The Middle Scots Religious Lyrics

Alasdair A. MacDonald

Ph.D.
University of Edinburgh
1978
To my Mother,

and

in memory of my Father.
Declaration.

I hereby declare that the present thesis has been composed by myself, and that the work which it contains is entirely my own.

Signature:

Date:
Abstract.

This thesis attempts to isolate and describe a particular genre of mediaeval poetry — the Middle Scots religious lyrics. These Catholic lyrics relate to episodes in the life of Christ, address Our Lady, express feelings of penitence, or made general declarations of praise of God. A few are expansions of Latin prayers and hymns.

The introductory chapters provide an account of the cultural context of these poems, and examine the religious, literary, musical, historical and social background. Royal patronage is seen to be very important, as are also the contemporary religious movements of Franciscanism, Marianism, and the Devotio Moderna. At all times the many contacts between Scotland and Continental Europe are stressed.

The lyrics themselves are seen against a background of English and Continental poetry, and there is also a discussion of the texts in which they are preserved. The collection of religious items in the Arundel MS, and the poetry anthology of the Bannatyne MS, emerge as the most significant texts, revealing respectively the devotional attitudes and literary tastes of mid sixteenth-century Scotland.

The impact of the Reformation — with its further Continental influences — has also been examined. Alterations in the texts of Catholic lyrics are pointed out, and the new poetic style of the Protestants is discussed. One notes the loss of many traditional subjects of religious poetry. In conclusion, there follows a brief mention of the religious poetry of the later sixteenth century, ending with a glance at the Castalians.
Acknowledgements.

For all that he has done to guide me in the composition of this thesis, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor John MacQueen, Director of the School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh University. I have been able to take advantage of many constructive suggestions from Father Anthony Ross, O.P., from which my work has greatly benefited. At certain specific places I received helpful hints from Dr R.D.S. Jack, Department of English, Edinburgh University, and from Professor William Beattie, former Librarian of the National Library of Scotland, and now Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, Edinburgh University. I would like to record my appreciation of the courteous assistance which I have received from the staffs of the following institutions: the National Library of Scotland; the British Museum; the Scottish Record Office; Edinburgh University Library; Glasgow University Library; the Mitchell Library, Glasgow; the Brotherton Library of the University of Leeds; the Balme Library of the University of Ghana, Legon.
Contents.

Chapter I: Introduction ........................................ p. 1
Chapter II: The Cultural Background ....................... p. 21
Chapter III: The Religious Background ..................... p. 48
Chapter IV: Performance and Audience ..................... p. 80
Chapter V: The Literary Background ......................... p. 120
Chapter VI: Lyrics of the Annunciation and the Nativity ................................. p. 152
Chapter VII: Lyrics of the Passion and the Resurrection ................................ p. 203
Chapter VIII: Lyrics of the Virgin Mary .................... p. 266
Chapter IX: Miscellaneous and Penitential Lyrics ....... p. 318
Chapter X: Religious Lyrics and the Reformation ....... p. 384
Appendix: Texts containing Middle Scots religious lyrics ................................ p. 467
Bibliography .......................................................... p. 471
Abbreviations used in this thesis.

ALHTS : Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland
AV : Authorised Version
BM : British Museum
BVM : Blessed Virgin Mary
CUL : Cambridge University Library
DNB : Dictionary of National Biography
DOST : Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue
EBS : Edinburgh Bibliographical Society
EETS : Early English Text Society
ES : English Studies
EUL : Edinburgh University Library
GGB : Gude and Godlie Ballatis
HThR : Harvard Theological Review
MLN : Modern Language Notes
MLR : Modern Language Review
MS : Manuscript
NLS : National Library of Scotland
PMLA : Publications of the Modern Language Association (America)
PQ : Philological Quarterly
RCAHMS : Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland
RES : Review of English Studies
RPS : Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland
SBRS : Scottish Burgh Records Society
SGTS : Scottish Gaelic Texts Society
SHR : Scottish Historical Review
SHS : Scottish History Society
SND : Scottish National Dictionary
SRS : Scottish Record Society
SSL : Studies in Scottish Literature
STC : Short-Title Catalogue of Books 1475-1640
STS : Scottish Text Society
TEBS : Transactions of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society
Note on the treatment of texts.

The manuscripts in which most of the Middle Scots religious lyrics appear have generally, in the relevant Scottish Text Society volumes, been transcribed rather than properly edited. Although I have used these volumes wherever possible, I have felt free to do my own editing of the parts of the lyrics which are quoted in the chapters below. For the sake of consistency I have done the same with one or two edited texts: e.g. the Makculloch MS, and the Gude and Godlie Ballatis. In the meantime, a full scale edition of the texts of the Middle Scots religious lyrics remains something devoutly to be wished. Where I have quoted explicitly from a reliable, modern edition - such as Carleton Brown's Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century - I have, of course, reproduced the text as given therein. Where a lyric exists in more than one text I have normally followed the earliest version, but exceptions to this rule are noted at the appropriate places below. In the quotations, punctuation and capitalisation are my own. Original abbreviations, whether of single words or of whole-line refrains, have been expanded. The scribal letters /ʒ/, ʃ and ʒ, have been given, respectively, as s, th and (usually) y. Vocalic w has been written as u. ff, at the beginning of a line of verse, has been given as F. I have identified lyrics by underlining their first lines, and put titles (unless of large works or books) into quotation marks.
Chapter I: Introduction.

(a) Outline .......................................................... p. 2

(b) Tentative Definitions of the Religious Lyric .... p. 3

(c) Ballatis of theologic ........................................ p.10

(d) The Study of the Middle Scots Religious Lyrics ... p.16
Outline.

In the critical discussion which follows I shall be principally concerned to examine some sixty or seventy poems written in Scotland in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. These poems are all religious lyrics, and they form part of a mediaeval, European, and Catholic tradition of such works. I shall also discuss the religious lyrics of the Scottish, Protestant reformers which began to appear in the quarter-century before the Reformation of 1560, and which survive from printed texts of the 1560's. These Scottish Protestant lyrics, despite the obvious new departures which they make in the matter of doctrine, will be seen nonetheless to exhibit certain affinities with the mediaeval tradition of religious lyric poetry, and to be related, just as much as their Catholic counterparts, to the larger European background.

The present study is the first to bring together into a single focus all the Middle Scots religious lyrics. Such a conspectus enables one to appreciate that there is here a genre (in saying this I am thinking mainly of the Catholic lyrics) rather than a motley collection of sixty or seventy heterogeneous specimens. As I shall demonstrate below, common features of structure, style and diction can frequently be discerned among the lyrics on any given subject, and the economically forceful way in which these features are handled permits, I believe, the distinguishing, within a context of English and Continental religious poetry, of a specifically Middle Scots type of lyric. It is also perhaps appropriate to remark at the outset - though this will emerge as abundantly
clear from the critical discussion of the poems themselves - that I consider the Middle Scots religious lyric to be a felicitous creation, eminently worthy of critical investigation.

Tentative Definitions of the Religious Lyric.

There already exists a sizeable body of critical writing devoted to the Middle English religious lyrics, and as a consequence there is no need to attempt here a fundamental definition of the term 'religious lyric'. There is in any case little chance of arriving at any one universally applicable formula with which to denote poems so numerous, so diverse in style, so varied in subject matter, and which come from so many different periods. Yet a working definition evolved from an examination of the practice of the Middle Scots poets may not be absolutely useless. We can, therefore, tentatively say that a religious lyric is a literary composition in verse, which is on a religious theme, which is strophic in form, and which does not run to great length.

Although the phrase, 'literary composition in verse', might seem to be all-embracing, I use it here to refer to poetry in which the poet, through his efforts of imagination and skill in expression can be held to have achieved a creation both interesting for its subject matter and affecting for the reader. I would not wish to extend the range of the description to cover pieces which are merely versifications - and occasionally rather crude ones - of prose originals.
Among the latter, versified renderings of the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, and the Apostles' Creed loom large, and examples of all three can, in fact, be found together on a single folio of the Makculloch MS, a text which also preserves several religious lyrics.1 These versifications - when they are good ones - have their peculiar merits: their ideals are concision and clarity, their function mnemonic, and when they achieve these things they can be considered to be successful, in their own way. Yet it is obvious that there is a wide gap between such productions and poems which display colours of rhetoric, and which may make strong appeals to the emotions of the reader or listener. That is not to deny, of course, that versified prayers may be the vehicles for the profoundest religious sentiments, but since pieces of this nature ultimately justify their existence on the basis of content alone, whereas true religious lyrics are justified by the harmonious coordination of religious content and poetic artistry, I have chosen to examine only the latter kind of poem. As it happens, most of the Middle Scots religious verse survives in manuscripts (the Bannatyne, Bannatyne Draft, Maitland Folio, Maitland Quarto) wherein the choice of the compilers is patently governed by literary, rather than devotional merit.2 (That is because these collections of mostly Catholic poetry were assembled after


2 A detailed list of the Middle Scots poetry MSS, with dates and details of modern editions, can be found below, pp.467-470.
the Reformation: the earlier Arundel MS is the most important exception to the rule.) We are thus fortunate in still having a considerable number of religious lyrics of excellent poetic quality, although many others will doubtless have been lost. The object of the present study is to make a critical examination of these lyrics rather than an indiscriminate survey of each and every scrap of religious verse.

The various themes of mediaeval religious lyric poetry can be most conveniently seen in the headings under which Carleton Brown arranged his collection of fifteenth-century religious lyrics. However, not all of them are applicable to the Middle Scots religious lyrics - as a result of the destructive forces of time and Reformation. The surviving Scottish lyrics fall naturally into the groupings adopted for the chapters of discussion which follow. The poems which relate to the life of Christ can be collected in two sections: the first dealing with the Annunciation and the Nativity; the second dealing with the Passion and the Complaints of Christ, followed by the Lyrics of the Resurrection. Then come the lyrics of the Virgin Mary. Another chapter deals with certain themes for which only a few poems survive - lyrics in praise of God the Father, and what Carleton Brown called 'Songs of Penitence'. Here, too, are grouped miscellaneous lyrics which seem to be related to mediaeval Catholic hymns, or to texts used in the liturgy. A final chapter gives a review of the lyrics of the Protestants, and considers the ways in which the topics and themes just outlined are developed (or avoided)

---

by the Reformers, with especial reference to the collection known as the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis*.4

Systems of classification are seldom watertight, and those just indicated are, it must be admitted, more convenient than neat. Several lyrics have affinities with more than one group. The poem, *Quhen be dyvyne deliberatioun*5 could be found both among the Annunciation and the Marian poems, while the solitary Middle Scots lyric on the Compassion of the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Quhat doolour persit Our Ladyis hert*,6 relates in a similar fashion to both the Marian and the Passion lyrics. Nevertheless, the divisions adopted here are those which, I believe, best accommodate the Middle Scots poems as they have come down to us.

It was said above that religious lyrics do not, characteristically, run to great length. It is not common for lyrics to be of less than ten, or more than sixty, lines. Within such a compass, the poet may make a meaningful statement, without being either too brief, or too lengthy. These dimensions can also be related - as we shall see later - to the practical needs of public or private recitation and singing, especially since musical settings usually extend the time required for the delivery of a poem.7 Where the

---


7 See below, pp.343-344.
lyric - as is often the case - expresses a single emotional state on the part of the poet, we would not really expect the poem to be unduly protracted: repetition ultimately tends to monotony. This consideration is particularly relevant to the Marian lyrics of adoration, such as Dunbar's *Hale, sterne superne*, 8 or the lyric contained in Richard Holland's allegorical poem, *The Buke of the Howlat: Hale, temple of the Trinity*. 9

If a lyric were to be extended to great length, we should expect some development in the poet's emotions, or a recourse to some more robust structural framework - such as can be provided by narrative or allegory. It is of course possible for such literary devices to be used to communicate a single emotional state on the part of the poet: this is precisely what we do find in Dunbar's great Passion lyric, *Amang thir freiris within ane cloister*, 10 discussed below. This meditation on the Passion used the time-honoured convention of the dream vision to introduce and round off the poem, and, within the vision, resorts first to a harrowing narrative of the sufferings and death of Christ, and subsequently to an allegorical account of the poet's emotional reactions thereto. Some critics might oppose the application of the term, 'lyric', to such a composition, simply because of the presence there of these essentially non-lyrical characteristics, and because


9 *The Asloan MS*, II, 95-126; *The Bannatyne MS*, IV, 128-158. The Marian lyric comprises lines 718-741 of the Howlat.

of the length of the poem (144 lines). However, the term, 'lyric', must of necessity be somewhat elastic, and the practice of modern critics of the lyric, such as Rosemary Woolf, has been to regard Dunbar's poem as a lyric.\textsuperscript{11}

Moreover, the scarcity of the surviving material in Middle Scots prevents one from being always rigidly exclusive in one's critical categories: to put it simply, beggars can't be choosers. Then again, the figure of one hundred lines cannot be regarded as a magic number. Of the lyrics in Carleton Brown's \textit{Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century}, twelve exceed that mark, and three (Nos. 102, 109 and 144) are appreciably longer than Dunbar's poem. Thus, though it may be conceded that \textit{Amang thir freiris} carries us to the outer limits of the lyric, it does not, in my opinion, transgress them.

Two other 'problem' poems demand to be mentioned here. The first is Henryson's 'The Bludy Serk', which I regard as a fable, and not as a lyric.\textsuperscript{12} In the poem, a knight heroically battles against a giant to save a virgin's kingdom, but dies in victory. His blood-stained 'serk' is preserved as a beloved relic. This poem, like Henryson's other fables, divides into two sections of narrative and Moralitas, and in the latter the battle of the knight is explained in terms of an allegory of the sacrificial death of Christ. 'The Bludy Serk' is thus formally distinct from the Middle Scots lyrics

\begin{footnotes}
\item[12] \textit{The Bannatyne MS}, IV, 202-205.
\end{footnotes}
proper, and George Bannatyne, who included it in his manuscript, located it far from the first section of lyrics, and together with the other fables, in his fifth section. For all these reasons I shall not discuss 'The Bludy Serk' in the present study.

Even more problematic is the case of another Middle Scots poem - Walter Kennedy's *magnum opus*, *Hail, Cristin knycht, hail, etern confortour*, preserved only in the Arundel MS.\(^{13}\) On account of its length (1715 lines), Rosemary Woolf excludes it from detailed consideration.\(^{14}\) While one cannot indeed pretend that such a work is a religious lyric, it makes sense, I suggest, to examine it in the context of a study of the lyrics. At certain points of the poem - most clearly in the stanzas which immediately follow the account of the death of Christ - the writing can only be described as lyrical, and can be related to religious lyrics on the same subject. One might argue that Kennedy, in this long poem, has been concerned to extend the range of possibilities of the religious lyric. We shall see that *Hail, Cristin knycht*, like *Amang thir freiris*, is related to devotions on the Passion:\(^{15}\) thus if one treats the latter poem, one may, perhaps, be forgiven for treating also the former, which is somewhat akin to it in method and purpose. And once again, finally, the paucity of surviving Middle Scots poetry makes the inclusion here of *Hail, Cristin knycht* desirable, even at the cost of some violation of consistency.

---

13 *Devotional Pieces*, pp.7-63.
15 See below, pp.257-265.
Ballatis of theoligie.

Although the label, 'religious lyric', has hitherto been used to denote the poems to be discussed below, it must be pointed out that this is one term which is never employed in the texts themselves. The first recorded use - according to the Oxford English Dictionary - of the word 'lyric' in the sense of 'a poem in lyric metre' is to be found in Sir Philip Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie* (written in the early 1580's, though not published - in its two forms - till 1595), and the first use of 'lyrical' is to be found in the same work.16

In fifteenth and sixteenth-century Scotland, the most common term for a lyric poem was "ballat". The text which can be used most conveniently to demonstrate this is the Bannatyne MS of 1568 - the largest collection of mediaeval Scottish lyric poetry, on religious and other themes. The so-called 'Draft MS' - which precedes the main text - begins with the words: "Heir begynnis ane ballat builk...",17 and again, at the conclusion of the opening section of the main part of the manuscript we find the following: "Heir endis the first pairt of this buke contenand ballatis of theoligie".18 From this last phrase we may deduce that "ballatis of theoligie" is a contemporary critical term for most of the religious lyrics which we shall examine below. Within the same opening section of this manuscript we find 'ballat' used to introduce the religious lyrics of Christmas, which are "ballatis of the nativitie of Chryste", and also to describe the long poem by

17 *The Bannatyne MS*, I, 1.
18 *The Bannatyne MS*, II, 108.
Sir Richard Maitland of Lethington: "Ane ballat of the creatioun of the warld /etc/".\(^{19}\) The Draft MS also speaks of "Ane godlie ballat maid be the poet Montg\(\text{o}m\)erie/".\(^{20}\)

That the term 'ballat' is not peculiar to George Bannatyne can be seen from the general descriptive heading, "ballat of our ladye" in the Asloan MS - a pre-Reformation text.\(^{21}\)

When Bannatyne ends his subsection of Nativity lyrics and begins on the Passion poems we find the following words:

"Finis nativitatis dei Sequntur de eius passione quedem cantilenee",\(^{22}\) and we may surmise that the term 'cantilena' is for Bannatyne an equivalent of 'ballat'. Furthermore, Bannatyne not only uses 'ballat' to introduce his section of religious lyrics, and the various subsections thereof, but also employs the same term for the following three sections of the manuscript - "ballatis full of wisdome and moralitie", "ballettis mirry", "ballattis of luve".\(^{23}\) The same terminology is also encountered among the lyrics of the Protestant Reformers. It is seen in such a title as \textit{Gude and Godlie Ballatis}, and in some general descriptive headings within the same collection: "certaine ballatis of the Scripture", and "Uther new plesand ballatis".\(^{24}\)

The term 'ballat', as also 'cantilena', reminds us of the musical dimension of the poems so denominated. The

\(^{19}\) The Bannatyne MS, II, 63, 26.

\(^{20}\) The Bannatyne MS, I, 82.

\(^{21}\) The Asloan MS, II, 245, 270.

\(^{22}\) The Bannatyne MS, II, 77.

\(^{23}\) The Bannatyne MS, II, 108, 258; III, 240.

\(^{24}\) The \textit{Gude and Godlie Ballatis}, pp.59, 85.
heading to Sir Richard Maitland's "ballat of the creatioun of the warld" - referred to above - goes on to say that the poem was "maid to the tone of the bankis of helecon". The metrical structure of Maitland's lyric is thus determined by the exigencies of the pre-existing popular (and secular) song. In this case we are fortunate that the melody of 'The Banks of Helicon' - which was composed by the Scotsman, Andrew Blackhall (1536-1609) - still survives. It must indeed have been an influential song for its stanza form appears in 'Ane Ballat of the Captane of the Castell', attributed to Sir William Kirkcaldy of Grange, and it was also used by Alexander Montgomerie, for his moral allegory, 'The Cherrie and the Slae'. As we shall see below, many of the religious lyrics of the Protestants were expressly written to exploit the already wide currency of the melodies of secular songs. However, this practice - which is an age-old method of generating the popular hymnody of the church, and still continues in our time - was by no means exclusive to the Protestants, who were here merely following the example of earlier, Catholic poets. For example, one popular English song, My love she mourn' th for me, for me, was spiritualised

according to Catholic belief by John Gwynneth, and printed in 1530 in a volume described by John Stevens as the "earliest English book of printed songs in mensural notation": it was also spiritualised according to Protestant belief by an unknown Scotsman and printed in the 1567 collection of Gude and Godlie Ballatis. And again, we may further assume that many of the high-style, Catholic Middle Scots religious lyrics would likewise have been graced with musical settings, albeit in the technically more complicated styles favoured by the Church and the Court. Tragically, of course, most of this music has not survived the Reformation: desunt nonnulla.

At least two of the other descriptive labels for Middle Scots religious lyrics further strengthen the links between the music and the poetry. The first is 'Psalm', and the three vernacular metrical translations of psalms preserved in the Bannatyne MS - two of them by Alexander Scott, himself a musician attached to the Chapel Royal at Stirling - must be seen in the European context of vernacular psalmody which developed in the sixteenth century. The second term is 'Song': in the Bannatyne MS we have "a Song of him lying in poynt of deth" and "The song of the virgin mary" (a translation of the Magnificat).


29 See below, pp.43-181.


31 Millar Patrick, Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody (London, 1949), pp.3-42.

32 The Bannatyne MS, II, 34-35, 60-63.
On the other hand, two more descriptive terms — "prayer" and "exortatioun" — used in the Bannatyne MS might seem to be unrelated to music. However, it is by no means impossible to imagine such a poem as Robert Henryson's 'Prayer for the Pest' set to music: on the contrary, the initial, doleful, penitential mood could well be supported by the use of minor harmonies, and, were these to change to major for the last three stanzas, we should have a musical correlative to the emotional structure of the poem. The same can be said for Stewart's "exortationis of Chryst to all synnaris To repent thame of the same": we should not, even here, rule out the possibility that these poems were designed as much to be sung as to be read.

In the light of these remarks we may at first conclude that the only religious verse which was written to be read and not sung is that which has been excerpted from texts which are themselves definitely known to be unconnected with music. One such poem would be Gavin Douglas's *He plasmatour of thingis universall*, which was transcribed by Bannatyne from Douglas's translation of the *Aeneid* (published by Copland in 1553), wherein this poem on the Trinity figures as the prologue to the tenth book. Another example would be the poem, *O wondit

33 The Bannatyne MS, II, 58-60.
34 Cf. below, pp.151-168, 370.
35 The Bannatyne MS, II, 90-95.
spreit and saule in till exile, which, as I point out below, has been adapted by Bannatyne or another from the extremely long moral work, The Contemplacioun of Synnaris, printed at Westminster by Wynkyn de Worde in 1499. Yet though the original sources of these two poems are strictly non-lyrical, that need not mean that these poems themselves, when taken - as Bannatyne takes them - out of context, cannot be regarded as religious lyrics. One could argue that, in these cases, the very process of excerption has created two lyrics: such indeed is my opinion, and I shall treat these poems alongside the other religious lyrics in Bannatyne's collection.

Music, therefore, is to be regarded not as an adjunct but as an integral part of any definition of the religious lyric. Although further discussion of this subject is deferred until later, it must be pointed out here that the musical setting may well have a determining effect on the number of lines in a religious lyric: the power of the human vocal organs is not unlimited, and a length of up to fifty pentameter lines might be thought to be most convenient for singing.

We can say, then, that the contemporary Scottish term for such a religious lyric is 'ballat', and nearly all the poems discussed below can be confidently so called.

Bannatyne's title, "ballatis of theoligie", is particularly apt, and argues not just the existence, but the perceived

---

37 The Bannatyne MS, II, 80-83. See also below, pp.12b-13b.
38 Other texts of the Contemplacioun are in the Asloan and Arundel MSS, and BM MS Harleian 6919; The Asloan MS, II, 219-226; Devotional Pieces, pp.124-141.
39 See below, pp.88-103.
40 There can, of course, be no hard and fast rule here, and it must be emphasised that the figure of fifty lines is merely a personal guess (albeit based on some experience of the performance of such pieces).
existence, of a genre - a genre to be seen in the context of, and in relation to, others similarly labelled, such as the "ballatis full of wisdome and moralitie" and the "ballatis of luve". As William Ramson has recently written:

the lasting value of [Bannatyne's] editing is not simply that it is intelligent, that, had the 'Ballat Buik' ever been published, it would have been neat, convenient, and remarkably 'modern' in its arrangement, but that it is critically based and provides, through the deliberateness with which the poems have been selected and ordered, a demonstration of a sixteenth century Scottish understanding of the uses of poetry and an example of the poetic taste which was in part conditioned by this understanding.41

It is with the genre of "ballatis of theoligie" that we shall be concerned here.

The Study of the Middle Scots Religious Lyrics.

There has never yet been any study of the Middle Scots religious lyrics by themselves. There are several reasons for this. One stems from the custom of historians of English literature, who usually conclude their surveys of mediaeval literature at the date of 1500.42 The example of Carleton Brown, whose anthologies of English religious lyrics are


culled from successive centuries, is typical of this attitude. The useful reference work, The Index of Middle English Verse, stops at the end of the fifteenth century, and this has awkward results, as R.H. Robbins pointed out in the later Supplement to the Index. The truth is, of course, that, in both England and Scotland, there was exactly in the year 1500 no abrupt transmogrification of taste. Mediaeval lyrics continued to be read, recited, sung, copied and printed in the age of Wyatt and Surrey, an age which is conventionally regarded in relation to the Renaissance. In the case of Scotland, furthermore, it often happens that the only surviving texts of lyrics which are obviously much older belong to the middle or late sixteenth century: such are the Bannatyne, Maitland Folio and Maitland Quarto MSS. Many of the Middle Scots religious lyrics which are preserved in these late texts belong to a tradition which goes back to the age of Chaucer and Lydgate. Yet most of them, we may presume, were composed during the 'Golden Age', the reigns of James III, James IV, and James V - a period which is usually considered to usher in the Renaissance in Scotland. Thus, while nearly all these poems display features which are thoroughly 'mediaeval', there are some - as we shall see - which it is helpful to relate to the larger context of the Northern European Renaissance. The taxonomic problems of the historians


of English literature should not be allowed to deflect one from the present purpose. In the meantime, therefore, we shall merely designate the poems to be discussed here by the neutral label provided by the language in which they are written: Middle Scots religious lyrics.

Another factor which has probably tended to militate against the study of the Middle Scots religious lyrics is the lack of information concerning the authorship of these poems. Less than one quarter, perhaps, are graced with any manuscript attribution to a particular author. Such large-scale anonymity can be daunting, and it is obviously safer to deal in precise facts than in the often nebulous deductions made from poetic style.

A third difficulty - of a practical nature - which besets the student of Middle Scots poetry is the fact that most of the material has only been transcribed, rather than edited. Indeed, the poems which have been properly edited are mostly those by known authors. Yet while, for example, the religious lyrics of Dunbar have been edited time and again along with his other poems, the same religious lyrics have been seldom given due recognition in their own right. In the edition of William Mackay Mackenzie they are banished to the very end of the book, almost as if they were to be considered as a kind of appendix.\textsuperscript{45} It is, however, the view of the present writer that Dunbar's religious lyrics are not the least praiseworthy among his works, and that they are best appreciated in the context of contemporary poems by other writers which they resemble in style and subject-matter. This endeavour perforce

involves one in the task of doing one's own editing.

It is, of course, greatly to be regretted that such difficulties have hitherto prevented a critical examination of the Middle Scots religious lyrics. I hope to demonstrate that this genre contains very great poetical merit, and should no longer be underestimated.
Background to the Middle Scots religious lyrics.

In the short chapters which follow in this section, I have tried to indicate something of the main trends in the background - religious, political, educational, musical and literary - to the Middle Scots religious lyrics. These aspects may all be subsumed under the general heading of 'cultural background', and the division of this material into four results from no more than practical utility. In the space available it has been quite impossible for me to provide a complete picture of this cultural background - nor am I competent to attempt one. I have therefore deliberately chosen to emphasise the factors which impinge most upon the composition and performance of religious lyric poetry in late mediaeval Scotland. My great debt to previous and present scholars working in this field will be as widely apparent as it is gratefully acknowledged.
Chapter II: The Cultural Background.
In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries - as scholars such as David McRoberts, John Durkan, Anthony Ross, John MacQueen and Priscilla Bawcutt have stressed - Scotland was no cultural island, cut off from neighbouring countries, and with a culture developing along narrowly nationalistic lines. On the contrary, it seems to have been a country remarkably open to influences from the rest of Europe, a land where new ideas were, in the main, readily assimilated. Any study of the manifestations of Scottish culture in this period, therefore, must of necessity take cognizance of a wider, European context.

The European connection, in the period under consideration, derived mainly from the activities of two institutions: the Court and the Church. The list of Princes with whom Kings James IV and James V carried on diplomatic correspondence is impressive.1 Such contacts required trusted messengers and skilled negotiators, many of whom were clerics and some were also poets. Gavin Douglas and Sir David Lindsay were two who were employed on such errands.2 Royal marriages especially were a fruitful source of contact between kingdoms, and in the period of this study each and every spouse of the Scottish monarchs came from abroad. The wives of Kings James II, III, IV, and V were respectively Mary of Gueldres (from Gelderland, in the Low Countries), Margaret of Denmark, Margaret Tudor, and (i) Madeleine of France and (ii) Mary of


2 See below, pp.27-28.
Furthermore, the first husband of Mary Queen of Scots was the Dauphin, later Francis II of France.

Such royal marriages involved more than merely court ceremonial, and were responsible for spurring on Scottish artists to creative endeavour. As an example, we can cite the testimony of Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie, writing of the welcome accorded to the English wife of James IV in 1503:

*gret reverence and honouris in all the borrowis townis of Scotland quhan that scho maid hir entres.
Evirie ane according to thair estait maid hir sic bankattin, feirceis and playes, that nevir siclykk was seine in the realme of Scotland for the entres of na queine that was ressavit afoirtyme in Scotland.*

The entertainment was not, however, all one-sided, and the Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer for 1st October 1503 record the payment of thirty French crowns "to the menstrales of Ingland, quhilk passit away". Altogether the marriage was a most magnificent occasion, and seemed so not only to the Scots, but also to the English. We may also quote Pitscottie on the marriage of James V and Madeleine of France, which was celebrated in Notre Dame de Paris on the 1st January 1537:

---

5 A full account, from the viewpoint of John Young, Somerset Herald, is given in J.W. Baxter, William Dunbar: A Biographical Study (Edinburgh and London, 1952), pp. 114-118. I shall refer to this later, when discussing the relationship between religious lyrics and dramatic performances: below, p.118.
And also the pairteis bankcating, deliecalt and costlie triumph and playis and feistis, witht pleasand sound of instrumentis of all kynd, and also cuning carweris haveand the art of igramansie to cause thingis to appeir, quhilk was as flieand dragounss in the air schot fyre at ether heids, great reveris of watteris rynand throw the toun and schipis fyghtand thairupon as it had bene the bullring stremes of the sie, witht schutting of gouns lyk crakis of thunder.  

From such cultural contacts with European artists the Scots poets would doubtless benefit. Pitscottie's account of the "triumphant frais" of Sir David Lindsay, with which the latter welcomed Mary of Guise to Scotland and St Andrews in 1538, leaves us in no doubt that he had fully mastered the art of the Renaissance pageant:

Lyndsay ... caussit ane great clude come out of the heavins done abone the yeit quhair the quene come in, and oppin in two halffis instantlie, and thair appeirit ane fair lady most lyk ane angell havand the keyis of haill Scotland in hir handis deliverand thame into the quens grace, in signe and takin that all the heartis of Scottland was opnit to the ressaving of hir grace; witht certane uriesouns and exortationis maid be the said Schir David Lyndsay into the quens grace instructioun ...  

As we can see, Scotland was not slow in following the artistic example of England and the Continent.

Although, as Pitscottie seems to imply, such dramatic performances in the celebration of royal nuptials were an

---

6 Pitscottie, Historie, I, 365.
7 Pitscottie, Historie, I, 379.
innovation of the age of James IV, earlier marriages also left their effect on Scotland. The arrival of Mary of Gueldres in 1449 greatly fostered contacts between Scotland and the Low Countries. Many Flemings who came with her stayed on in Scotland, though Black points out that the name 'Fleming' appears in Scottish documents from the second half of the twelfth century. As we shall see later, Mary of Gueldres encouraged the growth of the Franciscans in Scotland. Observantine friars had arrived in Edinburgh from the Low Countries only two years before her marriage to James II; she herself, by a Papal Bull of 1463 was allowed to establish three or four Observantine houses; and prominent among the Observantine friars were such Dutchmen as Father Cornelius of Zierikzee, at Edinburgh, and (later) Father Gerard of Texel, at Aberdeen.

Mary of Gueldres, after the death of James II, founded in 1462 the Trinity College in Edinburgh, where she herself was later buried. The altar-piece of Trinity College was the work of the famous Dutch painter, Hugo van der Goes (c.1470).


With this name the Scottish-Dutch connections are strengthened, for Van der Goes was related by marriage, David McRoberts points out, to:

the great miniaturist Alexander Bening, who was almost certainly a Scotsman from Edinburgh and ... Bening, in his turn, was father-in-law to Andrew Halyburton, the Conservator of the Privileges of the Scottish Nation in the Netherlands.

McRoberts notes the frequent appearance of Scottish names in Flemish artists' guilds in the century before the Reformation, suggests that the Van der Goes altarpiece was unlikely to have been a unique specimen, and thus speculates that there may have been in mediaeval Scottish churches more such works by Dutch masters, and perhaps also some from France, Germany or Italy.11 One other artistic commission is definitely known - the commemorative medal executed by Quentin Metsys for William Scheves, Archbishop of St Andrews and one of the most interesting figures in relation to the cultural exchanges of the day.12 Furthermore, Van der Goes - like Mary of Gueldres herself - came from the part of the Low Countries associated with the pre-Reformation religious reform movement known as the Devotio Moderna. As will be suggested later, this movement may have been a significant background influence on religious

11 David McRoberts, "Material Destruction caused by the Scottish Reformation" in McRoberts, Essays on the Scottish Reformation, p.457. Thompson and Campbell have recently questioned the theory that Bening was a Scot, but they do provide a list of objets d'art imported to Scotland from the Low Countries in the late mediaeval period: Hugo van der Goes, pp.50, 53-54. See also David McRoberts, "Notes on Scoto-Flemish Artistic Contacts", Innes Review, X (1959), 91-96.

life—and thus on religious poetry—in late fifteenth-century Scotland.\(^{13}\)

We can see, therefore, that the dynastic marriages of the Scottish kings were an important factor in promoting artistic influences from abroad. Even more important, however, must have been the contacts forged by the Church in several spheres of activity: theology; the religious life; diplomacy; education. All through our period—as also before and after it—many young Scotsmen proceeded to the universities of the Continent, especially to Paris, to further their education, church officials went regularly back and forth to the Papal Court at Rome, and many clerics—who were the best educated men in Scotland at the time—assisted in negotiations wherein the affairs of Church and State were often closely connected.

To give some examples from the lives of the poets: Gavin Douglas was in 1517 sent to France by the Regent Albany to renew the alliance between the two countries and to arrange a marriage between the young James V and one of the daughters of Francis I. These negotiations concluded in the treaty of Rouen of 26 August 1517. Douglas's companions in this mission were Patrick Panter, royal secretary and Abbot of Cambuskenneth, and Robert Cockburn, Bishop of Ross. In 1521 Archibald Douglas sent his uncle, Gavin, to London, with letters for Henry VIII and Cardinal Wolsey—and there Gavin Douglas died in the following year.\(^{14}\) Sir David Lindsay frequently acted as

\(^{13}\) Van der Goes died in the Rode Klooster near Brussels in 1482. This was affiliated to the Windesheim Congregation: Thompson and Campbell, *Hugo van der Goes*, p.3. See below, pp.53–72.

ambassador for James V, and in the course of his duties met the Emperor Charles V at Brussels in July 1531, met King Francis I in 1532, '34, '35 and '36, and was present at the marriage of James V and Madeleine of France in Paris on 1st January 1537. Such diplomatic missions would certainly afford the Scottish poets ample opportunities of imbibing cultural influences from the Continent. (It should, however, be noted that J.W. Baxter has dismissed Oliphant Smeaton's suggestion that William Dunbar acted as a special "King's messenger" for James IV.)

When we turn to the field of education, we can readily appreciate the huge contribution which this must have made to the development of cultural contacts between Scotland and the rest of Western Europe. The researches of Dr John Durkan allow us to perceive this trend in its full magnitude:

there is no need to labour the importance of Paris. Paris was not only the main filter for European culture; it was also, in the phrase of Gabriel le Bras, the second capital of Christianity. But at Paris Scots students were not only under French influence, although this was increasingly so by the time of Mary of Lorraine, as it contracted into a much more national institution, with a much decreased inflow of foreign, and especially of German, students; for it tends to be forgotten that the Scots there were members of the German (formerly English) nation in the university, and so most closely associated with Dutch, Flemish and German students by the very nature of the university organisation. When our Hector Boece left

---

16 William Dunbar, pp.44-45.
Paris his most vivid memories were of Jean Standonck of Malines and Erasmus of Rotterdam. Moreover, men like John Mair were admirers of the Spaniards, treating themes of interest to their expanding empire, and acquiring Iberian followers such as the young Vives, the Coronels, the Enzinas, Juan Gelida, who became the patron of may Scots teachers at Bordeaux. At Paris also Buchanan made the contacts that brought him later to teach at Coimbra. Orleans ... Bourges, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Poitiers, Angers and Montpellier were overshadowed and provincialised by the Parisian monopoly, although all sheltered the odd Scots student during their occasional spells of temporary brilliance. 17

Although Paris was the main educational centre for Scots abroad, Durkan has also found several Scots students in other countries: in Italy (at Padua, Bologna, Pavia and Rome); High and Low Germany (at Louvain, Cologne, Frankfurt on Oder, Vienna - and, after the onset of the Reformation, at Wittenberg, Greifswald, Frankfurt on Rhein, and Leipzig); and also Denmark. The education of Scots overseas was clearly a fairly large-scale phenomenon. 18

Nor was this phenomenon a merely one-sided flow of information. Scottish students who were successful in their scholastic careers might well remain abroad for years, and thus make a mark in the education of Continental students. The great humanist, George Buchanan, praised by Scaliger and known as "huius saeculi poetarum facile princeps", is such a

Durkan gives the example of John Lesley, who later became Bishop of Ross, and wrote, between 1568 and 1570, a history of Scotland - first published at Rome (in a Latin version) in 1578. Lesley graduated in Arts at Aberdeen, studied theology at Paris, studied canon and civil law at Poitiers, took a licence in civil law at Toulouse, returned to Paris and was made a doctor in decreets and public reader ordinarius in the schools of decreets, and only then returned to Scotland. Buchan and Lesley were by no means the only Scots to have comparable experience. It is clear that education, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, was responsible for creating many bonds of connection between Scotland and the Continent, and that these links were bound to facilitate the emanation of cultural influences from their geographical centre to the periphery.

Having said this, however, we must note that it is not altogether easy to be certain as to which Middle Scots poets did themselves receive a university education abroad. The best example is that of George Buchanan, who went to Paris in 1520, at the age of fourteen, and graduated in 1528 - but as Buchanan's poetry was entirely in the Latin language, he


cannot be treated in the present study. Professor MacQueen has suggested that Robert Henryson, in addition to his Scottish studies, might well have studied canon and civil law at Rome - the suggestion being prompted by, inter alia, some very precise references to the Courts of Rome in the Prologue to the Fable, The Lion and the Mouse. Priscilla Bawcutt, in her turn, has recently discussed the question of whether Gavin Douglas completed his studies at Paris, and finds this quite possible, while admitting that the incomplete nature of contemporary records prevents any downright assertion.

Although we cannot say definitely that the Middle Scots poets - as a group - were subject to cultural influences from the Continent as a result of formal university education received there, it is likely that they benefited from such cultural influences in their own, Scottish universities, wherein many of the teachers - of whom Doece and Major are perhaps the best known - were trained on the Continent. This could have been the case for Henryson and Walter Kennedy at Glasgow, and Dunbar, William Stewart and Gavin Douglas at St Andrews.

The Middle Scots poets probably received further Continental cultural influences from their own travels. The

---

21 T.M. Lindsay, "George Buchanan", in Neilson, George Buchanan, pp.2-7.
23 Bawcutt, Gavin Douglas, p.27.
24 It is, of course, possible that the authors of some of the anonymous religious lyrics studied abroad.
diplomatic missions of Douglas and Lindsay have already been mentioned. Although William Dunbar may not have acted as an ambassador for James IV, he certainly did some travelling on the Continent: Baxter shows that - apart from being blown off course to Scandinavia - Dunbar went through England to France, and may have briefly visited Italy. 25 Alexander Scott may have been in Paris on at least one occasion, for on 26 June 1540 a man of that name and a Swiss musician received liveries and twenty-one sous tournois when they were hired to play during the July review of the 'Knights of the Table Round of the King of the Basoche' - an association of clerks of the Palais de Justice. 26 And finally in this context, Robert Norvell - the Protestant translator and versifier - put his four-year period of incarceration in the Bastille to good use, by translating poems by Clément Marot. 27 Several of the Middle Scots poets, therefore, had personal experience of the centres of European culture, and it would be strange had they not benefited therefrom.

In speaking of the links forged by the Church between Scotland and the Continent, we have up to this point mentioned only the secular clergy and the hierarchy. The religious orders were likewise responsible for many such contacts. In a later chapter I shall discuss the religious background to the Middle Scots religious lyrics: for the present I am content

25 William Dunbar, pp.82-85.
27 See below, pp.399-408.
merely to illustrate the ways in which the orders fostered the growth of European cultural contacts.

As a case in point we may cite some of what Anthony Ross has written on the history of the Dominicans. A separate province of Scottish Black Friars was created in 1481, under Friar John Mure. Of the two factions thereof, the stronger - the reformist one - was associated with the Congregation of Holland, who were influential in France, and took over St Jacques. Official visitators from the Congregation of Holland were then admitted to Scotland: these were "notable members of the Congregation, whose personal standing was high in Paris, and backed by the authority of the Master-General Thomas de Vio, better known later as Cardinal Cajetan". The great figure of Jean Standonck was a friend of several leading members of the Congregation of Holland, and his admirers in Scotland included Bishop Elphinstone, John Mair, Hector Boece, John Hepburn of St Andrews and Alexander Mylne of Cambuskenneth. John Adamson, who became provincial of the Scottish Dominicans in 1511, was professor of theology at Elphinstone's new university of Aberdeen, of which the principal - Hector Boece - had left a post under Standonck in Paris to assume his appointment in Scotland. All of these things imply close connections with the Continent, which were further strengthened when Abbot Chrystall of Kinloss - one of Elphinstone's circle - hired the Italian humanist, Giovanni Ferreri, to teach at Kinloss. Ferreri (or Ferrerius) continued the history of Scotland of Hector Boece, which had been printed at Paris by

Badius Ascensius in 1527, and this second edition, with the continuation of Ferrerierus, was published at Paris in 1574.29

Other orders were also in touch with developments on the Continent. Anthony Ross has called the reformed Franciscans "a significant link with Italy", and the Augustinian Canons — like the Dominicans — had ties with Paris, and came under the influence, as we shall see below, of Standonck.30 The friars and canons thus made a great contribution to the cultural links between Scotland and the Continent, and when it comes to the time of the Reformation, later in the sixteenth century, Ross concludes:

They were at the very centre of what happened in Scotland, on both sides of the main conflict, because they were already at grips with moral and intellectual issues which were not simply national but which were deeply engaging many of the best minds in Europe.31

We conclude, therefore, that in this period Scotland was no benighted backwater of Europe. Contacts were many, and derived from various activities: royal marriages; diplomacy, both royal and ecclesiastical; university education; and the affairs of the Scottish hierarchy and the religious orders. There were also many commercial contacts between Scotland and Europe, especially with the Low Countries. The three towns of Antwerp, Middelburg and Veere were all important centres for Scottish trade until 1541, when, under a grant made by

Maximilian of Burgundy, the trade was settled in the last-named town, which thenceforth became the Staple. Bonds of trade and the regular movement of shipping would naturally sustain the cultural and religious links between the two lands. For example: in 1494 Abbot Robert Bellenden of Holyrood left for the Continent with a shopping-list. He passed through Flanders, on the way to Rome, and on the way back bought "very cheaply, in the market-place of Bruges" some rich vestments, including "a cope with chasuble and two tunicles, with three albes, three amices and their apparels of precious cloth of gold, of white colour. And twenty copes of damask also of white colour, with orphreys of cloth of gold of blue colour, and some orphreys of value of black colour". We note that James IV and James V each year between 1501 and 1523 sent a barrel of salted salmon to the Dutch Grey Sisters of the Third Order of St Francis who, in their hospital at Campveere, treated the Scottish traders. The link is also seen in the basic jeu-de-mots of an indecent little satirical poem by Robert Semple, included in the Bannatyne MS - I half a littill Fleming berge - where the lady's surname suggests a Low Countries origin. Trade and commerce thus played an important supporting role in the present context.

The cultural contacts between Scotland and Continental Europe can by and large be summed up under the large headings of scholasticism and humanism. At this point Anthony Ross provides a timely word of caution:

Facile contrasts of humanists and scholastics are here utterly misleading, as are the old-fashioned equations of catholic and scholastic, humanist and protestant, scientist and humanist, which still appear from time to time. A man might be a scholastic and a humanist at once, like Guillaume Petit of St Jacques, a supporter of Lefèvre and Erasmus and Cajetan against the obscurantists of the Sorbonne, but also a student of Thomas Aquinas.36

It is equally impossible to equate scholasticism with mediaevalism, and humanism with the Renaissance: again and again the evidence shows that the great figures of the period were quite likely to be connected with both aspects of the intellectual life of the times. Dr Durkan makes this point with reference to John Major, unquestionably the greatest Scottish scholastic:

the renaissance of the fifteenth century had been embraced with buoyant confidence in the highest ecclesiastical quarters; its firmest patrons were the renaissance popes. Mair held to the theory, advanced by certain Italians like Battista Mantuano, though characteristic of French humanism, that the new Athens was no longer Rome, but Paris. In their view, shared by Guillaume Bude, there had been a *translatio studii* and Paris had become the real heir of Athens and this view was held enthusiastically, not only by Mair's contemporaries like John

---

Annand but even by others of a later date and different stamp, like Andrew Melville, not to speak of Mair's warmly Francophil if highly disrespectful pupil, George Buchanan.  

Durkan and Ross, in their study of mediaeval Scottish libraries, say that "the two most popular writers ... were John Major and James of Voragine", yet they go on:

The impression left by these lists of books is not one, however, of dominant scholasticism. Independently of his editions of the bible and the Fathers, it is Erasmus whose works challenge Major's by their numbers and the quantity of their readers. And he is accompanied by so many other names famous among humanists or important in Reformation or counter-Reformation circles on the Continent that we can say that there is little of significance in the thought of the time not represented here.  

For corroborative illustration of these remarks one turns to examine the contents of the libraries of the leading figures of the period, and discovers that the Scottish bishops possessed many volumes which bespeak an interest in humanist studies. Bishop Elphinstone of Aberdeen - the founder of King's College there - possessed a copy of Lorenzo Valla's *Elegantiae latinae linguae*; Robert Reid, Bishop of Orkney and abbot of Kinloss included Bembo's *Opera* among his thirty-six books; Archbishop William Scheves of St Andrews - who on one single occasion spent 500 crowns on his library - owned an  

---

edition of Martial published in Venice in 1482. The library of Henry Sinclair, Bishop of Ross, seems to have been the most extensive, and ran to 102 books (that we know of). These included three separate editions of Horace, Cicero, the Iliad and the Odyssey (in Greek), Xenophon (in Greek), Plutarch, the Greek New Testament, the Dialectice libri tres of Valla, several works by Erasmus in more than one edition, the De animae immortalitate of Pico della Mirandola, and last, but not least, John Bellenden's translation of the history of Boece: The Hystory and Croniklis of Scotland (1536). This last volume was presented by Sinclair to Giovanni Ferreri sometime before 10 June 1557, and it still bears the signature of the Italian humanist. Many more examples could be given of humanist texts in the hands of mediaeval Scottish clerics, and, of course, one may reasonably surmise that large numbers of other such works have perished unrecorded. Awareness of humanism was more widespread than might be thought: even schoolmasters such as John Forman of Cupar and Thomas MacGibbon of Dundee possessed works by Pico della Mirandola, Angelo Poliziano, and Quintilian. We might also mention in this context that a Scottish poet - one Master Paul - acted as tutor in classical Latin metres to the great Pierre de Ronsard, on the occasion of the visit of the latter to Edinburgh, in the entourage of Madeleine of France, in 1537.

40 Early Scottish Libraries, p.54.
41 Early Scottish Libraries, p.20.
Having made much of the humanist works in the early Scottish libraries, we must emphasise again that there are also large numbers (as one would expect) of editions of the Fathers, and of scholastic commentaries. What is really important is that the two kinds of intellectual activity were in this period prosecuted simultaneously by the same people. This perspective throws light upon both scholastics and humanists, allows us to appreciate just how widely Major had read in the works of his Italian contemporaries, and reveals in Aberdeen "a background which makes Hector Boece no longer a lonely, ineffectual representative of humanism".\(^{43}\)

In the discussion of cultural contacts between Scotland and Europe in the late Middle Ages I have so far concentrated on countries across the Channel or the North Sea. It goes almost without saying that there were many contacts between Scotland and the neighbouring England - if for no other reason than that Scotsmen travelling to and from Europe often passed via London. Dunbar may have gone through England to France in 1500, and may have visited London in connection with the betrothal of James IV and Margaret Tudor in 1501.\(^{44}\) Gavin Douglas returned from France via England in 1517, with a safe-conduct from Cardinal Wolsey.\(^{45}\) Close contact with England was for Scotland unavoidable, if not always agreeable. Scottish poets looked to the great, mediaeval, English trio of Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate as their masters. Dunbar's lines on Chaucer in the 'Goldyn Targe' are well known:

\(^{45}\) Bawcutt, \textit{Gavin Douglas}, p.17.
O reverend Chaucere, rose of rethoris all,
As in oure tong ane flour imperiall, and he finds "grete delyte" in the sugared lips and aureate tongues of "morall Gower, and Ludgate laureate". Similarly Lindsay, before listing other Scottish poets at the beginning of the 'Testament of the Papyngo', writes:

Off Poetis now in tyll our vulgare toung;
(For quhy) the bell of Rethorick bene roung
Be Chawceir, Goweir, and Lidgate laureate.

Passages such as these clearly indicate on the part of the Scottish poets a great respect for their earlier, English colleagues. Furthermore, we may note that not a few poems which crop up anonymously in Scottish manuscripts are in fact versions of English poems. In the Arundel MS one 'Orison to the Name of Jesu Crist' is by Richard de Caistre, one Passion poem is a section from Lydgate's 'Testament', and another is a poem which can be found in the Towneley plays.

The very first poem in the Bannatyne MS is a fifteenth-century English piece, and the version of the Magnificat therein contained is by Lydgate. In Johannes de Irlandia's theological treatise, The Mercoure of Wysdome, one finds a poem by Hoccleve - Moder of God, and virgin undefould - though it

47 Works of Lindsay, ed. Hamer, I, 56.
49 The Bannatyne MS, II, 2; printed in Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century, ed. Brown, p.86; The Bannatyne MS, II, 60-63.
is erroneously attributed to Chaucer. There were thus very close cultural contacts of persons and poetry between Scotland and England in this period, as we should expect, yet these have to be considered with the influences from the Continent (which also affected England) in order that a balanced assessment of the cultural debts of Scotland may be drawn up.

The statistics of book-ownership provide an interesting indication of the relative strengths of the Continental and English influences. In the late-mediaeval Scottish libraries the books:

came from no less than thirty-nine different printing centres. The greatest source was Paris, accounting for over 400 volumes, followed by Basle with a little under 200, Lyons with not quite 120, Venice with approximately 65 and Cologne with two or three less. Louvain, in which many books were bought in the fifteenth century, has about thirty, Strasbourg and Antwerp just over 20. A striking number came to Scotland before 1500 (especially of the Venetian ones). London is well behind in the recorded places of printing.

It would seem from this that the Scots experienced cultural influences - in the printed medium, at least - directly from the Continent, rather than from England. Middle Scots culture was no hand-me-down from London. At this point we should note that the art of printing was introduced to Scotland from France. Indeed, Andrew Myllar, even before he


51 Early Scottish Libraries, p.15.
and Walter Chepman printed their first books in Scotland in 1508, had had two books printed for him on the press of Pierre Violette at Rouen, in 1505 and 1506 - although Professor Beattie has recently suggested that these may have been influenced in certain particulars - chiefly in the wording of colophons - by prints of Pynson and Wynkyn de Worde, of the late 1490's. 52 Dr Durkan has also pointed out that, "owing to the late foundation of the Scottish universities, Scots students were more frequent at universities abroad (except perhaps in Italy or in certain centres at certain times) than were English", and he further notes that few Scottish students are found at Oxford or Cambridge after the fourteenth century. 53 Even had there been no predilection to attend Continental universities, the regular state of belligerence between Scotland and England would probably have turned the thoughts of Scottish students to educational centres further afield.

Despite the tributes of Dunbar and Lindsay to Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate - tributes of which the pat similarity of phrase might seem to betray the formulaic nature of the compliment - the Middle Scots poets were by no means blinded by the products of the English masters. In the Testament of Cresseid we encounter the line: "Quha wait gif all that Chauceir wrait was trew?" 54 This question has a certain ring

53 McRoberts, Essays on the Scottish Reformation, p.278.
of independence to it. As Professor MacQueen has written:

Henryson follows the tradition of citing authorities for the truth of his material, while at the same time his irony prevents him from being the slave of the tradition. ... In the most Chaucerian of his works, Henryson is not the disciple, rather he regards himself with some justification as a fellow innovator with Chaucer.55

It can be said, therefore, that the cultural influence on Middle Scots poetry which came from England was very important, but was far from being the only one.

The Middle Scots poets were all, though doubtless to different degrees, touched by the manifold cultural influences which came to Scotland from England and the Continent. It is naturally impossible here to document this general trend, but one convenient exemplification may be given from the life and poetry of Gavin Douglas. Douglas was a poet and a cleric (he even aspired to be an archbishop); he was a member of an illustrious, Scottish noble family, intimately involved in the political affairs of his own country, yet at the same time the horizons of his intellectual friendships extended overseas to France and Italy (he knew Polydore Vergil, the Italian who wrote a Historia Anglica). He - like Henryson, Dunbar, and Lindsay - paid tribute to Chaucer, calling him:

Venerabill Chauser, principal poet but pair,
Hevynly trumpat, orlege and reguler,
In eloquens balmy, cundyt and dyall,
Mylky fontane, cleir strand and roys ryall,
Of fresch endyte, throu Albion iland braid.

- and yet he too guards his independence of the English poet, saying:

55 Robert Henryson, p.55.
And netheles into sum place, quha kend it,
My mastir Chauser gretly Virgill offendit.\textsuperscript{56}

Douglas, through his studies and in his profession of bishop, was familiar with scholastic philosophy (he was also a friend of the great John Major),\textsuperscript{57} yet he performed the eminently humanistic feat of translating Virgil's \textit{Aeneid} (though in so doing, according to C.S. Lewis, he subjected the ancient, Latin poem to a thoroughgoing process of 'mediaevalization').\textsuperscript{58} Douglas is the author of only one poem considered in this study - \textit{He plasmatour of thynge universall}\textsuperscript{59} - yet this poem performs at once several functions. It is in part a religious lyric - and Priscilla Bawcutt has recently speculated that this aspect is the original part of the poem - and it is also a Prologue to Book X of his translation of Virgil. As one would expect, the diction of the poem reflects this dual purpose, and Mrs Bawcutt discovers that: "Douglas is here re-applying to the Christian God phrases and epithets which Virgil had used of Jupiter".\textsuperscript{60} Douglas's career thus involved religion and literature, Scotland, England and Europe, humanism and scholasticism, and he is consequently an excellent illustration of the complex and transitional nature of the period under study.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{56} Virgil's \textit{Aeneid} Translated into Scottish Verse, ed. David F.C. Coldwell, STS, 4 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1957-64), II, 12, 14.
\item \textsuperscript{57} This and other details in this paragraph are taken from Bawcutt, \textit{Gavin Douglas}, pp.1-46 (p.27).
\item \textsuperscript{58} C.S. Lewis, \textit{English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama} (Oxford, 1954), p.86.
\item \textsuperscript{59} The Bannatyne MS, II, 20-26.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Bawcutt, \textit{Gavin Douglas}, pp.173-174. See also below, pp.338-343.
\end{itemize}
Though the Scottish Renaissance is difficult to define, we may take the measure of its achievement in several ways. One is by surveying the architectural remains from the period: who can fail to be impressed by the Palace at Stirling Castle, the royal hunting lodge at Falkland, and the Palace at Linlithgow - to name only a few of the noble buildings erected by the Scottish sovereigns? Or by the church architecture of the time? Another way is by studying the musical compositions of men such as John Carver and Sir John Fethy. Another - it goes without saying - is by examining the works of the Middle Scots poets, which amount to a truly splendid corpus of literature. Nor are these the only features which might be singled out.

We may readily appreciate the change wrought in Scotland by the Renaissance by comparing two passages from Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie's *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*. The first tells of the fate meted out to Robert Cochrane, a favourite of James III:

> This correction and punishment foresaid was done at Lather the year of God ane thousand four hundredth four score and ane years that he might be ane exampill to all simpill persouns nocht to climb so hie and proceed in so great thingis in ane realme


62 See below, pp.94-95, 100-101.
as he did. For at his beginning he was bot ane
printis to ane maisonne and within few yeiris
become verie ingeneous into that craft and bigit
money stain house witht his hand into the realme
of Scotland: and becaus he was conning in that
craft nocht efterlang thai maid him maister
maison and ever this Cochran clam heigher and
heigher quhill he come to this fyne as is
rehearssit.63

This is indeed an admonitory tale: Cochrane's good fortune is
in the end suddenly reversed - according to the mediaeval
pattern of tragedy. But the fact that a man could reach such
heights through architecture alone indicates the value placed
on art by James III. Unluckily for Cochrane, not all the
nobility of the 1480's held architecture in such high esteem.

Very different is the picture which Pitscottie paints of
the country under James V:

Nocht lang efter this the king sieand the realme
standand in great peace and tranquilietie,
rejoysit greatlie at the samin, thinkand daylie
that all thingis sould increse mair and mair.
... And also he appeirandlie plenischt the
contrie witht all kynd of craftismen out of
uther countries, sic as Frenchemen, Spanyardis,
Dutchemen and Inglischmen quhilk war all cunning
craftismen everie man for his awin hand and craft
as effeiris, - that is to say, sum was gunnaris,
cuning wryghtis and carveris, paintaris, messouns,
smythis, harneis makeris, tepestaris, broudinstaris,
taillyouris, cunning surugenaris, pottingaris, witht
all wther kynd of craftismen that might bring his
realme to polliecie and caussit the said craftismen
to apparall his pallaceis in all maner of operatioun
and necessaris according to his order and gaif

63 Pitscottie, Historie, I, 176.
thame large wakis and pensiouns the airof yeirlie. 64

The year that this refers to is 1535, and one has the impression from Pitscottie's words of tremendous bustle, innovation and achievement both artistic and technical. It is a prelude, in fact, to an account of the embassies to France which sued on James's behalf for the hand of Madeleine of France. There is a real sense of optimism in this passage - especially in the words, "thinkand daylie that all thingis sould increse mair and mair" - and, though later events in the history of Scotland, such as the disaster of Solway Moss, in 1542, were to make that optimism seem perhaps exaggerated and that achievement seem precarious, both must have been real enough at the time. In the year 1535, architects were no longer being lynched, and in the light of such displays as the Field of the Cloth of Gold (1520), we can see that James V was clearly behaving in a manner typical of a Renaissance prince. Cultural and technological influences from the Continent and from England had become not merely desirable to the monarch, but even necessary to the fulfilment of his personal and political ambitions. The Middle Scots religious lyrics must be seen against a background of such developments.

64 Pitscottie, Historie, I, 353-354.
Chapter III: The Religious Background.

(a) Franciscanism ........................................... p. 49

(b) The Devotio Moderna .................................... p. 58

(c) Marian Devotion .......................................... p. 72
In the following section I shall attempt to sketch in some of the features of the religious life in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries which had a significant influence on the composition of religious lyrics in Scotland during that period. Once again we shall see the great importance of the connections between Scotland and other European countries.

Franciscanism.

The movement which probably had the most powerful effect on religious lyric poetry was Franciscanism, and a brief word must be given on the history of the Grey Friars in Scotland. The Franciscans first reached Scotland in the thirteenth century: in 1231 a friary was established at Berwick (under the custodies of Newcastle), and Conventual friaries were subsequently founded also at Roxburgh, Haddington, Dumfries, Dundee, Lanark, Inverkeithing and Kirkcudbright. However, it is with the second manifestation of Franciscanism — the Observantines — that we are mainly concerned. This mission first reached Scotland (from the Netherlands) in 1447, as the result of an invitation made in 1436 by James I. The leader was Father Cornelius of Zierikzee, of the Observantine Province of Cologne. In 1455 or '58 a friary was established at Edinburgh; in 1458 one at St Andrews, under the aegis of James Kennedy; and in 1460 one was established at Perth.

1 Bryce, Scottish Grey Friars, I, 5. For the details of the Observantines in this paragraph, I am indebted to Bryce's account, I, 51-96.
Under the Bull, *Intelleximus te*, of 9 June 1463, Mary of Gueldres was allowed to establish three or four Observantine houses. It should be noted that the Pope at this time was Pius II, the great humanist scholar who, as Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, had been Papal legate to Scotland in the reign of James I. The Scottish Province of the Observantine Chapter was erected in 1467, and friaries were then built in Aberdeen (1469/70), Glasgow (1472/3), Ayr (1474), Elgin (1479), Stirling (1494) and Jedburgh (1513). The Scottish sovereigns took a particular interest in this movement: apart from the personal interest of James I and Mary of Gueldres, two daughters of James I became members of the Third Order of St Francis. James IV and James V drew their confessors from the friary at Stirling, whereof the first warden, Patrick Ranny, advised James IV to wear the famous iron belt as penance for his part in the death of James III. During Easter week James IV would make a strict retreat to the Stirling friary — a custom regretted by Dunbar, who criticised it in his parody-dirge, *We that ar heir in hevins glory*.\(^2\) Writing to Pope Julius II on 1st February 1506/7, James IV displayed the fervour of his attachment to the Observantines:

> I, myself, as if bound by the bond of hereditary piety, have set free house after house of this Order; I have adorned them with suitable plenishings; to their care I have entrusted the purification of my conscience and the prime ardour of my devotion; and I have constituted myself their son and defender.\(^3\)

---


3 Bryce, Scottish Grey Friars, I, 92.
We have already noted one tangible result of the King's devotion: it was the Observantines of Aberdeen who alerted James to the charitable work of the Dutch sisters of the Third Order at Veere, which was rewarded by a royal grant of salted salmon.  

From this brief summary we can surmise the tremendous enthusiasm with which the Franciscan movement was received in late fifteenth-century Scotland. The movement seems to have brought about a regeneration in the spiritual life of the age. As Bryce expresses it:

The arrival of the Dutch Friars in Edinburgh was an event of no ordinary importance in the annals of reformation within the Scottish Church, and it also made a strong appeal to the contemporary conception of piety, in which outward manifestation played so large a part.  

The Franciscans are noted for the huge popular appeal of their teaching. This is seen in their preaching: Johan Huizinga notes that a Franciscan friar Richard preached for ten consecutive days in Paris in 1429, from 5 a.m. till 10 or 11, and that the people were greatly disappointed when he was not permitted to continue. In Scotland, as elsewhere, Franciscan friars often delivered sermons in parish churches on feast days, and each time this happened a report had to be sent to the bishop.  

---

4 See above, p.35.
5 Scottish Grey Friars, I, 54.
and likewise required a bishop's mandate. Ross points out that there were probably no more than 200 friars in the two main orders at any time in the sixteenth century.)

Persuasive preaching presupposes a thorough command of the skills of rhetoric, but even more apposite to the topic of religious lyrics is the contribution made by the Franciscans to the popularisation of religion via music and hymnody.

On this subject Manfred Bukofzer has written:

Several ... English lyrics are translations or free paraphrases of known Latin models, and there are also examples where the reverse is true. It is clear that translations from Latin were made for popular consumption, namely for the common folk who did not understand Latin. The presence of sacred lyrics in the vulgar tongue indicates a trend toward popularization of religious ideas by means of music. The foremost exponents of this trend were the Franciscan friars.

And again:

The Franciscans gained influence over the populace by employing popular songs as a means of religious propaganda. It was their established policy to substitute sacred words, usually in the vernacular, for the original secular ones.

This policy resulted in the creation of the Italian lauda, which is especially associated with Jacopone da Todi, and was influential in the development of the English carol in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Kildare MS of

---


Anglo-Irish lyric poetry (c.1300) was the work of Franciscan friars, and another Minorite, Johan de Grimstone, collected many religious lyrics and some carols in his commonplace book of 1372. One Franciscan, James Ryman (c.1492), was especially prolific and is alone responsible for over a quarter of all the English carols earlier in date than 1550. R.L. Greene has thus characterised the influence of Franciscanism upon mediaeval English poetry:

The tempering of the austerity of Christianity by the appeal to tender emotion and personal love of Christ, the invocation of pity for His sorrow in the cradle and suffering on the cross, which is particularly to be noted in the lullaby and Crucifixion carols, are part of the legacy of Francis to the centuries which followed his ministry. Greene goes on to say that "an excellent expression of this religious attitude is to be found in the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, a Franciscan work (formerly attributed to St Bonaventura) immensely popular in the fifteenth century (twenty-three manuscripts survive), and a work to which I shall refer for illustrative comparisons in discussing below the merits of specific religious lyrics.

The Franciscans, furthermore, may have transmitted their religious message through the medium of drama. R.S. Block quotes from William Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire Illustrated* of 1656 on the subject of the Coventry Corpus Christi plays:

11 The *Kildare MS* is in the BM; *Harleian MS* 913; Grimstone's book is in the NLS: Adv. MS 18.7.21.
12 *The Early English Carols*, p.cxxvii.
which occasioning very great confluence of people
thither from far and near was of no small benefit
thereto; which pageants being acted with mighty
state and reverence by the friars of this house
(The Grey Friars) had Theaters for several scenes.\(^{13}\)

Although Block casts doubt upon this declaration, he does not
rule it out absolutely. We can be quite certain, at any rate,
of the great influence upon English lyric poetry of the
Franciscan movement, which set out to stimulate piety by
appealing through affecting words and popular melodies to the
heightened emotions of the listeners. When we consider the
enthusiastic welcome given to the Franciscans in Scotland
(especially the Observantines), it would be strange if we did
not conclude that Franciscanism was one of the strongest
formative influences upon the Middle Scots religious lyric.
As I shall attempt to indicate in the ensuing chapters of
criticism, such seem to be the methods used, such the responses
to be elicited, by many of the poems with which we are concerned.

