

Deirdre Serjeantson

dserj@essex.ac.uk

## THAT PRIVATE LABYRINTH: THE BOOKS THAT MADE LYMOND

This is the text of a talk delivered to the Dorothy Dunnett Society in August 2015 and reprised for the Society's AGM in March 2016. It will shortly appear in the December 2016 issue of the Dunnett Society journal, *Whispering Gallery*. This is a pre-print version made available under the REF's Open Access requirements and should not be used for citation.

It is not often in my lecturing career that I stand on the podium entirely confident that everyone in the room has read the set texts. But this time, I think I can be certain that we are all familiar with the scene in *The Ringed Castle* when Philippa, back in Midculter after her adventures in the seraglio, finds at the top of a tower the room which in childhood had belonged to Francis Crawford. You'll remember the broken lute in the aumbry, and the scars in the door where it had been - significantly - kicked by an angry man. The room is also full of books. Here is Philippa's perspective on it:

She scanned them: some works in English; others in Latin and Greek, French, Italian and Spanish ... Prose and verse. The classics, pressed together with folios on the sciences, theology, history; bawdy epistles and dramas; books on war and philosophy; the great legends. Sheets and volumes and manuscripts of unprinted music. Erasmus and St Augustine, Cicero, Terence and Ptolemy, Froissart and Barbour and Dunbar; Machiavelli and Rabelais, Budé and Bellenden, Aristotle and Copernicus, Duns Scotus and Seneca.

Gathered over the years; added to on infrequent visits; the evidence of one man's eclectic taste. And if one studied it, the private labyrinth, book upon book, from which the child Francis Crawford had emerged, contained, formidable, decorative ... as the Master of Culter.

*Ringed Castle*, pp. 43-4

The list of authors is long, and one of the reasons it is there is to confirm us in what we already knew – that Lymond had read everything there was to be read. In fact, as I will be talking about in a few minutes, he read considerably more even than that, but for the time being, let's stick with the packed shelves in Midculter. I am going to look at those shelves, and some other libraries we encounter along the way, to explore what his reading did for Lymond.

Dorothy Dunnett said that she wrote the Lymond Chronicles to explore an idea, in this case, 'the nature and experiences of a classical hero'. And she had her context in mind from the start: 'I wished', she said, 'to set him in the age of the Renaissance.' In fact, Lymond could not really have existed in any other age: he is the epitome of his era with all its opportunities, its ideals, and its violent contradictions. We are told quite specifically in *Gemini* that the elder Francis Crawford – FC1 – was not born into the right moment to achieve his full potential. His son, on the other hand, was perfectly matched with his time. So what changed between the generations? What made this the moment for flourishing? It certainly wasn't that the late medieval world did not attain great heights of intellectual and artistic achievement, or that armies did not need heroes. However, the renaissance represented a period of the breaking, and making, of nations. It presented a wider stage, with greater opportunities. And the element which effected that change can be found on the shelves at Midculter. Just as these books formed the private labyrinth in which Francis Crawford was transformed into the Master of Culter and the Comte de Sevigny, so the same books – and new ways of reading them – transformed the western world, and brought about the renaissance.

There are all sorts of ways to account for the renaissance – I learnt a list at school: the decline of feudalism; the emergence of the merchant classes; the fall of Constantinople and the subsequent influx of Greek scholars into the west – and there is some truth in all of these – but it really comes down to these books. But before I go on to describe them, I should clarify a few things. The first is that the books on Lymond’s shelves will not all have been printed works, which is why that very popular theory about the renaissance (that it was the result of the invention of the printing press) doesn’t quite hold water. We are specifically told there are music manuscripts in Lymond’s collection, but in fact, any renaissance library would be likely to have at least as many manuscripts as printed texts. People preferred manuscripts: they were more intimate, and less amenable to censorship. Some of them would be private collections of, for instance, poems exchanged among friends, but manuscripts could even be mass-produced in a moderate sort of way – we are not talking about illuminated gospels, but working copies in a neat quick hand produced by professional scribes. Furthermore, not all of the texts in question are new: lots are classical, and many, including the Duns Scotus, spotted here by Philippa, are mediaeval. What matters is that both manuscripts and printed books were read in a new way, and circulated in highly efficient networks.

