THE CAMPBELLS: LORDSHIP, LITERATURE AND LIMINALITY

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The Campbells have the potential to offer much to the theme of literature and borders, given that the kindred's astonishing political success in the late medieval and early modern period depended heavily upon the ability to negotiate multiple frontiers: between Highlands and Lowlands; between Gaelic Scotland and Ireland, and, especially after the Reformation, with England and the matter of Britain. This paper will explore the literary dimension to Campbell expansionism, from the *Book of the Dean of Lismore* in the earlier sixteenth century, to poetry addressed to dukes of Argyll in the earlier eighteenth century. Particular attention will be paid to the literary proclivities of the household of the Campbells of Glenorchy on either side of what appears to be a major watershed in 1550; and to the agenda of the Campbell protégé John Carswell, first post-Reformation bishop of the Isles, and author of the first printed book in Gaelic in either Scotland or Ireland, *Foirm na n-Urrnuidheadh* ('The Form of Prayers'), published at Edinburgh in 1567.

That the Campbells have so much to offer the theme of literature and borders within late medieval and early modern Britain and Ireland is no surprise given that the most distinctive characteristic of their staggering political success in that era was the ability to operate across frontiers. Regional domination in Argyll was the foundation of the achievement of national high office, and the plantation of branches of the kindred across Scotland (Dawson 1999: 215). In addition to movement from Highlands to Lowlands, Campbell expansion reactivated an older and highly porous internal frontier between Argyll and the Isles, heartland of MacDonald lordship, and gave it an ideological charge. Blind Harry's *Wallace* may be the earliest literary portrayal of Campbells and MacDonalds locked in dialectical opposition on the grounds of civility, ethnicity, and loyalty to the realm (Boardman 2006: 211-13). The full-blown Gaelic version of the topos took far longer to emerge, reflecting a relationship initially evolving in

tandem rather than confrontation (Gillies 1976-8: 264-71). By the mid-sixteenth century Campbell literati could legitimately challenge the MacDonald right to supremacy over Gaelic Scotland embodied in the title *ceannas nan Gàidheal*, 'headship of the Gaels' (MacGregor forthcoming (a)). Involvement in Gaelic Ireland was a natural for both kindreds. Finally, the Scottish Reformation of 1560 and the death of the third duke of Argyll in 1761 demarcated two centuries of profound Campbell engagement with British state formation.

Confronted with this phenomenon, it is no surprise to find that some of the scholarly descriptors applied to the Campbells – a 'semi-Lowland family', or 'Gaeldom's Trojan Horse' – suggest a degree of perplexity (Donaldson 1990: 3-4; Lynch 1991: 242). The fact that their very genealogy allowed them to don British, Norman or Gaelic faces as audience, occasion and timeframe demanded, only enhances their claim to the title of Scottish history's ultimate chameleons or shape-changers (Sellar 1973: 109-25; Gillies 1976-8: 276-85; Gillies 1982: 41-75; Gillies 1994: 144-56; Gillies 1999: 82-95). Mutability of this order dovetails seamlessly with the belief that they owed their rise firstly, to a slipperiness practised for the sake of self-aggrandisement alone, and secondly, to a longstanding but self-serving role as unconditional crown loyalists and ciphers for royal authority. As to methodology, there is the contemporary testimony of seasoned observers for the Campbells as masters of the black arts of late medieval and early modern lordship, ever craving to fish in 'drumlie waters' of their own making (MacPhail 1914-34: 3. 222, 302; Cowan 1984-6: 269-312). However, recent research has made plain how much principle mattered to those at the head of the kindred: both a deeply felt Scottish patriotism, and, from the point of Reformation onwards, an equally sincere Protestantism governing a conditional Britishness (Boardman 2007; Dawson 2002). The Campbells suffered heavily and regularly as a consequence, not least in the deaths of successive heads of the lineage

on the scaffold in 1660 and 1685, pointing in turn to a far from straightforward relationship with monarchy. The Campbells were perfectly capable of falling out with the crown on the basis of principle both before and after 1560, and by the earlier seventeenth century had, by virtue of Stewart patronage and Stewart failings, virtually usurped Stewart sovereignty in Argyll and the Isles (MacGregor forthcoming (a)).

What of the literary implications of this narrative of lordship across frontiers? Within a Gaelic cultural milieu dominated by poetry and song in a mainly panegyric mode, significant and sustained Campbell involvement as patrons and creators, and as subjects for others, confirms the normality of the kindred (Gillies 1976-8: 256-95). The most prestigious verse was composed in strict syllabic metre, and in the 'classical' literary dialect utilised by the practitioners of high Gaelic culture in Ireland and Scotland between roughly 1200 and 1700. It is true that the MacEwens, the lineage sustained by the Campbells to compose poetry of this order, died out somewhat earlier than their Scottish peers, in the mid-seventeenth century, and apparently because of wilful neglect by their erstwhile employers (MacGregor 2008: 358-60). However, high-ranking Campbells continued to be addressed by other exponents of syllabic or near-syllabic verse until the very end of the tradition, well into the eighteenth century (Gillies 1976-8: 259, 261-2). Clearly such verse was capable of addressing changing Campbell aspirations across borders and time. Paradoxically, one reason lay in the very conservatism of the classical mindset, and of its mental map of Britain and Ireland. *Gaidheil* or Gaels inhabited a Gaeldom whose greatest extent corresponded to all Ireland and all Scotland. *Goill*, the generic referent for non-Gaels, obviously took up the rest of the archipelago, overwhelmingly England, and hence it was natural for *Goill* to develop the specific connotation of 'English'. During its lifetime this paradigm was stretched to its limits and beyond, starting with the actual presence of *Goill* in

Ireland, and, more puzzlingly, of non-Gaelic Scots in Scotland. Internal frontiers like these could simply be overlooked, but the incremental impact of Reformation, English conquest of Ireland and Union of the Crowns proved impossible to absorb without some recalibration of ethnicities and nationalities (MacGregor forthcoming (a)). A separate conundrum was the status of *Alba* or Scotland within what was a very Hibernocentric world (Coira 2008: 144-9). To her own classical literati she was real enough, and a striking constant was the territorial integrity they gave her. They did not employ what came to be the equivalent Gaelic terms for 'Highlands' and 'Lowlands', *Gàidhealtachd* and *Galldachd* and their cognates, and it may be that for them *Alba* could be nothing other than a Gaelic entity (McLeod 1999: 1-8; McLeod 2004: 21-4; *cf.* MacInnes 1989: 92-3, 96-7). To the Irish literati *Alba* was equally indivisible yet inexplicable, a foreign country whose inhabitants had become separated from the Irish homeland to which they really belonged.

Elision of frontiers made it unproblematic for Irish or Scottish classical poets to represent Campbell ambitions so long as these were contiguous with Gaeldom in its fullest sense. The challenge came from the Reformation onwards, as the Campbells outgrew 'Gaeldom' and engaged with the matter of Britain. The literati turned to Arthurianism, and the elevation of Arthur, an early medieval North Briton from whom the Campbells claimed descent in the version of their pedigree the literati favoured, into King Arthur himself. This was the obvious and perhaps the only solution, but not ideal. The place accorded to Arthurian literature and lore within the classical canon was marginal, while the identification with King Arthur necessitated the setting aside of well-established genealogical scruples on this very score (Gillies 1981b: 47-72). Subsequent poetic treatments exhibit signs of novelty and strain. *Dual ollamh do thriall le toisg* ('It is customary for a poet to travel on a diplomatic mission'), is a poem of Irish authorship

addressed to Gilleasbuig, seventh earl of Argyll around 1595, as the crisis engendered by English attempts to conquer Ireland intensified. The poet coins for Gilleasbuig the striking neologism of *Breat-Ghaoidheal* or 'Brit-Gael', and urges him to succour Ireland not on the grounds that she had nurtured his kindred, as we find in parallel contemporary appeals to MacDonald chiefs, but because his progenitor King Arthur had exacted tribute there (MacGregor forthcoming (a)). At another 'British' crux during the mid-17th century Wars of the Covenant, a poem of MacEwen authorship addresses Gilleasbuig Campbell, first marquis of Argyll and leader of the Covenanting Movement. The extremity is also the poet's, now faced with oblivion because of the loss of land and favour, and this may be explanation enough for the uninhibited Arthurianism on view. However, dignity is also present, maintained through critique at once oblique and forthright. Gilleasbuig is reminded of the mutual responsibilities attending poet and patron: he is acting in a manner unbefitting his honour and ancestry. The poem becomes part of the case for the defence, and it may be that its Britishness is the poet's means of demonstrating the continuing relevance of himself and his art (Watson 1931: 139-51).

The ebbing of the tradition a century later allowed greater latitude to be taken in *Tuirseach an diugh críocha Gaoidhiol* ('Sorrowful today are the bounds of the Gaels'). This is an elegy for Iain Ruadh nan Cath, John Campbell second duke of Argyll, composed following his death in 1743 by the Kintyre poet and antiquarian, Uilliam MacMhurchaidh. In language and form the poem combines features of vernacular and classical Gaelic. MacMhurchaidh consciously emphasises the literary heritage to which the poem is heir by presenting it within one manuscript as part of a sequence of classical encomia to Campbell chiefs. Jacobitism, and Iain Ruadh's pivotal role in its defeat in 1715, is subtly treated so as not to undermine his leadership of Gaelic Scotland and all Scotland. Arthurianism is absent. Instead, points of contact with *The*

Seasons by the Augustan Anglo-Scot James Thomson inject a contemporary metropolitanism

consonant with the duke's career as a soldier and statesman at the heart of British politics.

