the surface – yet it never entirely ceased to flow.⁹

Wittig then goes on to state that in post-Union Scotland, “literature became increasingly the product of an occasional spare hour in the day of a farmer or worker with all the ensuing lack of finish and care – or else the writer obeyed the call of the South.”¹⁰ While raising a believable point concerning the definition of the word “revival,” some of Wittig’s other comments should perhaps be treated with caution. It is reasonable to say that from the point of view of numerous writers throughout post-Union Scotland, London was an “Augusta,”¹¹ or a sort of halcyon, classic Mecca which many aspiring poets operating in a new British environment believed themselves obliged to acknowledge. However, if taken too literally, some of this might amount to an oversimplification. Native types still received attention, and not all successful poets found it necessary to leave Scotland, even though the opinions of London critics were influential.

Wittig then advances the idea that in the case of Ramsay himself, unrequited politics played a role in shaping the tone of the revival: “In him, for the first time,

⁹ K. Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (Edinburgh, 1958), p. 160.

¹⁰ Wittig, *Scottish Tradition*, p. 153. In this instance, he seems to be saying at least in part, that such poets actually left for London.

¹¹ The term often employed by James Thomson, one of the most successful Scots who wrote in English, primarily for an English or (in deference to the opinions of such people as R. Crawford -- see below) British audience. See James Thomson, “Spring,” in, *The Poetical Works of James Thomson* (London: John Walker and Company, n.d), p. 7.

we find outraged nationalism taking the form of sentimental Jacobitism.”¹² Sentimental Jacobitism as one of the forces which motivated such fathers of early modern literary Scots as Ramsay,¹³ is a theme to which other commentators repeatedly return. However, the general tone of Wittig’s assessment of Ramsay seems to suggest that although the founding member of Edinburgh’s Easy Club was no extraordinary poet, future generations of Scots poets would find themselves indebted to his rescue efforts.¹⁴ Thus he seems to be saying that it is as an antiquarian we should remember Ramsay.

Yet concern over the use of the word revival might be well founded. It seems that even in those periods in which the language has been defined as hitting a low point, new Scots poetry was being produced. What was not being produced was the sort of literature that had been common prior to c.1603, that being a sort of “courtly” Scots literary culture. But what was going on outside of courtly circles, would eventually serve to inject new life into Scots vernacular. This new life would not be exactly like the old, almost entirely representative of elite, courtier culture; rather, it would be more reflective of common values. Occasionally, in the case of some of Ramsay’s poems, it would present an urban outlook, at other times, that of small rural village, which formed the basis for the entire “Habbe Simson” tradition. But Sempill’s “Habbe Simson” was hardly lacking in finish and care. The unpolished works produced by Wittig’s individual with a spare hour were more likely the ongoing traditional Scots ballads, possibly enhanced by post-reformation events.¹⁵

The idea of a persistent, despite the odds, vernacular literary culture is taken up by Lindsay (ironically, a critic of Wittig), who argues that Scots as a literary

¹² Wittig, *Scottish Tradition*, p. 163.

¹³ Other such “fathers” who might be termed “sentimental Jacobites” can be found: the printer James Watson is one whose name immediately springs to mind.

¹⁴ Wittig, *Scottish Tradition*, p. 171.

¹⁵ This form of oral literature thrived in the face of religiously-motivated efforts which sought to control all types of popular culture. As literacy and the printed word became more common, starting, theoretically with the reformation (though actual practice was something different), the oral tradition existed as a sort of counter-culture.

language never really died-out prior to the eighteenth century. Larger epics like John Barbour's *Bruce* and Blind Harry's *Wallace*, the works of Sir David Lyndsay, and individual pieces typified by Montgomery's *The Cherrie and the Slae*, all served to sustain the tradition during the seventeenth century.¹⁶ Moving to the early eighteenth century vernacularists, Lindsay points to James Watson and the importance of his editorial efforts. Watson was motivated by (once again) patriotism, which in this case, served "to counter the increasing Edinburgh tendency to accept anglicisation," reflected in the number of Scots poems contained in his *Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems*,¹⁷ a work which "ushered in the Eighteenth-century Revival by establishing a direct link with the Makars who wrote before the Castilians and the Cavaliers."¹⁸ Here, Lindsay seems to be stressing the rescue efforts on the part of Watson which might, arguably, be seen as a form of antiquarianism. But Lindsay takes issue with Wittig, and asserts that Ramsay has been all too readily dismissed as being more important as an editor, instead of a poet – "he was ... a much better poet than is generally acknowledged."¹⁹ This is a crucial point, for it stresses the creative aspect of Ramsay's works, which in turn, might suggest a progressive attitude on his part toward Scots poetry.

The promotion and resuscitation of Scots was a near life and death matter, artistically speaking, for the likes of Ramsay, Fergusson, and even (later on) Burns, if we are to give weight to Craig's statements. Though poets such as these did possess an adequate command of English, it was only in Scots that they could fully express themselves.²⁰ Here, he seems to be stressing the artistic value of the

¹⁶ M. Lindsay, *History of Scottish Literature* (London, 1977), p. 169. However, at the risk of correcting Lindsay, it is important to note that the language of (at least) the *Bruce* and *Wallace* during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had been heavily anglicised; so much so, that it was really a form of Anglo-Scots. For more on this, see the pertinent discussion in my chapter concerning the *Wallace* and *Bruce* traditions during the early modern period.

¹⁷ Lindsay, *History of Scottish Literature*, p. 171. However, not all of Watson's poems were rendered in Scots. Many are in fact written in the standard poetic English of the day.

¹⁸ Lindsay, *History of Scottish Literature*, p. 170. "Castalian (Band)" = name given to a group of poets at the court of James VI; Alexander Montgomerie and John Stewart were two. "Cavaliers" = poets to the courts of Charles I and Charles II.

¹⁹ Lindsay, *History of Scottish Literature*, p. 172.

²⁰ Craig, *Scottish Literature*, p. 237.

vernacular, as commented upon earlier. All these authors could, and did, write in English – much of their personal correspondence is rendered in more or less standard early modern English. But this, Craig maintains, was a form of mechanical writing, representing the limits of their capabilities with the language. Creative writing, however, and the fullness of personal expression attached to such, was only effectively accomplished through conceptualisation in Scots, and this mental imagery was best transmitted to the page through the vernacular medium.²¹ The literary tongue in which the vernacularists worked was not that of “an upper-middle and upper class metropolitan world of coffee-house, mansion, and country estate,” inhabited by “a milieu of politicians and landowners ... and the artists to whom they gave commissions and hospitality,” since that world occupied itself with the poetic language of the Drydens and Popes.²² Conversely, the world of literature in Scots encompassed:

... the ordinary pubs and market places, centres of gaming, drinking, eating, small business deals, the coming and going of farmers, chapmen (peddlers), and lawyers looking for work – but not, apparently, of literary connoisseuring and the discussion of new publications which could seriously influence a central government. They [Ramsay, Fergusson, Burns] write in the manner of popular wiseacres, masters of repartee, in a language little different from that of the masses of their countrymen, not in that of an educated uppercrust.²³

Hook maintains that nostalgia for the Jacobite cause went hand-in-hand with the Toryism to which poets like Ramsay and Robert Fergusson subscribed. (So once again, this theme of sentimental Jacobitism seems to appear.) This was the result of post 1688 conditions, when due to the triumphs of the Hanoverian, whig, and presbyterian causes, “Tory Jacobitism” (with its affinity for episcopalianism) had

²¹ Craig, *Scottish Literature*, pp. 237-38. The theory seems to be that if the author thought in Scots, the most effective way for him to convey his ideas, was to write in Scots. Something similar concerning Burns was argued in my article “Aspects of Scotland’s Social, Political, and Cultural Scene during the 17th and 18th Centuries as mirrored in the *Wallace* and *Bruce* Traditions,” in E.J. Cowan and D. Gifford (ed), *The Polar Twins: Scottish History and Literature* (Edinburgh, at press).

²² In essence, well-honed neo-Augustan English. See Craig, *Scottish Literature*, p. 19.

²³ Craig, *Scottish Literature*, p. 19.

ceased to be part of “the world of political reality” and had moved “into the language of sentiment and feeling ...”²⁴ Thus, once again, we might surmise from his comments that sentiment for old political, monarchical, and religious ideologies may have played an inspirational role for some of the early vernacular revivalists such as Ramsay. All this might be true, but just because Ramsay might have been traditional in his political outlook, seems to be no reason on its own to assume that he was also artistically conservative. Finally, Hook emphasises a crucial aspect of political union with England, that being a “renewed focus on the meaning of Scotland” and its place in the new united Britain.²⁵ An extension of this idea might have been precisely the conundrum faced by vernacularists like Ramsay, with respect to language; that being, “In this new united Britain, given its emphasis upon the English language, where could Scots find meaning?” One solution he seems to have happened upon, was to use Scots in a seemingly little tapped area, relating the common urban experience.

One of the most visible persons engaged in attempting to decipher events and motivating factors pertinent to the eighteenth century revival (if that is the best word for it) is D. Daiches. Many other writers with similar interests, writing on related topics, cite him (either to agree or disagree), or believe themselves compelled to comment upon his standpoint.²⁶ So what does this seemingly influential scholar have to say about the resurgence of Scots, after a period of languishing?

²⁴ A. Hook, “Introduction,” in A. Hook (ed vol. 2), *The History of Scottish Literature*, C. Craig (gen. ed) (4 vols; Aberdeen, 1987-88), ii, p. 2. Hook (pp. 2-3) is quick to mitigate his statement by maintaining “that an identical political nostalgia appears in the work of writers who were upholders of the Hanoverian status quo” such as Thomson, Smollet, and Boswell, who took advantage of the new united Britain by seeking fame in its capital city.

²⁵ Hook, “Introduction,” p. 3.

²⁶ Recent writing which seems to echo some of Daiches’s ideas include J. Corbett, *Language and Scottish Literature* (EUP, 1997); C. Kidd, “The ideological significance of Scottish Jacobite Latinity,” in J. Black and J. Gregory (ed), *Culture, Politics and Society in Britain, 1660-1800* (Manchester, 1991); Simpson, *The Protean Scot*. This is not to suggest these authors agree with everything that Daiches has said, only that the influence of his writings appears present in these modern studies. (And, admittedly, to a degree this present chapter has also been similarly influenced.)

Daiches arguments primarily revolve around the main social/political events of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth centuries:

From the late sixteenth century on, this Scottish literary language was increasingly challenged by English. The Reformation, the Union of the Crowns in 1603, the political and religious situation in the seventeenth century, and finally the Union of 1707, all had their effect in helping to make Scottish writers turn to English as their medium, even though they continued to speak Scots.²⁷

Daiches then furthers the case when he declares that the departure of James VI and the royal court – the latter being “Scotland’s chief if not only source of patronage of the arts”²⁸ – for the balmy political climate of the south, resulted in Scotland and the Scots language experiencing something of a drought.²⁹ It should be pointed out,

²⁷ D. Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture* (OUP, 1964), pp. 19-20.

²⁸ D. Daiches, *Literature and Gentility in Scotland* (EUP, 1982), p. 1. Thus Daiches (*The Paradox*, p. 11) believes that James’s departure resulted in an “abrupt cessation of the court patronage of the arts in Scotland” – a plausible enough, if somewhat overly generalised, statement that seems echoed in Kidd’s assertion (“The ideological significance,” p. 112) that Scots declined as a literary language after 1603. For a view that seems to place the decline of Scots a little more squarely on the shoulders of the reformers, see A.H. Maclaine, “The *Christis Kirk* Tradition in Scots Poetry to Burns,” in *Studies in Scottish Literature*, vol. 2 (July 1964-April 1965), p. 117:

During the latter part of the sixteenth century Scots poetry on the literary level died a slow and lingering death. With the triumph of Knoxian Calvinism there came a general stifling of poetic composition on a large scale, since poetry, along with dancing and other “led” entertainments, was proscribed as conducive to idleness and sin.

This, together with 1603 and the resulting influence of English types, resulted in “an enormous and almost fatal gap in the natural development of native Scottish poetry ...,” the resulting gap between that time and the emergence of Ramsay, et al., being only partially bridged by three forms, 1) pure folk literature, chiefly oral ballads, songs, etc. 2) the collecting efforts of a number of Scots gentlemen, 3) the commonly referred to *Christis Kirk* tradition.

However, it is worth pointing out that it might be unwise to jump to the conclusion that the Reformation resulted in a sort of absolutist clamp-down on *all* native poetic forms – “One of the most persistent myths of Scottish history is that the Reformed church abolished ecclesiastical music and was positively hostile to music in general.” E.J. Cowan, “Calvinism and the Survival of Folk,” in E.J. Cowan (ed), *The People’s Past* (EUP, 1980), p. 36.

It does appear true, however, that ballad composition and (maybe more significantly) collecting, awareness, etc., hit a “high-point” during the eighteenth century. Many ballads which have survived to this day appear to date to the eighteenth century, or at least the noted sources date from that time. This may be related to the general concern for indigenous poetic types experienced by some. This phenomenon has prompted one folklorist to insist that:

Eighteenth-century Scotland, there is no doubt at all, was a nation of ballad singers and ballad lovers. How much earlier it had been so, no one knows; but it is a fact that what we today know as British balladry at its best is a mass of texts taken down by interested persons from living Scottish tradition in the latter half of the eighteenth century, or learned them and transmitted to print or manuscript early the following century.

H. Henderson, *Alias MacAlias. Writings on Songs, Folk and Literature* (Edinburgh, 1992), p. 1.

²⁹ Daiches, *Literature and Gentility*, p. 2.

however, that there might have been very little new about some of Daiches's ideas, since the idea of a literary cultural drought in Scotland, brought about monarchical union, was apparently present even during the later eighteenth-century.³⁰ In more recent times, his viewpoint may have been foreshadowed by that of Wittig, who held that the reformation, movement of the court to England, and Act of Union, all resulted in an "orientation towards England," and English manners and language. Additionally, many Scottish notables, aspiring members of the court, large land-owners, among others, "made London their headquarters" and sent their sons to English schools.³¹

Regardless of to whom these theories should be first ascribed, Daiches maintains that the net result of these political events (especially the loss of courtly patronage), was a transformation in Scotland, roughly parallel – but not identical – to that experienced by other European nations. In effect what occurred was a move away "from an aristocratic ideal of courtliness" in favour of a new concept of good manners, formulated this time by an embryonic middle class.³² What marks the Scottish transformation of "courtly" into "bourgeois" concepts of the "dignified" was that the latter turned to English as its mode of expression, according to Daiches. The net result of this gradual alienation of Scots (language) literature was that starting in the late seventeenth century, poets increasingly used the vernacular as a vehicle for "drawing on the folk tradition rather than on a more complex tradition," to produce "poetry of rustic merriment, of urban low life, of conviviality or abuse or courtship," which is where Allan Ramsay came in.³³ The idea of Scots becoming most readily associated with "low culture" is an idea that seems to have won approval with current scholarship, reinforced by recent historical discourse.³⁴

³⁰ C. Jones, *A Language Suppressed. The Pronunciation of the Scots Language in the 18th Century* (Edinburgh, 1995), p. 14.

³¹ Wittig, *Scottish Tradition*, p. 153.

³² Daiches, *Literature and Gentility*, p. 1. "Middle class" is my own term, used here in the very loosest sense; Daiches prefers the word "bourgeois."

³³ Daiches, *The Paradox*, pp. 22-23.

³⁴ Kidd, "The ideological significance," p. 112.

Nevertheless, it is Daiches's belief that several poems incorporated in Watson's *Choice Collection* – to become endeared to such early vernacularists as Ramsay – should be seen as examples of old courtly poems that had been reworked, and whose language was “modernised” (meaning anglicised?). Thus, the version of “Old Long syne,” as printed in the *Choice Collection*, “clearly had its roots in the Cavalier tradition of the courtly tradition,” since it was the product of Robert Aytoun, a courtier who accompanied James when the king changed addresses.³⁵ In addition, the premier piece in Watson, celebrating the world of Scottish popular festivity – “Christis Kirk on the Grene” – possessed a metrical form of such complexity, that it was unlikely to have originated with the commonality.³⁶ Thus, fully entrenched in the so-called revival,³⁷ Ramsay was not only a patriot, but also had “aimed at both reviving interest in older Scottish literature and in producing Scots poetry of his own.”³⁸ Thus, it may be fair to advance from these last comments, that the muse of Leadhills was not only concerned with conservation, but with the progression of the art form. Something similar was argued about the career of Ramsay's successor, Robert Fergusson (1750-74). No mere nostalgists, vernacularists like Fergusson³⁹ displayed a progressive tendency toward their work:

³⁵ Daiches, *Literature and Gentility*, pp. 24-25.

³⁶ Daiches, *Literature and Gentility*, p. 35. The (reportedly) aristocratic origins of such so-called folk pieces as “Christis Kirk” (as well as “Peblis to the Play”) are discussed in A.H. Maclaine, “The *Christis Kirk* Tradition in Scots Poetry to Burns,” in *Studies in Scottish Literature*, vol. 2 (July 1964-April 1965), passim, but see pp. 10-13 in particular.

³⁷ Or as Daiches once defined it, the time between Robert Sempill and Robert Burns (we may assume c. 1665, the year of Sempill's death, and 1786, the year the Kilmarnock edition of Burns's poems was issued) when Scottish poetry had to learn how to be a product of the whole and recover its “lost dimension.” See, D. Daiches, “Eighteenth-Century Vernacular Poetry,” in J. Kinsley (ed), *Scottish Poetry. A Critical Survey* (London, 1955), p. 151.

³⁸ Daiches, *The Paradox*, p. 23.

³⁹ Perhaps one essential question that should be posed of the work of eighteenth century Scottish poets, is which medium, if any, did they prefer? In the case of Fergusson, the question might centre around what form of poetry he gravitated towards. In the earlier part of his all too brief career, Fergusson worked with standard English types. Examples of these were “Morning,” “Noon,” and “Night,” done in an elegiac pastoral style similar to such artists as Thomas Gray (1716-71), an English-born poet, credited with being a forerunner of the romantic movement, and remembered as the author of *The Progress of Poesy* (1754). Published by Ruddiman, these inaugural poems of Fergusson's were followed by others in English, all described as being “undistinguished.”

With the commencement of 1772, Fergusson switched styles, and began writing poetry in Scots, the first example being the very fine “Daft Days” – a rollicking celebration of communal winter festival. The setting for his poetry changed also: Fergusson left the artificial, contrived

“The Revival, it appears, is a matter of new forces supporting old tendencies: it both continues from the past and moves forward with the times.”⁴⁰ The author of these comments, Freeman, believes that tendencies such as these would provide a cornerstone for enlightenment –

The Scots Revival derived from a *Weltanschauung* radically different from that of the Calvinist, utilitarian world of eighteenth-century Scottish moderatism; it belonged to an attitude that looked backwards as well as forwards at the same time, endeavouring to retain the best of the past and to assimilate what it wanted of the present. Fergusson and his poetry appear less the anomaly than the culmination of a great and consistent humanist tradition.⁴¹

Putting this in a slightly different manner, Allan talks of a Scottish humanist tradition that was integral with the onset of the early sixteenth century northern Renaissance. Organic to this humanist movement: “There emerged in a growing number of Scottish scholars a new self confidence in their own literature ...” while also displaying “an increasing familiarity with the literature of antiquity.”⁴² Thus Allan seems to be stressing the importance of scholarship which is both backward, and forward looking, something apparently in agreement with Freeman, and which also might have – as will be argued later in this thesis – a bearing upon the nature of the early eighteenth century vernacular revival. Humanist thought caused some problems for scholars committed to the Calvinist line which tended to reject “human

pastoral landscape behind, and entered into the hustle and bustle of urban life, typified probably by his own experience living in the “tall tenements and narrow wynds” of Edinburgh’s Royal Mile. It is for his depictions of communal life, told in Scots, that Fergusson seems best remembered, and (arguably) this was him at his best. It is impossible to say whether or not Fergusson would have ever returned to writing major pieces in English during his lifetime – he simply did not (truly unfortunately) live long enough. Yet his genius is probably best preserved for posterity by his “Auld Reekie” – published in 1773 as “an evocative portrait of Edinburgh, its citizens and its low life, the taverns and clubs, Sunday afternoon walks and debtors’ sanctuary at Holyrood.” It appears that “Auld Reekie” was intended to be the first in a series of light-hearted looks at Edinburgh life, never finished because of the poet’s untimely death. That being the case, it seems logical that Robert Fergusson’s immediate plan prior to his passing was to continue writing in Scots. See Royle, *Companion to Scottish Literature*, p. 14, and p. 108.

⁴⁰ F.W. Freeman, *Robert Fergusson and the Scots Humanist Compromise* (EUP, 1984), p. 9.

⁴¹ Freeman, *Fergusson*, pp. 1-2.

⁴² D. Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 32.

intentions” in favour of “God’s eternal Providence.”⁴³ Thus, as one recent opinion, concerning the Latin tradition described the situation:

The cultural doctrine of the most extreme of seventeenth-century Scottish Calvinists deemed the classics and philosophy to be profane. Divine wisdom was contained in the Bible, but human learning, like the other works of man, was tainted with original sin ...⁴⁴

In spite of this, Scotland experienced a “simultaneous evolution of Calvinist and humanist discourse” largely because the humanist emphasis upon oratory perfection also made for superior preachers and teachers.⁴⁵

Summarily, it seems that this humanist tradition could become organic to a variety of socio-religious viewpoints.⁴⁶ It might therefore be fair to argue that it is too simple an explanation to see the revival as being *only* a reaction to thwarted religious, social, and political platforms, even though, as will be shown later, vernacular literature could contain serve as a vehicle through which current policy could be attacked.⁴⁷ Perhaps, the most essential aspect of the vernacular revival, which can be ascribed to a humanist tradition, is this idea of granting the past a place of prominence, while addressing the problems of the present by applying this bygone wisdom. However, there may indeed be something to this idea of a humanist tradition⁴⁸ in Scotland, divergent from mainstream religious thought in the

⁴³ Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, p. 80.

⁴⁴ Kidd, “The ideological significance,” p. 116. Apparently, according to Kidd, something similar may have been occurring in England.

⁴⁵ Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, pp. 80-81 and p. 85.

⁴⁶ With the possible exception of the most extreme Calvinist, if weight is to be given to Kidd’s viewpoint (see above).

⁴⁷ Freeman, *Fergusson*, p. 1, agrees that these factors were influential, but reaction to “stultifying church hostilities” and English dominance, does not fully answer the question of why a vernacular revival?

⁴⁸ Humanism seems a rather broad-ranging term. But according to *The Chambers Dictionary*, humanism stresses, among other things “putting human interest and the mind of man paramount, rejecting the supernatural ...” In general, within Ramsay’s poetry, strictly religious topics do not seem to abound, unless to deride its excesses in some cases. Furthermore, his mock elegies in Scots

early modern period. If this was the case, then any Calvinist derived condemnation of alternative “philosophy of life” was irrespective of whether it was classical or vernacular based.

Furthermore, a long-standing theory from the sixteenth century held that Scots was a purer form of the original Anglo-Saxon tongue, and thus its beauty was in its primitiveness.⁴⁹ Scots was drawn from the custom of the people, and thus was suitable for their use.⁵⁰ These arguments seem to support an idea that this language of the people, being their native tongue, might be superior in conveying certain “feelings” of the people, in a way an adopted language (such as English) could not. Thus, the Scots revival was marked by “new forces supporting old tendencies: it both continues from the past and moves forward with the times.”⁵¹

This, then, is a critical representation of most of the key opinions surrounding the motivation for, and nature of, the Scots revival. Though antiquarian rescue may have helped inspire Ramsay, it was a desire to progressively promote that was equally important in motivating him. Yet even Ramsay would be forced to come to terms with concepts of self-improvement, a fashion that had at its heart the promotion of polite concepts of English writing, manners, and even speech. Such

are largely about people, the feelings of people, and feelings he and other people derive from their surroundings.

⁴⁹Freeman, *Fergusson*, p. 9, who also points to the influence of Rousseau’s ideas of the ideal primitive state of man, as having an influence upon Scottish philosophical thought

This theory of the uncorrupted nature of Scots, seems to have stemmed from the idea that Scotland, unlike England, was never a conquered land, being able to stem the tide of the Roman, Saxon, Viking, and Norman onslaughts. This was an idea that stretched back at least to the time when *The Complaynt of Scotland* was written. See (Robert Wedderburn?) *The Complaynt of Scotland*, (ed) A.M. Stewart (STS, 1979), pp. 66-67 (cap. 10), which lists the hordes of conquerors which England would suffer; namely the Danes, Saxons, and Normans. But the final invaders would be the Scots, whose conquest would result in a unification of the crowns.

⁵⁰ Freeman, *Fergusson*, pp. 8-9.

⁵¹ Freeman, *Fergusson*, p. 9.

concepts would provide stiff competition for the vernacular in early modern Scotland.

Thus, during the early eighteenth century, Scots vernacular literary culture had to compete with the neo-classical tradition rendered in standard poetic English, being intricately tied in with improvement movement. Associated with this philosophy, was the advancement of the study of “belles lettres” in Britain, the discipline itself seemingly originating in France with the publication of Rollin’s lectures on the same subject in 1723-28. These were translated into English in 1734, eventually to become the basis of the discipline of English Literature.⁵² Connected with all this, one important way in which an individual improved himself or herself mentally, was through the cultivation of proper speech and writing⁵³ – “proper” meaning, inevitably English. There was nothing in itself unpatriotic about this attitude on the part of interested Scots, despite its negative implications for the vernacular, though it very often could be taken to some chauvinistic extremes. An example of this type of work, replete with classical references, as well as allusions to Scotland’s national(?) dress, is afforded by this piece from the repertoire of Allan Ramsay:

Ye Caledonian Beauties, who have long
 Been both the Muse, and Subject of my Song,
 Assist your Brad, who in harmonious Lays
 Designs the Glory of your Plaid to raise:
 How my fond Breast with blazing Ardour glows,
 When e’er my Song on you just Praise bestows.

Phœbus, and his imaginary Nine,
 With me have lost the title of Divine;
 To no such Shadows will I Homage pay,

⁵² R. Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford, 1992), p. 27.

⁵³For a discussion of this see R. Wolker, “Apes and Races in the Scottish Enlightenment: Monboddio and Kames on the Nature of Man,” in P. Jones (ed), *Philosophy and Science in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1988), *passim*, but especially, p. 147.

These to my real Muses shall give Way:
 My Muses, who on Smooth Meand'ring Tweed,
 Stray through the Groves, or grace the Clover Mead;
 Or these who bath themselves where haughty Clyde
 Does roaring o'er his Lofty Cat'racts ride;
 Or you who on the Banks of gentle Tay
 Drain from the Flowers the early Dews of May,
 To varnish on your Cheek the Crimson Dy,
 Or make the White the falling Snow outvy:
 And you who on Edina's Streets display
 Millions of matchless Beauties every Day;
 Inspir'd by you, what Poet can desire
 To warm his Genius at a brighter Fire?

I sing the Plaid, and sing with all my skill,
 Mount then O Fancy, Standard to my Will;
 Be strong each Thought, run soft each happy Line,
 That Gracefulness and Harmony may shine,
 Adapted to the beautiful Design ...

The Plaid's Antiquity comes first in View,
 Precedence to Antiquity is due:
 Antiquity contains a certain Spell,
 To make ev'n Things of little Worth excel;
 To smallest Subjects gives a glaring Dash,
 Protecting high born Idiots from the Lash:
 Much more 'tis valu'd, when with Merit plac'd
 It graces Merit, and by Merit's grac'd.⁵⁴

Here is one of Ramsay's more visible works, insofar as it attempts to represent Scotland as a classical landscape, yet in a thoroughly patriotic manner. Noteworthy is how it begins by banishing the classical masters of lyric, "Phœbus, and his imaginary Nine" etc. As far as Ramsay the patriot was concerned, he would sooner not have bothered with these "imported" muses. Scotland – he might have said – had had its own long tradition of muses. Rather, he would have much rather sung the praise of his own, native, muses, the same "Caledonian Beauties," who had long been a favourite subject of his, and a source of joy to him.

The entire nature of "Tartana" – though rendered in somewhat stilted English couplets – was thus highly patriotic, representative of a (supposed) national dress,

⁵⁴Allan Ramsay, "Tartana, Or the Plaid," in B. Martin and J.W. Oliver (ed vols 1-2), and A.M. Kinghorn and A. Law (ed vols 3-6), *The Works of Allan Ramsay* (6 vols; STS, 1945-74), i, pp. 27-28 (ll. 1-27; 30-37).

equally as noble as the imperial purple (maybe more so) was, through its simplicity, a symbol of ancient virtue.⁵⁵ But further, Ramsay's patriotic beliefs extend to trust in his nation's literary heritage, one well adept on its own at exploiting the classical tradition as exemplified by the old courtly makars (who were seemingly heavily influenced by continental scholarship). There is in fact a continuum through the sort of things Ramsay was doing in such works as "Tartana," reaching back to the writings of such individuals as Gavin Douglas – the only thing that was markedly different was the language employed (and, arguably, the quality of verse). Furthermore, we hear Ramsay speaking on the authority of antiquity. Part of elite eighteenth century literary scholarship involved paying homage to all things deemed ancient – age conferred authority. Yet Ramsay is cautious, and adds the proviso that an item must be of importance, as well as being long-lived, in order to warrant praise. Thus, in this one instance at least, Ramsay is not passive in his acceptance of the prevailing attitude.

Therefore one expression of patriotism could be the perpetuation of classically-inspired literature, rendered in standard poetic English. As noted, it was believed that the propagation of this sort of literature had a further benefit, on the personal level, since it was deemed paramount in elevating oneself. This concept of elevation thus had implications for the acceptance of the vernacular.

After 1707 it was believed by numerous individuals north of the border that in order to fully participate in the political and economic entity of Great Britain, successful candidates would have had to first purge their speech of "scotticisms."⁵⁶ One manifestation of this desire was the creation of a number of gentlemen's "improving societies," designed to promote "correctness" in speech and manners (in essence, promote English speech and mannerisms) – although this did not preclude

⁵⁵ I.G. Brown, "Modern Rome and Ancient Caledonia: The Union and the Politics of Scottish Culture," in Hook (ed) *History of Scottish Literature*, ii, p. 43; cf D. Daiches, "Eighteenth-Century Vernacular Poetry," in Kinsley, p. 155.

⁵⁶ Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p. 18.

such associations from showing an interest in Scottish culture.⁵⁷ Of these improving societies, one of the best remembered to this day was Ramsay's Easy Club; its clear mandate was thus spelled out:

The Gentlemen who Compose this Society Considering how much ye unmaturation of years want of knowing ye world and Experience of living therein Exposes them to ye Danger of Being Drawn away by Unprofitable Company ... Have Resolved ... to Retire from all other Business and Company and Meet in a Society By Themselves in order that by a Mutual improvement in Conversation they may become more adapted for fellowship with the politer part of mankind and Learn also from one anothers ... to abhorre all such Nauseous fops as are by their Clamorous impertinencies the Bane and Destruction of all Agreeable Society and also to Ridicule those Pedantick Coxcombs who by their unthinking gravity peevish preciseness or Modest folly Demonstrate themselves the apish Counterfeiters of such perfections as God by Nature has utterly denyed them the Capacity of Ever attaining to which Sorts of people are so industriously avoided by the Society, and others of free tractable and ingenious tempers as carefully encouraged ...⁵⁸

The Easy Club's objectives are fairly self-evident here; however, it is interesting to note that part of the club's goals was to be on the alert for true practitioners of the art of eloquence, and to be able to separate them from the charlatans among the crowd. Presumably mutual and friendly debate among the membership was the determining factor in making the distinction. The ability to engage in dialogue and rhetoric were therefore useful skills the aspiring candidate should look to acquire while on the road to improvement.

Scots consumed with the goal of improving mannerisms and speech, could often find inspiration within the pages of such periodicals as *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. Both these were London-based publications, though reprinted on occasion in Edinburgh.⁵⁹ Through the reading of these, it was believed by aspiring Scots that an understanding of elite British (i.e., English) social mores and literary

⁵⁷ Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p. 20.

⁵⁸ "Journall of the Easy Club, established in Edinburgh May 1712," in *Works of Allan Ramsay*, v, p. 5.

⁵⁹ See for example, GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 53-b.15; *The Tatler*. By Isaac Bickerstaff Esq. Number 12. A reprint corresponding with no. 141 of the London Tatler.

tastes could be acquired. The adoption of these qualities was thought to have been vital for personal improvement, since civility itself was dependent upon good taste. Poor taste, or lack of taste, as a result, was equated with barbarism and savagery. Thus cultural and literary taste not promoted by these two publications, by implication, would have been seen as examples of savagery. Both *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* seemed to act as a focal point for (what was thought to be) good taste during the eighteenth century,⁶⁰ at least as synthesised through the minds of Richard Steele (1672-1729) and Joseph Addison (1672-1719).

A Dubliner by birth, Steele became acquainted with Wiltshire-born Addison at Charterhouse. Both eventually studied at Oxford. After an unsuccessful attempt at a military career, Steele enjoyed some success as an author before becoming gazetteer for the *London Gazette* in 1701. Steele launched *The Tatler* in 1709, and continued producing the thrice-weekly publication until 1711, following which, he and Addison collaborated on *The Spectator*. Addison himself, especially since his Oxford days, was a noted Latin versifier, while his neo-classical tragedy *Cato* won acclaim. Both he and Steele held various positions in the government: Addison sat in parliament till his death as a Whig. More important for present purposes, the two formed the Spectator Club, which apparently provided the inspiration for Ramsay's Easy Club.⁶¹

The influence of both *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* – together with their authors – cannot be glossed over. As already mentioned, both these publications were embraced by early eighteenth century devotees to improvement. Readers, thus, could find such journal pieces as the following, offering general observations on right and wrong mannerisms of speech, both among urban and rural inhabitants:

There has happened another Revolution in the Point of Good Breeding, which relates to the Conversation among Men of Mode,

⁶⁰ C.J. Berry, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment* (EUP, 1997), p. 177. The idea was to appeal to men of “perfect state” in the quest to determine rules of morality. Also, a person’s literary taste was deemed indicative of their level of morality and civility.

⁶¹ A.M. Kinghorn and A. Law, “Allan Ramsay and Literary Life in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century,” in Hook (ed), p. 66.

and which I cannot but look upon as very extraordinary. It was certainly one of the first Distinctions of a well-bred man, to express every thing that had the most remote Appearance of being obscene, in modest Terms and distant Phrases; whilst the Clown, who had no such Delicacy of Conception and Expression, cloathed his *Ideas* in those plain homely Terms that are the most obvious and natural. This kind of Good Manners was perhaps carried to an Excess, so as to make Conversation too stiff, formal and precise; for which Reason (as Hypocrisy in one Age is generally succeeded by Atheism in another) Conversation is a great measure relapsed into the first Extreame; So that at present several of our Men of the Town, and particularly those who have been polished in *France*, make use of the most coarse uncivilized Words in our Language, and utter themselves often in such a manner as a Clown would blush to hear.

This infamous Piece of Good breeding, which reigns among the Coxcombs of the Town, has not yet made its way into the Country; and as it is impossible for such an irrational way of Conversation to last among a People that make any Profession of Religion, or Show of Modesty, if the Country Gentleman get into it they will certainly be left in the Lurch. Their good Breeding will come too late to them, and they will be thought a parcel of lewd Clowns, while they fancy themselves talking like Men of Wit and Pleasure.⁶²

Here we can see the summation that the person given to employing “coarse uncivilized Words” was perceived as being of inferior “breeding.” It might be assumed that this latter group included persons employing common Scots terms. It was not simply a case of such persons lacking the correct education, but rather somehow lacking in personality and moral fibre. In modern terms, we might almost refer to this as a sort of genetic deficiency, and thus those not in possession of the ability to converse in the language of “men of wit” were somehow at a lower level of evolution. We today have the benefit of Darwin’s theories; those in the eighteenth century did not, and thus equated the use of unpolished language with a lack of the correct moral character. It goes without saying, that these were highly prejudicial attitudes. To an extent, however, those actively engaged in revitalising the vernacular were standing in opposition to these same attitudes.

⁶² Joseph Addison, “Manners in Town and in the country,” from *The Spectator*, no. 119, Tuesday, 17 July 1711, in *Selections from The Tatler and The Spectator*, A. Ross (ed) (Harmondsworth, 1982), p. 278.

Thus, among the manifold activities of the men of The Easy Club during each of its meetings – including the reading of members’ verses, debating the meanings of words especially the word “easy,” and composing answers to letters – they also resolved to read an edition of *The Spectator*.⁶³ It was in such publications as *The Spectator* that poets like Ramsay would have been exposed to opinions expounding neo-classical values of speech and writing. For Ramsay then, the writing of English neo-Augustan verse (of which he attempted no small amount) was probably the best way in which he could express himself as being a person of higher intellectual fibre in early eighteenth century Scotland. This is not to say that Ramsay’s English poetry was the poet’s favourite form of writing; simply that which could best establish him in the current intellectual environment as being a non-savage.⁶⁴

At this point it might be appropriate to diverge slightly, but nevertheless examine an important issue and answer, perhaps, an obvious question. When modern critics and scholars talk of improvement, it almost always involves a discussion surrounding the would-be or aspiring *men* of letters. It is worthwhile pointing out that there were women who aspired to reach the ranks of the improved. *The Edinburgh Miscellany*, which printed some of James Thomson’s (1700-48) earliest poems when he was still a student at Edinburgh, also purported to have included contributions from the “delicate sex” who were members of the “Fair Intellectual Club.” It seems that all of the members of this club were female,⁶⁵ and their work was pretty much standard pastoral English fare, with the usual classical allusions:

⁶³ Kinghorn and Law, “Allan Ramsay and Literary Life,” p. 66. See also, Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, pp. 20-21; C. McGuiirk, “Augustan Influences on Allan Ramsay,” in *Studies in Scottish Literature*, vol. 16 (1981), p. 104; and R. Watson, *The Literature of Scotland* (London, 1984), p. 172.

⁶⁴ Other Scots, such as Adam Smith, as we shall see, were not so easily convinced of Ramsay’s intellectual prowess.

⁶⁵ NLS Hall. 195.j; “A Pastoral Elegy, Sacred to the Memory of her deceast Lover. By a young Lady, a Member of the Fair Intellectual Club,” in *The Edinburgh Miscellany Consisting of Original Poems, Transcriptions, &c. by Various Hands* (Edinburgh, J. McEuen, 1720), p. 183 and note, together, refer to the members as “ye sweet Nymphs.”

Beneath the Covert of a rural Shade
I Sing the young, the dear Adonis dead.

Ye friendly Swains, who mourn'd Menaleas Fate,
And best deserve the Bays in Albion yet:
My first Essay in pastoral Excuse,
Indulge my Genius, and protect my Muse.⁶⁶

Romantic love, unfulfilled or otherwise, seemed to occupy the attention of the female members of "Fair Intellectual Club." Regardless of the subject matter, however, all these efforts were really exercises in cultivating the neo-classical:

Ye Muses, Loves and Graces, now prepare
To crown gay Damon and Belinda fair,
Of all our Caledonian Plains the Pride,
He the best Bridegroom, she the loveliest Bride.⁶⁷

However, a good grounding in language and the classics did not necessarily guarantee success for the female poet with neo-classical aspirations. One such person, whose life actually ended rather tragically, was Jane Adams.⁶⁸ The daughter of a Greenock ship-master, Jane Adams became governess in a minister's house after her father's death. When in the minister's employ, Adams studied classic English writing. Thus inspired, she assembled a *Miscellany* of her own poems that were mostly either devotional or classical in nature. Her editor credited Adams for her knowledge of proper grammar and phrases, a style reminiscent of Milton, and employing allusions and "figures" that should find favour with any English poet. In spite of this glowing review, the book was not a success and many copies were left unsold, even though it managed to attract 153 subscribers from many walks of life, including a high number of merchants.⁶⁹ Great fame as a poet seemed to escape her,

⁶⁶ "A Pastoral Elegy, Sacred to the Memory," in *The Edinburgh Miscellany*, p. 183.

⁶⁷ "Epithalamium. Or the Marriage of My Lord — with Lady — By a young Lady of the Fair Intellectual Club, present at the marriage," in *The Edinburgh Miscellany*, p. 158.

⁶⁸ The information presented here on Adams comes from two sources: a newspaper clipping from 1873(?) inserted into the Mitchell Library's copy of her poems; and from the "Preface. To the Reader" in the same miscellany. See Mitchell, no. 73501; Jane Adams, *Miscellany Poems* (Glasgow, James Duncan, 1734).

⁶⁹ This in itself tells us something about the improvement movement, centred around the reading of refined English literature — that it was often the aspiring "middle-sort," keen on financial intercourse with the island as a whole, who were drawn to the genre. Thus, as is still the case, English was the universal language of business.

and as such, Jane Adam's death was a sad one, for she spent her last days in obscurity at a Glasgow work house. Perhaps this was an unfortunate testimony to the times in which Adams lived, one not yet willing to fully accept a neo-classical female poet whose work, by all accounts, was not substantially worse than that of many of her male counterparts.⁷⁰

Returning to the main discussion at hand, the attitudes of both the English and the Scots themselves, towards other Scots and the vernacular tongue, present an interesting and varied picture. As far as English attitudes towards the Scots language were concerned, the view held by Basker seems to be that the Union of 1707 was only one aspect in a large train of events which helped to stimulate the perceived need to standardise English. This need, was first made clear with calls for the Royal Society of London, soon after its creation in the 1660s, to initiate an instructional body capable of regulating and refining the English language.⁷¹ Accordingly from about mid-century onwards, some of the biggest proponents of this cause were probably Scots themselves.⁷² Nevertheless, it might then have been the case that some, but certainly not all, of the bias against Scots, was simply a result of long-standing English attitudes, which were reinforced by certain elements among the eighteenth-century Scottish literati, all of whom desired to improve the English language (and thus, by implication, Scottish speech also) in its entirety.

Yet the point concerning eighteenth-century English chauvinism against Scots – and, indeed, Scottish vernacular culture itself – cannot be underestimated. An anonymous English journalist, in a bombastic summation of the abilities of a Scottish member of the Bar, remarked on the “loud, clamorous Monotony” of “the Caledonian Screecher[’s]” dialect, that “struck so harsh[ly] upon the [listener’s]

⁷⁰ In the broader sense, perhaps it is also a testimony to the sheer glut of poems that existed along the lines of Adam's.

⁷¹ J.G. Basker, “Scotticisms and the Problem of Cultural Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” in, J. Dwyer and R.B. Sher (ed), *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (John Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 81.

⁷² Basker, “Scotticisms and ... Cultural Identity,” p. 82.

Ear.”⁷³ Despite this, as Freeman points out, a contradiction of opinion in England seemingly existed: Scottish poetry was quite popular in England during the seventeenth century⁷⁴ (and possibly beyond?). What might be deduced from this apparent contradiction in opinion, is largely threefold:

1) There may well have been a stark difference in opinion between the English bureaucrat, and the English “man of letters” (in theory, the latter being more enlightened than {hopefully} the former, irrespective of his country of origin).

2) The Act of Union brought the English bureaucrat into contact with his Scottish counterpart, who if he spoke Scots, would have sounded nothing at all like the verse of Robert Henryson, William Dunbar, and others whose medium was deemed an ancient language, fully as noble as Greek or Latin.

3) Related to the previous point, there may indeed have been an attitude that Scots poetry was a great thing, as long as the Scots themselves stayed at home. (Or perhaps, more correctly, any Scots-*sounding* Scot should stay home. The tone of the criticism against the “Caledonian Screecher” is that it was really the Scotsman’s speech that was found to be the most offensive, and less so the actual person.) Thus there may have existed an opinion, held by some in England, and heightened by the Union: “Give us more Scots Poetry, but fewer Scots.”⁷⁵

But, it would seem, there was no greater opponents of Scots literary culture, then certain enterprising and ambitious Scots: Crawford points to the late century example of Sir John Sinclair, who seems to expound nothing short of linguistic genocide.⁷⁶ Sinclair (fl. 1782), a sitting Scots MP in London, believed that repression of native linguistics was the only way for “provincials” like the Scots, Welsh, Irish, and Northern English to fully integrate themselves into an anglicised,

⁷³ GUL Spec. Coll., Mu10-g.4 (3); *The Thistle: A dispassionate Example of the Prejudice of Englishmen in General to the Scotch Nation. And particularly, of a late arrogant Insult offered to all Scotchmen, by a Modern English Journalist In a Letter to the Author of Old England, of December 27th, 1746* (London, 1747), p. 37.

⁷⁴ Freeman, *Scots Humanist Compromise*, p. 2.

⁷⁵ Especially since much of this poetry was probably that of the old makars, whose language, was perceived by some as a purer form of Anglo-Saxon.

⁷⁶ Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, pp. 24-25.

“British” mould.⁷⁷ Having said this, many Scottish aristocrats did express a liking for songs and proverbs in Scots, a fact which might serve to indicate “the comparative unsophistication of the Scottish upper class, its homely naturalness despite its aspirations to the polite.”⁷⁸

Several of the preceding points seem to indicate one important issue, that a distinction should be made between the written and the spoken word. It is the written word that is of most concern here. Yet it is worth pointing out, that for the average person not overly concerned with improvement, reading English might not have been as monumental a task as speaking in English:

The *spoken* language of course remained either full Scots or half and half according to the informality of the subject or the social status of the speaker; and even when ostensibly English in grammar and vocabulary, the pronunciation and intonation would be Scots.⁷⁹

Taking the example of the average fully literate modern person, conversing and writing only in the English language, it might be noted that they still in fact possess several “tongues.” They employ one language for formal writing, another (possibly closely related) for formal speaking; they also have their informal languages that are used when writing letters to close friends and acquaintances, while the language spoken at the public house is certainly a different one than that used to give a university lecture (or it should be!). Perhaps (at least some) people in the eighteenth

⁷⁷ Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p. 25. There were however, voices standing in opposition to this, for example near century’s end:

Continuing notions of Scottish literary eloquence, then, stemming ultimately from a sympathy with the oratorical pretensions of a Calvinist and humanist tradition, drove a number of eighteenth-century authors. These also included the antiquarian and naturalist Sir John Dalrymple, who warned in 1798 that ‘When a native of Scotland writes in English, he writes in fetters’. The enlightened membership of the Select Society, of course, unavoidably echoed George Buchanan in their preferences. They longed for an edificatory Scottish literature couched in the common language of the greatest contemporary scholars. Less Anglophile intellects like Dalrymple, however, still followed Hume of Godscroft in upholding the Scots tongue itself as the natural vehicle for Scottish national Eloquence. They argued that ‘National antiquities must be expressed in national tongue’ Even the most dismissive Enlightenment authors found themselves obliged to at least concede the eloquence and literary style of earlier Scottish scholars.

Allen, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, pp. 157-58.

⁷⁸ Craig, *Scottish Literature*, p. 59.

⁷⁹ D. Murison, *The Gude Scots Tongue* (Edinburgh, 1977), p. 6.

century possessed a similar array of languages, both formal and informal. Yet one of the main ideas behind improvement during the eighteenth century seems to have been to mitigate, if not totally eradicate, the informal. Thus even if a person born speaking Scots was able to somehow reduce their native speech to the level of the informal, they might still have been seen as not yet fully improved.

On a related, but slightly different note, we might offer similar consideration towards the Scots spoken language in relation to the written. As shall become apparent in subsequent chapters, at least some of the most prevalent works in Scots, since the early seventeenth century, were being rendered into a sort of “bastard” Scots – really Anglo-Scots. This might have been a written language which the majority of literate people could read with relative ease.⁸⁰ This is not to say that some could not still have been masters of Middle Scots, and certainly pure English would have presented few problems either. Yet despite all this, it is possible that they best *understood* in a sort of Scots frame of mind. Thus, in between what they read and what they heard, versus what they wrote or spoke in response, there might have been a constant process of translation occurring in their minds. For example, an improved Scot conversing with a fluent speaker of polished English listens to his friend’s words, all the time translating into easily understandable idiom in his head. He then considers his response in his own mental idiom, then translates it into speech appropriate for the occasion. Of course training can ease the difficulty of the whole process, so that it becomes almost automatic. The point is, for the person brought up in a Scots-speaking environment during the eighteenth century, any lapse in concentration, any slight lowering of the guard, could result in an embarrassing situation.

Pity, therefore, poor David Hume, an accomplished scholar in every right, but self-consumed with those times when he “slips,” and his Scots tongue and mind are there to the “rescue” to help him to his feet again. Though he may have

⁸⁰ The full argument is related in my chapter on the *Wallace* and *Bruce* traditions, and re-inforced in chapter five in my discussion of the printing of *The Prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer*.

fanatically and endlessly worked towards eliminating any and all traces of scotticisms from his writings, try as he might, Hume could not, to his embarrassment, purge his speech in a similar manner: “As to my Tongue ... I regard it as totally desperate and irreclaimable.”⁸¹ Apologies like these, directed toward the Scots language (and, by implication, Scots culture itself), often have the intonation that to fall into the habit of using scotticisms was something akin to a slip in morality.⁸² Thus concerned as he was over the scotticism “controversy,” in his 1752 published work *Political Discourses*, Hume included an appendix containing a list of these allegedly offensive words and phrases, likely for the edification of others, but probably equally to prove that he was personally aware of the conundrum concerning scotticisms.

Scotticisms, as it turns out, have proved themselves very durable phrases and words. Though it might have been advantageous for those aspiring persons seeking power in the newly united Britain to use “remember it” rather than “mind it,”⁸³ the latter remains innocuously prevalent to this day. As “luck” would have it, words and phrases as these were not so offensive that they were incapable of surviving into the twentieth-century, where in Western speech, especially that of North America, they have largely supplanted their “proper” equivalents.⁸⁴

However there appeared to be some persons who saw the entire improvement movement for its sheer practicality alone, and as such, simply a philosophy for success, rather than a total, all encompassing philosophy of life and artistic

⁸¹ “Letter 100 [David Hume] to John Wilkes, Edinburgh, 16 October 1754,” in J.Y.T. Greig (ed), *The Letters of David Hume* (2 vols; Oxford, 1932), i, p. 205. This trait of Hume’s speech was noted by John Jamieson, *An Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* (Edinburgh, 1808), p. v, who stated: “No man, educated in Scotland, can entirely divest himself of its particular idioms. Even ... Hume ... who [has] justly acquired celebrity in other respects, [has] not escaped censure, because [he has] been found guilty of using national barbarisms.” The term “barbarisms” might not seem complimentary, but it does not appear (given his continued work with Scots) that Jamieson held an aversion for the vernacular. Perhaps he was, like Hume, an apologist for the language, or at least for its colloquial associations.

⁸² C. Jones, *A Language Suppressed. The Pronunciation of the Scots Language in the 18th Century* (Edinburgh, 1995), p. 12.

⁸³ Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p. 23.

⁸⁴ Basker, “Scotticisms and ... Cultural Identity,” p. 83. For example “styme” in place of “thwart” is used with alarming(!) frequency in Canada.

appreciation. The idea of cultural improvement, exemplified by the mandate of Ramsay's Easy Club, was therefore appreciated as a form of pragmatism. Thus evidence exists to suggest that Scots was viewed by some contemporaries as a highly vital and worthwhile tongue, despite the fact that, they themselves agreed, English was the language of official parlance. The testimony of Alexander Pennecuik seems illuminating in this manner:

Nor have I, My Lord, in the following sheets affected altogether the English Idiom, I love not Pedantry, not do I reckon that Dialect Preferable to our own, if it be not accounted so, in regard it is now turn'd Modish, being the general Language of the Court of Great-Britain, and the Richer Kingdom of England ...⁸⁵

There is a pragmatic, yet genuine quality to Pennecuik's⁸⁶ remarks, which seem to underscore an important point: taking political reality into account "courtly" English would have to be the chosen language for political intercourse within a united Britain; Scots, however, was in no way a degenerate tongue.⁸⁷ And in a somewhat strenuous attempt to underscore the latter point, Pennecuik included several appended poems which were written in a language that could be called Anglo-Scots.⁸⁸ A typical example of this might well be the poem "To his Highness, the Prince of Orange," accredited to one "William Younger of Hog-Yards In Name of all the Lintoun Lairds," in which the reader is presented with such verse typified

⁸⁵ GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 3-e.19, A[lexander] P[ennecuik], *A Geographical, Historical Description of the Shire of Tweeddale with a Miscelany and Curious Collection of Select Scottish Poems* (Edinburgh, John Moncur, 1715), pp. vii-viii. This work was dedicated to William Earl of March, Viscount of Peebles, who appears again, as a promoter of Beltane in Peebles, in my chapter on Scots poems of conviviality.

⁸⁶ The Pennecuik in question here is the so-called "elder" Pennecuik MD (1652-1722). A discussion of his works – described as being in certain instances "semi-vernacular" – can be found in T.F. Henderson, *Scottish Vernacular Literature. A Succinct History*, 3rd rev. ed. (Folcroft Library Editions, 1974), p. 411.

⁸⁷ Again, see Basker, "Scotticisms and ... Cultural Identity," p. 81, for the mid-eighteenth century perspective on this.

⁸⁸ In essence, a language whose lexicon is grounded in both Scots and English; a fuller description of this language is found in my chapter on the literary traditions associated with William Wallace and Robert the Bruce.

by: “Our Lintoun Wives still blaw the Coal, | And Women here as weel we ken, | Would have Us all John Thomson’s Men.”⁸⁹

Related to Pennecuik’s defence of Scots, despite a (perhaps grudging) realisation that English was destined to be the official language of the new united Britain, is the affinity for Scots culture held by some of those individuals committed to formal cultural self-improvement. One such individual may have been a Glasgow University student named John Campbell. According to a note written by a distant descendant of his and inserted into the student’s own notebook, Campbell was born in 1698 and died in Jamaica in 1729.⁹⁰ While at Glasgow, it appears that Campbell was engaged in liberal and classical studies,⁹¹ since his notebook contains numerous notes on philosophical themes, all (no surprise here) rendered by him into Latin. Yet despite that, his notebook contained several Scots pieces, including the music for (with lyrics) “Bonny Jean,” “Gaberluncy Man,” etc. The inclusion of one poem in particular, not only hints Campbell’s knowledge of at least one Scots standard,⁹² but that he might have also been a Jacobite (that is, if his preference in poetry in any way reflects his politics).⁹³ Additionally, he includes a version of the durable “Broom of Cowden Knows,” dubbed “The Lord Duffus’s Lament” by Campbell –

⁸⁹ “To his Highness, the Prince of Orange. The Humble Address and Supplication of the Portioners and Inhabitants of the Famous Town of Lintoun, Sub-metropolitan of Tweeddale,” in *Geographic Description of Tweeddale*, p. 3.

⁹⁰ Letter by Fergus Roberts on John Campbell, April, 1960, appended to GUL Spec. Coll. MS Gen 12, “Notebook of John Campbell,” 1713. Thus, being born in 1698, Campbell was fifteen when he took down these notes. At first thought, we might suspect him of being precocious, but it should be remembered that students at this time apparently entered university at a younger age. Adam Smith, for example (later professor at the university, as most are surely aware) entered Glasgow University at age fourteen. See A.L. Brown and M. Moss, *The University of Glasgow: 1451-1996* (EUP, 1996), p. 19.

⁹¹ The typical arts curriculum at this time in Glasgow comprised of “two years of Latin and Greek, then Rhetoric (Logic) and Ethics (Moral Philosophy), Natural Philosophy including mathematics, Physics, Astronomy and Geography.” Brown and Moss, *The University of Glasgow*, p. 19.

⁹² Which in the broader context, might indicate a knowledge, and appreciation, of such poems among a more general audience.

⁹³ The poem in question is “To the King in [] of the Crown” –

Receive that Crown which by thy Birth
It is not we, but God that doth Bestow
And whilst thy head a diadem adorns.
Lett thy Competitors be deck’d with horns
That the true King may from the false be known
Iustice prevails, when each enjoys his own.

Hard Fate that I shou'd banish'd be
 and Rebell term'd with scorn
 for serving of the Bravest prince
 That ever yett was Born
 O the Broom the Bony (sic) Bonny broom
 The broom of the Cowden knows
 I wish he were at home again
 how wou'd my soul rejoyce

Give James O Lord his rightfull own
 Lett Scotland happy be
 Then I'le no more my fate known
 what e're become's of me
 O the Broom &c.

I go and yeild to fates Command
 But e're I leave the shoar
 I'le once Look back to that dear land
 which I hope to see once more
 O the Broom &c.

O Scotland nurse of Bravest Hero's (sic)
 alas! of ill men too
 Good men for thee attempt in vain
 what villains shll (sic) undoe
 O the Broom &c.

My trusty Targe and good Claimore
 most useless now ly by.
 My plaid and trews that hereto fore
 I ware so Chearfully.
 O the Broom &c.

Couragiously our King came o're
 sent Ecclins(?) to the North
 But Judas-like he was Betray'd
 By Huntly and Seaforth⁹⁴
 O the Broom &c.

This is in spite of the fact that we do not normally associate the name Campbell with pro-Jacobite sentiments (to say the least!).

⁹⁴ This appears in reference to events associated with the revolution of 1688. George, 9th Earl and 4th Marquis of Huntly (and Duke of Gordon), was a privy councillor under James VII. It was he who made the heroic year long stand at Edinburgh Castle on behalf of James, which best endeared him to posterity. Eventually he surrendered to the forces of the Convention, and made his peace with King William III. Apparently, the exiled court at St Germain's had little use for him upon his visit.

Kenneth, 4th Earl of Seaforth was another of James's privy councillors, and like Huntly, was one of the original Knights of the Order of the Thistle. He too found himself in the midst of difficult times, and after originally supporting James's position, was eventually forced to surrender to the government in 1697. See J.B. Paul (ed), *The Scots Peerage. Founded on Wood's Edition of Sir Robert Douglas's Peerage of Scotland* (9 vols; Edinburgh, 1904-14), iv, p. 550; and vii, p. 510.

O Wretched Huntly vail thy face
 The King and Countrys gone
 And many a valient Scot hast thou
 By treachery Undone.
 O the Broom &c.

Adieu Old Caledon I'll sing
 fareweel all pleasures Here
 Till heavens once more sends back my King
 Then fareweel grief and Care
 Amen.⁹⁵

The origin of the "Broom" is traceable to an early seventeenth century seduction song,⁹⁶ and Allan Ramsay included a version of it in his *Tea Table Miscellany*. After the 1715 Jacobite uprising the poem appeared in broadside form as *An excellent New Song Entituled the New way of the Broom of Cowden Knows* which – displaying some differences to Campbell's version, both in the ordering of the stanzas, and, in some cases, actual wording – seems to have been variously employed as a vehicle supporting either side of the Jacobite controversy.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ "The Lord Duffus's Lament" in "Notebook of John Campbell."

⁹⁶ W. Donaldson, *The Jacobite Song* (Aberdeen, 1988), p. 33.

⁹⁷ Donaldson, *Jacobite Song*, p. 33, claims that this piece "was published shortly after the '15. One surviving manuscript version bears the note 'Said to be done by my Lord Duffos when he left Scotland anno 1716,' but whether this is true or not is anybody's guess." Nevertheless, the text of one broadsheet version follows:

Hard Fate that I should banisht be
 And Rebell called with Scorn,
 For serving of a Lovely prince,
 As e'er yet was Born,
 O the Broom the Bonny Broom
 The Broom of Cowding knows,
 I wish his Friends had stayed at home
 Milking their Dadys Ewes.

My trustie Targe and Good Claymore
 Must now ly useless by;
 My pleding Trows that heretofore
 I wore so Cheerfully.
 O the Broom, &c.

Aduie (sic) old Albion I say,
 Farewell all pleasnres (sic) there,
 Till I come back to my land,
 which I hope to see once more
 O the Broom, &c.

Most cheerfully he did come or'e
 Sent Taklings to the North,
 But Judas like he was betray'd

For some then, in the vein of Allan Ramsay and his compatriots at the Easy Club, self-improvement did not necessarily mean a shying away from traditional Scots poetry. To take this discussion a step further, there might have even been individuals who, though they recognised the importance of adopting polished mannerisms of speech and writing, saw the vanity, even hypocrisy, of the latter. Thus the idea of cultural improvement, or at least of some of those who practised it, might have found itself the target of light satire. One author, at least, seemingly

By Huntly, not Seaforth,
O the Broom, &c.

O! Wretched Huntly vail thy Face,
Thy K--g and countrys gone,
And many Valiant Scot thou hast
By Trechery undone.
O the Broom, &c.

But since the French doth take our part
my fears Dispelled be
I hope few months will end our smart
And we our Friends shall see
O the Broom, &c.

The Noble Sweed (sic) our Friend appears
The Christian King also,
The King of Spain also,
That he will them o're thro
O the Broom, &c.

O blessed Lord let King ^{James} George ring (“George” crossed-out; “James” penned in.)
Let Scotland happy be,
And I shall not my fate bemoan,
What ever happen's me,
O the Broom, &c.

Well meet our Friends with Noble Heart;
Attired with Armour clear
Who him opose shall feel our Darts,
Like Old Scot men of Weir,
O the Broom, &c.

Then happy Days and pace well have
Content in every place,
Ashamed all the Rouges shall be,
And Honest Men shall have Place
O the Broom, the bonny Broom
The Broom of Cowden-Knows,
I wish his Friends had stayed at home
a Milking their Dadys Ewes.

(From: NLS, Ry III a.10(7); *An Excellent New Song Entitled the New way of the Broom of Cowden Knows.*)

found the humorous side to the Scots' penchant for apologising for their lapses in language:

When one is confin'd at home to the little fond Tattle of a Wife, and the inarticulate Pleasantries of a Wee-ane (please pardon the *Scots* of the Expression) he must forget himself a little ...⁹⁸

The author in question, John Harvey, seems to have been a man consumed with the pursuit of the so-called "belles lettres" movement.⁹⁹ Almost all of his writing is in either polished "polite" English, or (a little of it) in Latin. Yet some of Harvey's polite English verse contained (what might be termed by some people as) highly crude phrases and allusions:

But thank our Stars, just ere we drew our Swords,
Choak'd as we were with Streams of Pannic T—s;
We found the War was but a War of Words.
Our Poet-Menarch chanc'd to be a Noun,
A Garret-gotten hungry, lousy Lown;
Guarded with Adjectives, as void of Sense,
As, generally, the Poet is of Pence;
With Pronouns, He's and She's, and Who's and Which's
A scoundrel Race of d—n'd pedantic B——s.¹⁰⁰

In part, what the author here is doing is displaying his understanding of modern grammar, thus heightening his own self-esteem. But in addition, he seems to be speaking out against the same "fops" which the members of the Easy Club thought it best to avoid (see above). However, the inclusion of allusions to such crude words as "turds," "damned," and "bitches" might have had the effect of lowering the poem itself to a commoner level. Others have questioned this aspect of Harvey's poetry;¹⁰¹ yet it is truly difficult to know how such material was greeted by *all* those

⁹⁸ Mitchell no. 73697; John Harvey, *A Collection of Miscellany Poems and Letters, Comical and Serious*, Edinburgh, 1726, p. 48.

⁹⁹ As we will see Harvey is not exactly a common topic of discussion in the secondary literature. A hand-written letter inserted into the Mitchell Library's copy of his *A Collection of Miscellany Poems and Letters, Comical and Serious* by a "J.D." dated 13 November 1855, credits him with seeking to do his part in directing his fellow Scots toward enlightenment through correct literary habits. This assessment of Harvey seems totally convincing, in view of his general style. Yet having said that, some of Harvey's pieces to thwart that goal.

¹⁰⁰ Harvey, "Epiloque to Bellum Grammaticale," in *Miscellany*, p. 60.

¹⁰¹ "J.D." questioned Harvey's choice of words in poems dedicated to refined taste: "We can hardly conceive a coarser present to the 'Countess of Panmuir' than Mr Harvey's 'Loose Essays' as he calls

persons of gentler affinities apt to be exposed to it. Presumably some would have found it revolting, yet for others it might have had a curious fascination. Certainly some of Ramsay's poems, presumably destined for a general reading audience, contained material capable of making the more sensitive blush. Nevertheless, this might cause us to question just how seriously some people took the concept of improvement. John Harvey was by no means, nor did he ever aspire to be, a master of the Scots tongue; indeed quite the opposite. Yet his "please pardon the *Scots*," might be a gentle jest against the chauvinism some individuals displayed against Scots, rather than an overt slight against the language in question. If it ever was Harvey's intention to lampoon Scots, he could have done so in a much more thorough manner, in not only the aforementioned work, but also in other efforts of his.¹⁰²

Many Scots writers though, were successful in plying their trade throughout the new political entity of Great Britain. Far from meeting with hostility from the enlightened, a number found great success in capital city of London. Scots of rank with ties to the south, and even English patrons themselves were at times receptive to lyrics produced by persons from the northern parts of the island. Much of this lyric was in the form of the neo-classic English form. Thus, James Thomson is one obvious name that springs to mind, when we think of Scots poets who enjoyed success with a southern audience – this was in spite of the fact that all his life he apparently spoke with a Scots accent.¹⁰³ David Mallet (Malloch), Thomson's friend, was yet another, as was the novelist Tobias Smollett.

An interesting characteristic of Smollett's writing, if the opinions of R. Crawford are accepted, is the intrinsically Scottish nature of the title character in *Roderick Random* (1748), in spite of the fact that his native tongue is muted:

them." "Epiloque to *Bellum Grammaticale*," quoted earlier, was part of this series, and thus the countess – an apparent admirer of Harvey's work – would be met with such listed allusions as "d—n'd pedantic B——s."

¹⁰² His most visible work, *The Life of Robert Bruce*, is discussed below.

¹⁰³ Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p. 47. Crawford also lists some of Thomson's patrons, including Duncan Forbes of Culloden.

Random and his friend Hugh Sharp remain visible in the texts as Scots, constantly recognised as such by the other characters. Yet in a novel linguistically alert to speech mannerisms and to French, Welsh, and Irish accents among the minor characters, Roderick's Scottishness of speech is never represented on the page. The result is that the reader, though kept aware that the protagonist is a Scot, tends to sense his voice as that of standard English.¹⁰⁴

Told in the first person, the novel's narration is pretty much all in then current English, while Random himself is a student of belle lettre. An example of this trait of *Roderick Random* is perhaps evident in Roderick's display of abhorrence toward the sexual practices described by Petronius Arbiter.¹⁰⁵ Roderick is informed by Earl Strutwell that such practices as described by the ancient Roman writer have now become commonplace in Europe. (From the intonation of the conversation, it appears that what is being referred to is homosexual contact.) And so the title character believes it prudent to defend himself, being the traveller that he is:

From this discourse, I began to be apprehensive that his lordship, finding I had travelled, was afraid I might have been infected with this spurious and sordid desire abroad, and took this method of sounding my sentiments on the subject. Fired at this supposed suspicion, I argued against it with great warmth, as an appetite unnatural, absurd, and of pernicious consequence; and declared my utter detestation and abhorrence of it in these lines of the satirist:

Eternal infamy the wretch confound
 Who planted first that vice on British ground!
 A vice! that, 'spite of sense and nature, reigns

¹⁰⁴ Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p. 57.

¹⁰⁵ Likely in reference to *Satyricon*, the earliest surviving novel in Latin, albeit in fragmentary form. A work of marked bawdy nature at times, *Satyricon's* author was probably none other than Gaius (Titus) Petronius Niger (d. AD 62), whose nickname "Arbiter" (actually, in full, *Arbiter Elegantiae* – "judge of elegance") was given him by the Roman historian Tacitus. See, Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, 4th rev. ed., M. Grant (ed and tr.) (Harmondsworth, 1989), p. 389n. Not only the source of sensational testimony in *Roderick Random*, Petronius may have been likewise in his own age, which was marked by the reign of the emperor Nero. According to Tacitus, Petronius caused quite a stir when he "wrote out a list of Nero's sensualities – giving names of each male and female bed-fellow and details of every lubricious novelty – and sent it under seal to Nero ... Nero could not imagine how his nocturnal ingenuities were known." Tacitus, *Annals*, p. 390 (chap. 16).

And poisons genial love, and manhood stains.¹⁰⁶

Yet Roderick's role as the typical self-conscious Scot, consumed with his place in an eighteenth century Scotland, united with the old adversary to the south, is never in doubt. His roots being "in the northern part of this united kingdom,"¹⁰⁷ Roderick excelled at Greek and mathematics, was competent as a poet, and above all, he was proud to say how he "valued myself on my taste in the *Belles Lettres*."¹⁰⁸

However, these observations could find increased significance through the suggestion that Smollett might not have been the first Scot to portray characters within their writing in such a manner. A possible precursor to Smollett, might have been the lesser-known "Mr Mitchell."

Evidence derived from the introduction to his dramatic effort *The Highland Fair*, would tend to suggest with fair certainty that Mitchell was a Scot. This introduction takes the form of a dedication to his patron, one of the most powerful and influential members of the Scottish nobility:

To His Grace John, Duke of Argyll and Greenwich.

My Lord, As your Grace is acknowledged the Chief of our Scotian Chiefs, the World will own that I cou'd not so naturally, and justly, dedicate this Opera to any other Person.¹⁰⁹

The Highland Fair is rendered in totally acceptable English, even though it purports to present the mannerisms of old Alba:

Critick. A Scotch Opera, Ha, ha, ha!

Poet. Why not, Sir, as well as an English, French, or Italian one? Yet it is not in Dialect, but the Musick, Manners and Dresses of the Country, from which it takes the Title.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Tobias Smollett, *Roderick Random*, H.W. Hodges (intro.) (London, Dent, 1927), pp. 307-08 (chap. 41).

¹⁰⁷ Smollett, *Roderick Random*, p. 9 (chap. 1).

¹⁰⁸ Smollett, *Roderick Random*, p. 27 (chap. 6).

¹⁰⁹ John Purser, "Personal Music Collection;" Mr Mitchell, *The Highland Fair; or, The Union of the Clans. An Opera. As Perform'd at the Theatre-Royal, in Drury Lane ...* (London, J. Watts, 1731), p. iv. My thanks to Dr Purser for providing me with this.

The influential role of the Duke(s) of Argyll in the management of Scotland (to the extent of having a virtual strangle-hold on Scottish affairs), is well attested. See R. Mitchison, "The Government and the Highlands, 1707-1745," in N.T. Philipson and R. Mitchison (ed), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement* (EUP, 1970), p. 25-26.

In many ways this style does seem to predate the methods utilised by Tobias Smollet (trusting R. Crawford's analysis) in presenting characters whose speech is English, yet their mannerisms, etc., give them away as being Scottish. Obviously then for the English-biased audience for which *The Highland Fair* was intended, characters presented as being Scottish were perfectly acceptable, providing that they did not speak as Scots (or Gaels). True to the character of Poet's words, the musical airs employed in Mitchell's opera are all derived from such visible Scottish standards as *Auld Lang Syne* and *The Bonny Broom of Cowden Knows*. The influence of Allan Ramsay is again apparent, as the music from his *Polwarth on the Green*¹¹¹ has also been incorporated into *The Highland Fair*.

As to the reason for the author choosing to create an operatic piece, set in Scotland, his purpose, so he said, was twofold. The first, was for the sake of novelty on behalf of urban culture (we must remember that *The Highland Fair* was performed in front of a London audience): "Is not Novelty agreeable to the Taste of the Town? Ought not the Town to be humour'd?"¹¹² The second reason Mitchell gives for creating and performing his piece appears to have a didactic element behind it:

Critick. There it is! What moral Precept, what noble Plot was ever pursued, or so much as intended, in such trivial Compositions? Sound has always prevail'd over Sense, and Plot and Moral been less regarded than pompous Show and Impertinent Variety! However, I shall be glad to find any good Design pursued in yours.

Poet. Your critical [J]udgment must be more Prejudic'd than Impartia[l, i]f it refuses to own the Madness and Misery of Family Feuds and Divisions among Neighbours are expos'd – the Charms of Peace, Unity, and all the social virtues display'd – sullen Pride, and imaginary State, Romantic Bravery and blind Superstition, starch Gravity and persecuting Bigotry are ridicul's throughout my Piece;

¹¹⁰ *The Highland Fair*, "Introduction," p. xiii.

¹¹¹ *Polwarth on the Green* first appeared in 1720; the text was printed in Ramsay's *Poems* in 1721. See Kinghorn and Law (ed), *Poems by Ramsay and Fergusson*, p. 200n.

¹¹² *The Highland Fair*, "Introduction," p. xiii.

and their Contraries recommended for their Loveliness, and contrast to such Deformities of Nature.¹¹³

The setting for this operatic vision was actually along the braes between the Highlands and Lowlands (the so-called Highland line). Here could be found the meeting place, or fair, where so many varied examples of the author's countrymen traditionally congregated. At the heart of *The Highland Fair's* plot were the negotiations designed to weld an alliance between Highland and Lowland clans, a diplomatic marriage being central to the cause. However, the nature of the work (hinted at in the quotation immediately above) appears to allegorise eighteenth century designs at controlling the Highlands, as well as instituting general cultural and economic improvement in the area. Military solutions were often looked for when it came to solving the so-called problems of the Highlands; in a way, this was a form of forced improvement. A hint of this policy can be seen in Mitchell's opera. At the negotiations for unity between Highlander and Lowlander in *The Highland Fair*, it was declared that the braes Laird should not make any "Mention of old Quarrels, Feuds, or Offences given and receiv'd; nor expect Satisfaction for any Losses ..." ¹¹⁴ Furthermore, it was hoped that "Commerce and Correspondence with the Lowlanders, (to which this Union will contribute) will, by Degrees, refine our Notions, Customs, and Manners," while "independent Companies will assist, in making you [Highlanders], at least, tame and peaceable Subjects." ¹¹⁵ The military

¹¹³ *The Highland Fair*, "Introduction," pp. xiii-xiv.

¹¹⁴ *The Highland Fair*, p. 4.

¹¹⁵ *The Highland Fair*, p. 5. This latter speech is made by the character of Charles, Captain of an Independent Company, and seems to be a reference to the Highland Companies of soldiers, which were formed to help push government policy in the Highlands, as well as quelling Jacobitism there. It appears that one of the first (if not the first) times such a company was formed was in 1667, when John Murray, 2nd Earl and eventual 1st Marquis of Atholl received a commission to form an Independent Company, the purpose of which "was to keep watch upon the passes into the Lowland peripheries as well as provide a constant guard for securing the peace of the Highlands over the next 18 months." A.I. MacInnes, *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart, 1603-1788* (East Linton, 1996), p. 131.

Independent Companies were again a feature of eighteenth century policy, much of it overly preoccupied with the threats posed by Jacobitism. However, the companies were disbanded in 1717 in the wake of the successful suppression of a major Jacobite uprising. In 1725, however Scotland was restless, the Shawfield riots had erupted as a violent urban expression of dissatisfaction with the malt tax policy, especially in Glasgow. In this same year, six new Highland Companies were formed. See R. Mitchison, "The Government and the Highlands, 1707-1745," in N.T. Philipson and R. Mitchison (ed), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement* (EUP, 1970), pp. 33-35.

officer's speech concerning Highland tradition also hints at the author's approval of government policy:

Charles. ...Well, 'tis stratagem that those Heads of Clans shou'd thus picque themselves on their Birth and Superiority! Adhere tenaciously to the Notions and Customs of their Ancestors! And vainly imagine themselves entitled to a blind Obedience, and Submission from their Vassals and Dependants! But to Expect Homage, and insist on Punctilio's of Honour and Ceremony, among Equals too, is a peculiar Instance of their Romantic Pride and Grandeur!¹¹⁶

Here, we find a thinly veiled reference to the Whig distrust of traditional Highland ways, seen as being divisive, and the root of Jacobitism. The solution to the alleged problem, hinted at in the above quote, was:

The suppression of Jacobitism [which] required that chiefs and leading clan gentry, whose volunteer assimilation into Scottish Landed society had proceeded apace since the early seventeenth century, demonstrate their patriotism as Britons rather than Scotsmen. Imperial security ... necessitated the emasculation of clans as the enemy within. Thus, Whig ideology, British patriotism and imperial security made a potent cocktail which ensured the demise of clanship ...¹¹⁷

At first glance a seemingly innocuous piece, *The Highland Fair* served as something of a "front" for government policy in the Highlands, containing allusions to some pretty drastic policies. It might seem a bit unconscionable that a Scot like Mitchell would have harboured thoughts like these directed towards his own people, but probably he did not regard the Highlanders as being such. Many eighteenth century Lowland Scots perceived the Highlanders as being of a lower level of social development.¹¹⁸ After all, their own society was (so they might have rationalised) closer to the Saxon ideal; Highland society was based upon that of the tribal Irish. Societies improved by adopting "civilised" manners, related to language, legal institutions, forms of government, architecture, and so on. In the mind of a person like Mitchell, government policy towards the Highlands was simply a form of

¹¹⁶ *The Highland Fair*, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ MacInnes, *Clanship*, p. 160.

¹¹⁸ Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p. 17.

improvement, something he likely believed in anyway, given the style of his opera *The Highland Fair*.

The Highland Fair exemplifies the trend which saw English used as a medium to mute the “lesser” voices within united Britain. The high ideals associated with improvement were transmitted through the English language, which also tended to dominate in many intellectual and political circles. Persons wishing to compete in the new English dominated environment, thought themselves compelled to at least appear to subscribe to this ideology. Writers wishing to be seen as members of this new intellectual forum, also believed it essential to follow suit, regardless of how they may have viewed the language and culture of their own land.

However, while virtually all the better-known names from the annals of early eighteenth century Scots poets did produce poetry in the general category of English neo-classical, a few also countered this with writings in the vernacular. While the majority of literature produced c.1680-1750 is rendered in English, a (perhaps) surprising amount was produced in Scots, or in a middle of the road Anglo-Scots literary language. The fact that most writing was executed in English might lead us to think that this was the most important medium in early eighteenth century Scotland. However, it would be a mistake to assign too much importance to the English neo-classical poetic genre often wielded by poets the likes of Ramsay, and assume that this was the *only* factor which led to the poet’s success. There was still a vital importance to Ramsay’s work within the vernacular, for some of it represents both the exploitation of an established mode of expression, as well as indicating his desire to produce a new Scots literary tradition pertinent to a Scotland that was about to move ahead. In seeking to address issues concerning the dynamism behind this aspect of Ramsay’s works, and to chart its course, we will now turn our attention to the state of Scots as a literary language during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Chapter Two

“Manufacturing a New Scots.”

Syne come thair four and tuentie madinis ying
 All claid in greine of mervelous bewtie,
 With hair detressit as threidis of gold did hing,
 With quhyt hattis all browderit rycht brav[elie],
 Playand on timberallis and syngand rycht sweetlie;
 That seimlie sort, in ordour weill besein,
 Did meit the quein, hir [saluand] reverentlie:
 Be blyth and blisfull, burcht of Aberdein.¹

Auld Reeky!² Mourn in sable hue,
 Let fouth of tears dreep like May dew.
 To braw Tippony³ bid adieu,
 Which we, with greed,
 Bended as fast as she cou'd brew.
 But ah! she's dead.⁴

Here are two pieces, both justifiably described as examples of “Scots (language) poetry,” yet they clearly display differences in vocabulary, but perhaps little wonder of it, since, they are separated in time by better than two centuries. The first is a composition of the great makar William Dunbar; the second, from the hand of one of the fathers of the so-called Scots revival, Allan Ramsay. As such, while Dunbar’s “Blyth Aberdeane” is representative of medieval Scots literature at its pinnacle, Ramsay’s “Elegy on Maggy Johnston”⁵ is the genesis of a new era. The muse of Leadhills’ first serious attempt at the vernacular, “Elegy on Maggy Johnston”

¹ William Dunbar, “Blyth Aberdeane, thow beriall of all tounis,” in J. Kinsley (ed), *William Dunbar. Poems* (Oxford, 1958; reprinted Exeter, 1989), p. 17 (ll. 41-48).

² “Auld Reeky” = Edinburgh. The nickname is probably in reference to the early modern version of that (unfortunately) all too common blight of many large, urbanised centres – airborne pollution.

³ “Tippony” = a type of ale, at the time sold for two pence per pint Scots.

⁴ Allan Ramsay, “Elegy on Maggy Johnston, who died Anno 1711,” in A.M. Kinghorn and A. Law (ed), *Poems by Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson* (Edinburgh, 1985), p. 3 (ll. 1-6). Though the word “dead” is spelled in the conventional English manner (it was, after all, a standard English word), it was probably understood that it was to be pronounced in Anglo-Scots fashion; that is, as “deed” so as to rhyme with “greed.” This may indeed have been a trick Ramsay learned from the original poem which inspired his own, *The Life and Death of the Piper of Kilbarchan*. (See below.) Nevertheless, where Ramsay’s poem was concerned, it was a case akin to what Robinson described, that “In the eighteenth century in particular the Scottish literary tradition is provided with clear examples of English spelling being used where Scots pronunciation is intended.” See M. Robinson, “Language Choice in the Reformation: The Scots Confession of 1560,” in J.D. McClure and A.J. Aitken (ed), *Scotland and the Lowland Tongue* (AUP, 1983), p. 60.

⁵ “Maggy Johnston” was first seen in print (as far as is known) in 1718, when it was released as part of *Elegies on Maggy Johnston, John Cowper and Lucky Wood*. However, it seems that it was composed several years previous (perhaps in a less refined form?), since references to it can be found in entries from the Easy Club’s journal for June and July, 1712. See, Kinghorn and Law (ed), *Poems by Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson*, p. 197n.

undoubtedly owed much of its existence to earlier poetry exemplified by that of Dunbar. Yet there was also much that was progressive and forward-looking about the Scots poetry of Allan Ramsay, a medium to which he continually returned.

It may be a mistake to view these earlier eighteenth century attempts at the Scots vernacular as only homage to – or sentiment for – the old makars and their work. Undoubtedly, a form of antiquarianism did play a significant role in the re-emergence of Scots in the early eighteenth century, and this vital aspect of the movement is worthy of investigation. But additionally, certain vernacular poets, such as Ramsay, may have had as part of their agenda the creation of a new Scots literary language, one more appropriate for a modern, post-union Scotland. He did this by building upon old established forms – some classical, but others Scots – but built upon these traditions by injecting a level of comprehension based upon contemporary observation.

Others who worked with Scots during the early eighteenth century, in fact did so within an established Scots/Latin genre, first defined by the makars – thus did the classic world and Scotland meet. But once again it was apparent that even in these, the work can be best understood when its indebtedness to contemporary observation is appreciated. These traits of this time-honoured Scots classical genre, as related to early modern Scottish writing, can be seen in Scots macaronics, and one work which translates *Ovid* into the vernacular.

Thus, the old interpretation of “vernacular literary culture” – that from the time of the old makars like Dunbar – was in a very real sense obsolete, and no longer reflective of the realities of the early eighteenth century. What was needed was a new definition of “Scots literary culture,” one taking into account the social and political realities faced by the nation. This was indeed the concern of at least some of the creators of literature in early modern Scotland.

To begin, it probably is something of a misnomer to refer to an eighteenth century “revival” of the vernacular, since the vernacular never completely disappeared during the seventeenth century. The parliaments of Scotland, right up

until the very last, still communicated in a language replete with scotticisms – albeit, less so as the date 1707 loomed. Thus, in 1540, during the reign of James V, a parliamentary decree looked like this:

Item Becaus of the grete repair in Edinburgh throw resorting of o[ur] souerane lord his lieges and vtheris strangearis it is necessar þat þai be p[ro]videt of breid gude and sufficient stuff ...⁶

In 1621, during James VI's reign, a parliamentary act read like this:

Oure Souerane Lord and Estaittis of Parliament Considdering that thair is sum pairtis Off the burgh of Edinburgh w[ith]in the Poirtes of the sameñ Quhairoff the inhabitantis and Induellaris have in tyme bygane ...⁷

Some changes are notable in Charles II's Scotland of 1681, but Scots is still fairly evident:

Our Sovereigne Lord with advice Consent of his Estates of Parliament Be thir presents Ratifies and Approves Ane Chartor made and granted be his Mätie ffor himselfe ...⁸

Yet in 1707, in Anne's time, the Scots character of a parliamentary decree has still not completely withered away:

At Edinburgh ... Our Sovereign Lady with the special advyce & consent of the Estates of Parliament ratifies & approves a confirmation of ane new tack under the Privie Seall of the Kingdome of Scotland ...⁹

While not the singular best tribute to the Scots language possible, it still was the case that in Anne's time such words as "sic" for "such," and archaic spellings like "fail3ieing" for "failing" were still prevalent.¹⁰ The lasting power of these few snippets of Scots and scotticisms in the later acts of the parliaments is perhaps a rather curious occurrence, given the fact that highly literate Scotsmen and women were increasingly depending upon English as their language of official

⁶ *APS*, ii, p. 378.

⁷ *APS*, iv, p. 671.

⁸ *APS*, viii, p. 343.

⁹ *APS*, xi, p. 460.

¹⁰ *APS*, xi, p. 461.

communication. Perhaps this lingering usage was meant to somehow impart a traditional quality to the office of parliamentarian – the old language was meant to somehow render an ancient, and thus respectable, quality to the proceedings of parliament. Here then, is one example of Scots writing which was not fully terminated despite, the Reformation, the union of 1603, and impending political union.

Furthermore, as stated earlier, certain Scots standards, typified by the works of Blind Harry and Sir David Lyndsay, continued to “make the rounds,” and (especially the former) were vigorously reprinted during the course of the seventeenth century.¹¹ True, the English tongue had infiltrated some of these (Harry’s *Wallace* being a good example). But a sufficiently heavy “sprinkling” of Scots was still present, and this, together with the style of verse, tone and subject matter, served to remind those interested and paying attention, that native poetic types were, and still could be, full of vibrancy.

Even historians whose slant is not primarily a literary one, assert that though court patronage may have ceased after 1603, a new intelligentsia made up of lairds and professionals arose, and the “seventeenth century marked the era of a great literary revival.”¹² Thus, one of the most important of the Scots literary traditions that helps to dispel the myth that there was *no* vernacular tradition in the period between the Union of the Crowns, and the eighteenth century resurgence, was the so-called “Habbe Simson” tradition. Detailed interest in its language and stanza style formed, at least in part, the motivation for the composition of not only the original, but also the numerous imitations, notably those by Allan Ramsay, and his friend, the possibly underestimated Lieutenant William Hamilton of Gilbertfield. It was Ramsay who would dub the type “Standart Habbe.”

¹¹ See my chapter on the *Wallace* and *Bruce* traditions, as well as Appendix XII.

¹² Lynch, *Scotland*, p. 257.

Though a small possibility exists that the original “Habbe Simson” was written by Francis Sempill (c. 1616-82),¹³ it is more likely the case that it was the product of Francis’s father, Robert Sempill of Beltrees (c.1595-c.1665),¹⁴ not to be published until after his death at century’s end.¹⁵ The same Robert Sempill might have also written a sequel to Habbe called “Sanny Briggs, Nephew to Habbe Simson and Butler to the Laird of Kilbarchan” – though Francis Sempill is another possible author.¹⁶ Yet as it so happened, Habbe Simson (its laborious full title being, *The Life and Death of the Piper of Kilbarchan, or, The Epitaph of Habbe Simpson Who on his Dron bore bonny Flags He made his Cheeks as red as Crimson, And babbed when he blew his Bags*) would come to exemplify the type of “rustic” or “folk”-based literature which (so the usual analysis went) typified the eighteenth century revival.

Sempill of Beltrees should receive just due for producing a vernacular poetic type that would prove both durable and capable of providing the vehicle for a great deal of varied artistic interpretation, largely, but not exclusively, in the form of the mock elegy. Yet even he may have been a borrower of sorts, as his *The Life and Death of the Piper of Kilbarchan* may have been – to an extent – a derivative piece

¹³ If not the author of “Habbe Simson” Francis has at least received some tentative credit for being the author of the equally important *The Blythsome Bridal*, another poem important to the so-called revival of Scots poetry, which is discussed in my chapter on poems of conviviality. MacLaine, “The *Christis Kirk* Tradition,” p. 120, at one time believed a plausible link existed between Francis Sempill and *The Blythsome Bridal*. More recently, he appears to have changed his mind: in his own edition of the poem, he now prefers to declare it as being “Anon.” See “Anon., *The Blythsome Wedding*, c. 1680,” in A.H. MacLaine (ed), *The Christis Kirk Tradition. Scots Poems of Folk Festivity* (Glasgow, 1996), p. 50.

¹⁴ On the debate over the authorship of “Habbe Simson” see (among others) Royle, *Companion to Scottish Literature*, pp. 281-82; and F. Collinson, *The Bagpipe: The history of a musical instrument* (London, 1975), p. 101. Both Royle and Collinson favour Robert Sempill as being the poem’s composer.

¹⁵ M. Spiller, “Poetry after the Union 1603-1660,” in R.D.S. Jack (ed), *The History of Scottish Literature*, C. Craig (gen. ed), i, p. 160.

¹⁶ See T. Royle, *The Mainstream Companion to Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 282 (who incorrectly, it appears, declares Sanny as once being the “Brother to the Laird of Kilbarchan.” All noted editions of the poem make him Kilbarchan’s butler, an observation made all the more believable when we consider that the piece’s subject matter includes descriptions of domestic service.) The (apparently) first editor of all the Sempills’ poems attributes “Sanny Briggs” to Robert Sempill; see University of Guelph (Canada) Library, Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, s0146b05; *The Poems of the Sempills of Beltrees, Now First Collected*, (ed) J. Paterson (Edinburgh, 1849).

as well. The distinguishing feature of Habbie Simpson is its rhyming sequence, difficult to explain, more easily illustrated:

Alas! for him my Heart is fair,
 For of his Springs I gat a skair,
 At every Play, Race, Feast, and Fair,
 but Guile or Greed.
 We need not look for Pyping mair,
 sen Habbie's dead.¹⁷

It seems this stanza style had its origins in an informal style used by the troubadours of the twelfth century; it was found in certain old miracle plays, not to mention the works of certain Scots poets of the medieval and renaissance periods – Sir David Lyndsay for one.¹⁸ At first glance this is difficult to see in Lyndsay's work. But upon closer examination, the connection seems more apparent. Much of Lyndsay's poetry was rendered in couplets; some used a different stanza, *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estatis* being one. Though it also employs couplets, *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estatis* features a style of stanza approaching that of Habbie Simson, as is evident in this verse culled from one of "Rex Humanitas's" speeches:

Forsuth, I wait not how it stands,
 Bot sen I hard of your tythands,
 My Bodie trimbles, feit and hands,
 And quhiles is hait as fyre:
 I trow, Cupido, with his dart,
 Hes woundit me out-throw the hart;

¹⁷ Once again, "dead" is to be pronounced as "deed." The text here is from the reprint of James Watson, *Watson's Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems* (Glasgow, 1869), part 1, p. 35 (stanza 14). Also consulted were:

University of Guelph (Canada) Library, Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, s0501b16; *A Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems both Ancient and Modern, Part I* (Edinburgh, James Watson, 1706), pp. 32-35.