The religious topic which would most readily lend itself
to such an appeal to the popular imagination is doubtless
that of the Nativity, and it is important to bring out the
emphasis which this was accorded in Franciscan tradition. As
Greene notes:

St Francis himself took a particular interest in the
feast of the Nativity and in devotion to Christ as
the Babe of Bethlehem. The long-accepted legend
that he first instituted the custom of the Christmas
crib at Grecia in 1223 testifies to this interest.
... The emphasis on the humility and poverty of the
Divine Infant, which Nativity carol and noël so
often exhibit, is characteristic of Franciscanism,
which embraced humility and poverty as the highest

\(^{13}\) Ludus Coventriae or The Playe Called Corpus Christi,
of virtues. The ox and the ass, which appear so frequently in medieval Nativity poetry and art, owe their recognition in part to the love of dumb creatures which St Francis preached and for which he is particularly remembered.\textsuperscript{14}

Greene goes on to mention the devotion to the Virgin, for which Franciscans were also noted, and this extra emphasis is often a salient feature of English and Scottish Nativity lyrics, as we shall see.

Huizenga points out that the Franciscans were much involved in spreading the devotion to the Name of Jesus in the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{15} The best known figure in this connection is St Bernardino of Siena. Pope Clement VII in 1530 allowed the Friars Minor to celebrate a feast of the Holy Name.\textsuperscript{16} Two lyrics which appear in the Arundel MS relate to this theme - one being the poem, already noted, by the Englishman, Richard de Caistre.\textsuperscript{17} This too may be a sign of Franciscan influence upon the Middle Scots religious lyrics. The cord of the Franciscans - the cordelière - even appears as a decorative motif in Scottish art objects of the period. It is found, as David McRoberts has noted, on a reliquary from Dunottar Castle, and it figures as a border on the Fetternear Banner, which was probably made for the Confraternity of the Holy Blood in St Giles collegiate church, Edinburgh. The Provost of St Giles from 1515 to 1522 was Gavin Douglas, and his coat of arms is included on the Banner, on which the work of decoration may have ended with Douglas's

\textsuperscript{14} The Early English Carols, p.cxxxi.
\textsuperscript{15} The Waning of the Middle Ages, p.193.
\textsuperscript{16} New Catholic Encyclopedia: see under 'Holy Name'.
\textsuperscript{17} Devotional Pieces, pp.277-278.
exile in England in 1520.  

Franciscanism impinges upon Middle Scots lyric poetry most interestingly in the case of William Dunbar (that is, if we except the *Contemplacioun of Synnaris* of the Minorite, William of Touris, a version of which appears in the Bannatyne MS.  

The poem beginning, *This nycht, befoir the dawning cleir* (usually entitled 'How Dumbar wes desyrd to be ane freir'), recounts the occasion on which a fiend, disguised as St Francis, appeared to the dreaming poet, and tried to tempt him into donning the habit of the Grey Friars.  

Dunbar, luckily, resisted the fiend's blandishments. J.W. Baxter concludes from this: "so far as this poem has consistency, it means that as a young man he was at least a novice in the order". He suggests that the novitiate may have begun before Dunbar's graduation (1479), but thinks that at the latter date Dunbar was probably not a friar. Baxter thus rejects Laing's belief that the poet was a fully-fledged Franciscan.  

More recently still, however, Matthew P. McDiarmid has disagreed with Baxter and argued that Dunbar was indeed (or had been at some time) a Franciscan brother, and not merely a novice. In support of this he cites Kennedy's lines from the *Flyting* which speak of Dunbar's begging with a pardon in all churches from Ettrick to Dumfries. Yet other critics have

---

19 See below, pp.126, 236-238.
pointed out that the subject of criticism of the Friars is quite conventional in late-mediaeval poetry, and this might seem to diminish the autobiographical interest of Dunbar's poem.23

On the other hand, it should be noted that Dunbar's Passion poem, *Amang thir freiris*, contains a detail which makes one think of the other great order of friars. McRoberts points out that, when the poet has his vision of the Crucifixion, he is praying in a friary, and is engaged in the devotion of the Rosary, particularly associated with the Dominicans.24

We have already mentioned Dunbar's criticism of James IV's frequent visits of penitence to the Franciscan friary at Stirling, a criticism which takes the form of a dirge, a parody of the Office for the Dead. If McDiarmid is right in considering Dunbar to have been a full Franciscan brother, this poem would sound somewhat surprising, since it betrays scant sympathy for the routine of the brothers' life, where penance is taken at table.25 Alternatively, of course, the poet may have been trying to warn the king against an excess of penance. Yet whatever the case, we can see that Franciscanism affected very closely both James IV and the poet, William Dunbar.

The friars - both Franciscan and Dominican - played an

---


important role in connecting Scotland with the culture of mainland Europe, and the Franciscans, as a result of their specific concern to popularise religion and make an appeal to as wide an audience as possible, had a strong influence upon the development of religious lyric poetry in the European vernaculars. It is natural to conclude that these considerations form the background to the poetry of Dunbar, who was at least for some part of his life connected with the Grey Friars, and who is indubitably the greatest composer of Middle Scots religious lyrics.

The Devotio Moderna.

Another great movement which probably affected the religious poetry of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries is that known as the Devotio Moderna. Unlike Franciscanism, which in its enterprise of vulgarisation had a profound effect on the expression of religious sentiments, the Devotio Moderna was concerned with the spirit in which such sentiments were conceived. Although there are many specific connections between the Devotio Moderna and late-mediaeval Scotland, the effect of this movement upon the Middle Scots religious lyrics is perhaps more easily felt than demonstrated.

The origin of the Devotio Moderna is traced back to Gerard Groote (1340–84), who, after a conversion in 1374, abandoned all personal property and became an itinerant preacher, until he was stopped by an episcopal decree in
Nonetheless, under Florent Radewijns (who had been inspired by Groote) the brothers of the Common Life - one of the most significant developments of the Devotio Moderna - began to group together in Deventer and Zwolle, in the Low Countries. There they faced strong opposition from the already existing mendicant orders. Not far from Zwolle, there was a foundation of regular canons at Windesheim in 1387. By the end of the fifteenth century Windesheim had become the head of a rapidly expanding congregation, with eighty-four convents of men, and thirteen of women. Jean Busch (d.1479) and Jean Mombaer (d.1501) spread the movement into Germany and France respectively. Debongnie has thus described the brothers of the Common Life:

Les frères vivaient en petits groupes, sans se rattacher à un ordre reconnu, sans vœux et sans organisation centralisée; ils menaient une vie de pauvreté, de prière et d'oraison, gagnaient leur vie par leur travail, qui consistaient surtout en copie de livres.

On the other hand the canons of Windesheim:

se consacraient exclusivement à la vie contemplative ...

Ils n'admettaient d'autre forme d'apostolat que la copie de bons livres.  

In 1431 the Council of Basel decided that the life-style of the brothers of the Common Life was legitimate. One of the

---


27 Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, III, 728.
most important figures associated with the Devotio Moderna is Jean Standonck (1450-1505). Educated by the brothers of the Common Life at Gouda, he matriculated at Louvain in 1469 and later at Paris, where he stayed in the Augustinian monastery of St Geneviève. After taking his M.A. in 1475, he proceeded to the College of Montaigu for theology. He was made director there in 1483, had the buildings repaired, and - after a year (1499-1500) in which he was banished from France by order of Louis XII - he drew up a new constitution for Montaigu. He also attempted to introduce the rule of Windesheim at St Victor, but failed. Later students at Montaigu included Calvin, who left in 1528 just as Loyola arrived, and it was just after this that Loyola began writing his Spiritual Exercises, between 1528 and 1535. The importance of this Paris college of Montaigu, intimately connected with the religious reform which, with the Devotio Moderna, was sweeping through the Low Countries, is thus succinctly expressed by Albert Hyma:

The Congregation of Montaigu became the stepping-stone, or rather, the intermediary between Groote's brotherhood and that of Ignatius Loyola.

Although R.R. Post has more recently tempered some of Hyma's claims for the Devotio Moderna - saying that:

One must not take it for granted that everyone who showed any signs of piety at the end of the Middle Ages, or who was assumed to be devout, belonged to the Modern Devotion.

- it remains true that this is one of the most significant

30 Post, The Modern Devotion, p.676.
religious developments of the fifteenth century. It also remains likely that the Devotio Moderna did not fail to influence the composition of the Middle Scots religious lyrics.

The Devotio Moderna sought to inculcate a new spiritual ideal in the hearts of men in which religious thoughts would be felt by the most devout with an immediacy that was scarcely possible outside true mysticism. As Dickens puts it: "At all levels the new devotion aimed at a direct and personal sense of the presence of God".31 Jean Chatillon quotes from Mombaer's *Invitatorium ad exercitia pietatis*, and brings out both the concern for charity so characteristic of the Devotio Moderna, and also the emphasis upon the emotions:

parmi les occupations du religieux, celle-là l'emporte en excellence qui est plus profondément enracinée dans la charité ... où le coeur s'enflamme d'une affection plus ardente;

and again:

cette intensité de charité, et l'ardeur des affections croîtra en proportion de l'intensité, de la vivacité des réflexions et des conceptions dirigées à cette fin.32

The result of this, as Chatillon notes, is a great emphasis on the 'prayer of the heart and of the spirit', which is discovered to be more suited to the awakening of fervour than vocal or liturgical prayer. The Dutch preserved themselves from excesses of piety by binding themselves to the observance of regulations - either the rule of the Canons, or the devotional

---

32 *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, III, 714.
exercises for the individual soul that were one of the
greatest achievements of the Devotio Moderna. One of the
most influential works in this context was the *Rosetum
exercitiorum spiritualium et sacrarum meditationum* of Mombaer,
printed (probably at Zwolle) in 1494. This book recommended
the 'practice of virtues, religious regularity, sacraments,
truths and mysteries, especially of the life and Passion of
Christ: all the supports of tradition are found there, and
only mysticism was expressly excluded.' For a French edition
(1510), Mombaer wrote a preface in which he stressed the
superiority of the exercises of the inner life over the
observances and austerities of the outer. This is the work
which has been called: "comme un manifeste de la dévotion
moderne".

Yet without a doubt the greatest work which derived from
this religious movement is the *Imitation of Christ* of Thomas
à Kempis (1380-1471). Of this work six hundred manuscripts
and fifty-four incunable editions survive. Thomas à Kempis
was imbued with Gerard Groote's love of charity (he had written
an account of Groote's ideals in his book, *The Founders of the*
*New Devotion*), and this is coupled with a reforming zeal
similar to that which we encounter in the sixteenth century.
For example, he notes approvingly one of Groote's practical
resolutions: "I will not pay court to any Cardinal or
Ecclesiastic so as to gain benefices or temporal goods;
because such subservience doth lead to many falls and relapses

33 Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, p.185.
34 Debongnie, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, III, 729.
35 Debongnie, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, III, 729.
When we turn to the *Imitation of Christ* itself, we at once perceive the emphasis on the inner life of the individual and the effective role of the emotions in the purification of the spirit - two things which reappear in the later work of Mombaer:

In silence and in stillness a religious soul advantageth herself, and learneth the mysteries of Holy Scripture. There she findeth rivers of tears, wherein she may every night wash and cleanse herself; that she may be so much the more familiar with her Creator, by how much the farther off from all worldly disquiet.37

In the second book we read:

Christ will come unto thee, and shew thee His own consolation, if thou prepare for Him a worthy mansion within thee. All His glory and beauty is from within, and there He delighteth Himself. The inward man He often visiteth; and hath with him sweet discourses, pleasant solace, much peace, familiarity exceeding wonderful.38

In chapter twelve of Book II, entitled "Of the High Way of the Holy Cross", we learn that meditation on the Passion is above all else to be recommended: "for there is no other way unto life, and unto true inward peace, but the way of the holy Cross, and of daily mortification".39 Books II and III of the *Imitation* have been described as the *chef-d'oeuvre* of this whole religious movement:

38 Of the Imitation of Christ, p.62.
39 Of the Imitation of Christ, p.90.
Elévations, soupirs, retours humiliés sur soi, aspirations enflammées alternent avec les enseignements impérieux du Maître intérieur. C'est l'épanouissement suprême de la "Dévotion moderne", telle qu'on la comprenait et la pratiquait dans les monastères des chanoines réguliers, unissant dans une synthèse vivante les principes austères des fondateurs, leur mépris du monde et de la science vaine, avec une piété plus affective, nourrie de liturgie, avec quelque souvenir de la mystique rusbroekienne".40

The Imitation of Christ is thus the work which is most characteristic of the Devotio Moderna, and the plethora of surviving texts shows that it was this book which was most of all responsible for the dissemination throughout north-western Europe of the ideals of this movement. In a slightly later paragraph I shall try to suggest some ways in which the Devotio Moderna could have influenced the Middle Scots religious lyrics, which come from precisely the same period.

Before doing this, however, we must consider the ways through which the influence of the Devotio Moderna could have percolated to Scotland. Firstly, the New Devotion is rooted in the Low Countries - an area with which Scotland had close connections in the Middle Ages, as we have seen - and particularly with the towns of Deventer and Zwolle. These towns lie close to the province of Gelderland, whence Mary of Gueldres came to be the wife of James II in 1449. The influence of the movement later spread to Paris - especially with Standonck, a figure known to several of the leading Scotsmen of the day.41 Commercial and educational ties with

40 Debongnie, Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, III, 734.
Europe were thus likely to have facilitated the propagation of an awareness of the ideals of the New Devotion in Scotland.

The Devotio Moderna had an important part to play in the growth of humanist studies in the fifteenth century. One of the foremost teachers of the movement, Wessel Gansfort, met the German humanist, John Reuchlin, in Paris in 1470, and we have it on the testimony of Melanchthon that he drew great respect from the German. Gansfort later visited Rome and Florence, and saw the Platonic academy of Lorenzo and Ficino. The young Erasmus was in 1484 sent to be educated to the brothers of the Common Life at 's-Hertogenbosch, although he was, apparently, less than happy with the teaching there.  

One follower of Groote was John Cele, rector of the town school at Zwolle, of whom Hyma has written:

The influence exerted by him on the Europe of the fifteenth century is incalculable. Students, attracted by his fame, flocked to Zwolle from the bishoprics or principalities of Cologne, Trier, Louvain, Utrecht, Brabant, Flanders, Westphalia, Holland, Saxony, Cleves, Gelderland and Frisia.  

Cele was succeeded at Zwolle by Alexander Hegius (also a brother of the Common Life), who, though "one of the leading humanists of the fifteenth century ... was nevertheless too closely associated with the Brethren of the Common Life to despise the use of the vernacular". Hegius had learned Greek from Agricola, but, according to Jacob: "belongs to the earlier or Latin stage of the Renaissance [which] was true in spirit and ideals to early, rather than later, humanism".

42 Jacob, Essays in the Conciliar Epoch, pp.131-135.  
44 The Christian Renaissance, p.126.  
45 Essays in the Conciliar Epoch, p.137.
Jacob qualifies Hyma's label of 'Christian Renaissance' for this movement, but concedes that if the term means re-birth generally, and does not bear the exclusive connotation of scholarship, if it is religious revival that is intended, then we may fully admit that the Brethren definitely come within this category, and rank high among the reforming pietists of the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{46} The Devotio Moderna, therefore, must be seen as both a religious and a cultural phenomenon (if this distinction is even possible). The humanism of Northern Europe in the fifteenth century was basically a Christian humanism, and this meant that there was no sudden break between 'mediaeval' and 'Renaissance' as perhaps there was elsewhere. Even the latter theory may be disputed, and as Jacob puts it:

can we honestly say that the search after new Greek models has gone so deep that the whole structure and method of scholastic argument is discarded? The answer is emphatically in the negative.\textsuperscript{47}

The scholar and publisher, Badius Ascensius, whom one might take to be in some ways typical of Renaissance humanism, was educated by the brothers of the Common Life at Ghent, and after he had travelled to Italy to learn Greek he still printed the Rosetum of Mombaer in 1510.\textsuperscript{48} As Huizenga has written of the whole cultural and religious scene of the time:

\begin{itemize}
\item [46] Ibid.
\item [47] Essays in the Conciliar Epoch, p.180.
\item [48] Hyma, The Christian Renaissance, pp.265, 278.
\end{itemize}
Classicism did not come as a sudden revelation, it grew up among the luxuriant vegetation of medieval thought. Humanism was a form before it was an inspiration. On the other hand, the characteristic modes of thought of the Middle Ages did not die out till long after the Renaissance. It was this mélange of humanism and christianity which Scottish students and scholars experienced when they visited Europe in the late fifteenth century.

I have already recapitulated the outline of the career of Jean Standonck, the director of the College of Montaigu in Paris. He is a key figure and was obviously a focal point for most of the religious and cultural trends of the time. In the Paris of Standonck's day we see simultaneously the survival of scholasticism and the growth of humanism. Standonck was also closely concerned with the reformist movements within the church, to which the Devotio Moderna had given a great impetus, and which can be traced in the writings of Thomas à Kempis. At a later date Luther was to say of Wessel Gansfort: "If I had read his works earlier, my enemies might think that Luther had absorbed everything from Wessel, his spirit is so in accord with mine". This statement, though, as Jacob stresses, it does not bespeak any proof of protestantism in Wessel, is nonetheless indicative of the important pre-reform of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, which was to touch mediaeval Scotland.

It was Standonck who drew up the new constitution for Montaigu, and it was he who outlined his ideas for the reform

---

49 The Waning of the Middle Ages, p.307.
50 Jacob, Essays in the Conciliar Epoch, pp.131-132.
of the clergy at the Assembly of Tours in 1493. Standonck invited Mombaer to Paris for the specific purpose of reforming Augustinian houses in France, and Mombaer and his companions entered Château-Landon in 1496. After great difficulties there, they tried to introduce the Windesheim reforms at the great abbey of St Victor. This attempt, however, failed in 1498. One of Standonck's greatest admirers in Scotland was Abbot Alexander Mylne, of Cambuskenneth. Mylne requested his compatriot, Robertus Richardinus, to write a Commentary on the Rule of St Augustine, which would both expose the bad practices of the times and encourage Augustinians to reform. Richardinus studied with the reformed Augustinians in Paris and his Commentary, dated 1530, speaks eloquently for the felt need for reformation. In adducing authority for his advocacy of humility (one of the great themes of Thomas à Kempis), Richardinus takes some quotations from St John Chrysostomos, and some: "ex praestantissimo theologia magistro nostro Maiore conterraneo et praeeptore". This is a fitting tribute to the greatest Scottish theologian of the age. We can see, therefore, as John Durkan points out, that there existed the possibility of some awareness in Scotland of the Windesheim reforms, via the Augustinian connections with St Victor and Standonck.

53 Commentary on the Rule of St Augustine, p.62.
Nor must we overlook the less specific and necessarily indirect influence which Standonck exerted in Scotland through his other admirers - Elphinstone, Boece, and John Hepburn. The latter, prior of the Augustinian canons of St Andrews, founded St Leonard's College in St Andrews on the model of Montaigu, and the first Principal thereof was one John Annand, a disciple of Standonck. Finally, in this section, we may mention again the great work of reformation carried out in the Dominican order by such men as John Mure and John Adamson.

The late fifteenth century was an exciting time in the history of culture and religion. Not only do we see the growth of humanism (still with the Catholic context), but we also witness active attempts at reform, in which the efforts of Franciscans, Dominicans, and Augustinian canons and the Brethren of the Common Life are prominent. All of these trends left some mark in Scotland.

Franciscans were especially important in the development of religious poetry: what contribution could be made to literature by the Devotio Moderna?

Firstly, we can say that the example of humanist scholars such as Wessel Gansfort favoured the use of the vernacular. This was in accordance with the emphasis upon humility and charity, so characteristic of the leaders of the New Devotion, who set out - like Thomas à Kempis - to rekindle the fire of spiritual love in the hearts of men for whom the traditional observances might have become rather stale. The writers of the Devotio Moderna strove for immediacy of effect, and this was best achieved for the largest audience via the use of the

---

the vernacular. In this respect the influence of the Devotio Moderna coincided with that of the Franciscans, and the aims of both would clearly favour literature in the vernacular.

Secondly, there is a great stress placed upon the value of emotional reactions. Thoughts of devotion and love may be aroused by several things - by affecting works of representational art, for example. But poetry, which uses rhetoric, is perhaps ideally suited to the excitement of emotional fervour. We shall see in many of the lyrics discussed below that considerable artistry is employed to this end. A good example would be the intense reaction to the Passion which we find in the lyric, *Compatience persis, reuth and marcy stoundis.*

The recommendations of Thomas à Kempis could only give an impetus to religious poetry.

Thirdly, we note the interest in the inner life of the individual. The outward observances of the Church are transformed in the spirit and in the imagination of the devout so that they can become part of a heightened spiritual awareness. The tendency of the Devotio Moderna was to eschew triumphalism in any form and instead to concentrate on the relationship of the individual with his God. We shall encounter just this emphasis in not a few Middle Scots religious lyrics from the very end of the fifteenth century or the beginning of the sixteenth. Dunbar's Passion lyric, *Amang thir freiris*, for example, seems to display symptoms of the religious sensibility of which we have been speaking.

---

57 Debongnie, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, III, 743.
58 See below, pp.227-235.
Fourthly, much of the literary achievement of the Devotio Moderna consisted of devotional writings which were to be used. Huizinga has reminded us that the Middle Ages "knew only applied art", wherein purpose and meaning always preponderated over purely aesthetic value. Middle Scots lyrics were sometimes created by a process of excerption from large-scale devotional works. Thus we have the poem, O wondit spreit and saule in till exile, from the Contemplacioun of Synnaris, a long moralising work divided into seven sections, one for each day. This was one of the commonest meditative structures, and can be seen, for example, in the narrative of the Franciscan Meditationes Vitae Christi, and in the prayers against the seven deadly sins in the Commentary of Robertus Richardinus. There are also versifications among the devotional exercises in the Arundel MS: although these may not be connected specifically with the Devotio Moderna, the influence of the latter could well have given a fillip to the practice of reading works of devotion, and could explain why some poet took the trouble to make such versifications in the vernacular. As always, the Devotio Moderna was concerned with spiritual practicalities.

59 The Waning of the Middle Ages, p.234.
60 The Bannatyne MS, II, 80-83; Devotional Pieces, pp.64-169. See below, pp.236-238.
62 Devotional Pieces, passim.
It was in these ways that we can say that the Devotio Moderna was able to influence the composition of religious lyric poetry in the vernacular. This influence was quite compatible with the contemporary programme of the Scottish Franciscans, although it is possible that it imparted to the efforts of the friars a greater note of religious intensity. In this matter of background stylistic influences it is, of course, difficult to make categorical assertions; yet we can state that Franciscanism and the Devotio Moderna were both concerned with literature and with the inculcation of religion thereby. Furthermore, from the viewpoint of the Middle Scots religious lyrics, these two movements formed a significant part of the contemporary cultural and religious background.

Marian Devotion.

It would be wrong to conclude this chapter without a word on another trend which obviously influenced the religious lyrics of one special type - the lyrics of the Virgin Mary. The devotion to Our Lady dates from the earliest years of Christianity, and the development of Marian feasts continues to this day. In the late Middle Ages, however, devotion to the Virgin reached such a pitch of enthusiasm that the term 'Mariolatry' has often been applied thereto. It was in the fifteenth century that the prayer, Ave Maria, assumed its current form - although versions thereof had been in existence since the twelfth century, and were used in the Psalter of Mary and in the Rosary. The feasts of the Presentation of Mary (November 21) and the Visitation (July 2) were introduced
to the West in the late fourteenth century, and in 1477 Pope Sixtus IV gave the feast of the Conception of Mary limited approval and the favour of indulgences.\(^{63}\) This period, as Huizinga notes, saw a vast expansion in the number of feasts:

Religious customs tended to multiply in an almost mechanical way. A special office was instituted for every detail of the worship of the Virgin Mary. There were particular masses, afterwards abolished by the Church, in honour of the piety of Mary, of her seven sorrows, of all her festivals taken collectively, of her sisters - the two other Maries - of the Archangel Gabriel, of all the saints of our Lord's genealogy.\(^{64}\)

As an illustration of the attitude of the period, we may quote from the Marian sermons of the great Franciscan preacher, St Bernardino of Siena (d.1444):

*The blessed Virgin could do more concerning God than God could do concerning himself. ... God could only generate God from himself; and yet the Virgin made a Man. God could only generate someone infinite, immortal, eternal, impassible, impalpable, invisible, in the form of God; but the Virgin made him finite, mortal, poor, temporal, palpable, sentient, visible, in the form of a servant, in a created nature. ... O the unthinkable power of the Virgin Mother! ... One Hebrew woman invaded the house of the eternal King; one girl, I do not know by what caresses, pledges or violence, seduced, deceived and, if I may say so, wounded and enraptured the divine heart and ensnared the Wisdom of God. ... Surely it was quite impossible for God to do such a thing by himself. Therefore this is the prerogative of the Virgin that, since God could not do it, he did not concede this to* 

---

63 New Catholic Encyclopedia: see under 'Mary, Blessed Virgin, Devotion to'.
64 The Waning of the Middle Ages, p.149.
any other creature.

As Graef says, this description "can scarcely be excused by a perfervid poetic imagination, and it is certainly not permissible in a preacher". 65 Such passages come close to deserving the label of Mariolatry, and put the Virgin on a level with God, or even above Him. The invention of printing helped the spread of Marian devotion, and the sermons of St Bernardino were several times printed in the last two decades of the fifteenth century. 66 In the library of Archbishop William Scheves of St Andrews we find one work of the Franciscan saint - De duodecim periculis - printed at Antwerp in c.1488. 67

At this point we may also mention the fine carving of the Coronation of the Virgin, which is on the apex of the East gable of Melrose Abbey (Cistercian), and also dates from the fifteenth century. 68 The viewer, looking up at this statue from ground level, would have seen it against the blue of the sky (Mary's colour), and would find it easy to think of Mary, in the words of one lyric, as "quene of hevin and sterne of blis". 69

The excesses of Marian devotion were attacked at the time of the Reformation, but they had had their critics well before

69 Devotional Pieces, p.298.
that, in such men as Pierre d'Ailly (d.1420), who attacked liturgical novelties and the plethora of saints, festivals, churches, orders, holy-days and images. The growth of Marian devotion in the late Middle Ages had indeed been dramatic.

Although it is impossible here to go into this cult in depth, I would like to emphasise two aspects of Marianism which are very important background influences on the religious lyrics. These are: (a) a growing tendency to use the vernacular language in the forms of popular piety; and (b) the dissemination of such forms of piety via the innumerable books of Hours (Prymers in English) which are so characteristic of the religious literature of the late Middle Ages. It is obvious that these effects of Marianism would blend in easily with those deriving from the other two religious movements discussed in this chapter, and that all three would be likely to bear on the composition of devotional literature in English.

Whereas we would not be surprised to note the appearance of the vernacular in the sermons of the Friars preaching to congregations of ordinary people, we may be rather struck to observe that already in the middle of the fifteenth century a conventual house of nuns should require an English translation and explanation of the Hours of the Blessed Virgin which they sang daily. The Myroure of our Ladye was compiled - perhaps by Thomas Gascoign, Chancellor of Oxford University, 1442-45 - for the benefit of the Sisters of St Bridget of Sion (near Isleworth), who were instructed to read the English text as

70 Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages, pp.148-149.
they heard the Latin recited.  

This *Myroure of oure Ladye* was copied several times, and was printed in 1530. Needless to say, the *Myroure* proclaims the Marianism of the times:

And theryfore now moste dere and devoute systres, ye that ar the spoueses of oure lorde Jesu chryste, and the specyall chosen maydens and doughtres of his moste reverende mother, lyfte up the eyen of youre soules towarde youre soverayne lady, and often and bysely loke and study in this her myrroure. And not lyghtely but continually, not hastynge to rede moche atones, but labouryng to knowe what you rede that ye may se and understande her holy service and how ye may serve her therwyth to her most plesaunce.  

Furthermore, we read that, whereas at other houses the Hours of the BVM were sung before those of the Day, at Sion the special reverence for Our Lady led to the reversal of this procedure.  

The author of the *Myroure* proceeds to declare:

There be also some bokes that treate bothe of maters to enforme the understondyng and also of matters to sturre up the affeccions. Somtyme of the tone, and some tyme of the tother.  

(The *Myroure* is this kind of book, naturally.) This quotation shows a keen awareness of the emotive potentialities of literature, within a Marian and vernacular context, and it is not inapplicable to religious lyrics.

If the Brigittines of Sion required an explanation of their customary Hours, it is not surprising that the laity generally in the late Middle Ages should wish to express their

---

72 *Myroure of oure Ladye*, p.4.
74 *Myroure of oure Ladye*, p.70.
personal piety in the mother tongue. It was the Prymers which catered principally for this need. Besides the Little Office of the BVM, these customarily included the Seven Penitential Psalms, the Litany of the Saints, and the Office of the Dead. Other pieces were frequently added:

_D'autres pièces, parfois étrangères à toute idée religieuse, y prennent place et font du livre d'Heures un livre varié, touffu, pittoresque à souhait._

Thus says Leroquais, who underlines the popularity of these books: _"Dès le milieu du xve siècle, ils sont l'objet d'une véritable industrie"._ He notes that two items frequently found in French books of Hours are the prayers, _Obsecro te_ and _O interemerata_, which were particularly popular (_Obsecro te_ especially at the deathbed). These may be found in English Prymers also, and both appear in the Arundel MS, beside the poetry of Dunbar and others. The York Prymer also contains a table of confession which in structure is clearly related to Dunbar's Penitential lyric, _To the, O marcifull_. Besides the Hours of the BVM, Prymers often contained Hours of the Cross, Hours of the Holy Ghost, Hours of the Compassion - and we shall observe a poetic version of the latter in the Arundel MS. The organisation of Walter Kennedy's Passion poem into

---

76 Leroquais, _Les Livres d'Heures_, pp.xxiv-xxv.
80 Devotional Pieces, pp.234-236. See below, pp.275-278.
Hours—also in this text—doubtless also derives from this common devotional practice.  

The York Prymer also contains the Fifteen Ooes of St Bridget—which were versified by Lydgate, and also by a Scottish poet in the Arundel MS.

Finally, in the Prymer one finds the Indulgence of the Image of Pity, and we shall see how important the iconographic form of the *imago pietatis* was to the composition of certain Passion lyrics and Complaints.

The conclusions to be drawn from this are obvious. Marianism was one of the most prominent aspects of late mediaeval devotion, and could make a strong appeal to the populace at large, not only in church, but also at home. The Prymers, which were in English, were largely responsible for inculcating this devotion (the word itself came to stand for any book of rudiments), and of the books printed in England in the fifteenth century, editions of the Prymer outnumber any other class. The Prymer also demonstrates the connection between Marian devotion and the vernacular, and this bears fruit in poetry in such texts as the Arundel MS.

As I point out below, most of the texts dealing with Marian devotion were destroyed or censored at the Reformation, and for an instance of the way in which a popular exercise—

---

81 *Devotional Pieces*, pp.7-63. See below, pp.257-265.


in this case the Rosary - gives rise to a moving poem, we have to turn to the literature of Gaelic Scotland. In a late fifteenth-century lament, one Aiffric nic Corceadail writes:

\[
\text{Is briste mo chridhe im chlí,} \\
\text{agus bíd nó go dtí m'éag,} \\
\text{ar éis an abhradh dhuibh úir,} \\
\text{a phaidríin do dhúisg mo dhéar.}
\]

My heart is broken within my body, and will be so until my death, left behind him of the dark fresh eyelash, thou rosary that hast waked my tear.  

Marianism completely permeated the piety of the late Middle Ages, and has given an articulation for the grief felt in this poem. Together with Franciscanism and the Devotio Moderna, it constitutes the background to the religious lyrics.

Chapter IV: Performance and Audience.

(a) Public and Private Prayer .................... p. 81

(b) Music in Scotland ............................. p. 88

(c) Performance of Religious Lyrics ............... p. 103
Now that some of the cultural and religious trends which form the background to the composition of the Middle Scots religious lyrics have been indicated, it is appropriate to ask more particular questions concerning this corpus of poetry. Who wrote these lyrics, and for whom? What was the purpose of them? How were these poems experienced? In what ways do the Scottish lyrics betray the European influences adumbrated above? In attempting to answer these questions I shall in this chapter be concerned with the Scottish poems in their Scottish setting.

Public and Private Prayer.

In the main part of the period (James III - James V) with which we are involved in this study, the authors of the religious lyrics were - not surprisingly - clerics. Of the names known to us - Holland, Dunbar, Kennedy, Douglas, William Stewart - each and every one was in orders and (at least) a priest. We can say, therefore, that the poems of these men represent the work of professionals. Although we cannot be certain as to the authorship of the other religious lyrics, which lack manuscript attributions, it would seem probable that they, too, are the work of priests or other clergy. The *Contemplacioun of Synnaris* came from the hand of the Scottish Franciscan, William of Touris: it is perhaps to be expected that other poems would have been composed by friars, grey or black. Still others may have been written by monks, whose names are now forgotten. After all, the fifteenth-century

---

1 *Devotional Pieces*, pp.vi-vii.
English lyric, Hayle! se sterne, gods modyr holy, was evidently composed in a Carthusian monastery, and another lyric, on the Five Joys of Our Lady, Myldeste of moode and mekyst of maydyns alle, is associated with the Cistercian monastery of Pipwel, in Northamptonshire, and may be the work of one Richard Spaldyng, whose name is given in acrostic form after another poem.² At any rate, it can clearly be said that at this period religious lyrics were not composed by amateurs, but by men for whom the church was both life and livelihood.

As a corollary of this it follows that - as Greene has stressed - religious lyrics which appear 'popular' are so in terms of destination rather than origin. This is particularly true of the Franciscans: though St Francis was a prophet to the people, he was not of the people.³ Religious lyrics, even those which - like the carol - may borrow features from folk-song, are at least one degree removed from traditional song. They are the creation of educated churchmen, though intended for the instruction and edification of the unlearned. Into the making of religious lyrics goes a conscious and deliberate artistry.

England and Scotland differ greatly in the proportions of 'popular' and 'learned' religious lyrics. The reason for this is the almost complete loss in Scotland of the carol, which is one of the most numerous species of Middle English lyric. Thus there are no Scottish texts to set beside those

² Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century, ed. Brown, pp.35-36, 55-56; and Notes, pp.301, 303-304.
³ The Early English Carols, pp.cviii, cxxi-cxxviii.
collected by Greene in his *Early English Carols*. The existence of the mediaeval Scottish carol can only be inferred.

(However, we must note the carol preserved in the Makculloch MS, *O fairest lady, O swetast lady.* It is clear that Reformation censorship has dealt most severely with the Scottish Catholic carols. However, as we shall see in a later chapter, some of the religious lyrics of the Reformation show signs of contact with popular poetry, and some seem to be carols. Such a poem as *All my hart ay* in the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* does not differ in form from the earlier, Catholic carols.

The majority of the surviving Middle Scots religious lyrics can be said to be 'learned' - in the sense that they would, on the appropriate occasions, have been acceptable in church, court and college. This predominantly 'learned' aspect of the corpus of Middle Scots religious lyrics is the consequence both of Reformation censorship and of the literary predilections of men such as George Bannatyne and Sir Richard Maitland, who collected and preserved these mediaeval poems for their literary merit.

In passing, I must emphasise that I do not wish to suggest that all carols are popular in the sense of being 'low-style' from the rhetorical point of view (or even from the social): Greene has printed several carols in high style, often employing a polysyllabic vocabulary. Nevertheless, it remains

4 *The Makculloch MS*, p.9. The carol form of this lyric is easily seen when it is set out in print as in *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Brown, pp.36-37.

5 *The Gude and Godlie Ballatis*, pp.139-140. See below, p.448.

6 *The Early English Carols*, Nos.205, 215, 216, 239,248, 260, for example.
obviously true that most carols are popular in a sense which one could not extend to poems such as the religious lyrics of Dunbar. It is greatly to be regretted that we can no longer view the latter in their proper context of poetry both popular and learned.

In the sixteenth century, however, we begin to find religious lyrics composed by members of the laity. This is not true only of self-advertised Protestants, such as Robert Norvell. There is also Sir Richard Maitland's ballad on the Creation (in the Bannatyne MS), and another example is Maitland's religious parody of Henry VIII: Pastyme with godlie companye. Here, too, we may mention Alexander Montgomerie's penitential lyric, Peccavi, pater, miserere mei. Maitland's position vis-à-vis the Reformation is ambiguous — Knox wrote that he was "not persuaded in religioun" — and Montgomerie was a Catholic. However, contemporary with Maitland and Montgomerie are Alexander Scott and John Fethy, who were both in at least minor orders before the Reformation, and who continued the tradition of the earlier cleric/poets. Up to around 1540, then, religious lyrics were composed by professional clergymen alone (as far as is known): after that date we may also expect to find religious lyrics from lay


10 For the careers of these two poets: MacQueen, Ballattis of Luve, pp.xxxxv-xlvi, xxx-xxxiii.
hands.

Today, religious poetry is written (or, at any rate, published) for the interest and possible edification of a vast, anonymous, educated reading public, which may or may not share the beliefs of the author. The situation in the Middle Ages was necessarily very different. The numbers of the literate then were obviously small (though it is possible to exaggerate the smallness), and it is therefore impossible to assume that poetry was intended to be read - as it would be today - privately and silently. That is not to say, however, that the literate did not read poems in this manner. There are thus two ways in which the Middle Scots religious lyrics could have been experienced: first, as a silent reading of words on the page; and second, as a social occasion - such as when one hears a poem read aloud or sung by another person, or when one participates in a performance, spoken or sung, for the benefit of others.

A perusal of the Middle Scots religious lyrics will immediately suggest that there are certain specimens which seem as apt for private reading as there are others for public performance. Against the exuberant spirit of Dunbar's *Rorate celi desuper*, with all its many references to song, one could set the same poet's penitential lyric, *To the, 0 marciull salviour myn, Jesus*, or his Passion poem, *Amang thir freiris*. The latter deal with intimate feelings, whether of acute regret for sin or of painful contemplation of the sufferings of Christ. Both poems employ the first person singular pronoun, and seem to relate to the spiritual life of the individual. Such lyrics could thus readily themselves
to the kind of reading in which the reader is likely to identify, or at least sympathise, with the poet's experiences, and so convert them into a kind of prayer. The poet would thus have written for the direct spiritual benefit of the reader: it is open to anyone to express his feelings of penitence through the words of Dunbar's *To the, O marci full*. The aim of providing a prayer for others to use in their devotions is probably relevant to certain of the poems in the Arundel MS. In this important collection of late-mediaeval devotional texts there appear versions of the Rosary - *The Lang Rosair* - and of the Jesus Psalter. Such texts are eminently suited to the private use of the individual for his own prayers. Other poems, however, would more probably have been perused for the sake of stimulating a meditation on the reading: the seven sections of the *Contemplacioun of Synnaris*, which could be read in the successive days of one week, is one such work.  

It is unfortunate that we cannot be certain - as Anthony Ross remarks - as to the identity of the people who used these poems.  

However, the vernacular prose and poetry of the Arundel MS might suggest that the collection was intended for readers other than priests and monks, for whom Latin would perhaps be adequate. Yet it is impossible to be categorical here: we cannot say that Dunbar, a priest, intended his religious lyrics to be read only by those who were not priests themselves. Yet the Arundel MS might well have been compiled for the benefit of some courtier or noble, and his family.

---

11 *Devotional Pieces*, pp.322-334; 194-204; 64-169. See below, pp.236-238.

This manuscript - like the contemporary collection of Asloan - is an anthology, albeit the range of works from which the collection has been made is much narrower than in the case of the other text, since non-religious material is rejected. The compilation of the Arundel MS clearly took some considerable time, effort, dedication and expense: if it was a commissioned work, it might be appropriate to the library of some bishop or devout aristocrat. As Durkan and Ross have shown, the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was a time when several Scotsmen became keen book collectors. The Asloan MS and the early part of the Maitland Folio MS testify to a desire, in the first half of the sixteenth century, to gather together the literature of mediaeval Scotland. This tendency was, after the Reformation, to result in the Bannatyne MS, the later part of the Maitland Folio MS, and in the Maitland Quarto MS. It is conceivable that the Arundel MS should be seen as part of this trend. We can, however, never be quite sure, and the destruction wrought by the Reformation, and the consequent lack of comparable texts, render it difficult to make inferences based on practice elsewhere. We can only conclude that some of the poems in the Arundel MS which lend themselves to individual devotional use might have been so used by people who were not themselves priests, and who may have been members of the nobility.

Despite what has just been said above concerning the silent reading of religious lyrics by individuals, it seems much more likely that the true dimension of these poems was

---

13 See the lists in Early Scottish Libraries.
public rather than private. In the long run, there is no religious lyric of the period which is absolutely incompatible with the idea of performance: even the poems mentioned in the previous paragraphs could be sung, or listened to by large audiences. The use of the pronoun 'I' is no sure indicator of the degree of intimacy, since it is obviously given to the members of a congregation simultaneously to experience intimate sensations of devotion: Isaac Watts's *When I survey the wondrous Cross* can have such an effect. All the historical evidence for the Middle Scots religious lyrics suggests that the latter were connected with public performance, in which, moreover, music would have played a prominent and essential part.

Music in Scotland.

In order better to appreciate the local setting of the Middle Scots religious lyrics, we must consider briefly the state of music in the country. We might begin with the following quotation from Robertus Richardinus:

David cantabat psalmos ante Archam in tabernaculo domini: ideo ab ecclesia frequentantur, ut animi audientium ad devotionem accendantur. Ab isto vero cantu qui nunc fere toto terrarum orbe cantatur, animos audientium non ad devotionem accendi legimus: sed potius levitate, vanitate, et delectatione multos labefactari, et potius a devotione avertere, quam illo pacto ascendere.

15 *Commentary on the Rule of St Augustine*, pp. 78-79.
This outburst - which continues at some length - is clear testimony to the fact that sweeping changes had recently come over church music in Scotland, and it emerges that Richardinus is inveighing against the complicated, polyphonic style of music, the charms of which draw the minds of the audience from proper religious thoughts. Richardinus prefers the plain style of chanting - a sentiment which accords with the overall reformist tenor of his Commentary, and with the ethos of the Augustinian Canons of Paris among whom the author had studied. Yet, despite the denunciations of Richardinus, it seems that the victory of this sweet new style was already complete.

For a second piece of evidence we may turn to the Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer, and note the expenses of James IV on Easter day, 1497. When the king took his sacrament in the morning he gave 23 shillings, and later, at High Mass, a further 14. To "Thome Pringil and his brodir trumpatouris", and to "Will Carrick and Pete Johne, trumpatouris" he gave 28 shillings each. Similar payments were made to "Adam Boyd, fithelar, and Mylsone the harpare", to "Bennet, fithelar, and Fowlis the harpar", and to "Jacob, lutar, at the Kingis command". Further expenses, totalling 63 shillings, were incurred in payments to "Guillaume and Pais, tawbronaris [drummers], and ane spelare [rope dancer] with thaim", to "Pate, harpar", to "Lundoris the lutare" and to "Ansle the tawbronare". From this entry we can appreciate the great importance which the king laid on music: in this

16 Commentary on the Rule of St Augustine, pp.80-81.
17 ALHTS, I, 326.
case we hear only of instrumentalists, but there are plenty of records of payments to vocalists. For example, on the Eve of Epiphany, 1498, a sum of 31 shillings was given "to the singaris that nycht, that brocht the cens in to the king".\textsuperscript{18} From such extracts it becomes apparent that music was an important concern of both church and court. This was part of a nationwide trend, which has led John Durkan to speak of a "national passion for music".\textsuperscript{19}

When one considers the part played by music in the education of Scotsmen, the national passion is readily comprehended. In late mediaeval Scotland, much of the elementary education was provided in Song Schools. These were established with the object of staffing the choirs of large religious institutions, and are found beside the cathedrals and college churches. Theoretically, there should have been one in every parish, yet, though only one example is definitely known in a rural parish (in the diocese of St Andrews), Durkan suspects that there must have been more, since students came to the universities from places as remote as the Isles. In the Song Schools the boys learned their alphabet and memorised the psalter, and the inculcation of literacy and music went on at the same time. Durkan points out that by the sixteenth century "the attempt to teach everything through Latin had been partially abandoned ... and many little schools had become in reality vernacular schools". Among the skilled

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{ALHTS}, I, 375.
\textsuperscript{19} "Education in the Century of the Reformation", in McRoberts, \textit{Essays on the Scottish Reformation}, p.150. I am indebted to this chapter (pp.146-156) for most of the details in the following paragraph.
musicians who taught in Song Schools were: Thomas Wood, probably a monk of Lindores; John Angus, a monk of Dunfermline; Andrew Blackhall, a canon regular of Holyrood; David Peebles, a member of the convent of St Andrews; John Fethy, at Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh; Andrew Kemp, at Dundee and chaplain in St Salvator's College, St Andrews; Alexander Smith who taught music to James Melville after the Reformation, and who had been educated in the priory of St Andrews. As Grant has written: "Music, as a branch of education in the schools, was at that time only second in importance to the *ars grammatica*". The education provided in these Song Schools - a combination of letters and music, destined for the church yet prosecuted largely in the vernacular - might well have been conducive to the composition of religious lyrics.

Durkan cites as illustration the career of John Panter, who came from a rural area near Hamilton and became one of six endowed choirboys at Glasgow cathedral. Later he learned more advanced singing and organ-playing. The Earl of Arran persuaded him to accept the parish clerkship in the collegiate church of Hamilton for a fee of £40, and Panter may well have become a prebendary in charge of the Song School. Later, however, he returned to Glasgow cathedral, where the archbishop gave him the preceptory of the Song School and a stipend of £20. Panter was also a composer, and made a polyphonic arrangement (in "prickat singing") of an anthem, *Ave Gloriosa, Virginum Regina*.  

---


Those boys and young men who continued their studies in the grammar schools and universities would not there have lost all contact with music. In the standard arts curriculum - the seven Liberal Arts - the student followed the grammar, logic and rhetoric of the trivium with the geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and music of the quadrivium. This traditional course - a preparation for studies in theology - would therefore have fostered links between the disciplines of letters and music. Moreover, all through his education, the scholar would have been exposed to music in school, college and university chapels, and the connections between word and song must have been impressed upon him from his earliest years.²²

The century before the Reformation was in many respects the great period of Scottish music. In the cathedrals and college churches we find that, beyond the traditional cultivation of Gregorian chant, there was a considerable interest in polyphony - the musical fashion which had swept virtually all of Western Europe by that time. Bishop Elphinstone's statutes for Aberdeen cathedral in 1495 ordered that there should be "twenty priest-vicars 'skilled and learned in Gregorian chant at least', two deacons and two sub-deacons, eleven boys who were to be maintained only as long as their voices were unbroken",²³ At the same time the Song School was probably founded. Bishop George Brown of Dunkeld endowed


²³ Frank L. Harrison, Music in Medieval Britain (London, 1958), pp.14-15. For the other details given in this paragraph and the following, see Harrison, pp.15-16, 37-38.
an altar of the Blessed Virgin in c.1500, and chose seven vicars-choral to serve seven altars to be founded later. Alexander Myln recorded in his lives of the fifteenth-century bishops of Dunkeld that several of the canons were skilled in music, including organ-playing, theory of music, and singing.

St Salvator's College in St Andrews was the first college of a Scottish university to have an endowed chapel and choir (1450). This originally comprised thirteen persons - the Provost and two other graduates in theology, four priest-chaplains who were Masters of Arts, and six poor clerk-scholars - but the number grew, and by 1534 there was a Song School under the control of one of the chaplains. St Leonard's College (founded 1513) required musical students to 'sustain and adorn the divine office with singing, at least with plainsong and if possible also with descant'. St Mary's College at Aberdeen - founded by Elphinstone in 1495 - had a chapel establishment of eight priest-chaplains skilled in plainsong and polyphony and four choristers trained at least in plainsong, and in 1529 Bishop Gavin Dunbar added a further six members, including two choristers, to the foundation. Elphinstone required that the eight priests who held probendaries at St Mary's College should be:

skilled in 'cantu gregoriano, rebus factis videlicet prik singin, figuratione [ornamentation of plainsong for polyphonic setting], faburdon, cum mensuris et discantu'. Every evening at six, between Vespers and supper, all the members of the college were to sing sollemniter cum organis et cantu, in the intervals between twelve strokes of the great bell,
the three antiphons *Salve regina*, *Angelus ad virginem* and *Sub tuam protectionem*.²⁴

There can be no doubt of the high place accorded to music in the colleges and cathedrals of late-mediaeval Scotland.

All this music, especially the polyphonic music, must have involved a great deal of copying of manuscripts, and we are not surprised to read, in an inventory of the "bukis for the Guher" of St Salvator's College compiled in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, that there were "ane gret prykkyt sang buk and tua smallar of prekyt senggyn", two sets of part-books ("off sang bukis with v messis v bukis" and "iii bukis with iii messis and antemnis").²⁵ Cant also mentions "ane collector with anthiphonis and responsis and yns brevit and notit for the chantouris". The abundance of music books is compatible with the opulence of the chapel furnishings described elsewhere by Cant.²⁶

One splendid music manuscript which survived the Reformation is the Scone Antiphonary, now in the National Library of Scotland.²⁷ The only composer named therein is Robert Carver, a canon of Scone (b.1491), and the book doubtless came from the Augustinian abbey. Among Carver's works are a four-part Mass on *L'homme armé* - earlier used by Dufay (d.1474) and Josquin des Prés (d.1521) - a ten-voice Mass of St Michael, *Dum sacrum misterium*, dated 1513 (though Harrison believes this should be 1508 or 1509), a four-part Mass dated

²⁵ Ibid.
1546, a four-part setting of *Gaude flore virginali*, and a motet, *O bone Jesu*, in nineteen parts. The manuscript also contains items by English composers — for example, two antiphons by Robert Fayrfax, Magnificats by Nesbett and Walter Lambe, and the *Salve Regina* of Cornysh. Carver seems to have preceded the Tudor composer, John Taverner (d.1545) in his use of the love-song tune, *The Western Wynde*, for a Kyrie. The appearance of both Continental and English pieces in the Scone Antiphonary is exactly in line with the trend of cultural influences in Scotland, as outlined above. Farmer, however, suggests that the stronger musical influence on Scotland during this period, was that from France and Flanders.

All this evidence shows that Scotland was keeping up with developments in music in other parts of Western Europe — especially in the evident concern for polyphonic settings. This style was the one attacked by Robertus Richardinus, as placing the chief interest in intricacy of technique and diverting the mind from religion: "Bone Deus, quantum occi boni hisce temporibus in Anglia et Scotia in una missa cantanda inaniter canterunt". It is interesting to note these remarks of the reform-minded Augustinian, since there seems, nearer the middle of the sixteenth century, to have been some movement towards a simpler style of music. Harrison

---


30 Commentary on the Rule of St Augustine, p.80.
points out that the St Leonard's statutes of 1544:
ordered High Mass on festivals to be sung in *cantu gregoriano*, Vespers in *cantu gregoriano* devote non sincopando nec varia aut impertinentia colloquendo, while the *Salve* and the commemorations of St Andrew and St Leonard in the evening were to be sung by all *alla voce*.31

Prior John Wynram - at his visitation of St Leonard's in the following year - apparently asked all to learn the chant, so that the Mass could be sung without dissonance, and discouraged the singing of difficult masses. Since it is often said that the Reformation was responsible for the tremendous simplification in church music in Scotland, it is especially interesting to observe these steps taken in the St Leonard's chapel in the 1540's.

This last, however, was - for our purposes - a late development. The main period of composition of Middle Scots religious lyrics was one during which musical activity - both composition and performance - was at its height in the cathedrals and colleges of Scotland. Many texts of the Jesus- and Mary-antiphons set by the Scottish composers are just those which contributed refrains to the vernacular religious lyrics. This is doubtless because - as Harrison puts it - the votive antiphon "was the universal and characteristic expression of the devotional fervour of the later Middle Ages".32 As evidence, we may point to the religious lyric in the Maitland Folio MS (*O Immensa Trinitas*) with the refrain, "*O lux beata trinitas*".33 These are the first words of a hymn which, as

31 *Music in Medieval Britain*, p.169.
32 *Music in Medieval Britain*, p.219.
33 *The Maitland Folio MS*, I, 197-199.
plainsong, figures in a music book shown on one of the panels of the Trinity College altarpiece of Hugo van der Goes. In the panel, the music is being read by an angel, who is providing a musical accompaniment on a positive organ. As Thompson and Campbell note, this hymn to the Trinity, sung at Vespers on Saturdays, would be highly appropriate when seen - as it ought to be - beside the panel depicting the Trinity.34 This hymn - it should also be said - is appointed for First Vespers on the first Sunday after Trinity, in both the Sarum and Aberdeen Breviaries.35

The development of music in late-medieval Scotland also owed a great deal to royal patronage, and, as far as religious lyrics were concerned, the Court was perhaps as important a focal point as the Church. Of course, the Court would have its secular song, which would have been out of place in chapel, but it is very doubtful whether any distinction existed between the religious lyrics favoured by the king and those favoured by the king's clerics. Certainly, there was no difference of musical style. As Manfred Bukofzer explains:

It is extremely difficult if not impossible to give an a priori definition of sacred and secular style in music and to determine on this basis in what way the one may have influenced the other. The distinction of secular and sacred is essentially one of musical function, not of musical style.36

34 Hugo van der Goes and the Trinity Panels in Edinburgh, pp.13-14, and plates 3 and 4.
35 See below, pp.328-330.
If any Middle Scots religious lyrics were ever set to music for the use of the Church, they would be just as welcome at Court.

The most obvious manifestation of the interest of the Scottish kings in music is the foundation of the Chapel Royal at Stirling Castle. It was James III who decided that St Michael's Chapel there should be patronised as a royal establishment and be a musical college - intentions thus recorded by Pitscottie:

Also he [James III] maid into the chapell Ryall all kynde of office men to wit, the bischope of Galloway the deine, and the archedeine and thensawrar and subdeine and chanter and subchanter witht all kynd of uther officeis pertaining to ane colledge, and also dublit thame to that effect that they sould ever be redy, the ane half to pase witht him quhair ever he pleissit that they might sing and play to him and bald him merrie and the uther half sould remaine at hame in the said chapell for to sing and pray for him and his successouris, and for this cause he maid great foundatiounis of the said chapell Royall. 37

James invited the English musician, William Rogers, to Stirling, and in November 1469 he granted him the lands of Traquair. Rogers was later knighted, and became a familiar of the king - a development which made him unpopular with the older nobility, and led to his being hanged at Lauder Bridge in 1482, along with the architect, Robert Cochrane. 38

Although James III had the idea of establishing the

37 Historie, I, 200.
Chapel Royal as a college of music, it fell to his successor to accomplish that aim. With a papal mandate from Alexander VI, James IV in 1501 refounded the Chapel Royal as a collegiate church. Pitscottie mentions James's feelings of penitence for his part in his father's downfall - for a while, after Sauchieburn he passed to the Chapel Royal for matins and evensong - and it is not beyond possibility that the foundation as a college church (a project dear to the heart of James III) arose from the workings of the king's conscience. James IV continued his father's practice of making large donations to the Chapel Royal, the fruits whereof may be seen in the inventory of ornaments, jewels and volumes kept in the collegiate church of the Blessed Mary and St Michael at Stirling compiled in 1505. This list indicates an establishment of some magnificence, seen in - for example - such an item as:

one pendicle for the high altar, of blue damask sewed with golden threads like the rays of the sun, bearing a very beautiful salutation of Our Lady.

In establishing a Chapel Royal the Scottish kings can be seen as typical Renaissance princes. They would naturally wish to emulate the Chapel Royal of England - Edward IV began the building of the new chapel of St George at Windsor Castle in 1483, and in the same year he incorporated the Royal Free Chapel of the Household - yet the fashion was Europe-wide: we could mention here the chapel of John I of Aragon (d.1396),

39 Rogers, History of the Chapel Royal, pp.xxx-xxxvi.
40 Historie, I, 217-218.
41 Rogers, History of the Chapel Royal, p.xlvi.
42 Harrison, Music in Medieval Britain, pp.20-23.
the Collegium Rorantistarum at Cracow of Sigismund the Elder (1467-1548), and the Chapel Royal of Matthias of Hungary (1443-1490) which in 1483 was by the Bishop of Castella rated higher than the music schools of the papal court.\textsuperscript{43} In these countries, as in Scotland, the existence of a chapel royal was a demonstration of Renaissance culture.

Nearly all the musicians of medieval Scotland came to be connected with the Chapel Royal at Stirling: these included Robert Carver of Scone (1491-c.1550), Robert Johnson of Duns (Carver's contemporary), John Fethy (c.1480-c.1570) and Andrew Blackhall (1536-1609).\textsuperscript{44} Fethy was also a poet, as were George Clapperton (d.1574) and Alexander Scott (c.1515-1583), who both received benefices from the Chapel Royal. Fethy and Scott both composed religious verse, and both lived and worked at the foremost musical institution of the country, and therefore it is natural to connect their verse with musical settings. In Fethy's case, we know, from a comment of Thomas Wode in his late sixteenth-century Psalter, that he was both poet and arranger of at least one religious lyric - 0 God abuse so well thou hast devyst\textsuperscript{45} - and may similarly be the author and composer of another penitential lyric - The time of youth sore I repent - which is preserved in a manuscript copy of the Forbes Cantus (first printed c.1662).\textsuperscript{46} From such evidence one can appreciate the central role of the


\textsuperscript{44} For the details of these Scottish composers, see MacQueen, Ballattis of Luve, pp.xiii-xiv.

\textsuperscript{45} MacQueen, Ballattis of Luve, p.xxxi. See below, pp.369-370.

\textsuperscript{46} Music of Scotland, pp.154-157.
Chapel Royal in stimulating musical effort in late mediaeval Scotland, especially after the refoundation of 1501. The men who worked therein had to satisfy the demands both of court and church, and we witness the collaboration and poets and musicians. There could scarcely have been an environment better suited to the writing of high-style religious lyrics.

The Lord High Treasurer's Accounts furnish impressive testimony to the king's great concern for his Chapel of Stirling. On the 8th February 1501 quarter fees to members of the Chapel Royal included: £10 for the Provost; £5 each to Patrik Newlandis, David Ostyan, Thomas Lindesay, Robert Wemis, William Stirret, Alane Marschael and Thomas Dalrumpill (each being dignified with the title of "Schir"); 50 shillings to Alexander Buquhan; 40 shillings "to the sex childir of the College". On the 10th March 1501 the king gave 27½ ells of French tawny cloth (costing £18 16s) "to vi priestis of the College of Strivelin quilk the King promittit to thaim quhen tha began to sing prime and houris". On the 28th March, £10 17s was paid to "the goldsmyth in Strivelin, to gilt the new Eucharist with and chalices". Other payments are for cloth, vestments, vessels and furniture, and these expenses, together with the recurring grants to the clerks of the Chapel Royal, add up to very considerable totals. In the Accounts, the donations to the Chapel Royal appear side by side with others to James IV's second most favoured ecclesiastical establishment - the kirk of the Grey Friars in Stirling. This is especially significant in the light of the great

47 ALHTS, II, 61-69.
interest of the Franciscans in music and poetry. The town of
Stirling might even have been a kind of forcing-house for the
composition of religious lyrics. From Pitscottie's record of
James III's intentions towards the Chapel Royal we learn that
the musicians might be required to travel with the king and
provide entertainment for him: 48 thus we find a payment, on
28 April 1517 "to the menstrualis of Striveleng that followit
the King to Lithqw ... x s[hillings]". 49 On another occasion
James IV was evidently sufficiently proud of the Chapel Royal
to parade the musicians before a foreign power: "1489 - To
the clerkis of the chapell that wes in Lythqow quhen the
Imbassatouris wes thare, at the Kingis commande, ... xxx
[pounds]". 50

In addition to the expenses on the clerks of the Chapel
Royal, the Treasurer's Accounts record many grants of money
to other musicians. James IV's payments to various musicians
on Easter day 1497 have been mentioned. 51 All through the
Treasurer's Accounts of the reigns of James IV and James V we
find benefactions to musicians at Christmas and Easter - the
two most important ceremonies of the Christian year, at which
the services of the musicians would be especially required.
Trumpeters, harpers, players on the clarsach, taubronars,
luters, fiddlers, pipers and organists were among the instru-
mentalists who regularly benefited from the king. 52 For

48 See above, p.18.
49 ALHTS, V. 111.
50 ALHTS, I, 393.
51 See above, p.27.
52 ALHTS, II, 131, 141; III, 360.
several years there were payments to a small group of Italian minstrels: we also hear of a "Franch quhissillar", and in 1503, while the wedding party that came North with Margaret Tudor were still in Scotland, there were also performances by the "menstrales of Ingland". As Sir James Balfour Paul has written of the court of James IV: "Of indoor recreations the principal was naturally music, of which the King was not only an admirer and critic, but a performer himself". The king also paid the singers who entertained him. I have already mentioned the singers who brought in the incense to James IV on the Eve of Epiphany 1498 (clearly a church choir, with priests). We should also note the remuneration, in the late summer of 1506, of the following groups of female singers: "the maddinis in Dernway that sang to the King"; "in Elgin ... the wemen that sang to the King"; "the wemen that sang at the Kirk of Logy". Life at the court of James IV clearly involved continuous close contact with music, and such must have been the ambience of such a courtier as William Dunbar.

Performance of Religious Lyrics.

The Middle Scots religious lyrics were probably intended not so much for silent reading as for public delivery, and it is possible to make certain surmises concerning the circumstances in which they would have been received. Given the

53 ALHTS, II, 399, 476; III, 132; II, 399.
54 ALHTS, II, cviii.
55 ALHTS, I, 375. See above, p. 10.
56 ALHTS, III, 345.
vigour of the musical culture of late-mediaeval Scotland, one will not be surprised at the intimate connection between music and these poems.

What place would there have been in the church services of the late Middle Ages for religious lyrics in the vernacular? Gustave Reese, writing on the musical practices of the church in Germany, mentions two lyrical forms which had introduced vernacular words to the church for several centuries before the Reformation. The first of these consists of that quintessentially mediaeval 'half-way-house' - the macaronic lyric. Of such poems the best known example is the still popular In dulci jubilo. The earliest version of this lyric in the British Isles appears in the Gude and Godlie Ballatis of 1567, but the German version dates from the fifteenth century. The second group of such lyrics were composed entirely in German, and Reese says that these had been in use in many churches since the mid fourteenth century, although they were never admitted officially to the Liturgy.

Reese does not specify exactly how these lyrics were used in church, but it is not improbable that they, in this respect like many English religious lyrics, were sung in church as substitutes for the Benedicamus on certain designated feasts. For Harrison:

the words of some polyphonic carols, a genre which appeared about the time the conductus [an earlier musical replacement for the Benedicamus] was going out of use, make it likely that the sacred carol of the fifteenth century took over from the

57 The Gude and Godlie Ballatis, pp.53, 250-251.
58 Music in the Renaissance, p.674.
conductus the role of Benedicamus substitute on certain festivals.  

The festivals in question were those of the Christmas period, and this serves to explain why the vast majority of carols relate to the feasts between and including Christmas and Epiphany. The choirs seem to have had quite a "free choice of music as a substitute for the second Benedicamus at the Offices". For example, the Ordinal of Exeter Cathedral allows the deacons to sing the second Benedicamus solemnly at the altar-step in whatever kind of musical setting they might choose; the priests might sing any solemn Benedicamus after the procession on the eve of St John; and the boys likewise do this on the eve of the Holy Innocents. Harrison declares that the carols sung in choir in this period would "almost certainly have been substitutes for the Benedicamus, and the texts of some polyphonic carols strongly suggest that this was their function". We may therefore conclude that the lyric in the Gude and Godlie Ballatis (Christ Jesus gaif him self to deide) which ends with the words, "Allalua allalua. Benedicamus domino", is in the tradition of this kind of carol singing - though it is not in the stanza-refrain-and-burden form singled out by R.L. Greene. And again, the poem from Wode's St Andrews Psalter which, below, is treated with those on the Annunciation - All sons of Adam - seems to have such an ending that would permit its use as a Benedicamus substitute:

59 Music in Medieval Britain, pp.416-417.
60 Ibid.
61 Music in Medieval Britain, p.108.
62 Music in Medieval Britain, p.417.
63 The Gude and Godlie Ballatis, p.59.
The sons of Adam answered them:
Sing glorie be to thee God and man,
The Father and the Sprit also,
With honor and perpetual jo. 64

There was no question of vernacular lyrics making an appearance in the Latin text of the liturgy: their use in church was very carefully restricted to a brief period in the year when the exuberant hilarity of the people was given a limited licence. The carols written for this period were frequently arranged to polyphonic settings. If the "ballatis of the nativitie of Chryste" in the Bannatyne MS were ever sung in church, it could have been in such circumstances as I have outlined.

