

St Andrews and Aberdeen

20: Aberdeen and St Andrews

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Introduction

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| A thousand thre hundreth fourty and nyne | |
| Fra lichtare was þe suet Virgyne, | <i>lichtare</i> – delivered of a child |
| In Scotland þe first pestilens | |
| Begouth, of sa gret violens | |
| That it wes said of liffand men | <i>liffand</i> - living |
| The third part it distroyit þen; | |
| And eftir þat in to Scotland | |
| A zere or mare it wes wedand. | <i>wedand</i> - raging |
| Before þat tyme wes neuer sene | |
| In Scotland pestilens sa keyne: | <i>keyne</i> - keen |
| For men, and barnis and wemen, | |
| It sparit nocht for to quell then. ¹ | |

Thus Andrew of Wyntoun (c.1350-c.1422) recorded the first outbreak of the Black Death in Scotland. Modern commentators set the death toll at between a quarter and a third of the population, speculating that Scotland may not have suffered as badly as some other regions of Europe.² Nevertheless, it had a significant effect. Fordun's *Gesta* discusses its symptoms, but its full impact on St Andrews comes to us through Walter Bower's lament on the high loss among the cathedral's canons.³ In Aberdeen, in contrast, there survive detailed burgh records regarding the process of isolating sufferers: that these relate to the outbreak of 1498 indicates that the burgesses had learned some epidemiological lessons from previous outbreaks and were willing to act on corporate responsibility.⁴

These responses nicely differentiate the burghs. On the north-east coast of Fife, St Andrews was a small episcopal burgh. From the top of St Rule's tower (see above), it is easy to see to the north, the bishops' castle substantially rebuilt by Bishop Walter Traill (1385-1401), the mouth of the river Eden, and beyond that the Firth of Tay; to the west, away from the sea, the good farmland in the rolling hills and valley of the Howe of Fife; to the east, the present harbour. St Andrews owed its immense significance to the realm by being one of the two most important dioceses of the Scots

¹ *Wyntoun* vol 6: p. 196 (the Wemyss Text), ll. 6223-34.

² Brown, *The Wars of Scotland* pp. 318-19; Jillings, *Scotland's Black Death* pp. 37-44.

³ *Fordun* vol 2, pp. 359, 369. Bower, *Scotichronicon* vol. 7, pp. 272-3.

⁴ Dennison, desBrisay and Diack, 'Health in the Two Towns', pp. 74-5.

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church.⁵ Its bishop was the realm's senior cleric (the Scots church itself being a 'special daughter' of the Roman see from 1192, and only in 1472 did St Andrews become the first Scottish archiepiscopal see) and the holders of that post were key political players in Scottish government. The town owes its name to its reception of St Regulus, or St Rule (after whom the tower is named). St Rule had brought a relic of St Andrew, Scotland's patron saint, several centuries earlier, thus providing (inadvertently) the foundation of the burgh's important pilgrim trade; this became so great that a ferry service, very early on, was instituted for pilgrims at Queensferry.⁶ Long before 1349, the cathedral was a repository of books and learning: the key historiographers of the period discussed below, John Fordun and Andrew Wyntoun, must certainly have found much if not all of their material in the church records there. The town's status as a centre for learning was institutionalised in 1413, when Pope Benedict XIII granted full university status to the school of higher studies present in St Andrews from 1410, with support of Bishop Henry Wardlaw. This was the first university foundation in Scotland, although three more were to follow in the next hundred years; previously, Scottish students had had to go abroad to study, sometimes to England, but increasingly often to the Continent-- Paris, Orleans, and Avignon being favourites. Such an education encouraged Scottish engagement with current intellectual debate, and also fostered cultural and political links. The choice of Benedict as papal authority reveals the Scots' long-standing loyalty to the Avignon (as opposed to Roman) popes; only in 1418, after the Council of Constance, did firstly St Andrews' Faculty of Arts and then the government as a whole move their allegiance to the newly-elected Martin V. As well as indicating international political allegiances, the foundation documents also demonstrate religious anxieties, since one clause from Wardlaw's own charter refers to higher education as helping the faith to withstand heresy, particularly Lollardy and other forms of Wycliffite thought.⁷ This fear had been actualised in the burning of the English priest John Resby in Perth in 1407, after a successful prosecution by Laurence of Lindores, later master at St Andrews and keen heretic hunter.⁸