NLS, Ry III.a.10(17), "Old Scotch Ballads and Broad-sides 1679-1730;" *The Life and Death of the Piper of Kilbarchan, or The Epitaph of Habbie Simpson ...*

G.R. Roy (ed), *The Life and Death of the Piper of Kilbarchan* (Edinburgh, Scottish Poetry Reprints no. 1, 1970). Roy says his text is based upon that of Watson.

University of Guelph (Canada) Library, Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, s0146b05; *The Poems of the Sempills of Beltrees, Now First Collected*, J. Paterson (ed) (Edinburgh, 1849).

Only inconsequential differences in orthography – largely with respect to the capitalisation of nouns – distinguish these various printings. Future references to the poem will represent a compilation of these.

¹⁸ Lindsay, *History of Scottish Literature*, p. 143; and Roy (ed), *The Piper of Kilbarchan*, p. 1. A complete break-down of the possible precursors of Habbie's stanza form are outlined by Watson, *Literature of Scotland*, pp. 148-49.

My spreit will fra my bodie part,
Get I nocht my desyre.¹⁹

A stanza style employed by William Dunbar was, if anything, even a closer precursor to that of Habbie Simson:

Musing allone this hinder nicht
off mirrie day quhen gone wes ye nicht
within ane garth vnder ane tre
I hard ane vocce yat said on hicht
May na man now vndemit be

ffor thocht I be ane crownit king
3it sall I nocht eschew demyng
Sum callis me gude aum sayis yai le
Sum prayis god to end my ring
So sall I nocht vndemit be²⁰

While neither of these examples are *identical* in stanza style to that of Sempill, they seem to be approaching it; Dunbar's is extremely close, however. The point to all of this is that the tradition of Habbie Simson which Ramsay acquired from Sempill, was in turn acquired by the latter from poets of even earlier times. Ramsay was thus employing a tradition which stretched back to medieval times. However, it was a tradition that was not static, which instead metamorphosed according to the creative agenda of those who employed it. What this form had become in the hands of Sempill, is a stanza perhaps "too ... well suited to the movement of popular dances and reels," where the two short lines were used by later poets including Ramsay, Fergusson, and Burns to "produce a variety or ironic ... sly, or sententious effects."²¹

Thus, as Sempill had subtly modified its stanza form, Ramsay (as we shall see) widened its application. Similar arguments to these have been applied to the efforts of other early eighteenth century Scottish poets, textual scholars, printers, et al. Part of the artistic success of the Jacobite Latinist (and printer both of the

¹⁹ David Lyndsay, "Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis," in *The Poetical Works of Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount* (2 vols; Edinburgh, Paterson, 1871), ii, pp. 126-27.

²⁰ William Dunbar, "Of Deeming," in *The Maitland Folio Manuscript*, W.I. Craigie (ed) (2 vols; STS, 1919), i, p. 191.

²¹ Watson, *Literature of Scotland*, pp. 148-49.

Caledonian Mercury, and to the University of Edinburgh) Thomas Ruddiman was that he modified trends according to current literary and philosophical tastes. Ruddiman was “a man with a strong sense of the past and a discerning, realistic understanding of the present,” as evidenced in his involvement with the editing of Gavin Douglas’s version of Virgil’s *Aeneid*.²² As is hopefully becoming increasingly clearer, these same traits applied to Ruddiman, could also be applied to Ramsay.

Nevertheless, as a piece with an apparent wide appeal, Habbie Simpson was issued at least twice as a broadside in or around 1698, as well as being one of the hallmarks in James Watson’s *Choice Selection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems* (1706-11).²³ No substantial differences in text and orthography are apparent when the broadsheets and Watson’s text are compared, however.²⁴ Throughout the eighteenth century its popularity seemed constant: at the mid-point of the century the publishers to the University of Glasgow, Robert and Andrew Foulis, included it (along with “Sanny Briggs,” the “Blythsome Bridal,” and “Christis Kirk on the

²² Freeman, *Scots Humanist Compromise*, p. 4. Giving weight to this argument, is Ruddiman’s inclusion of a glossary of Middle Scots in Douglas’s version of the Virgil classic. D. Duncan, *Thomas Ruddiman. A Study in Scottish Scholarship of the Early Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1965), p. 56, believes that though Ruddiman’s word list was imperfect, it scored “more hits than misses.” It was probably never his intention that glossary should be used as a “nationalist manifesto,” even though the work shows a good deal of pride, and “its actual results were to provide a wealth of authentic detail for later lexicographers; and to stimulate the growth of eighteenth century interest in the Scottish vernacular.” (Duncan, *Ruddiman*, p. 57.) Apparently one such “later lexicographer” who made use of Ruddiman’s work was John Jamieson in his *An Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* (1808). This was the same Jamieson who later edited a scholarly version of the *Bruce and Wallace*.

Several points of information concerning Ruddiman should be cleared up here. His claim to fame was of course *Ruddiments of the Latin Tongue* (1714) which persisted in its role as a standard Latin grammar until the nineteenth century. A devotee of the Latin tongue, Ruddiman also began the vital work of cataloguing the Faculty of Advocates’ Library. His printing business, mentioned in the main text, was of course largely undertaken in conjunction with his brother Walter. Finally, Thomas’s work on Douglas’s *Aeneid* was commissioned in 1706 by Robert Freebairn, a name that will continually crop up throughout the course of this thesis, especially in the chapter dealing with the printing history of Blind Harry’s *Wallace* and John Barbour’s *Bruce*.

²³ Roy (ed), *The Piper of Kilbarchan*, p. 1, mentions the existence of two broadsheets of “Habbie Simson” in the NLS one of which was noted above.

²⁴ Based upon both my own observations and those of Roy (ed), *The Piper of Kilbarchan*, p. 1. Paterson’s text is in no way substantially altered either.

Green”) in their anthology *Poems in the Scots Dialect*.²⁵ The importance of this anthology was that it illustrated that even a publisher whose mandate was to produce works deemed constituent to a proper university education, recognised the vitality of such Scots pieces as “Habbe Simpson.” Sempill’s work, it must be remembered was not the work of a past master – a Dunbar or a Henryson – but rather that of a *relatively* up-to-date individual, which would serve to spur on such early vernacularists as Allan Ramsay.²⁶

Scots poets like Ramsay could take inspiration from the effective use of the Scots literary tongue in “Habbe.” Though not overly inundated with such, it still contained a noteworthy smattering of Scots, and at all times presented a vivid picture of rural village life:

Kilbarchan now may say alas!
For she hath lost her game and grace:
Both Trixie and the Maiden-trace
 But what remeed?
For no man can supply his place
 Hab Simpson’s dead.

Now who shal play the day it daws,
Or hunts up when the Cock he craws,
Or who can for our Kirk-towns Cause
 stand us instead?
On Bag-pipes now no body blaws,
 Sen Habbi’s dead.

²⁵ See GUL Spec. Coll. Mu 47-c.4; and NLS, L.C. 3141; *Poems in the Scottish Dialect by Several Celebrated Poets* (Glasgow, R. Foulis, 1748). Thus by Foulis’s criteria of such, Sempill was worthy of being regarded as a “celebrated poet.” Despite the mandate of producing classical works for the University of Glasgow, encouraged by tax rollbacks on the paper used for such (see my chapter on the *Wallace* and *Bruce* traditions), the brothers Foulis produced at least one series of old Scottish standards; see GUL Spec. Coll. Mu 47-c.22; containing *Hardyknute, A Fragment of an Antient Scots Poem* (Glasgow, R. Foulis, 1748); *Chevy-Chace, the Celebrated Old Poem on the memorable Hunting of the Earls Doulgas and Piercy* (Glasgow, R. Foulis, 1747); *Gill Morice* (Glasgow, R. Foulis, 1755); *Young Waters* (Glasgow, R. and A. Foulis, 1755); *Edom of Gordon* (Glasgow, R. and A. Foulis, 1755); *The Cherry and the Slae with other Poems by Captain Alexander Mountgomery* (Glasgow, R. and A. Foulis, 1751); *Two Old Historical Scots Poems, giving an Account of the Battles of Harlaw, and Reid-Sqair* (Glasgow, R. Foulis, 1748). Several of these are actually printed versions of traditional ballads; for example, *Chevy-Chace*, *Gill Morice*, *Young Waters*, *Edom O’Gordon*, and *The Battle of Harlow*.

²⁶ Of course, Ramsay was probably also inspired by the work of the past masters, the likes of Henryson and Dunbar, not to mention his alter ego, Gavin Douglas.

Or who shall cause our Shearers sheat?
 Who will bend up the Brags of weir?
 Bring in the Bells, or good play Meir,
 In time of need
 Hab Simpson could what need you speir,
 But now he's dead.²⁷

Habbie, so the poem named in his honour declared, was a conspicuous fixture at such communal events as fairs, Beltane and Saint Barchan's day, clerk plays, races, football matches, and penny bridals. So pervasive was this image – that of a famous piper plying his art at the communal spectacle – that even poets writing in more “polite” language could not fail to take notice:

Habbie, for he was at the sport,
 On bagpipe play'd the horseman's sport,
 While wise Paleman try'd a trick,
 To spur them up with fiery stick.²⁸

What seems essential here is that the person of Habbie Simpson almost seems to have become a stock literary figure for the bagpiper of exceptional ability. Habbie had achieved an almost mythological status.

Whether or not it is fair to classify “Habbie Simson” as “folk” literature, is a point worth pondering for a moment. After all, it might be difficult to class Robert Sempill as being of rustic background himself, since he was the son of Sir James Sempill (1566-1625), a courtier to James VI. The author of numerous satirical poetic squibs aimed at the Catholic Church – the most visible being *The Packman's Pater Noster* – the elder Sempill apparently also assisted the king in his preparations for the writing of *Basilicon Doron* (1599). Robert succeeded to the family estates after his father's death, and refined *The Packman's Pater Noster* in preparation for

²⁷ *The Piper of Kilbarchan*, stanzas 1-3.

²⁸ GUL Spec. Coll. Mu 51-i.4; “A Lochaber Tale,” in *The Poetical Works of the Ingenious and Learned William Meston A.M. Sometime Professor of Philosophy in the Marshal College of Aberdeen*, 6th ed. (?) (Edinburgh, W. Ruddiman jr., 1767), p. 116. Meston claimed that the poem from which this excerpt is taken, was never before published in its entirety, and is based upon an old manuscript “Old Mother Grim's Tales” dated 1527. The preposterous nature of this claim is confirmed in *The Poetical Works'* “Account of the Author” which sets the record straight that indeed Meston was the author of “Old Mother Grim's Tales.” It seems that Meston composed these tales while on the run after the Battle of Sheriffmuir for the purpose of entertaining his companions. “A Lochaber Tale” is hardly serious fare, since the race being run is between lice picked off the contestants' bodies!

its eventual publication in 1669. A Royalist supporter during the Covenanting era, Robert Sempill attended the University of Glasgow. The bottom line to all of this, seen from the surface, is that few would be convinced Sempill was a typical “rustic” – lettered or unlettered. But would this necessarily block Sempill’s objectivity, and prevent him from creating a poem that was an honest tribute to a village piper, and that same piper’s environment?

Taking issue with the opinion that “Habbe Simson” was little more than “a vernacular squib” created with the intention of lampooning,²⁹ one author expresses some thought-provoking opinions on the factors motivating Sempill:

The impression of humorous affection for the dead piper and respect for his prowess which I get from the poem suggests something different; and I wonder how confident critics would be about the allegedly ‘condescending’ tone of its author if they did not know in advance that Robert Sempill was a laird with a university education.³⁰

The tone of “Habbe Simson” is instead one of “playful affection;” while significantly, at the same time, the piece was a champion for an old, threatened, traditional lifestyle.³¹ In a related argument, Daiches also believes “condescending patronage” is not the correct way in which to sum up Sempill’s attitude towards the subject matter of his poem.³² Instead, the author is “amused by what he describes,” relating his poem in “a Scots which is no longer a literary language,” but rather that which “a writer would only use when deliberately trying to imitate popular speech.”³³

²⁹ K. Buthlay, “Habbe Simson,” in *Bards and Makars*, (eds) A.J. Aitken, M.P. McDiarmid, and D.S. Thomson (Glasgow, 1977), p. 214.

³⁰ Buthlay, “Habbe Simson,” p. 216.

³¹ Buthlay, “Habbe Simson,” p. 216, and p. 219. The nature of that disappearing lifestyle – that of the village piper – is touched upon in my chapter on Scots poems of festivity and conviviality.

³² Daiches, *Literature and Gentility*, p. 36. Daiches poses the question as to whether Sempill’s poem, a celebration of rustic merriment, was – as he maintains Craig, *Scottish Literature*, p. 20, assessed matters – an example of “condescending patronage.” For the record, Craig does not *appear* to say exactly what Daiches claims he does:

This poem seems authentically popular, with no taint of *arrière-pensée* about the ordinary village fun. It gives the effect, though written by a landed gentleman, of sharing directly and artlessly in a village life whose high moments were signalled by music ...

Craig, *Scottish Literature*, p. 20.

³³ Daiches, *Literature and Gentility*, p. 37.

As far a laird like Robert Sempill of Beltrees having the opportunity to observe “rustic festivity” of the sort portrayed in “Habbe Simson,” Thomas Crawford, at least, thinks it was highly possible. Sempill was only a “small laird” anyhow, and from childhood to adulthood, even into the eighteenth century, “close contacts between persons of differing status” were possible. Thus, “it seems the most natural thing ... that ... the Sempills of Beltrees should have been the pioneers of a new *vernacular* poetry in the seventeenth century.”³⁴ Certainly the chance for Sempill to observe is all the more enhanced by the fact that Kilbarchan and Beltrees were separated by a mere three-and-one-half miles. Additionally, several comments made by Whyte concerning the historical relationship between landowner and tenant farmer, might lead us to suggest that it was feasible for a fairly cordial relationship to develop between a laird like Sempill and the peasantry, paving the way for their shared involvement in folk festivity. As such, the survival of certain feudal obligations, including those regarding mutual defence, has led to a belief among some historians,

... that personal ties and mutual interdependence went sufficiently far to create a social consensus producing a relatively egalitarian society within which social divisions were relatively unimportant, a society with a level of harmony unusual in Europe. This is almost certainly an over-idealised view but the absence of certain types of popular protest like peasant uprisings may indicate a degree of social harmony,

though exploitive practices on the part of the land-owner could upset this situation.³⁵

It is important to note that what is not being suggested here is that the situation was “rosy across the board” as far as land-owner and tenant relations were concerned, but that the social structure allowed for a congenial atmosphere to be theoretically possible. At least that was the picture until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

³⁴ T. Crawford, “Lowland Song and Popular Tradition in the Eighteenth Century,” in Hook (ed), p. 130. Crawford points to such small communal festivities as Scone’s Shrove Tuesday football match (at which it was expected that all men, including gentry, would participate) as providing the perfect setting for all members of a community to rub shoulders with one another. This idea is elaborated upon later in this thesis.

³⁵ I.D. Whyte, *Scotland Before the Industrial Revolution. An Economic & Social History c.1050-c.1750* (London, 1995), pp. 152-53.

had run their course. For, as Whyte once again related, during the passage of that two hundred years the old feudal code broke down, and land holders began to think of themselves as a coherent class among themselves, resulting in “the increasing group solidarity of proprietors.”³⁶ Prior to this, however, there may have been less standing in the way of a laird like Sempill observing the sort of days of rejoicing that are mentioned in *Habbie Simpson*. (This is not to say that even after reorganisation a laird could not participate in communal festivities, only that there existed a reason why it might have been less likely.)

With the passing of the Sempills of Beltrees, the *Habbie Simpson* torch was passed on to early eighteenth century vernacular-minded poets, the most prominent of whom was of course Allan Ramsay. It was in fact Ramsay who coined the term “Standart Habbie” and in one of his epistles to Hamilton of Gilbertfield, he actually refers to the style by name:

May I be licket wi’ a Bittle,
Gin of your Numbers I think little;
Ye’re never rugget, shan, nor kittle,
 But blyth and gabby,
And hit the Spirit to a Title,
 Of Standart *Habby*.³⁷

Ramsay’s indebtedness was equally expressed in his elegy to the Kinghorn fiddler Patie Birnie, in which he not only copied the verse style, but also wove in an extract from the older poem: “And then besides his valiant acts, | At bridals he won mony placks.”³⁸

The innovative Ramsay had rather eclectic literary tastes, since he dabbled in many different forms, writing in both Scots and English (admittedly, more the latter). And as noted above, many of the forms he used ultimately had their roots in classical literature, which it will be remembered, was the guiding light for improvement. As such, McGuirk stresses the Augustan literary genres employed by

³⁶ Whyte, *Scotland Before the Industrial Revolution*, p. 152.

³⁷ Allan Ramsay, “Familiar Epistles, Answer I,” *Works of Allan Ramsay*, i, p. 119 (ll. 31-36).

³⁸ Allan Ramsay, “The Life and Acts of, or An Elegy on Patie Birnie,” in *The Poems of Allan Ramsay*, i, p. 61 (prologue ll. xiii-ix).

Ramsay – epistles, complimentary song, and pastoral – in which the vernacular was interjected by him in an experimental fashion.³⁹ While this statement appears in itself to be true, rigid adherence to it might cause us to overlook such inherently Scots genres employed by him, such as stanza style, in such poetic forms as, for example, the elegy (being itself, originally, a Greek form).⁴⁰ In this respect, we encounter such poems of his as “Elegy on Maggy Johnston, who died Anno 1711,” done in “Standart Habbie” verse.⁴¹ While there might be some persons from the eighteenth century who were drawn to such a piece because it was an elegy – precisely because they saw it as the descendant of a classical form of literature – there surely were others who were devotees of the poem on account of it being a continuation of the convivial, rustic Habbie Simpson tradition, being “closer to home” both in terms of time and locale.⁴² We thus should probably never lose sight of the inherent Scottish nature present in Ramsay’s poetry, even though classical influences might be present as well.

A vibrant form such as Habbie Simson was just too good a thing for Ramsay to pass up. Thus he would go on to produce a whole host of elegies in that style, such as the above-quoted “Elegy on Maggy Johnston,” as well as “Elegy on John Cowper, Kirk-treasurer’s Man,” “Elegy on Lucky Wood,” “The Life and Acts of, or an Elegy on Patie Birnie,” “Lucky Spence’s Last Advice,” “The Last Speech of a Wretched Miser,” and “The Last Speech of Caleb Balie.” Additionally, one ode was

³⁹ C. McGuiirk, “Augustan Influences on Allan Ramsay,” in *Studies in Scottish Literature*, vol. 16 (1981), p. 98.

⁴⁰ As an originally Greek (and, by association, Roman) form, the elegy was mainly a song of lamentation, but could also express themes of love or politics. Callimachus from Alexandria (fl. 3rd cent. BC) and the Roman poet Catullus (84?-54? BC) were among the ancients who wielded this type, which originally was structured out of distich couplets (i.e. two succeeding, rhyming lines of equal length). Later, elegies were characterised as such mainly by content rather than form – obviously, Allan Ramsay’s examples were not in distich couplets. Thus, the presence of melancholia was usually one of the distinguishing features of an elegy (though again, this might be a debatable characteristic, insofar as it applied to Ramsay’s material). From the eighteenth century, one of the most visible elegies was the Englishman Thomas Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” (1751), in which not just a single passing, but human mortality itself, was the topic.

⁴¹ And it certainly must be conceded that Sempill’s original poem, “The Life and Death of the Piper of Kilbarchan,” might contain sentiments characteristic of elegy.

⁴² Undoubtedly there were also those who appreciated both traits inherent to “Elegy on Maggy Johnston” and its successors from his repertoire.

done by him in this same style – “To R— H— B—, An Ode.” By the same token, Hamilton of Gilbertfield’s “The Last Dying Words of Bonny Heck,” and – in concert with Ramsay – “Familiar Epistles” were also executed in Standart Habbie.⁴³ Later in the century, both Robert Fergusson and Robert Burns would also make use of this durable poetic genre.⁴⁴ But even in Ramsay’s own times, though he was the most prominent poet using the form, other individuals tried their hand at producing literature in imitation of Sempill’s original.

To list all the early modern Scots poems done in the style of verse of Habbie Simpson could conceivably fill pages – to say the poem was often imitated is, an understatement. Additionally, possibly due to Allan Ramsay’s application of Standart Habbie as a medium through which to convey his series of mock elegies, several of the lesser-known imitations declare themselves as being a “Habbie on” someone or another, i.e. an elegy on a particular person. Thus, the term a “Habbie on” seems to have been in certain instances interchangeable with the phrase an “elegy on,” an association, perhaps, indicative of a wider knowledge of Ramsay’s elegies. Regardless, mock elegies in the form of “Habbie Simson” were written for some seemingly unlikely persons, such as *Willy Bald*,⁴⁵ or one James Campbell, who suffered the misfortune of transportation:

Now let salt Tears run down our Cheeks,
The only son of Mongo Cleeks
Is to be banisht in few Weeks
O’re to Virginia
I’d rather given all in my Breeks;
And that’s a Guinea.⁴⁶

⁴³ Ramsay’s and Gilbertfield’s “Familiar Epistles,” as well as the latter’s “Bonny Heck,” are discussed in my chapter dealing with traditions associated with the *Wallace* and *Bruce* during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

⁴⁴ As would the Dumfries poet, John Mayne (1759-1836), whose *The Siller Gun* describes a shooting match for a prized silver tube. The poem is set against the backdrop of the King’s Day celebration, and as such is very much in the vein of Fergusson’s *Daft Days*. From the same poet was another Habbie Simson style poem, *Hallowe’en*; for both these poems, see Maclaine (ed), *Christis Kirk Tradition*, pp. 96-108.

⁴⁵ NLS, Ry III.a.10(39); *An Elegy on Willy Bald* (Edinburgh? n.d.).

⁴⁶ NLS, Ry III.c.36(57); *Elegy on the Mournful Banishment, of James Campbell of Burbank, To the West-Indies* (n.d.).

Similarly there was the elegy in Standart Habbie for a Highland brigand named Donald Bayn, an acquaintance of Rob Roy “sin he was a Boy” who being hanged as a common criminal, cursed the “Loulan Louns” for pressing their law to the final conclusion.⁴⁷

In like vein to Ramsay, other kirkmen were eulogised – rarely in a totally serious manner – in verse patterned after Sempill’s original. A noted example of these was *An Habby On the Death of Mis. James Cruickshanks in Mountounha, Alias Buckle the Begars Marry them A(a!)*⁴⁸ concerned with the memory of “Curate Cruickshanks”⁴⁹ who was singularly lucky, in a sense, since he was the subject of a second such elegy.⁵⁰ Noted, and in fact praised in both poems for “buckling the beggars” – for performing irregular marriages that presumably would have been forbidden under the strictest interpretation and application of kirk law – so that as a result Cruickshank was said to have “valued neither Kirk nor Law.”⁵¹ The fear of the town’s inhabitants is that with the death of Cruickshanks, they will “turn [into] a dreary dowy Toun.”⁵² The implication here seems to be that James Cruickshanks was a follower of episcopalianism, and that with his death, a return to prebyterianism seemed imminent. Additionally, a fairly common theme in these Habbie Simpson impostors, of sorts, is that of illicit sex,⁵³ and this panegyric to the departed Cruickshank is no exception:

The Lasses now may weep and waill,

⁴⁷ NLS, Ry III.a.10(36); *The Highland Man’s Lament, For the Dea[th] [o]f Donald Bayn, alias M’evan Vanifranck, who was Execute in the Grass [Mar]ke[t] of Edinburgh, on Wednesday the 9th Day of January 1723* (Edinburgh?, 1723?).

⁴⁸ NLS, S.302.b.2(73); *An Habby On the Death of Mis. James Cruickshanks in Mountounha, Alias Bruckle the Begars Marry them A(a!)*.

⁴⁹ By this title, obviously not remembered for being a staunch presbyterian.

⁵⁰ NLS, Ry III.c.36(97); *The Grievous Complaint of the Beaux and the Bads, And a the young Widows, and Lasses and Lads, For Death’s taking Mas. James Cruickshanks awa, Who buckl’d the Beggars at Mountounha. Interr’d in the Church-yard of Inverash the 29. of March 1724* (1724?).

⁵¹ *The Grievous Complaint*.

⁵² *The Grievous Complaint*.

⁵³ Allan Ramsay’s versions certainly featured it: “John Cowper” was a bit of a man about town, and “of whore-hunting he gat his fill;” whereas in the case of “Lucky Spence,” written to commemorate the passing of the (im)famous brothel madam from Holyrood vicinity, the central theme is (needless to say) that of illicit sex.

Salt Tears run down their Cheeks like Hail
 Wha now will take them be the Tail.
 And bang their Wame,
 Death's dung Mas. James with his stark Flail.
 To a lang Hame.⁵⁴

Perhaps there is truth to the old adage, “impersonation is the sincerest form of flattery.” If so, at least one person believed Ramsay’s elegy on “John Cowper” was a fine piece of creative writing, since this anonymous individual was sufficiently inspired to pen not only a testimonial in *Standart Habbie*, but also choose as the subject for his poem yet another kirk treasurer. This piece, *An Habbiack Elegy on ... Robert F-----s* – so obviously inspired by the efforts of the former wigmaker – was probably composed after Ramsay’s poem had been in circulation for several years:

Greet a ye Bairns and beard'd Fo'k
 Sic News would pierce a Heart of Rock;
 Death's gi'en a Kick to Robin's Dock,
 Shame fa his Greed;
 He thought Death wa ay in Joke,
 But now he's dead.

Ay sir he left his Cobbling Trade,
 Minding the Shoes that others made;
 He's been a rare reforming Blade,
 Cobbling the Church:
 But now he's got the School and Spade,
 And left i' the Lurch.

Limmers and Lairds he'll nae mair chase,
 Nae mair we'll see his pauky Face,
 Keek thro' Closs-heads to catch a Brace
 Of Wapping Morts.
 Play Bogleboo, a bonny Race,
 About the Ports.⁵⁵

True to the original Habbie Simpson (and Ramsay’s “copies”) this poem is replete with Scots words and phrases. Here is a poem that is difficult to see as being the best example of “British” literature (see below). Instead, it is representative of a

⁵⁴ *The Grievous Complaint*.

⁵⁵ NLS, Ry III.c.36(95); *An Habbiack Elegy on the untimely and deplorable Death of Robert F-----s Kirk Treasurer's Man, who dy'd November 3d. 1724* (n.p., 1724?).

creative slant that seemingly goes contrary to all concepts of “improved” literature deemed respectful of the tastes of a highly enlightened audience. This piece is rather parochial in outlook,⁵⁶ dealing with a specific person and incident, largely (we would assume) of local significance. Furthermore, in terms of language, even phrases rendered in English are hardly the words of the highly educated: “But now he’s got ...” is not exactly the finest example of high English.

Before leaving the topic of elegiac imitations of Sempill’s durable poem, it seems worthwhile to have a look at one further example, which amounted to a light-hearted lampoon of Ramsay himself, and appears to have been done by a person either quite close to the poet, or one at least very familiar with his works and associations. The poem’s title, *A Block for Allan Ramsay’s Wigs*,⁵⁷ in itself makes a reference to “canty Allan’s” former trade. Additionally, the broadsheet speaks of “Pet an’ Rodger” – the two pals Patie and Roger from *The Gentle Shepherd*; “wanton Willie” – very likely in reference to Ramsay’s own friend William Hamilton of Gilbertfield;⁵⁸ claims Ramsay “has consulted with William Wallace” – perhaps with *The Vision* in mind;⁵⁹ and then prompts Ramsay to “Rouse up thy

⁵⁶ Which is not to say that it could not be read and enjoyed by those outside of the poem’s locale.

⁵⁷ All references are to NLS, Ry III.a.10(115); *A Block for Allan Ramsay’s Wigs, Or, the Famous Poet, fall’n in a Sleep* (Edinburgh? n.d.).

⁵⁸ Ramsay refers to Gilbertfield as “wanton Willie” in “Answer I” to Hamilton’s “Epistle I” as part of their series of Familiar Epistles, all of which were also executed in Standart Habbie; see “Familiar Epistles Between Lieutenant William Hamilton and Allan Ramsay,” in Kinghorn and Law (ed), *Poems by Ramsay and Fergusson*, p. 20.

⁵⁹ The theme of *The Vision* was the troubled times associated with the Scottish Wars of Independence, although Ramsay probably used this theme as an analogy for a Scotland immediately after incorporating union. The ostensible narrator of the tale (in reality Ramsay himself) is portrayed as a contemporary of those earlier times; i.e. the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It then goes on to talk of “The Warden of this auntient nation,” a man “Of stalwart Mak, in Bane and Brawnd, | Of just Proportions, large,” whom “nane sall oppress | Me, unpunist with Pain ...” (*The Vision*, l. 86; ll. 61-62; ll. 75-76.) The interpretation seems to be that the “Warden” is none other than William Wallace, and a reference to his acquired title of Guardian of Scotland, given him after the victory at Stirling Bridge (1297). For additional commentary (upon which this critique was based) see T. Crawford, D. Hewitt, A. Law (eds), *Longer Scottish Poems, Volume 2* (Edinburgh, 1987), pp. 359-60n. *The Vision* itself can be found in most anthologies of Ramsay (it seems to be a rather popular number with modern readers of Scots poetry!); see, for example, *Longer Scottish Poems*, pp. 31-43; Kinghorn and Law (ed), *Poems by Ramsay and Fergusson*, pp. 35-40 (who condense some of the text); and *The Works of Allan Ramsay*, iii, pp. 81-95. *The Vision* was part of the anthology *The Ever Green* (1724) which was supposed to be a collection of ancient Scots poems originally written before 1600. Ramsay’s line on this particular poem was that it was first composed in Latin by a cleric in 1300, and then translated into Scots in 1524. In many ways this has a similar ring to the line on the

Muse, and draw thy Quill; | Suld ye gi' P-----k his Will" – perhaps a reference to yet another of his acquaintances, Alexander Pennecuik, who died in 1730. The poem makes several references to both the poem and stanza style of "Habbie Simson," as well as the long-deceased piper himself: "So rightly Tune up Habbies Bags." But the over-riding message in *A Block for Allan Ramsay's Wigs* seems to be to enquire into the Leadhills poet's silence:

Vow Allie, what's come ore ye now:
 Fain wa'd we hear some News frae you;
 Some say ye'r Dead, but that's no True;
 gin ye sit Dumb,
 A Fig for the canting Crew,
 they may sing Mum.⁶⁰

It appears significant that the author of this broadsheet would choose to relate some of the work and socialising of the aspiring "Gavin Douglas" in the style of verse first created by Sempill of Beltrees. Perhaps in his mind, it was thoroughly appropriate to eulogise Ramsay thus (probably before the poet's actual death), given that he was noted for working with the genre. Perhaps this signifies just how thoroughly the name of Ramsay was associated with Standart Habbie during the early eighteenth century. Ramsay was not, however, the sole exploiter of the form. Nor was it the only medium he worked within: among his vast corpus of poems, both Scots and English, seven are done in imitation of "Habbie Simson." Yet perhaps these seven were recognised, by at least some individuals, as being among Allan's best efforts. If all this is true, then it speaks volumes when questions of Ramsay's attitude towards the Scots language, and traditional Scots literary forms

Life of Wallace – supposedly composed by Arnold Blair, Wallace's chaplain, and then turned into *The Wallace* by Blind Harry, c.1473. The role of Arnold Blair in the Wallace saga is less certain than once thought; similarly, it is a virtual certainty that Ramsay was the actual author of *The Vision*. The fact that the poem finishes with "*Quod AR. SCOT.*" probably means that "the jig is up" as far as Ramsay's ruse is concerned.

⁶⁰ Ramsay's last works appear to have been *A Collection of Scots Proverbs, To the Honourable Duncan Forbes of Culloden*, followed by the last volume of the *Tea Table Miscellany*, all from 1737, after which the creative energies seemed to have dried up, with no known output between then and his death, either December 1757 or January 1758. (An edition of his poems printed Leith, A. Allardice, 1814, claims a notice in the Scots Magazine, December 1757 reported Ramsay's death; Kinghorn and Law (ed) *Poems by Ramsay and Fergusson*, p. xi, claim "on or about 7 January, 1758.")

are raised. Ramsay, in fact, appeared in no small way to help in putting the “Habbe Simson” tradition on a firm footing, which later artists, like Fergusson and Burns, could then pick up and use for themselves. Again, in the case of Ramsay, these are hardly the actions of a person bent on mere preservation alone; more those of a man concerned with dynamic development.

Ramsay’s work with “Standart Habbe” amounts to a vivid portrayal of aspects of common urban life, which might be called the underbelly of Edinburgh, or portrayals which are more sensual than cerebral. It is these vernacular-based images which are often referred to as pictures of Edinburgh or Scottish “low life,” or more charitably “low culture.”⁶¹ It seems prudent to point out that something can be referred to as “low life,” or being of “low culture,” without being “less cultured,” or of an inferior level of culture; instead, it should probably be taken as “basic culture,” or “non-intellectual culture.”

Ramsay seems to have hit upon the correct application of “low culture” in the commentary to his version of *Christis Kirk on the Green*,⁶² in which he states that excessive indulgence in alcohol consumption can rob a man of his otherwise natural constitution, and make him unable to perform “divine or natural duties.” No man is immune to this danger, as Ramsay notes in a quote from Pope that “Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend, | And rise to faults true critics dare not mend.” His agenda for creating a new version of *Christis Kirk* are conveyed by him thus:

Thus I have pursued these comical characters, having gentleman’s health and pleasure, and the good manners of the vulgar in view: The main design of comedy to represent the follies and mistakes of low life in a just light, making them appear as ridiculous as they really are, that each who is a spectator may evite his being the object of laughter.

⁶¹ Daiches, *Paradox of Scottish Culture*, p. 24; cf. Kidd, “The ideological significance,” p. 112; Wittig, *Scottish Tradition in Literature*, p. 167.

⁶² All following references to Allan Ramsay, “Christis Kirk on the Green, In Three Cantos,” in *Poems*, i, pp. 82-106 (text); pp. 82-107 (notes).

To provide a warning for the literate spectator so that he might avoid the scorn associated within foolishly over-indulging in low culture, probably was not the main reason for his additions to the old poem.⁶³ More likely he wrote it to show his prowess at continuing the medium, which resulted in its renewed publicity,⁶⁴ thus serving to boost his own reputation.

Yet through his comments, we might catch a glimpse of Ramsay's own definition of low culture (something in which he probably participated). This concept of low culture, is probably best described in terms of its relationship to the body itself, referring to the sensual parts of the body linked with primal pleasures like love, eating, drinking, sex, etc. This differs from the part of the body referable to as high; that being, the brain which pursues knowledge and aesthetics. The contrast between high and low culture in relation to the body, is a central to the analysis of carnival first advanced by Bakhtin; this will be discussed in greater detail below. Suffice to say for the moment, however, that *Christis Kirk on the Green*, and probably Ramsay's mock elegies on low life, are examples of literature displaying some, or all of these characteristics. We now return to examining Ramsay's mock elegies.

Though it is seemingly accurate, as a result of the preceding discussion, to refer to Ramsay's elegies done in *Standart Habbie* as examples of low culture, these poems are better described as "a lively series of Scots poems on the notables of Edinburgh street life."⁶⁵ Presumably all the individuals mentioned in this series were people well-known to the participants in this street culture (and thus, probably

⁶³ Ramsay added two cantos to a revised version of the text; one in 1715, another in 1718.

⁶⁴ MacLaine, *Christis Kirk Tradition*, p. 54. MacLaine, to his credit, recognises the value and quality of Ramsay's added cantos, and notes, despite the poet's occasional lapses into antiquarianism, the progressive nature of his work in demonstrating "that the venerable genre was still adaptable for modern purposes." Lindsay, *History of Scottish Literature*, p. 173, noted its artistic worth; however, less charitable was Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition*, p. 167, who described Ramsay's added cantos as being "of simpler and tougher texture than their models."

⁶⁵ Watson, *The Literature of Scotland*, p. 172.

to Ramsay himself).⁶⁶ As far as the poems themselves are concerned, they seem marked by an intimate familiarity between poet and that which he is describing. The very language employed, executed in a Scots partially derived from the spoken, is deliberately chosen so as to portray a vivid, descriptive picture, rendered in colloquial terms. Specific terms are being appropriated from – we might assume – everyday Edinburgh street talk to describe events, and paint a picture of life in that burgh. For instance, in the poem that introduced this chapter, “Maggy Johnston,” Edinburgh is referred to as “Auld Reeky,” a nickname pulled from the common parlance of rural dwellers living within easy sight of the burgh.⁶⁷ The poem’s opening line, “Auld Reeky! Mourn in sable hue” is brilliant in its descriptive energy: not only is it suggestive of donning a mourning cloak out of respect for the tavern-keeper’s passing, but it also invokes an image of a horizon darkened by the city’s pervasive chimney smoke. It is as if the very smoke itself becomes a mourning shroud, enveloping Auld Reeky, pensive with the death of Maggie. A day to day image, illustrative of the typical Edinburgh horizon, becomes a powerful, location-specific, poetic device.

Similarly, in “Elegy on Lucky Wood In the Cannongate – May 1717,” the deceased’s former residence is described as “O Cannigate! Poor elritch hole!”⁶⁸ In this instance, melancholia has stricken the poet. Ramsay provides some of the clues

⁶⁶ Kinghorn and Law (ed) *Poems of Ramsay and Fergusson*, p. xiii, suggest that the characters depicted in Ramsay’s elegies would have been well enough known to his immediate audience. His glosses and explanatory footnotes were likely for the benefit of the wider audience.

⁶⁷ Royle, *Companion to Scottish Literature*, p. 14, tells us that Robert Chambers maintained that the nickname went back to the days of Charles II; Royle himself believes it was even older. He continues with the anecdote that the residents of Fife could determine it was meal time by observing the cooking-fire smoke coming from the chimneys in Edinburgh.

According to Ramsay’s gloss, Maggy’s was a small rural establishment, connected to a farm about a mile south of the city proper. People (presumably on a day outing from the capital) would come in great numbers to pay two pence per pint Scots (nearly two *quarts* English!) for one of the finest ales going, which Maggy skilfully concocted herself. Interestingly, Maggy still sold her pints in Scots measure, even though, according to the terms of Union, uniform weights and measures were to be in place. The faithful who travelled to this ale-drinkers’ Mecca on the outskirts of town, along the way could play a round of golf at Bruntisfield Links – “When in our pouch we fand some clinks, | And took a turn o’er Bruntisfield-Links ...”

⁶⁸ Allan Ramsay, “Elegy on Lucky Wood in the Canongate, May 1717,” in Kinghorn and Law (ed), *Poems by Ramsay and Fergusson*, p. 10 (l. 1).

for the onset of these emotions in his own glosses to the poem. We learn from him that Cannongate was once a vibrant place, close to the king's residence, where the Scots members of parliament had their homes – at least, that had been the situation prior to 1707. After the union, he laments, London became home to the Scottish parliamentarians, and with the death of Lucky Wood (who by Ramsay's criteria, ran a class establishment), all that remained in testimony to times past were spectres. Further, in the passage in question – “O Cannigate, etc.” – notice the efficiency in selecting Scots to describe the area's current condition. “Poor elritch hole” would translate into something like “poor, dreadfully vacant place, haunted by ghosts of the past” – and even that is an incomplete rendering. But one carefully selected Scots word speaks volumes to those who understood the feelings invoked by it. In this instance, then, Scots does more than convey narrative, it also conveys feeling in a way that another language (such as Modern English) could only approximate.⁶⁹ Thus in this one instance (no claim for universality being made here), a composition drawn from the pages of Scots urban popular culture can more completely and effectively convey mood by drawing descriptive elements from the vernacular.

When searching for material for his equivalent to the modern urban tale, Ramsay did not go around with a set of blinders on; he was aware of the descriptive messages associated with his subjects. There is, as a result, a genuine quality to this body of poetry, which (sadly) only represented a portion of his respectably-sized repertoire. This is not to suggest that Ramsay was a dispassionate voice when rendering these elegies; he was indeed emotionally involved with his subject matter. His aim was not to produce a narrative of events, but rather to present ordinary people in believable situations, even though some have traits typical of Scots poems dealing with conviviality (discussed below). But it was the creation of a tale, based

⁶⁹ It is the age old problem bemoaned by those working with languages, that “something is lost in the translation.” Often, they have difficulty explaining, just exactly what was lost, and this may not be just a brush-off on their part. As an Icelandic friend said, when asked by me about the accuracy of current English translations of his nation's traditional sagas, he believed that the translations captured the essence of the narrative very well, but the unspoken elements of the story – the story's “feel” – could not be fully sensed or appreciated in all instances.

upon elements from everyday life, often ironically and satirically portrayed, rendered in an everyday language, which highlights Ramsay's mock elegies. This might be in contrast to poetry which the prevailing "British" attitude deemed superior to vernacular efforts typified by Ramsay's:

He kend the bawds and louns fou well
 And where they us'd to rant and reel
 He paukily on them cou'd steal
 And spoil their sport;
 Aft did they wish the muckle De'il
 Might take him for't.

But ne'er a ane of them he spar'd,
 E'en tho there was a drunken laird
 To draw his sword, and make a faird
 In their defense,
 John quietly put them in the Guard
 To learn mair sense.

There maun they ly till sober grown,
 The lad neist day his fault maun own;
 And to keep a' things hush and low'n
 He minds the poor,
 Syne, after a' his ready's flown,
 He damns the whore.

And she, poor jade,⁷⁰ withoutten din,
 Is sent to Leith-wynd⁷¹ Fit to spin,
 With heavy heart and cleathing thin,
 And hungry wame,
 And ilky month a well-paid skin,
 To mak her tame.

But now they may scour up and down,
 And safely gang their wakes arown,
 Spreading the clap throw a' the town,
 But fear or dread;
 For that great kow to bawd and lown,
 John Cowper's dead.⁷²

⁷⁰ An abusive term for a woman; a worn out *article*; a wilful perverse *animal* – thus, needless to say, to refer to any woman, even a prostitute, as a "poor jade" is not as sympathy-laden a statement as might have been thought!

⁷¹ In reference to a correctional house at the foot of Leith-wynd; Ramsay, in his own gloss, compares it to Bridewell in London.

The foregoing might be compared to this offering from the celebrated “Anglo-Scot”⁷³ poet, popular with the “improved” reader of poetry, the parish minister’s son, James Thomson:

The city swarms intense. The public haunt,
 Full of each theme, and warm with mix’d discourse,
 Hums indistinct. The sons of riot flow
 Down the loose stream of false enchanted joy.
 To swift distruction. On the rankled soul
 The gaming fury falls; and in one gulf
 Of total ruin, honour, virtue, peace,
 Friends, families, and fortune, headlong sink.
 Up springs the dance along the lighted dome,
 Mix’d, and evolved, a thousand sprightly ways.
 The glittering court effuses every pomp;
 The circle deepens; beam’d from gaudy robes,
 Tapers, and sparkling gems, and radiant eyes,
 A soft effulgence o’er the palace waves:
 While, a gay insect in his summer shine,
 The fop, light-fluttering, spreads his mealy wings.⁷⁴

What we have here are two widely differing examples of urban life. Starting in reverse order, Thomson presents us with a typically rhetorical,⁷⁵ stilted view of social intercourse in a large city. Such socialising is compared to the frantic activity within a nest of insects – a poetic device used elsewhere by Thomson in his poems, primarily his *Seasons* series. Yet the picture painted by this scene is a romantic one – perhaps little surprise, since he has been touted as a possible precursor to the Romantic movement.⁷⁶ The portrait presented has been sanitised, and as a result, is

⁷² Allan Ramsay, “Elegy on John Cowper, Kirk-Treasurer’s Man Anno 1714,” in Kinghorn and Law (ed), *Poems by Ramsay and Fergusson*, pp. 8-9 (stanzas 7-11).

⁷³ The definition of Thomson as an “Anglo-Scot” comes from M.J.W. Scott, *James Thomson, Anglo-Scot* (University of Georgia Press, 1988), p. 3. Scott’s contention is that since Thomson was born and raised in Scotland, but chose to settle in England and write in English rather than in Scots, he was, as a result, an “Anglo-Scot.” Later in this thesis, the term “Anglo-Scot” will appear again in a totally different context. As my own term, it will be used to describe a literary language that came about as a result of the anglicisation of such Scots standards as the *Bruce* and the *Wallace*. The result was a sort of hybrid, mostly of English, but still containing select words and phrases from Scots, resulting in a language which I refer to as “Anglo-Scots.”

⁷⁴ James Thomson, “Winter,” from *The Seasons* in, *The Poetical Works of James Thomson* (London, Walker and Co., n.d.), p. 176-77 (ll. 630-45).

⁷⁵ Agreeing with Nicol Smith, R.D.S. Jack, *The Italian Influence on Scottish Literature* (EUP, 1972), p. 181, thought that Thomson’s “style ... owes much to the consciously rhetorical and Latinate tradition in writing, so strongly fostered in Scotland.”

⁷⁶ Royle, *Companion to Scottish Literature*, p. 312.

not overly harsh, even in the face of human misfortune when the gambler squanders his money on a losing cause.

Though the poet from Ednam, Roxburghshire was noted for the vividness of all the images which he was describing – in this instance a portrait of urban diversions – it was really his rendering of the natural world in which he excelled. In the opinion of modern scholars, the poet's upbringing in Southdean (located in the isolated, but very picturesque Cheviots) helped provide the inspiration for so many of his portraits of the rural landscape – whether he was depicting nature's captivating beauty, as in idyllic representations of salmon-fishing in *Spring*; or her dangerous harshness, as in *Winter*.⁷⁷ Thomson seemingly did have an eye for realism; but insofar as his depictions of city life were concerned (perhaps not necessarily this poet's first place to seek creative inspiration), it really seems to be a question of where he looked, or rather what he was looking for. It is rather like the case of two modern-day tourists coming Glasgow, one visiting only the city centre or the west end; the other, the Gorbals, the east end, etc. Two very different pictures of Glasgow would result; comparing the two, one could be excused for thinking that the two respective tourists visited two completely different cities.

In like manner, Thomson's city is that of the privileged, the intelligentsia, the upper classes. Ramsay's mock elegies, conversely, represent the city of the vast "unwashed multitude." Thomson's picture of urban life is sheer serenity compared to that offered by the Leadhills poet. Most of the images presented by Ramsay are self-evident; but for the record, habitual drunkenness, prostitution, imprisonment, disease, hunger, and social despair are all featured. Yet "John Cowper"⁷⁸ is rife with

⁷⁷ See J. Sambrook, *James Thomson 1700-1748. A Life* (OUP, 1991), p. 3; and M.J. Scott, "James Thomson and the Anglo-Scots," in Hook (ed), p. 83.

⁷⁸ The person of John Cowper was evidently a well-known and infamous former inhabitant of Edinburgh. His passing provided the impetus not only for Ramsay's poem, but at least one other elegy. This second piece was (as far as can be ascertained) anonymous, and far more vitriolic than Ramsay's. Done in standard English, a taste for this piece can be appreciated thus,

This mungral Post 'twixt Lay and Clergy h[iri]ngs
Amphibeous Frogs and Catierpilars brings.
The free will Offerings and Price of a Whoare
Into the Churches Store to give the Poor,

satire (of a “black” variety), and irony, though sometimes often cruel.⁷⁹ The prostitute’s client (“loun”) after sobering up, is allowed to walk free after making a contribution to poor relief. The prostitute, convicted largely on account of his word, endures a less enviable fate: ill-fed and ill-clothed, she is incarcerated in an infamous gaol. The inequities of “justice” are thus portrayed – we today can see the injustice stemming from systemic double-standards; perhaps less likely the case for the majority of people in Ramsay’s time. Nevertheless, in this instance human despair is an object for black satire – and in fact, this is a fairly sophisticated concept that Ramsay is playing with. Most humour in at least the western world is in one way or another based upon the misfortunes, eccentricities, frailties, and shortcomings of the human condition. Yet laughing at our misfortune is one of the best ways to come to terms with such. Thus the stoic, with seemingly all aspects of his world gone wrong, deals with his adversity by “laughing it off.” The characters in Ramsay’s series of mock elegies are real people in real situations, whose fortunes and misfortunes are related in a language as alive as the people who mouth it. There is nothing overtly contrived about them and their situation. Something relative to this idea was suggested by Daiches, who said that:

In these poems – elegies ... in the mock-elegy tradition of ‘Habbe Simson’ – Scots could be used without any air of antiquarian

The Sacred Treasure and privet Fines,
 The Secret Bribes for penetential Sins,
 Bull Money, Buttock Mail and hackney Hire,
 And what they can by any means aquire,
 All Hotch Potch Jumbled in the Churches puse (sic)
 They afterward Religiously Deburse,
 First to the private Pocket, next to that,
 The Hackney Ladys must needs have some what ...

Edinburgh University Library Special Collections, “Uncatalogued Volume of Broad sides Relating to Scotland, 1690 to 1752,” *A Discription of a Kirk Treasurer. Or [aille]gie on John Couper*.

It is tempting to think that the author of this piece was inspired by Ramsay’s poem, but there is just too little information to say for certain. Obviously part of the title is virtually identical to Ramsay’s. Theoretically, the founding member of the Easy Club could have been following the lead of this elegy to Cowper in English, or the two poems could have been produced independently, the respective authors oblivious to each others’ work.

⁷⁹ In our eyes there might appear a cruel streak running through this sort of subject matter; who knows how it was viewed in the eighteenth century, however.

reconstruction, for the characters who figured in them were part of the Scots-speaking ordinary life of the city.⁸⁰

As such, despite the subject matter, Ramsay's elegies were still a more accurate celebration of life, in all its pleasure, and in all its pain.

Ramsay therefore was not content to simply resurrect an old poetic medium; his intent, rather, was to fabricate a new one. This is perhaps all the more likely when we consider that what he was doing in these creations – presenting his readership with a believable, unsanitised, slice of life of the commonest levels of urban society, in a relatively close approximation of their own tongue, replete with their jargon and colloquialisms. This form of unfanciful urban poetry seems to have been non-typical in his own immediate time.⁸¹ However, the torch primarily lit by Ramsay would shortly be passed along to another vernacularist, Robert Fergusson.

The timeliness of Ramsay's elegies on Scots urban common culture was significant in reflecting the ever increasing importance of Scotland's major urban centres. One study has suggested that by mid-century, a gradual exodus from the countryside was underway, even though Scotland was still predominantly a rural society.⁸² More recent scholars engaged in investigating questions of economic and social factors, as well as demographics, point to the ever increasing numbers (slower at some times, but always sustained) of inhabitants in the burghs during the passage of the eighteenth century – sometimes to the detriment of other areas, such as the Highlands, the north-east, and Fife.⁸³ This trend toward urbanisation might be summed up thus:

⁸⁰ Daiches, *Paradox of Scottish Culture*, p. 24.

⁸¹ This is not to say that Ramsay alone produced poetry of this sort, as it seems that there were a few others who did so. The immediate example that comes to mind is within some of the examples of Standart Habbie done by the lesser-known or anonymous individuals noted above, it is possibly to see aspects indicative of this genre. However, it is probably still fair to say it is with Ramsay that we should most readily associate poetry depicting realistic aspects of urban street culture, composed in Scots and using the stanza form of "Habbie Simpson."

⁸² R.H. Campbell, *Scotland Since 1707. The Rise of industrial Society*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, 1985), pp. 15-16.

⁸³ M. Lynch, *Scotland. A New History* (London, 1992), p. 383. According to him, actual drops in population are noted for the southern Uplands, and certain Aberdeenshire parishes.

Between the sixteenth and late eighteenth centuries Scotland had one of the highest growth rates of urban population in Europe. Scotland appears to have been the only European country to share the English pattern of a steady expansion of urban population throughout the period irrespective of whether national population totals were growing or stagnating. By 1750 Scotland was already more highly urbanised, on this measure, than France, Germany, or Iberia, and was rapidly catching up with England.⁸⁴

Of course urbanisation would seem to go hand in hand with an economic improvement that was not readily apparent immediately after the union. But “down the road” improvement would be made, and as one historian noted, “Scotland in the 1740s was a society poised on the brink of dramatic change,” in spite of the fact that few contemporaries would have had little reason to suspect this.⁸⁵ The eventual increase in commerce, industry, and banking would be dependent upon a stable urban environment; and in turn, these factors would help to stimulate urbanisation. If Scotland was to truly enter the modern age, truly take part in union, it would have to focus more intently upon its major cities.⁸⁶ Ramsay’s poetry set in an urban environment would have pertinence for the future importance of the cities, but this was something likely unbeknown to him. On the other hand, even though the rise in Edinburgh’s population during the first half of the eighteenth century has been described as “moderate” in comparison to Glasgow’s and Dundee’s,⁸⁷ it was an increase that still may have been noticeable in Allan Ramsay’s own time.

As is hopefully apparent, though it might be argued that the body of Ramsay’s elegies were examples of Scottish-inspired British Literature, they still contained parochial aspects. Nevertheless, this is not to imply that these poems could not, and were not read and enjoyed by a wider audience. The original Sempill piece, though containing “many obscure references which must have puzzled all but the very few readers familiar with the circumstantial or local detail,” portrayed

⁸⁴ Whyte, *Scotland Before Industrial Revolution*, p. 172.

⁸⁵ Lynch, *Scotland*, p. 378.

⁸⁶ Which is not to say that urban centres had ever been completely pushed to one side, only that a new imperative in their favour was present.

⁸⁷ Whyte, *Scotland Before Industrial Revolution*, p. 177.

subject matter that a wider audience could identify with.⁸⁸ In like manner, a number of the general themes in Ramsay's elegies in Scots, despite their localisms, would sound a familiar note for many. In the broader sense, it might be argued that it was possible to portray Scottish cultural markers within literature deemed fit for a polite British audience. This seems to be exactly what Crawford saw in certain "collections of Scots verse, such as Allan Ramsay's *Ever Green* (1724) and *Tea-Table Miscellany* (1724-37), [which] had fought to stress that poetry in the Scots tongue was ... fit to be admitted to polite society."⁸⁹ If this were true, then perhaps it was the reason why Ramsay dedicated his *Tea Table Miscellany* in like manner:

To ilka lovely *British* lass,
 Frae Ladies *Charlotte, Anne, and Jean,*
 Down to ilk bonny singing *Bess,*
 Wha dances barefoot on the green.⁹⁰

However, it probably took more than dedications mentioning the "British lassies" alone to endear Ramsay to the general British public, en masse. Ramsay was no fool either, and he probably realised that not everyone would be taken in by such an obvious ploy; yet it was still an attempt on his part to widen his readership, which indeed might have paid dividends, if the extensive subscribers' list to the first volume of his *Poems* can be taken as any sort of indication. Thus, while certain of the individual pieces within these anthologies had a definite regional slant, their having been juxtaposed with more universal works might have helped in bringing Scots colloquialism to the broader spectrum of readership. Additionally, we know that the subscribers to the first volume of his eclectic *Poems* included such

⁸⁸Buthlay, "Habbe Simson," p. 219.

⁸⁹Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p. 31.

⁹⁰Allan Ramsay, *The Tea-Table Miscellany A Collection of Choice Songs Scots and English* (2 vols; Glasgow, 1876), i, p. v.

prominent literary English figures as Pope, Steele, Burchet, and Arbuthnot,⁹¹ who may have found satisfaction first by reading such poems as “Horace to Virgil,”⁹² and “Richy and Sandy” – a pastoral on the death of Addison (of *Tatler* and *Spectator* fame).⁹³ Perhaps then these were the tactics of Ramsay the vernacularist: draw in as wide an audience as possible by presenting them with the most widely acceptable forms of poetry, and once suitable captivated, send his poems in Scots in their direction.

The poems constituent to *The Ever Green* and *Tea Table Miscellany* were often subjected to a fair deal of editorial manipulation courtesy of the former wigmaker’s hand. Though later editors verbally assaulted Ramsay’s editorial policies as applied to *The Ever Green* – his re-writings and mis-transcriptions raising their ire – this edited work has won some justifiable modern praise, which has seen it for what it truly was: a “pioneering” attempt at presenting Scots poetry, with a “popularising aim, which compelled Ramsay to make concessions to fastidious

⁹¹ Kinghorn and Law, “Allan Ramsay and Literary Life,” p. 67. A full list of these subscribers is listed in *Works of Allan Ramsay*, i, pp. xxx-xxxvii. Such notable members of the Scots nobility include the Duke of Argyll (and Greenwich), Duke of Montrose, and Earl of Moray.

⁹²Which was pretty much standard neo-classic English fare, with a slight smattering of Scots thrown in for good measure.

⁹³It is probably a very safe bet that both Steele and Pope were impressed with this latter poem as they were the respective title characters represented. The combining of the pastoral with both classical and vernacular elements in this, in many ways, reminiscent of the forthcoming *The Gentle Shepherd*:

Richy: Wow Man, that’s unco’ sad, – Is that ye’r Jo
Has ta’ en the Strunt? – Or has some Bogle-bo
Glowrin frae ’mang auld Waws gi’ en ye a Fleg?
Or has some dawted Wedder broke his Leg?

Sandy: Naithing like that, sic Troubles eith were born,
What’s Boggles, – Wedders, – or what’s Mausy’s Scorn?
Our loss is meikle mair, and past Remeed,
Edie, that play’d, and sang sae sweet, is dead.

Richy: Dead, say’st thou: Oh! Had up my Heart O Pan!
Ye Gods! What Laid ye lay on feckless Man!
Alake therefore, I canna wyt ye’r Wae,
I’ll bear ye Company for Year and Day ...

contemporary taste.”⁹⁴ Indeed, this observation seems affirmed by the said work’s introduction, which also chides those persons claiming to possess an education who nevertheless have no patience for things native:

There is nothing can be heard more silly than one’s expressing his Ignorance of his native Language; yet such there are, who can vaunt of acquiring a tolerable Perfection in the French or Italian Tongues, if they have been a Forthnight (sic) in Paris or a month in Rome: But shew them the most elegant Thoughts in a Scots Dress they as disdainfully as stupidly condemn it as barbarous. But the true Reason is obvious: Every one that is born never do little superior to the Vulgar, would fain distinguish themselves from them by some Manner or other, and such, it would appear, cannot arrive at a better Method. But this affected Class of Fops give no Uneasiness, not being numerous; for the most part of our Gentleman, who are generally masters of the most useful and politest Languages, can take Pleasure (for a Change) to speak and read their own.⁹⁵

This preamble may well reveal Ramsay’s awareness of Scots “vulgar associations,”⁹⁶ but it is a situation that he is not comfortable with. In this instance, Ramsay appears to be attempting to elevate Scots as a literary language, and point the educated man in its direction, to once again see it as a vital mode of expression.⁹⁷ Indeed, he even appears to take an aggressive stance, “laying down the gauntlet” and

Allan Ramsay, “Richy and Sandy, A Pastoral on the Death of Joseph Addison, Esq,” in *Works of Allan Ramsay*, i, p. 107 (ll. 7-18).

⁹⁴ Kinghorn and Law, “Allan Ramsay and Literary Life,” p. 70. Again, what is worth stressing here is that even in conjunction with his efforts at editing (however bad or good he was at it) Ramsay was not merely motivated by antiquarianism.

⁹⁵ Allan Ramsay, “Preface” to *The Ever Green, Being a Collection of Scots Poems, Wrote by the Ingenious Before 1600* (Originally published by Allan Ramsay. This edition: 2 vols; Glasgow, J. Cameron, 1824), i, pp. x-xi.

⁹⁶ Kidd, “The ideological significance,” p. 112.

⁹⁷ Something similar was argued by McGuirk, “Augustan Influences on Ramsay,” p. 103, who believed that Ramsay had a desire to make Scots appear “higher.” However, in addition, she goes on to state that his assumed mandate was also to make the language appear less bawdy than it had been with the makars. This latter point is a bit perplexing in view of the fact that there was a move throughout the century, but perhaps more marked towards the latter part, among certain of the educated to revive Middle Scots poetry in its purest form. In their minds, the poetry of the Sempills, and Ramsay’s attempts at renewing the medium were all backward steps, which served only to bastardise Scots poetic types. This was probably as much to do with how these poets had applied the language – if not more so – than how they had manipulated the vocabulary. Fuelled undoubtedly by antiquarianism, it was their desire to undo some of this alleged “damage.” As we will later see, one way in which this drive manifested itself was through the advent of the so-called “scholarly editions” of the *Wallace* and *Bruce*, which were supposed to take the form of literal transcriptions of Blind Harry’s, and John Barbour’s very words.

giving his readership a “loaded” choice: show yourself to be a true man of letters, a man of refined culture and manners, and read these poems with an eye for appreciation of some of the finest native writing from times past; or prove yourself a fool (a “fop”), little better than the vulgar whom you seek to avoid, and dismiss these poems as “barbarous.” Hardly the word of a man concerned only with *preserving* Scots poems, more those of a person concerned with *advancing* the medium through making it once again acceptable with an elite audience.

Thus as far as Ramsay’s elegies were concerned (and perhaps other of his Scots poems), they were primarily works based upon a parochial context, carefully displayed in an effort to present them to a relatively wider audience. Creatively and artistically speaking, probably among the best of his own poems,⁹⁸ Ramsay’s elegies were (variably) mainly testaments to common life in Scotland’s capital, evidently eulogising visible persons. All these poems were eventually anthologised in his *Poems*, obviously with an eye for general distribution, but Ramsay’s elegies were also part of the world of popular street literature, being issued singly in broadsheet and/or pamphlet form.⁹⁹ As fate would have it probably at least some of these

⁹⁸ Kinghorn and Law (ed), *Poems by Ramsay and Fergusson*, (intro.) p. xiii.

⁹⁹ True to the word of Craig, *Scottish Literature*, pp. 111-12, the following broadsheets have been noted: NLS, S.302.b.2 (99), *Lucky Spence’s last Advice* (n.d.); NLS, Ry III.c.34.47; *An Elegy on Patie Birnie, The Famous Fiddler of Kinghorn* (24 January, 1721). This last was obviously an immature version of “The Life and Acts of; or, An Elegy on Patie Birnie” from *Poems*, which was dated 25 January 1722. The earlier broadsheet omits the following lines, present in the anthologised version:

O Johny Stocks, what’s come o’ thee?
 I’m sure thou’lt break they heart and die:
 Thy Birnie gane, thou’lt never be
 Nor blythe nor able
 To shake thy short houghs merrily
 Upon a table.

How pleasant was’t to see thee didle,
 And dance sae finely to his fiddle,
 With nose forgainst a lass’s middle,
 And briskly brag,
 With cutty steps to ding their striddle,
 And gar them fag.

He catch’d a crishy webster loun
 At runkling o’ his dreary’s gown,
 And wi’ a rung came oe’r his crown,

broadsides were pirated copies of individual poems Ramsay had printed for himself, a fact which, if true, “is ... still stronger evidence of his popularity”¹⁰⁰ and the mock elegy genre he was instrumental in stimulating. The main feature of these mock elegies in Scots seems to have been the way in which they presented a slice of Scottish life, not normally dealt with in the same realistic manner by the neo-classic English genre.

It seems that one vital foundation needed by Ramsay upon which to build his elegies, indeed all his poems in Scots, was a vernacular language appropriate for early modern times. It is here that we can once again glimpse the progressive, creative side of Ramsay at its best. Though there is no reason to seriously doubt that Allan Ramsay was conservative in both politics and matters of religion, it is probably wrong to make the jump in logic and assume that he was also conservative in things artistic. For in fact, he appears, as we have seen, to have been extremely progressive as far as his attitude towards Scots poetry was concerned. It is true that much of his earliest work involved rescuing old Scots classics from oblivion. Equally true, the former wigmaker also wrote poetry in the pastoral neo-classic English style. Yet his innovative approach to poetry in the Scots literary language appears to suggest the activities of a true pioneer and aficionado. As such, it seems that in the course of writing his Scots poetry, Ramsay was really redefining the language. The literary language (or languages) of such earlier masters as Blind Harry, Robert Henryson, and William Dunbar, was a fluent and expressive medium to work within during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but was it still an

For being there;
But starker thrums got Patie down
And knoost him sair.

Wae worth the dog, he maist had fell'd him,
Revengfu' Pate aft green'd to geld him,
He aw'd amends, and that he tell'd him,
 And bann'd to do't,
He took the tid, and fairly sell'd him
 For a recruit.

¹⁰⁰ Craig, *Scottish Literature*, p. 112.

appropriate language for the eighteenth century, regardless of what it had suffered due to conditions caused by reform and union?

The fact is, language is rarely a static medium. The English language, the named competitor with Scots for the hearts and literary souls of Scottish writers during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, has hardly remained unchanged in its (roughly) 1,500-1,600 year history. (This seems often overlooked when the subject of early modern Scottish writing is discussed.) In the dim and distant past, Anglo-Saxon English faced its “crisis” in the wake of 1066, when Old French became the language of court. In such an environment, though the language of the poet of *Beowulf* ceased to be a discernible entity unto itself, it – in a sense – lived on. It was still one component part to a highly fruitful language that was more appropriate for the high middle ages, and as it came to pass, was eventually codified through writings of such persons as Geoffrey Chaucer. In many ways, however, 1066 is a bit of an artificial date as far as Anglo-Saxon language and culture was concerned. Since (at least) the days of Edward the Confessor, Norman culture and language had seeped into the social framework of Anglo-Saxon England. It is conceivable, therefore, that some of the changes the English language underwent, as it passed through its Anglo-Norman phase on the road to becoming Middle English, may have occurred notwithstanding 1066. Perhaps some of these points are applicable to the situation faced by the Scots literary language during the early modern period.

Similarly, we tend to fixate upon certain dates as holding infamy for Scots as a literary language: 1560, 1603, and 1707. But dates are points of convenience only, serving as reminders of far more important social events: the gradual dissemination of English writing through the (protracted) distribution of commonly available printed Bibles (which was only really accomplished in 1638 when the first pocket Bible was printed); the loss of court patronage which meant that the embryonic Scots printing industry went into a virtual limbo until approximately the middle of the seventeenth century; and (as we have already seen) the adoption of

English as a way to appear more prepared to participate in the new political and economic environment of a united Britain. Yet this somehow suggests that contact with England and English poetic types and language was limited to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries only. In fact, Scots writers have always relied upon the English language to make up for any (perceived) shortcomings in their own tongue. (This tends to underline the fact that even they understood the close relationship between the two languages.) As Watson points out, Blind Harry would have probably referred to his literary language as “Inglis” so as to set it apart from Gaelic or Latin.¹⁰¹ The first Scot to refer to his own literary tongue as “Scottis” was Gavin Douglas. Loyal as Douglas may have been to his native language, even he relied upon English (as well as Latin and French) to plug the holes in his lexicon.¹⁰²

Perhaps then some of the changes that Scots experienced were only the natural outcome of long-established contact with English. This is not to suggest that the events associated with the dates 1560, 1603, and 1707 had *no* effect upon Scots. Rather, what they served to do was to make the differences between the middle Scots of Henryson, Dunbar, and others, and the more up to date Scots of Ramsay and Fergusson appear all the more dramatic. Of course, one major outcome of 1707 was that Scots would no longer be an “official language”¹⁰³ (which is the obvious contrast between it and the above mentioned example of mutated Anglo-French).

The language of the makars was distant, and though it was a perfectly suitable basis for a new Scots literary language, it needed updating. Modern linguistic scholarship indeed tends to suggest that this was the exact plan of attack employed by Ramsay, when compiling a glossary of Scots words for use in his own vernacular efforts. For despite his work at anthologising a number of Middle Scots standards in his *Ever Green*, Ramsay was not content to simply appropriate the old language of the makars, Castillians, and the rest, when it came to composing his own

¹⁰¹ Watson, *Literature of Scotland*, p. 79.

¹⁰² Watson, *Literature of Scotland*, p. 79.

¹⁰³ Watson, *Literature of Scotland*, pp. 18-19.

vernacular verse. Here again, is perhaps evidence that it was not mere antiquarian pursuit alone which drove him, nor simple revival that Ramsay was interested in – for revival in this instance would solely entail bringing that which was dead back to life again (no mean feat in itself, however!). Instead, as the work by Ramsay’s own modern editors tends to indicate, it is a new literary Scots which Ramsay ended up creating. As such, the sources exploited by Allan Ramsay, when setting about to create a new Scots literary language, are outlined in the introduction to a glossary compiled for his *Works*:

This glossary relates to Scots words and forms used by Ramsay in his “poems miscellaneous and uncollected” ... It contains well over 700 entries, of which about 200 are to be found in some of Ramsay’s own glossary to *Poems* 1728. About half of the total are “literary” words found in the Bannatyne MS.; the rest are adapted from the vernacular without recorded precedent, though instances of their usage may be found in older collections of proverbs and wise sayings. Ramsay’s vocabulary in Scots represents an appropriation of the spoken language as he knew it to the extent of some 1,500 words, for the purposes of comparison ... Burns employed about 2,500 Scots words, of which approximately half were captured by Ramsay.

Although a considerable pioneer, Ramsay was not a “coiner.” He converted a number of Scots words and expressions aurally into a phonetic approximation capable of being understood by those accustomed to reading English poetry. He was not consistent, either in his modernisation of Middle Scots styles ... or in his reproductions of a given word in phonetic convention ... His orthography was usually grounded in standard English pronunciation ... and a Scottish affectation controlled the spelling-forms of words which were the same in both Scots and English.¹⁰⁴

Literally feeling his way through the process, in essence, it appears that what Ramsay did was to replicate a new Scots literary language. We should not be so harsh on Ramsay for not being “consistent” in this endeavour, however: he had only his own best judgement to rely upon when it came to drawing up a suitable literary Scots for his own poetry, based, as it was, upon a number of traditional and (then) current sources. Further indication of his awareness of the modern situation, was

¹⁰⁴ B. Martin and J.W. Oliver (ed vols 1-2); A.M. Kinghorn and A. Law (ed vols 3-6), *The Works of Allan Ramsay* (6 vols; Edinburgh and London, 1945-74), iv, p. 200.

that he seemed interested in presenting his language with a eye to making it, whenever possible, understandable and palatable for the majority of readers of English,¹⁰⁵ while still retaining a genuine appearance of authenticity. Very important here as well, is the fact that Ramsay apparently incorporated words drawn from common parlance, which has a significance for his depictions of Edinburgh street culture, discussed above. As said earlier, this facet helps to impart a layer of authenticity upon such poems as “Lucky Spence.”

Bearing in mind the constituent characteristics of Ramsay’s vernacular language, it does seem fair to assume that Ramsay was making certain overtures to the more British leaning intellectual, residing on either side of the border of the two nations formerly separate in government. Certainly the comments he issued in the introduction to his *Ever Green* seem to generally agree with this assumption. Sadly however, it seems intention and actual achievement do not always coincide, and such was the case with Ramsay’s attempts to win over *all* the men of letters in the new united kingdoms of Scotland and England. In this instance one of his eventual detractors was, perhaps not surprisingly, another Scotsman, none other than Adam Smith. Lecturer on belles lettres in Edinburgh between 1748 to 1751,¹⁰⁶ after which he held the Chair of Logic and lecturer on jurisprudence at Glasgow University, Smith apparently owned copies of some of the more common anthologies of Scots poems in his day, including Ramsay’s *Poems* and *Ever Green*.¹⁰⁷ Yet never did the eventual author of *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) bring a discussion of poetry in Scots into the body of his lectures on language. As far as Smith was concerned, the subject of a poet like Ramsay and his

¹⁰⁵ Thus, he tends to write “dead” for “deid” and “head” for “heid.” This would take into account the century or so in which people had been used to reading books printed in English. Yet as stated, it was probably understood that such words would be ascribed their standard Scots, or Anglo-Scots pronunciation.

¹⁰⁶ According to Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p. 27, belles lettres was the forerunner of the study of English Literature – a subject developed by Scots so as to show the way to purge themselves of Scotticisms so as “to develop a Scotland which would take complete advantage of the 1707 Act of Union by playing its part in the newly united political entity of Britain” since English was the tongue of the dominant partner (p. 18).

¹⁰⁷ Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p. 31.

work should be dismissed from such discourse, since he was noted for employing distinctly Scots forms, and “did not write like a gentleman.”¹⁰⁸

Ramsay’s mock elegies on Edinburgh street culture, though – comparatively speaking – sparse, even within his repertoire, represented a sort of counter culture to the norm of early eighteenth century Scottish poetry. Apart from language, subject matter, and even stanza style employed, it also differed by the way in which it depicted the nation itself. One of the most prevalent images of Scotland in early eighteenth century poetry was that of the pastoral. Innumerable examples of this type of poetry exist; Ramsay himself produced his fair share. What this amounted to was transformation of the native landscape into the classical, Scotland became “Alba” or “Caledonia” an ancient term first, presumably, coined by the Romans. Often these descriptions were linked to the portrayal of Scotland’s heroic past, as in the case of John Harvey’s *The Life of Robert Bruce*, where words and phrases like “old Caledonia,” “fame’d Caledonia,” and “Scotia” appear frequently.¹⁰⁹ Poetry of this sort was preoccupied with producing a linking between modern Scotland with the ancient world; Scotland thus was portrayed as having possessed all the cultured poise of the most significant civilisations, past and present.

One slightly lesser-known individual who tried his hand at the pastoral was (yet another) Alexander Pennecuik (d. 1730).¹¹⁰ In many ways, his was a rather paler imitation of Allan Ramsay’s career¹¹¹ – the two were apparently acquaintances. Pennecuik’s *Corydon and Cochrania, A Pastoral on the Nuptials of ... Prince James Duke of Hamilton ... with the Lady Anne Cochran*, was published in 1723,¹¹² two

¹⁰⁸ Argument and quote provided by Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁹ GUL Spec. Coll. Mu 20-h.24; John Harvey, *The Life of Robert Bruce King of Scots* (Edinburgh, John Catanach, 1729).

¹¹⁰ This is Pennecuik the so-called “younger” – not to be confused with the above mentioned Dr Pennecuik, the “elder” and author of *A Geographical, Historical Description of the Shire of Tweeddale with a Miscelany and Curious Collection of Select Scottish Poems*.

¹¹¹ He was once described by Henderson, *History of Scottish Literature*, p. 411, as having been Ramsay’s near double.

¹¹² Mitchell no. 73850; Alexander Pennecuik, *Corydon and Cochrania, A Pastoral on the Nuptials of the High and Potent Prince James Duke of Hamilton ... &c. with the Lady Anne Cochran ... &c. Solomniz’d February 14, 1723* (Edinburgh, 1723).

years before the formalised version of Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd* was published.¹¹³ *Corydon and Cochrana*, however, contains all the usual classical allusions to Phoebus, Pan, and Cupid;¹¹⁴ its language is more or less standard (for this time) poetic English. Interestingly, some mention is made of the topography of Scotland, in particular the Refrewshire area: the poem itself actually addresses "all the Renfrew Shepherds."¹¹⁵

Perhaps Pennecuik's contributions to the posthumously published *A Collection of Scots Poems ... By the late Mr. Alexander Pennecuik, Gent. and Others*,¹¹⁶ might be held as being better examples of Scottish tradition than *Corydon and Cochrana*. This entire collection, however, is doubly significant in that it contains versions of many old, and ubiquitous, Scots standards like (once again) "Habbe Simpson," "Pattie Birnie," "John Cowper," "The Country Wake," and "Christis Kirk on the Green." The goal here may have been similar to that of Pennecuik's friend Ramsay in some of his anthologies, to present his own work alongside "old favourites" as a way of helping to promote his own poetry. In addition, this anthology contains what probably appeared at the time as being risqué material, which nevertheless for some proved to be sources for guffaw – again, something to which Ramsay was no stranger. As such, "The Lost Maidenhead" – its theme self-evident by its title – may have produced cathartic laughter for a society probably still guilt-ridden when it came to thoughts on human sexuality. Thus the woman asks, "Why should I weep, why censur'd by the law, | For losing of the thing I never saw?"¹¹⁷ Yet it is in Pennecuik's "Merry Tales from the lang Nights of

¹¹³ Though – Henderson, p. 403 reminds us – parts of the *Gentle Shepherd* appeared as eclogues a few years earlier: *Patie and Roger* (1721) and the sequel *Jenny and Maggie* (1723). Ramsay also produced his "An Ode, With a Pastoral Recitative on the Marriage of the Right Honourable, James Earl of Wemyss and Mrs. Janet Charteris" much earlier; 1720; see NLS, Ry III.c.34 (46).

¹¹⁴ *Corydon and Cochrana*, pp. 5-7.

¹¹⁵ *Corydon and Cochrana*, p. 7.

¹¹⁶ Mitchell no. 73851; *A Collection of Scots Poems on Several Occasions, By the late Mr. Alexander Pennecuik, Gent. and Others* (Edinburgh, James Reid, 1756).

¹¹⁷ "The Lost Maidenhead," in *A Collection of Scots Poems ... By the late Mr. Alexander Pennecuik, Gent. and Others*, p. 81.

Winter. In Dialogue betwixt the Tinklarion Doctor¹¹⁸ and his Grandam &c,” that we might find one possible picture of Scots life, at its commonest, but not necessarily most indigent, level. The scene painted in the opening stanza of this poem appears to be a reasonably accurate depiction of traditional Scottish life, indoors, during the winter months:

Tinklarion Doctor.
 On a winters night, my gran’am spinning,
 To make a web of good Scots linen;
 Her stool being plac’d next to the chimley;
 For she was auld and saw right dimly:
 My lucky-dad, an honest whig,
 Was telling tales of Bothwel-brig;¹¹⁹
 He could not mess to mind th’ attempt,
 For he was fitting peeling hemp.
 My aunt, whom none dare say has no grace,
 Was reading on the Pilgrim’s Progress;
 The Meikle tasker Davie Dallas,
 Was telling blads of William Wallace:
 My mither had her second son say,
 Wat he’d by heart of Davie Lindsay.¹²⁰

Indeed, the telling of tales and ballads has long been a standard pastime of the Scots, both at work and play: thus it is entirely believable that “Davie Dallas” would recite ballads on Wallace (as will be further discussed in a later chapter); so too is the case when “dad” tells stories about Bothwell Bridge. It is difficult to know

¹¹⁸“Tinklarion Doctor” is an interesting title. Tinklarion is from the root “tinker” which is of course an itinerant peddler; a dispossessed person such as a gypsy; a dispossessed Highlander. The early eighteenth century pamphleteer William Mitchell referred to himself as tinklarion, in reference to his original trade of tinsmithing. Of all these descriptions, that of the wandering peddler seems to best fit the present situation – perhaps Tinklarion Doctor was a chapman, or the master chapman, owing to his numerous references to literary pieces. It is quite obvious that he was not a dispossessed person. The other possible explanation of the title might amount to something like, “the wandering scholar.”

¹¹⁹The battle of Bothwell Bridge (22 June 1679) would make for a rather interesting topic of conversation for an “honest whig.” Losses as a result of the actual battle were small on both sides; but in the ensuing mopping-up operation, the government forces were ruthless in their pursuit of those sympathetic to the conventicle. Presumably as a whig – favouring concepts of consensual contract between ruler and people – “lucky dad” would be less than happy with such an outcome, since it represented a victory of those forces loyal to a king who believed himself Providentially installed, none other than Charles II. The commander of the victorious government forces was Monmouth, one of Charles’s (numerous) illegitimate progeny. See, G. Donaldson, *Scotland. James V-James VII* (Edinburgh, 1965), p. 371.

¹²⁰ Alexander Pennecuik, “Merry Tales from the lang Nights of Winter. In Dialogue betwixt the Tinklarion Doctor and his Grandam &c,” in *A Collection of Scots Poems ... By the late Mr. Alexander Pennecuik, Gent. and Others*, p. 9.

whether “aunt” would be reading John Bunyan or not; there is a suggestion that he was popular among a wide range of people.¹²¹ A lingering question-mark always hangs over the subject of female literacy. However, we have seen that some women were indeed interested in self improvement through the study of grammar and language, and later in this thesis the question of female abilities at reading will be examined in greater detail.

Yet it is interesting to note that the people presented in Pennecuik’s “slice of common-life” are remarkable well-informed. Not only aware of some of the more important social and political events impinging upon the course of Scottish history (the Wars of Independence, and the Covenanting movement), but they are also able to recite poetry produced by one of the most skilled (not to mention influential) Renaissance-era Scots poets. Granted, the characters in “Tinklarion Doctor” might not be representative of the most basic of the “base,” but the picture offered – if in any way a reflection of reality – tends to mitigate any ideas that the lower levels of Scottish society were uniformly filled with backward, illiterate, and ignorant people. Information concerning such events as the Wars of Independence and Bothwell Bridge could have been disseminated to the real-life counterparts of “Davie Dallas,” “dad,” and “mither” in any number of different ways. However, one possible means was through the informal historical chronologies contained in popular almanacs (see chapter five).¹²²

Pennecuik’s description of a winter evening spent in a reasonably well-off rustic’s home might be comparable to Thomson’s treatment of similar. In the most complete version of *Winter* (1746), the scene is set thus:

Meantime the village rouses up the fire;
While, well attested, as well believed,
Heard solemn, goes the goblin-story round,

¹²¹ Craig, *Scottish Literature*, p. 66.

¹²² As it turns out, Bruce’s victory at Bannockburn, and the battle of Bothwell Bridge were two events very often related in these chronologies. The entries themselves were often very terse – usually only the name of the event and when it occurred. Yet these brief snippets of Scottish history found in the almanacs may have sparked an interest in the reader, prompting him or her to investigate the subject of choice further.

Till superstitious horror creeps o'er all.
 Or frequent in the sounding hall they wake
 The rural gambol. Rustic mirth goes round –
 The simple joke that takes the shepherd's heart,
 Easily pleased; the long loud laugh sincere;
 The kiss, snatched hasty from the sidelong maid
 On purpose guardless, or pretending sleep;
 The leap, the slap, the haul; and shook to notes
 Of native music, the respondent dance.
 Thus jocund fleets with them the winter night.¹²³

Thomson presents his rustics as being “lower” than the rustics in Pennecuik’s poem. In “Winter” the common person is still given to complete belief in superstition; in “Tinklarion Doctor” the commoner is a well-read person, presumably of a higher level of intellect. Both pictures might – to an extent, and in varying degrees – be representative of accurate assessments of the common mentality. Yet it is interesting that the more vernacular-minded Pennecuik wished to elevate the perceived image of the ordinary person’s intellectual level, whereas the proponent of belle lettres, Thomson, portrayed them completely differently, almost in a distancing manner.

Such descriptions of domesticity as these may be juxtaposed against poetry describing the non-commonplace dwelling. In one example of this type of literature, the theme of the classic Alba once again comes to the fore. Thus, listening to the following description of Dalkeith Palace, the audience could be well excused for believing the description pertained to a building in some far-off, bygone place:

Clasp'd in the Arms of two surrounding Floods,
 Compass'd with gentle Hills and rising Woods,
 On a green bank the beauteous Fabrick stands,
 And the subjected Stream with Pride commands.
 What tho' no lofty Domes project in Air,
 Or lengthen'd Collonnades with pomp appear;
 Yet is the whole in simple State designed,

¹²³James Thomson, “Winter,” in *James Thomson Poetical Works*, J.L. Robertson (ed) (Oxford, 1908), pp. 208-09 (ll. 617-29). This last and most complete version of “Winter” is nearly twice the length of the first. That same first version (1726) did not contain any depiction of this scene of village conviviality (nor the above quoted description of the city, which immediately follows this section). Thomson was in the habit of continually refining and adding to his poems; in this instance, descriptions of human interplay were added to a poem originally, and primarily concerned with, nature.

Plain and majestick, like her mighty Mind;
 From Gothic Ruin, and obscure Disgrace,
 Who rais'd the slumbering Genius of the Place,
 And fix'd the Mansion of her future Race.¹²⁴

A prevalent concept in a Scotland preparing to “enlighten” itself was improvements in architecture, presumably stressing the grandeur of classical construction. This piece, though replete with rhetorical neo-Augustan language, seems to speak of the inherent splendour of architecture not of the classical mould. Instead, the simplicity of an ancient design seems to be what is being praised. A link with the past thus is forged. Further, the whole aesthetic appeal of the pastoral setting – in which the palace seems an integral piece, as if it actually sprung from the land itself, not in the least alien to the natural beauty around it – is what is being celebrated.

Nevertheless, this linking of things intrinsically Scottish with things intrinsically classical¹²⁵ is a prevalent concept in eighteenth century scholarship. Somewhat commonplace among many Scots writers in the eighteenth century was this binding of various cultural threads, but nevertheless still retaining an eye for Scottish tradition. However, the important point behind all this, is that this really was a culture – taken in its entirety – with some doubts as to what road to take next.

A work that in some ways follows some of the trends begun by Ramsay in such efforts as “Tartana” is Thomas Blair’s pastoral, *Gibbie and Wattie*. The pastoral was yet another standard classical type, and it seems possible that Blair’s 1734 composition was inspired by Ramsay’s somewhat earlier *Gentle Shepherd*. Though based upon a classical model, *Gibbie and Wattie*, like many of Ramsay’s neo-classical works, has all but banished the “foreign muses.”¹²⁶ Also noteworthy,

¹²⁴ GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 56-h.16; “Verses Occasioned by seeing the Palace and Park of Dalkeith, Anno MDCXXXII. Humbly Inscrib’d to his Grace, The Duke of Buccleugh,” in *A Description of the Parish of Melrose; in Answer to Mr. Maitland’s Queries, set to each Parish of the Kingdom* (Edinburgh, Ruddimans, 1743), pp. 6-7.

¹²⁵ Perhaps it was not necessarily a desire to combine elements Scottish with elements classical that was the driving force, but rather to connect things Scottish with things ancient, and thus, by extension, with things classic.

¹²⁶ There was, especially among those artists who became involved in the vernacular revival, something of a backlash against overtly foreign influences in music and poetry. One of the most “touchy,” in this respect, might have been Robert Fergusson.

is that the said piece incorporates – again, vaguely reminiscent of Ramsay’s *Gentle Shepherd* – the introduction of literary Scots:

Youth’s a diverting Time for ilka Creature
 After its Kind, according to its Nature.
 The Cattle leaps for Joy, Birds sweetly sing,
 Wi’ cheerfou Notes proclaim the pleasant Spring.
 The Gowk, the dullest Singer of them a,
 Without a Rhyme but ane, or Note but twa;
 Yet he attends his Season for to sing,
 In Woods and groves he makes their Echoes ring,
 Repetes his Sang some hundred Times a Day,
 Heartsom to hear, in glorious Month of May.
 Come let us then with highest Notes espress,
 And sing Dame Nature, in her youthful Dress.¹²⁷

It must be emphasised that this type of poetry is heavily indebted to a tradition which extended back to the old makars, who combined Latin scholarship with the vernacular, to produce a poetic style pleasing to the ears of a European-looking court. As we know from c.1603 onwards court and government had become increasingly anglicised, and so the classical tradition was re-emphasised by English concepts of Augustan or classical poetic types. All this being said, the setting at least was still implied as being Scottish inspired.

For example, Drummond of Hawthornden’s *Polemo-Middinia inter Vitarvan et Neberman* (c.1645) might be considered a poem displaying sentimentality towards Scots. An example of macaronic verse in Latin and Scots, this poem from the repertoire of the Castillian William Drummond¹²⁸ has been compared to the ubiquitous “Christis Kirk on the Grene” in its portrayal of coarse, rustic burlesque and mayhem. However, the poem’s “coarseness is partially masked by the Latin vocabulary, the hilarious Scots phrasing, and the hexameter rhymes, all of which add

¹²⁷ Mitchell no. 45724; Thomas Blair, *Gibbie and Wattie. A Pastoral on the Death of Alexander Maben – Organ-Maker in Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1734), p. 3.

¹²⁸ In what is now a familiar pattern, some doubts have been expressed about the authorship of *Polemo-Middinia* in the past. The arguments for and against Drummond as being the author are found in *The Poetical Works of William Drummond of Hawthornden*, L.E. Kastner (ed) (2 vols; Manchester, 1913), ii, pp. 418-20. In the end, Kastner favours the case for William Drummond (over Defoe’s claim for Samuel Colvil), though cautiously he does treat *Polemo-Middinia* as a “Poem of Doubtful Authenticity.”

Sol-goosi in pelago prope littora Bruntiana;	Gave themselves up in the sea near the shore of Burntisland;
Sea-sutor obstupuit, summique in margine saxi	The comorant was stupified, and on the edge of the highest rock
Scartavit paelustre caput, wingasque flapvit;	Scratched his very illustrious head, and flapped his wings;
Quodque magis, alte volitans heronius ipse	And something more: the heron itself flying high
Ingemains clig clag shyttavit in undis.	Increasingly shat 'clig clag' into the waves.
Namque in principio (storiam tellebimus omnem)	For in the beginning (we shall tell the whole story)
Muckrellium ingentem turbam Vitarva per agros	The lady of Scotstarvit made a large disorderly crowd of dungbasket carriers
Nebarnæ marchare fecit, & dixit ad illos:	To march through the fields of Newbarns, and she said to them:
Ite hodie armati greppis, dryvate caballos	'Today go armed with pronged forks, drive horses
Crofta per agros Nebrnæ, transque fenestras:	Through the farm and fields of Newbarns, and past the windows:
Quod si forte ipsa Nebarna venerit extra,	But if by chance the lady of Newbarns herself will come outside,
Warrantabo omnes, & vos bene defendebo.	I warrant you all, and I will protect you well.' ¹³³

Apparent are allusions to both classical motifs – “the nymphs,” “the gods” – and items pulled straight from the common and everyday. Additionally, it is remarkable how descriptive phrases like “plash plash” and “clig clag” seem to echo the sound of the actually action – in this case the sound of aquatic birds swimming and defecating. Also, though this sort of macaronic verse might be considered “high” because of its being based upon a sort of pidgin Latin, the inclusion of coarse allusion – birds defecating (“Increasingly shat ‘clig clag’ ...”), people carrying dungbaskets, etc. – tends to “lower” this piece; and in fact, *Polemo-Middinia* is usually held up as being an example of carnivalesque-type literature.¹³⁴ Though in terms of language concerns, although *Polemo-Middinia* is not thoroughly a piece in

¹³³ *Polemo-Middinia* “macaronic text” from: collation of *The Poetical Works of William Drummond*, ii, pp. 321-22 (ll. 1-29), and MacLaine (ed), *Christis Kirk Tradition*, p. 40; *Polemo-Middinia* “translated text” from MacLaine (ed), *Christis Kirk Tradition*, p. 41.

¹³⁴ Never to be left in the dust where any literary type was concerned, Ramsay also attempted macaronic verse. To a large extent, Ramsay’s verse appears as playful mockery of the whole Latin genre. In his “Macaronic, Edinburgh, June 11, 1722,” the reader might find amusement with such

the vernacular language, it still appears to be a piece describing what might be termed vernacular or native culture, in keeping with the literal definition of the term “of one’s native country ...”¹³⁵

Thus in an exploration of the literature of seventeenth and eighteenth century Scotland, it appears prudent that we should always be as explicit as possible when defining a piece as being vernacular: is it vernacular in the sense of the language employed, in terms of the cultural motifs presented, or a combination (in varying proportions) of the two? In terms of a poem like *Polemo-Middinia*, to classify this as being vernacular in the sense of language, might be to stretch the case; in the sense of cultural motifs presented, however, the argument seems a good deal stronger.¹³⁶ It might be fair to assert, as a result, that though language employed can often be sought out a good indicator of cultural allegiances,¹³⁷ it is not the only medium by which affinities and biases towards any one culture may be gauged. Perhaps then, it is not quite accurate to say that the writing of vernacular poetry waned during the course of the seventeenth century.

phrases as “Senex Fumosus” – in reference to the now ubiquitous term for old Edinburgh, Auld Reekie. See, “Macaronic,” *Works of Allan Ramsay*, iii, p. 168.