There is, however, another way in which vernacular religious lyrics could have been heard both inside and outside church. This derives from the preaching mission of the friars, and especially of the Franciscans. I have already outlined the history of the Observantines in Scotland, and we have seen that the Grey Friars were at all times intent upon popularising religion and reaching out to the masses. After Bukofzer's account of the friars' popularisation of religion via music (given above), 65 he goes on:

the popularization hardly touched strictly liturgical forms, such as the Mass, and seized on lesser forms of the liturgy or on forms not strictly liturgical, such as the hymn and sequence, which were inherently close to simple syllabic melodies with popular appeal. 66

64 For the musical text of this lyric: Music of Scotland, pp.152-154. The words are given below, in an appendix, p.152, and the poem is discussed below, pp.157-160.
65 See above, p.52.
In one brief characterisation in the General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer emphasised not only the friar's skill in begging, but also his musical accomplishments:

Somewhat he lipsed, for his wantownesse,
To make his English sweete upon his tonge;
And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde songe.67 (264-266)

We have already seen that friars were not infrequently invited to deputise for parish priests when it came to giving sermons on feast days.68 G.R. Owst has suggested that the friars' intimacy with lowly people enabled them to adopt for their own didactic purpose colloquial turns of speech and snatches of verse:

The little popular idioms of speech, the alliterative and proverbial phrases, the snatches of vernacular verse that still meet the eye in manuscripts of Latin sermons, thus preserved for ready repetition, are vivid enough evidence of such linguistic intercourse on a much larger scale.69

R.L. Greene has emphasised the connection between the Franciscans and the literary form of the carol. Writing of James Ryman — an English Grey Friar who wrote 119 lyrics in carol form — he says:

His use of the carol-form is doubtless the result of observation of the popularity of the carol at the time he was writing, and there is every reason to believe that he meant his work to be more than

68 See above, p.51.
a pious literary exercise — that he designed his poems to be sung by his preaching brothers and their audiences. 70

It is thus possible that some or all of the religious lyrics noted by Owst were intended to be sung in the course of the sermon, in the parish churches: at any rate, they would presumably be sung in the friars' own churches, which, according to Dom David Knowles, "in the later Middle Ages are perhaps the principal theatres of the friars' oratory". 71

It is also possible that carols and other religious lyrics were sung by the friars in the course of out-of-doors sermons — given by both Franciscans and Dominicans at 'preaching-crosse' 72 — or ministrations inside private houses. Since the friars made a tremendous impact upon religious life in the mid to late Middle Ages, it would have been surprising if their religious parodies of secular songs (contrafacta), and their own original compositions in verse and song, did not gain wide currency. Even the architecture of the friary churches was designed, as Owst observes, to enable the largest possible number of people to hear the sermon, and thus the religious lyrics recited and sung by the friars would have been readily assimilated by the listening multitudes. 73 As Greene puts it:

The English religious carol, as preserved in manuscripts of the pre-Reformation period, far from being the spontaneous product of the popular

70 The Early English Carols, p.cxxvi.
73 Preaching in Medieval England, pp.159-160.
joy at the Christmas season which sentimentalising writers would like to make of it, is rather one weapon of the Church in her long struggle with the survivals of paganism and with the fondness of her people for unedifying entertainment. ... That it was such a successful aid in the cause of religion, that the people accepted and sang the pious carol, even when written by so ungifted a poet as Ryman, speaks well for the close contact with the people and the showmanship of those who introduced it. These were qualities for which the friars were famous; without doubt more of their number than have left any written trace both composed and sang many carols like those here collected. 74

It has already been mentioned that Scotland is today singularly lacking in mediaeval religious carols. We may observe, however, that some Scottish poetry manuscripts contain carols, though these deal with secular subjects. William Stewart's begging poem to James V - Larges of this new yeirday - is one such poem. 75 The inescapable conclusion is that the censorship imposed at the Reformation has suppressed the pre-Reformation religious carols, the existence of which, given the weight of the comparable evidence from England, is impossible to doubt. Thus, although the documentation no longer survives to prove it, we can assume that the friars were among the composers of religious lyrics in late mediaeval Scotland, and the performers of them both in church and out of doors.

Further opportunity for the performance of lyrics was probably given by the religious drama of the time, and there

74 The Early English Carols, pp.cxxxii-cxxxii.
75 The Bannatyne MS, II, 254-255.
are many points of contact between the two forms. One of the
poems in the Arundel MS - *Now herkynnys wordis wunder gude* -
is also found as part of the Towneley plays. In the
Towneley cycle this poem appears at the moment of the
Resurrection, and is spoken by a dramatic representation of
the iconographic figure of the *imago pietatis*, as Christ
publicly bears all the wounds of the Passion and makes a
heartrending appeal to the compassionate instincts of viewer
or reader. This must have been one of the most striking
scenes of the play, if one can judge by the number of surviv-
ing texts which contain this poem. It would thus not be
hard to envisage in a similar dramatic role the two Complaints
of Christ which appear at the end of the first section of the
Bannatyne MS: *O man unthankfull to thy creator* and *O creaturis
creat of me your creator.*

Some religious lyrics exhibit affinities with religious
drama not only in function but also in language. Here we may
juxtapose two stanzas from different sources:

A. Omnipotent fader sone and haly gaist,

Egall in glory, puer and majeste,

Thre evin of mycht and on of mychitis maist,

76 See above, p.40.

77 On the *imago pietatis* see: Woolf, *The English Religious
Lyric in the Middle Ages*, pp.202-207; Rosemary Woolf,

78 *The Towneley Plays*, ed. George England (Introduction by
Alfred W. Pollard), EETS (London, 1897), pp.313-316;
The Maculloch MS, pp.33-36; *Devotional Pieces*, pp.261-
265; BM Additional MS 37049; *Christmas Carols Printed
in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Edward Bliss Reed (Cambridge,

79 *The Bannatyne MS*, II, 96-98; 105-108. See below, pp.366-367,
245-246.
Ay rignand in eterne divinite:
Off a will, substance, and equalite,
In quhome is nowthir first, last, moir nor lest,
To be laud in tryne and unite:
Pro nobis christus homo factus est.

B. O lord of lordis and king of kingis all,
Ommipotent off power, prince but peir,
Eterne rignand in gloir celestiall,
Unmaid makar, quhilk, havand no mateir
Maid hevin and erth, fyre, air and watter cleir,
Send me the grace with peax perpetuall,
That I may rewill my realm to thy pleseir,
Syne bring my sawill to joy angelicall.

Although the last lines of the second passage veer off into a particular petition, we will readily detect the kinship of style and vocabulary between the two extracts. The first is a stanza from one of Bannatyne's lyrics: the second comes from the prayer of King Humanitas in Lindsay's _Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis._ Or we may take the following lines from the _Ludus Coventriae_ cycle (15th century):

I comende me on to yow, thou trone of the trinyte,
O mekest mayde, now the modyr of Jhesu,
Qwen of hefne, lady of erth, and emprés of helle be ye,
Socour to all synful, that wole to yow sew.
Throu your body beryth the babe oure blysse xal renew.
To yow, modyr of mercy, most makely I recommende.

and compare them with a passage in the _Buke of the Howlat:

Now soverane, quhar thow sittis be thi sonnis syd,
Send sum succour doune sone to the synnere.
The fende is our felloune fa in the we confide,
Thow moder of all mercy, and the mevare
For us wappit in wo in this warld wyde.

80 The Bannatyne MS, II, 75; Works of Lindsay, ed. Hamer, II, 38.
To thi son mak thi mane and thi makere:
Now lady, luke to the leid that the so leile lufis.
The first of these passages consists of the words of Gabriel
to Mary at the end of the play of the Salutation and Conception;
the second comes from a song to Mary supposedly sung by a
chorus of birds at the Pope's banquet.\textsuperscript{81} Here too the resemblances are obvious. Many such illustrations could be given,
and would clearly show that the religious drama was an
important medium for the performance of religious lyrics.
And as Holland so definitely indicates that this last Marian
lyric is imagined as being sung - he speaks of "thair notis"
(1.716), etc. - it is conceivable that the audience would hear
the religious lyrics in plays to the accompaniment of music.

Although the Reformation virtually obliterated all trace
of the mediaeval drama of Scotland - with the exception of
Lindsay's \textit{Thrie Estaitis} - researches of Anna Jean Mill have
revealed that drama was once a flourishing activity in this
country. Apparently the earliest reference to a religious
play in Scotland comes in 1440 - a Corpus Christi play at
Aberdeen - and Mill says that:

there are no clear instances of either a fully
fledged liturgical drama or miracle plays and
religious pageants prior to the stage at which
these came under the control and patronage of the
burgh authorities.\textsuperscript{82}

Mill, however, calls attention to the fact that the directions
for the services at Holyrood Abbey for Eastertide compose a

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Ludus Coventriae}, ed. Block, p.108; \textit{The Asloan MS}, II, 118.

\end{flushleft}
magnificent Passion play in embryo". The Ordinale in which these directions appear was written during the reign of James II, c.1450. It is also possible that the clerks of the Chapel Royal at Stirling acted a Nativity and a Passion play at the appropriate season: "A payment for the mending of the sepulchre at the Chapel Royal ... leads one to suppose that at least a Quem quaeritis was played by the Clerks of the Chapel at Easter". This last is especially interesting since any religious lyrics embedded in the Stirling plays could easily have been sung by the Chapel clerks.

In 1534-35 and 1541 the town of Ayr subsidised clerk plays "on Biblical and hagiological themes", and in Edinburgh miracle plays were presented on scaffolds in 1553 and 1554-55. John Knox, in his History of the Reformation in Scotland, tells of the Passion play put on most effectively in Stirling (c.1535) by the Dominican, Friar Kyllour. Kyllour's play was performed before King and people on Good Friday morning, and Knox claims that it made a telling comparison between the persecutors of Christ and the persecutors of "sik as professis Jesus Christ his blessed Evangell". In Glasgow, in 1562, provision was made for an annual celebration of the feast of the Translation of St Nicholas at the University. The performers were to be "magistri vel studentes", and the play was to be given out

83 Mediaeval Plays, p.60.
85 Mill, Mediaeval Plays, pp.56, 60-61.
86 Mill, Mediaeval Plays, p.75.
of doors for the enjoyment of the people.  

The surviving records indicate a lively interest in drama in mediaeval Scotland, and religious themes were prominent therein. Religious drama - performed by priests, friars, students or others - offered great scope for the performance of religious lyrics, and it is by no means unlikely that the lyrical verse contained in the dramas was accompanied by music.

The Scottish kings' interest in, and patronage of, music has already been noted. There were ample opportunities for the dramatic and musical performance of religious lyrics in the life of the Court. The musical recreations of the Court should not be divorced from those of the Church: religious lyrics would have been enjoyed by the king whether in church or in hall - especially by such a king as James IV, given to making retreats among the Observantines at Stirling - and, in any case, the musical style favoured at the time was common to Court and chapel. As Elliott and Shire remind us:

"Musick fyne" they called it, meaning part-writing. This music was of the church or court, composed by skilled musicians of the religious foundations or of the King's Music, his Chapel Royal or musicians of the household, or it was the civic music of the burgh kirk and its sang-school.

Sir Richard Maitland made a religious lyric by parodying a secular song by Henry VIII: Pastime with good company. One presumes that the tune used by Henry would be employed also

88 Mill, Mediaeval Plays, p.76.
89 Music of Scotland, p.xv.
90 See above, p.84; discussed below, pp.442-452.
for the words of Maitland: no stylistic incongruity can have been felt. The music for the lyric, All sons of Adam, is preserved in Wode's Psalter (Elliott and Shire assign it to the age of James IV). This three-part setting is a specimen of the 'medley' genre, which is related to the French fricassée—a form of lively dance.\(^91\) It is likely, therefore, that the song book which Wilyeam Sangstare of Linlithgow brought to James IV, and for which he was paid ten pounds, would have contained both sacred and secular pieces.\(^92\)

Kings and noblemen alike enjoyed the singing of religious lyrics in their own palaces, as the editor of the Treasurer's Accounts notes:

Serenading and singing of carols at the king's chamber door by the clerks of the chapel was a cherished custom, and was no doubt acknowledged in the payment made to them "for their service at Yule".\(^93\)

In connection with this he quotes from the Northumberland Household Book the following entry: "To the children of my lordis chapell for synginge of Gloria in Excelsis at the mattyns tyme upon Cristynmas day in the mornynge, [six shillings and eight pence]\(^7\).\(^94\) Harrison notes the rise in this period of a new type of carol which would be sung to elaborate arrangements:

\(^{91}\) Music of Scotland, pp.xvi, 152-154.
\(^{92}\) ALHTS, I, 114.
\(^{93}\) ALHTS, I, ccxlii.
\(^{94}\) Ibid.
The polyphonic carols of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries are markedly different in style and subject from the earlier carols, for their favourite theme was the Passion of Our Lord and they were personal in expression and pietistic in tone. There is nothing to suggest that these 'Carols of the Passion' were sung in the ritual; their place is with the household music of the court.  

Thus we find a more elaborate 'literary' kind of carol to suit the cultivated musical tastes and considerable domestic musical resources of the royalty and nobility of the late Middle Ages. This is the context in which the high-style religious lyrics of Dunbar and his contemporaries should be seen. The singers and instrumentalists who performed in the king's chapel and in his household were given their rewards at Christmas and Easter - the two great feasts of the Christian year at which religious lyrics would have been sung. The poet William Dunbar often received rewards at the same occasions. On 27 January 1506 Dunbar was given five pounds "for caus he wantit his goun at Yule"; on 4 January 1507, after a list of payments to minstrels from the Privy Purse at New Year, we find: "Item to Maister William Dunbar, in recompenstation for his goun ... £5"; and on 21 April 1512 Dunbar was paid £12 10s for his Yule livery (it is no wonder he complained to the king!). If one can assume that Dunbar was paid for his poetic services, it may be the case that the poet was being rewarded for his religious lyrics - though of this we cannot

95 Music in Medieval Britain, p.419.
96 ALHRS, III, 125, 361; IV, 249.
be sure.97

Dramatic productions would have furnished occasions for the performance of religious lyrics, and we know, for example, that James V and Mary of Guise assisted at a production of the Thrie Estaitis at Linlithgow Palace on Twelfth Night, 1540.98 The sovereign might also have heard religious lyrics sung out of doors, and such could have been the women's songs heard by James IV at the Kirk of Logy in 1506.99 Other opportunities for the performance of religious lyrics could have arisen from James's great interest in his navy. On 24 June 1506, the "menstrailes that wes in the schip quhen scho wes in the New Havin" were paid £5 19s.100 The occasion for this was the launching of the 'Margaret' - called after the Queen - on the previous day. Is it not possible that religious lyrics were sung at what must have been some kind of dedication of the ship? And again, on 3 August 1512 minstrels were paid 28 shillings for playing in the "gret schip" (the 'Great Michael') "becaus the Quein was thair at the suppair".101 The records of the court thus allow us to appreciate that there were many occasions when the sovereign might well have had the chance of hearing the singing of religious lyrics.

It seems very likely that the king was treated to religious lyrics in the course of the often elaborate pageants and masques which were staged in order to celebrate important

97 Matthew P. McDiarmid has suggested that Dunbar's function at Court was that of the secretary, rather than the laureate: "William Dunbar", SHR, XXXII (1954), 46-52. But this is a guess: we do know that Dunbar was a poet, and that he addressed several poems to the King.
98 Works of Lindsay, ed. Hamer, IV, 126-127.
99 ALHTS, III, 345.
100 ALHTS, III, 199.
101 ALHTS, IV, 356.
occasions. One such was the triumphal entry into Edinburgh of Margaret Tudor in 1503, of which Baxter gives the following description, based on the account of John Young, Somerset Herald:

At the entrance to the town was a gateway of painted wood, with two turrets, from which angels sang in welcome to the Princess, and from a middle window an angel presented the keys of the gate to her. Within the gate, the priests of St Giles met her in procession, bearing the arm of the saint, which the King kissed. The town cross was newly painted, its fountain casting up wine. Near by was presented a pageant of Paris and the three goddesses, of whom the fairest, Venus, received the golden apple. There was also presented the Salutation of Gabriel to the Virgin, and, after that, the marriage of the Virgin and Joseph. The town was hung with tapestries. Baxter suggests that the welcoming poem, Now fayre, fayrest off every fayre, attributed to Dunbar, was composed for this spectacular event, and he accepts Dunbar's authorship. In the above account we should note the two religious pageants: it would have been strange if these did not involve music and poetry. Dunbar himself testifies to the performance of musical tableaux in his poem which records the entry of Margaret into Aberdeen, in May 1511: Elyth Aberdeane, thow
beriall of all tounis:

Ane fair processioun mett hir at the Port,
In a cap of gold and silk, full pleasantlie,
Syne at hir entrie, with many fair disport,
Ressaveit hir on streittis lustilie;

102 William Dunbar, pp.115-118.
Quhair first the Salutatioun honorably
Of the sweitt Virgin guidlie mycht be seine;
The sound of menstrallis blaying to the sky:
Be blyth and blisfull, burgh of Aberdein. (11.17-24)

The pageant of the Annunciation was in this case followed by others depicting respectively the Adoration, the Expulsion from Paradise, and the history of the Stewarts. Here again we have almost the ideal opportunity for the public performance of a religious lyric (or lyrics), in a dramatic context, with a musical accompaniment, and for the entertainment of the royal entourage. Yet another similar occasion was the entry of Mary of Guise into St Andrews in 1538, of which I have already quoted Pitiscottie's account. It is possible that among the "certane uriesouns and exortatiounis maid be the said Schir David Lyndsay" as part of his "triumphant frais" there were snatches of religious lyric.

When we come to the question of whether religious lyrics were intended for private individuals, we can only make surmises. Since the *Buke of the Howlat* was apparently composed to celebrate the marriage of Elizabeth Dunbar, daughter of James, eighth Earl of Moray, with Archibald Douglas (1442), it is conceivable that the lyric to the Virgin Mary contained in the poem was performed at the wedding or later, at the Castle of Darnaway "in myddis of Murraye" (1.1000).

At a subsequent date (1506), when James IV was

105 See above, p.24.
visiting the North, he was entertained by the "maddinis in Dernway that sang to the King", but whether the songs he heard were religious lyrics one cannot know.  

It is not certain, but by no means improbable, that religious lyrics were recited in the private devotions of individuals in their private chapels, or elsewhere. The influence of the Devotio Moderna would have given a stimulus to such activity:

the writers in the devotio tradition claimed that at least the lower steps of the spiritual ladder might, by the use of well-tried exercises, be ascended by men and women obliged to continue in the active life. At all levels the new devotion aimed at a direct and personal sense of the presence of God.

We have already seen that the Devotio Moderna encouraged the use of the vernacular: a religious lyric in Middle Scots would perhaps be just as useful for private prayer as a hymn in Latin.  

Again, McRoberts has stressed the usefulness of the Rosary as a private devotional exercise (in which Dunbar apparently engaged), and he suggests that the presence of two pieces in the Arundel MS - "The Three Rois Garlandis" and "The Lang Rosair" - indicates an interest on the part of someone in extending the use of this devotion through the medium of the vernacular.  

Such pieces would not have been intended for use in church, but would have been suitable for the private prayers of the literate, or for the public ministrations of the friars. We cannot discard the possibility,

108 ALHTS, III, 345.
110 See above, pp.61-72.
therefore, that Middle Scots religious lyrics were occasionally composed to spread the use of late mediaeval devotions. Such pieces, of course, would have been prime targets for destruction at the Reformation.

There are several conclusions to be drawn from this evidence. We may say that religious lyrics in this period were very likely to be performed, rather than silently read, that the performance might well include a musical dimension, and possibly also a dramatic. Such performances might be given by the clerks of the Chapel in the period of Christmas, or by the friars - in their own establishments or out of doors - possibly in the course of sermons. Probably the composition and performance of religious lyrics owes most to royal patronage: the sovereign would have been regaled with such pieces in his Chapel Royal, in his banqueting hall, outside his bedroom (at Christmas), and on occasions such as triumphal entries into towns, the reception of ambassadors, and royal visitations. In the end, it was the king who paid. Although some religious lyrics may have been used in the solitary devotions of private individuals, the majority were doubtless written by courtier poet-priests, such as William Dunbar, for the entertainment and edification of the king and those around him. For such lyrics a high poetic style would be appropriate to the intended audience, and, if set to music, would probably have been arranged in the polyphonic style favoured by, and common to, Court and chapel.
Chapter V: The Literary Background.

(a) The Middle English Lyric Tradition .......... p.123

(b) The Grands Rhétoriqueurs ...................... p.134
Examination of the Middle Scots religious lyrics and the texts in which they are contained reveals the indebtedness of the Scottish poets to the literary traditions of England and the Continent.

The Middle English Lyric Tradition.

We have already noted the presence of 'Richard de Caistre's Hymn' - the title is that of Carleton Brown - in the Arundel MS. De Caistre was vicar of St Stephen's church in Norwich, and died in 1420. In his edition of the poem Carleton Brown points out that this hymn is a revised version (with additions) of an earlier fourteenth-century piece. We can thus see, in the case of this lyric, a poetic continuity which stretches over two centuries and ends with the version in the sixteenth-century Arundel MS, and a tradition of poetic common property which links both Scotland and East Anglia.

Other examples can be given. Perhaps the most prominent, on account of its location at the opening of the Bannatyne MS, is the stanza, God is a substance for evir durable. This is not by George Bannatyne, as has been thought, but is rather a fifteenth-century English poem, by one William Hammer. The

---

1 Devotional Pieces, pp.277-278. See above, pp.49,55.
3 The Bannatyne MS, II, 2.
scribe may have been ignorant of the true provenance of this poem, chosen to introduce his collection of Scottish poetry. This may also be true of 'The song of the Virgin Mary' - which is actually an extract from Lydgate's Lyf of Our Lady. Lydgate was a popular poet in sixteenth-century Scotland: another piece in the Arundel MS is in fact a portion of his Testament, and the final lyric in the first section of the Bannatyne MS - O creaturis creat of me your creator - is ascribed by Bannatyne to "Ledgait, monk of Bery". This attribution, however, is not accepted by MacCracken, and he excludes this lyric from the canon of Lydgate's minor poems.

Bannatyne's mistake may have come from his copying of a misinformed original, or it may be the result of his own guesswork. However, the fact that a scribe, working a century and a half after Lydgate's death (1449-50), could make such a slip indicates the closeness to each other of the late-mediaeval poetry of England and Scotland. Nor is this the only such instance. In the Selden MS the lyric to the Virgin Mary which begins, O hie emperice and quene celestiall, is given - wrongly - to "Chaucere" (in the Asloan text, which lacks one stanza, it is unattributed). At the end of the

---

6 The Bannatyne MS, II, 60-63; John Lydgate, The Book of the Lyf of Our Lady (Westminster, 1484 - reprint Amsterdam, 1972), Chapter XXII.

7 Devotional Pieces, pp.270-274 (Behald, man, lift up thy ene and see). The STS editor, J.A.W. Bennett, points out that this section of the Testament occurs separately in several MSS: Devotional Pieces, p.xvii; The Minor Poems of John Lydgate, ed. Henry Noble MacCracken, EETS, 2 vols. (London, 1911-34), I, 357-362.

8 The Bannatyne MS, II, 105-108.

9 Minor Poems of Lydgate, ed. MacCracken, I, xxxii.

second book of the *Meroure of Wysdome* of Johannes de Irlandia we find "ane orisoune, that Galfryde Chauceire maid and prayit to this lady". The Marian lyric which follows - "Moder of God and virgin unde souled" - is in truth from the hand of Hoccleve (1368/9-c.1450). This poem also appears in the Selden MS, where it is likewise attributed to Chaucer. It must be pointed out that it was not only in Scotland that such confusions occurred: in England, too, many poems were erroneously ascribed to the great masters, Chaucer and Lydgate. Thus the very mistakes of the scribes provide testimony to the great influence of these two poets in both England and Scotland.

The practice of 'borrowing' English poems continued even later in the sixteenth century. Besides the lyric of Maitland which is a parody of a love song by Henry VIII, there is also the Scottish spiritualisation of the love song, *My love she mourn' th for me*, which runs parallel to John Gwynneth's religious parody, published in 1530. We must also note the unacknowledged borrowing of four lyrics by Bishop Myles Coverdale of Exeter (c.1488-1569), which are printed in the

15 See below, pp.444-445.
Gude and Godlie Ballatis of 1567. One of the effects of the Reformation upon religious lyrics in Scotland - of which further discussion is deferred to chapter X - was, therefore, to continue a custom whereby the main sixteenth-century collections of Scottish poetry received a leavening (if that is the right word) of English material. The poetic traditions of the two countries remained in touch with each other.

Before looking at some of the similarities between Scottish and English poems it is but fair to point out that England in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was also capable of accepting influences from Scotland. J.A.W. Bennett, editor of the Contemplacioun of Synnaris, concludes that this devotional work was originally written in Scots - by the Franciscan, William of Touris (who was possibly related to the Touris family of Edinburgh) - although the earliest surviving text of this work is the 1499 print of Wynkyn de Worde. (Anthony Ross has drawn my attention to Walter Towris - a monk from the Charterhouse of Perth, who died at Bruges in 1568 - and to John Towers, a Dominican of Edinburgh, who left his name in a copy of Cajetan's De peccatis summula, printed at Paris in 1530. It is interesting that these three men, possibly of the same family, should have been members of such 'reformed' religious groups as

16 See below, pp.417-418.
17 Devotional Pieces, pp.v-vii, xxv-xxxii. At least one George of Towris can be found in the Treasurer's Accounts, and there is also a Schir Johne of Touris: ALITS, I, 87, 224-225, 255, 257, 283-284; 91, 103, 130, 181. The Tours family had a tenement in the Grassmarket, on the North-West side of the Grey Friars' land: Bryce, The Scottish Grey Friars, I, 271-272.
Franciscans, Dominicans and Carthusians.) Again, the Marian lyric, *Ros Mary, most of vertewe virginaele*, found in the Asloan and Makculloch MSS, is later to be seen in the manuscript of the English priest, John Forrest, with some alterations to the text and several extra stanzas by the latter.\(^\text{19}\) The influence from North to South is also seen in other genres of poetry. Professor MacQueen has suggested that the poem, *Lo, quhat it is to luve*, was the original composition of Alexander Scott, rather than of Sir Thomas Wyatt, and that Wyatt merely wrote a reply to Scott's lyric.\(^\text{20}\) F.H. Ridley has demonstrated the debt of the Earl of Surrey to Gavin Douglas's translation of the *Aeneid*.\(^\text{21}\) Doubtless the major literary influence was from England to Scotland, but movement in the opposite direction is far from negligible.

If one compares samples of the lyric verse of England and Scotland one immediately perceives that the most obvious influence on the Middle Scots religious lyrics comes from across the Border. The lines of the Primus Pastor in *Ludus Coventriæ*:

*Heyle, floure of flourys fayrest i-fownde,*
*Heyle, perle peerles prime rose of prise,*
*Heyl, blome on bedde, we [s]ch[ü]l be un-bownde*

\(^{19}\) The Asloan MS, II, 271-272; The Makculloch MS, pp.24-25; Henry Noble MacCracken, "New Stanzas by Dunbar", MLN, XXIV (1909), 110-111. See also below, pp.215-218.


With thi blody woundys and werkys full wyse.
Heyl, God, grettest, I grete the on grownde ... 22
clearly ring out in harmony with the following, from the
Scottish lyric, Ros Mary, most of vertewe virginale:

    Haile, purifyet perle, haill port of paradys,
    Haile, redolent ruby, riche and radyus,
    Haile, clarifyet cristall, hale qwene and emperys,
    Haile, moder of God, haile virgin glorius. 23

Both passages consist of honorific address, and both resort
heavily to alliteration and to the figure of anaphora (this
latter a common feature of religious lyrics) to achieve their
ends.

Aureate diction, with the conspicuous use of a highly
latinate vocabulary, can be seen in the following two extracts:

    Rede rose, flouryng withowtyn spyne,
    Fonteyn of fulenesse, as beryl corrent clere,
    Some drope of thi braceful dewe to us propyne;
    Thu light without nebule, shynyng in thi spere,
    Medicyne to myscheves, pucelle withoute pere,
    Flawme down to doolful, lyght of thyn influence,
    Remembryng thi servant for thi magnificence. 24

    Oleum effusum, to languentes medsyne,
    O Maria, by denominacioun,
    Fulgent as the beame celestyne,
    Called unto hir coronacioun.
    Phebus persplendent made his abdominacioun,
    Devoidyng all in tenebrosite,
    For great love of hir exaltacioun,
    Ecce virgo radix Jesse. 25

23  The Asloan MS., II, 272.
The first of these passages comes from Lydgate's 'Balade in Commendation of Our Lady'; the second is from an anonymous English lyric in BM MS Additional 20059, written in the reign of Henry VII, and dealing with the Coronation of the BVM. In the second passage phrases of Latin enter the poem with complete ease, and there is the use of a final, Latin refrain line - a detail frequently encountered among the Middle Scots religious lyrics. Such verse should be set beside the following, by the Scottish poets, Walter Kennedy and William Dunbar:

Protectrix till all pepill penitent,
The beriale bosome that our blis in bred
Sched betuix synnaris and Godis jugement,
Schawand thi son the sweit palpis that him fed,
Prayand him, for the precious blud he bled,
Us to forgeif of our gret trespas:
Thy corps was never with corrupcioun cled,
Sancta et immaculata virginitas. 26

Imperiall wall, place palestrall,
Of peirles pulcritud;
Tryumphale hall, hie trone regall,
Of Godis celsitud;
Hospitalall riall, the lord of all
Thy closet did include;
Bricht ball cristall, ros virginall,
Fulfillit of angell fude;
Ave Maria gracia plena;
Thy birth has with his blude
Fra fall mortall originall
Us raunsound on the rude. 27

26 The Asloa MS, II, 273.
27 The Asloa MS, II, 278.
Here also the language in which the petitions are couched is highly latinate, polysyllabic, and studded with alliteration. There is a great deal held in common between these four passages, and countless other extracts from English and Scottish lyrics could be adduced in further corroboration of the basic point that, in the sixty-odd years between the death of Lydgate and that of Dunbar, the high-style religious lyric poetry of both England and Scotland exhibits a considerable homogeneity of expression. I shall shortly discuss another source of poetic influence - that of the Grands Rhétoriqueurs of France - which was probably bearing on the English and Scottish lyrics of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. For the present I am content to suggest that, given the obvious similarities between the English and Scottish stanzas quoted here, given the constant tributes of the Middle Scots poets to their English counterparts, and given the opportunities of cultural contact between the two countries that existed at the time, we cannot but conclude that the influence in Scotland of the tradition of English lyric poetry was extremely strong.

It is nevertheless essential to enter one or two qualifications to this conclusion. There is a great difference between the comprehensiveness of the range of Middle English poetry and the comparative narrowness of the Scottish. All the stanzas quoted in the preceding paragraphs consist of aureate poetry of praise and adoration, written in a high style, with considerable use of rhetoric. Yet it must be emphasised that Middle English poetry was also capable of great things in a simple style. The fifteenth century, which could give us these dull lines:
O dulcis diamounde, deyre damesell,  
Domina mundi, thow delykat dame,  
Tronus dei thow art to tell,  
Intemerata, turtyll tame.  

can also delight us with this famous brief lyric:

I syng of a myden that is makeles,  
Kyng of alle kynges to here sone che ches.  
He cam also stylle ther his moder was,  
As dew in Aprylle that fallyt on the gras.  
He cam also stylle to his moderes bowr  
As dew in Aprille that fallyt on the flour.  
He cam also stylle ther his moder lay,  
As dew in Aprille that fallyt on the spray.  
Moder and mayden was never non but che —  
Wel may swych a lady Godes moder be.  

As a celebration in poetry of the mystery of the Incarnation  
this is unequalled, and one will hunt in vain through the  
Middle Scots religious lyrics for comparable felicity.  
Probably the only Scottish poem to approach it is the Marian  
lyric, Haill, quene of hevin and sterne of blis, discussed  
below, and praised for its very untypicality.  
The lack of  
lyrics of the style and calibre of I syng of a myden is one  
of the great lacunae in Middle Scots religious lyric  
literature.  

Since these we have argued that there are great similarities in the traditions of poetry in England and Scotland in the late Middle Ages, we must, in all consistency, suppose that religious lyrics in the sweet simple, apparently artless, style did once exist in Scotland. Such poems would then have

perished in the destructions of the Reformation. Whereas the Middle English religious lyrics are still extant in the manuscripts of mediaeval ecclesiastics, the Middle Scots lyrics scarcely exist outside the large poetry collections of the sixteenth century, which were clearly compiled as literary anthologies. The Middle English texts survive in their original forms (by and large) - though many have doubtless also been lost: the Middle Scots lyrics have been deliberately selected for preservation. The loss of the 'simple' kind of Middle Scots religious lyric is thus probably the result not only of Protestant censorship but also of literary prejudice. To put it simply, John Asloan, George Bannatyne and Sir Richard Maitland preferred the high-style type of religious lyric, and it is this type alone which has survived.

Nowhere is this suppression more clearly seen than in the nigh total absence of Scottish carols. The Middle English drama, from which I have excerpted several passages of honorific address, also contained more popular material - such as this song from the Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors from the Coventry Corpus Christi plays:

As I out rode this enderes night,
Of thre joli sheppardes I saw a sight,
And all a-bowte there fold a star shone bright;
They sang terli terlow;
So mereli the sheppards ther pipes can blow.31

The Makculloch MS carol - O fairest lady, O swetast lady - is almost the only extant, pre-Reformation specimen of the genre

- although, as we have seen, non-religious carols do appear in the Bannatyne MS, and religious carols are found in the Protestant Gude and Godlie Ballatis. The Reformers, indeed, placed the singing of carols under a special interdict, as we can see from an entry in the Register of the parish of Errol in Perthshire, for 30 December 1593:

Comperit tho loony being summonit for singing off carrellis, at the thornes, and confessing his offence promisit amendement. It is ordanit that carrelleris in all tym cuming be punissit as fornicatouris.

With such an attitude prevailing, it is no wonder that carols and other popular religious lyrics of pre-Reformation Scotland are now scarce in the extreme. In the case of carols, however, the suppression may have begun even before the onset of the Reformation proper. Archbishop Hamilton's Catechism of 1551 speaks out against:

carreling and wanton synging in the kirk, and all uther vice quhilk commonly hes bein maist usit on the sunday.

Clearly, by the mid century, the word 'carreling' had acquired pejorative connotations.

Any statement concerning the influence of the religious lyric poetry of mediaeval England upon that of Scotland is, therefore, based upon lamentably incomplete - and thus

---

32 See above, p.109.
33 For our gude man has both burden and refrain; Lat us rejoyis and sing and All my hart ay lack refrains: The Gude and Godlie Ballatis, pp.198-200, 83-85, 139-140. See also below, pp.432-433, 442.
34 Mill, Mediaeval Plays, pp.243, 244.
imbalanced - evidence. Despite this unfortunate fact, there yet seems little need radically to modify the conclusion already advanced: namely, that the degree of influence was large. If we could match the multifarious religious lyrics of England with Scottish counterparts in every genre, it is quite possible that we should perceive the mutual affinities to be all the closer. This would mean one, or both, of two things: (a) that the English poetic influence upon Scotland is even greater than we can appreciate from the surviving evidence; and (b), that late-mediaeval England, like Scotland, was subject to influences from the Continent which are manifested in similar ways in the religious poetry of both countries. It is to the Continental influences that I now turn.

The Grands Rhétoriqueurs.

Throughout the main period of composition of the Middle Scots religious lyrics one of the strongest influences would have been that of the school of French poets known as the Grands Rhétoriqueurs. It is most unlikely that the literary-minded Scotsman of this period could have remained ignorant of this Continental school: every contact forged by education, travel and trade would have afforded opportunities to imbibe the influence. On occasions, contact could be even closer - as when Margaret of Scotland, daughter of James I and wife of Louis XI of France, reputedly kissed the French poet, Alain Chartier, who is usually considered to be the founder of the school. Chartier himself had earlier visited Scotland,
in 1428, sent on an embassy to James I by Charles VII, and the poet delivered a long Latin speech to James at Perth. Chartier's political allegory, Le quadrilogue invectif, furthermore, seems to have had a direct influence upon the anonymous sixteenth-century satirical work, The Complaynt of Scotlande, and the book published in 1508 by Chepman and Myllar as The Porteous of Noblenes is a translation of Chartier's poem, Le bréviaire des nobles. Later poets of the Rhétoriqueur school included Georges Chastellain, an admirer of Alain Chartier, Jean Meschinot (1415?-1509), Guillaume Cretin (1472?-1525), Jean Molinet (1435?-1507), Jean Marot (1463-1527) and Jean Le Maire de Belges (1473-1525) - and there were also other, minor figures. Though the works of these poets are little read today, they nonetheless, as Lucien Foulet points out, constitute an important link between styles which are patently mediaeval and modern:

Il y a là, dès la fin du XVe siècle, comme une première Pléiade, qui, par son souci, même puéril, de la technique et surtout par le vif sentiment qu'elle a eu de la dignité de l'art, a, dans une mesure lointaine sans doute, mais appréciable, préparé les voies à Ronsard et à son école. Le premier des grands rhétoriqueurs et le plus

---


moderne, Jean Le Maire de Belges, sera salué par les hommes de 1550 comme un précurseur.\(^{39}\)

The Grands Rhetoriqueurs, thus, were poets of an age of transition, and it is necessary to investigate their contribution to the verse of the exactly contemporary Middle Scots poets.

The poetry of the Rhetoriqueurs is at all times consciously artful. In his *Art de Rhetorique*, Jean Molinet reveals his complete contempt for all poetry which might be described as popular or naive:

\[
\text{qui veult practiquier la science choisisse plaisans equivoques, riches termes etleonismes, ey laisse les bregiers user de leur rethorique rurale}.^{40}
\]

The use, in this quotation, of the word *science* is immediately indicative of the poet's attitude to his work: for Molinet, poetry is a craft to be learned and then practised with skill - his concern is with technique, for it is via the supremely competent application of technique that great poetry is to be achieved. This, indeed, is the characteristic attitude of the Rhetoriqueurs, and it is from this that they derive their name. As Patterson says:

\[
\text{it is not too much praise, but simply justice, to say of the treatise by the Burgundian Rhetoriqueur poet}^{\text{Molinet}}\text{ that it is the keystone in the arch of French poetic theory before the Renaissance Arts Poétiques}.^{41}
\]


41 *Three Centuries of French Poetic Theory*, I, 150.
The science of the Rhétoriqueurs is to be linked with another science - that of music - and the poets of this school frequently insist on the connection between the sister arts. The opinion of Johannes de Garlandia (d. c.1272) - "rithmica species est artis enim music"\(^4\) - is almost echoed by Molinet in the first paragraph of his treatise:

Rhétorique vulgaire est une espece de musique appellée richmique, laquelle contient certain nombre de sillabes avec aucune suavité de equisonance.\(^5\)

It is perhaps no accident that the apogee of the school of poetry espousing such ideas coincided with the great development of polyphonic music both on the Continent and in England and Scotland.

The deliberate artfulness of the programme of the Rhétoriqueurs emerges in verse in the enthusiastic cultivation of latinate vocabulary, in the proliferation of internal rhymes, in the use of alliteration (even though less easy in French than in a Germanic language), and in an intricacy of syntax which - at least theoretically - reflects the complexity of underlying thought. The latinate diction, which is ubiquitous in the works of the Rhétoriqueurs, is oppressive in such a poem as the following, published in 1501 by André de la Vigne:

```
Au point perfis que spondille et musculle,
Sens vernacule, cartillage, auricule
D'Isis aculle Dyana crepuscule
Et l'heure aculle pour son lustre assopir,
```

\(^5\) Recueil d'Arts de Seconde Rhétorique, ed. Langlois, p.216.
As an opening sentence, these lines are perhaps more remarkable than comprehensible. The combination of aureate Latinisms with an extravagant use of internal rhymes on vowel-sounds establishes a degree of kinship with the following:

Hale sterne superne, hale in eterne
In Godis sicht to schyne;
Lucerne in derne for to discerne
Be glory and grace devyne;
Hodiern, modern, sempitern,
Angelicall regyne.\footnote{44}{In Patterson, \textit{Three Centuries of French Poetic Theory}, I, 220.}

Yet how much more acceptable is Dunbar, who, by contrast with the French poet, has exercised some discipline in his choice of aureate terms, and who forges his assonances and rhymes between aureate terms (e.g. 'superne') and words of native stock (e.g. 'sterne').

One of the lyrical forms most highly recommended by Molinet was that of the \textit{serventois}, which, according to him, was especially employed "à l'honneur de la vierge Marie". The following lines are a typical example:

\footnote{45}{The \textit{Asloan MS}, II, 275.}
Dame d'honneur, de haute preference,
Fleur flourissant miraculeusement
En mer, en terre, et en circumferance
Du hautain ciel et divin firmament,
Ou ciel lassus, dignement couronnée,
Estes d'angeles et sains environnée ... 46

Molinet's verse is much closer to that of the Middle Scots poets than are the lines of the egregious De la Vigne. Beside them we could set the Marian lyrics of Dunbar or Kennedy, or this anonymous lyric from the Selden MS:

O hie emperice and quene celestiall,
Princes eterne and flour immaculate,
Oure soverane help quhen we unto the call,
Haile! ros intact, virgyne inviolate,
That with the fader was predestinate
To bere the floure and makar of us all ... 47

In both the serventois of Molinet and in the Scottish lyrics the latinisms are mainly vernacular renderings of terms familiar in Latin - from theological writings, and the Litany of the BVM - rather than flagrant neologisms created, it is true, from Latin roots, but for which there is no Latin precedent. Janet M. Smith has written of Dunbar's debt to the Rhétoriqueurs:

Middle Scots was poor in lyric. The influence of the Rhétoriqueurs did nothing to remedy this. Dunbar's most lyrical notes come, not from the native songs of his own country, nor from his literary foreign models, but from the Latin hymns and from the songs of the Goliards.

And again:

46 Recueil d'Arts de Seconde Rhétorique, ed. Langlois, p.246.
Dunbar never copied the *Rhétoriqueurs' manner* of twisting and playing with ideas, and though he does imitate their vocabulary and their elaborate rhymes, he does not go far with their tortuous verbal conceits.\(^48\)

It is fortunate that the Scottish master did not quite succumb to the novel, French poetic fashion.

For an example of poetry which is little more than verbal ingenuity we may cite some lines of "rhétorique batelee" from Moline's treatise:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Povres gens sont a tous lez reversez,} \\
\text{Tensez, bersez confachiez, confonduz,} \\
\text{Tappez, trompez tourmentez, trondelez,} \\
\text{Brulez, rifflez tempestez, triboulez,} \\
\text{Pelez, choulez espantez, esperdus ...} \quad 49
\end{align*}
\]

The valour of the poet's tongue is surely over-strong, and the reader of such lines may well feel that he has taken a verbal battering from the maddening repetitions of consonants - the effect which Southey achieves so triumphantly in his poem on the Cateract of Lodore.\(^50\) Dunbar did not use this stanza form, and, when it does appear in Middle Scots verse - in "To his Darrest Freind" of Stewart of Baldynneis (written late in the sixteenth century) - there is a welcome diminution of the verbal tap-dancing:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Lyk as the recent rubie rois} \\
\text{Is maist formois of flouris fair,} \\
\text{So but compair quhill lyf I lois} \\
\text{Ye ar my chois for vertew rair.} \quad 51
\end{align*}
\]

---

48 The French Background, pp.xxvi, 76.
49 Patterson, Three Centuries of French Poetic Theory, I, 147.
Nevertheless, the example of the Rhétoriqueurs elsewhere led some Middle Scots poets into flights of versification of which the success is debatable. Alliteration, which is an ancient and very basic feature of Germanic poetry, is carried to fantastic lengths, as in this stanza by Alexander Scott:

Fresch, fulgent, flurist, fragrant flour formois,
Lantern to lufe, of ladeis lamp and lot,
Cherie maist chaist, cheif charbuckle and chois,
Smaill sweit smaragde, smelling but smit of smot,
Noblest nator, nurice to nurtour not ...

The virtuosity of such lines easily transcends the effects of the traditional alliterative line, as exploited by Holland, in his Marian lyric, from the Buke of the Howlat:

Now soverane, quhar thow sittis be thi sonnis syd,
Send sum succour doune sone to the synnere;
The fende is our felloune fa, in the we confide,
Thow moder of all mercy and the mevare ...

The juxtaposition brings out the spectacular technique of Scott, and reveals the influence of the Rhétoriqueur style. A still later poem - which must represent the culmination of the alliterative craze - is the "Literall Sonnet" of Baldynneis, in which all the words in each line commence with the same letter. Though avoiding the trap of over-alliteration, Sir Richard Maitland displays a comparable level of metrical dexterity - which is eminently in the manner of the Rhétoriqueurs - in his stanza of moral counsels, Luif

52 The Bannatyne MS, II, 242.
53 The Asloan MS, II, 118.
54 Poems of John Stewart of Baldynneis, ed. Crockett, p. 185.
vertew ever, and all ycois fle, memorable for nothing other than, as the poet proudly declares:

Thir last aucht lynis ye may begun at ony nuke ye will and reid bakward or fordward and ye sall fynd the lyke sentence and metir.55

In such a stanza Maitland is regrettably following the example of Molinet, "one of the principal creators of the tradition of puerile search for difficult form".56

The influence of the Grands Rhétoriqueurs, then, was one of the strongest stylistic forces bearing upon Middle Scots poetry at the end of the fifteenth century, and in the sixteenth. Had this influence been assimilated without reservation, it is doubtful whether Middle Scots poetry would have been enriched, though it would certainly have been transformed. Warner Forrest Patterson has characterised the aims of this French school in the following words:

The poetry of the time was florid, like the flamboyant Gothic of the churches. The writers of the period possessed a store of pedantic learning. They cared to increase the national treasure of words with many Latinisms. ... They possessed more eloquence than sentiment. They had a genuine love of art combined with astoundingly poor taste. Poetry they defined as a music of words, but they were too confident that words could stand alone, with insufficient foundation in deeply felt thought.57

The reader of the Middle Scots religious lyrics will doubtless

---

55 The Maitland Folio MS, I, 48.
56 Patterson, Three Centuries of French Poetic Theory, I, 134.
57 Three Centuries of French Poetic Theory, I, 173.
perceive the relevance of these succinct remarks, but the state of poetry in Scotland in our period was not quite identical with that in France. Janet M. Smith reminds us that Scottish poets, while considerably in debt to their French models, were far from slavish in their borrowings, taking only what they wanted and applying it to suit their own purposes. As a result, Middle Scots poetry evinces few of the excesses of its Continental counterparts. Dunbar wrote too early to experience the strongest influence of the Rhétoriqueurs, and ... was too original a poet and too great a metrist to be completely mastered by it.58

and Gavin Douglas, while displaying much closer connections with this school of French poets, yet remained a pupil of Chaucer.59 Even in the lyrics to Mary - where the influence of the Rhétoriqueurs is perhaps most strongly felt - the Scottish poets had the tact to eschew the verbal pyrotechnics which lead ultimately to obfuscation.

It is important to note that the influence of the Grands Rhétoriqueurs may not be alone responsible for endowing Middle Scots poetry with its rich resources of latinate vocabulary and aureate diction. As George Gregory Smith long ago pointed out, the lexical importations could well have come directly from Latin, rather than through any French intermediary:

\[\text{Latin}\] was the familiar medium of all classes above the poorest and most uneducated, and ... it was used

58 The French Background, pp.164-165.
59 The French Background, p.122.
with such ease that we must believe that it frequently took the place of the vernacular in thinking as well as writing. The effect of this on the literary side of Scots could not but be great. The habit not only led to the direct incorporation of Latin words and usages, but it facilitated the imitation of the Latinised style of the Rhétoriqueurs and their disciples. This explains the paradox that though Middle Scots verse is more 'aureate' in its vocabulary than contemporary English, there is less suspicion of pedantry in it than in the milder efforts in the South. There are, of course, extreme cases, such as Dunbar's Ave Maria, where the Latin element is consciously exaggerated.\textsuperscript{60}

An excellent illustration of the truth of these remarks is furnished by the \textit{Meroure of Wysdome} - the religious treatise of Johannes de Irlandia, written in 1490, and dedicated to James IV. Irlandia includes Latin quotations in every other sentence: mostly these come from the Vulgate and the Fathers, but there are also references to classical writers of the Ancient World - e.g. Cicero, Demosthenes, Plutarch, Sallust and Virgil.\textsuperscript{61} Occasionally Irlandia's prose becomes genuinely macaronic, as the Latin words are incorporated into the Middle Scots sentence structure: "For als lang as wisdome in the orient had place and reule, thar was gret powere and dominacioune et domus imperii".\textsuperscript{62} But even when he writes entirely in Middle Scots Irlandia cannot keep the fruits of

\textsuperscript{60} Specimens of Middle Scots, ed. George Gregory Smith (Edinburgh and London, 1902), p.lx.

\textsuperscript{61} The Meroure of Wysdome, I, 31, 74, 11, 118, 108.

\textsuperscript{62} The Meroure of Wysdome, I, 9.
his Latin learning out of his sentences:

This cheptur schawis and ostendis agane evill and wykkit peple and the fals mynd and ymaginacioun of thame. The gret perfeccioun and vertu of the devin providence anens the universal regimen policie and gubernacioun of man and specialie in the natur of presciens and predestinatioun.63

This is aureation with a vengeance, and is quite as remarkable as the Latin diction of Dunbar and other Middle Scots poets. Irlandia's prose demonstrates the ease with which a late-medieval Scottish writer could incorporate new terms from Latin. The Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue indicates that he is the first person in Scotland to use the word 'gubernacioun', and other words in the sentence just quoted may originate with him. Irlandia, trained in scholastic theology, was naturalising the terms of his trade in his native tongue, for the benefit of a young king, who, though educated in Latin himself, was no specialist theologian. The poetic equivalent of this may be seen in the following lines from an Annunciation lyric, Quhen be dyvyne deliberatioun:

The vertu of the haly gaste dyvyne
Within thy wame sail obumbir and schyne.64

The new word, "obumbir", is straight from the text of the Vulgate,65 and the anonymous poet, in addition to enriching the vocabulary of Middle Scots, may have wished to prompt a recollection of the Latin source. In such ways, Latin, the language of religion, education and philosophy could readily

63 The Meroure of Wysdome II, 3.
64 The Makculloch MS, p.204. See also below, pp.168-172.
65 St Luke, I, 35.
pass into Middle Scots.

As far as the religious lyrics are concerned, there are few signs that the Middle Scots poets incorporated Latinate vocabulary as a result of any love for the pagan, classical culture of Rome. Given the Christian nature of the subject-matter, one will scarcely be surprised therewith. It is true that in the religious lyrics we do encounter the names of pagan deities — for example in Dunbar's Resurrection lyric:

Sprungin is Aurora radius and bricht,
On loft is gone the glorius Appollo.66

— but the sense is never other than Christian. That is not to say, however, that Dunbar’s use of the name "Appollo" for Christ might not have been suggested by the growing awareness of classical culture which is conventionally regarded as a sign of the Renaissance. Jean Seznec explains that, at this period, the combination of two influences — one from the Ovide moralisé, the other from Renaissance Platonism — so worked as to make the use of classical names in a Christian sense a commonplace, and he cites an opinion of the German humanist, Mutianus Rufus (1471-1526) — Dunbar’s contemporary:

Est unus deus et una dea. Sed sunt multa uti numina ita et nomina: Jupiter, Sol, Apollo, Moses, Christus, Luna, Ceres, Proserpina, Tellus, Maria.

... Quum Jovem nomino, Christum intellige.

Seznec points out that it was not Catholics, but Luther, who objected to this practice.67

In this last context, Gavin Douglas is a more interesting

66 The Bannatyne MS, II, 89.
Mrs Bawcutt has called attention to the fact that, in the religious lyric which stands as Prologue to Book X of his translation of the Aeneid, Douglas employs a terminology for God which is strikingly reminiscent of that with which he denotes the pagan Jupiter. A phrase such as "the Fader of goddis and men" recalls Virgil's "divum pater atque hominum rex", and the term "helply Fader", which he uses for the Christian God in the Prologue, is elsewhere given by Douglas as a rendering of the etymology (now no longer accepted) of the name of Jupiter: "iuvans pater". While such words serve to relate Douglas's Christian Prologue to the subsequent Book X of his translation of the pagan epic, they also serve to mark this Prologue as a rather unusual type of religious lyric.

These considerations become especially significant in any general estimation of the degree to which Middle Scots poetry - or a chosen subsection thereof, the Middle Scots religious lyrics - was affected by the cultural developments to which is given the collective label of 'Renaissance'. Johan Huizinga, writing of French poetry in the fifteenth century, declares that neither classicism nor paganism is a true sign of the new spirit:

If by moderns we understand those who have most affinity with the later development of French literature, the moderns are Villon, Charles of Orleans, and the poet of L'Amant rendu Cordelier, just those who kept most aloof from classicism and who did not strain after overnice forms. The medieval character of their motifs robs them not

in the least of their aspect of youth and of promise. It is the spontaneity of their expression which makes them moderns.69

Yet, although Huizinga's critical judgement leads him to value Villon and Charles d'Orléans more highly than any of the Grands Rhétoriqueurs, he concedes that the experiments of the latter constitute an important marker of a shift in taste:

Now it is rhetoric which in the literature of the fifteenth century signalizes the coming of the new spirit. For readers of that age lack of novelty in the matter was made up for by the aesthetic enjoyment of an ornate style.

And again:

It requires some effort and some reflection to realize that exactly in those artifices of style and wit [of the Grands Rhétoriqueurs], we witness the coming of the Renaissance, in the shape it took outside Italy. To contemporaries this far-fetched form meant the renewal of art.70

Huizinga's remarks are extremely useful in helping one to 'place' the Middle Scots religious lyrics more exactly in their late-medieval, early (Northern) Renaissance context. The debt of the Scottish poets to the great English masters - especially Chaucer and Lydgate - is, as we have seen, freely, humbly, and even enthusiastically acknowledged. The tradition of Middle English religious lyric poetry is an extremely important background to the Scottish poems under consideration (the transcriptions of English lyrics in Scottish manuscripts

69  The Waning of the Middle Ages, pp. 315-316.
70  The Waning of the Middle Ages, pp. 283, 306.
are proof of that), which it is impossible to overlook. Yet though the Scottish poets were wholly the admirers of Chaucer and Lydgate, they preserved a large degree of poetic independence from them. Since most of the Middle Scots lyric poets wrote towards the end of the fifteenth century and in the early sixteenth, they came under the influence of the new style of French poetry developed by the Grands Rhétoriqueurs, which Chaucer and Lydgate, writing fifty to a hundred years earlier, escaped. Even in Lydgate's day, of course, religious lyrics expressing adoration of God or Our Lady had had a wide recourse to a high style of diction, using rhetorical figures and an aureate vocabulary: in this they followed the Latin style of late-mediaeval devotions, and in their honorific diction when addressing Mary — for example — they reflect the Marianism which developed so strongly in the fifteenth century. The influence of the Grands Rhétoriqueurs on the verse of the period presently under study was to raise the level of poetic style even higher, by making the expression yet more rhetorical, the vocabulary more aureate still. The culmination of this development, insofar as it concerns the Middle Scots religious lyric, is the Marian poem of Dunbar: 

_Hale, sterne superne._ The same trend, however, continued to affect Scottish secular poetry well into the sixteenth century, and we have noted the results of Rhétoriqueur influence in Maitland, Scott, and Stewart of Baldynneis. Yet while Dunbar's Marian lyric furnishes clear evidence of the influence of the Grands Rhétoriqueurs, it must be emphasised that the Scottish poet refuses vulgarly to descend to the pursuit of novelty and ingenuity for their own sakes. And though traces of this
same influence may appear in other Scottish religious lyrics, it would be very wrong to suppose that there was a complete surrender to the new, Continental fashion. As with the English poetic masters, so with the French: though the Middle Scots poets came much in contact with both, they maintained their independence and were eclectic in their borrowings. We have already seen that Middle Scots religious lyrics in the simple style are conspicuously absent from the poetry collections of the sixteenth century. Partly, of course, this may be ascribed to the accidental loss, or deliberate destruction, of texts: the fate of the carol after the Reformation is a case in point. But another explanation, connected with the powerful influence of the new French poetry, may be hazarded. If the ornate and elaborate poems were so clearly favoured in the late fifteenth century, there may have been little desire for the simpler kind of lyric: the king and the church might not have cared to patronise such works, which might have appeared incongruous with the complex, polyphonic style which was all the rage in the music of the time. And moreover, when Asloan, Maitland and Bannatyne in the sixteenth century set about the collection and transcription of the Middle Scots poems, that was just the period in which the influence of the Grands Rhetoriqueurs had taken its strongest hold, and was, so to speak, producing much poetic fruit. In such an age there was little likelihood that the compilers of anthologies would continue to admire a simple style of religious lyric, that could only have seemed rude and old-fashioned, and indeed one will look in vain for such pieces through the large manuscript collections of poetry.
Finally, although in some Middle Scots religious lyrics we discover references to pagan gods, and although Gavin Douglas's Tenth Prologue is in its diction suggestive of the classical ethos of the translation of Virgil with which it belongs, we are to consider that the real signs of the Renaissance - as we see them in the religious lyrics - consist of the very innovations in rhetoric and vocabulary which were inspired by the Grands Rhétoriqueurs, the school of French poets which is the true voice of the age of transition. The brilliant exploitation of lexical possibilities - such as we encounter in Dunbar's Marian lyric, for example - ought to be seen not only in relation to the Latin hymns and the late-mediaeval cult of Marianism, but also to the developing linguistic awarenesses of Renaissance humanism. The Middle Scots religious lyrics developed in an age which was crucial in the history of European culture, and it is fortunate that among the composers of such poems there were talents which could both assimilate and exploit the influences both 'mediaeval' and 'modern' which bore upon Scottish poetry from both England and the Continent.
Chapter VI: Lyrics of the Annunciation and the Nativity.

(a) Ballatis of the Annunciatioun of Our Ladye ... p.153

(b) Ballatis of the Nativitie of Chryste .......... p.178
Ballatis of the Annunciacioun of Our Ladye.

It is natural to begin a study of the Middle Scots religious lyrics with those poems which take events in the life of Christ as their main subject, for, at least as far as the surviving Scottish Catholic lyrics are concerned, there are as many dealing with the life of Christ as with all the other subjects taken together. And within the life of Christ, those dealing with the Incarnation and the Nativity make an obvious starting point.

Considerations such as these may well have been in the mind of George Bannatyne as he drew up the list of poems to be included in his manuscript. The 'Draft MS' testifies most clearly to his intentions. It opens with John Bellenden's poem on the Incarnation, "The Benner of Peetie", at the conclusion of which we find the words, "ffollowis the con septioun of Chryst", used to introduce the anonymous lyric, Quhen be dyvyne deliberat ioun, and after that comes the next heading, "ffollowis ballattis of the birth of Chryst." At this point something seems to have gone wrong with the planned order of poems, and we then encounter, not a Nativity lyric, but a poem expressing the heavy distress of a sinner, written - of this we may be fairly confident - in a style later than that of the first two lyrics. Nonetheless, we can still see that Bannatyne's 'ballat buik' was to have opened with poems on

1 The Bannatyne MS, I, 3-10.
the Incarnation, the Conception, and the Nativity of Christ.

One must work from the Draft MS here, since the main manuscript as it now stands no longer reflects the original scheme. True, it too opens with the "Benner of Feetie" (that is where we find this title), but for the poem, Quhen be dyvyne deliberatioun, we must have recourse to almost the very end of the first section of the manuscript, and the "ballatis of the nativitie of Chryste" - which have been totally lost from the Draft MS - now appear in a group by themselves, near the middle of this section of the main manuscript.²

Bannatyne has therefore begun his collection at the obvious place, by choosing the Bellenden poem on the Incarnation. He might also have had a more particular reason for beginning with this work. E.A. Sheppard, in the most recent and most thorough investigation of the family and ancestry of John Bellenden, holds out the possibility of a family relationship between Bellenden and George Bannatyne.³ Indeed, as Tod Ritchie notes, there are but two of the many variants in the spelling of this name in sixteenth-century Scotland.⁴ Although the

² The Bannatyne MS, II, 102-103, 63-77.
³ For Sheppard see Bellenden, Chronicles of Scotland, II, 419-420.
⁴ The Bannatyne MS, I, xxxiv-xxxv.
family relationship between Bellenden and Bannatyne is not, apparently, likely to be a very close one, it might well have been enough, given the emphasis on kinship in medieval Scotland, to induce George Bannatyne to give pride of place to a kinsman's poem. Bannatyne himself, we recall, was sufficiently proud of his family name to call attention to it via a pun, in the concluding stanza of a love lyric of his own composition: *No wondir is althocht my hairt be thrall.*

The titles given to the Annunciation poems in the Bannatyne MS deserve further comment. The "Benner of Peetie" is an interesting title, but it does not immediately indicate just what will be the main subject of the poem which bears it. One would not necessarily connect this title with the Annunciation, which is, in fact, the central episode of Bellenden's poem:

Quhen Gabriell maid Annuntiatioun,
The Sone incarnat wes allanerlie. (119-120)

Another text of the "Benner of Peetie", however, declares the poem to be "Ane ballat of the cuming of Crist and of the annunciatioun of our Ladye". This manuscript — thought until very recently to have been lost — consists of a copy of John Fordun's *Scotichronicon*, and is now in the Mitchell

---

5 *The Bannatyne MS*, III, 309-311.

6 *The Bannatyne MS*, II, 6.

7 Denton Fox, in Aitken, *Bards and Makars*, p.162.
Library, Glasgow. It is of particular interest since a colophon at the end of the poem states: "Imprentit be me John Scot." Scot is known to have been active as a printer in Edinburgh and St Andrews in the decade 1552-1562. Examination of the watermarks in the relevant part of the MS indicates that the paper is of French origin, and from the period 1512-1525.

For the present purpose, the important thing is that this Mitchell text of Bellenden's poem furnishes a title which suggests that there may have been such a class of poems as 'ballatis of the Annunciation'. In that case, the title, "Benner of Peetie", may have been a convenient way of avoiding the original title of Bellenden's poem. The Annunciation was traditionally regarded as one of the Joys of the Virgin, and Bannatyne might well have felt obliged to minimise the Marian connection, although he still transcribed the poem. This hypothesis would certainly square with Bannatyne's practice as a scribe as it has been observed elsewhere. In similar fashion, Quhen be dyvyne deliberatioun is also clearly an Annunciation lyric, yet in the Draft MS it is given the title: "the conception of Chryst". The only other place where we

---

8 Manuscript Catalogue, No.308876. The poem can be found on pages vi-vii, before scotichronicon proper.
9 For the books printed by Scot, see the lists in Aldis.
11 See below, pp.167-200; below, pp.385-397.
12 The Bannatyne MS, I, 8.
find this title applied to a Middle Scots lyric is in the Gude and Godlie Ballatis, that militantly Protestant collection. Again this may lead one to suspect that Bannatyne has deliberately played down the Marian overtones of one of his lyrics. In the light of these suspicions, the title of 'ballat of the Annunciation' deserves to be rescued from its post-Reformation obscurity, and it is under that heading that I propose to discuss the first group of Middle Scots religious lyrics.

The first Annunciation lyric to be examined - All sons of Adam, rise up with me - comes from the latest text. This poem appears in the Appendix to the St Andrews Psalter of Thomas Wode - a collection of musical pieces assembled in the later sixteenth century for the specific purpose of preserving the best of the early Scottish musical heritage. As it is, All sons of Adam has not escaped some Protestant contamination: the word "Christsonday" (unknown both to the Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue and to the Scottish National Dictionary) in the lines:

Our Lord harpit, our Lady sang
And all the bells of heavn they rang
On Christsonday at morn. (18-20)

is obviously an awkward substitution for 'Christmasday', a term which, in its suggestion of the hated Mass, was repugnant to Reformed ears.

13 GGB, p.83.
Of all the Scottish lyrics of this group, this poem offers the briefest account of the momentous incident of the Annunciation:

Then spak archangel Gabriel,
Said Ave Mary mild,
The Lord of Lords is with thee,
Now sail thou go with child.
Ecce ancilla Domini,
Then said the Virgin young:
As thou hes said so mot it be,
Welcom be heavins king. (7-14)

This brusquely told narrative in short lines can be paralleled not in the other Middle Scots Annunciation lyrics, but in the verses of several fifteenth-century English carols. As an example we may cite the Franciscan, James Ryman (c.1492):

The Holy Goost shalle light in the,
And God shalle shadowe the eche dele;
The Sonne of God this childe shal be,
Cui nomen Emmanuel.

'Goddes handemayde beholde,' seide she
To Gabriell, that archaungell;
'Thy worde in me fufilled be,
Ut pariam Emmanuel.' 15

In All sons of Adam, as in Ryman's carols, there is a plain directness of expression, free of rhetoric or aureation. The result is a creation which would be bound to make a large appeal to the audience, particularly when there is a

15 Greene, The Early English Carols, No.245. See also Ryman's other carols on this subject: Greene, Nos. 246-256.
We recall that James IV's pride and joy, the ship known as the 'Great Michael', was launched to the sound of trumpets in 1511.\(^\text{16}\) It is within the bounds of possibility that in the poem there is an allusion to the patron saint of the great vessel. If this be so, the effect of the poem would be enhanced by its appeal to patriotism. At any rate, the picture of the musical ship is quite delightful, even without any historical reference, and through the whole poem there is a tone of robustly naive joyfulness. The stylistic affinities of this poem are clearly with such popular compositions as the simply attractive carols of the Franciscans. The line - "Sing we nowell, nowell, nowell" (3) - can be likened to the burdens of certain late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Annunciation carols, which also hark back to the Christmas season: for example, "Nowell, noweli / This is the salutacion of the aungell Gabriell".\(^\text{17}\)

In Wode's Psalter, All sons of Adam is scored for three voices, at the pitches of alto, tenor and bass.\(^\text{18}\) I have already mentioned that Elliott and Shire declare this

\(^\text{16}\) ALHTS, IV, 313.
\(^\text{17}\) Greene, The Early English Carols, No.239. Also Nos. 236, 245, 256.
\(^\text{18}\) Music of Scotland, pp.xvi, 152-154.
piece to be a 'medley' - a form derived from the lively French dance known as the fricassée.19 The harmonies of the music are - appropriately - in the major keys of F and C, and, as if to highlight the allusions to singing, the basically duple rhythm changes to a triple one for lines 3-6, 18-20, 24-27. The fundamental hilarity of the words is given a perfect expression in the setting. This lyric would consequently be an excellent 'Benedicamus substitute' for the Christmas season, which is suggested by the words of the third line.20 All sons of Adam is thus one lyric which is manifestly written for public performance, and it is sure to have been a great success.