There was an international Republic of Letters through which scholars shared their ideas with contacts all over Europe. Erasmus, whose books are in the Midculter collection, corresponded with men in Italy and Germany, in Hungary and Spain, as well as Thomas More in London and both James IV and James V in Scotland. Books travelled too, and farther than you might think. For example, there is a volume of Petrarch’s Italian verse, which is in the University Library in Cambridge. It was printed in Venice in 1544, and the final page contains handwritten inscriptions in several languages: Spanish, French, Latin and English. They all say roughly the same thing:

This booke was gotten at the wyninge of saint Domingo in America in  
the yere 1585 & geuen me by my brother William Ive the yong[er].

Paul Ive.

You may not remember the siege of Santo Domingo, but you’ll be familiar with some of the people involved. It was Sir Francis Drake’s fleet, sailing to America, which attacked this Spanish colony in the modern-day Dominican Republic. The settlement had considered itself well-defended (it was a Spanish garrison), so this evidence of English power greatly alarmed Spain, and it was one of the reasons behind the attack of the Spanish Armada two years later. We have records of English soldiers looting the town, and now we know that one of those soldiers, William Ive, took this book to bring home to his little brother, at school in Northamptonshire. So, this book was printed in Italy, and bought by a Spanish reader, who took it on his voyage to the Caribbean. There, it was stolen by an Englishman who, sailing on from San Domingo, landed with Drake at Roanoke in America before returning home. This is an extreme example of mobility, perhaps, but books were highly mobile, and although Lymond’s library at Midculter is a large one, it is entirely plausible that a wealthy family could gather this polyglot cast of authors on its shelves.

These books represented the international traffic in ideas which was to change the western world: reformation and counter-reformation, the theory of republics and the rights of kings, new maps and the mathematical theories of navigation. The availability of texts meant that an educated boy in sixteenth-century Lanarkshire could be at the very centre of the world of ideas, even before he left his well-stocked tower. And the ideas in these books formed the renaissance, as well as its incarnation in that perfect product of the renaissance, the courtier, scholar, and soldier Francis Crawford of Lymond. If you have ever wondered about his way with languages, the particular shape of his ambitions, or overdeveloped

interest in his mother's virtue, the answers – as Philippa, herself a good renaissance student, would tell you – will be found in the books which framed both his mind and his era.

### A HUMANIST EDUCATION

So what *was* on the shelves at Midculter? In some ways, the collection is quite specific to Scotland. Philippa noticed John Bellenden's name: he is the translator of the *History of Scotland*, published in 1540. John Barbour was the fourteenth-century author of *The Bruce*, the great poem in Scots about Robert the Bruce, and William Dunbar was one of the makaris or poets of the court of James IV. Much of the collection, however, could have been found anywhere in Europe: names like Seneca and Terence and Cicero are the staples of early-modern humanist education. The books themselves are not new – renaissance scholars made a virtue of rediscovering lost Latin texts, and many of them had made it intact through the middle ages. What was new was a way of reading and teaching them which united schoolboys from Edinburgh to Paris to Prague.

I will sketch a typical humanist education for you, because not only does it account for a number of books in Lymond's library, it also sheds light the way he read them. You may have noted, for instance, that he has quite a handy way with quotations, and that, moreover, his friends are much taken up with preventing him from killing himself. For both of those traits, I think we can look to the humanist schoolroom.

We use the term 'humanist' rather differently now, but in the renaissance, it means a *umanista* – a teacher of the humanities, which meant the classical languages of Latin and Greek. The aim of studying them was to recover what they perceived as the moral greatness of the ancient civilisations, and then to re-establish this moral greatness in their own society. The way to this wisdom was through words. School did not teach you maths, for instance: that was a university subject. The priority was language. Medieval education had focused on philosophy, theology, and logic. These were demanding, but also abstract, disciplines: logic taught you how to consider a question, but it did not teach you how to persuade someone to agree with your answer except through the force of your intrinsic rightness.

The renaissance shifted the focus from the abstract to the practical: logic gave way to rhetoric, the art of persuasive language, of appealing to the emotions. The aim of humanist education was to create the public men of its time: the kings, the statesmen, the lawyers, the preachers. All of these roles demanded an able and persuasive orator, and that is what the early-modern school-room produced.