¹³⁵ At least as defined by the Oxford Dictionary.

¹³⁶ Nothing being said here is meant to allege that *Polemo-Middinia* is *solely* a piece written in tribute to Scots vernacular tradition alone: for example, it is quite obvious that the long tradition of Scots Latin scholarship was highly influential to Drummond as well.

¹³⁷ And in many cases, this is still a good, and the only logical, plan of action; all that is being suggested here is that maybe, in some instances, a few more criteria might be considered, for a more balanced assessment of the cultural traditions present in a piece.

Thus it may be argued that a piece does not necessarily have to be portrayed in the Scots vernacular *language*, in order to be a projection of Scots vernacular *culture*. Sometimes these can turn up in less than obvious places. Tobias Smollet's writings have been hailed as being among the initial examples of the modern British novel, works which still display a Scottish element.¹³⁸ Despite the portrayal of Roderick as the modern northern Briton, his very origins are associated with an ancient mystical heritage, pulled from the traditions of his native land. Thus, distressed by dreams when pregnant with her son, Roderick's mother proves more than his father can tolerate, and becoming so "tired with her impunity, [he] at last consulted a Highland seer, whose favourable interpretation he would have secured beforehand with a bribe, but found him incorruptible."¹³⁹

What we might be seeing here is a representation of the voice of impending reason coming into contact with the voice of the superstitions of the past. The father desires to employ the seer as a sort of placebo to placate his distressed wife. In doing so, he is in a way attempting to control the past, to corrupt it for his own means. Yet the traditional past is not so easily corrupted; its voice not so easily denied or muted. In this one instance, modernity loses out to tradition.

The idea of combining Scottish themes with a polite – in essence, classical – style of poetry seems to have been occasionally in vogue during the early modern period. What this tends to suggest is an attitude among some that they believed they were expected to indicate their literary prowess (and thus indicate their level of advancement) by writing in classical English. Yet the Scottish mind and upbringing was difficult to deny, and so occasionally references to Scots words, phrases, or

¹³⁸ Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p. 57.

cultural motifs creep in. These may be self-conscious attempts at juxtaposing their own culture to that of the greater; or they may be the literary equivalents to the sort of verbal slips Hume expressed angst over (see above) – there is really little proof to say one way or the other in many cases. Thus in the case of Dr Archibald Pitcairne, though the intent of his literature has been described as having had the purpose of votive verse, in the classical mould, designed to promote divinely installed government in Scotland,¹⁴⁰ he still finds himself inserting phrases and words indicative of a Scots background within the primarily English text of his *Babell; A Satirical Poem, on the Proceedings of the General Assembly*.¹⁴¹ Thus, in Kinloch's composite text of *Babel*, the less than staid Latinist Pitcairne offers his readers small doses of Scots:

‘The least lay elder here does ken
That we do all these things to condemn,¹⁴²

and further,

‘I know some Cameronian rogues
Say, we for this deserve the joggs ...¹⁴³

Obviously, the inclusion of these Scotticisms can be at least partially attributable to Pitcairne wishing to maintain his rhyming sequence, and, as indicated earlier, only a light smattering of these Scots words are found anyhow. However, he also makes

¹³⁹ Smollett, *Roderick Random*, p. 9 (chap. 1).

¹⁴⁰ Kidd, “The ideological significance,” pp. 114-115.

¹⁴¹ See Archibald Pitcairne, *Babell; A Satirical Poem, on the Proceedings of the General Assembly in the Year M.DC.XCII*, G.R. Kinloch (ed.) (Edinburgh, 1830). Kinloch based his edition upon two sources, the so-called Keith and Arniston MSS. A third MS, apparently unknown to Kinloch has turned up: GUL Spec. Coll., MS Ferguson 108; Archibald Pitcairne, “Babel, or, The Assemblie.” The curious thing about it is that boasts about being “Written in the Irish tongue and translated into Scotch, for the benefit of the Leidges.” This proviso also forms the subtitle to Kinloch's edition. There is little to suggest that this was originally a Gaelic rendering, and it is anybody's good guess as to what might have been Pitcairne's motivation for saying it was.

Nevertheless, given this and the fact that *Babell* was an English piece, primarily, indicates that the general confusion over just what exactly was Scots, likely initiated by the reformation, continued into Pitcairne's day. As a result, the importance of Ramsay's efforts in redefining the Scots literary language is once again apparent.

¹⁴² Pitcairne, *Babell*, p. 16 (ll. 322-23).

¹⁴³ Pitcairne, *Babell*, p. 20 (ll. 466-67).

allusion to such examples of Scots culture (outside of any desire to maintain rhyme) as the reciting of traditional ballads – in essence, tales of Robin Hood and Little John,¹⁴⁴ two popular subjects of the Scots Ballad Tradition – and eating “haggise.”¹⁴⁵ *Babel* is composed in such a way that it gives the air of deliberateness: he probably included little that was not carefully contemplated. One opinion has it that Pitcairne was extremely confident in his Latin verse, even though such indicated “that a Scottish poet writing in Latin could achieve a linguistic assurance and sophistication not available to him in English or Scots.”¹⁴⁶ But if such a poet could achieve such confidence in his Latin verse, could not the same talented individual, upon setting his mind to the task, also produce a confident text like *Babel*, done in English with a smattering of Scots? It seems possible, especially since the poem’s subject matter amounted to a biting satire on the presbyterian assembly of 1692, a potentially risky task not for the faint of heart in itself. Taking all of this into its entirety might tend to indicate a confidence – even if only very slight – in the viability of traditional Scots culture, in the face of the pressures pitted against it.

Classical themes and Scots and language have long made for strange bedfellows; it is quite interesting that earlier works indicative of such find themselves being given new life again in the first half of the eighteenth century. Yet this was hardly a trend limited to the early modern period alone, since excellent examples of it existed in the medieval and renaissance periods. For example, there is the following quotation from a work ascribed to one John Bellenden, Archdeacon of Moray:

Quhen silver Diane full of Beims bricht,
 Frae dark eclipse was past this uther nicht,
 And to the crab hir proper mansion gane;
 Artophilax contending with his micht
 In the frit eist to set his visage richt;
 I mene the leider of the Charle-wane:
 Above our heid then was the Ursis twain,

¹⁴⁴ Pitcairne, *Babell*, p. 47 (ll. 1241-42).

¹⁴⁵ Pitcairne, *Babell*, p. 49 (l. 1318).

¹⁴⁶ Duncan, *Thomas Ruddiman*, p. 18.

Quhen staris small obscure grew to out sicht,
And Lucifer left twinkling alane ...¹⁴⁷

Of eardlie state bewailing thus the chance
Of fortune gude I had nae esperance,
Sae lang I had swont in hir seis sae deip,
That sad avysing with her thochtfull lance
Could find nae port to anker her firmance,
Till Morpheus the dreiry god of sleip,
For very rewth did on my cures weip,
And set his slewth and deidly contenance,
With snorand vains to throw my body creip.¹⁴⁸

The work of an important early figure in the Scots-Latin tradition, it was this same John Bellenden (fl. 1530s), who, while under commission from King James V,¹⁴⁹ translated Hector Boece's *Scotorum historiae* in Scots.¹⁵⁰ The redoubtable linguist Bellenden also tried his hand at translating a classical author no less daunting than Livy;¹⁵¹ he nevertheless dabbled in poetry that was a "little-closer-to-home." His description of the twilight hours in the Scottish countryside, "Quhen silvir Diane, ful of Bemis bricht,"¹⁵² is undoubtedly based upon personal observation that is tempered with a flair for the Classics. The above is indicative of what might be termed classic middle Scots at its best. Thus classical references are described in an extremely confident and artistic Middle Scots. This is, in fact, an example of a Scots courtly culture, its disappearance remarked upon by Daiches (see above). That this work was reprinted by the scholarly inclined Foulis brothers, might be seen as being an exercise in antiquarianism, but it also could be a testament to the success – however limited – of the resurgence and redefinition of Scots initiated by the likes of

¹⁴⁷ GUL Spec. Coll. Mu 47-c.22, *Venture and Vyce. A Poem, Addrest to James V. King of Scots by the Famous and renowned Clerk, Mr John Bellentyne Archdeacon of Murray* (Glasgow, R. & A. Foulis, 1750), p. 19.

¹⁴⁸ *Venture and Vyce*, Mu 47-c.22, p. 22.

¹⁴⁹ For which his was apparently paid £30 in c.1531; see *The Works of John Bellenden* (3 vols; Edinburgh, 1822), i, p. xxxix.

¹⁵⁰ An accessible modern edition is *The Chronicles of Scotland Compiled by Hector Boece, Translated into Scots by John Bellenden 1531*, W. Seton, R.W. Chambers, H.W. Husbands, and E.C. Batho (ed), (2 vols; STS, 1938-41).

¹⁵¹ See *Livy's History of Rome ... Translated into Scots by John Bellenden 1533*, W.A. Craigie (ed), (2 vols; STS, 1901-03).

¹⁵² "The Proheme of the Cosmographer," in *The Works of John Bellenden*, i, pp. v-xvi.

Ramsay. However, the themes in this piece are pretty abstract, having little relevance for early modern Scottish common life.

Yet the idea of “Scottifying” Latin or Greek based themes did not begin or end with Bellenden. Strange as it may seem upon first reflection, there had always existed a tradition of combined Scots-Latin scholarship within the nation. Since medieval times Latin scholarship was always afforded the highest priority in the Scottish curriculum. In fact, prior to the Reformation the intelligentsia of Scotland were bilingual in the sense that they had a command of both Scots and Latin: English never really came into the scene. It was only after the Reformation that Scots scholars came into contact with the English language, via the translated protestant bible.¹⁵³ It is this characteristic of early Scots-Latin artists like Bellenden, in combining personal observation of the native topography with Classical types, that was first, and possibly best, epitomised in the personage of Gavin Douglas (c.1474-1522).

Douglas’s most impressive work (arguably, of course) was his translation of Virgil’s *Aeneid* into “Scots metre.” The mid-twentieth-century author and literary critic Ezra Pound goes on record as having heaped enormous amounts of praise upon Douglas for his rendition of the *Aeneid*. Pound’s worship of the poetic abilities of the 5th Earl of Angus’s son knew few – if any – limits; in a matter-of-fact-manner, he declares that Douglas’s version was far superior to Virgil’s original.¹⁵⁴ Though Pound’s views on the *Eneados* may seem like “over-the-top” panegyric, he is correct in extolling the virtues of Douglas’s work when it portrays natural phenomena; witness his treatment of the prelude to the episode which has the goddess Juno persuading Æolus to wreak havoc upon the Trojan fleet:

And on this wyß, wyth hart byrnying as fyre,
Musying alone, full of makyce and ire,
Tyll Eolus cuntre, that wyndy regioun,

¹⁵³ I.S. Ross and S.A.C. Scobie, “Patriotic Publishing as a Response to the Union,” in T.I. Rae (ed), *The Union of 1707 - Its Impact on Scotland* (Glasgow, 1974), p. 96.

¹⁵⁴ E. Pound, “How to Read (1928),” in T.S. Elliot (ed), *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (London, 1954), p. 35.

A brudy land of furyus stormy sowne,
 This goddis went, quhar Eolus the kyng
 In gowsty cavys the wyndis lowde quhissiling
 And braithy tempestis by hys power refrenys,
 In bandis hard schet in presoun constreys,
 And thai heirat havand in full gret disdeyn,
 Quhill all the hill resoundis, quhryne and plene
 About thar closouris braying with many a rare.
 Kyng Eolus set hie apon his chare,
 With ceptour in hand thar muyd to meyb and still,
 Temperis that ire, leß thai suld at thar will
 Beir with thar byr the skyis, and drive about
 Erd, ayr and sey, quhen euer thame lest blaw out.
 Thus the hie fader almychty in cavis dyrk
 This wyndis hyd, for dreid sik wrangis thai wyrk,
 And thar abuf set weghty hillys huge,
 Gave thame a kyng quhilk, as thar lord and iuge,
 At certane tyme thame stanching and withhald
 And at command also mycht quhen he wald

Lat thame go fre at large to blaw out braid.¹⁵⁵

There is a vividness here, in describing the fury of a maritime storm, that goes far beyond a simple(!) translation of the original Latin; as Pound has remarked, Gavin Douglas is at his best, and in fact improves upon Virgil, whenever the text touches the sea or the elements.¹⁵⁶ That Douglas was never fully satisfied in producing a mere direct, word-for-word translation of Virgil (if it is at all possible to produce a direct translation of any Latin original),¹⁵⁷ is perhaps fully evident through his own admission that “Sum tyme the text man haue ane expositioun, | Sum tyme the collour will caus a litill additioun.”¹⁵⁸ Obviously, then, Douglas is adding to the text, but what is the nature of these additions, and when are they most evident? Are they simply for the sake of clarity, or is there a greater artistic freedom being exercised in his *Eneados*?

¹⁵⁵ *Virgil's Aeneid translated into Scottish Verse by Gavin Douglas, Bishop of Dunkeld*, D.F.C. Coldwell (ed) (4 vols; STS, 1957-64), Book I, chapter 2, ll. 1-23.

¹⁵⁶ E. Pound, “Landor,” in *Ezra Pound, Selected Prose, 1907-1965*, W. Cooksen (ed) (London, 1973), p. 356.

¹⁵⁷ Lindsay, *Scottish Literature*, p. 106.

¹⁵⁸ *Aeneid translated ... by Gavin Douglas*, Book I, prologue, ll. 346-47.

Pound maintained that it was only natural that Douglas could produce a superior version of *Vigil's* work, since he "had heard the sea."¹⁵⁹ That said, it begs the question, which sea had he heard? Most likely it was off Scotland's south-east coast, an assertion made all the more likely if we accept the fact that his point of origin was indeed the coastal castle of Tantallon (E. Lothian), to the east of North Berwick. It seems likely, then, that when Douglas is making reference to "the wind's loud whistling," he is thinking more of the sound of the wind in his own part of the world, than of Virgil's text. This is related to, but goes a bit beyond, Coldwell's assertion, that part of Douglas's success, through his "rusticity," comes about because he is "translating into terms of contemporary understanding."¹⁶⁰ And it is a sort of "contemporary understanding" which seems bound up in, or interwoven with, Scots language. Thus, though Douglas was working with the classics, and interpreting *from* Latin, he was thinking in Scots, and interpreting *into* that language; into that type of "contemporary understanding." And though Coldwell's comments were specifically applied to the way in which "the distinguished are ... ennobled as [for example] 'Schir Dardanus' and 'Schir Ditis'," it is perhaps more significant that Douglas bows to the dictates of his own physical environment, and translates the Classic World into Scotland's coastal regions. The Mediterranean, therefore, becomes a metaphor for the land and seaside of contemporary Scotland.

It is therefore Douglas to whom we might give credit for starting a genre, effectively taken up by later Scots writers. Extremely significant in this whole tradition is the above mentioned idea of an author transposing his life experiences to what might be described as an abstract environment, in this instance, based upon classic texts. One eighteenth century author in particular seemed to excel in this respect, as well as introducing a heightened level of the vernacular, while also interpreting into contemporary understanding.

¹⁵⁹ Pound, "How to Read," p. 35.

¹⁶⁰ *Aeneid translated ... by Gavin Douglas*, p. 63 (editor's introduction).

Indeed, this heightened usage of Scots reached new levels during the century's midpoint in the rather cleverly executed *Ajax, His Speech to the Grecian Knabbs, from Ovid's Metam. Lib. XIII*,¹⁶¹ which was the product of one Robert Forbes.¹⁶² What the central portion of this piece amounted to, was a retelling in so-called "Broad Buchans"¹⁶³ of a section of Ovid's *Metamorphosis* – a work which probably enjoyed at least limited circulation, and spawned a few imitators.¹⁶⁴ The following is indicative of the nature and content of Forbes's accomplishment:

Ajax bangs up, fase targe was shught
 In seven fald o' hide;
 An' bein bouden'd up wi' wraith,

¹⁶¹ See Mitchell, no. 32695, and GUL Spec. Coll. Mu 49-f.25; *Ajax, His Speech to the Grecian Knabbs, from Ovid's Metam. Lib. XIII ... Attempted in broad Buchans. To which are added A Journal to Portsmouth, And a Shop-bill, In the same Dialect. With a Key. By R -- F -- Gent.* (Glasgow 1755); the Mitchell Library also holds a few later editions.

¹⁶² A note in the fly-leaf of GUL Spec. Coll. 49-f.25; *Ajax, His Speech to the Grecian Knabbs*, appearing to be in the hand of a previous owner of the volume, David Murray, informs us that Forbes's "Scots Poems" were collected and published in 1777 by Reverend David Ferguson.

In an all too familiar scenario, the life history of Robert Forbes and his work is poorly known. The publishing of *Ajax* appears to have run its course during the eighteenth century before fizzling out. Forbes's poem was to resurface again in the form of a newly printed edition in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The preamble to that edition contains some enlightening information, mostly about the printing history of the poem, and is quoted here:

... frequent enquiries have been made for additional specimens of the genuine Buchan dialect, and "Ajax his Speech, &c." by Robert Forbes, being now very rare, has been reprinted ... as affording good specimens of the dialect of the district.

Information regarding Robert Forbes has been sought for in various quarters, but without success as to anything reliable. He is often confounded with William Forbes, the author of "Dominie Deposed," who was schoolmaster at Peterculter, and who enlisted or left this country for Ireland about 1732. "Ajax" was published in Aberdeen in 1742, 8vo; Edin. 1754; Glasgow, 1755, 8vo; Leith, 1761, 8vo, which copy is followed in this reprint; Edin. *Ruddiman* 12mo; in "Scots Poems," 1785, in which "Ulysses' Answer to Ajax's Speech" appears, as "never before published;" Aberdeen, 1791, 18mo; and at the Gordon's Hospital Press, Aberdeen, without date, 18mo.

Ajax, His Speech to the Grecian Knabbs, from Ovid's Metam. Lib. XIII ... (Aberdeen, 1869).

As to the identity of the author of *Ajax*, the only visible person by that name is Robert Forbes (1708-75), Episcopalian clergyman, ardent Jacobite, and Bishop of Ross and Caithness 1762. This Forbes (if it is the same person) also kept a journal of his activities, among which was the confirming of 616 persons in the area between Inverness and John O' Groats. For a short biography, of Robert Forbes clergyman, see *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 329.

¹⁶³ Literally, the dialect of, roughly-speaking, Aberdeenshire.

¹⁶⁴ Ovid's work inspired one individual of singular wit to produce a satirical clone of the original:

Sol's Mannor was a pretty House,
 But meaner far than Halie-rood-house ...

See: GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 56-i.9; (William Meston) *Phaethon: or the first Fable of the Second Book of Ovid's Metamorphoses Burlesqu'd* (Edinburgh, 1720), p. 3.

Wi' atry face he ey'd

[Latin text here]

The Trojan shore, an' a' the barks
That tedder'd fast did ly
Alang the coast; an' raxing out
His gardies, loud did cry:

O Jove! The cause we here do plead,
An' inco great's the staik;
Bat sall that sleeth Ulysses now
Be said to be my maik?

Ye ken right well, fan Hector try'd
Thir barks to burn an' scowder,
He took to speed o' fit, because
He cou'd na' bide the ewder.

[Latin text here]

Bat I, like birky, stood the brunt,
An' slocken'd out the glead,
Wi' muckle virr, an' syne I gar'd
The limmers tak the speed.¹⁶⁵

For comparative purposes, the (more or less) same in standard early modern poetic English is now offered:

The Chiefs were set; the Soldiers aroun'd the Field:
To these the master of the Seven-fold Shield
Upstarted fierce: And kindled with Disdain
Eager to speak, unable to contain
His boiling Rage, he rowl'd his Eyes around
The Shore, and Græcian Gallies hall'd a-ground.
Then stretching out his Hands, O Jove, he cry'd;
Must then our Cause before the Fleet be try'd?
And dares Ulysses fore the Prize contend
In fight of what he durst not once defend?
But basely fled that memorable Day,
When I from Hector's Hands redeem'd the flaming Prey
So much 'tis safer at the noisie Bar
With Words to flourish, than engage in War.

¹⁶⁵ GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 49-f.25; Robert Forbes, *Ajax, His Speech to the Grecian Knabbs, from Ovid's Metam. Lib. XIII ... Attempted in Broad Buchans. To which are added A Journal to Portsmouth, And a Shop-Bill, In the Same Dialect ...*, Glasgow, 1755, pp. 3-5 (stanzas 2-6). In the interest of brevity, the Latin equivalents at the end of each stanza are omitted here.

By different Methods we maintain our Right,
 Nor am I made to talk, nor he to fight.
 In bloody Fields I labour to be great;
 His arms are smooth Tongue, and Soft Deceit:
 Nor need I speak my Deeds, for those you see,
 The Sun, Day are Witnesses for me.¹⁶⁶

Ovid's epic account of ancient classical times garnered a fair following during the eighteenth century. Even small bookshops like that of little-known books-sellers, such as Matthew Crawford (of Edinburgh?), stocked it both in Latin and in translation.¹⁶⁷ Probably little doubt that the popularity of the ancient Roman poet's genius among (most likely) the more literate, together with the growing momentum of the vernacular revival, helped convince Forbes that the time was right to produce a bilingual Latin-Scots edition. The wrong conclusion should not be drawn, however: his was still a book not too likely produced with the nation's basically literate in mind. Yet its printing does help to support the belief that by mid-century, Scots vernacular could be wielded with a good deal of confidence, and perhaps even had achieved a wider level of respectability. Its creation might also suggest that the old Scots/Latin tradition could be revitalised to fill a niche in a Scotland that was seemingly well enough versed with the classics, yet a bit more comfortable with its native language.¹⁶⁸

Thus the stage was prepared for the veritable experts insofar as command of the new, revitalised Scots literary language was concerned. This stage had been set by the likes of Ramsay, and to a lesser extent his imitators, such as Alexander Pennecuik. The actors in the next scene of the drama would be well represented by

¹⁶⁶ GUL Spec. Coll. Eadie 195 and 196; *Ovid's Metamorphoses in Fifteen Books, Translated by the most Eminent Hands*, 4th ed (2 vols; London, 1773); "Ovid's Metamorphoses Book XIII. Translated by Mr. Dryden, and Others. The Speeches of Ajax and others by Mr. Dryden," ii, pp. 239-40. "Mr. Dryden" is indeed Restoration English poet John Dryden (1631-1700).

¹⁶⁷ NLS Adv. MS 5.1.12; "Mr Matthew Crawford's printed catalogue of Manuscripts in fol.," no. 942, *Ovid's Metamorphoses by Willimont*. NLS Adv. MS 5.1.12; "Mr L.'s [catalogue]," no. 30, *Ovid's Metamorphoses in Latin*. NLS Adv. MS 5.1.12; "Books in Fol. Edin. Aprile the 27th – 1726," *Ovid's Metamorphoses (in Latin), Lon. 1698*; 24 copies of *Ovid's Metamorphoses with Willimonts Notes*, @ 1s.

¹⁶⁸ The language of Forbes's *Ovid*, does not seem quite as "low" as that in Ramsay's elegies. Taken together with the author's subject matter, a piece of writing from an old Roman master, it might lead to the suggestion that there was once again some limited intellectual interest in Scots, providing it was portrayed it at least the semblance of dignity.

Fergusson and Burns. Yet these owed much to persons like Allan Ramsay. The former wigmaker could have taken the easy road, followed the norm, and worked entirely within the English poetic medium. He chose not instead, preferring to experiment with old Scots types, updated, and in certain instances thoroughly representative of a vision of Scotland rarely portrayed in quite the same fashion. At the risk of repeating the phrase, these are hardly the actions of the antiquarian; more those of a man committed to propagating a dynamic medium.

The language of Henryson, Dunbar, etc., may no longer have been appropriate for the eighteenth century.¹⁶⁹ The rustic speech exemplified by the efforts of Ramsay may indeed have been closer to the normal speech of the day: certainly more so than the courtly works of pre-1603. This new language of his was wrapped up in his portrayals of Edinburgh street life. So interdependent was this revamped language, and these illustrations of common life, that the two together seemed to form a sort of symbiotic relationship. Through the inherent poetic nature of the language, evocative description could provide the appearance of realism. This quality was also apparent in such works as *Polemo-Middinia* and Forbes's Scots version of *Ovid*. In these, as in Ramsay's mock elegies, Scots lends a descriptive strength to Scottish subjects, which English might be hard pressed to do with the same efficiency. The pattern for a new niche for Scots, as a language of colloquial, artistic expression had been laid down. Scots was therefore able to withstand the forces against it, precisely because it was able to bend when necessary.

Though frowned upon by polite Westminster society, colloquial Scots, like literary portrayals of traditional Scots culture, could survive and even make a comeback. What was gone forever was courtly Scots language and culture, just as the Scottish court itself, from 1603 onwards, was also forever gone. However, when

¹⁶⁹ In fact, this very point was raised by J.F. Miller, *Blind Harry's 'Wallace'* (Glasgow, 1914), p. 12. Miller maintained that "the vernacular of the Old Scots poets had become almost unintelligible to the common reader." We do know, however, that Ramsay, for example, was well-versed in the literature of such greats as Sir David Lindsay; the conclusion would seem to be that Ramsay was not "the common reader."

asked to categorise the most durable form of early modern Scots writing, most will point to poems of rustic celebration and conviviality, which will now be examined.

Chapter Three

**“Festivity, Popular Culture, and Patterns of Control:
Scots Poems of Conviviality”**

'I dwell among the caller springs
 That weet the Land o' Cakes,
 And aften tune my canty strings
 At bridals and late-wakes:
 They ca' me Mirth; I ne'er was kend
 To grumble or look sour,
 But blyth wad be a lift to lend,
 Gif ye wad sey my pow'r
 An' pith this day.'¹

The world of Scots communal festival was indeed the realm of "Mirth." This same world of "mirth and madness" represented the accumulated corpus of centuries of tradition drawn from popular celebration. It is little wonder then, that its portrayal became the centre-piece in the repertoire of so many Scots poets, not to mention its having been heavily associated with the early eighteenth century vernacular revival. The fostering of this so-called "low-culture" was, as already noted, considered an essential aspect of the promotion of the vernacular in Scotland after 1603.

Much of this tradition as it was found in community life, represented a release from the rigours of everyday life. It was a time, therefore, when the rules of normal conduct were forgotten, and special codes were applied which allowed for behaviour which under normal conditions could prove detrimental to the smooth functioning of the community. This was the time of the carnival, and it is noteworthy that several early eighteenth century poets held a marked fascination for, even preoccupation with it.

What follows is an examination of the phenomenon of carnival in early eighteenth century poetry and lyric. As such, what will be illustrated is that given the inversionary nature of carnival, certain poets (such as Allan Ramsay) and collectors of poetry (Ramsay again, as well as persons such as James Watson) consciously cultivated heightened carnivalesque qualities in many of their efforts. Part of the reason for this activity on their part was to express discontent with the status quo. In the newly United Britain, Scottish customs, manners, and institutions were often held inferior to their English counterparts.

¹ Robert Fergusson, "The Leith Races," in A.H. MacLaine (ed), *The Christis Kirk Tradition. Scots Poems of Folk Festivity* (Glasgow, 1996), p. 86 (ll. 28-36).

Some of the methodology that will be employed here is in part inspired by the theories of R. Watson, who in reference to certain works stemming from the early eighteenth century, has argued that:

... the growing potency of the “Christis Kirk” tradition can be seen as an upsurge of the old carnival spirit, comic and subversive, a “reductive idiom” full of oral energy and folk irreverence in the face of a political and linguistic agenda which was increasingly centralising and monological in its aspirations. (The Union of 1707 ... marked the beginning of “Great Britain” and the first steps towards the formal concept of a British Empire.)²

Watson’s statement is of the greatest interest probably in highlighting the tensions between the people at and government “aspirations.”

Certainly it is apparent that there were forces which sought to develop one language, or one dialect of a language, universal to the whole island (outlined in the previous chapter). But this was not always the actual achievement, and regional dialects persisted. Also, though not the main thrust of this thesis, it is worth pointing out that the dream of one universal political establishment, directed from one centre (presumably London) was perhaps more desire than actuality at times. In this instance, the opinions of Mitchison are deferred to, as she explains that during the eighteenth century, the source of political power in Scotland, was indeed the London Cabinet, in which there may, or may not have existed a person of importance who took a serious interest in, or knowledge of, Scottish affairs.³ The political machinery of Edinburgh was subordinated to this, its legal officers appointed or dismissed by London. “If there was a Secretary of State for Scotland, as there was till 1725 and again from 1742-6, these were part of his empire. If there was not they would be

² R. Watson, “Dialectics of ‘Voice and Place’: Literature in Scots and English from 1700,” in P.H. Scott (ed), *Scotland: A Concise Cultural History* (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 103. In large, Watson’s theories seem in part derivative of those of Rabelais’ critic, Mikhail Bakhtin.

given instructions by whoever inside the Cabinet took over Scottish business ...”⁴ A good deal of governing, both in England and Scotland, was performed by the judiciary: Lord Justice-Clerk and Lord President of the Session, who could not be dismissed by London. The influence of the judiciary was apparent in the 1725 Shawfield riots, concerned with the Scottish Malt Tax: the government in Scotland was stymied to act, because of the actions of sympathetic judges. From Mitchison’s description, we might conclude that centralisation was not a working success. Thus to return to Watson’s comments, he seems correct in stressing that there might have been aspirations towards centralised government. To those present at the time, it was possibly the threat of centralisation which likely seemed the most distressing. It was probably the case of fear over the loss of local autonomy, and thus the loss of local identity, which fuelled these attitudes. Thus it was as a reaction to these *perceived* forces of central authority that the carnival genre might have served as a bulwark.

In this chapter the term “carnavalesque” will be employed in the sense of it being an extension of carnival proper, which in itself was a systematised period of festival in which the world, or communal order was turned upside down.⁵ Carnival was originally a seasonally related celebration marking the onset of the forthcoming spring,⁶ marked by excess, debauchery, mockery, immorality, familiarity, and role-

³ R. Mitchison, “The Government of the Highlands, 1707-1745,” in N.T. Phillipson and R. Mitchison (ed), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement* (EUP, 1970), p. 25.

⁴ Mitchison, “The Government of the Highlands, 1707-1745,” p. 25.

⁵ P. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1978), p. 188.

⁶ E. LeRoy Ladurie, *Carnival, A People’s Uprising at Romans 1578-1580*, M. Feeney (tr.) (London, 1978), p. 309, also emphasises the regenerative aspects of carnival: “... Carnival festivities were not only cyclical and annual ... or pagan plus Christian; they also had to do with the changing of season. They were specifically connected to the approach of the end of winter, a crucial moment for a society which was still semi-agricultural and thus nature-orientated.” Though Ladurie’s comments are directed towards sixteenth century France, it still appears fair enough to refer to eighteenth century Scotland as “semi-agricultural” and “nature-orientated,” despite a growing trend towards

reversal, and in its most developed form in European Christendom, was probably meant to serve as a sort of pre-Lenten catharsis.⁷ Having said that, a forerunner of this activity, and mentality, may have existed back in those times when Christianity was not a dominant force in the Western World⁸ – perhaps the pagan Roman Bacchanalia, for example, was an earlier, more embryonic version of carnival. This leads to a significant point: owing to constraints of weather, carnival proper was probably more common in southern climes. But this does not mean that forms of carnival could not be found in other parts of the West, including Scotland. Carnival may have been able to “pull a chameleon act” and mutate, in an effort to reflect the nature of each particular community. It is this celebration of “quasi-carnival” that theoretically might have been present in places like Scotland. Indeed, carnival, as it was classically defined by such scholars as Bakhtin (primarily), Burke, Ladurie, and others, may not have existed in Scotland (see below). Still, carnivalesque-inspired activity and the carnival mind-set was present in other popular celebrations (outside of carnival itself) in both Northern and Southern Europe,⁹ and so this would seem to cover the case of Scotland. The general idea here is related to the comments of Bakhtin, who noted that carnival “is a very complex and diverse form, having many

industrialism. see the extract from his writings above note. It is probably essential to note that most of Ladurie’s observations are based upon, or derived from, the methodology of Bakhtin.

⁷ Ladurie, *Carnival, A People’s Uprising at Romans*, p. xix; p. 308, tells us that, “The winter [i.e. carnivalesque] festivities were a reminder of the days when prospective Christians buried their pagan ways in a Saturnalian outburst. In this way they prepared for Lent, which was in turn a cleansing process culminating in baptism at Easter, the time of spiritual birth or rebirth.” It is very significant, in view of what will be argued in the following pages, that Ladurie contends that carnival is a hold-over, or reminder, of a bygone lifestyle.

⁸ An idea arrived at as a result of a personal communication with Dr C. Whyte. What might be deducible from all of this, is that for those communities which practised it, carnival represented a much needed diversion from societal standards. Carnival could provide this because of the element of inversion which it contained.

⁹ Burke, *Popular Culture*, pp. 191-92.

variations and nuances based on the general carnival principle and depending on various epochs, peoples, and individual festivals.”¹⁰

Bakhtin categorised carnival into three basic interrelated forms:

1) “Ritual spectacles” – that is, various types of carnival pageants, and comic shows at the market-place.

2) “Comic verbal compositions” – which are parodies both oral and written, in either Latin (or, for purposes here, the official language) or the vernacular.

3) “Billingsgate” – common curses, abusive and vulgar language; “debased” talk of all sorts.¹¹

Bakhtin furthermore addresses the subject of carnival as metaphor which may have some bearing on the Scottish situation. Carnival concerns itself with the relationship between mind and body. The mind is related to intellectual pursuits, but the body is concerned with commonplace, which according to Bakhtin, relates to the entire life cycle, in all its extremes.¹² Thus, basic bodily functions are portrayed in their most extreme or extravagant form, but are still afforded reverence because of their life sustaining action. Thus the omnipresent images in all carnival are those concerned with basic bodily function associated with such things as reproduction, drinking and eating, and death.¹³

Yet another important aspect of the genre was the way in which it played with the conventions concerned with social status. Carnival was born in the stratified

¹⁰ M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, R.W. Rostel (tr.) (Ardis, 1973), p.100.

¹¹ Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, p. 5.

¹² Bakhtin, *Problems of*, p. 19; p. 21.

¹³ Bakhtin, *Problems of*, p. 19; p. 21; p. 317; Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 186. Little wonder of this, since the root of the word “carnival” is the Latin “carno” meaning “flesh.” Thus “carnival” is related to such words as “carnal,” the dictionary meaning of the latter being “of the flesh; material; worldly;” and even “sensuality.” These definitions are useful to keep in mind when seeking to unravel the carnival mind-set.

society, yet one of its basic principles was the removal of class barriers;¹⁴ the common man becomes the gentleman, or prince, and vice versa. Bakhtin observed that the spirit of carnival had the effect of stripping away a person's official status in life, as social norm, and all that determined and regulated the social hierarchy was suspended.¹⁵ Thus, these traits effected both the common and the high-born, the learned and unlearned, husband and wife, cleric and lay, as all was forsaken in the name of ribaldry, and the humorous disintegration of social class and social status.¹⁶ This was indeed the world turned upside down.

If we were to look for a single Scottish festival which seemed to come closest to the accepted description of carnival, that celebration was May Day, or Beltane. It seems that Beltane originated in the dim and dark past, and as such, marked one of the quarters of the old "Celtic calendar."¹⁷ Certain folklorists (Ross, for one) have tried, with varying degrees of success, to describe it as having been originally an ancient spectacle of truly awesome proportions.¹⁸ Beltane appears to have had, at one time, all the trappings of an ancient fertility festival, concerned with marking the passage of the seasons, and celebrating the onset of the fecund part of the year. It seemingly stemmed from that time when mankind's existence was heavily dependent upon the benevolence of the natural world, and its control over such was extremely limited. Thus, the rituals performed during Beltane, took the form of supplication theoretically engineered to appease the natural elements and/or the deities associated with those forces. Over the passage of time, however, it would certainly make sense to assume that memory of Beltane's original characteristics

¹⁴ Bakhtin, *Problems of*, p. 100.

¹⁵ M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, H. Iswolsky (tr) (Massachusetts, 1968), p. 13.

¹⁶ Bakhtin (1968), p. 13; Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 188.

would become clouded, if not forgotten. However the crucial question to be asked is whether or not the historic record supports the idea that Beltane survived into the early modern period, and if so, in what form.

Indeed there are indications of an active Beltane tradition in early modern Scotland. Though the evidence is not overwhelming, it is sufficient to suggest that it was practised in communities which almost spanned the “four corners” of the nation. In the Highlands (which are only briefly considered), the reports of travellers – at least on the surface – appear to suggest a Beltane tradition. In 1769, the Welsh-born Thomas Pennant reported in print that the inhabitants of Breadalbane faithfully observed the first day of May as a time of ritualised appeasement:

On the 1st of May, the herdsmen of every village hold their Bel-tein, a rural sacrifice. They cut a square trench on the ground, leaving the turf in the middle; on that they make a fire of wood, on which they dress a large caudle of eggs, butter, oatmeal and milk; and bring ... plenty of beer and whisky ... The rites begin with spilling some of the caudle on the ground, by way of libation ... every one takes a cake of oatmeal, upon which are raised nine square knobs, each dedicated to some particular being, the supposed preserver of their flocks and herds, or to some particular animal, the real destroyer of them: each person then turns his face to the fire, breaks off a knob, and flinging it over his shoulders, says, ‘This I give to thee, preserve thou my horses ... preserve thou my sheep;’ and so on ... they use the same ceremony to the noxious animals: ‘This I give to thee, O Fox! spare thou my lambs; this to thee, O hooded Crow! this to thee, O Eagle!’

When the ceremony is over, they dine on the caudle ... ¹⁹

He also provides a less involved account of the Beltane ritual in the Dingwall area, and it is through such that we catch a glimpse of Pennant’s attitude toward such “rural superstitions.” In general, Pennant adopts a condescending tone toward the practice, describing it as those “follies” that managed to survive only through the

¹⁷ That is, quite obviously, pre-Julian and pre-Gregorian.

¹⁸ A. Ross, *The Folklore of the Scottish Highlands* (New York, 1976), p. 134.

¹⁹ Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland; MDCCLXIX*, 3rd ed. (Originally published Warrington, 1774; reprinted Perth, 1979), pp. 97-98.

clandestine efforts of a few.²⁰ His stated attitudes are perhaps those which we should expect from a man destined to become a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1767, an organisation devoted to enlightened thought. The fact that the publication of his *Tour* helped him win the fellowship,²¹ perhaps suggests that one reason he took his journey in the first instance, was that he believed it could be influential in helping him obtain the coveted position. Not an infallible source – as most “tourists” tend to end up finding exactly what they looked for in the customs of the places they visit²² – Pennant nevertheless raises one perhaps valid observation: in his own time, such festivals as Beltane, as purely agriculturally-based rituals, were becoming a thing of the past over a protracted period.

It is true that towards the end of the nineteenth century, traveller and folklorist Alexander Carmichael (1832-1912) would claim that what he believed were traditional attitudes and observances associated with Beltane in the Highlands and Isles, were then starting to disappear. The beginning of May, has usually been ascribed to the onset of the summer sheiling in the Highlands.²³ Describing the typical outburst of communal revelry, dancing, music, and celebration, which we have come to assume is associated with such events, Carmichael would claim that the people joined together in praise of the onset of the fertile months. During such, they, supposedly, chanted verse similar to this:

Bless, O Threefold true and bountiful,
 Myself, my spouse, and my children,
 My tender children and their beloved mother at their head.
 On the fragrant plain, on the gay mountain sheiling,
 On the fragrant plain, on the gay mountain sheiling.

Everything within my dwelling or in my possession,
 All kine and crops, all flocks and corn,
 From Hallow Eve to Beltane Eve,
 With goodly progress and gentle blessing,

²⁰ Pennant, *Tour*, p. 186.

²¹ Pennant, *Tour*, B. Knight’s modern introduction.

²² An idea arrived upon as a result of a personal communication with Prof. E.J. Cowan.

²³ F.M. McNeill, *The Silver Bough* (4 vols; Glasgow, 1959-68), ii, pp. 68-72, describes and comments upon this occurrence in fair detail – her prime source is Alexander Carmichael.

From sea to sea, and every river mouth,
From wave to wave, and base of waterfall.²⁴

If Carmichael's observations can be trusted, then what he describes is probably the last, archaic holdover from times past.²⁵ Undoubtedly some of the enthusiasm displayed by the participants, described by him, is really enthusiasm on the part of Carmichael for having found what he was looking for – a holdover from those times when individual communities around the entire nation would participate in ritual pagan-inspired celebration. It is extremely unlikely that any of the nineteenth century participants in this spectacle thought of themselves as neo-pagans, however. More likely, this represented to them an expression of communalism, which had survived in spite of any attempts at systemic centralisation (how ever successful it may, or may not, have been). Presumably, such observances had a greater chance of survival among those communities along the periphery.

Shifting to the Lowlands (the prime focus here), Beltane customs were still being noted by Rev. George Lawrie in Loudon (Ayrshire) towards the latter part of the eighteenth century: "The custom still remains amongst the herds and young people to kindle fires in the high grounds, in honour of Beltan,"²⁶ his terminology suggesting that elsewhere, traditional Beltane was becoming rarer and rarer. But this

²⁴ "The Beltane Blessing (No. 73, lines 1-11)," from Alexander Carmichael (tr.), *Carmina Gadelica* (several available editions; one utilised here arranged by J. MacInnes and published by Lindisfarne Press, 1992). Carmichael was, not surprisingly, a little vague as to what part of the nation he had gathered his various, individual pieces of folklore from. In this instance, it appears as if it is a compilation of data from places like Arran, Uist, and Sutherland, possibly Benbecula, and parts of the Outer Hebrides as well. Though at times stressing some regional differences, such as the impact of Catholicism vs. Protestantism in some of the local customs, there really is a problem with a source like him. For it does appear that Carmichael has pulled pieces of information from numerous smallcrofting communities, and pasted them together into a conglomerate which he refers to as a Beltane tradition.

²⁵He is careful to note that in the case of some traditions, such as the Beltane Fire, he was able to find *traces* of that tradition in some parts of the Islands. Again, this tends to indicate a rural, agriculturally-motivated tradition that is breathing its last. In the case of the Highlands, it appears that traditional Beltane was on its way out during the late nineteenth century; as we will see, it possibly ebbed-out as such in the Lowlands during the course of the eighteenth century – probably even earlier in the burghs. We might expect the tradition to last a little longer in the Highlands. However, again, it must be stressed that it was not May-Day itself that was in danger of disappearing, but rather Beltane as a purely agriculturally motivated festival, designed, presumably, to placate the fickle forces of nature.

²⁶ John Sinclair (ed), *The Statistical Account of Scotland. Drawn up from the Communications of the Ministers of the Different Parishes* (21 vols; Edinburgh, 1791-1799), iii, p. 105.

does not mean that the festival was not to be found in other forms, simply that the original reason for its existence was being overshadowed.

Perhaps one of the most active parts of the country for a Beltane tradition was Peebles. In one form or another, Beltane has been long enjoyed in Peebles, conservatively dating back to at least the early fifteenth century (though it probably existed even before then), and surviving well into the first part of the eighteenth century. Attempts on the part of the burgh to breath new life into the festival in 1874 were in vain, and it seemed as if May-Day, in any form, was doomed to extinction. However, success was achieved in 1897 when certain of the old Beltane-inspired traditions were resuscitated to mark Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee.²⁷ This sort of burning-out, and then re-ignition of the Beltane flame in Peebles, tends to mitigate any idea of the timelessness of certain popular festivities, particularly any that have managed to survive into relatively modern times. Nevertheless, it was the Beltane fair as celebrated in this burgh which gave rise to the late medieval Scots poem "Peblis to the Play," composed perhaps c.1430-50,²⁸ and touted as an archetype of a genre epitomising the unbridled world of rustic communal festival:²⁹

At beltane quehen ilk bodie bownis
 To peblis to the play
 To heir the singin and the soundis
 The solace suth to say³⁰

As far as the early modern historical record goes, the Rev. William Dalgleish maintained that Peebles' Beltane tradition was one of the most flourishing in the nation, "a great annual festival of music, diversions, and feasting" that was "attended by multitudes from the Forth and the Forest in their best apparel."³¹ Perhaps there is

²⁷ J.L. Brown and I.C. Lawson, *History of Peebles, 1850-1990* (Edinburgh, 1990), pp. 66-67.

²⁸ According to MacLaine, *Christis Kirk*, p. 1.

²⁹ The claim made for it, in conjunction with "Christis Kirk on the Green," by M. Lindsay, *History of Scottish Literature* (London, 1997), p. 35. Similar claims have more recently been made for "Peblis to the Play" by MacLaine (ed), *Christis Kirk*, p. 1.

³⁰ "Peblis to the Play" in, *The Maitland Folio Manuscript*, W.A. Craigie (ed) (2 vols; Edinburgh, 1919), i, p. 176 (ll. 1-4); see also MacLaine (ed), *Christis Kirk*, p. 2. At one time it was believed that James I was the original composer of "Peblis to the Play." However, the most recent editor of the poem, MacLaine, p. 1, thinks it best to regard the work as being anonymous.

³¹ *The Statistical Account of Scotland*, xxii, p. 12.

no good reason for not believing most of Dalgleish's claims concerning Peebles' Beltane festival. Yet in the goal to obtain an untarnished picture of the past, there is one unfortunate aspect concerning his account. It seems that any personal observation on his part may have been enhanced by a familiarity with the poem, something that is made all the more apparent when Rev. Dalgleish engages in a discussion of its authorship (crediting – probably erroneously – King James I {1394-1437} with such).³² On a similar note, his above quoted description of the participants' places of origin, and their apparel, seems lifted virtually word-for-word from the poem:

Be firth and forrest furth they found,
Thay graythit thame full gay;³³

Yet despite this potentially disappointing situation concerning the sources, all is not lost when it comes to obtaining a reasonable picture of the feast of Beltane, as practised in Peebles.

The burgh records for Peebles reveal that Beltane was a highly significant event for that place and its inhabitants. An edict issued in 1621 spelled-out those times of the year in which the three major fairs observed by the community would be held, and thus Beltane would be held on 3 May, St Peter's day on 29 June, while 24 August would always mark the commencement of St Bartholomew's feast.³⁴ The whole rationale behind such legislation seems to have been to help in keeping the sabbath sacred. Thus, festival was separated from religion, in keeping with the general idea of the reformers to end observance of saints' days.³⁵ This characteristic

³² *The Statistical Account of Scotland*, xxii, p. 12.

³³ "Peblis to the Play," in MacLaine (ed), *Christis Kirk*, p. 2 (ll. 5-5).

³⁴ *Charters and Documents Relating to The Burgh of Peebles with Extracts from the Records of the Burgh. AD 1165-1710* [W. Chambers ed.] (Edinburgh, 1872), pp. 85-86.

³⁵ In the areas of the nation, when and where episcopal leanings were the strongest, Beltane seemed to retain a certain religious significance; such a place appears to have been Aberdeen in 1588: "Be it kend till all men ... me John Philp parson of Tereff (etc.) with express consent (etc.) of ... David bischop of Aberdene ... till have set ... to the richt nobil ... lord Francis earle of Errol ... all and haill the teindis ... and emolumentis of my said benefice of the parish of Turreff baith parsonage and vicarage therof (etc.) for nyntein yeiris ... Quilk entres ... began at the Feist of Rudeday callit the Inventioun of the Cross alias Beltyn." *Illustrations of the Topography and Antiquities of the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff*, (ed) J. Robertson and G. Grub (4 vols; Aberdeen, 1847-69), ii, p. 349.

was ably expressed when the burgh repeated its legislation, governing the days of festivity:

The magistrattes and councellores, taking in consideration that the prophanatioun of the Sabbath is occasioned by keeping faires upon Satterday and Moonday, and that the fair day comonlie called Beltane day, falles this year upon the Satterday ... it is resolved and hereby enacted that the said fair called Beltane fair-day shalbe kept and holdin within this burgh this year upon the feist Weddensday of Maii and so forth in all tyme comeing.³⁶

In fact, this sort of legislation became almost standard in 1642 for the entire nation, when parliament decreed what fairs should be celebrated; in general, they appear to reflect the situation in Peebles:

any of [the King's] free burghs royall within the kingdome of scotland ... and exerce weelkie within the said burgh mercat days according to the vse and custom of the said burghe Togidder also with three free fairs Thryse in the yeer the first ... to begin yeerlie wpoun the third day of Maij [callit] Beltane day And to hold and continue the same for the space of Fourtie eight houres thereftir And the second ... To begine vpoun the Twentie Nynt day of Junij callit saint peiteres day and to continowe for the space of Fourtie eight houres [ther]efter And the third of the said faires To gegine vpoun the Twentie fourt day of August callit [saint] Bartholomewes day and to hold and continowe be the space of eight dayes thereafter ..."³⁷

With the start of the nineteenth century, however, Beltane celebrations commenced on the "second Wednesday of May" in Peebles,³⁸ while evidence from popular almanacs reveals that during the eighteenth century, there were many more fairs being celebrated, some in certain locales only, but all required the sanctioning of some authority. These edicts perhaps allude to a trend readily apparent in the early modern period: the increasing amount of official regulation surrounding the practice of such celebrations as Beltane, a point which will be returned to repeatedly in this chapter.

³⁶ *Charters and Documents Relating to The Burgh of Peebles with Extracts from the Records of the Burgh, AD 1165-1710*, p. 34. The date for this piece of ordinance was 3 March, 1656.

³⁷ *APS*, v, p. 500. This parliamentary decree was issued in 1641.

³⁸ Rev. C. Findlater, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Peebles ... ("Agricultural Survey")* (Edinburgh, 1802), p. 214.

The Beltane festival as practised in Peebles, during the early modern era, seems to have normally concluded with a horse race – from at least as early as the first part of the seventeenth century – on the morning after the Beltane fair.³⁹ It appears that this was still being held in 1740, as it was regularly advertised in the periodicals:

A ... Plate, 7 l. Sterling Value, set out by the Town of Peebles, to be run for upon the usual Ground in Heats, upon Thursday the 8th of May next, by any Horse, &c. not under three at least, belonging to several Owners ... each Horse paying a Guinea of Inputs at booking.

There is also a Plate of 20 l. Sterling, set out by ... the Earl of March and the said Town, to be run for on Friday the 9th of May, by any Horse, &c. and not under three at least, belonging to several Owners ... each Horse paying two Guineas of Inputs at Entry.⁴⁰

The race had thus by this time become a prestigious affair, feeding-off the patronage of a noble. In this instance, it was William Douglas, the third Earl of March (1725-1810); previously it had been the earls of Tweeddale. During the 1660s, Tweeddale was an integral promoter of Beltane, so that in 1661 it was noted in the burgh records that he was actually in attendance.⁴¹ It seems fair to assume that this was not an occurrence isolated to the single year in question. So like March after him, Tweeddale's name was associated with the prizes awarded to the victor of the horse race:

... the ... thesaurer to caus make and buy ane silver cuppe, of the value of fyftie or thrie scoire punds, with my Lord Tueidale⁴² and the touns

³⁹ *Charters and Documents Relating to The Burgh of Peebles ... AD 1165-1710*, pp. 363-64, p. 377 (26 April, 1624; 1 May, 1643); *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Peebles, 1652-1714* [R. Renwick ed] (Glasgow, 1910), p. 86, pp. 93-94, p. 113 (21 March, 1672; 26 March, 1677; 24 March, 1684). There are also numerous references in the records to the prizes (cups, saddles, silver plates, etc.) awarded to the winners of the race; more on this shortly. However, in this one instance certain of the observations of the folklorist McNeill – at least as they apply to Peebles's Beltane celebrations – seem to have some grounding in the historical record; cf. F.M. McNeill, *The Silver Bough* (4 vols; Glasgow, 1959-65), iv, pp. 169-75.

⁴⁰ *GUL Spec. Coll.*, Mu60-c.15; *The Caledonian Mercury* no. 3119, Edinburgh, Tuesday, 25 March, 1740.

⁴¹ *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Peebles, 1652-1714*, p. 201.

⁴² Tweeddale is variously referred to as either "Lord" or "Earl." The individual in question seems to be John Hay, second Earl and (1694) first Marquis of Tweeddale (b. 1626). This John succeeded his father John, who was the eighth Lord of Yester and the first Earl of Tweeddale, titles which were to be passed along in perpetuity, and thus explaining the confusion over the son's title. For a full biography on both father and son, see *The Scots Peerage*, viii, pp. 447-58.

armes thairupon, and the tounes motto ... the cup to be run at upon the first Thursday of May nixt ...⁴³

The Earls of March, however, seem to have become the patrons of the Peebles horse race after 1686, when financial difficulties forced the second Earl of Tweeddale “to sell the whole of his Peeblesshire estates.”⁴⁴ These lands were bought by the first Duke of Queensberry, and through descent, eventually fell into the laps of the Earls of Wemyss and March.⁴⁵

From that time onwards, March’s ostentation would be remembered every time the race was run, since:

The magistrates and councill considdering that Alexander Horsburgh ... factor to William earle of March,⁴⁶ hath in the said earls name made offer to them of an piece of silver plate, to be run for in the Whythaugh Muir, at Beltoun nixt, provydeing they will putt on the said earles christ and motto on the plate hereafter, besyde ther oun arms, they unanimously declare that they will not refuse but accept of the earles complement ...⁴⁷

Importantly, we are seeing here the effects of patronage upon a localised version of a (possibly) nationally acknowledged festival. This might truly indicate the fame which Peebles’s Beltane festival had achieved, given that a neighbouring earl desired to have his name attached to it. Thus what we might be seeing from at least the mid-seventeenth century onwards, is Peebles’ Beltane celebration taking the form of a sort of “civic pride” day. There seems to have been an inclusive element of centralised authority in the celebration. The impression we get from the above extracts from the burgh records is a celebration in which the day’s events were pre-

⁴³ *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Peebles, 1652-1714*, p. 59 (21 March, 1664). Tweeddale was a rather busy man in 1664: January saw his appointment to the High Commission on church law, while in June he was “made an Extraordinary Lord of Session.” (See *The Scots Peerage*, viii, p. 451.) And in between all of this, he still graced the local Beltane celebration with his presence. But then, what else is a noble to do?

⁴⁴ *Peeblesshire, an Inventory of the Ancient Monuments* (2 vols; HMSO, 1967), i, p. 8.

⁴⁵ *Peeblesshire, an Inventory*, i, p. 8.

⁴⁶ Given that this notice applies to the 1708 race, it appears that it was the short-lived 2nd earl (c. 1696-1731) who is being referred to here. This William Douglas succeeded to the earldom upon his father William’s death on 2 September, 1705. In spite of his patronage of Peebles’s famous May festival, the 2nd earl “does not seem to have taken much part in public affairs ...” See, *The Scots Peerage. Founded on Wood’s Edition of Sir Robert Douglas’s Peerage of Scotland*, J.B. Paul (ed) (9 vols; Edinburgh, 1904-14), vii, p. 146.

⁴⁷ *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Peebles, 1652-1714*, p. 176.

determined, and probably fairly-well regulated. This image tends to stand somewhat in opposition to one standard interpretation of the carnivalesque, which dictates that such events as a Beltane celebration might contain elements of unbridled, spontaneous revelry. Beltane in Peebles during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, at the very least, does not seem to have been totally unbridled.⁴⁸

It is of further significance that, as mentioned several times already, Beltane in Peebles, as practised in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, may not have been exactly the same celebration as practised around the time when “Peblis to the Play” was composed (c. fifteenth century). As such, it may have been that the horse race was one of the last surviving vestiges of the old celebration. The authority here might be Robert Chambers (1802-71). Born himself in Peebles,⁴⁹ Chambers gives the impression of being in this instance a (relatively-speaking) dispassionate voice, speaking through the pages of his *Domestic Annals*. He is, at times, remarkably critical of what he relates, and is non-typical by virtue of the fact that he very often names his sources. Certainly he does acknowledge the existence of the poem “Peblis to the Play,”⁵⁰ but his account of Beltane in Peebles does not seem overly-indebted to such. Thus we might well give some weight to his statement:

The Peebles race was accustomed to take place on Beltane-day, the 1st of May; it was the chief surviving part of the festivities which had from an early period distinguished the day and the place ...⁵¹

⁴⁸ Presumably, however, individual acts of such behaviour could, and likely did, occur. Few large gatherings of people, past and present, fail to attract at least some of the local wags. However, a large scale spectacle, marked by total extreme behaviour of all sorts, is not implied by these descriptions.

⁴⁹ In tandem with his brother William (1800-83), Robert Chambers was one of the most prolific authors, publishers, editors, et al. of his time. Together they published the famous, and at one time ubiquitous, *Chambers's Journal*. For interest sake, it might be worthy of note that William was the author of (among numerous other pieces) the *History of Peeblesshire* (1864), as well as working on the burgh records themselves. For a complete, and succinct, list of the two brothers' literary achievements, see T. Royle, *Mainstream Companion to Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 67- 68.

⁵⁰ Robert Chambers, *Domestic Annals of Scotland*, 2nd ed. (3 vols; Edinburgh, 1859-1861), i, p. 410.

⁵¹ *Domestic Annals*, i, p. 410.

Even though, by this time, the race itself was no longer held specifically on the first day of May, rather a few days afterward, Chambers's observation that many aspects of the old Beltane tradition had been abandoned – at least in his day – is worth heeding.

Other evidence suggestive of the highly visible nature of Beltane as practised in Peebles, is found from an earlier period. Related in conjunction with a presbytery report concerning the dilapidated state of the local church, it was noted in 1592 that there was always a large influx of people to the area during, or near, the Beltane period, at which time, “pilgrimaris permittit to cum in pilgrimag about the third day of May yeirlie ...”⁵² Though these persons appear to have been genuine paupers, unable to obtain relief from their own parishes,⁵³ it is remarkable that they chose to come to staunchly presbyterian Peebles⁵⁴ during the time of its May Day celebration. Perhaps they understood that at a time of general good humour and merriment, they were less likely to encounter a “mean-spirited” welcome. Certainly the main thrust of the synod's report seems not to be to discourage these down-and-out people, but rather to “shape-up” the appearance of the kirk building, which had become somewhat run-down. Obviously, appearances of affluence had to be maintained. However to return to the discussion at hand, though this report predates Rev. Dagliesh's published comments by almost two centuries, it does in general support his claims concerning the multitude, coming from near and far, to be found in attendance at Peebles' Beltane celebration, in addition to giving some support to portions of the poem *Peblis to the Play*.

Finally there is the testimony of Alexander Pennecuik MD, an early eighteenth century poet, and student of languages. In his *Geographical, Historical*

⁵² *The Records of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, 1589-96, 1640-1649*, J. Kirk (ed) (Edinburgh, 1977), p. 38.

⁵³ *The Records of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale*, p. 39.

⁵⁴ *Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland, New Edition*, vol. 5, F.H. Groome (ed) (London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, n.d.), p. 162.

Description of the Shire of Tweeddale he comments upon the general nature of the people of the area, and some of their peculiarities:

They are an Industrious, Careful People, yet something Wilful, Stubborn and Tenacious of old Customs. There are amongst them, that will not suffer the Wrack to be taken off their Land, because (they say) it keeps the Corn warm, nor sow their Bear Seed, be the Season Wet or Dry, till the first Week of May be over, which they call *Runchie Week*...⁵⁵

If this account can be trusted, it seems to suggest that the first week of May was no longer referred to in the eighteenth century as Beltane, though it retained an agricultural significance. Yet the practices associated with such, were at the very least downplayed, being replaced by the civic orientated ceremony in Peebles itself. The nature of Beltane had therefore changed, insofar that some of the traditional characteristics often associated with it seem to have been less prevalent. The idea of it being a day of civic responsibility and pride, seems to have overshadowed those aspects which marked it primarily as a day of unbridled revelry, associated with fertility, played out in the Lenten period.

The fact that there appeared to be a certain fluidity to the nature of the May festival, might cause us to wonder exactly how all this related to the traditional literature devoted to festival. Perhaps the carnival inspired literature devoted to Beltane in Peebles was meant to be taken at a different level, than the actual festival itself. Thus, as one opinion maintained:

But we must caution ourselves at this point against simply equating Renaissance popular culture with Rabelais's novel: *Gargantua and Pantagrue* is not carnival, but the brilliant aesthetic representation of carnival motifs; not the communal laughter of a largely illiterate populace, but the highly crafted, classicizing of a supremely literate individual; not festive mayhem in the streets, but words on a page.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ GUL Spec. Coll., A[lexander] P[ennecuik], *A Geographical Description, Historical Description of the Shire of Tweeddale with a Miscellany and Curious Collection of Select Scottish Poems* (Edinburgh, J. Moncur, 1715), pp. 5-6. "Wrack" = weeds; "Runchie" = a bit uncertain: "runch" as a noun is a wild, weed-like raddish; as a verb is to crunch or grind; a "runchie" person is a coarsely-built, raw-boned person.

⁵⁶ S.J. Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (New York, London, 1990), p. 67.

Despite the fact that this statement is perhaps unduly harsh – it does not take into account the learned individual with honest intentions who submerges himself into the world of “communal laughter,” and thus becomes a fairly safe reporter of such – it still serves as a warning not to automatically assume that literature purporting to depict popular practice, is an accurate portrayal of folk practice. Thus, perhaps Beltane the festival, and Beltane the literary genre, were two different, but related entities.

An example of the potential pitfalls of equating the actual festival of carnival, or its offshoots, with literature purporting to be “carnavalesque” in nature, seems amply illustrated when it comes to the whole question of “mock violence.” Recent scholarship directed toward the carnival nature of the so-called “Christis Kirk” genre of Scots poetry, emphasises that in such poems as “Peblis to the Play” any violence that is portrayed is staged. As C. Whyte put it, describing this form of mock violence:

A crucial and striking characteristic of both the Scottish poems [“Christis Kirk” and “Peblis to the Play”] is that, however protracted and dramatic the violence, no one gets seriously injured.⁵⁷

Indeed, Whyte’s observation seems true insofar as the poems themselves go. For instance, in “Christis Kirk on the Green” arrows seem to fly hither and thither, yet an ordinary cleric is apparently immune to their potentially deadly affects:

Than lowrie⁵⁸ as ane lyoun lap
and sone ane flane culd fedder
he hecht to pers him at the pape
Thairon to wed ane wedder
He hit him on the wambe an wap
And It buft lyk ane bledder
bot lo as fortoun was and hap
his doublat was of ledder And sauft him
at chrystis kirk of ...⁵⁹

⁵⁷ C. Whyte, “Bakhtin at Christ’s Kirk: Carnival and the Scottish Renaissance,” in *Studies in Scottish Literature*, vol. 27 (1995), p. 184.

⁵⁸ In Ramsay’s version of “Christis Kirk” he reads “lawrie” as “Laurie” – the common form of the personal name of Lawrence – perhaps an example of his lack of full understanding of middle Scots forms.

⁵⁹ “Christis Kirk on the Grene,” in *The Maitland Folio Manuscript*, i, pp. 151-52 (ll. 101-110).

Thus, while this assessment might be all well and true, insofar as it relates to the poem “Chrisitis Kirk on the Grene” (or “Peblis to the Play” for that matter), it, unfortunately, does not appear wholly accurate as far as the actual celebration of carnival-inspired festivals, such as Beltane in Peebles, for example, was concerned. Real violence, in fact, seemingly did occur at the festival which “Peblis to the Play” was named for. The potential for an outbreak of violence during Beltane was commented upon by Chambers:

The great difficulty attending said popular festivals arose from the tendency of the people to mark them with bloodshed. Men assembled there from different parts of the country, each having of course his peculiar enmities, and the object of similar enmities in turn; and when they met and had somewhat inflamed themselves with liquor, it was scarcely avoidable the mutual provocations should be given, leading to conflicts with deadly weapons.⁶⁰

In fact, this account is backed-up (by Chambers himself) with an edict issued by the Privy Council in April 1608, calling for a suspension of the Peebles Beltane race for that year due to fears of dangerous “quarellis” among the “grite numberis of people” normally found in attendance.⁶¹

Additional evidence suggestive that the violence at Beltane was not always “symbolic,” is afforded by a burgh ordinance which stipulated that the town magistrates were to be escorted at all times by an armed retinue of sorts. This legislation was first issued in 1624,⁶² then repeated in 1643, and called for all “honest men of the town to attend the proveist and bailyeis with ane sword at their belt and ane staff in their hand” during the time of the horse race.⁶³ Now it is of course possible to argue that the 1643 edict might have been partially fuelled by civic apprehensions concerning the Covenanting movement and the English Civil War, all considered in conjunction with Peebles’s proximity to the frontier with England; the same, however, cannot be said for the 1624 edict, passed in a period of

⁶⁰ *Domestic Annals*, i, p. 410.

⁶¹ *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1887), viii, p. 81.

⁶² *Charters and Documents Relating to The Burgh of Peebles ... AD 1165-1710*, pp. 363-64.

⁶³ *Charters and Documents Relating to The Burgh of Peebles ... AD 1165-1710*, p. 377.

relative calm near the end of James VI's reign.⁶⁴ Finally, if any additional evidence is needed, we have the testimonial of the burgh records again, dated 6 May, 1645:

William Moffet, merchant, burges of Edinburgh, Robert Williamone, merchant, burges thair, and William Saltoun in Bonnytoun, all present, and accusit for ryottes done and committit be thame upone utheris, troubling of Beltane fayre last, and injureing of the magistrattes of this burgh upone the said Beltane day at night, being the third day of May instant.⁶⁵

If the essence of this account is accurate, little wonder that the town's officials were sufficiently paranoid to demand an armed escort during the Beltane fair.

Still, the essential point is that violent outburst was probably all too frequent an occurrence at public displays such as Peebles' Beltane festival. Naturally, the nature of town officials is such that they probably would be more inclined to draw attention to those times when the crowd did "get out of hand," rather than when all went smoothly and people behaved themselves. And of course some of their fears may be the result of overreaction on their part: the slightest little outburst may have been perceived as "all-out insurrection." But at some point in time, at least once, something of the kind may have indeed occurred, the memory of which lingered, causing succeeding governing bodies to expect the worst at the sight of the first

⁶⁴ A related piece of legislation was passed in Stirling, concerning "tumults" at fairs and markets in general. This particular decree comes from 20 August 1661, and calls for the merchants of the town to arm themselves in preparation for any major public spectacle:

The qilk day, it is ordained by the Court that everie gildbrother sall with all convenience provyde ane halbert to remane constantlie in there shopes for supressing of any tumults that sall happine to aryse in the toun in tyme of public fairs or weikle mercatts.

Extracts from the Records of the Merchant Guild of Stirling AD 1592-1846, W.B. Cook and D.B. Morris (ed) (Stirling, 1916), p. 71.

⁶⁵ Robert Renwick, *Gleanings From the Records of the Royal Burgh of Peebles, 1604-52* (Peebles, 1892), p. 214. Renwick apparently had access to manuscript material not available to Chambers when he edited earlier on the *Charters and Documents Relating to The Burgh of Peebles ... AD 1165-1710*. Though Renwick, like Chambers, was working "after the fact" in the nineteenth century, he seems to be a credible source since much of his "writing" was actually large edited pieces of the burgh records themselves, scrupulously referenced. Obviously, the Burgh Record Society people

clenched fist. Certainly individual actions of violence of a serious nature did take place. Thus, perhaps there were occasions when the town officials had a right to expect the worst. Furthermore, in general, it is really difficult to believe that all this legislative energy was expended to help curb an imaginary problem, or for the sake of “mock violence.”

If Whyte is correct that “Peblis to the Play” is a Renaissance era Scottish poem “describing carnival practice,”⁶⁶ and part of that practice involves symbolic violence in which “no one gets seriously injured,”⁶⁷ then a discrepancy seemingly exists between the Beltane-derived world of carnival present in the poem, and the purely historical account of Peebles’s famous May festival. How can we account for such? Perhaps the immediate solution that might materialise, is that in the time between the composition of the poem, and the main body of testimony from the historical sources, the situation had changed. After all, “Peblis to the Play” was (arguably) the product of the mid to late fifteenth century, whereas the bulk of the burgh accounts stem from the mid-seventeenth century – so maybe ritual violence was the norm in the former period, giving way to actual violence in the latter. Yet this does not appear a totally acceptable solution, since there seems to be no plausible reason for the shift. The only major event occurring between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries which theoretically may have had some effect upon people’s conduct during the times of communal festival was the Reformation.⁶⁸ Yet

shared this opinion: they deemed Renwick a sufficiently credible scholar to edit on their behalf *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Peebles, 1652-1714*.

⁶⁶ Whyte, “Bakhtin at Christ’s Kirk,” p. 182.

⁶⁷ Whyte, “Bakhtin at Christ’s Kirk,” p. 184.

⁶⁸ The forces behind such, at least in Melville’s time, were not wholly in favour of communal festival in the first place, since it (supposedly) smacked of popery. It was long assumed that Andrew Melville was the sole author of *The Second Book of Discipline (1578)* – the kirk’s express statement reconfirming presbytery, after the flirtation with episcopacy. It seems he was one of a committee of

if anything, in the new age of reform the tendency for mayhem at any communal gathering would have been reduced, given the power of the local kirk session to regulate and enforce moral code. Or perhaps at the very least, any resulting “wreckage” caused by such an altercation would have been speedily cleared-away by the kirk session, all with an eye toward making an example out of the offending parties. It therefore seems difficult to believe that in a celebration like Beltane, any violence enacted was only of the mock variety. Thus, it might be argued that the sort of staged violence portrayed in such poems as “Peblis to the Play” either did not occur, or else was not the sole form of violent behaviour. The type of mock violence portrayed in the poem, and discussed by scholars, possibly represents a sort of sanitisation of events – that any physical harm done, was all acted out in jest, and was not serious or permanent in nature.

Even though many of the aspects of the poem “Peblis to the Play”⁶⁹ are perfectly believable as portrayals of reality, others are somewhat hard to swallow in the same manner. Thus we can imagine people coming from far and wide to attend the event (l. 5), which took the form of a typical country fair (l. 33). Once there, they very likely would be met with the sound of music – in this case the bagpipes (l. 45). It is also perfectly believable that the all out free-for-all resulting from an altercation in the local tavern could indeed occur (stanzas 10-19) – for this is in fact, not an episode from carnival, but everyday life. However, this type of violence, as we have seen, could all too often erupt into real bloodshed, something which the poem downplays. Also, there is no mention of a formalised horserace “Peblis to the

about thirty contributors to the text. However, the entire debate over *The Book's* authorship is well handled in *The Second Book of Discipline*, (ed) J. Kirk (Edinburgh, 1980), pp. 45-57.

⁶⁹ For convenience sake, all following references are taken from MacLaine (ed), *Christis Kirk*, pp. 1-9.

Play” though one individual, “ane cadgear” or peddler (l. 141), madly gallops off on the back of his “greit gray meir” (l. 151), only to find himself in the middle of the altercation. What all this appears to amount to is a mixing of the real and the fanciful; aspects taken from an actual celebration, are enhanced by its author, to create a piece of fiction. What we have, then, in “Peblis to the Play” is a poem in the vein of carnival literature; as a portrayal of the actual carnival-like festival of Beltane, it seems accurate in some instances, distorted in others. Literary portrayals of carnival thus become a parody of historical portrayals of carnival; a sort of “levelling-out” of the actuality – which is perhaps what the whole literary genre dealing with this aspect of Scottish culture was meant to be in the first place.

Perhaps poems of conviviality are representative of the authors’ susceptibility to being charged with the same sort of folk energy they desired to portray. Here we might have an example of the literature interacting with the host community in an emotional sort of way – it might have been the spirit of communalism which was the driving force behind this type of literature. Thus the authors might have found themselves so totally entrenched in the experience, that they become emotionally attached to the subject. This is actually, it would seem, an essential prerequisite of some types of creative writing, so the authors should not be faulted in that respect. But accurate portrayal, of the sort necessary for historical narrative, actually benefits, it would seem, through emotional detachment. This might be why we should never look upon such poems as “Peblis to the Play” as historical accounts of Beltane in Peebles. Such a poem might actual represent something more profound than that; rather than serve as a representation of actual event, it might serve as an interpretation of the spirit of the community.

As noted earlier, festival and pastime of all sorts often found themselves the subject of regulation. It seems that the dynamism of festivity and relaxation would always push in the direction of less and less regulation; whereas the controlling forces, perhaps fearful of anarchy, would push for greater regulation. Thus, centralised forces such as, for example the kirk, had a desire to control popular culture. This seems to be worthy of a little closer look. In general, religious extremism often displays a desire, with varying effects, to curtail many aspects of popular expression. Religious fervour could often be a driving force behind a concerted assault upon popular culture, including carnival, throughout Europe.⁷⁰ If we turn our attention specifically to Scotland, one good way that we can arrive at an understanding of the authorities' attitude towards popular entertainments, is to look at some of their dealings with theatre.

The theatre was an example of one form of entertainment often heavily scrutinised by the authorities, in which normal day-to-day conduct might be suspended for the sake of emotional release. In this respect, it might have had some aspects in common with the carnival genre, though we would probably expect theatre to be more restrained by the eighteenth century. However, stage in general has been described as a "privileged site" wherein the rules of everyday life are suspended, so as to allow "for experiment, commentary, insouciance, and inconsequence"⁷¹ These are indeed emotions which could be linked to a carnival-type experience, although they were likely much less acute – again, more so in modern times.

⁷⁰ Burke, *Popular Culture*, pp 218-19. Burke here describes the way in which Reformation(s) served to spark official crack-downs on carnival.

⁷¹ I. Ferris, "The Indefatigable Word: Scott and the Comedy of Surplusage," in J.H. Alexander and D. Hewitt (ed), *Scott in Carnival* (Aberdeen, 1993), p. 21.

Yet in earlier times, though not properly part of the Lentin-Easter-Mayday experience, religious themes often were the subject of Scottish plays. These religious-inspired plays often fell under the vague classification of “clerk’s-plays.” Regardless, plays of all sorts were, from a relatively early period, viewed by the authorities, at first churchmen, as being the “competition” – they might be more likely to attract the attention of the common-folk than any sermon might. This was exactly the complaint levelled against the people of Haddington by George Wishart, related in John Knox’s *History of the Reformation*. While a clerk’s-play might draw a crowd of two or three thousand, Master George quipped, barely one hundred would sit “to hear the message of the Eternall God.”⁷²

For example, from late medieval times onwards, Scottish theatre drew audiences comprising people from all walks of life. However, Scottish drama has always found itself at the mercy of both the civic and religious rulers. From the standpoint of the Reformed Kirk, though their spiritual teacher Calvin could be tolerant, they themselves were often uncompromising towards the stage.⁷³ Quite often, though, it appears that it was not so much drama itself that the kirk was opposed to, but sundry activities associated with the play. For instance, the wearing of costume (“guising”) and role-playing (often role-reversal) common to the stage – and carnival, for that matter – were many times viewed with grave suspicion by the religious authorities. Further, the reader need only refer to the pertinent extracts from the kirk session registers of Aberdeen (in this instance, from 4 August, 1605) to find that this suspicion could lead to official condemnation. Quoting scripture (Deut

⁷² *The Works of John Knox*, D. Laing (ed) (6 vols; Edinburgh, 1895), i, p. 138.

⁷³ A.J. Mill, *Mediæval Plays in Scotland* (New York, London, 1924, reissued 1967), p. 95.

22:5),⁷⁴ the kirk session denounced the proceedings of a certain bridal when “young men and young wemen ... [were seen] dancing throcht the towne together ... the young men being clad in wemminis apparell;” while equally scandalous, it was noted how the young women danced through the streets “with masks on thair faces, thairby passing the bounds of modestie and shamefastness” which a person would expect to find in “a reformed citie” such as Aberdeen. Henceforth, it was decreed that for these, or any similar transgressions, the chronically unrepentant would be forced to exchange his or her garments for a sack-cloth.⁷⁵

Mr David Anderson declaired that thair was some in his parochie who had gone in gyseing: Ordeaned to caus sowman them to compeire befor the Presbyterie.⁷⁶

Though decisions and actions taken like these in Aberdeen and Kirkaldy might not have had the specific intent to constrain the actor and his art, it is quite clear that it would have had the spin-off effect of limiting the level of artistic freedom practised on stage.⁷⁷ In addition, it also could have had a profound influence in general upon any further carnivalesque activities practised; denial of one’s true self through role-reversal and disguise was, it should be stressed, a key aspect of carnival.

None of this is meant to imply that the church authorities in Scotland, at any time, tried to completely extinguish the art of the actor all together. But it does appear that they desired strictest control of the content of the play, its time and place of performance, and the moral conduct of both the actors and audience. In 1574, the General Assembly ruled that:

⁷⁴ “A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God.”

⁷⁵ *Selections from the Records of the Kirk Session, Presbytery, and Synod of Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1846), p. 47. A similar ruling came from Lanark in early 1627: “Ordaines M^r Thomas Bannatyne to summond the gysartes of Douglas, and to try out those who wer clothed in womens habit.” From, *Selections from the Registers of the Presbytery of Lanark, 1623-1709* (Edinburgh, 1839), p. 5.

⁷⁶ *The Presbyterie Booke of Kircaldie ... 15th Day of April 1630 to the 14th Day of September 1653*, W. Stevenson (ed) (Kirkaldy, 1900), p. 127.

⁷⁷ Mill, *Mediæval Plays in Scotland*, p. 95.

It is ... concludit, That no Clerk playes, comedies or tragedies be made of the Canonickall Scripture ... [nor performed] on the Sabboth day nor worke day.

And furthermore, that any other play, before its performance, must pass the scrutiny of the religious authorities.⁷⁸

With the onset of the seventeenth century, one grammar-school master in Elgin was ordered never “to practeis any comedie ... inwith the schole of this burgh or outwith ... without speciall licence.” The same beleaguered school-master, obviously caught and charged with allowing some “profane performance,” was repentant and admitted “he hes done wrang in practeizing ... the said comedy play so rashlie” and “thairfoir promesis fra hence furth not to practeize the lyke.”⁷⁹ The war against profanity supposedly acted-out on the stage continued, and it became the subject of at least one pamphlet printed in, and pertaining to, Scotland, but allegedly written by an inhabitant of early eighteenth century England:

I was surprised at the Reports running here; of the Degeneracy especially of the younger sort of People, in the two prime Cities of your Nation:⁸⁰ Vertue and Piety are said to be upon the declining Hand, and Vice and Vanity are said to prevail observably. It confirms Suspicions of a Change to the worse, that we here (sic) Stage-plays are coming in Request among you, and much resorted to. I know when I was at London, they were much frequented; but by sober People were reckoned Ingines of Impiety, that produced sad ill Effects and for my Part I am firmly preswaded (sic) they can have no good Effect any where.⁸¹

The defenders of the stage, its critic continued, were in the habit of justifying the portrayal of vice, so that people will learn to recognise it, and thus, avoid it. However, “It is not the first Time, the grand Imposter hath transformed himself into the Likeness of an Angel of Light, when designing to tempt to do the Works of

⁷⁸ *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies of the Kirk of Scotland* (3 vols; Edinburgh, 1839), i, pp. 322-23.

⁷⁹ *The Records of Elgin, 1234-1800*, W. Cramond (comp.), S. Ree (ed) (2 vols; Aberdeen, 1907), ii, p. 80. The date for this ruling is the 21st of May, 1600.

⁸⁰ Presumably in reference to Edinburgh and Glasgow; interesting as well that even in post-Union times, from the point of view of this particular Englishman, if none other, Scotland was still a “Nation” distinct unto itself.

⁸¹ NLS 2.279(12); *Stage Plays Justly Condemned In a Letter to a Friend in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1721), p. 1.

Darkness.”⁸² Those addicted to stage plays, even upon the hour of their death, refuse to repent for a life wasted in profaning the Sabbath, and idling away the spare hours attending plays and reading drama books.⁸³

Such religiously-motivated tirades did not go unnoticed, nor did they fail to draw a response from the opposite corner. In this instance, the defender of the art of the dramatist appears to have been none other than Allan Ramsay,⁸⁴ who would later open a theatre in Carruber’s Close, only to see it closed due to “Edinburgh’s traditional disapproval of theatre,” and thanks to the 1737 Licensing Act which prohibited stage plays in Britain “except in the city of Westminster, and then only when the monarch was in residence.”⁸⁵ Ramsay lashes out at his opponent, Mr Law, a man whose views in matters moral are questionable, since his “Opinions in Ecclesiastical Affairs, are condemned in our Confession of Faith ...”⁸⁶ He admits that there are wicked plays, immoral and an affront to any modest Christian. But just as there were decent and wicked women (he says in the quasi-misogynist tones of the day), so there are decent and wicked plays.⁸⁷ He continued with:

As it is plain that Stage-entertainments are not condemned in Scripture, so there are no Statutes in our Civil Law that make them criminal; but on the contrary, they have been protected and

⁸² *Stage Plays Justly Condemned*, p. 2.

⁸³ *Stage Plays Justly Condemned*, pp. 7-8. The anonymous writer, in his postscript (p. 8), expressed a desire that his work be forwarded to Doctor R.A. of Edinburgh, and Mr S.F., and Divinity student in Glasgow.

⁸⁴ However, this might be questioned in view of certain issues which will shortly come to light.

⁸⁵ Royle, *Companion to Scottish Literature*, p. 254.

⁸⁶ NLS H.32.e.30; *Some Few Hints, In Defence of Drammatical Entertainments* (Edinburgh?, 1728), p. 1. Perhaps an astounding thing for Ramsay to say, since the usual analysis of him was that he was at least a nominal Episcopalian, unless of course this pamphlet was not actually written by Ramsay, as the compiler of the ESTC CD-ROM claims. Further question might be raised since the author declares himself to be “a Member of the present Establishment of Church of Scotland.” (*In Defence of Drammatical Entertainments*, p. 21.) However, if the piece really was written by Ramsay, this might have been an attempt on his part to deflect criticism. Regardless, the ESTC compiler believes that this was written in reply to William Law’s *The absolute unlawfulness of the stage-entertainment*.

For the record, it seems that the original Confession of Faith – drawn-up by a committee comprised of Knox and five of his colleagues – was designed to accommodate varying views of kirk government, something which *The Second Book of Discipline* set out to reverse. Nevertheless, the whole question of toleration is a long-standing one in the history of early modern Scottish religious history.

⁸⁷ *In Defence of Drammatical Entertainments*, p. 2.

encouraged by the best of Princes, and the most modest and vertuous of our Quality and Gentry.⁸⁸

Stage plays also served a useful didactic purpose: the efforts of Sir David Lyndsay helped the nation in its struggle to free itself of “the Fetters of the See of Rome,” and illustrating the wickedness of a “Popish Clergy.”⁸⁹ Therefore all great nations, past and present, saw drama as an appropriate entertainment form. In an appeal to aspiring men of letters, who looked toward classical models as examples of good taste and polite intercourse, he stresses that Rome, Greece, and Athens inspired their peoples to greatness through plays.⁹⁰ Thus, nations which approve of theatre now prosper, Holland, for example, while those close-minded over the issue, such as Spain which practised inquisition and bigotry, are now ruinous.⁹¹ Thus, he calls for his fellow subjects of Britain to:

... pray take a short Review of the Opinions of the wisest and most potent nations in their most flourishing State. Their Sentiments and Encouragement of Plays, for 2500 Years since down to this present Day; the Reasonableness of such Entertainments, and the Advantages that our Good Toun may receive by them; their instructive Use, their Innocence, and their being now [sic] Laws against them either Sacred or Civil; must surely in the whole (unless possest with singular and absurd Opinions) cause you acknowledge that we ought to write Mr. Aston to settle among us, and bring his Substance hither to deposite it in our Bank (which he is resolved to do, if not driven from us by main Force) ...⁹²

Ramsay’s protest against overzealous religious authorities hit a new high when it came to attacking the evangelical brothers Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine as aired in “The Marrow Ballad.” Here again, is an example of literature reacting to the characteristics of a particular society, in this instance, the Calvinist nature of Scotland. Thus in “The Marrow Ballad,” allusions to “crude sexuality” between clerics and “rustic maidens when no-one is looking” symbolise Ramsay’s contempt

⁸⁸ *In Defence of Drammatical Entertainments*, pp. 7-8. This of course would change as a result of the passage of the 1737 Licensing Act.

⁸⁹ *In Defence of Drammatical Entertainments*, p. 8.

⁹⁰ *In Defence of Drammatical Entertainments*, p. 23.

⁹¹ *In Defence of Drammatical Entertainments*, p. 21.

⁹² *In Defence of Drammatical Entertainments*, p. 22.

for clerical hypocrisy.⁹³ The fact that Ramsay chose the name “Marrow Ballad” for his categorisation of the evangelical movement in Scotland is in itself a squib; the name is a parody of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, a work described as “a standard evangelical work in Scotland ...”⁹⁴ The 1718 republication of *The Marrow* (originally published 1645) sparked the highly charged Marrow Controversy, which had as one of its focal points (once again) the whole question of assurance and predestination.⁹⁵ *The Marrow* and its adherents, the Marrowmen, found themselves on a collision-course with Principle Hadow of St Andrews and the 1720 Session; the work nevertheless became the theological cornerstone of the 1733 Secession Church.⁹⁶

However, Erskine – himself a Marrowman – became involved in the patronage controversy, when he disagreed with the General Assembly’s decision that if a patron allowed his rights to choose a minister to lapse, the presbytery should appeal to the heritors and elders to intervene, and not the congregation at large.⁹⁷ Undoubtedly this position, helped fan the flames of Ramsay’s desires for revenge

⁹³ See both Kinghorn and Law’s biographical sketch of Ramsay in *The Works of Allan Ramsay*, iv, p. 40, and their essay “Allan Ramsay and Literary Life,” in R.D.S. Jack, A. Hook, D. Gifford, *The History of Scottish Literature*, C. Craig (gen. ed) (4 vols; AUP, 1987-88), p. 75. “The Marrow Ballad” was created with “The Blythsome Wedding” in mind, to such an extent that it was meant to be sung to the tune of same; see “The Marrow Ballad, On Seeing a Strolling (sic) Congregation Going to a Field Meeting, May, 9th, 1738,” in *Works of Allan Ramsay*, iii, p. 244. Wanton clerics, of the evangelical persuasion, must have made a huge impact upon Ramsay. In his “On George Whitefield The Strolling Preacher,” composed in 1741, Ramsay continues his accusations, and writes:

Now Reverend S[i]r, after your wandering,
your Thieving, whooring, and your squandering
you may rejoyce, that you at last
on Scotland happylie are cast ...

From: “On George Whitefield The Strolling Preacher,” in *Works of Ramsay*, iii, p. 250 (ll. 1-4).

⁹⁴ W. Ferguson, *Scotland 1689 to Present* (Edinburgh, 1968), p. 118. A slightly different slant comes from R. Mitchison, *Lordship to Patronage, Scotland 1603-1745* (Edinburgh, 1983), p. 153, who argues that since the work was written in socratic dialogue form “the book could not be taken to support any single point of view.” Seemingly taking into account eighteenth century perceptions of the work, Ferguson might have disagreed with Mitchison’s stance, since he argues that within the work’s dialogue “evangelista” always defeats the heretics. Thus we might assume, that the attraction of *The Marrow* for the likes of the Erskines is that it portrayed the evangelical cause as being the true course toward salvation; whereas the other side of the coin, presumably representing the moderates, were always perceived as being lapsed Christians – or “heretics.”

⁹⁵ M. Lynch, *Scotland, A New History* (London, 1991), p. 322.

⁹⁶ D.C. Lachman, *The Marrow Controversy* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 1-9.

⁹⁷ Mitchison, *Lordship to Patronage*, p. 153.

against presbyterianism in all its forms. (One opinion has it that it was religious extremism of the part of the Edinburgh presbytery that caused the closing of his theatre, only shortly after its opening in 1736.⁹⁸) Patronage, thus, should never be invested with the clerics of the day, given their immorality, and as such, inherent hypocrisy:

The sun will be sunk in the west
before they have finished the wark
then behind a whin Bush we can rest –
ther’s mekle good done in the dark.
There Tammy and Tibby may creep
Slee Sandy may mool in with Kate
while other dowf sauls are asleep
we’ll handle deep matters of State.⁹⁹

Thus the upright, moral man of God becomes a lecherous rake, no better than the “ungodly” he is charged with leading out of the darkness and into the light.

However, control of public morality continued to be a concern for the civic authorities during the eighteenth century. Town councils such as Edinburgh even resorted to distributing reprints of past Privy Council and parliamentary rulings, and Town Council Acts which dealt with morality, in an effort to curb the “excesses.”¹⁰⁰ The tone of the preamble to this effort, however, almost sounds like an admission on the part of the town fathers that their’s was a losing cause. Despite the numerous excellent pieces of legislation passed with the intent of controlling vice and profanity, “there hath not been such a due and vigorous Execution of the said Acts as were to be wished.” One possible cause of this sad affair, so the council reasoned, was that these dictates were not readily available in a volume easily accessible to those whose job it was to carry-out the task of enforcement.¹⁰¹ Thus the impetus for

⁹⁸ See T. Crawford, D. Hewitt, A. Law (ed), *Longer Scottish Poems, Vol. 2, 1650-1830* (Edinburgh, 1987), p. 15.

⁹⁹ Ramsay, “The Marrow Ballad,” p. 245.

¹⁰⁰ GUL Spec. Coll. Mu 7-i.14; *The Acts of the Town Council of the City of Edinburgh for Supressing of Vice and Immorality, made since the Happy Revolution; especially since the Year 1700. To which is prefixed, The Proclamation of the Privy Council, containing an Abbreviate of the Acts of Parliament made against Prophaness and Vice ...* (Edinburgh, R. Fleming, 1742).

¹⁰¹ *Acts of the Town Council of ... Edinburgh for Supressing of Vice and Immorality*, pp. 91-92.

commissioning the printing of this “small”¹⁰² quarto volume dedicated to listing the transgressions and the penalties to be metered-out for such.¹⁰³ Though at this time the impression might be that the kirk no longer became involved in repeating old, or enacting new, legislation controlling morality, this was not the case. During August 1704 the Presbytery of Edinburgh formulated a new act containing the express purpose of “suppressing the abominable sins of uncleannes And other Immoralities ...”¹⁰⁴ This decree received the full backing of civic authorities in December of that same year: the implication might be that the task of preserving the moral fibre of the nation was an effort requiring the combined efforts of both church and state. This co-operation had probably long existed, but the impression we might arrive at is that it was more prevalent in later times. Despite the move toward a more secular administrated society, the kirk still held a position as a figure of authority.¹⁰⁵

Cultural celebrations involving carnival-like emotional release, that often found themselves the object of regulation are visible elsewhere in Scotland. One good example of this is the celebration of the ruling monarch’s birthday and/or date of his assuming the throne,¹⁰⁶ commonly referred to as the “King’s Day.” In early modern times, this appears to have enjoyed near universal observance. The

¹⁰² Actually, not so small, but rather extensive instead.