The three other Annunciation lyrics - Henryson's Forcy as deith is likand lufe, Bellenden's "Benner of Peetic", and the anonymous Quhen be dyvyne deliberatioun - are all very different from All sons of Adam, and are more typical of the Middle Scots religious lyric in general. They are all longer than the popular poem, and are much more sophisticated as literary creations. Though each could have been given a musical setting, the quality of the verse allows these lyrics to exist independently as poems - something which scarcely applies to All sons of Adam. At the same time these three poems differ considerabibly from each other, and a comparison between them serves to illustrate various approaches to the religious lyric

employed by the Middle Scots poets. In the case of these poems, moreover, comparisons with late Middle English poems only bring out the contrasts between the methods of the English and Scottish poets, and so, by antithesis, help to define some of the features of the Middle Scots religious lyric.

Probably the earliest of these poems is Robert Henryson's *Forcy as deith is likand lufe*, which was copied into the Gray MS sometime before the end of the fifteenth century. It is a poem which has received mainly appreciative notices from the time of Gregory Smith onwards, and has recently been the subject of considerable critical interest. Like all lyrics of the Annunciation, this poem is concerned with the events told in the first chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, 26-38: the visit of Gabriel to Mary. The poetic treatment of this famous Biblical passage almost inevitably results in lyrics in praise of the Blessed Virgin, but there are many ways in which this end result can be realised. In this poem Henryson's main concern is not to retell the familiar story, nor is it merely to heap up aureate praises for Mary, as does — for example — the

---

21 The Makculloch MS, pp.43-45.

author of the fifteenth-century English poem, Ave Gracia Plena. Instead, what we find in the Henryson lyric is a meditative reaction to a Biblical text, from the Old Testament, which speaks of the miraculous power of love. It has recently been pointed out that the opening line of the poem, Forcy as deith is likand lufe, is a direct rendering of "quia fortis est ut mors dilectio", from the Song of Solomon (8, 6). This text, given out at the start, is the basis for the whole lyric, which is indeed almost a gloss upon it. The declaration in the first line of the miraculous qualities of love - that it is as strong as death - leads to an account of the Annunciation, which is expounded in such a way as to bring out the further miracles of love which one may perceive in that famous encounter. The poet, who concludes his poem with a prayer to Our Lady, therefore asks her to perform some rather wonderful things for him - namely, through the power of her love, to purge him of sin, to save him from the assaults of the devil, and to hasten the entry of his soul to heaven, where she reigns as queen. Henryson's ultimate concern is, therefore, with the salvation of the human soul. In the final stanza he is either speaking from a realised sense of his own predicament, or, perhaps more likely, he is speaking for the reader who, after reading the lyric, will wish to


appropriate to himself the sentiments expressed for him at the end of the poem. All this is to be achieved through a lyric on the theme of love, and which, as such, could almost be read as an expansion of the famous passage on the nature of love in the fourth chapter of the first Epistle of St. John, 16-21.

So much for the outward 'method' of the poem. What is chiefly admirable, from a poetic point of view, is the concise, yet elegant, style in which the lyric is couched. And this, surely, is one mark of a great lyric - that each word should be so absolutely right and necessary that it is inconceivable that the poet's meaning could be otherwise expressed. Henryson here employs a twelve-line stanza form, which has some resemblance to another used in a lyric by one Glassinbery in the same manuscript,25 but even a brief comparison of the two poems soon shows that, with even fewer possibilities of rhyming, Henryson has produced a tighter, more coherent, and certainly more compelling lyric. He has had to make some adjustments in order to achieve this: the detail of St. Luke's Gospel is severely curtailed, and the Virgin in this poem maintains only a devout silence, the sign of the perfect love which involves a complete acceptance of God's plan.

25 The Makculloch MS, pp.46-50. Nothing certain appears to be known of Glassinbery. Sir Israel Gollancz, however, suggested that this poet might have been a monk in the famous monastery of Glastonbury, and that he probably lived in the fourteenth century: Israel Gollancz, "The Poems in the Graye Manuscript", The Athenaeum, No.3883 (March 29, 1902), 403-404.
Henryson's skill is particularly evident in the metre and rhyme of this poem. The rhyme scheme is a demanding one. The poet has chosen to limit himself to only two rhymes per stanza, and each one appears six times in twelve lines. Yet the rhymes, as Henryson handles them, do not seem repetitive: rather they impart a pleasantly harmonious sound to the lyric. In each stanza, Henryson employs a 'masculine' rhyme and a 'feminine' one, and this makes for variety at the end of the line. Furthermore, the pattern of rhyme subtly avoids monotony: after four lines arranged - in the manner of the ballads - abab, the remaining eight lines are in the following, non-balladic order: abba, abba. At the same time the metre also helps to prevent any suggestion of monotony. Henryson uses lines of either four or three stresses, the latter always in conjunction with the feminine rhymes. The poet's use of rhyme and metre thus entirely avoids any mechanical regularity. This skill in verse is all the more striking since it operates within the tight compass of the short lines of this poem. And the total effect of it all - besides contributing to the impression of artistic control - is such as to make even the very form of this lyric seem beautiful.

Perhaps here, in this search for an exquisite form in which to couch his sentiments of devotion, Henryson may be said to exhibit signs of influence from the practice of the Grands Rhétoiqueurs. As we shall see below, lyrics on Marian themes often display exaggerated tendencies towards aureation, and this presumably reflects the Marianism of the times. But Henryson's Annunciation lyric is by no means
a tour de force of aureation (in this it contrasts markedly with Dunbar's Hale, sterne superne). However, as MacQueen notes, the style (and the stanza form) of this lyric are quite unlike that of any other of Henryson's works.\textsuperscript{26} We may therefore surmise that his devotion has surfaced particularly in the uniquely intricate stanza-form of this lyric.

In the detail of the lines one can see how carefully Henryson emphasises the elements of paradox in the situation. In the first two lines the antithesis of "deith" and "lufe" is paralleled by "bitter suet", and at the end of the second stanza there is a closely-knit series of paradoxes in the lines: "Wox in hir chaumer chaist with child, /With Crist our kyng that crowned is." (23-24) The miracle is not only that there should take place a Virgin Birth (not an Immaculate Conception, as Hallett says\textsuperscript{27}), but that this child of Mary should be at the same time the crowned King of heaven. These contrasts are given a sharp point by the skilfully controlled use of alliteration, which runs through this poem. The third stanza, with its picture of the Virgin in the ecstasy of love ("blith with barne") develops the paradoxes already noted. In the very centre of the poem Henryson gives a general statement explaining the events just told, and this is the kernel of the theological 'message' of the poem: "The miraclis ar mekle and meit/Fra luffis ryver rynnis." (37-38) The image of

\textsuperscript{26} A Choice of Scottish Verse, p.193.

\textsuperscript{27} Hallett, SSL, X (1973), 166.
the river of love is poetically suggestive. Not only does it associate in the mind with the river of life (Revelations, 22, 1), but it recalls the symbolic use of water in mystical writings to signify union with God (from Psalm 42, 1), and also suggests notions of copiousness and continuity - that love, in other words, is a never ending stream. (The verb "rymnis" may also link with "glidis" - the word excellently chosen by Henryson to indicate the effortless motion of the Archangel. Both words convey the idea of calmness in motion.) This general statement on love is Henryson's cue to introduce three of the best known images for the Virgin, the chosen of God. These are the burning bush, warm and shining yet never consumed (Exodus, 3, 2), the wand of Aaron, which miraculously budded (Numbers, 17, 1-9), and the fleece of Gideon, which remained moist while all around was parched (Judges, 6, 36-38). These were traditional emblems for the Virgin, often used in poems and paintings of the Annunciation: one may, for example, recall the Nicholas Froment painting of Our Lady in the centre of the burning bush, and the second and third of these motifs may be seen (with some others) in carols by James Ryman. The penultimate stanza of the poem

28 For the appearance of these motifs in mediaeval pictorial art see: Emile Male, The Gothic Image (London, 1961), pp. 146-150, 231.
30 Greene, The Early English Carols, Nos. 56, 66.
emphasises God's goodness to man, his "cherite". This charity, which led to the atoning sacrifice on the Cross, is also a manifestation of miraculous love. Man need no longer fear, since God has worked to secure our "peacis". In the same way the divine love of Our Lady preserved her from 'dreib'. Such lines surely bring to mind St. John's words: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John, 4, 18).

This last text must be in the reader's mind as he comes to the final prayer. Here we see that the miraculous victory of God's love over fear and death leads to the desired victory of the Virgin's love over the poet's fear of death. Kinghorn's remark here - that this stanza shows "a spontaneity rare among such utterances" - needs some qualification.31 There is nothing spontaneous about this concluding prayer, which, as I have tried to show, is prepared for all through the rest of the lyric. Indeed, one could argue convincingly that the lyric expressly exists in order to lead up to this final stanza. Yet the final lines certainly release intense feelings of hope and confidence, as the reader, accepting the words put into his mouth by the poet, is induced to repose all his trust in the love of Our Lady, which is both miraculous and inexhaustible.

This, then, is Henryson's Annunciation lyric - not just an account of the Annunciation, not just a glorification of the Blessed Virgin, but rather a carefully

constructed and beautifully expressed medium for the articulation of the poet's, and the reader's, hopes of salvation. This poem is one of the most artistic and moving achievements of all the Middle Scots religious lyrics.

The lyric, Quhen be dyvyne deliberatioun, probably dates from around 1500. It was printed by Chepman and Myllar in 1508 in a tract which included 'The Maying and Disport of Chaucer' - which is in fact Lydgate's 'Complaint of the Black Knight'.\(^3^2\) The Scottish lyric also appears in both parts of the Bannatyne MS,\(^3^3\) and the significant position which it occupies near the opening of the Draft MS has already been noted.\(^3^4\)

A comparison of the early print and the later manuscript texts of this lyric shows that it too did not escape the attentions of post-Reformation censorship, and I have given the textual variants in this poem on a later page.\(^3^5\) From this comparison we can see that Bannatyne suppressed the role of Mary as intercessor for man ("This gloriouse lady quhom to we oftyme call" (36)), and rejected the notions that Mary has any part to play in the salvation of man ("Be thy meke mene that

---


\(^{33}\) The Bannatyne MS, I, 9-10; II, 102-103. From the Bannatyne MS, for reasons of metre, I have taken the word "Quhen" to open this poem. In Chepman and Myllar the lyric begins (rather awkwardly) "O when".

\(^{34}\) See above, pp.153-154.

\(^{35}\) See below, p.388.
place in hevin to wyn" (48)), and could herself be a dispenser of grace (47). Instead, all of these attributes are, in Bannatyne's version, transferred -- with a loss of unity of subject-matter -- to Christ. In the final line Bannatyne substituted "Adame" for "Abraham" (though not in the Draft MS), and so avoided the reference to the concept of Abraham's Bosom, with the promise made to Abraham and his seed (repeated in the Mass of the Dead). This little alteration has resulted in an unfortunate loss of metre for Bannatyne, for which he has vainly tried to compensate by inserting the expletive "all" (which, if examined closely, carries a different theological implication). This lyric affords an early glimpse of the fate which awaited mediaeval Marian poetry in the later sixteenth century.

Much more obviously than Henryson, the author of this piece makes the Biblical narrative the foundation of his poem. He has not, however, transcribed all of the conversation between Gabriel and Mary (no mention of Elizabeth, for example), and he has made some rearrangement of the source material in order, presumably, to reduce the number of times the centre of interest passes from one interlocutor to the other. Indeed, this poem is best described as a clear, well-constructed narrative, based on Scripture. The only interruptions are the poet's own exclamations - addressed to the Virgin - in the fifth and seventh stanzas.

The lyric gives an impression of straightforwardness, particularly when compared with Henryson's reflective poem. This is a function both of structure and style. The poet has chosen just what he wants from the Gospel account of the Annunciation and has not surrendered to the temptation of merely versifying the Biblical passage, section by section. He has also imposed a discipline on the style of the poem, which is high and dignified and well suited to the purpose. The advantages of this procedure are most apparent if one contrasts this poem with the contemporary English lyric, Ave gracia plena, devoide of alltrespace (written in the time of Henry VII). The latter gives the text from the Vulgate, and then follows each section with exclamations of praise in aureate style. As a result, Ave gracia plena lacks the real strength of Quhen be dyvyne deliberatioun -- a unified structure organically related to the narrative base in the Gospel account. The Scottish poet starts from a deliberation in heaven, and the solemn reference to the Trinity ushers in some phrases which underline the lofty, and courtly, character of the angel's message: "The grete message and hye legacioun"(3), "that hye message"(15). It is not surprising that Mary should be afraid at the sound of the words of God, but it is a nice touch on the poet's part, to bring this out by contrasted rhetorical styles. Whereas Mary speaks only in brief sentences - "How may this be? I suld consave a childe?/I knaw no man. My

maidynhede is unfylde" (20-21) - the angel's tones are eloquent:

Be nought perturbit in thyne advertence,  
Thy benygnere unto my voce inclyne.  
The Faderis powere, the Sonis sapience,  
The vertu of the Haly Gaste dyvyne,  
Within thy wame sail obumbir and schyne.  
Thou sail consave, bath clene in dede and thought,  
Hym that the maid, and all this warld, of nought.  

(22-28)

One observes the use of rhetorical balance in the middle of the stanza, the polysyllabic vocabulary, the smooth flowing of the lines, and all these qualities contrast with the Virgin's mode of speech. The poet has fully realised the dramatic potential of the situation and has given it an excellent verbal expression. The paradox of the Virgin Birth is poetically suggested in the phrase, "obumbir and schyne", and the implied pictorial contrasts of light and shade show forth the perturbation in Mary's mind.

As has been mentioned earlier, the word "obumbir" is a conscious latinism, and is derived from the Vulgate ("Virtus Altissimi obumbrabit tibi": St. Luke, I, 35). Yet the appearance of such a word in this religious lyric is probably to be seen in the emerging context of Renaissance humanism. DOST informs us that the word is found in England as early as c.1420, and it also gives two parallel usages from the Buik of the Croniclis of Scotland of William Stewart, a late contemporary of Dunbar. The word "obumbir" would doubtless combine

---

38 See above, p. 145.

for poet and audience the attraction of novelty with a wealth of religious significance. The influence of humanism could thus have an enriching effect upon the language of religious lyric poetry, since it could expand the resources of vocabulary in this constructively suggestive way.

In Quhen be dyvyne deliberatioun the poet's two interruptions are interesting. The reader will be considerably surprised at the intrusion of this new voice in the poem, speaking first of the redemption of souls from the limbus patrum (where Abraham and other virtuous men from the Old Testament times were doomed to remain until the scheme of redemption was completed by Christ), and ending with a prayer to Our Lady as in the Henryson poem. This abrupt change from a pure narrative to the poet's own words imparts a certain urgency of feeling to these two stanzas. The poem also uses emblems for Mary, but here they are distributed through the poem. Gabriel addresses her as "Thou suete wyne tre and well of sanitee" (13), and the poet employs the burning bush emblem again (47). Like Henryson, therefore, he emphasises that what we see in the Annunciation is the very first stage of the part played by Christ in the soteriological system. Quhen be dyvyne deliberatioun displays a poetic artistry perhaps more straightforward than that of Forcy as deith is likand lufe, but it shows what can be achieved in an eloquent lyric in a courtly and formal style.

40 Enciclopedia Cattolica, VII, 1354-1357.
We return, for the latest of the Middle Scots 'ballatis of the Annunciatioun of Our Ladye' to the Bellenden poem which (in the Mitchell text) gives its title to this genre of lyrics. One cannot be sure when the 'Archedene of Murray' composed this work, but Sheppard suggests that there would have been a first, printed edition in the author's lifetime (and thus before 1549). The style of the poem at any rate clearly marks it as a very late mediaeval work, although there are interesting references to the 'happy senators' of heaven (174) and to 'great Octavian' (9).

This indicates a further manifestation of humanist influence, and it may be no coincidence that, in his main manuscript, Bannatyne follows the poems of Bellenden with Gavin Douglas's 'Trinity Prologue' to Book X of his translation of the Aeneid, which naturally is another poem betraying traces of humanism. The second of these Bellenden poems is no religious lyric, despite its location in the Bannatyne MS. It is an allegorical dream-vision of two goddesses, Virtue and Delight, who both make appeals to a prince, and the latter is required to choose between them. The poem is, in fact, a thinly disguised hint to James V, for whose benefit Bellenden had translated (1531) the Chronicles of Scotland of the

41 The Bannatyne MS, I, 3-8; II, 3-8.
43 See above, pp.36-38; below, pp.338-343.
humanist, Hector Boece (c.1465-c.1536), "Fra flow and Latyne in to vulgar prois". The poem -- Quhen silver Diane full of bemis bright -- is entitled by Bannatyne, "The proheme of the croniculs ...". It contains many references to ancient history (examples are taken from the lives of Hannibal, Achilles and Sardanapalus), and this we should expect from one who was also to translate the history of Livy -- an eminently humanistic achievement. With Bellenden, as with Douglas, humanism begins to make a real mark on poetry, and it is typical of the Archdean that he should refer in the "Benner of Poetie" to the company of the Blessed as "tha happie senatouris." Furthermore, in this poem Bellenden seems to have been the first Scot to use the words "cesarian" and "ineffable" -- neither of which is recorded in DOST. And several other words used here -- e.g., conding (89), concurris (111), contrarius (147), credence (149), frusion (40) -- stem from the innovations in vocabulary which resulted from the growth of humanist studies. Bellenden is among the earliest users of these words, and even a cursory perusal of DOST reveals the tremendous contributions of Douglas and Bellenden to the lexical resources of Middle Scots. Indeed, as George Gregory Smith notes, these

---

44 Bellenden, Chronicles of Scotland, II, 403.
45 The Bannatyne MS, II, 9-20.
poets were often to coin new words (not found in Latin) from Latin roots - and this is a notable feature of the verse of the Grands Rhétoriqueurs. 48

The "Benner of Peetie" shows how one central event - in this case the Annunciation - can be encased in the metaphysical mythology so dear to the Middle Ages. Before we come to Gabriel and Mary we are given a version of the debate of the Four Daughters of God. This scene, connected with Psalm 85, 10-11, is a familiar motif in mediaeval poetry. It appears, for example, in Robert Grosseteste's Château d'Amour, and in Piers Plowman, and there is also a detailed (prose) version of the debate in a Scottish theological treatise of the time of James IV - Johannes de Irlandia's Meroure of Wysdome. 49 But before we even reach the debate itself in the Bellenden poem there are some twenty lines of introduction, astrological, historical and theological, which lead up to the moment at which God decides to do something to redeem the "greit callamitie" of man (18). The debate between the Daughters - Mercy, Truth, Peace and Justice - is a method of demonstrating the complementary, although seemingly contradictory, aspects of the Godhead, and through the balanced petitions we see God's sense of justice poised against His sense of compassion. This is an excellent way of coping with the artistic problem (which later beset Milton) of how to dramatise the ultimately inexpressible.

48 Smith, Specimens of Middle Scots, pp. lxii, 304. See above, pp.43-44.

'Dramatise' must be the key word here. Not only is the debate of the Four Daughters intrinsically dramatic, it is also a subject which was treated in the mediaeval religious drama per se. Perhaps the best example can be found in the play of the Parliament of Heaven with the Salutation and Conception (there is no break) in the Ludus Coventriae cycle. Although Bellenden has his Four Daughters speak in a different order from that of the Middle English play, there is a fundamental resemblance. Indeed, one might even say that Bellenden, in this poem, has summarised the action of such a pageant, and here we can see another instance of the common ground between mediaeval drama and lyrical poetry. The striking differences, therefore, between Bellenden's elaborate and expansive poem and the other Middle Scots Annunciation lyrics may be accounted for by the non-lyrical origins of elements therewithin.

Sheppard's comment on this poem -- "We may believe, therefore, that the contemporary taste for moral discourse triumphed over the natural preference for good poetry" -- seems rather unfair, and there is, in fact, much to be said for the "Benner of Peetie." It is an excellent opener for the Bannatyne MS as a whole. The

51 See above, pp.109-114.
52 In Bellenden, Chronicles of Scotland, II, 457.
careful introductions and preparations take the reader gradually closer towards the heart of the poem — the central mystery of the Incarnation. Other poets may express religious truths more memorably, but Bellenden writes with an admirable clarity which, pace Sheppard, is not prolix. This poem will never suffer from a comparison with Lydgate.

Bellenden's chief concern is that his reader should understand. His insights do not emerge in paradox or emotional fervour: instead he labours always to explain. Whereas the English poet in **Ludus Coventriae** has Mary exclaim ecstatically:

> I can not telle what joy, what blysse
> Now I fele in my body.
> Aungel Gabryel, I thank yow for thys:
> Most mekely recommende me to my Faderys mercy.
> To have be the modyr of God fful lytyl wend I.

the sober Bellenden writes:

> Than jonit wes in perfyt unitie
> Devyne persone and miserie of man,
> The moder peur full of virginitee,
> The fervent haert and faith maist soverane,
> God -- saule and flesche -- at anes to remane,
> Passing the strent of mannis argument:
> Ane standing thre, and thre ay standing ane,
> Be michtie werk of God omnipotent. (121-128)

In the same way, his musical example of harmony (105-112) is designed to be of assistance in letting one understand the miraculous operation of the Three Persons of the Trinity in the matter of the Incarnation.

Bellenden is not a moving poet, as Henryson can be. Nor does he have the economic dexterity of the anonymous author of **Quhen be dyvyne deliberatioun** (although he too

---

describes the Salutation of Gabriel by the phrase, "hie legatioun" (117)). He is a careful, rather than a compelling, writer, and though he does not reach the heights of poetry, his verse is more than competent.

The Middle Scots lyrics of the Annunciation make an interesting group, if a small one, and indicate some of the possibilities of the genre as a whole. Whereas *All sons of Adam* is a jovial and popular piece, Bellenden's poem seems entirely literary and consists of a narrative compression of a motif perhaps most familiar from allegorical drama. The other two poems are more typical religious lyrics, written in a dignified and courtly style. Whereas *Quhen be dyvyne deliberatioun* shows signs of the aureate predilections of the age, Henryson avoids this method of stylistic brilliance yet matches the intensity of his meditative devotion on the Annunciation by an exhilarating display of metrical skill. All four, in their various ways, are most worthy compositions.

Ballatis of the Nativitie of Chryste.

The feast of the Annunciation (25 March) comes exactly nine months before that of the Nativity in the calendar of the Church, and this interval of time emphasises the connection between the two occasions. The Nativity is the event in which the promises made by the angel to Mary are fulfilled, as the redeeming love of God is made manifest, incarnate. If the Annunciation is the first of the Virgin's Joys, the Nativity is usually the second. As
one might expect, the lyrics on the Nativity relate very closely to those on the Annunciation, and often develop ideas first enunciated in the lyrics on the earlier topic. The importance attached to the role of Mary is another connection between the poems of these two groups. Yet to some extent this is obscured by Bannatyne's heading — "ballatis of the nativitie of Chryste"— just as the Annunciation lyrics had been obscured under the title: "the consceptioun of Chryste". Both titles emphasise only Christ, not His mother. By contrast, the religious lyrics of Lydgate — for example, *Blessed lady, O pryncesse of mercy* and *Atween mydnycht and the fressh morwe gray*[^54] — treat the Nativity only in the context of longer poems on the Virgin, and on the Joys of the Virgin. Such a procedure would obviously have been impossible in Scotland in the decade of the Reformation.

In the relationship between theme and form in the Nativity lyrics there seems to be a marked difference between the practice of England and Scotland. The only Middle English poems which treat the Nativity as a single subject seem to be carols, and by and large these are written in a popular style, usually in short lines, and with the requisite burden and refrain. The Middle Scots Nativity lyrics, by contrast, are all written in the eight-line ballat stanza in a high or courtly style, and, though they have refrains, they lack burdens. They

are quite unlike the English carols in tone, and show more affinity with the style of Lydgate and his school, who almost never treat the Nativity by itself, out of the context of the Virgin and her Joys. The Middle Scots Nativity lyrics therefore seem to be something of a new departure in late-mediaeval poetry. That George Bannatyne's taste was solely for this kind of courtly lyric can be seen in his total exclusion from his manuscript of any popular Nativity lyrics or carols, which we can assume to have existed in Scotland, and to have been known to Bannatyne.  

This is probably the group of Middle Scots lyrics in which the resemblances between the poems seem closest. Bannatyne, however, gives the author's name in only one case - Dunbar's *Rorate cella desuper.* Nonetheless, many critics, impressed by the apparent similarity between these Nativity poems, have attributed others to Dunbar. In 1834, David Laing suggested that Dunbar was also the author of *Now glaidith every lifcis creature,* Jerusalem, *rejos for joy,* and *The stene is rissin of our redemptioun.* In 1834, David Laing suggested that Dunbar was also the author of *Now glaidith every lifcis creature,* Jerusalem, *rejos for joy,* and *The stene is rissin of our redemptioun.* In 1834, David Laing suggested that Dunbar was also the author of *Now glaidith every lifcis creature,* Jerusalem, *rejos for joy,* and *The stene is rissin of our redemptioun.*

John Small, in 1893, followed Laing, but with greater confidence, and in 1908 Cécile Steinberger simply assumed the truth of the theory. Although more recent writers -

---

55 See above, pp. 164-165.
J.W. Baxter and Agnes Mure Mackenzie\textsuperscript{58} have cast doubt on these ascriptions the basic point remains, that, at least on a superficial level, there is a considerable mutual affinity between the "ballatis of the nativitie". Closer inspection, however, allows certain distinctions to be made within this group of poems.\textsuperscript{59} The first is obvious: four of the lyrics are written in eight-syllable lines, and three in ten-syllable lines. This difference of form is a pointer to a difference of style. As I shall suggest below, the three lyrics with ten-syllable lines are distinguished by great dignity of expression and loftiness of tone. \textit{Rorate celi desuper} and \textit{Jerusalem rejos for joy} are doubtless more forceful compositions, but the other three lyrics excel in aureate stateliness.

We note, secondly, that Bannatyne's title for this group of lyrics is used to cover poems on at least two major themes - the Nativity and the Epiphany. Only the first two of the seven lyrics properly relate to the subject of the Nativity (\textit{Now glaidith every liffis creature}, and \textit{Rorate celi desuper}). As against these, 


\textsuperscript{59} \textit{The Bannatyne MS}, II, 63-77.
there are three lyrics dealing with the Epiphany (Jerusalem, rejos for joy, Omnipotent Fader, Sone, and Haly Gaist, and The sterne is rissin of our redemption). There is, naturally, a close connection between the poems on the Nativity and those on the Epiphany, but the two themes can be clearly distinguished, despite Bannatyne's inclusive heading.

The third point concerns the two lyrics not so far mentioned. Haill, Goddis Sone, of mychtis maist and We that ar bocht with Chrystis blude are not poems which one would perhaps immediately relate to the Nativity (or to the Epiphany). The first is basically a meditation on the scheme of salvation; the second on the sufferings of Christ, undergone for man. Yet both poems make some reference to the Nativity, and this may have been sufficient reason for their appearance among the present group of lyrics. Furthermore, the Latin refrains of these two lyrics, as we shall see, can be related to liturgical texts used in the period of Christmas. The truth is, that it would be difficult to locate these two poems with complete satisfaction under any of Bannatyne's headings: the label 'ballatis of the nativitie' may consequently be the least inappropriate one for them.

Now glaidith every liffis creature makes an excellent introduction to this group of lyrics, for it is essentially a poem of joy. Gladness is in the second word of the lyric, and the spirit of gladness and joy

60 The Bannatyne MS, II, 63-64.
permeates the whole work. Moreover, the gladness is immediate: it is "Now", since the poet, using the present tense, writes putatively at the very moment of the Nativity. The emotion here is apparent and infectious:

Now glaidith every liffis creature
With blis and confortable glaidnes:
The hevynnis king is cled in our nature,
Us fro the deth with ransoun for to redres.

(1-4)

And at the end of the lyric the poet addresses all men:

Quhairfoir sing all with confort and glaidnes,
And cast away all cair and cuvatice:
Devoyd all wo and leif in merines.

(33-35)

The jocundity of the final stanza leads the poet into a rather bold, but very apt, image: "Dispys fortoun, richt rynis on synk and sise" (37). The reference is to the game of backgammon, in which a throw of the dice giving five and six points is especially welcome.61 This is an excellent, and civilised, way of expressing the theological notion that Fortune can have no influence in the matter of Christ's birth: her power is quite superseded.62

In Chapter X, I quote the second stanza to illustrate the richness of which this lyric is capable.63 A phrase


62 Sir Thomas More also used the game of dice as an illustration of the power of Fortune: Songs, Carols, and other Miscellaneous Poems, ed. Roman Dyboski, EETS (London, 1908), p. 78. (Richard Hill's MS) The dice thus make an appropriate place in which to see the overthrow of Fortune's power.

63 See below, pp. 460-461.
such as "The court of sterris, the cours of sone and mone", rhetorically balanced and august in diction, is the perfect expression of the poet's lofty thought. In the central stanza of the lyric there is a powerful appeal to the tender emotions: here Christ is not the prince of heaven, but the "garthe of all grace and glory" (19), who came on earth, "a bab full of benignite" (23). The emphasis here is the same as that communicated in the refrain of Dunbar's Nativity lyric: "Pro nobis puer natus est". Love is at the very heart of this poem. The following lines, contrasting with the previous, highly emotional stanza, return to the honorific expression appropriate to the omnipotent Deity:

The soverane senyour of all celsitude,
That sittis abone the ordour cherubin,
Quhilk all thing creat, and all thing dois includ ...

(25-27)

but the style is well chosen, for the poet uses it to emphasise the paradoxical action of this "soverane senyour" who stooped to "wesche our syn" (31). Aureation, which often becomes merely a mannerism in fifteenth-century poetry, and which can sometimes run riot in a lyric, is kept under control by the author of Now glaidith, who uses it purposefully for desired stylistic effects which give verbal and poetic expression to the 'thought' of the lyric.

The other Scottish Nativity lyric - Dunbar's Rorate celi desuper — makes an effective contrast with Now

64 The Bannatyne NS, II, 65-66.
glaidith, and the juxtaposition of the two poems reveals most clearly the respective merits of each. Whereas the first poem seems relaxed and confident in the knowledge of joy, the second must strike one as being dramatic and insistent. In this poem Dunbar addresses all creation and asks that the birth of Christ be given due recognition and reverence. Dunbar's purpose is to invoke, and, by so doing, to celebrate, and it is a purpose which he has achieved with complete success. A bare summary of the contents of this lyric, however, gives no idea of its tone or of the poet's mood. Briefly, the tone is commanding - the poet speaks with the authority given him by the knowledge of Christ's birth - and the mood is one of joyful excitement. It is a very rapid poem, in the sense that Dunbar passes quickly from one part of creation to another, and he gives the impression of great energy as he hurries from subject to subject. This is a poem which appears in all the anthologies, and - as it deserves - has been everywhere praised by critics.

The sources of the poem are fairly clear, and are the passages of the Old Testament in which all created things are urged to praise God: for example, Psalm 148, and the Benedicite (Daniel 3, 57-90, Vulgate only). Along with these models, Dunbar has used the ideas found in the antiphon, Germinavit: "Germinavit radix Jesse: orta est stella ex Jacob. Virgo peperit salvatorem. Te laudamus deus noster". This antiphon may be found in the Sarum and Aberdeen Breviaries at the Feast of the Circum-
cision (which is also the Octave of the Nativity), and elsewhere. In the first stanza it is noticeable that Dunbar develops, almost entirely in terms of nature imagery, the idea of the dew falling, borrowed from Isaiah (45, 8). Christ, the Son of God, surmounts Phoebus, the planetary sun, but God's Son is never obscured by clouds as the other is. This basic idea, depending on a quite traditional pun, links simultaneously with two other ideas - that of Christ as the day star, and that of the plant sprung from the rosemary (the Virgin Mary, and the stem of Jesse). But Dunbar has compressed these two references into one, so that in the poem the day star is made to spring from the rosemary. The result is imaginatively suggestive, and is a good example of the slightly hectic expression in this lyric. The middle of the poem consists of the poet's words, respectively, to: angels and heavenly bodies; men (sinners and clergy); non-human creation (animate and inanimate). The final stanza is a recapitulation of these stanzas and makes an exhilarating coda to the poem. The basic rhetorical technique here is that of the catalogue, and Dunbar uses it well. He also exploits compositional patterns suggested by his subject matter. Thus, in the second stanza, the angels and planets, which are on high, exalted, are urged to honour the Christ who descended

---

humbly "in to so meik maneir" (15). The movement of attention in the stanza is downwards, to focus on the Christ child. The passage on sinners sticks to the level of this earth, and here Dunbar emphasised that Christ has done what sinners could not have done - made the contact with Him, which redeems sin itself. The fourth stanza, on the clergy, reverses the movement of the second. The adoration on this earth of the Christ child leads to the adoration of "him that is of kingis king" (28). Thus we have moved, in these three stanzas, from heaven to earth, and from earth back to heaven. The spatial contrasts are continued in the next two stanzas, and the "Celestiall fowlis in the are" (33) - which inhabit the higher element but return to earth - must be seen in relationship with the plants, which, rooted in the earth, tend upwards to the light of the Son/sun. The effects which Dunbar achieves from these contrasts are those which one associates with pictorial representation. And all the time the lyric rings with noises, the sounds and sweet airs of angels, spheres, men, clergy, birds. The overall unity and power of effect is quite remarkable.

What is the poet's place in all this? Dunbar, as we see, addresses the members of the clergy. He might include himself among their number, and so, in addressing the parts of creation, would also be addressing himself. Consequently, the whole lyric becomes in a sense the poet's response to the commands which he himself has just uttered,
and the whole poem is Dunbar's own contribution to the honouring of Christ. The poem, thus, seems to look in upon itself, in a somewhat reflexive way, and the poet not only lets us see, in the words of the lyric, the fruits of his deliberations on the Nativity, but also indicates to us what he takes to be his own role in the poem. It is not so surprising that it should be Dunbar who does this, since he is the poet, of all the Middle Scots poets, who tells us most about himself.

The opening line of Dunbar's lyric - "Rorate celis desuper" - which is taken from the prophecies of Isaiah (45, 8) - can be found throughout Advent in both the Missal and, as a versiculus for Vespers, in the Breviary.66 The refrain, however - "Et nobis puer natus est" - also from Isaiah (9, 6) - appears in the Mass for the Nativity itself, as one would expect.67 The refrain thus anchors the lyric in the wonderful fact of the birth of Christ, and Dunbar's use of a scriptural text which was bound to be familiar to his readers (or hearers) gives an added emphasis to the central statement of his poem. All in all, this lyric, exuberant and incantatory, represents one of the greatest achievements of the Middle Scots religious lyric.

66 The Sarum Missal, ed. J. Wickham Legg (Oxford, 1916), p.18; Breviarium Sarum, I, vi, etc.; Breviarium Aberdonense, P.H., Temporal, fol.xixb, etc.

In the Bannatyne MS, Dunbar's great Nativity lyric is immediately followed by the first of the poems dealing with the Epiphany: *Jerusalem, rejos for joy.* Here the poet celebrates the birth of Christ the king - the "rychtous roy" (3) - and rehearses the various manifestations which betokened that birth. The first of these is, of course, the star shining over Bethlehem, which, together with the song of the angels, was the sign which led men to that momentous happening, the birth of the king who is to deliver all from thraldom (7). The spectacular arrival of the Three Kings adds to the wonder and splendour of the occasion, since they, although themselves magnificent - "All drest with dyamantis but dout,/ Reverst with gold in every hem" (13-14) - honour the newborn king. The third stanza tells of the exiling of a wicked king, the "regeant tirrant", Herod - the mad Herod of the Miracle Plays - whose authority is quite overthrown. The final two stanzas comprise a list of miracles all of which testify to the divinity of Christ. These come from all stages of Christ's career - from the star of Bethlehem, through the ominous events connected with the Passion, to the breaking of the gates of hell. To all of these one could apply the poet's words: "Nature him knew and had grit wundir" (37).

68 The Bannatyne MS, II, 66-68.
69 See, for example, the portrayal of 'Magnus Herodes' in The Wakefield Pageants in the Towneley Cycle, ed. A.C. Cawley (Manchester, 1958), pp. 64-77.
This, too, is a remarkably effective lyric: "magnificent" is the verdict of Agnes Mure Mackenzie, who praised its "crashing refrain". As in the case of Dunbar's lyric, the text is taken from Isaiah: "Surge, illuminare, Jerusalem, quia venit lumen tuum, et gloria Domini super te orta est" (Isaiah, 60, 1). The first words of this text appear as Responses, and also as part of the lessons of the first Nocturn, on the Feast of the Epiphany. It is indeed tempting to associate this lyric with the poem by Dunbar which precedes it in the manuscript. As with Rorate celi desuper, one notices the singleness of purpose: all the energy of the poem - and there is a great deal - is directed at one single aim, towards the creation of one effect. There is no breathless rush in this poem, however. Instead there is all the rhetorical power of the poet's proud confidence in his true King, a power which can brook no interruption of its impressive progress. Jerusalem, regios for joy certainly makes a worthy companion for Dunbar's lyric on the Nativity, and that is high praise indeed.

Both the remaining lyrics on the Epiphany are written in the longer line, of ten syllables. The first Omnipotent Fader, Sone, and Haly Gaist, without making such an overt appeal to the reader's emotions

---

70 In Kinsley, Scottish Poetry, p. 292, n. 17.

71 Sarum Missal, p.38; Breviarium Sarum, I, cccxxi; Breviarium Aberdonense, F.H., Temporale, fol.xlixb, etc.

72 The Bannatyne MS, II, 75.
as the Nativity lyric, *Now glaidith every liffis creature*, nevertheless communicates the poet's optimistic message through its stately verse. The debate in heaven, we are told, is "a myrthfull story" (13), which leads Christians to sing "with solace, joy and fest" (14). The birth of Christ is the dawn of joy (22-23), and every spirit is to take comfort of His coming (31). The poetic style of this lyric is extremely impressive: less flamboyant, perhaps, than *Now glaidith*, it is very dignified without seeming over-wrought. One admires the efficient yet elegant way in which the nature of the Trinity is described:

> Three evin of mycht and on of mychtis maist ...  
> In quhome is nowthir first, last, moir nor lest,  
> To be laud in tryne and unite.  
> (3, 6-7)

The poet has said rather a lot in a short space. He does not need to follow the example of Bellenden and retell the whole debate of the Daughters of God. Instead, he is content with saying: "Sentence of grace is now diffinityfe/Concludit in the hevinly concistory" (9-10), and the solemnity of the polysyllabic vocabulary here conveys the solemnity of the debate itself. Like the other poems of the group, *Omnipotent Fader* employs the traditional light/shade contrast:

> Our dirk orisoun and sable emysphery  
> Is lychnyt now with licht of every licht:  
> Discendit is the prince of he empery  
> With schynyng face to chace away our nycht.  
> (17-20)

The diction here is high, and there seems to be an extraordinarily suggestive pun on the word "orisoun" - meaning both 'orison' and 'horizon'. Thus the "dirk orisoun", besides providing some pictorial detail, may also refer to the imperfect piety of virtuous men living before the birth of Christ.
So far this poem has been a concise and dignified recapitulation of the material also seen in the "Benner of Peetie". But in the final stanza the poet suddenly breaks off to address his readers in a tone of excitement: "Go we and meit him with devot orisoun" (25). (The "devot orisoun" seems to contrast with the "dirk orisoun" of the previous stanza.) The role which the poet sees for the reader, and for himself, is, as it were, as one of the Three Kings, who travel far to express their adoration of Christ. In this respect the conclusion of *Omnipotent Fader* resembles that of the following lyric, *The sterne is rissin of our redemptioun*. In the future, we are urged, life is to consist of a pilgrimage to Christ, and the poet's command makes a ringing conclusion to the lyric.

*The sterne is rissin of our redemptioun* 73 is a companion piece to *Omnipotent Fader*, and is even more obviously related to the Epiphany. Like *Jerusalem*, *rejos for joy*, this is a poem about kingship, but, whereas the latter poem had listed many miraculous happenings which bore witness to the truly regal authority of Christ, *The sterne is rissin* confines itself to one subject alone - the adoration of the Three Kings. In this lyric the star of Bethlehem is an outward sign of heavenly power:

73 *The Bannatyne MS*, II, 76-77.
The poet's method is to find humiliating phrases for the kings of this world. They are "mortall" (6), "Heir nakit borne and nureist up with noy" (10), and all their rule is nothing but "wofull truble and debaittis" (11). They must "fall on kneis doun/Befoir the king of lestand lyfe and lycht" (6-7), must "Inclyne befoir the Cristin conquerour" (17), lie down on their faces "With reverend feir" (21), and "Ly all on grufe befoir that hich grand roy" (13). The earthiness associated with the word "grufe" is ideally suited to the poet's purpose: those people in high places in this life are being brought low before Christ. Christ excels in all respects: He is the king of heaven, but also of every kingdom under the sky (18), and especially - here the poet names the most fabulous kingdoms of which he has heard - of India, Egypt, Greece and Troy (15). We had heard, in Rorate celi desuper, that the star of Bethlehem, symbolising Christ the Son, surmounted Phoebus: in the present lyric the star rises to guide us, above the spheres of Mars, Saturn and Phoebus, thereby showing that Christ is king over all the planets which govern mankind.

As with Omnipotent Fader, the present lyric ends with an appeal to men to join with the Three Kings, and it is made clear in this poem that the voyage is, in fact, from earth to heaven, from darkness to light, and from the rule of earthly potentates to that of the "Imperiall" (39) of heaven. The poet, by dwelling on
the true, shining kingdom of God, has made it seem intolerable that men should continue to live in this painful, benighted world: "We may nocht in this vale of bale abyd,/Ourdirkit with the sable clud nocturn" (25-26). In the conclusion of the lyric, the two fundamental notions - that of kingship and that of light, which is the outward manifestation of kingship - are brought together in a total synthesis of imagery. The effect is impressive. Like Omnipotent Fader and Now glaidith, The sterne is rissin of our redemptioun shows how successfully the Middle Scots poets could handle the spacious, long-line lyric. Aureation is kept under control, and is used judiciously for special effects, while the poets exploit to the full the possibilities of the imagery taken from their sources, Biblical and liturgical.

Finally, in this section we come to two lyrics which, inasmuch as they may be conceived to be "ballatis of the nativitie of Chryste", must be considered to be 'problem poems'. As has been said above, each of these lyrics makes some reference to the Nativity, but it is difficult to see either of them as 'a Nativity lyric'. On the other hand, the liturgical application of the Latin refrains may offer some justification for the inclusion of these two poems among the Nativity lyrics.

The first of these poems, Haill, Goddis Sone, of mychtis maist, has a double, and alternating, refrain:

---

74 The Bannatyne MS, II, 68-71.
"Beatus venter qui te portavit, beata ubera quae suxisti". This text is taken from St Luke 11, 27, and is appointed as an antiphon for Vespers on Christmas Day, and through the Octave. In spite of the liturgical use of this text, however, the connection between the refrain of this poem and the topic of the Nativity is not of the most apparent. In this respect, Haill, Goddis Sone contrasts with Dunbar's Nativity lyric, for, whereas the latter concentrates upon the birth of Christ, the former recounts the whole career of Christ as saviour of man, from the words of the Old Testament prophets right through to the Crucifixion.

Like Bellenden's "Benner of Peetie", this poem includes several stanzas with the motif of the debate of the Four Daughters of God, and again, like the "Benner of Peetie", Haill, Goddis Sone seems to have as its main priority the clear exposition of the scheme of redemption. The greater part of the poem is therefore narrative in form. This procedure, more straightforward than the imaginative recreation seen in Rorate celi desuper, has this result, that Haill, Goddis Sone seems rather plain and subdued by comparison with Dunbar's poem. Only in a few stanzas does the author interrupt his exposition, and that is to indulge in apostrophes to the Trinity (1-8), and to Christ (33-40). The diction is capable of rising to anaphora, though perhaps of a rather routine kind:

---

75 Breviarium Sarum, I, cxcvii, etc.; Breviarium Aberdonense, P.H., Temporale, fol.xxixb, etc.
Haill, crownit king of angellis cleir,  
Haill, lord of all the angellis he,  
Haill, prince of parradice but peir,  
Haill, emprior of erd and se ... (33-36)

Even the account of the Nativity itself, the focal point of the poem, scarcely attains to any higher flights of poetry:

The nycht of thi nativite,  
The erd wes full of plesand licht,  
The hevin wes full of angell gle,  
The hellis power wes put to flicht ... (81-84)

After the Dunbar lyric, such statements seem rather flat, and give little idea of the potential for joy inherent in their subject: the poet's artistry hardly matches his theme. Perhaps something, however, can be made of the concluding stanza, which ends starkly: "Sevin tymes for us thy bluid outran ... Syn deit for us with visage wan" (101, 103). This is a sombre ending for what may be - at least notionally - perhaps a Nativity poem.

However, even these lines emphasise what is characteristic of this lyric - the complete absence of any indication of emotion in the language of the poem itself. To be sure, the reader may well react to the content of this lyric, but his attention will scarcely be distracted by poetic felicities. The examples of the "Benner of Peetie" and of Haill, Goddis Sone, of mychtis maist perhaps suggest that poems which take an incident in the life of Christ and set it within an account of the whole scheme of salvation are less likely to be successful as lyrics. The emotional impact, which a good lyric might be expected to make,
is dissipated, and the poets put the concerns of clear exposition before the achievement of striking poetic effect.

*We that ar bocht with Chrystis blude* follows *Haill, Goddis Sone* in the Bannatyne MS, and is a natural companion to the other poem. Besides the other formal features shared by these poems, these two lyrics also have Latin words in the sixth line of each stanza. I have not, however, been able to trace the source (if any) of the Latin phrases in these stanzas: it is possible that they were composed by the Scottish poets themselves. There is yet another detail to link these two poems, and which distinguishes them from the other two eight-syllable-line lyrics in this section of the manuscript (*Rorate celi desuper* and *Jerusalem, rejos for joy*). This is the small, but rather important, fact that *We that ar bocht* and *Haill, Goddis Sone* use the first person plural pronoun form (as do also the longer-line lyrics of the present group). In these poems the poet associates himself with the reader, whereas Dunbar and the author of *Jerusalem, rejos* merely address other people or things.

As with *Haill, Goddis Sone*, it transpires that the refrain of *We that ar bocht* - *"Virgo peperit salvatorem"* has also a liturgical application. This phrase comes from the antiphon, *Germinavit*, which, as has already been noted, appears in the Breviaries on the Feast of the

---

76 The Bannatyne MS, II, 71-74.
Circumcision and elsewhere (e.g. on the Octave of St Stephen). 77

*We that ar bocht* has the structure of a diptych. In the first part the poet pays tribute to the Virgin Mary, honoured by God by being chosen to be the mother of His Son. In the second half of the poem the emphasis is on the sufferings of Christ, incurred at the Crucifixion, and His battle with the powers of evil for the soul of man. It is possible that these details derive from a recollection of the liturgical links of the refrain with the Circumcision (a prototype of the Passion), and with St Stephen (the Protomartyr). They are certainly untypical of Nativity lyrics.

The Nativity, of course, is one of the Joys of Mary, and this doubtless explains the Marian emphasis of the first half of this lyric. The stanzas to the Virgin are deeply expressive of the poet's devotion. He uses many of the standard epithets for Our Lady - "Thow glorius grane and plant of grace" (29), "Thow lusty ledy, lamp of lycht" (33) - and he has recourse to such familiar images as that of the dew for the Annunciation (18). However, one notices how most of these stanzas couple the praise of Mary with references, usually in the penultimate line, to the Passion and the defeat of the devil. The constant juxtaposition of these two aspects imparts a certain poignancy to this half of the poem. Sometimes this can be supported by a unity of metaphor within the stanza, as in the contrasts of light and dark:

77 *Breviarium Sarum, I, ccxciii, ccxcix, etc.; Breviarium Aberdonense, P.H., Temporale, fols. xlv, xlvi, etc.*
Thow lusty ledy, lamp of lycht,
Loud lovit with celestiall sang,
Off the is borne our dawing brycht,
That doun our drery dirknes dang.
Our brycht Appollo fra the sprang,
Dans mundi tenebras splendorem,
That fra the dragon reft the stang,
Virgo peperit salvatorem. (33-40)

"Appollo" is perhaps surprising at first, but, as an equivalent for Christ, it refers again to the play on Son/sun, and may be seen also in Dunbar's Resurrection lyric.

In the second part of the poem the author addresses the devil. He does not fear his enemy, since the Passion of Christ, and the Compassion of Our Lady, make a "wall" to defend him against the "warlo and [his] weris" (65).

The basic image now becomes that of the battle, and Christ - as when He donned the armour of Piers Plowman becomes the champion who will fight for man. At this point the alliteration, which is prominent in this lyric, becomes most effective:

Syne with his croce to hell discendit,
And rudly doun the yetts rave.
Dragonis with dule on uthir drave. (83-85)

The resulting ruggedness of these lines accords well with the vigorous battle references. (Is there also a pun on "rudly", linking with "croce" in the previous line?) The total effect is a heartening one for man, and one thinks back to the first stanza: "Write we in till our standert stoute;/Virgo peperit salvatorem" (7-8). From this we see that the poet's words are

78 Langland, Piers the Plowman, I, 520-522.
intended to rouse the reader to action, to enlist under the King's banners - the *vexilla regis*\(^79\) - and carry on the fight. The lyric, therefore, neatly provides a bridge between author and reader, and this helps to communicate the optimism of the poet to his audience. Although *We that ar bocht* is something of a problem, if considered as a "ballat of the nativitie", it is none-theless a stirring poem in its own right.

Several points of interest emerge from this discussion. It is clear that, despite Bannatyne's inclusive heading, his "ballatis of the nativitie of Chryste" show considerable diversity. This diversity is seen in the subjects tackled (Nativity, Epiphany, and even also the Passion), in the pose adopted by the poets (either speaking with other men, or speaking to them), in the styles of expression (the dignified stanzas of ten-syllable lines, and the more forceful shorter-lined stanzas), in the degrees to which Latin is employed in these lyrics (either for refrains or for lines within the stanzas). Notwithstanding this diversity, the level of poetic accomplishment is, as I have tried to indicate, consistently high. Rosemary Woolf, in writing of Dunbar's Nativity lyric, emphasises that, while it is a type of religious lyric not normally written in the Middle Ages, its outstanding qualities

of poetry must override the exclusive critical categories which else would keep it outside the scope of her examination. For her this lyric is a special case. In this chapter I hope to have shown that Dunbar's poem, though indisputably excellent, can also be seen in the context of poetry contemporary with it, and on similar themes. Bannatyne's "ballatis of the nativitie of Chryste" may be untypical of Middle English religious lyrics, but they do present a common front of poetic excellence. These poems are all celebrations of the birth of the King of men, and all are couched in courtly (and occasionally aureate) language. If set to music, they would be eminently appropriate to the Nativity celebrations of the Scottish Court. One might even go so far as to claim that this group of poems is one of the triumphs of the Middle Scots lyric, whether sacred or secular. The existence of these splendid poems bears out Lewis's remarks about the Scottish literature of the early sixteenth century being a brilliant conclusion of mediaeval literature in the English language. George Bannatyne's taste in choosing these lyrics was impeccable.

80 Woolf, English Religious Lyric, p. 308.
All sons of Adam, rise up with me.

All sons of Adam, rise up with me,
Go lov the blissed Trinitie.
Sing we nowell, nowell, nowell,
Cry Kyrie with hosanna,
Sing Sabaoth, sing alleluja,
Now save us all Emanuel.
Then spak archangel Gabriel,
Said Ave Mary mild,
The Lord of Lordis is with thee,
Now sail thou go with child.
Ecce ancilla Domini.
Then said the Virgin young:
As thou hes said so mot it be,
Welcom be heavins king.
Ther cam a ship fair saillard then,
Sanct Michael was the stieresman,
Sanct John sat in the horn.
Our Lord harpit, our Lady sang
And all the bells of heavn they rang
On Christsonday at morn.
Then sang the angels all and sum:
Lauda Jerusalem Dominum,
Lauda Deum tuum Sion.
The sons of Adam answered them:
Sing glore be to thee God and man,
The Father and the Sprit also,
With honor and perpetual jo.

Chapter VII: Lyrics of the Passion and the Resurrection.

(a) Introduction ...................... p.204
(b) Cantilenae de Passione ............... p.220
(c) Exhortations of Christ ............... p.240
(d) Cantilenae de Resurrectione ......... p.247
(e) The Passion Poem of Walter Kennedy ,. p.257
Introduction.

The two most important events in the calendar of the Church are Christmas and Easter. In the first we see the beginning of the scheme of salvation which is to be accomplished through Christ's life on earth, and in the second we see its fulfilment. In the progress from the one to the other, the joy and optimism associated with the Nativity give way to the grief and anguish of the Passion, yet this in turn is converted into a deeper exultation by the fact of the Resurrection. The Resurrection of Christ, commemorated on Easter Day, is the true focal point of the Christian year, and gives a meaning to all the other devotions and observances. The surviving Scottish religious lyrics dealing with the life of Christ divide, not unnaturally, into two main groups, connected respectively with the Nativity and the Passion, and we come now to examine the poems of the second group.

It is noticeable that there are many more lyrics on the theme of the Passion than on the Nativity. This is especially true of the Middle English lyrics, although the proportions of space allotted to these two subjects in Carleton Brown's Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century do not make this clear. Even if we confine our attention to the Middle Scots lyrics, we find that there are over twice as many poems on the Passion and Resurrection as there are on the Nativity. Furthermore,
whereas all the "ballatis of the nativitie" were drawn from only one text - the Bannatyne MS - we find that the poems now to be examined exist in many manuscripts, and that there may be several texts of the same work. This points to the greater importance attached to the themes of the Passion and the Resurrection.

There are not many religious lyrics on the Resurrection. Indeed, as with the Annunciation and the Nativity, the customary way of dealing with this topic was in the context of lyrics on the Virgin and her Joys, of which the Resurrection was one.¹ There do not even appear to be any carols specifically on the Resurrection, and it is significant that the only 'Easter Songs' printed by Carleton Brown both come from the early sixteenth-century Arundel MS, a Scottish text.² Indeed, it seems to be the case that it is only the fairly late Scottish manuscripts - the Arundel and the Bannatyne - which furnish lyrics solely on the theme of the Resurrection, and this appears once again to be something of a new departure in the religious poetry of England and Scotland in the late Middle Ages.

The Passion, however, is easily the main subject with which we are concerned in this chapter. One might even go so far as to call all the poems to be discussed here 'Passion-related lyrics'. Within this general heading, nevertheless, it is customary to distinguish

---


several different types. The main types were summed up by Carleton Brown in his descriptions: 'Hymns and Songs of the Passion'; 'Appeals to Man from the Cross'; and 'Complaints of Christ'. All these types of lyric involve, to some degree, the relation of the events of the Passion. In the first, the love of the meditator for Christ emerges from the sorrowful narrative of His sufferings:

Jesu, that alle this worlde hast wroghte,
And of a clene virgyn so take oure kynde,
And with thi blode oure soules hast boughte,
My love to the I pray the to bynde,
In werk, in worde, in thought of mynde.
My soule, my body, I yeve alle to the;
So kynde a frende schal I noon fynde,
For-why thi blode thow sched for me. 3

In the other two types of lyric, Christ Himself speaks to the meditator, and pricks the conscience of the latter by His own narrative of the Passion, which may be told in the most lurid way possible. In such poems the main purpose is usually didactic. In the 'Appeals to Man from the Cross' the speaker is the traditional figure of the crucified Christ, as it were in the moment of His agony. In the 'Complaints of Christ', however, the speaker is not the crucified Christ but the imago pietatis, an iconographic form very characteristic of the fifteenth century, in which we see the suffering Christ with all

---

His wounds, yet not in the historically imagined scene of the Crucifixion. It is in this form that Christ appears to the Jews, and to St. Thomas, in Kennedy's Passion poem. Both the crucified Christ and the imago pietatis may be found as accompanying illustrations to the relevant lyrics, in late mediaeval manuscripts (for example, BM Add. MS 37049).

Under these three headings most of the Passion lyrics can be ranged. There are other poems, however, which derive from more specialised devotions connected with the Passion: lyrics on the Holy Name, the Seven Words of Christ on the Cross, the 'XV Ois', the Crown of Thorns. And obviously another subject, the Compassion of the Virgin, is closely related to the Passion. Such topics considerably extend the dimensions of the class of Passion lyrics.

There are in the Scottish manuscripts lyrics on each of the main aspects of the Passion, and there are also poems on some, at least, of the devotions just mentioned. Not all these works, however, are Scottish in origin. The two prayers to the Holy Name which appear in the Arundel MS have been borrowed from England, and the first, Jesu, Lord, that maid me, is the famous hymn of Richard de

5 Devotional Pieces, pp.57-58.
6 Woolf, English Religious Lyric, pp.186, 204.
Caistre. We have already seen that the Franciscans were especially associated with the devotion to the Holy Name in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and the presence of these two poems in the Arundel MS may indicate the widespread impact of the Minorites in late-mediaeval Scotland. Then again, among the Complaints of Christ, the lyric in the Gray MS, This is Goddis awne complaint, which is here attributed to one 'Glassinbery', is only a version of an English poem, while the lyric in the Arundel MS, Behald, man, lift up thy ene and see, is part V of Lydgate's Testament. Another Complaint, which is preserved in two Scottish texts (Arundel and Makculloch), is a version of an extremely well known English poem, Now herkynnis wordis wunder gude. This is found in the English text, BM Additional MS 37049, was printed in Richard Kele's Christmas carollles of c. 1540, and - perhaps most interesting of all - was incorporated into the Towneley Play of the Resurrection. On the other hand, The Contemplacioun of Synnaris of the Franciscan, William of Touris, which is the source of the poem in the


8 See above, pp.49-53.


Bannatyne MS beginning O wondit spreit and saule in till exile, seems to be genuinely Scottish in authorship, although the earliest surviving text is the printed version by Wynkyn de Worde (1499).

Several points emerge from all this. For no other group of 'Scottish' lyrics is there such a degree of uncertainty as to provenance. The poems on the Passion indicate most clearly, as a result, that fifteenth-century English lyrics were known North of the Tweed. At least as far as the Arundel MS is concerned, we may notice how easily the late Middle English lyrics can stand side by side with late fifteenth-century, or early sixteenth-century, Scottish poems — with works by Dunbar and Kennedy, for example. These English lyrics must have been admired in Scotland, for not only were they transcribed, but they were also recast in the Middle Scots dialect, and the purpose of that, we may surmise, was to enable them to be assimilated by Scottish readers, or to be sung by Scottish singers.

Whereas for the Nativity lyrics we must now rely exclusively upon the Bannatyne MS of 1568, we are fortunate in having the Arundel MS to preserve many texts of Passion lyrics. Indeed, the Arundel MS is the largest single Scottish source of Passion poems. Unlike the Bannatyne, the Arundel MS was unaffected by the Reformation (it may have been compiled in the 1540's). It is, as Bennett says, an invaluable guide to the taste

11 See also below, pp.236-238.
for devotional literature - both verse and prose - in late mediaeval Scotland,¹² and in this respect no other text approaches it, either for size or for scope. The basic purpose behind the Arundel MS is quite different from that of Bannatyne: it is not really a poetry anthology at all, but a collection of pieces of devotional literature, many of which happen to be in verse. The guiding principle is religious, not literary.

I have already suggested that the contents of the Arundel MS may have lent themselves to the private devotions of some individual, whose spiritual awareness could have been quickened through the influences -- either separate or combined -- of Marianism, the Devotio Moderna and Franciscanism. The poems on the Holy Name, and the Contemplacioun of Synnaris, clearly associate with the third of these religious influences, while items such as the 'Jesus Psalter', the 'Thre Rois Garlandis' and the 'Lang Rosair' could suggest the Devotio Moderna and Marianism.¹³ We have also noted similarities between the items in this manuscript and the Prymers. The manuscript could have been prepared for a priest, but the presence of so much devotional material in the vernacular might equally suggest that the collection belonged to some member of the laity.¹⁴ (Yet, with the knowledge of the lack of Latin scholarship at Sion before us, we cannot be categorical here.)

¹² Devotional Pieces, pp. 1, xxiv-xxv.
¹³ See above, pp. 55, 70-72, 85-87.
¹⁴ See above, pp. 25-74.
Regrettably, we know all too little of the private devotional practices of Scottish men and women before the Reformation, and the relevant texts have largely been destroyed. However, we should note a possible parallel in the literature of Gaelic Scotland, which testifies to the importance of the Rosary as an aid to devotion in the lives of lay people. A poem in the Book of the Dean of Lismore (mentioned briefly above), which probably expresses the grief of the wife of Neil MacNeil at the death of her husband -- who was Constable of Castle Sween, and died c.1470 -- opens and closes as follows:

A phaidrín do dhúisg mo dhéar,
ionmhain méar do bhittheadh ort;
ionmhain cridhe failteach fial
'gá raibhe riamh gus a noch.
...
Muire mháthair, muime an Ríogh,
go robh 'gam dhíon ar gach séad,
's a Mac do chruthuigh gach dúil,
a phaidrín do dhúisg mo dhéar.

Thou rosary that hast waked my tear, dear the finger that was wont to be on thee, dear the heart, hospitable and generous, which owned thee ever until to-night.
...
Mary Mother, who did nurse the King, may she guard me on every path, and her Son who created each creature, thou rosary that hast waked my tear.15

15 Scottish Verse from the Book of the Dean of Lismore, ed. Watson, pp.60-65, 271. See also above, p.79.
(This manuscript book was compiled in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, and -- as MacQueen points out -- was in some respects a Gaelic equivalent of the Maitland and Bannatyne MSS.) In the light of this Gaelic analogue, we cannot dismiss the possibility that the Arundel MS is evidence of the spiritual exercises of a Lowland Scot, devout but not in orders.

It is the Arundel MS which alone preserves the poems on the subordinate themes related to the Passion. The two "orisoun[s] to the naim of Crist Jesu" appear at the end of several folios of verse, with the Passion as the main subject. There is no need to discuss these two poems here: partly because they are already familiar (especially the first), partly because they are English in origin, and partly because - in their simple and unadorned style, with short lines and stanzas - they are untypical of the Scottish lyrics on the Passion. The connection between the Passion and the Holy Name was always close, as Frances Comper has noted, and a convenient Scottish illustration can be found in Archbishop Hamilton's Catechism, of 1551:

16 MacQueen, Ballattis of Luve, pp.lxviii-lxix.
17 Devotional Pieces, pp.255-278.
Trewly thai men and wemen, to quhome the vertew and meritis of Christis passioun is applyit be faith, that wyrkis be cheritie and the haly sacramentis, thai ar the pepil of Jesus, and thame wyll Jesus deliver fra thair synnis. Quhairfor (O christin man) have evirmair in thi mynd a quick remembrance of this haly name Jesus, have evir in thi hart fervent lufe to this haly name Jesus, have Jesus prentit in thi hart sa deiplly and sa constantly, that na thocht or lufe of this warld put it away.

This passage\(^{19}\) - part of a larger exposition of the Creed - goes on to give the example of 'that haly man Ignatius', who was found, after his death, to have the name of Jesus written in golden letters in his heart. The two English poems in the Arundel MS would certainly fit in with the devotion to the Holy Name\(^{20}\) suggested by this quotation.

Although the Compassion of the Virgin relates to the Passion, I have preferred to treat the solitary Scottish lyric on this topic - Quehat dollour persit our Ladyis hert - in the context of the Marian lyrics discussed below.\(^{21}\)

Although the Arundel MS contains a prose "devot exercicioun to be said ever ilk Sonday in the honour of the Crown of Thorne", there is no lyric on this topic. We should note, however, that an Office for the feast

\(^{19}\) The Catechism set forth by Archbishop Hamilton, ed. A.F. Mitchell (Edinburgh, 1882), fol. xcxiii.


\(^{21}\) Devotional Pieces, pp.234-236. See below, pp.275-279.
of the Crown of Thorns was printed at Edinburgh by John Story in 1520 (Laing's date), and this indicates a contemporary interest in Scotland in this new devotion.  

The source of the surviving poems on the Seven Words is the Latin prayer, De septem Verbis Christi in Cruce, although, according to Rosemary Woolf, the popular, fifteenth-century meditative Passion narratives - especially the Meditationes vitae Christi, attributed to St. Bonaventura - were also instrumental in spreading the currency of this theme. However, I agree with her in seeing little (if any) influence of such Passion narratives upon the Scottish poem on the Seven Words. 

At some places it is merely a translation of the Latin (quite a good one, in fact), though at others the poet may considerably adapt his original. Thus the passage:

Et sicut tu dixisti, "Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum", fac ut in hora mortis meae perfecte et libere possem dicere tibi, "Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum." Recipe me venientem ad te, quia non constituisti certum tempus vitae meae.

becomes in the poem:


23 Patrologia Latina, XCIV, 561-562.


26 The Arundel MS also contains a Scottish, prose translation of the prayer: Devotional Pieces, p.240.
And as thi body was extendit  
Apon the croce, thi spirit commendit  
Unto thi Fader; the quhilk ascendit  
And brought us fra all baill:  
For that blist wourke grant me the joy  
Off paradise, and me convoy  
quhair that thou rignis, O ryall roy,  
Quhen that I pas but faill. (54-61)

Yet although the personal optimism of the poet has been given a freer rein, near the end of the poem, the virtues of this piece are those of a translation, rather than an adaptation. The poem, however, does emphasise, through the pattern of each of its stanzas, which speak of the poet's own predicament, the intimate connection between the individual details of the Passion and the response of the meditator.