Language presents no barrier to the poet's directly addressing Britannia and her people, but 'the

idea of Britain is neither monolithic nor unproblematic'. The poem acknowledges the possibility

of tension borne out by the duke's record of opposition to Walpole's government: it is his

function to arbitrate with *ardrígh Bhreatann*, 'the high king of Britain', in accordance with his

hereditary Scottish jurisdiction, and on behalf of his core constituencies (Scott 2002: 149-62).

Thus far Campbell transgression of frontiers has featured as a theme to test the mettle of

their own literati, and as a matter requiring acknowledgement by the literati of Lowland Scotland

and Gaelic Ireland. The larger question remaining is whether high-ranking Campbells and their

circles took an interest in the literatures linked to the political worlds in which their kindred

moved, or deployed these literatures in ways either comparative or interactive. This will be asked

of three Campbell-sponsored literary endeavours of the sixteenth century, including two poems

which stand direct comparison with *Tuirseach an diugh críocha Gaoidhiol*. Uilliam

MacMhurchaidh's poem is a salutary starting point, for in its cultural borrowings and meldings it

offers what looks like an appropriate and attractive literary response to a phenomenon like

Campbell expansionism. Yet it is late and atypical of a classical panegyric tradition conditioned

to falling back upon its own resources, such as Arthurianism, rather than seek assistance

elsewhere. In a pioneering survey of the relationship between Gaelic and Scots literature in the

later middle ages, William Gillies argued that the same held true across that broader canvas

(Gillies 1979: 63-79; *cf.* Bawcutt 2007: 303). For all the varied forms of contact between

Highland and Lowland Scotland, their literary canons rarely if ever converged explicitly. In

origin they were 'Celtic' and 'Germanic'; their cultural affiliation remained with their natural

linguistic communities of Gaelic Ireland and England respectively; they found their own responses to universal European themes such as Romance or courtly love. Thirty years on the thesis has still to be seriously challenged. While Thomas Clancy recently advocated closer investigation of Scottish Gaelic courtly poetry in relation to its Lowland counterpart, free from 'the dead hand of the Irish paradigm', this was still on the basis of a sense of a 'Scottish' experience generally rather than specifically shared, a possibility allowed for by the Gillies model. Even an apparent exception, the flyting, ends up proving the rule, both in the failure thus far to establish the authentic Gaelic origin for the genre that some have assumed, and in the opportunities it afforded to hurl ritualised poetic abuse across the Highland Line (Bawcutt 1998: 1. 200-218, 2. 427-9). If there were greater local and grass-roots interaction below the level of formal literature within oral and popular culture, as seems probable, it has left little trace. However, as Gillies also noted, if there is an antithesis to be had, a Campbell milieu is the first place to look (Gillies 1979: 75-6, 79).

The first of our three endeavours, the manuscript known as the Book of the Dean of Lismore (henceforth BDL), has been described by John Bannerman as one of the two canonical Gaelic texts of the sixteenth century (Bannerman 1983: 220), and on the basis of internal evidence was compiled between c. 1512 and 1542, by a family of MacGregors based at Fortingall by Loch Tay. It includes what may be a dedicatory poem by Fionnlagh MacNab, chief of the MacNabs of Glendochart, invoking MacCailéin, the style borne by the chief of the Campbells, by that time also earl of Argyll (Watson 1937: 2-5). The active involvement of the Campbell ruling lineage in the project is certainly suggested by the attribution of other poems in BDL to an earl (possibly earls) of Argyll, his wife and daughter (MacGregor 1999: 137 and n. 122, 138 and n. 132). However, Mac Cailéin could also be interpreted as the simple patronymic

'son of Colin', a descriptor which would fit Sir Donnchadh Campbell of Glenorchy, head of what was, by the time of his death at Flodden in 1513, the most powerful branch of the clan behind the ruling lineage itself, exercising lordship over Breadalbane in the central Perthshire Highlands (Ó Mainnín 2002: 404-5; Gillies 2005: 63 and n. 35). Sir Donnchadh is the best represented Scottish poet in BDL. The subversive, ribald quality of his work, gently satirical of himself and others within his circle, would certainly square with the mock dedication to him of an anthology which is in places distinctly lacking the gravitas which characterises more conventional later medieval Gaelic *duanairean* or 'poem-books' (Gillies 1978: 18-45; Gillies 1981a, 263-88; Gillies 1983: 59-82; MacGregor 2006: 45-6). The second endeavour is the literary activity associated with the household of Donnchadh's successors, the sixth and seventh heads of the Glenorchy Campbells, in the second half of the sixteenth century. The third, and Bannerman's other canonical text, is *Foirm na n-Urrnuidheadh* or 'The Form of Prayers', the first book in Gaelic to be printed in either Scotland or Ireland, at Edinburgh in 1567 (Thomson 1970). The author was Séon Carsuel or John Carswell, superintendent of Argyll and first reformed Bishop of the Isles, and a Campbell protégé as surely as were the MacGregors of Fortingall. His book was a translation or mediation into Gaelic of the Protestant liturgy which John Knox had published as the *Book of Common Order* in 1564 (Matheson 1952-60: 182-205; Kirk 1989: 280-304; Meek 1998: 37-62; MacGregor 1998: 13-17, 21, 28-30; Dawson 1999: 231-3). Carswell's initiative is well known to Gaelic and Reformation scholars, but deserves to be better known both as a work of literature, and for what it has to say about literature. Literary scholars might well be intrigued by Bannerman's claim that John Carswell was the foremost practitioner of the three linguistic cultures – Latin, Gaelic and Scots – of sixteenth-century

Scotland, while the theme of literature and borders was made for him and his book (Bannerman 1983: 221).

The Book of the Dean of Lismore

All three languages and cultures are also represented in BDL, adding to the enigma of the most important literary manuscript to have survived from late medieval Gaelic Scotland (MacGregor 2006: 35-85; MacGregor 2007; 209-18; Gillies 2007: 219-25). Physically the book evokes the Scots rather than the classical Gaelic tradition, most dramatically in the use of the orthography of Middle Scots as a phonetic key with which to write all the Gaelic it contains, and in secretary hand rather than Gaelic script. As to content, the first impression is of diversity and disorder bordering on chaos. Casual memoranda and asides on a panorama of topics are randomly interwoven with the literary texts which form the bulk of the subject matter, some of them still bearing witness to intense scribal activity: syllabic Gaelic verse of many shapes, sizes and levels of strictness and formality, from Scotland and Ireland; a Latin chronicle centred on Fortingall, recording deaths and other events of mainly local and occasionally national significance; excerpts from the late medieval Scottish prose chronicle tradition, both Latin and Scots; and specimens of Middle Scots and English verse, including Henryson and Lydgate. These are the grounds for claiming that 'no other surviving single source demonstrates the same ability or will to navigate among a greater number of the literary cultures of late medieval Britain and Ireland' (MacGregor 2007: 210). Yet in terms of the literary culture whence it sprang, the fact that so little contemporary evidence has survived alongside BDL profoundly limits our ability to comprehend or contextualise it. Were its extensive horizons peculiar to its MacGregor compilers and their Campbell patrons, the product of a highly specific time and place? Or were they fairly

typical of aristocratic literary culture throughout the Highlands across the later middle ages, arising from characteristics which defined this social stratum such as its multilingualism?

Closer investigation reveals the degree to which principles of order, selectivity and indeed exclusivity govern the manuscript, even if the accompanying rationales are sometimes less obvious. To its compilers, its written Gaelic was no aberration based upon ignorance of classical 'norms', but a preferred and natural medium which they employ with assurance and a reasonable degree of consistency. They were capable of working from exemplars written in classical Gaelic orthography and script, but still chose to convert these to their own scribal system (Gillies 2008: 221).[1] They impress equally in the discrimination and purpose with which they exploit their far-flung and sophisticated networks. Their overwhelming preference for Gaelic syllabic verse suggests the convergence of several editorial stances. It is no great surprise that sub-literary or 'popular culture' does not figure in BDL, for it is a product of the aristocratic Gaelic milieu of its compilers, notably the centres associated with Campbell lordship. Within the households and courts of the earls of Argyll and Campbells of Glenorchy, BDL suggests that literature was composed, enjoyed and performed by high-ranking Campbells of both sexes, their retinues and circles. Participants were professional and amateur, clerical and lay. Their staple medium was Gaelic syllabic verse, put to both formal and informal ends. Perhaps the ability to compose such verse was a benchmark of secular nobility, and it is with the informal poetry of these amateurs that a case for BDL as a witness to true literary diversity, hybridity and innovation can best be made (Gillies 2010: 97; MacGregor 2007: 213).

