

Introduction

Early Modern Scottish-Scandinavian Studies

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In a field which has always been a by-word for internationalism, it is only appropriate that the foundational volume of modern Scottish-Scandinavian studies was written neither by a Scot nor a Scandinavian, but rather by the Lübeck-born historian and translator, Thomas Alfred Fischer (1844-1906). By the time Fischer came to write his *Scots in Sweden: Being a Contribution Towards the History of the Scot Abroad* (posthumously published in 1907), he had already established a name for himself as Europe's leading authority on the early modern Scottish diaspora. In 1902, he had published *The Scots in Germany*, which was rapidly followed by *The Scots in Eastern and Western Prussia* in the following year.

If Fischer's works were not immediately influential, this was due, in part, to the intellectual climate of his time – a climate which saw the increasing rise of ethnic-essentialist argument across Europe – and otherwise due to his own determination to speak plainly about his work and its importance. 'National vanity', Fischer wrote, 'dislikes to confess to a powerful and steady influence from abroad, and where this cannot be denied, it has been the watchword and the cherished purpose of many a political writer to minimise its characters and to ridicule its importance'.¹ Not content with such a general indictment, he also turned his pen towards what he saw as a certain parochialism present in the Scottish history of his day:

Perhaps some Society like the Scottish History Society or the Society of Antiquaries would think it worth its while to originate and stimulate research in this direction. So many old barrows have been ransacked, so many old Ogham stones been read, so many old Charter Chests been examined at their expense and instigation. Here then is a new field; quite as interesting to the Scottish historian, a field altogether neglected hitherto, but full of the promise of the most interesting and surprising results!²

It is unsurprising, then, that Fischer found himself misunderstood, if not simply dismissed, by the Scottish historical establishment. A. Francis Steuart, in a review of *The Scots in Sweden* published in the *Scottish Historical Review* for 1908, noted that Fischer's work was 'by no means the last word on the subject. Dr. Fischer was not a Scot, and could not be expected to grasp fully the intricate subject of Scottish genealogy ... as far as genealogy is concerned, [it] has not added much to Horace Marryat's delightful *One Year*

¹ Fischer, 1907, 3.

² Fischer, 1902, vi.

in Sweden.³ The implications of his work for undercutting – or at least drastically reformulating – Victorian histories of early modern Scotland were entirely ignored.

While Fischer's sometime reviewer went on to edit a volume of Scottish-Polish documents for the Scottish History Society, going some way towards the former's hope for an institutionally-supported study of Scots abroad, Scottish-Scandinavian studies languished in comparison with the increasing amount of work dealing with Scots in France, the Low Countries, Poland, and elsewhere. It was only in the 1960s that the thread of Fischer's pioneering work was picked up once again by James Dow (1938-1965), whose tragically early death saw his thesis, *Scottish Relations with Sweden, 1500-1625* unfinished and only two articles in print.⁴ Dow's important and posthumously published article on Scottish trade with Sweden appeared in a land-mark 1969 special issue of the *Scottish Historical Review*, commemorating the union of the Northern Isles with Scotland. While the predominant emphasis was on medieval connections between Scotland and Scandinavia, other articles with an early modern focus included those on Danish affairs by Thorkil Lyby Christensen and Thelma Jexlev.⁵ In the introduction to that issue, Gordon Donaldson echoed Fischer, albeit in a milder key, when he reiterated that while 'overseas links between Scotland and Scandinavia are apt to be overlooked', those links were nonetheless crucial for understanding both countries.⁶ The 1960s saw a further development of the field with the works of S. G. E. Lythe and T. C. Smout, who placed some emphasis on Scottish links with Scandinavia in their evaluation of Scotland's trade with Europe.⁷

A significant development in the discipline's history had occurred the year before, when the Scottish Society for Northern Studies was founded. In 1973, the society published the first volume of its journal, *Northern Studies*, although medieval topics dominated in its earlier period, and it was only some years later that early modern material began to find a foothold. Meanwhile, in 1977, a conference held at the Centre for Nordic Studies at the University of Aberdeen resulted in the edited volume *Scots in the Baltic*, the first of its kind.⁸

In the following decade, Thomas Riis' massive two-volume study of Scottish-Danish relations substantially advanced the field and further attention was paid to trading relations across the North and Baltic Seas, but it was not until the beginning of the twenty-first century that a thriving community and recognisable sub-discipline of Scottish-Scandinavian studies was solidly established.⁹ This new phase was led by the husband-and-wife team of Steve Murdoch and Alexia Grosjean. Murdoch's *Britain, Denmark-Norway and the House of Stuart, 1603-1660* (2000) broke new ground in understanding the relationship between the Stuart monarchy and one of their Baltic neighbours, while Grosjean's *An Unofficial Alliance: Scotland and Sweden, 1569-1654* (2003)

³ A. F[ran]c[is] S[teu]art, review of Th. A. Fischer, *The Scots in Sweden*, *Scottish Historical Review* 5 (1908): 240. Steuart was referring to the Victorian travelogue-cum-historical-miscellany, Horace Marryat, *One Year in Sweden: Including a Visit to the Isle of Götland*, 2 vols. (London, 1862).