⁵ Nicholson, *Later Middle Ages*, pp. 9-10

⁶ Lynch, *Scotland*, pp. 93-6

⁷ Nicholson, *Later Middle Ages*, pp. 241-6

⁸ Nicholson, *Later Middle Ages*, pp. 239-40

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Such anxieties seem less evident in the surviving records of Aberdeen. On the north-east coast of Scotland, Aberdeen lies about eighty miles north of St Andrews.⁹ In 1349 it was a royal burgh of about 2000 people, growing to c. 3000 in 1408. Like St Andrews, Aberdeen is also surrounded by rich farmland and hence served as an important market. Divided early on into Old Aberdeen and New Aberdeen, and situated around the mouths of two rivers, the Dee and the Don, its particular importance stems from sea-links with mainland Europe, reflected in the concern for the harbour and its quays in the remarkably full burgh records. One surviving from 1413 refers to the harbour as common space, for use by all burgesses, suggesting corporate engagement with international and local trade. The importance of the burgh and its associated business can be seen in buildings of the period. In 1393, Robert II sanctioned the construction of the tollbooth: at this time in Scotland, the tollbooth would hold the town weights, and also serve as a meeting place for the burgh council as well as the town jail. The episcopate of Alexander Kinnimund (1355-80) also saw the extension and renovation of one of the main churches, St Machar in Old Aberdeen (nearer the Don). This distinctive building, which imitates the architecture of the tower house of the period, is built in the local stone, granite-- which can make even modern Aberdeen shine silver or look extremely grey, depending on the weather. The other church, St Nicholas in New Aberdeen (closer to the Dee), also saw some improvement in 1351, when Provost William Leith of Ruthriestone donated two bells (St Laurence and St Mary) as penance for the death of one of his baillies. Aberdeen was also a centre for administering royal justice: both David II and Robert II visited to conduct business for the North, and indeed David was effectively trapped there by an outbreak of plague in 1362. The double tressure on the burgh's late medieval seals suggests a reward for a particular royal service, but Aberdeen appears to have been consistently loyal to royal authority throughout the period.

In enduring the onslaughts of plague, and fearing heresy, St Andrews and Aberdeen were participating in European phenomena; there were, however, further political challenges on the national stage between 1348 and 1418. The previous half-century had seen the First War of Independence, and the Bruce ascendancy under Robert I. Neither the settlement with England (agreed by Queen Isabella during Edward III's minority) nor indeed the Bruce hold on power went unchallenged, whether externally or internally. David II (Robert I's son) was in English hands between 1346 and 1357 after his capture at the battle of Neville's Cross; in his absence, his heir

⁹ For the early history of Aberdeen, Dennison, Simpson and Simpson, 'The Growth of the Two Towns', , and DesBrisay and Ewan with Hiack 'Life in the Two Towns.

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Robert Stewart (Robert I's grandson and David's half-nephew) built up power and influence. After his ransoming, David proved an energetic king, although some of his policies, including his suggestion that he be succeeded by one of the sons of Edward III of England, as well as an attempt to restrict the power of key magnates (Stewarts, Douglases, and the Earl of Mar), provoked rebellion in 1362-3. The evidence suggests that David's actual rule was a period of recovery and general prosperity for the Scots.¹⁰ David died in 1371, without an heir. Robert Stewart became Robert II, thus first Stewart king. Apart from too many sons and an informal first marriage, his problems as king stemmed from a lifetime of being a magnate among magnates. His difficult reign was made more difficult by growing infirmity, and his gradual displacement by two of his sons, firstly his heir John (who became Robert III on succeeding, since John was an unlucky royal name in Scotland), but also his second son, Robert, Earl of Fife, later Duke of Albany. Albany was guardian of the kingdom for his father (1388-90) and again for his brother (1390-3); even without such official status, in late 1401, Albany was able to arrange the capture and imprisonment (at least for a while in St Andrews Castle) of the Duke of Rothesay, Robert III's elder son and heir, and at that time, the official royal Lieutenant. When Rothesay died in custody in 1402 in Albany's own castle of Falkland, about twenty miles inland from St Andrews, Robert III sent his younger son, James, to France for safety; unfortunately, the ship was intercepted by English pirates. James did not return to his kingdom until 1424, during which time Albany and then his son, Murdoch, held power.