We meet several theorists of education in the Lymond chronicles. Erasmus, the most famous and influential of them all, is on Lymond's shelf, probably represented by *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1516), written for Charles V, but also applied to the schooling of those who were not emperors. Roger Ascham, who teaches Philippa during her stay in London, and was also tutor to Elizabeth I, was perhaps the most prominent English educator of the next generation. He and Erasmus had much in common, in terms of method, but also in terms of model. For them, and for the renaissance generally, the ideal to which students should aspire was the Roman lawyer, politician, orator, and philosopher, Marcus Tullius Cicero. There is some Cicero in Lymond's collection, which is hardly surprising: he couldn't have avoided him. Cicero had managed to use his wisdom and learning in both his public and private lives, speaking in the Senate, and writing about philosophy at home. His ethical teaching might have been pagan, but it mapped fairly neatly onto Christian thought, and his Latin was considered the most eloquent and purest available – which (so the theory went) was why his oratory had been so effective. There

were Latin scholars who would only use words which appeared in the works of Cicero. Petrarch wrote letters to him across the gulf of the centuries, and both Erasmus and Ascham put him at the centre of their curricula.

So what does that mean, in practical terms? Well, the works of Cicero, representing as they did ‘the verray Romane eloquence joynyd with wisdome’, were analysed, picked apart, and memorised by students. The lower forms learnt their Latin in a relentless system of repetition, ten hours a day, six days a week. Once they could read the texts, they would identify its rhetorical figures – early modern books are full of underlinings and careful marginal notes by small boys, and very occasionally girls, who are duly pointing out that Cicero is using hyperbole, or synecdoche, or metaphor, or whatever the case may be. These images were then memorised and then copied into the student’s own notebook, waiting for the next stage, when he would graduate to composing his own speeches. (We still have the commonplace books of hundreds of early-modern students, including John Milton, so we can reconstruct exactly how they were used.) The principle was to clothe your idea in the best language available, availing freely of the snippets you had culled from the writers of the past. You were supposed to reach for your commonplace book, flip to the appropriate subject heading – death, or the fickleness of fortune, or what to say when meeting someone who looks suspiciously like she might be your previously unknown sister – and you pluck out a suitable quotation and deliver it. Lymond may not have used his notebook much, as he seemed to have a very adequate filing system in his head, but that’s where the quotation habit comes from, and there is probably a commonplace book (in this case, a multi-volume commonplace book) in his handwriting on the shelves at Midculter, where it all started.

But all his beautiful style would have counted for nothing if Cicero had not also been admired for his morals. We must assume that Lymond’s library also included his treatise on moral duty, *De officiis* – the second book to be printed after the Gutenberg Bible, and perhaps the most widely read classical work of the renaissance. From this Lymond would have learnt one of the central tenets of humanist education: ‘We are not born, we do not live for ourselves alone; our country, our friends, have a share in us.’ The notion that the educated man bore a responsibility to his society is one of the shaping forces of the early-modern period. That is why there is such an overlap throughout the period in roles like politician and historian, or soldier and poet – you couldn’t just be a writer or scholar: you had to use your gifts in the world of action too. I’m thinking of Philip Sidney, who is a nice analogy for Lymond, even down to their matching coats of arms – if you look up Sidney, you will find a familiar azure pheon, or broad arrow, awaiting your inspection, and I think this cannot be accidental – but there is no shortage of examples. For instance, this sense of literary study contributing to public life would have been supported by one of the texts not mentioned by Philippa, but undoubtedly well-known to Francis Crawford: Virgil’s *Aeneid*. This was studied at school for its fine style, but also for its subject matter. It is about the founding of Rome. In an age when virtually every powerful nation wanted to emulate Rome’s success at empire-building, the *Aeneid* was a valuable guide book. The epic poems which flourished in the renaissance were all imitations of Virgil, and were all concerned with establishing their own country as the new imperial power: from Ariosto to Tasso to Spenser, they are all fired by the vision of a new Rome located firmly in their home capital. Thomas More’s *Utopia* and a plethora of similar books about how to run an imaginary state are part of a genre which stems from the same renaissance impulse to form, and then govern, a nation. We might see Lymond’s efforts to mould a new Russia as a practical essay in the same field – but certainly, his work for the Scottish queen, and his role as Marshal of France, epitomise the ideal of the Ciceronian *vita activa* or active life.