⁴ Dow, 1969, 64-79, 124-50.

⁵ Christensen, 1969, 80-97; Jexlev, 1969, 98-106.

⁶ Donaldson, 1969, 3.

⁷ Lythe, 1969; Smout, 1963.

⁸ Stewart (ed), 1977.

⁹ Riis, 1988; Lillehammer, 1986, 97-111; Grage, 1986, 112-115.

redefined how the other major Scandinavian power interacted with Scotland in the centuries between Reformation and Union.¹⁰ These were rapidly followed by Murdoch's seminal study of Scottish networks abroad: *Network North: Scottish Kin, Commercial and Covert Association in Northern Europe, 1603-1746* (2006).¹¹ Grosjean and Murdoch's 2005 jointly-edited volume, *Scottish Communities Abroad in the Early Modern Period*, contained an appreciative forward by Chris Smout, which reiterated much of the scholarship discussed here, while also reminding its readers – in the tradition of Fischer and Donaldson – that 'the biggest relative gap in modern scholarly effort' on Scottish history remained the study of Scots abroad during the early modern period, 'especially in the seventeenth century'.¹²

Since the late 2000s, studies of Scots abroad have become increasingly naturalised into the fabric of Scottish history as a whole, and Scottish-Scandinavian topics have appeared in numerous more general works, such as *British and Irish Emigrants and Exiles in Europe, 1603-1688*, edited by David Worthington in 2010.¹³ The 'Scotland and the Wider World' project at the University of St. Andrews provided a major impetus for further studies, while the *Scotland, Scandinavia and Northern European Biographical Database*, maintained by Murdoch and Grosjean, continues to be one of the first ports of call for further research in the field.¹⁴ More recently, Kathrin Zickermann's *Across the German Sea* (2013) has opened up the previously underexplored field of Scottish activity in areas of the Holy Roman Empire under Swedish or Danish control, examining transnational and transcultural interactions with the Elbe-Weser region.¹⁵

It was with the idea of keeping this tradition of vibrant new scholarship energised and moving forward that Steve Murdoch and Kelsey Jackson Williams organised a 'Scottish-Scandinavian Workshop' at Druminnor Castle in Aberdeenshire on 2-3 September 2015 (kindly hosted by Alex Forbes of Druminnor, himself the descendant of several Scots with notable Scandinavian connections). Despite an unfortunate outbreak of whooping cough in one academic household, that weekend saw nine papers given by scholars of seven nationalities on topics ranging across the early modern period and the whole gamut of political, military, economic, social, and cultural history. *Northern Studies* very generously offered to publish a selection of these papers, and the present special issue is the result, containing pieces both by the doyen(ne)s of the field and by younger scholars.

The issue opens with an ambitious article by Thomas Brochard, exploring Scottish-Scandinavian relations through the almost entirely untapped medium of visual culture, particularly heraldry and *alba amicorum*. Brochard's existing expertise in the links between northern Scotland and Scandinavia – as well as Scottish visual culture more

¹⁰ Murdoch, 2000; Grosjean, 2003. Grosjean's work was one of the first volumes published in Brill's *Northern World* monograph series which has gone on to become the premier series for the publication of Scottish-Scandinavian research.

¹¹ Murdoch, 2006.

¹² Smout, 2005, x.

¹³ Worthington (ed), 2010.

¹⁴ *Scotland, Scandinavia and Northern European Biographical Database*, <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/history/ssne/>, accessed 4 May 2017.

¹⁵ Zickermann, 2013.

broadly – is deployed here to excellent effect.¹⁶ First he examines the use of coats of arms by Scots abroad, demonstrating their flexible, self-fashioning nature, and then turns to *alba amicorum* of both Swedes and Scots, interrogating the social and intellectual interactions between the two nations. What emerges in both sections is the protean nature of national or cultural identity: Scots and Swedes shaped and reshaped themselves to respond to a wide variety of situations, sometimes grimly holding on to an ever-more distant foreign past, at other times seamlessly blending in amongst the inhabitants of another part of Europe. Brochard's work offers a valuable commentary on the dangers of making sweeping statements about the national or ethnic allegiances of immigrants, as well as opening up exciting new stretches of visual history which have until now remained largely untapped in Scottish-Scandinavian studies.