This is also seen in the popular devotion, printed in the Prymer, known as the 'Fifteen Ooes of Christ', or the 'XV Ois'. In no sense could this highly schematised reaction to the Passion be considered as a lyric, and I do not propose to say much about the Scottish version, which begins (acephalously), To thame that luffis the in cleynnes. This is in eight-syllable-line couplets, and is not distinguished by any poetic excellence. Lydgate, on the other hand, composed a version of the same meditation in an elaborately aureate style, and even this is preferable to the plodding Scottish version.

---

27 For the Latin text of this devotion: Horae Eboracenses, ed. Wordsworth, pp.76-80.
28 Devotional Pieces, pp.170-181.
29 Minor Poems of John Lydgate, I, 238-250.
These poems are characteristic of the Arundel MS, and they illustrate a few of the many devotions connected with the Passion which were developed in the Middle Ages, some of which, as Pfaff shows, found their way into the Liturgy. The existence of such a collection of devotional material in a Scottish text leads one to speculate on the amount of religious verse which must have been lost at the Reformation. The pieces of verse so far examined are not, by and large, of any great poetic merit, but they are important in filling out, to some extent, the religious context in which the Passion lyrics were composed.

For the remaining lyrics to be discussed here it is possible again to use the categorical descriptions of George Bannatyne. While these are of their time, and need some qualification before they can be readily adopted for mediaeval poems written perhaps some fifty to a hundred years before the compilation of the Bannatyne MS itself, Bannatyne's headings certainly have their uses. The fact that one should wish to use his classifications at all is a further tribute to the imposing authority of this great manuscript.

Immediately after the "ballatis of the nativitie of Chryste" we find these words: "ffinis nativitatis dei Sequntur de eius passione quedem cantilenee". The

30 Pfaff, New Liturgical Feasts, pp.84-97.
31 The Bannatyne MS, II, 77.
juxtaposition in this way of two groups of poems on the Nativity and on the Passion leads one to infer that, for Bannatyne, the term 'cantilena' is an equivalent for 'ballat'. As there had been lyrics on the one theme, so there will be lyrics on the other. Some pages later (II, 85) we find another heading: "ffinis ... de passione et sequitur de resurrectione". The poems are linked in a similar way, and presumably the Resurrection lyrics are also 'cantilenae'. Later still (II, 90) we find: "ffollowis exhortationis of Chryst to all synnaris To repent thame of the same". After this, there is no other heading before the end of the first section of the manuscript. Not all the poems which follow the last heading can have been considered as "exortationis": clearly something has happened to disturb the original plan. Indeed, the only poems near the end of the first section of the Bannatyne MS which could pass as "exortationis of Chryst" are Stewart's poem, O man, remember and prent in to thy thocht (which immediately follows that heading), and the very last poem, O creaturis creat of me your creator, here erroneously attributed to Lydgate.32

What Bannatyne seems at first sight to have done is to provide us with a set of mid sixteenth-century critical labels which we may apply to the lyrics before us. He has distinguished three kinds of poem: those on the Passion; those on the Resurrection; and the

32 The Bannatyne MS, II, 90-95; 105-108.
"exortationis of Chryst". It is easy to see the third of these classifications as an equivalent for the now more familiar 'Complaints of Christ'. But it is also clear that Bannatyne has made explicit in his title the didactic tendencies of such poems, which can already be seen in fifteenth-century English poetry.33

Furthermore, in setting the lyrics of the Passion and the Resurrection beside each other, Bannatyne seems to imply that the connection between them is to be found in the life of Christ, of which the lyrics on these two themes represent merely two stages. In a sense, of course, this is true. Yet the procedure adopted by Bannatyne is itself an interesting innovation. As was said earlier, the Resurrection, in mediaeval religious verse, is customarily seen as one of the Joys of the Virgin. Bannatyne's arrangement obliterates this distinction entirely, and this can be all the more appreciated when we realise that the only surviving Scottish lyric to introduce the Resurrection from a Marian viewpoint - O mothir of God, involat virgin Mary - is the only one which does not appear in the Bannatyne MS.34

The ordering of Bannatyne's lyrics in these three sections - Passion, Resurrection, "exortationis" - may

33 Woolf, English Religious Lyric, p.183.
34 Devotional Pieces, pp.274-275. The Maries in the lyric, Surrpexit dominus de sepulchro, do not, of course, include Our Lady: The Bannatyne MS, II, 87-88.
be a further indication of his attempts to placate the post-Reformation censorship. On the one hand the Marian connection of the Resurrection lyrics is suppressed. On the other, since Bannatyne has emphasised the didactic quality of the Complaints, and has isolated them from the lyrics on the Passion with which - in terms of subject matter - they clearly belong, it becomes easy to link the Complaints with the poetry of moral exhortation _per se_.

The latter is one kind of poetry which certainly does continue after the Reformation, and I discuss this verse, below, in Chapter X. These procedures of Bannatyne's, therefore, have the effect of subtly camouflaging to some extent the traditional, Catholic nature of his collection of poems.

Perhaps it will seem perverse, therefore, after all that has been said here about this manuscript, that one should propose in this chapter to proceed on the basis of Bannatyne's classifications. Some justification is required. First, if we except the poems on the special devotions already mentioned, it is the Bannatyne MS, and not the Arundel, which emerges as the fullest Scottish collection of Passion-related poems. Second, the Bannatyne MS is the only text which displays a systematic attempt at the classification of these poems. The headings in the Arundel MS give indications of the contents of the poems, on an _ad hoc_ basis, but Bannatyne alone has a clear method in his arrangements. Third, the adherence to Bannatyne need not be absolutely slavish, where this might lead astray. By this I mean that, where a poem
exists in both the Bannatyne and Arundel MSS, I have used the earlier (Arundel) text in preference to the possibly censored Bannatyne version. Furthermore, I have re-adjusted Bannatyne's ordering slightly, to the extent of considering the Complaints, which often contain detailed accounts of the Passion, after the Passion lyrics proper, and before the lyrics of the Resurrection.

Cantilenae de Passione.

Most of the lyrics on the Passion emphasise the pains and torments which Christ had to suffer for man's sake. The characteristic mood is dark, the tone doleful. Before examining such poems, however, one must take note of a quite exceptional Passion lyric — To the hie potent blisfull Trinitie. 35 This lyric is unique for several reasons. It does not appear among the other Passion poems in the Bannatyne MS, but instead it follows, somewhat incongruously, the poem by Stewart, O man, remember and prent in to thy thocht. In its mood and expression, To the hie potent blisfull Trinitie stands out from all the other Scottish Passion poems, and equally from all the fifteenth-century English lyrics in Carleton Brown's anthology. The true affinities of this unusual Passion are not, however, far to seek: they lie with the Bannatyne "ballatis of the nativitie of Chryste".

35 The Bannatyne MS, II, 95-96.
The motivating force of this lyric is the idea that Christ left heaven with the specific intention of doing battle with death and the devil for the sake of mankind. The Latin refrain - "A summo celo egressio eius est" - continually emphasises the solemn departure of the Son from heaven, with this intention in mind. The Incarnation of Christ, and His Nativity, are seen as preliminary stages in this great battle. Thus, while the lyric links the two themes of the Nativity and the Passion, it does so always through the basic image of warfare:

The virgynis wamb be glorifeit and blist,  
That bure our michty salviour Missias:  
Oure campioun Chryst that to the feild him drest  
Moir strong than Hector, Samsone or Golias,  
That Lucifer cheist, and all his allias,  
And all the feyndis affreyit most and lest.  
Surrexit gigas ad currendum vias:  
A summo celo egressio eius est. (9-16)

The Latin refrain of this lyric comes from Psalm 18, verse 7, and the preceding verse in the Psalm is the source of several lines in the poem: "In sole posuit tabernaculum suum: et ipse tamquam sponsus procedens de thalamo suo: exultavit ut gigas ad currendum viam". In their liturgical application, these verses are found, in the Missal, during Advent, and in the Breviary as antiphons for the Nativity and the Circumcision. Christ, the warrior, is more powerful than the mighty heroes of

36 Sarum Missal, pp.20-21, 23; Breviarium Sarum, I, clxxii, cclxxxiv, etc.; Breviarium Aberdonense, P.H., Temporale, fols. xxivb, xliiib, etc.
pagan or Old Testament legends: He is like a 'giant' -
a term which reappears in Dunbar's Resurrection lyric. Some of the expressions used in the Nativity lyrics appear here also. The "sueit entone" of the angels' song in Now glaidith every liffis creature (15) appears likewise in this Passion lyric (4). In The sterne is rissin of our redemp'oun, the star, symbolising Christ, rose above Phoebus, Mars and Saturn (28-29), and in the present lyric Christ is:

Moir velyeant nor Mars upoun his steid,
Moir fresche nor Phoebus rysand in the est,
Nor terrible eik nor Saturne for to dreid.
(21-23)

The astrological references seem to be a common way of indicating the superlative power of Christ. Finally, here, we may see a connection between this poem and the battle imagery - relating to the Harrowing of Hell - in the Nativity lyric, We that ar bocht with Chrystis blude. In a real sense, To the hie potent blisfull Trinitie may be said to make a bridge between the lyrics on the Nativity and those on the Passion.

The excellence of Christ as the "campioun kene" who came to rescue man (19) is conveyed in a most striking image - that of His shining armour:

This wicht, invinsible, and victorius king,
Quois bricht plaitis attoure all Juda schone,
But vanegard, reirgard, scaill, or ony wing,
His velyeand body to battell gaif allone.
(25-28)

37 The Bannatyne MS, II, 89, 1. 20.
Clearly, what the poet has done here, is to provide a substitute, in terms of the predominantly military imagery which runs through this lyric, for the star which, in the Nativity lyrics, illuminated Jerusalem, Judah, and even the 'dark hemisphere'. The poet is consistent, and economically inventive, in his expression. In the final stanza of this lyric there is an admirable restatement of the basic mood of joy, although in the penultimate line this merges with the poignant detail of the death of Christ, the man, on the Cross:

Glaidith, ye sterris and hevinly spheiris,
Signis, and plenneitis that wer in his passage,
For he, the michtie lord that yow all steiris,
Throw your bricht regionis maid his blist voyage.
Glaid ye, 0 man, maid eftir his image,
For quhois saik he willingly but request
Stervit on rude with deidly pale visage:
A summo celo egresio eius est. (33-40)

Here, too, the astrological references are prominent. To the hie potent blisfull Trinitie is another triumph of the high-style Middle Scots religious lyric. Although it is in many ways untypical of the other Passion poems, it is nonetheless a first-rate lyric in its own right. It occupies an important place, as a link, not only with the Nativity lyrics, with which - as I have shown - it shares imagery and mood, but also, on the other hand, with the lyrics of the Resurrection, and in particular Dunbar's Done is a battell on the dragon blak.
Quite different in every way as a treatment of the Passion is the lyric – the second in Bannatyne's group of Passion lyrics – *Compatience persis, reuth and marcy stoundis*. With this poem we encounter a more familiar idiom for the Passion, in which the painful details are emphasised. This has led Rosemary Woolf to describe this lyric as "untender", though she does recognise its dramatic quality.

*Compatience persis* is the only high-style Middle Scots Passion lyric in which the poet recounts the events of the Passion while speaking directly to Christ. It is surprising that no other Scottish lyric (except the poem on the Seven Words) should have employed this narrative position, since it is admirably designed to draw the reader into the meditation on the Passion: the poet's words become, as it were, those of the reader also. (There may, of course, have been other such lyrics, now lost.) At any rate, the poem operates in such a way as to establish a close connection between the speaker and Christ. He suffers, in his own compassion, along with his Saviour: "Compatience persis, reuth and marcy stoundis/In myddis my hert, and thirlis throw the vanis."

38 The Makculloch MS, pp.10-12; Devotional Pieces, pp.255-257; The Bannatyne MS, II, 83-85.


41 Devotional Pieces, pp.259-261.
(1-2) The heightening of emotional fervour which these lines exhibit would accord excellently well with the ideals of the Devotio Moderna and the Franciscans.

Later in the lyric, the poet speaks of the contrary emotional reactions which the spectacle of the Crucifixion arouses in him (49-52), and at the very end he prays to Christ to receive his soul into heaven, since his trespass has been purged by the Passion. Concomitantly with the compassion of the poet, we find references to that of the Virgin: "Throu Maryis saule the suerd of dolour thrist,/Quhen that you said, 'Se thair thi sone, woman'." (41-42) This is a reference to the prophecy made by Simeon on the occasion of the presentation of Christ in the Temple.42 Later, when Christ's side is pierced by the lance, we read: "Thy wofull moder swonit stif and calde" (55), and there is also a reference to the perturbation in the mind of Mary after the death of Christ, when she walked back to Jerusalem (30-31).43

There are thus many connections between the sufferings of Christ, on the one hand, and of Mary and the poet, on the other. The pain felt by the poet is skilfully brought out in the verse itself:

Thy deid, Jesu, thi petuous cruell woundis,
Thy grym passion, gret tormentis, grevous panis,
Ingravit sadlie in my spreit remanis. (3-5)

One notices how the alliteration links the key words: grym, gret, grevous, ingravit (one can perhaps add 'cruell' to this list); petuous, passion, panis; sadlie, spreit. The cumulative impression is of an intense grief, as the sad connotations of many of these words fuse together in the mind. Doubtless such lines are "untender", but they do impress with the force of the poet's feeling. However, the lack of tenderness may be slightly less striking if the correct reading of line 7 is not "wofull teris", but "teris of pete" (the Makculloch version).\(^4\)

The main part of the poem contains the account of the Passion. This seems to be told in a deliberately unchronological way. Thus, in the order of the lines, Christ is nailed to the Cross before He has to carry it to Golgotha (33-37), and this is preceded by St. Peter's denial of Christ, which in turn comes before Mary's anguish at the sight of her dead Son. Many more instances could be cited. It seems that the poet's priority was less to provide a narrative of the Passion - though there are the outlines of one\(^5\) - than to accumulate many of the most telling, and painful, episodes of the

\(^4\) The Makculloch MS, p.10.

\(^5\) Rosemary Woolf suggests a basis for this lyric in the Seven Hours of the Passion: *English Religious Lyric*, p.234.
Passion in a short space. The brevity of the poem - it seems too short for all that has to be packed into it - and the artful confusion of the historical details add to the impression of intensity, noted already. The combination seems to me to be very effective.

Many of the details mentioned in the poem do not come from the Bible itself, but from later, mediaeval expansions of the Passion narrative. One of the strongest influences here seems to be that of the Franciscan Meditationes vitae Christi. This is most pronounced when the poet speaks of the joy and sadness which he simultaneously feels at the Passion (49-52), and seems to derive quite clearly from the Meditationes:

This is a pyteful sight and a joyful sight: a pyteous sight in hym for that harde passioun that he suffrede for our savacioun; but it is a likyng sight to us for the matere and the effecte that we have therby of our redempcioun.46

The paradox is developed further in the prose text, which would seem to lie behind several features of the Scottish lyric.

Like Compatience persis, Dunbar's poem, Amang thir freiris within ane cloister,47 exists in three texts, and on the perhaps not altogether reliable evidence of the manuscripts these two seem to have been the best known Scottish Passion lyrics. It is surprising,

46 Powell, Meditationes vitae Christi, p.244.
47 The Asloan MS, II, 242-245; Devotional Pieces, pp.266-269; The Maitland Folio MS, I, 229-234. I have followed the Maitland text, which is the only complete one.
therefore, that the poem does not appear in the Bannatyne MS, although it is possible that the mere references to the friars and to the prayer before the Cross (in the first and last stanzas) are in themselves sufficient explanation of the conspicuous absence of this poem from the post-Reformation anthology. At any rate, it seems that the best place to discuss it is in the present context, with the other Passion poems which are in the Bannatyne MS.

A brief outline of Dunbar's poem will serve to indicate how much more it is than a 'conventional' Passion lyric. It opens with the poet's devotions before the altar of an oratory, during which he suddenly falls asleep. In his dream he has a vision of the whole Crucifixion, with the events told in order. This comprises the largest section of the poem. Then we find five stanzas in which the poet, with a recourse to some allegorical 'machinery', indicates his reaction to the Passion. In the final stanza, the earthquake which followed on the death of Christ wakes the poet up again, and he immediately begins to write down all that happened to him, as he prayed before the Cross on Good Friday.

The framework is that of the dream vision - familiar in mediaeval poetry, but encountered nowhere else among the religious lyrics. The use of allegory in this poem is not like that of Bellenden, in the "Benner of Peetie". Dunbar does more than merely give a version of a trad-
itional motif. His allegorical figures, which take control of his house, and shall continue to do so until the coming of Christ (129-32), are reminiscent, rather, of those in *King Hart*, and perhaps also those near the end of *Piers Plowman*. The human soul is to be governed like a house which awaits its master. Within the dream vision the two sections, narrative and allegorical, are marked by a refrain each: "O mankynd, for the luif of the", and "Thy blissit salvatour Chryst Jesu", respectively. In the Asloan text we find only the introductory stanza and the Passion narrative: though this might only indicate a defective copy-text, one might speculate also that this shows a desire, on the part of the copyist, to trim the poem down to a less elaborate account of the Passion. Should this in fact be so, it might suggest a possible reason for the non-appearance of Dunbar's poem in the Bannatyne MS: this work, in its complete text, would be very different from the other lyrics in the manuscript - and not only from those on the Passion. In spite of the interesting formal features of this poem, however, one may legitimately discuss it in the present context. The Passion narrative, of which the poem mainly consists, can be seen in relation to other lyrics,


49 The position of the poem in the folios of this MS shows that the loss of the stanzas of allegory cannot have been accidental: *The Asloan MS*, II, 245.
especially *Compatience persis*, and the allegory, as I shall attempt to show, merely renders explicit what the function of religious lyrics must often have been in any case.

Like *Compatience persis*, *Amang thir freiris* betrays strongly the influence of the *Meditationes vitae Christi*. In Dunbar's poem the story of Christ's sufferings is told in such a manner as to make the latter seem as gruesome as possible. Thus we do not hear of nails, but of "*gret irne takkis*" (69); the Crown of Thorns is described in detail:

And syn with thornis scharp and kene,
His saikles bludd agane thai sched,
Persing his heid with pykis grene.

(42-44)

We also hear of Christ's agony as the Cross falls into the hole prepared for it:

*Quhen he was bendit so on breid,*
*Quhill all his vanis brist and brak,*
*To gar his cruell pane exceid*
*Thai leit him fall doun with ane swak,*
*Quhill core and corps and all did crak.*

(73-77)

The alliteration used in these lines supports the impression of incredible pain. At times this seems almost sadistic:

*The clayth that claif to his cleir syd,*
*Thai raif away with ruggis rude,*
*Quhill fersly followit flesche and blude."

(59-61)
Tom Scott is surely right to suggest a comparison between the aesthetic and emotional effect of Dunbar's lines and that of the Crucifixion painting by Matthias Grunewald.\textsuperscript{50}

In dwelling on all the horrible details of the Passion, Dunbar is clearly writing under the influence of the mediaeval meditative tradition. In the \textit{Meditationes vitae Christi}, for example, there is a discussion as to the precise way in which the Crucifixion is carried out. First the author mentions one tradition, in which the Cross is already set in position, and Christ ascends a short ladder in order to be nailed on to the Cross. This is followed by a second account, in which the Cross is laid on the ground, and Christ is nailed on to it before it is hoisted into place. His body also has to be 'drawn' to fit the length of the Cross, and between this and the shock as the Cross falls into the socket, all His sinews are broken. This is undoubtedly the more powerfully affecting version. One might also mention such a work as the meditation on the Passion in the Arundel MS, which emphasises each and every article of Christ's sufferings, and inserts a prayer between each item. This work is intended as a series of "exercicioun/is/" for all the days of the week.\textsuperscript{51} The authors of such works seem to have felt that the more gruesome the details, the more effective would be the meditation.


\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Devotional Pieces}, pp. 213-237.
The horror of it all is justified by the stanzas in which the poet's reaction is described, and the allegory seems to me to be absolutely necessary in retrieving the poetic balance of the whole work. Through the sequence of allegorical characters we see a complete account of the psychological effect of the Passion section, and Dunbar is led from compassion - which the sensitive reader is almost certain to share - through to contrition and repentance. In this progress he is maintained by grace. Although Dunbar gives us first a Passion narrative and then an allegorical narrative - thereby seeming to separate the two parts - we are probably meant to infer that in reality (as opposed to the dream) the two would be synchronic: Dunbar has described the reactions which we will have as we look at a picture of the Crucifixion, or listen to an account of it. The psychological reaction which Dunbar outlines here is likely also to be that which one will experience with other Passion lyrics. Mutatis mutandis, this points to the effect which most of the religious lyrics were probably designed to produce - contrition, confession and repentance. Dunbar lets us see that we are intended to react to the lyric: the poem exists to stimulate reactions and to goad consciences, and the account of the reactions of the persona of the poet is a way of focusing the reactions of the reader.

It is worth recalling here a passage from Thomas à Kempis, already quoted:
In silence and in stillness a religious soul advantageth herself, and learneth the mysteries of Holy Scripture. There she findeth rivers of tears, wherein she may every night wash and cleanse herself; that she may be so much the more familiar with her Creator, by how much the farther off from all worldly disquiet.

This is exactly what happens to Dunbar, as recounted in this poem, and one must be impressed by the sincerity with which the author tells us of his profoundly moving religious experience. The sequence of emotional reactions on the part of the poet here corresponds with that most characteristic of writers deeply affected by the meditative practices associated with the Devotio Moderna (as we have already seen Debongnie note).

It is noticeable that the Passion lyrics in the Arundel MS are found between prayers and prose meditations on the same theme. Texts such as "Ane devoit exercicioun to be said ever ilk Sonday in the honour of the croun of thorne, and panis quhilks our Sallvour Jesu thollit in his blist heid", the "Jesus Psalter", the "Goldin Latany", "Remembrance of the Passion", "The Thre Rois Garlandis", "The Lang Rosair" -- these are all texts involving the repetition of responses which the devout could use by themselves to attain a quickened life of the spirit.

These devotional exercises for the individual soul -- of which Mombaer's Rosetum is an example -- were among the greatest achievements of the Devotio Moderna.

52 See above, p.64.


54 See above, p.62.
It is by no means impossible, as a result, that in *Amang thir freiris* we see some of the fruits of the impact of this Continental religious movement in Scotland. On the other hand, McRoberts has noted that, at the beginning of the poem, Dunbar is engaged in saying his Rosary — another kind of individual devotional exercise (associated with the Friars), but one which works in the same way to provide a mechanism for drawing the soul closer to God.\(^\text{55}\)

It is possible that one of James IV's Easter-week penitential retreats among the Grey Friars of Stirling afforded the occasion for the composition of this powerful lyric.\(^\text{56}\)

The poetical dexterity of Dunbar's poem is amazing. It has all the force of *Done is a battell on the dragon blak*, and, like that poem, *Amang thir freiris* clearly strives to make a tremendous impression on the reader (though not necessarily in the same way). Dunbar's skill is perhaps best seen when the poet is awakened from his dream by the earthquake. Not only does Dunbar use this for a neat conclusion to the poem, but he reminds one of the miraculous events — such as the earthquake — which in the Gospels betoken the death of Christ.\(^\text{57}\) He also takes us back to the conclusion of his Passion narrative (and so implies that all the psychological allegory occupies but an instant of time), and back, too, to the altarpiece


\(^{56}\) See above, p.50.

\(^{57}\) St. Matthew, 27, 45-53.
(of Christ and Mary) before which he had genuflected at the beginning of the poem. Such an artistic economy and structural control is the sign of the master poet. Admittedly, as Rosemary Woolf says, the accomplishment of the poem is intellectual rather than emotional, but that is Dunbar's way, and the poem is a triumph for all that. 58

When is a lyric not a lyric? Rosemary Woolf specifies two conditions for Passion lyrics: (a) they must, even when narrative in form, be capable of being transformed into a personal meditation or complaint; (b) there should normally be a single situation. 59 It seems clear that, while Kennedy's poem, Hail, Cristin knyght, haill, etern confortour, 60 does not meet this bill, Dunbar's poem certainly does. The novel techniques imported by Dunbar from other poetic genres serve, I believe, to enrich the effect, not obscure the true nature, of this great Passion lyric, Amang thir freiris.

As we have seen, the conclusion of Dunbar's poem, and also its first refrain - "O mankynd, for the luif of the" - reach out into the realm of morality. The reader, like the poet in the lyric, is to be led to reform his life, and this aim perhaps takes priority over the inculcation and refinement of a love for Christ.

58 Woolf, English Religious Lyric, p.234.
60 Devotional Pieces, pp.7-63.
The didactic tendency which one detects in Dunbar's Passion lyric is characteristic of late-mediaeval poems on this theme, and reaches an apogee in the overtly didactic form of the Complaint. This moralistic element is much clearer in another of Bannatyne's Passion lyrics, *O wondit spreit and saule in till exile*. It could hardly be otherwise, since this 'lyric' is a reworking of the fifth section of *The Contemplacioun of Synnaris*, a long, late fifteenth-century moral poem, thought to be written by the Franciscan, William of Touris, and first printed, in England, by Wynkyn de Worde, in 1499. The *Contemplacioun*, like the *Meditationes vitae Christi* is divided up into sections for each day of the week, and the verses for Friday revolve round the Crucifixion.

This is not the place for a thorough comparison of the Bannatyne text with those printed by Bennett (from the Arundel MS, and Harleian MS 6919). Suffice it to say that, in principle, the reworker - whether Bannatyne or another - has removed most of the stanzas of the original except for those relating directly to the Passion. Moral digressions are largely (but not altogether) excised. Marian stanzas are deleted, and other

61 The Bannatyne MS, II, 80-83.
62 Devotional Pieces, pp. v-vii, 64-169. For details of Touris, see above, p.126.
63 For the relevant section of the Contemplacioun: Devotional Pieces, pp.124-141.
Marian references are 'treated' in a way that is familiar. There is, however, one distinct improvement. The eight-line stanzas of the *Contemplacioun* are trimmed down to seven lines, with no great loss. These changes can be summed up by saying that the author of the Bannatyne version has created a *Passion* lyric out of the larger, rather diffuse, moral work. This is interesting for several reasons, not least for the insight which it affords into the genesis of a religious lyric - both its source, and the process of recasting by which it came to have its present form. Once again we can see the connections between lyric poetry and devotional exercises for the individual.

As a poem, the result of this process is little more effective than the original. The account of the Passion is rather flat, and has none of the artistic tension of *Amang thir freiris* or *Companience persis*. The following is quite typical of this poem:

> Apoun his heid thai thrang ane crown of thorn
> For diadame; ane croce to beir of tre.
> As king of Jowis thai salust him in scorne.
> Betuix twa thewis thai deput him to de.
> Thus throw his lufe and our iniquite
> He sufferit. Thow synnit, thou man maist fruelus.
> Beir this in mynd and regard nocht thi gre;
> Thocht thou be wracht, thi price is precius.

(1001-8)64

The verbal artistry is simple here, and does nothing of itself to support the 'message' of the lines - as it so

---

64 This quotation is taken from the Arundel text.
signally does in the two other Passion lyrics just mentioned. The lines of narrative are of the most straightforward. One notices also the irruption of the preacher/poet. The connection between the moral exhortation and the rest of the stanza seems almost casual: the two do not add point to each other. What this poem obviously aims at is a contrapuntal effect, in which the Passion narrative will be seen against, and in meaningful relation with, the moral exhortation (and *vice versa*). Unfortunately, it does not seem to work very well, and in both the Arundel and the Bannatyne versions (but especially in the former, because of its length) the result is a rather dull work of moral advice instead of a conscience-striking Passion lyric. Moreover, some lines which are quite effective in the original:

Pers my herd hert with thi scharp luffis lance,
   And mak thi panis with me ay permanent,
   Off thi passioun the ruthftull remembrance.

(1086-8)

are far from improved in the Bannatyne text:

Gife me thi grace, ffforgiff me my offence,
   Conforme my will to thy benevolence.

(104-105)

Little more need be said about this poem, which, of all the Middle Scots lyrics, shows to an extreme degree the combination of didacticism with a narrative of the Passion.

There remains in this section the first of Bannatyne's Passion lyrics, *My wofull haert me stoundis throw the vanis*, by Clerk - probably the 'Maister Johne
Clerk' mentioned by Dunbar in the 'Lament for the Makaris', and the author of Fane wald I luve, but quhairabout? (before 1500).

Clerk relates how, when he gazed upon the crucified Christ - like Dunbar, he is probably referring to the crucifix on the altar - Christ spoke to him, and most of the poem consists of a first-person account of the Passion. At the very end, however, the poet breaks into a rhetorical stanza of adoration for Christ.

To my mind, this lyric is much more successful than the previous one. Clerk's poem does not use any of the more obvious methods of making a strong emotional appeal to the reader: indeed the style of the poem is somewhat subdued and quiet. Yet this is effective here, because it permits the suggestive effect of some small details to develop in the reader's mind. Thus in the lines:

My Fader saith, "Go to thi deid, my deir".
With all blythnes I wes obedient. (9-10)

we see the full force of the love of Christ in the powerful paradox of the loving Father's sending His Son to die, and the Son's joyful acceptance of His death.

Such lines carry one far into the central meaning of the Passion. The details of the stages of the Passion are told in a straightforward way, and none are omitted. Clerk, luckily, does not give Christ a diction which over-emphasises for emotional effect. A detail such as,

65 The Bannatyne MS, II, 77-79; MacQueen, Ballattis of Luve, pp. xxi, 30-32.

66 These lines appealed to C.S. Lewis: English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, p.74.
"The thorne pykis thay to my tay dang doun" (44), is a pardonable addition to the story and cannot really be said to make the narrative sensational. Unlike the Complaints, in which Christ retells His sufferings to a man whom He simultaneously upbraids, this poem by Clerk is much more restrained, and even slightly impersonal. Christ here merely recounts His Passion, rather than makes a special appeal to the poet or the reader as individuals. The chief aim is not a moral one, but is rather to deepen a love for Christ, and this is supported by the refrain: "Benedicta sit sancta trinitas". It is to a blessed and holy God that the highly rhetorical concluding stanza is designed to pay tribute, and, after the sombre Passion narrative, this creates just the right change of mood. Clerk's poem, in a formal sense, makes a bridge towards the Complaints of Christ, but it shows that first-person accounts of the Passion need not necessarily be didactic in intention, nor hyperemotional in expression.

**Exhortations of Christ.**

There are five poems in Scottish texts which come into this category. Three of these, however, are English in origin, and it is not necessary to say a great deal about them here.

Two poems - Lydgate's *Behald, man, lift up thy ene and see* (Part V of the Testament), and the anonymous *Now herkynnis wordis wunder gude* - seem to depend upon
the accompanying iconographic feature of a crucifix, since they repeatedly ask the reader to 'behold' the visible signs of the Passion.\(^67\) Such an illustration, indeed, could greatly increase the impact which the words of the lyric might make by themselves. Moreover, Christ speaks from the viewpoint of the completed Crucifixion, even though He asks the reader to review the list of His torments. There is little concern for historical and chronological verisimilitude: Christ's wounds, though inflicted in the past, are still present, and it is clear that we are dealing here with a form of art which does not depend upon temporal presentation.

In the illustration of the crucified Christ which accompanies Now herkynnis in BM Add. MS 37049\(^68\) we see that Christ is crucified on the "tre of lyfe", and the Instruments of the Passion are also drawn. Both these poems are, ostensibly, appeals from the Cross, yet they have a static pictorial basis somewhat in the manner of the imago pietatis. As the version of these lines stands in the Towneley Plays, they can only be spoken by an imago pietatis. There they are spoken by Christ at the moment of His Resurrection, while the soldiers guarding the tomb are asleep, and before the entry of the three Maries into the Garden. The sudden appearance of the risen Christ, with all His wounds, must have been one

\(^{67}\) Devotional Pieces, pp.270-274, 261-265. For other texts of these poems, see above, pp.110,124,208.

\(^{68}\) Reproduced in Woolf, English Religious Lyric, p.204.
of the most vivid moments in this Mystery cycle, and the appeal of Christ would doubtless have been poignantly arresting. 69

Both these poems are strongly didactic. Christ tells His sufferings in order that man will be touched in his conscience, and the sign of this will be a refraining from sin:

Gif thou thi life in syn hes led,
To ask me marcy be thou nocht dred;
For the lest drop I for the sched
May clenge the sone,
And all the syn this warld within
That thou hes done. (79-84)

Lydgate's poem emphasises the details of the Passion in a cumulative way, and each is introduced by the word, "Behald". The constant repetition conveys the magnitude of Christ's pain, and thus of His love. With every detail the sympathy of the audience is gained. At the same time, such poems, which allow Christ to speak directly to man, have a distinct advantage over certain Passion lyrics, since they avoid the awkward mixture of narrative (with Christ as the centre of interest) and preaching (with the reader as the subject of the preacher/narrator's harangue) noted in O wondit spreit. The message of the Complaints is communicated directly from Christ to man, without any interference from a third party, and this serves to strengthen the appeal which the Complaints make.

These last two poems at least stick closely to the Passion itself, from which the moral counsel stems. In the lyric, \textit{This is Goddis awne complaint} \textsuperscript{70} (another English poem in Scottish dress), we find that the words of Christ are much less tied to the Passion. Christ here reviews all that God has done for man, and asks only that that love be reciprocated:

\begin{quote}
Man, I have bocht thi luf full deir; 
Unkynd, quhy forsakis thow myne? 
I gaif the hert and body infeir; 
Unkynd, quhy giffis thow me nocht thine?
\end{quote}

\begin{center}(116-119)\end{center}

At other places, however, the Passion details are explicit, and in this poem we find the idea that the sins of man continually recrucify Christ: "Unkyndlie thou has slane thi lord,/And ilk day thow woundis hym new." (128-129)

It is significant that in the concluding stanza (in the Gray MS version) there is an admission that God's words are an irresistible argument: "Lord, with the we will nocht plete" (97). Devotion is engendered, and men have been convinced of the need to refrain from sin, the commission of which is synonymous with showing unkindness to, and renewing the wounds of, Christ.

Two Scottish poems, which Bannatyne calls "exortationis of Chryst to all synnaris To repent thame of the same," seem to belong to the Complaint genre. The first, by William Stewart (c. 1481-c.1550), \textit{O man, remember and

\textsuperscript{70} The Makculloch MS, pp.46-50. This poem is from the Gray MS. For details of the author (Glassinbery), see above, p.163.
prent in to thy thocht, which, like Now herkynnis and Beheld, man, lift up thy ene and see, consists mainly of Christ's account of the Passion, followed by His words of upbraiding to man. In this poem, however, in complete contrast to that by Clerk, the Passion is told in most graphic terms:

Thay sonyeit nocht to mak my sydis sair:
With all thair wit thay wrocht me woundis wyd.
Fra nek to heill unhurt thay left no hyd,
Fortled and blaknit quhill I wes blak and bla.

Thus we hear that the Cross was "grit and squair" (57) and the nails were "lang and grit" (73). Stewart intends every detail to heighten the emotional effect:

Calland me fule, with mony ane cry and schout,
Blerand thair ene, cryand "O bubo ba!"
As blind feld best thay beft me all about.

Stewart is clearly striving for something of the effect produced by Dunbar's account of the Passion. But whereas Dunbar was successful in depicting an intense horror, Stewart seems to emphasise rather a resentment felt by Christ. There is certainly nothing tender here: although Christ reproaches man for being "unkynd" (100) to Him, He points out that man is incapable of suffering as He did (98-105). The abiding impression created is of injured innocence, rather than of love. Rosemary Woolf speaks of the character which can be imparted to a lyric by a

71 The Bannatyne MS, II, 90-95.
In this poem, Christ is made to say, somewhat sternly, that if man will mend his ways, the plague will leave him. To some extent this is a threat, rather than an appeal. Furthermore, the most effective parts of the poem are those in which Christ uses this stern tone to man - as when He abruptly accuses him (the poet, the reader) of crucifying Him (85), and again when He points out the worthlessness of a voluptuous life (130). In such lines one hears Stewart the moral poet, one accustomed to use tones of authority even when addressing his king. It is typical of this poem that the poet asks Christ for mercy, and the cessation of the plague, which is Christ's instrument of punishment: not even here does the poem tend towards a declaration of love. This becomes very evident if one contrasts the conclusion of Stewart's poem with that of Lydgate's. In the latter, Christ is cheerful and encouraging to man, while in Stewart's poem Christ, most importantly, is the Controller of plagues. The difference between the attitudes of the poets speaks for itself.

Finally, here, there is the poem - the last in the first section of the Bannatyne MS - attributed (but mistakenly) to "ledgait monk of bery", O creaturis creat of me your creator. This is quite different in tenor from Stewart's poem. In this work, Christ cannot under-

---

72 English Religious Lyric, p.234.
73 See, for example, certain of Stewart's other poems: The Bannatyne MS, II, 231-232, 256-257.
74 The Bannatyne MS, II, 105-108.
stand how man can live, sunk in sin: He is concerned to point out that the Passion was an act of redemption for all time, and that therefore man has no need to be diffident about asking for pardon from God:

I bid the ask for grant I wald,  
I bid the serche among the laif,  
I bid the trest to mak the bald,  
Ask of thy bruthir and thow sall haif.

(33-36)

As Christ points out, "It is full sweit to suffer pane/To saive ane sawill eternaly" (51-52). He cites examples of sinners He has pardoned (St. Mary Magdalene, St. Peter, Dysmas, the 'good' thief), and of others who have grieved Him by not repenting (Cain, Judas, Pilate, Herod). All through, the tone is one of encouragement for the sinner, and there is repeated allusion to the claim that Christ is man's 'brother'. The element of reproof is of the gentlest, and what Christ seeks is that men should continue to repose their faith and love in Him. Just as Mary knelt to Him, so He will kneel to God in man's cause (73-80).

The Scottish Complaints of Christ, then, like the English ones, have a strong didactic element. Not for nothing did Bannatyne describe them as "exortationis of Chryst to all synnaris". The Complaints tend to be graphic in their accounts of the Passion, and they use many techniques to strike the conscience of the reader. Not many Complaints of Christ, however, value love more than virtue. The two dangers of the Complaint form are
that the Passion narrative can become excessively sensationalised, and that the appeal to man can be abrupt - even minatory - rather than tender. Nonetheless, the Complaint form is capable of being very affective, and indeed deliberately tries to be so: whereas all religious lyrics make some appear to the imagination and the conscience of the reader, it is in the Complaints that this is done most directly and most obviously.

Cantilenae de Resurrectione.

The mood of the Passion lyrics, and of the Complaints of Christ, is characteristically sombre. The main themes are death and sin, and painful details are emphasised. Lyrics on such subjects are likely to be more impressive than enjoyable. It is therefore with some relief that one turns to the lyrics of the Resurrection. Here there is joy instead of sorrow, light in place of darkness, and a poetic tone which is exultant rather than lugubrious. I have already said that a class of lyrics on the Resurrection is somewhat of a novelty, since it breaks with the convention whereby the Resurrection was regarded as one of the Joys of Mary, but, when such a class of poems includes Dunbar's Done is a battell on the dragon blak, the novelty will surely be welcomed.

The only Resurrection lyric which retains the Marian connection - and then only in the first stanza - is the first of the two in the Arundel MS, 0 mothir of God, involat virgin Mary.75 (This poem does not appear in the

75 Devotional Pieces, pp.274-275.
Bannatyne MS\(\dagger\). This is a high-style lyric, which emphasises the joy felt at the Resurrection first by Mary, then by the angels, then by mankind, and the poem closes with two aureate stanzas which speak of the triumphal return of Christ to heaven. Two of the standard images which were noted in the Nativity lyrics appear here also. First, the pun on Son/sun:

The lampe that lichtnes every regioun,
Thy glorius birth, the blissfull orient sone,
With joy is partit fra the subtell nyght,

(4-6)

and second, the military champion:

Haill, victour, haill,
That hes in erd cure-cumyn with gret travell
And hes of hell the power put to flicht.

(12-14)

The poet, inspired by the Resurrection, has a tone full of confidence as he addresses Mary, the angels, and man, and commands them to be joyful at the victory of the paschal lamb that climbed on the Cross (23).

In the final two stanzas the high-style diction employed is clearly an appropriate vehicle for the poet's emotion:

The mycht\(y\), strange, victorius campyoun,
With hie imperiall laude hes done return,
With palme of glory and with lawre croun,
With his all-weilding Father to sojorne.

(25-28)

The Conqueror's palms of glory are perhaps a recollection of the palm leaves strewn on the occasion of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, but there is to be no sad outcome
from this entry into heaven. The auration is continued, and even intensified, in the last stanza. The union of the Father and Son is marked by the song of the nine orders of angels, and it is fitting that the sound which, at the Nativity, marked the operation of God in sending His Son into the world, should welcome Him back into heaven when His mission is accomplished. In terms of theology we see here the completion of the scheme of redemption, and in terms of the Middle Scots religious lyrics, we see here the poetical complement of the Nativity lyrics. Here too the style is high, and this is the ideal expression for Christ's return to heaven.

The Resurrection, on Easter Day, comes after the forty days' fast of Lent, and this aspect is brought out in another lyric, Thow that in prayeris hes bene lent.76 (It is curious, incidentally, that all four Resurrection lyrics have forty lines exactly, and perhaps a numerical correspondence with the days of Lent, or the number of hours spent by Christ in Hell, is intended.) This lyric is based on the doctrines of penitence. The first two stanzas are addressed to the sinner who has repented and kept fast from sin through Lent: he can now rejoice, since his saviour is risen. Christ's victory over the devil, on the Cross, can be an example to the man who resists the devil in his own life (9-16). The rest of

76 Devotional Pieces, pp. 275-276; The Bannatyne MS, II, 85-87.
the poem is directed at the unregenerate sinner. The meaning of the Passion is restated:

Behald thi meik sueit salviour,
The to enbrace how that he bowis,
Se how he martirit wes with Jowis,
And how he stud for the in strife.
Hes he thi lufe, all he allowis,
That for the deit and rais on live.

(19-24)

If the sinner follows in Christ's footsteps, the poem says, he will not go wrong. In the final stanza there is an explicit reference to some technical terms of theology (altered in the Bannatyne text): man must be contrite, he will find that his "inhibicioun" (37) is "blindit", and that Christ, by His sacrifice, has gained the remission of the sins of man. The lyric, though it cannot compare with the previous one, or with Dunbar's poem, is nonetheless well written, and emphasises one area of theology to which the Resurrection gives special point.

Another lyric which suffers from a juxtaposition with Dunbar's poem is *Surrexit dominus de sepulchro.* 77 This poem will recall certain Nativity lyrics in having not only a Latin refrain but also a Latin line in each stanza. In this case the Latin phrases are based on the account in the Vulgate of the visit of the women to the tomb of Christ, 78 and this episode occupies three of the

77 *The Bannatyne MS*, II, 87-88.
five stanzas in this lyric. The poetry here does not rise to great heights — although the description of the angel is memorable:

This angellis weid wes snawith in cullour,
His face as fyrflacht flawnyt ferly brycht.
The knychtis keparis of Christis sepultour
Fell doun as deid offerit of his licht.

(9-12)

The ending of the poem consists of words of honour to Christ the conqueror. When man had "non uthir bute nor beild" (34) Christ was his "mychte pavis and ... scheild" (36) in the battle with Satan. There are some other effective little details in this stanza. Thus, though the superiority of Christ over Phoebus is by now seen to be commonplace, it is a nice touch for the poet to speak of God's Son revealing Himself above the "dirknes" of Phoebus (37). Again, the significance of the Passion is neatly encapsulated in the paradox: "He deit triumphand" (39). Although this lyric lacks the aureate dignity of O mothir of God, involat virgin Mary, and the force of Done is a battell, it is not such a poor performance as it has been described.79

Yet one hurries to pass over Surrexit dominus in order to come to the final lyric of this chapter of Passion-based poems — Dunbar's great work, Done is a battell on the dragon blak.80 Like his Nativity lyric,

79 Scott, Dunbar, p. 302.
80 The Bannatyne MS, II, 88-89.
Dunbar's Resurrection poem is extremely well known, and everywhere admired. This, too, is a public poem: the tone is triumphant, and the poet's own voice rings out clearly in it. As Rosemary Woolf says, such a poem has little real connection with the mediaeval, meditative tradition: instead it is the great, and flamboyantly assertive, achievement of one individual, William Dunbar.

The whole subject of the lyric is the victory of Christ over the devil, and the force and energy needed for this fight find their expression in the poet's verses. Almost every line of the poem is a sentence in itself, and this results in a concatenation of triumphal declarations. The effect is cumulative, and, by the end of the poem the reader must be convinced of the invincibility of Christ. The reader is overwhelmed by the total rhetorical effect, and by the great dynamic force of the poem. Yet not content simply with this, Dunbar's final stanza intensifies the effect by having similar, brief, balanced sentences in each half line, making great use of the rhetorical devices of isocolon and chiasmus:

The fo is chasit, the battell is done ceis,
The presone brokin, the jevellouris fleit and flemit.

The weir is gon, confermit is the peis,
The fetteris lowsit, and the dungeoun temit.

(33-36)

As the poem comes to a close, the pace seems only to accelerate.

Dunbar's poem, like that other excellent lyric, To the hie potent blisfull Trinitie, deals with the fight between Christ and the devil. Yet whereas the other poem stops with the Passion, Dunbar writes retrospectively, from the point of view of the accomplished Resurrection. Thus, while the one poem is full of wonder that Christ should fight for man, the other celebrates, and glories in, the victory won. The contrast can be used to bring out the character of Dunbar's poem. Compare these lines from To the hie potent blisfull Trinitie:

This wicht, invinsible, and victorius king,
Quhois bright plaitis attoure all Juda schone,
But vanegard, reirgard, scaill, or ony wing,
His velyeand body to battell gaif allone.

(25-28)82

with the following lines from Dunbar's lyric:

Done is a battell on the dragon blak,
Our campioun Chryst confountet hes his force,
The yettis of hell ar brokin with a crak,
The signe triumphall rasit is of the croce.

(1-4)

The first poet merely tells one about the battle. The pictorial detail and military terms are interesting, but they do not really allow the reader to get the 'feel' of the combat: Christ is "invinsible", and we must remain content with the polysyllabic adjective. Dunbar, on the other hand, seems to take one right into the battle with the first (stressed) syllable of his opening line, and one can almost hear the "crak" as the gates of hell are

82 The Bannatyne MS, II, 96.
pierced. The use of alliteration here - done, dragon; battell, blak, brokin; campioun, Chryst, confountet; confountet, force - is brilliantly controlled, and produces a forceful effect in sound which is the perfect match for the subject matter of this lyric.83

Another notable feature of this poem is the way in which Dunbar finds concise expressions for Christ, the devil, and for details pertaining to the Resurrection victory. These are quite traditional, yet they assist greatly in the visualisation of the scene. Dunbar describes the devil as "The crewall serpent with the mortall stang,/The auld kene tegir with his teith on char" (10-11), and the Resurrection is expressed thus: "Sprungin is Aurora radius and bricht,/On loft is gone the glorius Appollo" (21-22). Dunbar's handling of the traditional images used in many other lyrics is distinctive: He passes from one to the other with great rapidity, and does not slow down the tempo of his poem in order to develop the connections between the various phrases. Instead, each line is self-contained, and is merely set down - like the tiles of a mosaic - beside the other. It is for the reader to see how they fit into the overall design. The details in this poem have a hard clarity to them: Dunbar's phrases are precise, and often deal only in concrete terms. There is none of the vagueness here which is occasionally seen in aureate lyrics. Indeed, Done is a battell is not at all

83 Dunbar's skill in alliteration has been well brought out by Tom Scott: Dunbar, pp.301-302, 324.
an aureate poem, and that is part of its triumph. In every way, Dunbar's Resurrection lyric is a companion piece for his Nativity lyric, Rorate celi desuper. The qualities of energy, speed, and compression characterise both poems, and their excellence is best appreciated when set beside the more expansive style of some of the best aureate lyrics - such as The sterne is rissin of our redemptioun, To the hie potent blisfull Trinitie, and O mothir of God, involat virgin Mary.

Just as several of the Nativity lyrics, and also the Passion poem, To the hie potent blisfull Trinitie, were seen to have refrains which could be related to the liturgy, so too with the Resurrection lyrics. Surrexit dominus and Done is a battell have refrains which are some of the most frequently uttered responses for Easter Day. Dunbar's Resurrection lyric would make a perfect celebration of that glorious feast. Tom Scott has even gone so far as to describe this lyric as the finest religious poem in the Scottish language, and this is certainly borne out by an examination of the other poems in the same genre of Middle Scots religious lyrics.

With Done is a battell on the dragon blak we complete the survey of the Middle Scots lyrics on the themes of the Passion. It is with the poems dealing with the

---

84 Sarum Missall, pp.136-144; Breviarium Sarum, I, dcccxxviii, etc.; Breviarium Aberdonense, P.H., Temporale, fol,cxvib, etc.

85 Scott, Dunbar, p.300.
Passion that contact with Middle English lyrics is most to be seen, and this emerges from the number of Passion lyrics and Complaints in Scottish texts which turn out to be merely versions of English originals. In spite of this, the Scottish lyrics show scant sign of influence from these English poems, although both Scottish and English poems may betray the influence of sources — like the Franciscan _Meditationes vitae Christi_ — common to each. Although some Scottish lyrics have connections with the meditative tradition, many can be read as 'public' poems dealing with the Passion and the Resurrection, and that is how we must read such lyrics as To the hie potent _blisfull Trinitie, O mothir of God, involat virgin Mary_, and _Done is a battell on the dragon blak_. These poems, indeed, are most suitably seen in the restricted context of the Scottish Nativity lyrics, rather than in that of the Middle English lyrics.

None of these lyrics has been discovered to have had a musical setting, yet, in the light of what has been said above concerning the rich musical activity of the Scottish Court, it would come as no surprise to learn that any of them — especially the triumphant Nativity and Resurrection lyrics — had been taken as the text of an anthem, which could have been performed at Court for the entertainment of the King, courtiers and foreign ambassadors, in streets or playfields in the course of the performance of dramatic pageants, or in the churches

86 See above, pp.58-103.
of the Friars. There would have been no shortage of opportunities for the performance of such vernacular lyrics.

Finally, as with the lyrics on the Nativity, so too with most of those on the Passion and the Resurrection, the Scottish lyrics seem to be strikingly expressive of the individual authors. They deal in single topics (for the most part), are mainly public in tone, and in this seem to break with the earlier lyric conventions which encased the Annunciation, Nativity and Resurrection within the larger framework of the Joys of Our Lady. In this respect the Middle Scots lyrics can be differentiated from the high-style lyrics of fifteenth-century England, while they may be distinguished from the carols by their high level of rhetorical accomplishment and their lack of burdens. Other more intimate lyrics -- such as Compatience persis and Amang thir freiris -- seem to be characterised by a heightened intensity of emotional fervour, which may result from the general background influence of the Devotio Moderna. For all these reasons, the Middle Scots lyrics emerge as a fairly distinct phenomenon in late-mediaeval poetry in Britain.

Kennedy's Passion Poem.

The largest Middle Scots poem on the Passion87 is, however, not a lyric, and fails to meet the two conditions laid down by Rosemary Woolf. It cannot really be read as

87 Devotional Pieces, pp. 7-63.
a personal meditation, and it has certainly more than one situation. The sheer length of this work - approaching two thousand lines - is another barrier to the consideration of it as a lyric. Nevertheless, it is impossible to overlook this great poem, which resembles the lyrics in most of its various sections, if not in its totality.

The basic organisational device employed by Kennedy in this very long poem is that of linking the stages of the Passion to the Canonical Hours. This is not the only such case in poetry: the only Scottish lyric on the Compassion is described in the Arundel MS as "The houris of our Ladyis dollouris", \(^{88}\) and the lyric, *Compatience persis*, may be a version of the Seven Hours of the Passion. \(^{89}\) As I have suggested above, this practice probably derives from the development of popular devotions in the Prymer -- under the general influence of Marianism. There we find, for example, Hours of the BVM, Hours of the Cross, Hours of the Holy Ghost. \(^{90}\) In one text of the Prymer (CUL MS Dd.11.82) we find that at each Hour of the BVM there are two stanzas of lyric on the subject of the Passion, each mentioning the details appropriate to that Hour. \(^{91}\) But Kennedy goes much further, and spreads his account of

---

88 *Devotional Pieces*, pp.234-236.
the life of Christ through the days of Holy Week, culminating in the Resurrection on Easter Sunday, but also extending to include the Ascension and Pentecost. Naturally, the main part of the poem deals with the Passion of Christ, on the Friday, beginning with the examination of Christ by the council of Jews, and ending with the Burial, at Compline time. This is also the arrangement used in the *Meditationes vitae Christi* and in the *Commentary* of Robertus Richardinus (1530), and is widespread in devotional literature.\(^9^2\) The division of the Passion narrative into Days and Hours is useful in such a long work, and provides convenient resting places for the reader or meditator. But the main purpose was probably to provide the reader with a set of lessons, to be read at the appointed times, and which would be the starting points for meditations on the Passion. Thus the poem consists of a series of episodes, each one of which might have lent itself to treatment as a religious lyric. Kennedy, like William of Touris, is clearly interested in composing a devotional exercise for the reader, and here too it may be possible to discern the influence of the *Devotio Moderna*.

In the account of the Passion in this poem we at places see all the deliberate brutality of effect which was noted in *Amang thir freiris*, and Kennedy, like Dunbar,

uses many of the commonest amplifications to the Gospel narrative found, for example, in the *Meditationes vitae Christi*. Consider the following lines:

Apoun his heid the crowne of thorn thai threw,
With sa gret prais quhill thai his harnis persit:
Fra the harn pane thai all the blude out thrang.
With all thair pith him for to pane thai pressit -
His gret meiknes na thing thair malice cessit.

(603-607)

The insistent alliteration - prais, persit, pane, pith, pane, pressit - emphasises the violence of Christ's persecutors. With justice are the two words, "meiknes" and "malice", balanced, and the malice can be seen in the way that the Crown of Thorns is *thrown* on to Christ's head. We read also of the tearing away of the purple cloth, which ripped open the wounds on Christ's back (680-686), and of the detail of the stretching of His body:

On lenth and breid with scharpe cordis thai tak
That nobill corps quhill thai the banis twyn.
Now all the lethis on his tender bak
Thai sa depart quhill that his ene wox dyme.
Fra heid to fute thai brak baith hid and ryme,
Twynnis his joynouris, and rivis all his banis,
Birssis his breist, and all his bowellis panis.

(764-770)

Critics have complained at the lack of tenderness, or worse, in Dunbar's Passion poem. Yet Kennedy's poem carries the tendency even further - and he has the space to expatiate upon all the horrible details of the Passion, which are emphasised in the meditative tradition.
Like Dunbar, in the refrains to his Passion poem, Kennedy is continually addressing the reader, pointing out that it is for his benefit that Christ underwent such sufferings. The Hours are usually introduced by the formula, "O man", or some variant thereupon. The poet explains that the cruelty of the Jews is caused by allegorical figures: Ire; Feid; Will, Prid; Cupid; and Falset (456-462), and he tells the reader what his reactions should be:

Man, be thou kind, quhom for this pane he dreis,
Sorrow thy hert and all thi bowellis cersis.
And now behald how purelie that he deis.
Lust birnis thy breist, pane all thi partis persis. (463-466)

At other times, Kennedy, in addressing the reader, finds words for the latter to speak:

O man, now luke how deir is thi ransoun,
How he is punist for the, that did na mys.
Thrist in thi hert his bitter passioun,
Murnyng in mynd for thou art caus of this.
Say: "Lord, my syn and thi gret lufe, I wis,
Garis the now ly stentit on the tre.
I did the mis, Lord, have mercy on me". (778-784)

Kennedy here is the preacher, addressing, haranguing or exhorting his reader, and all the time directing the reader's attention to the Passion. Like a good preacher, however, he realises the practical advantages of variety in his discourse. Thus, at the climactic section of the poem - the death of Christ - we find two new departures: a long, lyrical section, in which Kennedy uses the first person singular pronoun; and a dialogue
between the Virgin and the Cross. The latter is very interesting, and would seem not out of place in the religious drama. The Virgin cannot understand the cause of the wickedness of the Cross, which is instrumental in the death of Christ, but is answered by the Cross, which compares itself to the stock holding up the vine, and allowing it to bear fruit (1093-1162).

The lyrical stanzas of lament are - it must be declared - a poetic triumph. Here there is a real impression of the spontaneous overflow of the poet's intense feelings, just after the moment of Christ's death (at the hour of None). Each stanza in this section ends with the word "allace", which thus has the effect of a tolling bell. Although Kennedy speaks apparently in his own voice, all readers are doubtless meant to join with him: here the preacher voices, and shares, the thoughts of his audience. Indeed, the sudden disappearance of the hectoring tone of the preacher at this moment of the poem is principally responsible for the creation of the sense of spontaneity here. The emotional appeal of the Passion is strong:

And fra my hert wald bludy teris spring,
For thy passioun to murne baith day and nycht,
My wofull mynd it wald to confort bring ...
And sall nocht ceis to cry quhill I worth hais,
For my kind kingis ded to say, "Allace",

(1002-4, 6-7)

Kennedy — famous for his flyting with Dunbar$^{94}$ — now resolves to "flite" with death (1009), and in the reproaches which he levels at death he recapitulates the details of the Passion, all the while crying, "Allace". The final stanza of this plangent threnody represents the emotional nadir of the poem:

```
My gle is gone, renewit is my wo,
My spreit is spuitit with malancolie.
Ded I defy, for he may do no mo,
For all confort now hes he tane fra me.
My lufe, my life, he hes slane on the tre,
And I for dule neir deis in this place,
For sueit Jesu is ded fra me, allace.
```

(1058-64)

In these lines the power of the Passion to affect the imagination of the meditating reader is shown, as nowhere else in Middle Scots poetry. The appeal is all the greater since it comes after the many stanzas of brutal details, the tenderness all the more striking, and thus the horrific account of the Passion is perhaps a necessary preliminary to such emotionally-charged lines. When Kennedy's lament does come it has all the more power to reinforce the reader's love of Christ through a meditation on the Passion. In this poem we find precisely what, in the words of Debongnie, could be called: "une piété plus affective, nourrie de liturgie".$^{95}$ Kennedy, like Dunbar in Amang thir

---

$^{94}$ Poems of Dunbar, ed. Mackenzie, pp.5-20.

$^{95}$ See above, p.64.
freiris, has succeeded admirably in providing for his reader words which will help him to a deeper spiritual awareness — perhaps the main objective of the Devotio Moderna.

For reasons of space it is impossible here to do justice to Kennedy's poem. Although it is not a lyric, *Hail, Cristin knycht, hail, etern confortour* can be seen to use many of the methods of the lyrics: in terms of poetic style, narrative technique, and the desired effect upon the reader. Arguably this is the greatest Middle Scots poem on the Passion. Although the form chosen by Kennedy is, by comparison with the lyrics (and also with *Amang thir freiris*), somewhat expansive, he is capable of generating considerable emotional tension at the climax of his story. David Laing, however, was scathing in his comments upon this poem:

"... tedious episodical reflections appropriated to the different Hours ... of the Romish Church service", 96 and, as a piece of criticism, this is only slightly less corrosive than Pinkerton's insolent dismissal of Dunbar's *Amang thir freiris*: "as stupid as need be. Yet it is by Dunbar." 97 Clearly the religious poems of Dunbar and Kennedy received much less than justice at the hands of early editors, and Schipper was the first to give a truer valuation of Kennedy's Passion poem. 98 Like

---

96 Poems of Dunbar, ed. Laing, II, 448.


98 The Poems of Walter Kennedy, ed. J. Schipper (Vienna, 1901), pp.21-25.
Schipper, I would claim that Kennedy can bear comparison with Dunbar - on the basis of their poetical skill, not the lack of it.
Chapter VIII: Lyrics of the Virgin Mary.

(a) Introduction ........................................ p.267

(b) The Arundel-type Marian lyrics ............... p.275

(c) The Asloan-type Marian lyrics: Ballatis of Our Lady .. p.288
Introduction.

In the course of this study one or two poems which could be described as Marian lyrics have already been discussed. These include Henryson's Forcy as deith is likand lufe, and the anonymous lyric, Quhen be dyvyne deliberatoun. These two poems both deal with the Annunciation, a subject which, as has been noted, was usually regarded as the first of the Virgin's Joys. Among the other Joys are the Nativity and the Resurrection, and it is noticeable that two lyrics which pertain respectively to these two topics - We that ar bocht with Chrystis blude, and O mothir of God, involat virgin Mary - give a certain prominence to the figure of Our Lady.¹

In the present chapter, however, I shall confine myself to the critical discussion of the remaining Marian lyrics, the great majority of which do not restrict themselves to single episodes in the life of Christ. (The solitary lyric on the Compassion is, however, an obvious exception here.) There are some thirteen surviving Scottish Marian lyrics, if one excludes those on the Annunciation, Nativity and Resurrection just mentioned, and, as we shall see, they divide into two main subgroups: (a) short, devotional poems, or translations of prayers to Mary; and (b) longer, highly ornate panegyrics. Though this division into two kinds of Marian lyric requires further comment, one may for practical purposes take it

¹ For individual discussion of these poems, see above, pp. 117-260, 247-249.
as applying to the contents of the Arundel and Asloan MSS respectively. It was to the lyrics of the second group that the scribe, John Asloan, gave the descriptive heading, "ballatis of our ladye". 2

Poems to the Virgin Mary comprise the largest single group of Middle English religious lyrics. This is reflected in the numbers of the poems in Carleton Brown's Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century, in which the 'Songs and Prayers to the Blessed Virgin', together with the Marian lyrics of the Annunciation and the Nativity, account for half the total (after leaving out the poems purely on moral themes). Greene's collection, The Early English Carols, shows that this preponderance also holds true for the more popular kind of religious lyric. The large numbers of Marian lyrics are, of course, related to the prevalent Marianism of the late Middle Ages. When set against this large corpus of poetry, the thirteen Scottish Marian lyrics can only seem a meagre group. Although such an observation on the paucity of the Scottish religious lyrics when compared with the English could apply to every topic with which the religious lyrics deal, we shall see, in the course of this chapter, that in mid sixteenth-century Scotland certain very definite factors militated against the survival of the Marian lyrics.

In the case of the Marian lyrics, significantly, we must abandon the Bannatyne MS as the basis of approach.

2 The Asloan MS, II, 270.
The only lyric in that manuscript which is clearly advertised as being Marian in character is the quite exceptional case of the Magnificat: *With lawd and prayis my saule hes magnifeid.* 3 Bannatyne gives this poem the title of, "The song of the virgin mary", but fails to mention that it is, in fact, one section from Lydgate's *Life of Our Lady.* 4 Any other Marian poems in the Bannatyne MS are carefully camouflaged, as has been noted in an earlier chapter. The title of the lyric, *Quhen be dyvyne deliberatioun*, makes no mention of the Annunciation (with all the Marian overtones of that term), but instead baldly announces "the conception of Chryst". And the partly Marian poem, *We that ar bocht with Chrystis blude*, appears under the unequivocally christological heading of "ballatis of the nativitie of Chryste." 5 Consequently, there appears at first sight to be no Marian poetry at all in the Bannatyne MS (if we do not count the Magnificat in this context), and although closer inspection reveals one or two Marian lyrics, these have all been reclassified in such a way as to mask their true nature.

It is therefore clear that, inasmuch as the Bannatyne MS sets out to be an anthology of the best Middle Scots lyrics, it is grossly unrepresentative in the matter of the Marian lyrics. There has been a

---

3 The Bannatyne MS, II, 60-63.
5 The Bannatyne MS, I, 8; II, 63.
deliberate suppression. Baririatyne, of course, may well have deliberately ignored the Marian carols (which we can presume to have existed in some numbers in mediaeval Scotland) for the same reasons that seem to have led him - as I have suggested earlier - to ignore the Nativity carols: these are, (a) his manuscript was to be a collection of 'art poetry', and not popular verse; and (b) the carols, as has already been pointed out, seem by the mid sixteenth century to have become a somewhat disreputable form of poetry. However, the omission of Marian lyrics such as those by Kennedy and Dunbar can only be satisfactorily explained on doctrinal, as opposed to aesthetic or moral, grounds. In the Marian lyrics, therefore, more than in any other group of Middle Scots religious poems, we see the destructive results of the Reformation. One looks in vain for Marian lyrics in the Maitland Folio or Quarto MSS, and even Alexander Montgomerie, a Catholic poet writing in the later sixteenth century, seems to have left no Marian lyrics.

What was the attitude of the Reformers in Scotland to the Virgin Mary? One early indication can be seen in John Gau's Richt Vay to the Kingdom of Hevine (translated from the Danish of Christiern Pedersen, an early sixteenth-century Reformer, living in Malmø):

6 The lyric, O farest lady, O swetast lady, is however, a carol, and was probably not the only one: The Maksuloch MS, p.9. See below, pp.286-287.
7 See above, pp.132-133.
Quhen ane man seis the sone or the mune or the sternis or ony oder plesand creature, thane thay giff occasione to love and thank God quhilk maid thayme, and to say, "Blissit be Thow, almichtine God, of al thy angels and sanctis and of al thy creaturs quhilk Thow hes maid in hevine and yeird." Sua suld we du and say of the virgine Maria, "O almichtine and marciful God, blissit be Thow, quhilk maid that plesand creatur the virgine Maria, and gaiff hir sa greit grace and honour to be the Moder of thy weilbelovit Sone, our salviour. Giff usz al grace that we may thank the thairfor without ony end." We suld sua think in our hart of hir in our prayer, that we put notht our hop in hir bot in Jesu Christ, our lord and salviour, and mediatur betuix usz and the Fader. 

