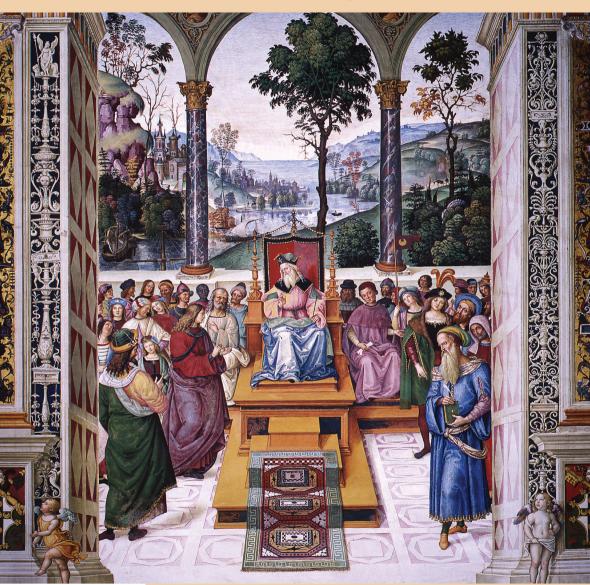
# The Impact of Latin Culture on Medieval and Early Modern Scottish Writing

Edited by Alessandra Petrina and Ian Johnson





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### STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN CULTURE



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## Afterword

### Nicola Royan

To [my history], which in its Scottish dress could interest Scotsmen only, I have, with some trouble, given the power to speak to all through the medium of Latin.<sup>1</sup>

OHN LESLEY'S CHARACTERIZATION of his own De Origine et Moribus Scotorum (1578) identifies two important and obvious features of Scottish latinitas: the breadth of audience, and the Scottish participation in European culture. Even in Lesley's account, however, there may be discerned an element of defensiveness, in the need to court an audience for Scottish affairs using an international language. While such a position is not really tenable, given the interest in and importance of Lesley's queen to European affairs, nevertheless it could be argued that a similar defensiveness has colored the scholarship on Scottish latinitas for several, far more recent, decades.<sup>2</sup> This collection challenges that perspective, by exploring without apology aspects of Scottish latinitas from the eighth century to the seventeenth, and opening that great area of Scottish culture to further scholarly scrutiny, to support its rediscovery in anthologies and histories, and crucially to embed it in our understanding of Scottish culture from the eighth to the eighteenth centuries, rather than isolating it as a curious and additional cousin to the vernacular cultures.3

That a battle standard for new approaches to Scottish *latinitas* should be raised by a volume of essays with its foundations in the 13th International Conference on Medieval and Renaissance Scottish Languages and Literatures, held in Padua in 2011, is not at all surprising for scholars in this area. Indeed, it is something of a trope to describe these conference proceedings as statements of the discipline, as it has grown in confidence, breadth, and depth. Studies in Older Scots have benefited from developments in book history, both with respect to individual manuscripts and prints, and to broader work on production, reception, and circulation; we have become even more sophisticated in tracing intertextuality and encoded responses; and we have enriched and broadened the canon, so much so that the great works of the fifteenth century, even Henryson, can become overshadowed by new discoveries in the seventeenth. Older Scots as a discipline has also developed in self-confidence



and self-assertion, both in comparison with its cousins in Middle English and contemporary Scots. These developments have been evident at each of the triennial conferences: when the 15th International Conference on Medieval and Renaissance Scottish Language and Literature takes place in Glasgow in 2017, research will have moved on again, and new areas, as well as new perspectives on familiar ones, will be brought to our attention.