Next in order is Alexia Grosjean's study of British musicians in the early modern Scandinavian world. Despite scanty surviving records, Grosjean identifies a large number of musicians active in the Swedish and Danish courts as well as in the two nations' respective armies. In addition to the expected Scottish military drummers and pipers and high-profile Elizabethan court musicians such as John Dowland, her study reveals numerous lesser known figures, including intriguing individuals such as the Scottish drummer Donnchadh mhic Donnchaidh and the Irish harpist Diarmuid Albannach. The Gaelic-speaking diaspora also played an important part in these cultural interchanges. Grosjean's work opens up a vista onto a world of transnational musical employment, which, while known to musicologists, has remained largely *terra incognita* for early modern historians. The implications of this in developing a more nuanced understanding of Scottish-Scandinavian cultural exchange are considerable.

Building on his extensive study of Scottish soldiers in Scandinavian services during the Thirty Years' War, Steve Murdoch addresses the medical provision offered to those soldiers and the role of Scottish field surgeons and physicians in providing it. Swedish medicine was significantly less advanced than its Scottish counterpart at the beginning of the seventeenth century, leading to increasing immigration of trained physicians from Scotland and elsewhere. At the same time, the relative pay of a military surgeon increased dramatically. Nonetheless, more favourable pay scales in the Dutch service seem to have led more Scots medical men there than to Sweden. Murdoch's work develops an important new dimension in our understanding of the Scottish regiments abroad, but also raises a number of exciting questions about the large-scale transnational exchange of skilled professionals during this period.

Finally, Kelsey Jackson Williams considers not a Scot in Scandinavia, but a Scandinavian in Scotland: the itinerant Danish scholar Joachim Frederik von Bassen. On the eve of the revolution of 1688, von Bassen produced a fantastical manuscript, recounting the genealogy of the Scottish kings intertwined with a richly intertextual seam of invention and appropriation all von Bassen's own. Jackson Williams assesses this manuscript's place in the cultures of late Humanism and explores how its author's Danish origins informed his recreation of the Scottish past. As such, it provides a case study in intellectual cross-fertilisation of a kind which has been intensively studied in the

¹⁶ Brochard, 2014: 210-234 and 2015, 1-23.

contexts of, for example, Scotland and England or Scotland and France, but which remains less well-known in a Scottish-Scandinavian context.

Taken as a whole, these articles provide ample evidence of the flourishing state of Scottish-Scandinavian studies. They also point towards its future. Economic and military history remain fundamental to a field whose protagonists were so often soldiers or merchants, but cultural history is increasingly making its mark here, as elsewhere. Likewise, prosopographically informed work – such as Grosjean’s and Murdoch’s examinations of entire professions – continues to be foundational to much Scottish-Scandinavian research, but has now been joined by methodologies borrowed from intellectual and material culture history.

The continuous engagement with the Scottish involvement in the Thirty Years War is not least important in regard to the anniversary of the outbreak of the conflict in 2018, which will stimulate new scholarly interest. Although the Scottish dimension has been thoroughly explored by Murdoch and Grosjean, new research questions relating, for example, to the loyalty of officers and soldiers with multiple identities deserve further analysis. Transnational approaches are also on the rise, but there is still much to be done in going beyond focused analyses of particular cities, regions, or nations and towards broader understandings of the northern world as a single socio-cultural region.

One hundred and ten years on, the promise of Fischer’s *Scots in Sweden* has been richly and diversely realised. There is an intellectually vigorous and ever-growing scholarly literature produced by a tightly-knit, vibrant community of scholars across the world. It is hoped that this special issue of *Northern Studies* will make a modest, but methodologically valuable, contribution to that literature and, in doing so, open up new avenues of research for future scholars of Scottish-Scandinavian studies.

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Articles

Thomas Brochard, “Identities and Contacts: Scots and their Relations with Scandinavia, 1500-1700”

Alexia Grosjean, “The Scandinavian Service of British Isles Musicians ca. 1520-1650”

Steve Murdoch, “‘Medic!’ An Insight into Scottish Field Surgeons, Physicians and Medical Provision during the ‘Thirty Years’ War, 1618-1648”

Kelsey Jackson Williams, “Joachim Frederik von Bassen: A Danish Scholar in Restoration Scotland”

Reviews

Andrew Lind on *The Rivals: Montrose and Argyll and the Struggle for Scotland*. By Murdo Fraser. Birlinn Ltd: Edinburgh, 2015. vii + 280 pp. £9.99 Paperback. ISBN 978-1-78027-306-8.