Philippa also spotted another school-room favourite, who seems also to have been read with a particularly close attention by Lymond. That is Seneca, Roman politician, playwright and tutor to the emperor Nero. He was one of the most important

representatives of Stoic philosophy, which was held up as fostering the moral strength which had made Rome great, and which therefore was to be emulated. His writings taught generations of schoolboys that the reasonable man lived free of the four passions – fear, delight, distress, and lust. The school editions did not record that his own efforts to live free of lust were notable failures, which, had it been mentioned, might have reassured Lymond in the Sevigny scenes of *Checkmate*, because Lymond very much shows the marks of Stoicism. Seneca advocated a detachment from the world, and an indifference alike to good and bad fortune. More significantly for most of Lymond’s friends, who are always trying to counter the effects of his having listened too hard in this particular lesson, Seneca also advocated suicide as a respectable way out of an untenable situation. Here’s what he said in *De Providentia* – I should say that God is speaking here, not Seneca himself...

Scorn poverty: no one lives as poor as he was born. Scorn pain: it will either be relieved, or relieve you. Scorn death, which either ends you or transfers you. Scorn Fortune: I have given her no weapon with which she may strike your soul. Above all, I have taken pains that nothing should keep you here against your will: the way out lies open. If you do not choose to fight, you may run away. Therefore of all things that I have deemed necessary for you, I have made nothing easier than dying.

Seneca did end up committing suicide, forced to it by his pupil the emperor Nero. His wife Pompeia Paulina dutifully slit her wrists too, but you’ll be happy to know that she was bandaged up by order of Nero, so was celebrated by posterity for her virtue without actually having to die at that point.

Seneca’s suicide, like that of Socrates and Cato, was much admired by many humanists, but despite Lymond’s evident adherence to stoic philosophy, it was also staunchly opposed by many Christian thinkers, among them a team of practical philosophers including Archie Abernethy and Sybilla Crawford. Just before she sets fire to his bed curtains, Sybilla attempts to exhort her son back into life with a speech straight from Cicero:

‘I hear you tried to cut your throat – or was it your wrists? – on another occasion. Your childhood is over now, Marshal. Mankind can survive very well without an intimate study of your susceptibilities but not, unfortunately, without your other functions and talents. Do you think I bring any child into the world to live for himself alone?’

That last line is straight from *De Officiis*; but then she turns to Seneca. When Sybilla accuses Francis Crawford of running away, or when Philippa, in the Hotel d’Hercule, tells him that he has always tried to escape, that’s Seneca. In these scenes, two renaissance codes come into violent conflict – Cicero’s sense of public duty collides with Seneca’s belief that the intolerable only had to be accepted up to a certain point. If you ever wondered why, at a crucial point in *Checkmate*, it is Jerott who does not move to stop Austin shooting the figure they all believe to be the apparently suicidal Lymond, it is not lack of affection that motivates him: it is that Jerott has also read his Seneca in the schoolroom, and unlike the women Sybilla and Philippa, or the less formally-educated man, Archie, Jerott has been taught to admire this particular model for masculine behaviour.

Ultimately, Lymond is not a very successful Senecan. He seems to have held on to the hints about indifference to fear or to poverty, but by the end of *Checkmate*, he has succumbed to all sorts of unreasonable elements, not the least of which includes staying alive. He might have been supported in this by some of the other books on his shelf: he has Terence’s comedies, taught in schools since the middle ages, and Philippa’s reference to legends probably takes in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, which, in a cleaned-up version of the text, was also widely taught. But studying Ovid also meant reading the *Fasti*, where he would have encountered the story of the Roman matron, Lucretia, perhaps best-known now as the

subject of Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece*. Renaissance admiration for this woman who killed herself rather than live with the shame of having been raped – in circumstances entirely beyond her own control – probably contributed to an oppressive sense of what was required in respect of female virtue. The story was retold in murals, in etchings, in plays and in volumes on the histories of famous woman – there is a Botticelli painting from 1501 in which lots of Roman men stand around admiring her corpse, which is morally as well as visually at the centre of the city. Although Lymond has clearly recovered some perspective on this issue by the time Philippa trades her virginity for his family secrets, we might look to the humanists and ponder his anxieties about Sybilla.