In the light of such a passage, and bearing in mind the Biblical theology of the Reformers, it is easy to see why the Magnificat, taken from St. Luke's Gospel, continued to be a popular subject in the poetry of the Protestants. This passage from Gau also allows one to understand why not a few allusions to the Virgin Mary are allowed to stand in other, non-religious lyrics in the Bannatyne MS. Thus in a "ballat of lufe", Devyce, proues and eik humilitie, there is a stanza on the Virgin as the ideal woman, the antithesis of the ladies known to the poet.

The praise of Mary in such poems does not raise any controversial points of doctrine.


9 The Bannatyne MS, IV, 34-35. This poem also appears in MS Arch Selden B.24, fols, 119b, 120, and in Beattie, Chepman and Myllar Prints, pp.145-146.
On a later page I offer a consideration of Bannatyne's treatment of Marian references, where these would have offended post-Reformation sensibilities. Although Bannatyne does make local changes in the course of the texts which he copies, we shall see that (with this understood) his manuscript is far from a totally unreliable witness to the Catholic originals.10 If Bannatyne changed some things, Maitland changed (or deleted) more, and we shall have to admire the adroit way in which Bannatyne juggles his new, largely christological, headings for the purpose of preserving so much good poetry of the past.

These are two special poetic cases which it is appropriate to mention here. The first is the Magnificat, already remarked. There is no shortage of verse translations of this Biblical passage in the early sixteenth century, and one finds them - for example - in Coverdale's *Goostly Psalmes and Spiritual Songs*, in John Hall's *Court of Virtue*, and in the Gude and Godlie Ballatis.11 All these versions appear in emphatically Protestant collections, and all may have been accessible to Bannatyne. Yet Bannatyne's preference was for a version by Lydgate, from the *Life of Our Lady*. This suggests that his poetic predilections were for the older, mediaeval poetry in the

10 See below, pp.385-378.
high style, rather than for a more up-to-date version in a plainer kind of verse. The second example is that of the Marian stanzas in the Duke of the Howlat. One would have expected these three stanzas to have been excised, if Bannatyne had intended to subject the poems in his manuscript to a thorough, self-imposed censorship. In this case one presumes that Bannatyne felt that his first obligation was to preserve Holland's poem in its integrity, despite the Marian content of these stanzas. With both the Lydgate Magnificat and the Marian stanzas of the Howlat, therefore, one can say that Bannatyne's priorities were manifestly literary, rather than religious.

Such a conclusion enhances his value as an anthologist of poetry. And although we cannot use the Bannatyne MS as the basis for an investigation of the Marian lyrics, we can nonetheless claim that, even in its omissions and alterations, it is a significant document in the present context. From it quite a lot may be deduced, regarding the fate of Marian poetry in post-Reformation Scotland.

For the Scottish Marian lyrics one must have recourse to the pre-Reformation texts. Chief among these are the Arundel, Makculloch and Asloan MSS, and there are also two Marian lyrics in MS Arch Selden B.24 (in the Bodleian Library), of which one is a text of a lyric by Hoccleve - Moder of God, and virgin undefould - which is also to be found in Johannes de Irlandia's Meroure of Wysdome.


13 Irlandia, Meroure of Wysdome, I, 166-170.
After all that has been said in previous chapters about English poems in Scottish manuscripts, it is interesting to note that an English priest and poet, William Forrest, made a copy of, and added to, a lyric which appears in both the Asloan and the Makculloch MSS: *Ros Mary, most of vertewe virginalie.* 14 Forrest (fl.1530-81) was a Cistercian monk of the Abbey of Thane in Oxfordshire at the time of the Dissolution (1540). He later became a chaplain to Queen Mary Tudor, and was the author of various poems in support of Catholic doctrine. 15 The date of the Forrest MS, according to MacCracken, is "not earlier than 1581", and this is important in indicating that, after the English Reformation, there was a taste for mediaeval Scottish lyrics in some recusant circles, at least.

In the present chapter it is the Asloan which, perforce, usurps the wonted place of the Bannatyne MS in providing the general heading which is required for the Marian lyrics: they are "ballatis of our ladye". As we shall see below, Asloan, like Bannatyne, opts for lyrics which have a high literary merit, and his title is best suited to poems of a rather elaborate kind. To lyrics such as those in the Arundel MS, some of which are merely translations of Latin prayers, the title, "ballatis of our ladye", is not really appropriate, and for practical purposes it is easier to consider the


Marian lyrics as falling into two groups, of 'Arundel-type lyrics', and 'Asloan-type lyrics', respectively.

The Arundel-type Marian lyrics.

This group of lyrics is best seen in contradistinction to Asloan's "ballatis of our ladye". Most of the poems in this section are fairly short; most are written in short lines of six or eight syllables; some are translations of Latin prayers. Generally speaking, the importance of these poems is to be seen in their devotional content, rather than in the excellence of their expression (although this is not an absolute rule). As in the case with the Passion lyrics, it is to the Arundel MS that we are mainly indebted for this kind of religious lyric.

I begin this chapter of Marian poems with the only Scottish lyric exclusively on the subject of the Compassion of Our Lady.16 This poem, as its title - "the houris of oure Ladyis dollouris" - indicates, is divided into stanzas which follow the pattern of the Hours of the Church, somewhat in the manner of Kennedy's Passion poem.17 Rosemary Woolf points out that it is the only poem on the Compassion, in either Scotland or England, to be so organised.18 The poem is, of course, based on the Hours of the BVM, which were familiar from the Prymers. We have already noted that an Office

16 Devotional Pieces, pp.234-236.
17 Devotional Pieces, pp.7-63.
18 Woolf, English Religious Lyric, p.269.
of the Compassion of the BVM was printed at Edinburgh c.1520 by John Story.\(^{19}\) This liturgical text, and the existence of these two lyrics organised on the Hours, is another indication of the Marianism of the times. The poem, Quhat dollour persit our Ladyis hert, is to be found as part of the "exercicioun" for Saturday, in a long meditation on the Passion, which, like the Meditationes vitæ Christi and other works in that tradition, follows an arrangement in terms of the days of the week. The overall point of the poem is the meditator's desire to be admitted into heaven, as we learn from the prayer which concludes the lyric:

\[\text{0 Mary, moder of marcy and of grace,} \]
\[\text{Thir houris to thi honour I refer,} \]
\[\text{To be my advocat in every cais,} \]
\[\text{And stand with me at the bar.} \]
\[\text{Grant me of thi Sonne to have compassioun,} \]
\[\text{And ay be ane servand to the,} \]
\[\text{And for my synnis do satisfactioun,} \]
\[\text{Syne be tane to the blis of hevin finalie.} \]

\((29-36)\)

Here the meditator himself desires to experience a compassion. For him, therefore, the figure of Our Lady is a convenient way of focusing his reactions to the spectacle of Christ's sacrifice. For him the Passion is the important thing, and in the introduction we find this declaration: "devoit remembrance of the passion is better than our Lady and all the sanctis prayit for him."\(^{20}\)

\(^{19}\) See above, pp.213-214.

\(^{20}\) Devotional Pieces, p.213.
The meditator wishes, through an effort of the imagination and the emotions, to bring himself as close to being an involved spectator of the Passion as the Virgin Mary was in the historical event. For him, the sufferings of Mary may be used to suggest the emotional reactions which he too should strive to experience. The poem begins with the piercing of Mary's heart (a reference to the prophecy of Simeon), and we then hear that she followed Christ to Pilate's house "With sobing, sighing, lik to fall in swone" (6). Such lines do little to generate any poetic tension, however, and much more affecting is the stanza for Compline (25-28):

Our Lady saw thame to graif his body beir,
And clois him thairin with a gret stane.
To keip him the Jowis put men of weir,
And the faith of Crist remanit in our Lady allane.

The effect of this juxtaposition is to link suggestively the faith of Christ in Mary's heart with the body of Christ in the tomb. The "gret stane" which closes the tomb could thus be seen as a symbol for the Compassion, which guards Mary's faith. Although I would agree with Rosemary Woolf in describing the lyric as "mediocre", this detail of the burial of Christ is one of the more successful and moving incidents in the poem. There are, however, very few of these, and in this poem there is none of the fervency of love which we see - for example -

21 English Religious Lyric, p. 269.
in the hymn, **Stabat mater dolorosa**, rendered thus in the Arundel MS:

O thou mothir, the well of lufe, gar me I feill nocht the strenth of thi dollour and that I murne with the. And gar my hert birn in luffing of Jesu Crist, sa that I pleis him. O haly mothir, fessin the woundis of Crist, and dewid in me the panis of thy Sone woundit, and desdeny to tholl passioun for me. 

At least two of the Arundel poems are straight translations of Latin works. **Haill, Mary, quhais concepcioun** is a close version of the hymn, **Ave cuius conceptio**. This poem consists of five quatrains on the Joys of the Virgin, each beginning with the word, "Haill", and it ends with a short prayer to Mary, in which she is asked to pray for man. In this it differs from the original Latin hymn, which ends with a **Gloria**, mentioning the Trinity and the Virgin Mary. Another small difference is that lines 9-10 and 13-14 of the Latin are in the reverse order in the translation. Apart from these minor changes, however, the poet only rarely departs from the Latin text. The phrase, "Ave praelata omnibus" (17) becomes "Haill, lady of all vertuis full", and in one or two other places some unimportant 'fillers' are inserted to eke out the metre. However, even with such expletives, the poet fails to maintain a regular number

---


23 **Devotional Pieces**, p. 286.

of syllables per line in each stanza, and it is interesting that, as Bennett notes, the poem is written out as prose in the manuscript. The poem speaks of the glee with which mankind is filled, as a result of the life of Mary; it is unlikely that much glee will be generated by the poetic artistry of this translation.

I pray yow, lady, Mary deir is a translation - and to some extent an amplification - of the prose prayer, Obsecro te, domina sancta Maria. In this case the versifier is not under such a narrow obligation to follow the structure of the original. The prayer, however, falls into three sections. First there is the eulogy of the Virgin, then an account of the Passion and Compassion, and finally a series of petitions addressed to the Holy Ghost and to Mary. If we compare the Scottish version with the Latin, we notice at once that the middle section is greatly expanded.

As a translation, this poem sticks fairly closely on the whole to the Latin. On occasion small details are added: thus Gabriel comes "fra hevinnis tour" (18), and the purpose of the Incarnation is "Our barrat for to but and beat" (26) - a phrase which recalls Henryson's "Luf us fra barret betis". Sometimes the insertions are longer, and, after the first occurrence of the fons motif, we find these words, for which the Latin affords no warrant:

25 Devotional Pieces, pp. xx-xxi.
27 From the Annunciation poem in the Gray MS: The Makculloch MS, pp. 43-45.
Lampe of licht, lanterne of blis,
Sterne of the sey, wilsun to wis,
Well of perdoun and of gudnes.  (13-15)

These phrases, however, are absolutely traditional and do not really add much to the poem. In diction also the poem follows the original. The examples of anaphora (21-23, 93-96) are merely convenient ways of dealing with the equivalent catalogues in the Latin. More interesting is the rendering of "mater orphanorum, consolatio desolatorum" as "Mothir till all fathirles, / Confort till all helples" (5-6) - a simple, but not inelegant rhetorical formula. At other times the translation is more interesting, as when "per illud divinum mysterium" becomes the compressed phrase, "Throw that gaistlie Goddis deid" (21)

The original contribution of the Scottish poem is seen in the accounts of the Passion and of the Virgin's care for the infant Jesus. The reference to the spilling of Christ's blood becomes much more pictorial:

The stremes of his blissit blude
That rynand come doun on the rude.  (51-52)

and the Virgin's role becomes slightly sentimentalised:

And for the mylk sa precius
Qhair-with thou fed thi Sone, Jesus;
Thy travell and thy besynes,
Thow did till him in tendernes;
Thy kissing and thi clapping sueit,
Thy rokking him quhen he couth gret.  (59-64)

There is no basis in the Latin prayer for any of this, and one suspects here the general influence of such works as the Meditationes vitae Christi, which add a
a wealth of detail to the Gospel accounts. The intentions of the poet are clear - to increase the emphasis on the role of Mary, to dwell on the legendary details which add pathos to the story of the life of Christ, and to raise the level of emotional fervency.

(Incidentally, in the Scottish version it is no longer the Holy Ghost but Mary, who is to grant an honest life to the poet.) All these features are characteristic of late mediaeval religious verse, and this poem squares with the general trend. The poetic merit of this piece, however, is not great.

The very next poem in the Arundel MS - Haill, glaid and glorius - is remarkable for two quite contradictory reasons. While on the one hand, in its accumulation of epithets for the Virgin, it seems to look forward to the methods of some of the Asloan lyrics, yet, on the other, the confusion in its stanzas and versification makes it a poetic failure.

Bennett is unable to point to any Latin source for this lyric, although he does emphasise the utterly conventional nature of its phrases. This, one suspects, may be a case where a Latin model might have benefited the poem. Haill, Mary, quhais concepcioun has at least a clear structure, and I pray yow, lady.  Mary deir is kept within certain bounds. Haill, glaid and glorius knows no bounds, and is quite without

28 Devotional Pieces, pp. 294-298.
29 Especially those by Holland and Dunbar: The Asloan MS, II, 117-118, 275-278.
30 Devotional Pieces, p. xxii.
structure. The versifier does not even maintain a regular stanza pattern, and it is difficult to see how the irregularity here can be considered as an ornament. The poem consists of a long string of eulogistic expressions for Mary, which are interspersed here and there with petitions for her intercession at the moment of death. Lists of epithets are not in themselves to be condemned - we shall see several fine examples of lyrics so composed in the Asloan MS. But they must be used with care, marshalled in a meaningful fashion, and disciplined by the structure of the poem, if they are to be effective. In these respects, Haill, glaid and glorius is altogether defective. The vocabulary of the poem is decidedly more aureate than in any of the other Arundel Marian lyrics, but the poet does not seem to have quite mastered the art of this kind of panegyric: "Specull of pulcritude" (97), for example, is merely a dressed-up version of a phrase which has occurred earlier (34). Haill, glaid and glorius is, finally, a rather interesting failure. The author, clearly, is thoroughly versed in the traditional expressions for Our Lady, but unfortunately lacks the artistic control over content and structure necessary when the poem is not following an existing model.

There is one, short, Marian lyric31 in the Arundel MS, which, on account of its outstanding excellence, is worth quoting in full:

31 Devotional Pieces, p. 298.
Haill, quene of hevin and sterne of blis,
Sen that thi sone thi fader is,
How suld he ony thing the warn,
And thou his mothir, and he thi barne?

Haill, fresche fontane that springis new,
The rute and crope of all vertu,
Thou polist gem without offence,
Thou bair the lambe of innocence.

This poem is an excellent illustration of how a beautiful and compelling lyric can be created out of material which is absolutely traditional. There is no originality of thought in this poem, but here the control over expression - and in particular the handling of the images - is brilliantly successful.

In the first stanza, everything depends upon the family relationships between Mary and Christ. Since He is both Son and Father, there is nothing which He (as God) could reproach ("warn") her with, since He (as Son) would not dream of reproaching His mother. This is not just an ingenious play on the apparent paradoxes of the ambivalent relationship between Christ and Mary, but rather an attempt to appeal to the tender feelings in order to stimulate the reader's emotions of love. Yet the poet's purpose, while strongly felt, is not crudely obvious. With a delicate touch he rests the appeal upon a rhetorical question, preferring a suggestion to an outright declaration.

The second stanza again takes up the topic of the Mother-Son relationship, with four images for the birth of Christ. These images stress first purity: most obviously in the "fontane" and the "polist gem", but
also in the two images from nature: the growth of the crops, and the "lambe of innocence", (both of which are free of sin). The fountain which always flows, even as it washes clean, suggests also the continuity and fecundity of the love of the Virgin, and these notions also emerge from the description of Mary as both "rute and crope" - the origin and the perfected result of this miraculous love. In this connection we may perhaps recall some of Henryson's images: "The miraclis ar mekle and meit,/Fra luffis ryver rynnis". Mary is like a jewel, which has been polished to brilliance, but - unlike precious stones - she never had any gross matter to be purged away: she was always pure, like the "sterne of blis" in the opening line. This is an extremely concise and effective way of suggesting the idea of the Immaculate Conception, and it leads naturally into the Virgin Birth of Christ, in the final line. This, too, was "without offence", since Mary remained a virgin even in the moment of parturition, and experienced no pain at the birth of Christ. And if Mary is both root and crop, then she must be the innocence itself which gives birth to the "lambe of innocence", Christ. In this way, we see how the poet's use of images in the bold exploration of paradox is not mechanical but poetically suggestive, and the lyric weaves a tight texture of connected images.

32 From the Annunciation lyric in the Gray MS: The Makculloch MS, pp. 43-45.
Arguably this is the most beautiful of all the Middle Scots religious lyrics. It is a "single well-turned thought", and is perfectly expressed. The art of this poem is a subtle one that depends on delicate touches, yet the lyric, as I have tried to indicate, has real power, in a truly poetic sense. It also displays a careful artistic control, and in these eight lines there is nothing that is out of place, or overprominent. The author of this lyric knew, as clearly the author of Haill, glaid and glorius did not, how to select from the infinite set of honorific phrases for Our Lady, and how to arrange these phrases in such a way as to make a deep appeal to the imagination and emotions of the reader. It is difficult to praise such a lyric too highly.

In this section of the chapter one might mention two short Marian poems from the Makculloch MS (a third Marian lyric therein, Ros Mary, most of vertewe virginate, will be discussed with the Asloan lyrics). The first of these poems, Hail, Mare, Goddis moder ful of grace, merits little comment. It consists merely of five lines, and is a version of the Angelic Salutation, with only a few additional words to eke out the metre.

33 Woolf, English Religious Lyric, p. 291.
34 See below, pp. 245-248.
35 The Makculloch MS, p. 18.
More interesting is the poem, O fairest lady, O sweetest lady. The form of this lyric, as Carleton Brown realised, is that of a carol, in which the first line of the text in the Makculloch MS is the refrain. In each stanza the poet asks Mary for her help in saving his soul "fra hel sa fel" (5), and his method is to contrast the purity and love of the Virgin with the evil of the world in which the poet lives. Thus the focus of attention is continually alternating between the heavenly and the earthly, between Mary and the poet, between ideal virtue and all too real sinfulness. An interesting feature of the poem is the way in which the epithets for Mary, which introduce each stanza, seem to link with each other in a chain of imagery. Mary is first the "sterne so brycht", then the "ruby red", then the "wel of grace", and lastly, "lady myne". The brightness of the star leads naturally into that of the precious gem, which also sparkles with a beautiful light, shining "throw thire clowdis dirk" (4). But the redness of the ruby connects with the colour of Christ's blood, and this is emphasised in the third stanza, in which Mary - like Christ- is a "wel of grace". In the final stanza one can detect a certain influence from secular love lyrics. The poet says to Mary, "Now, lady myne, thi ere inclyne/To me thi servitour" (19-20). This request sounds rather

36 The Makculloch MS, p. 9.
like that of the lover to his mistress, and he would also ask for "grace" from his lady. For the poet, heaven, where Mary is, becomes the "place quhare grace ay growis grene" (23), and one remembers that green, in mediaeval literature, is the colour of courtly love. The connection with the language of love poetry is not surprising, however, and is a common feature of fifteenth-century lyrics to the Virgin. Compare these lines from an English lyric:

I have nowe sett myne herte so hye,
My luff alone is one oone lente
The whiche is fayre, fecunde and fre,
The myldeste may that ever was mente.38

Many other examples could be given from English poetry. Thus the lyric, O farest lady, O swetast lady, is doubly interesting in the present context: not only, once its form is recognised, does it prove the existence of Scottish carols to the Virgin (one presumes that it was not a unique specimen of the genre), but it also highlights one of the salient features of mediaeval Marian lyrics - the overlapping, in terms of diction, between these religious lyrics and the poetry of secular love.39

In its own right, moreover, it is an attractive lyric, and the abundance of internal rhyme, together with the recurring rhymes on the long syllable, '-ene', give the lyric a pleasant sounding quality.

---

39 Woolf, English Religious Lyric, p. 274.
Similarities of form and style link many of the Marian lyrics mentioned in this first section. They tend to be written in short lines (not in the more decorative octosyllabic or decasyllabic ballat measure); three bear Latin titles, and at least two are direct translations; most belong in the tradition of the meditative lyric; all are anonymous. If one contrasts the 'Arundel-type' poems with the more elaborate Marian lyrics of Asloan, one can immediately appreciate the greater simplicity of the former. They belong, truly, with the anonymous religious lyrics of which Carleton Brown's anthology gives a fair sample. Not many Scottish lyrics of this type have survived, however, and we are greatly indebted to the compiler of the Arundel MS for preserving these Marian lyrics, and to the happy fortune which kept this manuscript from destruction at the hands of the Protestants. Lyrics such as Haill, quene of hevin and sterne of blis and 0 fairest lady, 0 swetast lady, moreover, are reminders that the successes of the Middle Scots religious lyrics were not exclusively in the more aureate and elaborate idiom.

The Asloan-type Marian lyrics: Ballatis of Our Lady.

The significance of Asloan's title has already been mentioned. When one looks at the lyrics to which Asloan applied the title of "ballatis of our ladye" one sees that they are poems which George Bannatyne also might

40 See above, p.268.
well have included in his collection of ballatis, had the religious circumstances of the time been favourable. All of these lyrics are decidedly literary creations, written in deliberately ornate styles. Such works ask to be judged as poetry first and foremost. Their value does not so much inhere in their ability to draw the reader into a meditation on Our Lady, as in the excellence with which they express the devotion of specific poets to the Virgin Mary. It is no accident that, while we know the names of the authors of not a single one of the Marian lyrics already discussed in this chapter, we know the authorship of five of the seven lyrics to be mentioned in this section. Rosemary Woolf has noted that the English Marian lyrics of the fifteenth century begin to indulge in personal displays of reverence, and she suggests that this may be an indication of a decline in mediaeval devotion. It would certainly seem to mark a decline in the tradition of the anonymous mediaeval lyric.\textsuperscript{41}

The formative influence upon this group of Marian lyrics was undoubtedly that of the high-style poetry of Lydgate and his successors. I have already pointed out that Bannatyne opted for Lydgate's version of the Magnificat—a topic which was \textit{de rigueur} in any collection of religious lyrics. This version—\textit{With lawd and prayis my saule hes magnifeid}—comes from an extremely long and prolix work, the \textit{Life of Our Lady},

\textsuperscript{41} Woolf, \textit{The English Religious Lyric}, p.281.
of which this Magnificat constitutes one chapter.\textsuperscript{42}

In every way, the Lydgate Magnificat is characteristic of the parent work. Between each stanza Bannatyne inserts the relevant few Latin words, and "quia fecit mihi magna" is rendered thus:

\begin{quote}
For he to me hes done thingis grit,
Of he renoun and passing excellence.
His grace so fully to me dois fleit,
For hie is mighty, off maist magnificence.
His name is holy and maist of reverence,
Than for to leif it sail I nevir astart,
To trust in him with my hoill mynd and hairt.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{(24-30)}

Lydgate's skill in the device of amplificatio is, as ever, prodigious. Yet although one might with justice apply Henry James's famous phrase - "loose, baggy monsters" - to the stanzas of the fifteenth-century poet, one must concede to Lydgate a certain relaxed dignity of expression. The basic idea behind such a poem seems to be this, that the praise of Mary is increased in proportion as the use of rhetoric becomes conspicuous and the style is heightened.\textsuperscript{43}

The fruits of Lydgate's example can be seen in the lyric by Hoccleve, with which Johannes de Irlandia chose to conclude the second book of the Meroure of Wysdome.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{42} The Bannatyne MS, II, 60-63; Lydgate, The Book of the Lyf of Our Lady, Chapter XXII.

\textsuperscript{43} Woolf, English Religious Lyric, p.281. It is noticeable that, while Lydgate's poem is written in eight-line stanzas, the Bannatyne text occasionally abbreviates them to seven lines.

\textsuperscript{44} Meroure of Wysdome, I, 166-170.
(Irlandia, however, gives it the title of "Oracio Galfridi Chawcer"). This consists of twenty stanzas in aureate diction, directed first to Mary alone, and then also to St. John. Hoccleve heaps praise upon Mary by emphasising her role in the scheme of salvation, and at the same time - like all the other writers of Marian lyrics - he asks the Virgin to intercede for him when he comes to be judged, after death. Not much, perhaps, requires to be said here about this English lyric. In terms of diction, we see that Hoccleve also chooses the high style. He is much given to polysyllables, and his verse is liberally scattered with line-fillers. The following lines may be taken as an instance:

Paradice yettis all opin bene throu the,
And brokin bene the vettis ek of hell.
By the the waurld restorit is perdee,
Of all vertu thou art the spring and well.

(22-25)

As a result, the lyric, aureate and diffuse, is hardly memorable. One presumes, however, that Irlandia, in inserting this poem in his treatise, thought highly of it - although such an opinion might have been influenced by the belief that the poem came from the hand of Chaucer. Such poems by Lydgate and Hoccleve are thus the poetical context in which the Scottish high-style Marian lyrics should be seen.

The first of these lyrics stands apart from the others in the Asloan MS, and appears between Dunbar's

45 The Asloan MS, II, 245-246.
Passion lyric, and the "Maying and Disport of Chauceir" (in fact, Lydgate's Complaint of the Black Knight). The Asloan text has, however, suffered the loss of the final stanza, and I quote from the complete text of 0 hie emperice and quene celestiall printed by Carleton Brown from the Selden MS, in which this lyric is likewise attributed to Chaucer.\footnote{Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century, pp.26-28. MS Arch. Selden B.24, fols. 137b-138. (EUL Mic. M.44).}

\textit{0 hie emperice} is a high-style ballat, in the customary, eight-line stanza. Several small poetic details, however, differentiate this poem from, say, Ros Mary, most of vertewe virg\'inale and Closter of Crist, riche recent flour delys. The rhyme scheme of 0 hie emperice is in the less usual ababbaba form, and this Marian lyric has no lines of Latin - not even in the last line of each stanza, where most expected. Furthermore, this poem is the only one in which Mary is addressed in the plural pronoun (except for one instance in the third line). The reason for this is perhaps the complete freedom of the poem from the Latin sources: the other Marian lyrics, which quote or refer to the words of Gabriel to the Virgin, cannot fail to be influenced by the second person singular pronoun of the Latin. Again, one notices the uncommon enjambement in the penultimate stanza - "Knawing your pure and incorrupt entent/Incomparable" (38-39) - and the way in which the sense is run on from this stanza to the
final one, in a long adverbial clause. These last two features especially are not at all typical of Marian lyrics, which tend to rely rather more on neatly handled short phrases than on long and involved sentences that spill over the natural boundaries of line and stanza.

Another interesting aspect of this lyric is the emphasis on the poet's own predicament. At least a dozen times in forty-eight lines he refers directly to himself, and there are other places where he includes himself in the more general plural pronoun. The reason for this is clear: the poet is making a confession of his sins to the one person whom he can directly address, and the lyric establishes a pattern of honorific praise and penitential prayer:

0 blissit ros, 0 gemme of chastitee,
0 well of beautee, rute of all gudeneace,
0 way of bliss, flour of virginitee,
0 hede of treuth, 0 sterr without dirknace.
Graunt me, synfull, lyving in unclennace,
To sew the path of parfyte cheritee,
And to forsake my synnis more and less,
Ay serving him that sched his blud for me.
(9-16)

The contrast of rhetorical styles between the two halves of this stanza could scarcely be more decisive, and the plain diction of the last four lines throws the formulaic expressions for Mary into bold relief. There is one kind of poetry for saluting and praising Our Lady, and another for the sinner's humble prayer.
Perhaps it is also in the light of this that one should regard the use of the more respectful "yow" pronoun for Mary: as the poet is abased, so Mary is exalted, and the poet hopes that his contrition will be met by her mercy.

A few more details of the poem deserve to be mentioned. The author knows how to construct a decorative simile:

For rycht as Phebus with his bemy's brycht
Illuminate all this erd in longitude,
Rycht so your grace, your beautee and your mycht
Anournyt all this wold in latitude.

(25-28)

The related geographical terms used by the poet here reinforce the links between the two parts of the simile, and thus the poet emphasises the idea that the glory of Mary has shone on the whole world. The same image of the sun appears in the final stanza: The Holy Ghost has "yow illumynit with that blisful lycht, I mene the Sone of the hie Deitee" (41-42). The basic idea is, of course, absolutely conventional, but the pun is expressed in an unusually neat way.

This lyric seems to me to be distinctly successful. The poet has several rhetorical styles at his command, and makes them work in harmony with each other. Formulaic praise is balanced by the personal prayers of the poet. Since few of the elaborate "ballatis of our Ladye" depend so much upon the personal words of the poet, this makes for a certain impression of intimacy within this
lyric. Here the author - and the reader who utters the same words silently to himself, or the listener who hears the words read by another - seems to be in close contact with Our Lady, trying to engage her interest in his individual predicament. At the same time the diction remains respectful, even a trifle solemn. The lyric is a triumph of restraint.

Another of Asloan's "ballatis of our ladye" - Ros Mary, most of vertewe virginale - presents peculiar textual problems. Asloan has one stanza more than Makculloch, but the Forrest MS leaves out two of those in Asloan, adds four new ones (while completely rearranging the order of the stanzas), and the scribe follows the poem with ten more stanzas of his own.47 The textual history of this poem is confused. It is possible that the four extra stanzas in the Forrest MS could be Scottish in origin, although, like the rest of the poem in that text, they are written in English. Forrest himself attributes his eight stanzas to "A devoute Scotte". The absence of four stanzas from either of the Scottish MSS is, however, suspicious, and Mackenzie compromises by printing them in italics.48 The lateness of the Forrest text, and the fact that it was copied in England, far from the mainstream of Scottish poetry, make one reluctant to accept that manuscript as the basis of a

47 The Asloan MS, II, 271-272; The Makculloch MS, pp. 24-25; MacCracken, MLN, XXIV (1909), 110-111.
text of this poem, and I shall quote here from the Asloán version. Like several other poems, Ros Mary has been traditionally attributed to Dunbar. There is no real foundation for this, however, and more recent writers have rejected the theory. Yet in the process these critics have, in my opinion, severely underestimated this lyric. In order to repudiate the ascription to Dunbar, they have made the poem out to be an unspeakable failure. That is not the case - at least if we confine our attention to the Makculloch and Asloán versions.

The poem is certainly not shapeless. After two stanzas of praise for Mary, in her own right, there are two stanzas praising her for bearing the Saviour who battled with the devil for mankind, and the fifth stanza asks Mary to intercede for man with Christ, for the sake of the wounds He received at the Crucifixion. The structure is straightforward and natural. Asloán adds to this a further stanza in a more formulaic style, and this, if it belongs with the previous five stanzas, is not inappropriate as a virtuoso coda to the lyric. The refrain throughout is a Latin salutation to Mary - "O mater Jhesu, salve Maria" - and Asloán's final stanza, which ends with the words of Gabriel, fits in well with the rest of the poem.

The pace of this lyric is, however, somewhat leisurely,

49 Baxter, William Dunbar, p.227; Scott, Dunbar, pp.304-305.

50 Tom Scott calls it "corrupt and inferior" and lacking in "mere poetic competence": Dunbar, p.305.
and the poet is prepared to spread himself to develop his idea:

O sterne that blyndis Phebus bemes bricht,
With cours abone the hevinnis circulyne,
Abone the speir of Saturn hie on hicht,
Surmonting all the angell ordouris nyne. (9-12)

This, too, is a commonplace of religious lyrics, but Ros Mary is the only lyric to use the neat image of 'blinding' to show the eclipsing of Phoebus, the lesser sun. There is a tendency to include pictorially imagined details:

Mary, the Empress of heaven, is a lamp shining before the throne of God (13). We hear, also, about the hosannahs of the angels, together with the musical instruments which accompanied the heavenly choirs: "organe, tympane, harpe and symbalyne" (15). (Similar details can also be found in the Book of the Howlat.51)

Two poetical features used by the poet here link him with the authors of other "ballatis of our ladye". He is prepared, in praise of the Virgin, to borrow a phrase from secular poetry - in this case, "of ladyis chose, as is of letteris A" (6). In Kennedy's Marian lyric we shall see even more explicit signs of contact with secular poetry. Again, he shows a fondness for making the eulogistic phrases as alliterative as possible. Thus Mary is:

O cleir conclaiif of clene virginitie,
That closit Crist but curis criminale,
Tryumphand tempill of the Trinite. (17-19)

51 The Asloan MS, II, 118.
This tendency can also be seen - where, with the example of Dunbar's Done is a battell, we might expect it - in the account of the Harrowing of Hell: "Syne brak the barmeckyn of that bribour bla" (30), and in the final apostrophes to Mary: "Haile purifyet perle, haile port of paradys" (41) etc. This technique, of course, reaches its fullest development in the Marian stanzas of the Buke of the Howlat. Ros Mary, most of vertewe virginale may not be a great poem, but it is - pace Tom Scott - a competent one, and a dignified and aureate prayer to Mary.

The following poem in the Asloan MS - Kennedy's Marian lyric, Closter of Crist, riche recent flour delys52 - is in some respects a more interesting work than Ros Mary, although, for reasons discussed below, one may have reservations about the overall success of Kennedy's poem. Both Ros Mary and Closter of Crist are high-style lyrics, and many of the remarks already made of the former poem also apply to the latter. Alliteration, however, though it does appear in Closter of Crist, is not nearly so conspicuous as in the other poem, while on the other hand Kennedy's lyric boasts several striking rhetorical devices. One such is the use of anaphora for the items of the Virgin's beauty:

Blist be thi haire, hed, eyne, face and neise,
Blist be thi hals, breist bane, bak and rib,
Blist be thi palpis, that couth thi Sone appleis,
Blist be thi handis, that wande him in the crib.

(49-52) etc.

---

52 The Asloan MS, II, 272-275.
This catalogue is based upon a text of Scripture, which has already been seen as a refrain in one of the Nativity lyrics: "Beatus venter qui te portavit, Beata ubera quae suxisti". The use of anaphora is a good way of securing a cumulative effect, and here it certainly emphasises the unique blessedness of the Virgin. Nonetheless, the technique is perhaps rather an obvious one, even mechanical, and such a passage may not appeal to all modern readers. Although this reservation may seem only a small matter in relation to this particular stanza, it is symptomatic, I believe, of one's overall reaction to some basic problems presented by this poem.

One of the most significant aspects of Closter of Crist is its indebtedness to secular poetry. This emerges in the second line: "Ave Maria, herbar of amouris", and again in the final line: "O mater dei, memento mei, thi man". Such a phrase is reminiscent of the declarations of loyalty made by lovers to their secular mistresses. Yet the most striking manifestation of secular influence is to be seen in the use of rhetoric in the 'inexpressibility topos':

The moder se, fludis, lochis and wellis,  
War all thir ynke, and quyk and deid couth wryte -  
The hevyne stellat, montunis, planetis and fellis,  
War faire parchiament and all as Virgillis dyte -  
And plesand pennis, for to report perfyte,  
War woddis, forestis, treis, gardingis and grawis -

Couth nocht discryve thi honouris infinit:
Speciosa facta es et suavis.   (25-32)

Such a stanza is remarkable in a Marian lyric - indeed, in any religious lyric - and has clearly been borrowed from a convention of love poetry: one finds remarkably similar lines in a Bannatyne lyric attacking women - *Gif all the erth war perchmene scribable* (there attributed to Chaucer) - and in the concluding stanza of a lyric by Stewart in praise of women: *For to declair the he magnificens.* 54 As Rosemary Woolf notes, even Kennedy's formulae for inexpressibility are themselves conventional. 55

An adequate explanation of the presence of such a stanza in a religious poem of some seventy lines raises issues posed by the nature of the Marian lyric itself, and a brief digression is necessary here to discuss some of these. All the previous subjects of the religious lyrics which have been examined have involved, to some extent, narrative: they have described events, which have a dimension in time. This somewhat facilitates the task of the lyric poet, for whom the chief task will be to recount what happened at the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Passion, etc. The Marian lyrics preclude such an approach: their subject, the figure of Mary, is static, and does not have a dimension in time. The only exceptions here are the poems like *Haill, Mary, quhais concepcioun*,

54  The Bannatyne MS, IV, 23; III, 256-258.

55  English Religious Lyric, p.280.
which move in a somewhat jerky fashion from one of the
Virgin's Joys to another, in sequence. Apart from such
poems (and obviously, those on the Compassion), there is
no natural length or structure imposed by the subject
matter on the Marian lyric: the poems are as long as the
poet chooses, or as his ingenuity permits. It is therefore
not surprising that the Marian lyrics should so often
consist of lists of eulogistic phrases. Behind such
lyrics there is probably the model of the Litany of the
Blessed Virgin Mary.\(^5\) In the lyrics, as in the Litany,
no matter how many eulogistic phrases are used, the
infinite honours of Mary can never be exhausted. The
Marian lyric therefore - if one should wish to venture on
a generalisation - tends to the catalogue. The lyrics by
Dunbar and Holland next to be discussed are excellent
specimens of this kind of poem.

How does this affect Kennedy's poem, however?
Kennedy, in reaching out in the direction of other kinds
of lyric poetry, seems to be trying to get beyond the
technique of mere catalogue. Although this poem - unlike
such an English lyric as *Goe. lytyll byll, and doe me
recommende*\(^5\) - does not come so close to secular poetry as
to make it difficult to distinguish its religious nature,
it yet employs in several places, as we have seen, the

---

\(^5\) For the Litany of the BVM: *The Golden Manual* (London,
1850), pp.102-105.

\(^5\) *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Brown,
pp.75-76.
phraseology of secular poetry. Kennedy also tries once or twice to introduce lines of narrative, mentioning Mary’s parentage (21-22), and her visit to Elizabeth (33-36). Significantly, the most effective lines in the poem are those which least recall the customary lists of traditional epithets. For example:

Princes of hevyn, hell, erd and paradys, 
That bathis our blak syn with thi balmy schouris, 
Nurys to God, and moder of favouris, 
To leper leche, crukit, blynd, deif and dum. 

(3-6)

Here the health and life-giving qualities of Mary are contrasted with the disease of sinful men, and the lines with the poetically powerful imagery of healing contrast with the first line of the stanza in all its traditional rhetorical stiffness. Kennedy introduces another memorable novelty when he speaks of the devotions paid by men to Mary (though they may not be kept):

Thocht we brek vowis, prayeris, pilgrimage 
and hechtis, 
To the, rosare, and rute of our remeid. (57-58)

Such lines make a curious form of praise, and are without parallel in the other Scottish Marian lyrics.

The end result of it all, paradoxically, is that the lyric reveals simultaneously great poetical ability and yet also a certain lack of direction. Kennedy is clearly an accomplished poet, but is one to describe his work as a great Marian lyric? My own impression is that the poet’s energies are somewhat dispersed. The lyric lacks structure, and seems to be full of stops and starts. A certain
adventitious structure can be glimpsed in three stanzas (33-56), in which the Latin lines come from the Angelic Salutation, but nothing much really comes of it.

The root of the problem lies in the final stanza:

Throw thi request, Mary, as wele thou can,
Sen hale suple to Kennedy thow art,
O mater dei, memento mei, thi man. (70-72)

The poet’s signature is written into his religious lyric, and Kennedy advertises his part in the poem. In a very conspicuous way, therefore, Closter of Crist is the Marian lyric of one individual. It exists in order to manifest to other readers Kennedy’s devotion to Our Lady, and it is thus a much more personal poem than the other lyrics of this group. Mediaeval religious lyrics are usually so written as to be accessible to the readers, who may take the words provided by the poet for the text of their own devotion. Kennedy’s lyric is not available to other readers in this sense. The reader can only admire Kennedy’s words of devotion: he cannot pray with him using the same words, since these belong to the poet alone. Closter of Crist is therefore at a considerable remove from the traditional type of impersonal, meditative lyric.58 The insertion of the author’s name in his poem is, however, by no means an innovation of the Scottish poet. Curtius has noted that this common mediaeval literary device can represent a conventional plea by the author for the intercession of

his hearers or readers, in order to gain forgiveness for sins - while at other times (as with the final line of the *Howlat*) it is merely a way of 'signing' the work.⁵⁹ Although Closter of Crist displays more inventiveness and novelty than *Ros Mary* or *Ohie emperice*, it is debatable whether the work as a whole is in the end any more successful as a religious lyric. Schipper, the editor of Kennedy's poems, described the lyric as "insipid", and with faint praise damned it by saying "on the whole a certain warmth of tone cannot be denied to it".⁶⁰ The contrast with Dunbar's poem - to anticipate just a little - is revealing. Dunbar's Marian lyric, despite its verbal brilliance, is firmly in the tradition of anonymous, meditative lyrics, and displays no uncertainty of purpose. Against Dunbar's poem, Closter of Crist seems to lack poise: it is a lyric which is perhaps more interesting for the issues it raises than for the success with which it deals with them.

The Marian lyric composed by Richard Holland as part of *The Buke of the Howlat* (1450) - the long, allegorical fable about the Douglas family, and the Council of Hasle⁶¹ - is a somewhat curious specimen of the genre. Firstly, it is the song of a choir of birds (all the characters in the


poem appear as birds) during the Pope's banquet. Secondly, this lyric, which occupies three of the seventy-seven stanzas of the poem, is written in a thirteen-line, alliterative stanza, which is mainly employed in certain romances. This poem is thus unique among the religious lyrics, and it might seem that here we have the greatest possible contact with secular poetry.  

As far as the verse-form of the lyric is concerned, that is undoubtedly so. Holland has simply continued with the stanza used for the rest of his poem. On the other hand, however, there is almost nothing in the diction of this lyric to remind one of secular poetry: only perhaps the line, "Now, lady, luke to the leid that the so leile lufis" (750). The rest consists of panegyrical expressions of the most traditional type, with the lines linked in anaphora on the words "Haile" and "Thow":

Haile, temple of the Trinite, crounit in hevin,
Haile, moder of our makere, and medicyn of mys,
Haile, succour and salf for the synnis sevyne,
Haile, bute of our baret, and beld of our blis.

(718-721)

The content of these formulaic expressions is absolutely standard. The first two stanzas consist entirely of this kind of praise, and there are no other rhetorical devices, no phrases from courtly love poetry, and no fragments of

---

narrative. The third stanza is, however, somewhat more expansive in its diction, and allows the formulae of petition to be spread over two or more lines: "Now, soverane, quhar thow sittis be thi Sonnis syd,/Send sum succour doune sone to the synnere" (744-745). The artistry in such a poem is not at all one of content, but one of expression (if one may, for the moment, separate the two). Though the phrases used are not new, the skill in organising them into a complicated verse form is. In this lyric, alliteration, which has already been seen to be quite common in the Marian lyrics, becomes the most conspicuous decorative feature of the verse. This is combined with the demands of the rhyme scheme, and of a stanza form in which the long lines are followed by the shorter lines of a 'bob'. Such an intricate verse form, which is quite a challenge to the poet's technical skill, becomes almost a showpiece of his craft when he meets its demands successfully. Perhaps here - as we shall also see in the case of Dunbar's Marian lyric - we may detect the search for difficult form which is so characteristic of lyric verse in the manner of the Grands Rhétoriqueurs, but, if that is the case, Holland has skilfully merged the new fashion with the native tradition of alliterative poetry. Moreover, such a stanza operates to discipline the poet's effusions of adoration for the Virgin, and gives the whole inset lyric a certain shape. In other words, the high demands of stanza, metre, verse and rhyme seem in the end to be beneficial to the lyric. There is a discipline of length
too, for the poem could not be infinitely protracted without seeming disproportionately large in the Howlat as a whole. In Holland's case, the contact with secular poetry and the adoption of the stanza of the alliterative romances seem all to have worked to the good of his Marian lyric.

It is worthwhile emphasising this poem, since it raises general issues which are pertinent to the most celebrated Scottish Marian lyric, Dunbar's Hale, sterne superne, hale, in eterne.63 Most important of all is the question of whether the latter poem is anything more than a display of verbal pyrotechnics. According to Baxter, the poem "glitters in its preciosity", but Aeneas Mackay must have felt that this had its dangers: "[Dunbar] uses one of the most complex metres, which somewhat obscures the sense."64 The poet's dexterity is generally conceded, but the critics are divided as to the overall merits of the lyric.

Hale, sterne superne, like Hale, temple of the Trinite and Haill, glaid and glorius, consists entirely of brief honorific phrases addressed to Our Lady. There are no digressions, fragments of narrative, or inexpressibility topoi, and nothing is allowed to deflect the poet from his task of heaping up praise for Mary. Many lines are introduced by the customary "Haile" anaphora, and many of them contain two, or even three, eulogistic words or phrases in their short compass of eight or six syllables:

63 The Asloan MS, II, 275-278.
64 Baxter, William Dunbar, p.213; Poems of Dunbar, ed. Small, I, cxi.
Hale, sterne superne, hale, in eterne,  
In Godis sicht to schyne,  
Lucerne in derne, for to discerne,  
Be glory and grace devyne:  
Hodierne, modern, sempitern,  
Angelical regyne.

The abiding effect is one of compression. It seems almost incredible that Dunbar should have been able to pack so much into these lines. This effect is greatly enhanced by the profusion of rhyme, and Dunbar is in large measure governed in his choice of aureate vocabulary by the desire to exploit all the possibilities of rhyming which such words afford. Furthermore, the fifteenth-century poets seem to have felt that words which are unusually latinate, polysyllabic and musical-sounding would of themselves redound to the Virgin's glory (and, of course, to other suitable topics): since they are 'choice' words, they are eminently appropriate to their subject.

It is scarcely necessary to emphasise the great musical effect of Dunbar's stanzas. In the first, there are fourteen rhymes on "-erne", and six on "-yne" - all within twelve lines. And nearly all the other stanzas have as many rhymes. For the ninth line of each stanza, however, Dunbar uses the Latin phrase, "Ave Maria, gracia plena", which is left without a matching rhyme. Yet despite the fact that it stands alone in the stanza, the Latin line is brilliantly successful, and gives just the necessary relief from the incessant rhymes. In any case, the Latin words, with their many vowels, are in themselves sonorous. These are also highly appropriate to the poem,
since the phrase, "Ave Maria, gracia plena", carries the
mind of the reader back to the words of Gabriel, and the
very beginning of the scheme of salvation.65

The chiming effect of the rhymes has a counterpart in
Dunbar's handling of his honorific phrases, which seem to
echo each other. Often these appear at various places in
the course of the poem, with only slight variation of the
wording at each occurrence. Thus the Virgin is "sterne
superne" (1), "lucerne in derne" (3), "day sterne
orientale" (26), "stern in aurore" (53), and "sterne
meridiane" (70). Similarly, Mary is the "riallest rosyne"
(8), "fresche floure femynyne" (10), "Of reuth baith rute
and ryne" (12), "fresche flourising" (13), "ros of paradys"
(40), "fresche flour delyce" (42), "grene daseyne" (43),
"indeflore" (55), and "flour delice of paradys" (71). In
both these lists we can see that Dunbar has chosen one
fundamental image and then varied the details of it in a
large number of ways. Such a technique acts as a powerful
factor for unity in the poem, and through it the brightness
and beauty of the Virgin can be stressed.

Tom Scott has made some interesting and challenging
remarks on this lyric:

It is as near as Dunbar - that very classical and
impure poet - ever comes to "pure" poetry, the
poetry of sheer lovely verbal noise for its own
sake, with the intellectual content reduced to a
minimum: intellectually it is one tautology. In

65 St. Luke, 1, 26-38.
eighty-four lines he manages to say very much less than the few phrases of the Ave Maria itself: but how he says it!

Such a comment is very persuasive as an account of Dunbar's poem, and has the merit of doing justice to the formal beauties already observed in this lyric. However, if, as Scott implies, Dunbar has sacrificed matter on the altar of art, this is a strong indictment of Hale, sterne superne. By way of replying to this criticism one might point out that Scott's remarks must apply equally well to other, highly ornate, honorific poems to the Virgin. They would certainly seem to apply to Hale, temple of the Trinite, to Haill, glaid and glorius, to Ros Mary, and even to Haill, quene of hevin and sterne of blis. All these poems consist, by and large, of eulogistic and periphrastic expressions of praise for Mary, on the model of the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. And, of course, one could also cite large numbers of English lyrics which might be attacked for the same reason. The truth is, in effect, that Scott's remarks are as much a comment on the genre of Marian lyrics themselves, as on the specific poem by Dunbar. The basic problem of the Marian lyrics - already discussed in connection with Kennedy's poem - remounts to the essentially static nature of their subject, and Scott's strictures are really a critique of the lyrics which are themselves static.

One of the fascinations of the Marian lyrics is the

---

Scott, Dunbar, p. 304.
way in which each variously attempts to cope with the essential artistic problem - that of finding a motive force for the poem, something that will maintain the flow of the lyric, suggest a natural length for it, and furnish an idiom for the expression of the poet's devotion. There is no difficulty, needless to say, for the lyrics which are translations of Latin prayers, or which are closely based on such pre-existing models. For the others, however, the poets' freedom from previous models involves the search for an approach, an 'angle' on to the subject of the poem. In response to this problem some Marian lyrics fall back upon the conventions of courtly love poetry, others try to introduce sections of narrative, and others - like O hie emperice - resolve themselves into penitential confessions. Holland's lyric, the chief distinction of which is to be seen in its satisfaction of the technical demands of a complicated stanza from a completely different poetic genre, offers another approach to the Marian lyric.

Dunbar's solution is closest to that of Holland. His Marian lyric contains nothing but honorific expressions for Mary, and in one sense, therefore, he is a traditionalist, eschewing the poetic novelties which are so prominent in Kennedy's Closter of Crist. Dunbar does not even use the eight-line ballat stanza, but instead chooses an extremely intricate twelve-line stanza - one that is without an exact parallel in the Scottish religious lyrics - and sets himself the challenge of showing himself capable of handling this taxing verse form. The result, of course,
is a brilliant success. But the basic point is that the Virgin has been honoured not merely in, but also through, the verse. The incredibly dazzling poetic performance is all for her glorification. *Hale, sterne superne* is not, as Scott says, "virtuosity for its own sake," but rather virtuosity for Mary's sake. Kennedy, we remember, had declared in a famous stanza that no poet was capable of expressing adequately the merits of Our Lady. Dunbar's Marian lyric could be seen almost as a confutation of the statement of his fellow poet.

To gauge the merit of Dunbar's poem, we only have to set it beside another which uses the same method. Here is a stanza from *Haill, glaid and glorius*:

Haill, well I weyne,  
Off grace bedeyne,  
Till cairfull creatour,  
To the we meyne  
Oure caris keyne:  
Thou art our trew tressour,  
Off bewte the mirrour. (28-34)

Here, next, is Dunbar:

Hale, more decore than of before,  
And swetar be sic sevyne,  
Our glore forlore for to restore  
Sen thow art qwene of hevyn.  
Memore of sore, stern in aurore,  
Lovit with angellis steyne,  
Implore, adore, thow indeflore,  
To mak our oddis evyne.  
Ave Maria, gracia plena,  
With lovingis lowde ellevyn,  
Quhill store and hore my youth devore,  
Thy name I sall ay nevyne. (49-60)
To argue the point of precedence is supererogatory. On the one hand, the formulae are naively, even crudely, arranged; on the other they all fall perfectly into place like the coloured tiles of a mosaic. Dunbar's poem shows supremely the shaping hand of the artist.

In an important sense, therefore, the whole value of Hale, sterne superne is to be sought in its triumphant satisfaction of the extreme demands of form. As an aesthetic of the religious lyric, this is not a principle which has to be invoked for very many Middle Scots poems, yet it is this principle which, when applied to the Marian lyrics, allows one to commend Hale, sterne superne, Hale, temple of the Trinite, and Haill, quene of hevin and sterne of blis, and also to find Claster of Crist somehow unsatisfactory. At any rate, it takes one a little way beyond the description of Dunbar's Marian lyric as "sheer lovely verbal noise for its own sake". As I have suggested above, we witness in this lyric the results of an influence from the Grands Rhétoriqueurs - seen most clearly in the aureate vocabulary, frequent alliteration, and profusion of internal rhyme. At the same time, Dunbar has not listened to the siren song of poetic preciosity for its own sake, and seems to have more tact than Molinet or De la Vigne. In the context of Middle Scots Marian lyrics, Dunbar's poem is certainly spectacular: while if compared with some of the excesses of the Continental school, it might even be commended for a certain welcome restraint. Throughout this study it is Dunbar who is seen to stand out as the greatest Scottish exponent of the art of the
religious lyric, and it is somehow appropriate that his Marian lyric should solve the main poetical problem of this whole class of poems in a generally admired display of technical virtuosity.

It is not often that we can give a precise date for the death of a poetic genre, yet this we can do in the case of the Marian lyrics. After the Reformation of 1560, such poems were, simply, no longer possible, and neither was the transcription of earlier lyrics on this theme. Even the Catholic poet, Alexander Montgomerie, has left no poem in honour of Mary, as one might have expected. Marian poetry in England reappeared briefly after the Dissolution, in the thin disguise of poems addressed to Queen Mary Tudor: such a work is "The Marigold" of William Forrest, the priest who transcribed the Scottish lyric, Ros Mary. 67 This did not happen in Scotland, unless one can regard Alexander Scott's address to Queen Mary Stuart in this light. 68 It is thus fair to describe the loss of Marian lyrics in Scotland as the "murder of a tradition". 69

The Middle Scots Marian lyrics are an accomplished group of poems, and while one is grateful for those which have survived the religious and political upheavals of the mid sixteenth century, one may wonder how many others were fated to die a violent literary death.

67 Guiney, Recusant Poets, pp.149-150.
68 See below, pp.454-457.
69 The phrase is that of MacQueen (albeit used in a slightly different context): Ballattis of Luve, p.xvii.
Ave cuius conceptio

Ave cuius conceptio
sollemnī plena gaudio
coelestia, terrestria
nova replet laetitia.

Ave cuius nativitas
nostra fuit sollemnitas,
ut lucifer exoriens,
verum solem praeveniens.

Ave sancta virginitas,
immaculata castitas,
cuius annuntiatio
nostra fuit redemptio.

Ave pia humilitas,
sine viro fecunditas,
cuius purificatio
nostra fuit purgatio.

Ave praelata omnibus,
angelicis spiritibus,
cuius fuit assumptio
nostra glorificatio.

Patri natoque gloria
perpes sit et laetitia
una cum sancto flamine
atque beata virgine.

Obsecro te, domina sancta Maria

Obsecro te, domina sancta Maria mater Dei pietate plenissima, summi regis filla, mater gloriosissima, mater orphianorum, consolatio desolatorum, via errantium, salus et spes in te sperantium. Virgo ante partum, virgo in partu: et virgo post partum. Fons misericordiae, fons salutis et gratiae, fons pietatis et leticie: fons consolationis et indulgentiae. Per illam sanctam inestimabilem leticiam qua exultavit spiritus tuus in illa hora quando tibi per Gabrielem archangelum annunciatus et conceptus fuit Filius Dei. Et per illud divinum mysterium quod tunc operatus est Spiritus sanctus in te. Et per illam sanctam inestimabilem pietatem, gratiam, misericordiam, amorem et humilitatem per quas Filius Dei descendit accipere humanam carнем in venerabilissimo utero tuo: et in quibus te reprimis quando te commendavit sancto Johanni apostolo et evangeliste. Et quando te exaltavit super choros angelorum. Et per illam sanctam inestimabilem humilitatem in qua tu respondisti arch-angelo Gabrieli, Ecce ancilla Domini: fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum. Et per illa sanctissima quindecim gaudia que habuisti de Filio tuo Domino nostro Jesu Christo. Et per illam sanctam maximam compassionem et acerbissimum cordis dolorem quem habuisti quando Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum ante crucem nudatum, et in ipsa levatum vidisti pendentem, crucifixum, vulneratum, sitiendum, solum audisti et morientem vidisti. Et per quinque vulnera Filii tui. Et per contractionem viscerum tuorum quando te commiserunt quando tuum et per fontes sanguinis sui, et per omnem passionem eius, et per omnem dolorem cordis tui, et per fontes lachrymarum tuo: ut cum omnibus sanctis et electis Dei venias et festines in auxilium et consilium meum, in omnibus orationibus et requestis meis: et in omnibus illis rebus in quibus ego sum facturus, locuturus aut cogitaturus, omnibus diebus ac noctibus, horis atque momentis vite meae. Et michi famulo tuo impetres a directo Filio tuo complementum vite cum omni misericordia et consolatione, omni consilio et omni auxilio, omni adiutorio et omni benedictione et sanctificatione, omni salvatione, pace et prosperitate, omni audacia et alacritate, etiam abundantiam omnium bonorum spiritualium et corporalis et gratiam sancti Spiritus, qui me bene per omniam disponat, animam meam custodiat, corpus meum regat, sensum erigit, cursum dirigat, mores componat, actus probet, vota et desideria mea perficiat, cogitationes sanctas instituat, preterita mala indulget, presentia emendet: et futura moderetur. Vitam honestam et honorabilem michi tribuat, et victorian contra omnes adversitates huius mundi: beatam pacem spiritualem et corporalem michi tribuat: bonam spem, charitatem, fidem, castitatem, humilitatem et patientiam. Et quinque sensus
corporis mei regat et protegat. Septem opera misericordie
50 completere me faciat. Duodecim articulos fidei et decem
precepta legis firmiter tenere et credere me faciat. A
septem peccatis mortalibus me liberet et defendat usque in
finem vite mee. Et in novissimis diebus meis ostende
mihi faciem tuam et annuncies michi diem et horam obitus
55 mei: et hanc orationem supplicem suscipias et exaudias,
et vitam eternam michi tribuas. Audi et exaudi me
dulcissima virgo Maria, mater Dei et misericordie.
Amen.

Text taken from: Horae Eboracenses, ed. Christopher
Wordsworth, Surtees Society (Durham and London, 1920),
pp. 66-67.
Chapter IX: Miscellaneous and Penitential Lyrics.

(a) Miscellaneous Religious Lyrics .............. p. 319

(b) Penitential Lyrics .......................... p. 346
Miscellaneous Religious Lyrics.

Poems on Christ and the Virgin Mary account for the majority of mediaeval Scottish religious lyrics. If these are set aside, one is left with penitential lyrics, occasional prayers to God or to the Trinity, vernacular renderings of Latin hymns, and poems which could, perhaps, be classed either as 'religious' or 'moral'. The number of all such poems is not large, and only the first of these groups - the penitential lyrics - warrants a lengthy study.¹ As a result, the title given to this chapter cannot but be slightly vague: a general, portmanteau heading is unavoidable for the discussion which follows below, into which the loose ends and remaining stray lyrics are gathered.

Another aim of this chapter is to round off the examination of the first section of the Bannatyne MS. Approximately one third of the contents of this most important source of Middle Scots religious lyrics has yet to be discussed, and this includes those poems which deal with most of the lesser subjects listed in the previous paragraph. This, therefore, will be a convenient place for some remarks on the first section of the Bannatyne MS, considered as a whole.

This chapter, thirdly, affords space for a consideration of a few religious lyrics from other texts, such as the Maitland Quarto or Laing MSS. These are poems which, in terms either of form or of theme, can be associated with

¹ The best discussion of pre-Reformation penitential lyrics is that of F.A. Patterson, The Middle English Penitential Lyric (New York, 1911).
some of the Bannatyne lyrics, and they serve to complete the survey of Middle Scots religious lyrics from the manuscript sources.

Finally, this chapter begins to indicate the change from Catholic to Protestant poetry (although a full discussion of the emergence of Protestant lyric verse in Middle Scots will have to wait until the following chapter). This is seen in the composition and ordering of the first section of the Bannatyne MS, from the deliberate censoring of the texts of some Catholic lyrics preserved in the Bannatyne and Maitland Folio MSS, and from the exclusion from later manuscripts, such as the Maitland Quarto, of religious lyrics on any of the themes which have hitherto been seen in the Catholic poetry of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

I begin, however, not with the penitential lyrics but with seven poems, preserved in both the Bannatyne and the Draft MS, which it is convenient to consider together. These poems follow each other in almost exactly the same order in the two manuscripts (one text may well have been copied from the other), except for the lyric, Eternall king, that sittis in hevin so hie, which is the last of these lyrics in the main manuscript, though the second in the Draft. All these poems are written in the eight-line ballat stanza, and they all have Latin in the final line of each stanza. We shall see, however, that these Latin

lines come from various different sources, and that for these seven poems the relationship between Latin source and Scottish lyric is by no means uniform.

The first of these poems, *Christe qui lux es et dies*, is also to be found in the Makculloch MS. This hymn has been pronounced by R.H. Robbins to be, "judged by its survival in manuscripts, the most popular Latin hymn in Middle English translations". Among other versions, this hymn was translated by Lydgate and by Ryman (thrice). The popularity of the hymn, even into the sixteenth century, is proved not just by the Bannatyne MS transcriptions, but also by the translations - which Robbins does not discuss - in Coverdale's *Goostly Psalmes*, and in the Gude and Godlie Ballatis. These latter two versions are close renderings of the Latin, in four-line stanzas. Although they give the first words of the hymn as a title, they have no words of Latin in the body of the translation, and there are no refrains. Right at the other poetic extreme, so to speak, is the version by Lydgate, which is in his typically loose, high style, full of expansions and expletives. The Bannatyne/Makculloch version lies somewhere between these two styles. It uses the original Latin in the first and last lines of each stanza, and therefore cannot but follow the original more closely than does the version by Lydgate.

3 The Makculloch MS, pp.20-21; The Bannatyne MS, I, 21-23; II, 50-51.
5 Remains of Myles Coverdale, p.584; Gude and Godlie Ballatis, pp.144-145. Robbins does not mention the latter version.
6 See below, Chapter X, pp.443-444.
The hymn is a prayer for God's protection through the night, and appears appropriately in the Order of Compline. The equation of Christ with light, the opening image of the hymn, is therefore highly relevant. The poet asks Christ to defend him from the enemy, and to give him a quiet night. The Scottish translator gives the enemy a name - "Baliall" (22) - and seems particularly to emphasise the hostile forces. Thus, "insidiantes reprime" becomes:

Behold our enemy and se,
Ay wating us fra hour till hour.
God send us grace fra hevynis tour
To brek thair power and thair pres,
And save us fra thair [saltis] sour. (35-39)

The basic idea of the siege is made much more vivid in these lines. Usually, however, the vernacular poet is much less adventurous.

Christe qui lux es et dies seems to be the only Office hymn which was translated in mediaeval Scotland. According to Robbins, the purpose of this translation was not that a congregation might use the vernacular version for their singing in church: it was, rather, "made for pious relaxation". The Bannatyne/Makculloch version clearly states its function, in the second stanza:

And grant us grace that we may say
This ympne so plesandly to the,
To bed quhen that we boun us ay. (13-15)

8 Breviarium Sarum, II, 228-229; Breviarium Aberdonense, F.H., Psalterium, fol. lxxiii.
9 The word, "saltis", in the last line of this quotation, is taken from the Makculloch text.
This seems to suggest that the poem was intended for private reading, or for recitation as a prayer before sleep, when it would presumably give voice to the reader's personal thoughts. It would thus be what Gneuss calls a "Lesehymn zur Privatandacht".\textsuperscript{11} On the other hand, it might have been translated for the benefit of a reader unskilled in Latin - such as were the nuns of Sion, who listened to Latin but read English.\textsuperscript{12}

A rather different process of adaptation has created the lyric, Chryist, crownit king and conquerour,\textsuperscript{13} out of the Latin hymn, Jesu nostra redemptio, which is the Compline hymn for the Vigil of the Ascension.\textsuperscript{14} Instead of following the Latin line by line, this poem devotes one stanza to each line of the original. This means that the Scottish version is not a translation of the Latin, but a free variation upon the basic model. The resulting poem, obviously, would be four times the length of the original (in terms of the number of stanzas) but in Bannatyne we find now merely nine stanzas, then a final Gloria. These nine stanzas comprise three of honorific praise of Christ, three on the Incarnation, and three on the Passion. I include here the detached fragment of this hymn, preserved only in the Draft MS (pp.36-37). This ends with the line, "Thow that undid all our sin", which is clearly the

\textsuperscript{11} Helmut Gneuss, Hymnar und Hymnen im Englischen Mittelalter (Tubingen, 1968), p.217.
\textsuperscript{12} See above, pp.75-76.
\textsuperscript{13} The Bannatyne MS, I, 31-33, 36-37; II, 98-100.
\textsuperscript{14} Breviarium Sarum, II, 235; Breviarium Aberdonense, P.H., Psalterium, fol. lxxiiiib.
beginning of a new stanza which would have ended on the tenth line of the Latin hymn: "Tuos captivos redimens". It would thus seem likely that the lyric was once longer, and that it has been truncated for the Bannatyne text.