Political life in Scotland as a whole, and perhaps particularly on the eastern seaboard, was therefore governed during this period by internal faction and external pressure from both England and France. Some Scots attended the court of the Avignon papacy, such as Bishop Wardlaw; others, notably Archibald Douglas, fourth earl of Douglas and duke of Touraine, participated in the wars in France, on the French side. Those at home, like most of Europe, faced difficult economic circumstances and intermittent plague. In addition, there remained the more fundamental divide between east and west: Aberdeen and St Andrews were both Inglis-speaking, associated more with the increase in centralised government, and there are clear anxieties expressed in literary texts concerning the Gaelic-speaking west. Given these tensions, both endemic and immediate, perhaps it is less surprising that much of the surviving literature of the period concerns itself with the past, both distant and more recent, and (in three from five cases) with defining and unifying Scotland. As

¹⁰See Penman, *David II* for full account. .

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a result, even the writing that can be clearly associated with the prosperous burghs of St Andrews and Aberdeen concentrate on the larger picture, making local detail incidental.

John Barbour

The best-known Older Scots text from this period is John Barbour's poem, *The Bruce*. Clearly associated with the Stewart affinity, Barbour (c.1330-1395) probably came from Stewart lands in south-west Scotland; in 1356, however, he was appointed archdeacon of Aberdeen, remaining in post until his death in 1395. Between 1357 and 1371 he received safe-conducts for study abroad, two for England and two for France, quite possibly to remove himself from the kingdom during the rule of David II.¹¹ After Robert II's accession he appears in both court records and diocesan records as an active witness and participant in affairs.¹² He is credited with two significant works, *The Stewartis Orignalle* and *The Bruce*.¹³ The former no longer survives in any form, but references to it suggest that it too articulates Barbour's allegiance to the Stewart house; the latter is a key text of Scottish literary and political identity, and the first extensive piece of writing in Older Scots.

The Bruce is some 13000 lines long, in four-stress couplets, and presents an account of Robert Bruce's life from 1306, when he allies himself with cause of Scottish freedom, to his death in 1329. The poem thus addresses both Bruce's struggles to claim the Scots throne but also his rule subsequent to the victory at Bannockburn (which is at the centre of the poem). The poem treads a fine line between history, epic and romance. Barbour opens by stressing the importance of truthfulness, yet borrows folk-tale motifs to demonstrate Bruce's qualities, as in various Battles against Odds. He also compares Bruce's behaviour, particularly at the beginning, to that of important heroes, including Arthur and Alexander. Such figures similarly blur boundaries between romance and history, and Barbour's deliberate positioning of Bruce there supports his treatment as a significant hero whose values reach beyond national boundaries, even while embodying the rights of his own realm to sovereignty.

Barbour's association with Aberdeen is not particularly foregrounded in the poem: the city appears on various campaign itineraries, but is not described or really differentiated from other places. This may in part result from the association of the Comyns, Bruce's regular opponents, with

¹¹ Goldstein, *Matter of Scotland* pp. 138-42.

¹² Boardman, *Early Stewart King* pp. 58-61; Goldstein, *Matter of Scotland*, pp. 140-1.