In contrast to Older Scots, Scottish Latin writing, and, just as important, the Scottish reception of Latin writing, have not perhaps been able to attract quite the same attention. There have of course been exceptional scholars who have engaged profoundly with Latin writing. Some of these are primarily historians: for instance, Donald Watt's supervision of the nine-volume edition of Walter Bower's Scotichronicon is a triumph of shared scholarship and vision; Dauvit Broun has unraveled our assumptions about Fordun and the Chronica Gentis Scotorum; Roger Mason's dissection of the political writings of John Mair and George Buchanan underpins many more recent examinations of sixteenth-century articulations of government and national identity. The intersection of cultural history and literary criticism in this area is clear in the invaluable work of John Durkan and John MacQueen;8 Alexander Broadie's work on the Scottish traditions of philosophy has also foregrounded the significance of Scottish Latin writing.9 It is fitting that Steven J. Reid, a graduate of the University of St. Andrews (supervised by Professor Mason) should have undertaken at the University of Glasgow (intellectual home of Dr. Durkan) such a significant research project as "Bridging the Continental Divide" on Scottish Latin poetry. The disciplinary challenge is now to integrate Latin culture and writing seamlessly into our understanding of Scottish culture and writing, to move beyond straightforward sourcestudy and consideration of the occasional bright star, into a broader conception of a polyglot culture among readers as well as writers. This collection of essays demonstrates the possibilities of Scottish latinitas, as well as providing foundational studies to which future scholars will return.

The collection offers three main approaches to its material, which might be very broadly categorized as production, reception, and external understanding. The last category refers particularly to those essays by Alessandra Petrina and Tommaso Leso, for both of these are concerned with the representation of the inhabitants of Scotland outwith the geographical region. Leso's examination of Bede's understanding of the peoples who lived to the north of Jarrow, specifically the Picts, encourages us to reflect on national boundaries and ethnic definitions. Leso outlines



the critical assumptions that Bede brings to his ethnography. In particular, Leso points out the tension between literary genre and political context, and the way in which the Pictish participation in church reform may have colored Bede's description of them. In the same way that, as Leso points out, Bede inherits Roman attitudes to the Picts, in terms of name and location, so later medieval and early modern writers relied on Bede's understanding of British ethnography without necessarily being able to or indeed concerned to contextualize it. As Leso explains, Bede's position reflected his own situation, while later readers used it to reflect theirs, using the inherited authority to bolster their position. But while Bede's name and reputation were crucial to the survival of the text, it was the medium, namely Latin, that enabled its continued influence beyond Northumbria and beyond the eighth century.

Petrina's subject is to be found at the other end of the chronological spectrum. For Petruccio Ubaldini, the Scots — or at least his description of their location — were a means to an end. There is then a subtle difference between the attitudes of these non-Scottish writers. Whereas, for Bede, the Picts had immediate political and religious importance which he encoded into a familiar genre, for Ubaldini, the encoding was the crucial point, for he wished to draw attention to his gifts as a rhetorician, rather than to communicate anything new. Nevertheless, it is revealing that descriptions of Scotland appear as common cultural currency, the kind of topic by which rulers (or their bureaucrats) could assess the rhetorical competence of a potential worker. We might judge Ubaldini to have limited himself almost to the sixteenth-century equivalent of paraphrasing Wikipedia: that in itself indicates just how accessible his sources were, particularly Hector Boece's Scotorum Historia. Even from these two essays alone, we can see the ways in which Latin material about the Scots and Scotland circulates outwith its borders.

That it does so is in part due to the Latin chronicles and distinguished writers, men (largely) like Walter Bower, John Mair, Hector Boece, George Buchanan, and John Lesley. It happens that neither Bower nor Buchanan receive direct consideration in this collection, but they sit as important Wallie dugs<sup>10</sup> at either end. The *Scotichronicon* underpins sixteenth-century narratives of the Scottish past; Buchanan's influence as a poet, as well as a politician and a historiographer, is inescapable, but his European reputation means that his work has been explored in other publications.<sup>11</sup> None of the three historiographers considered in this collection are exactly unknown, but their treatment here demonstrates a diver-



sity in approaches that provides new perspectives. Building on his investigation of the impact of Latin grammar on vernacular political expression, John C. Leeds looks at the way in which "realist" philosophy underpins John Mair's *Historia*. In contrast, John Cramsie points out how personal knowledge enables John Lesley to enrich his description of Scotland, and to challenge the assumptions of the accounts of Boece and Bellenden. Finally, Elizabeth Hanna explores in detail one particular story in Boece's *Scotorum Historia*, namely the reign of Arthur, and how Boece weaves that into his larger narrative of Scots greatness. Each of these builds on previous examinations of the material, but in focusing on particular details, each enables a new perspective on how these texts communicate their understanding of the Scottish present as well as its past.