¹⁰³ *Acts of the Town Council of ... Edinburgh for Supressing of Vice and Immorality*, p. 92.

¹⁰⁴ *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh 1701-1718*, (ed) H. Armet (Edinburgh, 1967). p. 96.

¹⁰⁵ One church historian has argued along similar lines. C.G. Brown, *The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730* (London, 1987), p. 10, points to the strength of the kirk in relation to central authority: “Set against this view of powerful church assemblies is the very cause of their apparent strength – the geographical distance from the civil legislation in London ...” Once again, we can understand the significance of Mitchison’s views (see above) regarding the overall lack of authority directed from Westminster to the north.

Addressing the more pertinent concern here, regarding the kirk’s continued, if slightly reduced, presence in regulating local affairs, Brown, *Social History of Religion*, p. 11, has this to say: On a more local level there is greater evidence of the religious influence in public administration. From the Scottish Reformation of 1560 onwards the ruling committee of the parish church, the kirk session, grew in power *de facto* if not *de jure* as the magistrates’ court in criminal law. Despite some decline in power, the kirk session remained a compelling force in many communities well into the nineteenth century. More generally, the churches continued to exert enormous power in local government spheres such as the drinking laws, poor relief and education.

¹⁰⁶ Often the two dates were combined into one celebration.

description of the typical king's birthday celebration contains many allusions to celebration on a grand scale:

On whatever day it fell ... the monarch's birthday was, for many thousands of town-based Scots, a holiday, a period of release from their normal routines, which became increasingly regimented with the march of industrialisation. The noise of bells, small arms and cannon fire ... fulfilled their purpose in arousing public emotions, but in combination with liberal quantities of drink, are likely to have weakened the usual restraints on behaviour ... for the mass of the onlookers, the formal climax of the day ... occurred ... when the magistrates and their guests assembled at town crosses throughout Scotland to drink to a variety of loyal toasts.¹⁰⁷

The king's day thus represented a break from the norm, just as carnival represented a temporary suspension of normal behaviour. Whatley's observations are, in a general manner, confirmed by various official decrees stating the manner in which the king's birthday should be celebrated. For instance, it was ordained that for the 1691 celebration of the king's day, in honour of William III,

the provost of Edinburgh ... to cause make publict intimatione to the inhabitants of Edinburgh and suburbs to putt out illuminations in place of bonfyres and to cause ring of the bells of the city, and recomends to the Earle of Leiven, govenour of the castle of Edinburgh ... to cause fyre the guns and putt out the flags of the said castle as is usuall upon days of publict rejoycing, and the Councell ... will with the magistrats and toune councell of Edinburgh in their robbs walk in solemne ordor ... to the mercat cross of this city and ther give publict testimonie of their rejoycing for his Majesties happie birth, and ... the members dependents thereon and servants may be at libertie to give testimonie of their rejoycing upon the account forsaied.¹⁰⁸

It may be, therefore, that the king's day was a type of carnivalesque celebration in Scotland, especially given Whatley's contention that it was marked by

¹⁰⁷ C.A. Whatley, "Royal Day, People's Day: The Monarch's Birthday in Scotland, c.1660-1860," in R. Mason and N. Macdougall (ed), *People and Power in Scotland, Essays in Honour of T.C. Smout* (Edinburgh, 1992), passim; however, see especially, p. 180.

¹⁰⁸ *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland, 3rd Series* (Edinburgh, 1970), xvi, pp. 576-77; cf. *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland, 3rd Series* (Edinburgh, 1967), xv, p. 511 (the source Whatley cites). See also the description of the birthday preparations for King Charles II in 1672, which called for: "thanksgiving for his Maiesties happy birth and restauration, shall ... be kept upon the 29th day of May yeirlie and that ringing of bells throughout the whole Kingdome, and other evidences of joy be observed the said whole day, with bonfires at night ..." From, *APS*, viii, p. 73.

“boisterous behaviour” and a “saturnalia”-like atmosphere.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, and also very much in the vein of carnival, there seems to have been an attitude among the ruling elite that the king’s day, and all celebration associated with it, had to be recognised by the entire community. Parliamentary decree during the reign of Charles II made it mandatory for all ministers to preach on, and duly observe, the king’s day;¹¹⁰ and for individuals, regardless of their station in life, “that whosoever shall faill in observing this present act they shall be fined and otherwise punished by his Maiesties privie Councill and other Judges ordinar according to their condition and Estate.”¹¹¹ This latter point might seem somewhat incongruous given what was stated above (and with be further dealt with below), that the authorities did their best, at times, to severely restrict many forms of popular release. It must be remembered, however, that in the case of the king’s day the state was once again setting the rules, as was similar in the case of later forms of the Beltane celebration in Peebles. Thus, it might be argued that the king’s day represents a theoretical controlled time of communal emotional release. From the point of view of the authorities, it would always be preferable to have certain, pre-determined days set aside for public boisterousness, rather than allow social tension to build to a point where this emotional release could spontaneously ignite. Herein is likely the reason why the king’s day was promoted by the civil authorities, not to mention being a perceived method of promoting loyalty.¹¹² It is also the explanation behind the Glasgow city father’s stipulation that there should be mandatory participation in the Feast of Corpus Christi drama – a former papist observance – in 1599:

¹⁰⁹ Whatley, “Royal Day, People’s Day,” p. 176.

¹¹⁰ *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland, 3rd Series* (Edinburgh, 1910), iii, p. 347; cf. *APS*, vii, p. 376.

¹¹¹ *APS*, viii, p. 73.

¹¹² A national day, or days, of mirth and merriment as a way of promoting patriotism is a common practice in many states, in many eras. For a study of the parade as an expression of patriotic loyalty in nineteenth century America, see: M. Ryan, “The American Parade: Representations of Nineteenth-Century Social Order,” in L. Hunt (ed), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, 1989), passim.

... it is statute ... that according to the proclamatioune and preparatione to the playe and pastyme on Thurisdaye nixt, that ilk persone absent sall paye fyve lib. of penalte.¹¹³

Similarly, in Edinburgh a decree was issued on 3 November 1697 that:

The Treasurer is to deck the Cross and put up a theatre upon Thursday next, his Majesty's birthday, and to provide all things necessary in the usual manner. The inhabitants are to put illuminations in their windows and to attend their respective Captain's Colours in their best clothes and arms, under penalty of £20 Scots.¹¹⁴

The King's Day, like carnival itself, however, could often have a more political nature to it. It could be, and often was, the mode of protest against the ruling caste, by people interested in social change.¹¹⁵ The violent character of certain monarchical birthday celebrations in Scotland, according to Whatley, was a front for the deep-rooted frustrations harboured against those in authority on the part of the common citizenry.¹¹⁶ Thus there certainly seems some credibility to the poetic words of Robert Ferguson, who once described the mob celebrating the king's birthday in Edinburgh as a "hostile rabble."¹¹⁷ Ferguson's words are confirmed by a decree issued during the reign of Charles II which called for restraint during the celebration of the King's Day, and that furthermore, the day should be marked by "modestie and civillie without ony kynd of profanitie."¹¹⁸ Similarly, during the birthday celebrations for William III:

The Councill appoynts proclamation to go throw this City commanding the nighbourhood and inhabitants of this city and suburbs to put furth luminations of candles set befor ther glasse windows to the high street for the solemnity of his Majesties birthday upon the fourth instant under the penalty of ten pounds scots discharging the throwing of stones at glasse windows or any other

¹¹³ *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Glasgow, 1573-1642* (Glasgow, 1876), p. 193. This decree was issued on 2 June of that year.

¹¹⁴ Editor's paraphrase of act, in *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh 1689-1701*, H. Armet (ed) (Edinburgh, 1962), p. 221.

¹¹⁵ Ladorie, *Peoples Uprising at Romans*, p. 316; p. 319; cf. Watson, "Dialectics of 'Voice and Place'," p. 126.

¹¹⁶ Whatley, "King's Day, People's Day," passim; however, see especially p. 178.

¹¹⁷ Robert Ferguson, "The King's Birth-Day in Edinburgh," in A.M. Kinghorn and A. Law (ed), *Poems by Allan Ramsay and Robert Ferguson* (Edinburgh, 1985), p. 127 (l. 59).

¹¹⁸ *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Glasgow, 1663-1690* (Glasgow, 1905), p. 30.

publick disturbance by casting of squibs or fireballs under the paine of imprisonment and other wayes punished as disturbers of the peace ...¹¹⁹

Despite a large amount of official decree and ordinance to the contrary, the monarch's birthday, nevertheless, was often marked by violence and riotous behaviour. The fact that year after year the same act against “disturbers of the peace” is repeated, is suggestive of the authorities’ paranoid attitude – perhaps well-founded – concerning the potential for communal revelry to go awry.¹²⁰ Additional evidence of mob-like behaviour during the king’s day is afforded by the Statistical Accounts, speaking somewhat after the fact, but probably based upon first hand evidence. We know that in Edinburgh, for example, it was reported that although “The King’s Birthday” was celebrated in 1763 in a rather reserved manner, “in 1783 [it was], devoted to drunkenness, folly, and riot ...”¹²¹ Though drink and the mob mentality often fuelled rioting during the king’s day celebrations, anger towards those in positions of authority undoubtedly contributed its share towards any escalating level of violence during the saturnalia of the monarch’s birthday.

The cumulative picture that seems to be developing here in the foregoing examples of Beltane in Peebles, Scots theatre, and burgh celebrations of the king’s day, an increasing tendency for the authorities to allow public celebration, even taken to some pretty extreme levels, providing that a pre-determined line drawn by the officials was not crossed. Therein, a constant struggle of sorts develops: the momentum of public spectacle always has an inherent tendency to head toward the level of riot. On the other hand, official action always tended towards a controlled spectacle, limiting the chances for complete and sustained anarchy. As Burke described affairs relating to the carnival experience, there were “formally structured events” associated with this experience, in addition to a whole host of informal

¹¹⁹ *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh, 1689-1701*, p. 137.

¹²⁰ For instance, during the first two decades of the eighteenth century, such legislation was re-affirmed on (almost) a yearly basis; see *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh, 1701-18*, p. 36, p. 99, p. 116, p. 132, p. 166, p. 228, and p. 243.

¹²¹ *The Statistical Account of Scotland (The Lothians)*, D.J. Witherington and I.R. Grant (ed.) (East Ardsley, 1975), ii, pp. 52-53; cf. *The Statistical Account of Scotland (Fife)*, J. Sinclair (ed.) (East Ardsley, 1978), x, p. 459.

events, intermittently played out over the periphery.¹²² It seems that there was an increasing tendency among the town authorities in Scotland to limit, or control, the informal events occurring on the periphery of the main, more regulated events. There was thus, perhaps, a fraudulent aspect to the carnival experience in early modern Scotland, for it no longer recognised all the rules. Leeway for complete bedlam was no longer as acceptable, and perhaps less possible. Certainly, by comparing the poem “Peblis to the Play” we can see certain general themes present in both the poem, and historical renderings of Beltane. Some of the details, and ancillary elements, are certainly less faithfully portrayed. Perhaps then, at least some literature purportedly portraying certain aspects of the carnival were never meant to be taken as representations of the *actual*, but rather images of that which was *desired*, or that which should have been.¹²³

Therefore, there seems some validity to one of the basic contentions of R. Watson, insofar as that the carnival in Scots literature might have contained some elements of social protest. This might be illustrated by examining certain Scots poems portraying times of social conviviality, in which elements of protest seem to be also present.

A favourite tune which fits the criteria of that of popular folk celebration, while displaying many characteristics of carnival, is “The Blythsome Bridal.” This particular piece describes, very likely in a somewhat stereotyped fashion, a rural wedding, and is charged with much of the same folk-energy that was the basis for its inspiration. “The Blythsome Bridal” concerns itself with such typical entertainment’s as dancing, drinking and eating, familiarity and mixing of the social classes, plus there are many sexual and fertility overtones in the work: all these features are taken to near-carnavalesque extremes. The piece is thought to be the

¹²²Burke, *Popular Culture*, pp. 182-83.

¹²³In some cases however, some poems depicting the “good times” may have been at least based upon actuality. For instance, in the previous chapter it was suggested that probably Habbie Simson (who will re-appear in this chapter) was based upon first-hand observation, and thus could well contain many elements truthfully conceived, and even rendered, if somewhat stereotyped at times.

work of Robert Sempill, though this is apparently not an established fact.¹²⁴ Select stanzas from the piece will help to illustrate some of these characteristics, such as, initially, dancing, and drinking and eating:

Fy let us all to the Briddel,
for there will be Lilting there,
For Jockie's to be married to Maggie
the Lass with the Gauden-hair;
And there will be Lang-kail and Pottage
and Bannocks of Barley-Meal,
And there will be good Salt-herring
to relish a kog of good Ale ...

There will be Tartan, Dragen and Brachen
and fouth of good gappoks of Skate,
Pow-Sodie, and Drammock, and Crowdie
and callour Nout-feet in a Plate;
And there will be Partans, and buckies,
Speldens, and haddocks anew,
And sing'd Sheep-heads, and Haggize
and Scaldlips to sup till ye're fow.
Fy let us all &c.

There will be good lapper'd-milk Kebucks
and Sowens and Farles, and Baps,
And Swats, and scraped Paunches,
and Brandie in Stoups and in Caps.
And there will be Meal-Kail and Castocks,
and Skink to sup till you rive,
And Rosts to rost on a Brander,
of Flouks that was taken alive.
Fy let us all &c.

Familiarity, plus the mixing of the social classes is apparent here:

And there will be Sandie the Sutor,
and Willie with the meikle mow
And there will be Tom the Plouter,
and Andrew the Tinkler I trow,
And there will be bow legged Robbie,
and Thumbless Kettie's Good-man,
And there will be blue cheeked Dallie.
and Lawrie the Laird of the Land.
Fy let us all &c.

¹²⁴ A succinct commentary on "The Blythsome Bridal" is found in W. Donaldson, *The Jacobite Song* (Aberdeen, 1988), pp. 31-32, in which he describes the piece as "a sketch of a country wedding, rejoicing in the coarseness of the common people but at the same time full of lightness and grace."

More familiarity here, but these time with crude overtones sometimes of a sexual nature:

And Crampie that married Stainie
and coft him Breeks to his Arse
And afterwards hanged for Stealing,
great Mercy it hapned no worse;
And there will be fairtickl'd Hew,
and Bess with the lillie white Leg,
That gat to the South for breeing
and bang'd up her wamb in Mons-Meg.
Fy let us all &c.

And there will be Geordie McCowrie,
and blinking daft Barbara and Meg,
And there will be blincht Gillie-whimble
and peuter-fac't flitching Joug.
And there will be Happer-ars'd Nansie
and Fairie fac'd Jeanie by name,
Gleed Katie and fat lugged Lisie
the Lass with the gauden wamb.
Fy let us all &c.¹²⁵

In short, all the essentials necessary for a successful rustic celebration are present in “The Blythsome Bridal,” replete with allusions to eating, drinking, fellowship, and human sexuality, and then taken to comic extremes.

“The Blythsome Bridal” apparently spawned a whole host of imitators, eager to exploit the spirit, and driving verse and stanza style, of the original. One piece which sought to cash in on the carnivalesque atmosphere of the original was “The Treaty of Union,” a work of political satire that seems to fall under the somewhat amorphous heading of “Jacobite Verse.” It may well be the case, as Donaldson maintains, that the work was a rather shoddy imitation of “The Blythsome Bridal.”¹²⁶ Yet the poetic merits of the work are of limited importance for the purposes of this discussion; more crucial is the fact that “The Treaty of Union” utilised the form of a poem which might be described as having been of the

¹²⁵ “The Blythsome Wedding” in, James Watson, *Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems* (3 vols; 1706, 1709, 1711; reprinted as 1 vol., Glasgow, 1869), i, pp. 8-10 (ll. 1-8; 58-75; 13-48).

¹²⁶ Donaldson, *Jacobite Song*, p. 32.

carnavalesque genre, only to be turned into a biting critique against perceived centralisation and those individuals in favour of such:

Fy, let us all to the treaty,
As there will be wonders there,
For Scotland' to be a bryde,
And married to the Earl of Stair.

There' Queensberry, Seafield, and Marr,
And Morton comes in by the by;
There' Lothian, Leven, and Weems,
And Sutherland, frequently dry.

There; Roseberry, Glasgow, and Dupplin,
Lord Archibald Campbell, and Ross;
The President, Francis Montgomerie,
Who'll amble like any pac' horse.

There's Johnston, Daniel Campbell and Stewart,
Whom the Court has still in their hench;
There's solid Pitmedden and Forglen,
Who minds to jump on the bench.

There's Ormystone, and Tilliecountry,
And Smollett for the town of Dumbarton;
There's Arniston, and Carnwath,
Put in by his uncle, Lord Wharton.

There's young Grant, and young Pennycook,
Hugh Montgomerie, and David Dalrymple;
And there is one who will shortly bear bouk,
Preston grange, that indeed is not simple.

Now, the lord bless the gimp one-and-thirty,
If they prove not Traytors in fact;
But see their bryde well dressed and pretty,
Or else – the *De'el* take the pack!¹²⁷

We can see, therefore, how a politically charged piece such as “The Treaty of Union” could be derived from the carnivalesque, and in fact display many characteristics of the original genre. One characteristic, after all, of carnival was mock political rhetoric and debate¹²⁸ – although in this instance, there was a serious undercurrent to this mock debate.

¹²⁷ “The Treaty of Union,” in James Maidment (ed), *A Book of Scottish Pasquils, 1568-1715* (Edinburgh, 1868), pp. 366-67 (full text).

¹²⁸ Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, p. 15.

The precedent for this practice seen in “The Treaty of Union,” of using established verse as the basis for social and political debate, is long-standing. For instance, in reformation times, it was commonplace for popular verse to be transformed, and reworked, into verse embodying aspects of the reformers’ social and spiritual dogma.¹²⁹ This practice, however, was unlikely to have totally obscured memory of the original. In like fashion, persons familiar with both “The Treaty of Union” and the original, probably would have had equated one with the other – the stanza and lyrical style being the “ties that bind.” Encountering the imitator, the original would spring to mind; the net result, in this sense, would be that “The Treaty of Union” might have been perceived as a sort of “Blythsome Bridal on” the Union, in a fashion similar to the “Habbies on” one person or another, discussed in the previous chapter. In this manner, a poem of conviviality could become associated with biting social protest, in this instance, directed towards perceived fears over loss of political autonomy.

What pieces such as “The Treaty of Union” might represent are examples of examples of “reverse carnival” in which it is the authorities, or rather, the old authorities, that are helping to establish the genre, by disseminating their opinions, which are absorbed by sympathetic members of the commonality, who then in turn, generate literature promoting this standpoint. The literature is thus not that of the authorities, but the ideology stems from them. Ideas similar to these were expressed by Worth, in his study of subversion in Sir Walter Scott’s *Woodstock*. Thus there existed in Scott’s novel:

a world inverted by a temporarily triumphant revolution, [in which] carnival signifies the resistance of the old masters (rather than the resistance of the populace) to the doxa of the new order ...¹³⁰

This goes a long way toward explaining the convivial aspect in much so-called Jacobite Poetry. Many Scots standards like “Auld Lang Syne,” “The Blythsome

¹²⁹E.J. Cowan, “Calvinism and the Survival of Folk,” in E.J. Cowan (ed), *The People’s Past* (Edinburgh, 1980), p. 36.

¹³⁰ C. Worth, “Scott, Story-Telling and Subversion: Dialogism in *Woodstock*,” in Alexander and Hewitt (ed), p. 381.

Bridal,” “Bonnie Broom,” and “Habbe Simpson” inevitably were transformed into songs sympathetic to the Jacobite cause. Thus, a song originally connected with unrestrained public revelry becomes a vehicle for criticising restraint associated with the political and social structures of the status quo. The carnival in Jacobite Poetry is not representative of an entire population’s thoughts and attitudes, but it was endearing (as Jacobitism itself was, or became) to all those individuals who had a gripe with the new order supportive of union, Hanoverian succession, whiggism, and the established kirk.

It is probably worth re-emphasising some select aspects of the genre started by Sempill of Beltrees, since some of these imitators speak against centralisation, such as it was. As will be recalled, an extremely popular, and versatile tune “Habbe Simson” was born of the world of popular festival, replete with aspects suggestive of a carnival-type atmosphere: “‘Habbe Simson’ and his many relatives all belong to the world of communal festival ...”¹³¹ So famous, and fully ingrained in many people’s minds was Habbe, that even after his passing, popular tradition concerning the skills of other pipers constantly returned to him as the measure by which the others were judged:

Weel hae you play’d your part, quo Meg,
Your cheeks are like the crimson;
There’s nane in Scotland plays sae weel,
Sin’ we lost Habbe Simpson.¹³²

In actual fact, probably the poem “Habbe Simson” did more to boost the dead piper’s reputation than his actual playing;¹³³ popular tradition may have played a big part in this as well.

It has been argued that, among other things, Habbe Simson acted as sort of champion for an old, threatened, traditional lifestyle.¹³⁴ Almost immediately after the Reformation, the piper, and pipe music began to be viewed with grave suspicion

¹³¹ Watson, “Dialectics of ‘Voice and Place’,” p. 102.

¹³² NLS, S.302.b.2 (94); (Allan Ramsay) *Maggie Lauder*, Belfast, Simms & McIntyre, n.d.

¹³³ Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, p. 102.

¹³⁴ Buthlay, “Habbe Simson,” p. 216; p. 219.

by the Kirk.¹³⁵ However, this attack actually began even before the Reformation had run its course. John Knox, with a good deal of vehemence, lashed out at “the assembled priests, friars, canons and rotten Papists with tabors and trumpets, banners and bagpipes ...” who partook in the St Giles Day procession in Edinburgh on 1 September, 1558.¹³⁶ Here, of course, the main source of Knox’s ire was the papacy, but the excesses and superstitions of the Roman faith were symbolised by the clamour of the bagpipes. Later, a good deal of official decree aimed at silencing the public displays of music was passed, and it seems that at certain points in time in Kilbarchan itself, the sound of pipe-music at weddings was something especially painful to the ears of any self-respecting presbyterian.¹³⁷ The pre-reformed church was less critical of pipe-music;¹³⁸ in the eyes of the later reformed kirk, pipe-music was the work of no less an infamous figure than Satan himself.¹³⁹ In fact, during the proceedings of many Scottish witch trials, the accused were said to have consorted with the devil, who often (being the shape-changer that he was) appeared in the guise of a man playing the bagpipes.¹⁴⁰ Or, in the case of one Isabel Smyth of

¹³⁵ Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, p. 103.

¹³⁶ *John Knox’s History of the Reformation in Scotland*, (ed) W.C. Dickinson (2 vols; London, Edinburgh, 1949), i, p. 127.

¹³⁷ R.D. MacKenzie, *Kilbarchan: A Parish History* (Paisley, 1902), p. 67, relates that, “In March, 1640 intimation was made from the various pulpits forbidding piping and dancing ‘at marriage brydeles’.”

¹³⁸ Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, p. 102.

¹³⁹ Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, p. 104. See also Cowan, “Calvinism and the Survival of Folk,” pp. 44-45.

¹⁴⁰ Portraits of the Devil assuming the form of a bag-piper appear to have been a common item in Scottish popular culture. In no way was he the originator of the genre, nevertheless Burns’s diabolical piper in “Tam o’ Shanter” is possibly one of the best remembered. In a vein remarkably similar to accounts in *The Register of the Privy Council* (see next note), the devil in “Tam” provides the music for “Warlocks and witches in a dance” –

A winnoch-bunker in the east,
There sat auld Nick, in shape o’ beast;
A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large,
To gie them music was his charge:
He screw’d the pipes and gat them skirl,
Till roof and rafters a’ did dirl. –

(Robert Burns, “Tam o’ Shanter. A Tale,” in *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, {ed} J. Kinsley, {3 vols; Oxford, 1968}, ii, p. 561 {l. 115 and ll. 119-24}.)

Pilmore, the evil one first bedded the accused; then she together with several other women “danced thair and haid a piper, but saw not quha he was ...”¹⁴¹

Yet it might be a mistake to believe that all such musicians were indiscriminately hunted-down as an evil force. Numerous burghs employed town-pipers, whose duty it was to perform certain civic functions.¹⁴² Aberdeen (albeit, not a place known for its presbyterianism) certainly employed one Alexander Thomson as its town-piper in 1664.¹⁴³ However, in one area with stronger Presbyterian leanings, the Burgh of Stirling “appoint[ed] Alexander Glass ... to be town piper ... during the counccills pleasure.”¹⁴⁴ Glass’s duties including going through the town, playing his pipes twice daily: four-o-clock in the morning and seven-o-clock in the evening, for which he was to receive £36 Scots per annum.¹⁴⁵ And one Edinburgh bailie appreciated the fact that the town piper was lodged in his barn, as one night

¹⁴¹ *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, 3rd series, vol. i (Edinburgh, 1908), p. 650. Though according to Cowan, “Calvinism and the Survival of Folk,” p. 43, in such a situation it may have been the dancing itself, albeit to the sound of piping, that most provoked the wrath of the religious authorities. There may be a good deal of truth to this, since most accounts of the witches’ sabbat refer in lurid detail to the participants’ lascivious dancing; on this see J. Klaitz, *Servants of Satan* (Bloomington, 1985), p. 53. However, it stands to reason that dancing of any sort – lascivious or otherwise – benefits through the presence of music.

¹⁴² Some of these town-pipers may have in actual fact been players of the fife; it is sometimes very difficult to discern which instrument is being referred to. The fife versus bagpipe debate is touched upon by D. Johnson, *Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1972), p. 95. He seems to favour the fife in many cases, yet he admits that others are partial to the bagpipe theory (such as Collinson, cited elsewhere in this thesis). Regardless, he also concedes that “several town pipers in Border towns were *also* notable bagpipe players.” The whole idea behind the employment of these pipers was for them to perform as a sort of hourglass, announcing the times of day.

¹⁴³ *Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen, 1643-1747* (Edinburgh, 1872), pp. 209-10.

¹⁴⁴ *Extracts from the Records of the Royal Burgh of Stirling, AD 1667-1752* (Glasgow, 1889), p. 200.

¹⁴⁵ *Extracts from the ... Royal Burgh of Stirling*, p. 200. Similarly, Stirling employed John Innes to be its piper in 1672 for an annual income of £24 Scots, in addition to providing him with clothing and lodging (see: *Extracts from the ... Royal Burgh of Stirling*, p. 12). This same Innes was even allowed to perform at penny-bridals (*Extracts from the ... Royal Burgh of Stirling*, p. 13). Unfortunately, in 1687, the council, citing financial woes, were forced to terminate Innes’ employment (*Extracts from the ... Royal Burgh of Stirling*, p. 52). This is in spite of the fact that six years previous, Stirling had received royal assent from Charles II to levy a malt tax to pay for, among other things – “drummer’s and piper’s fees (*Extracts from the Records of the Merchant Guild of Stirling, AD 1592-1846*, W.B. Cook and D.B. Morris {ed} {Stirling, 1916}, p. 75).” For interest sake, during the Hanoverian period, a similar tax was approved in January, 1731 (*Records of the Merchant Guild of Stirling*, p. 92).

the musician deterred a thief, bent on stealing “20 bolls of pease,” by blowing on his pipes!¹⁴⁶

What seems to have been frowned upon was unofficial, non-sanctioned, and spontaneous music. Worse yet were those occasions when people who supposedly should have known better, sanctioned the playing of loud music at what should have otherwise been solemn events. Thus within the bounds of the Presbytery of Stirling, during the late sixteenth century, Robert Menteith, minister of Alva, was made to answer for the occasion when he allowed “ane pyper [to] playit” at a marriage he performed.¹⁴⁷ Thus, to those who wielded power over the spiritual realm in said place it was believed that “ane grit abuse and superstitioun usit be sindrie personis that cumis to parroche kirkis to be mareit in causing pyperis ... play befoir thame to the kirk and fra the kirk.”¹⁴⁸ The attack upon the pipes continued into later times, when the kirk session of Cambusnethan decreed on 22 September, 1649 “that ther should be no pyperis at brydels” and that those who disobeyed the ruling “sall loose their consigned money, and be farder punisched as the Sessioune thinks fitt.”¹⁴⁹ Thus it might be fair to say that this attack upon popular music and entertainments was a result of the centralising force of the kirk desiring to curb what it saw as an insidious superstition, reminiscent of popery. Such poems as Habbie Simson represented something of a counterpoint to these attitudes.

The reformed kirk thus did its earnest best to stamp out popular participation in, and the traditional celebration of, such events as Saints’ Days, Beltane, etc.,¹⁵⁰ a fact, supported by the General Assembly article, presented to the Lord Regent in 1575 “That all dayes that heirtofore have been keepit holy, besydes the Sabbath

¹⁴⁶ *The Edinburgh Gazette*, No. 4 (Friday 10 March to Monday 13 March, 1699).

¹⁴⁷ *Stirling Presbytery Records, 1581-1587*, J. Kirk (ed) (Edinburgh, 1981), pp. 190-92.

¹⁴⁸ *Stirling Presbytery Records*, p. 192.

¹⁴⁹ From the “Register of the Kirk Session of Cambusnethan,” in *Miscellany of the Maitland Club* (4 vols; Edinburgh, 1834), vol. i, p. 430; cf. *The Scottish Antiquary, or Northern Notes and Queries*, iv, A.W.C. Hallen (ed) (Edinburgh, 1891), p. 180, which relates that on 18 December, 1658, the Kirk Session of Dunblane ordained that “eurie brydall haveing pyping ... [should] loose their consignation and consignation in the treasrs. hands for yat effect ...”

¹⁵⁰ J. Wormald, *Court, Kirk, and Community: Scotland 1470-1625* (Edinburgh, 1981), pp. 136-37.

dayes, sic as Zuill ... Saint's dayes, and others, may be abolischt ..."¹⁵¹ Furthermore, in 1581, parliament decreed that the observance of all Saint's Days – especially when associated with such things as fairs, markets, the lighting of bonfires, the singing of holy songs, or “papist trappings” of any sort – should henceforth be considered taboo.¹⁵² Despite this calculated attack upon the time-honoured folk traditions of the people, the authorities (both civil and religious, often working in concert with one another) were often times less than wholly successful in this endeavour, and the celebrations on an individual communal level at times survived the onslaught.

This official intervention into local practices such as festival, met literary and popular tradition on the day set aside to honour Habbie. This was the observance of St Barchan's Day in Kilbarchan.

Kilbarchan itself was, according to popular tradition, named for the eighth-century cleric Saint Barchan (var. Bearchan, Berchan).¹⁵³ Traditionally speaking, however, Saint Barchan's Day was observed on the sixth of April and, as a result, was part of the whole Lentin-Easter-Beltane “season.” However, in Kilbarchan, Saint Barchan was commemorated during that community's Liliias Day celebrations, held on the third Saturday in August.¹⁵⁴ This appears to have been the result of yet another attempt at controlling tradition, previously referred to, since William Cunninghame (of the Glencairn earls) thought it inappropriate that Kilbarchan's favourite festival should be associated with the heathen-inspired Beltane. Thus by

¹⁵¹ *The Book of the Universall Kirk of Scotland*, A. Peterkin (ed) (Edinburgh, 1839), p. 151.

¹⁵² *APS*, iii, p. 212.

¹⁵³ A.P. Forbes, *Kalendars of Scottish Saints* (Edinburgh, 1872), p. 279; *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol. x (Perth) (Edinburgh and London, 1845), p. 1104. However, there was, as might be expected, some dispute as to the true origin of Kilbarchan's name. Thus, according to *The Statistical Account of Scotland*, vii, p. 751, there is a tradition held by some that “Kilbarchan” stems from the Gaelic roots *Kil* = “chapel,” *bar* = “hill,” *chan* = “valley or plain;” thus, *Kilbarchan* = “chapel of the hill-bounded valley,” which describes the location of the original church.

Nevertheless, St Barchan appears to have been part of the Culdee movement in the Perth/Stirlingshire area. Rather improbably, he is listed as Bishop of the Orkneys.

¹⁵⁴ McNeill, *Silver Bough*, iv, p. 127.

Cuninghame's insistence (and no doubt also in appeasement of his vanity), the day was renamed for his daughter Lilius sometime early in the eighteenth century.¹⁵⁵

Thus the Habbie Simson literary genre might have, during the early eighteenth century, represented something of an antithesis to what Scotland was, or what it feared the land was about to become. It has already been mentioned in the preceding chapter how the basic piece served as a vehicle to help reverse the trend toward anglicisation of literature, and to portray common burgh life. It also seems to have been making a statement in favour of spontaneous communal revelry. Perhaps this last is a reason why James Watson decided to include it in his anthology *A Choice Collection of Scots Poems* above and beyond any antiquarian rescue efforts. A traditionalist by nature, Watson probably saw the increasing tendency towards union (finally realised in 1707) as centralisation on its grandest scale.¹⁵⁶ A poem full of Scottish popular folk motifs like "Habbie Simpson" may have been one of the best ways for a patriotic printer like Watson to voice his displeasure surrounding overtures for a central British government.

In a manner similar to "The Bylthsome Bridal" the offshoots of Sempill's original often expressed vehemence against political and social policy. Thus *An Habby On the Death of Mis. James Cruickshanks* lashes-out against the "Whig Fools," who were in favour of punishment by public humiliation – "Fash us with their Repenting Stools" – for those who had committed sexual transgressions which produced "Bastard Bairns."¹⁵⁷ Similarly, the nationalistic *An Elegy on Willy Bald* expressed many anti-English and anti-Union sentiments, while enshrining the names of those heroes to the nation, Douglas, Wallace, and Bruce.¹⁵⁸ The lament of the

¹⁵⁵ McNeill, *Silver Bough*, iv, p. 128.

¹⁵⁶ Even though the union of 1707 may not have worked in exactly that manner.

¹⁵⁷ NLS, S.302.b.2 (73); *An Habby On the Death of Mis. James Cruickshanks in Mountounha, Alias Bruckle the Begars Marry them A(a!)* (n.d.), ll. 13-14.

¹⁵⁸ NLS, Ry III.a.10(39); *An Elegy on Willie Bald, Who was long Porter in Traquaire: Tho' now dead he was not auld; Alas for him my Heart is faire*. It is the hope of the unnamed poet (of Catholic leanings {?}) that Willie lies peacefully:

And has auld Death that Bloody Knave
E'en brought Poor Willy to his Grave?
Tho' we pray'd his Life to save

early eighteenth century Highlander, mindful of concerted attacks upon traditional Gaelic-based society, from the Lowland representatives of the government, are expressed in *The Highland Man's Lament*. Scorning a law imposed upon his society, the Highlander laments the execution of Donald Bain, hanged as a common criminal: "Shame fa the feckless Lauthian Law | for now he's dead."¹⁵⁹

Allan Ramsay's affinities for the Habbie Simson tradition have been discussed above; this was his way of deliberately cultivating images of the common. Some of these images could be seen as squibs against the mounting status quo. Thus "Elegy on Patie Birnie" presents a picture of the itinerant fiddler performing for money at the local public house is preserved:

When strangers landed, wow sae thrang,
Fuffing and peghing, he wa'd gang,
And crave their pardon that sae long
 He'd been a coming;
Syne his bread-winner out he'd bang,
 And fa' to bumming.¹⁶⁰

It is well known that Old Nick was a talented fiddle-player in his own right; this is probably the reason why earlier on the kirk authorities at such places as Stirling in 1583 decreed that all ministers who allowed not only the playing of pipes, but also the playing of the fiddle at marriages, would be subject to severe disciplinary

with Book and Beed.
Alas we'll never hear him Rave,
 since now he's dead

Now we pray all with Heart and Mouth,
May Willy's Doom be soft and smooth,
Oh save him from the Lion's Tooth;
 and Fire of Hell:
For he cou'd never suffer Drouth,
 he kens himsel.

(stanzas 1 and 17 in their entirety)

¹⁵⁹ NLS, Ry III.a.10(36); *The Highland Man's Lament, For the Dea[th] [o]f Donald Bayn, alias M'evan Vanifranck, who was Execute in the Grass [Mar]ke[t] of Edinburgh, on Wednesday the 9th Day of January 1723* (Edinburgh?, 1723?).

¹⁶⁰ Allan Ramsay, "Elegy on Patie Birnie," in *The Poems of Allan Ramsay* (2 vols; Leith, 1814), i, p. 62 (ll. 7-12).

action.¹⁶¹ In time, however, the fear of diabolism may have waned slightly, and fiddlers were often employed at official events. Thus, Edinburgh paid four violinists twenty shillings sterling for performing at the king's birthday celebrations in 1660;¹⁶² while in 1686 Glasgow also employed fiddlers for its king's day celebrations.¹⁶³ The implication might be, once again, that fiddle music was acceptable, providing that it was played only at times deemed appropriate by the authorities.

Already discussed was "The Blythsome Bridal," which contained numerous references to carnival-like practice; from Ramsay's *Tea Table Miscellany* comes another piece containing interesting references to communal gathering:

Here are people and sports,
Of all sizes and sorts,
Coach'd damsel and squire,
And mob in the mire,
Tarpaulins, trugmallions,
Lords, ladies, sows babies,
And loobies in scores;
Some hawling, some bawling,
Some leering, some fleering,
Some loving, some shoving,
With legions of furbelow'd whores;
To the tavern some go,
And some to a show,
See poppets for moppets,
Jack puddens for cuddens,
Rope-dancing, mares prancing,
Boats flying, quacks lying,
Pick-pockets, pick-plackets,
Beasts, butchers and beaux,
Fops prattling, dice rattling,
Rooks shaming, putts damning,
Whores painted, masks tainted,
In tally-man's furbelow'd cloaths.
The mob's joys wou'd ye know,

¹⁶¹ *Stirling Presbytery Records*, p. 224.

¹⁶² *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh 1655-65*, M. Wood (ed) (Edinburgh, 1940), p. 210.

¹⁶³ *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Glasgow 1663-90* (Glasgow, 1905), p. 510.

To yon music-house go,
 See tailors and sailors,
 Whores oily and doily,
 Here music makes you sick;
 Some skipping, some tripping,
 Some smoking, some joking,
 Like spiggit and tap;
 Short measure, strange pleasure,
 Thus billing and swilling,
 Some yearly get fairly
 For fairings, pig pork and a clap.¹⁶⁴

The world thus represented was that of the high-born and low-born, freely mixing in a setting of games, pranks, and excessive consumption. It is really some thing of a “free-for-all” here, and the impression of mass confusion, even chaos, seems prevalent. There is little order alluded to in this poem, and unrestrained behaviour enacted by people “feeling” rather than “thinking” is noticeable. Less in the way of cerebral activity is apparent here; more in the way of instinctive reaction to external sensual stimuli. But it must be stressed that this is not a poem dealing with carnival in its strictest sense, rather it is a poem which exploits selected elements drawn from the convivial genre.

Playful mockery, even light-hearted abuse is a common trait of carnival; it can be seen in such literary efforts as Ramsay’s mock elegies. However, in this respect the metaphorical aspects of carnival are being emphasised. As noted in an earlier chapter, Ramsay’s elegies partially derived their strength from the fact that they were based upon scenes from contemporary urban life. Ramsay thus contemporised the “Habbe Simson” genre. But because these elegies seemed to contain references to carnival type experience, as did the Sempill original, he was in a sense also contemporising literary carnival. In this sense, Ramsay’s portrayals of conviviality might have contained more relevance than such poems as “Christis Kirk.”

¹⁶⁴ “Song XLVIII, Sung by *Pinkanello*, Merry Andrew to *Levergio*, the Montebank Doctor,” in Allan Ramsay, *The Tea-Table Miscellany: A Collection of Choice Songs, Scots and English*, 14th ed reprint (2 vols; Glasgow, 1871), ii, pp. 51-52.

Ramsay's mock elegies certainly contained elements of realism in them, but the addition of carnival-type descriptions seems to have resulted in a highly jocular quality in some instances. In "Lucky Spence's Last Advice" the deceased madam has some sage advice for her surviving girls, telling:

O black Ey'd Bess and mim Mou'd Meg,
 O'er good to work or yet to beg;
 Lay Sunknots up for a sair Leg,
 For whan ye fail,
 Ye'r Face will not be worth a Feg,
 Nor yet ye'r Tail.¹⁶⁵

This selection is (quite obviously) full of terms crude, slightly abusive, slightly uncomplimentary. This example of billingsgate demonstrates how curses and informal, playfully abusive language could be used entirely affectionately, in a manner ultimately derived from the coarse exchange between those familiar persons at the market-place.¹⁶⁶

It will be recalled from an earlier chapter the way in which the poem "Habbe Simson" related Robert Sempill's humorous, playful, even mocking, yet totally sincere, affection for the dead piper from Kilbarchan. Ramsay's use of billingsgate might be in many ways similar, or perhaps even more acute. Yet this is a long-standing feature of carnival-based literature, as is readily apparent in the writings of Rabelais (fl. c.1530),¹⁶⁷ who was the subject of Bakhtin's original inquiry. From

¹⁶⁵Allan Ramsay, "Lucky Spence's last Advice," in *Works of Ramsay*, i, p. 22 (ll. 13-18).

¹⁶⁶ Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, p. 16.

¹⁶⁷ The first English translation of Rabelais was accomplished by Sir Thomas Urquhart (in concert with Motteux), who was probably born in Cromarty c.1611. His was, for the longest while, the standard translation, for which he himself seemed to get caught-up in the spirit of carnival, since as R. Boston (ed), *The Admirable Urquhart, Selected Writings* (London, 1975), p. 55, maintained:

Urquhart's mastery of obscure language is only equalled by his command of the colloquial and idiomatic, the earthy and the bawdy, with which Rabelais's name is associated. The enormous lists of synonyms which Rabelais piles up present am frightful problem for the translator: for many of the items on the list there will be no exact equivalent in English (or, indeed, in modern French). Urquhart rightly decided to follow the spirit rather than the letter: instead of trying to translate item by item, what he usually does is simply to provide his own list. It would have been remarkable if in doing so Urquhart had been able to match the gusto and exuberance of Rabelais. He does not. Instead, he repeatedly outstrips Rabelais, producing lists that are even longer (often considerably longer) than those of the original.

Pantagruel, it is related how the character Panurge became distressed through hearing the words of Herr Trippa, regarding the former's desire to marry. Seeking solace, Panurge turns to his long-time friend and travelling companion, Friar John:

'Cheer me up a little, old cock,' he said. 'I feel quite down in the dumps from that benighted idiot's claptrap. Listen my dainty ballock ball-bag ... my arquebussing ball-bag, my waggling ball-bag, my dear friend brother John, I have the greatest reverence for you ... Give me your advice, I implore you. Should I marry or not?'

Friar John answered him with a light heart: 'Marry in the devil's name, and ring out a double peal on your balls. I say as quickly as I can, and I mean it. Call the banns and make the bed creak this very evening ...'¹⁶⁸

And still later, while ridiculing Panurge's anxiety over the possibility of his becoming a cuckold – "Besides, if its predestined to be so, would you oppose your fate?" – Friar John returns the compliment to his trusted accomplice: "Tell me that, you faded ball-bag, jaded ball-bag."¹⁶⁹ This exchange between Panurge and Friar John is no different a situation than that when two long-time friends, being at complete ease with one another, would during the course of conversation affectionately refer to each other as "bastard," or "bugger," or something similar. To the casual onlooker, sitting on the outside, such an exchange might appear distressing, crude, violent, even inflammatory. But those within the situation, taking part in it, would understand the special circumstances involved. Perhaps this is exactly what Ramsay had in mind when he concocted Lucky Spence's hypothetical last words to her surviving prostitutes. In a sense, what he was doing was to extend the limits of the carnivalesque nature of the poem, to draw his readership into the boundaries of same.

The way in which Urquhart becomes enmeshed with this spirit of excess, might be considered a carnivalesque experience, and might relate to what will shortly be argued about some of Ramsay's poetry.

Nevertheless, Urquhart's translation is replete with words like "cod-piece," and "new-fangled" colloquialisms we might expect a seventeenth century speaker of English to use. See *The Complete Works of Rabelais ... Rendered into English by Sir Thomas Urquhart and Peter Motteux* (2 vols; London, 1927), i, p. 465 (chap. 8).

¹⁶⁸ François Rabelais, "The Third Book of the Heroic Deeds and Sayings of The Good Pantagruel" in, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, J.M. Cohen (tr) (London, 1955), pp. 360-62 (chap. 26).

¹⁶⁹ Rabelais, "Pantagruel," p. 365 (chap. 28).

It is also of interest to note that certain curse words which were debased originally, and cruelly assailed those suffering verbal attack, later became popular terms of familiarity. Certainly word meanings and uses change throughout time, but when words experience drastic metamorphosis, changing from vulgar insult to commonplace terminology, perhaps we are witnessing the long-term effects of inversion.¹⁷⁰ Such words had a formal meaning at one time, but nevertheless took on a different guise during the special time of the carnival experience. Certain words have a type of inherent hypocrisy within themselves. Formally speaking, these words are crude curses, often – if we consider the example of the words “bastard” and “bugger” – with lewd sexual overtones. Nevertheless, informally – that is, during “special occasions” – curse words can be the language of merriment. It is at this time, when formality is suspended, that we can see the carnival-like nature of certain abusive or crude words. Most of these crude terms pertain to basic bodily functions, to the “lower” parts, which the carnival experience is centred around. Virtually every basic bodily function has some crude phrase associated with it (they are, hopefully, obvious!). Thus at the outset, there is a carnival-like characteristic associated with these terms. When such crude terms lose their formal nature, and are inverted into a term of coarse affection, there is yet a further extension of the carnival. Suspension of formality is yet another characteristic of the carnival.

¹⁷⁰ For what it is worth, an example of a word whose meaning experienced a carnivalesque sort of inversion during its long lifespan, is the curse word “bugger.” G. Hughes, *Swearing* (Oxford, 1991), p. 254, provides a fascinating history of this word.

Bugger:

- 1) A heretic – AD 1340
- 2) A sodomite – AD 1555
- 3) A practiser of bestiality – AD 1555
- 4) A chap, fellow, customer – AD 1719

Thus, in the high middle-ages a bugger was an enemy of the church; in the late middle-ages, possibly still an enemy of the church and definitely a sexual deviant of one sort or another (of course what is deviant to some may not be to others); and in the early modern period, an all-round nice “chap” presumably without a problem in the world. Of course today, depending upon what circle a person travels in, and whether they are in the convivial spirit or not, the word “bugger” has a variety of meanings: everything from a reference to a person’s best pal, to the Oxford Dictionary description of the same word – “sodomite; *vulgar*, unpleasant or contemptible person or thing, etc.”

The key point to remember when considering the issue of the curse becoming a commonplace term of affection is that as long as the tone of the crude language was not hostile, the words themselves can seemingly transform from curse to endearment. In fact this latter point, relating to the intonation of the curse, is crucial, since context can transform insult into affection. Such profanities and oaths were not initially related to humour, but they did, however, eventually serve to break official norms,¹⁷¹ and as such were a rebellion against all that was official. Forms of billingsgate, therefore, shattered the concepts of human behaviour as envisioned by the state and replaced them with forms of social intercourse born in, and common to, the fair and the market-place.¹⁷² Ramsay's portrayal of common Edinburgh street life, related in the language of the people (or an approximation thereof) might be seen as an example of this. For in these poems, non-official language is used to convey tales pertaining to the non-elite.

Billingsgate can be seen in some of the other works of Ramsay such as in "The Monk and the Millar's Wife," the entire readership is addressed in an extremely familiar and playfully mocking manner, in the way a person with a propensity for drink would address his best companion in crime:

Now lend your lugs, ye benders fine,
Wha ken the benefit o wine;
And you wha laughing scud brown ale,
Leave jinks a wee and hear a tale.¹⁷³

Scarcely any difference between this sort of greeting and that offered by Friar John to Panurge – "my dainty ballock." And on the subject of the author of *Gargantua*, we find an amusing similarity between Ramsay's greeting to his readership, and Rabelais's cordial, carnivalesque invitation to those who would venture through the

¹⁷¹ Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, p. 17.

¹⁷² A modification of an idea first expressed by Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, p. 17.

¹⁷³ Allan Ramsay, "The Monk and the Millar's Wife, A Tale," in *The Poems of Allan Ramsay*, i, p. 75 (ll. 1-4).

pages of his work: “Most noble boozers, and you my very esteemed and poxy friends – for to you and you alone are my writings dedicated ...”¹⁷⁴

Other aspects of carnival might have found their way into the works of Allan Ramsay – namely, excessive portrayals of such “bodily functions” as eating, drinking, and the sex act. It seems apparent that Ramsay spent much of his time observing, and (probably) participating in the activities common to Edinburgh street life – the vividness and believability of some of his accounts, albeit transmitted in a fantastic manner, is perhaps evidence enough of this. Thus he was familiar with the ale-houses, taverns, public-houses, and bawdy-houses. Ramsay was the, would-be, wise man of sorts, seeking knowledge in the areas of dominated by rules of the common. This idea, as it happens, bears some relationship to the arguments of R. Watson who quotes Bakhtin on the subject of the Menippean satire, a classical form of satire dating from the third to first century BC:

A very important characteristic of the Menippea is the organic combination within it of the free fantastic, the symbolic, at times even the mystical-religious element with an extreme and (from our point of view) crude *slum naturalism*. The adventures of truth on earth take place on the high road, in brothels, in the dens of thieves, in taverns, market-places, prisons, in erotic orgies of secret cults, and so forth. The man of the idea – the wise man – collides with the worldly evil, depravity, baseness and vulgarity in their most extreme expression.¹⁷⁵

In a Britain increasingly coming to be dominated by intellectual ideals propelled by lofty, and chauvinistic concepts of politeness, literature fuelled by the wise man encountering the common could indeed have been perceived as “counter-cultural.” (Witness Adam Smith’s summation of Ramsay’s writing, noted above.) Thus:

Parodic-travestying literature introduces the permanent corrective of laughter, of a critique on the one-sided seriousness of the lofty direct word ...¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴Rabelais, “The Most Fearsome Life of the Great Gargantua – The Author’s Prologue,” in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, p. 37.

¹⁷⁵ Watson, “Dialectics of ‘Voice and Place,’” pp. 102-06; cf. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 93.

¹⁷⁶ M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, M. Holquist (ed), C. Emerson and M. Holquist (tr), (University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 55; Watson, “Dialectics of ‘Voice and Place,’” refers to this as well.

What Ramsay appears to have been doing was to seek a fuller interpretation of the world in which he lived, fuller than he could achieve simply by mingling with polite society alone. It was at the tavern, brothel, etc., that society's normal rules of conduct were suspended, or suppressed. The tavern, by way of example, is therefore a place where carnival might be frequently played out. That the tavern, public-house, and house of prostitution represents an affront to authority and common morality is affirmed by the fact that the authorities themselves – both past, present, and (probably) future – spend, and have spent, a good deal of time attempting to control, or altogether eliminate such places.

In literature containing elements of carnival, aspects of the everyday can be at times grotesquely portrayed.¹⁷⁷ Thus, in “Lucky Spence’s Last Advice” the famous madam who lived near Holyrood House gives her blessings to the generous clients:

My benison come on good doers,
 Who spend their cash on bawds and whores;
 May they ne'er want the wale of cures
 For a sair snout;¹⁷⁸
 Foul fa' the quacks wha that fire smoors,
 And puts nae out.

But offers a curse for the mean client:

My malison light ilka day
 On them that drink and dinna pay,
 But tak a snack and rin away;
 May't be their hap
 Never to want a gonorrhoea,
 Or rotten clap.¹⁷⁹

Here, the grotesque, unpleasant aspects of human sexuality are parodied, as the topic of venereal disease becomes the centre-piece for crude humour. Though not,

¹⁷⁷ This is what Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, p. 18, refers to as “the concept of grotesque realism” that is but a modification of folk-humour.

¹⁷⁸ Though fairly obvious, “snout,” or nose, is being used here as a euphemism for the penis. According to Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 187, during carnival the symbolic meaning of the long-nosed masks worn by some of the participants was unmistakable, being an obvious phallic symbol.

¹⁷⁹ Allan Ramsay, “Lucky Spence’s Last Advice,” in *The Poems of Allan Ramsay*, i, pp. 69-70 (ll. 85-96).

strictly-speaking, a piece of carnival literature in the same vein as, for example, “Christis Kirk,” Ramsay’s elegy to the deceased Hollyrood madam, seems to contain select elements of the carnival, such as this portrayal of the extreme elements associated with sex. Thus, the bodily function of reproduction becomes the subject for a portrayal of one aspect of carnival.

Ramsay’s familiarity with tavern life has been alluded to in the above quoted extract from “The Monk and the Millar’s Wife.” One of his finest renderings of ale-house and tavern life can be seen in “Elegy on Maggy Johnston,” which contains many references to drinking vast quantities of intoxicating drink, and to people who were living life to the full when they “guzzl’d scuds.” An interesting allusion to the convivial interplay between persons of all social levels is apparent in this stanza:

To tell the truth, now Maggy dang,
Of customers she had a bang;
For lairds an’ souters a’ did gang
 To drink bedeen:
The barn an’ yard was aft sae thrang,
 We took the green.¹⁸⁰

Considering the character of the ale-house, or tavern, it is indeed a great leveller of the classes. All who enter experience an equality perhaps not synonymous with their station in life in the everyday world. They are all subject to the same rules, and as such privilege of status is largely, if not altogether, diminished.

Yet as was stressed above, such archetypes of carnival literature were not always reflective of carnival in the strictly historical sense. As such, the historical reality of carnival is that eventually, refinement does win out. The tendency was for the authorities to put limits upon popular revelry. This does not always mean that they were successful – people would always desire to test the limits of acceptable behaviour. But those who did so, if caught, were treated as transgressors.

¹⁸⁰ Ramsay, “Elegy on Maggy Johnston,” i, p. 50 (ll. 7-12).

Carnival in the historic sense, thus, might be seen as a break from the norm – yet it is always understood that it is a temporary period. This understanding of the ephemeral nature of carnival, in fact, helps to fuel its intensity: realising that the next day brings a return to the staid and normal, the participants propensity for outlandish behaviour on the day of carnival (or whatever length of time is set aside for it) is intensified. Thus in a sense, carnival cannot exist without the days of normality which surround it. If these days of normality did not exist, to help in defining the parameters of carnival itself, then carnival would become, in theory, the norm,¹⁸¹ thus losing its potency. Part of the historical element of the carnival is thus, the eventual victory of refinement. Thus, though a play like “The Gentle Shepherd” might not be reflective of the literary carnival genre, since the voice of enlightenment is not seriously challenged,¹⁸² it might be reflective of *historical* carnival, in that the polite and refined, who thinks, eventually wins out over the rustic who “feels.”

The question which must be asked, therefore, is why carnival in the first place? This question seems well dealt with by Burke:

The world turned upside down was regularly re-enacted. Why did the upper classes permit this? It looks as if they were all aware that the society they lived in, with all its inequalities of wealth, status and power, could not survive without a safety-valve, a means for the subordinates to purge their resentments and to compensate for their frustrations.¹⁸³

Thus it was the elites who were defining the parameters of the celebration, even though it was sustained by the energy of the common. Very importantly, what Burke also seems to be suggesting is that carnival was a way which allowed the

¹⁸¹ Though presumably before that would occur total anarchy would be the result, causing a complete disintegration of the society in question.

elites to help preserve their privileged status. Carnival was thus every bit as much a victory for them, as it was for the energy of the commonality.

Carnival manifested itself, in varying forms and degrees, in numerous pieces of Scottish literature portraying convivial times. At times these literary portrayals overlapped with the actual experience of conviviality as observable in the historical record. At other times, the picture seems vastly different. In this one instance, perhaps literature was not always an accurate representation of real life, but rather an interpretation of real life. However, the theory behind both literature and real life may have been similar: carnival was meant to represent subversion and inversion through grossness and comedy. On the surface, there was never anything serious about carnival, as the seriousness was always hidden beneath the surface.

Carnival, thus, could serve as a front for serious social protest. Ladurie's book suggests how such can occur by examining the 1580 carnival riot in Romans in France. The Monarch's Day, often charged with the same folk energy which drove the participants in carnival,¹⁸⁴ at times could be difficult to control. Still, it should be remembered that carnival was mostly intended to be a form of controlled protest. Carnival should never be seen as a liberating force,¹⁸⁵ regardless of how those who participated in it – willingly or not, knowingly, or otherwise – may have perceived it. Even when the experience flashed to the point of being completely out of control, normality and reason would have to eventually win, lest the very society itself cease to exist.

¹⁸² Watson, "Dialectics of 'Voice and Place'," p. 106.

¹⁸³ Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 201.

¹⁸⁴ Whatley, "Royal Day, People's Day," p. 176.

¹⁸⁵ Worth, "Scott, Story-Telling and Subversion," p. 382.

It seems also important to realise that the entire genre itself might have had a flexible quality to it. This is why poets like Ramsay could introduce elements reminiscent of carnival into his poems concerning contemporary Edinburgh street life. The fact that these poems were based upon the metre of Sempill's "Habbe Simson" perhaps made their success all the more likely. "Habbe" both due to its stanza style and content, might be seen as an extension of the energy of the folk, and a metaphor for common festivity.

In this manner might literature depicting conviviality on the common level be categorised. This same literature, as related earlier, was one of the more visible forms of Scots writing in the early modern age. Yet side by side with material of this nature, the old Scots classics like John Barbour, Blind Harry, Robert Henryson, and Sir David Lyndsay (to name but four) continued to receive attention. Of these, it was probably Barbour's *Bruce* and Harry's *Wallace* which received the most attention. It would therefore appear that no discussion of the early modern Scots vernacular tradition could be considered complete without a detailed analysis of these two.

Chapter Four

**“The Images of Wallace and the Bruce:
Popular and Literate perceptions of the Hero
In Early Modern Scotland”**

It is writin þat an herymett saw him be visioun fleand to þe heuin þe samyn houre þat he was martiritt at Londoun, bot we hald it in maner of fabill, howbeit Wallace for his singulare vertew in defense of his cuntre, is wourthy to haif þe fame of immortalite.¹

The learned Hector Boece – speaking through his translator, John Bellenden – could not have possibly appreciated in *c.*1527, the accuracy of his statement concerning the longevity of Scotland’s archetypal patriot, William Wallace of Elderslie. Though Wallace suffered a horrific death at the hands of the hangman at Smithfield, his spirit did indeed live on; in fact it found a comfortable and accommodating home in Scotland up to and including the period *c.*1680-1750 (and even beyond). That the legendary figure of Wallace² – quite distinct from the historical Wallace – could survive as a symbol of both heroism and patriotism, is in no small part due to the indelible stamp he must have made upon the popular consciousness. Several early eighteenth-century poets embraced the cult of Wallace, and the related cult of his “cohort” King Robert Bruce, with an eye toward promoting their own agenda: yet by choosing for their subject matter the Guardian of Scotland and the foil of the English at Bannockburn, these poets were responding to the popular appeal of two individuals who were never merely two more figures from the Scottish past. Indeed, despite having their own agendas, those eighteenth century poets who made it their business to dabble in both the traditions of Wallace and Bruce, ultimately helped to bolster the mythos surrounding these two individuals who figured in the Scottish Wars of Independence.

¹ *The Chronicles of Scotland Compiled by Hector Boece [and] Translated into Scots by John Bellenden 1531*, R.W. Chambers and E.C. Batho (ed.) (STS, Edinburgh and London, 1938), p. 264.

² During the nineteenth century, Robert Chambers commented on the – it seems fair to say – colossal proportions William Wallace had achieved as a national icon, and defender of its liberties, after his execution on (allegedly) 23 August: “The Scottish people have ever since cherished the memory of Wallace as the assertor of the liberties of their country – their great and illrequited chief. What Tell is to the Swiss, and Washington to the Americans, Wallace is to them.” Robert Chambers, *The Book of Days. A Miscellany of Popular Antiquities in Connection with the Calendar* (2 vols; Edinburgh, W. & R. Chambers, 1869), ii, p. 252.

As far as the originator of the myth is concerned, Blind Harry's *Wallace*³ was seemingly an exceedingly popular subject in early modern Scotland, if the publishing record is anything to go by:

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries at least forty-four editions were printed. The chief presses were those of Edinburgh and Glasgow, although Aberdeen and Belfast helped in the work.⁴

³ *Bibliographical Note*. In addition to NLS Adv. MS 29.2.2(ii) "Henry the Minstrel's 'Wallace'," the following printed editions of the *Wallace* were also consulted:

NLS, Ry IV g.29; *The Life and Acts of... William Wallace* (Edinburgh, A. Hart, 1618).

Mitchell no. 313401; NLS, H.29.e.23; *The Life and Acts of... William Wallace* (Edinburgh, Society of Stationers, 1661).

Mitchell no. 313402; *The Life and Acts of... William Wallace* (Glasgow, R. Sanders, 1665).

NLS, L.C.4; *The Life and Acts of... William Wallace* (Glasgow, R. Sanders, 1685).

NLS, R.B.S. 1724; *The Life and Acts of... William Wallace* (Glasgow, R. Sanders, 1699).

Mitchell no. 313406; *The Life and Acts of... William Wallace* (Edinburgh, Heirs and Successors of A. Anderson, 1701).

Mitchell no. 313407; *The Life and Acts of... William Wallace* (Edinburgh, Heirs and Successors of A. Anderson, 1709).

NLS, Hall 199.K; *The Life and Acts of... William Wallace* (Glasgow, R. Sanders, 1713).

GUL Spec. Coll., Mu.47-e.29; *A New Edition of the Life ... of... Sir William Wallace ... Wherein the Old obsolete Words are rendered more Intelligible ...* (Glasgow, W. Duncan, 1722) -- the so-called Hamilton of Gilbertfield edition.

Mitchell no. 313410; *The Life and Acts of... William Wallace* (Belfast, J. Blow, 1728).

GUL Spec. Coll., Mu.50-h.20, 21; *The Life and Acts of... William Wallace* (Glasgow, A. Carmichael and A. Millar, 1736).

GUL Spec. Coll., Mu.49-i.15: *The Life and Acts of... William Wallace* (Glasgow, J. Robertson and "Mrs M^cLean," 1747).

GUL Spec. Coll., Mu.48-f.24; *The Life and Acts of... William Wallace* (Glasgow, A. McLean, 1756).

NLS, H.29.b.21; Mitchell no. 313415; *The Acts and Deeds of... William Wallace* (Edinburgh, 1758).

In addition, the following more recent editions were consulted:

The Bruce and Wallace; published from two ancient manuscripts preserved in the Library of the Faculty of Advocates, J. Jamieson (ed) (2 vols; Glasgow, 1869). (Seems to have utilised the MS fairly faithfully.)

The Actis and Dienes of the Illustere and Vailzeand Campioun Schir William Wallace Knicht of Ellerslie by Henry the Minstrel Commonly Known as Blind Harry, J. Moir (ed) (STS, 1889). (Claims to have consulted the MS, but McDiarmid seems sceptical of Moir's scholarship in general.)

Hary's Wallace (Vita Nobilissimi Defensoris Scotie Wilelmi Wallace Militis), M.P. McDiarmid (ed) (2 vols; STS, 1968-69). (Utilises the MS, and as well as the fragmentary Chepman and Millar 1507, Lekpreuik/Charteris 1570, Charteris 1594 and 1601, and the Hart 1611 printed texts, under the assumption they are based upon an older, more authentic, and now {conveniently!} lost MS.)

Perhaps we should be critical of those "scholarly" editions of Harry which are produced by collating Ramsay's MS with early printed texts which supposedly had better MS authority. Such a claim has been used as a cover for some overly creative readings of Harry in the past. We probably should also be cautious of accepting the word of some other editors of Harry who claim to have "returned to the original text [i.e. MS] for their authority." For example, it seems apparent that the first such individual, Pinkerton, never actually saw the prized national treasure (see below).

⁴ J.F. Miller, *Blind Harry's "Wallace"* (Glasgow, Glasgow Bibliographical Society off-print, 1914), pp. 9-10. Though see Appendix XI below, where only (!) 36-37 editions of Blind Harry could be accounted for. However, Miller's figures are much more believable (in fact, maybe something of an

Furthermore, the inventories of books held in stock by a number of seventeenth to early eighteenth century printers and booksellers, upon their deaths, reveal a fairly sizeable quota of the *Wallace* on hand. After he had departed for the Great Beyond in 1599, it was discovered that even though Henry Charteris still had something on the order of 1,000-2,000 catechisms of all types on hand, many Bibles and hundreds of copies of works broadly referable to as “classical” in nature,⁵ his inventory also contained “fyve scoir tua Wallaces.”⁶ James Bryson had a stock, when he died in 1642, of 2,000 “Psalms for Bybillis” of several types; but nevertheless also had

understatement) if the editions of Hamilton of Gilbertfield’s version of the *Wallace* were to be included.

On the continued popularity of the *Wallace*, Maclaine maintained that a plausible explanation for such, was because Harry’s work was fortunate enough to have passed the scrutiny test of “didactic moralists” concerned with reformation. Certainly some of the early promoters of Blind Harry were not only printers, but also godly men, such as Charteris, and probably Hart. However, Maclaine’s view does not satisfy as far as the continued popularity, through into the eighteenth century (and beyond), of Harry and even Barbour are concerned. There are, it must be added, certain doubts as to how rigid a stance the reformers took to towards native literature, poetry, song, etc. They may not have been quite as “bad” as some – such as Maclaine – may have thought. And even when Calvinism did take an authoritarian stance toward such art forms, it is questionable how successful it were. On this, see E.J. Cowan, “Calvinism and the Survival of Folk,” in E.J. Cowan (ed), *The People’s Past* (EUP, 1980).

Even Maclaine admits that certain popular Scots works (in this instance he is speaking specifically about *Christis Kirk*, but in a more general sense, it seems, about all such “secular” Scots poetry, including Harry and Barbour) were able to survive the Calvinist onslaught: “One can only conclude that an insistent popular demand kept the poem alive and in print despite the official opposition to such works.” See, A.H. Maclaine, “The *Christis Kirk* Tradition in Scots Poetry to Burns,” in *Studies in Scottish Literature*, vol. 2 (July 1964-April 1965), pp. 117-18.

⁵ It often seems striking that so much effort was devoted toward the printing of classical texts in Scotland, especially when compared to the (at times) relatively fewer works of indigenous and even vernacular subject matter. We might conclude that there was greater demand for the classical text. Yet, in the eighteenth century, at least, this conclusion would have to be tempered by the fact that there was something along the line of “official” promotion of the printing of Greek and Latin works. This often amounted to financial compensation to printers who engaged in printing classics – “It is well known that R. and A. Foulis were allowed drawback of duty on about 5000 reams of paper that they had used for printing books in Greek and Latin from 1742 to 1765.” P. Gashell, *A Bibliography of the Foulis Press*, 2nd ed (St Paul’s Bibliographies, 1986), p. 15n(1).

Obviously, the promotion of Greek and Latin must have been part of an official ideal concerning education around the mid-century mark, more so the case since the Foulis brothers’ press was located at the Saltmarket, Glasgow, within “shouting distance” of the old University of Glasgow, at the High Street. Their works were noted for accuracy, and general high standard of scholarship. The brothers also founded an art academy in 1753-54. On these later two points see, B. Lenman, *Integration, Enlightenment, and Industrialisation. Scotland 1746-1832* (Toronto, 1981), p. 36. Yet if this sort of official sponsorship was in any way common, it makes the number of vernacular works, especially editions of the *Wallace*, an even more significant occurrence.

⁶ *The Bannatyne Miscellany* (3 vols; Edinburgh, 1827, 1836, 1860), ii, p. 224. The *Miscellany’s* editor seemed to think that these were probably copies of the (rare, to say the least) 1597 edition.

possession of “fyve hundreth Wallaces.”⁷ Upon the settling of her estate on 10 July 1717, it was revealed that Mrs Anderson⁸ had in her inventory, in addition to thousands of other books including a multitude on broadly religious topics, “662 Wallaces.”⁹ (This is the same Mrs Anderson who was the former Agnes Campbell, widow of the previous King’s printer Andrew Anderson {d. 1676}, as well as scourge of, and legal foil to, such ambitious printers as Robert Sanders {d. 1694}¹⁰ and James Watson.)

From this and similar evidence we might conclude that although the *Wallace* was not the number one best-seller during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, it was still a singularly popular item. It also seems apparent that the popularity of Wallace grew through the passage of time, although we must bow to the point made by Carnie that the period between 1668-1775 was a “boom” period for the Scottish printing industry in general.¹¹ Most publications were of a religious nature;¹² it may be a significant aside, however, as Houston maintains was the case for the eighteenth-century, that many of the Bibles produced in Scotland – owing to their cheaper selling-cost – were ultimately destined for the English market.¹³ On the other hand, it is perhaps conceivable that some of the *Wallaces* or David Lyndsays, for example, also made the journey south.¹⁴

⁷ *Bannatyne Miscellany*, ii, p. 260.

⁸ Under the “pseudonym” of “Heirs and Successors of A. Anderson” Agnes Anderson printed on either her own or her son James’s (his father’s successor) behalf numerous titles, including several editions of the *Wallace*. See above note 3, and below Appendix XII.

Bibliographical note: much information concerning these “printer” lives” stems from H.G. Aldis, *A List of Books Printed in Scotland Before 1700* (originally published 1904; this edition, including a continuum for the year 1700, published Edinburgh, 1970).

⁹ *Bannatyne Miscellany*, ii, p. 184.

¹⁰ Sanders, and later his son and successor Robert the younger (d. 1730), also was involved in the publication work devoted to the *Wallace* – see above, note 3, and below Appendix XII.

¹¹ R.H. Carnie, “Scottish Printers and Booksellers, 1668-1775: A Study of Source Material,” pp. 213-27 in, *The Bibliothek – A Scottish Journal of Bibliography and Allied Topics*, vol. 4 (1963-66), p. 213.

¹² However, Miller, *Blind Harry*, p. 1, alerts us to the fact that (at least) two editions of Blind Harry appeared before the first Bible was printed in Scotland in 1579.

¹³ R.A. Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity. Illiteracy and Society in Scotland and Northern England 1600-1800* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 16.

¹⁴ The relative popularity of Scots poetry south of the border has been spoken of earlier in this thesis; it will be remembered that one scholar who speaks on this, especially with the seventeenth century in

Certainly the number of copies of a certain title on hand at the time of their death, does not necessarily mean that during their lifetime they sold that title in equal numbers. It is a bit rash to assume that because a bookseller had a thousand copies of one book on hand, and five hundred of another, he sold twice as many of the former as compared to the latter (though of course it could possibly mean exactly that). Conceivably, because he had fewer copies on hand of a certain title, he might have consistently sold more of that particular work. Still, it is a reasonable conclusion to assume that since the majority of the printers in question would have described themselves as “merchant burgesses”¹⁵ – concerned, as they would be, for profit – they would not keep a stock of “fyve hundreth Wallaces” unless they were as certain as humanly possible of being able to move such. Thus – with little question – as an example of traditional Scots secular literature, the Blind Minstrel’s *Wallace* was virtually without peer.

mind, was F.W. Freeman, *Robert Fergusson and the Scots Humanist Compromise* (Edinburgh, 1984), p. 2.

However, Wallace might appear as an unlikely hero for an English audience, given the fact that Harry “pulls few punches” when relating the numbers that fell to the Guardian’s sword –

Bot Wallace Wald no grace grant in yat hour
He slay bad all off cruell sotheroun keyn
And said yai had to Sanct Ihonstoun Enemys beyn
ffour hundreth men in to ye toun war deid

(NLS Adv. MS. 19.2.2(ii), “Henry the Minstrel’s ‘Life of Wallace’,” folio 83b.)

In spite of this, the nineteenth century English folklorist William Hone maintained that Wallace did garner a fair following in England –

August 23, 1305, Sir William Wallace, ‘the peerless knight of Elleslie’ who bravely defended Scotland against Edward 1. was executed by order of that monarch on Tower-hill. This distinguished individual is popular in England five hundred years after his death, through the well-known ballad

‘Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled,’ &c.

(William Hone, *The Every-Day Book: Or, the Guide to the Year ...* {2 vols; London, 1827}, ii, p. 1110.)

The “ballad” which Hone cites is actually the first line from Burns’s poem “Robert Bruce’s March to Bannockburn.” Obviously then, it might be argued that it was really the popularity of Burns which helped to endear Wallace to nineteenth century England. Yet in the eighteenth century Scotland’s Guardian was already the subject of the English popular ballad. One of Child’s eight ballads “Gude Wallace” – the B version – is described by him as having had English origins, coming from “R. Lambe, of Norham, apparently in 1768.” If this is true, it would tend to indicate that Wallace gained respect in England before Burns had really made his mark upon the world of poetry (since the Ayrshire genius would have been only nine years old at the time!). Was it the case that Blind Harry’s poem was responsible for this apparent popularity? It is really impossible to say for certain, but we might boldly speculate that this was the case. For more on the Wallace ballad tradition, see below.

¹⁵ “Town businessmen,” and businesswomen, in the case of Mrs Anderson.

Among the copious editions of Henry the Minstrel's¹⁶ *Wallace* produced during the eighteenth century was Hamilton of Gilbertfield's (c.1665-1751) so-called English translation, entitled *A New Edition of the Life and Heroik Actions of the Renoun'd Sir William Wallace ...*¹⁷ It is this work (and others of a similar linguistic ilk) which has been in the past touted as being indicative of the unhealthy state of Scots as a literary language, an idea perhaps partially sustained by the book's own subtitle. Supposedly, Gilbertfield's was the singular edition of the *Wallace* that everyone alive in Scotland during the early eighteenth-century had been eagerly awaiting. Even today, scholars still refer to *A New Edition of the Life ... of ... Sir William Wallace* as a "popular edition,"¹⁸ while its most recent editor maintained that "the blacksmiths, ploughmen, weavers and washerwomen" more readily found the legendary Wallace when "armed with a copy" of "Hamilton's popular edition."¹⁹ The theory taken to its ultimate end alleges that the general populace of circa 1700-1750 Scotland, just could not possibly cope with Harry's language. It seems fairly apparent that the notion of the *Wallace* being a text far beyond the capacity of all save those dedicated to the study of letters, was one that was long held. As a decidedly less than charitable, and certainly patronising, nineteenth century source assessed the situation, despite the apparently numerous copies of the *Wallace* in circulation, nobody except the literati of the land could read such, owing to the difficult language found in the Blind Minstrel's handiwork.²⁰ In fairness, the

¹⁶ To use his other title, one which, for reasons known only to themselves, is more popular these days with those who compile library catalogues.

¹⁷ See GUL Spec. Coll., Mu. 47-e.29; *A New Edition of the Life and Heroik Actions of the Renoun'd Sir William Wallace General and Governour of Scotland. Wherein the Old obsolete Words are rendered more Intelligible; and adapted to the understanding of such who have not the leisure to study the Meaning, and Import of such, Phrases without the help of a Glossary* (Glasgow, William Duncan, 1722).

¹⁸ R. Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (OUP, 1992), p. 55.

¹⁹ William Hamilton, *Blind Harry's Wallace*, (ed) E. King (Edinburgh, 1998), p. xvi. Hamilton's version of Harry probably did have a certain popular appeal, but the more vernacular editions of the *Wallace* were likely every bit as appealing, if not more so. In fact, probably the popularity of Hamilton's edition was one of the truest testaments possible to the popularity of the original – and the old adage "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery" seems to apply here.

²⁰ GUL Spec. Coll., Mu14-e.16(5); *Traditions, &c. Respecting Sir William Wallace, collected chiefly from Publications, of recent Date, by a Former Subscriber for a Wallace Monument* (Edinburgh, 1856), p. 21.

opinions of our elitist-minded nineteenth-century source might have been affected as a result of the then fairly recently arrived Dr Jamieson edition (published 1820), a version which purportedly did indeed return to the original manuscript for its authority (as was also the claim made for the somewhat earlier 1790 edition). Thus, in the 1820 edition, the language of Harry – or presumably a close approximation of such – had resurfaced; however, the situation in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was a little different, for the language employed in those editions of the *Wallace* (even were we to discount the special case of Gilbertfield’s version) was not quite that of the Minstrel’s.

To expect someone commonly literate from, for example, eighteenth century Glasgow to be able to pick up a copy of Blind Harry in its original form – written in what was effectively Medieval or Middle Scots – and read it “cold” is a bit like asking the commonly literate inhabitant of London’s east-end to be able to pick up Chaucer or Langland and display an instant understanding of the text. On the other hand, there is absolutely no reason to think that even the commonly literate of the time, once familiarised with Harry’s original language, could not acquire a basic understanding of his narrative. However, as related earlier, language rarely remains static, and so in the case of Middle Scots, what indeed might have been going on with it was a gradual transformation that was probably accelerated by such developments as the Reformation and the Unions. One possibly way to chart this transformation, might be to look at the language employed in the various editions of Harry’s *Wallace*.

Starting with the first post-Reformation edition of Charteris, published in 1570, it is immediately apparent that the text is very much Middle Scots (refer to Appendix II). The language employed in Charteris’s edition, while not identical, seems to deviate only slightly from that of the (only known) manuscript of the *Wallace*, housed in the Advocates’ Library.²¹ The most immediate difference

²¹ M.A. Bald, “The Pioneers of Anglicised Speech in Scotland,” in *SHR*, vol. 24 (1927), pp. 181-82, argued that any occasional English word which crept into Charteris’s text was the result of his not even realising it was such.

between the two is that “the manuscript is the work of a ... Roman Catholic while the printed edition is that of a Protestant.”²² To illustrate this, attention is drawn to the following excerpt from Wallace’s re-conquest of St Johnstoun as it exists in the manuscript:²³

A hundreth men ye kyrk tuk for suc[c]our
 Bot Wallace Wald no grace grant in yat hour
 He slay bad all off cruell sotheroun keyn
 And said yai had to Sanct Ihonstoun Enemys beyn²⁴

and then compare same as rendered in 1570,

Ane vndreth men the Kirk tuik for succour,
 Bot Wallace wald na grace grant in that hour.
 He bad slay all of cruell Sutheroun kyn,
 Thame for to slay, he said it was na syn.²⁵

The differences in language are subtle, but far less dramatic than some have alleged.²⁶ However religious zeal, of the sort one still would expect to exist ten to eleven years after a reformation, has caused Wallace to self-examine himself – in true Calvinist fashion – for the presence of sin in any of his actions.

Moving to the successive reprints of *Blind Harry* – the printers of which indeed did not consult any manuscript source, but rather other printed editions²⁷ – it is possible to see that the language of the text does begin to mutate and gradually take on more of an, but never a complete, English appearance. The first real interjection of English seems to occur in 1618,²⁸ but nevertheless, the text still contains a good number of Scots words (consult Appendix III). Thus, it appears

²² Miller, *Blind Harry*, p. 7. See also, M. Lyndsay, *History of Scottish Literature* (London, 1977), p. 23. Charteris was apparently a member of the Edinburgh Kirk Session; see M. Lynch, *Edinburgh and the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1981), appendix iii, p. 267.

²³ For the sake of convenience and brevity the story of Wallace’s re-conquest of Saint Johnstoun (situated in what is now the city of Perth) was examined for the purposes of this exercise.

²⁴ NLS, Adv. MS. 19.2.2 (ii).

²⁵ *The Actis and Deides of Schir William Wallace (1570)* (Facsimile reprint for STS, 1940).

²⁶ Notably Miller, *Blind Harry*, p. 7, whose comments on such are largely based around the assessment of Moir.

²⁷ *Hary’s Wallace*, McDiarmid, p. x, declares “that all early editions after that of (?) 1509 derive from it.”

²⁸ M.A. Bald, “The Anglicisation of Scottish Printing,” in *SHR*, vol. 23 (1926), p. 114, claimed that this, as well as Hart’s 1611 edition held by the National Library have gone missing, yet one is indeed present today.

correct that the written language of Scotland was altered as a result of events associated with, or occurring as a result of, monarchical union. But from then onwards, as far as the language of Blind Harry is concerned, change is far less noticeable. From about the middle of the seventeenth century, the language of the *Wallace* seems to become more-or-less set; no appreciable difference can be noted in the editions between, and including, 1661 and 1756 (refer to Appendixes). The situation regarding the various efforts at re-editing the *Wallace* during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, seems to be in agreement with a statement made by Craigie back in the 1920s, regarding the mutation of Scots as a written language:

... the climax naturally came with the Union of the Crowns. After that date the former equality between the English and Scottish tongues was completely gone, and English was definitely recognised as the standard form for literary work, although the native tongue might persist in colouring it to a greater or lesser degree according to the taste or learning of the writer.²⁹

While terms like “former equality between ...” might appear ambiguous, Craigie’s comments do seem to fit what was happening with Harry’s text during the period, although the work was being carried out fervently by editors rather than writers per se. Seventeenth and early eighteenth century editions of the *Wallace* were largely English in language – sufficient that even a reasonably well-schooled modern reader would probably experience only slight difficulty in understanding the text; the average reader from the early eighteenth-century probably would have experienced little, if any, difficulty in understanding the text. However, somewhat variably between the individual editions themselves, they still contained a fairly hefty “sprinkling” of Scots,³⁰ about on par with some of the early quasi-vernacular efforts

²⁹ W.A. Craigie, “The Present State of the Scottish Tongue,” in *The Scottish Tongue* (London, 1924), p. 5.

³⁰ This literary language which represents a merging of both the written Scots and written English language may be something like the literary language Aitken claimed was a precursor to an Anglo-Scots spoken language:

Something approaching Scottish English, by which I mean the Scots-accented variety of Standard English ... first emerged ... in the speech of some Scots aristocrats near the end of the seventeenth century. The prior stage in the

of Allan Ramsay. This latter characteristic of the *Wallace's* text is observable in Carmichael and Millar's Glasgow printed edition of 1736, noticeably retaining such Scots words as "bushment" (ambush), "fra," and "dang" (strike), which were words carried over from earlier editions, such as Charteris and Hart. Few Scots words were dropped from 1736 which were present in 1618 – "syn" being the most obvious. The situation is much different when comparing 1736 and 1618 to 1570. In the oldest of these, there are many more Scots words: "atouir" (out over), "quhen" (when), "quhill (while), "brig" (bridge), and "3et" (gate). The extracts appended are brief by necessity; yet they underscore the basic point the Harry's text was most profoundly affected during the first half of the seventeenth century.

The reason for these changes to the text of the *Wallace* appear intertwined with the history of Scottish printing, insofar as it was related to the Bible. Though a feeble attempt was made c.1520 to produce a Bible in Scots by Murdoch Nisbet,³¹ English was the language of the reformation, while from the reformers' point of view, Scots and English were all interchangeable variations of the "vulgar tongue" of the Lowlanders.³² It seems that it was the idea of the protestants to present Scripture to these people in as plain and simple a manner as possible. Certainly Knox believed in the pure and direct Wisdom of the Almighty: "The word of God is plane ..." ³³ Therefore, it became essential to present God's Word to His people in their own vulgar, Scots or English, tongue in an effort ensure that His will was commonly understandable.

anglicising of Scots saw the gneiss of a prose variety which combined phonological elements of Scots and English in writing and probably also in speech.

A.J. Aitken, "The Pioneers of Anglicised Speech in Scotland; a second look," in J.D. McClure (ed), *Scottish Language*, 16 (Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1997), p. 1.

³¹ His Bible, unpublished until earl this century, was still largely in the English of Purvey's Wycliffe Bible. See *The New Testament in Scots ... by Murdoch Nisbet c. 1520*, T.G. Law (ed) (STS, 1901-05).

³² D.F. Wright, "'The Commoun Booke of the Kirke': The Bible in the Scottish Reformation," in D.F. Wright (ed), *The Bible in Scottish Life and Literature* (Edinburgh, 1988), p. 160. My thanks to Dr James Kirk, Glasgow University, for pointing me in the direction of this source.

³³ *The Works of John Knox*, D. Laing (ed) (6 vols; Edinburgh, 1846-95), i, p. 284.

The reformers thus relied upon translated Bibles, and it was these which may have had a profound effect upon the language of Scottish literature, including the *Wallace*. But where the *Wallace* was concerned, the crucial period was not the reformation itself, but really some fifty years later. The key individual here seems to have been Andrew Hart. Though Thomas Bassadyne and Alexander Arbuthnot were producing New Testaments and complete Bibles during the 1570s, Hart's 1610 Bible was the first produced which seemed to better address the religious character of Scotland. For example, it professed a more Calvinist, i.e., strongly anti-Catholic, sentiment than the average Geneva Bible. As well, Hart's mandate might still have been akin to that of the early reformers, namely, to produce a Bible in as straightforward a language as possible.

Hart also printed some of the earliest editions of Blind Harry, in 1611, 1618, and 1620. Perhaps he viewed the language of the *Wallace* in a fashion similar to that of the Bible. Thus, his printings were presented in a language which he thought the average literate reader of Lowland Anglo-Scots could understand, while still containing traces of Harry's original language in an effort to retain a measure of authenticity. If the drive to present a Bible in a universally understandable language was carried over by Hart into his editions of the *Wallace*, then it is he, and not Hamilton of Gilbertfield, who should be credited with producing the first most effective, and certainly most authentic, "modern" version of the Guardian's life.

Most editors of the *Wallace* who followed Hart seemed to follow his examples regarding language and orthography, with the continuing aim to produce a book that could be understood by the majority of people. In fact, they may have actually used one of his editions of Blind Harry as a model for their own.³⁴ Some of their own personal predilections naturally crept into their texts, perhaps influenced by both the spoken and written word of God, their understanding of Harry's own language and orthography, plus perhaps everyday speech. As a result, the *Wallace's*

³⁴ The 1758 edition of the *Bruce* makes the claim that it was "Carefully corrected from the edition printed by Andro Hart in 1620." See below, Appendix XI.

text metamorphosed to such an extent that it seemingly rendered Hamilton's book largely redundant, in its purported goal of creating a text commonly understandable. What, in effect, is to be discerned in the vast majority of the reprints of Blind Harry produced during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which might be described as chap-books, is a text related in a palatable form of Anglo-Scots. This may have been the language with which the general reading public was most comfortable, while still thinking themselves capable of reaching-back, in an effort to listen to Harry himself speak. It is also apparent that few of these books sat on the shelves of antiquarians, collecting dust, since most of the examined copies have that "well-thumbed" look about them.³⁵

Nothing being proposed here is designed to suggest that the Union of the Parliaments had absolutely no effect upon changing the nature and even language of Scottish poetry. But rather what is being proposed is that its impact was imperceptible upon this one source – which by sheer fortune, given the numbers of editions published down through the centuries, permits a mapping of its metamorphosis over time. In fact, the greatest impact of anglicisation upon the language of the *Wallace* occurred well before 1707, in contrast to the opinions of Daiches, who claims that Scots as a literary language suitably disintegrated after that point in time³⁶ (even though, with respect to some other forms of literature, he may still be correct in his assumption).

Thus the text of the seventeenth and early eighteenth-century editions of the *Wallace* were no longer exactly in Harry's language any longer. This may be in fact the impetus for John Pinkerton's three volume edition of 1790 which proudly announced that, under the watchful eye of the Earl of Buchan, it had returned to the original MS for its authority³⁷ and was determined to follow "the ancient and true

³⁵ All the while accepting the fact that some are 300 or more years old!

³⁶ Daiches, *Literature and Gentility in Scotland*, p. 54.

³⁷ This statement requires more than just a little qualification. Apparently, neither the publishers, nor Pinkerton himself, actually ever laid eyes upon the original manuscript. This fact is quite clearly spelled-out by the publishers themselves in their address to David Stewart, the Earl of Buchan:

orthography.”³⁸ It would appear, then, that Pinkerton, like perhaps Jamieson after him, believed the text of the *Wallace* had metamorphosed over time.³⁹

Yet, what we may be encountering in the various editions of the *Wallace* as they appeared during the seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries, is a more “genuine” expression of a new, and ever-transforming, popular Scots literary language. Few of the various editors, redactors, copyists, printers (or however else they might be described) involved in maintaining the tradition of the *Wallace*, would have had as their prime objective, the promotion of either Scots or English as the nation’s literary language. The sole apparent exception to this may have been the alleged Freebairn edition, composed in (so the story goes) 1714 or 1715, but only published in 1758. According to Jamieson⁴⁰ (and later parroted by Moir⁴¹) the edition produced by the former King’s Printer was held up due to his involvement in the Jacobite uprisings of those years. His support of the Jacobites was the cause of

Particularly for the trouble Your Lordship has taken, in procuring for us a Copy of the valuable Manuscript of Henry’s Life of Wallace ... in comparing the Copy with the Original; in suggesting to us Directions concerning its Publication ...

³⁸ Miller, *Blind Harry*, p. 12 and p. 21; for the original, see: GUL Spec. Coll., BG60-k.1-3; *The Metrical History of Sir William Wallace, Knight of Ellerslie, by Henry, commonly called Blind Harry* ... (Perth, R. Morison and Son, 1790).

³⁹ Certain aspects of this theory seem to have been anticipated by Craig, who believed that Pinkerton wished to recreate a scholarly edition of the *Wallace* that would, presumably, put Harry out of the reach of all except the literary elite. Just how this was to be accomplished, with so many chap-book versions of Blind Harry in circulation, is rather puzzling; nevertheless, see D. Craig *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People* (London, 1961), p. 308n. Where Craig’s analysis (such as it is, and mostly relegated to a footnote, anyhow) of the readability of Harry’s text falls short is that he does not really delve into the question of the language employed in the seventeenth and eighteenth century “vernacular” of the *Wallace* in any detail. He does state – erroneously – that the so-called “black-letter” editions of Henry the Minstrel were the scholarly ones from the period in question. As it turns out, a number of the surviving black-letter editions exist in a pretty worn state. This would tend to indicate that any such book had passed through the hands of a number of readers, and not simply relegated to the shelves of an antiquarian or bibliophile.

However, Craig’s apparent suggestion that Pinkerton’s was the edition that finally restored the story of Wallace in line with Harry’s intentions, is questionable, given the publisher’s own admissions:

They [the publishers] are obliged to Mr Pinkerton for the Arguments which they have prefixed to the Books, and have only taken the liberty of altering the orthography of some of his words, with a view to make the Poem as intelligible as possible to an English Reader [i.e. reader of English].

From publisher’s introduction to the *Wallace*, 1790 edition.

⁴⁰ *The Bruce and Wallace*, Jamieson (ed), ii, p. x.

⁴¹ *Actis and Deidis of ... Schir William Wallace ...*, Moir (ed), p. xviii.