Less predictably perhaps, the compilers also omit two cultural forms which ought to have figured prominently in these settings. The absence of the multi-stranded Gaelic prose tale tradition is consistent with the very limited quantity of Gaelic prose of any sort in BDL. Yet the

depth of allusion in the book's occasional poems reveals the extent to which knowledge of the romantic tales suffused the mentalité both of their authors, and surely, of the courtly scene reflected in BDL (Gillies 1979: 65-6; Gillies 2005a: 66). The second omission is the Gaelic accentual verse tradition: compositions made in the vernacular rather than the classical language, on the basis of stressed as opposed to syllabic metre, and sung rather than read, recited or 'chanted'. William Matheson has argued that vernacular song of this order was originally practised within the courtly milieu both by the professional *bàrd* in the panegyric mode known as *iorram*; and by the minstrel, composing and performing on the harp within the mode of *amour courtois* (Matheson 1993: 4). If we note further that BDL does contain verse composed in vernacular or semi-vernacular Gaelic, but only in syllabic metre, then we can understand the logic of William Gillies' important recent observation that the compilers' overriding priority was not so much high over low culture, or classical over vernacular language, as syllabic over stressed metre: 'words' over song (Gillies 2007: 220; *cf.* Watson 1917: 4)). Interestingly, the 'dedicatory' poem says of the anthology whose making it appears to anticipate, 'bring unto MacCailéin no poem lacking artistry to be read', and one wonders whether the artistry alluded to is syllabic verse.[2]

BDL contains a very modest corpus of Scots and English verse, in excerpted or fragmentary form. The reason is obvious: the corpus is devoted to the 'debate about women' which, along with the related theme of clerical dissipation, is a major preoccupation of BDL's Gaelic verse in courtly and satirical mode, both professional and amateur. In probing the relationship further, Professor Gillies' provisional conclusion was of no real evidence for textual interaction, but rather of 'two traditions co-existing, on the whole unaffected by each other's presence, and looking in opposite directions for inspiration and models'; the Gaelic poets in BDL

'enjoyed the fruits of both Gaelic and Scottish composition, but did not see fit to commingle the two strains for whatever reasons' (Gillies 1979: 72-4). One might ask whether an awareness of developments in the south explains why the genre seems to have come to the fore in Gaelic verse in Scotland earlier than in Ireland, a reversal of the normal or assumed pattern (*cf*. Gillies 2008: 215). That aside, if Gillies is right, it implies an attitude towards Scots (and English) verse which although informed, was highly pragmatic and circumscribed. Poetically at least this was a Gaelic scene, not a Gaelic-Scots scene. Its protagonists had an interest in seeing how an adjacent culture dealt with the same questions, rather than an interest in that culture per se, or a desire to create new literary forms incorporating that culture. Nor is there any indication on their part of original verse composition in Scots: their unassailable medium of choice was Gaelic syllabic poetry. Remarkable as it may seem, BDL thus provides simultaneous evidence both for profound linguistic interaction, and for parallel yet firmly demarcated verse literatures. Creating a written 'Scoto-Gaelic' on the back of a thoroughgoing bilingualism was not a prelude to the creation of a hybrid poetry. BDL seems to offer no Scoto-Gaelic equivalent to its two poems on the theme of the 'Ship of Evil Women', which reveal a remarkably rapid assimilation of continental models (MacGregor 2006: 72-3). The hybridity which matters in BDL takes place within the boundaries of the Gaelic poetic tradition, specifically the interplay of genres which is a trademark of its amateur poets. So far as Scots and Gaelic verse literature is concerned, the paradigm of separate spheres emerges intact from circumstances seemingly tailor-made to shatter it.[3]

Very different, however, is the attitude to prose in BDL. Compared to verse its profile is low in any of the book's languages, especially Gaelic. What there is consists mainly of chronicle and history in Latin and Scots: the local annalistic compilation, and extracts from Fordun, Boece and Bellenden which treat of Scottish battles, kingship and succession, echoing the single-

minded approach to Scots and English verse. Potential access points to this material were Dunkeld and its cathedral; Perth, the principal urban centre for Breadalbane, and whose Dominican Charterhouse also held large estates there; and Boece's well-attested connections to the Campbells in the years when he must have been working on his *Scotorum Historiae*. The relationship with Boece may have worked both ways, for recent scholarship gives grounds for taking seriously his claims that he obtained sources from Iona with help from the Campbells, who were very influential there in the first three decades of the sixteenth century (Boece 1527: ff. iii, vii-viii; MacGregor 2006: 70-71; Broun 2007: 235-68). How then to explain the predominant role accorded to Latin and Scots for history and chronicle writing, and the invisibility of Gaelic prose narrative in any of its guises: heroic, romantic, religious, or the strand which has been variously described as clan saga, historical legend or genealogical history (Gillies 1979: 65-6, 68; MacInnes 1990-92: 377-94; MacGregor 2002: 196-239)? It may not be enough to say that the compilers privileged verse over prose, remembering the level of consciousness of Gaelic romantic narrative exhibited by that verse, and also, perhaps, Fionnlagh MacNab's 'manifesto' poem. This urges the inclusion of *seanchas*, or historical material, and *caithreim* – translated by Watson as 'tuneful works', but given its pairing with *seanchas* (not to mention what has been said already about the lack of song texts in BDL), perhaps better understood in the sense of a roll-call of the chief or lord's military exploits. The prose material in BDL which fits these categories is overwhelmingly in Latin and Scots.

A deeper explanation would begin with the degree to which, by the era of compilation of BDL, Latin and Scots had established themselves as the truly normative languages of written prose throughout the Scottish kingdom, because of their official standing within church and government at both local and national levels. The process was governed not by diktat but rather

pragmatic and widespread acceptance of language status and roles. Latin, of course, was in no sense an alien imposition upon Gaelic Scotland and its literati. In the context of Gaelic Scotland, the consequence seems to have been the emergence of different linguistic zones according to the strength of impact of these languages (*cf*. MacCoinnich 2008: 309-56). In Argyll and the Isles, where the practitioners of the classical Gaelic tradition, originating in Ireland and trained accordingly, were overwhelmingly to be found, unadulterated classical Gaelic in its 'Irish' form survived as the normal written means of recording classical Gaelic culture, both poetry and prose. There is also limited evidence of its use for personal letters, albeit in contexts often involving Ireland (Bannerman 1983: 232-4). Everything else, including legal texts, seems to have become the province of Latin and Scots. Outwith the west their influence ran deeper still, monopolising all categories of prose including letters, and in the case of Scots crossing into the terrain of classical Gaelic culture by becoming the base language through which classical Gaelic poetry was recorded in BDL. This involved a process of phonological exchange which presumably implies that those involved could speak Scots as well as write it. It is again instructive of the strength of this Scots dynamic that 'Scoto-Gaelic' established itself as a written medium despite the quite fundamental differences in the sound systems of the two languages (Gillies 2008: 219).

Hand in hand with these developments, surely, went the linkage of Gaelic to orality, either as something new, or perhaps as a deepening of an existing and historic relationship in Scotland. We would expect the legal sphere to have been the first affected, and universally. Confirmation exists in the extreme rarity of survival of any such texts in Gaelic from late medieval Scotland; the lack of any evidence for literacy in Gaelic on the part of members of professional Gaelic legal lineages such as the Morrisons of Ness (either in terms of authorship of

individual documents or the amassing of manuscript collections); and the use of Gaelic verse or rhyme as an oral means of recording legal acts. As for history, genealogy and chronicle, and notwithstanding the losses there certainly were, the surviving written Gaelic corpus from Gaelic Scotland as a whole is meagre in the extreme, especially when compared to Gaelic Ireland. It may be that Latin and Scots came to be regarded as the natural media for history-writing nationwide, and that even if this applied with less force in the west, Gaelic remained in the van there as an oral rather than written medium. Some of those who came to take an interest in the historical component of the classical legacy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries noted the paucity of written remains, leading in one instance to charges of slothfulness and ingratitude on the part of professional Gaelic historians towards their employers (Clark 1900: 1. 118-9; MacPhail 1914-34: 2. 72-4). In the rest of Gaelic Scotland meanwhile, Gaelic as a language for historical matter or literary narrative became entirely given over to the oral milieu; while BDL's unique status as a poetic anthology suggests a similar orientation for verse.

Finally, BDL contains our second poem embodying the theme of Campbells and borders (Watson 1937: 158-65). This is a *brosnachadh catha* or 'incitement to battle' addressed to Gilleasbuig second earl of Argyll, as the sleeping warrior (v. 20) who must be roused to save his people from the imminent threat posed by the 'foreigners', or *Goill*. The older editors believed that *Goill* must mean the English or 'Saxons', and that the poem was composed in the months preceding Flodden, where the Campbells were deeply involved and suffered more than most. On this basis Michael Lynch has called the poem 'the most remarkable example of Scottish patriotism between the Declaration of Arbroath and the seventeenth century' (Lynch 1990: 68). A more recent view is that *Goill* refers instead to Lowland Scots, specifically the crown and its allies engaged on a mission to extinguish and remake the MacDonald Lordship of the Isles, in a

context some ten years before 1513 and Flodden. Gilleasbuig is being appealed to, presumably by a MacDonald poet, as saviour of Gaelic Scotland from Lowland enmity: at a stroke a nationalist manifesto becomes instead stunning testimony to a Scotland riven by insurmountable ethnic division (Ó Briain 2002: 247-54; Boardman 2006: 281; *cf.* McLeod 2004: 27-8).