The other writers of Latin considered in this volume are the poets, Thomas Maitland and Thomas Seget. While Latin historiography is regularly trawled for its content rather than for its style, Scottish Latin poetry is generally less familiar. There are editions of some Latin poets — the Scottish Text Society edition of Sir Robert Ayton's verse, for instance, has both Latin and English, and the Scottish Historical Society has published a collection of Buchanan's political poetry, while the Delitiae project at Glasgow is publishing digital editions of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets — but they are rarely core parts of university syllabi. Steven J. Reid's account of Maitland's erotic oeuvre demonstrated that Scottish Latin culture was not limited to serious political and religious matters. Reid's account challenges us to look beyond the straight-laced aspects of the Northern Renaissance and Erasmian humanism, to see a richer culture, which has different parallels and intersections with vernacular literatures. The role of vernacular lyric and erotic poetry in political life has been explored for several decades now, with reference to English Elizabethan and Jacobean culture. Reid's essay opens the possibilities of looking at the contemporary situation in Scotland through Latin poetry alongside Older Scots — to see Ayton in the round, for instance — and to think about the relationship between the languages and their users.

If Maitland's fame has been in part maintained by his association firstly with Buchanan and secondly with his bureaucratic family, Thomas Seget has not been so fortunate. Nick Havely's essay explores Seget's career as a scholar, and how this figure moves between Dante (as an owner, however briefly, of a significant manuscript of the *Commedia*) and Galileo (as a messenger between Galileo and Kepler). On the one hand, such a narrative points up the uniqueness of Seget's experience, and his extraordinary



if circumstantial role. On the other, Seget's education at Edinburgh and the Scots contacts on the Continent enabled him to make the necessary connections in the Low Countries and then in Italy, in order to follow a scholar's life. Seget's engagement with scientific thought as well as theology and poetry marks him out in this collection: discussions of *latinitas* have curiously focused on the political, even over the philosophical and theological, and the consideration of Scottish Latin scientific writing is still quite small.<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to speculate how many other men went to the Continent like Seget, but were not able to leave quite such a trail as scholars, writers, and messengers.

That speculation points up two issues: firstly, the peripatetic existence of many Scottish Latin writers, and secondly, their audience. Hector Boece was educated in Paris before coming back to Aberdeen. Mair and Buchanan worked both on mainland Europe as well as in Scotland, and had particular international constituencies. For instance, tracing the current locations of Mair's publications indicates his strong Spanish following, replicating his student body. John Lesley, Thomas Maitland, and Thomas Seget travelled in France, Italy, and in Seget's case to Germany and Bohemia. The time they spent residing in Scotland was in some cases comparatively short. Sometimes this determined their audiences. In Lesley's case, he deliberately sought a European audience for his work to defend his sovereign. He was not alone, for printed histories and other political writing often had foreign publishers. While it was common in the sixteenth century for insular presses to print vernacular works, and Latin and Greek material was printed on the continent, nevertheless, a Parisian printing, such as the one chosen by Mair and Boece, would offer greater opportunity for circulation. It can be assumed therefore that at least part of the audience for Scottish Latin writing is non-Scottish, even when the material or the writer advertises itself or himself (usually) as Scots. The difficulty this brings to definitions of Scottishness may indirectly contribute to the comparative neglect of Scottish Latin as literary text. Even in contemporary literary studies, the definition of what makes literature Scottish is inordinately complex: questions about the national identity of the author, the place of writing, the subject matter, and the language all contribute to definitions of Scottish literature. How much harder, then, to categorize John Barclay's *Argenis*, a romance written in Latin by a man who identified as Scots through his father but never set foot in Scotland before or after the publication of his work.<sup>13</sup> The use of Latin does not expedite these kinds of discussions, yet this collection demonstrates the



significance, the quality, and the influence of Latinate culture on the vernacular, as well as its own reflexivity. Ultimately, whether or not Maitland and Barclay are defined as Scottish writers or as (unspecific) European writers, neither was remotely anxious about the idea of a Scotsman participating in an international culture, or deliberately inviting an international audience. Indeed, like Lesley, they may actively have sought it, if not necessarily for wider political ends.