I've been talking about education in grammar schools, and Lymond's early education was at the hands of a local priest. However, the results were so typical of the best Erasmian methods that we must assume the clergy of Midculter to have been very well versed in the most modern fashions in pedagogy. At about 13, he would have gone to university: in his case, to Sainte Barbe in Paris. This was an institution serious about learning. Classes started at 5am, and students were not even provided with benches: they sat on the floor at their teachers' feet. In the summer time, they were allowed to sit on hay brought in for the purpose; in the winter, they must have been pretty chilly. However, the quality of the lectures may have distracted them from their discomfort. Sainte Barbe was one of the foremost institutions for the study of classical Greek. It attracted Scottish scholars like the neo-Latin writer George Buchanan, who just missed teaching Lymond - he had returned to Scotland a few years before Sybilla dispatched her younger son to Paris. Lymond also narrowly missed studying in the varied company of Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, and Jean Calvin, his unlikely contemporary. Guillaume Postel, a student with a great reputation as a linguist, also left shortly before Lymond arrived, sent by his king on an embassy to the court of Suleiman the Magnificent. It would have been more useful for Lymond had Postel's book describing that court been published in a more timely fashion – he was there in 1536, but the book did not appear for over twenty years, by which time it was too late to be useful on Lymond's own mission. Nonetheless, one must hope some of his preparatory notes on the Turkish language had still been kicking around the student rooms.

At university, Lymond would have continued his study of classical literature, but would have added theology and mathematics to his mental furniture. This explains the presence of Ptolemy and Copernicus in his library, and accounts for the fact that during his trip to France in *Queen's Play* – when you would think he had other things to do – he made time to attend John Dee's lectures on Euclid. (There isn't a description of this in the book, but in his encounter with Dee in *The Ringed Castle* he refers to the lectures, and both the timeline, and the fact that Dee doesn't recognise our memorable-looking hero, indicates that he went along as Thady Ballagh.)

That adds up to a fairly comprehensive education. However, it doesn't account for everything on Lymond's shelves, so having established what in his collection derives from his schooling, I'd like to turn to what what extra-curricular in Lymond's reading.

### EXTRA-CURRICULAR READING

Philippa notes books in all the major modern vernaculars: the young Francis Crawford was reading French and Italian and Spanish. He knows the lore of the bard-schools, so he must also have been reading in Irish, but the first book printed in the Irish language did not appear until 1571, so we must assume he had manuscript copies of Thady Ballagh's repertoire. Vernacular languages were not taught at school – they had no status in comparison with writing in neo-Latin – but as we can see from Paul Ive's polyglot

inscriptions in his copy of Petrarch, this did not mean that people were not actively learning these languages. Teach-yourself-Italian books did very well in the sixteenth century.

I think we can assume Lymond, like Ive, had read Petrarch, if only because the *Canzoniere*, Petrarch's sonnet sequence to his beloved Laura, was the most influential vernacular text of its day. Indeed, he would have read translations and imitations of Petrarch in every other European language he could command: the French Pléiade, for instance, and the English sonnets of Thomas Wyatt, which are performed at the momentous musical evening at the Hotel d'Hercule, including his version of Petrarch's sonnet 262, 'The pillar perisht'. That evening reveals something about Lymond's reading habits which you may already have suspected: even in the middle of personal trauma, he was assiduous about keeping up with all the newest books. Wyatt died in 1549, and the performance of the poem happens in the spring of 1558. Wyatt's sonnets had been circulating in manuscript since the 1530s, so Lymond had plenty of time to catch up with them. However, the particular form of the poem as used on that evening is not Wyatt's own: it is the edited, smoothed-out version produced for one of the most best-selling poetry books of the age, Tottel's *Miscellany*. This was published in June 1557, and could have reached Lymond at the earliest in July, when he was busily engaged in escaping across Lyon with Philippa and slitting his wrists. It is a salutary reminder to all of us that personal preoccupations are no excuse to neglect the latest fashions in verse. Some of you might be interested to know, by the way, that the poem by Wyatt which so shatters Sybilla – 'The pillar perisht is whereto I leant' – was not a love poem, but Petrarch's lament for the death of his friend and patron, Giovanni Colonna: pillar puns in Italian on Colonna's name, which means column. But in Wyatt's hands, it becomes a guarded lament for the death of *his* friend and patron, Thomas Cromwell, recently executed by Henry VIII. Like Lymond, Wyatt was skilled at using poetry to convey pointed meanings to the well-informed listener.