The latest studies (Coira 2008: 137-68; MacGriogair 2010: 23-35) have argued for a return to the original orthodoxy, one reason being the alliance concluded between James IV and Aedh Ó Domnaill of Tirconnel in June 1513, with a view to a possible Scottish attack upon English rule in Ireland. In prospect was war on two fronts, with Gilleasbuig in the van. The poet's brief was to present him simultaneously as champion of Scotland and all Gaeldom in the face of the common enemy, monolithic English imperialism (vv. 10, 20):

Cuir th'urfhógra an oir 's an iar	Send thy summons east and west
ar Ghaoidhlibh ó Ghort Gáilian;	for the Gael from the field of Leinster [i.e. Ireland];
cuir siar thar ardmhuir na Goill,	drive the Saxons westward over the high sea,
nach biadh ar Albain athroinn …	that Alba may suffer no division …
Saigh ar Ghallaibh 'na dtreibh féin:	Attack the Saxons in their own land;
bí id dúsgadh, a mheic Cailein:	awake thee, thou MacCailéin:
d'fhear cogaidh, a fholt mar ór,	for a man of war, thou with hair like gold,
ní maith an codal ramhór.	not good is too long sleep.

Part of the poet's response was a given for the caste to which he belonged: adherence to a vision of *Alba* or Scotland as a Gaelic entity. The threat to the integrity of *Alba* is political and military, not ethnic. Dissolution is envisaged along a line demarcating not Highlands and Lowlands – for such a possibility would not formally exist for such a poet – but the limit of English conquest, as had happened before when courage and collectivism failed (v. 6):

Seala do Ghallaibh mar sain	Even so did Saxons for a space
ag íoc cíosa as an dúthaigh;	raise tribute from our country:

<pre>
[   ] ar eagal gach cinn,   [it was so done] through each man's fear;
mór atá teagamh orainn.   such is our great mistrust.
</pre>

Equally conventional is the recourse to Gaelic prehistory, and identification of Gilleasbuig with Lugh, liberator of Ireland from the oppression of the Fomoronian giants led by Balar. The poet deftly exploits a version of the tale in which the saviour figure arrives from afar (v. 5):

<pre>
Nó go dtáinig Lugh tar linn   Until Lugh came across the sea
mór bfhian darab maith d'irim   with great warrior-bands of valiant troops;
dár marbhadh Balar ua Néid: by him was slain Balar ua Néid:
budh samhladh dhúinn a leithéid.   for us a deed to follow.
</pre>

The 'Britannia' of this poem could not be more divided and contested, yet the absence of any internal Scottish frontier between Highlands and Lowlands, and the portrait of Gilleasbuig bestriding the archipelago in both solidarity and anger, create resonances with the eighteenth-century vision of Uilliam MacMhurchaidh.

The Household of the Campbells of Glenorchy in the later sixteenth century

Flodden may have signalled the end of the creative and optimistic poetic scene associated with Sir Donnchadh Campbell, and ushered in an era given over to history, retrospection and anthologising, in the decades in which BDL was compiled (MacGregor 2006: 67-8). For the Campbells of Glenorchy, under Donnchadh's three immediate successors, the era meant decline and near extinction. All changed again after 1550 and the accession of Cailean Liath, the sixth chief. He and his son Donnchadh Dubh, who succeeded his father in 1583 and died in 1631, dramatically expanded the bounds of the lordship of their ancestors, and invested it with an unprecedented degree of social control and regulation. In temperament and faith they were

reformers and iconoclasts, committed to Protestantism both regionally and nationally, and self-conscious elevators of the new over the old. Theirs was a lordship of the Word and of the word, meticulously ordered and governed through compendious documentation in Scots. The hub was a reformed household, staffed by a professional bureaucracy of notaries, scribes and legal agents who were presumably of sound religious principles, and often of non-Gaelic origin, displacing the local personnel, such as the MacGregors of Fortingall, who had formerly provided these services. Presiding over the household during Cailean Liath's chiefship was his second wife, Katherine, who represented an alliance with the powerful and Protestant Ruthvens of Perth. Another beneficial relationship was that with his own chiefs, particularly Gilleasbuig fifth earl of Argyll, who succeeded in 1558. The main casualties of this lordship resurrected were the MacGregors, who were at odds or outright war with their former masters for much of the period from 1550 to 1631 (MacGregor 1989: 118-22, 152-4, 200-403).

Recent research by Emily Wingfield has claimed Cailean Liath and Donnchadh Dubh as, in Scottish terms, 'two of the most significant early modern readers of medieval romance known to date' (Wingfield 2010: 110). Father and son seem to have shared a taste for prose and verse romantic historical literature, in Latin, Scots and English, treating of the epic cycles of Alexander, Thebes and Troy (Wingfield 2010: 102-10, 117-29; *cf*. Wingfield 2011: 161-74). Cailean Liath owned an edition of Guido of Columna's *Historia destructionis Troiae* printed at Strasbourg in 1494. This was a gift from sir William Ramsay to the patron who gave him local ecclesiastical office before the Reformation, including a household chaplaincy, and who established him as the first Reformed minister within his lordship in 1561. Ramsay also served as factor to Cailean Liath's brother-in law, Patrick Ruthven, and as notary to Cailean Liath on either side of 1560, as indeed he had to his brother and predecessor (Dawson 1999: 234-5).

Annotations to the text evince an interest in anti-feminism and anti-clericalism – idolatry and priestly avarice – among other themes. To scribes operating within the household of Donnchadh Dubh we owe the two surviving witnesses of *The Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour*, the Older Scots verse romance biography of Alexander's career, conquests and death; and a fragment of *Florimond*, the Older Scots verse romance translation of the Old French *Florimont* which acted as a prologue to the French Alexander cycle, narrating the heroic deeds of Alexander's ancestors (*cf.* McClure 1979: 1-10). By 1592 Donnchadh Dubh had also acquired a manuscript of Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* (Bawcutt 2001: 83-4).

Wingfield has also drawn attention to Campbell of Glenorchy ownership of English prose texts predating 1550. Two very early printed works by Caxton were copied into the one manuscript by the same Scottish scribe between c. 1479 and 1485: an excerpt from the 1480 edition of the *Chronicles of England*, commencing during the reign of Edward II and ending with his death; and Caxton's 1479 translation of the devotional French text *Cordiale*, in its entirety. An inscription claims ownership for a 'Johannes Cambell', and both the hand and the absence of the 'p' from the surname (Steer and Bannerman 1977: 140, 211) might suggest a later fifteenth rather than a sixteenth century dating.[4] The *Chronicles of England* are represented again by an acephalous print of Julian Notary's 1515 edition. This has been heavily annotated by an anonymous reader to highlight themes including the falsity of women, and battles fought during the Wars of Independence. Attention to religious matter – miracles, saints' lives and martyrdoms, and the names of Popes – may locate the reader before the Reformation (Wingfield 2010: 106-7).

These texts are contemporary with the life cycle of BDL, which was compiled between c. 1512 and 1542, and whose Gaelic verse of Scottish provenance, including its courtly amateur poetry, was largely composed between the later fifteenth century and 1513. They share thematic

points of contact with BDL, and recall its swift downloading of external literatures. They provide

a parallel in English to its historical prose texts in Latin and Scots, and a prose parallel to its

solitary specimen of English verse. Thus they bolster the case for assuming – though there

remains a level of assumption – that BDL can be taken as an index of the literary activities and

horizons of the Campbells of Glenorchy in the heyday of Sir Donnchadh Campbell. Proceeding

on that premise, then there are some parallels and continuities to be drawn between the era of Sir

Donnchadh and that of Cailean Liath and Donnchadh Dubh in the later sixteenth century.[5] This

applies to both the provenance and subject matter of the imported literature; and it should be

added that Alexander features in Gaelic poetry in BDL, and in its listings of the Nine Worthies

(Black, forthcoming; *cf*. Gillies 1983: 64). However, the differences in known literary output

could hardly be more profound. Whatever use it made of the non-Gaelic literature which it

accessed, the court of the second chief was highly inventive and productive in its own right.

After 1550, acquisition seems to have taken precedence over creation, with Cailean Liath and

Donnchadh Dubh as consumers rather than catalysts. What is known to have been composed can

probably all be assigned to servitors of the latter. *The Black Book of Taymouth* is a utilitarian

prose history of the Glenorchy lineage, documenting each chiefship in terms of lands, fortresses,

marriages and offspring. It was dedicated to Donnchadh Dubh by his notary and childrens' tutor,

Mr William Bowie, in 1598, and becomes more expansive in its treatment once it reaches the

present (N.A.S. Breadalbane Muns. GD112/78/2; Innes 1855: 1-106). Bowie is a candidate for

authorship of *Duncan Laideus' alias Makgregouris Testament*, a long satirical poem voiced by

the fictional version of an actual enemy of the house; and of the sonnet and verse postscript

which follow in the same hand in the manuscript, and which continue the anti-MacGregor theme

(N.A.S. Breadalbane Muns. GD112/71/9; Innes 1855: 151-73; Williams 2005: 357).