Robert Freebairn's forfeiture of the position of King's Printer;⁴² instead, he quite openly turned to printing on behalf of the Pretender.⁴³

Still, one piece of evidence both Jamieson and Moir produce in support of their claims, is that the edition in question is curiously in want of a printer's name on its title page. Miller however, seems to believe that a date of 1730 should be ascribed to the Freebairn edition;⁴⁴ an assumption with which the most recent editor of a scholarly edition of the *Wallace*, McDiarmid, is inclined to agree.⁴⁵ The specific date when this rather controversial rendition of Harry was actually produced, printed, etc., is a question probably best left to the antiquarians and bibliophiles to wrangle over. However, McDiarmid's comments concerning this edition are much more interesting in so far as they relate to the possible sources consulted by Freebairn. He believes that around 1730, Freebairn employed an individual named Tate to "transcribe Ramsay's manuscript and collate it with one of Hart's editions."⁴⁶ If McDiarmid's assumption is correct, then what we have represented in Freebairn's *Wallace* is the first attempt at producing a "scholarly" edition of the text. This trait is perhaps made all the more apparent by the fact that it includes a version of "Andrew Symson's 1705 publication of the *Relationes Arnaldi Blair* and their accompanying Latin commentaries."⁴⁷ Obviously, this inclusion was meant to appeal to a more discerning audience, who might find themselves impressed by the apparent Latin scholarship being presented. Nevertheless, the actual story of Wallace as presented in 1758, was a text still in touch with the commonest language standards of the day: that being a sort of "Anglo-Scots," as defined above.

In fact, the alleged black-letter Freebairn version of Blind Harry (produced when?) has one rather noteworthy feature of language: it certainly does contain a

⁴² W. Ferguson, *Scotland 1689 to Present* (Edinburgh and London, 1968), p. 98.

⁴³ W.J. Couper, "The Pretender's Printer," in *SHR*, vol. 15 (1918), p. 110.

⁴⁴ Miller, *Blind Harry*, p. 11.

⁴⁵ *Harry's Wallace*, McDiarmid (ed), i, p. xii.

⁴⁶ *Harry's Wallace*, McDiarmid (ed), i, p. xii.

⁴⁷ *Harry's Wallace*, McDiarmid (ed), i, p. xii.

somewhat stronger dosage of Scots within its text (see Appendix VI) than any other previous late-seventeenth or early-eighteenth-century edition of the *Wallace*. McDiarmid (in this one instance) is wrong when he chastises “the modernising policy of Freebairn.”⁴⁸ If we are to take this term as referring to the practice of employing English substitutes for Scots words, then Freebairn was in fact less inclined toward this policy than most of his contemporaries (or near-contemporaries): his Anglo-Scots was a little more heavily weighted towards the Scots side. With little doubt, it is also fair to say that his phraseology and style of versification were further indebted to traditional Scots types. And related to this last point, certainly if the term “modernisation” is meant to apply to the sort of policy toward modifying Harry adopted by Hamilton (see below), then Freebairn’s effort hardly qualifies as a “modern text.” We then must inquire into the motives of Freebairn: why, through his transcription of Blind Harry, did he appear interested in being more faithful to the original tradition?

Perhaps Freebairn saw his *Wallace* as being an expression of his devotion to the Jacobite cause.⁴⁹ In his mind, devotion to the vernacular-inspired culture of Lowland Scotland was equitable with sympathies toward the old lineage. He is noted for having printed material directed towards the Royal Stewarts that was extremely laudatory in nature; for example, this panegyric to Charles I, in which the king’s conduct was such that his execution could only be the product of malice, and not revenge for deeds perpetrated.⁵⁰ Thus, the former King’s Printer was a

⁴⁸ *Harry’s Wallace*, McDiarmid (ed), i, p. xii. Nor does he even define (clearly or otherwise) what he means by “modernisation;” though, unlike many of his predecessors, he does consider the Freebairn edition to be the best the eighteenth century had to offer, “better than the one issued by Morrison at Perth in 1790” – the version often referred to as Pinkerton’s. For what it is worth, if these are the only two editions of Harry from which we were allowed to choose, one would be inclined to agree with McDiarmid’s assessment.

⁴⁹ In 1710, *The Scots Post-Man* ran an advertisement for a newly published book, a “Genealogical History of the Royal Family of Stewarts for 700 Years,” which was to be sold by Robert Freebairn, in addition to James Watson, John Vallange, and “Mistress Ogston” – Jacobites all (?). See, GUL Spec. Coll. Mu 60-f.54(94); *The Scots Post-Man, or, The New Edinburgh Gazette*, no 57, Saturday May 6th to Tuesday May 9th, 1710.

⁵⁰ NLS MS. 2960(112); *A Character of the Royal Martyr King Charles I, Who was Beheaded at his Royal Palace Gate, January 30. 1648* (Edinburgh, Robert Freebairn, 1714).

traditionalist, who hoped that the regal/political clock could be turned back, and in addition, desired a resurgence of old literary types. Robert Freebairn was not alone in his ideas: others had desired to inject new life into the vernacular while – in varying degrees – holding some loyalty towards the Stewarts. James Watson (d. 1722) has been justifiably credited with initiating the so-called vernacular revival and patriotic publishing movement – as a Tory he had few qualms about printing anti-Whig propaganda;⁵¹ while his pro-Stewart and probable Jacobite sympathies were made abundantly clear in his *Choice Collection*. As such, he anthologised numerous poems that could be construed as being pro-Jacobite, including, “On King James VI,” “To Queen Anne, on a New-year’s Day, 1604,” “On Prince Henry’s Death: to Prince Charles,” eight poems attributed to Montrose,⁵² “King Charles’ Lament,” and “Robert the III ... His Answer to Henry the IV ... to do Homage for the Crown of Scotland”⁵³ – in spite of all this, Watson would still have nothing to do

⁵¹ Watson was known to express anti-Whig sentiments in print. One such example of this type of material which seemingly caught his attention sufficiently to cause him to reprint it was NLS, MS.2960(20); *The Whiggs Travel through Europe* (1713), which relates:

Suppose we were to carry them to Hanover, and settle them there ... what would Luther say to their Religion, or Justinian to their Principle of Government? Would not their Popular Whims put an End to the Electoral Prerogative? And how should a Family relish those Politicians, who are Enemies to all Lineal Descent and Right of Inheritance?

⁵² They were: “In Praise of Woman,” “My Dear and only Love, parts 1 and 2,” “There’s nothing in the World can prove,” “Unhappy is the Man,” “Burst not, my Soul, in main of Tears,” “Can Little Beasts with Lions roar,” “(On King Charles I.) Great Good, and Just, could I but rate,” and “(On King Charles I.) On hearing what was his Sentence.” See, *Choice Collection of Scots Poems*, part 3, p. 88, and pp. 107-116 (no. 56, and nos. 66-72).

⁵³ Pertinent to what will be argued below, concerning the links between Jacobitism and the nostalgia for the legend of King Robert I (and even, to an extent, the legend of Wallace as well), “Robert the III ... His Answer to Henry the IV” draws upon the most significant traditions from the period of the Wars of Independence as still having meaning both Robert III’s time (1390-1406), and, little doubt of it, Watson’s. Therefore the poem remarks:

But Scotland yet I dare well say
Was ever free until this day,
Nor never stranger weer’d our Crown
Except of late a mansworn lowne,
That was Langshanks call’d Edward,
Tuik on him to declare the pairt
Between the Bruce and John Balion [sic],
Then through your false illusion,
Where that John Baliol had no right,
And so tuik Treasonably to hauld by flight
Castles and Strengths of our Country
Your Edward tuik most Cheatingly,

with the 1715 rebellion.⁵⁴ Similarly, Allan Ramsay was one of the fathers of the vernacular revival, a patriot, and at least nominally a Jacobite;⁵⁵ wisely he steered clear of the 1715 uprising, and was conveniently out of town when the Jacobites entered Edinburgh during the Autumn of 1745. Thus, though Ramsay was cautious about his Jacobitism, Freebairn was not – much to his detriment. His Jacobitism did result in the loss of the much coveted title of King’s Printer. Nevertheless, the pertinent question that will be addressed below, is how Robert Freebairn’s devotion towards the story of a commoner, who had shown people and monarchs alike the path toward freedom, is related to his affinity for a line of monarchs who, ultimately, believed in the supremacy of the ruler.

Robert Freebairn aside, the majority of printers, publishers, and editors engaged in replicating Harry’s myth employed a language which to them was quite natural. By referring to the appended excerpts concerning Wallace’s second St Johnstoun campaign, hopefully it is apparent that some degree of “artistic” (that is, linguistic) freedom is being exercised. Language is not being used to promote any socio-political viewpoint; the words chosen are those which were “closest at hand” when it came conveying a nationally recognised tale of heroism and bravery. There

When William Wallace wight and wise
 Right worthily rescued us thrice;
 Then valiant Bruce right racklesly
 First tint, syne wan us worthily ...

“Robert the III. King of Scotland, His Answer to a Summons sent Him by Henry the IV. of England, to do Homage for the Crown of Scotland,” in *Watson’s Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems*, 3 Parts (Glasgow, 1869), part 2, pp. vi-vii. This piece also included some choice lines which might have appealed to certain traditional Jacobite sentiments, such as the king of Scots allusion to being divinely installed: “I Robert be God’s might.”

The part of Watson’s anthology which included “Robert the III ... His Answer ...” was printed by him in 1709. However, nine years before appearing in the *Choice Collection*, the piece was issued at least once as a broadside; see NLS, Ry II g.37(1); *Robert the III, King of Scotland, His Answer to a Summons sent by Henry the IV of England, To do Homage for the Crown of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1700). The wording and orthography of this broadside scarcely differs from that contained in Watson’s volume. Was the earlier broadsheet also printed by Watson? Perhaps, although for that to be the case, timing would be critical, since he was imprisoned in 1700 for printing a pamphlet critical of England’s attitude to the Darien Scheme entitled *Scotland’s Grievance Respecting Darien*.

⁵⁴ Ferguson, *Scotland*, p. 98.

⁵⁵ The suggestion is not that one had to be a Jacobite in order to be a patriot; simply that Ramsay, both through his works, and by the assessment of others, appears to have been both.

was no attempt here to promote a vernacular revival as Ramsay, Fergusson and others tried to do (with a good deal of success) with their poetry; no attempt to promote proper speech and manners through the poetic medium as the belle lettre movement was determined to do with its (at times rather lifeless) neo-classical exercises. Rather, the language employed in the seventeenth and eighteenth century vernacular versions of the *Wallace* may have been as honest a representation as one could possibly hope for as to what the Scots literary language had, in a totally natural manner, evolved into during that period.

What then, are we to make of Hamilton of Gilbertfield? To begin with, it might seem a bit perplexing that he would choose to “translate” an old Scots classic like the *Wallace* into English, given the fact that William Hamilton’s first notable attempt at poetry was in the vernacular sphere. He was, after all, a contributor to James Watson’s *Choice Collection of ... Scots Poems*. Exactly how much he contributed to this anthology seems a little unclear; a recent mini-biography on Hamilton claims “he contributed a number of pieces to the first volume” of the *Collection*.⁵⁶ Conversely, the latest editor of Watson seems to credit William Hamilton with only one piece, a fine example of late seventeenth/early eighteenth century Scots poetry, “The Last Dying Words of Bonny Heck.” Done in imitation of “Habbie Simson; or, The Life and Death of the Famous Piper from Kilbarchan” – the same standard Scots classic mentioned earlier – “Bonny Heck” was something of a mock elegy (and perhaps to more humane twentieth century eyes, a minor tear-jerker) relating the final words of a once champion Grey-Hound, who, being now past his prime, is to be rather heartlessly “put-down” by his penny-counting owners. An innovative application of the “Standart Habbie” verse form, Hamilton’s “Bonny Heck” represents both a continuation of an old tradition, plus the genesis of new poetic fashion.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the language and phraseology of “Bonny Heck” –

⁵⁶ T. Royle *The Mainstream Companion to Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh, 1991), p. 142.

⁵⁷ D. Glen (ed and intro.) *Four Scottish Poets of Cambuslang & Dechmont Hill: Patrick Hamilton, Lieutenant William Hamilton, John Struthers, and Duncan Glen* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 9.

composed no later than 1706 – is of a Scots that is neither the medieval language of Harry's *Wallace*, nor as thoroughly anglicised as Hamilton's 1722 reworking of such:

Alas, alas, quo' bonny *Heck*,
 On former Days when I reflect!
 I was a Dog much in Respect
 For doughty Deed:
 But now I must hing by the Neck
 Without Remeed.

O Fy, Sirs, for black burning Shame,
 Ye'll bring a Blunder on your Name!
 Pray tell me wherein I'm to blame?
 Is't in Effect,
 Because I'm Cripple, Auld and Lame?
 Quo' bony *Heck*.

What great Feats I have done my Sell
 Within Clink of *Kilrenny* Bell,⁵⁸
 When I was Souple, Young and Fell
 But Fear or Dread:
John Ness and *Paterson* can tell,
 Whose Hearts may bleid.

They'll witness that I was the Vier
 Of all the Dogs within the Shire,
 I'd run all Day, and never tyre:
 but now my Neck
 It must be stretched for my Hyre,
 quo' bonny *Heck* ...

I Wily, Witty was, and Gash,
 With my auld felni packy Pash,
 Nae man might anes buy me for Cash
 in some respect.
 Are they not then confounded Rash,
 that hangs poor *Heck*?

I was a bardy Tyk and bauld,
 Tho' my Beard's Gray, I'm not so auld.
 Can any Man to me unfald,
 what is the feid,
 To stane me ere I be well Cauld?

⁵⁸ The setting for the poem seems to be largely within the bounds of old East Fife.

a cruel Deed!⁵⁹

Instead, this is the language of the new Scots vernacular in its most embryonic form. Though, a contrivance of sorts, it nevertheless represents something of an amalgam of several Scots dialects, married to certain English words that have been given Scots spellings.⁶⁰

As already established in a previous chapter, Gilbertfield and the Scots vernacularist Allan Ramsay were friendly correspondents.⁶¹ In their later series of poetic exchanges, Familiar Epistles, the two were to maintain both the stanza style, and a good deal of the Anglo-Scots language associated with this same Standart Habbie tradition. Being exercises in mutual admiration, the nature of these Epistles range anywhere from playful mockery to out-and-out “back-patting” (“elaborate compliments” as one scholar termed them⁶²), the phraseology being a rhetorical, quasi-Athenian style with an noticeable interjection of Scots words, moderate at times, though hefty at others:

O Famed and celebrated Allan!
 Renowned Ramsay, canty Callan
 There’s nowther Highlandman nor Lawlan,
 In Poetrie,
 But may as soon ding down Tamtallon,⁶³
 As match wi’ thee.

For ten Times ten, and that’s a hunder,
 I hae been made to gaze and wonder,
 When Frae Parnassus thou didst thunder!
 Wi’ Wit and Skill.
 Wherefore I’ll soberly knock under,

⁵⁹ “The Last Dying Words of Bonny Heck, A Famous Grey-Hound in the Shire of Fife (ll. 1-24; 43-54), as found in *James Watson’s Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems*, H.H. Wood (ed) (2 vols; STS, 1977-91), i, pp. 68-69. “Bonny Heck” was part of volume one of Watson’s anthology, published by him in Edinburgh, 1706.

⁶⁰ See Kinghorn and Law (ed), *The Works of Allan Ramsay*, iv, p. 200, for a description of the sources exploited by one such early vernacularists, Allan Ramsay, when setting about to create a “new” Scots literary language. Their analysis is included in my discussion of the nature of the vernacular revival in a previous chapter.

⁶¹ Also, Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p. 55, talks of “Burns’s future correspondent, William Hamilton of Gilbertfield.” It is a bit of a mystery how this could come about, since Hamilton died c. 1751, eight years before Burns was born.

⁶² R. Watson, *The Literature of Scotland* (Macmillan Publishers, 1984), p. 173.

⁶³ Probably a reference to Tantallon Castle, East Lothian.

And quat my Quill.⁶⁴

His ego sufficiently stroked as a result of this panegyric, the Leadhills poet responds by singing the praises of the above-quoted Scots masterpiece of Hamilton's, "Bonny Heck" –

When I begoud first to cun Verse,
 And cou'd your Ardry Whins rehearse,
 Where Bonny Heck ran fast and fierce,
 It warm'd my Breast;
 Then Emulation did me pierce,
 Whilk since ne'er ceast.⁶⁵

With works such as "Bonny Heck" and the "Familiar Epistles" to his credit, Gilbertfield seems to perform an "about-face" with his rendering of Henry the Minstrel, produced only three years after his "Epistles." When considering his anglicised *Wallace* it is important to realise that, as Lindsay points out, William Hamilton's version of Harry was not a straight "translation;" it was, instead, an "abridged paraphrase."⁶⁶ Here once again, attention should be drawn toward the appended texts:⁶⁷ we can see that whereas all other versions of Wallace's recapture of St Johnstoun are rendered into 84 lines of text, Hamilton is blissfully content to reduce the same tale down to 53 lines – though, in fairness, this does not appreciably affect the overall integrity of the general narrative. Purists of the Harry tradition might object to this abridgement; for our purposes, however, the essential point is that – issues of language being now being set to rest – the *New Edition of the Life ...*

⁶⁴ "Epistle I (Gilbertfield June 26th, 1719)" (ll. 1-12), in *The Works of Allan Ramsay*, i, p. 115. In his "Epistle II (Gilbertfield, July 24th, 1719)" (found in *The Works of Allan Ramsay*, i, p. 123), Lieutenant Hamilton really "goes-to-town" insofar as the Scots language is concerned:

E'en mony a bonny knacky Tale,
 Bra to set o'er a Pint of ale.
 For Fifty Guineas I'll find Bail,
 Against a Bodle,
 That I wad quat ilk Day a Mail,
 For sic a Nodle. (ll. 61-66)

⁶⁵ "Answer I (Edinburgh, July 10th, 1719)" (ll. 25-30), in *The Works of Allan Ramsay*, i, p. 119.

⁶⁶ Lindsay, *History of Scottish Literature*, p. 169. Lindsay's comments concerning Hamilton's version of the *Wallace* almost exactly mimic those made by K. Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (Edinburgh and London, 1958) p. 161, some years previous.

⁶⁷ Compare Appendix V to any other version of the *Wallace* included in this study.

of ... *William Wallace* represents a freer, more interpretative representation of Henry the Minstrel's text, rather than being greatly innovative in terms of language.

Now it is certainly a fair point to make that the Scots employed in such pieces as Ramsay and Hamilton's "Epistles" is something of a construct, that few folk in Scotland actually spoke exactly in that manner; but is the language of Hamilton's *Wallace* any less so? It would seem to be the case that like some of the Scots poetry both he and (much more so by far) his friend Ramsay produced, Hamilton's anglicised version of the *Wallace*, in addition to being an exercise in the sort of patriotism people like Robert Burns would eventually seek out as a source of inspiration,⁶⁸ was also conceived as a statement about the nature of literary style, very unlike the more "vernacular" versions of Blind Harry being produced at the time.

As far as these more vernacular late seventeenth to early eighteenth century versions of the *Wallace* are concerned, hopefully it is now readily apparent that they were in themselves already very anglicised in language. What was not so "English" about them was their verse style. The verse style of the vernacular *Wallaces* was still indebted to that of the older, courtly style of the ancient makars, not to mention Harry himself. William Hamilton's style of verse, however, is much more akin to the neo-classic type employed by the Scottish (and probably English) Augustans; that is, those Scottish poets who wrote non-Scots (language) verse.⁶⁹ For comparative purposes this short extract from the poetry of Alexander Pennecuik (d.

⁶⁸ For some of my ideas on Burns and the Wallace tradition, see my forthcoming "Aspects of Scotland's Social, Political, and Cultural Scene during the 17th and 18th Centuries as mirrored in the *Wallace* and *Bruce* Traditions," in E.J. Cowan and D. Gifford (ed), *The Polar Twins: Scottish History and Literature* (Edinburgh, at press).

⁶⁹ This working general definition of "Scottish Augustan" is based upon A.M. Oliver, "The Scottish Augustans," in J. Kinsley (ed) *Scottish Poetry: A Critical Survey* (London, 1955). In a more specific sense, it would probably refer to any poet who patterned his poetry after that of such English writers as Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, and Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. In England, the reign of Queen Anne is sometimes referred to as an Augustan Age. In general they worked within a neo-classical style employing classical forms, such as the ode. It must be pointed out, however, that (at least) one Scots poet who worked with classical imagery, James Thomson, actually rebelled against Augustan style in its strictest by challenging its normally artificial view of nature.

1730) should suffice in providing a basis for comparison between Scottish Augustan poetry at large, and Hamilton's anglicised *Wallace*:

By all the Renfrew Shepherds 'tis confess'd
A glorious Sun arises in the West,
Thro' spacious Fields, by all the Swains its told
This Sun hath more adorers than the Old.⁷⁰

Though perhaps not identical, Gilbertfield's new edition of Harry certainly has much more in common with this style, than it does with that of the more traditional *Wallaces*. This Augustan style of poetry was actually "all-the-rage" within polite circles in both England (largely London), and those places in Scotland which sought to ape polite English society. Though it drew upon the English language for its vocabulary (as both the vernacular editions of the *Wallace* and some of the so-called Scots poems during our period also drew heavily, but not completely, upon English), Augustan poetry employed an inflated rhetorical style, which was presumably meant to mimic that of the ancient Classical scholars – if not their actual language. Still, the reasons for the popularity of this largely imported Augustan style within polite circles in early eighteenth-century Britain as a whole, and more significantly, within those same circles in Scotland itself, have been outlined elsewhere in this study; suffice to say for now, that its popularity was linked with efforts concerned with promoting more "cultured British" (in essence, polite English) manners and speech. It will be recalled that two of the prime vehicles of this cause were the various Gentlemen's Improving Societies (such as Allan Ramsay's Easy Club), and (perhaps a little later in the century) the entire belle lettre movement.⁷¹ Both the Improving Societies and the belle lettre school had within them people who were actively engaged in producing poetry which, they believed,

⁷⁰ Mitchell no. 73850; *Croydeon and Cochrania, A Pastoral on The Nuptials of ... His Grace James Duke of Hamilton ... with the Lady Anne Cochran ... Solemnized February 14, 1723, by A[lexander]. P[ennecuik]. Gent.* (Edinburgh, 1723), p. 7.

⁷¹ For a discussion of the teaching of rhetoric and belle lettre, see R. Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (OUP, 1992), passim. The term "belle lettre," used here, is indeed borrowed from Crawford.

was of a style most suitable for the ears of this new polite British society. It is here that Gilbertfield's *Wallace* finds its niche.

It appears that William Hamilton's new edition of *Blind Harry* was indeed an exercise in relating the old classic Scots tale of *Wallace* using the medium of (as Gilbertfield probably perceived the situation) the new "classic" poetic form of Scotland. The wrong conclusion, should not be drawn, however: the story of the heroic life and deeds of the old Lord Protector did indeed fire the patriotic imagination of Hamilton, every bit as much as the ex-army lieutenant's rendering of that same story roused feelings of national pride within the soul of Robert Burns, later in the century. But in the mind of Hamilton, such a vitally important story deserved to be told in the new "universal" literary language of the recently united kingdom of Britain. Hamilton was not an isolated example of this mentality: eight years later in his neo-classical tribute (of sorts) to the land of his birth, James Thomson (1700-48) would speak of the heroic nature of the nation, and of its defender, the scourge of the usurping Edward:

... A manly race,
Of unsubmitting spirit, wise, and brave;
Who still through bleeding ages struggled hard,
(As well unhappy Wallace can attest,
Great patriot-hero! ill requited chief!)

To hold a generous, undiminished state ...⁷²

Nevertheless, in Hamilton's version of Henry the Minstrel's *Wallace*, the title character becomes something akin to an old Classical hero, going-off to fight in the Trojan War, or some similar endeavour. Slightly later in the century, a somewhat obscure poet by the name of John Harvey also treated Scotland's original commoner-patriot in similar fashion. In his *The Life of Robert Bruce King of Scots*

⁷² James Thomson, "Autumn," in *The Poetical Works of James Thomson* (2 vols; London, 1860?), i, p. 131. Thomson, it will be recalled, is not normally seen as fitting the precise mould of an Augustan lyricist; he has been referred to as a precursor to Romanticism (Royle, *Companion to Scottish Literature*, p. 312). He nevertheless employs many classical references in his poetry.

(1729), Harvey introduces us to a William Wallace who could have as easily sprung from the pages of Homer or Ovid, as from the pages of Medieval Scots poetry:

In glitt'ring Steel, the *Ellerslian* Hero shines.
Born to chastise the Pride of perjur'd Kings,
Quick to the Field, the youthful Warrior springs.⁷³

A somewhat different Guardian of Scotland is being portrayed here – and perhaps also, to a lesser degree, in Hamilton's version of the *Wallace*. Though heavily indebted and even related to the image of the popular hero of common origins,⁷⁴ this William Wallace is a man who is greater than the sum of his parts; he is thus ennobled through his altruism. In a sense then, the Wallace who is portrayed by Harvey and maybe even Hamilton is no longer a "simple" commoner – this slightly different defender of Scotland's liberty is thus removed from the realm of populist legend to become part of a more elitist eighteenth-century literary tradition.⁷⁵ This endeavour to convert the Wallace story is exactly what Pinkerton laboured at with his (supposedly) scholarly version of Blind Harry in the vernacular at century's end. True, even Harry had made an attempt at emphasising a notable lineage for his hero:

We reide of ane rycht famous of renowne,
Of worthi blude that ryngis in this regioun:
And hensfurth I will my process hald
Of Wilyham Wallas yhe haf hard beyne tald.
His forbearis likis till wnderstand,
Of hale lynage, and trew lyne of Scotland ...⁷⁶

Here, the Minstrel is appropriating an ancestry for the Guardians created by earlier chroniclers, such as Fordun, who had been concerned with reversing the slanders

⁷³ GUL Spec. Coll., Mu-h.24; Mitchell no. 313542; John Harvey, *The Life of Robert Bruce King of Scots* (Edinburgh, John Catanach, 1729), p. 8 (ll. 110-12).

⁷⁴ We should not for a moment draw the incorrect conclusion here that Harry's original hero, and the later neo-classical Wallace are two completely distinct entities. Instead of being "two different coins" they are "two different faces of the same coin." If the opinions of Moir, p. ix, are to be trusted, than it appears that Harry himself may have grafted some traits of the Classical hero onto his Wallace – though he probably also was heavily indebted to the tradition surrounding the old Guardian as well. (This point will be returned to below where the ballad tradition is discussed.)

⁷⁵ Though again, possibly to belabour the point once more, Scotland's uncommonly accomplished Poet Laureate of the common man and woman – Robert Burns – would find inspiration through this more elite version of "the Knight of Ellerslie".

⁷⁶ *The Bruce and Wallace*, Jamieson (ed), ii, pp. 1-2 (book 1, ll. 17-22).

told by the English that Wallace had been the most base of the base, not only in status, but actions also. Despite this, and even the fact that he makes his hero king for a day, Harry is not overly consumed with pressing the issue of Wallace's ancestry. What Wallace did, rather than what he was, concerned Harry most. Thus the image of a noble Wallace does not seem at all that well-sustained throughout the *Blind Minstrel's* original text, largely as a result of his narrative emphasis; not nearly to the same degree as in, for example, Harvey's *Bruce*.

Perhaps related to this poetic creation of a quasi-gentrified William Wallace, is the treatment he receives at the hands of certain early modern Scottish historians. Most of these seem to have been highly faithful to the memory of Scotland's Guardian. Examples of their worship of his deeds and personage will come to light below; but few could surpass such comments assessing the hero from Elderslie as "... that matchless Hero, and Miracle of human Nature, Sir William Wallace ..."⁷⁷ Hero worship like typified many histories concerned with Wallace; quite often the tone of their wordings seemed to hearken back to traditional narratives of the classical hero. In addition, it seems that some were also determined to build (or build upon) an image of an ennobled version of Scotland's premier patriot. This promotion of a Wallace of high social status, perhaps reached its peak within the work of a certain anonymous eighteenth century historian, who stated that during the reign of John Baliol, "W[illiam] Wallace of extraordinary natural Endowments both of mind and body is made regent."⁷⁸ A more visible figure was George Mackenzie MD, who, quoting a Thomas Crawford ("one of our most Learn'd Antiquaries")

⁷⁷ GUL Spec. Coll. Mu 8-a.6; *The History of Scotland; from 21 February, 1436 to March 1565 ... by Robert Lindesay of Pitscottie ... To which is added A Continuation, by another Hand, till August 1604* (Edinburgh, Baskett and Co., HM printer, 1728), p. iv. The quoted lines were taken from the dedication to John Lindesay, Earl of Crawford and Lindesay, written by one of the book's dealers, Robert Freebairn.

We will meet Freebairn again below, where he will appear as a devotee to the Wallace and Bruce traditions, as well as a supporter of the 1715 Jacobite uprising. It is interesting to note, that after he forfeited his position as King's printer to take up the position as printer to the Pretender in Perth. However, it seems that after the dust had settled from the uprising, he later returned to Edinburgh, and opened a book-shop at Parliament Close, at least, according to the title page of Lindesay's *History of Scotland*.

⁷⁸ GUL Spec. Coll. MS Gen 53; "Notes on Scottish history from c. 1500 BC to 1726 AD," f. 23b.

makes the claim that Wallace's father "was Laird of Ellerslie"⁷⁹ – a statement which appears to be based upon a creative reading of Harry's "Malcom Wallas hir gat in marriage, | That Elrislé than had in heretage."⁸⁰ Mackenzie in fact seems to expend a fair bit of energy, probably more so than did Harry, in his attempts to shed light upon the lineage, real or imagined, leading to Wallace. In this latter regard, the tone of Mackenzie's writings bear a resemblance to those of another historian (one of the better known of the eighteenth century), Patrick Abercromby, who seemed to have a gripe with those (mostly English) persons that would deny the Guardian's heritage:

Displeas'd at his very Birth, they will not allow him to have been born a Gentleman: But this is a Falshood (sic) demonstrable, even in our Days; as Sir James Dalrymple has actually demonstrated from original Charters ...⁸¹

Matthew Duncan was another historian who tried to immortalise Wallace. By virtue of the title of Duncan's work – *The History of the Kings of Scotland* ...⁸² – it should not be surprising to discover that the author only had limited interest in the past lives of the "lowly." As such, sixteen to seventeen pages of his work are devoted towards the career of the victor of Bannockburn.⁸³ Nevertheless, Elderslie's finest receives much more than just an honourable mention within the section dealing with the Bruce. Additionally, Duncan includes "An Appendix Containing

⁷⁹ NLS, Jolly 2911-13; George Mackenzie MD, *The Lives and Characters of the Most Eminent Writers of the Scots Nation* ... (3 vols; Edinburgh, James Watson, 1708), "The Life of John Blair," p. 248. Mackenzie also quotes Harry as one of his sources.

⁸⁰ *The Bruce and Wallace*, Jamieson (ed.), ii, p. 2 (book 1, ll. 27-28).

⁸¹ University of Guelph (Canada) Library, Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, S0277b01; Patrick Abercromby, *The Martial Achievements of the Scots Nation* (2 vols; Edinburgh, Robert Freebairn, 1711-15), i, p. 522. Abercromby claimed to be less enthusiastic about using Harry as a historical source. In the preamble to "The Life of Sir John Graham" he laments:

Unless I should copy after Blind Harry, which I believe, no author, that has a mind to be credited, will do, I can say but little of the great Actions and Life of this Gentleman [Graham] ... (Abercromby, *Martial Achievements of the Scots*, i, p. 549.)

Though distrustful of the Blind Minstrel's text, Abercromby also seems to be conceding that as far as sources for the age of Wallace is concerned, it is a case of using Harry or doing (relatively speaking) without.

⁸² See, Mitchell no. 475410; [Matthew Duncan] *The History of the Kings of Scotland From Fergus I. to the End of Q. Ann's Reign* ... (Glasgow, William Duncan, 1722). Typical of works of this nature from our period, Duncan's work is dedicated to a notable (most likely a patron); in this instance, the Earl of Kilmarnock.

⁸³ Duncan, *Kings of Scotland*, pp. 108-24.

the Lives of several Persons of Quality, who were concern'd in the Government, Civil or Military;" the persons contained within such, could be described as being extraordinary commoners. It is here that Duncan allows uncommon commoners like Wallace to come to the fore. Yet in spite of this, the author does not attempt to hide his biases regarding these non-regal people who performed majestic deeds. Though the (in)famous Oliver Cromwell graces this section with his presence, Duncan's praise for him is conditional: though admirable for his religious zeal, the Roundhead leader was indeed a brave, yet wicked man; he was devoted to the Word of the Almighty at all times except when that same gospel stood in the way of his own goals.⁸⁴

Duncan's treatment of Wallace, however, was unreserved: "William Wallace was of this Humour: He was incredibly Strong, and his Aversion to the English could not be equalled but by the Love he had for his Country ..." ⁸⁵ Then after having related a (thankfully) toned-down version of the horrific ending to Wallace's life – in a manner very like the neo-classicists – Duncan attempts to ennoble the Guardian of Scotland:

This fate had Sir William Wallace the famousest Man of his Time, and comparable to the greatest Heroes of Antiquity, both for his Courage in undertaking Dangers, and Wisdom and Valour in overcoming them, for Love, and when others were Slaves he alone was Free; neither could he be induced by Reward or Threats to forsake the publick Cause which he had once under-taken ...⁸⁶

Here once again, we are presented with a Wallace who displays all the attributes of the classic hero; with characteristics akin to the ancient warrior/king of any nation. He displays the altruism of a Pericles figure, giving his life for the higher ideals in which he believed.⁸⁷ However for Duncan, it seems that the deeds performed by

⁸⁴ Duncan, *Kings of Scotland*, pp. 406-13. Though his assessment of Cromwell is largely based around the opinions of a "Mr Baxter," Duncan does nothing to refute this source.

⁸⁵ Duncan, *Kings of Scotland*, p. 387.

⁸⁶ Duncan, *Kings of Scotland*, p. 393.

⁸⁷ R. Warner, *Men of Athens* (London, 1972), p. 89. None of this is to say that Duncan – or any of his ilk – was consciously attempting to remould Wallace into any one specific Grecian hero (like Pericles), only that instead there was indeed at least one Classical equivalent to the Lord Protector as portrayed by Harry. Admittedly, Harry's original text itself was a pretty good exercise in hero

Wallace – the rescue of his nation from a more potent foreign power – can only be those undertaken by one of higher birth. As such, he takes great pains to set the record straight; despite the slanders of chroniclers from the south, “Sir William Wallace ... was a Gentleman of very low Fortune, but Noble Birth ... English authors will not allow him to have been born of a Gentleman, but this is a Falsehood even demonstrable in our Days ...”⁸⁸

Matthew Duncan’s statements regarding the “noble” lineage of William Wallace perhaps underpin a sense of insecurity. Certainly there were Scots who believed themselves, as a nation, to be the inferior partner in the newly united Greater Britain. His concern over the “disparaging” comments offered by certain English sources concerning Wallace seem to reflect, to a degree, this insecurity. Pride in his own nation, by itself, was not enough for Duncan; he was still compelled to define his patriotism in relation to the traditions of the southern partner in the Union. A freedom-fighter like a Wallace, hailing from the most obscure ranks of society – though his deeds and bravery truly were beyond compare – still was not quite of the same status as, for example, an Alfred, who not only (arguably of course) defeated the Danish menace, but was also of noble status. This is not to say that all individuals concerned with retelling and propagating the tale of William Wallace were insecure about Scotland’s original patriot’s less than spectacular lineage. Undoubtedly, some in fact would find great comfort in such, that even the most ordinary could rise to the call of national pride (and more will be said on this

worship. The qualities of a premier hero actually may be universal. Probably if a person were to dig deep enough, similarities between Harry’s hero and countless others would crop-up: the immediate parallel seems to be Arthur who also, so the legend goes, selflessly united his people for the cause of freedom. Treachery was the ultimate cause of Arthur’s downfall, as was the case with Wallace (a point to which we will return). The difference between Arthur and Wallace, however, was that the former was of the highest blood, whereas the latter was not – kings were supposed to be courageous; a trait not normally associated with the commons.

⁸⁸ Duncan, *Kings of Scotland*, pp. 385-86. The author then devotes the better part of a page toward relating his alleged proof for this claim. It is worth noting that like Abercromby before him, Duncan credits Sir James Darymple as being the one to demonstrate beyond reproach that Wallace was of gentle birth. In fact, Duncan’s words look like they could have been lifted from the very pages of Abercromby’s history: “... English Authors will not allow him to have been born a Gentleman, but this is a Falsehood even demonstrable in our Days, and Sir James Dalrymple hath actually demonstrated ...” (pp. 385-86.)

In addition, another of Duncan’s authorities is Blind Harry.

below). And even when it comes to a person like Duncan, it is not difficult to envision his chest swelling with patriotic fervour as his pen frantically scribbled away; but in the back of his mind we can imagine also a voice telling him that the opinions of the English must be attended to.⁸⁹ Thus, Duncan's Wallace could not be a mere commoner, and thus, truly a traitor; a more notable lineage would thus absolve the Guardian of any treasonous activity on his part. The lowly who rebel are indeed traitors; the high-born who do same are freedom-fighters, at least in the minds of persons such as, possibly, Matthew Duncan.

This attempt at ennobling the legendary figure of Wallace did, though, have the drawback of effectively down-playing the Guardian's achievements. The actions of Wallace the commoner were uncommon: defending the liberty of his nation; leading in its struggle against a potentially more powerful foreign adversary. Few commoners can lay claim to having achieved so much. Among the general populace, the deeds of Wallace were inspirational; perhaps this was less the case with his quasi-gentrified alter-ego. By raising Wallace to the status of nobility, the impact of his deeds were reduced. This Guardian never freed his homeland, as the Bruce did. The actions of the ennobled Wallace pale by comparison to those of others of true kingly or noble birth. The ennobled Wallace was an ineffectual one, at least as far as his achievements were concerned. Perhaps this is why the image of him as objectified by Harry's (extra-) ordinary man who confronts the situation at hand, still retained its popularity.

Thus far, we have only dealt in passing with the image of William Wallace as an icon of Scotland on the commonest level; it is now time to confront this aspect of his cult in a more direct manner. In this respect, it is significant to note just how well-versed common-folk were when it came to the text of Blind Harry itself.

⁸⁹ The argument here is that of the phenomenon of nationalistic thinking being defined through external forces. This mind-set is related to that which is visible in the nationalistic rhetoric expressed today in the present author's own country of origin, Canada: a Canadian is defined as being (allegedly) everything that an American is not. So too, in modern day Scotland, there exists an attitude among many Scots that they are best described as being that which the English are not. Perhaps, through an examination of the historical record, we can find one possible antecedent of this attitude.

Miller, quoting several authorities, relates how, for example, simple shepherds were able to recite by heart large portions of the *Wallace*.⁹⁰ Of course we simply cannot say whether these “simple shepherds” had actually read Harry for themselves, or instead, had had the pertinent facts read or recited to them by another person. However, to address this question in a somewhat indirect manner, it just may be that some of our proverbial simple shepherds were in general not completely lacking in the ability to at least read.

Formerly, as Houston relates, an understanding of literacy levels was only vaguely ascertainable through a process governed by an examination of,

... the production, ownership and borrowing of books. Unfortunately these tell us little directly about the literate skills of early modern people. They are very much indirect indicators from which we must infer abilities to read and write. The results they produce are necessarily vague about the distribution of literacy in any given population.⁹¹

A far more accurate consensus, he maintains, could be arrived at by examining a given population’s ability to sign their own names in full on legal documents.⁹² Using his criteria for determining such, overall illiteracy rates in Lowland Scotland tended to drop marginally between the period 1700-70 when compared to the period 1640-99.⁹³ By-and-large, illiteracy rates based upon a man’s ability to sign his name were highest among labourers and servants, and lowest among professionals and the gentry, while craftsmen and tenants displayed abilities somewhere in between the two extremes. Massive differences in illiteracy rates between Lowland Scotland and Northern England were not visible; yet, “Scottish literacy is slightly superior to English for some occupational groups and at some points in time, but there is still a clear hierarchy of illiteracy. Social divisions were just as marked as in England, despite Scotland’s allegedly open access to education.”⁹⁴ Houston claims that the

⁹⁰ Miller, *Blind Harry*, p. 2.

⁹¹ Houston, *Scottish Literacy*, p. 20.

⁹² Houston, *Scottish Literacy*, p. 20.

⁹³ All the following findings of Houston’s are taken from his table “Occupational illiteracy of Scottish and English male deponents, 1640-99 and 1700-70,” in *Scottish Literacy*, p. 33.

⁹⁴ Houston, *Scottish Literacy*, p. 35.

further a person lived from a major burgh, like Edinburgh or Glasgow, the greater the chances of that person being illiterate.⁹⁵ Finally, the situation for the female half of the population was far worse:

In England between 1640 and 1760, 42% of all male assize deponents were illiterate, while in Scotland between 1650 and 1770 the comparable level was 32%. The level for women is identical in both countries at 81%.⁹⁶

However, Houston attempts to qualify his point, possibly correctly, that lower literacy rates among women may be as directly related to a lower socio/economic status, rather than to any prejudice against female education in general.⁹⁷

Houston, however, probably misses the mark in his analysis of the general lack of education in the Highlands. It is his belief that a rural Highlander, in general, was more likely to be unable to sign his name than a rural Lowlander; yet a more recent study⁹⁸ casts serious doubt upon his claim concerning the poor level of schooling in the Highlands.⁹⁹ In general, it appears that Houston has been uncritical in his acceptance of the statement made by the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, concerning the lack of parochial schools in 175 Highland parishes.¹⁰⁰ Also, yet another crucial flaw appears in his approach to the subject at hand: what about those folk who could not sign their names, but still possessed the ability to read?

It is not at all unreasonable to assume that for many people, writing was not nearly as important as being able to read. After all, had not the Scottish Reformation placed a great emphasis upon the individual's ability to understand the *written* Word

⁹⁵ Houston, *Scottish Literacy*, p. 46.

⁹⁶ Houston, *Scottish Literacy*, p. 57.

⁹⁷ Houston, *Scottish Literacy*, p. 58. Here he does not take into consideration that women's lower socio/economic status might be a symptom of long-standing prejudices against them. (However in a later effort of his, Houston does make an attempt to set the record straight, regarding prejudices against female education; see R.A. Houston, "Women in the Economy and Society of Scotland, 1500-1800," in R.A. Houston and I.D. Whyte {edd.}, *Scottish Society 1500-1800* {Cambridge, 1989}, pp. 134-36.)

⁹⁸ D.J. Withrington, "Schooling, Literacy and Society," in T.M. Devine and R. Mitchison (ed), *People and Society in Scotland, 1760-1830* (Edinburgh, 1988).

⁹⁹ Houston, *Scottish Literacy*, p. 72 and p. 85.

¹⁰⁰ Withrington, "Schooling, Literacy and Society," p. 165.

of God?¹⁰¹ Furthermore, it seems to make sense that a person must possess at least a limited ability to read before that person could aspire to display any sort of fine penmanship.¹⁰² Indeed, the present writer has encountered people, who, while totally befuddled when it came to writing, nevertheless displayed more than competent abilities when it came to understanding written texts.¹⁰³ As such, Houston did eventually amend his theories to take into account this fact, that reading often precedes the ability to write. Thus, he is confident when he relates that:

Despite its merits as a universal, standard and direct criterion of literacy, the ability to sign does not command general approval among social and cultural historians. Because reading was taught before (and indeed separately from) writing, it is likely that this skill was more widespread than signing which was in turn more extensive than fluent writing at length. Furthermore, reading gave access to the growing body of vernacular literature and is thus potentially more useful as an indicator of cultural possibilities opened up by literacy. Indeed, it has recently been argued that possibly by the 1740s and certainly by the 1790s Scotland's people were like those of Sweden in possessing universal reading ability.¹⁰⁴

Another scholar engaged in the study of Scottish literacy, who has embraced this idea of using a person's ability to sign their name as an indicator of their literacy, is, perhaps not surprisingly, Whyte.¹⁰⁵ For the most part, he notes a

¹⁰¹ On this, I.D. Whyte, *Scotland before the Industrial Revolution. An Economic and Social History c.1050-1750* (London, 1995), p. 245, says: "... the demand for serious religious historical and literary works does seem to have spread more widely through [Scottish] society than in Northern England." The greater demand for these works may indeed say something about higher literacy levels in Scotland, when compared to England.

¹⁰² An idea first brought to my attention as a result of a personal conversation with Prof. E.J. Cowan.

¹⁰³ One such individual was the product of a nineteenth century East-Central European education system, perhaps at least in certain key points, not too dissimilar from early modern Scotland's primary education system: very indebted (if that is the correct word for it) to a state church for its governance and curriculum, while the young student's first (and main) "textbook" was the written Scripture. Often it took what seemed a superhuman effort on the part of this man to sign his own name; indeed, when he was not fully feeling up to the task, he would give up and make his mark with an "X". However, reading "dime-store" novels, newspapers, and even periodical magazines was never beyond his capabilities.

¹⁰⁴R.A. Houston, "Scottish Education and Literacy, 1600-1800: an International Perspective," in T.M. Devine (ed), *Improvement and Enlightenment. Proceedings of the Scottish Historical Studies Seminar University of Strathclyde 1987-88* (Edinburgh, 1989), p. 53. In a previously cited study, Houston also related the general illiteracy of early modern Scottish women – using their (in)ability to sign their names as the criteria – then concedes that "Conceivably, many more women were able to read than could write their name." From Houston, "Women in the Economy and Society of Scotland, 1500-1800," p. 136.

¹⁰⁵ Given the fact he and Houston were former collaborators.

decrease in Scottish illiteracy in the century roughly between 1640 and 1760; from 75% male illiteracy to 35%, a considerable achievement for a small, poor country like Scotland.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, and far more significant for our present purposes:

Literacy levels in different societies can be compared by using the index of the ability of individuals to sign their names on documents. This may underestimate the ability of women more than men; reading was taught before writing and many Scottish women may have been able to read but not write.¹⁰⁷

Whyte's points seem to confirm that for the most disadvantaged members of early modern Scottish society (the majority of women being probably among this category), writing was beyond their ability, but reading may not have been. For in one sense, why would writing, even one's own name, be the most essential "survival skill" for a common agricultural labourer, or even the average rural housewife? But reading could be an essential pursuit in that it was one way in which times of boredom could be "whiled-away." On this last point, there may indeed be some accuracy in the observation of the poet Alexander Pennecuik in his "Merry Tales from the lang Nights of Winter. In Dialogue betwixt the Tinklarion Doctor and his Grandam &c." In his poem, Pennecuik presents a scene from rural early modern Scotland, set during the fallow months of the year. In it he tells of the pastimes folk engaged in, and it is very interesting to note "Tinklarion Doctor's" claim that, "My aunt, whom none dare say has no grace, | Was reading on the Pilgrim's Progress."¹⁰⁸ The supposition on the part of Pennecuik, that "aunt" could "wade-through" the pages of Milton seems all the more believable in light of Whyte's comments; but ask "aunt" to sign her name, and perhaps we are back to the theories of Houston.

Thus, to return to the original point of this current discussion, it may be that the above mentioned simple shepherd could cope with something like a chap-book

¹⁰⁶ Whyte, *Scotland before the Industrial Revolution*, p. 245.

¹⁰⁷ Whyte, *Scotland before the Industrial Revolution*, p. 245.

¹⁰⁸ Mitchell no. 73851; *A Collection of Scots Poems on Several Occasions, By the late Mr. Alexander Pennecuik, Gent. and Others* (Edinburgh, James Reid, 1756), p. 9.

edition of Blind Harry, written in an accommodating language and a “handy,” easy to transport, format. That aside, however, the written medium was not the only way in which the story of William Wallace was circulated. The art of the balladeer was another essential way in which Harry’s hero made himself known to the common populace. Scotland, as well known, has had a very long and vital ballad tradition; the entire known corpus, as collected during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is truly enormous.

The popular ballad, as a form of “literature” associated with the broadest spectrum of Scottish society was probably the initial medium in which the deeds of Wallace were conveyed to the populace at large in medieval times. And it seems that the image of the old Guardian (or tales concerning him) readily endeared itself to the people. Hector Boece relates how the legendary figure of Wallace had had a strong affinity with “þe pepill,”¹⁰⁹ and possibly he is commenting as much upon his own times, as upon the days of Sir William himself. This latter point might well be substantiated by the fact that Wallace did attract the attention of the composer and performer of ballads.

In fact, Wallace was always something of a favourite with Scottish balladeers. By the eighteenth century, historians were noting the various forms of literature (by the broadest definition of such) that were composed in commemoration of Scotland’s Guardian:

... ’tis no more than all true Hearted Scotsmen have wish’d for, these 400 Years bypast; For, as Mr. Tyrrel observes, Sir William Wallace was the great Champion of the Scots nation, and is celebrated, ever to this Day, in their Songs, Poems, and Histories.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ *The Chronicles of Scotland Compiled by Hector Boece*, p. 256.

¹¹⁰ Abercromby, *Martial Achievements of the Scots*, i, p. 522. In the preamble to his chapter “Life of Sir William Wallace, Guardian of Scotland” (pp. 522-48), Abercromby laments the daunting task faced by the historian in writing a history of Wallace, satisfactory to both the “Vulgar,” and the “Learn’d and Wise,” each of whom have their own ideas concerning the life of “this Modern Heroe.” The term “Modern Heroe” is perhaps a curious tag for Wallace – strictly speaking, as a historical figure, he was not a modern hero, but (arguably) a medieval one. Perhaps, then, this assessment was meant to apply to the legendary Wallace, and the status of hero the Guardian had gained in the ages closer to Abercromby’s own times.

A glimpse of this phenomenon, at least as it related to the ballad tradition, might be garnered from Pennecuik's "Merry Tales" –

The Meikle tasker Davie Dallas,
Was telling blads of William Wallace ...¹¹¹

Furthermore, an excerpt from a broadsheet done in imitation of the Scots standard, "Habbe Simson," possibly offers us a look as to how many good (or not so good) stories of Wallace (and in this case, also Bruce and Douglas), might well have had their beginnings – over a healthy drink:

Then when of Barley's healsom juice,
He got his Dose he crack'd so Cruse,
Of Douglas, Wallace and the Bruce
 their doughty deed:
The Names of these made Willy spruce;
 but now he's dead.¹¹²

As a character of the popular ballads, Wallace is a compilation of Harry's near mythical hero and local folk tradition. F.J. Child collected no fewer than eight versions¹¹³ of a ballad which sang the praises of "Schir William;" all of these were given by him the (possibly) somewhat artificial title of "Gude Wallace" – a title which nevertheless hearkens back to Blind Harry's text. But given that Harry's text was created nearly two centuries after Wallace's death, it in itself is likely to be partially based upon old ballads, folk-tales and other oral forms of testimony, not to mention the chronicle-based evidence other scholars, such as McDiarmid,¹¹⁴ have written about. Though it is not the intent here to delve into the sources employed by Harry, the relationship between oral-based culture (largely expressed through the ballads) and the text of the *Wallace*, is indeed a topic worthy of discussion.

¹¹¹ *A Collection of Scots Poems ... By ... Alexander Pennecuik*, p. 9.

¹¹² NLS, Ry III.a.10(39); *An Elegy on Willy Bald* (n.d.). This is not to suggest that Willy's ramblings on Wallace, etc. provided the basis for any one particular ballad, only that in those relaxed places where people meet in numbers, such as the public house (or market place, or fair), are the places where stories are told, and a good story is the basis of any good ballad.

¹¹³ And several sub-versions – "variations" in Child's terminology.

¹¹⁴ See *Harry's Wallace* (ed), McDiarmid, i, pp. lx-lxxiv, for a full discussion of the possible sources employed by Harry.

Referring specifically to his “G” version of “Gude Wallace” – and in a more general sense to the other versions – F.J. Child remarks thus on the creation of a Wallace ballad tradition:

The first half of this version is plainly a late piece of work, very possibly of this century [19th], much later than the other [half], which itself need not be very old. But the portions of Blind Harry’s poem out of which these ballads were made were perhaps themselves composed from older ballads ... ¹¹⁵

Child’s comments are extremely interesting, for what they allude to is a constant exchange of ideas and literary themes between the learned poet and Scottish oral tradition. Few would disagree that the successful poet does not work in a vacuum, but is constantly gauging the artistic mood of the populace. A good poet is not only an innovator, but also a collator and collector of prevailing tradition as it exists within at least a section of society.¹¹⁶ And one prevailing tradition of the generality of Scotland, at least until the advent of industrialisation (and maybe even beyond) was the oral ballad tradition.

True enough, in Wallace’s, and even Harry’s time, ballads were performed for the amusement of notables. But for the ordinary folk of the times in question, ballads existed as a key source of entertainment. The possibility that the average early modern Lowland Scot was not totally non-literate has been suggested above; his medieval counterpart may not have been so lucky, however. Education, in the Lowlands at least, was not widely available until the early modern period.¹¹⁷ But

¹¹⁵ Francis James Child (ed) *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (5 vols; Boston and New York, 1882-1898), iii, p. 266. There seems scarce reason (the controversy over ballad origins notwithstanding) to seriously doubt Child’s basic assumption concerning the origin of the Wallace ballad tradition – specifically “Gude Wallace (Child no. 157A-H).” The *Wallace’s* most recent editor also believes in a ballad influence for at least certain portions of the poem’s text (see below).

¹¹⁶ Something similar was argued by M.W. Bloomfield and C.W. Dunn, *The Role of the Poet in Early Societies* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 4: “Early poets were teachers, diviners, prophets, and preservers of tradition. Part of their sacred office was to admonish and warn rulers and subjects alike, and to hand on the accumulated wisdom of the past.” In this instance, “early poets” are defined as pre-romantic era – in the case of Scotland, this would probably equate to pre-Sir Walter Scott.

However, we thus might argue that a poet’s repertoire was at one time viewed as a great storehouse of communal tradition and mores. This is not to say that poetry was necessarily a repository of pure historical narrative, although it could be.

¹¹⁷ Whyte, *Scotland before the Industrial Revolution*, p. 242. See also an earlier discussion by D.J. Withrington, “Education and Society in the Eighteenth Century,” in N.T. Phillipson and R. Mitchison

even if education and the ability to read were insignificant considerations, the opportunity to read surely must be taken into account. It was only in 1507 that the first licensed printing press was established;¹¹⁸ and as pointed-out above, Scottish printing only began to boom around the mid-way mark of the seventeenth century. Before the seventeenth century – and especially 1507 – books would have been a rare and expensive commodity; whether imported from abroad, or printed at home, they were probably beyond the means of even some of the notables of the land. Thus it is fair to say that during the genesis period of the Wallace myth, the orally-based ballad tradition was readily identifiable with society in general.

What has thus resulted through time is a reasonably extensive, yet varied, corpus of ballads based upon the life of the William Wallace the popular hero (distinct from the historical). Most of the versions Child presents came from nineteenth century sources. But two main versions that were recorded by him are the A version from – arguably – 1745, and the B version from 1768.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, all these renditions of “Gude Wallace,” whether eighteenth or nineteenth century – or at least portions of them – stem from a much earlier time. Having said that, what might be an intriguing inquiry is find those points at which “Gude Wallace,” the popular hero of the ballads, intersects with Blind Harry’s poem. McDiarmid has noted that:

Certainly there were “great gesses” of Wallace and Bruce in the first half of the fourteenth century. One of these must be the tale of Bruce outwitting a hostile boatman at Loch Lomond that is mentioned in Sir Thomas Gray’s *Scalacronica* ... And one such “geste” ... is preserved

(ed) *Scotland in the Age of Improvement* (Edinburgh., 1970), p. 169. The combined opinions of Whyte and Withrington seem to indicate that by the latter part of the seventeenth and earlier part of the eighteenth, Lowland Scotland, largely in and around the burghs, was relatively well populated by schools, but this does not mean that folk attended en masse. Of course, there are other ways to learn to read besides attending school.

¹¹⁸ Whyte, *Scotland before the Industrial Revolution*, p. 235. And for interest sake, only one year after that (with fair certainty) appeared an edition of the *Wallace* from the press of Chepman and Myllar, Scotland’s first royally-established printers.

¹¹⁹ Child, iii, p. 265. Child estimates the date of the A version, however Kinsley seems more certain when he attaches a date of 1750 to it. (*Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, {ed} Kinsley, iii, p. 1513.)

by Wyntoun, of Wallace's night-time vengeance on the sheriff of Lanark for slaying his "leman."¹²⁰

On a similar note, Miller alerts us to Wytoun's statement, that a healthy oral tradition (in the form of "Gret Gestis") existed in his day;¹²¹ while Wittig points toward similar acknowledgements on the part of Barbour.¹²² However, as far as the surviving ballad tradition is concerned, William Wallace seems a better preserved entity than Robert the Bruce. This seems related to the sort of comments made by Boece and related above, that Wallace had always had a natural rapport with the people (and vice versa). For despite the efforts of certain of the literati bent on creating a quasi-noble Lord Protector, the commons were not so easily fooled: "Gude Wallace" was, as always, one of them.

The "Gret Gestis" as incorporated into the works of poets like Harry and Barbour, could have been – in whole or in part – originally the product of long-standing tradition. Accordingly, key phrases incorporated into the text of works like the *Wallace* or the *Bruce* have been interpreted as signifying the interjection of material from the oral tradition. Preamble phrases in the *Bruce* typified by "as ik hard said," "as ik hard tell," "and 3eyt haiff ik hard some men say," "as ik heff hard syndry men say," and "ik hard oft-sys tell" might all be indicators that following narrative was based upon oral testimony, which, in one manner or another, came the

¹²⁰ M.P. McDiarmid, "The Metrical Chronicles and non-alliterative Romances," in R.D.S. Jack (ed), *The History of Scottish Literature, Volume 1, Origins to 1660*, C. Craig (gen. ed) (Aberdeen, 1988), p. 28.

Gloss: "leman" = literally, beloved one; specifically here, a mistress.

"geste" = literally, life of, or deeds; specific to this usage a tale, story, or sung romance; a romantic ballad.

¹²¹ Miller, *Blind Harry*, p. 5. The relevant text, according to (*Harry's Wallace*) McDiarmid, i, p. lxix, is from Book VIII, ll. 1993-2076; which can be found in *The Original Chronicle of Andrew Wyntoun*, F.J. Amours (ed) (6 vols; STS, Edinburgh and London, 1903-1914), v, pp. 300-305.

¹²² Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition*, p. 11. The passage in question goes thus:

For quha-sa likis thai may her
Young wemen quhen thai will play
Syng it amang thaim ilk day.

John Barbour, *The Bruce*, (ed) A.A.M. Duncan (Edinburgh, 1997), p. 607.

It is intriguing to note that Barbour credits the female section of Scottish society with being the repository, of sorts, for the ballads he speaks of. Women seem to have been far more instrumental in preserving Scotland's ballad culture than their male counterparts.

way of the Archdeacon of Aberdeen.¹²³ Similarly, McDiarmid alerts us to various codes within Harry's text that might be indicative of those places in which material from popular song and ballad was injected by the blind minstrel. One convention he points to is when notice of time or place is given in the *Wallace*, which is reminiscent of some from Wyntoun's chronicle.¹²⁴ The particular episode from Wyntoun involves Wallace's love affair with a woman from Lanark. After a skirmish with the English at the market in Lanark, in which Wallace (needless to say) gave more than a good account of himself, the hero decides to "beat a hasty retreat" after the enemy starts to "appear out of the woodwork" and from every direction. The entire melee winds up at, and in through, the mistress's door, but she is able to distract the foe long enough for Wallace to escape to the woods. The Sheriff of Lanark takes his revenge by killing the woman. Wallace, after witnessing her execution from a hiding place, takes his revenge by putting the sheriff to death.¹²⁵

Harry basically gives a similar account of this occurrence. However, in his rendition the woman who shelters Wallace, only to meet her death at the hands of the Sheriff of Lanark, is none other than the Guardian's lawful wife. Furthermore, Wallace does not witness her death first-hand; instead, the terrible news is related to him by the murdered lady's serving-woman:

A trew woman, had seruit hir full lang,
Out off the toune the gaynest way can gang;
Till Wallace tald how all this dede was done.¹²⁶

Another woman appears as a lover of Wallace in Blind Harry; she is described by the poet as being the hero's "lemman" or mistress. Wallace, disguised

¹²³ W.F.H. Nicolaisen, "Stories and Storytelling in Barbour's *Bruce*," in J.D. McClure and M.R. Spiller (ed), *Bryght Lanternis. Essays on the Language and Literatue of Medieval and Renaissance Scotland* (Aberdeen, 1989), p. 57.

¹²⁴ *Hary's Wallace* (ed), McDiarmid, i, pp. lxxi-lxxii. His criteria appear to involve examining chronicle sources like Bower and Wyntoun for signs of material based upon oral tradition, and with these results in hand, examining Harry in similar fashion.

¹²⁵ A summation of Wyntoun (Wymss MS), ll. 1994-2076.

¹²⁶ *The Bruce and Wallace*, Jamieson (ed), ii, p. 108 (book 6, ll. 197-99).

as a priest, makes a series of visits to this woman's home in St Johnstoun (modern-day Perth), only to be recognised on one occasion by the English. They bribe her into betraying the Guardian, and it looks like the trap is set for Wallace. But upon his next visit, the St Johnstoun woman cannot go through with the plot, and she reveals all to the hero. Wallace devises a plan to make his escape – “Hir gowne he tuk on hym, and courchess als”¹²⁷ – to masquerade as she. The English guard suitably deceived, Wallace takes flight, but not before turning and dispatching some of them with blows from his sword.

At least one of the popular ballads relating some of the alleged deeds of William Wallace seems partially based upon this last episode related by Harry. The Ballad in question, G, nevertheless plunders other bits from Harry, plus appears to add material not from the *Wallace*. In the G version of “Gude Wallace” the title character starts his adventure by going to visit his mistress, who this time is not an inhabitant of St Johnstoun, but rather of Lanark:

Would ye hear of William Wallace,
And sek him as he goes,
Into the lan of Lanark,
Among his mortel foes?¹²⁸

Lanark, it will be recalled, is the place which Wallace's ill-fated bride-to-be called home, at least by Harry's account. So in a sense, what the ballad does here is to homogenise two episodes (and two women) from the *Wallace* into one. The ballad then continues, relating more or less Harry's narrative of the woman being bribed into betraying Wallace, her inability to go through with the deed upon seeing him face-to-face, and finally his escape, disguised as her. But there is additional detail in the ballad, not found in Harry:

Will ye gie me your gown, your gown,
Your gown but and you kirtle,
Your petticoat of bonny brown
And belt about my middle?

¹²⁷ *The Bruce and Wallace*, Jamieson (ed), ii, p. 65 (book 4, l. 765).

¹²⁸ Child no. 157G.

I'll take a pitcher in ilka hand.
 And do me to the well;
 They'll think I'm one of your maidens
 Or think it is yoursell.¹²⁹

The woman of course complies with Wallace's wishes, but this extract from the ballad should be looked at in relation to Harry's own testimony of the same event, which mentions nothing of Wallace taking a pitcher to (pretend to) go to the well. Also Harry's description of the clothing taken by Wallace is fairly curt: he mentions only the gown and "courchess" (kerchief). The greater detail related in the ballad regarding the woman's clothing taken by Wallace, might indeed suggest a female input.¹³⁰ It does make sense, at least in the days when the Wallace ballad tradition was being formulated, that a woman would have a better idea of female attire than any male. With respect to the pitchers taken by Wallace – as part of the overall ruse – it would seem likely that in medieval and early modern Scottish society, the job of fetching water from the well was considered to be (so-called) "women's" work." The ballad thus was enhanced with material garnered from everyday life:

¹²⁹ Child no. 157G.

¹³⁰ It has long been strongly suspected that women were an essential element in maintaining the Scottish ballad tradition. The ballads were, of course, initially and primarily transmitted through the oral medium. On this latter subject, Houston (1989), p. 139, credits women with playing "a prominent role as the purveyors of oral culture." As far as ballad scholarship specifically is concerned, it seems that one reigning authority is still (the late) D. Buchan, *The Ballad and the Folk* (London and Boston, 1972; reprinted East Linton, 1996). The main subject of Buchan's study is the ballad repertoire of Mrs Brown of Falkland (née Anna Gordon). Nearly all of Brown's ballads were taught to her by either her mother, her aunt (a Mrs Farquharson), or an unspecified maid-servant of the Farquharsons. Of these, the most important source was Mrs Farquharson (née Anne Forbes), who possessed a "tenacious memory, which retained all the songs she had heard the nurses and old women sing in that neighbourhood [in the county of Braemar]." (Buchan, pp. 63-64.) Perhaps in a society that placed a lower emphasis upon female writing skills, women in general were more apt to hone their memory skills than men. Nevertheless, all of this tends to suggest an active ballad tradition among certain Scottish women living in the past, a tradition which was passed down along maternal lines, to culminate with people like Mrs Brown herself.

A more recent study tends to confirm some of these inferences, drawn from Buchan's work. The study in question centres itself around Agnes Lyle, the daughter of an early nineteenth-century weaver from Kilbarchan, Renfrewshire; see W.B. McCarthy, *The Ballad Matrix* (Bloomington, 1990), *passim*. Significantly, McCarthy, p. 25, relates that of the forty ballads performed by Renfrewshire people while in the presence of the collector William Motherwell, eighteen were sung by Lyle. All the rest – save one – were sung by four other women. Admittedly, Lyle learned most of her ballads from her father. Thus, while none of this is meant to suggest that it was only Scottish women who preserved the nation's ballad tradition, it does serve to indicate that the female half of the population produced at least its fair share of balladeers.

descriptions of the sort of day-to-day domestic tasks probably performed by women, which Harry either never observed, or simply was not at all interested in. But to the general population from which the ballad tradition originally sprung, fetching water from a well was a daily task; it thus makes sense that descriptions of such chores might find their way into tales relating some of the near-mythic deeds of the Guardian of Scotland.

Wallace, as the peoples' champion, makes an appearance in at least two other popular ballads, the eight or so versions of "Gude Wallace" aside. Albeit, his appearance in both cases is comparatively brief, he is nevertheless to be found in "Hobie Noble" (Child no. 189) and "The Wee Wee Man" (Child no. 38A-G).¹³¹ In the case of both of these, the name of Wallace is used as a synonym for words like "courage," "strength," "prowess," "fortitude," et al:

He took up a meikle stane,
And he flang't as far as I could see;
Though I had been a Wallace wight,
I couldna liften't to my knee.¹³²

And similarly:

There was heaps of men now Hobie before,
And other heaps was him behind,
That had he been a wight as Wallace was
Away brave Noble he could not win.¹³³

In both these examples, Wallace seems to occupy the same niche inhabited by such popular ballad heroes as "Johnnie Armstrong"¹³⁴ and "Robin Hood" – historical (or

¹³¹ These two references from W. Schepps, "William Wallace and His 'Buke:' Some Instances of their Influence on Subsequent Literature," in *Studies in Scottish Literature*, vol. 6 (July 1968-April 1969), p. 236.

¹³² Child no. 38A.

¹³³ Child no. 189.

¹³⁴ Armstrong received his fair share of attention in the early modern period as well. At least one broadside was published invoking the story of his last stand – see NLS S.302.b.2(64); *John Armstrongs Last Farewell. Declaring how he and his Eight-scoremen fought a bloody Battell at Edinburgh* (n.d.). The broadside pretty much relates the standard tale, told in the ballad "Johnnie Arstrong" in which the title character, a border reiver, accepts King James's offer of truce. Once in the king's hands, the familiar story of betrayal unfolds, and Johnnie is set upon by the king's forces. Though he and his men gave a good account of themselves, "... a Cowardly Man Came Iohn behind, | and run him thorrow the fair Bodie."

quasi-historical) figures who allegedly performed deeds which captured the general imagination. In fact, in “Gude Wallace” (G version) Scotland’s original patriot is compared to Robin Hood. Thus for any individual to be compared to Wallace, was viewed as a great compliment. This seems to be the sentiment expressed in a broadside honouring the memory of a Highland freebooter named Donald Bayn – “Tonald as stout as William Wallace.”¹³⁵

In one sense, there is much similarity between Wallace the hero as portrayed in the ballads, and that same figure as he appears in the works of the neo-Augustan. Both genres epitomised concepts like courage, strength, devotion, honesty, and faithfulness. But whereas the emphasis for the neo-classic writers seems to have been to create a Wallace who could move among the notables of the land, the Guardian of Scotland from the ballads – though able to function quite well in higher circles – seems to have had an even greater affinity with the commoners. In “Gude Wallace” his Lanark mistress certainly is a “ladie” who is also being courted by “... a lord, | The Best in Christendom”¹³⁶ – the agents of whom bribe her into betraying Harry’s hero. Wallace is not destined to have this woman – the object of desire of a member of the ruling elite – for his own; he takes flight, and after the usual victorious encounter against fifteen English “sogers,” he seeks hospitality at a nearby tavern. Eventually, the wine is brought by the hospice’s gudewife to Wallace’s table, at which point he declares:

“Now if there be a Scotsman here,
 He’ll come and drink wi’ me;
 But if there be an English loun.
 It is his time to flee.”

The gudeman was an Englishman,
 And to the hills he ran;
 The goodwife was a Scots woman,

¹³⁵ NLS, Ry III.a.10(36); *The Highland Man’s Lament, For the Dea[th] [o]f Donald Bayn, alias M’evan Vanifranck, who was Execute in the Grass [Mar]ke[t] of Edinburgh, on Wednesday the 9th Day of January 1723* (Edinburgh?, 1723?). This broadsheet is even replete with quasi-Highland intonations – “Tonald” for “Donald.”

¹³⁶ Child no. 157G.

And she came to his hand.¹³⁷

One embedded statement which “Gude Wallace” (at least the G version) seems to be making is that all that was Scottish was congenial, true, and virtuous; that which was English (and those who were associated with same) was – though possible of highest status¹³⁸ – untrustworthy, false, and treacherous. This sort-of “us-versus-them” mentality appears indicative of the sort of “straight-ahead” and uncomplicated mode of thought of the general population. This is not meant to be a disparaging statement, simply an admission that detailed analysis of any given set of circumstances (such as the characterisation of the enemies of a national hero) was something few had the luxury of time for. True enough, this could be described as a form of xenophobia. But for the commonality the time of the day was consumed with thoughts of earning “one’s daily bread;” they had not the luxury of the privileged, to be able to while away the day in pursuit of “higher things.” Instead the free-time of the commoners revolved around the pursuit of a release from the daily routine. And one form of release was through ballads like “Gude Wallace” with its simple rules of right and wrong, as prejudicial as these rules could be portrayed at times.

That being said, the sentiments of the ballads could indeed, at times, interject themselves into contemporary political thought. An example of this can be seen within the A version of “Gude Wallace,” which as mentioned above may have originated around 1745 (or 1750)¹³⁹ – the same year in which yet another Jacobite threat began to fester. Nevertheless, the opening words ascribed to the title character in the A version might have struck a familiar cord with those in the nation wary and distrustful – for varying reasons – of monarchical and political union with England:

¹³⁷ Child no. 157G.

¹³⁸ It is true that anyone of “gudeman” or “gudewife” status (in essence, minor property-holders, which Harry suggests might have been Wallace’s background) was not exactly of the absolute lowest social order. Yet in relation to a “lord” the “gudeman and wife” pale by comparison.

¹³⁹ From *Poems and Songs of Burns*, Kinsley (ed), iii, p. 1513, where the claim is made that A was originally printed along with a number of Jacobite pieces in chap-book form. In view of this, it seems probable that the name of Wallace was being invoked for the sake of the Jacobite cause (see below).

‘Had we a king,’ said Wallace then,
 ‘That our kind Scots might live by their own!
 But betwixt me and the English blood
 I think there is ill seed sown.’¹⁴⁰

In fact, knowledge of the whole struggle for Scottish independence from its neighbour to the south, was sustained during the Union era through popular editions of Harry’s (and Barbour’s) work.¹⁴¹ It is possible as well that the various ballads which helped to preserve a memory of the old Guardian’s deeds (real or other wise), also played a part in reminding folk of the age-old rivalry, in spite of the Union.

Still, it is not unsurprising to find that, given the place he held as a champion of the common cause, in the common consciousness, that Wallace would manage to infiltrate the world of Scottish street literature. *The true Scots Mens Lament for the Loss of the Rights of their Ancient Kingdom* was a rather skilfully constructed anti-Union broadside that was obviously patterned after the old Scots standard “Auld Lange Syne.”¹⁴² In this case, a sentimental tune, perhaps with some Jacobite leanings, and bolstered by the Wallace tradition, becomes a vehicle for a form of patriotism. Thus, the broadside laments:

Old *Albion*, what will become of thes
 when *England* sits thy Judge?

¹⁴⁰ Child no. 157A. Sufficiently inspired by reading Hamilton’s version of the *Wallace*, Burns would later produce his own version of “Gude Wallace.” Note how he treats the same passage quoted above:

O For my ain king, quo gude Wallace,
 The rightful king o fair Scotland;
 Between me and my Sovereign Blude
 I think I see some ill seed sawn. –

Burns, no. 584, “Gude Wallace,” in Kinsley (ed), ii, p. 869.)

¹⁴¹ I.S. Ross and S.A.C. Scobie, “Patriotic Publishing as a Response to the Union,” in T. I. Rae (ed), *The Union of 1707 – Its Impact on Scotland* (Glasgow, 1974), pp. 94-95.

¹⁴² Though normally associated with Robert Burns, “Auld Lange Syne” predates the bard himself. On this subject, Kinsley (iii, p. 1289) relates that:

The sentiment [of “Auld Lange Syne”] has been traced to “Auld Kyndnes for3ett” in the Bannatyne MS, 1568 ... The earliest known songs ... with something of Burns’s version in them, are (i) a broadside ballad, *Old Long Syne. Newly corrected and amended* ... (ii) a song in Watson’s *Choice Collection* (1711) attributed to Francis Sempill, with opening lines corresponding to Burns ... In *The Tea-Table Miscellany* ... Ramsay has a sophisticated love-song with the opening line from Watson. Editors have turned up a number of political songs against the Union and the Hanoverians, which make use of the sentiment of “auld lang syne”

...

One such “political song,” invoking the name of Wallace, follows.

May thou not only expect,
 Oppression but Refuge?
 It's their Design to ruine thee,
 as clearly may be seen:
 Why wilt thou not again reflect
 on old long sine &c.

and then draws upon public sensibilities by reminding:

Remember *William Wallace* Wight:
 and his Accomplices,
Scotland they [] [t]ook to free,
 when it was in Distress.¹⁴³

Of course, a broadsheet invoking the name of Wallace is a piece of literature that is on a different level from an epic like the *Wallace*. Nevertheless, that Wallace had infiltrated a number of different, yet interconnected, literary modes is indicative of just how well established a hero he was. What is very interesting about all of this, is that it appears the individual participants in this broader literary tradition, working within their own particular medium (ballads, broadsides, “histories,” neo-classical plagiarisms, vernacular reprints), had some knowledge – in varying degrees – of the activities of their counterparts of sorts who operated within different circles.

We shall return to the “life and times” of William Wallace below as a co-patriot of Robert the Bruce; now, however, the spotlight will shine a little more exclusively upon the champion of Bannockburn, at least as he appeared in early modern Scottish literature. To start at the same point where the discussion on Wallace began, it is noteworthy that John Barbour’s *Bruce*¹⁴⁴ also found favour with

¹⁴³ NLS, “Old Scotch Ballads and Broad-sides 1679-1730,” Ry III. a. 10(117); *The true Scots Mens Lament for the Loss of the Rights of their Ancient Kingdom* (Edinburgh, James Reid, 1718). Although printed in 1718, Donaldson maintains that this piece was “obviously written before the Union.” (W. Donaldson, *The Jacobite Song* {Aberdeen, 1988}, p. 12.) How “obvious” that this was the case is perhaps open to dispute. However, even if it was a pre-Union piece, the poem was likely still composed either very late in the seventeenth, or early in the eighteenth century, since it does express regret to have to “... look back | to ruin’d Darien” – which seems in reference to the so-called Darien disaster, c. July 1698-April 1700 (the latter date being when the second relief expedition was forced to surrender to the Spanish, after being refused provisions in the English West Indies).

Nevertheless, regardless of when it was originally composed, *The true Scots Mens Lament* apparently found a receptive audience in post-Union Scotland – sufficiently so to cause it to be printed in 1718.

¹⁴⁴ *Bibliographical Note*. The editions of Barbour’s *Bruce* consulted were: NLS, F.6.f.7; (photo-reproduction of) *The Actis and Lyfe of ... Robert Bruce* (Edinburgh, Lekpreuk for Charteris, 1571).

early modern Scottish printers up to the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁴⁵ However, the publishing record of the *Bruce* was not quite as favourable as that of the *Wallace*. Thirty-seven editions of the latter stemming from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries can be accounted for,¹⁴⁶ as opposed to twelve printings of John Barbour (see below, Appendix XII). During the period 1700-50, only one edition of the *Bruce*¹⁴⁷ appears to have been printed, whereas there were about eleven of Blind Harry's *Wallace*. The reason for the apparent greater popularity for the *Wallace*, at least among printers, might be a reflection of his popularly conceived status as a commoner. Perhaps a manifestation of this is the greater number of surviving ballads devoted to Harry's hero. The vast majority of the individual editions of both the *Bruce* and *Wallace* produced during the late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries could be broadly referred to as "popular editions;" it would seem that the publishers of such were producing their books with the maximum possible audience in mind. Perhaps they were aware of the greater number of traditions associated with Wallace as compared to the Bruce. Again, as previously indicated, these printers were probably first-and-foremost concerned with producing books which they knew would sell and for which there was a ready market. Scotland's rank-and-file could more readily identify with the story of a hero drawn almost from their own midst. If all these assumptions are correct, then it was likely the case that there was greater demand among the general populace for a book that related this story of the commoner who did uncommon things, than for one which told of a king who

NLS, F.7.c.26; *The Actes And Life of ... Robert Brvce* (Edinburgh, A. Hart, 1616).

NLS, Ry II g.37(2); *The Actes And Life of ... Robert Brvce* (Edinburgh, A. Hart, 1620).

Mitchell no. 313541; *The Life and Acts of ... Robert Bruce* (Edinburgh, A. Anderson, 1670).

GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 49-i.3; *The Acts and Life of ... Robert Bruce* (Glasgow, R. Sanders, 1672).

Mitchell no. 556292; *The Life and Acts of ... Robert Bruce* (Glasgow, A. Carmichael and A. Miller, 1737).

Mitchell no. E 32289; *The Life and Acts of ... Robert Bruce* (Edinburgh, 1758).

Several of the more readily accessible (in essence, non-archival) editions – edited by Skeat, Jamieson, McDiarmid, and (the most recent and accessible of all) Duncan – were also consulted; full citations for these below.

¹⁴⁵ And at least one English printer, that being the London-based one who produced the 1790 edition on behalf of James Pinkerton.

¹⁴⁶ This figure does not include printings of Hamilton's paraphrase.

¹⁴⁷ That of Carmichael and Millar's of 1737.

performed kingly deeds. The publishing record was simply then a reflection of all this. But it must be emphasised that none of this is meant to say that the *Bruce* was not popular at all; quite the opposite. All that is being said, is that as popular as Barbour's tale was, Harry's was even more so. And it is worth reiterating that although popular ballads concerning the events portrayed in the *Bruce* were in circulation at one time, little of this tradition had survived, unlike the *Wallace* ballad tradition.

When we turn to the language of the various editions of the *Bruce* it is important to emphasise at the outset that Barbour's original language, although closely related to that of Harry, was nevertheless not precisely on the same level. Since the Lowland Scots tongue of Barbour's days was one that had yet to fully establish itself as distinct from the dialects of Northern England,¹⁴⁸ it might be somewhat redundant to look for any changes from Scots to English within the text of the *Bruce*; rather it would be more useful to look for a shift toward more modern English. Still, one importance of the *Bruce* as Barbour had originally created it, was that it performed a similar function for Scots as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* performed for English. The *Bruce* seems to have paved the way for the codification of literary Scots.

Two manuscripts of the *Bruce* are known to exist: the Cambridge Manuscript, incomplete and written in 1487; and the so-called Edinburgh Manuscript, written by John Ramsay in 1489.¹⁴⁹ The Ramsay manuscript was at one time bound together with that same cleric's copy of the *Wallace*; currently the two exist as separate volumes, housed in the National Library of Scotland. Apparently, the first printed edition of Barbour to collate both manuscripts was done in 1856 by Cosmo Innes.¹⁵⁰ But irrespective of the manuscript(s) upon which it was based, the

¹⁴⁸ Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition*, p. 11. We must remember that nearly a century separated Barbour (c.1320-95) from Harry (c.1440-c.1492).

¹⁴⁹ *The Bruce*, Duncan (ed), p. 32.

¹⁵⁰ *The Bruce ... Compiled by Master John Barbour ...*, W.W. Skeat (ed) (2 vols; London, EETS, 1870-89; reprinted 1968), i, pp. lxii-lxiii. See also, *The Brus. From a Collation of the Cambridge and Edinburgh Manuscripts*, C. Innes (ed) (Edinburgh, Spalding Club, 1856), p. xiv. Innes

first known printed version of Barbour's epic is Lekpreuik and Charteris from 1571.¹⁵¹ As noted above, the previous year saw the printing of this duo's version of the *Wallace*. It appears that the language of their *Bruce* is slightly more inclined towards an early modern tone than their *Wallace*. (Compare Appendix II with Appendix VIII, and against excerpts from respective originals, Appendix I and VII.) Still, the differences in language between the two books is subtle.

During the period 1600-1800, the vast majority of editions of the *Bruce* continue to experience an anglicisation of language. This is much the same as was the case for similar editions of the *Wallace*. And once again, the trend toward providing a more modern English tone to the *Bruce* seems most fully realised first in Andrew Hart's versions, while an attempt to reverse this can be noted the Freebairn 1758 edition (Appendix XI), which again may have been an attempt to appeal to a more "scholarly" audience. However, overall, there seems to be slightly less emphasis given toward providing an up-to-date English tone to Barbour's text, when compared to the *Wallace*.¹⁵² The differences that are being referred to here are, admittedly, extremely subtle; however, the reasons for such are puzzling. This might be attributable to the fact there were fewer editions of the *Bruce*, and so there was less opportunity for "editorial tampering." It may be that because the *Bruce* was a story very concerned with the ancient nobility of the land, Barbour's book was meant to appeal to a *slightly* more exclusive (and literate) audience. This does not

suggested that Andrew Hart may have been fully aware of the Cambridge MS, but his editions did not have the "appearance of his having carefully followed that or any more ancient authority in the language of the poem, or its spelling." See, *The Brus ...* Innes (ed), p. xiv, note.

¹⁵¹ Just as some have claimed for the 1570 edition of the *Wallace*, so too have others believed that the 1571 edition of Barbour is based upon an unknown, and now lost, manuscript; see *The Bruce*, Duncan (ed), p. 32.

¹⁵² Bald "Scottish Printing," p. 114, noted this of Hart's respective editions of the *Wallace*, and the *Bruce*. She did not offer a fully satisfactory explanation of the two books, however. Observing that his 1621 versions of Henryson's *Fables*, and the *Gude and Godly Ballates* contained more Scots than his *Bruce* or his *Wallace*, Bald believed that Andrew Hart had waited until he had established "his reputation as an anglicised printer" before releasing these works in Scots, which were solely meant to be antiquarian curiosities. If this was the case, why then is Hart's 1620 edition of the *Bruce* still mainly in modern English, perhaps – *very marginally* – even more so than the 1616? And even if Hart's later efforts were meant to appeal to a narrow readership, it still does not detract from the idea that efforts like the *Bruce* and the *Wallace* were intended for a more general audience.

explain the fractionally greater trend toward anglicisation in 1571 (when compared to the *Wallace* of the previous year). Perhaps the initial trend was to make Barbour at least as accessible as Harry.¹⁵³ But because the *Wallace* eventually garnered more attention from both printers and (probably) the populace, perhaps its language gradually conformed a little more fully to general tastes. However, for the most part, the same general trends concerning language and orthography in successive editions of the *Bruce*, broadly mimic those of the *Wallace*.

Though there were sufficient reprints of Barbour's original in fairly regular circulation, he also had his imitators. The figure of Robert the Bruce as a neo-classical figure perhaps first emerges in Patrick Gordon's *The Famous History of ... Prince Robert, sirnamed The Bruce, King of Scotland ... with an Addition of the Scottish Kings lineally descended from Him to Charles now Prince ... Set forth ... in Heroic Verse*.¹⁵⁴ Originally published in 1613, Gordon's effort was reprinted twice during the eighteenth century, in 1718 and 1753, but then disappeared.¹⁵⁵ Significantly the 1718 edition was published by the pro-Jacobite, anti-Union James Watson of Edinburgh for reasons that will shortly become clear.

Gordon's book, or more likely the 1718 reprint of same, may have inspired Harvey's later work. For like John Harvey after him, Gordon melds classical iconography with Scottish popular iconography. For example, and in the spirit of martial glorification taken to almost unreasonable extremes, Sir Patrick Graham is referred to as "that brave *Mars* of men."¹⁵⁶ Additionally, melded into his

¹⁵³ It is only after Andrew Hart's final editions of the *Wallace* and the *Bruce* (both from 1620), that the printing of Harry took to a road that would see it eventually massively outpace that of Barbour.

¹⁵⁴ GUL Spec. Coll., Mu.48-i.29; the rather laborious full title is *The Famous History of the Renown'd and Valiant Prince Robert, sirnamed The Bruce, King of Scotland and of Sundry other Knights, Both Scots and English. Enlarged with an Addition of the Scottish Kings lineally descended from Him to Charles now Prince ... Set forth and done in Heroic Verse* (Glasgow, John Hall, 1753). "Heroic verse" appears to be another way of describing the neo-Augustan genre.

¹⁵⁵ R. McKinlay, "Barbour's *Bruce*," in *Records of the Glasgow Bibliographical Society*, vol. 6 (Glasgow, 1920), pp. 34-38 (McKinlay's bibliography).

¹⁵⁶ Gordon, *Famous History of Bruce*, p. 23. This appears to be the same Graham who apparently conspired against King Robert I after Bannockburn, et al. See, *The Bruce*, Duncan (ed), p. 698n. It seems that the (supposed) compliment of referring to a peerless individual as a "brave Mars of men" outlived Gordon's days. The Duke of Buccleuh was paid a similar compliment in one noted piece:

How sweet his Look, how gallant is his Air!

commentary of the hapless John Baliol, Gordon resurrects that age-old concept of the “pure” Scottish kingdom of antiquity, hitherto unconquered by any foe:

But little knew the Princes of the Land
 That he [Baliol] to *England's* King should Homage Pay;
 The Crown that sixteen Hundred Years did stand
 ‘Gainst endless War and cruel Arms Eflay;
 Nor *Romans, Danes, nor Saxons* could command,
 Unconquer’d still, nor conquer’d would obey,
 Was now betray’d by him, whose hapless Name
 Because his Country’s Scorn, and Kingdom’s Shame.¹⁵⁷

Playing upon this age-old belief concerning the indomitable martial nature of the Scottish kingdom and people (a belief to which one could also easily imagine Barbour and Harry subscribing), the above quote actually reveals a lot about the personage and political slant of Gordon – a political slant which appeared in at least one of his imitators.

There seems good reason to credit Gordon as being the same Patrick Gordon who wrote *Britain's Distemper*.¹⁵⁸ Gordon was a contemporary and devoted admirer of James Graham, the first Marquis of Montrose.¹⁵⁹ It might be suspected, therefore, that an admirer of the premier covenanter turned royalist might hold some pretty strong pro-Stewart beliefs and such suspicions are indeed justified given the way in

Warlike as Mars, and as Adonis Fair!

GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 56-h.16; “Verses Occasioned by seeing the Palace and Park of Dalkeith, Anno MDCCCXXXII. Humbly Inscrib’d to his Grace, The Duke of Beccleuh,” in *A Description of the Parish of Melrose; in Answer to Mr. Maitland's Queries, and to each Parish of the Kingdom* (Edinburgh, Ruddimans, 1743), p. 9.

¹⁵⁷ Gordon, *Famous History of Bruce*, p. 14.

¹⁵⁸ Patrick Gordon, *A Short Abridgement of Britain's Distemper From the Yeare of God M.CD.XXXIX. To M.DC.XLIX*, (Aberdeen, Spalding Club, 1844). That Gordon the poet was one in the same with Gordon the historian might be obvious on stylistic grounds: the history has a good deal of poetry interspersed throughout. The politically-based similarities will be discussed in the main body of this study shortly. Also, a recent biographical sketch of Gordon also seems to think poet and historian are one; see D. Stevenson, *King or Covenant? Voices from the Civil War* (East Linton, 1996). The only “fly-in-the-ointment” to this theory is that “the two types of literary work are separated by a silence of thirty years.” (Stevenson, *King or Covenant*, p. 175.)

¹⁵⁹ The praise that he bestows upon Montrose is nearly limitless:

And it cannot be denied but he was an accomplished gentleman of many excellent partes ... and I am certainly perswaded, that this his gracious, humane, and courteous fredome of behaviour, being certanely acceptable before God as well as men, was it that wanne him so much renowne, and inabled him cheifly, in the love of his followers, to goe through so great interpryssees ...

Gordon, *Britain's Distemper*, p. 76.

which Gordon bemoans the execution of Charles I in *Britain's Distemper*.¹⁶⁰ In like vein, Gordon devotes almost as much space in the *Famous History of Bruce* toward praising the latter Stewarts as he does in relating the deeds of Robert the Bruce, who he stresses was the progenitor of the entire lineage. Momentous was the day, says Patrick Gordon, when "The South and North Crowns [were] joined by that great King," and better yet the day when that great monarch produced those two wonderful sons!¹⁶¹ (An obvious allusion to Henry and Charles.)

Granted, Gordon's 1613 song of praise for the Stewarts falls outside the specific boundaries of this study; but as mentioned earlier, the *Famous History of Bruce* was reprinted twice during the eighteenth century. It is the 1718 reprint which demands attention, since it was the handiwork of James Watson. It is no surprise, given Watson's own Jacobite and Episcopalian leanings, that he would believe himself compelled to reprint a work such as Gordon's. As far as nostalgia for the old lineage was concerned, there certainly was a growing trend for such to become interwoven with the respect for the mystique surrounding the Bruce. Certainly this appears to be the case for the man who produced the most thorough neo-classical tribute (as far as the genre went) for King Robert I, namely John Harvey.

As William Hamilton was to Blind Harry, so John Harvey was to Barbour. A somewhat obscure individual,¹⁶² it nevertheless seems certain that Harvey (fl.

¹⁶⁰ On the execution of Charles I, Gordon had this to say:

Thus died the best of Kinges by the inhumaine and barbarous crueltie of the worst nationes [England]; thus, so farre beneath his royall birth, his princelie breiding, and continued habit of reuerence and steat which had ever befor been yeilded wnto him, is he heir brought low, used with contempt, and forced to suffer a violent death by the unjust sentance of a number of bass rascalls [the English Parliamentarians] ...