¹³ Nicholson, *Later Middle Ages*, pp. 184-5.

the earldom of Buchan, and thus north-east of Scotland. Barbour does, however, record, albeit briefly, the Herying of Buchan by Bruce:

Now ga we to ye kyng **agayne**
That off his wictory wes rycht fayn, *fayn - delighted*
And gert his men bryn all Bowchane *gert - madebryn - burn; Bowchane - Buchan*
Fra end till end and sparyt nane, *till- to*
And heryit yaim on sic maner *heryt - harried*
Yat eftre yat weile fifty 3er *That after even fifty years had passed*
Men menyt ye herschip off Bouchane. *Menyt - mourned; herschip - harrying*
Ye king yan till his pes has tane *tane - taken*
Ye north cuntreys yat humbly
Obeysyt till his senjoury *Obeysyt - obedient; senjoury - sovereignty*
Swa yat be north ye Month war nane *Month - eastern Grampians of Angus and Kincardineshire*
Yen yai his men war euerilkan, *euerilkan - every one*
His lordschip wox ay mar and mar.¹⁴ *wox- grew*

Comment [SP1]: again, please give marginal glosses. Are the 'y's standing in for thorns? [It seems that the 'y's are indeed 'y's, since you say below that this is a 16th c. print.

Comment [NR2]: Here's a technical issue then: the STS records that in their base ms, thorn and <y> are indistinguishable, and the editors have taken the decision to print them all as <y>. This is what I've reproduced. Would it be helpful to normalise these one stage further, to <th>? I agree <y> is actually quite annoying, being neither one nor the other.

That this despoliation is still remembered fifty years later – certainly within Barbour's lifetime – gives a taste of its effects; nothing more specific about place is provided. Clearly, that Bruce should need to take such drastic action against his own people is problematic for a text concerned with representing him as a figurehead for independent sovereignty; it is notable here, however, that his lordship apparently grows as a consequence. The violence of the act is subordinated to the benefits to the king, namely Bruce, and to strong government.

Locality proves more significant in the treatment of the 'Good Sir James', although neither St Andrews nor Aberdeen loom large. Rather Douglas's concern is with his family estates. He regains these in an episode known as 'the Douglas Larder' (*Bruce* 5: 224-462). As well as demonstrating his right to ownership, in the context of the poem's structure, such a narrative stands as a synecdoche to map the relationship between the Scots nobility and their followers and lands. The place itself is largely unimportant for the larger point Barbour is making, but of course crucial to the Douglasses and their understanding of their place in Scotland.

The *Bruce* has fairly consistently been read as a poem concerned with national identity and with issues of kingship and nobility, as they applied across the realm. Its original audience was most likely Robert II and his court, and its allusions to a variety of exempla as well as its deft handling of literary genres and tropes suggest that that audience was culturally sophisticated.¹⁵ It

¹⁴ *Barbour's Bruce*, vol 2: book 9, ll. 295-307.

¹⁵ Goldstein, *The Matter of Scotland* pp. 133-214 still offers the most developed reading of *The Bruce*. See also Boardman, *Early Stewart Kings*, pp. 58-61 and Penman, p. 339..

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would certainly have appreciated the validation of Robert II by the record of his grandfather's achievements, and recognised the inherent warnings regarding their behaviour to the king, his rather truculent sons, and the key magnates of the realm. The *Bruce* continued to be read in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: its earliest witnesses date from the 1480s, it was in print by the late sixteenth century, and it has featured as a cornerstone of Scottish literature ever since. Recent engagement has examined the way in which Barbour blurs distinctions between loyalty to Robert Bruce and loyalty to the crown, so that one is identified with the other. Barbour also proves tolerant of other allegiances: it is possible, for example, for an Englishman to be a good knight, if, perhaps, a misguided one. Other questions have been raised about Barbour's presentation of 'fredome': can it be quite as compelling as a casual modern reader might imagine if we remember that Barbour himself, as archdeacon of Aberdeen, still had serfs? Such arguments have usefully complicated readings of the *Bruce*, but they cannot diminish its success at winning over support for its hero.