The writers so far mentioned have been producers as well as readers of Latin text. There is another group of writers, those who read Latin texts and reworked them into Older Scots. Accounts of this kind of interaction have often been focused on source studies. Where such borrowing exists, recognizing a source can be a vital piece of information, particularly if the Scots text has not survived intact. However, they can present the relationship as a simple one of the vernacular text borrowing from Latin text, whether classical or medieval, and have a tendency to value the vernacular text in terms of its closeness to its model, in effect valuing its dependency rather than its reworking, and to assume incompetence on the part of the Scottish writer rather than innovation. Such a pattern has also been true of older accounts of the relationship between Scots and French texts, notably the fifteenth-century romances, Golagros and Gawane and especially Lancelot of the Laik. Only fairly recently have there been discussions that have foregrounded the deviation in the Scots texts as something significant to their own contexts and traditions.14 This approach might be best described as vernacular humanism, a term used by Priscilla Bawcutt to describe Gavin Douglas's engagement with the Aeneid, but which may have purchase in considering other writers and texts. 15 In his essay describing the phenomenon in sixteenth-century England, Warren Boutcher notes that "not only English but Italian, Spanish and French treatments of classical concepts, stories and texts were widely used ... as a pedagogical resource alongside Latin ... 'originals' ... [T]he modes of mediation of these stories in disparate vernacular contexts were related and interdependent." 16 Such a definition would equally fit with some fifteenth-century Scottish texts, where their writers draw on vernacular understandings to re-present classical material. In this collection, Kate Ash-Irisarri and Ian Johnson explore the reworking of Ludus Scaccorum into The Buke of the Chess and the classical narrative of Orpheus and Eurydice (with later accretions) into Henryson's Orpheus and Eurydice.

The Buke of the Chess, as Ash-Irisarri presents it, takes a thirteenth-century Latin text and reworks it for a fifteenth-century Scottish audience. That



reworking involves a change of target, from the monarch alone to a wider body responsible for government, including the nobility. This has also been identified as a feature of other Scottish vernacular advice to princes, and is a change apparently manifested in Golagros and Lancelot. Here then is a question that might trouble the relationship between Latin and Older Scots: does the writer of *The Buke of the Chess* see his Latin model as having similar authority to the French romance sources? Such a question not only demands further thought regarding linguistic status in fifteenth-century Scotland, but also much broader questions about adaptation generally. In the case of *The* Buke of the Chess, it would seem that the fundamental allegory was deemed still useful both in its familiarity and its applicability to general European precepts of good government. However, in order to apply those shared precepts to fifteenth-century Scots culture, the text needed some reshaping. The domestication, therefore, is taking the general and recognizable and making it specific: in so doing, the Latin text is reshaped apparently to fit with other vernacular expressions of good government and advice material.

The case of Henryson's *Orpheus and Eurydice* is different again, for Johnson argues that in that poem Henryson deliberately brings together material and modes of reading from both Latin and vernacular traditions. Such a view is even more radical perhaps than perceiving Latin texts as having authority equivalent to that of French texts, for here the argument is that Henryson presents the act of reading as having authority no matter the material under consideration, but that authority needs to be stretched and exercised to have the necessary moral benefit. Henryson's blending of different expectations undermines the claims of elitism on the one hand, in that the moral benefit is available to all readers, but on the other, continues to challenge the experienced by offering multiple approaches. In order to do this, Henryson himself seems familiar with a multiplicity of reading strategies of what Boutcher identifies as "modes of mediation," and a sound knowledge of academic approaches to reading, mostly expressed in Latin.

This assumption points to the final aspect of Latin reception presented by this collection. It is possible through some source studies and occasionally through direct acknowledgement (as when Boece notes his quotation of Tacitus in the margin), to be certain that particular texts were available in Scotland or to identifiable individuals at the appropriate time. In other cases, such knowledge is based on the work done by John Durkan and Anthony Ross and their successors in *Early Scottish Libraries*. Tracking the existence and circulation of particular volumes



as well as particular texts is ongoing, and will only reveal a proportion of what must have circulated. In working on university and school curricula, Dr. Durkan and others have shown what was basic in education, and although that kind of education was certainly not accessible to all the Scottish population, those who undertook it would have shared common references. This last is key to considering the relationship between Scottish *latinitas* and Scottish vernaculars.