Gordon, *Britain's Distemper*, p. 219.

¹⁶¹ Gordon, *Famous History of Bruce*, p. 47.

¹⁶² About the only biographical information on Harvey so far uncovered comes from R. McKinlay, "Barbour's Bruce," in *Records of the Glasgow Bibliographical Society*, vol. 6 (Glasgow, 1920), p. 33:

He is said to have been a school-master in Edinburgh and to have died there. It has been conjectured that he was a graduate of Aberdeen University and perhaps an Aberdonian, because he works into his poem a glowing eulogy upon the city, as if no one but an Aberdonian could have a good word to say about it. Harvey and his *Bruce* have received scant attention from literary historians. Even those who

1702-29?¹⁶³) was an inhabitant of Edinburgh for at least part of his life, since he endeavoured to take subscriptions for his *The Life of Robert Bruce King of Scots* at a residence in Scotland's capital city.¹⁶⁴ Not only sold, but also printed in Edinburgh, Harvey's effort appears to have had a few admirers initially, even though later in the century its popularity seemed to greatly wane. As far as content is concerned *The Life of Robert Bruce* is an amalgam of different literary strains brought together. It is very much grounded in the classical mould; and while quite obviously inspired by John Barbour's *Bruce*, it is not simply a re-editing of the earlier work.¹⁶⁵ Harvey in fact states that it was never his intention to "present the Reader with an Epic Poem" – in essence, to reproduce Barbour's poem. Instead, he admits that his is an "Imitation" of an epic, a fact of which the reader will become aware as he works his way through the poem's pages.¹⁶⁶ Equally important, Harvey betrays his classical slant when he goes on to chastise those who create epic based upon fable, which

devote a sentence or two to castigate Hamilton for his ill-executed Wallace, do not apparently consider Harvey worth their lash.

Unfortunately MacKinlay does not name any of his sources.

¹⁶³ According to the archivist's entry for the copy of his *Bruce* held by Glasgow University Special Collections.

¹⁶⁴ This conjecture is based upon the contents of a sheet inserted into an extant copy of Harvey's version of Bruce's life, held by the National Library of Scotland. The sheet is an advertisement for Harvey's book, which states (among other things) that,

Subscriptions will be taken in John's Coffee-house, and at the Author's own House in Foulis's-Closs, immediately above the Ship-Closs, opposite to the Head of the Guard, North-side.

At the bottom of the same sheet is a subscription form:

Received from _____

Half a Crown, as the first Mority (sic) for a Book, entitled, The Life and Acts of Robert Bruce, King of Scots, which I oblige my self to deliver to him in Sheets against the first of June next, upon Payment of Half a Crown more. As Witness my Hand at Edinburgh, the _____ Day of _____ (then signed by Harvey).

As an aside, if the above is taken literally, it would appear that Harvey would only accept responsibility for the printing of his work; binding was left to the discretion of the buyer, which might tend to indicate an attempt to target as wide a segment of a discriminating audience as possible. (See NLS, LC 286; *Proposals For Printing by Subscription, The Life and Acts of Robert Bruce King of Scots Done in Modern Verse By Jo. Harvey M.A.*)

¹⁶⁵ "J.D." says: "John Harvey ... is better known in the north by his version of Barbour's Life of Rob. Bruce ..." To reiterate a point, strictly speaking Harvey did not produce a version of "Barbour's Life of Rob. Bruce" but rather his own "Life of ..." that is heavily indebted to Barbour's *Bruce* (not to mention Harry's *Wallace*).

¹⁶⁶ Harvey, *Bruce*, preface page.

underscores his knowledge of the classics and his belief in the classical approach to epic:

The Patrons of absolute Necessity of Fable have the whole Current of Antiquity against them. ...[U]nluckily, the *Iliad* and *Ænid* (sic) stand in the way, built upon certain Fact, upon true and undeniable History.

That the *Ænid* is grounded upon Fact is plain from the joint Testimony of all the Roman Historians.¹⁶⁷

Despite having created a work in the classical mould, Harvey's *Bruce* is a sincere testimonial to the greatest traditions within Scottish literature, given the nature of its subject matter: the "fact" upon which his effort is based (but of which it is not a straight copy) is, of course, Barbour's *Bruce*. Furthermore, it is perhaps obvious that since Harvey made a point of introducing William Wallace into his "epic," he must have been fully aware of the contents of Harry's *Wallace*,¹⁶⁸ given the fact that the subject of the blind minstrel's poem seems nowhere to be found in Barbour's original.¹⁶⁹ The latter point helps to underscore the bigger issue that Harvey's *Bruce* was not a simple "updating" and re-editing of Barbour's classic. This was not the case with Hamilton's *Wallace*, which retained the general narrative of the original.

But despite all this, and given its title, it should come as no great revelation that Wallace was not the central subject of Harvey's *Bruce*. By his own admission, Harvey is only interested in Wallace in those major instances when his career

¹⁶⁷ Harvey, *Bruce*, preface page.

¹⁶⁸ He would have been a rare individual living within his times had he not been!

¹⁶⁹ Wallace is nowhere to be found in the *Bruce*, largely, it would seem, because of Barbour's lack of interest in the earliest part of Bruce's career (an idea arrived at as a result of a personal conversation with Dr D. Brown). For the record, Barbour does, in Book One (ll. 277-78) of the *Bruce*, bemoan the fate of many of the early martyrs for the cause, when first Edward began throwing his weight around in Scotland:

For off ye lordis sum yai slew
And some yai hangyt and sum yai drew,

which of course was the ultimate fate of Wallace – but the above passage could refer to anyone, since Scotland's Protector is not specifically named as being among the stricken, hanged, and quartered. Furthermore, posterity has not remembered Wallace for being a lord, despite numerous efforts on the part of certain individuals – starting with Harry himself – to expound his "good lineage." *Barbour's Bruce (A fredome is a noble thing!)*, (ed) M.P. McDiarmid and J.A.C. Stevenson, (3 vols; STS, Edinburgh, 1980-85), ii, p. 11.

intersects the career of the Bruce.¹⁷⁰ Thus, Wallace only appears for the Battle of Falkirk, and the conversation with the elder Bruce (the father of the later Robert I)¹⁷¹ at Carrick, after which the Guardian of the realm performs his disappearing act and leaves for France, never to be seen again, at least in Harvey's version of events.

Though Harvey did no great service to the Scots tongue, he nevertheless showed respect for both Barbour (whom he saw as an infallible source), and two great icons of Scottish legend and history. Harvey's treatment of William Wallace has already been noted; his treatment of the Bruce is such that any god of Olympus would find himself flattered, and Scotland itself is raised to the status of being the home of the gods:

Thence to Imperial *Scoon* they bend their Way,
The far fam'd Seat of *Albion's* ancient Sway.
Arriv'd, they enter; Guards surrounding wait,
Whilst *Bruce* is seated on a Throne of State.
Then from the Altar of hallow'd Fame,
The sacred Officers the Rites began.
The Regal Oyl first, plac'd by pious Hands,
In holy Vases on ther Altar stands.¹⁷²

So like Hamilton slightly before him, Harvey's main claim to fame (if that is the correct term for it) was the conversion (some would say bastardisation) of an already famous, and successful, Scots classic into a neo-classical tribute to a popular hero from Scotland's past. That Harvey's *Bruce* and Hamilton's *Wallace* were indeed two works that were on the same stylistic (and linguistic) wavelength is perhaps best attested by the fact that the two were, by century's end, often edited together into

¹⁷⁰ Harvey, *Bruce*, p. 6n.

¹⁷¹ For the lineage of the family of Bruce leading to Robert I, refer to the genealogical tables contained in G.W.S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce* (London, 1965), pp. 455-57. For the present, the three significant members are:

Robert Bruce, "the Competitor" and lord of Annandale (d. 1295)

|
Robert Bruce, earl of Carrick (d. 1304)

|
Robert I (1306-29)

¹⁷² Harvey, *Bruce*, p. 70.

one volume.¹⁷³ The first time this momentous event in the annals of Scottish literature occurred was in 1770 (see below, Appendix XII); the individual responsible for this undertaking was H. Galbraith from Dundee.¹⁷⁴ The original purchasers of this volume probably were as much impressed by its neo-classic style, as they were with the actual narrative of events. However the sad fact is that probably the best way to promote Harvey's work towards the end of the century, was to append it to Hamilton's work, which in all honesty did seem to perform well enough on its own.

Part of Harvey's motivation for composing his poetic panegyric in honour of King Robert I may have been political. There appears to be a strong possibility that John Harvey, perhaps like others involved in the promotion of the Bruce cult, had sympathy for the Jacobite cause.¹⁷⁵ The link between the Royal Stewarts and the House of Bruce was well established, while the Stewart monarchs enjoyed many other illustrious connections:

For sheer concentration of kingly mystique, the Stuarts were one of the most glittering in Christendom. They were endowed by blood and marriage with a legitimacy far-flung and long descended, and wreathed in prophetic lore going back deep into the Middle Ages. Their title to the crowns of Britain was far more formidable than mere fact of intermarriage with the Tudors. Their claim to sovereignty was derived from Fergusiana, sister of King Hungus of the Picts, and from Mordred of Lothian, heir to Uther Pendragon; from Canute and the

¹⁷³ Apparently there was never any attempt at "cross-fertilisation" along stylistic grounds -- i.e. editing Harry's *Wallace* together with Harvey's *Bruce*, or Barbour's *Bruce* with Hamilton's *Wallace*, or any other similar permutation.

¹⁷⁴ Mitchell no. 313418; *A new Edition of the Life ... of ... Sir William Wallace ... to which is annexed, The Life and Martial Atchievements of ... Robert Bruce ... By John Harvey* (Dundee, H. Galbraith, 1770).

¹⁷⁵ The possibility of a link between the cult of Bruce in the eighteenth-century and Jacobitism, was first brought to my attention by Prof. E.J. Cowan during a personal communication. Tradition held that Robert I was the progenitor of the Royal Stewarts, an idea not too far removed from fact when one considers the actual lineage of his descendants. The pertinent information comes from S.I. Boardman, *The Early Stewart Kings: Robert II and Robert III* (East Linton, 1996), the genealogy tables on p. 2 and p. 41, and goes thus:

Robert I = Isabella of Man
|
Marjory = Walter Stewart
|
Robert II

Danish kings; from the Saxon royal family through Queen Margaret, daughter of Edward the Confessor; from the Norman kings, and the royal line of Wales, through Banquo, thane of Lachaber, whose son Fleance married the princess Nesta, daughter of Griffith ap Llewelin.¹⁷⁶

With ever increasing creativity, it was possible to demonstrate a direct lineage between the later Stewarts that stretched far back into antiquity. The lineage of the royal blood of Scotland was deemed centuries old; even George Buchanan accepted the existence of sixty-eight Scottish kings, prior to Kenneth MacAlpine's ascent (AD 843). The Stewarts thus were the modern-day representatives of that ancient lineage. The defence of the Stewarts, for people like George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh (see below), may have been an actual defence of the antiquity of the kingdom of Scotland itself, and upon the very identity of the nation itself.¹⁷⁷ Perhaps, for people like this, a love of the actual latter Stewarts themselves, was secondary to this greater affinity.

What arose from this, was a belief in the indefeasible hereditary right to rule. This doctrine was supported by the theory held by many that there existed a Providential nature to history; "the judgement of God was expressed, in this mortal world, by the events of history."¹⁷⁸ There was nothing about this theory exclusive to seventeenth century thought, since it was present around the middle of the previous century (at least), in the form of the *Complaynt of Scotland*:

History for the Complayner is more than a description of discrete happenings. He selects and interprets events as elements in a pattern. History is philosophy teaching by examples. It is a revelation of God's judgements, as well a being a monument against oblivion and the life of memory.¹⁷⁹

Thus, a good king, God supports; a bad one, God deposes. World history was "the theatre of God's judgements."¹⁸⁰ Later Presbyterian thinkers like Robert Wodrow

¹⁷⁶ Donaldson, *Jacobite Song*, p.14.

¹⁷⁷ Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings*, p. 18.

¹⁷⁸ Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings*, p. 19.

¹⁷⁹ (Robert Wedderburn?) *The Complaynt of Scotland (c.1550)*, A.M. Stewart (ed and intro) (STS, 1978), p. xxxv.

¹⁸⁰ Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings*, p. 19.

would also embrace this theory, by maintaining that the tribulations suffered by the godly during the reigns of Charles II and James VII were part of Providential plans to separate the wheat from the chaff (see chapter four). This same doctrine also would have consequences for the promotion of Jacobitism:

There was ... no reason why the doctrine of Providences should not prove two-edged, especially when coupled with the doctrine of indefeasible hereditary right. It was a very natural and persuasive Jacobite argument after 1690 that the misfortunes which were afflicting Scotland and England were the direct consequences of the heinous sin committed by both nations in setting aside the hereditary succession to the crown.¹⁸¹

Yet to turn the discussion back to such Jacobite printers as Robert Freebairn, he was undoubtedly well aware of this association between the Stewarts and several noted royal lines. For as Freebairn once related of Charles I in one of his own Jacobite/pro-Stewart tracts: “All the Royal blood in Christendom ran in his veins, i.e. many Kings went to the making of him ...”¹⁸²

Frustrated because of continued military and political setback, the devotees of the Stewart cause may have looked to the glorious past when the progenitor of the favoured lineage shone with brilliance, resulting in a forged link between Jacobitism and veneration of the Bruce legend. Perhaps it was such a link, then, that sparked the printing of such “patriotic” pieces as *A Dissertation Concerning the Competition for the Crown of Scotland betwixt Lord Robert Bruce and Lord John Baliol ...*, in this instance, issued scarcely two years after Culloden.¹⁸³ However, none of this is

¹⁸¹ Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings*, p. 19.

¹⁸² *A Character of the Royal Martyr King Charles I.*

¹⁸³ GUL Spec. Coll. Mu 10-g.4(1); *A Dissertation Concerning The Competition for the Crown of Scotland, betwixt Lord Robert Bruce and Lord John Baliol, in the Year 1291. Wherein is Proved, That by the Laws of God and Nature, by the Civil and Feudal Laws and particularly by the fundamental Law and Constitution of Scotland, at that Time, and ever since, the Right of Robert Bruce was preferable to that of John Baliol ...* By Tho[mas] Ruddiman, AM (Edinburgh, T. and W. Ruddimans, 1748). It is noteworthy that this piece is maintaining that by every possible law imaginable – God’s, man’s, the nation’s, etc. – Bruce had a right to rule. It appears as if the Bruce to whom this tract was referring was Lord Annandale, the grandfather of King Robert I (see above, note). Nevertheless, these laws, according to the proclamation, remained constant; thus suggesting that, by the same criteria, Bruce’s descendants might also be found fit to rule.

Thomas Ruddiman himself was a supporter of the Stewart cause, and is credited with maintaining the “Jacobite Latinist tradition” after the Union by H. Ouston, “Cultural Life from the Restoration to the Union,” in A. Hook (ed), *The History of Scottish Literature*, C. Craig (gen ed) (4

meant as an assertion that Harvey, and others of his ilk,¹⁸⁴ were necessarily sufficiently motivated to participate in such events as, for example, the 1715 Uprising (though he indeed may have – there is really no evidence one way or the other). Rather, it is more to say that his Jacobitism was of the so-called “sentimental” variety. Furthermore, it seems certain that Harvey held strong anti-Union sentiments. We can catch glimmers of both these aspects of Harvey’s politics in his *Life of Robert Bruce*; the best example of such being found in the concluding couplets:

While circling Spheres their endless Rounds shall run
And feel the genial Influence of the Sun:
While Earth shall daily on her Axle roll,
And the slow Wain attend the freezing Pole;
While Monthly Moons their Revolutions keep,
By Turns shall raise, and sink by Turns the Deep;
While Fortha, spacious, rolls her winding Waves,
And Tay’s rich Stream Æneian Borders laves;
Still dear to Albion be her Bruce’s Fame,
Sacred his Merit, and rever’d his name.

So may just heav’n maintain her ancient Crown,
And Banquho’s¹⁸⁵ Race for ever fill her Throne.
May both, ye Gods! one final Period know,
That cease to rule, and Fortha cease to flow.¹⁸⁶

Additional – and in fact, even more explicit – evidence of Harvey’s political leanings are suggested through a new introduction written for an edition of his *Bruce*, published in London, 1769, and given the rather pretentious-sounding name of *The Bruciad*. The anonymous editor is quite willing to praise Harvey’s poetic

vols; Aberdeen, 1987), ii, p. 21. See also D. Duncan, *Thomas Ruddiman: A Study in Scottish Scholarship of the Early Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1965), pp. 10-11, who states that it was Ruddiman’s Banffshire upbringing which kindled ideals that would serve him in later life, including his leanings towards Episcopalianism, Jacobitism, Latin scholarship, and humanism.

¹⁸⁴ As always, though, there are notable exceptions to virtually every quantitative statement: in this case the notable exception is the above named Robert Freebairn.

¹⁸⁵ Tradition also held that Banquo was a legendary ancestor of the Stewarts, a “fact” exploited by Shakespeare in his tragedy *Macbeth*, which was a composition designed to flatter James VI. The pertinent extract from *Macbeth* (IV, i, 112-24) relates the prophecy of the eight (Stewart) monarchs that will be descended from Banquo. For more on this this subject, see A.M. Clark, *Murder Under Trust: The Topical Macbeth* (Edinburgh, 1981), p. 19.

¹⁸⁶ Harvey, *Bruce*, pp. 231-32.

skills, referring to him as “perhaps one of the best classical scholars of the age he lived in.”¹⁸⁷ It was a different matter, however, when it came to his politics, and perhaps even his nationality: according to his new (in the greatest likelihood English) editor, Harvey had excessively “confined his observations to the narrow boundaries and prejudices of the land of his nativity, “ which made it unsuitable for a more general audience. We may rightly assume that the “general audience” in question is one which has just tentatively breathed a sigh of relief, hopeful that no new rumours of an intended Jacobite invasion would surface.¹⁸⁸ Still, once again according to his new editor, the sort of politics Harvey had held, back when he created his version of the *Bruce*, had since that time “embarrassed both England and Scotland.” Thus the editors took it upon themselves to modify Harvey’s effort, and severely tone down, if not totally eliminate, the allegedly offending lines, representative of the author’s anti-Union and pro-Jacobite sentiments. As part of this agenda *The Bruiciad* features a totally reworked conclusion, bearing only a superficial resemblance to that in Harvey’s original ode to King Robert I:

Whilst circling Spheres their endless rounds shall run
And feel the genial influence of the sun:
Whilst earth shall daily on her axle roll,
And flow, the wain attend the freezing pole;

¹⁸⁷ Mitchell no. 313547; *The Bruiciad, an Epic Poem, In Six Books* (London: Printed for J. Dodsley, in Pall-mall; and J. Murray {Successor to Mr Sandby} No. 32, Fleet-street; T. and J. Merrill, at Cambridge; and A. Kincaid and J. Bell at Edinburgh, MDCCLXIX.”), “The Preface.” There is a tone to this “Preface” which suggests that Harvey, at this point in time, was dead. This is not too difficult to accept when we consider the fact that *The Bruiciad* was published, as its editor is quick to point out, forty years after the initial publication of Harvey’s *Bruce*.

¹⁸⁸ The exiled Charles Edward Stewart appears to have returned briefly to London once in September 1750. He returned to France after only a week. One of the most ambitious plots to place Bonnie Prince Charlie back upon the throne was set to occur in November 1752. This, the so-called “Elibank Plot” (for Lord Elibank), was foiled in no small part due to the actions of one Alister Macdonald of Glengarry, a Hanoverian spy who had infiltrated the Jacobite ranks. Another of these plots occurred in 1759, when the French foreign minister Choiseul planned an invasion for mid-July of that year. The idea seems to have been to land troops in an effort to take both Westminster and Glasgow. Charles was to be involved in this – but the whole endeavour was stymied after British intelligence uncovered Choiseul’s plans, and the Royal Navy hit the French fleet first, dealing it a telling blow. In all these (and any other) planned overthrows of the 1750s, the general idea was to secure London first, then to whisk Charles over from the continent and place him upon the throne. With the Pretender safely in place as monarch, it was hoped that sympathetic troops from Scotland would then descend upon England to help secure the new ruler’s position and mop-up any final opposition. See: C. Erickson, *Bonnie Prince Charlie* (London, 1989), pp. 252-268.

While monthly, moons, their revolutions keep,
 By turns to raise, by turns to sink the deep;
 While Fortha, spacious, flows in curling waves,
 And Tay's rich stream, Æneian borders laves;
 Be Albion's sons and Bruce's name still fir'd,
 And distant times, with Brucian worth inspir'd.

From him – till heav'n propitions to our pray'r
 May bliss Great Britain with one sov'reign care!
 A sov'reign! glorying in Britain's name!
 A royal pattern, to perpetuate fame!
 May Union! ever decorate his crown,
 And may his race, for ever fill the throne:
 May both, ye gods! one final period know,
 That cease to rule, – the Thames and Forth to flow.¹⁸⁹

Note that in the above, “Bruce's Fame” and name are less to be thought of as “Still [being] dear to Albion” but rather more, to be revered for their significance in “distant times.” Scotland no longer retains “her ancient Crown” perpetually ruled by a representative of “Banquo's Race;” rather, one sovereign (of an unspecified lineage, but we might expect not that of the Stewarts) should “for ever fill the throne” of a United Kingdom of Britain. It seems fair to suggest, therefore, that the new editor of Harvey's *Bruce* is pushing a pro-Union, pro-Hanoverian platform.

All that aside, it seems safe to say that if the subject matter of Harvey's “epic” was anything else other than the Bruce (and Wallace), we could dismiss it as having little, if anything, to do with vernacular culture. Undoubtedly, Harvey's intent was to show how “proper language” could be used to describe the life and deeds of a legendary figure from the Scottish past. However, Harvey was unable to escape the ever present popularity of two persons who in the past, had made it their business (as the common populace must have believed) to resist that which was “un-Scottish.” Through his attempts to promote “polite” (in essence, elitist) language and manners, Harvey was equally promoting the culture of the commonality.

The links between eighteenth century Jacobitism and the cult of the Bruce are perhaps not too difficult to accept, given that it was possible – without stretching reality too much – to make the claim (as did Gordon and Harvey) that Robert I was

¹⁸⁹ *The Bruciad*, p. 237.

the ultimate progenitor of the Stewart lineage. But the cult of Wallace was not totally immune from being intertwined with Jacobite politics either. This might seem a little hard to grasp, since at the centre of the Wallace cult was a (relatively) ordinary man who rose to become his country's defender, who even led aristocrats into battle. To use a twentieth century anachronism, Wallace is almost a representation of certain principles of democracy. Jacobitism, at its "purest" form embodied a devout following of the later Stewarts, a line that believed themselves worthy of rule by Divine Right – an authoritarian concept seemingly in opposition to some of the principles Wallace stood for. How then could the mythos of Harry's hero find itself in the middle of the Jacobite controversy?

Wallace's career spanned part of the period when Scotland had fought for her independence from a foreign power. His "successor" of sorts was, naturally, Robert the Bruce. Both these historical figures, as said before, were absorbed into the common consciousness as the original liberators of Scotland. But in the minds of some, possibly people like the above mentioned Robert Freebairn,¹⁹⁰ Wallace had paved the way for Bruce.

Opinion has it that as a companion to his edition of the *Wallace*, Freebairn also produced a volume devoted to the subject of John Barbour's book. Pinkerton, in fact, made this claim towards the end of the eighteenth century within the introduction to his own edition of the *Bruce*;¹⁹¹ so did Skeat in the late nineteenth century.¹⁹² Even were this not the case, a close examination of the alleged Freebairn editions of the *Bruce* and the *Wallace* reveal many striking similarities between the two volumes. Both volumes are in quarto format and are in black letter type; the title pages of both profess a publishing date of 1758, though the actual date of composition of this edition of the *Bruce* is as fraught with controversy as is the

¹⁹⁰ Who it will be remembered produced an edition of Blind Harry.

¹⁹¹ GUL Spec. Coll., BG60-l.13, 14 [John Pinkerton] *Ancient Scottish Poems Never Before In Print But now Published From the MS Collections of Sir Richard Maitland ...* (2 vols; London, 1786), i, p. xci. Pinkerton's remarks are faithfully quoted in full by Miller, *Blind Harry*, p. 10.

¹⁹² *The Bruce or The Book of the Most Excellent and Noble Prince Robert De Broyss, King of Scots Compiled by Master John Barbour*, W.W. Skeat (ed) (2 vols; STS, 1894), i, p. lxxxii.

companion volume dealing with Blind Harry's subject; the title page of the 1758 edition of the *Bruce* claims to have been "Carefully corrected from the edition printed by Andro Hart in 1620,"¹⁹³ (consult Appendix VII) which is similar to the claim made by McDiarmid, related above, for the *Wallace* of that same year – although no mention of consultation with the original manuscripts is made in either work. If, however, the mysterious Mr Tate did copy the manuscript of the *Wallace* on Freebairn's behalf, it makes sense that he could have done likewise with the manuscript of the *Bruce*, as both were at one time bound together in the Faculty of Advocates' collection.¹⁹⁴

If all the above suppositions are correct, then it appears that like a number of others both before and after him, Freebairn seemed bent on creating two parallel volumes, each respectively devoted to one half of the William Wallace/Robert the Bruce tandem.¹⁹⁵ Nonetheless, it should not be assumed that because Freebairn was a Jacobite who happened to edit an edition of the *Wallace* and one of the *Bruce*, that all such individuals who similarly produced parallel volumes were also Jacobites. Having said this, it was not a natural progression for an editor of the *Wallace* to also attempt an edition of John Barbour's classic; Blind Harry was published almost three times as often as the *Bruce* up till the end of the eighteenth century. Rather it would seem that those individuals who did produce both volumes probably believed that the stories of the Guardian of Scotland and the victor at Bannockburn deserved to be told simultaneously; that one epic complemented the other.

¹⁹³ Hart appears to have been regarded as something of a textual authority during the eighteenth century. Undoubtedly this had to do with his printing work on both the *Wallace* and the *Bruce*, not to mention the Bible as well. James Watson, at the least, believed Hart to be one of the "heroes" of early Scottish printing. See *Watson's Preface to the "History of Printing" 1713*, W.J. Couper (ed) (Edinburgh, 1913), p. 47 (Watson's original p. 9).

¹⁹⁴ As NLS, Fac. Ad. MS. 29.2.2 (i & ii).

¹⁹⁵ And there may have been others who did likewise: Alexander Carmichael and Alexander Millar, the team from Glasgow, printed an edition of the *Wallace* in 1736; the following year their own version of the *Bruce* appeared. And we have not mentioned yet the number of editions of Hamilton's *Wallace* which have been bound together with John Harvey's *Bruce* – perhaps one of the most commonly encountered editions (and reprints of same) being the (?)1790 Ayr edition; on this last point, refer to Millar, *Blind Harry*, pp. 21-22. More will be said about the affinities between Hamilton's *Wallace* and Harvey's *Bruce* below.

Naturally of course, in terms of relating the historical account of the Wars of Independence, Bruce and Wallace are two of the most significant figures. But something far more significant may have been going on in the mind of a person like Freebairn at least:¹⁹⁶ no King Robert I without a Wallace; or, no protective monarchy without the support of the commoner. This latter point is related to recently made remarks by Cowan, regarding the Wallace myth, “that true patriotism resided in the ranks of the lowly;”¹⁹⁷ although those who sought to idolise both Harry’s hero and the Bruce probably did not believe that “those who shared the blood royal were [in fact] quislings”¹⁹⁸ but were instead the people’s champions, who still needed to be spurred-on by the commons in order to find the correct path toward righteousness.

This last point would appear to allow for a little too much dependence upon the common-folk on the part of a line of monarchs that recognised themselves to be the Almighty’s chosen rulers. Perhaps in similar vein, Freebairn’s poem announcing James’s landing paints the Pretender¹⁹⁹ as being like a god himself:

Hail God like Youth! when Britain’s angry Stars
Have from the Shoar thus long by impious Wars
Detain’d, her Parent and her Prince, Divine
By Richt and only Remnant of that Line
In which all Claims, as well as Vertues join.²⁰⁰

Despite playing up concepts of divine right to rule, many of the metaphysical allusions in this piece seem based upon classical concepts of the divine hero. Thus, one allusion that springs to mind is that of a youthful Apollo-like figure, skilled in the arts of both music and warfare, and special protector of all mortals, especially

¹⁹⁶ This is not to extend this theory to later individuals who edited both the *Bruce* and the *Wallace*.

¹⁹⁷ E.J. Cowan, ‘The Wallace Factor in Scottish History’ in *Images of Scotland*, (eds) R. Jackson and S. Wood, *The Journal of Scottish Education Occasional Papers*, no. 1 (Dundee, 1997), p. 15.

¹⁹⁸ Cowan “Wallace Factor,” p. 15.

¹⁹⁹ Though the poem actually recognises James as being king.

²⁰⁰ NLS, Adv. MS 19.1.13(63); *Advice to the Muse, on the King’s Landing* (Perth, reprinted Robert Freebairn, 1716). Despite being part of the National Library’s MS collection this is indeed a printed piece.

other young male heroes. In this instance, there is a similar mind-set at work here to that which created the ennobled William Wallace.

More explicit evidence for this concept of divine right might be apparent in another piece, allegedly printed by Freebairn, on behalf of “Noblemen, Gentleman, and others” talks of James’s right to rule “... by the laws of God.”²⁰¹ This same tract, however, goes on to stress that equally as important, James has a right to rule, because of “the ancient constitution and by the positive unrepealed laws of the land.”²⁰² Thus, factors outwith of those laid down by Providence pointed to this Pretender as being Scotland’s just ruler. This seems to be hinted toward a new trend within Jacobitism. It was increasingly becoming the case, that despite any pretensions about being God’s chosen they may have held, few of the Stewarts found absolute acceptance among their followers solely because of any claim they may have had for Divine Right.²⁰³ In fact, there were probably people within the Jacobite camp, particularly in James Stewart’s and Bonnie Prince Charlie’s times, that rejected the concept altogether.²⁰⁴ Possibly the events connected with the Revolution of 1688 played a role in watering-down this final concept.

Thus to this end, even a staunch supporter of the cause like Freebairn, who went as far as to forfeit his post as King’s Printer and became instead a devotee of the Earl of Mar’s cause,²⁰⁵ seemed to on at least one occasion to play down the concept of Divine Right in one of his own pro-Jacobite tracts:

²⁰¹ I have not seen this tract myself, but am trusting the word of A. and H. Tayler, *1715: The Story of the Rising* (London, Edinburgh, 1936), p. 46, who quote substantial portions of it.

²⁰² Tayler, *1715*, p. 46.

²⁰³ B.P. Lenman & J.S. Gibson (ed and intro.), *The Jacobite Threat – England, Scotland, Ireland, France: A Source Book* (Edinburgh, 1990), pp. xvi-xvii.

²⁰⁴ Lenman & Gibson (ed and intro.), *The Jacobite Threat*, p. xvi.

²⁰⁵ The 1715 Uprising was in no small way indebted to the aspirations of John Erskine, the Earl of Mar. Erskine seemed to embody the one characteristic which (at least today) gives politicians a bad name – a self-serving agenda. He had been, at one time, a promoter of the 1707 Union, and a supporter of the Hanoverian succession. Mar’s Whig rivals apparently started a rumour concerning secret Jacobite tendencies on his part. See B. Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings in Britain* (London, 1980), p. 126.

In reality, it seems that if Mar had had any such leanings, they were largely attempts on his part to obtain “fire insurance, for nobody excelled Mar in grovelling sycophancy to George I.” See B. Lenman, *The Jacobite Cause* (Glasgow, 1986), p. 46. The result was that Mar would “fall-out” with the king, or maybe more correctly, vice versa. Not long after that, John Erskine raised the

He [James Francis Edward Stewart] is our Lawful Right Sovereign: And we all know that He is the Undoubted Lineal Heir by Blood and Descendent of the Ancient Race of our Scottish Kings; whose Ancestors, in direct Line, have sway'd the Scepter in our Hereditary Monarchy for many Generations without Contest; a Prince upon who the Crown is entail'd by the Fundamental Laws of our Country, and to whom, even before he was born; we have often sworn Allegiance and Fealty, by those Oaths given to former Kings, by which we bound our selves not only to them, but to their Lawful Heirs and Successors.²⁰⁶

Certainly some of this has the ring to it of being designed to deflect any rumours concerning the Pretender's alleged illegitimacy. But on the other hand, the wording seems suggestive that it was by the laws of the land, more so than the laws of God, that stood in support of James Stewart's right to govern.²⁰⁷ It is difficult to know whether Freebairn himself believed in concepts of divine ruler. But the fact that he could print separate tracts, some mentioning divine right, others totally disregarding the concept, most importantly indicates his loyalty to the cause. All it seems he was trying to do was to widen support for James Stewart, attempting to appeal separately to those who still believed in the ruler who governs by the whim of Providence on one hand, versus those who believed more earthly criteria were the deciding factors, such as the traditional line of succession. Finally, Freebairn's tract goes on to say that the alternative to James Stewart is a German Prince who "knows not one Tittle of our Constitution"²⁰⁸ – probably meaning he understands nothing of

Jacobite standard, apparently without even consulting the Pretender. See Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings*, p. 126.

²⁰⁶ GUL Spec. Coll., 2665(4); *To All True-hearted Scotsmen, Wether (sic) Soldiers Or others* (Perth, Robert Freebairn, 1715), p. 4.

²⁰⁷ This concept of Rule by the laws of the land seem consistent, at least in noted examples of Freebairn's work. In *A Character of the Royal Martyr King Charles I* (1714), he maintains that the royal victim of the headsman's axe ruled "his Kingdom not by the Voice of Popularity" – a standard tenant of Jacobitism – but instead by "the Suffrage of Nature."

Of course the ancient concept of "the law of the land" was that such was, ultimately and originally, handed-down by God. However, tone of *To All True-hearted Scotsmen* (and even *A Character of the Royal Martyr King Charles I*) is such that one might conclude that people like Freebairn conceived the ancient law of succession as being intrinsically linked to the land itself. On this last point, the pamphlet chastises the Hanoverians in because they "are fighting against [their] Lawful and Rightful King, born of our own Island, of the Ancient Stock ..." (*To All True-hearted Scotsmen*, p. 6.) The idea here seems to be that land and the royal-line are linked.

²⁰⁸ *To All True-hearted Scotsmen*, p. 9.

the ancient traditions of Scotland concerned with the relationship between ruler and ruled. Of course one of the most recognisable statements of such a constitution was the Declaration of Arbroath.²⁰⁹

It is George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh (1636-91)²¹⁰ who is credited with first having transcribed and published the Declaration of Arbroath, in his *Observations upon the Laws and Customs of Nations as to Precedency*.²¹¹ The first English translation appeared in 1689, probably – at least in part – with the intention of using it as a lever, to help in the cause of ousting James VII.²¹² What is most curious about all of this is how on one hand the Declaration of Arbroath could be used to help depose a Stewart monarch, yet on the other, the said document only came to print through the actions of a scholar sympathetic to that same line of kings. It is here that we return to the subject of Jacobitism, since Mackenzie was one of only five individuals who opposed Dalrymple's successful motion in the Scottish parliament, on 4 April 1689, to stand against James VII.²¹³ All his life Mackenzie supported the Stewarts, for as a lawyer, he had hounded the Covenanters; and while he could never come to terms with James VII's catholicism, he nevertheless remained loyal to the king during the Revolution.²¹⁴ And (at least some of) Mackenzie's politically-orientated material was written in support of the later Stewarts.²¹⁵ Yet how could a man like this have been so short-sighted not to see that

²⁰⁹ The Declaration of Arbroath probably was well-enough known among literate circles during the eighteenth century. According to J. Fergusson (ed and tr.), *The Declaration of Arbroath* (Edinburgh, 1970), p. 42, before the death of George II, it was printed eleven times in Latin and four times in English.

²¹⁰ Not to be confused with the George Mackenzie who wrote *The Lives and Characters of the Most Eminent Writers of the Scots Nation*.

²¹¹ Fergusson, *Arbroath*, p. 39. See also GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 16-y.8; George Mackenzie, *Observations Upon the Laws and Customs of Nations, as to Precedency* (Edinburgh, Andrew Anderson, 1680), pp. 20-21.

²¹² Fergusson, *Arbroath*, p. 40. The Declaration did clearly state that any king deemed a subverter of his and the people's rights, could be driven-out.

²¹³ Fergusson, *Arbroath*, p. 40.

²¹⁴ Royle, *Mainstream Companion*, p. 204.

²¹⁵ See particularly GUL Spec. Coll.; George Mackenzie, *A Defense of the Antiquity of the Royal=Line of Scotland ...* (London, 1685). In this tract, addressed specifically to King James VII, the monarch's grandfather, James VI, is referred to as "the Solomon of his Age: who excelle'd all His Contemporary Princes in * King-Craft [*{note in margin} His own word]; all his Ministers in

his transcription of the Declaration might one day prove the antithesis to any concept of lawful right to rule?

Whether Mackenzie did or did not realise that the Declaration of Arbroath could one day prove to be the undoing of the Stewarts, is really not the question. The fact is, if by design or accident, he in some ways provided a deflection for any attempts to use this ancient document as the precedent for ousting a king. In his introduction to the Declaration, Mackenzie does his best to play-down the portions which provide the precedent for deposing an errant monarch (he does struggle a bit), and instead, plays up those sections which caution against submission to a foreign prince:

But to show how great Aversion even that Generation had, for any such Submission to the English Monarchy, I have set down the Copy of a Letter yet extant, under all the Seals of our Nobility directed to Pope John, in anno 1320. Wherein they Declare, that if their King should offer to submit to England, they would disown him, and chuse another. Not that the power of Electing Kings, was ever thought to Reside in our Nobility; But because it was represented to them, as the Opinion of all Lawyers, that a King could not alienat [sic] his Kingdom, or submit himself by his sole Consent to a Foireigne Prince ...²¹⁶

It is in fact this concept – as alluded to by Mackenzie’s commentary on the Declaration of Arbroath – that the nation should not be made subject to a foreign potentate, which may have been picked-up by Jacobites like Freebairn. It is probably true that no sensible Jacobite would wave about the Declaration as a banner symbolic of their beliefs – it would have been just too dangerous to do so. But for

Prudence; and all His Doctours in Learning.” Compliments are also paid to Charles I and II by Mackenzie. But when it comes to James VII, the author’s praise knows few limits:

His [Charles II’s] Throne is now fill’d with Your Sacred Majesty, whose Abilities Your Royal Brother esteemed so much, that He share’d with you the excersise of the Government before his Death, gave you the Possession of the Crown. In you, Sir, Your People have a General to their Armies, and Admiral to their Fleet, a Thesaurer to their Money: whose Courage can lead them as far as theirs can follow and raise the glory of these kingdoms as high as they can wish: So that if they are not happy, they will have this addition to their misfortunes, that the World will see, that they themselves are onely [sic] to be blam’d for it.

²¹⁶ Mackenzie, *Observations*, p. 19.

people like Freebairn, Scotland's ability to throw-off the yoke of domination by a foreign power was something entrusted to the just king:

Our whole Nation either is, or pretends to be sensible of the Mischief of the Union, we feel the Weight of it to our Cost; and the Inconvenience will duly increase, as it is obvious to any that will look before him: The King's²¹⁷ Forces have sufficiently demonstrated their Dislike to it, by their ready appearing to join with the only Expedient to dissolve it: And you²¹⁸ pretend to be Scotsmen ...²¹⁹

Thus for a Jacobite like Robert Freebairn, to rebel against the Hanoverians, and support James Francis Edward Stewart, was a justified cause, since it seemed the most practical way of dissolving the Union, a perceived instrument of foreign oppression.²²⁰ These are indeed sentiments similar to those expressed by a Stewart supporter like Mackenzie, through his own interpretation of selected aspects of the Declaration of Arbroath. Again, it must be stressed that it was certain sentiments which had first found their way into the Declaration that were being exploited by Freebairn, rather than the ancient letter itself. Those sentiments centred around a Scots fear of (some might say paranoia concerning) domination or oppression by a foreign power.

Perhaps, then, we have an explanation for the Jacobite Robert Freebairn's fascination with the figure of William Wallace. Maybe he rationalised the situation by recounting that it was the Guardian who first responded to his own apprehensions over a Scots nation that had been forced to bow to an alien prince bent on breaking tradition. And had Wallace not responded in way he did, the way would not have

²¹⁷ Referring to the Pretender, James VIII.

²¹⁸ Referring to the pro-Hanoverians.

²¹⁹ *To All True-hearted Scotsmen*, p. 10.

²²⁰ On this, Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings*, p. 87, relates that "The Jacobites certainly regarded the Union as a major political gift to them, for it handed them the leadership of nationalist sentiment in Scotland." Lenman's comments seem to underscore the point that it was not unrealistic to expect both anti-Unionist and Jacobite standing side-by-side against the Government troops at such battles as Sheriffmuir. It is highly possible that some individuals held sentiments for both causes, simultaneously – perhaps one such individual was Robert Freebairn (though it is unknown if he ever actually even picked-up a gun, let alone used one).

However, Lenman, *The Jacobite Cause*, p. 46, does sound a cautionary note, that Mar would not have been able to "raise the Jacobite standard," had there not been such a strong anti-Union character to the nation at the time. Mar was the catalyst that lit "the powder keg of discontent" surrounding the Hanoverian succession and (maybe even more so) the incorporating Union.

been cleared for the Bruce, the progenitor of the Stewarts. It was those same Stewarts – Freebairn might have thought – that now seemed most committed to expelling yet another power originating from outside of Scotland.

Certainly none of this is to say – for even the briefest moment – that devotion for the Blind Minstrel’s epic should be equated with devotion for the Jacobite cause, though in the instance of the alleged Freebairn edition of the *Wallace*, the equation might be possible. But another example of possible connections between Jacobitism, perhaps on a much more intimate level, and the entire Wallace (literary) tradition, is evident in the anonymous “A Curious Poem to the Memory of Sir William Wallace.” A work which retold selected aspects of the Lord Protector’s deeds (and eventual execution) in the neo-classic mould, the said piece was part of a larger collection devoted toward commemorating Charles Edward Stewart’s arrival in 1745 to Edinburgh.²²¹ Needless to say, by virtue of the collection’s title, the affinity with the cause of the Stewarts is quite clear. Nevertheless, the ideology of the supporters of Bonnie Prince Charlie seems clearly spelled-out in lines which could as easily refer to a Scotland caught-up in the 1745-46 Jacobite Uprisings, as to her struggle for freedom during the Wars of Independence:

Opress’d with Woes, ill fated *Scotia* lay,
To Edward’s Power a sunk defenceless Prey;
Her drooping Friends beheld with mournful Eyes,

Their Lord in Exile, and his Right a Prize ...²²²

The sentiments expressed in the last line are typical of any people²²³ deprived of their perceived leadership. The Scots had suffered considerably in this sense: for example, in 1603 their king had left for England, to return only once (his

²²¹ NLS, Ry.1.2.86(5); “A Curious Poem to the Memory of Sir William Wallace,” in *A Full Collection of all Poems upon Charles, Prince of Wales, Regent of the Kingdoms of Scotland, England, France and Ireland ... Published since His Arrival in Edinburgh the 17th Day of September, till the 1st of November, 1745* (Edinburgh?, 1745).

²²² “A Curious Poem to the Memory of Sir William Wallace,” p. 20.

²²³ “People” being defined in the most liberal sense of the word; though there is no suggestion here, for even a moment, that the cause of Charles Edward Stewart was a universally popular one in mid-eighteenth century Scotland on the whole.

descendants were equally as uninterested in visiting Scotland); in 1707, their parliamentarians also left for England, and that same Act of Union also appeared to threaten their kirk, which many had turned to for guidance in lieu of an absentee monarchy. The idea of the absentee monarch was one of the most telling. In Harvey's *Bruce*, the future King Robert I had been exiled in France before finally returning to rescue his people from perceived unjust rule; and during the period of the Jacobite uprisings, those Scots who, perhaps very conservatively, clung to older concepts of monarchical rule for security, hailed the arrival of this latest Pretender as the first step in the process toward returning the old lineage (comprising the rightful rulers, so these folk would have maintained) to its rightful place. These are the sorts of ideas that appear embedded in the above quotation.

One final work attempting to replicate the Wallace tradition which tended to display some Jacobite leanings was Gordon Nisbet's dramatic work *Caledon's Tears: or, Wallace. A Tragedy*. What this work amounted to was a fairly brief (fortunately) five act play, dedicated to Sir Thomas Wallace who, according to the play's creator, not only was a descendant of the elder Wallace, but bore "all the beautiful Resemblance's" to William!²²⁴ However, the speech attributed by the play to Wallace, upon hearing of his sentence of death from Edward, embodies not only some pro-Jacobite sentiments, but also an anti-Englishness that equally could have originated in either a post-Union, or Wars of Independence Scotland:

Wal. Think not, inhumane Tyrant, that your Threats
Or cruel Treatment, can deter the Fates
From doing so far Justice to my Name,
As, when I'm falling, to defend my Fame
And know, you Savage, That these shackled Hands
Have shed the Blood of your beloved Friends,
Your Brother *Hugh*, Six Nephews, second Son,
Dropt from Gardies to my Girdle down.
Know I am he who have your Hopes deforc'd
And dares the *Saxons* still to do their Worst.

²²⁴ NLS, H.29.d.29; G. Nisbet, *Caledon's Tears: or, Wallace. A Tragedy. Containing the Calamities of Scotland from the Death of King Alexander III to the betraying and butchering of that faithful Father of his Country, Sir William Wallace of Elderslie* (Edinburgh, P. Mattheie, 1733), p. iii.

For all my Wishes are, That *Albion's* King
 May finish what I have referr'd to him;
 So a red *Finis* shall receive Empire,
 And *English Edward* in its Arms expire.²²⁵

In addition Edward's reply to Wallace, "Treason, Treason. – Guards remove the Scots, | For so aught all such Rebels to be treat,"²²⁶ undoubtedly would be sufficient to incite any "self-respecting" English-hating Scot to immediately jump on the anti-Union bandwagon, although at the time of the writing of *Caledon's Tears* (1733) that same wagon may not have been quite as swiftly rolling as it had been in previous times.²²⁷

That same Union of 1707 has to be one of the most controversial occurrences in the history of Scotland, and any study devoted to examining the period 1700-50 must acknowledge the significance of that event. This present study, however, will not attempt to answer such questions as whether or not the Union was good for Scotland, nor will it delve into a deep discussion of the politics of the era. Rather, it will examine, at this point, how the popular icons of Wallace and Bruce spliced into the broader issue of discontentment directed toward the Union.

Suffice to say, the Union was extremely unpopular throughout many sections of the new kingdom of Great Britain, and most areas of Scotland were hardly the exception to this.²²⁸ Reasons for opposition to the Union ran the gamut from such things as overt hostility toward the English, concerns for the maintenance of the Scottish Kirk,²²⁹ the question of monarchical succession, and economic concerns

²²⁵ *Caledon's Tears*, p. 59.

²²⁶ *Caledon's Tears*, p. 59.

²²⁷ One opinion, at least, focusing on Jacobitism as a flash point, maintains that from 1715 to 1745, there might have been a more broader realisation that union was here to stay. See A.J.K. Breitwieser, *The Scottish reaction to the Union* (University of Waterloo, Canada, Ph.D. thesis, 1978), p. vi.

²²⁸ Ferguson, *Scotland*, p. 61; Ferguson's ideas on the union are more fully expressed by him in, W. Ferguson, "The Making of the Treaty of Union of 1707," in *SHR*, vol. 43(2) (Oct. 1964).

²²⁹ One anti-union pamphleteer, perhaps realising how volatile an issue the union was with the staunchly religious, appeared to desire to unite all three of the nation's faiths in opposition. Thus, he maintains, that from the Presbyterian point of view, the union might prove a disaster since it could threaten kirk government and open the door to Popery and/or Prelacy. The priest should fear union because it would guarantee a protestant succession. The prelate's fears are based upon any actions of parliament making "such a Security for the Presbyterian Church Government, as that it cannot be altered in Scotland, without shaping the Foundations of the Union, and shaking the whole Fabrick of the British Constitution." See NLS, 1.520(3); *A Letter to A Friend, Giving an Account of how the*

regarding taxation and trade.²³⁰ Once the “deed was done,” however, those disaffected turned to pen and print when ever able. It was then that often the old heroes like Bruce and Wallace were turned to by some people in a bid to right the perceived wrongs of the Union. For example, one petitioner, addressing a Scots parliamentarian, had “reason to wish the Dissolution of the Union because of what we have suffered by it, and are still likely to suffer in matters of Religion; the Church of England has affected a Government and Superiority over the Church of Scotland.”²³¹ For the petitioner, the pages of history set precedent concerning Scotland’s right to self-determination over matters spiritual: “... our K. *Robert Bruce* taught our Neighbours by Blood and Wounds, that we could find our way to Heaven without the help of their Conduct ...”²³²

Yet even before union became a reality, people in places like Dumfries expressed their dissatisfaction with the Articles of Union by burning them in great public spectacles. And a printed account of the event serves to summarise the mood of the participants:

We have ... no Design against her Majesty, nor against the England ... neither against Our present Parliament ... But to Testifie Our Dissent from, Discontentment with, and Protestation against the Twenty five Articles of ... Union, Subscribed by the foresaid Commissioners; as being Inconsistent with, and altogether prejudicial to, and utterly Destructive of this Nation’s Independency, Crown-Rights, and Our Constitute Laws, both Sacred and Civil.²³³

Popular opinion seemed to be against an incorporating union akin to the one being proposed.²³⁴ Nevertheless, the Dumfries ceremony concluded with a burning of the

Treaty of Union Has been Received here ... (Edinburgh, 1706). A pen inscribed note (of unknown origin) credits this piece to John Clerk of Pennecuik the younger.

²³⁰ Ferguson, “Treaty of Union,” p. 109, maintains that it was not so much union itself, but rather *incorporating* union which tended to stick in the craw of the Scots.

²³¹ GUL Spec. Coll., Mu6-f.36(1); *Reasons for Dissolving the Treaty of Union Betwixt Scotland and England; In a Letter to a Scots Member of Parliament, from one of his Electors* (n.p., 1713?), p. 13.

²³² *Reasons for Dissolving the Treaty of Union Betwixt Scotland and England*, p. 13.

²³³ GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 29-e.20(41); *An Account of the Burning of the Articles of the Union at Dumfries* (n.p., 1706?).

²³⁴ Ferguson, “Treaty of Union,” p. 109.

offending Articles hoisted on a pike-pole, to the frenzied cheers of the attending audience of thousands²³⁵ in the market cross.

The account from Dumfries, however, begins to hint at a potentially bigger concern – that Scotland’s parliamentarians (comprising a membership drawn largely from the ranks of the privileged) had put concerns other than the welfare of their nation at the forefront when negotiating union: “... the Commissioners for this Nation, have been either Simple, Ignorant, or Treacherous, if not all three.” The modern analysis of the sincerity of the nobility when it came to negotiating for union, has been varied indeed. However, the most recent and useful study comes from Whately, who effectively picks apart the bygone theories concerning the impeachable nature of the Scottish nobles who bargained with the English for union, in exchange for political favours.²³⁶ Similarly, with a somewhat economically-based slant, Whyte also dissects some of the issues involved with, and past writings on, the incorporating (or parliamentary) Union of 1707.²³⁷ However, the ultimate analysis of their arguments does tend to indicate that more than a few members of the Scottish nobility received perks for their support for union. And whether or not it is fair to say that the Scottish nobles who supported union were simply playing the political game as it had come to exist in the early eighteenth century – a system where “management and corruption were entrenched within ... and benefits in the forms of bribes, sinecures and pensions had become component parts of the political currency”²³⁸ – is one issue; but it seems fairly apparent that at least a few individuals of the period itself were less than impressed with their parliamentarian’s cavalier behaviour.

Even before the actual signing of the Treaty of Union, segments of the Scottish population did seem to believe that they had been “sold-out” or betrayed by

²³⁵ A figure which probably exceeds the sum total of Dumfries’s population at the time.

²³⁶ C.A. Whatley, *‘Bought and Sold for English Gold’? Explaining the Union of 1707* (Glasgow, 1994).

²³⁷ Whyte, *Scotland before industrial Revolution*, pp. 291-309.

²³⁸ Whatley, *Bought and Sold for English Gold*, p. 17.

those members of Scotland's nobility who were in favour of such. This idea of the Scottish nation being betrayed by grasping nobles – who had been bribed (or were in the process of being bribed) into handing over their homeland's freedom to the old enemy – was the subject of a fair deal of pamphleteering and broadsheet circulation. One such broadsheet bemoaned the downfall of Scotland due to the intervening actions of her sister, England, and to:

the degenerate Cowardice of too many of my Sons, of sordid Mercenary Spirit. It is a foul brand (but a most unjust one) upon your Predecessors, that they Sold their King. Pray man not the dishonourable Imputation of Selling your Country ...²³⁹

The idea that the nobles of eighteenth century Scotland were once an illustrious lot, but now were as low as the origin Fallen Angel, continued on (for a while at least), and found a new fermentation point. With the imposition of such taxes as the linen duty in 1711, and the Malt tax in 1712 (contrary to the terms of the Treaty), calls to dissolve the Union were issued. In the wake of these events, the war of words once again started. One anonymous author relates how the stout forefathers of the nation, though outnumbered to the tune of ten-to-one, defeated “300 000 of our treacherous Enemies” at the Battle of Bannockburn.²⁴⁰ The same pamphleteer continues that the sons of the nation (“her born Magistrates”) have done their best to undo the nation, and were only able to do so because of the people's slothfulness:

Since the Union of the Crowns, which commenc'd our Misery, God for Chastisement of our Sins, hath given up the Nobility to a reprobate sense; they have taken as indefatigable Pains to pull down their own Houses, as their gallant Ancestors did to build up.²⁴¹

²³⁹ NLS, 1.22 (111); *Scotland's speech to her Sons (against union)* (n.p. 1706).

²⁴⁰ GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 6-f.36(2); *A Proper Project for Scotland, In a humble Address to the Peers, for Using their utmost Application in the ensuing Parliament, for having the Union dissolv'd* (Glasgow, 1722), p. 4.

²⁴¹ *A Proper Project*, p. 6.

According to the petitioner, the Scots peers were responsible for such calamities as the Darien disaster,²⁴² and in return for turning their backs on their country, were rewarded with perks from the English: it was through “Knavery, Bribery, Equivalent” that caused the death of “old Scotia” and she is buried “In the Grave of great Britain.”²⁴³ “How will Posterity Credit,” the author laments, “That the successors of Scots heroes, Should so far extinguish the Light of Nature, as to perpetuate such a Prodigy of Wickedness, which entail’d Poverty and Slavery upon their Posterity?”²⁴⁴

The sentiments expressed through the bulk of the sort of anti-(incorporating) union literature is the potential turn-coat nature of the aristocracy, particularly in recent times. At one time, the nobles were a respectable lot; they had fought alongside Wallace and the Bruce; many of them sided with the great Montrose, himself an eventual supporter of the cause of the old lineage. It was also the nobles, with the support of the common people who in effect drew up Scotland’s first written statement of nationhood, the Declaration of Arbroath.²⁴⁵ Significantly, and probably not in the least coincidentally, “The Declaration” was reprinted in 1703²⁴⁶ – the very year in which the Act of Security was finally passed. The Act sought, among a number of things, to guarantee the Scots the right to select their own sovereign upon the death of Anne; they would not (so the theory went) be obliged to accept England’s choice of monarch for themselves.²⁴⁷ And as probably anticipated,

²⁴² *A Proper Project*, p. 7.

²⁴³ *A Proper Project*, p. 14.

²⁴⁴ *A Proper Project*, p. 7.

²⁴⁵ A convenient reprint of such is found in “The Declaration of Arbroath,” translated and appended in John Barbour, *The Bruce*, A.A.M. Duncan (ed) (Edinburgh, 1997).

²⁴⁶ Refer to GUL Spec. Coll., Mu44-c.9(10); *A Letter From the Nobility, Barons and Commons of Scotland, in the Year 1320 ... Directed to Pope John: Wherein they declare their firm Resolutions, to adhere to their King Robert the Bruce ... Translated from the Original, in Latine* (Edinburgh, 1703).

²⁴⁷ Ferguson, *Scotland*, p. 40. The Act of Security, thus, sought to reaffirm many of the same constitutional rights that were originally spelled-out, back in 1320, by “The Declaration of Arbroath” – Scotland would be ruled by the Scottish people’s choice of ruler, a monarch committed to upholding their own traditions.

in the days leading up to the passage of the Act, the broadsheet publishers had a “field-day” as they attempted to influence a favourable vote.²⁴⁸

However, the departure of the Stewarts in 1603 for the pleasanter political environment of Westminster, left the Scottish people with only their church and parliament to cling to. Impending union seemed to threaten their church, and it certainly appeared to some that it was their own parliamentarians, who had “gone bad” and were among the chief instigators of this betrayal of tradition. But the tradition of the past and its glories still remained, and one way it was sustained was through the iconography surrounding Wallace and Bruce.

In fact, knowledge of the whole struggle for Scottish independence from its neighbour to the south, was sustained during the Union era through popular editions of Harry’s and Barbour’s work.²⁴⁹ It is in these, especially in the *Wallace*, that the competing theme of the self-serving aristocrat finds an antecedent. The idea of betrayal by grasping nobles plays a crucial role in the building of the Wallace saga. It is the hero’s undoing when those in his confidence deal behind his back, selling Elderslie’s finest, and their nation, to the highest bidder. Unfortunately for Wallace, the highest bidder is his sworn enemy, Edward Longshanks, and the betrayer is Monteith. In Harry’s own work, Monteith – though at one point uncertain about placing Wallace into Longshank’s clutches – is beguiled by the sweet words of Vallance:

Wallange saw him intill a study be,
Thre thowsand punys off fyn gold leit him se;
And hecht he suld the Lewyn-houss haiff at will.
Thus tresonably Menteth grantyt thartill;
Obligacioun with his awn hand he maid;
Syn tuk the gold, and Eduuardis seill so braid,
And gaiff thaim his, quhen he his tym mycht se
To tak Wallace our Sulway, giff him fre
Till Inglissmen; be this tresonabill concord

²⁴⁸ Just a few of the surviving broadsheets which speak favourably of the Act of Security are, National Library of Scotland, 1.22 (100, 101, 102, 102a, and 103).

²⁴⁹ I.S. Ross and S.A.C. Scobie, “Patriotic Publishing as a Response to the Union,” in, T. I. Rae (ed), *The Union of 1707 – Its Impact on Scotland* (Glasgow, 1974), pp. 94-95.

Schyr Jhon suld be off all the Lennox lord.²⁵⁰

Though it may be argued that Monteith is presented as a reluctant Judas, Harry makes it abundantly clear that he has no sympathy for the turncoat Scot, who allowed covetousness to be his guide rather than any sense of loyalty.

The unholy alliance of Sir John Montieth, Sir Vallance and his king, Edward, rarely escaped the notice of those committed to retelling the Wallace story, all in their own unique fashion, during the eighteenth century; witness Hamilton of Gilbertfield's treatment of same:

Vallance the Knight, to Scotland did repair,
 The false Montieth Sir John did meet him there.
 Sir John the Lennox greatly did desire,
 To whom Sir Aymer promised it in Hire.
 To hold in Fee, and other Lands moe,
 Of Edward; if to London he would go.
 Thus they accepted and to London went,
 Which pleas'd King Edward to his Hearts content.
 Montieth on sight was bound to the fierce King,
 In Scotland to assist him, in each Thing
 Then both return'd no longer did wait
 Pox on their nasty Snouts for Villians great.
 For Montieth told Edward every Thing,

And that the Scots designed Bruce for King.²⁵¹

Thus Hamilton follows the lead of Blind Harry and relates how a grasping, greedy noble conspired to sell Wallace and Scots autonomy in exchange for personal gain and wealth. But not to be outdone, other authors give Scotland's nobles a rough ride by portraying certain of them as a treacherous, untrustworthy lot; according to Patrick Gordon the chief Judas of the crowd was, once again, Monteith – "When him [Wallace] betray'd by that accursed Thought |Of false Monteith."²⁵² In *Caledon's Tears* – true to its Athenian-like fashion – portents allude to the downfall of Wallace:

Cum. To Day, ere in the East a dawnind star
 Apper'd to usher in Hyperian's Car

²⁵⁰ *Bruce and Wallace*, Jamieson (ed), ii, p. 341 (book 11, ll. 821-30).

²⁵¹ *A New Edition of the Life and Heroik Actions of the Renown'd Sir William Wallace ...*, p. 298.

²⁵² Gordon, *Famous History of Bruce*, p. 24.

I knew some Meteor would this Morning blaze,
 On which the rude ungovern'd World would gaze,
 As if the Gods themselves, in humane Form,
 Were hast'ning downward to divert a Storm,
 While Fame in William's Favours triumphs o'er.
 All our Endeavours to suppress his Power.

To which Cumming's co-conspirators Vallance and the (by now) damned Monteith respond with:

Val. I verily believe the Victor will,
 One Day or other, undermine us all,
 If Care and Cunning be not quickly us'd,
 And all his Projects presently oppos'd;
 But who is he, to whom we can impart,
 This one grand Secret which endangers Art.
Monte. A louring Vengeance, from the lower Verge
 Of Hell, shall hover o'er his Heritage,
 And in red Lightning, all its Pales
 Discharge with Thunder and the Traitor's Heels,
 Who is so stupid, for a stated Hire,
 As in one Wallace to undo Empire:
 Yea, it is more than my Estate commands,
 To work such Wonders with unweapon'd Hands.
Val. Why so? – You shall have Gold, and whate'er else
 You ask in Honour, upon the guilty Head
 Of him that's always shedding Christian Blood:
 Only observe where he's in Use to lurk,
 And we shall after undertake the Work.
Monte. I do acknowledge 'tis a sovereign cene,
 Which shall be acted ere we meet again.²⁵³

This entire tradition is in some ways different from the one stemming from Arbroath. In the Declaration of Arbroath, it is the people and the nobility who will unite to choose a ruler of their own, and to keep that ruler in check:

We are bound to him for ... our freedom both by his rights and merits, as to him by whom salvation has been wrought unto our people, and by him ... we mean to stand. Yet if he should ... [seek] to make our kingdom subject to the king of England or to the English, we will ... drive him out as our enemy and a subverter of his own right and ours, and we would make some other man who was able to defend us our king.²⁵⁴

²⁵³ *Caledon's Tears*, pp. 46-47.

²⁵⁴ "The Declaration of Arbroath," in *The Bruce*, Duncan (ed), p. 780.

But in this competing tradition, though the focus is still upon national sovereignty and the sovereign himself, the nobles are ousted. Yet there is little that is intrinsically exclusive to the eighteenth century about this theory, at least as far as its origin goes. We can certainly see its presence in the sixteenth century, notably in the writings of Sir David Lyndsay (c. 1490-1555). It is in Lyndsay's drama, "Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis" that the figure of John Commonweal comes to the fore, to seek out the new king – "Quhair traist 3e I sall find 3on new cumde King?"²⁵⁵ – with the expressed purpose of relating, without interference from deceitful and corrupt intermediaries, the true state of the nation to him.²⁵⁶ In the "Thrie Estaitis" therefore, the relationship between king and people is more intimate. The theory behind all this appears to be that the people should have the right to praise or chastise the sovereign on a face-to-face basis. With "intermediaries" standing between the two, messages are distorted; loyalties become confused; the ruler and the ruled are out of touch with one another, and each other's wishes and concerns. Furthermore, the intermediaries, may have their own agenda, independent of those of the monarch and the commons, and in fact, at times in direct opposition to each.

This idea was certainly present in the whole Wallace and Bruce saga. The tradition in question involves the conference which allegedly occurred between the two at Carrick after the disastrous (from the point of view of the Scots) Battle of Falkirk. This entire tradition, which predictably starts with Harry,²⁵⁷ centres around Bruce displaying a distrustfulness of Wallace: was the "upstart"²⁵⁸ from Elderslie interested in the Crown of Scotland? It is at this point in time when Wallace, face-to-face, chastises the Bruce for his slothful attitude towards Scotland and its people. As Cowan has pointed out, this might be an example of a related attitude, that it is in

²⁵⁵ David Lyndsay, "Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis (1554 text)," in *The Works of Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount 1490-1555*, D. Hamer (ed) (4 vols; STS, 1931-36), ii, p. 235 (l. 2426).

²⁵⁶ Lyndsay, "Thrie Estaitis," p. 237-39 (ll. 2435-66).

²⁵⁷ *The Bruce and Wallace*, Jamieson (ed.), ii, p. 295-97 (book 10, ll. 439-527).

²⁵⁸ To borrow a word, and line of thinking, from the translation of Buchanan; see *The History of Scotland translated from the Latin of George Buchanan*, J. Aikman (tr.) (4 vols; Glasgow, 1827), i, p. 405.

the heart of the devoted commoner that patriotism finds its most welcome home.²⁵⁹ If this is correct, then it might help explain the fascination early eighteenth century Scottish street literature had for the Wallace/Bruce parley. In such pieces as *The ... Speech of William Wallace ... at the Battle of Falkirk*, we might conceivably be hearing the grievances of so many zealous lovers of their country and countrymen, issuing from the mouth of the Guardian:

But when I see my Fellow Subjects Destitute of leaders by your Cowardice, and Disposed to a most cruel Enemy, not for Slavery, but for Butcherie and Destruction; I took pity upon their case, and have under-taken their Cause, forsaken by you; and I will as soon leave my Life, as forsake their Liberties, Fortunes and Safety. You, to whom nasty Slavery and Security is preferable to honest Liberty with hazard, Embrace that Fortune, which you so greatly Esteem: I shall freely and willingly Die, tho I had a Thousand Lives, in the Defence of my Country. Nor shall the Love of my Country leave me, before my Life forsake me.²⁶⁰

No mention is made here of the lineage, real or imagined of Wallace; no words like “noble” are used in conjunction with a description of the Guardian – he is not even described. The emphasis is not so much upon the person of Wallace, but his actions and what he stood for: “liberty,” “security,” and “safety,” words that could have meant something to everyone.

The whole Wallace/Bruce exchange (and its underlying themes of the nature of sovereignty) seemed too good an opportunity for the eighteenth century neo-Augustans to let slip by. Heading the list is John Harvey, who in the wake of Falkirk and after setting the two heroes at each other’s throats, “arranges” a parley – rendered (as improbable as it may seem) in true quasi-Athenian style – in which

²⁵⁹ Cowan, “Wallace Factor,” p. 18.

²⁶⁰ NLS, 1.520(65); *The Generous and Noble Speech of William Wallace of Elderslie at the battle of Falkirk* (n.d.). The above quoted speech, by the admission of the broadsheet’s printer, was based upon Buchanan. Though this piece is not dated, it is found in the NLS’s collection nestled between other broadsheets dated 1707. Undoubtedly this is why the compiler(s) of the ESTC cautiously date it as having been printed in 1707. If this is correct, perhaps it was hoped that its printing and distribution would help jostle public consciousness, with the talk of parliamentary union in the air.

Perhaps a little ironically, no (known) edition of the *Wallace* was produced in 1707. A questionable edition was printed in 1705; and the Successors of A. Anderson printed another in 1709. However, as has been just suggested, the Guardian may still have been a topic of conversation in 1707. For more on this, see Appendix XII.

Bruce questions Wallace's motives. The Guardian responds in the expected fashion, that his desires were never for the Crown; he had always been loyal to both Scotland and Bruce,²⁶¹ and only desired to open the future king's eyes to the injustice and fraud that had been worked by the hated Edward:

Thus spoke the Chief. His latest Accents roll,
Thro' *Bruces'* Heart, and settle in his Soul.
He finds himself by *Edward's* Fraud misled,
And long by South'ron Artifice betray'd;
Perceives the *Scottish* Leader's loyal Care,
His honest Toils, and unambitious War.²⁶²

In this example, which is a clear deviation from the text of Barbour, Harvey seems to be bowing to this underlying notion that it takes a highly principled commoner to set the wayward monarch back on to the path of patriotism. His inclusion of this exchange between the champion from Elderslie, and Bruce (the father of Robert I) also points toward the strength of the whole Blind Harry tradition during the eighteenth century. Harvey also seems willing to admit, that the common patriot has many things to contend with in order to see the fruition of the dream of living in a just society. For in Harvey's *Bruce*, William Wallace must grapple with more than simply the misdeeds of the English:

Thus for the Muse, in just Example sings
Of Traitors, loyal Chiefs, usurping Kings;
Their Deeds transmitting down to future Times,
In faithful Records, and unbiased Rhimes.
Of virtuous Names she marks the glorious Fate,
And brands with Infamy the factious Great.
Faction! thou dire, thou legionary Fiend,
How dark thy Views, how dismal is thy End?
What num'rous Woes in thy black Bosom dwell?
On Pride first founded, and inspir'd by Hell!
By The Gods were mix'd in dire Debate,
And daring Faction shook th' immortal State!²⁶³

²⁶¹ Harvey, *Bruce*, p. 29.

²⁶² Harvey, *Bruce*, p. 36.

²⁶³ Harvey, *Bruce*, p. 51.

It is this faction, caused by the notables of the land and their proud penchant for self-aggrandisement,²⁶⁴ that, according to Harvey, is at the root of much discontentment, and threatens the very stability of a society.

However, Harvey does have some of his own unique views on the subject of sovereignty. For in his mind, it appears that a wayward monarch like Bruce (the elder)²⁶⁵ does require a Wallace to set him on the correct path. But an intrinsically just monarch (as long as he remains intrinsically just) requires no such assistance. Harvey is very careful to separate the figures and the characters of Bruce the father, and Bruce the future Robert I – something Barbour seems far less interested in.²⁶⁶ In Harvey's poem, the elder Bruce is "The Godlike Leader to *Edina* came | Renounc'd

²⁶⁴ Harvey's remarks here seem specifically directed toward Stewart of Bute, who stubbornly refused to allow Wallace the position of vanguard at the Battle of Falkirk. Later, however, in Harvey's *Bruce* (pp. 57-58) it is "Hunginton" who is the noble at the root of faction, this time directed toward the future Robert I.

²⁶⁵ Harvey, unlike Barbour, is very careful to separate the figures of grandfather, father, and son -- Robert Bruce, Lord of Annandale; Robert Bruce of Carrick; and Robert Bruce, King of Scotland. It seems his intent was to portray the would-be Robert I as a "purer," less corrupted (and therefore, more noble) figure.

On Barbour's original intentions, with regard to merging the three figures, there seems no better source than A.A.M. Duncan, who relates:

This poem [Barbour's *Bruce*] was an account of their [Robert Bruce and James Douglas's] rise from appalling adversity to triumph and to recover both their heritages at Bannockburn. It began with a necessary setting of the scene, a selective account of how the English came to take over Scotland, which identified Robert Bruce the Competitor with his grandson, the king, and gave account of the wars against Edward I between 1296 and 1304 in which the Bruce first opposed, then submitted to that king. Instead Bruce is pictured as rightful king, moved Comyn to take kingship ... and then betrayed by him. Thus Bruce was justified in killing Comyn.

The Bruce, Duncan (ed), p. 8.

²⁶⁶ Barbour makes Robert I both Lord of Annandale and Earl of Carrick, completely bypassing both his father and grandfather (alluded to previously):

Be this resoun that part thocht hale
That the lord off Annandyrdale
Robert the Bruys erle off Carryk
Aucht to succaid to the kynryk.

The Bruce, Duncan (ed.), p. 49 (Book I, ll. 65-68.)

Duncan (p. 48) further deciphers this tangled web of Bruces by relating:
The claimant of 1291-2 [competing with Baliol] was of course Robert Bruce of Annandale (and never earl of Carrick), grandfather of Robert I. Barbour must have known this and deliberately homologated the two, ignoring Robert Bruce who married Marjory Countess of Carrick and in 1292 passed on that earldom to his eldest son, later king.

his Pow'r ..."²⁶⁷ It is this final act which sets the stage for the younger Robert the Bruce to make his triumphant passage to Scotland:

The South'ron Trumpets sound the dread Alarm,
 The War rekindles, and the Legions arm.
 The younger *Bruce* is call'd from *Gallia's* Shore,
 For now the hapless Father was no more.
 In Warlike Pomp array'd, the crowded Host.
 Moves, sable, onward to the *Scottish* coast.²⁶⁸

Unlike the case with Harry, the Bruce in Harvey's book requires no prompting from Wallace to make the journey to Scotland. This Bruce seems to instinctively realise that Scotland is his legal birth-right; a crown that is his by hereditary right, which might be indeed a theory, expressed in Harvey's *Bruce*, that was spawned as a result of the author's own Jacobite leanings. Yet, it certainly appears that though Harvey's main goal in his *Bruce* was not to allow the common-man (Wallace) to steal the scene excessively, it was still an inescapable fact during his times that a good degree of patriot fervour could be found within the bosom of the lowly.

Though they have appeared in some of the most unlikely places, and in some of the most unlikely guises, the images of Bruce and Wallace were indebted to the mentality of the populace for their survival. Certainly though many of individuals who engaged these two figures, did so as part of a higher purpose. This is not to say that even they did not idolise greatly both the Bruce and Wallace for their heroic attributes and deeds. However in effect, people like Freebairn, Harvey, and even Hamilton of Gilbertfield, were producing – in one sense of the word – various forms of propaganda. Good (or perhaps a better word is “effective”) propaganda becomes such when it is able to strike a familiar chord with the general population. This is not to say that there was always a scheme on the part of these people, to insidiously ram their ideas down an unsuspecting and gullible public's throats by dressing-up their plot in the guise of two national heroes. (Although in one or two instances this might have been exactly the case; certainly in Nisbet's work there is a tone that is

²⁶⁷ Harvey, *Bruce*, p. 52.

²⁶⁸ Harvey, *Bruce*, p. 55.

almost hateful at times – that is if *Caledon's Tears* was ever intended to be taken seriously in the first place – though even as a joke, it could be construed as being offensive, both to an Anglo or even a Scot.)

Yet it is within the soul of the people at large that these two heroes found their best audiences. Ballads devoted to both (more so Wallace) were composed and sung by even the commonest of the common; quasi-chapbook editions (devoid of any overt social or political rhetoric) of Barbour's *Bruce* and Blind Harry's *Wallace* were plentiful. Street literature, in the form of broadsides and pamphlets – sometimes, perhaps unfortunately, marred by the politics of the creator – also recounted the deeds of both. Furthermore, the success (even if only limited) of the various clones of the Wallace/Bruce traditions is probably the best testimony to the popularity of Harry's and Barbour's texts. The fact that these imitators were produced in the first place, is highly suggestive that the root stories were familiar. Perhaps the biggest success story where the Wallace/Bruce clones were concerned, was Gilbertfield's *Wallace*. Though it is extremely unlikely that it made folk at large forget about the original, it could not have been so unreadable if it was able to coerce Burns to stand up and take note.

That Wallace still was an integral component of a balladeer's repertoire in the nineteenth century, underscores the fact that he was an endearing figure in general Scottish society. The name of Wallace (together with that of Bruce) held a grip upon the popular imagination greater than most other figures drawn from the pages of Scottish history. As one author put it – speaking on the psyche of fifteenth century Scottish popular culture – the voice of the people gained prominence in the literature after “formal and courtly delights ... [had] faded,” adding that Barbour's “*Bruce* and Blind Harry's *Wallace* can be seen as larger expressions of this force, because they too stem from the sense that a nation is simply its people.”²⁶⁹ The strength of the Wallace and Bruce traditions was very much dependent upon, and interdependent with, the strength of Scotland's voice.

²⁶⁹ Watson, *Literature of Scotland*, p. 31.

These same traditions inevitably revolved around the printing and dissemination of numerous copies of popular editions of both the *Bruce* and *Wallace*. The publishing record of these two examples of popular literature is truly awesome. Having said that, one form of popular literature seemingly outperformed both the *Wallace* and the *Bruce*, with respect to numbers printed and distributed. That form, the popular almanac, is our next stop along the road to categorising the main types of vernacular secular literature in Lowland Scotland.

Chapter Five

**“Almanacs and Prophetic Observations:
the Politics and Sociability of Popular Predictions”**

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.¹

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.²

For centuries people have looked towards the heavens for guidance, be it for the (hopefully) friendly face of God or a god, or for some other celestial force to benevolently intercede on behalf of humanity. At the same time, the heavens could also reveal dire portents; the enlightened, able to interpret such omens, could take precautionary measures and advise others to do likewise. The sensible man or woman would be well-advised to heed the messages offered by the wise astrological prognosticator. Still, the aforementioned excerpts from the Bible are only two from a whole host of similar passages to be found in that particular work: they are nevertheless indicative of how astrological prognostication often went hand-in-hand with Judeo-Christian speculative thought. The relationship between mainstream religion and the “cosmology” of astrological prediction could be erratic – certainly this seemed to be the case in early modern Scotland.

Yet, though some might scoff at the concept, those who are fortunate enough to live in the late twentieth century western world are all too quick to forget that throughout the world, and even in the west of not too many generations ago, the business of living could be a grim experience indeed. To harness the otherwise unpredictable natural environment would be a great accomplishment; to be able to foretell dire events – and prepare – before their happening, could be a way to “cheat” fate. The art of the prognosticator was one tool that could provide the believer with the necessary edge he or she sought in their attempt to overcome dreadful fate.

Almanacs were nothing of a rarity in early eighteenth century Scotland; most of that nation’s printers – both small and large – happily churned-out copy after

¹ Matt. 2:9-10.

² Rev. 15:1.

copy, year after year. The format of these publications, produced around the general model of the ubiquitous chapbook, followed two or three basic outlines. Mainly, they all appeared to mimic the format(s) of their English counterparts. This is not to say that Scottish almanacs were mere reprints of equivalent English ones. Rather, the almanac produced north of the border was specifically tailored to suit the tastes of Scotland – particularly, it appears, for certain Lowland areas. That being said, in addition to containing a certain entertainment factor, this form of prevalent literature³ might reveal several important aspects regarding a commonly held world view.

Before proceeding any further it seems worthy of mention that there are few studies specifically devoted to the Scottish almanac,⁴ in spite of the fact that this was one of the most prevalent forms of popular literature from the early modern period. As the lone modern study on the topic maintained, they were probably the most important and widely distributed chapbook produced, owing to the ease with which they could be printed and carried.⁵ Evidence garnered from Raban's 1625 almanac tends to indicate that chapmen were the chief, if not sole, distributors, during the seventeenth century at least.⁶

Since work has been done on English almanacs,⁷ it is the intent here to direct some of that methodology toward Scottish almanacs, given the common format, if

³ Almanacs were one of the most plentiful publications in Scotland. All examined copies were rendered in English, but in a very common variety of that tongue, which bears little resemblance to the English wielded by the neo-classicists and those who wrote in the language of the "improved." The fact that the Scottish almanacs were rendered in common English, might further enhance the notion that they were based upon English equivalents.

⁴ The only twentieth century study of Scottish almanacs – comparatively brief as it may be – is W.R. McDonald, "Scottish Seventeenth-Century Almanacs," in *The Bibliotheca*, vol 4 (1963-66). Those persons interested in early modern Scottish almanacs, as well as chapbook literature of all sorts, owe him an undying debt of gratitude, since he conveniently compiled a catalogue of all the seventeenth century almanacs (pp. 295-322). McDonald's list begins in 1623 and ends in 1700, and features – truly incredibly – 100 distinct entries, which once again serves as a true testament to the popularity of this form of literature.

⁵ McDonald, "Scottish Seventeenth-Century Almanacs," p. 260.

⁶ McDonald, "Scottish Seventeenth-Century Almanacs," p. 260. The item in question seems to be *Prognostication, for ... 1625 ...*, (Aberdeen for D. Melvill by Raban). See H.G. Aldis, *A List of Books Printed in Scotland Before 1700* (originally published 1904; this edition, including a continuum for the year 1700, published Edinburgh, 1970).

⁷ Such as those by Curry and Capp; full citations for their works to follow.

not the content, of specific almanacs produced for the respective English and Scottish markets. As might be expected, the virtually unanswerable question is whether the Scots almanacs were direct copies of their English counterparts, or whether they represented some sort of parallel development.⁸ Because they seem to very closely mimic their English counterparts, in some cases, and also since there was no shortage of English-based almanacs circulating in Scotland, it might be that the first scenario is more likely true, but anything is possible in this respect. Nevertheless, because of these similar characteristics, it seems justifiable to use some of the approaches adopted by those studying early modern English almanacs.

As initially stated, religion and astrology have made for strange companions in the past. In one sense, the two were in “competition” with one another. From earliest times, the natural and supernatural forces governing human existence seemed untameable, and beyond the understanding of ordinary mankind. Astrology was the first discipline that embodied a form of a scientific process⁹ designed to give humanity some (theoretical) control over its own destiny.¹⁰ It was, in fact, “the most ambitious attempt ever made to reduce the baffling diversity of human affairs to some sort of intelligible order.”¹¹ Nevertheless, it is probably incorrect to categorise early modern astrology as being exclusively a science:

Astrology ... was not a science. It was not a religion. It was not magic. Nor was it astronomy, mathematics, puritanism, neo-Platonism, psychology, meteorology, alchemy or witchcraft. It used some of these as tools; it held tenets in common with others; and some people were adept at several of these skills. But in the final

⁸ McDonald, “Seventeenth-Century Scottish Almanacs,” p. 257, grapples with this problem for all of about two or three sentences, then gives up, having arrived at few definitive conclusions.

⁹ On this subject, S.J. Tester, *A History of Western Astrology* (Woodbridge, 1987), p. 11, said: “Since astrology proper depends upon the charting of the movements and positions of the planets, it could not arise until after the growth of mathematical astronomy.” Related to this, Scottish almanac writers often took great pains to relate their (supposed) mathematical and scientific credentials to their readership.

¹⁰ B. Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press. English Almanacs 1500-1800* (London and Boston, 1979), pp. 15-16.

¹¹ K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic. Studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England* (Harmondsworth, 1971), p. 340.

analysis it was only itself: a unique divinatory and prognostic art embodying centuries of accreted methodology and tradition.¹²

Yet prognostication did figure into certain religious narrative, such as in the Bible. Furthermore, since the length and breadth of Creation was the handiwork of the Almighty, it was reasoned that He had put the stars in their places to provide humanity with “a source of divine guidance.”¹³ The source for this belief seems to be, once again, Biblical testimony:

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years ... And God made two great lights; the great light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.¹⁴

However, the issue is not quite so clear-cut as that. It seemed that – again staying with the theoretical aspects of the question – ambiguity existed. Though consultation of the stars may have been acceptable often, those who performed the consultation (prognostication) could arouse suspicion. What seemed questionable was the sincerity of the person performing the prognostication, and most of all their interpretations of the significance of astrological events. It was thus not so much the knowledge of celestial phenomena that could be open to scrutiny, but the application of such. To this end, the Bible warns the devout Christian (and/or Jew):

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder. And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not harken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.¹⁵

Of course the term “other gods” could be fairly liberally interpreted by any overly-zealous religious authority. For example, Galileo’s “other god” was his telescope, and belief in its “wonders” earned him the unenviable title of heretic.

¹² A. Geneva, *Astrology and the Seventeenth Century Mind. William Lilly and the Language of the Stars* (Manchester, 1995), p. 9.

¹³ P. Curry, *Prophecy and Power. Astrology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 3.

¹⁴ Genesis 1:14, 16.

¹⁵ Deut. 13:1-3.

In general, religious authorities were always suspicious of forms of prediction such as astrology, for it mitigated “the freedom of the human will.”¹⁶ Furthermore, during the reformation era, astral prognostication was deemed to be a form of idolatry by Luther and (especially) Calvin, and was attacked because it seemingly stood in the way of the direct relationship between God and Mankind.¹⁷ Thus, in the form of one of his (numerous) religious tracts, apparently distributed through Britain, the Genevan reformer lashed-out at the “diuelish superstition” of astronomy.¹⁸ For Calvin, however, the real demon was judicial astronomy; natural, on the other hand, seemed fine to him. God, after all, did put lights into both the day and night-time skies so that men could reckon the time of planting and harvesting; to know the seasons; reckon general patterns of weather; and come to know the art of navigation.¹⁹ Overly clever men had perverted this noble science, granted to mankind by the Almighty – such individuals were like the false prophet, claiming to have knowledge of the time and place of God’s final vengeance upon the wicked. However, Calvin laments, he is powerless when it comes to trying to convert these corrupt men; rather, he is intent upon warning the multitude, so that they may be made aware of the “difference bet-wirte the right Astrologie and these superstici[ou]s of charmers and sorcerers.”²⁰ As a result of religiously motivated ideas such as these, the most suspicious aspect of astrology was manifested when it attempted to project the specific fate of individuals, nations, and institutions, which is commonly referred to as “judicial astronomy.”²¹

However in Scotland, judicial astronomy was not always so quickly dismissed as mere superstition, especially when heavenly and natural signs, thought

¹⁶ Curry, *Prophecy and Power*, p. 10.

¹⁷ Curry, *Prophecy and Power*, p. 11; cf. J. Klaits, *Servants of Satan. The Age of the Witch Hunts* (Bloomington, 1985), p. 35. In fact, an important observation (possibly alluded to by Klaits) is that this fear of the stars standing between the Almighty and His people may have been present in the minds of men of religion even before reformation.

¹⁸ GUL Spec. Coll., Bi 7-L.15; Jean Calvin, *An admonicion (sic) against astrologie iudiciall and other curiosities the raigne now in the world ...* (London, n.d.), p. 12.

¹⁹ Calvin, *An admonicion*, pp. 15-16.

²⁰ Calvin, *An admonicion*, p. 14.

²¹ It was this form of astrology which was the precursor to the horoscope.

to be providentially sent, seemed to show the path toward godliness. Thus, when Queen Mary returned to Scotland in August of 1561, John Knox quipped that,

The very face of heaven, the time of her arrival, did manifestly speak what comfort was brought into the country with her, to wit, sorrow, dolour, darkness, and all impiety. For in memory of her, that day of the year was never seen a more dolorous face of the heaven than was at her arrival, which two days did so continue; for besides the surface wet, and, corruption of the air, the mist was so thick and so dark that scarce might any man espy another the length of two span of boots. The sun was not seen to shine two days before, nor two days after. That fore-warning gave God unto us; but alas, the most part were blind.²²

Knox even sees the relationship between dire portents and the fortunes of world rulers. Thus, he believed that there was a significance to a comet – “the fiery besom” – seen in the skies of November, December, and January 1555-56, since it foretold the death of King Christian of Denmark, and the onset of a war between Scotland and England.²³

Knox’s predictions and interpretations of astral and meteorological phenomena seem to underscore an important point regarding power structures, and their use of astrology. It often appears the case that it was not so much what was said, but by whom. Those in positions of power could exercise much greater freedom within the realm of prophecy, astrology, etc. Thus, in early modern Scotland, prognostication came under government scrutiny fairly early. Yet it appears that legislation tabled to control such, was aimed at specific groups. An act issued in 1574, and repeated in 1579, listed the punishments that were to be meted-out to those caught practising the act.²⁴ The appearance, however, of these parliamentary decrees was never to specifically curtail prognostication itself, but

²² *John Knox’s History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Dickinson, W.C. (ed.) (2 vols; London, Edinburgh, 1949), ii, p. 7.

²³ *History of the Reformation*, i, 124. Obviously Knox is making this connection after the fact, since his editor, Dickinson, points out that both Christian II and III died in 1559, while the war (and resulting peace) Knox describes took place in Carlisle in July 1557.

²⁴ Similar decrees were issued in England only slightly earlier in the sixteenth century, though the motivation for such may have been different; see Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, chap. 9, especially p. 307.

rather to limit the number of wandering beggars, of whom itinerant fortune-tellers were but one of a number of “suspicious” individuals.²⁵ In fact, the tone of the 1579 decree is such that the “crime” of idleness is as much the reason why these people should be ostracised, as for their “ability” to predict future events:

The Idle people calling þame selffis egyptians Or ony vþis that
 fen3eis þame selffis to haue knowlege of prophecie charmeing or
 vtheris abusit sciences *quair*by the persuaið the people That they can
 tell þair weardis deathis & fortunes and sic vther fantasticall
 Imaginationes ...²⁶

Notice, however, how the Scottish authorities in the sixteenth century -- despite their attitude towards some of those persons who practised it -- were still inclined to refer to prognostication as a “science.” Perhaps this underscores the point that they still had a lingering belief that prediction involved some systematic, sequential mental processes in order to arrive at a conclusion. In other words, the authorities still retained a lingering belief that if certain astute persons were able to notice that when “a” occurred, followed immediately by “b” then these same individuals possessed the ability to say with certainty that “c” was about to happen. This belief on their part reflected the general attitude of society at large toward astrology. The scientific methodology of the astronomer would be more or less firmly linked with the prognostication of the astrologer until well into the seventeenth century. It was only during the course of the seventeenth century that the final split between astronomy and astrology would occur, at which point the practitioner of one was no longer necessarily the practitioner of the other.²⁷

Still, though it may be true that parliament never repeated its legislation against wandering soothsayers beyond 1579,²⁸ it seems that the burgh authorities

²⁵ A. Gow, *Prophetic Belief in Early Modern Scotland, 1560-1700* (Unpublished MA thesis, University of Guelph, Canada, 1989), p. 193.

²⁶ *APS*, iii, p. 140.

²⁷ D. Parker, *Familiar to All. William Lilly and Astrology in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1975), p. 213.

²⁸ An point raised by Gow, *Prophetic Belief*, p. 193.

instead took it upon themselves to re-issue the warning, as suggested by the following “Instructions to the constables” in 1695:

They shall stay and arreist all vaggabounds, sturdie beggar, and Egiptians, and carie them befor ane of the magistrats, who are to take order for ther committing to prison or other punishment according to law.²⁹

In this example, as in the parliamentary decree of 1579, gypsies are referred to as “Egyptians” and are once again classed as being among the idle. Suspicions surrounding their activities were to continue well into the closing stages of the eighteenth century: the – in this instance – opinionated Chambers described them as being naturally predisposed toward armed robbery.³⁰

Attitudes in Scotland toward prediction continued to be wrought with inconsistency. At the close of the sixteenth century James VI scoffed at the “vaine” astrologer, studying the “course of the starres” for personal satisfaction only, and not for the betterment of those around them.³¹ His tone is one of indifference: though those that practised it may have been deluded, self-seeking fools, there was little that was overtly sinister about astrology itself. However, with the commencement of the infamous Scottish witch-hunt, initiated (arguably) by that same James VI, the art of prognostication increasingly became linked with the forces of diabolism. Though it is not the intent here to delve into the Scottish witch-hunt in any depth, it is worth noting at least one trial – that of Margaret Wallace – in which this same link was made (doubtless among others). The wife of John Dynning, a Glasgow merchant, Wallace was put on trial on 20 March, 1622. Referring to the familiar Biblical authority of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, the presiding magistrates made it clear that Wallace’s alleged skills and activities contravened the law, which stood “againis þe vsearis and practizaris of Witchcraft, Sorcerie, Charming, and Sothesaying, and

²⁹ *Extracts from The Records of The Royal Burgh of Lanark with Charters and Documents Relating to the Burgh AD 1150-1722* (Glasgow, 1893), p. 255.