All these, bar the dedicatory Latin verses prefixed to the history, are in Scots, now the first language of literature as well as lordship for the Campbells of Glenorchy (*cf*. Dawson 1997). Did the post-1550 agenda of reform include language as an explicit element? Qualifications have to be registered as to the abruptness, agency and locale of linguistic shift, beginning as ever with the potential vagaries of source survival. The transitional pattern of literary activity detectable between 1513 and 1550 presumably held implications for language, and it is possible that the dramatic falling off in the syllabic Gaelic verse tradition during the sixteenth century was already underway in these years. Nor was that phenomenon restricted to the household of the Campbells of Glenorchy, for accentual verse in the vernacular dominates Gaelic literary survival from Breadalbane as a whole between 1550 and 1631.[6] The same can be said of the supplanting of Latin by Scots, observable on a contemporary basis between the 1550s and 1580s in the chronicle maintained by the MacGregors of Fortingall, even as Latin was ceasing to be the language of choice for inscriptions on monumental sculpture in western Gaelic Scotland (Innes 1855: 109-42; Bannerman 1972-4: 307-12; Steer and Bannerman 1977: 90-92).

Cailean Liath and Donnchadh Dubh may not have been pioneers of linguistic engineering, but their acts as lords held major implications for language and literature nonetheless. Fundamental was the restructuring of their household in personnel and function. Gone was the sense, so pervasive in the era of Sir Donnchadh Campbell, of a household that readily and regularly expanded to become a court for the local elite: a literary forum characterised by inclusivity, tolerance, pluralism, collaboration and experimentation; its common currency Gaelic syllabic verse. After 1550, the changes in household membership may have marginalised vernacular Gaelic speech, far less more literary modes of the language. While the MacEwens survived, it could be significant that one of the roles associated with their caste, the

education of the lord's children, was performed by William Bowie on behalf of Donnchadh

Dubh; that it was Bowie who was commissioned to author the official family history; and that

the only known MacEwen composition from this period on behalf of the Glenorchy lineage is the

elegy for Donnchadh Dubh on his death in 1631 (Watson 1916-17: 132-4, 149-51).[7]

It can be further asserted that where once lordship had acted as a springboard for

literature, after 1550 literature became a parable for lordship. Whether or not the shelfmarks they

bear belong to their era, the texts acquired by Cailean Liath and Donnchadh Dubh could

represent the origins of a library which was an end in itself, a statement of wealth, status,

conspicuous consumption and self-image. The texts themselves obviously share a preoccupation

with the decadence of empire and the typology of despotism, remembering especially

Alexander's transformation from benevolent to tyrannical ruler in *The Buik of King Alexander*

the Conquerour. This surely speaks to the rise and fall of the Campbells of Glenorchy, and their

renaissance under new absolutists driven by the knowledge of how close to the brink the house

had come. In 'Ane admonitioun to the Posteritie of the Hows of Glenvrquhay', a poem in Scots

forming part of the prefaratory matter to *The Black Book of Taymouth*, William Bowie

counselled future heads of the lineage thus (Innes 1855: 5):

> Will thow thy honour, howss and rent to stand,
> Conques, or keip thingis conquest to thy hand.

If *The Black Book of Taymouth* is analogous to *The Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour*, and

concerned to foster Donnchadh Dubh's perception of himself as a latter-day Alexander, then it

may also recall *Florimond* in its setting of Donnchadh Dubh's achievements against those of his

ancestors. In *Duncan Laideus' alias Makgregouris Testament*, the internal role model of choice

is not Cailean Liath, recipient of attention and praise which is notably measured despite the fact

that it was he who captured and executed Donnchadh Làdasach, the real life counterpart to

Duncan Laideus', in 1552. In the poet's eyes the true hero of the lineage to date was Sir

Donnchadh Campbell, with whom the initial and highly successful phase of expansion had ended

so abruptly in 1513 (Innes 1855: 154-6, 165). It is known that there was at least one serious

rupture between Donnchadh Dubh and Cailean Liath in the years before the former succeeded in

1583 (Innes 1855: 221-2; Gillies 1939: 124; *cf.* Dawson 1997: 16, n. 4, 242, n. 4): a further point

of contact, perhaps, between Donnchadh Dubh and Alexander, and grounds for linking the

authorship and date of this poem with the era of the son rather than the father. This is consistent

with Wingfield's close analysis of the two manuscript witnesses (A and B) of *The Buik of King*

Alexander the Conquerour, which on internal evidence were clearly made for Donnchadh Dubh,

and yield dating parameters of 1579 and 1597. She suggests that MS B is the superior and later

version, and 'may well have been produced to improve upon the defects of MS A' (Wingfield

2010: 96).[8] *Duncan Laideus' alias Makgregouris Testament* and the other anti-MacGregor

poems coupled to it are written upside down at the back of MS B (*cf.* Mapstone 2005: 186, n.

44).

     Duncan Laideus' alias Makgregouris Testament includes a section systematically tying

various vices to offices within the hierarchy of the old church, from curate to bishop and abbot

Innes 1855: 165-8). In the context of this reformed household after 1550, such a passage, and the

related material in Guido's *Historia destructionis Troiae*, was surely ideologically driven –

Protestant polemic rather than Catholic self-criticism – in a way that distinguishes it from the

playful anti-clericalism of the Book of the Dean of Lismore. Janet Hadley Williams has recently

emphasised the richness of literary allusion and style in the *Testament*, the surety of its author's

grounding in earlier genres of Scots and English literature, and the subtlety with which these are

put to use (Williams 2005: 346-69). Equally, the *Testament* and its companion pieces are propaganda designed to damn and demonise Donnchadh Làdasach and his kindred as arch-enemies of the house. The nature of lordship in Breadalbane after 1550 compelled literature, and perhaps even language, to take sides. Against a household and its literature of self-congratulation and self-validation, predominantly in Scots, is counterpoised a 'country' literature of opposition in vernacular Gaelic. The canon of Marion Campbell of Glenlyon, and the wider song-cycle created by the MacGregors and their sympathisers, give voice to the internal dissident and the victims of absolutism (MacGregor 1999; MacGregor, forthcoming (b)) . In such a setting there is little linguistic and literary hybridity to be seen. It is as if we have moved directly from the Book of the Dean of Lismore, and Scots as a purely linguistic conduit of convenience for Gaelic literature, to a bifurcation of the two languages and their literatures, with no visible intermediate stage of genuine literary interaction. William Gillies has suggested that *Duncan Laideus' alias Makgregouris Testament* may exhibit a Gaelic literary sensibility employed by its author to enhance its appeal to a sixteenth-century Perthshire audience (Gillies 2005b: 390-94; *cf.* MacDonald 1991: 22-4). Yet even this modest hybridity does not square with the evidence discussed here, which points to Donnchadh Dubh and his household as the intended audience, and the likely authorship of William Bowie or another of his ilk.

Foirm na n-Urrnuidheadh: John Carswell's version of the <u>Book of Common Order</u>

The territorial surname Carswell points to origins in Wigtonshire and a Gaelic milieu which was probably marginal at best by the sixteenth century, in terms of local vernacular speech; and induitably so in terms of the classical language in which *Foirm na n-Urrnuidheadh* is written. The Campbells, however, were well-established in Ayrshire and the south-west, and it has even

been suggested that this was Carswell's true surname (Bannerman 1972-4: 308-9).[9] He came to

the household of Gilleasbuig fourth earl of Argyll via St Andrews University, where he studied

in the early 1540s; and, intriguingly, the retinue of Domhnall Dubh, last serious MacDonald

claimant to the Lordship of the Isles, whose attempt to recover his patrimony ended prematurely

with his death of fever in Ireland in 1545. Carswell acted as a plenipotentiary on Domhnall

Dubh's behalf in negotiations with Henry VIII, and is known to have spent some time in Ireland

at this point in his life. He may have acquired his proficiency in classical Gaelic either now or as

he moved into the ambit of the Campbells, in which case his likeliest mentors would have been

the MacEwens. His first major ecclesiastical preferment, at the instance of the fourth earl, was

the treasurership of Lismore, evoking parallels with that earlier clerical man of Gaelic letters,

Seumas MacGregor (MacGregor 1998: 27-9). Carswell's true patron was Gilleasbuig the fifth

earl, who succeeded in 1558 and was prominent in the making of the Scottish Reformation. In

the post-Reformation kirk Carswell became superintendent of Argyll, and Bishop of the Isles *de

facto* from 1565, *de iure* in 1567. Hence his ecclesiastical province encompassed the secular

lordships of MacDonalds and Campbells in an era when the latter aspired to unite them. It was

also the part of Gaelic Scotland in which high Gaelic culture conformed most closely to Irish

practice.