John Fordun

If Barbour has been treated as the father of Older Scots verse, John Fordun (fl. c.1365-1385) has been treated as the father of Scottish historiography. Since the early seventeenth century it has been assumed that John Fordun originated in the village of Fordun, in Aberdeenshire; there is, however, no contemporary evidence for this, and it is possible that he hailed from the Perthshire village of the same name. Walter Bower (1385-1449) who incorporated Fordun's work into his own *Scotichronicon*, states that Fordun was a chaplain of the church of Aberdeen but not, it would seem, a graduate or a man of power; Bower also suggests that Fordun travelled widely in search of his material, and without doubt, the *Chronica* preserves a great deal of material that can be verified in other places, although there is no other evidence that Fordun travelled far to discover it.

Such considerations, however, hide the complex nature of the *Chronica*, and its constitutive elements. The work transmitted under Fordun's name is now often considered in different parts, based on the fullest rendition of the material: the *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, and the *Gesta Annalia*. The *Chronica* is divided into five books, from the origins of the Scots to the end of the twelfth-century reign of David I, with an incomplete sixth book devoted to David's royal ancestors. Only this part is now attributed to Fordun's composition, sometime between 1371 and the mid-1380s. Even so, the *Chronica* itself is a reworking and synthesis of several thirteenth-century accounts. Those were probably written to differentiate Scottish identity from its Irish roots, but in Fordun's hands, they were reworked to refute the aggressive English use of Galfridian material. Its key focus is the foundation myth of the Scots, beginning with Gathelos and Scota, moving through

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settlements in Spain, then coming to Ireland and finally Scotland. It brings together different versions of the story, attempting to endow them with chronological and narrative coherence. By developing the king lists and attendant myths, Fordun presents an unbroken line of sovereign kings from 330 BCE, thus defining the independence of the Scottish people from the earliest beginnings.

Gesta Annalia opens with an account of Queen Margaret's royal ancestors and continues until about 1385-7. It too has been divided into two parts, one of which runs until 1285, and the other from 1285 onwards. Such a division derives originally from a curious placing of documents in one of the most significant manuscripts, but it makes sense of other discrepancies apparent in the *Gesta*. Evidence suggests that *Gesta* as we have it, including the collection of documents, was added wholesale to the end of the *Chronica*. The significant difference is attributable to different sources: the first part of the *Gesta* seems to rely on a text which stopped abruptly c. 1285; the second part may have been written by Thomas Bisset, prior of St Andrews, who demitted office in 1363.¹⁶ The commonality of material between this possible work of Bisset's and that of Andrew Wyntoun and Walter Bower indicates a common source. Such a source would most likely be found at the cathedral in St Andrews, of which both Wyntoun and Bower were, at different times, canons. However, Aberdeen twice plays its part in national history during this period, as a site of death: that of one lord David Barclay, murdered in 1351, and of the king's sister, Matilda, two years later. Wherever Fordun had his main associations, however, it is clear from the biases of the *Chronica* that he was a man with sympathies north of the Forth and east of the mountains: Aberdeen is thus not an unlikely location.¹⁷

While Fordun as compiler rather undermines Bower's image of him as a trawler after truth, nevertheless, it suggests that a tradition of extensive Latin history-writing flourished in Scotland long before the fourteenth century; indeed, it is probable that there may have been substantial vernacular writing before Barbour, although he would presumably have encountered literary material in English and French while studying. So although these texts seem to come from nothing, they may in fact be merely the first survivors of a more extensive tradition. Both articulate a view of national identity as figured in the person of the sovereign. Barbour is concerned with individual heroes, who raise themselves from the lowest possible point, especially in the case of Bruce, to the kingship and thus symbolise and guarantee freedom from external control. Fordun is keener to

Comment [SP3]: 'the two' here being the *Chronica* and the *Gesta*? The confusion re 'parts' continues to haunt me later in the paragraph-- caould you clarify?

¹⁶ Royan with Broun, 'Versions' p. 171

¹⁷ Boardman, 'Chronicle Propaganda' 24.

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refute the possibility of subjugation altogether, at least in the *Chronica*; the *Gesta Annalia* are perhaps less obvious in their intent. We begin therefore with material that asserts its Scottishness, defined by use of the past.