³⁰ Robert Chambers (ed), *Domestic Annals of Scotland*, 2nd ed. (3 vols; Edinburgh, 1859-1861), iii, p. 233.

³¹ King James VI, “Basilicon Doron” in J.P. Sommerville (ed), *King James VI and I, Political Writings* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 44.

against the seikeris of help and responsis of thame, thraiting and denouncing to be committeris of sic devillisch practize, and pwneischment of daith.”³² The fate of the unfortunate woman was thus sealed.

This apparent inconsistency in attitude towards prediction might be attributable to the passage of time, hostility increasing as fervour for ferreting-out suspected witches intensified. This seems a partial, but not fully adequate explanation. The true cause of the authorities’ on one hand indifference, on the other hostility, toward prognostication, seems linked to probably one of the root causes of such occurrences as the witch-hunt, that being religious fervour. Yet again, the main issue here is one of power. Those who were responsibly for trying witches, theoretically, had to believe that the art of the witch was real. In other words, they had to believe, or else at least give the appearance of believing, that such practices as prognostication were possible, and not just the stuff of legend or fable. Thus, it was perfectly acceptable for some kirkmen to actively show a keen interest in judicial prophecy, even though this form might be a dangerous variety for some people to be actively engaged in. Thus, judicial prophecy was practised in Calvinist Scotland, and often it stemmed from some of the most unlikely sources, such as the Reverend Robert Wodrow (1679-1734).

Devout evangelical Calvinist minister to Eastwood, adherent to the Covenant and apologist for the excesses of the covenanting movement,³³ University of Glasgow librarian, prolific writer,³⁴ antiquarian, and premier bibliophile, Wodrow appears to have had a hearty interest in the world of the uncanny.³⁵ His *Analecta*

³² Robert Pitcairn (ed), *Ancient Trials in Scotland* (3 vols; Edinburgh, 1833), iii, p. 508.

³³ A major motivation for Wodrow writing his *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* appears to have been to respond to George Mackenzie’s anti-covenanting comments. Thus, *History of the Sufferings* often appears as an apology for the violence and disloyalty of Restoration presbyterians. On this, see C. Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s Past* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 67.

³⁴ A bibliography of his printed works can be found in W.J. Couper, “Robert Wodrow,” in *Records of Scottish Church History Society*, vol. 3 (1929), pp. 125-30. Couper also briefly discusses Wodrow’s manuscripts.

³⁵ Though discussions of Wodrow and his activities abound, very few concern themselves with his interest in the occult. Recently, significant work has been done in this field by Yeoman, cited below. His interest in The Prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer (see below), however, seems to have gone largely un-noticed.

was a virtual cornucopia of (judicial) prophecy, both his own and that of others.³⁶ A good example of this is his record of the fate of the victor of the Battle of Killiecrankie (27 July 1689), John Graham, First Viscount of Dundee and Lord Graham of Claverhouse, as foretold by Michael Bruce, minister of Anwoth. Accusing John of thinking himself a reincarnation of an earlier Stewart supporter by the name of Graham (James, First Marquis of Montrose), Bruce apparently predicted that Claverhouse would be killed at Killiecrankie. John Graham did indeed perish early in the engagement when he was struck with a gunshot, possibly in the head, but more likely in the side.³⁷

Wodrow amassed a sizeable collection of anecdotes on the uncanny, though this material only counted for approximately one per cent in an otherwise gigantic inventory, the bulk of which were historical papers of one sort or another.³⁸ All these papers contained anecdotes that would provide the basis for much of his historical writings. History, especially that which stressed evidence over narrative, was deemed extremely important to Calvinists like Wodrow.³⁹ Following the lead

³⁶ It is really impossible here to do full justice to the vast corpus of Wodrow's writings, let alone only the material dealing with prophecy and other forms of what is referred to today as the paranormal. Rather, the intention here is to provide only a sampling, while trying to tie it in with the larger question of judicial prophecy as practised in Scotland.

³⁷ Robert Wodrow, *Analecta: or, Materials for a History of Remarkable Providences; Mostly Relating to Scotch Ministers and Christians* (4 vols; Edinburgh, Maitland Club, 1842-1843), ii, p. 60. *The Scots Peerage. Founded on Wood's Edition of Sir Robert Douglas's Peerage of Scotland*, J.B. Paul (ed) (9 vols; Edinburgh, 1904-14), iii, pp. 324-31, claims that Claverhouse was shot in the head. A more up to date biography gives this account of Claverhouse's final moments:

It was then, with the battle [of Killiecrankie] barely begun, that a bullet struck Dundee. Whether it hit him as he raised his arm to signal, or whether it struck as he turned to his left, is not known, probably the former, for Balhaldie says that he was hit on the left side 'about two hand's-breadth within his armour', which might have risen up as he waved. Balcarres, who says he had a vision of Dundee's death as he lay in prison in Edinburgh, wrote that the wound was on the right side, but gave no detail. The Gaelic bard Iain Lom, talked of Dundee's being hit 'beneath the skirt of [his] tunic'.

M. Linklater and C. Hesketh, *For King and Conscience. John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee (1648-1689)* (London, 1989), pp. 218-19.

³⁸ E-mail message from Dr L.A. Yeoman, National Library of Scotland, 27 Feb., 1998.

³⁹ D. Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 53. Probably for this reason, most of Wodrow's historical efforts seem to take the form of one contemporary accounting of events followed by another, arranged in more or less chronological order, or significance. The idea here seems to be one of "allowing the evidence speak for itself" – which might be an extension of one way in which the die-hard Calvinist viewed Biblical testimony, that (surely) the Word of God was self-evident.

of such protestant historians as Knox, Calderwood, and Kirkton, the minister of Eastwood believed that there was an integral relationship between scripture, providential authority, history, and prophecy:

Most Calvinists of this sort not only believed that God attached a peculiar importance to the creation and dissemination of an accurate historical account. They believed that history itself was in some sense a special formulation of the Divine Word. Indeed, they were convinced that historical time was marked, or even motivated, by providential occurrences and that history was therefore capable of being a prophetic medium second in authority only to scripture.⁴⁰

In a collection of his papers held by his old alma mater – The University of Glasgow – there can be found a transcription of *The Prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer*. Yet another example of long-standing Scottish tradition, its significance in the hands of Wodrow reinforces the idea that established culture can maintain its vitality when utilised in promoting a viewpoint, such as in this instance, devout Calvinism. But Wodrow's was not the only viewpoint which made use of this work, popularly ascribed to one Thomas de Erceldoune,⁴¹ who probably died sometime late in the thirteenth century.⁴² Said to have acquired the gift of prophecy from the queen of fairy-land – a land which he himself allegedly visited for seven years – Thomas's abilities were the stuff of both folk legend, and aristocratic pretensions. Thomas's predictions eventually became legendary, and were included in the narratives of such figures as Walter Bower (in his continuation to John of Fordun), Hector Boece, and even Sir Walter Scott. Bower was the first on the scene with his *Scotichronicon* (c.1430), in which the question is posed: "Do you not remember what the country prophet Thomas de Earlston had said ... the night before the death of King Alexander?"⁴³ Bower's Latin narrative continues with the Rhymer's prophecy of the great storm about to hit Scotland after Alexander III's death –

⁴⁰ Allan, *Virtue and Learning*, p. 51.

⁴¹ Presumably derived from the village, now named Earlston, in Berwickshire.

⁴² *The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune ...*, J.A.H. Murray (ed.), (London, EETS, 1875), p. xi.

⁴³ Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, D.E.R. Watt (et al. ed) (8vols; Aberdeen, 1987-96), v, p. 429 (book 10, chap. 43).

presumably referring to the monarchical crisis that death would cause, which opened the door to John Baliol and Edward I, precipitating the Wars of Independence. In one version of that struggle for Scottish independence, Blind Harry's *Wallace* (c.1480), that same country prophet makes an appearance, "Thomas Rimour in-to the Faile was than | With the mynystir, quilk was a worthi man,"⁴⁴ and offers the crucial prediction regarding the career of the illustrious Wallace,

Than Thomas said, "Forsuth, or he deces,
Mony thousand in feild sall mak thar end.
Off this regioun he sall the Sothroun send,
And Scotland thris he sall bryng to pes.
So gud off hand agayne sall neur be kend."⁴⁵

Finally, the testimonial of Hector Boece (1527, and very similar to that of the earlier Bower), affords us a look at the development of the mystique surrounding Thomas:

It is said the day afore the kingis death, the Erle of Merche demandit ane prophit namit Thomas Rimour otherways namit Ersiltoun, quhat weddir suld be on the morrow. To quhane answerit this Thomas That on the morrow, afore noun, sall blaw the gretist wind that evir wes hard afore in Scotland. On the morrow, quhen it was neur noun, the lib appearing loune, but only din or tempest. The erle send for this propheit, and reprivit him that he prognosticat sic wind to be and ner appearance thairof. This Thomas maid lital ansuer, bot said, Noun is not yit gane: and, incontinent, ane man come to the yet, schawing that king wes slane. Then said the propheit, Yone is the wind that sall blow, to the gret calamite and trouble of a Scotland. This Thomas wes ane man of gret admiration to the peple and shew sindry thingis as they fell, howbeit thay were ay hid under obscure wourdis.⁴⁶

Here we can see the reputation of Thomas beginning to build among the "peple" at large. As noted earlier in conjunction with the Wallace sage, any popular affinity that a tradition can capture, seems to be beneficial in helping to promote its longevity. Noteworthy as well, is Boece's statement that all of Thomas's prophecies

⁴⁴ *Hary's Wallace (Vita Nobilissimi Defensoris Scotie Wilelmi Wallace Militis)*, M.P. McDiarmid (ed) (2 vols; STS, 1968-69), i, p. 27 (lib. 2, ll. 288-89).

⁴⁵ *Hary's Wallace*, McDiarmid (ed.), i, p. 29 (lib. 2, ll. 346-50).

⁴⁶ *The History and Chronicles of Scotland: Written in Latin by Hector Boece ... and Translated by John Bellenden ...* (2 vols; Edinburgh, 1821), ii, p. 358 (book 13, chap. 21).

were blanketed in “obscure wourdis” – a common trait of most prophecy, for if it was sufficiently vague, it could potentially foretell just about any event.

However, the essential point is that Thomas the Rhymer was yet another example of a long-standing tradition in Lowland Scots mass culture. A good example supporting this claim is the presence of popular ballads relating Thomas’s legendary journey to fairy-land, where he received the gift of prophecy from the Queen of the Fairies. Three main variants of this ballad, “Thomas Rymer,” are known to exist.⁴⁷ The first – “A” – was recited to Alexander Fraser Tytler by Mrs Brown of Falkland in April 1800.⁴⁸ Sir Walter Scott collected another version, and included it in his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. These ballads represent a wealth of popular culture related to the world of “unco” folk, such as fairies, especially, but also dwarfs, water-sprites, devils, the souls of the departed, and even witches⁴⁹ – in some of which the Reverend Robert Wodrow had an interest.

Wodrow’s version of the ubiquitous *The Prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer*⁵⁰ is not in his own hand, but rather appears to be in that of a secretary, James Reid.⁵¹ Nevertheless, there are additions to the manuscript done in the reverend’s own handwriting.⁵² The manuscript of Wodrow’s *Thomas the Rhymer* bears a close resemblance to standard printed editions.⁵³ Only (largely) inconsequential

⁴⁷ There are preserved in Francis James Child (ed), *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (5 vols; Boston and New York, 1882-1898), i, pp. 317-29.

⁴⁸ Child, p. 317.

⁴⁹ Child, p. 319.

⁵⁰ It was apparently popular well into the 1800s (*The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune*, Murray {ed}, p. xlii), while there appears to have been “twelve ... editions, printed between the years 1680 and 1746 (*Collection of Ancient Scottish Prophecies* {Edinburgh, Banantyne and Co., 1833}, p. vi).” Editions noted by Aldis include: 1603, Waldegrave; 1615, Andrew Hart; 1617; Andrew Hart; 1625, Heirs of A. Hart; 1680, Heirs of A. Anderson; 1683, Heir of A. Anderson; 1690, “Edinburgh;” 1695, J. Reid. See H.G. Aldis, *A List of Books Printed in Scotland Before 1700* (Originally printed 1904; reprinted with continuation including 1700, Edinburgh, 1970).

⁵¹ That Reid performed transcription work for Wodrow, was confirmed during a telephone conversation with Dr L.A. Yeoman, National Library of Scotland, 22 Feb., 1998.

⁵² See, GUL Spec. Coll., MS Gen. 1215; [James Reid{?} transcription for Robert Wodrow] *The Prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer*. For a description of the believed provenance of the MS, refer to archivist’s entry for MS Gen. 1215 in Glasgow University Special Collections MS catalogue.

⁵³ See, for example:

Waldegraves’s 1603 edition, in *Collection of Ancient Scottish Prophecies*, pp. 18-25.

GUL Spec. Coll., Bd. 20-g.39; *The Whole Prophecy of Scotland, England, France, Ireland, and Denmark ... Prophesied by Thomas Rymer* (Edinburgh, James Watson, 1718), pp. 15-22.

differences in wording and orthography exist, sufficient to suggest that scribe and/or master were fully familiar with standard versions of the text, but still were not simply copying verbatim a printed edition. The lexicon and orthography of progressive editions of *Thomas the Rhymer*, including Wodrow's, shows some increasing preference for early modern Anglo-Scots⁵⁴ on the part of their creators. This tendency for late seventeenth and early eighteenth century printers, copyists, and others, to progressively update their texts, has been cited elsewhere;⁵⁵ it seems, therefore, that the noted versions of *Thomas the Rhymer* also followed this trend. Thus, the superfluous final "e" found in Waldegraves' 1603 edition, is largely dispensed with in Millar's 1739 version, the latter also replacing "u" with "v" where appropriate:

(1603)
Baners fiue againe shal striue,

(1739)
Banners five again shal strive.⁵⁶

The Wodrow/Reid transcription seems to closely approximate both Watson's 1718 edition, and that of Millar's. However, some minor differences in line order are observable:

(1718)
His horse was all of silver shine
In it a ramping Lyon keen,
Seemly into Gold was set;
His Border was of azur sheen,
His shield was shaped right seemly
With silk and sable well was plate.

(Wodrow)

GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 34-h.12; *The Whole Prophecy ... by Thomas Rymer* (Glasgow, Alexander Millar, 1739), pp. 21-28.

NLS, Hall, 149.1; *The whole prophecies of Scotland, England, Ireland, France, and Denmark. Prophesied by Thomas the Rymer, Marvellous Merlin ... [et al.]* (Glasgow, James Duncan, 1746).

⁵⁴ My own term, fully described and defined in a previous chapter; see following note.

⁵⁵ This transition in the texts of Barbour's *Bruce*, and Blind Harry's *Wallace*, has been described in my chapter on the Wallace and Bruce traditions.

⁵⁶ Line 88 in both cases.

His Horse was all of the Silver Sheen,
 His Shield was shaped right and seemly,
 In it a Ramping Lyon keen,
 Seemly into Gold was set;
 It's (sic) Border was of Azur Sheen,
 With Silk and Sable well was plate.⁵⁷

The transposition of these lines does not greatly influence the general narrative, although Wodrow's version of events definitely makes more sense. Further, it does appear that Wodrow (or his secretary) may have introduced some personal preferences into the text. That being said, the real burning question is whether Wodrow's interest in such pieces as *The Prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer* was mere antiquarian fascination, or something more significant.

Despite being a rational man of science and theology, Wodrow was also an evangelical, which appears to have bestowed upon him a genuine belief in the existence of a mystical realm, inhabited by witches, demons, ghosts, and other elements of the metaphysical.⁵⁸ Such unearthly apparitions represent examples of folk belief drawn from tradition, in some cases, centuries old. As such, they represent a convoluted mixture of local tradition, folklore, myth and legend; including elements of both mainstream and provincial Christian ideology, as well as pre-Christian (i.e. pagan) thought. In the case of Wodrow, however, his receptivity toward the supernatural may be attributable to his being in tune with popular tradition; on the other hand, it may represent something else.

As an evangelical and defender of the covenanting tradition, Wodrow may have subscribed to what has been described as,

... the 'double covenant' theory of [religious] conversion so popular in Scotland. Under this doctrine believers had to make a (usually traumatic) transition from a state of despair and possible damnation (the covenant of works) to the state of election (the covenant of grace).⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Lines 24-29 in both cases. Wodrow and 1603 have similar line ordering; orthography is different, however.

⁵⁸ L.A. Yeoman, "The Devil as Doctor: Witchcraft, Wodrow and the Wider World," in *Scottish Archives*, vol. 1 (1995), p. 101.

⁵⁹ Yeoman, "The Devil as Doctor," p. 94.

This theory further dictates that if a person were susceptible to being approached by a mystical force such as the Grace of God, they were just as apt to being approached by the Dark One and his minions – such fearsome (and loathsome) creatures as demons, witches, and warlocks. The elect, however, could overcome the advances of the forces of diabolism;⁶⁰ presumably those who succumbed were not among the elect. The Devil, then, used the same tactics as the Almighty in attempting to win converts. Thus, the Robert Wodrows of late seventeenth and early eighteenth century Scotland who still believed in a metaphysical universe filled with spectres both good and evil, were simply “steeped in the psychology and the experiences of the conversion process.”⁶¹ Thus, in his mind, there was empirical evidence for such unearthly apparitions.

By the same token, Wodrow seems to have looked upon judicial prophecy as a genuine phenomenon. Certainly, however, one prophet could be inspired through providence, while another could be a false prophet (“beware the false prophet”). Though it is not the intent here to delve into the world of early modern Scottish religious prophecy, suffice it to say that this more elitist sort of predication resulted in a vast body of pamphleteering, hopeful of bolstering one side or another in the equally numerous spiritual debates which often gripped the nation. Yet possibly where Wodrow and his ilk were concerned, judicial prophecy was providential when it seemed to coincide with their viewpoint on a particular subject, and when it was made by one of their own. Thus, a prediction made by a member of the Scottish Kirk, claiming that a member of the Scots peerage who led the forces opposing the succession of a protestant monarch (William III) would meet his death, could have been seen as a revelation (not to mention retribution) from Heaven. Did the

⁶⁰ As Yeoman, “The Devil as Doctor,” p. 104, states, these attitudes could be present among not only among adherents to the Covenant, but also those of any zealous religious persuasion, including the counter-reform Catholics of France, “who followed a conversion path of impossible total surrender to God,” could “experience frightening demonic possessions.”

⁶¹ Yeoman, “The Devil as Doctor,” p. 101.

reverend Robert Wodrow view *The Prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer* as being providential?

On the surface, there is much that might lead to the conclusion that a Robert Wodrow could have seen the alleged predictions made by Thomas as being supportive of wickedness. Firstly, they (presumably) predicted a united kingdom of Britain, ruled by a monarch of ancient lineage:

A French Queen shall bear the Son
 Shall rule all Britain to the sea.
 Which of Brúces Blood shall come,
 As near as the Ninth Degree.⁶²

Tradition held that Robert the Bruce was the progenitor of the Royal Stewarts (see previous chapters), and that the Union of the Crowns upon James VI's accession to the English throne indeed had been long-time prophesied.⁶³ Furthermore, the "conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Aries in 1603 (occurring only once in 800 years) signified events of the grandest proportions to the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe; in Scotland the importance of this impending occurrence was satisfied through the person of James, and gave new meaning to the sage sayings of Thomas.⁶⁴ However, in the case of *The Prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer*, references to the "French Queen's" son were probably grafted onto the original in order for James VI to *appear* as its focal point,⁶⁵ and as the bringer of peace to an island long divided by strife and war between the north and the south:

⁶² "Wodrow's" *Thomas the Rhymer*, ll. 237-240; cf. *Ancient Scottish Prophecies*, p. 25.

⁶³ For a discussion of this see Gow, *Prophetic Belief*, chapter 3.

⁶⁴ A.H. Williamson, "Number and national consciousness: the Edinburgh mathematicians and Scottish political culture at the union of the crowns," in R.A. Mason (ed), *Scots and Britons. Scottish political thought and the union of 1603* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 201; cf. A.H. Williamson, *Scottish National Consciousness in the Age of James VI: The Apocalypse, the Union and the shaping of Scotland's Public Culture* (Edinburgh, 1979), p. 176n.

⁶⁵ It is related in *Thomas of Erceldoune*, Murray (ed.), xxxvii, that:

... the prediction of the "French Wife" and her son was added to the prophecy ... The origin of this prediction, forty years before, being now quite forgotten, it was accepted as a genuine deliverance of the Rymour himself, and continued to be held in the highest credit as his. It was applied to Queen Mary, as having been the wife of a French prince, by the poet Alexander Scott in his "New Year's Address to the Queen," and finally, when her son James VI actually succeeded to the English throne, the renown of Thomas as the accredited author of the prophecy filled all Britain, and excited attention even beyond the seas.

Go thee Two Knights then did she say,
Let be your strife, my Knights ...

Saint Andrew, thou hast thee Right;
Saint George, thou art my own Knight ...

Tho Knights two the Field to tae
Where many Men in shall Fight;
Know you well it shall be sae,
That Die shall many a Gentle knight,
With Death shall many Dought deal.⁶⁶

That this grafting of the personage of James to the Rhymer's prophecy was deemed complete and convincing in the minds of at least some, might explain why, with the monarch's death in March of 1625, a gap in the printing record of the *Whole Prophecies of Scotland* is noted from then until 1680.⁶⁷ This same relationship between monarch and prophecy is what probably motivated the redoubtable Andrew Hart to dedicate his 1615 edition of the same work to James VI: "Sacro Et Avg. Mona. | Iacobo, magnæ Brit. Gal. & | Hib. Regi & cæt."⁶⁸

If *The Prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer* was meant to be applied to a uniting monarch like James, perhaps Wodrow's attitude toward it should have been one of total disapproval. First of all, the concept of a united kingdom of Britain – at least as it was set-up in Wodrow's own time – did not seem to sit well with him. The incorporating union of 1707, in principle, guaranteed the maintenance of the Scottish kirk; nevertheless, 1710-14 brought with it "a number of unwelcome changes, including toleration and the restoration of patronage."⁶⁹ Wodrow, apparently, could

⁶⁶ "Wodrow's" *Thomas the Rymer*, ll. 58-59, 62-63, 76-80; cf. *Ancient Scottish Prophecies*, pp. 19-20.

⁶⁷ After the 1625 edition by the Heirs of A. Hart, apparently no edition was printed until 1680, when it was done by the Heirs of A. Anderson.

⁶⁸ *Ancient Scottish Prophecies*, p. 59. Though, admittedly, many early modern printers (especially King's Printers, like Hart) dedicated their efforts to the reigning monarch, probably as a show of appreciation for his or her patronage.

⁶⁹ Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, p. 59. The original decree of January 1707 can be found in *APS*, vol. 11, p. 413, which relates,

... That the foresaid True Protestant Religion contained in the ... Confession of Faith with the form ... of Worship presently in use within this Church and its Presbyterian Church Government and Discipline, that is to say, the Government of the Church by Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries, Provincial Synods and General

“see the writing on the wall,” for even in 1709 he wrote of the threats posed to the kirk by incorporating union, and “the groundless opinion of so many, that our constitution is unalterably secured to us by the late Union.”⁷⁰ Little doubt of it, the ramifications of full political union, as achieved in 1707, often left a bitter taste in the mouth of the minister of Eastwood.

Wodrow’s attitude toward monarchical union seems a bit more ambivalent, however. One ruler for both Scotland and England seemed a tolerable situation, providing that monarch did not impede Scottish protestantism. For a monarch such as George I, Wodrow at least makes the overtures of praise – the Hanoverian, as “Head of the Protestant interest” in not only Britain, but all of Europe, is wished a “happy and glorious reign over [his] kingdoms, and useful life to the church of God, mankind, and those lands ...”⁷¹ The tone of his words are such, that the king is thought to be the servant of church and state, perhaps quite the opposite from the sort of kingdom envisioned by James VI, who arguably saw himself as being above all other estates within the land. And James’s descendants continued in like manner, threatening not only the religion, but the very liberty of the nation.⁷² Quite likely then, if Wodrow was aware (and why would he not have been) that *The Prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer* was thought by some to have been applicable to James VI, it was not for love of that (or any other) Stewart monarch that compelled him in its direction. What was the reason?

Assemblies ... shall Remain and Continue unalterable, and ... shall be the only Government of Church within the Kingdom of Scotland.

On the question of the patronage act of 1712, see (among others) R. Sher and A. Murdoch, “Patronage and Party in the Church of Scotland, 1750-1800,” in N. Macdougall (ed), *Church, Politics and Society: Scotland 1408-1929* (Edinburgh, 1983), p. 205. Like Kidd, Sher and Murdoch cite the actions and ideals of a heavy-handed Tory government alone as the reasons behind acts such as this, breaking the terms of union.

⁷⁰ “Letter 16, ‘[Robert Wodrow] To Mr Thomas Linning, Minister at Lesmahagow,’ 6 Sept 1709,” in *The Correspondence of the Rev. Robert Wodrow*, T. M’Crie (ed.) (3 vols; Edinburgh, Wodrow Society, 1842-43), i, p 41. In general, anti-Union sentiments on the part of Wodrow for religious reasons abound in volume one of this series.

⁷¹ Wodrow, *Analecta*, p. xxxv.

⁷² Wodrow, *Analecta*, p. xxxv.

The idea of James as the bringer of peace to a land that has just suffered an apocalyptic cataclysm is probably not what Wodrow found attractive about Thomas the Rhymer, but perhaps it was the prophecy of that conflict itself. Protestant ideology embraced the concept of apocalypse,⁷³ originally manifested in the belief that the break from Rome signified the onset of a “millennial struggle.”⁷⁴ Certainly a hint of this can be seen in Wodrow’s dedication to George I of his *Analecta*. George and his father, followed the lead of William III, in assuring the protestant succession, while bringing about an end to the sufferings of the godly (protestants).⁷⁵ That period of suffering was a “time never to be forgotten ... when our Reformation from Popery ... [was] in the utmost danger” from a “bigoted Papist”⁷⁶ – presumably James VII,⁷⁷ who Wodrow tends to paint as being only one step away from the anti-Christ. King George, however, had experienced,

... the glory of making a noble stand, in a manner worthy of [himself], and the great interests of Religion and Liberty, against the unmanly and antichristian spirit of ... tyranny, so peculiar to Papists, and such who have been guided by their counsels.⁷⁸

Adherents to the Roman faith were thus portrayed as being akin to the original Deceiver himself, ensnaring the susceptible, who were as pawns in his ultimate showdown with the just. The righteous – though oppressed and mocked – “suffered for righteousness sake,” knowing all along that they were not “evil-doers. This they

⁷³ Gow, *Prophetic Belief*, p. 127.

⁷⁴ Allan, *Virtue and Learning*, p. 51 – though he cautions that presbyterians alone did not have exclusive rights to the concept of apocalyptic vision, even in the late seventeenth century (i.e. around Wodrow’s time). However, in general, Allan maintains that, “The apocalypse in historical scholarship, and so the prophetic allusion which it invited, came to acquire great prominence in Scottish thought.”

⁷⁵ Among the woes suffered by these “martyrs” for the presbyterian cause, which might have invoked sympathy from Wodrow, were the various acts against conventicles (secret religious meetings, often held in fields). The act first was passed on 10 July, 1663, and re-affirmed in Feb, 1670. In June of 1674, legislation was passed making masters responsible for any servant who attended a conventicle; heritor for his tenant(s), burgh magistrate for any burghess. The penalties for attending a conventicle ranged from a fine, to (and) imprisonment. The death penalty was reserved for those convicted of organising conventicles. See I.B. Cowan, *The Scottish Covenanters, 1660-1688* (London, 1976), pp. 57-58, p. 80, and p. 87.

⁷⁶ Wodrow, *Analecta*, i, p. xxxiii.

⁷⁷ And maybe his elder brother, Charles II.

⁷⁸ Wodrow, *Analecta*, i, p. xxxiv. Here, once again, the threat posed by Episcopacy towards the Kirk and freedom at large, seems stressed.

were taught by their Bibles.”⁷⁹ The whole tone of Wodrow’s tirade against Charles II and James VII, and their respective followers,⁸⁰ thus seems reminiscent of that of Revelations – the godly, with providential aid, will eventually triumph, throwing-off the yoke of sinful servitude. Thus, one reason why Robert Wodrow may have been interested in *The Prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer* was that it seemed to fit the general pattern of an apocalyptic vision. However, the full reason for its attractiveness to him does not stop there.

The fact that the Rhymer’s prophecy (in its revised form, nearly three centuries after Thomas’s death) was thought by some to have been in some way significant where James VI was concerned, may have indeed held a more general interest for Wodrow. As already mentioned, most of Wodrow’s papers were of a historical nature; he himself was a fairly accomplished writer of history (biased towards his own goals, though his writings may have been). One of his most pressing ambitions was to truly (by his own standards of such) relate the lives of the reformers from 1559-60 up to his own times – a period which, of course, encompassed James’ reign.⁸¹ Perhaps he viewed the cobbled-up early modern version of Thomas the Rhymer as being potentially significant to the task. In his goal to write the “true” history of presbyterianism, he seems to have regarded any document as worthy his attention,⁸² especially since, as he believed, so many pieces of potential historical evidence had been badly interpreted in the past. The period between James VI and the Restoration was especially worresome to him, as many invaluable papers on that period were obviously unknown to previous authors; these were either overlooked, or were lost, to subsequently resurface after the Revolution.⁸³ It is probably a bit rash to assume these comments were meant to

⁷⁹ Wodrow, *Analecta*, i, p. xxxv.

⁸⁰ Not to forget, closer to Wodrow’s own times, James Francis Edward Stewart and the adherents to Jacobitism.

⁸¹ E-mail message, Yeoman.

⁸² This is not to say that every he believed every document was useful, only that it deserved to be critically analysed, and then judged as to its worth.

⁸³ Wodrow, *Analecta*, p. xliii.

apply specifically to a rather equivocal piece like *Thomas the Rhymer*,⁸⁴ but in a general sense, it may have some significance. Though it is difficult to believe that Thomas's prophecies were completely forgotten at any point in time, it will be recalled from above that after James VI's death, they were not reprinted until 1680. However, this latter point is probably also a reflection upon the fact that printing only became a burgeoning concern in Scotland after the Restoration,⁸⁵ and the censorship of the Cromwellian period could not have helped matters either. There is, however, one more piece to the puzzle to be added, before a useful summary of the whole Wodrow/Rhymer issue can be offered.

Perhaps as an extension of an idea held by some, including Wodrow – that historical events were providential, and could also be prophetic – the reverend seems to have desired at one point early in his career to create a sort of concordance of potentially prophetic occurrences.⁸⁶ Referred to by him as “Remarkable Providences,” it appears that he had a desire for as many of these to be collected as possible, and their significance (if any) ascertained, since it seems that no one yet had undertaken this potentially important project. Therefore, as Wodrow once wrote to a colleague:

But I wish some of abilities, time, and diligence would take a scriptuall methode, i.e. classe them under their proper heads fulfillings of, threatenings of, promises, answers of prayer, accomplishments of prophecys, confirmations of points of truth, or the like. And I belive (sic) this land might furnish as good materialls for this as any other place under the sun. All I am upon is to satisfy my oun curiosity and Athenian spirit, and if you have any thing of this kind to communicate, it will be very acceptable.⁸⁷

Here, Wodrow seems to be saying that indeed some of his interest in these “Remarkable Providences” is purely for antiquarian reasons. But given the

⁸⁴ Which, for reasons suggested below, probably was of only limited potential use to Wodrow.

⁸⁵ Mentioned elsewhere in this thesis.

⁸⁶ Perhaps this was at least partially realised later in his career, with the writing of his *History of the Sufferings* and *Analecta*.

⁸⁷ “Letter 144, [Robert Wodrow] For Lachland Campbell, Minister of Cambeltoun in Kintyre,” in *Early Letters of Robert Wodrow, 1698-1709*, (ed) L.W. Sharp (Edinburgh, SHS, 1937), p. 285.

relationship between prophecy, providence, and history that those of his ilk believed existed, perhaps he also was looking upon these occurrences as potential proof that the Word of God was unfolding as had been preordained. Note as well his interest in whether these providences were in fact “points of truth” – implying that he did not necessarily accept all metaphysical occurrences (and prophecy) as being bona fide, and there was a selective process going on.

That being said, if it was Wodrow’s goal to compile a concordance of these remarkable providences, his was not an original idea. Divines from previous times had actually attempted the project. Near the end of the Protectorate, the English Calvinist Matthew Poole initiated a “Design for registering of Illustrious Providences” in co-operation with ministers at home and in New England –

The idea was that a complete list of fully documented providences should be compiled as a cooperative venture which would cross denominational barriers. Every county should have a secretary who would gather together the material sent in to him and forward it on to Syon College, to be analysed by Poole. The close parallel with the methods used by the scientists of the Royal Society for collecting and classifying natural phenomena is obvious enough, and it is worth recalling that Francis Bacon had himself urged the desirability of compiling a definitive history of the workings of providence.⁸⁸

Poole’s idea never got off the ground, though the torch was successfully passed to the New England zealot, Increase Mather, who was sufficiently inspired to complete his *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (Boston, 1684).⁸⁹ The methodology proposed by Wodrow seems very much indebted to these slightly earlier pioneers. It was thus remarkable that Wodrow claimed that the project he

⁸⁸ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 110.

⁸⁹ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 111. Increase’s son, Cotton, was a regular correspondent of Wodrow’s. One of their favourite topics of conversation was the supernatural – especially witches. See, for example, “Letter 170, ‘To Dr. Cotton Mather, 10 Feb. 1720’,” in *The Correspondence of the Rev. Robert Wodrow*, ii, p. 505. In his sermon “A Discourse on Witchcraft” – preached in Boston, 1689 – the Rev. Cotton Mather (1663-1728) proclaimed that witches could dazzle the onlooker with strange and unnatural visions “transcend[ing] the ordinary course of nature.” “Discourse on Witchcraft” was printed as part of Cotton’s collection of providences, *Memorable Providences Relating to Witchcraft and Possessions* (Boston, 1689). For an edited version of “Discourse on Witchcraft” see, “Cotton Mather, *Witchcraft in North America, 1689*,” in A.C. Kors and E. Peters (ed), *Witchcraft in Europe 1100-1700* (Philadelphia, 1972), pp. 276-79.

was interested in had never been initiated; however he did seem to be talking specifically with the Scottish context in mind. Still, the essential point seems to be the comparison made by K. Thomas, that the compiling of such a list of providences would have required a near scientific approach. This perhaps underpins the point that there was little “backward-looking” about Wodrow’s (et al.) methods in investigating the paranormal, that in fact this was in many ways dependent upon the “cutting-edge” of early modern scholarship.

However, to return to the case of Thomas the Rhymer’s prophecy, probably there were four drawing points where Wodrow was concerned. First, a general interest in all old “documents” from both an antiquarian point of view, and with a mind to collecting potential material for his own writings. Second, a more discerning interest in the prophetic vision, as a result of his Calvinist outlook. Third, as part of his evangelical slant, a profound predilection for belief in metaphysical occurrences. Fourth, and finally, the desire to check the “accuracy” of any uncanny event or utterance with an eye to determining the extent of the influence of providence. Perhaps, with respect to the last point, he understood that some had made a connection between the Rhymer’s alleged sayings and James VI, prompting Wodrow to determine the accuracy of such. However, for reasons of religion, it might be questionable whether or not he would have found Thomas’s prophecies allegedly concerning James believable. Nevertheless, it seems probable that in some way, even if small, Wodrow’s interest in *The Prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer* helped in sustaining the genre to the extent that it motivated him to commission the writing of his own version.

The very existence of Robert Wodrow’s transcription of Thomas’s prophecies begs one further question: why undertake such a project in first place, with so many printed editions in circulation? Perhaps this goes back to a point made earlier, concerning Wodrow’s style of historical writing, emphasising evidence over analysis. This was related to his methodology of utilising documentary evidence, only after its accuracy had been verified. As alluded to above, early eighteenth

century editions of Thomas the Rhymer often did contain some scribal errors.⁹⁰ Perhaps it was the goal of Wodrow to right some of these errors, thus prompting him to commission Reid to transcribe (his own idea of) a more accurate version of the text.

The circulation of the judicial prophecy in the form of Thomas the Rhymer may have been commonplace in early modern Scotland, but this form of prognostication was only occasionally found in almanacs printed in and for Scottish literary consumption.⁹¹ Far more common in the Scottish almanacs was basic plant and weather lore based upon astral projection. This latter type of astrology, termed “natural,” was in general the most popular form of astrology,⁹² and was less likely to land its practitioners in trouble with the religious and secular authorities.⁹³

This trait of the Scottish astrological scene may be a result of the influence of Calvinism, outlined above. If such ideas were in regular circulation throughout Scotland, then little wonder that almanac writers, printers, etc., were very cautious when it came to engaging in judicial astronomy, lest they be classed among the notorious “charmners and sorcerers.” Thus, with their products likely passing through the hands of numerous individuals, some of whom may have cast a critical, even suspicious eye over the contents, the Scottish almanac writers, at least during

⁹⁰ For more on the theme of inaccurate printings and transcriptions of The Prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer, see *Collection of Ancient Scottish Prophecies*, p. 55.

⁹¹ This is not to say that there were no printed tracts which contained judicial prediction to be found in Scotland. During the eighteenth century (perhaps a considerably “safer” century than the seventeenth), a few have been noted: NLS, 2.286(6); *Doctor John Whaley’s Strange And Wonderful Prophecy For the Year of our Lord God, 1721...* (Dublin Printed and Glasgow Reprinted in the Year 1721), which was really a “pro-mercantile” tract, praising the (allegedly) better trade opportunities in a United Kingdom; and the rather bizarre NLS, 2.286(15); *Wonderful Vision, or Prophecie which was revealed to William Rutherford, Farmer in the shire of the Merk near Duncce, Upon the 19th of March 1719* (n.p.), not an almanac *per se*, but a pamphlet describing a dreadful wrath about to hit Britain, and especially Scotland, which was obviously greatly influenced by a colourful reading (and interpretation) of the Book of Revelations. These sort of tracts, although in circulation in Scotland, seem to have been far outnumbered by serials which made predictions concerning less sensational occurrences, such as the weather.

⁹² Curry, *Prophecy and Power*, p. 4. According to him (p. 95) there was a tripartite division in astrology during the eighteenth century: 1) “low” or popular; 2) “middling” or judicial; 3) “high” or cosmological-philosophical. It appears that the “low” variety was the type most common to Scottish almanacs, perhaps being indicative of their authors’ desire to appeal to the broadest segment of society, as well as desiring to be as uncontroversial as possible.

⁹³ Curry, *Prophecy and Power*, p. 11.

the seventeenth century, probably thought it unwise to get too specific with very many of their predictions.

Even when the predictions contained within a seventeenth century Scottish almanac did attempt to relate people's horoscopes, it was executed with such ambiguity, that the prognostication could really apply to just about anybody. Take, for example, the following:

Erra Paters Observations for this Year 1671

In the Year that January shal enter on the Sunday,⁹⁴ the Winter shal be cold and moist,⁹⁵ the Summer shal be hot and rainy, with great abundance of Corn, Wines, and other grains, and of all garden fruits and herbs: there shal be little oyl, abundance of all manner of flesh: some great news shal men hear spoken of Kings and Prelats of the Church, and also of great Princes: great wars and robberies shal be made, and many young people shal die.⁹⁶

Not only is the author of this equivocal piece of writing careful in his wording, but he wishes it known that these are not his own predictions, but rather those of "Erra Pater." Perhaps the author's prudent choice of words was stimulated by a memory of one the most intense periods of witch-hunting in Scotland, 1661-62,⁹⁷ when survival of the prophet may often have been dependent upon his own level of discretion. Nevertheless, the general reluctance to engage into judicial astronomy to any great degree continued to be a characteristic of the Scottish almanac even into the mid-eighteenth century. This is in direct contrast to a comparable "British" almanac from the early eighteenth century. Although "Isaac Bickerstaff's" almanac probably was circulated in Scotland, and maybe even had a Scottish printer, there

⁹⁴ Apparently 1671 was such a year, but then so was 1672, and it goes without saying, numerous other years.

⁹⁵ A fairly safe bet for a typical Scottish winter!

⁹⁶ GUL Spec. Coll., Bh 13-b.35(5); *A New Prognostication For the Year of Christ 1671 ... by M.D.L. Professor of Mathematics in Aberdeen* (Glasgow, Robert Sanders, 1671).

⁹⁷ Peak periods in the witch-hunt included 1643, 1649, and 1661-62. Undoubtedly, political, religious, and social tensions, heightened by the Covenanting movement and the Civil War, all had a

was nothing intrinsically Scottish about its content.⁹⁸ The entire work, if it ever was designed to be a serious example of the genre in the first place,⁹⁹ was entirely consumed with general judicial prophecy involving the state of Britain and its relationship with the continent – lists of fairs, weather predictions, tide tables, etc., are entirely lacking.¹⁰⁰ Maybe then, judicial astronomy in Scotland was considered acceptable to print, so long as the topic of discussion was not too close to home.¹⁰¹

At the same time, a typical English almanac from the eighteenth century almost always contained at least some judicial astronomy. Henry Season's 1751 edition, for instance, devoted approximately three pages to the topic.¹⁰² But in the case of Scotland, judicial astronomy was something practised only infrequently. Very likely this was at least partially a legacy of conditions during the seventeenth

role to play in this. See R. Mitchison, *Lordship to Patronage. Scotland 1603-1745* (Edinburgh, 1983), p. 89.

⁹⁸ See NLS, 2.286(5); *The British Vision: or, Isaac Bickerstaff's Twelve Prophecies For the Year 1711* (n.p.).

⁹⁹ It seems highly probably that this was one of the spurious almanacs produced by Jonathan Swift, aimed specifically at satirising one of the most visible English prognosticators of the early eighteenth century, John Partridge (see below); refer to Curry, *Prophecy and Power*, pp. 89-91.

¹⁰⁰ *The British Vision*, p. 14. Indeed, according to Curry, *Prophecy and Power*, p. 91, this was the exact tactic employed by Swift, to mock the entire judicial astrology genre in general, and John Partridge in general. By faking an unflattering death-bed confession of the still living Partridge, Swift apparently succeeded in making,

... the astrologer a laughing-stock in educated and coffee-house circles ... Whether this had any immediate effect on Partridge's or judicial astrology's overall popularity ... may be doubted. Any such effects, lower down the social scale, were long-term and indirect. There is no evidence that the sales of Partridge's almanac ... suffered ... and the Company of Stationer found it profitable to continue the imprint into the last decade of the century.

What Curry seems to be saying is that not even discredit from "enlightened" circles could tarnish the image of prophecy in the eyes of some people.

¹⁰¹ However, if there was any hint that maybe this was a fake prognostication, then perhaps that helped in letting the printers "off the hook."

¹⁰² See GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 7-i.43(9); *Speculum Anni Redivivum, or, An Almanack For the Year of our Lord 1751 ... by Henry Season, Licensed Physician and Student in the Astral Sciences* (London, T. Parker, 1751?), pp. 40-42. Season also includes a table of the twelve signs of the zodiac and each sign's effect upon the human body and temperament. Similarly, one noted Scottish Almanac did likewise: NLS, L.C. 3153 (10); *Gloria Deo in Excelsis. Good News from the Stars, 1711; Or, Aberdeen's New Prognostication ... By a Well-wisher of the Mathematics* (Aberdeen; Edinburgh reprinted, J. Reid, 1711), p. 12, which relates, for example, "The Head and Face doth Aries rule, as Taurus doth the Neck."

century, the memory of which never ceased. About the closest thing to judicial prophecy noted in an eighteenth century Scottish almanac is *Aberdeen's new Prognostication* for 1711, which purports to relate the dire events for the upcoming year in verse:

A mighty fight shall foughten be,
Which many of your Eyes shall see ...

The place as Constellations say,
In a plain Field benorth the Tay ...

A knight shall jump before his fall,
And fight the Adverse General.
But ah a Rogue with subrile Wheels
Shall suddenly turn upon his Heels.
Two myter'd Heads shall long-contend,
Their Monarch safely to defend
But he and they shall go to wrack,
And be laid flat upon their back.
King, Knights and Men of meaner Rank,
Shall all be buried in one stank,
This Fight shall be surviv'd by none,
But the Two Generals alone.¹⁰³

Quite likely this prophecy was inspired by continued rumblings from within the Jacobite camp, and four years later at least, during the 1715 uprising, the Tay area was over-run by those supportive of the Pretender (as mentioned in a previous chapter). This extract serves to help stress that judicial prophecy was cautiously approached by Scottish prognosticators. In the eighteenth century perhaps they could afford to be, a little braver, yet their language was still couched in ambiguity. Certainly the vaguer a prophecy was, the greater chance for its author to be “proven” correct, and undoubtedly this was a factor insofar as the Scottish almanac was concerned. Yet there is no mention of specific individuals in the Aberdeen almanac for 1711, contrasting the case of John Partridge’s London almanac for the same year,

¹⁰³ *Good News from the Stars, 1711; Or, Aberdeen's New Prognostication ...*, p. 16.

in which the author mentions Queen Anne by name, albeit in a complimentary manner.¹⁰⁴

Having said that, perhaps other new factors may have helped to make judicial astronomy a path rarely trodden by Scottish almanac authors. The real watershed for the almanac as a piece of prognostication was the middle to end of the seventeenth century. By the start of the eighteenth century, the intellectual vitality which had helped to stimulate astrology was greatly diminished.¹⁰⁵ Judicial astronomy itself, with the demise of belief in neo-Platonic interdependent harmonies, had become obsolete.¹⁰⁶ Thus, with the commencement of the early modern era, disbelief in astrology, particularly prediction, gradually increased. However, it would be wrong to say that public acceptance of prediction only ended with the start of the eighteenth century – the process was an ongoing one that had finally become acute in the early 1700s:

The general tone of the public attitude to astrology seems already to have been changing while many intelligent and civilised men still supported it, without doubt there was a considerable body of opinion shifting away from the whole proposition – in particular where prediction was concerned.¹⁰⁷

The roots of these changes in attitude may possibly be traced back to ideas originating in the Renaissance. Copernicus's heliocentric universe mitigated the theory that all celestial influence was directed solely toward the earth, while Haley's comets and Galileo's discovery of the moons of Jupiter suggested a greater number

¹⁰⁴ NLS, 2.286(4); *Dr. Partridges Most Strange and Wonderful Prophecy for the year 1711... Containing his astrological judgements on the Twelve Months ... what will happen throughout Europe, and the Downfall of the French King ... J. Partridge, Student in Phisick and Astrology* (London, Edinburgh reprinted, 1711), p. 3. The mitigating factor here is that Partridge's almanac was reprinted and distributed in Scotland – again emphasising that this sort of material was not present in the nation, only less frequently, on a proportional basis, encountered. A short biography appears on him in Curry, p. 79-82, who tells us (among other things) that Partridge (1644-1715) had some education in the classics, and was a Whig and Dissenter. Thus, perhaps needless to say, he chose exile in Holland rather than suffer the reign of James VII, but upon "the accession of William and Mary, he returned joyfully to London." Apparently Partridge accurately predicted the downfall of James VII and catholicism, something which no Scottish almanac author seems to have been inclined to do.

¹⁰⁵ Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press*, p. 238.

¹⁰⁶ Geneva, *Astrology and the Seventeenth Century Mind*, p. 12.

¹⁰⁷ Parker, *Familiar to All*, p. 212.

of heavenly bodies than astrologers had formerly been paying attention to, thus diminishing the omnipotence of those objects traditionally favoured by them.¹⁰⁸ Yet it might be rash to assume that the growing weight offered from such scientific discoveries spelled-out the doom of astrology solely by showing it to be superstition. In fact, many of the practitioners of astronomy embraced these scientific revelations as a way in which to improve the intellectual standards of their art.¹⁰⁹ This reform in attitudes was to reach a crescendo by the end of the seventeenth century, an occurrence which effected the Scottish almanac.

If not the first, then one the first popular almanacs printed in Scotland, came from the press of Andrew Hart in 1619.¹¹⁰ Edinburgh based, Hart (as related in previous chapters) was one of the nation's most important early printers, producing some of the first translated Bibles, and popular editions of John Barbour's *Bruce* and Blind Harry's *Wallace*. Called the *General Prognostication for ever*, it is difficult to be certain how popular this, or any other early seventeenth century Scottish almanac was. However in England during the 1660s, it is estimated that 400,000 almanacs were being printed on an annual basis.¹¹¹ It would probably be unwise to assume that the Scottish numbers matched those of England: Scottish printing seemed to lag behind its English counterpart at this period, and probably the removal of the court with James VI for the south only exacerbated the situation. Yet, since so many other aspects of Scottish almanac printing seem to mirror those of their English

¹⁰⁸ Parker, *Familiar to All*, p. 212. In Scotland during roughly the same period, scepticism also existed. The poet Robert Henryson steadfastly maintained that the "superstitioun of astrology" had little hold over human affairs. See, Robert Henryson, "Orpheus and Eurydice" (Bannatyne MS I. 589), in *The Poems of Robert Henryson*, (ed) G.G. Smith (3 vols; Edinburgh, STS, 1906-1914), iii, p. 86.

¹⁰⁹ Geneva, *Astrology and the Seventeenth Century Mind*, p. 12; cf. Parker, *Familiar to All*, p. 213.

¹¹⁰ See H.G. Aldis, *A List of Books Printed in Scotland Before 1700* (Originally printed 1904; reprinted with continuation including 1700, Edinburgh, 1970).

¹¹¹ M. Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories. Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 2. Similarly, Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp. 348-49, believes "it is clear that the figure of 3,000,000 to 4,000,000, which is sometimes suggested as the total production of almanacs in [England during] the seventeenth century, is a distinct under-estimate; the ten years after November 1663 alone nearly reached that total. Not even the Bible sold at this rate." More recently, these sort of figures generally have found favour with people like Curry, *Prophecy and Power*, p. 21.

counterparts, it is probably safe to assume that – relative numbers aside – those produced north of the border likely enjoyed a healthy following.

As far as the content of the average early modern Scottish almanac is concerned, Curry's description of their seventeenth century English counterpart is a useful starting point. As such, the average English almanac of the period was comprised of:

1) A calendar, spelling-out the time of church festivals, markets, and fairs, as well as a selective chronology of world events.

2) The astronomical phenomena for the upcoming year; at the very least, including such things as the phases of the moon, ingress of the sun, and eclipses of both.

3) Astrological predictions (prognostications) for such things as the weather, crops, and general health – “this category nearly always embraced political and religious predictions (as discreetly worded by the author as possible).”¹¹²

Many of these characteristics can also be found in Scottish almanacs of the late seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries, while one or two of such seem a bit rarer. A look at the work of Scottish astrologers from the latter seventeenth century – in particular that of “J.A.” – will help to illustrate those overlapping, as well as diverging points.

Preferring to remain anonymous, J.A. proclaimed himself to be “mathemat,” a common title for those involved in astrological prediction in Scotland,¹¹³ if the surviving record can be trusted. Similarly, “philomath” (“lover of learning”) was

¹¹² Curry, *Prophecy and Power*, p. 21.

¹¹³ And elsewhere, for that matter.

another common *nom de plume*.¹¹⁴ J.A.'s almanac, like the vast majority from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was comprised of sixteen pages, or eight leaves – being the number obtained from one folio sheet of paper divided into octavo. One very general description of the average seventeenth century Scottish almanac goes as follows:

Throughout the seventeenth century the almanacs, with only a few exceptions, remained constant in size in eight leaves in octavo. An increasing amount of matter was accommodated not by adding extra pages, but by using smaller type and covering all available space with little regard to the appearance of the finished article.¹¹⁵

Having said that, some in the eighteenth century were reduced to eight pages, a fact lamented in the “last speech” of one of the more acerbic almanac creators, Merry Andrew:

From town to Town they banish'd Me,
Diminish'd to half a Sheet.¹¹⁶

After reading J.A.'s warm greeting to the nation's capital – “the most Honorable City of Edinburgh” to which the prognostication is dedicated¹¹⁷ – the

¹¹⁴ Of the astrologers whose works were printed in Scotland, and presented themselves as “mathemat,” “philomathes,” “professor of mathematics,” or some such variant, the following were noted:

GUL Spec. Coll., Bh 13-b.35(1); *A New Prognostication for the Year of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 1667 ... By J.A. Mathe[mat]* (Edinburgh, Society of Stationers, 1667).

GUL Spec. Coll., Bh 13-b.35(2); *A New Prognostication for the Year of Christ, 1668 ... By I.H. Philomathes* ({Aberdeen} Glasgow, Robert Sanders, 1668).

GUL Spec. Coll., Bh 13-b.35(3); *A New Prognostication for the Year of Christ, 1669 ... By Philomathes of Aberdene* (Glasgow, Robert Sanders, 1669). The same “I.H.” from the previous year?

A New Prognostication, 1671.

GUL Spec. Coll., Bh 13-b.35(6); *A New prognostication for the Year 1672 ... At Aberdene, by an expert Mathematician P.A. for the ... profit of Robert Sanders* (Glasgow, R. Sanders, 1672).

GUL Spec. Coll., Bh 13-b.35(7); *A New prognostication for the Year 1673 ... by L.D. and expert Mathematician* (Glasgow, R. Sanders, 1673).

NLS, L.C. 3153(1); *An Almanack, and New Prognostication for the Year of our Lord, 1698 ... By G.C. Mathemat* (Edinburgh, Heirs and Successors of Andrew Anderson, 1698).

NLS, L.C. 3153(2); *An Almanack, and New Prognostication for the Year of our Lord, 1701 ... By G.C. Mathemat* (Edinburgh, Heirs and Successors to A. Anderson, 1701).

¹¹⁵ McDonald, “Scottish Seventeenth-Century Almanacs,” p. 257.

¹¹⁶ GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 7-i.43(5); *Aberdeen's Nevv Almanack After the best Fashion, for the Year 1752 ... By Merry Andrewv Professor of Predication by Star Gazing at Tamtallon* (Belfast, 1752), p. 1. (Half a sheet folio = four leaves octavo = eight pages.) Running intrigues such as this – that Andrew's enemies were out to get him -- probably added to the general sensational nature of later almanacs. Such intrigues, whether genuine or not, probably fascinated some, and amused others.

reader was presented with “A Succinct Computation of Memorable things to this present Year of God, 1667.” This feature agrees with the model laid out above for a seventeenth century English prognostication, and is in fact a standard component of virtually every Scottish-produced almanac noted up to the middle of the eighteenth century.¹¹⁸ More will be said on these chronologies later; suffice to say for now that J.A.’s 1667 work notes such memorable events – commonly repeated in virtually every Scottish almanac – as, The Creation, Great Flood, the crowning of Fergus I, the construction of Edinburgh Castle, Scotland’s adoption of Christianity, and the invention of guns and printing.¹¹⁹ Fairly commonly repeated events in the almanacs,

¹¹⁷ *A New Prognostication, 1667*, p. 1.

¹¹⁸ As an aside, and as might be expected, versions of English almanacs were sold north of the border. In at least one of these noted, from the early eighteenth century, the chronology of events is conspicuously absent. Perhaps the author had little to say about Scottish history, little knowledge of it and no concern to learn, or an English chronology of events had once been present, only to be removed from the edition sold in the north. The particular almanac in question, however, is a real piece of propagandist work, designed to promote solidarity at home in Britain, in the face of numerous calamities spawned on the continent, and New World:

Good Nws (sic) from the Wastern (sic) Parts of the World, and looks like a general and total Revolution in Spain: Some great and particular Honour will be paid Queen Anne about this time for there is a very smiling Position of the Planets in the time of her Birth. It likewise betokens some amicable attempts for Peace at Home ... New Troubles threaten Europe from Easten (sic) to the Northwesten (sic) parts of the World, and points towards Canada, where the French are like to be uneasy ...

See *Dr Partridges Most Strange and Wonderful Prophecy For the Year 1711*.

¹¹⁹ *A New Prognostication, 1667*, p. 2. It has been noted that *all* of these named events are repeated in the following: *A New Prognostication, 1668*; *A New Prognostication, 1669*; GUL Spec. Coll., Bh 13-b.35(4), *A New Prognostication For the Year of Christ 1670 ... Calculated for the Meridian of the honourable City of Glasgow*. By D.E. (Glasgow, Robert Sanders, 1670); *A New Prognostication, 1671*; *A New Prognostication, 1672* (which elaborates – “The inventiö of Printing in Europe, before in China.”); *A New prognostication, 1673* (also mentions printing in China); NLS, L.C. 3005(2), *Leith’s True Almanack, Or a New Prognostication for the Year of Our Lord 1704 ... By John Man Teacher of Navigation ...* (Edinburgh, 1704); GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 1-f.34(1), *Perth’s True Almanack; or a new Prognostication For the Year of Our Lord 1718 ... By Patrick Stobie Philomathemat* (Edinburgh, 1718); GUL Spec. Coll., Mu1-f.34(2), *Perth’s True Almanack; or a new Prognostication For the Year of Our Lord 1719 ... By Patrick Stobie ...* (Edinburgh, 1719); GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 1-f.34(3), *A New Almanack or new Prognostication For the Year of our Lord, 1727 ... By Merry Andrew Professor of Predictions by Stargazing at Tam-tallon* (Edinburgh, 1727); GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 7-i.43(1), *A New Almanack or new Prognostication For the Year of our Lord, 1748 ... By Merry Andrew ...* (Edinburgh, 1748); GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 7-i.43(2), *A New Almanack or new Prognostication For the Year of our Lord, 1749 ... By Merry Andrew ...* (Edinburgh, 1749); GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 7-i.43(3), *A New Almanack or new Prognostication For the Year of our Lord, 1750 ... By Merry Andrew ...* (Edinburgh, 1750); GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 7-i.43(4), *A New Almanack or new Prognostication For the Year of our Lord, 1751 ... By Merry Andrew Professor ...* (Edinburgh, 1751); GUL Spec. Coll., Mu7-i.43(5), *Aberdeen’s Nevv Almanack After The best Fashion, for the Year 1752 ... Calculated for the Meridian of any Place in Scotland, By Merry Andrew Professor of Prediction by Star Gazing at Tamtallon Being the last of all his VVorks* (Belfast, 1752); GUL Spec. Coll., Mu7-i.43(6); *Aberdeen’s Nevv Almanack ... for the Year 1753 ... By Merry Andrew ...* (Aberdeen?, 1753);

which J.A. notes, include the gunpowder treason of Guy Faulkes, the births of Charles I and Charles II, and the latter's coronation at Scone.¹²⁰ Specific incidents, of a more local significance, occasionally creep in into chronologies; in the case of 1667 "The great fire in Glasgow" might be considered an example of such.

Following this chronology can be found a list of "common or vulgar notes" including the dates for such seasonal markers as Pasche (Easter) and Whitsunday.¹²¹ After the common notes for 1667, J.A. provides his readership with a list of upcoming solar and lunar eclipses,¹²² accompanied by a proviso:

Having Typically represented to thy view the form of this Eclipse, thy eye may afterwards be both judge and witneße if I have deceived thee: as for the Predictions therefrom, I have not attain'd the confidence of some young Prophets, who adventures to determine Things and times in particulars, wherein their very Teachers are in doubt, and to decide in cases wherein the greatest Patrons of Astrology have not agreed among themselves, especially as to the Time of operation and continuance of effects of Solar and Lunar Eclipses, which my forbearance, as it begets no expectation, so consequently no disappointment either to thee or my self. As things shall [] and forth in their season, I believe they will be as already [th]ey have been viz. a disappointment to many small Pro[ph]ets, who deduce their judgement from such doubtful Foun[d]ations; for who hath not lately known Great Things talked [off] that never came to passe, and Great Things come to passe [that] [hat]h not been talked off ... Seek therefore true contentmen[t] [], and that will expell Anxiety concernin[g] [] [l]et this be thy place, and thy minute shall b[e.]¹²³

This mitigating note – though non-typical in itself – is actually representative of similar cautionary statements that occasionally can be found within several Scottish almanacs. As already noted in the above example of M.D.L.'s almanac for 1671,

GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 7-i.43(7), *Aberdeen's New Almanack ... For the Year of our Lord, 1754 ...* (Aberdeen?, 1754); GUL Spec. Coll., Mu7-i.43(8); *Aberdeen's New Prognostications For the Year of our Lord 1772 ... By Merry Andrew professor of Prediction by Stargazing at Tamtallon* (Aberdeen?, 1772).

¹²⁰ For example, *A New Prognostication, 1668*; *A New Prognostication, 1669* (which in sympathetic tone adds "... the Martyrdom of King Charles the first."); *A New Almanack, 1727* (replaces Charles II's coronation with that of Charles I), and others.

¹²¹ *A New Prognostication, 1667*, p. 2.

¹²² *A New Prognostication, 1667*, pp. 3-4.

¹²³ *A New Prognostication, 1667*, p. 4.

these statements of non-culpability are common at least in the seventeenth century, and may have been formulated in the hopes of keeping the critics (and possibly even the authorities) at bay.

Following his judgement of those who would seek to forecast the unfolding of major events, through solar and lunar observation, J.A. provides a list of “The exact day, hour and minute of The New moon, her Full and Quarters: With the daily disposition¹²⁴ of the Weather; with the whole Fairs in Scotland for the Year, 1667.”¹²⁵ This sort of material is probably the most commonly encountered aspect of all Scottish almanacs noted for the period roughly 1667-1772.¹²⁶ This is the type of information that may indeed be indicative of an originally practical purpose behind the almanac, being the sort of thing – theoretically – of use to the agriculturist and pastoralist. Furthermore, as outlined above, the calculation and printing of this type of material was probably a relatively safe occupation. Since it dealt with either the obvious (such as the rising and setting of the sun – something which a person in possession of fairly basic mathematical knowledge could calculate), or the subjective (major storms aside, one person’s definition of a “nice day” may indeed differ from another person), the forecasting of natural events was generally not considered inflammatory. Despite the fact that many people were sceptical of the accuracy of weather prediction, resulting in it being often times scorned,¹²⁷ such predictions had a more general rather than specific significance. Thus, barring offending the entire nation with a bogus weather prediction,¹²⁸ the

¹²⁴ In other words, weather predictions for each month.

¹²⁵ *A New Prognostication, 1667*, pp. 5-12. It has been speculated by McDonald, “Scottish Seventeenth-Century Almanacs,” p. 267, that much of the non-astrological and non-chronological data in the almanacs was compiled by the printers themselves, rather than the almanac author. This would include such entries as the fair days, advertisements for the fairs themselves, and more general advertisements.

¹²⁶ The sole noted exceptions are such works as the “Edinburgh almanac” and “Glasgow almanac” which are really more akin to a diary for the conscientious citizen (full citations below).

¹²⁷ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 353.

¹²⁸ Though he or she may be a highly cursed individual, the modern-day weather person appearing on the evening news is rarely the object of serious threats of violence.

author was relatively safe, since his writings were unlikely to incur the wrath of any single opponent.

J.A. then attempts to impress his readership with his professional skills. He devotes the next two or three pages of his almanac to relate a whole host of astrological and astronomical facts, largely based around lore concerning the twelve signs of the zodiac, and the seven known celestial bodies thought in antiquity to have been planets: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus, “Mercurius,” and “Luna.”¹²⁹ This section (again, not altogether typical) includes a sort of “mini-handbook” for would-be astrologers, emphasising the cryptic symbolism prognosticators use in calculating and conveying their prophetic messages, the following serving to illustrate:

Astrologers uses these two Characters also, viz. the Dragons head Ω , and the Dragons tail, (which is nothing else but the intersections of the Moons orbite with the Ecliptick) but this Dialect is something too superlative for vulgar Capacities.¹³⁰

This is an example of the astrologer’s “secret language” known as encryption,¹³¹ which seems to have had its roots in antiquity, the Hebrew kabbala being one of the first, and most respected – even feared – of these systems.

J.A.’s finishes his almanac with separate tables for calculating the rising and setting of the sun; length of days; the times of high and low tide; and the waxing and waning of the moon¹³² – all practical information, useful to agriculturist, mariner, and merchant alike. However, this is the basic pattern of the almanac produced in Scotland up until, roughly speaking, the middle of the eighteenth century. This is

¹²⁹ Of course five are planets, but Sol is a star and Luna the earth’s satellite – as we today are all well aware of, and as certain people in latter seventeenth century Scotland were also aware. Apparently the discoveries of Gallileo, Copernicus, etc., had made little impression upon J.A.’s concept of the heavens, or at least, what he was willing to admit was “out there” that held relevance for worldly and human affairs. What we really are glimpsing at here is sort of an alternative cosmology, a competing or archaic concept of the universe, existing outside the ken of learned and authoritative thought. There is nothing to say that J.A. was not aware of modern scientific theories concerning the heavens (if he really was an academic, surely he must have at least heard of them), only that he was conceding they had little place in, or usefulness for, astrological-based prediction.

¹³⁰ *A New Prognostication, 1667*, p. 13.

¹³¹ Early modern encryption is described by Geneva, chap. 2 (pp. 17-54).

¹³² *A New Prognostication, 1667*, pp. 13-16.

not to say that all almanacs are *identically* patterned after *A New Prognostication for 1667*, rather most of the main elements continue to be seen year after year.

Around the mid-point of the eighteenth century, a new development seems to occur on the almanac scene. These are what might be termed “civic almanacs”¹³³ produced for the major metropolises like Glasgow and Edinburgh. Almost akin to something along the lines of a diary, civic almanacs were really more like a manual for the “good citizen.” *The Glasgow Almanack For the Year 1766*¹³⁴ typifies these, and in keeping with the notion of it being an exercise in civic pride, begins by offering,

... the greatest respect ... Unto to Honourable John Bowman ... Lord Provost, John Jamieson, John Gray, John Millar, Bailies. Arthur Conel, Dean of Guild, James Clark, Deacon Conveener (sic), And the Remnant Honourable Members of the Council, By their most obedient and humble servant, A. McLean.¹³⁵

Being the council’s “obedient servant” tends to give the impression that McLean was commissioned by the city to print his almanac on its behalf. Far more extensive than many other almanacs, McLean’s still contains an annual calendar of such natural phenomena as the sun’s rising and setting, lunar phases, and high and ebb tides at Glasgow and Leith. However, underscoring this almanac’s more “sophisticated” personality, events such as the birth-dates of the royal family have found their way into the calendar of annual occurrences.¹³⁶ True enough, McLean did list such standard observations as the “vulgar notes,” moveable feasts, and eclipses for the year, as well as a fairly extensive compilation of the upcoming fairs in Scotland,¹³⁷ but all similarities with more “common” almanacs tended to end at that point. From there on, *The Glasgow Almanack for 1766* mostly concerned itself with listing the names of the nation’s and city’s notables: the members of the royal

¹³³ My own term.

¹³⁴ GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 23-f.1; *The Glasgow Almanack for the Year MDCCLXVI ...* (Glasgow, A. McLean).

¹³⁵ *Glasgow Almanack, 1766*, p. 1.

¹³⁶ *Glasgow Almanack, 1766*, pp. 13-24.

¹³⁷ *Glasgow Almanack, 1766*, pp. 5-8.

family; privy council; household officers; officers of state; lists of the peers of the realm; religious officials; high-ranking generals and admirals; Faculty of Advocates; sheriffs; magistrates, and town council of Glasgow; not to mention the names of key foreign potentates.¹³⁸ Interestingly, even the “Members of the University of Glasgow” are listed:

His grace William, duke of Montrose; Chancellor
 The hon. Thomas Millar esq. Lord advocate rector
 Dr. James Clow, professor of philosophy, dean of faculty
 The Reverend Doctor William Leechman, principal
 — — — Robert Trail, professor of divinity
 Dr. James Moor — — — Greek
 Dr. [] Reid — — — Moral philosophy
 Mr. George Muirhead — — — Humanity
 Mr. John Anderson — — — Natural Philosophy
 Dr. Joseph Black — — — Medicine and Chemistry
 Mr. Thomas Hamilton — — — Anatomy
 Dr. Alexander Wilson — — — Astronomy
 Mr. John Millar — — — Law
 Mr. Patrick Cummin — — — Oriental languages
 Dr. James Williamson — — — Mathematics
 Dr. William Wight — — — Ecclesiastical History
 Mr. Thomas Clark, Bibliothecarius
 John Bryce, Bedallus
 John Bryce, Janitor¹³⁹

A veritable “who’s who” of mid-eighteenth century Glaswegian academia, but noteworthy is the fact that astronomy was presumably considered an essential ingredient to a liberal education.

It seems fair to say that the sort of publication typified by *The Glasgow Almanack* was something considerably different when compared with the more ubiquitous chap-book variety. Even the bindings of the civic almanac tend to indicate that a “higher-class” audience was being targeted. Noted examples¹⁴⁰ are

¹³⁸ *Glasgow Almanack*, 1766, pp. 25-68.

¹³⁹ *Glasgow Almanack*, 1766, p. 69.

¹⁴⁰ In addition to the *Glasgow Almanack*, 1766, see:

GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 23-f.2; *The Glasgow Almanack For the Year M,DCC,LXXXVII ...* (Glasgow, J. Mennons, 1787?).

GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 23-f.3; *The Glasgow Almanack For the Year M,DCC,LXXXVIII ...* (Glasgow, J. Mennons, 1788?).

almost always bound in fine leather¹⁴¹ with cover flap and draw-strings to hold it closed when not being read,¹⁴² while all page edges were usually trimmed, sometimes with gilt-edging. In contrast, the cheaper chap-book almanac seems to have been rarely, if ever, bound, the individual leaves being only crudely sewn together.

Further evidence suggesting that a more genteel, urban clientele was being catered for by civic almanacs can be seen in the *Edinburgh Almanack, For the Year [1752]*, which included a “Table of Hackney-Coach Hires,”¹⁴³ something which would be of limited use for a rural, or indigent urban audience. Tables indicating the travelling distances between various Scottish burghs, cities, towns, etc., and between Edinburgh and London,¹⁴⁴ might make for fascinating reading for the lower classes, but such information could only have had a practical value for a more mobile person of the “middling sort,” or higher classes. Thus, the content of the civic almanac might be reflective of a more elite social class’s increasing desire to distance itself from popular culture throughout the course of the early modern period, becoming more noticeable in the eighteenth century. This all underpinned a desire on the part of the “up and coming” to indicate their perceived distinctiveness from the rank and file. Though they could freely participate along side their common brethren in the “vulgar events” associated with the “moveable feasts” listed in the civic (and popular) almanacs, the upwardly mobile alone were free to engage in a more exclusive culture, befitting (so they would have thought) their elevated status.¹⁴⁵

GUL Spec. Coll., Mu 23-f.4; *The Glasgow Almanack For the Year 1789 ...* (Glasgow, J. Mennons, 1789?).

GUL Spec. Coll., Bf. 72-h.32; *Edinburgh Almanack, For the Year M.DCC.LII ...* (Edinburgh, R. Fleming, 1752?).

¹⁴¹ Admittedly, even some fairly inexpensive books from the eighteenth century are leather-bound; the point being made here is in reference to the quality of the leather and its workmanship.

¹⁴² There is the impression that binding was left to the purchaser’s discretion.

¹⁴³ *Edinburgh Almanack, 1752*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁴ *Edinburgh Almanack, 1752*, pp. 12-22, and pp. 23-24. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 347, lists travelling distances as a standard feature of almanacs in general from earliest times. Presumably, he is referring to those for English consumption; noted popular Scottish almanacs normally did not feature travelling distances.

¹⁴⁵ However, at least one of the later eighteenth century popular almanacs copied some of the format of the civic almanac. The revived Merry Andrew for 1772 included, in addition to the usual material

Perhaps the upwardly mobile of eighteenth century Scotland were especially inclined in this direction, given that they may have believed it necessary to prove their superiority to not only their own countrymen, but also the refined inhabitants of the new, larger, and more advantaged southern partner in union.

However, during the eighteenth century the popular almanac remained largely unchanged in format from its seventeenth century counterpart. Many of their composers continued to print under pseudonyms. Notable are such “authors” as “G.C. Mathemat”; again, probably a reference to some mathematical credentials which he may or may not have actually possessed, highlighted in an attempt to give some authority to all that he said.¹⁴⁶ Other late seventeenth, early eighteenth century Scottish almanac writers used similar pseudonyms based around alleged intellectual skills: the most visible was Merry Andrew, who by his own (or by those who used his name) self-assessment was “professor of predictions.” Others, however, such as John Man, were bold enough to use their own name in full. Nevertheless, the desire on the part of some almanac writers at the end of the seventeenth century and beyond to remain anonymous, may be an indication of a certain level of scepticism associated with written prognostications. Certainly later in the eighteenth century, some learned writers treated the almanac with much scorn:

A broadside published this month [June 1693] at Glasgow, under the title of the *Scottish Mercury*, ‘by Mr John Stobo, student in astrologo-

relating to the weather and fairs, also included “the Distance of the principle Towns in Scotland from Edinburgh, and a list of the Scots Peers.” Again, there is nothing to say that any and every person in the realm might not have found this sort of material interesting. But if an almanac was supposed to provide at least some practical information to the reader, then only a more elevated readership could make use of material such as this. Nevertheless, see GUL Spec. Coll., Mu7-i.43(8); *Aberdeen’s New Prognostications For the Year of our Lord 1772 ... By Merry Andrew Professor of Prediction by Stargazing at Tamtallon* (n.p., 1772).

In fact, the more popular almanacs (in the form of cheap chapbooks) often did try to cater to a more sophisticated audience. For example, John Man ran an advertisement in his almanac stating that interested individuals should contact, Rev. Mr. Robert Monteith who would “transcribe manuscripts etc. in a fine hand; or to be taught Latin & Greek in their homes.” See NLS, L.C. 3005(2); *Leith’s True Almanack ... for the Year of Our Lord 1704 ... By John Man Teacher of Navigation to the Fraternity-House of Leith* (Edinburgh, George Mosman, 1704), p. 13.

¹⁴⁶ Whether or not every reader was so easily impressed by these credentials, is another matter. And whether it was ever even the intention of the almanac creator that the public at large should be impressed by these possibly spurious titles, is also questionable. There is often a marked “tongue in cheek” tone to the whole Scottish almanac genre.

physick' being dated, however, 'from Kirkintilloch, where I dwell,' makes us aware that almanac-making charlatanry was not unknown in Scotland ... The author professes to ground upon natural causes, but not to conclude positively about anything – 'that belongs to God's providence.'¹⁴⁷

It is clear that by the latter half of the eighteenth century, prognostication was held in high ill-repute by some. This might have had implications for the popular almanac. Though its format remained largely unchanged, its basic persona became, especially in the case of Merry Andrew, much more light-hearted. This may have been a way in which authors and printers could retain an audience, in spite of trends towards scepticism. The above quotation also reiterates the point that in an earlier period, almanac writers had to be careful not to overstep their authority – even in 1693, the supremacy of God had to be acknowledged.

On the subject of the relative scholarly credentials possessed by the practitioners of prognostication, it was the case that the most often consulted English astrologer of the mid-seventeenth century, William Lilly (1602-81), had absolutely no mathematical or astronomical training whatsoever.¹⁴⁸ Lilly was not alone in this respect, since in seventeenth century England many astrologers hired others to do their calculations.¹⁴⁹ However, this did not seem to prevent certain almanac writers, living in numerous lands, from trying to pass themselves off as being scholars with formidable skills and credentials. This was all part of the general effect of attempting to give an air of authority to all they had said and written. Related to this, the redoubtable Calvin noted that,

¹⁴⁷ Robert Chambers (1802-71), *Domestic Annals of Scotland* (3 vols; Edinburgh, 1859-1861), iii, p. 85. Stobo it seems published an almanac for the year 1694 (thus it might be one in the same with the one described so acerbically by Chambers). Sadly though, this is about the sum total of information known on him; see McDonald, "Seventeenth-Century Scottish Almanacs," p. 268.

¹⁴⁸ Geneva, *Astrology and the Seventeenth Century Mind*, p. 9. A Scottish version of Lilly's English almanac accredited him with being a "Physick" and astrologer in training, which, admittedly, is not the same thing as being an expert practitioner of same. The same almanac then goes on to state that Lilly's prognostication indeed was based upon the calculations of another; in this instance a mathematician from the Holy Land – obviously a tribute of sorts to the mysteries surrounding the cabbala. See GUL Spec. Coll., Mu7-i.43(9); *Lilly's Erra-Pater, Or, New Prognostication ... Compiled by Erra Pater a Jew Doctor in Astronomy and Physick born in Bethamy in Judea; made English by W. Lilly, Student in Physick and Astrology. To which is subjoin'd An exact Account of all the Fairs within the Kingdom of Scotland ...* (n.p., n.d.).

¹⁴⁹ Geneva, *Astrology and the Seventeenth Century Mind*, p. 9.

No man can denie but that y science of Astrologie is honourable. Therefore they [the charlatans] couer themselues with this cloke. They name them théselues Mathematiciens whyth is as muche to say as professers (sic) of the liberall sciences. But none of thys is newe: for theys forgers haue also pretended the same to y intent they might deceive y world.¹⁵⁰

Amazingly, in part, Jean Calvin may have “hit the nail on the head,” as far as the overall effect of “gimmickry” associated with astrology was concerned. Some astrologers may have possessed certain levels of mathematical skills -- the above noted J.A. of Aberdeen might have been one. Clearly, others did not, but nevertheless often pretended that they were skilled in the “liberal sciences.”

That being said, several late seventeenth to early eighteenth century Scottish prognosticators seemingly possessed more than competent mathematical and astronomical skills. The first seems to have been a John Corss, who issued an almanac for Edinburgh in 1663.¹⁵¹ This was entitled *Mercurii Scoti Ephemeris sive Almanack for 1663*, and was published by the Society of Stationers.¹⁵² Moving to the eighteenth century, one of the most readily identifiable Scottish almanac writers, also appears to have been among the most learned. The person in question was John Man, and his almanac (see Appendix XIII) proudly announced that their author was “Teacher of Navigation to the Fraternity-House of Leith” -- in fact, there is fairly good evidence to give weight to this claim. In 1699, a piece appeared in the *Edinburgh Gazette*, advertising Man’s skills as a teacher of navigation:

John Man professor of Navigation &c, for the greater convenience of his Schollars (sic) is removed to Leith. Whoever would be instructed in the said Art, may repair to his home at the back of Babylon.¹⁵³

Prior to this move, Man was an inhabitant of Edinburgh, where he succeeded his uncle, the famous almanac author John Paterson, as teacher of maths in Edinburgh

¹⁵⁰ Calvin, *An admonicion*, pp. 13-14.

¹⁵¹ McDonald, “Seventeenth-Century Scottish Almanacs,” p. 259.

¹⁵² Aldis, *Books printed in Scotland Before 1700*.

¹⁵³ GUL Spec. Coll., Mu60-f.54(22); *Edinburgh Gazette*, no. 18; 24-27 April, 1699.

starting in c. 1696.¹⁵⁴ It seems that he was called to Leith in 1699 as a teacher of mathematical subjects to Trinity House.¹⁵⁵ The position itself was first created in 1680, for which an annual salary of £20 Scots was allocated for teaching six hours per day from March to September, and for four hours per day the remainder of the year. Man apparently received £80 Scots to help defray the cost of moving from Edinburgh, plus an allowance of £40 Scots for rental of a house.¹⁵⁶

It appears that in every sense of the word, Man was a true scholar, perhaps made all the more apparent by the fact that he seems to have even been a builder of navigational equipment, if the following advertisement from (once again) the *Gazette* is to be trusted:

Navigation in all its Parts Taught by John Man at his House near the Tollbooth of Leith, where all sorts of Mathematical Instruments are made, and Sea-Compasses, and Compasses for Coal-Heughs touched ...¹⁵⁷

Further evidence suggestive of Man's higher proficiency perhaps can be seen in the level of sophistication present in his almanac. For example, he provides scientific explanations as to why certain eclipses will remain invisible to earthly onlookers.¹⁵⁸ Displaying a greater degree of mathematical knowledge, Man instructs his readers in basic navigational techniques, providing with "a table of points & half points for every quarter of the compass to aid in navigation."¹⁵⁹

John Man, then, may have been something of a rarity if he did indeed perform both astrological observation, calculation, *and* interpretation. Success, though, often will spawn contempt, for despite his seemingly glowing credentials, Man was not without his detractors, and the most visible was apparently another almanac author, who went by the (obvious?) pseudonym of Merry Andrew.

¹⁵⁴ McDonald, "Seventeenth-Century Scottish Almanacs," p. 267, bases this opinion on a advertisement in Man's first almanac of 1696, describing him as a teacher. Paterson wrote almanacs between 1679 to 1693.

¹⁵⁵ McDonald, "Seventeenth-Century Scottish Almanacs," p. 268.

¹⁵⁶ McDonald, "Seventeenth-Century Scottish Almanacs," p. 268.

¹⁵⁷ GUL Spec. Coll., Mu60-f.54(41); *Edinburgh Gazette*, no. 212; 27-31 March, 1701.

¹⁵⁸ *Leith's True Almanack ... 1704 ... By John Man*, p. 3.

¹⁵⁹ *Leith's True Almanack ... 1704 ... By John Man*, p. 12.

If the number of almanacs bearing his name that have survived to this day are an indication, Merry Andrew¹⁶⁰ appears to have been one of the most popular prognosticators in Scotland during the first half of the eighteenth century.¹⁶¹ Certainly he was one of the most visible, and seems to have turned-out his first almanac in 1699,¹⁶² his last maybe having appeared in 1752, which is perhaps the same year Merry Andrew died. All of this is difficult to say with any certainty, as is ascribing this publication record to any single individual, since it would presuppose a career of over fifty years,¹⁶³ which is unlikely, but theoretically possible. Still, though he may have fancied himself as being “Professor of Predictions,” Andrew’s credentials are unknown (if he indeed had any at all). This is in spite of the fact that

¹⁶⁰ If indeed he was one single person; forthcoming evidence might suggest that “Merry Andrew” was a collective pseudonym for at least two people.

¹⁶¹ Bibliographical note. The following editions of almanacs bearing Merry Andrew’s name were consulted:

NLS, L.C. 3153(3); *Merry Andrew, 1703. or, An Almanack After a New Fashion, For the Year 1703* (Edinburgh, James Watson, 1703).

NLS, L.C. 3153(4); *Merry Andrew, 1705 ...* (Edinburgh, James Watson, 1705?).

NLS, L.C. 3153(6); *Merry Andrew, 1706 ...* (Edinburgh, James Watson, 1706?).

NLS, L.C. 3153(8); *Merry Andrew, 1709 ...* (Edinburgh, James Watson, 1709?).

GUL Spec. Coll., Mu1-f.34(3); *A New Almanack or new Prognostication For the Year of our Lord, 1727 ... Calculated ... for the Ancient Kingdom of Scotland. But more especially for the City of Edinburgh ... By Merry Andrew Professor of Predictions by Stargazing at Tam-tallon* (Edinburgh? 1727?).

GUL Spec. Coll., Mu7-i.43(1); *A New Almanack After a New Fashion, For the Year 1746 ... Calculated by Stargazical Art, for the Ancient Kingdom of Scotland ... By Merry Andrew Professor of Predictions by Stargazing at Tam-tallon* (Edinburgh? 1748?).

GUL Spec. Coll., Mu7-i.43(2); *Merry Andrew’s New Almanack or Prognostication For the Year of our Lord, 1749. Calculated for the Kingdom of Scotland. But especially for the City of Edinburgh, whose Elevation is 55Deg. 54 min.* (Edinburgh? 1749?).

GUL Spec. Coll., Mu7-i.43(3); *Merry Andrew: Or An Almanack After a new Fashion, for the Year 1750 ...* (Edinburgh? 1750?).

GUL Spec. Coll., Mu7-i.43(4); *Merry Andrew: Or An Almanack After a new Fashion, for the Year 1751 ...* (Edinburgh? 1751?).

GUL Spec. Coll., Mu7-i.43(4); *Aberdeen’s Nevv Almanack After The best Fashion, for the Year 1752 ... Calculated for the Meridian of any Place in Scotland, By Merry Andrew Professor of Prediction by Star Gazing at Tamtallon Being the last of all his VVorks* (Belfast, 1752). (Presumably, we are to take it that the merry one departed from life in this year.)

GUL Spec. Coll., Mu7-i.43(6); *Aberdeen’s Nevv Almanack ... for the Year 1753 Calculated for the Meridian of any Place in Scotland By merry Andrew Professor of Predictions by star-gazing at Tamtallon* (Aberdeen? 1753?).

Aberdeen’s New Prognostications For the Year of our Lord 1772 ... By Merry Andrew ... (full citation above).

¹⁶² Aldis, *Books Printed in Scotland Before 1700*.

¹⁶³ And a minimum lifespan of perhaps seventy years – even longer if he had had any higher education and/or career instructing in such, which is (again) questionable.

he alleged to have arrived at his calculations through “Stargazical Art at Tam-tallon” – which may be a reference to him claiming to have undertaken astrological observation at Tantallon Castle, in the vicinity of North Berwick. There is much evidence within the body of his almanacs to suggest that Merry Andrew never took all aspects of his “art” seriously. This point may be in fact a reflection of the wider attitude toward the almanac in the eighteenth century. Perhaps by the onset of the 1700s, the entertainment value of prognostications was beginning to overshadow any of its more “practical” aspects. However, none of this would prevent Andrew from ridiculing the competition; in this instance, the above named John Man:

Reader,

I uuill not trouble you uuith ansuuering that Rapsody of illegible Nonsense, Lies, and Mis-representations uuich Mr Man stufft his last Almanack uuith: If I should, I could turn the Cannon, and shouu houu tuuo of the Tables (uuich he imprudently calls his ouun) are stole out of Paterson’s High-uuays of Scotland ... I uuill shortly take occasion in a Paper ... and inquire into his pretentions to Navigate, &c. But in the mean time since he is so fond of Poems relating to himself, I’ll generously afford him the follouuing ...

John! may thy Labours never find Restraint;

O! may thou still appear a Fool in Print:

Hault not to promise finer things each Year,

Nor ever fail of being Jock-the-Liar.

May thou still stuff the Gazette with Praise¹⁶⁴

Among the Run-aways, who there get Bays;

Nor e’er a Poet deny the Feats to raise;

Till it be known with what ado,

Thou tricks the Mob and Country too.¹⁶⁵

Anagrams such as these, both laudatory and (like this one) satirical, were commonly employed by astrologers -- it had long been part of their secret language.¹⁶⁶ In this instance, Merry Andrew is using the anagram in a mocking manner, both of the individual John Man, and, in a sense, the whole genre itself.

¹⁶⁴ Probably a reference to the *Edinburgh Gazette* and the sort of advertisements in ran, typified by the example cited earlier.

¹⁶⁵ *Merry Andrew, 1703*, p. 3.

¹⁶⁶ See Geneva, *Astrology and the Seventeenth Century Mind*, chap 2, but especially pp. 35-36.

What this sort of mockery might underpin, was a veritable war of words being fought out for what was a potentially competitive market. By the latter half of the seventeenth and on into the eighteenth century, there appeared to be no shortage of almanacs being printed in Scotland. It is no exaggeration to say that during this period the market was literally flooded with them, and two or more rival almanacs often would be printed for the same year.¹⁶⁷ In 1686, for example, no fewer than five different almanacs competed for a share of the Scottish market.¹⁶⁸ The situation regarding the printing of almanacs definitely experienced a dramatic change in 1681. Prior to that, there seems to have been but one almanac from one printer per year. In 1681, however, for the first time, more than one almanac came out; the number specifically in that year being three.¹⁶⁹ This might be at least in part due to the fact that it was not until the latter half of the seventeenth century that Scottish printing in general became a burgeoning concern,¹⁷⁰ a point previously made. This point seems to agree with the observations of McDonald, who held that until the 1660s, virtually the only almanacs printed were from Aberdeen.¹⁷¹ Much of this was probably due to the fact that most early mathematicians, engaged in penning astrological lore, were trained, and/or taught at Aberdeen's Marischal College. After, the 1660s, almanacs experienced a boom – reflective of Scottish printing in general – and the days of piracy and counterfeiting began,¹⁷² thus probably contributing to this war of words.

At times this battle of the mathematical geniuses would take on a more cerebral quality. McDonald points to the feud waged at the end of the seventeenth

¹⁶⁷ For example 1705; see *Merry Andrew, 1705* (full citation above), and NLS L.C. 3153(5); *An Almanack and new Prognostication for the Year of our Lord 1705 ... by G.C. Mathemat* (Edinburgh, Heirs and Successors of A. Anderson, 1705). Both Andrew's and Mathemat's almanacs claim to have been calculated with the "famous city of Edinburgh" in mind.

¹⁶⁸ Aldis, *Books Printed in Scotland Before 1700*, p. 126, relates that the *Everlasting Prognostication* was printed in Aberdeen; there were three *New Prognostications*, printed in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen respectively; while J. Paterson's almanac was produced in Edinburgh also.

¹⁶⁹ Aldis, *Books printed in Scotland Before 1700*.

¹⁷⁰ The period 1668-1775 is when the Scottish printing industry finally showed signs of maturity according to R.H. Carnie, "Scottish Printers and Booksellers, 1668-1775: A Study of Source Material," pp. 213-27 in, *The Bibliothek – A Scottish Journal of Bibliography and Allied Topics*, vol. 4 (1963-66), p. 213.

¹⁷¹ McDonald, "Scottish Seventeenth-Century Almanacs," p. 267.

¹⁷² McDonald, "Scottish Seventeenth-Century Almanacs," p. 267.

century between John Forbes¹⁷³ and Duncan Lidel¹⁷⁴ on one hand, and James Paterson on the other. The whole conflict between these two factions erupted over the dating of Easter (and more importantly, Lent). The arguments are quite involved, but basically both parties at first determined the date for Easter using the old Julian style of calendar. Paterson, however, changed his mind, believing that the (relatively) more modern Gregorian calendar offered the more accurate answer.¹⁷⁵ Forbes, however, stuck to his guns, and defended his use of the Old Style of determining Easter. The upshot of all of this was a protracted war waged in print between the two factions, the first blow being struck by Paterson in the form of his satirical broadside *Long Lent*, which is quite matter of fact in its attack on Forbes, and Duncan and George Lidel:

Lent fourty Work dayes ever was,
 With just six Sundayes more;
 But three Horn'd Beasts at Aberdeen
 Intends to make three score.
 For now they want but only six,
 As clearly may appear;
 And if they continue with their old tricks,
 They shall want none nixt year.

But for to know when Pasch should be,
 Their Errors to discover,
 It still should the first Sunday fall,
 After the Jews Pass'over.
 Which falls this year April the seventh,
 As Jews do reckon all
 The fourteen day of Nisan month
 It every year must fall ...

If Master Duncan understood
 The Gramer Rules aright,

¹⁷³ Forbes appears to have had a printing press in Aberdeen.