Carswell's book was the first to be published in Gaelic, at Edinburgh by the printer to the

General Assembly, Robert Lekprevik, in 1567. The author justified himself thus (Thomson 1970:

10-11, 179):

> Acht ata ni cheana, is mor an leathtrom agas an uireasbhuidh ata riamh orainde, Gaoidhil
> Alban agas Eireand, tar an gcuid eile don domhan, gan ar gcanamhna Gaoidheilge do
> chur a gcló riamh mar ataid a gcanamhna agas a dteangtha féin a gcló ag gach uile chinel
> dhaoine oile sa domhan; agas ata uireasbhuidh is mó iná gach uireasb*h*uidh oraind, gan
> an Biobla naomhtha do bheith a gcló Gaoidheilge againd, mar ta sé a gcló Laidne agas

Bherla, agas in gach teangaidh eile o sin amach, agas fós gan seanchus ar sean no ar sindsear do bheith mar an gcedna a gcló againd riamh, acht ge tá cuid eigin do tseanchus Ghaoidheal Alban agas Eireand sgriobhtha a leabhruibh lámh, agas a dtamhlorgaibh fileadh agus ollamhan, agas a sleachtaibh suadh. Is mor-tsaothair sin re sgriobhadh do laimh, ag fechain an neithe buailtear sa chló ar aibrisge agas ar aithghiorra bhios gach én-ni dhá mhed da chriochnughadh leis.

[Great indeed is the disadvantage and want from which we, the Gaels of Scotland and Ireland, have ever suffered, beyond the rest of the world, in that our Gaelic language has never been printed as all other races of men in the world have their own languages and tongues in print; and we suffer from a greater want than any other in that we have not the Holy Bible printed in Gaelic as it has been printed in Latin and in English, and in all other tongues besides, and likewise in that the history of our ancestors has never been printed, although a certain amount of the history of the Gaels of Scotland and Ireland is written in manuscripts, and in the tabular staves of poets and chief bards, and in the transcripts of the learned. It is a great labour to write that by hand, when one considers what is printed in the press, how smartly and how quickly each work, however great, is completed thereby.]

Carswell had stolen a march on Ireland, where the first printed work, also a Protestant liturgical text, did not appear until 1571 (Mac Craith 1995: 144). The inclusion of an Irish audience is consistent with contemporary Campbell influence there, and the fifth earl had offered military assistance to Elizabeth to facilitate Reformation in Ireland (Dawson 2002: 1-2). The title page stated that Carswell had translated from both Latin and English to Gaelic. This suggests the use of both John Knox's *The Forme of Prayers* (otherwise known as *The Book of Common Order*), which Lekprevik had published in 1564; and the Latin original from which Knox's text derived, the Anglo-Genevan Psalter *Ratio et Forma* first published in 1556 (Wingfield 2010: 89). In fact it seems clear that Carswell used Knox as his base text. Printing may have come late to Gaelic, but Carswell had thus wasted little time in launching his initiative. There may be echoes here of BDL's capacity for the rapid redeployment of material that mattered; and, perhaps, of Campbell of Glenorchy interest in the first fruits of the printing press in England. Carswell was also concerned less with literal translation than to adapt his text to Gaelic needs. 'Translating the

Reformation' meant the making of a 'Gaelic Protestantism', including the future social role and function of high Gaelic culture and its practitioners.

As a pioneer Carswell was confronted with choices and decisions, but the prior existence of a supradialectal literary standard for Gaelic was a given, and made all else possible. Across his core constituency in Argyll, the Isles and Ireland, it was the accepted form of written Gaelic. This was particularly true of the upper echelons of both the secular and cultural hierarchies where Gaelic literacy was likely to be found, and for which Carswell believed his book had special import. Equally, it was not his intention to create something esoteric and exclusive. This was a practical manual of Protestant worship for the benefit of all the laity, and explicit evidence survives as to its intended use at parish level, implying an assumption of literacy on the part of ministers and readers, and of aural comprehension on the part of their flocks (Bannerman 1983: 228).[10] Carswell's adherence to standard classical orthography rather than the 'Scoto-Gaelic' of BDL was again the norm within the area that mattered to him. Where he broke with convention was in the use of Roman type rather than a font based on Gaelic script. In Ireland, where there was no tradition of Gaelic being written in any other mode, Elizabeth herself underwrote the costs of establishing such a font, which was employed in 1571 and long afterwards (Mac Craith 1995: 143-4) . Perhaps Carswell's hand was forced by issues of cost, or the practical challenges facing his non-Gaelic speaking printer. If the choice were his, then it looks problematic in its Irish aspect, unless Carswell's very point was that the Gaelic literati had to accept a degree of departure from the past.

In his opening 'epistles' Carswell lays bare his conservative revolution: to maintain the social order, and the place within it of the secular ruling class and the learned orders; but to reform them both in order that they can reform society. The wordly chief was to become the

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godly prince. In the epistle to Gilleasbuig fifth earl of Argyll, Carswell rewrote the traditional job description of Gaelic chiefship in the light of the Reformation, and advanced his patron as the new archetype. One cannot underestimate the radicalism of the assertion that in upbringing and education, the chief should be guided by scripture rather than hereditary custom (Thomson 1970: 6, 175):

> Oir ni h-air dhimhaoineas do-chuaidh dhuit an saothar do-rinde tu as t'oige ag leghadh an sgribtuir dhiadha; oir is mo do chuir tu a suim an ni do dhearbh an soisgel diadha dhuit ina meid oirrdhearchais *t*h'aoisi, agas fad an ghnathuighe do-chualais do bheith ag na sindsearaibh onoracha do-chuaidh romhad, ag aithris air an righ dhiadha Esecias, neoch do bhi 'na óganach ar bfaghail righeachta dó.
>
> *[For the labour you have devoted from your youth up to reading the holy scriptures has not been in vain; for you have considered that which the divine gospel has proved to you of more account than the glory of your age and the old-established customs which you have heard were followed by your honourable ancestors who preceded you, imitating the godly king Hezekiah, who was a youth when he obtained the kingdom.]*

It follows that it is in scripture that Gilleasbuig's true lineage and mentors are to be found (Thomson 1970: 4, 174):

> Agas ge taid naimhde na firinde go mi-naireach aga ragha nach dlighfedis na prindsadha no na tighearrnaidhe saoghalta curum do bheith orrtha a dtimcheall hsoisgeil Dé, no a dtimcheall dhroch-chreidimh do sgris, is fearr do thuig tusa an faidh naomhtha ina bhriathraibh ina mur sin .i. Daibhith, neoch iarus ar prindsaghaibh na talmhun beith eolach neamh-ainbfeasach sa ladh dhiadha … Do thuigeadar na breitheamhain agas na righthe deagh-chreidmheacha do bhi ar Chloind Israhel an ni-se do labhramar romhaind, mar do bhi Geidion, agas Samuel, agas Daibhith, agas Isafat, agas Esecias, agas Iosias …
>
> *[And although the enemies of the truth shamelessly say that princes and temporal lords ought not to have any responsibility for God's gospel nor for the destruction of superstition, you have understood better than that the words of the holy prophet David, who requires the princes of the earth to know and not to be ignorant of the divine law … The pious judges and kings who were set over the children of Israel*

understood what we have mentioned above, such as Gideon and Samuel and David and Jehosaphat and Hezekiah and Josiah …]

His *caithreim*, or record of military achievement, consists of spiritual victories fought with enemies of the faith, and of iconoclasm performed in the name of the faith, not fighting for pointless worldly gain or destruction (Thomson 1970: 7, 176-7):

Do chind leat-sa, a thighearna, ar aithris na righruidhe ro-uaisle sin do raidheamar romhaind, gach obair agas gach ard-tsaothar dar thinnsgain tu, tré rath an Sbirad Naomh agas le h-eolas an sgrib*h*tuir dhiadha, gan f*h*echain do chundtabhairt no do ghábhadh no do ghuasacht da raibhe oraibh .i. sgris fuar-chreidimh agas fuar-chradhbhaidh, agas losgadh dealbh agas droch-eisimlara, agas leagadh agas lan-bhriseadh altor agas inodh a ndentaoi iodhbarta breige do bhunadh, agas sgris meirleach agas mi-bhesach agas [lucht] foghla agas foireigne, agas 'na dhiaidh sin medughadh agas mór-chumhdach na h-Eagluisi Crisduidhe go comhlan. Oir is buaine dhuit an caithreim-si a bfiadhnuisi Dé ina gach caithreim saog*h*alta oile, mar ata creachadh agas comh-lomadh na gcomharsand agas na gcoigrich, agas marbhadh agas mór-mhughughadh a ndaoine, agas losgadh agas lán-mhill*e*adh a n-aitreabh agas a n-aras.

[You have succeeded, my lord, after the manner of those noble kings we have mentioned above, in every work and great enterprise you have begun, through the grace of the Holy Spirit and by knowledge of the holy scripture, without considering any danger or peril or hazard in which you were, that is in destroying the false faith and false worship and in burning images and idols and in casting down and smashing altars and places where false sacrifices were offered of old, and in destroying thieves and immoral persons and plunderers and oppressors, and after that in fostering and protecting and honouring the Christian church to the full. For this triumph is more permanent for you in the sight of God than every other worldly triumph, such as harrying and despoiling neighbours and strangers and killing and exterminating their men and burning and destroying their houses and their residences.]