You may not be surprised to know that I imagine, among Lymond's Italian texts, was a copy of Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Although the book was banned in England and France, it seems likely that he was one of many eager readers who nonetheless got hold of a copy – because if anything could teach him how to make decisions in a ruthlessly pragmatic way, it was Machiavelli. In line with Machiavelli's advice, most of his generosity, and all of his penitent suffering, takes place behind the scenes. But less important even than *The Prince* is, I think, Machiavelli's *Art of War* of 1520. Here's some of it:

To worry the enemy during the battle, something must be made to happen which dismays him, either by announcing new help which is arriving, or by showing things which look like it, so that the enemy, being deceived by that sight, becomes frightened; and when he is frightened, he can be easily overcome. These methods were used by ... Caius Sulpicius [who] placed many soldier-packs on mules and other animals useless in war, but in a manner that they looked like men-at-arms, and commanded that they appear on a hill while they were in hand-to-hand combat with the Gauls: whence his victory resulted.

Or, in other words, if you lack a convenient army, and the English are coming, try putting helmets on your sheep.

There is one other author I would like to suggest as a candidate for inclusion among Lymond's Italian books, and that is Baldessare Castiglione. *The Book of the Courtier* recounts a conversation held over several summer evenings in the court of Urbino, where the participants discuss what makes a perfect courtier. Much of what they say tallies with what you might by now expect: that the courtier should be a good humanist; that he should advise his prince; that he should be a skilled warrior. The quality which commends itself to our attention is what Castiglione calls *sprezzatura*. There is no satisfactory English translation for this: authors have tried 'nonchalance' and 'grace', which are certainly part of the picture. It might be best to think of it as the ability to perform with the appearance of ease,

disguising any hard work which has happened behind the scenes. The perfect courtier, for example, is not seen to take Russian classes: he learns Russian in secret, so that when the Tsar asks, he is ready to speak perfectly, as though the ability were natural to him. We tend to think of everything from sailing ships to controlling elephants to come easily to Lymond, but in fact, this is all a performance: what we are seeing is the highly cultivated art of *sprezzatura*. Very occasionally, someone thinks about this. Lymond and Jerott have been engaging in some trick riding as part of their plot to escape the Aga Morat, and Lymond has just swung under his horse and landed back in his saddle:

It had been a boy's trick, Jerott remembered. Standing bareback on your father's horses; somersaulting, chariot-riding. Francis, buried in books, had never publicly attempted it. What private practice, Jerott wondered fleetingly, had gone into that? Then he was under attack himself, a racing horse on either side, and a hand grasping his reins.

It is the private practice which is key, as the books he was buried in may well have been suggesting.

### RARE BOOKS

The works I have mentioned so far were all extremely well known in the sixteenth century. However, it was also an era of book collectors questing after rare texts, and I wanted to say something about the more unusual books which turn up in the Lymond Chronicles. There are quite a lot of them. A pivotal conversation in *Checkmate*, for instance, takes place in the King's Library at Fontainebleau, where Lymond and Philippa were surrounded by around two thousand rare, and often unique, manuscripts. Francois I was a poet, a patron of the arts, and a serious collector of ancient Greek work, and so was his son Henri. Guillaume Budé, who was the librarian at Fontainebleau, was one of the foremost classicists of his day, and he supervised works collected from all over the known world. Pierre Gilles, for instance, was not in Stamboul to dissect giraffes or to excavate subterranean passages: he had been sent by the king to find manuscripts, which he did, very successfully, and Fontainebleau was the result. The library was open to all scholars, and was a popular resort: frankly, it is amazing that Philippa and Lymond didn't have to have their traumatic conversation in front of a gaggle of inky students. If, by the way, you were wondering what Lymond is reading on that fateful night, we can tell from Dunnett's description of the binding that it is the 1540 bible produced by Robert Estienne, Greek printer to the king, and specially bound in a jewelled cover for the king's collection. Despite Lymond's very Protestant-sounding comment on his reading – he says he is looking at 'certain comfortable places of the Epistles, namely the Romans' which would tend to sound like a reference to Luther's teaching on salvation by faith alone, rooted in that book ('comfortable' is something of a codeword among Protestants), in fact he is foxing us again: he isn't reading a Protestant vernacular text, but a very orthodox Catholic Vulgate.