Andrew Wyntoun

Such perceptions were shared by a writer of the next generation, Andrew of Wyntoun, prior of the Augustinian St Serf's Priory on Loch Leven. The, now ruined, priory there is on the largest island in the loch, where there are signs of habitation from the ninth century. The priory is about thirty-five miles from St Andrews, where there was another Augustinian house, attached to the cathedral, and about the same distance from another Augustinian house on an island, Inchcolm on the Forth. St Andrews would have been the centre for learning, books, and probably also church politics. Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle* places the Scottish past into the history of the world, starting from the very beginning (hence *Original*) and coming down to his own time. Like Barbour, whose work he clearly admires greatly, Wyntoun writes in four-stress vernacular couplets. Like Fordun, and indeed his successor, Bower, Wyntoun must have drawn greatly on the resources available at St Andrews, but with a different (albeit overlapping) audience in mind. His patron, Sir John Wemyss, was based around Leuchars, a town close to St Andrews, so there is reason to assume that Wyntoun was familiar with the burgh over many years and was known to the local lairds.¹⁸ That Wyntoun's accounts are sometimes less respectful of power and carefully constructed national identity than those written in Latin might suggest an audience equally unawed by those exercising power above them.

The *Chronicle* survives in three versions in nine manuscripts. The latest version (preserved in BL MS Cotton Nero D.XI) includes a description of the rebuilding of St Andrews Cathedral after a fire in 1378. Wyntoun's account presents the bishop, William Laundells, and the prior, Steven Pay, spending the remainder of their lives (seven years) overseeing the reconstruction. They did not see it to completion, as, for instance, only 'A quarter of þe stepil of stane/ War made', but they did their best.¹⁹ Such improvements would have been underway in Wyntoun's own time in the town, and his description demonstrates, through his assertion 'zhe se appeyr' ['you see appear'], his

¹⁸ For Wyntoun and Stewart, see Goldstein, "'For he wald vsurpe na fame'", pp. 10-11.

¹⁹ *Wyntoun* vol 6, pp. 309-13.

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familiarity.²⁰ Wyntoun also records the items of value left by Bishop William and his successor, Bishop Walter, to their seat, including vestments and books. Wyntoun would have seen these gifts in use, during his time as a canon at St Andrews, and quite possibly in subsequent years when visiting from St Serfs. Given that Wyntoun envisions situating the Scottish realm in a world context, there is doubtless an element of boasting here: the major church of the Scottish realm is richly furnished by its leaders.

Although never quite as influential as Fordun's version of the past, Wyntoun's *Chronicle* was reworked and copied into the sixteenth century. That there was a hunger for this kind of historical narrative suggests that the Scots, at least those literate and wealthy enough to own large literary manuscripts, were indeed interested in accounts of their national past. All three writers are clearly east coast writers, giving prominence to events and attitudes in the Inglis-speaking parts of Scotland. They are however prone to elide the differences between Gaelic and Inglis Scotland. For Barbour, this is perhaps less of a problem: Bruce certainly had Gaelic connections and may well have spoken the language. But the others needed to combine Gaelic king lists with the newer patterns of power based in the Inglis-speaking south and east. They manage this chiefly by not acknowledging the problem: Gaelic disaffection is attributed to individual rebels and magnates, rather than to differences in culture and expectation. Tendentious as a model of national identity, it would work well for the eastern view of Scotland for another two centuries.

Scottish Troy Book

Scots of the late fourteenth century did not confine their interests to their own history. Now fragmentary, the *Scottish Troy Book* translates Guido delle Colonne's *Historia Destructionis Troiae*. Understanding these fragments remains a current discussion.²¹ They survive in two manuscripts, both significantly later than the putative composition of the work, and in both cases the Scots fragments, different in each manuscript, have been supplemented with material from Lydgate's *Troy Book*. Given that the Scots version is written in four-stress couplets, like the other Older Scots texts of this period, it seems probable that it predates Lydgate's version. There is every reason to assume that, as originally conceived, it was to have been a complete rendition of Guido's work; when it became incomplete, apparently fairly early in its transmission, several people made

²⁰ Wyntoun, vol 6, p. 311.