He offers patronage and welfare on the basis of faith, to those who serve the truth or suffer for it (Thomson 1970: 9, 178):

Agas maille ris na h-adhbharaibh-sin, do bhrosnaidh go mór mhé méd mo dhóchais as do dhaingne-si agas as do bhuaine sa slighe dhiadha do ghlacais as

t'oige agas as t'anfhoir-feacht, a thighearna, ag breathnughadh agas ag tuigsin gurab pátrun dileas dingmhalta agas gurab oide carthanach don fhirinde thú, agas fós gurab cádhas agas comairce do na daoinibh anbfanda egcruaidhe bhios i ngábhadh no i nguasacht ar sgath na firinde thú; agas tuigmaoid fós gurab athair don chloind bhis ar athchur agas ar indarbadh ar son na fírinde thú; agas fós go bfedaid timpiridhe agas teach-tuiridhe agas minisdrighe na firinde comhnuidhe agas comh-thoiriseamh do dhenamh fad sgiathanaibh.

[And together with these reasons I was much encouraged by the greatness of my confidence in your firmness and your constancy in the godly way which you have adopted from your youth and from the days of your immaturity, my lord, judging and understanding that you are a faithful firm patron and that you are a kindly fosterer of the truth, and that you are a stay and refuge to the weak and infirm who are in danger or peril for the sake of the truth; and I know also that you are a father to the children who are driven away and banished for the truth's sake; and further, that agents and messengers and ministers of the truth can find rest and refuge under your wings.]

The earl's commitment to a godly life since youth proves 'how worthy you are that that should never pass into oblivion and that your illustrious name should not be forgotten to the end of the world'. In other words, Carswell is justified in making his patron the subject of a reformed eulogy, and bestowing upon him the greatest gifts the learned classes had to offer: legitimacy and immortality. Carswell concludes (Thomson 1970: 10, 179) by asking that God, 'pour out his grace and his great miracles with abounding favour on your people and on your country and on your men and on your tenantry, and especially on your ministers throughout all your dominion': a Protestant glossing of the time-honoured topos whereby the rightful ruler conferred divine blessing upon land and people.

The main theme of the epistle to the general reader is reform of the Gaelic literati and their art, suggesting that they are the intended readership. In their own language, they are enjoined to eschew false subject matter, specifically the various branches of Gaelic prose narrative, in favour of the truth (Thomson 1970: 11, 179-80):

Agas is mor an doille agas an dorchadas peacaidh agas aineolais agas indtleachta do lucht deachtaidh agas sgriobhtha agas chumdaigh na Gaoidheilge gurab mó is mian léo agas gurab mó is ghnathuidheas siad eachtradha dimhaoineacha buaidheartha bregacha saoghalta, do cumadh ar Thuathaibh Dé Dhanond, agas ar Mhacaibh Mileadh, agas ar na curadhaibh, agas [ar] Fhind mhac Cumhaill gona Fhianaibh, agas ar mhóran eile nach airbhim agas nach indisim andso, do chumhdach agas do choimh-leasughagh, do chiond luadhuidheachta dimhaoinigh an t-saoghail d'fhaghail doibh féin, iná briathra disle Dé agas slighthe foirfe na firinde do sgriobhadh agas do dheachtadh agas do chumhdach. Oir is andsa leis an t-saoghal an bhreg go mor iná an fhirinde.

[And great is the blindness and darkness of sin and ignorance and of the mind among composers and writers and patrons of Gaelic, in that they prefer and are accustomed to maintain and improve vain hurtful lying worldly tales composed about the Tuatha Dé Danann, and about the sons of Mílesius, and about the heroes and Fionn mac Cumhaill with his warriors, and about many others whom I do not recount or mention here, with a view to obtaining for themselves vain worldly gain, rather than to write and compose and to preserve the very Word of God and the perfect ways of truth. For the world loves the lie much more than the truth.]

The same applies to falsity of style (Thomson 1970: 8-9, 177-8):

Acht cheana, atá a fhis agam nach a milis-bhriath-ruibh na bfeallsamh do cuireadh an sgriobhtuir diadha, agas nach bfuil feidhm aige ar dhath breadhdha bregach na bfileadh do chur air. Oir is lór don fhírinde í féin mar fhiadhnuise, gan brat oile do chur impe, acht gé ta feidhm ag an mbreig tsaoghalta ar dhath égsamhail oile do chur impe, da cumhdach don taobh amuigh, ar an adhbhar go bfuil si lochtach don taobh astoigh. Agas ge bé da dtug Dia do thidhlocadh bheith eolach a gceart chanamhna sgribhaidh agas deachtaidh agas labhartha na Gaoidheilge, is mó atá d' fhiachaibh air an tiodhlucadh-sin fuair sé ó Dhia do chaitheamh ré cumhdach agas ré comhmoradh na firinde atá a soisgel Dé, iná a chaitheamh ré cumhdach breige nó egora nó seachráin a n-adhaidh an t-soisgeil-sin.

[However, I know that it was not in the sweet words of the philosophers that the holy scripture was framed, and that it has no need to be given the fine false colour of the poets. For truth is a sufficient witness to itself, requiring no other covering, although the worldly lie requires some other varied colour to be given it as a cover from without because it is faulty within. And to whomever God has given the gift of being learned in the correct writing and diction and speaking of Gaelic, so much the greater is his obligation to spend this gift that he has received from God in cherishing and exalting the truth which is in God's gospel, rather than to spend it in cherishing falsehood or injustice or error against that gospel.]

The relationship with the patron is one of love or *grádh*, the traditional term (Thomson 1970: 3, 173), but founded on recognition of mutual godliness, not commercial exchange: 'worldly men pay for the lie but are not willing to listen to the truth though it be free' (Thomson 1970: 11, 180). The prototype of the reformed man of letters is Carswell himself, self-evidently using the gift of Gaelic literacy to exalt the gospel and its champions, and to forge a godly literature. If the MacEwens did indeed find themselves marginalised within the household of the Campbells of Glenorchy after 1550, it is worth speculating whether Carswell's views on the native learned classes were a contributory factor; and whether Cailean Liath and Donnchadh Dubh were at all influenced by Carswell's template for the reformed and godly Gaelic lord.

Carswell's achievement and vision were remarkable, but flawed. Gaelic Protestantism meant elements and degrees of continuity which generated contradictions, even internal contradiction. He includes references to the saints and archangels, and the formula for the blessing of a ship (Thomson 1970: 11, 16, 110-11). Giving the secular elite its place meant acceptance of the right of the godly chief to take the lead, not merely in implementing Reformation, but also in church governance; reformed doctrine is manipulated to show 'a marked deference to the civil magistrate' (Kirk 1989: 302). The prose style contains enough colour and decoration in places to call into question the strictures about the need for plain language, as if Carswell is looking to gain credibility in the eyes of the literati, and give them a stake in the future. His deep-seated ambivalence towards classical Gaelic culture, especially as practised by the poets, breaks surface in two key passages (Thomson 1970: 8, 12, 177, 180):

> Ar an adhbhur-sin dob áil linde an ní nach gcualamar do dhenamh romhaind do thindsgna anois, mar atá foirm agas bridh na n-urrnaidheadh agas na

sacramuinteadh naomhtha do chur i nGaoidheilg; óir do ghabhamar an mhéid-sin do mheisnigh chugaind ar nditheall do dhenamh, a mbriathruibh Criosd, do chomhfhurtacht na h-Eagluise Crisdaidhe. Acht gé nach ro-mhaith ar nGaoidhealg, gidh eadh is gabhtha mo dheagh-thoil uaim-se ar son mh'uireasbhadha, agas adhbhuim féin fós uireasbhuidh mhór do bheith oram a gcanamhain Ghaoidheilge agas a bfoirm mo dheachtaidh, agas ar an adhbhur-sin geallaim umhla do thabhairt don tí is eolcha iná mé.

[Therefore we have desired to begin now something that we have not heard was done before, namely to translate into Gaelic the form and substance of prayers and of the holy sacraments; for we have taken this much courage to endeavour, in the words of Christ, to comfort the Christian church. Although my Gaelic is not very good, yet my good will ought to be accepted in place of my deficiencies, and I confess that I have a great deficiency in Gaelic idiom and in the style of my diction, and for that reason I promise to submit to anyone more learned than myself.]

Acht cheana, saoilim fós nach bfuil imarcaidh no easbhuidh andso acht mar tá sé a gcló na laidne agas an Ghaill-b*h*erla, acht mura bfuil uirea*s*bhuidh no imarcaidh and do reir dheachtaidh no cheirt na bfileadh ar an nGaoidheilg, an ní ar nach bfuil feidhm no foghnamh ag an sgribhtuir dhiadha air. Agas is tearc neach aga bfuil ceart canamhna na Gaoidheilge, agas ni h-a n-Albain amhain acht a n-Eirind féin, acht mara bfuil sé ag beagan d'aois ealadhna mhaith re dán agas re seanchus, agas ag méid eigin do mhacaibh maithe leighind; agas ar an adhbhar-sin, da bfaghadh saoi re h-ealadhain locht sgriobhtha no deachtaidh sa leabhar bheag-sa, gabhadh se mo leithsgel-sa, óir no dhearrna mé saothar ná foghluim sa nGaoidheilg acht amhain mar gach nduine don p*h*obal choitcheand.