Pierre Gilles as book collector has also appeared in *The Ringed Castle*. During the London negotiations with the Muscovy company, Lymond gains Sir William Petre's good will by bribing him with a copy of Cicero's *De republica*. Lymond says he bought it from Gilles, presumably transacting the business to while away the intervals in his war to the death with Gabriel. Lymond was obviously something of a book collector too: when he has parted with the book to Petre we are told he 'stood for a while, looking at the empty place where the Cicero had rested on his book-laden shelves.' So why did he mind so much? Because it was the only copy. Cicero's *De republica* is lost. We only know about it through references in other classical writers, and a few fragment of the original text which survive.



The middle ages only had a section of Book VI, the Dream of Scipio; in 1819 more sections were discovered in a palimpsest in the Vatican Library; but Lymond's copy is the last sighting history will get of the whole work.

### VERY RARE BOOKS INDEED

Those books are rare, but I'll finish with a consideration of the very rarest text we encounter in the Lymond Chronicles. You will remember this psalm from *Checkmate*:

And from the sword (Lord) save my soule  
By thy myght and power;  
And keepe my soule, thy darling deare,  
From dogs that would devour.

And from the Lion's mouth that would  
Me all in sunder shiver  
And from the hornes of Unicornes  
Lord safely me deliver.

We hear it the first time just after Lymond, disguised as the Cardinal de Guise, has effected the escape of the Maréchale d'Albon from the troops sent to arrest the Calvinists at their service in the Hotel Bétourné. Catherine d'Albon, overwrought at the end of their ordeal, has become belligerent, and challenges Lymond to provide a prayer for her.

'In English?' Lymond said. 'I don't know. What about one from Geneva?' And he recites the verses I have just quoted.

You are probably aware that during the reign of Queen Mary, a sizeable community of English Protestant exiles settled on the continent. The largest group established themselves in Geneva, the city of Jean Calvin, where they listened to (and translated) his sermons, and adopted Calvinist customs. One of these was the congregational singing of psalms. There certainly were, as there continue to be, Catholic hymns which were sung by the people, but much of the lavish music for Catholic church services was designed to be sung by choirs. Calvin abolished this custom and insisted on texts which had biblical precedent, to be sung plainly with no harmonies so the words could all be heard and understood. France was the leader in terms of vernacular psalm singing, but the trend had reached England in 1549 with the works of Thomas Sternhold, who translated 37 psalms into English for Edward VI. The Protestant exiles brought these to Geneva in 1556, and they continued the process of translating the whole psalter, publishing a little bit more of it year on year. Eventually, the Geneva psalter would go through over 1,000 editions before it ceased to be sung in English churches in the nineteenth century. Admittedly, this brief history does not make it sound like an especially rare book, but there is one problem. Lymond is singing the Geneva version of Ps. 22 in 1558. The first edition of the Geneva psalter, in 1556, is not complete, and it does not include a translation of Ps. 22. The 1557 edition does, but it is a prose translation, not Lymond's verse. In fact, Ps. 22 is not included until 1561. So *that's* a rare book: one that doesn't exist yet.

In a lesser author, we would assume a mistake. In the case of Dorothy Dunnnett, I think we must conclude: it's a subplot. I have applied myself in a serious manner to this question, and I have a hypothesis to lay before you. When it first appears in 1561, this version of Ps. 22 is attributed to TS – that is, Thomas Sternhold – but modern editors conclude that it was not in fact by him. All of Sternhold's posthumous papers had been published in 1549: a new text wasn't going to show up a decade later. So who is TS? And how did his or her translation come to be known by Lymond four years too early?

My first thought was that he wrote it himself. The letters T and F are easily confused in early-modern handwriting, so Francois de Sevigny could easily become TS. If that is the case, how did he get his psalm translation to Geneva to be printed? Well, you will remember that early in *Checkmate* Lymond finds John Knox's manuscript for the *Monstrous Regiment of Women*, which is published much later in the book. We are told he read it all the way through, so he could easily have slipped a single leaf of psalm translation in the back, ready to be found by Knox when he took the manuscript back to Geneva, where he was, of course, a prominent member of the team involved in translating the scriptures into English.

But this theory, alas, does not work. For one thing, the translation is already known by others besides Lymond: Catherine d'Albon can recite it along with him, and up to this point she has spent very little time in his company, and she seems unlikely to be a correspondent of John Knox, so she didn't get it from him either. And the very poor musical setting which comes with the psalm negates everything we are told about Lymond. Unless he is trying, for obscure reasons, to sabotage the Genevan psalter with inferior music, I think we have to reject him as the author.