It is perhaps to be expected that a lyric which so greatly expands on its original source should use some of the common techniques of amplification. This is indeed true of the opening stanza, where there is a string of formulae of praise:

Chryist, crownit king and conquerour,
Makar of all martir and remeid,
Salwe of all sair and sweit succour,
Howp of all haill and help at all neid. (1-4)

The remainder of the poem, however, avoids such obvious methods, and later stanzas praise Christ in a slightly less stiff manner: "The firmament, the feild and flum,/Quhy sowld thay nocht gif blis to yow?" (22-23). The device of rhetorical question is used again, in speaking of the mystery of the Incarnation:

Quhat petie was that the compellit
To tak mankynd and mak us fre?
Ane theolog me trewly tellit,
Sayand, 'the cheif was cheretie.' (41-44)

Here the poet uses the persona of a simple enquirer, whose question is answered by the expert. The account of the Passion passes swiftly from one painful detail to the next:

Our all thy body ran strems reid,
On thy heid thristit ane croun of thorne,
Thow was skurgit with skrech and scorne. (59-61)

The use of alliteration in the Passion stanzas follows the
example of Dunbar's poem on this topic, and shows the same attempt at a verbal equivalent of the torments suffered by Christ. Yet at other points in the lyric alliteration is employed merely to give a neat turn to the lines, as for example: "quhen we sowld spill thow gart us speid" (31); "Sic panis thow previt to procur us pes" (62). *Chryist, crownit* is, in my opinion, a successful poem, although it must not be judged as a translation, but as a recreation, of the Latin hymn. In spite of the increase in length, it nowhere appears prolix, and there is considerable dexterity in the poet's handling of the detail of his verse. It is a good - and apparently unique - example of yet another way in which a Latin hymn can be turned into a Scottish lyric.

These two lyrics both display a close relationship between the Latin and the vernacular versions. There are three other poems, however - two in this group of Bannatyne lyrics, and one from the Maitland Folio MS - which are much less closely tied to the Latin sources. Here the opening lines of the Latin hymns are used merely for refrains, and, while the rest of these three lyrics is based to a slight extent upon some of the ideas and images of the respective originals, they are for the most part new compositions in their own right.

One of the most famous of all Latin hymns is *Veni creator spiritus*, sung at the beginning of the Mass, and

15 See above, pp.230-231.
the Terce hymn for the Feast of Pentecost. The derivative Scottish lyric, *Cum, Haly Spreit*, gives a translation of only the first two lines of the Latin hymn, before departing from it completely. The remainder of the poem is a devout invocation of the Holy Ghost, as the sustainer and protector of the human soul:

Latt no evill spreit us within
Mak sojorne quhair thow sowld be plaist.
Cum sone, and tak the hous in haist,
Cum capitane gude and gratius. (11-14)

The invocation, with the use of the word "Cum" at the beginning of the lines is repeated later (21-22). The image of the "house" for the soul - already used by Dunbar in his Passion poem - is continued in the third stanza, in which the assaults of the devil are expressed in terms of a siege. In these stanzas the Scottish poet has taken one Latin phrase - "Hoste repellas longius,/Pacemque dones protinus" (17-18) - and developed it in his own way: his lyric still makes explicit reference to the original hymn, but the latter has been refashioned with complete artistic freedom.

The lyric, *Eternall king, that sittis in hevin so hie*, is not based on a famous Latin original. Yet although

---

17 The Bannatyne MS, I, 27-28; II, 54-55.
18 See above, p.124.
19 The Bannatyne MS, I, 24-25; II, 100-101.
Eterne rex altissime is not found in the great printed collections of mediaeval Latin hymns, it may be seen in the English and Scottish Breviaries, where it is appointed for the Vigil and the Feast of the Ascension. This is the only one of the present group of lyrics to be written in the ten-syllable measure, and here, as elsewhere, the longer line creates an impression of stateliness. This is supported by the high style, the aureate diction of many lines, and the overall mood of confidence and celebration.

Almost the only relic of the Latin hymn in this lyric is the idea of Christ's ascending up to the throne of God ("scandens tribunal dextere") in line 22, something which is adumbrated in the second line of the poem: "clymmith up the cluddis schynyng licht". The rest of the poem consists of the enumeration of the glories of the ascended Christ, and of God the Father:

Excelland, michtie and immensurable,
O gratious God, most soverane lord and king,
Quhilk, in thy lusty palyce most delectable,
Abone Saturnus thow sittis eternaling,
Distill the balme of thy mercy ding,
As thow art one with two in unitie. (9-14)

Once more the poet uses astrological references - to the sphere of Saturn - to indicate the transcendent power and majesty of God. Christ was incarnate in Mary as purely as the beams of Phoebus shine through the glass (19), and now He has returned to heaven, His natural dwelling place, and

---

20 Breviarium Sarum, I, dcccclvii, dcccclix; Breviarium Aberdonense, P.H., Temporale, fols. cxxxiiib, cxxxiii. The Latin Hymn is included neither in the Analecta Hymnica, nor in the collections of Mone or Daniel.
illumines - like "Zepherus" (presumably 'Hesperus') - all
the earth with His light (3). The imagery of light and
of the planets links this lyric with others in a high style:
with Rorate celi desuper, and Omnipotent Fader, for example.
The poet has clearly tried to give a stylistic equivalent
of the exalted and triumphant theme of the Ascension, and
this intention also links Eternall king with these other
lyrics in this high style.

The opening stanza is of special interest:

Us grant that we may sing with hairt uprycht
This ympne, Eterne rex altissime. (7-8)

Previously, a reference in the translation of Christe qui
lux es was taken to indicate that that lyric was intended
only to be read and not sung: the evidence from the present
poem suggests that this lyric at least could have been
intended to be sung, perhaps in the course of some ceremonial
at Court.

The third lyric to use the opening line of a Latin
hymn for its refrain, 0 immensa trinitas, contains not
one but several lines which point to musical performance:
"It is my sang to wirship ay" (23); "Thair we sing bayth
most and leist" (53); "Thairfor we sing in weill and wo"
(87). It has already been noted that the refrain comes
from the hymn, 0 lux beata trinitas, which is appointed for
general Saturday Vespers, and also for Vespers on the First
Sunday after Trinity, and we have seen the appropriateness
of this hymn to the Trinity College altarpiece of Hugo van

21 The Maitland Folio MS, I, 197-199.
This lyric resembles Cum, Haly Spreit and Eternall king in making little specific reference to the Latin hymn, but the macaronic nature of O immensa trinitas immediately sets it apart from the Bannatyne lyrics. Not only does the poet alternate Latin and Scots, he also changes languages in mid line: "Most traistfull and of bonitas" (14); "To thy Father altissimo" (84). This technique has practical advantages, in greatly facilitating the task of finding a rhyme. The other conspicuous stylistic feature is the use of praise formulae, in Latin and Scots:

0 lux beata trinitas,  
0 lord of lordis maist speciall,  
0 regalis divinitas,  
0 king of kings celestiall. (9-12)

One stanza consists entirely of such formulae, with the same introductory anaphora (57-64). As a result, the first half of this poem - where this technique is most frequently employed - is somewhat reminiscent of the Marian lyrics. Like Hale, sterne superne, it is quite static in its concentration of formulae of praise. Later, however, when the poet tells of the Incarnation (33-56), the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension (65-88), there is much less recourse to this formal rhetorical method, and the verse is not so stiff when the poet recapitulates these incidents in the life of Christ. Perhaps it will seem paradoxical, therefore, to suggest that the most effective lines in the

22 See above, p. 17; Breviarium Sarum, II, 221; I, molxvii; Breviarium Aberdonense, Pars Estiva, Psalterium, fol. lxixb; Temporale, fol. x.
poem are the following:

    Heir wes wysdome, and heir wes mycht!
    Heir wes vertew in greit plainte!
    Quhen God in Marie thus couth licht,
    Procedens sine semine. (41-44)

The first two lines of this quotation rely heavily on the rhetorical devices of apostrophe, anaphora and isocolon. Yet this is the only place where the "Heir wes" formula is used, and it has the merit of seeming fresh, at this point of the poem. In these lines the author appears to reveal his own reactions to his subject, in an exclamation of rapt wonderment, and rhetoric is artfully employed here to create the impression of a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.

The Book of Psalms was one of the most important influences on the mediaeval lyric, and was a storehouse of phrases and images used by the poets writing in the vernacular. This has already been noted at several places above, and is particularly true of penitential lyrics based on the Penitential Psalms. Two rather similar lyrics of the present group, which stand beside each other in both the main Bannatyne MS and the Draft, have refrains which are taken from the Psalms. The first of these lyrics, Ye sonis of men, be mirry and glaid, \(^{23}\) is based on Psalm 112, Laudate pueri dominum. (The exact words of the refrain, however, can be found in Psalm 134: Laudate nomen domini, laudate servi dominum.) The poem urges on man a complete and joyful acceptance of the will of God, whether this

\(^{23}\) The Bannatyne MS, I, 28-29; II, 55-56.
appear fortunate or unfortunate. The burden of such a poem is, therefore, extremely characteristic of the Psalms. Yet the connection between the Bible and the vernacular lyric is also more specific. The Psalmist shows the glory of God in His dealings with rich and poor: "Quis sicut dominus deus noster, qui in altis habitat, et humilia respicit in caelo et in terra? Suscitans a terra inopem, et de stercore erigens pauperem: ut collocet eum cum principibus, cum principibus populi sui" (5-8). The Scottish poet, in echo of this, speaks directly to rich and poor: the first must be thankful for God's gifts, and the second for the fact that their possessions will not count against them at the Last Judgement, the "conclusioun" (9-24). The diction of the lyric is plain and direct, and the poet's blunt message is driven home with little effective touches of alliteration:

Think that this lyfe is nocht the lent
For skafing heir of scruf and skum. (29-30)

and again:

Blaspheme him not be feild nor firth,
Nor drowp ye not as ye war dum:
Bot boith in mowth and mynd with mirth,
Lawdate servi dominum. (37-40)

Both Ye sonis of men and its companion, Ye that contreit bene and confess, hold out the promise that the just and faithful man will in the end see God's face. The refrain of the latter poem comes from the Penitential Psalm 31, Beati, quorum remissae sunt iniquitates, with only slight

24 The Bannatyne MS, I, 30-31; II, 57.
alteration: "Laetamini in domino et exultate iusti, et gloriamini omnes recti corde" (v.11). The main themes of this lyric are, therefore, penitence and justification. The persons addressed by the poet have left their sins behind them, after going through the stages of contrition and confession in the sacrament of penance, and have now received the gladness which comes from the Holy Spirit. These serious doctrines are neatly summed up by a pun in the first stanza: "For ye ressaif a glorious gaist" (3). The "gaist" is the Holy Ghost, who is received by man as an honoured 'guest'. The second stanza urges man to rejoice, since, through prayer and penitence, he can win for himself a place in heaven forever denied to the rebellious angels (9-16). However, in the next stanza, we are told that it is not only a time of grace, but also a time of battle. Man must don the whole armour of God to fight the three great foes: the world, the flesh and the devil. The lyric concludes with a prospect of the reward for the faithful and righteous man, who abstains from sin in this life: he will be protected by the God "that brocht us owt of wo" (30). With another pun, the poet emphasises that two kinds of fortitude are required - that of the soul and that of the body: "Awalk in spreit, and he not waik" (5). This brief summary of the contents of the lyric shows the extent of the influence from the Psalms. But the lyric is not a paraphrase: it is rather a complete recreation of a few of the basic ideas found in the original text. These two lyrics also share a plain, straightforward poetic style,
which is in harmony with that of the Psalms which are the sources of the refrains in these poems.

The last poem of this group of lyrics also takes its refrain from an Old Testament text, but this time it is the Book of Job: "Parce mihi, nihil enim sunt dies mei. Quid est homo, quia magnificas eum? aut quid apponis erga sum cor tuum?" The whole of this lyric, Spair me, gud lord, and mak me clene,25 partakes of the somewhat grim and sombre tone of the Biblical prophet, and it is not altogether surprising that the whole passage of Job (7, 16-21) should appear as the first lesson "In vigiliis mortuorum".26 Like the Book of Job itself, the lyric asks searching questions about the meaning and purpose of human existence. The poet, whose "sawll is irkit of [his] lyfe" (17), gives a very stark summing up:

A man is of a woman born,
His lyf is bot a littill thrw:
His wretchitnes is him before,
Quhill he is weill he standis no aw.
In his maist welth he can not knaw,
Nowdir him self nor yit God hie:
Quhen we ar deid and lyis full law,
Than parce michi domine. (9-16)

The poet turns his attention especially to the clergy: "Sall paipis, bishopis and clerkis sterf,/Sall thay haif hell for synnis saik?" (25-26), and there follows a lengthy attack on ecclesiastics who seize the goods of the church. The rhetorical questions are a most effective tool in the poet's

26 Breviarium Sarum, II, 273-274; Breviarium Aberdonense, P.H., Psalterium, fol. lxxxiiib.
denunciations, and lead the reader to acknowledge the validity of the satire. The most telling lines of the poem repeat this technique, with some startling juxtapositions:

Sall lordis and ladeis die and rot,
Or sail thay styenk, that smellis now sweit?
Sall wormis thame brese abowt the throt,
Quhair goldin colleris hingis so meit? (33-36)

The controlled balance of the lines - perhaps deriving from some of the cadences of Hebrew poetry - gives a perfect expression to the poet's savage irony. The veils of self-deluding vanity with which men customarily hide the prospect of death are stripped away, and the poet's final focus is on the Passion of Christ, with its promise of redemption. By any standards this is an enormously successful lyric. It testifies to a single, intense mood on the author's part, who has chosen exactly the right Biblical model in the Book of Job, and has framed the diction of his poem at once to recall the voice of the prophet and to communicate with great power his own grim vision of the human condition.

On the whole, the lyrics just discussed seem an accomplished and successful group. With the exception of the macaronic immensa trinitas, and the aureate Eternall king, that sittis in hevin so hie, they share a fairly plain poetic style, but one which - as we have seen in the case of Spair me gud lord - is capable of powerful effects. Although these poems appear greatly to resemble each other in outward form, they draw on various sources of inspiration: Latin hymns; the Psalms; the Book of Job. Neither is

the poetic method uniform: Christe qui lux es is a straight translation; Chryist, crownet is a translation and expansion; while the others take ideas and images culled from the original sources, and cast them into new moulds. For all the Latin refrains one can discover a liturgical application in the Breviary, and for some also in the Missal.

When were these lyrics written, and where do they stand in relation to the Catholic/Protestant opposition? The presence of Latin lines is not of itself a sufficient indication that these lyrics were composed in an untroubled, Catholic era, since one can find occasional lines of Latin in some of the poems in the Gude and Godlie Ballatis. However, the appearance of Christe qui lux es in the Makculloch MS dates this lyric to the late fifteenth, or early sixteenth, century. And doubtless, such a flamboyantly macaronic lyric as O immensa trinitas must date also from a fairly early period. Eternall king, on stylistic grounds, I would associate with such lyrics as Rorate celi desuper, The sterne is rissin and Omnipotent Fader: all are in the high poetic style, and presumably date from the same period, (the late fifteenth, or the beginning of the sixteenth century). The other three lyrics of this group cannot be dated with such confidence - unless one goes by the company they keep in the two versions of Bannatyne, and assigns them also to the same period.

Translation of the Psalms is a poetic activity highly

28 Gude and Godlie Ballatis, pp. 53, 59.
29 For the dating of Dunbar's poems see: Denton Fox, "The Chronology of William Dunbar", PQ, XXXIX (1960), 413-425.
characteristic of the Reformation, and already in the Bannatyne MS there are a few Psalms in Scots (two by Alexander Scott, two by Montgomerie, and one anonymous). This might suggest that *Ye sonis of men* and *Ye that contreit bene and confess* are the work of Protestant writers: one can be sure, at least, that the satire on the grasping prelates in *Spair me, gud lord* would endear itself to a Reformed readership. Yet the references to penitence in *Ye that contreit bene and confess* do not specifically relate to the detail of either Catholic or Protestant doctrine. In the light of what has been said in relation to the Prymer and the tendency towards furnishing English translations and explanations of the liturgy, however, we might guess that this group of poems represents a felt desire in Scotland for vernacular equivalents of texts long familiar in the Latin, and that the purpose of such creations was to facilitate the practice of private devotions and meditations by individuals. Alternatively, of course, such lyrics could have been used by Friars in sermons, or have been set to music for public performance at Court or elsewhere. The dates of some of these poems must nevertheless remain subject to speculation. What is at least clear is that these lyrics must have been thought by George Bannatyne to be acceptable in the post-Reformation age, even though some (and perhaps all of them) date from an earlier period.

30 The Bannatyne MS, I, 85-86; II, 33-34, 38-42. For details of other Scottish translations of Psalms, see below, pp. 451-452.
The concern which George Bannatyne must have felt for the order of presentation of the lyrics in his collection has been remarked already at several points in this study. This concern is particularly noticeable, as Dr. Shire has emphasised, at the beginning of the section of religious lyrics.31 After the two stanzas of Preface — entitled, "The Wryttar to the reidaris" — we find a stanza under the simple heading of "God". There then follow Bellenden's poem on the Incarnation (with the "Proheme of the cosmographie of the cuntre of Scotland" — which has no business to be where it is), Gavin Douglas's poem on the Trinity, and Sir Richard Maitland's poem on the Creation and the Fall. It is immediately apparent that here we have a deliberately structured scheme, which is a highly appropriate introduction to a collection of religious lyrics.

The first poem in the manuscript, God is a substance for ever durable,32 is not, as has traditionally been thought, a Scottish lyric at all, but an English poem (printed by Carleton Brown).33 The stanza makes a disappointing opening to the Bannatyne MS. Its poetic value is nugatory, and it is a poor advertisement for the lyrics to come after. In this stanza the poet enumerates some of the attributes of God, in a style which is drab in the extreme. Later in the manuscript one finds a group of similar stanzas, on the Soul, Life, Conscience, Prayer and

31 Shire, Song, Dance and Poetry, p.14. See also below, pp.342-344.
32 The Bannatyne MS, I, 33; II, 2.
33 Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century, p.86.
Repentance, Faith, and the Fear of God.\textsuperscript{34} These stanzas, sad to say, are remarkably consistent in style with the first. It would seem, perhaps, as if some later versifier had decided to continue from the stanza on God, for the Draft MS groups that stanza with three of the others, and applies a single 'finis' to the lot.\textsuperscript{35} No more need be said about this poem, which is unique in being the one unmitigated disappointment in the first section of the Bannatyne MS.

In mediaeval England, lyrics to the Trinity are not scarce, and are found both in the aureate style (\textit{0 radiant luminar of light eterminable}), and in the plainer manner of the carols (there is a plethora of such lyrics by James Ryman).\textsuperscript{36} Yet this subject seems to have been rare in Middle Scots poetry. Indeed, apart from the sonnet by Montgomerie, \textit{Supreme essence, beginning, unbegun}\textsuperscript{37} - the poetic form of which debars it from consideration here - the only surviving Middle Scots lyric on the Trinity is by Gavin Douglas: \textit{He plasmatour of thongis universall.}\textsuperscript{38} This poem is, properly, the Prologue to the tenth book of Douglas's translation of the \textit{Aeneid}, from which Bannatyne has excerpted it.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{34} The Bannatyne MS, II, 36-37.
\textsuperscript{35} The Bannatyne MS, I, 40-41.
\textsuperscript{37} Poems of Montgomerie, ed. Cranstoun, p.89.
\textsuperscript{38} The Bannatyne MS, II, 20-26.
\textsuperscript{39} Virgil's 'Aeneid' Translated, ed. Coldwell, III, 223-228.
He plasmatour performs the functions of personal prayer and public glorification, and one of the interesting aspects of the poem is the way in which the poet's voice changes to mark the transition from one function to another. The five stages of the poem can be listed as follows: (a) introductory address to God, on behalf of the poet and all mankind, with the example of the order of the seasons (1-25); (b) general, descriptive statements about God, and outline of the doctrine of the Trinity (26-85) - this includes the two analogies of the soul, and of fire; (c) the poet's address to his friend (or reader) concerning the merits of God (86-100); (d) a second section in which the poet, speaking for all men, again addresses God directly (101-145); (e) the final prayers - first the poet's own (146-160), and then that of all men (161-175).

By thus changing the focus of the poem - by turning from God to man, and back to God, and by speaking now in a private, now in a public, voice - Douglas prevents any monotony, and instead exploits a variety of poetic effects. The stanza on the seasons makes an excellent illustration of the operation of divine grace:

Fresche ver to burgeoun herbis and sueit flowris,
The hait sommer to nureis corne all houris,
And breid alkynd of fowlis, fische and beist:
Hervist to randir his fructis maist and leist,
Winter to snyb the erth with frostie schowris.

(11-15)

Such a passage is a pleasant novelty in the religious lyrics, though it doubtless came easily to a poet who penned memorable pictures of Winter and Summer in two of his other
The various sections of this poem are marked by specific rhetorical features. The parts addressed to God are, for example, full of apostrophe: "How mervellus bene divisionis of thy graci" (6); "O Lord, thy wayis bene investigable!" (101); "Quhat infinit excellent hie bonte" (111). These passages, and also the account of the Trinity, are couched in aureate diction:

Quhilk soverane substance in gre superlative
Na cunning comprehend ma nor discrive -
Nowthir generis, generat is, nor dois proceid.

The ending of the poem offers a vision of heaven, and the style is suitably lofty:

Thow haldis court over cristall hevynis cleir,
With angellis, sanctis, and hevinly spreitis seir,
Thay but seissing thy gloir and loving singis.
Manifest to the and patent bene all thingis,
Thy spous and quene maid and thy moder deir.

By this point - the Coronation of the Virgin - we seem to have come a long way from the image of winter, 'snibbing' the earth with frosty showers, and this in itself is a measure of the way in which Douglas has drawn the poem to a triumphant conclusion.

The central portions of the work have a somewhat intellectual stamp. Douglas, like the bishop he is, carefully delineates the nature of the Trinity, but, when theoretical terms are found to be inadequate, he uses the
analogies of the soul and of fire: "Flamb, heit and licht bene in ane fyre, we se" (75). Yet even analogies fail to express the divine mystery, and Douglas dismisses them as "rud exampillis and figuris" (83). Incidentally, these similitudes remind one of Bellenden's musical analogy for the Trinity, which has already been noted in the "Benner of Peetie", and it is quite possible that Bellenden used Douglas's lines as his model.41

Near the end of the poem Douglas asks:

Quhat thankis dew, or gainyeild, lord benyng,
May I, maist sinfull wrechit cative indyng,
Rander for this soverane hie bontie? (141-143)

The answer is to be seen in the three stanzas of his own, personal prayer. He first addresses his God humbly, as a simple sinner, but then also as the translator of Virgil, the pagan poet. Douglas insists on a declaration of his own religious allegiance:

Frome the begynning and end be thow my muse,
All uther Jove and Phebus I refuse.
Lat Virgill hald his maumentis till him self!
I wirschep nowdir ydoll, stok, nor elf,
Thocht furth I wryt so as my auctor duse. (151-155)

His final words on this subject are down-to-earth and unambiguous: "I compt nocht of thir pagane godis ane futhir,
/Quhas power may nocht help ane haltane hen!" (159-160).

This statement is the answer to his previous question, and constitutes the due thanks which Douglas, as poet and translator, can render to God.

41 The Bannatyne MS, I, 6; II, 6. For discussion of Bellenden's poem see above, pp.173-178.
Priscilla Bawcutt, as has already been noted, has suggested that this Prologue "may have pre-existed as a devotional poem on the paradoxes of the Creation and the Incarnation", yet she stresses that it is nonetheless very well integrated into the larger framework of the Aeneid. A phrase like "helply Fader" (158) is, as she points out, derived from the Latin, "iuvans pater", and she compares the court of heaven (166-169) with the court of Jupiter before declaring:

In so reapplying the phrases of Virgil Douglas is drawing on a tradition of great antiquity to effect a neat and apposite transition between apparently disparate themes. This is only to be expected of the humanist bishop, and it is a sign of the impact of one aspect of the Renaissance - translation of the Ancient classics - on the mediaeval tradition of religious lyrics. It is significant that Bannatyne places the poem of Douglas (the translator of Virgil) immediately after two poems by Bellenden (the translator of Livy). This inevitably means that the Bannatyne MS can be said to open with something of a humanistic flourish.

We have already noted innovations in vocabulary in Bellenden's "Benner of Peetie": we cannot therefore be surprised to detect the same phenomenon in Douglas's Prologue. The DOST gives us authority to state that Douglas is the first user in Scotland of the following words, in

---

42 Bawcutt, Gavin Douglas, pp.173-174. See above, p.44.
43 See above, p.174.
the senses in which they are employed in this poem:
discrepance (22); groisly (74); coeterne (82); investig-
able (101); inestimable (102, 126); excellent (111).
Douglas is here the first user of two words unrecorded
in DOST: incomprehensible (3); denudit (97) - and, pace
DOST, it is he and not William Stewart who is the first
user of 'unmensurable' (93). Were the remaining volumes
of DOST in print at the present time, these lists could
doubtless be extended. But the point has surely been
made: the vocabulary of this poem bears clear witness to
Renaissance influence, whether the above items (and the
many others I have not listed) were derived directly from
Latin, or from the latinising programme of the Grands
Rhétoriqueurs. And of course, these lexical features
accord well with the classical ambience of the Aeneid
itself.

Douglas's Prologue thus represents the fruitful con-
vergence of an old tradition with a new influence. Apart
from the allusion to Mary as Christ's "spous" and Queen
of Heaven (170), there is nothing in the poem to offend
the Reformers on doctrinal grounds, and the piece therefore
could - through the anthologist's dexterity which we have
seen to be so typical of George Bannatyne - be made to
stand as an exposition of the Trinity at the head of a
collection of religious poems in the post-Reformation age.

Following on from Douglas's poem is "Ane ballat of
the creatioun of the warld, man, his fall, and redemptioun",
attributed to Sir Richard Maitland of Lethington.44 (This

44 The Bannatyne MS, II, 26-32.
poem, however, appears in none of the other manuscripts of Maitland's poetry). God be his word his work began certainly may be called lyrical, in at least one sense of the word, for the title goes on to state that it was "maid to the tone of 'The Bankis of Helecon'. This is the only place in the first part of the Bannatyne MS in which the melody for the poem (by Andrew Blackhall) is indicated to the reader. The hundred and ninety-six lines of this poem must have taken a considerable time to sing, particularly since the melody itself—as I would guess—does not seem to be specially adapted to a fast tempo. 

This work is written in the stanza form later to be employed by Montgomerie in The Cherrie and the Slae. Douglas Hamer has argued convincingly that Maitland's poem is a recasting of some four hundred lines of Sir David Lindsay's, The Monarche, except for three stanzas (141-182), which may be original or may have been influenced by other sections of Lindsay's poem. I do not propose to discuss this poem in detail, since it is another which takes one beyond the frontiers of the religious lyric. Maitland's ballat consists almost totally of verse narrative. There is no attempt at any of the emotional appeal, or any of the element of personal meditation, usually associated with the lyrics. If Hamer is correct in his conjectures about

45 See above, pp.12,160.
46 Melody printed in Shire, Song, Dance and Poetry, p.35. See also Dr. Shire's account of this tune: pp.163-173.
47 Poems of Montgomerie, ed. Cranstoun, pp.3-54.
48 Works of Lindsay, ed. Hamer, IV, 290-297.
the origin of this work, then Maitland's poem must date from after 1553, when Lindsay completed *The Monarche*. The poem's emphasis on original sin — though by no means the prerogative of the Protestants — would certainly accord well with the emphases of the Reformers.

In presenting a series of four poems on God, the Incarnation, the Trinity, and the Creation and Fall, Bannatyne has given the opening of his collection an appearance which would seem to square with Reformation practices and sensibilities. When, however, one realises that these four poems are, respectively: a fifteenth-century (English) lyric; a Catholic poem of the late 1530's or early 1540's; a Catholic poem from even earlier in the century; and a ballat by Maitland out of Lindsay (two poets whose personal stance in the religious controversy of the sixteenth century is less than pellucidly clear) — when one realises these things, then Bannatyne's selection procedures seem all the more interesting and diplomatic. Obviously Bannatyne was chiefly interested in the poetry of the 'great period' — the reigns of James III, IV and V: but he is also a man of his time, and cunningly appeared to come to terms with

49 *The Monarche* was printed — probably by John Scot — in c.1554: *Works of Sir David Lindsay*, ed. Hamer, IV, 23.

50 I omit from this list Bellenden's "Proheme of the croniculs", which is not a religious lyric at all: *The Bannatyne MS*, II, 9-20.

the religious establishment of his day.

There are only five items in the first section of the Bannatyne MS which may be excluded from the present survey. These are the translations of the Psalms (two more, by Montgomerie, can be found in the Draft MS), the "Proheme of the croniculs" of Bellenden, and two distichs attributed to Aristotle and Seneca.52 The last deserve no comment here. The "Proheme", Quhen silver Diane full of bemis bricht, is in no sense a religious lyric, and probably owes its inclusion - just after the "Benner of Peetie" - to Bannatyne's respect for his kinsman's verse. Another of Bellenden's poems finds a place in a later section of the manuscript.53 The Psalms are omitted principally because they belong to a separate genre of religious poetry, although they influenced the religious lyrics greatly. Moreover, the study of the vernacular versions of the Psalms - the composition of which becomes something of a craze in the sixteenth century - is a large subject in itself, demanding separate investigation.54

Penitential Lyrics in Middle Scots.

The remaining Middle Scots religious lyrics - largely from the Bannatyne MS, but with a few from other texts -

52 The Bannatyne MS, II, 33-34, 39-42; 9-20; 37-38; I, 85-86.

53 The Bannatyne MS, IV, 313-316.

may be considered under the general heading of 'penitential lyrics'. For the first time, the manuscripts themselves have not provided the appropriate critical label. This is not to suggest, however, that these poems amount to any clearly defined group: they are scattered through the first section of the Bannatyne MS, and there is no formal, and few stylistic, features to unite them. All that can be said is that they are concerned, in their various ways, with the topics of sin and justification. It is seldom easy to separate the poems on this topic into 'religious' and 'moral' categories. Fortunately, Bannatyne has already made a division - into "ballatis of theologie" and "ballatis of ... moralitie" respectively - and one may confine one's attention to the first of these.\textsuperscript{55} I have continued to apply the term 'lyric' to such poems, and this may merit a word of explanation here. The penitential poems are not joyful works of celebration: they are for the most part sombre in tone and restrained in expression. Yet it is quite conceivable that these poems might be set to music and be sung, and we definitely know this to be true of Fethy's penitential lyric.\textsuperscript{56} In that sense, at least, these poems are 'lyrics'. If the penitential poems are solemn and sad, so too are the Passion poems, and if the latter may be termed 'lyrics', so may the former. The subject of penitence, moreover, is deeply rooted in the meditative tradition, one of the main inspirations of the

\textsuperscript{55} For these titles: The Bannatyne MS, II, 108.

\textsuperscript{56} See below, pp.369-370. Fethy's poem is reproduced below, p.382.
mediaeval religious lyrics. Mediaeval treatises on penitence are common, and a Scottish example contemporary with some of the religious lyrics discussed here is that by Johannes de Irlandia, included in the Asloam MS: this is even given the same title as the penitential poem of Dunbar - "table of confessioun".  

Although there are penitential poems from both before and after the Reformation, the doctrines concerning penitence were considerably modified at that time. Whereas Penance was a sacrament for Catholics, it ceased to be so for the Protestants. One of the essential parts of this sacrament was private, auricular confession, and this was abolished by the Reformers, who found the institution, with its 'whispered sins', unacceptable. Another part of Penance was the satisfaction made by the penitent in atonement of the initial sin, and this, too, was repudiated by the Reformers. In Calvin's theology of predestination a sacrament of Penance was unnecessary, for the elect were to be rewarded in any case. This is not the place for a detailed discussion of this vexed theological issue, however, and fortunately this is not required for a study of the poetry. In most cases the lyrics do not expound doctrinal theories, but content themselves with the

57 The Asloam MS, I, 65-80.
59 Gude and Godlie Ballatis, p.201.
60 For such a discussion see: Maurice Taylor, "The Conflicting Doctrines of the Scottish Reformation", in McRoberts, Essays on the Scottish Reformation, pp.245-273.
expression of a general mood of sorrow, and of the poet's sense of man's unworthiness in the face of Christ, his saviour. There is thus an area of common ground between the Catholic and the Protestant poems on this subject, and the tradition of penitential lyrics, though perhaps disturbed, continues after the Reformation. One sign of this continuity is Bannatyne's inclusion of a penitential lyric by Henryson, on the one hand, and one by Robert Norvell, on the other. In a case where a Catholic poet does allude to specific matters of pre-Reformation doctrine, his poem is subject to censorship, and the relevant parts are deleted or altered. The only example of this, however, is that of Dunbar's confessional poem, To the, O marcifull salvior myn, Jesus, which, as we shall see, is suitably 'treated' in the Bannatyne MS, and 'pruned' in the Maitland Folio.

Patterson, in his study of the Middle English penitential lyric, distinguishes between lyrics of confession and those of contrition. Of the first, the only Scottish example is the Dunbar poem just mentioned, and - for doctrinal reasons - one would not expect to find such a poem after the Reformation. Poems of contrition, however, continue unabated after the Reformation: so much so, in fact, that penitential lyrics of contrition - as we shall see in the following chapter, when discussing the Gude and Godlie Ballatis - become the characteristic type of post-

61 The Bannatyne MS, II, 58-60, 47-50; I, 33-36, 18-21.
Reformation religious lyric. Patterson also shows that penitential poems in the Middle Ages might be directed to the Virgin Mary. Such poems were obvious candidates for suppression, and we find none in the Scottish texts of the middle and late sixteenth century. One specimen of this type of poem has, however, already been discussed, in the context of the Marian lyrics: O hie emperice and quene celestiall (found in the Selden and Asloan MSS).

The earliest of the surviving Scottish penitential poems is perhaps 'Ane prayer for the pest', by Robert Henryson: O eterne God, of power infinyt. This is a completely public poem, and Henryson speaks for all the people of Scotland when he addresses his anguished appeal to God. The title of the poem is explained by the refrain in the first eight stanzas: "Preserve us fra this perrelus pestilens". Outbreaks of the plague were not uncommon in fifteenth-century Scotland, and Henryson may have such an occasion in mind - though Charles Elliott points out that these outbreaks were too frequent to permit a precise dating of this poem. This lyric, moreover, may have had a special significance for George Bannatyne, whose collection of Scottish poetry was made "in tyme of pest".

Such a calamity as the plague has the effect of making men reflect upon their lives: when death may come at any

---

63 Brown, Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century, pp. 26-28; The Asloan MS, II, 245-246. See also above, pp.212-245.
64 The Bannatyne MS, I, 33-36; II, 58-60.
66 The Bannatyne MS, IV, 332.
moment, it is time to enquire into the state of one's soul, and make the necessary corrections. Henryson, naturally, implores God to remove the scourge from his country:

Haif mercy, lord, haif mercy, hevynis king,
Haif mercy, of thy pepill penent:
Haif mercy of our petous punissing,
Retreit the sentence of thy just jugement. (33-36)

At the same time, the poet acknowledges that men are full of sin, and deserve to be punished. They would even welcome this, but by any means other than the plague:

We ar richt glaid thow puneis our trespas,
Be ony kynd of uthir tribulatioun,
Wer it thy will, 0 lord of hevin, allais,
That we sowld thus be haistely put doun. (17-20)

These lines imply a total submission to God's will, whatever this should bring. The poet's attitude is akin to that of the Psalmist, as he voices the sins of his people. Like him, Henryson points out that death does not diminish, or rectify the sins of men: "Salvum me fac propter misericordiam tuam. Quoniam non est in morte qui memor sit tui; in inferno autem quis confitebitur tibi?" It is repentance which is required, and he asks for "grace for till amend our mis" (49). The poet points out that Christ lived and died for the redemption of mankind - the plague does not help to secure that salvation:

Remember, lord, how deir thow hes us bocht,
That for us synnaris sched thy pretius blude.
Now to redeme that thow hes maid of nocht,
That is of vertew barrane and denude,
Haif mercy, lord, of thyne awin symlitude. (41-45)

67 Psalms, 6, 5-6.
Henryson's tone in addressing God is both humble and reasonable, and takes the words of the Psalmist as model. God, of course, needs no reminding of the purpose of the Passion of His Son, but here Henryson is really speaking to other men - they are the ones who have to be reminded. Henryson has two roles in the poem - those of spokesman for man, and preacher to man - and consequently the lyric is both precatory and didactic. The second of these aspects is most pronounced when Henryson criticises the sins of those who are in authority over other men, and who ought to be a force for good:

Bot wald the heiddismen that sowld keip the law Pueneis the peple for thair transgressioun, Thair wald na deid the peple than owrthraw. Bot thay ar gevin so planely till oppressioun, That God will nocht heir thair intercessioun.  

Surely one can recognise here the moral tone of the author of the Fabillis: Henryson is never afraid to condemn evil when he sees it. 68

The last three stanzas of this lyric introduce a profusion of internal rhyme, and there is an appearance of aureate diction:

Superne, lucerne, guberne this pestilens, Preserve and serve, that we not sterve thairin. Declyne that pyne be thy devyne prudens, O trewth, half rewth, lat not our slewth us twin.

The refrain in these stanzas changes to "Latt nocht be tynt

---

that thow so deir hes bocht". (Such conspicuous alterations to the form of the lyric presumably led the scribe of the Bannatyne Draft MS to suppose that he had copied two poems.) These three stanzas make a brilliant conclusion to the poem. Until this point, the whole lyric has moved between humble prayer and acknowledgement of sin, and the glorification of God. In the intricate lines of the final stanzas the element of glorification is intensified, and Henryson so contrives that the removal of the plague by God will seem to be a deed that can only redound to His glory: "Bot thow, sa wyis, devyis to mend this byle" (77). The attrition inspired by the thought of the plague has been converted into a true contrition. It may be that the change of diction in the last stanzas of the poem is intended as a rhetorical correlative of the change in the spiritual condition of the poet himself. Henryson, unlike the Psalmist, has before him the unique example of Christ, and the thought of the Passion is not just a spur to the conscience, but also the chief ground of the hope of salvation.

Henryson's poem is a finely expressed lyric of public contrition. On man's behalf he confesses to sins, repents of them, and asks for God's mercy. In the process of reading the poem (or listening to it), one's attitude to the plague undergoes a change: the plague ceases to be merely the threat of immediate death, and becomes instead a force which leads man to a greater self-knowledge, and

69 The Bannatyne MS, I, 35-36.
to the acceptance of God's will. William Stewart, one will remember, used the subjects of the plague and the Passion to construct a memorable Complaint: *O man, remember and prent in to thy thocht.*\(^70\) (Stewart's poem has a refrain - "Amend thy mys, this plaig sall pas the fra" - which is almost an answer (spoken by Christ) to the plea contained in the refrain of Henryson's lyric: "Preserve us fra this perrelus pestilens.") Yet that lyric was found to be strangely unsatisfactory, and harsh in tone. Henryson's poem, however, does not set out to frighten man, but to lead him to a higher level of moral and spiritual awareness. *O eterne God* is thus a solemn poem, but also a very satisfying one.

The vocabulary of Henryson's lyric reveals influences similar to those already remarked in the poems of Bellenden and Douglas. The final three stanzas are well known for their aureation, yet the 'learned' cast of this poem is evident also in the first section, from such words as: indigent (5); succure (7); clemens (14); tributatioun (18); penetryve (26); pungityve (29); etc. Henryson may be the first user of some of these words - and DOST declares him to be the first user of: evaid (50); intercessioun (61); lucerne (65); guerne (65); distort (74) and deluge (84). Innobediens (62) and dissiver (70) are unrecorded in DOST. Once again we see the influence of humanist education,\(^71\) and in the intricate internal rhymes in the last three

\(^{70}\) The Bannatyne MS, II, 90-95. See above, pp. 243-245.

\(^{71}\) MacQueen, *Robert Henryson*, pp. 21-23.
stanzas we can probably discover a debt to the Grands Rhétoriqueurs. Just as Dunbar does in his Marian lyric, Henryson strives for (and achieves) heightened effect through these striking features of style, and this is appropriate to O eterne God, where the poet ends by making a fervent plea for divine assistance and mercy.

The Gray MS, which preserves the Annunciation lyric by Henryson, contains a penitential lyric - To the maist peirlas prince of pece - which takes its refrain from the opening of another of the Penitential Psalms: Miserere mei deus.\(^72\) This Latin phrase is widely used in the Missal, especially - as one would expect - at times of fasting and repentance.\(^73\) Another text of this lyric is found, with two new stanzas, in Richard Hill's MS (Balliol MS 354) - a well known English commonplace-book of the time of Henry VIII.\(^74\)

It would seem from certain rhymes, however, that the Scottish version of this poem is the older one. For example, in line 30 the Gray text rhymes "fra us" with "deus", which is quite possible in Scotland. The English text here has "leve us" - which does not, and cannot, rhyme at all, and the whole line - "Then will they alone leve us" - seems to have lost its rhythm, as if it had been tampered with.

This lyric emphasises the ephemerality of human life, attempting to lead the reader (or listener) towards an

\(^72\) The Makculloch MS, pp.51-53.
\(^73\) Sarum Missal, pp.52, 450, etc.
\(^74\) Songs, Carols, and other Miscellaneous Poems, ed. Roman Dyboski, EETS (London, 1908), pp.52-54.
attitude of contempt for this world. After recapitulating the Passion, near the end of the lyric, the poet and the reader look forward to the life to come, and both pray to the "Crist, that confortis all mankynd" (56). The lyric has considerable poetic power when speaking of the grim realities of human life:

Quhen we ar deid and dollin deip,
And grene girs [growis] abone our brawne,
Quhat helpis than to wawill or weip?
Till this lif cum we nevir agane.
Bot also smal as droppis of rane,
Wan wormys so schill sall all to schow us,
And than it is to lait to sayne,
Lord, miserere mei deus. (17-24)

The use of alliteration in this stanza is effective in giving full weight to the key words, particularly in the passage with the innumerable worms, pale and cold as death, which attack the buried body. In lines such as these, the poet strips away the things which normally console the human heart, and he brings the reader, in a deliberately brutal fashion, face to face with death. This kind of morbid realism is a not uncommon feature of the penitential lyrics.

The Scottish poet who made the greatest contribution to this class of lyrics was William Dunbar. This will not surprise us, since in previous chapters we have already seen his preeminence as a composer of religious lyrics. There are three penitential poems which are certainly by Dunbar: a fourth - Thow that in hevin for our salvatioum - is attributed to the same poet in the Maitland Folio (and
Reidpeth) MSS, but Denton Fox has given some convincing reasons for the removal of this poem from the Dunbar canon.75

The penitential lyrics of other poets express fear of death and consciousness of sin, in a fairly general way: by contrast, two of Dunbar's penitential poems emphasise precise points of doctrine concerning penitence. These more specific and explicit poems would be undoubtedly offensive (in parts, at least) to Protestant sensibilities. O synfull man, thir ar the forty dayis is found, significantly, only in the Arundel MS, while To the, O marci full salviour myn, Jesus has suffered some losses in the Maitland Folio, while in the Bannatyne MS it has suffered both deletions and alterations.76 As we would expect, the Seven Commands of the Kirk (which include going to Mass, keeping Fasts, making Confession) are left out of both the later versions of this poem. Maitland also omits the stanza on the Seven Sacraments, but Bannatyne adroitly redrafts Dunbar's lines and succeeds in mentioning only two sacraments. The poet had originally written, "I schrie me cleyne, with humile spreit and meik" (4), but in Bannatyne this becomes: "I repent my synnys, with humill hart contreit". To a Protestant, one could not shrive oneself clean: confession could no longer lead to absolution. We should note, here, that the Maitland scribe has begun to write out a few lines of the stanzas on the

75 The Maitland Folio MS, I, 210-211; Fox, PQ, XXXIX (1960), 413-425.
Sacraments and the Seven Commands of the Kirk, but has then scored them out— as if thinking better thereof. There are many such fascinating variants in the text of this lyric, and this shows the extent to which Dunbar is preoccupied with the specific articles of his faith. His penitential poems, even more than his other religious lyrics, show him to be writing as a professional ecclesiastic.

The poem, O synfull man, thir ar the forty dayis, refers to the time of Lent, the period of fasting which precedes Easter. The Arundel MS gives this poem the title, "The maner of passynge to confessioun", and this is exactly right. Dunbar is not so much urging his reader to repent as advising him in the best way of making his confession. His audience is already contrite, remembering the example of Christ's voluntary forty-day fast, and is ready to pass on to the next stage of penitence—confession. As the poet says, "With humyll and sad contrycioun,/Thow suld cum to thine confessioun" (48-49). Dunbar urges his reader directly: "Thow schrive the clene, and mak confessioun" (10). Most of the poem consists of advice on how to find a competent confessor, how to frame the confession itself, and how to avoid the temptation to make an incomplete confession. Dunbar all through this poem speaks in a voice of experience and authority. To make his message more effective, he falls back at one point on a proverbial expression: "Thow knawis best quhair bindis the thi scho"

---

77 See below, pp.391-394.
78 Devotional Pieces, pp.257-259.
(54). This, too, betrays the poet's professional understanding of the conscience of the sinner. At other places Dunbar employs medical metaphors, in which sins are equated with physical wounds and diseases: one cannot be restored to health unless they are thoroughly cleansed (15-21). The same metaphor allows the poet to warn of the consequences of concealment:

Off twenty wounddis and ane be left unhelit, 
Quhat awalis the leiching of the laif? 
Rycht sua thi schrift, and thair be oucht conselit, 
Awalis not thi sely saule to saif. (22-25)

As one can see from such a passage, Dunbar's task here is one of persuasion, and he shows that the only sensible and reasonable course for man to take is that of full confession. This is especially true of young men who might be tempted to let such observances pass by:

I reid the, man, quhill thou art stark and young, 
With pith and strenth into thi yeris grene, 
Quhill thou art abill baith in mynde and toung, 
Repent the, man, and kepe thi conscience clene. (64-67)

The opening of this last stanza perhaps contains an echo from Henryson's "Reasoning betuix aige and yowth", one refrain of which is: "O yowth be glaid in to thy flowris grene".79 In this poem Dunbar's is the voice of Age, of experience, of the preacher who earnestly desires the salvation of his fellow men.

O synfull man is a penitential poem in the sense that it deals with one stage in the Catholic doctrine of penitence.

79 The Bannatyne MS, I, 68-71; II, 137-139.
It is altogether a didactic work, and one cannot really describe it as a lyric. However, it is important as an introduction to the greatest Middle Scots lyric of penitence - the confessional poem, To the, O marcifull salviour myn, Jesus. The relationship between these poems is brought out in their titles: "The maner of passyng to confessioun", and "The tabill of confessioun", respectively. The second poem is the confession which might be made by the person addressed in the previous poem, and it relates entirely to the second stage of penitence.

The most striking aspect of To the, O marcifull is its comprehensiveness. The poet confesses to so many sins that it is hard to imagine that he could have omitted to mention any others. Most of the poem is taken up with such enumeration under the following categories: the Five Wits; the Seven Deadly Sins; the Seven Deeds of Corporal and Spiritual Mercy; the Ten Commandments; the Twelve Articles of the Creed; the Seven Commands of the Kirk; etc.

To accommodate all of these sins, the basic rhetorical device of the poem is that of catalogue, and Dunbar's poem comprises a remarkably full list. Denton Fox perhaps had this poem in mind, when he declared that Dunbar's long religious poems "seem today the least attractive part of his work".

It is not necessary here to go into this list of sins in great detail: they are recapitulated and discussed at

---

80 Devotional Pieces, pp.1-6.
81 Fox, PQ, XXXIX (1960), 413-425.
some length by Tom Scott, in his account of the poem. 82 One thing, however, seems clear - that Dunbar is not making a personal confession of his own sins, but instead is making what the Maitland scribe calls "ane confessioun generale". The poet will, doubtless, be guilty of some of the sins he mentions, but that is not the main point: his chief intention, surely, is to mention all the sins of which he knows, in order that his words may be applicable to as wide a readership as possible. All those who read or hear Dunbar's poem will recognise the sins of which they themselves are personally guilty, through the words provided by the poet they will make confession of these sins, and in this way the poem will have a universal relevance. To speculate whether Dunbar had 'oppressed' anyone is otiose. 83

This penitential poem can be related to the private devotions which we see in popular texts such as the Prymer. At the end of the York Prymer (printed many times between 1510 and 1556) we find "The Forme of Confessyon", which breaks down the confession of sin under the following categories: the Seven Deadly Sins; the Ten Commandments; the Five Wits; the Seven Works of Corporal Mercy; the Seven Works of Spiritual Mercy; the Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost; the Seven Sacraments; the Eight Beatitudes. 84 Dunbar's poem has clearly begun life as a versification of such a devotional exercise, and once again we can see the links

82 Scott, Dunbar, pp.288-298.
83 Scott, Dunbar, p.290.
between the vernacular verse and the piety of an age nourished by the influences of Marianism, Franciscanism, and the Devotio Moderna.

The power of this lyric lies, I believe, in its very comprehensiveness. Each reader can use the words of Dunbar for his own confession, since each will find that he is guilty of at least some of the sins mentioned by Dunbar: one would not necessarily have to be guilty under every count in order that the poem should prick the conscience.

To the, O marciull represents a complete categorisation of experience, and one sees, from the poem, that there is an infinity of ways in which human life and intercourse can degenerate from the ideal exhibited by the life of Christ. The diction of the poem contributes largely to the conscience-striking effect. While continual catalogues may not leave much space for other rhetorical colours, they do make a total, cumulative impact, which seems greater than the sum of all the parts. At the same time, the great compression evident in Dunbar's lists of sins suggests that the poet must have covered every sin possible. Then again, the combination of this compression, with the absence of any other poetical distractions or fine flourishes, creates and sustains a sombre and sorrowful tone, which is the outward sign of the penitent mind. All these aspects can be seen in this stanza:

Lord, I have done full litill reverence
Unto the sacramentis sevin of gret renoun:
To that his eucarist moist of exellence,
Baptasing, pennence, and confirmacioun,
Matremony, ordour, and extreme unclyoun.
Heirof sa fer as I wes necligent,
With hert contrit and teris falling doun,
I cry the marcy, and laser to repent. (41-48)

Compression, catalogue, absence of any pictorial, mytho-
logical or astrological references, and a concentration on
the spiritual state of the speaker - these are all respon-
sible for the solemn power of such lines. If the effect
produced by Dunbar in this poem is, perhaps, less
immediately attractive than that of certain of his other
poems, it is nonetheless real. In the last three stanzas
the poet renounces the catalogue method, and his verse,
after the restraint and severity of the rest of the poem,
seems to become unusually expressive:

Though I have nocht thi precius feit to kis,
As had the Magdalyn quhen scho did marcy craife,
I sall as scho weipe teris for my mys,
And every morrow seik the at thi graife. (145-148)

The sound of a personal voice in these lines is all the more
striking for the rigid schematisation which has gone before.
The poet asks that the memory of Christ's pain and death
fill him with compassion (Dunbar had said similar things
in his Passion lyric), and ends with the prayer that his
soul - figured in the traditional image of a ship - may
arrive safely in heaven.

In its forswearing of the customary adornments, this
poem may perhaps seem the least 'poetical' of Dunbar's
religious lyrics, and in its reliance on the conventional
categories of sins it may perhaps seem the least 'original'.
Paradoxically, however, To the, O marcifull - as I have
tried to show - has a considerable poetic power, within the terms of its rhetoric of restraint. It makes an enormously effective penitential lyric, of a type which Patterson would call 'extended, general confessions of sins', and has all the unity of emotion which Patterson desiderates in the true lyric.  

The third of Dunbar's penitential lyrics consists of a single stanza:

Salviour, suppois my sensualite
Subject to syn hes maid my saule of sys,
Sum spark of lycht and spiritualte
Walkynnis my witt and ressoun biddis me rys.
My corrupt conscience askis, clips and cryis
First grace, syne space for to amend my mys,
Substance with honour, doing none suppryis,
Freyndis, prosperite, hear peax, syne hewynis blys.

This poem, like most of the penitential lyrics, makes an acknowledgement of sin without specific reference to the doctrines of penance, or to the form of confession. It is noticeable that, in the last four lines, when the poet makes his petition to God, the whole rhythm of the verse changes: the lines cease to flow, and become terse and uneven. This is, presumably, what Scott has in mind when he says that these lines "anticipate Donne's style and manner". It is as if the movement of the verse were itself intended to display the difficulties which beset the man who turns from sin and labours to attain "hewynis blys".

The poem, "Quhen the governour past in Frayne", has,

85 Middle English Penitential Lyric, pp.2, 10-15.
86 The Maitland Folio MS, I, 393.
87 Scott, Dunbar, p.302.
on the basis of the Maitland colophon, been traditionally attributed to Dunbar. However, the arguments of Professor Fox - relating to the date, and to the style of the poem - now make the attribution seem less likely. 88 John Stewart, Duke of Albany, was made Regent of Scotland after Flodden (1513), and the present poem bewails the disorder which the poet feared would attend the Governor's return to France. Albany, in fact, left for France in 1517, 1522 and 1524 (the last time for good), and the poem could refer to any of these occasions. While one can agree with Tom Scott that this is a sincere and deeply felt poem of lamentation, 89 one must also, I think, accept Professor Fox's criticisms of the rather clumsy diction of this poem, which does not have the 'feel' of Dunbar's verse - though his description of the tone of this poem as "a mixture of whining servility and currish snapping" seems rather extreme. 90

Thow that in hevin is a penitential poem for the whole Scottish nation, and it acknowledges political as well as personal sins:

Lord, hald thy hand that strikin hes so soir,
Have of us pietie eftir our punyioun;
And gif us grace the to greif no moir,
And gar us mend with pennance and contritioun,
And to thy vengeance mak non additioun,
As thow that of michtis may to morne.
Fra cair to confort thow mak restituioun,
For but thy help this kinrik is forlorne. (33-40)

88 The Maitland Folio MS, I, 210-211. Fox, PQ, XXXIX (1960), 413-425.
89 Scott, Dunbar, pp. 265-267.
90 Fox, PQ, XXXIX (1960), 423.
We have already seen that Henryson, in his penitential lyric, makes himself the spokesman for his contrite countrymen, and the present lyric is of the same type. Furthermore, both poems include a strong element of social and political criticism in their prayers to God. The inspiration here is obviously Biblical: the Scots are like the Jews in that their sins have led them away from the path set by God, and their misfortunes as a nation are the signs of God's punishment. As we shall see in the conclusion to the following chapter, this kind of penitential-cum-political verse begins to loom large in the post-Reformation age - especially in such poets as Lauder, Scott and Maitland.91

Dunbar's Passion lyric, Amang thir freiris, contains a stanza which is a succinct account of how feelings of penitence are aroused by the contemplation of the Passion:

Methocht Compassioun, vode of feiris,
Than straik at me with mony ane stound;
And for Contritioun bathit in teiris
My visage all in watter drownit.
And Reuth in to my eir ay rounde,
"For schame, allace, behald, man, how
Beft is with mony ane wound,
Thy blissit salvatour Jesu". (97-104)92

One Bannatyne lyric, O man, unthankfull to thy creator, sets out to make a similar impact upon the reader.93 The poet first emphasises the love which God has for man, and Christ, "That blissit prince is blyith the to imbrace" (5).

91 See below, pp.453-459.
92 The Maitland Folio MS, I, 232.
93 The Bannatyne MS, II, 96-98.
God led the people out of Egypt (again there is the equation of the Scottish audience with the Jews), and put man in charge of this beautiful earth (17-32). Unfortunately, man has fallen from faith, and now needs to repent. At this point of the poem there is a stanza on the Passion, followed by the poet's exhortation:

Repent thy sinfull lyfe and the ammend;
Fra thynefurth se thou cuvat no manis geir:
And now in tyme I mak it to the kend,
Thair is no cryme bot thou mone it forbeir
And thou be saif fra furius seindis seir,
Or uthirwayis in smoke thou salbe smord
In hellis pane, in wofull wa and weir,
Be thou aganis thy gratius thankfull lord. (43-48)

This poem can be linked with the Complaints of Christ - with Stewart's poem, O man, remember and prent in to thy thocht, for example. In each of these poems there is an appeal for moral reformation, after an account of the Passion. In O man, unthankfull it is the poet, and not Christ, who is speaking, but the same "exortationis" are made. Strictly speaking, of course, O man, unthankfull cannot be described as a penitential lyric. It is included here partly in order to complete the survey of the religious lyrics in the Bannatyne MS, and partly because of its general concern with the subjects of sin and repentance.

A didactic poem like O man, unthankfull bears fruit, so to speak, in such a fine lyric of penitential meditation on the Passion as O hicht of hicht and licht of licht most cleir.94 The poet here asks that the Passion be 'printed'.

94 The Bannatyne MS, I, 23-24; II, 52.
on our minds, so that we may be truly contrite and ultimately receive God's remission (6-10). The poet speaks from a deep realisation of the power of the enemies of man's soul: "Fro hellis houndis conserve our sawlis fre,/ Quhen that thow soundis thy awfull horne on his" (14-15). He also marvels at the fact that He Who shone brightly on high should willingly descend into the darkness of this world:

Sone schynyng bricht, aboif Saturnus spheir,
Quhois vesage heir for us wox dym of sicht,
The way to beir us to eternall licht. (3-5)

In his meditation the poet dwells on the sufferings incurred by Christ in atoning for the sins of man - shamed, outraged, and subjected by men to the cruel irony of the Crown of Thorns. For the sake of that Passion, the poet prays to Christ to save him from the assaults of the devil:

Redemptor gud, ressaif in paradice
Thy merchandyce, that thow bocht on the rude.
Latt not the wude, infernall cokatrice
Fra the us tyse, sweit Jesu myld of mude:
For the Brit pryce and vertew of thy blude. (16-20)

There is a quality of elegant and decorous restraint in the diction of this lyric. The poet's prayer is clearly and calmly stated, and one appreciates his use of internal rhyme, which helps to render the earnest tone more appealing. The lyric is a fine example of a penitential poem which has resulted directly from a personal meditation on the Passion.

The prospect of the poet's own death is also a powerful factor in generating thoughts of penitence. Patterson
includes a group of English lyrics in his collection, on
the theme of Timor mortis conturbat me. However, probably the best known poem in this tradition is the so-called 'Lament for the Makaris', by Dunbar, but in this poem the emphasis on death and decay - particularly as they affect the poets - leaves little room for thoughts which are specifically penitential, and I therefore do not propose to discuss this work here. A better example is "Shir John Futhies Sang of Repentance". Thomas Wode, in whose musical manuscript this lyric is preserved, says that Fethy composed it "bayth letter and note". This is important, since it is the most explicit instance of the connection between Middle Scots lyrics and music.

Fethy was a "papeist priest", a distinguished organist who, in the 1530's introduced a new style of fingering, and was also a Canon of the Chapel Royal, the institution which was probably more than any other sympathetic to the composition of religious lyrics, combining as it did the interests of both Court and Church. In this poem, Fethy rejoices that God has at last brought him to a state in which he may perceive the folly of his earlier life. He wishes that his present "gude mynd" may continue. In the second stanza

95 Middle English Penitential Lyric, pp.100-108.
97 The text of Fethy's lyric is given below, p.382.
98 For discussions of the importance of the St. Andrews Psalter for Scottish Poetry, see: MacQueen, Ballattis of Luve, pp.xi-xiv, xxx-xxxiii; Shire, Song, Dance and Poetry, pp.23-25.
99 See above, pp.48-52.
the poet rounds on the young man who, not having yet seen the light, still rejoices in frivolous pleasures, and he points out that only the grace of God can be of any sure help at the end. In His treatment of the poet, and also of the young man, God's purposes are entirely justified.

Fethy's ballat is scored for four parts: alto, two tenors, and bass. It is composed in minor harmonies, which thoroughly fit the penitential mood of the piece, yet, in a nice touch, Fethy has made the more optimistic last line of each stanza coincide with the customary cadence on to the final chord of the major (if one can use these terms here). Words and setting are perfectly compatible. Elliott and Shire suggest that Fethy is also poet and composer of another lyric, which is only preserved in a manuscript copy of the first edition of Forbes's *Cantus* of c.1662. This is the four part (SATB) piece, *The time of youth more I repent*, reproduced below. Once again the poet looks back on a career of youthful folly, and in deploring his wasted time, is grateful to God for the opportunity to repent. For all that Fethy was a "papeist priest", however, there is nothing in these two lyrics to offend the Reformers. It is quite possible that they were composed in the new age - especially since Fethy did not die till c.1570, and the poems are clearly those of a man well advanced in years.

100 *Music of Scotland*, pp.154-156.
101 *Music of Scotland*, pp.157, 211. See below, p.383.
The same attitude of complete acceptance of the will of God is seen in the other Scottish lyric on the same theme, **O lord, my God, sen I am brocht to gret distress**. Bannatyne gives this poem the title of "A song of him lying in poyn of deth". Here the speaker declares at length that his mind is fixed only on God, his only "howp and confidence" (5). The progress of mortification cannot defeat his concentration: "Quhen that my senssis ar all gone/And wordis dois fail, /My hairt and mynd on the allone/ Salbe all haill" (21-22). The poetic interest of this work is not great, but the poem vividly displays the author's rather tense and grim attitude, in which he himself is not spared. Although it is difficult to be sure of it, this poem could well be the work of a Protestant, whose faith allows him to recommend his soul to God "With cheirfull hairt" (26). It is difficult to be sure of the date of this poem. It follows **O lord, my God, to the I cry, heir my complent** in the Laing MS, and this poem is the only other Scottish religious lyric written in the same verse form. Yet the latter poem refers to King James VI as a mature monarch - like King David - who has been preserved from the schemings of his relations. **O lord, my God, sen I am brocht may**, of course, have been the model for the later poem, to which, on formal and stylistic grounds, it is related.

Still on the subject of death and penitence, there is

the poem by Robert Norvell, *O most heich and eternall king.* This is the work of one who was indubitably linked to the Protestant cause, and in the following chapter I shall discuss his book, *The Meroure of an Christiane.* In the Bannatyne MS, Norvell's poem follows on the heels of Dunbar's great penitential poem, and the juxtaposition is surely significant: it is possible that the inclusion of *O most heich and eternall king* may have been intended as a sop to Reformed sensibilities. Norvell's poem, however, is by no means a work of Protestant polemics, and might even — apart from certain stylistic features — have come from a collection of mediaeval poems on mortality.

These stylistic features include — most obviously — the direct paraphrasing of Biblical texts, especially from the Psalms, complete with the numbered reference to the Scriptures:

*Gif thow desyre for to leif long*
*In rest and peice, and see gud dayis,*
*Frome speiking lyis refrane thy tong,*
*The four and throtty salme thus sayis.*  

(49-52)

One would be unlikely to find such an exact citation in a mediaeval lyric. (Incidentally, these lines show that Norvell was not using the Vulgate as his text, since there the relevant Psalm is number thirty-three.) We find paraphrases at several other places in the poem: "The psalme doith say, 'Call upoun me/In tyme of tribulatioun!" (64-65); "Agane God sayis, 'Gif ye me luve,/Than ye most keip my commandment!'" (33-34). We have already seen how penitential

---

103 *The Bannatyne MS*, I, 18-21; II, 47-50.
104 See below, pp.399-408.
lyrics often depend upon the Psalms (especially the Seven Penitential Psalms), but this lyric reveals a quite new devotion to the literal text of the Bible—another manifestation of its Protestant origin. This lyric is not a statement of personal penitence but a concise recapitulation of the reasons, drawn from Scripture, why men should repent: in a real sense, it is a preaching poem. As poetry the lyric is not without some good touches. There is a curious analogy from shooting, in one stanza:

How can ane blind man schut arryght,
Being all blind, without ony ee?
Sic can nocht lichtly hit the quhyt:
He that will leive most lerne to de. (13-16)\(^\text{105}\)

And the final stanza contains the neatly turned statement: "Be the we ryis quhen we do fall" (74). In spite of such touches, the emphasis in this poem is clearly on matter, rather than art, and, in terms of style, \textit{O most heich and eternall king} belongs with Norvell's other work, and with the \textit{Gude and Godlie Ballatis}.

The remaining Middle Scots penitential lyrics consist all of the prayers of individual sinners. One of these is the only poem from the first section of the Bannatyne MS still to be discussed: \textit{O lord, my God, on quhome I do depend.}\(^\text{106}\) In this lyric the poet, in an attitude of total humility, gives praise and thanks to God, and asks that he be defended from sin and temptation:

\(^{105}\) This stanza only appears in the Draft: \textit{The Bannatyne MS, I, 19.}
\(^{106}\) \textit{The Bannatyne MS, II, 104-105.}
A parfyte luve, gud lord, grant unto me,
With humill hairt to the praysis still,
Feiring for till offend thy majestie,
But daylie to obey thyne holy will.
Be my defens frome that thing that is ill,
And for thy onlie trewh and promeis saik,
Gif eir and heir the prayar that I maik. (8-14)

There is no obvious embellishment in such lines, no tricks of rhetoric. Yet the poet's style is the perfect expression of his humble and contrite heart. The tone of the lyric is deliberately low-keyed, and one can sense the calmness of spirit in which the poet addresses his God. It is the work of one who is meek of heart, one who has waited patiently on the Lord, one who knows that in God's will he has found his peace.

A rather different attitude of mind emerges from the lyric in the Maitland Quarto MS which begins thus:

With weippin eis and face defigrat,
My hairt to the, O God, I elevat,
But mynd and bodye humblie doe prostrat,
And als thy glorious name I invocat. (1-4)

Later we learn that the poet longs to pour out his 'sobs and sighs' by the footstool of God (24, 30). Since he has prayed for "ane mynd not counterfeit,/That wordes and thochtis and all in one may meit" (18-19), we must assume that the emotional terms in this lyric are the outward sign of the author's inward spiritual sorrow.