[Indeed I believe that there is neither excess nor defect here except as appears in works printed in Latin and in English, unless indeed there is excess or defect therein according to the standard of diction or propriety laid down for Gaelic by the poets, a matter for which the holy scriptures have no need or use. And there are very few who are masters of correct Gaelic usage, not only in Scotland, but in Ireland itself, except for a few learned men skilled in poetry and history, and some good scholars; and therefore, if any learned man should find any fault of writing or diction in this little book, let him excuse me, for I have made no special study of Gaelic except as any one of the common people.]

The acknowledgement of inadequacy goes further than timeworn topoi of self-abasement. The pupil seeks to reform those he knows to be his linguistic and literary masters, to whom he owes the skills upon which his project depends.

Conclusions

John Carswell brought his introduction to a close with a poem bidding envoi to his 'little book'

itself (Thomson 1970: 13, 181):

Gluais romhad, a leabhrain bhig,   Move onward, little book,
go h-Ua nDuibhne rig ad réim;   to Ó Duibhne in thy course,
chomh luath is fhuicfeas tú an cló,   as soon as thou shalt leave the press,
'na áras dó soirbhidh sén.   speed prosperity to him in his abode.

'Na dhiaidh sin siubhail gach tír   After that, travel each district
ar fhud Alban go mín mall,   throughout Scotland, gently, slowly,
ach ort o nach bfuil a bfeidhm,   but, since they have no need of thee,
na tabhair céim i ngort Gall.   do not take one step into Saxons' fields.

Da éis sin taisdil gach tond   After that, travel each wave
go crích Eireand na bfond bfial;   to the land of Ireland of liberal bounds,
ge beag ar na braithribh thú,   though the friars care little for thee,
gluais ar amharc a súl siar   move westwards within their sight.

Gach seancha gan seanchas saobh,   Every historian without false history,
gach fear dáno nar aomh brég,   every poet who has not yielded to lies,
cumand eadrad agas iad,   friendship between thee and them,
a leabhrain bhíg, biadh go h-ég.   little book, let there be till death.

Gach neach do ghradhaigh an chóir   Every one who has loved the right,
do tsiol Adhaimh roimh ni guais,   of the seed of Adam, from him there is no danger,
aca sin dena do nid,   with those make thou thy nest,
romhad a leabhrain bhig gluais.   little book, onward move.

Donald Meek has likened the book's tour of duty to the formal circuit of the courts of the Gaelic

aristocracy undertaken by high ranking poets (Meek 1998: 43). Edinburgh is swiftly deserted in

favour of Argyll and the book's true place of origin, but the ensuing negotiation of thresholds is

not straightforward, and some can only be invoked or approached rather than crossed. The book

is relevant to all Scotland whose integrity therefore goes unquestioned, as with our two other

keynote poems. However, reformed England has no need of a text whose language she cannot in

any case understand. Ireland presents a barrier not of language, but religion. In its charting of the book's problematic progress, the poem embodies the tensions of Carswell's project, and the difficulties in arriving at a satisfactory Britishness given the plurality of languages, cultures, polities and faiths to be found across the archipelago.

One general conclusion to be drawn is that a Campbell interest in crossing British borders on purely literary grounds existed well before the Reformation, and the attendant elevation of the matter of Britain, provided confessional and political imperatives for doing so. Indeed, provisional work by Rachel Butter and Sìm Innes on another Campbell of Glenorchy text, British Library Egerton MS 2899, may push the horizon for such activity back to the mid-fifteenth century.[11] The *Book of the Dean of Lismore* is vital to this argument, and adds the rider that within their own milieu, cultural curiosity of this order was not necessarily unique to the Campbells. Gaelic Scotland is often painted in terms of conservatism, insularity and, where the making of Britain was concerned, intractability. Yet with the Campbells, it gave rise to the most ambitious and sustained literary, religious and political initiatives across frontiers in late medieval and early modern Britain and Ireland. Ultimately, however, the absence of fellow travellers who shared the same level of curiosity or commitment tells its own story, while the Campbell vision of Britishness remained unrealised. In terms of the cultural version of this narrative, there is equal fascination to be had from observing both the range of literatures engaged with by the Campbells and their literati, and the degree to which the integrity of these literatures remained unaffected by that process. The point applies most forcibly of all to those cultures in closest proximity to one another, Gaelic and Scots. The thesis set out with characteristic erudition and insight by William Gillies in 1979 looks set to endure.[12]

NOTES

[1] The key example here is Donnchadh MacGregor, brother of the dean of Lismore in question. Donnchadh was both a poet trained in the classical tradition, whose poetry is represented in BDL; and one of the scribes responsible for the Scotticised orthography utilised in the manuscript.

[2] In the light of this argument, Watson's use of 'Song-Book' to translate *Duanaire* in this poem is open to question (Watson 1937: 2-5).

[3] On p. 144 of BDL is a short Gaelic prose genealogy of the MacGregor chief Eoin Dubh (d. 1519), written by the dean's brother Donnchadh in 1512, 'from the history books of the kings and great men'. Elsewhere Donnchadh elaborates this genealogy into a poetic *ardríomh* or 'high enumeration', grafting the MacGregor lineage onto the royal dynasty. The poem asserts of Eoin Dubh (Watson 1937: 212-3):

Tearc aithris a fhine ann	Rare is the counterpart of his line
d'uaislibh Gaoidheal ná glanGhall,	among the nobles of the Gael or of the bright non-Gaels,
focht na fréimhe agá bhfuil	who make enquiry of his lineage
do locht léighthe na leabhar.	from those who are readers of books.

If the 'history books' in question be a reference to the Lowland chronicle tradition as excerpted elsewhere in BDL, then the poem, which belongs to a reasonably well attested genre in Gaelic, would constitute perhaps the only explicit instance of cultural fusion across the Highland line to be found in the manuscript. In fact, since Donnchadh's 'high enumeration' seems to depend upon other sources as yet unidentified, the most that can be said at present is that the poem is willing to claim a broader audience for its theme than a purely Gaelic one (MacGregor 2006: 69-70).

[4] 'Johannes Cambell' might be identified with (i) the brother of Sir Donnchadh Campbell of Glenorchy, and first head of the Lawers branch of the kindred, who died at Flodden (*cf.* MacGregor 2006: 56); (ii) the brother of Sir Donnchadh, and bishop of the Isles, who died in Iona in 1510 and was buried there; or (iii) the Campbell so named who became treasurer of Scotland and was thanked by Boece, in his preface to *Scotorum Historiae*, for provision of sources from Iona (MacGregor 2006: 70).

[5] The MacGregor ecclesiastics at Fortingall were also responsible for what I have called *The Book of Fortingall*, a lost manuscript miscellany whose centre of gravity lay after 1550. In form and substance it invites a degree of comparison with BDL, from which it borrowed a number of items; but the hallmarks of the relationship are derivation, attenuation and degradation. The Gaelic poetic element consists of a single text, and Scots is the dominant language of the collection, both poetry and prose (MacGregor 2006: 36-7, 74; Mapstone 1985: 307-10).

[6] On the apparently syllabic basis and transitional character of 'Griogal Cridhe', Marion Campbell's lament for Griogair Ruadh MacGregor of Glen Strae, see MacGregor 1999: 137; Thomson 1989: 107-8.

[7] It should also be noted that a charter granted by Cailean Liath to the MacEwens in 1558 took care to specify the rents and services to which they were bound should they cease to practise poetry; Innes 1855: 408-9.

[8] There is a hint that the text of *The Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour* in MS B was written before 1590 (Wingfield 2010: 97 and n. 134), but no obligation to assume that the same need apply to *Duncan Laideus' alias Makgregouris Testament*.

[9] On the Campbell Protestant nexus in Ayrshire, see Dawson 1999: 221-8. It is not known at what point Carswell's own Protestantism first manifested itself.

[10] There may be a suggestion of such an approach in Carswell's statement (Thomson 1970: 11, 80) that 'we are permitted to read and understand the holy scriptures and declare them to the peoples' (*go bfuil ceadaighthe againd an sgriobhtuir diadha do léghadh agas do thuigsin agas do chur a gceill dona poibleachaibh*).

[11] This is a Latin psalter whose flyleaves include a poem in classical Gaelic, along with an inscription, possibly a later addition, claiming ownership for a Colin Campbell of Glenorchy who has been identified with the third chief (d. 1523). On internal evidence Butter and Innes tentatively suggest a mid-fifteenth century origin for the manuscript, which might point to an association with the first chief, Cailean Dubh na Roimhe ('Black Colin of Rome'), who died in 1475. The provenance of the saints enumerated in the calendar – Perthshire, Iona and the west Highlands, Gaelic Scotland in general, Ireland, England and the continent – hints at the same nexus of influences found in BDL. I have to thank Drs. Butter and Innes for sharing the findings of their preliminary researches with me.

[12] This essay reveals the extent of my debt to the scholarship of Professor William Gillies, and is dedicated to him with immense respect and gratitude, and in acknowledgement of his recent retirement from the Chair of Celtic at

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