¹⁷⁴ Duncan Lidel was the nephew of another Duncan Lidel, who was professor of Mathematics first at Helmstadt, then Marischall college, Aberdeen. Duncan the nephew graduated from Aberdeen with an MA in 1634, then moved to London to teach geometry, navigation, and gunnery, after which he was appointed chair of maths at Aberdeen. He was succeeded in the position by his son George in March of 1687, who was also MA at age twenty. George was deposed in 1706, for immoral conduct, reinstated in 1707, only to be deposed again in 1717, again for immorality and harbouring suspected Jacobite sympathies as well. See, McDonald, "Scottish Seventeenth-Century Almanacs," pp. 263-64.

¹⁷⁵ McDonald, "Scottish Seventeenth-Century Almanacs," p. 276.

The Rule Eclipsis he would mind
 And that would set him right;
 And yet of Learning he will boast,
 And unlern'd others call;
 But he that braggeth most therof
 Hath oftimes least of all ...¹⁷⁶

All this energy expended in this controversy (which did not go unanswered from the other corner, who retaliated with satirical verse of their own¹⁷⁷) serves to underpin the basic point: that each individual author was desperate to find, and maintain, his own niche, lest an interloper deprive him of it.

However, perhaps this same war waged between the various creators – with one side “taking shots” at the other – was only another aspect of the overall entertainment purpose which the almanac was designed to fulfil. Perhaps readers were drawn to the sort of banter such prognostications had to offer, that aspect overshadowing all others. And as far as the level of hilarity was concerned, none seemed to reach greater heights of merriment than Merry Andrew. As mentioned above, it is at times very difficult to believe that the author of Merry Andrew’s almanac took all aspects of his effort seriously – he was not even above having a laugh at the expense of his readership, in conjunction with the describing the contents of his effort:

Wherein the Reader may find (if he have more Brains than a Butterfly) many remarkable Things, worthy of his Observation:

Calculated for the Meridian of any Place in Scotland, where they understand an Ape from an Apple and a sucking Pig, from a Hay-Stack. And fitted for the Noddles of most Peoples Understanding.¹⁷⁸

It goes without saying, that to credit someone with having the ability to tell the difference between a suckling pig and a haystack is not exactly the highest

¹⁷⁶ NLS Ry.III.a.10(32); *Long Lent, Or a Vindication of the feasts, Against those three great Horned beasts, John Forbes, Master Duncan Lidel, With his Son George to tune their fiddle* (Aberdeen, John Forbes?, 1685). The National Library catalogue claims this was printed by John Forbes. This seems rather suspect, since it seems hard to believe that Forbes would print a piece which satirised himself, unless conceit over his own name got the better of him.

¹⁷⁷ McDonald, “Scottish Seventeenth-Century Almanacs,” p. 278.

¹⁷⁸ *Merry Andrew, 1750*, p. 1. This “cordial” greeting to the reader was repeated at least once, in *Merry Andrew, 1751*.

compliment that could be paid to that person's level of intelligence. Certainly, at times, aspects of Merry Andrew suggest it was at least partially an attempt at "poking fun" at the whole genre. There were, in fact, even back in the seventeenth century, numerous examples of "mock almanacs" – with commercial success rates rivalling that of the real thing – containing predictions of all sorts, so sufficiently equivocal, they could seemingly apply to any event, good or bad, on any day, rain or shine.¹⁷⁹ These mock almanacs were a sceptic's delight, and given that there was more disbelief surrounding prognostication during the eighteenth century,¹⁸⁰ it is perhaps no surprise that even a "serious" almanac (if Merry Andrew was ever intended as) would incorporate some of the traits of the "non-serious" variety, all in an attempt to win as wide a readership as possible.

Satirical squibs and poems (often of burlesque and bawdy nature) became a near standard feature of Merry Andrew's almanac during the eighteenth century. One of Andrew's "tamer" exercises in merriment was visible in his introduction to each monthly weather forecast for 1705:

This Month [January] to keep thee from all harm,
In bed with Cloaths wrap they self warm:
Three things a woman well will please,
A Kiss, a Coach, and live at ease;
And three things will a Man content,
Tobacco, Wine, and Merriment.¹⁸¹

Poetry often featured in early modern Scottish almanacs – again, probably to heighten entertainment value. As a cheap sort of literature, the popular almanac probably had a certain cathartic value for society. The subject matter was non-threatening, by and large, and for a few pennies, the reader could be amused by weather lore – possibly knowing the likelihood of such predictions coming true was

¹⁷⁹ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 398.

¹⁸⁰ Though this is not to say that they were *no* believers at all. Reverend Wodrow still was a believer, though the type he believed in, and its source, were likely on a greatly different level to almanacs like Merry Andrew's.

¹⁸¹ *Merry Andrew, 1705*, p. 5.

problematical – numerous other pieces of astrological and meteorological trivia, plus, if lucky, find a laugh in some satirical squib of one sort or another. A few would be interested in the practical information contained thereon; it stands to reason that information garnered from tide tables, and dealing with the rising and setting of the sun, was probably – in the main – accurate, dependent upon the skills of the compiler of such. The potential existed for the popular almanac to find its way into virtually every household, largely because it had something to offer everyone.¹⁸²

The popular almanac may have served another purpose, perhaps not readily apparent. They may have served as informal histories, a window into events from the both the near and distant past. In the case of relating events from the recent past, this might have been a way in which they were able to keep up with current affairs, and never appear totally out of date. It is indeed interesting that most Scottish almanacs engaged in relating events both of future *and* past significance. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, virtually all included a table of “memorable events” done in imitation of a basic model from England. Events of national and international significance almost always were including, as mentioned earlier; these included such events as the births and deaths of certain monarchs, significant battles, the course of the Christian faith, and such single events of importance like the invention of guns (presumably cannons) and printing. The most important event in the history of the world, its very creation, is almost always mentioned. In most instances, these events are related in terms of days before present. Thus, in the case of Merry Andrew’s 1748 almanac, the creation of the world was said to have occurred 5697 years before

¹⁸² McDonald, “Scottish Seventeenth-Century Almanacs,” p. 261. Of course, there is little, if any,

present; the Great Flood, 4032 years before present; while Fergus the first became King of Scotland 2070 years prior to 1748.¹⁸³ This picture is pretty well the norm as well for the appended examples of John Man from 1704 (Appendix XIII), Patrick Stobie from 1718 (Appendix XV), and Merry Andrew from 1727 (Appendix XVI). All these, with some notable exceptions that will be discussed shortly, seem to employ chronologies that are all but virtual carbon copies of this basic pattern.

Thus, one noteworthy exception to this more or less standard pattern of rendering chronologies, is in the form of Merry Andrew's almanac from 1705. where the first event mentioned is the beheading of the Duke of Hamilton on 8 March 1648 (see Appendix XIV). As it turns out, this last piece of information is probably wrong; pedantic as it may seem, James, Duke of Hamilton was actually executed on the *ninth* of March 1649.¹⁸⁴ The career of this supporter of Charles I was chequered indeed; at one point, due to conspiracies against him, he fell out of favour with the king. With nowhere to turn, it seems he swore to the Solemn League and Covenant.¹⁸⁵ Yet when the king was made prisoner, it was Hamilton who entered England to attempt the rescue, only to be thwarted. Hamilton's forces surrendered to the Commonwealth at Urttoxeter on 25 August 1648, after which he himself was made prisoner. While imprisoned at Windsor Castle, Hamilton managed to escape, only to be recaptured, then tried, and executed at Westminster.

direct evidence to say that it did. Yet indirect evidence, regarding numbers printed and subject matter, might lead to the conclusion that the almanac *possibly* entered most households.

¹⁸³ *Merry Andrew 1748*, p. 2. For interest sake, mention of the Duke of Hamilton's military activities during the Covenanting period, is first referred to by a Scottish almanac (noted here), in *A New Prognostication for 1672*, p. 2.

¹⁸⁴ Which was after Charles I's execution; not before, as Merry Andrew alleges. See G. Donaldson, *Scotland James V to James VII* (Edinburgh, 1965), p. 340; see also, Paul, J.B. (ed), *The Scots Peerage. Founded on Wood's Edition of Sir Robert Douglas's Peerage of Scotland* (9 vols; Edinburgh, 1904-14), iv, p. 378, and E.J. Cowan, *Montrose for Covenant and King* (Edinburgh, 1977; reprinted 1995), p. 267.

¹⁸⁵ D. Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution 1637-1644* (Newton Abbot, 1973), p. 293.

Why Merry Andrew's 1748 almanac begins with the Duke's execution is a mystery. It may be that the author was paying some sort of tribute to Hamilton, 1748 being the centenary of the Duke's death, at least by Merry Andrew's (incorrect) reckoning. It could also be that it was the author's original intent to produce an extended chronology, but due to space considerations, was forced to reduce its length. Though most chronologies took up the space of exactly one page, at least one English almanac – Henry Season's 1751 – featured an extended "Micro Chronicon" of two pages.¹⁸⁶ Perhaps it was Merry Andrew's original intention to produce something similar in his 1748 almanac – an intent which, obviously, never materialised.

This same almanac also includes references to the Company of Scotland's ship *Annandale* seizure by the East India Company, resulting in her internment in Dover; and the reprisal when the East India's *Worcester* was seized at Leith after which it was moored at Burntisland Harbour. The dates supplied for these events were 1 February and 12 August, 1704, respectively (see Appendix XIV), which appear to be correct. The *Annandale* was the Company's last remaining ship and was seized in the Downs by English revenue officials, at the bequest of the East India Company. The reprisal episode indeed saw the *Worcester's* capture in the Firth of Forth; its Captain Green and crew being charged with piracy over the mysterious disappearance of the Company's *Speedy Return* in the East Indies in 1703. The charges against Green and his crew, more than likely trumped up,¹⁸⁷ were pressed forward, the result of which was that the unfortunate captain and two of his crew were forced to have a fateful meeting with the hangman on 11 April 1705. Hysteria

¹⁸⁶ Henry Season, 1751, pp. 7-8.

connected with resentment over the failure of the Company of Scotland,¹⁸⁸ subsided after the three hangings, and the remainder of the crew were granted their freedom.

The hysteria over the failure of the Company seems to be reflected in Merry Andrew. In the main, he seems concerned with the general state, and failure, of Scotland's overseas ventures, and English efforts seemingly designed to thwart Scottish efforts in the New World. As was discussed in a previous chapter,¹⁸⁹ that failure, connected with the so-called Darien disaster, weighed heavily upon significant portions of the national consciousness.¹⁹⁰ Undoubtedly, anger over the failure of the company, plus the whole *Annandale/Worcester* event was the stimulus for Merry Andrew including this event in the chronology of his 1705 almanac. At the same time, given the general circulation status of any single almanac, it is very likely that his having drawn attention to the event, would help in bringing to the attention of Merry Andrew's readership. Thus, the inclusion of this singular event was probably both a reflection of national consciousness, and helped in sustaining its memory. In addition, it also reflects something of both the author's politics, in harbouring resentment towards the perceived English aggressor. (Which might even be a trait of the nation's politics at large.)

Events of a local significance occasionally crept into the chronologies of memorable events contained within some of the more visible almanacs. A fine example of this is John Man's 1704 almanac in which he reports that "33 Barrels of

¹⁸⁷ Ferguson, *Scotland 1689 to Present*, p. 45.

¹⁸⁸ Ferguson, *Scotland 1689 to Present*, p. 45.

¹⁸⁹ That concerned with the *Wallace* and *Bruce* literary traditions.

¹⁹⁰ The general attitude was that England had done all it could to see such ventures as Darien (Panama) fail. It was hoped that the Darien project would result in financial prosperity for Scotland. Thus, the view that English efforts were responsible for Darien's failure, probably were seen as being attempts by that nation to cripple the Scottish economy. See, for example, R.K. Marshall, *The Days of Duchess Anne* (London, 1973), p. 220.

Powder [were] blown up at Leith [on] the 3 July 1702” (see Appendix XIII).

Quoting from the town’s petition to the Privy Council for relief, the event itself is retold in full detail by Chambers:

It pleased the great and holy God to visit this town [Leith] for their heinous sins against him, with a very terrible and sudden stroke, which was occasioned by the firing of thirty-three barrels of powder; which dreadful blast, was heard ever at many miles distance with great terror and amazement, so it hath caused great ruin and desolation in this place. It smote seven or eight persons at least with sudden death, and turned the houses next adjacent to ruinous heaps, turred off the roof, beat out the windows, and broke out the timber partitions of a great many houses and biggings even to a great distance. Few houses in the town did escape some damage, and this in the moment of time; so that the merciful conduct of Divine Providence hath been very admirable in the preservation of hundreds of people whose lives were exposed to manifold sudden dangers, seeing they had not so much previous warning as to shift a foot for their own preservation much less to remove their plenishing.¹⁹¹

Events such as the explosion in Leith harbour, though infrequently related in the chronologies of the almanacs noted, nevertheless appear to be examples of historical events which impinged upon the common consciousness. Chambers’ narrative alludes to the general destruction caused by the explosion: many households, shops, etc., were affected, a fact reinforced by the estimate of the damage rendered, “thirty-six thousand nine hundred and thirty-six pounds Scots ...”¹⁹² Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that virtually all inhabitants of that place would have knowledge of the event, and as such, it would become an integral part of their life experiences. This may have been yet one more way in which certain almanacs attempted to retain a degree of contemporaneity in subject matter.

What is especially interesting about Man’s inclusion of this explosion in Leith Harbour, was the fact that it was juxtaposed against the “larger,” ubiquitous events such as the creation of the world, the Biblical flood, gunpowder plot, etc. What we might be seeing here is a reflection of common perceptions of history. To

¹⁹¹ Chambers, *Domestic Annals*, iii, p. 264.

¹⁹² Chambers, *Domestic Annals*, iii, p. 264.

the average person, what is it that formulates their concepts of world history; or rather, the history of their world? It would certainly seem to be a combination of both the “big” and the “little” events. Thus, the individual’s perception of “history” would probably include such events as the general history of the planet itself; the origins of their own homeland, or state; the history of any religious, spiritual, or philosophical movement to which they might subscribe; but in addition – perhaps – the history of their own local community; their immediate neighbourhood; their family; their own birthday, etc. The juxtaposing of events of national and international significance, with an event like the explosion in Leith Harbour – of mostly local significance¹⁹³ – is then a reflection of a personal view of world events, in which the local are often afforded the same importance of an event drawn from the “bigger picture.” Man’s inclusion of the explosion of thirty-three kegs of gunpowder at Leith seems to be an extension of that same mind-set.

The method of reckoning time most often encountered in the almanacs, is rarely a method based upon that which is most commonly used in modern times. In modern times, of course, and at least in the west, a method of reckoning time based upon the Nativity was, and is, the most prevalent. Thus, we have dates both “Before Christ” and “Anno Domini.” The method most often employed in the almanacs is in

¹⁹³ Though there is no reason why some persons outside of that particular community would not find such an event compelling. However, if a person from – for example – Glasgow were to find such an event as the Leith Harbour explosion worthy of note, that particular event would no longer be of local significance, at least from that one person’s standpoint, but more so (in a way) of national significance. There would be, as a result, a shift in emphasis: events of local significance, can become events of national significance. The reverse might also be true: the boarding of the *Worcester*, though of primarily national import, might have held a special place in the common consciousness of the people living in the vicinity of Leith Downs, where the event took place. As to which event – that of local, or that of national significance – held the greatest fascination for the individual, it might really be dependent upon the individual himself or herself. Perhaps it might be argued that for most, it would be the more intimate events which first make up the personal interpretation of history. Most people have difficulty imagining a world in which they are not a part of (an idea originally communicated by Prof. E.J. Cowan – several years ago!). Add to that the fact that most people tend to see themselves as part of a local community first and foremost (this might be a trait which the average Scot readily displays), and it seems to suggest that the average individual looks first inward, and then to his or her immediate surroundings, when first formulating a personal interpretation of environment. The world view is thus a personalised one; it stands to reason that the world view of history is also a personal one. Thus, the definition of “what is history” might start from the individual, then look gradually look further and further afield, in the search for one person’s own search for their place in history.

the form of events which occurred so many “years before present.” The basis for this characteristic could conceivably come from several sources. However, it is worthy of mention that it could be based upon a method of reckoning time, present in some earlier histories of Scotland – notably the *Chronicle of the Scots*, for one. This history also includes certain references to international history that also seem to creep into the chronologies of certain Scottish almanacs; they will be discussed in due course. However, a taste for the way in which the *Chronicle*¹⁹⁴ renders its historical entries, may be seen here:

Fra ye begynnyng of ye warld onne to Christ was v. thousand a hundir foure score and xix zeris, fra Adam to we twa thousand twa hundir and xlij zeris ... The sext fra ye transmigratiounn to Christ fife hundir and xvij zeris.

Scottis-men. – The first Scottis men was foure thousand thre hundir and xv. zeris fra ye begynnyng of ye warld. Romme was byggyt eftir ye begynnyng of ye warld be twa breyir, Remiss and Romulus, four thousand twa hundie and xviii zeris ... Alex^r conquest of the ye world fra ye begynnyng of it foure thousand and nynne hundir zeris. Julius Cesar conquest ye warld fra ye begynnyng of it, all bot Scotland, fife thousand a hundir nynne and thretty zeris.¹⁹⁵

Here, time is reckoned both in terms of years before present, and years subsequent to the creation of the world. Noteworthy as well is mention of such events drawn from the Classical and Mediterranean world as the (legendary) founding of Rome by Romulus and Remus, Alexander the Great’s conquests, as well as those of Julius Caesar. As it turns out, certain of these events crop up in the chronologies of some Scottish almanacs. For example, in the *A New Prognostication for 1668*, Alexander the Great’s death was commemorated,¹⁹⁶ as well as Romulus’s construction of Rome.¹⁹⁷ This was repeated in *A New prognostication for 1669*; the death of Alexander the Great was no longer deemed sufficiently significant, however, in *A*

¹⁹⁴ Seemingly transcribed first in 1530, and appended to Wytoun’s *Chronicle*, as found in the so-called Royal MS. See, *Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots, and other Early Memorials of Scottish History*, W.F. Skene (ed) (Edinburgh, 1867), p. lxxiii.

¹⁹⁵ “The Chronicle of the Scots,” in *Chronicles of the Picts and Scots*, p. 386. Thanks to Dr D. Brown, Glasgow University, for first suggesting this source.

¹⁹⁶ In the noted Scottish Almanacs, the first mention of Alexander the Great’s death was in *A New Prognostication for 1667*.

¹⁹⁷ *A New Prognostication for 1668*, p. 2.

New Prognostication for 1670.¹⁹⁸ The founding of Rome continued to be an event in world history, deemed worth of mention, by most subsequent almanac authors, printers, etc.¹⁹⁹ “The first Scottis men,” an event normally deemed to be from the same level of antiquity as the founding of Rome, also is a pretty much standard item in these chronologies, tending to surface as “The Scots entred into Albion.”²⁰⁰

How did such entries as these first find their way into the almanacs’ chronologies? It is possible, if the original source was indeed something like *The Chronicles of the Scots*, that at some comparatively early point in time, one, more enlightened, almanac author inserted such information into his own creation. Such a person would have to have a knowledge of medieval Scots, the language in which the *Chronicle* was originally rendered. (Of course, it is possible that such information could come to him by word of mouth.) Probably subsequent authors simply copied, from this work, the pertinent information, and incorporated it into their own almanacs. The general similarity of the length of the chronologies, their contents, and even in many cases, their very wording, seems sufficiently convincing in respect to this latter observation.

For one, seemingly insignificant piece of literature, the Scottish almanac, can tell of a surprising amount of information concerning its host society. Aspects of the progress of mathematical scholarship can be witnessed; as can the sort of information deemed of practical value for a wide segment of the population. Some of the attitudes towards prognostication can possibly also be glimpsed. We have seen how the non-specific was most often emphasised; the specific, often cautiously approached. At times, some of the information in latter almanacs is flippantly

¹⁹⁸ *A New Prognostication for 1670*, p. 2.

¹⁹⁹ The list could almost fill an entire page, and even among the almanacs consulted, there is the possibility some may have been overlooked; nevertheless, see *A New Prognostication for 1670*; *A New Prognostication for 1671*; *A New Prognostication for 1672*; *A New Prognostication for 1673*; *Merry Andrew, 1748*; *Merry Andrew, 1749*; *Merry Andrew, 1750*; *Merry Andrew, 1751*; *Merry Andrew, 1752*; *Merry Andrew, 1753*; *Merry Andrew, 1754*; *Merry Andrew, 1772*; see also appended example from John Man (Appendix XIII).

²⁰⁰ Again, a sizeable list could be rendered here. The point, however, concerning the frequency of some of these historical entries, hopefully has been convincingly made by now. Thus, one place (among truly numerous others) that this reference could be found, is in *Merry Andrew, 1752*, p. 2.

rendered, perhaps reflective of the growing scepticism concerning prophecy. Yet from scholarship surrounding the merits of prophecy was conducted by at least one of the leading Presbyterian thinkers at the beginning of the eighteenth century. There is no reason to think that such an interest would ever totally diminish, when we consider the agenda of the Reverend Wodrow.

Wodrow also possessed an interest in one of the longest standing examples of traditional prophecy, that of Thomas the Rhymer. Reprinted several times during the early modern period, traditions associated with *The Prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer*, and its alleged creator, Thomas de Erceldoune, have long been a reflection of interests held by segments of the population. Thus, predictions concerning a monarch who will unite all of Britain, plus Calvinist concerns for understanding providence as it was thought to have impinged upon protestantism's progress, are two higher purposes to which Thomas's alleged powers were applied. All of this is representative of a need to gain an understanding of the significance of events both past and present, beyond the immediate moment.

Almanacs were not only a window into the future, but also the past, and the theory seems to be that if one was knowable, so was the other.²⁰¹ It seems possible, furthermore, to formulate opinions concerning concepts of history held by the commonality, through the examination of the histories contained within the almanacs. Certain aspects of this historical information was probably picked from the common consciousness; when such information began to fade from memory, its presence in print, might serve to reawaken the memory. These histories were one possible way in which the almanac retained its vitality, despite the probably growth of scepticism. Furthermore, the pieces of supposedly inspired advice contained within the almanac, relating to weather and seasonal lore, probably still continued to serve at least a portion of the public, despite some growth in scepticism. We may never know for certain exactly what the average literate person from the past read. Yet because almanacs were sold by travelling peddlers, and were thus able to reach

²⁰¹ An idea formulated as a result of a personal communication with Professor E.J. Cowan.

even the remotest areas of the nation, we might suspect that this was one type of reading in which the commonality engaged. One little book, then, can suggest a fair amount of details concerning a bygone culture.

Conclusions

“The Continuity of Scots Vernacular Culture”

The aim here has been to present a representative look at writing which could be referred to as being part of early modern vernacular culture, with a directive to see how these pieces interacted with their host society. This literary types might be described as popular, owing to either the sheer number of printings they experienced, and/or the significance they held for society at large. Some of the mutations which the vernacular, language, culture, and literature experienced were examined in an effort to argue that these were necessary if the entire genre was to remain relevant.

As a language, Scots vernacular was challenged by English. It was probably a case of the greater dictating to the lesser, so polite English came to be seen as the correct form. In the poetic realm, the neo-classical type was seen as being superior. This seems to have been attributable to the way in which the ancient world was viewed. Greece was seen as having been a role model for concepts of eloquence and oration; Rome showed the way toward civility and public-mindedness.¹ Thus, the cultivation of writing styles and speech based upon models formulated originally by these two, could have the effect of producing an elevation of morality, responsibility, and intellect within the individual. Allan Ramsay, like all others from his time seeking to become a noted writer, was forced to pay attention to these dictates. He and his fellow members of Edinburgh's Easy Club took it upon themselves at every meeting to read selections from the *Tatler* and *Spectator* – two London based publications designed to serve as a handbook of sorts for good taste.

The net result was that Ramsay did write much English poetry, probably more than his writings in Scots. It might be wrong to assume that he wrote English

poetry because he thought it intrinsically superior to poetry in the Scots language. But in an environment in which the former national literary tongue was reduced to an idiomatic, colloquial dialect, often seen as inferior, the attitude that he must write in English, at least at times, in an effort to prove himself, might have been compelling. Yet it was really his writing in Scots which highlighted his creativeness. For in the process of writing in Scots, he was really redefining the Scots literary tongue. His repertoire of Scots words, though not as extensive as later poets like Robert Burns, was both an amalgam of the old and the new: the language of the middle Scots giants like Blind Harry, Robert Henryson, and Gavin Douglas, was combined with – among other things – current oral usage. This seems to have resulted in a partial resurrection of middle Scots, but even more, the creation of early modern Scots – a language which took into account the social realities of a nation which had experienced a reformation based upon English liturgy, the loss of court patronage in 1603, and the amalgamation of the Scots parliament with the much larger English-speaking parliament of the south. Scots as a language of officialdom had seen its last; as a dynamic language of creative writing, in some ways, its best days were still ahead. It was this creative language which Ramsay was instrumental in first formulating, and as has been shown in this thesis, later masters such as Burns would actually employ the Leadhills poet's glossary as a basis for their own.²

Despite all the adversities it faced in between 1680 to 1750, Scots vernacular culture was left in a pretty good state at the conclusion of this period. True, there would be continued emphasis on writing in polished English, but the lesson both

¹ D. Allan, *Virtue, Learning, and the Scottish Enlightenment* (EUP, 1993), *passim*, but especially pp. 87-90.

² B. Martin and J.W. Oliver (ed vols 1-2); A.M. Kinghorn and A. Law (ed vols 3-6), *The Works of Allan Ramsay* (6 vols; Edinburgh and London, 1945-74), iv, p. 200.

could learn from Ramsay was how to juggle both forms, in an effort not only to remain visible within a wide spectrum of the poetic audience, but also to expand their own personal creative potentials. But Scots as a literary language was not going to disappear; Ramsay's redefinition of the tongue would be something later, and (admittedly) more adept vernacularists like Robert Fergusson and Robert Burns would be able to build upon and wield with even more authority. Ramsay displayed his creativity in the way he was able to reinterpret established forms along contemporary lines. With respect to this, the later masters Fergusson and Burns might owe yet another debt of gratitude to the less polished, but certainly every bit as innovative Ramsay. Craig asserts that like Ramsay, Fergusson "was close to [the] events" which formed the basis of his poetry.³ If this is meant to say that Fergusson obeyed the rules set down by Ramsay in striving for authentic poetic interpretation, then it seems an accurate statement insofar as it goes. But the unanswerable question might be whether Fergusson – and Burns as well – would have been able to discover the vitality of the "Habbie Simson" tradition on their own, had Ramsay not laid the groundwork ahead of them.

Perhaps there is little doubt that a poem like "Habbie Simson" deserves to be counted among one of the most significant pieces of early modern Scots writing. Its language and stanza style all marked it as a piece drawn from common experience. This might also be argued for Allan Ramsay's vernacular portrayals of common Edinburgh street life which were based upon the Sempill original. Ramsay's treatment of these mock elegies displays both an appreciation for contemporary urban life on his part, plus an understanding of the convivial, which stood in

³ D. Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680-1830* (London, 1961), p. 122.

opposition to concepts of modern restraint and sensibility. Though Ramsay presented his works with the sort of excessiveness commonly associated with the carnival genre, little that he portrayed was so far removed from everyday life as to cause it to enter the realm of the unbelievable.

In the case of “Christis Kirk on the Grene,” the basis for the poem is the world of common celebration, though aspects of it seem to go beyond the realm of strict reality. Poems such as this might contain an element of mock violence, which does not always agree with the example from actual folk celebration, in which real violence might manifest itself. This apparent contradiction stresses the fact that literature is not always a representation of reality, but instead at times, a representation of the author’s reaction to his life experiences, and environment. It is thus a metaphor for events. Thus, the anonymous author of “Christis Kirk on the Grene” may have actually witnessed various individual scenes of the sort of unrestrained behaviour associated with a carnival-like experience. He might have been impressed by the actions of people living for the moment, pushing and shoving, laughing and shouting, and exchanging bold oaths, sometimes with furious amounts of energy: to him this might have been a sort of ritualised violence.⁴ With such a vision in mind, and charged himself with the folk energy which he had witnessed, he found himself compelled to recreate the emotions that were stirred within him. Thus he found that the best, and no doubt most sensational, way in which he could portray these “feelings” on the page was to create a burlesque scene, filled with irony, in which a cleric gets hit by an arrow, but does not die.

⁴ In this instance, the word violence is being used in the sense of “excessive” or “unrestrained.”

The standard works exemplifying the long-standing traditions associated with the Scots vernacular literary language would continue to prosper, even though they did not remain static. Blind Harry's *Wallace* would be one of the most visible pieces throughout the course of the eighteenth century, and then into the nineteenth. Barbour's *Bruce* would exist as a distant, but still respectable second. Yet Harry's original language would receive a boost, with the introduction of the so-called scholarly edition in 1790, though perhaps not as faithfully rendered a language as might have been hoped for, if the analysis is correct. The move toward the creation of a scholarly edition might have been first made by Robert Freebairn, sometime between 1714 to 1758.

The reprints of Blind Harry's *Wallace* and John Barbour's *Bruce* seem to have retained a vitality precisely because the integrity of their stories remained, in spite of modification to their language. Reprint after reprint was produced, especially of the former, presumably to meet some sort of general demand for the portrayal of the commoner who accomplished, according to the accepted myth, uncommon deeds. Both works appeared suitable for exploitation by factions devoted to political and social change, namely by the Jacobite, and anti-union movements. In the case of the *Bruce* there was a ready-made story which could seemingly serve as a cornerstone for political, monarchical, and constitutional argument.

Almanacs, as representatives of the chapbook genre, might be (arguably) seen as satisfying the reading needs of a wide variety of the literate public. Prophetic statement still held a fascination for (at least) a segment of the population. Any growing scepticism connected with the whole viability of trying to predict

future events of any sort did not seem sufficient to blot out interest in the almanac, especially when it contained far more information than simple, and relatively inoffensive, weather prediction. The inclusion of historical and near current events, might have helped in retaining an audience; humorous anecdote and satirical squibs might have performed a similar function. The bottom line seems to be that the popular almanac probably never totally alienated its audience.

Literature was always the product of a society, and each piece retains its viability, it would seem, by remaining relevant to society. It would appear that it can never remain unchanged if it is to continue to be viable. But individual creativity also plays a role in maintaining a literary genre. As was suggested in this thesis, many types received a boost through the actions of an individual, but contemporary events often played a role as factors regulating both success, and determining motivation.

Appendix I

Blind Harry's *Wallace*
"Original Text"¹

"Book X"²

Ye later³ day off August fell yis cace
 ffor ye reskew yus ordanyt wicht Wallace
 Off Sanct Ihonstoun yat sothroun occupyit
 ffast towart tay yai passyt and aspyit
 5⁴ Out off ye toun as scottismen till hym said⁵
 Or it was day wndyr kynnowll yaim laid.
 Yat sewardys oysyt *with* cartis hay to leid
 So was it suth and hapnyt in to deid
 Saxsum yar com and brocht bot cartis thre
 10 Guthre *with*⁶ ten in handys has yai tayn
 Put yaim to dede, off yaim he sawyt nayn
 Wallace gert tak in haist yar hu[m]jest weid
 And sic lik men yai waillyt weill gud speid
 15 ffour was *rycht* rud Wallace hym selff tuk ane
 A rwsset clok and *with* him gud Ruwane
 Guthre *with* yat⁷ and als gud 3emen twa
 In yat ilk soit yai graithit yaim to ga
 ffull sutelly yai coueryt yaim *with* hay
 20 Syne to ye toun yai went ye gaynest way.
 xv yai tuk off men in arnes wicht
 In ilk cart v. yai ordanyt owt off sycht⁸

¹ What is being presented here as the "Original Text" is a collation of a reading of Advocates' Manuscript 19.2.2(ii) (John Ramsay's 1488 transcription of the *Wallace*; starting about a third of the way through folio 83, and ending at the top of folio 84) and M.P. McDiarmid's 1968 scholarly edition of Blind Harry. Generally speaking, the wording of manuscript has been more faithfully adhered to here than in McDiarmid, though with the exception of a few instances, the differences are not overly dramatic.

² Book headings are not in MS, but originate from McDiarmid. There are, however, rubrics in the margins of the manuscript, done in a later hand.

³ One of a number of contractions in the MS; this transcription has mostly followed the expansions as found in McDiarmid's text.

⁴ Line numbers are not part of MS; there are present in McDiarmid's text and are included here for clarity.

⁵ Lines 5 and 6 are reversed in McDiarmid, to agree with early printed versions of Harry, which he thinks might have been based upon a different (and now lost) manuscript.

⁶ Not indicated as an abbreviation in McDiarmid.

⁷ McDiarmid replaces "with yat" with "Bissat."

⁸ In McDiarmid, ll. 19-20 come after ll. 21-22, again to agree with the alleged earlier MS from which early printed editions, such as 1570, were (allegedly) based upon.

yir cartaris had schort suerdis of gud steill
 Wndyr yar weidis callyt furth ye cartis weill
 25 Schyr Ihon Ramsay baid *with* a buschement still
 Quhen myster war to help yaim with gud will
 yir trew cartaris past *with* outyn⁹ let
 A tour the bryg and entryt throu ye 3et
 quhen yai war in yar clokis kest yaim fra
 30 gud Wallace yan the mayster portar can ta
 wpon the hed¹⁰ quhill dede he has him left
 Syn *oyir* twa the lyff fra yaim has reft
 Guthre be yat¹¹ did rycht weyll in ye toun
 12 And ruwan als dang off *yar* famen down.
 35 Ye armyt men was in the cartis brocht
 Rais wp and weill yar dawern has wrocht
 Apon ye gait yai gert feill sothroun de
 Ye Ramsais spy has seyn yaim get entre
 ye buschement brak bathe bryg and port was won.
 40 Into ye toun gret stryff yat was begon
 yai xx^{it} men¹³ or Ramsay come in playn
Within ye toun had saxte sotheroun slayn
 ye Inglißmen on till aray was gayn
 ye scottis as yan layser lett yaim get nayn
 45 ffra gud Ramsay *with* hes men entryt In
 yai sawit nayn was born off Ingliß kyn
 Als Long[a]weill ye wicht knyght ß thomas
 Prewyt weill yan and in mony *oyir* place
 Agayn his dynt few Inglißmen mycht stand
 50 Wallace *with* him greit faith and kyndnes fand
 Ye sotheroun part saw weill ye toun was tynt
 ffreschly yai ferd as fyr dois¹⁴ out off flynt
 Sum fled sum fell in to draw dykis¹⁵ deip
 Sum to the kyrk yar lywys giff yai mycht keip
 55 Sum fled to tay and in small weschell 3eid
 Sum derffly deit and drownyt in yat steid
 Schyr Ihon Sewart at ye west port owt past
 Till meffen wod he sped him wondyr fast
 A hundreth men ye kyrk tuk for suc[c]our
 60 Bot Wallace Wald no grace grant in *yat* hour
 He slay bad all off cruell sotheroun keyn
 And said yai had to Sanct Ihonstoun Enemyt beyn

⁹ McDiarmid: "... past on *with*-outyn ..."

¹⁰ McDiarmid: "... ned ..." (A misprint?)

¹¹ McDiarmid replaces "be yat" with "Besat."

¹² Folio 83b begins here.

¹³ McDiarmid: "Twentie and ane ..."

¹⁴ From McDiarmid; MS appears to have "... dou^s ..."

¹⁵ From McDiarmid; MS appears to have "... dyku^s ..." In some minor ways, Ramsay's style seems inconsistent at times.

ffour hundreth men in to ye toun war deid
 Sewyn scor *with* lyff chapyt out off yat steid
 65 Wyffis and barnys yai maid yaim fre to ga
With Wallace wyll he wald sla nayn off ya
 Riches yai fand that Inglißmen had brocht new
 Syn plenyst ye toun *with* worthi scottis trew
 Schyr Ihon Sewart left meffen forest strang
 70 Went to ye gask *with* feyll sotheroun amang
 And syn to fyff quhar Wallang Birreff was
 Send currowris sone out throw ye land to paß
 And gaderyt men, a stalwart cumpany
 Till ardargan he drew him *prewaly*
 75 Ordanad yaim in bargan reddy boun
 Agayn he *thocht* to sail3e sanct Ihonstoun
 Quhar Wallace lay and wald no langar rest
 Rewllyt ye toun as *yat* him likyt best
 Schyr Ihon Ramsay gret captane ordand he
 80¹⁶ Ruwan Birreff at ane accord for to be
 yis charge he gaiff gyff men yaim warnyng maid
 To cum till him *with* outyn mor abaid
 And so yai did quhen tithingis was yaim brocht
With a hundreth Wallace furth fra yaim socht

(From: NLS, Adv. MS. 19.2.2(ii), "Henry the Minstrel's 'Life of Wallace'" and
Hary's Wallace {Vita Nobilissimi Defensoris Scotie Wilelmi Wallace Militis}, M.P.
 McDiarmid {ed} {2 vols; STS, 1968-69}.)

¹⁶ Folio 84a starts here.

Appendix II

**The
 actis and
 Deidis of the Illuster and Vaile and Campi-
 oun, Schir William Wallace,
 Knight of Ellerslie;**

**Imprentit at Edinburgh be Robert Lekpreuik
 at the Expensis of Henrie Charteris, & ar to be
 sauld in his Buith, on the North syde of ye gait
 aboute the Throne.**

Anno Do. M.D.LXX.

The Tent Buik declairis how Wallace wan
 Sanct Johnstoun be ane Jeopardie. Ca. i.

The latter day of August fell this cace,
 For the reskew thus ordanit gude Wallace,
 Of Sanct Johnstoü, yat Sutheroun occupyit
 Fast towart Tay thay passit and espyit.
 5¹⁷ Or it was day under Kynnoull shame laid,
 Out of the toun, as Scottishmen to him said:
 Thair seruandis Ischit with Cartis, hay to leid,
 Swa was it suith, and hapnit in that steid.
 Than sex thair come, and brocht bot Cartis thre,
 10 Quhen yai of hay was leidand besylie.
 Guthrie with ten, in handis hes thame tane,
 Put all to deith, of thame he saifit nane.
 Wallace in haist, gart tak thair vmest weid,
 And siclyke men thay wailkt weill gude speid.
 15 Four was richt gude, Wallace him self tuik ane,
 Ane Russet cloik, and with him gude Rothuen.
 Guthrie, Bissat, and als gude zemen twa,
 In that Ilk sute, thay graithit thame to ga.
 Fyftene thay tuik, of men of armis wicht,
 20 In Ilk Cart fyue, thay ordanit out of sicht.
 Full subtellie thay couerit thame with hay,
 Syne to the toun thay went the gamest way.
 Thir Carteris had schort swordis of gude steill,
 Under thair weid, callit furth the Cartis weill.
 25 Schir John Ramsay, baid iu the buschemët still,
 Quhen myster war, to help yame with gude will.
 Thir trew Carteris past on withouttin let,

¹⁷ All line numbers mine.

Atour the brig, and enterit at the 3et.
 Quehen thay war in, thair cloikis kest thame fra,
 30 Gude Wallace than the cheif portat couth ta.
 Upon the heid, quhill deid he hes him left,
 Syne other twa the lyfe fra thame he reft.
 Guthrie, Bissat, did richt weill in the toun,
 And Rothuen als, dang of thair fey men down.
 35 The armit men, that in the Cartis war brocht,
 Rais up and weill thair deuoir dewly wroucht.
 Upon the gait thay gart fetil Sutheroun de,
 Than Ramsayis spy, hes sene thame get entre.
 The buschement brak baith brig and port hes wyn
 40 Into the toun roun greit stryfe thair was begun.
 Twentie and ane or Ramsay come in plane,
 Within the toun had fourtie Sutheroun slane.
 The Inglishmen to array was nocht gane,
 The Scottis as than, laiser leit yame haue nane.
 45 Fra gude Ramsay with his men enterit in,
 Thay saiffit nane, was knawin of Sutherou kin.
 And Longoueill, ye worthy Knicht schir Thomas
 Preuit weill thair, and mony vther place.
 Aganis his dynt, few Inglishmen micht stand.
 50 Wallace in him greit faith and kyndnes fand.
 The Sutheroun part saw weil ye toun was tynt
 Feirsly thay fled, as fyre dois of the flynt.
 Sum fled, sum fell, into draw dykis deip,
 Sum to the kirk, thair lyfe gif thay micht keip.
 55 Sum fled to Tay, and in small veschell 3eid,
 Sum derfly deit, and drownit in that dreid.
 Schir Johne Psewart at the west 3et out past,
 To Methuen wod he sped him wounder fast.
 Ane vndreth men the Kirk tuik for succour,
 60 Bot Wallace wald na grace grant in that hour.
 He bad slay all of cruell Sutheroun kyn,
 Thame for to slay, he said it was na syn.
 Four hundreth men within the toun was deid,
 Seuin scoir on lyfe, chaipit out of that steid.
 65 Wyfis and barnis, thay maid thame fre to ga,
 With Wallace will he wald slay nane of tha.
 Riches thay fand, that Inglishmen had brocht new,
 Pleneist the toun, with worthy Scottis & trew.
 Schir Johne Psewart left Methuen Forest strag
 70 Went to the Gask full feill Sutheroun amang.
 And syne in Fyfe quhair Wallange Schiref was
 Maid Scurriouris sone, out throw ye lād to pas.
 And gadderit men, ane stalwart cumpany,
 To Ardagane he drew thame priuatly.
 75 Ordanit thame in reddy bergane bown,

Agane he thocht to sailze Sanct Johnstoun.
 Quhair Wallace lay, and wald na langer rest,
 Reullit the toun, as than him lykit best.
 Schir Johne Ramsay greit Capitane ordanit he,
 80 Routhuen Schiref, at ane accord to be.
 This charge he gaif, gif men yaine warning maid
 To cum to him, withoutten mair abaid.
 And sa yai did, quhen tythingis was yaine brocht
 With ane hundreth Wallace furth fra yame socht.

(From: *The Actis and Deides of Schir William Wallace {1570}* {Facsimile reprint for STS, 1940}.)

Appendix III

**The Life and Acts
of the
Most Famous and Valiant Champion
Sir William Wallace
Knight of Ellerslie;
Maintainer of the Liberty of
Scotland ...
Printed at Edinbvrgh, by
Andro Hart, 1618**

The Tenth Book

How Wallace wan Saint-Iohnstowne,
By an jeopardie,
Chap I

The latter Day of August fell this case,
For the rescue thus ordained good Wallace,
Of Sainct-Iohnstown, that Southeron occupied.
Fast toward Tay they passed and espied:
5 Ere it was day vnder Kinnowle them laid.
Out of the Toune, as Scottishmen to him said,
Their servants ished, with Carte, Hey to leid:
So was it suith, and hapned in that steid.
Then sixe there come, and brought but Carts thrée.
10 When they of Hey were leiding busilie,
Guthrie, with ten, in hands he hes them tane,
Put all to death, of them hée saued none.
VVallace in haste gart take their vpmost Wéed,
And such like men they wailed weill good spéed.
15 Four were right good Wallace himself took one,
A Russet Cloak: and with him good Ruthuen,
Guthrie, Bisset, and als good Yeoman two:
In that ilk sute hée graithed them to goe.
Fiftéen they took of men of Arms wight:
20 In ilk Cart fiue they ordained out of sight.
Full subtilly they couered them with Hey:
Syn to the Town they went the gainest way.
These carters had short Swords of good fine Stéele,
Under their wéed, then droue forth the Carts weill.
25 Syr Iohn Ramsay, bade in the Bushment still,
When mister were to help them with good will.
These true Carters past out withouttin let,
Out over the Bridge, and entred at the Gate.
When they were in their Cloaks they cuist them fra:

30 Good Wallace then the chief Porter could ta
 Upon the heid, whill deid hée hes him left:
 Syn other two the life from them hée reft.
 Guthrie and Bisset did right well in the Town,
 And Ruthuen als dang of thir fey men down
 35 The Armed men that in the Carts were brought,
 Rose up, and weill their deuore duely wrought.
 Upon the gate they gart fell Southeron die.
 Then Ramsayes Spy hes séen them get entrie.
 The Bushment broke both Bridge and Port hes wun
 40 Into the Town great strife there was begun.
 Twenty and one ere Ramsay come in plain,
 Within the Town had fourty Southeron slain.
 The Englishmen to array were not gone,
 The Scottis as then leisure let them haue none.
 45 Fra good Ramsay with his men entred in,
 They saued none were known of Southeron kin.
 And Longoueuill the worthy Knight Syr Thomas,
 Prooued weill there, and mony other place.
 Against this dint few Englishmen might stand:
 50 VWallace in him great faith and kindness found.
 The Southeron part saw weill the Towne was tint,
 Fiercely they fled as fire doeth from the Flint.
 Some fled, some fell into draw-dykes full déep:
 Some to the Kirk, their liues if they might kéep.
 55 Some fled to Tay and in small Vessels 3eid:
 Some derfly died and drowned in that steid.
 Syr Iohn Psewart at the West 3et owt past,
 To Methven Wood hée sped him wonder fast.
 An hundreth men the Kirk took for succour:
 60 But Wallace would no grace grant in that hour.
 Hée had slay all of cruell Southeron kin,
 Then for to slay hée said was no sin.
 Foure hundreth men without the Toun were deid,
 Seuén score on line scaped out of the steid.
 65 Wiues and Bairnis they made them for to goe,
 With VWallace will hée would slay none of thoe.
 Riches they found, that Englishmen had brought new.
 Plenisht the Toun, with worthy Scots and true.
 Syr Iohn Swewart left Methwen Forest strong.
 70 Went to the Gaske, full feill Southeron among.
 And syn in Fyke (sic), where VVallange Shyreffe was,
 Made Scurriows soon out throw the Land to passe.
 And gathered men, a stalwart company,
 To Archatane hée drue them priuily.
 75 Ordained them in redy bargain boun,
 Again hée thought to sail3ie Saint-Iohnstoun.
 Where VWallace lay, and would no longer rest,

80 Ruled the Toun as then him liked best.
Syr Iohn Ramsay great Captain ordained hée,
Ruthwen Shyreffe at one accord to hée.
This charge hée gaue, If men them warning made,
To come to him withoutin more abade.
And so they did, when tidings was them brought.
With an hundreth Wallace foorth from them sought.

(From: NLS, Ry IV g.29)

Appendix IV

**The Life and Acts
of the
Most Famous and Valiant Champion
Sir William Wallace
Knight of Ellerslie;
Maintainer of the Liberty of
Scotland ...
Glasgow, Printed by Alex. Carmichael,
and Alex. Millar. 1736.¹⁸**

**The Tenth Book
Chap. I**

How Wallace wau (sic) St. Johnstoun

5²² The latter day of April¹⁹ tell²⁰ this case;
For the rescue thus ordained good Wallace:
Of Saint Johnstoun²¹ the Sutheron occupied,
Fast toward Tay they passed and espyed.
Ere it was day under Kinnowle them laid
Out of the town, as Scottishmen to him said,
Their servants ished²³ with carts hay to lead:
So it was sooth and hapned²⁴ in that stead.
Then six there came, and brought but carts three,
10 When they of hay were leading busily,
Guthrie with ten in hands hath them²⁵ tane;
Put all to death, of them he saved nane.
Wallace in haste gart take their upmost weed,
And such like men they wailed with good speed:
15 Four were right good, Wallace himself took ane,
A russet coat,²⁶ and with him good Ruthwen,
Guthrie, Bisset and als good Yeoman two,

¹⁸ The text, divisions into books (12), chapters of the 1736 edition was essentially similar, if not identical, to the editions of 1618, 1685, 1699, 1701, 1709, 1713, 1747, and 1756. The edition of 1758 (Freebairn's) gets extremely creative with its chapter divisions, at times and especially in "Book 12," not following perfectly the examples set by any of the previous printed editions.

¹⁹ Like the quoted edition of 1736, the 1747 edition agrees that Wallace (re-)took Saint Johnstoun (modern-day Perth) in the month of April; the editions of 1615, 1661, 1665, 1685, 1699, 1701, 1709, 1713, 1728 (Belfast printed), 1756, and 1758 ascribe this occurrence to the month of August.

²⁰ 1661, 1685, 1699, 1701, 1709: "... fell ..."

²¹ 1661, 1665, 1685, 1699, 1713: "St. Johnstoun ..."

²² All line numbers mine.

²³ 1747, 1756: "... ishued ..."

²⁴ 1699, 1713, 1747, 1756: "... happned ..."

²⁵ 1661, 1699, 1701, 1713: "... then hath them ..."

²⁶ 1661, 1665, 1685, 1699, 1701, 1709, 1756: "... russet cloak ..."

In at²⁷ each sute he graithed them to go.
 Fifteen they took of men of ars (sic) wight,
 20 In each cart five ordaned they out of sight,
 Full subtilly they covered them with hay,
 Then to the town they went the gainest way,
 These carters had short swords made of²⁸ fine steel,²⁹
 Under their weed, and drove³⁰ the carts forth well.
 25 Sir John Ramsay bode in the bushment still,
 When mister were to helg (sic) them with good will.
 These true carters past³¹ withoutten let,
 Out over the bridge, and entred at the gate,
 When they were in their clocks³² they cast them fra
 30 Good Wallace then the chief porters could ta
 Upon the head, while dead he hath left,
 The other two the life from the reft.
 Guthrie and Bisset did right well in the town.
 And Ruthven als dang of their fey man down,
 35 The armed men that in the carts were brought,
 Rose up and well their devour duly wrought:
 Upon the gate they gart feil Sutherland die,
 Then Ramsay's spy hath seen them get entry,
 The bushment broke both bridge and port hath won,
 40 into the town great strife there was begun,
 Twenty and one ere Ramsay came in plain
 Within the town had fourty Sutherland slain.
 The Englishmen to array then were not gone,
 The Scots as then leisure let them have none,
 45 Fra good Ramsay with his men entred in,
 They saved none were knoun of Sutherland kin.
 And Longoveil the worthy knight Sir Thomas,
 Proved well there and many other place;
 Against this dint few Englishmen might stand.
 50 Wallace in him great faith and kindness fand.
 The Sutherland part saw well the toun was tint.
 Fiercely they fled, as doth from the flint.
 Some fled, some fell into draw-dykes full deep,
 Some to the kirk their lives if they may keep;
 55 Some fled to the Tay, and in small vessels yeed:
 Some derfly died, and drowned in that stead.
 Sir John Psewart at the west-gate out passed,
 To Methvin wood he sped him wonderfast.
 An hundred men the kirk took for succour:

²⁷ 1661, 1685, 1713: "In that ..."

²⁸ 1665, 1685, 1709, 1713: "...swords of fine ..."

²⁹ 1747: "... steal."

³⁰ 1661, 1685, 1709: "... then drove ..."

³¹ 1661, 1665, 1685, 1713, 1756: "... past out ..."

³² 1661, 1665, 1699, 1713: "... cloaks ..."

60 But Wallace would no grace grant them that hour.
 He bade slay all of cruel Sutheron kin,
 Them for to slay he thought was no sin.
 Four hundred men without the toun were dead,
 Seven score on life scaped off that stead
 65 Wives and bairns they made them for to go,
 With Wallace will he would slay none of tho:
 Riches they found that Englishmen brought new,
 Plenisht the toun with worthy Scots and true.
 Sir John Psewart left Methven forrest strong
 70 Went to the Gask feil Sutheron among.
 And then in Fyfe where Vallange Sherriff was
 Made scurrious soon out through the land to pass
 And gathered men a stalwart company
 To Archtererdor he drew them privily:
 75 Ordained them in ready bargain bown,
 Again he thought to assail Saint Johnstoun,
 Where Wallace lay, and would no longer rest;
 Rules the town as then him liked best.
 Sir John Ramsay great Captain ordained he,
 80 Ruthwen Sheriff at one accord to be.
 This charge he gave if men then warning made,
 To come to him withoutten more abade;
 And so they did when tidings³³ was them brought,
 With an hundred Wallace forth from them fought (sic).

(From: GUL Spec. Coll., Mu.50-h.20, 21)

³³ 1661, 1665, 1685, 1699, 1701: "...tydings ..."

Appendix V

A
New Edition
of the
Life
and
Heroick Actions
of the Renoun'd
Sir William Wallace
General and Governour
of
Scotland

Wherein the Old obsolete Words are rendered
more Intelligible; and adapted to the understand-
ing of such who have not leisure to study the
Meaning, and Import of such, Phrases without
the help of a Glossary

Glasgow
Printed by William Duncan, A.D.
M.DCC.XXII

The Tenth Book
of
Sir William Wallace
Chap. I

How WALLACE won St. Johnstoun³⁴

Into St. *Johnstoun* WALLACE quickly prest,
 Which by the *English*, then was repossess.
 Under *Kinnoul* e'er it was Day, lay down,
 Then sp'd Six *Suthron* Servants from the Town,
 5³⁵ Driving Three empty Carts upon the Way,
 In order to bring Home their Masters Hay.
 Which, when they were a loading suddenly,
Guthrie and's Men, made all Six to dy.
 WALLACE in haste caus'd take their upmost Weed,
 10 And Men to fit them, ordered with speed.
 WALLACE himself, and Ruthven brave also,
Guthrie and *Bisset*, and good Yeoman two:

³⁴ Unlike the more vernacular renditions of Wallace's re-conquest of Saint Johnstoun – which all employ 84 lines of text to describe the event in question – the frugal Hamilton manages (?) in his version to “get-by” with only 53.

³⁵ All line numbers mine.

Each took a Suit and with Subtile Art,
 Five Men with Hay they cov' red in each Cart.
 15 Then to the Town, those Carters took their Way,
 And carefully, drove on their Carts of Hay.
 Good Sir *John Ramsay*, lay in Ambush till,
 He warning got then marched with good will.
 Over the Bridge, the Carters quickly past,
 20 Enter'd the Gate, and then thair Cloakes do cast,
WALLACE with three good Strokes, which he got,
 The Porter kill'd and Two more on the Spot.
Guthrie and *Bisset*, *Ruthven* of Renoun,
 Most manfully did cut the *Suthron* down.
 25 The armed Man that snug lay in the Carts,
 Came fiercely out and bravely play'd their parts.
 VVhen *Ramsay's* spy saw all that there was done
 The Ambush broke, both Bridge and Port have won
 E'er *Ramsay* came, with his Men good and true,
 30 The Twenty one, there Fourty *Suthron* slew.
 And so soon as the Ambush enter'd in,
 They spared none that were of *Suthron* Kin.
 There *Longoveil* that brave and warlike Knight,
 Nobly behav'd, and did their Doublets dight.
 35 The *Suthron*, when they saw the Town was tint,
 Fled then as fast, as Fire does from the Flint.
 And Sir *John Psewart*, at the next Gate past,
 To *Methven*-Wood, he scour'd off wonder fast.
 One hundred Men fled to the Church in vain,
 40 But **WALLACE** spared none, for all were slain.
 Four Hundred *Suthron* kill'd were in the Strife,
WALLACE got Riches, good things not a few,
 And with true *Scots*, plenish'd the Toun of new,
 First to the *Gask* did Sir *John Psewart* pass,
 45 Then unto *Fife*, where *Vallange* Sherriff was.
 To *Auchterarder*, then drew privily,
 And to attach St. *Johnstoun* at a Call,
WALLACE made *Ramsay* his great Captain there,
 And *Ruthven* Sherriff a deserving Pair.
 50 He charged them that on first warning they,
 Should come to him, without further Delay.
 On some Exploit, he quickly marched then,
 With him One Hundred of good fighting men.

(From: GUL Spec. Coll., Mu. 47-e.29)

Appendix VI

The
Acts and Deeds
of
The Most Famous and Valiant Champion
Sir William Wallace,
Knight of Ellerslie

Written by Blind Harry in the Year 1361
Together with
Arnaldi Blair Relations

Edinburgh:
Printed in the Year MDCCLVIII

The
Acts and Deeds of the Most Famous
and Valiant Champion
Sir William Wallace,
Knight of Ellerslie

The Tenth Book
Chap I.
How Wallace wan Saint Johnstoun

The latter day of August fell this case,
For the rescue, thus ordain'd wight *Wallace*,
Of *Saint Johnstoun*, that *Southeron* occupied;
Fast toward Tay they passed and espied,
5³⁶ Ere it was day under Kinnoul them laid,
Out of the town, as *Scotsmen* to him said,
That servants used with carts hay to lead,
So it was sooth, and happened in that stead;
Some six there came, and brought with them carts three.
10 When they off hay were leading most busie,
Guthrie with ten in hands soon has them tane,
Put them to death, of them he saved nane.
Wallace in haste gart take their upmost weed,
And sik like men they wailed with good speed;
15 Four were right rude, *Wallace* himself took ane,
A russet cloke, and with him good *Ruthven*,
Guthrie, *Bisset*, and als good yeoman two,
In that ilk suit they graithed them to go.

³⁶ Line numbers part of original text.

Fifteen they took of men in arms wight,
 20 In ilk cart five they ordain'd out of sight;
 Full subtilly they cover'd them with hay,
 Syne to the town they went the gainest way.
 Thir Carters had short swords, made of good steel,
 Under their weeds, syne forth the carts drove well.
 25 Sir *John Ramsay* bode with a bushment still,
 When mister were to help them with good will.
 Thir true Carters then past withoutten let,
 Attour the bridge, and entred through the yate.
 When they were in, their clokes they cast them fra,
 30 Good *Wallace* can the master=porter ta,
 Upon the head, while dead he has him left,
 Syne other two the life from them reft.
Guthrie, by that, did right well in the town,
 And *Ruthven* als dang of their foe=men down.
 35 The arm'd men that were in the carts brought,
 Rose up, and well their devory have wrought;
 Upon the gate they gart feil *Southeron* die.
 The Ramsay's spy has seen them entrie.
 The bushment brake, both bridge and port have won,
 40 Into the town great strife there was begun.
 These twenty men ere *Ramsay* came in plain,
 Witihin the town had firty *Southeron* slain.
 The Englishmen unto array are gone,
 The Scots as then leisure let them get none;
 45 Frae good *Ramsay* with his men entred in,
 They saved none was born of *English* kin.
 Als *Longovile* the wight Knight Sir Thomas,
 Proved well then, and many other place;
 Against his dint few *Englishmen* might stand,
 50 *Wallace* with him great faith and kindness fand.
 The *Southeron* part saw well then town was tint,
 Fiercely they fled, as fire does out of flint.
 Some fled, some fell into draw=dykes full deep,
 Some to the kirk, their lives if they might keep.
 55 Some fled to Tay, and in small vessels yeed,
 Some derfly dead and drowned in that stead.
 Sir *John Sewart* at the West=port out past,
 To Methven wood he sped him wonder fasat.
 An hundred men the kirk took for succour,
 60 But *Wallace* would no grace grant in that hour,
 He bade slay all of cruel *Southeron* kin;
 Them for to slay he thought it was no sin.
 Four hundred men into the town were dead,
 Sevenscore with life scaped out of that stead.
 65 Wives and bairns they made them free to gae,
 With *Wallace* will he would slay nane of thae.

Riches they fand, that *Englishmen* brought new,
 Plenisht the town with worthy *Scots* and true.
 Sir *John Sewart* left *Methven* forest strong,
 70 Went to the *Gask* feil *Southeron* men among;
 And syne in *Fife*, where *Vallange* sheriff was,
 Sent Couriers soon out through the land to pass,
 And gathered men in a stalwart company;
 To *Ardargan* he drew him privily,
 75 Ordained them in bargain ready down.
 Again he thought to sail³ie *Saint Johnstoun*,
 Where *Wallace* lay, and would no longer rest,
 Ruled the town as that him liked best.
 Sir *John Ramsay* great Captain ordain'd he,
 80 *Ruthven* Sheriff, at one accord to be.
 This charge he gave, it men them warning made,
 To come to him withoutten more abade;
 And so they did, when tidings were them brought.
 With an hundred *Wallace* forth from them sought.

(From : Mitchell, no. 313415; NLS, H.29.b.21.)

Appendix VII

**Master John Barbour's Life of
Robert Bruce,
King of Scotland ("MS")**

[Book XIV]

Ye erle off Carrick schyr Eduuard,
 Yat stoutar wes yan a libard
 And had na will to be in pes,
 Thocht yat Scotland to litill wes
 5 Till his broyer and him alsua,
 Yarfor to purpos gan he ta
 Yat he off Irland wald be king.
 Yarfor he send and had tretyng
 With [Irschery] off Irland,
 10 Yat in yar leawte tuk on hand
 Off all Irland to mak him king
 With-yi yat he with hard fechting
 Mycht our-cum ye Inglis men
 Yat in ye land war wonnand yen,
 15 And yai suld help with all yar mycht.
 And he yat hard yaim mak sic hycht
 In-till his hart had gret liking,
 And with ye consent of ye king
 Gadryt him men off gret bounte
 20 And at Ayr syne schippyt he
 In-till ye neyst moneth of Mai,
 Till Irland held he straucht his wai.
 He had yar in his cumpany
 Ye erle Thomas yat wes worthi
 25 And gud schyr Philip ye Mowbray
 Yat sekyr wes in hard assay,
 Schyr Ihone ye Soullis ane gud knycht
 And schyr Ihone Stewart yat wes wycht
 Ye Ramsay als of Ouchterhous
 30 Yat wes wycht and chewalrous
 And schyr Fergus off Ardrossane
 And oyer knychtis mony ane.
 In Wolringis fyrth arywyt yai
 Sauffly but bargan or assay
 35 And send yar schippis hame ilkan.
 A gret thing have yai wndertane
 Yat with sa quhojne as yai war yar
 Yat war sex [thousand] men but mar
 Schup to werray all Irland,
 40 Quhar yai sall se mony thousand

Cum armyt on yaim for to fycht,
 Bot yocht yai quhone war yai war wicht,
 And for-owt drede or effray
 In twa bataillis tuk yar way
 45 Towart Cragfergus it to se.
 Bot ye lordis of yat countre
 Mandweill Besat and Logane
 Yar men assemblyt euerilkane,
 Ye Sawagis [wes] alsua yar,
 50 And quhen yai assemblit war
 Yar war wele ner [twenty] thousand.
 Quhen yai wyst yat in-till yar land
 Sic a menze aryvyt war
 With all ye folk yat yai had yar
 55 Yai went towart yaim in gret hi,
 And fra schyr Eduuard wist suthly
 Yat ner till him cummand war yai
 His men he gert yaim wele aray,
 Ye awaward had ye erle Thomas
 60 And ye rerward schyr Eduuard was.

(From: *Barbour's Bruce {A fredome is a noble thing!}*, McDiarmid and Stevenson {ed}.)

Appendix VIII

**The Acts an
 Life of the maist victorious Con=
 qnerour (sic), Robert Brvce, King of Scotland.
 Quaharin alswa ar contenit the Martiall
 deidis of the Vailzeant Princes: Ed=
 ward Brvce Schir James Dou=
 glas Erle Thomas Randell,
 Walter Stewart and
 sindrie otheris.**

**Imprentit at Edin=
 burgh be Robert Lekprevik; at the
 expensis of Henrie Charteris. Anno Do M.D.LXXI**

How Schir Edward take on hand,
 for to make weir in Ireland.

The Erle of Carrick Schir Edward,
 That stoutar was thã a Leopard
 And had na will to be in peis,
 Thocht yat Scotland to lytill wes,
 5³⁷ To his brother, and him alswa,
 Thairfoir to purpois can he ta
 That he of Ireland wald be king.
 Thairfoir he send, and had treitting
 With Irschry of Ireland,
 10 That in thaire lawtie tuke on hand,
 Of all Ireland to mak him King,
 With thy that he with hard fechting
 Micht ouircum the Inglishmen,
 That in that land wat wynnand then,
 15 And they suld help with all thair micht.
 And he yat hard yaine mak sic hicht,
 In till his hart had greit lyking,
 And with the consent of the king,
 Gadderit him men of greit bountie,
 20 And syne at Ayr Schippit he.
 Into the neist Moneth of May,
 Till Ingland held he straucht his way.
 And had thair in his Company,
 The Erle Thomas that was worthy:
 25 And gude Schir Philip the Mowbray,

³⁷ Line numbers are mine.

That sikker wes in hard assay.
 Schir Iohne Sowlis that was wicht,
 And schir Iohn stewart an gude knicht
 The Ramsay als of Ouchterhous
 30 That wes richt wyse and Cheualrous,
 And Schir Fergus of Ardrossane,
 And other knichtis mony ane.
 In Wolyngis firth arryuit thay
 Saifly but bargan or assay:
 35 And send thair Schippes hame agane.
 Ane greit thing haue thay undertane.
 That with sa quhene as thai thay wair,
 That was seuin thousand men but mair,
 Schupe for to weirray all Ireland,
 40 Quhair thay sall se mony thousand,
 Cum armit on thame for to ficht:
 Bot yocht yai quhene war, yai war wicht,
 And without dreid, or effray.
 In twa battallis thay tuke thair way,
 45 Towart Cragfergus, it to se.
 Bot the Lordis of that countrie,
 Maundwile, Bisset and Logane,
 Thair men they semblit euerilkane,
 The Sauages als was with yame thair
 50 And quhen thay all assemblit wair,
 Thay war weill neir twentie thousand.
 Quhen yat thay wist, that in thair land
 Sic an Menze arryuit wair,
 With all the folk that yai had thair,
 55 Thay went towart thame in hy.
 And quhen Schir Eduuard wist surely,
 That till him neir cūmand war thay.
 His men richt weill he gart array.
 The Vangard had the Erle Thomas,
 60 In the Reirward, Schir Edward was.

(From: NLS, F.6.f.7)

Appendix VIII

**The
 Acts
 and
 Life
 of the
 Most victorious Con-
 queror Robert Bruce
 King of Scotland ...**

**Edinburgh,
 Printed by Andrew Anderson, and are to
 be sold at his House, on the north side
 of the Cross, Anno Dom. 1670.**

How Sir Edward took in hand
 For to make weere into Ireland.

The Erle of Carrick Sir Edward
 That stouter was then Leopard,³⁸
 And had no³⁹ will to live at peace,
 Thought that Scotland too little was⁴⁰
 5⁴¹ To his brother, and him alswa:
 Therefore to purpose can be ta,⁴²
 That he of Ireland would⁴³ be King:
 Therefore he sent, and had treating,
 With the Irshry of Ireland,
 10 That in their lawtie took on hand,
 Of all Ireland to make him King:
 With thy, that he with hard feghting,⁴⁴
 Might overcome the Englishmen,
 That in the land were winning then.
 15 And they should⁴⁵ help with all their might:
 And he that heard them make sik heght,
 Into his heart he had great liking,
 And with the consent of the King,
 Gathered him men⁴⁶ of great bountie:

³⁸ 1616, 1672: "... then a Leopard."

³⁹ 1616, "na ..."

⁴⁰ 1616, "wes."

⁴¹ Line numbers are mine.

⁴² 1616, 1672: "... can he ta."

⁴³ 1616, "...wald ..."

⁴⁴ 1672: "fighting."

⁴⁵ 1616, "... sould ..."

20 And syne at Air shipped hes he:⁴⁷
 Into the neist⁴⁸ month of May,
 To Irland held he straught⁴⁹ his way;
 And had there in his companie,
 The Erle Thomas that was worthie;
 25 And good Sir Philip the Mowbray
 That sikker was in hard assay,
 Sir Iohn Sowles that was wight,
 And Sir Iohn⁵⁰ Stewart a good Knight;
 The Ramsay als of Oughterhous,
 30 That was right wise and Chevalrous;
 And Sir Fergus of Ardrossan
 And other Knights many ane.
 In Wolyngs Firth arriued they
 Saiflie but bargane or assay;
 35 And sent their ships home agane,
 A great thing have they undertane,
 That with so wheen as they were,
 That was seven thousand men but maire,
 Shupe for to weirray all Ireland,
 40 Where they shall⁵¹ see many thousand,
 Come armed on them for to fight:
 But though they wheene were, they were wight,
 And without dread or affray,
 In two battells⁵² they tooke their way
 45 Toward Craigfergus, it to see
 But the Lords of that Countrie,
 Maundewile, Bisset, and Logane,
 Their men they sembled everilkane.
 The Savages als was with them there:
 50 And when they all assembled were,
 They were well near twentie thousand.
 When that they wist, that in their land
 Sik a Menyie arrived were,
 With all the folk that they had there,
 55 They went toward them in hy.
 And when Sir Edward wist surely,
 That to him neer comming⁵³ were they,
 His men right well be gart array.

⁴⁶ 1616, 1672: "Gathered with him men ..."

⁴⁷ 1616, "And syne at Air shipped he."

⁴⁸ 1672: "Into the next ..."

⁴⁹ 1672: "To Ireland held he straight ..."

⁵⁰ 1616, "...John ..."

⁵¹ 1616, "... sall ..."

⁵² Owing to the poor quality of this edition, there may be the possibility that this word is spelled "battelis."

⁵³ 1672: "... near coming ..."

60 The Vangard⁵⁴ had the Erle Thomas,
 In the Røregard(?)⁵⁵ Sir Edward was.

(From: Mitchell, no. 313541)

⁵⁴ 1672: "... vanguard ..."

⁵⁵ 1616: "Røereward;" 1672: "... r[e]er[g]u[a]rd ..."

Appendix X

**The
Acts
and
Life
Of the most victorious Conqueror
Robert Bruce
King of Scotland ...**

**Glasgow,
Printed by Mr. A. Carmichael, and A. Miller.
MDCCXXXVII.**

How sir Edward took in hand,
For to make weer into Ireland.

5⁵⁶ The earl of Carrick sir Edward,
That stouter was then a leopard,
And had no will to live at peace
Thought Scotland too little was
To his brother and him alsua;
Therefore to purpose can he ta,
That he of Ireland would be king:
Therefore he sent and had treating,
With the Ishry of Ireland,
10 That in their lawtie took in hand,
Of all Ireland to make him king;
With thy, that he with hard fighting,
Might overcome the Englishmen,
That in that land were winning then,
15 And they should help with all their might:
And he that heard them make sik heght,
Into his heart he had great liking.
And with the consent of the king,
Gathered him men of a great bountie
20 And syn at Air shipped hes he,
Into the next month of May,
To Ireland held he straight his way,
And had there in his companie,
The earl Thomas that was worthie,
25 And good sir Philip the Mowbray,
That sikker was in hard assay,
Sir John Sowls that was wight,

⁵⁶ Line numbers are mine.

And sir John Stewart a good knight;
 The Ramsay als of Dughtherhous,
 30 That was right wise and chevalrous,
 And sir Fergus of Androssane,
 And other knights many ane.
 In Wolings firth arrived they,
 Safely, but bargone or assay,
 35 And sent their ships home again.
 A great thing have they undertane.
 That with so when as they were,
 That was seven thousand men but mair,
 Shupe for to weirray all Ireland.
 40 Where they shal see many thousand,
 Come armed on them for to fight:
 But tho they when were, they were wight,
 And without dread or affray,
 In two battels they took their way
 45 Toward Craigfergus it to see
 But the Lords of that countrie,
 Mandervil, Bisset and Logane,
 Their men they sembled everilkane.
 The savages als was with them there;
 50 And when they all assembled were
 They were well near twenty thousand,
 When that they wist that in their land,
 Sik a menze arrived were,
 With all the folk that they had there:
 55 They went toward them in hy.
 And when sir Edward wist surely,
 That to him near coming were they,
 His men right well he gart array.
 The vanguard had the earl Thomas,
 60 In the reerguard sir Edward was.

(From: Mitchell, no. 556292)

Appendix XI

**The
 Life and Acts
 of
 The most victorious Conqueror
 Robert Bruce,
 King of Scotland
 by John Barbour, Archdecon of Aberdeen.**

**Carefully corrected from the edition printed by Andro Hart in
 1620**

**Edinburgh:
 Printed by in the Year MDCCLVIII.**

How Sir Edward Earl of Carrick makes Prepara-
 tion against Ireland.

The Earl of Carrick Sir Edward,
 That stouter was then a libbard,
 And had no will to be in peace,
 Thought that Scotland too little was
 5 To his brother and him alsa;
 Therefore to purpose can he ta,
 That he of Ireland would be King;
 Therefore he sent and had treating
 With Hursery of Ireland,
 10 That in their lawty took on hand,
 Of all Ireland to make him King;
 With thy, that he, with hard fighting,
 Might overcome the Englishmen,
 That in that land were winning then,
 15 And they should help with all their might,
 And he that heard them make sik hight,
 Into his heart he had great liking,
 And with the consent of the King,
 Gather'd him men of great bountie
 20 And syne at Ayr shipped has he,
 Into the next month of May,
 To Ireland held he straight his way,
 And had there in his company,
 The Earl Thomas that was worthy,
 25 And good Sir Philip the Mowbray,
 That sicker was in hard assay,
 Sir John the Sowls a good Knight,

30 And Sir John Stewart that was wight,
 The Ramsay als of Oughterous,
 That was both wight and chevalrous,
 And Sir Fergus of Ardrossane,
 And other knights many ane.

How Sir Edward came to Ireland, and made his
Way to Craig-fergus.

In Wokings firth arrived they,
 Safely, but bargain or assay,
 And send their shippes home ilkane.
 A great thing have they undertane,
 5 That with so wheen as they were there,
 That were six thousand men but mair,
 Shuip for to werray all Ireland,
 Where see they shall many thousand
 Come armed on them for to fight.
 10 But though they wheen were, they were wight,
 And foroutten dread or affray,
 In two battles they took their way
 Toward Craig-fergus, it to see
 But the Lords of that countrie,
 15 Maudweil, Bisset and Logane,
 Their men assembled e'erilkane.
 The savages were also there;
 And when that they assembled were
 They were well near twenty thousand,
 20 When that they wist that in their land,
 Sik a menzie arrived were,
 With all the folk that they had there:
 They went toward them in great hy.
 And fra Sir Edward went soothly,
 25 That near to him coming were they.
 His men he gart them well array.
 The wanguard had the Earl Thomas,
 And the reward Sir Edward was.
 [...continues...]

(From: Mitchell, no. 32289)

Appendix XII

**Editions of Blind Harry's *Life of Wallace*,
John Barbour's *The Bruce*, Hamilton's *Modern Edition
of the Wallace*, and John Harvey's *Bruce (Bruciad)*,
Printed c. 1508-1799.⁵⁷**

Title of Work	Publication Year	Printer, Publisher, etc.
Harry's Wallace	1508? (1st ed. ?)	Chepman and Myllar?
Harry's Wallace	1570	Lekpreuik for Charteris
Barbour's Bruce	1571	Lekpreuik for Charteris
Harry's Wallace	1594	H. Charteris
Harry's Wallace	1601 ⁵⁸	R. Charteris
Harry's Wallace	1611	Andrew Hart
Barbour's Bruce	1616	Andrew Hart
Harry's Wallace	1618	Andrew Hart
Barbour's Bruce	1618	Andrew Hart
Harry's Wallace	1620	Andrew Hart
Barbour's Bruce	1620	Andrew Hart
Harry's Wallace	1630	Aberdeen for D. Melvill
Harry's Wallace	1640	J. Bryson
Harry's Wallace	1645	J. Bryson
Barbour's Bruce	1648	Gideon Lithgow ⁵⁹
Harry's Wallace	1648	Gideon Lithgow
Harry's Wallace	1661	Gideon Lithgow
Harry's Wallace	1661	Society of Stationers
Barbour's Bruce	1665	Sanders of Glasgow ⁶⁰
Harry's Wallace	1665	Sanders of Glasgow
Harry's Wallace	1666	A. Anderson
Barbour's Bruce	1670	A. Anderson
Barbour's Bruce	1671	A. Anderson ⁶¹

⁵⁷ As always, a list such as this is very tentative; unknown editions of all these works have had the habit of surfacing without warning in the past. Excluded from this list are editions which have been shown with reasonable certainty not to have existed, or have been shown beyond a doubt as being mis-identified-identified; included are those volumes which others have listed because they were thought to have been printed, despite the fact no extant copy exists at present. Volumes only possibly mis-identified have been included, but noted as such, and not worked into any of the commentary analysis.

The list of Harvey's *Bruce* is possibly the most incomplete: Mitchell Library no. 313548 claims to have been the 13th edition of Harvey, printed in 1776, though all could not be accounted for. However the figure might be a bit more believable if we were to take into account the editions appended to Hamilton's *Wallace*. Nevertheless, if thirteen editions of Harvey were in fact produced, this would indicate a popularity of his *Bruce* even beyond all expectation.

⁵⁸ But colophon dated 1600.

⁵⁹ A possible reprint of Hart's 1620 edition. (Skeat, p. lxxxix)

⁶⁰ Another possible reprint of 1620. (Skeat, p. lxxxix)

Barbour's Bruce	1672	Sanders of Glasgow
Harry's Wallace	1673	A. Anderson
Harry's Wallace	1684	Sanders of Glasgow
Harry's Wallace	1685	Sanders of Glasgow
Harry's Wallace	1690	Sanders of Glasgow
Harry's Wallace	1698	Sanders of Glasgow ⁶²
Harry's Wallace	1699	Sanders of Glasgow
Harry's Wallace	1701	(?)Edinburgh: J. Watson
Harry's Wallace	1705	Edinburgh ⁶³
Harry's Wallace	1709	Successors of A. Anderson
Harry's Wallace	1711	Edinburgh ⁶⁴
Harry's Wallace	1713	Glasgow: R. Sanders
Harry's Wallace	1713	Heirs of Queen's Printer
Harry's Wallace	1722	Glasgow ⁶⁵
Hamilton's Wallace	1722 (1st ed.)	Glasgow: W. Duncan
Harry's Wallace	1728	Belfast: James Blow
Harvey's Bruce	1729 (1st ed.)	Edinburgh: John Catanach
Harry's Wallace	1736	Carmichael and Millar
Barbour's Bruce	1737	Carmichael and Millar ⁶⁶
Harry's Wallace	1737	Glasgow ⁶⁷
Harry's Wallace	1747	Glasgow: Robertson and M ^c Lean
Harry's Wallace	1756	Glasgow: A. M ^c Lean
Harry's Wallace	1758 ⁶⁸	Edinburgh: Robert Freebairn(?)
Barbour's Bruce	1758 ⁶⁹	Edinburgh: Robert Freebairn(?)
Hamilton's Wallace	1765 -1770 ⁷⁰	Edinburgh: A. M ^c Caslan
Harvey's Bruce ⁷¹	1768	Edinburgh: W. Ruddiman
Harvey's Bruce ⁷²	1769	London

⁶¹ If this edition even existed, it was a reprint of Anderson's of the prior year. (Skeat, p. lxxxi) McKinley, p. 35, does not mention it.

⁶² A somewhat questionable edition: "*A Sale Catalogue of Books*, 1712, No. 323. If this date is correct, the printer was Robert Sanders the younger. It may be the same edition as that next named, but with a different date." (Miller {1914}, p. 18n.)

⁶³ No copy ever traced. (Miller {1914}, p. 18n.)

⁶⁴ Named in *Bibliotheca Wallasiana*, p. 9. (Miller {1914}, p. 18n)

⁶⁵ An alleged vernacular version, described by A. Gardyne, possibly being an "inaccurate description of the first edition of Hamilton's version." (Miller {1914}, p. 19n.)

⁶⁶ It would appear that this edition was published in both Glasgow and Edinburgh. (Skeat, p. lxxxii)

⁶⁷ Named in Gray's *Sales Catalogue* 1907 (Miller {1914}, p. 19n)

⁶⁸ 1714-15(?); 1730(?): See earlier discussion.

⁶⁹ The remarks made about Freebairn's *Wallace* also apply to this volume.

⁷⁰ The original date was arrived at by Miller, examining a defective copy, and read as "MDCCLXV." He later obtained a better copy, only to find the date to be "MDCCLXX." (Miller {1920}, p. 19.)

⁷¹ This edition is interesting in that it appends several Scots ballads such as "Edom O' Gordon."

⁷² The reworked *Bruciad*.

Hamilton's Wallace and Harvey's Bruce	1770	Dundee: H. Galbraith
Hamilton's Wallace	1770	Edinburgh: A. M ^c Caslan
Hamilton's Wallace	1774	J. Taylor, Booksellers, Crieff
Hamilton's Wallace	1774	Aberdeen: John Boyle
Harry's Wallace	1774	London for J. Gillies, Perth
Harvey's Bruce	1776	Perth for J. Gillies, Perth
Hamilton's Wallace	1785	Falkirk: Patrick Mair
Harry's Wallace	1786	Edinburgh: W. Creech ⁷³
Harvey's Bruce	1786	Aberdeen: J. Boyle
Harry's Wallace	1790	Perth: R. Morrison ⁷⁴
Barbour's Bruce	1790	London for J. Pinkerton
Hamilton's Wallace and Harvey's Bruce	1790(?)	Ayr: J. & P. Wilson
Hamilton's Wallace and Harvey's Bruce	1793	Ayr: J. & P. Wilson ⁷⁵
Harry's Wallace	1799	4 vols.; Edinburgh for P. Hill ⁷⁶
Hamilton's Wallace and Harvey's Bruce	1799	Ayr: J. & P. Wilson ⁷⁷
Harvey's Bruce	1799	

Commentary:

Within the given parameters of this survey, Blind Harry's *Wallace* was issued 37 times;⁷⁸ Barbour's *Bruce* 12 times, for a ratio of better than 3:1 in favour of the original version of the *Wallace*. Hamilton's re-editing of Blind Harry accounts for 10 printings and reprintings (including those versions which appended Harvey's *Bruce*⁷⁹) between 1722-99; during a roughly equivalent period (1728-99) the original also appeared 10 times.⁸⁰ Harvey's *Bruce* was issued (at least?) 10 times between 1729-99, both on its own and as an appendage to Hamilton's effort. Barbour's original made an appearance a mere three times during the period 1737-99, one third less than Harvey's "knock-off" of such.

⁷³ No copy ever traced. (Miller {1914}, p. 21n.)

⁷⁴ What is referred to in the present study as the Pinkerton edition.

⁷⁵ A reprint of their ?1790 edition.

⁷⁶ Volume 1 only produced.

⁷⁷ Another reprint of the ?1790 Ayr edition; yet one more was produced in 1799 with reset type and other (comparatively) minor changes.

⁷⁸ Including the one volume from the attempted four volume set of Hill's, but not including the possibly mis-identified 1722 vernacular edition.

⁷⁹ Though two of these composite volumes are reprints of the original Ayr edition.

⁸⁰ So despite what some have argued in the past, in favour of one or the other version, and if the publishing record is a fair assessment of overall popularity, then both versions seem to have had an equal number of devotees.

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- The Bruce or The Book of the Most Excellent and Noble Prince Robert De Broys ...* W.W. Skeat (ed) (2 vols; STS, 1894).

Appendix XIII

**Leith's True Almanack,
Or a New Prognostication for the Year of Our Lord 1704,
Being Bissextile or Leap Year,
and from the Creation of the World 5653**

**Exactly Calculated for the Good of all Merchants and Mariners,
but more Especially for the Toun of Leith,
whose Latitude is 55.d 55.m½ and Longitude 11.d. 37.m.
from Pico Tenar _____**

By John Man Teacher of Navigation to the Fraternity-House of Leith.

“Some Chronological Remarks for this Year 1704”

Creation of the World	5653
Flood of Noah	3997
Building of Rome	2456
Building of Edinburgh Castle	2034
Reign of Fergus the 1st King of Scotland	2033
Birth of Our Saviour	1704
Passion and Death of Our Saviour	1671
Scotland first embraced the Christian Faith	1494
Extirpation of the Picts out of Scotland	864
Beginning of the Reign of K[ing] Robert Bruce	398
His defeating 30 000 English at Bannockburn	384
First use of Guns	324
Invention of Printing	264
Establishing of the Reformed Religion in Scotland	144
Colledge of Edinburgh was founded	122
Pestilence in Edinburgh wherein dyed 11 000	120
Colledge of Aberdeen was founded	111
Birth of King Charles the first	105
Birth of King Charles the second May 29, 1630	74
Gun Powder Treason, Nov. 5	99
Rebellion in Ireland	63
English entered Scotland July 22d. 1650	54
Battle of Dunbar September 3d. 1650	54
Birth of King William Novem. 4th 1650	54
Birth of Queen Mary April 30 1662	42
Birth of Queen Ann February 6th 1664	40
Arrival of King William to England Novem 15 [1688]	16
Castle of Edinburgh surrendered June 13th	15
Battle of Crombdel May 12	15
Battle of Killicrankie, July 27 th	15

Battle of Dunkel, August 21 st	15
Castle and City of Namure taken by K. William Aug 22	9
Death of Queen Mary	8
Dreadful Fire in Parliament-Closs, Feb. 3. 1700	4
Another dreadful Fire in the Land-mercat of Edinburgh October 28 1701	3
The 33 Barrels of Powder blown up at Leith the 3 July 1702	2
Death of King William III d March 8. 1702	2
Proclamation of Queen Ann March 8. 1702	2
	[years before Present]

(From: NLS, L.C. 3005(2), p. 2.)

Appendix XIV

Merry Andrew, 1705.

or,

An Almanack

After a new Fashion

For the Year 1705

Being First after Bissextile or Leap Year.

Wherein the Reader may see (if he put on a Pair of Understanding Spectacles) many things worthy of his choisest (sic) observations. Calculated by Stargazical Art, for the Meridian of the Cross of Edinburgh.

By Merry Andrew, Professor of Predictions by Star-gazing at Tam-tallon.⁸¹

“A short Chronology of Remarkable Things”

	[In the year]
Duke of Hamilton beheaded 8 march	1648
King Charles the first murder'd January 30	1649
Dunbar fight 3 September	1650
Worcester fight 3 September	1651
K. Charles 2nd. arrived in France 19 October	1651
Birth of his Royal Highness Prince George of Denmark	1651
Cromwell died 3 September	1658
General Monk marched into London 8 May	1659
The free Parliament vote for the King 1 May	1660
K. Charles the 2nd. Proclaimed in London 8 May	1660
Birth of our Sovereign Queen Ann Feb 6	1664
Battel of Pentland	1666
Battel of Bothwel Bridge	1679
Death of King Charles 2nd February 6 th	1685
Arrival of K. William to England November 5th	1688
The Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies established by Act of Parliament	1695
Death of Queen Mary	1695
The English Memorial to the Toun of Hamburg against the Indian and African company of Scotland, April 7	1697
Jamaica Proclamation against the Scots 8th of April	1699
Barbadoes Proclamation 13th of April	1699
Neuu (sic) York Proclamation 15th of May	1699

⁸¹ Tantallon Castle in Berwickshire?

A second Neuu York Proclamation 3rd of June	1699
A second Barbadoes Proclamation 15th of September	1699
Dreadful Fire in Edinburgh February 3d	1700
Death of K. James 7th, September	1701
Another dreadful Fire in Edinburgh October 28	1701
Death of king William, March 8 th	1702
Proclamation of Queen Ann at Edinburgh March	1702
The Ship Annamdale, belonging to the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies, was, in a violent and unprecedented manner, surpris'd and seiz'd in the Douns by Order and VVarrant of the English East-India Company; and brought forcibly away from thence into the Port of Dover – first February	1704
The Ship Worcester belonging to, or Commission'd by the English East-India Company, was by Order and VVarrant of the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies, seiz'd in the Road of Leith, by way of Reprisal and from thence carried into the Harbour of Bruntisland, 12 Aug.	170(sic)

(From: NLS, L.C. 3153(4), p. 2.)

Appendix XV

**Perth's True Almanack;
or a new
Prognostication
For the Year of Our Lord 1718.
Being the second after Bissextile or Leap Year,
and from the Creation of the World 5667**

**Calculated exactly for the Meridian of the Toun of
Perth, whose Latitude is 56 Deg. 26 Min. and
Longitude 3 Deg
11 Min West from London⁸²**

By Patrick Stobie Philomathemat.

“Chronological Remarks for this year 1718”

Creation of the World	5667
Flood of Noah	3711
Scots came first into Albion	2136
The Building of Edinburgh Castle	2048
Fergus was first Crowned King of Scots	2025
Scotland first embrac'd the Christian Faith	1508
Battle of Bannockburn	0398
Invention of Guns	0337
Invention of Printing	0278
Pest in Edinburgh wherein dyed 11 000	0134
Gun Powder Treason Nov. 5th 1605	0113
Battles of Kilsyth, Aug. 15 & Philiphaugh	0073
The Dukes Engagement	0070
Battle of Dunbar Sept. 3d.	0068
Great Eclipse of the Sun, called the Dark Munday	0064
Birth of our Present Sovereign K. George May 28th 1660	0058
Birth of his Royal Highness Prince of Wales Oct. 30th 1683	0035
Battle of Killiecrankie, July 27 th	0029
Union of Scotland and England	0011
Almanack was Taxed Aug. 1st, 1711	0007
Peace between Great-Britain &c. and France	0005
Death of Queen Ann August 1. and Proclamation of King George Aug: 5.	0004
Coronation of K. George Oct. 20	0004
Rebellion in Scotland and England ⁸³	0003
The attack upon the Castle of Edinburgh September 8 th	0003

⁸² Probably not meant to refer to London *specifically*, but rather Greenwich.

⁸³ The commencement of the 1715 Jacobite Uprising.

Rebels took in Perth Sept. 16
Battle of Sheriffmure Nov. 13
Rebels fled from Perth Jan. 30

0003
0003
0002
[years
before
Present]

(From: GUL Spec. Coll., Mu1-f.34(1), p. 4.)

Appendix XVI

An New Almanack or new Prognostication For the Year of our Lord, 1727

Calculated according to Art for the
Ancient Kingdom of Scotland.
But more especially for the City of Edinburgh,
the Metropolis of the Kingdom ...

By Merry Andrew, Professor of Predictions by Star-gazing at
Tamtallon.

“Memorable Things for the Year 1727”

Creation of the World	5676
Flood of Noah	4021
Building of Edinburgh Castle	2057
Reign of Fergus 1st King of Scotland	2056
Scotland embraced the Christian Faith	1517
Extirpation of the Picts out of Scotland	887
Building of the High Church of Glasgow	536
Defeating 100 000 English at Bannockburn	407
First use of Guns	347
Invention of Printing	287
Establishing of the Reformed Religion in Scotland	167
King Charles the 1st, born at Dunfermling	127
King James the VI went to England	124
Powder Treason was discovered Nov. 5	122
New Translation of the Bible finish'd	117
King Charles the II born, May 29	97
K. Charles the 1st Crowned in Scotland	94
Book of Liturgy sent to Scotland, July 23	90
Scots Army enter'd England, August 17	87
Battle of Kilsyth, August 15	82
Battle of Philiphaugh Sep. 13	82
Duke of Hamilton's Engagement	79
Last great visitation in Scotland	79
King Charles Beheaded Jan. 30 th	78
Mirk-Munday	75
Battle of Pentland Hills	61
Battle of Bothwell-Bridge	43
Battle of Sheriff-Muir & Preston	12

Proclamation of King George

13
[years
before
Present]

(From: GUL Spec. Coll., Mu1-f.34(3), p. 2.)

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