There are, however, several other contenders for the part of TS. A badly formed secretary-hand P can also look like a T, so that gave me the two PSs of the text, Pierro Strozzi and Philippa Somerville, to consider. However, if Strozzi, the apparent atheist, was a secret Protestant, why did he not confess it on his deathbed? I think his conscience would have dictated that he should, so I discount him. Philippa may well have Protestant leanings, but unfortunately, she wouldn't have written secretary hand, which was just for men: women were taught Italic script which is so legible that she is out of the running – an italic P and T could not be confused. And the argument about the very poor musical setting applies to her too.

I then wondered if the initials were a red herring – the editor might have attributed an anonymous text to Thomas Sternhold just for the sake of convenience. That blows the question wide open again. It could be anyone. However, it is worth noting that Lymond never quotes the Geneva psalms in general until he gets to Lyon, when he starts quoting them a great deal, and not just PS. 22. I think we must assume that he obtained some sort of manuscript during his time in that city. So who is in Lyon? Well, the devoutly Catholic Jerott is a very unlikely Calvinist; Marthe isn't much of anything at all; and Archie invokes the Blessed Virgin in times of stress, so he's not a likely candidate. It is true that the printers Lymond knows in the city have Protestant leanings, but why would a printer not just print his own work in secret (a very common habit) rather than sending it to Geneva to be some other printer's bestseller?

But there are other people in Lyon too. If we look back to the initial scene, we will notice something interesting: Lymond recites the psalm and 'She had followed it all, her lips moving.' In other words, Catherine d'Albon knows this particular setting. But how? We have been used for too long, I think, to read this scene between mother, daughter, and Lymond, as a sexual triangle. This is how its interpretation usually goes. The Maréchale, Catherine, and Lymond return home after a narrow escape. The exhausted Catherine asks for a prayer, and Lymond, ever ready with the apt quotation, provides one from Geneva – that is, one which is suitable given the religious events of the evening. He then goes to bed and Catherine begins to weep, realising that she is in love with him; and her mother (also besotted) goes upstairs to her room, gazes at herself in the mirror, and, we are told, is too proud to cry at the knowledge that she will never win him for herself. She tells Catherine's maid to ensure her mistress looks beautiful the next day, and we conclude that the mother, who has been Lymond's lover herself, surrenders him to her daughter.

In all of this, we have been in error. The authorship of the psalm is the key to understanding this scene as a delicate piece of religious negotiation against the perilous

background of the reformation. Lymond's quotation is not in fact intended to be helpful: it is a signal to the psalm's translator that he knows what she is up to.

Women were some of the most daring and assiduous translators of Calvinist texts. They could not preach in public, but they could play their part in religious war by writing and disseminating the word – though it was a dangerous task, and one which made martyrs. So who in this household – which we are told is an English-speaking one – is the translator? It cannot be Catherine – despite her mother's best efforts, history relates that she remained a committed Catholic, so is unlikely to have engaged in creating Calvinist psalmody, even if she happened to know the words. No: it is the Maréchale herself, the zealous new convert, who is contributing to her cause by translating psalm verses for her oppressed brethren in England. When Catherine weeps, it is because she realises that if Lymond knows the psalm, her beloved mother is in mortal peril; when the Maréchale steels herself in front of her mirror, it is because she must sacrifice her daughter to this Scottish heretic to protect, not herself, but her religious cause. We have misconstrued the Maréchale: we have read her actions throughout as dictated by less than virtuous motives – but Lymond's quotation of an unpublished psalm is a hint to us that she is in fact engaged throughout in a religious struggle fraught with peril.

So there you are: Dunnett's hints about Lymond's reading material is in fact the key to a major subplot about the conflict in Lyons between Calvinism and the Catholic Church. Never let it be said that she did not make her readers work for their pleasures.

When I arrived this morning, you were busily voting on your favourite characters, and I promised to finish by revealing my own. It will be obvious by now that I quite see that Lymond has his charms, as well as an alluringly well stocked library, which is always an asset; but based on these important discoveries, my own favourite must be the unsung heroine of the Reformation, that daring agent of Calvinism in France, the Maréchale de St André.

© Deirdre Serjeantson  
University of Essex  
dserj@essex.ac.uk