²¹ See Purdie, 'Medieval Romances', p. 173. For more discussion see Wingfield, 'The Manuscript and Print Contexts' of pp. 263-84.

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the decision to patch it with extracts from Lydgate's work. This of course raises interesting questions about attitudes to Lydgate in fifteenth-century Scotland, as well as the circulation of Guido (also known to Wyntoun), but those are beyond this essay. We know nothing about the author of the translation: one scribe attributes the work to Barbour, but there is no further evidence to suggest that this is the case, and the comment is perhaps more revealing of later fifteenth-century knowledge of earlier Scottish writers than it is of any named author. Based on the assumption that it predates Lydgate's work, and also on linguistic evidence, its likely date is the beginning of the fifteenth century. In the fragments that survive, the text's explicit concerns lie entirely outwith the realm; as with so many Trojan narratives, there may have been in the mind of the translator and his first audience direct correlations with their contemporary circumstances, but these are lost to us. Nevertheless, it shows that the eastern seaboard of Scotland was alive to literary and cultural developments on mainland Europe, and was responding with enthusiasm.

Legends of the Saints

The last work of east coast Scotland to be written in this period is the *Legends of the Saints*, or the *Scots Legendary*.²² The collection has received very little critical attention over the last century.²³ Surviving in one manuscript, even its place of composition is uncertain: some linguistic accounts have placed it in the north-east, around Aberdeen or possibly Moray, but this is not absolutely certain. Its writer describes himself as an old priest, 'Alde and swere' [lazy]: such a description clearly does not help in locating the work. Its most significant source is the *Legenda Aurea*, from which the saints selected appear to reflect Scottish church dedications.²⁴ Amongst these is a life of Saint Andrew. Curiously, however, the account of Andrew contains no reference at all to the Scottish burgh, or to the saint's relics and cult there, even though St Andrews was both a destination for pilgrimage and Andrew the national patron saint. While such detail is not to be found in the source text, it would have been easy enough for the poet to add some local colour, particularly if he were writing for a local audience. Such an absence surely suggests that the poet was not attached to any religious house or parish there or in its locality.

²² See Bawcutt, 'Religious Verse' pp. 119-20, and also Rydal, 'The British Reception of the *Legenda Aurea*' pp. 232-250.

²³ See *Legends of the Saints: St Andrew* vol 1. pp. 63-96.

²⁴ See Rydal, 'The British Reception of the *Legenda Aurea*', p. 228.

In addition, the collection includes narratives of two Scottish saints, Ninian and Machar.²⁵ Machar is an important saint in Aberdeen, the dedicatee of the burgh's cathedral, but again the account lacks local colour.²⁶ He is identified as significant to Aberdeen in the opening lines, but no details are given of local miracles or a shrine. Substantial duplication extends between the life of St Ninian and the life of St Machar: indeed, two passages in particular are almost identical. The first pair (*St Machar* 333-53; *St Ninian* 37-57) refers to high moral standards sustained by the saints even in youth, specifically in their devotion to learning ('& he þat abil was & 3yng/ folouyt his mastir in al thing' *St Machar* 333-4 [and he that was able and young/ followed his master in all things]) and sexual abstinence ('& for he douyt for to fal/ til abstinens he gef hym al', *St Machar* 347-8[and since he feared to fail/ to abstinence he gave himself entirely]). The second pair (*St Machar* 1581-1614; *St Ninian* 781-841) discusses the saints' powers in healing people in response to prayer. The editor of the poems argues that *St Machar* is the derivative, on the grounds that the metre is handled with greater sophistication, and that Ninian was the better-known saint, thus more likely to have attracted initial attention. It is certainly true that the compilers of the Aberdeen Breviary at the end of the fifteenth century struggled to find much detail about St Machar²⁷, and it might thus seem likely that a writer, out of loyalty to his locality as much as anything else, might have constructed a life on the model of another. After all, medieval saints quite commonly display early piety, here particularly obedience to authority and chastity, and healing miracles were hugely significant for devotion: *The Life of St Machar* also attests to his Celtic origins and his associations with St Columba, well-recognised marks of sanctity.