Jeremy Smith's essay looks with a linguist's eye at the work of Sir Thomas Urquhart, one of the extraordinary figures of the seventeenth century. Urguhart's work is undoubtedly idiosyncratic, and has often been portrayed as completely beyond obvious influence and tradition. In examining Urquhart's lexis, particularly with reference to dictionary corpora, Smith demonstrates that Urquhart was less eccentric in his usage than we have been accustomed to believe, but still splendidly polymathic. His lexis is drawn from various disciplines and discourses, including litigation and accounts of language associated with dictionaries. Crucially, however, Smith points out that some of Urquhart's most baroque expressions are designed to provoke laughter, for they are clever euphemisms or elaborate circumlocutions. Those kinds of laugh can only be elicited from those in the know, those whose education and thought patterns are largely similar to the author's. In short, no matter how strange and baroque Urguhart's prose looks to a modern reader, to Urquhart's contemporaries it would have seemed more familiar and certainly less opaque. Most of those people, presumably mostly men, have not left behind their own Latin poetry or baroque Scots prose, so they are less visible. Yet in understanding what Havely calls the "cultural interface ... the volgare and latinitas," 19 apprehending their existence is essential. It is a common and necessary assumption to all the essays in this collection, but the essays by Smith and Johnson are where it is articulated and explored most fully. Understanding the nature of that interface, for instance, how easily educated Scots readers might move between Latin and Scots (leaving aside other vernaculars), or how writers of Latin texts understood vernacular texts and responded to them, is very hard to establish, but in any case the exchange should not necessarily be assumed to go only one way.

To take only one example, in the case of Thomas Maitland, there is perhaps a microstudy of this interface. For, in addition to Thomas's Latin poetry, the patriarch, Sir Richard, wrote in Scots and responded to Latin texts; at least one daughter, Marie, also wrote Scots verse and was familiar with Italian poets, and the other brothers became government servants



and stayed home.<sup>20</sup> It seems probable that William and John Maitland, Thomas's brothers and very clever men, were able to read his poetry, as they read his sister's. It may also be that they might not have differentiated the exercises, that to them reading Latin poetry came as easily as reading Scots poetry, and that they were comfortable in moving from one to the other. It may be that Marie and her sisters had some competence in Latin in addition to French, but, as with most aspects of women's experience, it is even harder to be sure. The Maitlands were an extraordinary family. Nevertheless, as Douglas's earlier suggestion that grammar school teachers would value a crib for the *Aeneid* should not lead us to assume that there was no Scottish audience able to correct his translation, so the Maitlands' distinction does not deny the capacities of their neighbors.<sup>21</sup> In short, these essays reinforce and develop the perception that the audience for Scots and the audience for Latin are entangled, and that this is evident as much from the Scots texts as from the library lists.

The implication of this is surely that Scottish latinitas is essential to the deepest and broadest understanding of Older Scots literature, history, and culture. Such a view does not mean that writing in Older Scots cannot be read, appreciated, and analyzed by those with little or no knowledge of Latin: had it been intended to be read only by those who read Latin, it would surely have been written in Latin. Nevertheless, among scholars, latinitas needs to be embraced as a language of creativity, rather than simply of sources; and as a significant contributor to Scottish culture in shaping inter-textual understanding and mind-set, even if it does not appear to do so directly. More specifically yet, particular areas are only beginning to attract sustained attention: Latin poetry; scientific writing; the relative receptions of neo-Latin and classical Latin in Scottish culture; and the interaction between Latin and the vernaculars. This collection of essays, as a whole and as individual examples, builds on the scholarship of some thirty years to point out new directions and explore old assumptions. In so doing, it offers a challenge to others to take the research forward and highlight the polyglot nature of medieval and early modern Scottish culture in their scholarship. In a context similar to this, after discussing Arthur Johnston's Latin opinion of William Drummond, Sally Mapstone noted that "Johnston's ... remarks are a telling reminder of how our own understanding of Older Scots writing is enhanced by reading around and beyond its standard parameters."22 This volume makes good on that reminder, but issues a reminder of its own, that the standard parameters may not be as standard and as fixed as we think.



#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Cramsie, "Lesley" 136 in the present volume.
- <sup>2</sup> Although Scottish Latin writing has been covered in the major histories of Scottish literature, it is often limited to a single chapter: see, for instance, the chapters in *The History of Scottish Literature*: Macqueen, "Scottish Latin Poetry," and MacQueen, "Latin Prose Literature." See also MacQueen, "From Rome to Ruddiman." There has been an attempt to include Latin texts in larger narratives of Scottish writing: see, notably, Crawford, *Scotland's Books*.
- <sup>3</sup> For editions of Scottish Latin material, see Crawford, *Apollos of the North*. Buchanan's work features heavily in editions, for instance Sharratt and Walsh, *George Buchanan*; McGinnis and Williamson, *George Buchanan*; and Mason and Smith, *Dialogue on the Law of Kingship among the Scots*. Sometimes translated editions are embedded in essay collections: see, for instance, Cunningham, "Andrew Melville's *Scotiae Topographia*." Through the "Bridging the Continental Divide" project, a whole range of Latin poetry has been made available.
- <sup>4</sup> See, for example, Royan, "Introduction," esp. 18; van Heijnsbergen and Royan, "Introduction," esp. x; Mapstone, "Introduction," esp. 3.
- <sup>5</sup> The linguistic situation in medieval and early modern Scotland is complex, involving at least three languages. This essay and the volume generally focus on Latin; the place of Gaelic and its interaction with Latin and with Scots at this period is equally interesting and deserves just as much attention.
  - <sup>6</sup> Broun, The Irish Identity of the Kingdom of the Scots.
  - <sup>7</sup> Mason, Kingship and the Commonweal.
- <sup>8</sup> See, as only a single example, MacQueen, *Humanism in Renaissance Scotland*, which contains Durkan, "Education: Laying Fresh Foundations."
  - <sup>9</sup> Broadie, *The Circle of John Mair* and *A History of Scottish Philosophy*.
- <sup>10</sup> "Wallie *adj., adv., interj., n.*." DSL, accessed 8 Dec 2016 <a href="http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/wallie">http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/wallie</a>, with particular reference to meaning 3.2.
- <sup>11</sup> See, as examples, Erskine and Mason, *George Buchanan*; Green, "George Buchanan's Psalm Paraphrases;" Ford, "Self-presentation."
- <sup>12</sup> For a slightly dated summary article, see Keller, "The Physical Nature of Man;" for a more recent account, Withers, *Geography*.
- <sup>13</sup> See "Barclay, John (1582–1621)," ODNB. Barclay is excluded as non-Scottish from Green, *Scottish Latin Authors*.
- <sup>14</sup> For a discussion of *Golagros and Gawane* and this issue, see Purdie, "The Search for Scottishness in *Golagros and Gawane*."
  - 15 Bawcutt, Gavin Douglas.
  - <sup>16</sup> Boutcher, "Vernacular Humanism," 193.
  - <sup>17</sup> Durkan and Ross, *Early Scottish Libraries*. See also Hillyard, "Durkan & Ross."
  - <sup>18</sup> See Durkan, "Education;" Durkan, Scottish Schools.
  - <sup>19</sup> Havely, "Seget's Comedy" 214 in the present volume.
  - <sup>20</sup> For the Maitland men, see "Maitland, Sir Richard, of Lethington (1496–1586),"



- "Maitland, William, of Lethington (1525×30–1573)," and "Maitland, John, first Lord Maitland of Thirlestane (1543–1595)" in ODNB. For Marie Maitland and her possible poetic career, see Martin, *The Maitland Quarto*, 28–30.
- <sup>21</sup> See Douglas, *Virgil's Aeneid*, IV, Translator's Direction, 88–92, ll. 41–48.
   Douglas's anxiety is perhaps best expressed in "Ane exclamatioun," IV, 192–93.
   <sup>22</sup> Mapstone, "Afterword," 219.

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