The audience for the *Scots Legendary* might well have been lay rather than religious, and the act of translation parallels the *Scottish Troy Book* in appropriating European culture for a Scottish audience. It is more than likely that had the whole *Troy Book* survived, certain parts and episodes would show clear signs of adaptation for a Scots audience, just as the *Scots Legendary* does in introducing the lives of Machar and Ninian.

Conclusion

²⁵ *Legends of the Saints: Machar*, vol. 2, pp. 1-46 and *Ninian*, vol. 2, pp. 304-45.

²⁶ *St Machar*, ll. 10-15.

²⁷ See Macquarrie, 'Scottish Saints'. p. 146, where Macquarrie notes that St Machar's feast was designated as major only in the diocese of Aberdeen, suggesting that he was important but local. See also ó Baoill, 'St Machar – some linguistic light?'

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All five texts discussed in this chapter are narratives, all are concerned with the past. Each at some level sees the past as reflecting upon and giving advice to the present, but from different perspectives and with different imagined audiences. The magnatial view of the world embedded in the *Bruce* is at least partially distinct from the humility and self-control advocated by the *Scots Legendary*, and that affects the way the texts present themselves. Nevertheless, all five texts take grand narratives as their heart, and think big, suggesting that the inhabitants of Aberdeen and St Andrews may also have thought beyond their burgh boundaries, thinking of their realm as a large place with a stake in the wider world. Locality grows more visible over the fifteenth century, but as much through our ability to place the writers as through the texts themselves: William Dunbar provides the first surviving examples of occasional addresses to places. More consistently, Older Scots literature is interested in broader narratives, European myth, only reset against Scots landscape. What changes is genre: for instance, dream vision makes its first appearance when James I returns to his realm, apparently with the *Kingis Quair* under his arm, in 1424. It would be a mistake, however, to write off the texts written in the earlier period as unsophisticated: Barbour's arrangement of Bruce's story is very carefully plotted; Fordun and his sources attempt to synthesise some diverse material into a coherent narrative; Wyntoun's vignettes can be sharp and revealing; the writers of both the *Legends of the Saints* and the *Scots Troy Book* are keenly aware of current European culture and eager to transfer it into the vernacular. Of the five, Barbour and Fordun have been the most obviously influential: in the centuries immediately following, both became dominant in the construction of national narratives, whether by absorption, as Fordun's *Chronica* was absorbed into Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon*, or by reaction, as Hary's *Wallace* challenges Barbour's implicit ideologies with some of his own, even by borrowing and rewriting some of the *Bruce*'s episodes. However, although the other three may seem more marginal to the mainstream of Scottish tradition, manuscript evidence suggests that they were considered valuable.

By the end of the Great Schism, the university of St Andrews had been founded: amongst its reasons for foundation is the intent to drive out heresy and educate the people. By the end of the century, Aberdeen too would have a university, King's College, also founded by a far-seeing bishop with an interest in internal church reform. Both burghs maintained and developed their place in the intellectual and cultural life of the realm, although identifiable writers had more varied affiliations in terms of place and patron. As Older Scots dialect studies progress, it may become possible to trace more directly any centres of scribal practice and literary composition, but it seems likely that Aberdeen and St Andrews will continue to be significant places in our understanding of late medieval Scottish culture. At no point, however, were Older Scots writers parochial; they

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maintained, rather, their links with both Continental and English literatures. On returning to his realm after his English captivity, James I, and his wife Joan Beaufort, must have brought back more English literature and books; certainly, the *Kingis Quair*, attributed to James or to a close courtier, reflects the influence of Chaucer and others. The surviving Older Scots literature of the later fifteenth century is certainly more diverse in genre, encompassing dream vision, beast allegory, and lyric among others. We also begin to learn a little more about the writers, their particular contexts and literary cultures. However, the passion for the past and the gift for narrative so evident in these earlier works continue distinctively in Scottish writing, as much as St Andrews and Aberdeen maintain their places in Scottish cultural life.

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