A similar relationship of emotion and expression can be seen in the other penitential lyric in the Maitland Quarto:

107 The Maitland Quarto MS, pp.251-252.
With sobs and sighs, with bitter tearis I groan,
Heir me, thairfoir, heir me, O lord, I say,
To the I flie, to the I rin and pray:
Graunt me at last, graunt me, a sinner puir,
That all the mas
Of my trespas
Thow will forget and maik me ever suir. (36-44)

In this poem the emotion is reflected in the verse itself: the repetition of words and phrases, the halting progress of several lines are all correlatives of the poet's strong emotion. At other places this bursts out in rhetorical questions:

What mortall man is he, O lord, that can
Thy merceis comprehend so monyfauld?
What sinfull wratche is he that dar be bauld,
Thy secreittis, lord, for to unfauld and skan? (45-48)

or in the use of anaphora for urgent invocation (23-26, 56-59). Both O lord in heavin above, that rewis all and With weippin eis have this strong emphasis on the outward, physical signs of the poet's feelings, and they seem to stand apart, somewhat, from the Bannatyne lyrics. The stanza forms of these two lyrics from the Maitland Quarto are, moreover, without parallels in the other Middle Scots religious lyrics, and these two poems in the Quarto MS may be later compositions, from perhaps the third quarter of the sixteenth century. (They must, however, date from before 1586, when the Quarto MS was completed.)

With the penitential lyric by Montgomerie we come to the last of the Middle Scots poems on this theme, with

108 The Maitland Quarto MS, pp.239-241.
which we need be concerned. There are, it is true, several more penitential lyrics in the Drummond and Laing MSS, but these all seem to belong to the end of the sixteenth century. As George Stevenson pointed out, the influence of Alexander Hume lies heavily upon them, and it is beyond the scope of this enquiry to examine the religious poetry of the Court of King James VI. The tenor of the poems in these late manuscripts can be gauged from these lines: "Bott frome that fillthie hour of Rome,/Lord keip me ever more". Not all of them, however, are as lively as this. On stylistic grounds there is nothing to link these poems with the Middle Scots lyrics proper. One could certainly link them, on the other hand, with the Gude and Godlie Ballatis, although reasons of practical convenience force one to end the detailed consideration of the poetry of the Protestants with that collection of 1567. The Laing MS, however, contains two penitential lyrics which, by virtue of their inclusion in the Bannatyne MS, can be said to have some connection with the Middle Scots lyrics. One of these - O lord, my God, sen I am brocht - has already been mentioned; the other is the "godlie ballat maid be the poet Montgomerie".

Montgomerie's Catholicism has already been noted in this study. One might therefore expect the poet to have a

109 Poems of Montgomerie, ed. Stevenson, pp.222-247; 364. This Drummond MS contains one poem certainly by Hume: The weight of sin is wondir greitt (pp.243-246). See also Poems of Hume, ed. Lawson, pp.64-67.


degree of sympathy with the works of the 'makaris' of the pre-Reformation age, a sympathy which might not be shared by the Protestant poets of the later sixteenth century. (If Montgomerie wrote this poem at - say - the age of thirty, it would date from c.1575.) At any rate, Montgomerie's penitential lyric shows certain features - common enough in the lyrics of the earlier poets - which seem to mark his poem as somewhat old-fashioned in style, when compared with the poetry of Hume. One of these features is the use of a Latin refrain: "Peccavi pater, miserere mei".112 This chapter began by discussing a whole group of poems with Latin refrains, and many other ballatis with Latin refrains have figured in previous chapters. Yet one simply ceases to find such poems in the later sixteenth century. Another feature concerns Montgomerie's quotations from the Psalms. As we have seen, this is normal in penitential lyrics. Montgomerie, however, quotes the Psalm texts in Latin (perhaps suggesting that, unlike Norvell, he was still using the Vulgate), and the texts he chooses come from two of the Penitential Psalms.113 Montgomerie has not been influenced by the Psalms in a vague and general way - like the authors of the penitential lyrics in the Laing MS: he quotes, rather, specifically from those Psalms which had traditionally been regarded as best expressing thoughts of penitence. By including direct Biblical quotations in his lyric, therefore, Montgomerie is

112 From St. Luke, 15, 21; Psalm 50, 1.
113 "Salvum me fac" (14) - Psalm 6, 5; "cor mundum" (71) - Psalm 50, 12.
in line with the practices of Protestant poets, but his use of Latin simultaneously sets him apart from them. The position of a Catholic poet (especially one who had possibly taken part in the Catholic plot of Barclay of Ladyland) in a Protestant Scotland may have been somewhat delicate — at least in the matter of religious poetry — and Montgomerie's methods in this lyric may represent something of a compromise with the new attitudes and styles.

In this poem Montgomerie compares himself to the Prodigal Son (4), asking his father for forgiveness. The reference to the Parable provides one powerful image for the poet's disgust at sin:

Suppois I slede, lett me nocht sleip in sleuth,
In stykand sty, with Sathanis synfull swyne,
Bot mak my tung the trumpett of thy trewth,
And len my vers sic wingis as ar devyne. (41-44)

Here the revulsion from evil to good is enacted poetically in the change from one letter of alliteration to another. In another stanza we see rhetoric put to good use — to show the violence which the poet needs in order to force his body to obey the commands of his soul:

Stowp, stubburne stomok, that hes bene so stowt,
Stowp, filthie flesche, and carioun of clay,
Stowp, hardnitt hart, befor the lord, and lowt,
Stowp, stowp, in tyme, differ not day be day. (56-59)

In his verbal artistry Montgomerie's poetic practice derives from that of the Middle Scots poets, and it distinguishes this penitential lyric from any of the others in the Laing

---

or Drummond MSS. Montgomerie asks for divine inspiration in his poetry: "Fie doun on me in forkit tungis of fyre" (51). For him the gift of poetic talent has an almost Pentecostal significance, and he is justified in boasting of this ability, which comes from God: "Thy spreit, my spreit to speike, with speid inspyre, /Help, Holy Ghost, and be Montgomereis muse" (49-50).

In the previous stanza the poet had said: "thow hes grantit me sa gud ingyne/To love the, lord, in galland style and gay" (45-46). This is surely a rather important phrase. Montgomerie's lyric is a powerful expression of penitence, yet it is more elaborate and exuberant than most of the lyrics of this category - especially those of the later sixteenth century. To find a comparable ability in handling rhetorical devices for effect one would have to go back to Henryson and Dunbar, to poets influenced both by the mediaeval tradition and by the verbal exuberance of the Grands Rhétoriqueurs. Perhaps significantly, it is Gavin Douglas and Montgomerie who refer to the Holy Ghost as the 'muse' of inspiration (a Renaissance touch). By contrast with the poetical style of penitential lyrics favoured in the later part of the century, Montgomerie's poem can seem nothing else but 'gallant and gay'. This remark by a man who was clearly not prepared in his religious lyrics to bury his poetic talent, gives one a measure of the extent to which the attitudes to religious poetry of the time of James VI differed from those

115 The Bannatyne MS, II, 25; Poems of Montgomerie, ed. Cranstoun, p.231.
prevalent in the mediaeval period, when rhetorical ornamentation was welcome in the religious lyrics. At the same time it can be seen that, with Pecca, pater, miserere mei, we have come, perhaps, to one of the last poems which can with justice be considered Middle Scots religious lyrics.

Although it is not easy to sum up a chapter which bears, in part, the title of 'miscellaneous lyrics', some general points may be deduced. Firstly, the discussion here presented has borne out yet again the absolutely crucial importance of the Bannatyne MS. It is the most copious, and the most varied, of the collections of Middle Scots poetry. The Bannatyne MS contains most of what is best in the Middle Scots religious lyrics, and it is the one manuscript in which we find the scribe making significant changes in the text of the lyrics in order to meet the doctrines of the Reformation. The Bannatyne MS also includes at least one lyric in what may be called the more 'advanced' style of the Protestant poets - using the word 'advanced' in a purely chronological sense - which is discussed in the following chapter. The so-called 'miscellaneous' poems - translations and expansions of Latin hymns, lyrics based on Scripture, poems on God, the Trinity and the Fall - these are the poems which fill out the first section of the Bannatyne MS, making it a comprehensive survey of the religious lyrics of mediaeval Scotland.
There is no convenient terminus ad quem for the penitential lyrics. They are not restricted to the Bannatyne MS, nor to the Catholic tradition, nor to the first half of the sixteenth century. Penitential poetry in Scotland continues into the reign of James VI, and beyond. Although specific points of doctrine may differentiate Protestant penitential lyrics from the Catholic ones, yet there is much held in common between them. Bannatyne's censored version of Dunbar's confession poem, and the penitential lyric of Montgomerie, may even be considered - in their different ways - as points of contact between the two styles, the two periods, the two beliefs. At any rate, of all the classes of religious lyrics known in 1568, it was those on the themes of sin and penitence which had the brightest future: as the other kinds of lyric died out, or were killed off, the penitential lyrics begin to monopolise the field. This process was, of course, a sign of the Protestant times, but it spelt the death of a rich poetic tradition.

Pethy's "Sang of Repentance"

O God abuse, so weill thou hes devyst
Me to be puneist with infirmitye,
That from the youth the rage I have suppryst
In tyme bygone I thought bot fantasies.
Heir I beseike thy godly majesty
That this gude mynd stand with continuance,
Sen ever and ains I wat that I mon dye,
Lord of my prayar have compaitence.

O witles youth that hes bot syght present,
Nathing before nor after what may fall,
Thou dois nathing bot that thou sall repent.
All thy sweit joy sall turne in bitter gall.
Sen na refuge nor help thou may on call
And warldly welth may make thee no supplye,
Aske grace at him wha giffs grace to all
And he will help in thy necessity.

Fethy?: The time of youth

The time of youth sore I repent,
Remembering how it was spent:
To grieve my God omnipotent
  I took no cure.
When he to me had riches lent
  I thought me sure.

Spending my time in vanitie,
Having no thought Christ dyed for me,
Nor yet that I myself should dye
  I took no thought.
All vice in me men might well see
  That e'er was wrought.

To serve the flesh I thought it best
As long as youth did with me last,
But to my God now I protest
  Before I die,
My soul with him in heav'n to rest
  Eternally.

Great thanks be to his Majestie,
That time and space hath lent to me
Of all my youth and fantasie
  For to deplor,
Wherefore I think his face to see
  Into his Glore.

Chapter X: Religious Lyrics and the Reformation.

(a) The Preservation of the Middle Scots Religious Lyrics ......................................................... p. 385

(b) Robert Norvell's Mercure of an Christiane .... p. 399

(c) The Gude and Godlie Ballatis ....................... p. 409

(d) The Second Half of the Sixteenth Century: Conclusion ......................................................... p. 450
In this chapter I shall attempt to show something of the ways in which the composition, transcription and preservation of religious lyrics were affected by the Reformation - the most dramatic religious, political and cultural phenomenon in Scotland in the sixteenth century. As we shall see, this was far from being a simple process of clear-cut change: rather, close investigation reveals many points of contact between the old and the new, the Catholic and the Protestant. For this reason it is, I believe, permissible to include the present discussion under a general heading of 'Middle Scots Religious Lyrics'.

The Preservation of the Middle Scots religious lyrics.

Many of the lyrics which have been discussed above, though written in the 'great period' of James III to James V, are preserved in texts which postdate the year 1560, when the first Reformation parliament was held. The Bannatyne and Bannatyne Draft MSS, the Maitland Folio and Quarto MSS, the Reidpeth MS and the St Andrews Psalter of Thomas Wode are all post-Reformation texts (although Craigie notes that one section of the Maitland Folio may be earlier), as are the printed collections of Norvell's *Meroire of an Christiane* and the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis.*

In the cases of some poems, the pre-Reformation lyric is preserved only in a post-Reformation text, while in others

---

1 The Maitland Folio MS, I, v. For the dates of the other MSS and prints mentioned here, see the Appendix, below, pp. 467-470.
we may have versions from both before and after 1560. The changes in religion caused many problems for the preservers of Mediaeval Scottish poetry, which they met in various ways.

The main problems were connected with the medium of print, since after the Reformation the church imposed a censorship on printed works. Scribes who wrote in the privacy of their own homes, or wrote for a restricted circle of recusants, were, of course, still able to pen what they wished: the manuscript of the English priest, John Forrest (dated 1571-81), which contains stanzas attributed to Dunbar, is such a text. ² A post-Reformation printed text, however, is unlikely to be a faithful witness to certain features of Catholic doctrine. As an early example, we may cite the fate of Douglas's translation of the Aeneid, by comparing the Trinity College MS of c.1515 with the version printed by William Copland at London in 1553:

Thou prynce of poetis, I the mercy cry,
I meyn thou Kyng of Kyngis, Lord Etern,
Thou be my muse, my gydar and laid stern,
Remittyng my trespas and every mys
+Throu prayer of thy Moder, Queyn of Blys.
Afald godhed, ay lestyng but discrepans,
In personys thre, equale, of a substans,
+On the I call, and Mary Virgyn myld -
Calliope nor payane goddis wild
May do to me na thing bot harm, I weyn:
+In Criste is all my traste, and hevynnys queyn.
+Thou, Virgyn Moder and Madyn, be my muse,
That nevir yit na synfull lyst refus
Quhilk the besocht devoutly for supple.

² See above, p.274.
Albeit my sang to thy hie majestie
Accordis nocht, yit condiscend to my write,
*For the sweit liquor of thy pappis quhite
+Fosterit that Prynce, that hevynly Orpheus,
+Grond of all gude, our Salvyour Jhesus.3

In the printed version, the lines marked with asterisks become:
Throu Christ thy sone, bring us to hevynly blys ...
On the I cal, with humyl hart and mild ...
In Christ I trest, borne of the virgine Quene ...
Thou Salviour of mankind, be mye muse ...
For thy excelland mercy, and love perfite
Thou holy gost, confort and sanctifye
My spret to ende, this wark to thy glory.4

References to Mary seem to be deleted wherever possible, and certainly when there is any allusion in Douglas's original to her role as a mediatrix for man with God. The sense of the last eight lines of this address is quite perverted by the alterations made in the printed text. This is far from being the only such instance, and Douglas's editor, Coldwell, has noted several passages of the Aeneid which suffer similarly (these deal with the Virgin Mary, and with Purgatory).5

The treatment meted out to the English print of Douglas's Aeneid is but a foretaste of what happens to some of the Catholic lyrics in the Bannatyne MS. J.T.T. Brown and Tod Ritchie suggested that the Bannatyne MS was compiled

4 The XIII Bukes of Eneados of the famose Poete Virgill (etc) (London, 1553), Prologue.
5 Virgil's 'Aeneid', ed. Coldwell, I, 102; III, 2; III, 3; III, 5; IV, 4.
with a view to publication, and the alterations in the
texts of many Catholic lyrics would seem to be in accord-
ance with just such an intention. More recently, however,
Professor Fox has expressed doubts about this: "Bannatyne was certainly not fool enough to think that publication of his MS would have been tolerated". 6

One case is that of the Annunciation lyric, Quhen be dyvyne deliberatioun, wherein the line from the Chepman and Myllar text:

This glorius lady quhom to we oftyme call
becomes in Bannatyne:

This glorius lady and virgin celestiall
and where the lines of the last verse:

And geve us grace that houre quhen we sall dee,
Be thy meke mene that place in hevin to wyn,
That ordanyt was for Abraham and his kyn.

are changed to:

And gif us grace, that hour quhen we sowld dee,
Be thy fair fruct that place in hevin to win,
That ordanit was for Adame and all his kin. 7

(In this last line the Draft MS retains "Abrahame").

Although Bannatyne has not excised all reference to Mary, he has carefully tried not to offend Protestant beliefs.

In another example, from the Passion lyric, Compatience persis, reuth and marcy stoundis, the line which originally read:

Thy wofull moder swonit stif and calde

---

6 Denton Fox, "Manuscripts and Prints of Scots Poetry in the Sixteenth Century", in Aitken, Bards and Makars, p.167.

7 The Makculloch MS, p.205; The Bannatyne MS, I, 10; II, 103.
becomes in Bannatyne:

Thy pretius blud for our redemptioun thow said. and, in the process, the reference to the Compassion is submerged. In the light of these changes we will not be surprised that the following lines from the Contemplacioun of Synnaris:

This is a sentence of singular conforting
For every stait, condicioun, and degre,
Quhair we ar gevin be gracius governyng
To Goddis moder, maistres of marcy,
Quhilk is cheif patroun and princis of piete ...

are omitted altogether from the abbreviated form, carved out of this work, which appears in the Bannatyne MS: O wondit spreit and saule in till exile.

It is not only in references to the Virgin Mary, however, that Bannatyne imposes his censorship. In Dunbar's poem, To the, O marciull salviour myn, Jesus, a stanza on the sacraments which survives in the Arundel MS has been drastically altered, with the lines:

Unto the sacramentis sevin of gret renoun:
To that hie eucarist moist of excellence,
Baptasing, penence, and confirmacioun,
Matremony, ordour, and extreme uncleioun ...

becoming:

To thy sacramentis excellent of renoun,
Thy haly supper for my syn recompence
And of my gilt the holy satisfactioun
And bapteme als quhilk all my syn wesche doun.

8 Devotional Pieces, p.256; The Bannatyne MS, II, 85.
9 Devotional Pieces, p.132; The Bannatyne MS, II, 80-83.
10 Devotional Pieces, p.2; The Bannatyne MS, I, 15; II, 43.
In the same poem, a stanza on the Seven Commands of the kirk is omitted altogether in both Bannatyne versions. Furthermore, one of the Resurrection lyrics in the Arundel MS which opens with references to the Catholic doctrines of penance:

Thow that in prayeris hes bene lent,
In prayaris and in abstinance,
For thy trespassis penitent,
Confessit and cleyne of all offence ...

is appropriately 'doctored' by Bannatyne:

Thow that hes bene obedient
To God be prayeris and abstinence,
For thy trespass als penitent
But spot and cleyn of all offence.

These examples show the more obvious kind of religious censorship. Others not so obvious include the suppression of the title, "ballat ... of the annunciatioun of Our Ladye" (which properly survives in the Mitchell Library text of Bellenden's poem, Quhen goldin phebus movit fra the ram) - with its Marian overtones - and the use instead of the innocuous title, "The Benner of Peetie". Such a change is surely significant when it affects the first lengthy poem in the Bannatyne MS. Then again, it is most curious that Bannatyne, who made the most copious collection of Middle Scots poetry, fails utterly to mention one sub-genre of religious lyrics - "ballatis of Our Ladye" -

11 Devotional Pieces, p. 3 (lines 81-88). See above, pp.333-364.
12 Devotional Pieces, p.275; The Bannatyne MS, II, 85.
13 Mitchell MS, p.vii; The Bannatyne MS, II, 3. See above, pp.155-156.
the perceived existence of which we only know from the
pre-Reformation Asloan MS. 14

Bannatyne is not the only culprit in this regard. We
find no "ballatis of Our Ladye" in either the Maitland
Folio or Quarto MSS, and the Folio text of Dunbar's
penitential poem, To the, O marcfull, makes textual
changes where we have already noted them in Bannatyne.
But the Maitland text is especially interesting because,
in the two stanzas on the Seven Sacraments and the Seven
Commands of the kirk, the scribe has begun to copy out the
original text, and has subsequently stricken out these
lines. 15 Unlike Bannatyne, however, the Maitland scribe
does not recast the offensive references: he merely omits
the stanzas altogether and proceeds to the next. One other
example, though it affects not the religious lyrics but
rather the text of Henryson's Morall Fabillis, can be seen
in the Bannatyne MS, where the scribe, after originally
writing at one point:

O Mary myld, medeator of mercy meke,
Sitt doun before thy Sone celestiall:
For us synnaris his celsitude beseke

then made an alteration to:

O Lord eternall, medeator for us mast meke,
Sit doun before thy Fader celestiall. 16

Such changes in the texts of Middle Scots poems afford
excellent glimpses of the censorship in action, and they

14 The Asloan MS, II, 270. See above, pp.248-249.
15 The Maitland Folio MS, I, 226-227.
16 The Bannatyne MS, IV, 181. The lines come from the
Moralitas to 'The Trial of the Fox', 230-332. See
also MacQueen, Robert Henryson, p.197; Denton Fox, in
Aitken, Bards and Makars, p.166.
serve to highlight the dangers of using any post-Reformation text of mediaeval, Catholic religious lyrics. We are indeed fortunate in having the Asloan and Arundel texts to compare with those of the second half of the sixteenth century.

Dr Helena Shire has called attention to another aspect of the first section of the Bannatyne MS which manifests Protestant influence: this is the very ordering of the pieces themselves. After listing the various headings and sub-headings used by Bannatyne in his collection of religious lyrics she says:

The Protestant cast of the book of devotional poetry is notable in contents, in certain absences and in the entitling. The ordering of the pieces within the section can be seen to be meaningful. The matter of his First Book, section one, can be 'read': God (by Bannatyne himself); the 'Benner of Piety'; a poem of advice to the Prince of Scotland (James V); poems on the creation and the created soul, its relation to God; hymns to Christ; the Magnificat. 17

In fact, it is Bannatyne's sleight of hand which is to be admired, for he has managed to give a 'Protestant cast' - a spurious appearance of religious modernity - to a group of poems which includes only one by an unequivocally Protestant author: Norvell's O most heich and eternall king. 18 The poems which begin and end Mrs Shire's list

18 The Bannatyne MS, I, 18-21; II, 47-50. See also below, pp.377-402.
both come from the fifteenth century, and, on top of that, both are English — one by William Hammer, the other by Lydgate. Yet it is interesting to note another of Bannatyne's techniques for bringing his poetry collection up to date, from the religious point of view.

More recently, William Ramson has suggested a more elaborate theory to account for the contents of the first section of the Bannatyne MS, based on the three terms which appear in Douglas's Tenth Prologue: Intelligence, Reason, and Memory:

Broadly the poems fall into three groups, each corresponding with one of these terms: poems, like Bellenden's 'Banner of Piety', which set forth the 'matter' of the Christian story, corresponding with 'Intelligence' (the remembering of things past, the historical sense); poems, like Dunbar's Tabill of Confessioun, which contrast man 'lying in poynt of deth' with the power of God, which call on man to know himself, corresponding with Reason; affective poems, exhortatory poems or poems for occasions, corresponding with memory (the keeping of the 'conceit', the retention of belief, the nurturing of apprehension).

This is an interesting interpretation, if perhaps somewhat over-subtle. Several objections can be raised against it. First, Ramson's three categories of religious lyric could probably be applied to any large collection of this type of poem; one can certainly find examples of all three in the Arundel and Maitland Folio MSS, and thus his comments

---

19 The Bannatyne MS, II, 2, 60-63. See above, pp.123-124.
do not refer particularly to the Bannatyne MS. Second, few lyrics consist entirely of one category: most seem to set out some 'matter', then try to render that matter affecting, and so require man to search into his own soul. The divisions are almost never as neat as Ramson implies. Third, Ramson disregards poems which do not fit the theory, but which are nonetheless there: for example, Bellenden's 'Proheme of the Croniculs', which is in no sense a religious lyric.\textsuperscript{21} The whole subject of George Bannatyne's editing of predominantly Catholic texts in the very decade of the Reformation is, however, an extremely interesting one, and one must be grateful to Shire and Ramson for raising it.

After what has been said, therefore, it may seem paradoxical to praise the general fidelity of the Bannatyne texts: though the latter are not to be preferred to Asloan or Arundel, they are yet greatly to be preferred to other contemporary or subsequent collections. In the case of Dunbar's penitential poem, \textit{To the, O marcifull}, Bannatyne preserves stanzas (albeit in recast forms) which Maitland totally suppresses (apart from a few intrusive lines, later deleted).\textsuperscript{22} It is surely better to have a corrupt text, from which the original may be reconstructed, than to have no text at all. And if we compare Bannatyne's text with a contemporary print, the superiority of the manuscript is at once apparent. For illustration we may turn again to the text of Henryson. In the case of the three lines from

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item The Bannatyne MS, II, 9-20.
\item See above, pp.357-358.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
the Fabillis quoted above, the Bassandyne print of 1571 reads:

O Mediatour! mercifull and meik,
Thow soveraigne Lord, and King Celestiall,
Thy celsitude maist humillie we beseik. 24

Both Bannatyne and Bassandyne rewrite Henryson's lines, but the former is the more conservative in his text. Other examples from the text of Henryson which support this conclusion are listed in an Appendix by MacQueen. 25 We should also note in this context that Bannatyne has preserved without alteration the stanzas of Marian adoration in his text of the Buke of the Howlat. 26 One might have expected that these lines would have fallen victim to the Reforming scruples of the 1560's: that they have not might have something to do with the fact that they are far removed from the section of religious lyrics. Furthermore, at least two of the "ballatis of the nativitie of Chryste" - Haill, Goddis Sone, of mychtis maist and We that ar bocht with Chrystis blude 27 - contain a Marian emphasis which is underscored by the use of such refrains as: "Beatus venter qui te portavit, beata ubera que suxisti" and "Virgo peperit salvatorem". The second of these lyrics certainly implies that, between man and God, there is not only Christ with His Passion, but also Mary with her Compassion:

23 See above, p. 391.
24 The Poems and Fables of Robert Henryson, ed. Wood, p. 42; MacQueen, Robert Henryson, p. 197.
25 Robert Henryson, pp. 197-199.
26 The Asloan MS, II, 117-118; The Bannatyne MS, IV, 150-151.
We haif put us and God betuene
Our salvatur Jesu on the rude,
His croun of thorne, his windis kene,
His passioun and his pretious blude,
His muder, Mary, myld of mude,
Lacrimas eius et dolorem,
That our hir face ran doun as flud:
Virgo peperit salvatorem. 28

To some extent the force of these Marian references may seem to be lessened by virtue of the christological heading with which these two lyrics are introduced. Yet it is also possible that Bannatyne's retention of lines in honour of Mary indicates that he was not an extreme, Calvinistically-minded Protestant, but rather, perhaps, one whose beliefs may have been more in sympathy with the milder Lutheranism which characterised the Reform movement in Scotland into the 1550's. 29 A Calvinist would doubtless have been more drastic in his excisions. The result of all this is that, when we compare the large, post-Reformation poetry collections with each other, it will probably be Bannatyne which will emerge as the most conservative, and so the most preferable. Though Bannatyne knew that, if his manuscript was ever to be printed, it would have to meet the changed doctrines of his day, 30 he seems to have 'doctored' the religious allusions in the Catholic poems he transcribed in a fairly discreet manner, and the total losses are thus minimised. While a sub-genre of 'lyrics of Our Lady' was

28 The Bannatyne MS, II, 73.
30 Though Denton Fox has, as we have seen, cast doubt on this: see above, p.328.
not possible in 1568, three stanzas of Marian adoration sung by birds in the course of a more or less cryptic allegory might have been deemed less likely to cause offence.

It is important, therefore, to recall that for many of the mediaeval religious lyrics we are heavily dependent upon post-Reformation texts. The decade of the 1560's is thus a crucial one in the history of Scottish poetry, for, just as the recently established Protestant religion was beginning to throw a new cast over religious poetry, there were collectors - like Bannatyne and Maitland - who were clearly so concerned about the mediaeval literature of Scotland that they went to considerable trouble to record it. Some of the textual corruptions of the Bannatyne and Maitland MSS show, however, that the Reformation was not slow to impinge upon the Middle Scots religious lyrics.

In addition to the general, insidious influence of the Reformation upon texts such as the Bannatyne MS, there are one or two more precise points of contact which should be noted. First of all there is the inclusion by Bannatyne of the lyric, O most heich and eternall king, by Robert Norvell. Presumably this is the same Norvell who was the author or translator of the Meroure of an Christiane, to be discussed below (though this poem does not appear in the Meroure). If so, it is possible that Bannatyne transcribed this poem by one who was of a militantly Protestant persuasion in order to give an appearance of doctrinal

31 The Bannatyne MS, I, 18-21; II, 47-50.
32 See below, pp.349-408.
'rectitude' to his collection: this would be all the more important if the MS was to follow Norvell's Meroure into print. However, I find it difficult to imagine that Bannatyne could ever have been very enthusiastic about this poem, since Norvell's literary style and religious orientation are at a remove from those of the other religious lyrics in his collection. Another moral lyric - Sen throw vertew increas is dignitie - which was added to the Gude and Godlie Ballatis from the edition of 1578 onwards, is also to be found in the Bannatyne MS. And finally, in the GGB we find a verse attack on the seductive charms of women - Was not Salomon, the king - which is clearly an answer to the love-lyric transcribed in the Bannatyne MS: Was nocht gud King Salamon. These three lyrics are the only explicit links between the two large collections of 1567 and 1568. One cannot but be impressed by the extremely small number of these poetic contacts, a rarity which emphasises yet again the differences in nature - including aims and criteria of selection - which exist between the Bannatyne MS and the GGB. Although George Bannatyne was obliged to make a certain deference to the changes in religious beliefs, he did not compromise his literary discrimination too deeply.


34 GGB, pp.213-218; The Bannatyne MS, III, 254-256.
Robert Norvell's *Meroure of an Christiane*.

The earliest collection of Scottish Protestant religious poetry is the *Meroure of an Christiane*, which was published by Robert Lekprevik in 1561. As this book is very little known, but yet is important in the present context for several anticipations of the famous *GGB*, I am constrained to give it a prominence which its own poetic merits scarcely deserve.

On the title page Norvell informs us that the book was written by himself, a "man of armis, during the tyme of his captivitie at Paris in the Bastillie, for the testimonie of our Saviour Jesus Christ". The strident terms here used betray the Protestant martyr, persecuted for his faith. The Prologue to the *Meroure* contains a dedication to the Earl of Argyll, and declares that the book was originally dedicated to him while he was yet "maister of Argile". The reference is to Archibald Campbell, fifth Earl of Argyll (1530-73), who succeeded to the earldom in August 1558, and was conspicuous in the Protestant cause. It was to this Campbell that John Carswell, Superintendent, and later Bishop, of the Isles, dedicated his Gaelic translation of Knox's *Book of Common Order*. At the end of the volume there is an Envoy - "The excusation of the maker to the reader, togidder with

---

35 STC, No. 18688; Aldis, No. 33.
36 *Meroure of an Christiane*, fols. 2-4.
37 DNB: 'Archibald Campbell, fifth Earl of Argyll'.
the makers direction to his good lord and maister, my Lord Earle of Argyle", and this poem of six stanzas ends with "Norvelles Newyeres gyft, to the Archeris of the gard, when he was presoner at Paris in the bastillie, 1555":

To all the Archeris of the Scottis Gard,
I wyshe health, honour and prosperitie.
If that I shuld seke them, trewlie to reward,
Throw Scotland, Engelande, France and Italie,
Spayne, Portingaill, Yrelande and Almanie,
Turkie, Trace, Medois and the Moirs of Ynde,
Syne rake hell, and the bodum of the sie,
I could not find so many so unkynde. 39

With this sharply ironic stanza the author takes his leave of the reader. Norvell elsewhere carefully specifies the length of his prison sentence: it lasted four years, four months, four weeks, four days and four hours "in nombre and no lesse". 40 Thus the date at which the Meroure was composed must lie somewhere between the years 1551 and 1558. The only other personal detail Norvell gives about himself is that, when young, he was in the service of Bacchus:

Who maid this sang, for suith I shall you tell,
Somtime an brother of Bacchus beastlie band,
Yf ye wold know, my name is Norvell,
That served Bacchus boith by sea and land. 41


40 Meroure of an Christiane, fol.3.

41 Meroure of an Christiane, fols.50-50b. It is interesting that in this quotation Norvell should have exactly anticipated a phrase later made famous by John Home: Douglas, ed. Gerald D. Parker (Edinburgh, 1972), p.25.
Several more facts, however, may be gleaned about Norvell. On 20th July 1561 the Provost of Edinburgh and his supporters were besieged in the Tolbooth by a rascal multitude, which was dispersed, as Knox says: "partlie by a pystoll schott by Robert Norwell, quhilk hurt ane Twedy." Then in July 1563 one Robert Norvel petitioned the Town Council of Edinburgh for permission to build on the lands of the Greenside (described as the "playfeild"). He revealed that he had gained the sasine "be greit laubour, nocht onelie of myself bot of utheris greit courteours, my freindis and favoraris", and warned the Council that they might have trouble from the Abbot of Holyrood, the superior of these lands. The abbot at that time was Robert Stewart, bastard son of James V and Euphemia Elphinstone, half-brother to Queen Mary, and later (1581) Earl of Orkney. It is possible that the Norvel of this petition - which was granted - was the same person as the poet, and it could be that the friend at court was the Earl of Argyll. This is all the more likely since, at a Parliament before Queen Mary in 1563, Robert Norvell supported the Earl of Argyll against the bishops' party, and was described in Knox's History as: "A meary man (who now sleapis in the Lord)". Apart from this I have not been able to find out any more about Robert Norvell -

42 Knox, Works, ed. Laing, II, 158.
44 The Scots Peerage, I, 24.
45 Knox, Works, ed. Laing, II, 379. This part was mostly written in 1566: Works, I, xxviii.
beyond the fact that his motto would appear to have been:  "Non est mortale quod opto".\textsuperscript{46}

As the Meroure is a very little-known and fairly inaccessible work, a brief summary of its contents may be useful here:

A 1. (fol.2) Prologue - stanzas in rhyme royal.
   2. (fol.4) First part of the "Meroure of an Christiane" - a long poem in couplets.
   3. (fol.21b) Second part of the "Meroure" - long poem in rhyme royal.

B 4. (fol.41b) Lord's Prayer.
   5. (fol.41b) The Twelve Articles of Our Belief.
   7. (fol.43) Grace before Dinner.
   8. (fol.43) Grace after Dinner.
   9. (fol.43) "The Pellicane figuring Jesus Christ".
  11. (fol.45) "Ane Ballad of the Spirituall and carnall understanding of Christes wordes".
  12. (fol.46b) "Ane Ballade, upon the prayer ... of Manasses King of Juda".
  13. (fol.48b) "Ane Ballade, against the foull and detestable vice of dronckinnesse".

C 14. (fol.50b) "Death, to all humaines": Blindit people, fallin in fantasias.
  15. (fol.53b) "The Judgment of Minos".
  16. (fol.60) The Fifth Psalm: Unto the wordes, that I shall say.
  17. (fol.62) "The excusation of the maker".

\textsuperscript{46} Meroure of an Christiane, fols.3b, 60, 62b.
One of the chief interests of this book is the source of the poetry which it contains. Norvell himself declares that "Death, to all humaines" and "The Judgment of Minos" were translated from French. These two poems, as Professor Beattie has pointed out, are from Clément Marot (1495-1544), as are a further seven of the others (Nos. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 16 of the above list). It would seem that Norvell put the period of his incarceration to good use. The Meroure is to be seen in the general context of Scottish indebtedness to cultural influences from the Continent, which has already been discussed. Clément Marot was one of the great figures of the French Renaissance, and translated Ovid, Virgil and Catullus: he was also a Huguenot, whose translations of the Psalms were admired by Calvin. Furthermore, he was the son of Jean Marot (c.1465-1526), one of the later Grands Rhetoriqueurs, and a servant of both Anne de Bretagne and (later) Francis I. Thus we can see that the first printed collection of Protestant religious poems in Scotland maintains already existing contacts with French literature: although the doctrines have changed, the practice of literary borrowings continues.


Norvell's "Meroure" was planned to have three parts. The first was to tell of the Creation of Adam and the Fall, with the prospect of Redemption by Christ. The second was to consist of the confession of a poor sinner, and the third was to show that all worthy men have suffered, like the Prophets. The poet seems to have lost sight of his third part, and in place of it we find only the collection of short poems listed above, beginning with the Lord's Prayer. Even the run-on heading at the top of the pages changes, and on pages 41b-50 it becomes "Godlie Ballades". After this section of the book we come to the miscellaneous poems proper, beginning with "Death, to all humaines", which is one section of Marot's Complainctes - "Deploration de Messire Florimond Robertet". 50

The Meroure of an Christiane displays an organisation of contents which is not dissimilar to that of the GGB. Norvell's book - after the "Meroure" itself, that is to say - contains poems on the very basics of the Christian faith, then has some more original poems, and near the end has a Psalm. This basic pattern will be encountered again in the larger Scottish collection - although the Meroure is on a much smaller scale. Unlike George Bannatyne, Norvell is concerned to include many fairly humble pieces of religious verse, which have a very practical devotional utility. It is also discernible that, as a book, the Meroure has only one theme - that of sin and justification. From the very outset the emphasis is on sin, and this

50 Oeuvres de Marot, ed. Saint-Marc, I, 478-485.
explains even the title:

It is an myrour, Lord, I muse to make,
Wherein all Christians may beholde and see
Their sinfull lives, they leid with shame and lake.\footnote{Merour of an Christiane, fol.2b.}

The two surviving parts of the "Mourure" deal, respectively, with the origin and the effects of sin upon human beings, and this is the preoccupation of the rest of the book (with the sole exception of the "Judgment of Minos"). Norvell's poem on drunkenness - it is in the form of a dream vision, in which Noah speaks - may be seen as an expression of one of the poet's own, self-confessed sins.\footnote{Merour of an Christiane, fols.48b-50.}

Norvell tells us that the \textit{Mourure} was "composed, and drawn fourth of the Scripturis". The Biblical emphasis is everywhere apparent in this collection - from the constant corroboration of the "Mourure" itself with marginal glosses which direct one to the relevant passages in the Bible, to the translation of the fifth Psalm, near the end of the book. Along with the reliance on Scripture, we find that the poet professes to eschew all the tricks of rhetoric:

"Heirfor thought it smell not of Rethorie,/But is of language and cadence clene confusit".\footnote{Merour of an Christiane, fol.3b.} Although such a disclaimer is partly a conventional formula of modesty, there seems also to be present here the idea that any merit in the poems themselves derives from their content, and not from any adventitious poetic adornments - an idea which we shall see later in Alexander Hume.\footnote{See below, pp.460-463.}

\footnote{Merour of an Christiane, fol.2b.} \footnote{Merour of an Christiane, fols.48b-50.} \footnote{Merour of an Christiane, fol.3b.} \footnote{See below, pp.460-463.}
that of holiness:

Upon non other, therefore, wil I cry,
But onlie on that Lord celestiall,
Thoght poetis used in there poetry
On many sindry goddesses to call.
How far frome wisdome did those foles fall,
On such a wise their pennis to applie
Where help was none for to be had at all!55

Thus in the *Meroure of an Christiane* we see a narrowing of
the range of subjects open to the religious poet, with the
result that the collection is dominated by poems on sin
and human frailty, and we also see that the poet professes
to make a clean start, in matters of style and expression.
In these two features the *Meroure* is eminently typical of
Protestant poetry of the mid century: the GGB manifests
the same tendencies, as do the contemporary English collec-
tions, Myles Coverdale's *Goostly Psalmes* and John Hall's
*Court of Virtue*.56

Despite the importance of the *Meroure*, not many of
the poems which it contains can qualify as religious lyrics.
One which does is the poem on the Passion, *O Jesu Christ,
my lord so sweit*, which may presumably be taken as a sample
of Norvell's own verse (if it is a translation I have not
been able to discover the source).57 Unlike most of the
mediaeval Passion lyrics, *O Jesu Christ* does not follow the
sufferings of Christ through the Crucifixion, and so touch
the conscience of the reader with a vivid account of

55 *Meroure of an Christiane*, fol.2.
56 Remains of Myles Coverdale, ed. Pearson, pp.533-590;
57 For the text of this lyric, see below, pp.465-466.
physical tortures. Instead, Norvell is concerned solely to emphasise the assuaging of his sins by the atonement of Christ:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Thy holie death surmount, and slaye} \\
\text{The dolent dead now of my saull.} \\
\text{Thy pretious blood mot wesche awaye} \\
\text{My uncleinnes and vices all.} \\
\text{The sufflettes suffred in the hauull,} \\
\text{The bandes that band thy handes and feit,} \\
\text{Mot breck now and perpetuall} \\
\text{That bandes of sinne that hurtes my spreit.}
\end{align*}
\]

In the first four lines of this stanza the intimate connection between the sinner and his Saviour is most effectively brought out in the balance of the lines. Here Norvell depicts the role of Christ as active, not passive; in suffering death Christ is slaying the "obligatione" (10) - the term is also used in Archbishop Hamilton's Catechism of 1552 – of original sin which kills the soul of the poet, and, as the following stanza declares, the nails, the Crown of Thorns, the spitting, scourging and piercing, etc., all have the effect of drawing the poet's soul near to God (47). Thus the focus of interest in this lyric is at least as much (if not more) on the health of the poet's own soul as it is on the Passion, and it is from this that the whole emotive power of the lyric stems. 

O Jesu Christ, therefore, demonstrates how the traditional subjects of the mediaeval lyrics tend, in the poetry of the Protestants, to be incorporated into poems on the obsessional subject of sin. The nature of Norvell's poem can perhaps be best

---

appreciated if we set beside it a passage from one of Bannatyne's Passion lyrics:

My wofull hairt me stoundis throw the vanis
Quhen I behald my makar on the tre,
Wondit, forbled, all plungit in till panis,
With rewtfull voce syn cryand upoun me.59

Clerk's poem, like that of Norvell, expresses the poet's sense of anguish. But whereas in the first we find the anguish of love, in Norvell's poem we find the anguish of guilt. We should doubtless beware here of criticising the Protestant lyric for failing to accomplish what it may never have intended, yet, while one can argue that O Jesu Christ is a good poem within its own terms, one may still feel that, by comparison with Clerk's lyric, it is somewhat frigid in the emotional attitudes which it portrays. This poem, like many other Protestant lyrics, is rather deficient in expressions of love for Christ.

It would be wrong to overestimate the importance of the poetry in the Meroure of an Christiane: the quality of the verse is not very high, and by and large the description of "tedious rimester" can not without justification be applied to Norvell.60 Yet the book has a historical interest, by virtue of its being the earliest Scottish surviving collection containing Protestant religious lyrics. In this volume the influence of French upon Middle Scots poetry is at its strongest, yet the novelty of the Meroure is not in its turning to foreign sources, but rather in its doctrines, attitudes, and verse style.

59 The Bannatyne MS, II, 77.
60 Beattie, in Barrow, The Scottish Tradition, p.120.
The **Gude and Godlie Ballatis**.

The main collection of Scottish Protestant lyrics is, of course, the volume known as the **Gude and Godlie Ballatis** (1567). In scope and importance this book compares with the first section of the Bannatyne MS, and the fact that the two collections are almost contemporary with each other adds point to the comparison.

It must be said at the outset that a new text of the **GGB** is greatly to be desired. David Laing in 1868 reproduced with notes the text of the second edition of 1578, at that time the earliest known; while A.F. Mitchell in 1897, though he used the 1567 print and provided a learned commentary on the book, was guilty of making several cuts in the texts of poems, where they offended his moral scruples. My quotations are taken from Mitchell's STS edition, but they have been checked against Laing's text, and against the originals, or photostats thereof, in the National Library of Scotland.

The **Gude and Godlie Ballatis** may have been compiled, for the most part, in the 1540's, although the dating of the items in the collection is rather obscure. Mitchell suggests that a rudimentary form of the book may have been printed between the years 1542 and 1546, but no trace of this now remains.

Three brothers Wedderburn - James, John and Robert - seem to have been largely responsible

---

61 For simplicity of reference I denote Mitchell's edition by the abbreviation, **GGB**, and Laing's by the short title, *Compendious Book*.

62 **GGB**, P.xiv.
for the collection. The Wedderburns all studied at St Andrews, where they were incorporated, respectively, in 1514, 1526 and 1526. All three embraced early the Protestant faith, and James and John both died abroad as exiles - the first at Rouen, the second at Wittemberg. Mitchell credits John Wedderburn with being principally responsible for the GGB, but also reports that Robert was said to have added to the book "sindrie gude and godlie ballatis not contenit in the first edition". Mitchell assumes that when, in 1549, the council of the Scottish clergy ordered the rooting out of books of ballads which were either heretical or which repeated scandals about the Church, it was the GGB which was principally intended. Precise information about the GGB is sadly lacking, and it may be that it was not the only collection of poems by the Protestants. But at any rate the GGB is a symptom of the religious and political movement which led to the establishment of a Protestant church in Scotland in 1560. In these early years of the Scottish Reformation the character of the movement of Reform was Lutheran rather than Calvinist, and we shall see that the contents of the GGB reflect this.

Whereas the Bannatyne MS was never published, and,

---

63 For details of the Wedderburns: GGB, xiv-xxxii. See also: The Compt Buik of David Wedderburne Merchant of Dundee 1587-1630, ed. A.H. Millar, SRS (Edinburgh, 1898), pp.11-lvii.

64 GGB, p.xxxix.

perhaps, may not have been accessible to more than a few people, the GGB enjoyed a widespread popularity. One writer has described it as "a book which, next to the Bible itself, did more than any other to further in Scotland the Reformation cause". It was one of the Wedderburn Psalms which was sung by George Wishart on the night before his arrest (1546). The Autobiography of James Melvill also reveals the great enthusiasm with which such pieces were received (he is writing of the year 1570, when he was a fourteen-year-old schoolboy in Montrose):

Ther was also ther a post, that frequented Edinbruche, and brought ham Psalme buikes and ballates; namlie, of Robert Semple's making, wherein I tulk pleasour, and lernit sum thing bathe of the esteat of the countrey, and of the missours and cullors of Scottes ryme. He schew me first Wedderburn's Songs, wharof I lerned diverse par ceur, with great diversitie of toones.

The popularity of the GGB continued long after the edition of 1567, and there were subsequent editions in 1578, 1600 and 1621. David Laing notes that in 1603 one bookseller in Edinburgh had a stock of no fewer than 1034 copies of the volume - a statistic which reveals the success of this work.

When comparing the GGB as a collection of verse with

66 Patrick, Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody, p.5.
67 Knox, Works, ed. Laing, I, 139-140.
69 Knox, Works, ed. Laing, I, 139.
the large, Scottish poetry manuscripts of the second half of the sixteenth century, one cannot insist too much on the popularity of the printed volume. It was clearly the intention of the Wedderburns that their book should be as widely known as possible, and it obviously succeeded as a piece of mass propaganda. This contrasts utterly with the circumstances surrounding the compilation of such anthologies as the Bannatyne, Maitland Folio or Maitland Quarto MSS. The latter were prepared in prosperous, middle-class, or noble, households, and their contents - which consist in the main of court poetry of the period James III to James V - presumably reflect the poetic tastes of the individual collectors themselves. Unlike the Bannatyne and Maitland MSS, the GGB consists entirely of religious poetry, and this shows, by comparison, the exclusivity of purpose in the minds of its compilers. Whereas these other literary manuscripts preserved a valued inheritance from the past, the GGB set out aggressively to mould the tastes of the future.

Within the book there are various subdivisions. The collection begins with some fundamental matters: a prose text of the catechism; the catechism versified; several graces to be said before or after meals (pp.1-21). There follow the "spirituall sangis" (pp.21-59), then "certane Ballatis of the Scripture" (pp.59-85), and then "beginnis the Psalms of David, with uther new plesand Ballatis" (pp. 85-222). The Psalms comprise approximately one third of

70 The 1578 edition prefixes a Calendar: GGB, p.xlvi.
this final section, and the "uther new plesand Ballatis" the rest. One writer has summed up the contents of the book by saying that it "falls naturally into two parts, one of which is doctrinal and devotional, the other profane but spiritualised".71

The titles given to the various sections of the GGB are among the many features which differentiate this book from the mediaeval collections of lyrics. Gone are such labels as Ballatis of the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Passion, the Resurrection. And, needless to say, there are no 'Ballatis of Our Lady' in the GGB. As we shall see, there remain in the GGB a few poems which could be regarded as pertaining to one or two of these traditional subjects, but it is clear that the categories in which people like John Asloane and George Bannatyne had been accustomed to think of the mediaeval religious lyrics have been entirely lost from sight. Although in the GGB we find "ane sang of the birth of Christ" (I come from hevin to tell) and "ane sang of the resurrectioun" (Christ Jesus gaif him self to deide),72 there is no indication of the existence of a class of either Nativity or Resurrection lyrics. On the contrary, the titles of most of the individual poems in the GGB impress one by their novelty: "Ane Consolatioun in adversitie, of the Scripture" (Blissit is he quhome God dois correct); "The principall pointis of the Passioun, schortlie correctit" (Help, God,

72 GGB, pp.49-51, 58-59.
the formar of all thing); "Ane sang of the Evangell" (Re
blyith all Christin men and sing); etc. 73 It is clear
that we are dealing here with a new conception of the
nature of religious lyric poetry.

Bannatyne, in fact, would scarcely have recognised
the GGB as an anthology of religious lyrics, as he would
have understood such a thing. The only poem in the GGB
which might be claimed as an 'Annunciation lyric' is the
piece, Lat us rejoyis and sing, entitled "The Conceptioun
of Christ". The same title has indeed also crept into the
Bannatyne Draft MS, but it has already been suggested that
this may represent one of Bannatyne's concessions to
Protestant emphasis. 74 There is, moreover, no small
difference between the two poems bearing this title.

Quhen be dyvyne deliberatioun is an elegant lyric in the
high style: Lat us rejoyis and sing is a simply worded
carol. Whereas in the one poem Gabriel's words are deferen-
tial, oblique, and rely on antonomasia - "Thou suete wyne
tre and well of sanitee,/God will of the tak his humanitee"
(13-14) - in the other the angel's address is positively
blunt: "Thow blissit Virgin mylde,/Thow sail consave ane
chyld". Between the two poems - as also between the two
collections - there is all the difference between high art
and popular versifying.

I shall return later to the Nativity poems in the GGB.
For the moment I will simply say that not one of these poems
resembles any of the Bannatyne Nativity lyrics, in style,

73 GGB, pp.32-34, 42-46, 46-49.
74 GGB, pp.83-85; The Bannatyne MS, I, 8. See above,
pp.156-157.
verse form, or level of literary achievement.

Furthermore, there are in the GGB few lyrics solely on the subject of the Passion, as one had known such poems from the Bannatyne MS. Almost the only one is Help, God, the formar of all thing, although there are many differences between this poem and the earlier lyrics— for example, the centre of this poem is a somewhat bare account of the events from the eating of the Paschal Lamb until the Ascension, and there is little or no attempt to exploit the emotional potential of the Passion. With considerable adjustments to critical categories, Grevous is my sorrow could conceivably be treated as a Complaint of Christ, but it is the only such poem in the GGB.

There is likewise only one Resurrection lyric— Christ Jesus gaif him self to deide. If the Magnificat may be counted as a Marian lyric—as opposed to a 'ballat drawn forth from Scripture'—then there is My saule dois magnifie the Lord. The conclusion from all this is clear: the GGB cannot be considered, as a collection of religious lyrics, as belonging to the same order as the first section of the Bannatyne MS: to claim even a single poem for most of these traditional categories involves not a little taxonomic legerdemain.

On the other hand—and this, from the example of the Meroure of an Christiane, we should have expected—poems

75 GGB, pp.42-46.
76 GGB, pp.151-157.
77 GGB, pp.58-59.
78 GGB, pp.143-144.
of penitence abound in the GGB. This omnipresent theme affects even the poems on the Nativity. As Brother Kenneth has written: "But even these glad tidings are not announced without a sombre note on sin and the tedious repetition of justification by faith which is dragged into nearly every item in the collection, be it song, psalm or ballad."79 The prominence given to this theme at the expense of other, traditional subjects of religious lyric poetry is sure confirmation that this is a new type of anthology.

We have seen that the Mercure de Christiane contained translations of several poems by Clément Marot. Though there is no actual poem by Marot in the GGB, one piece, For lufe of one,80 is a spiritualisation of a Scottish love poem which uses a tune by Claudin de Sermisy, which had been applied to Marot's words, D'ou vient cela belle je vous supply.81 Furthermore, the song, Johnne, cum kis me now, uses the dance tune known as "Les Bouffons".82 Another item in the GGB, Preistis, Christ beleve,83 is based upon a French poem by Matthieu Malingre - a Norman - which, Mitchell notes, was published in 1532 in French Switzerland.84 Yet despite these French connections the GGB turns mainly to German sources for its literary borrowings.

Several poems in the GGB are translations of works by Luther: Moyses, upon the mount Sinay (the Ten Commandments);

79 In McRoberts, Essays on the Scottish Reformation, p.175.
80 GGB, pp.131-132.
81 Shire, Song, Dance and Poetry, pp.41-42.
82 Shire, Song, Dance and Poetry, p.29.
83 GGB, pp.195-198.
84 GGB, pp.290-291.
We trow in God allanerlie (the Creed); Christ bapteist was be Joyn in Jordan flude (the Sacrament of Baptism); Our Saviour Christ, King of grace (the Lord's Supper); Be blyth all Christin men and sing (poem on the Passion); I come from hevin to tell (the Nativity). Many of the other "spirituall sangis" have been identified by Mitchell as being versions of hymns by less well known German poets of the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries. There are also four poems in the GGB which seem to have been taken from Coverdale's Goostly Psalmes: I call on the, Lord Jesu Christ; O God, be mercyfull to us; My saule dois magnifie the Lord; Christ is the onlie Sone of God. In previous chapters it has been noted that several Middle English religious lyrics were adopted by Scottish scribes and copied into their manuscripts: it is interesting that this practice should continue, in the case of the Coverdale poems. Myles Coverdale himself was, however, greatly influenced by the German Reformers, and spent several years on the Continent, moving in the same Protestant circles as did John Wedderburn. Consequently it is not surprising that there should be connections and overlappings between the Goostly Psalmes and the GGB, as the compilers of these books both came under the same strong influence of German Protestantism. Mitchell suggests that it is possible that Coverdale borrowed these four pieces from the Wedderburns: if so, this would be another example of Scottish poetry

85 GGB, pp.7-10, 10-11, 14-16, 46-49, 49-51 respectively.
making its mark in England. Coverdale's book was printed before 1546, and is thus earlier than any text of the GGB, yet it is by no means impossible that the Scottish version could have circulated in England, either in manuscript or in a broadside version. I have already suggested that there is a certain similarity of shape and organisation between the Mercure of an Christiane and the GGB. There is also a resemblance between the GGB and the Goostly Psalmes. Versions of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer appear near the beginning of each book, followed by various religious ballatis, and ending with Psalms and a few more ballatis. In the arrangement of poems in these three books there is a perceptible basic similarity, although the parallels may not be absolutely exact in each and every detail. As we would expect, all three Protestant collections are noticeably different from such a 'literary' collection of religious lyrics as the Bannatyne MS, and in the common features of the Goostly Psalms, the Mercure of an Christiane and the Gude and Godlie Ballatis we may discern the lineaments of a Protestant type of poetry collection. We shall see later that this is as true of the contents of the GGB as it is of the organisation.

The function for which the GGB was intended is clearly

87 See GGB, pp.lxvi-lxxii, cxiv-cxxv. Brother Kenneth declares that the four GGB poems were taken from Coverdale; McRoberts, Essays on the Scottish Reformation, p.174. See also Charles H. Herford, Studies in the Literary Relations of England and Germany in the Sixteenth Century (Cambridge, 1886), pp.1-20, 399-402.
indicated in the Prologue:

We have heir ane plane text, that the word of God increasis plenteouslie in us, be singing of the Psalmes, and spiritual sangis and that speciallie amang young personis, and sic as ar not exercisit in the Scriptures, for thay wil soner consave the trew word, nor quhen thay heir it sung in Latine, the quhilks thay wait not quhat it is. Bot quhen thay heir it sung into thair vulgar toung, or singis it thame selfis with sweit melodie, then sal thay lufe thair Lord God with hart and minde, and cause them to put away baudrie and unclene sangis.  

88

Here, significantly, the extolling of the vernacular is linked with reliance on the word of God, which alone is the truth. The declared emphases are Protestant in flavour, and will be responsible for the stylistic characteristics of the collection. The GGB was not, however, an official publication; it was never blessed by the General Assembly, and, on the contrary, was probably condemned for its inclusion of a poem on Fortune at the end of the book - Welcum, Fortoun, welcum again. 89 The book was designed not for ecclesiastics but for young persons, who would sing the ballatis themselves to pleasant tunes, and the author hopes that his ballatis will usurp the place of "baudrie" in the minds of the singers. The reference to music is of crucial importance. The GGB were to be sung to easy, traditional melodies, which would be familiar, doubtles, from secular song. They were not designed to be sung, in elaborate style, by professional choirs in cathedral or

88 GGB, p.l. My italics.
89 GGB, p.lxxv.
college church. They were to be poems for the people at large, which the people would sing in their own fashion and at their own leisure. This has important consequences for the poetic style of the GGB. Rosemond Tuve points out that the GGB, "though it contains translations of psalms and canticles, is not a collection of hymns used in services, rather of sung religious lyrics." The GGB was for home, and not church, use, and the homes where this collection would be appreciated were probably - one may surmise - more humble than those of George Bannatyne or Sir Richard Maitland. Once more it is instructive to compare Coverdale’s Goostly Psalmes:

Yea, would God that our minstrels had none other thing to play upon, neither our carters and ploughmen other thing to whistle upon, save psalms, hymns, and such godly songs as David is occupied withal! And if women, sitting at their rocks, or spinning at the wheels, had none other songs to pass their time withal, than such as Moses’ sister, Glehana’s wife, Debora, and Mary the mother of Christ, have sung before them, they should be better occupied than with hey nony nony, hey troly loly, and such like phantasies.

In this passage it is made even more clear that the appeal of such poems is to a ‘working-class’ audience, and that some of the functions of these poems is the supplanting of popular, secular poetry. This, then, is the rationale of these two Protestant collections, and the time has come to examine how the theory is translated into practice.

91 Remains of Myles Coverdale, ed. Pearson, p.537.
I begin with the Nativity poems in the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis*. Unlike their counterparts in the Bannatyne MS they are not grouped together under one heading: three of them appear in the "spirituall sangis", and three in the "ballatis of the Scripture". The first is entitled, "Ane Sang of the Birth of Christ, with the Tune of Baw Lula Low", and this poem - *I come from hevin to tell* - is a Scottish rendering of a famous hymn by Luther, said to have been written in 1535, for his five year old son.92

After telling us the good news of the birth of Christ, who is to be our Saviour, the poet goes on to give a picturesque account of the scene. Christ is "Full sempill in ane cribbe lying" (18), and here "sempill" is the key word:

My saull and lyfe stand up and se
Quha lyis in ane cribbe of tre:
Quhat Babe is that, sa gude and fair?
It is Christ, Goddis Sone and air. (25-28)

The idea of the poet's soul standing on tiptoe to peep into the manger is an engaging one, and both this idea, and the question and answer structure ("Quhat Babe is that ... It is Christ"), suggest the cultivation of deliberate naivety on the part of the poet. This is an effective way of communicating the wonderment which human beings must have, in contemplation of the inscrutable works of God:

O God that maid all creature,
How art thou now becumit sa pure,
That on the hay and stray will ly,
Amang the assis, oxin and ky? (33-36)

92 GGB, pp.49-51, 249-250.
The childlike attitude is maintained right up to the end of the poem, and emerges in a declaration of love for the Christ-child (which is all the more effective by virtue of being untypical of the GGB):

O my deir hart, yung Jesus sweit,
Prepair thy credill in my spreit,
And I sall rock the in my hart,
And never mair fra the depart. (49-52)

Altogether this poem is a delightful work: it is tender, picturesque and artistically naive. It is at a long remove from such elaborate lyrics as Rorate celi desuper and The sterne is rissin of our redemptioun, but it is none the worse for that. Simplicity, as this poem demonstrates, can make a powerful poetic appeal.

Although, of course, Luther's poem is a skilled artistic achievement, its stylistic affinities are not with the high-style lyrics, but with the simpler, more popular, mediaeval poems, such as the carols - poems which the great Scottish poetry anthologies ignored. Perhaps, if the texts of the Middle Scots carols had been preserved, we should be able to discern a continuity of style between a poem such as I come from hevin and mediaeval predecessors. In view of their different literary antecedents, it is not surprising that there should be such a wide stylistic gap between the GGB and the Bannatyne religious lyrics.

The connection with mediaeval poetry is even more evident in the cases of the next two Nativity poems. To us is borne a barne of blis is a translation of a German hymn of the 1520's, which in turn is an 'improved' version of a

93 See the previous remarks on carols, above, pp.109, 133-134.
pre-Reformation poem: *Dies est laetitiae* (the first stanza only). The German poet's tone of cheerful relief comes across well: "Was never hard sa kynde ane thing,/Christ for his fais on croce did hing,/To purge us from our sin" (38-40). The second stanza, however, which is the original contribution of the Scottish poet, stands apart from all the others, and dourly asserts the conventional Protestant attack on the efficacy of good deeds:

For never was, nor salbe, man,
Nor woman in this lyfe -
Sen Adam first our sin began,
And Eve his weddit wyfe -
That can be saif, through thair gude deid;
For poysand all ar Adamis seid,
And can not sin refraine. (11-17)

Although the doctrinal message of this stanza is perhaps the least endearing part of the poem, it must be admitted that the verse takes on a new vigour at this point, when the Scottish poet is no longer tied down to a foreign original. This poem is almost a perfect paradigm of the transformation of a Catholic, Latin poem, via a Protestant, German intermediary, into a 'gude and godlie ballat'.

The GGB contains the earliest known version - in any form of English - of the fifteenth-century macaronic lyric, *In dulci jubilo*. Here the use of numerous Latin phrases is an obvious sign of the pre-Reformation origin of this poem. The Latin phrases do not raise any controversial issues. (Mitchell notes, however, that the Marian bias of

---

95 GGB, pp.53, 250-251.
one of the stanzas of the original was 'censored' when the lyric appeared in the German, Protestant hymnbooks.)

Since the Prologue to the GGB condemned the use of Latin, we may perhaps deduce that this lyric owes its inclusion here to its popularity as a Christian song. In this context it may be useful to mention also the Resurrection poem, Christ Jesus gaif him self to deide, which is another of the pieces which began life as a pre-Reformation Latin hymn (Christus pro nobis passus est), was translated into German, and from German into Scots. Such poems permit one to argue a certain continuity between mediaeval poetry and the GGB. There are, however, not more than three or four such poems in the book, and even these, in the passage from Latin hymns to godlie ballatis, have often been transmogrified by religious censorship and a double process of translation.

The other two Nativity poems in the GGB are original, Scottish compositions. Little need be said about the first: Hay, Yule, Yule, now sing and mak myrth. After the words of joy in the opening line, the real subject of the poem quickly resolves itself into the theme of sin, over which Christ has triumphed: "Had nocht bene Christ we had bene loste, /0 blissit birth that ever was" (11-12). The poetical value of this piece is slight - though the poem might have been helped by being set to an attractive tune. The four-line stanza in which Hay, Yule is written is a common one

96 A contemptuous attitude to Latin can also be seen in the texts of some of the lyrics themselves: "Requiem eternam fast thay patter, / Befoir the deide, with haly watter" (GGB, p.194).
97 GGB, pp.59, 253.
98 GGB, pp.69-70.
in this part of the "ballatis of the Scripture", and seems especially to commend itself to plain speaking and directness (and, no doubt, to simple melodies).

In the final Nativity poem, *Now lat us sing with joy and myrth*, however, this simple stanza and plain diction are put to good use:

Quhen he was borne none did him snib
To ly rycht law in till ane crib:
Ane ox, ane asse, rycht tenderlie
Refrescheit his humanitie. (9-12)

One notices here the homely Scottish idiom - "none did him snib" - and the picturesque and gently humorous detail of the ox and ass breathing into the manger and 'refreshing' the new-born Christ. It is possible that the Scottish author of this poem (which is an original one) could have been influenced by Luther's poem, *I come from hevin*. Certainly the two poems show a simplicity of expression and directness of imagination. Phrases which are peculiarly Scottish also lend point to other parts of the poem:

For ye war all at Goddis horne:
This babe, to yow that now is borne,
Sall make yow saif, and for yow die,
And yow restoir to libertie. (21-24)

The idea of being 'put to the horn' is an excellent way of expressing the alienation of man from God, and the use of such an idiomatic phrase would doubtless give the 'message' an immediate impact in mediaeval Scotland. Near the end of the poem there is a telescoping of three ideas: the new-born

99 *GGB*, pp.75-77.
100 See above, pp.421-422.
Christ, the crucified Christ, and Christ the intercessor for man. The poet looks ahead from the Nativity scene to incidents which show the fulfilment of the scheme of salvation: "This babe for yow did sched his blude" (25). Even in this Nativity poem, however, we witness the intrusion of Protestant dogma:

Thair foir all tyde, tyme and houre,  
Pas unto him as mediatour  
Betuix the Fatheris wraith and the,  
Of sin gif thou wald clengeit be. (33-36)

The poet emphasises that the greatest significance of the Nativity is the promise which it holds out for penitent sinners. We may contrast this poem with Dunbar's *Horate celi desuper*, one stanza of which is also directed to penitent sinners (17-24). Whereas, for Dunbar, the joy of the reformed sinner is but a part of the joy of all creation at the birth of the Son of God, for the author of *Now lat us sing* the idea of the Nativity is almost subordinated to that of penitence.

These poems on the Nativity are representative of the "spirituall sangis" and the "ballatis of the Scripture" in the *GGB*, and, when considered as a group, they make an interesting counterpart to Bannatyne's "ballatis of the nativitie". The *GGB* poems eschew all mythological and astrological references (the only exceptions consist of the poem, *Was not Salomon the King*, which, described as "Ane dissuasioun from vaine lust", is - as has already been noted - an answer to one of Bannatyne's love lyrics, and an isolated reference to Hercules at the end of *Musing greitlie*
in my mynde); they use few or no devices of rhetoric; they are written in a homely style, and in simple stanza forms which consist mainly of short lines. Their appeal derives not from the elevation of their thought or the aureation of their expression, but rather from the very directness and simplicity of their style, which is sometimes deliberately naive. One must not overlook the musical dimension of these works, however: a poem such as In dulci jubilo has remained popular till the present day, and its survival from the Middle Ages is probably due in large measure to its attractiveness as a song. Thus, though we see conspicuous contrasts between the Bannatyne Nativity lyrics and those of the GGB, the latter are certainly not devoid of merit.

Rosemary Woolf, in writing about the GGB, comments on the fact that several of the poems therein have a distinctly mediaeval 'feel' to them. She rejects the idea that the GGB were influenced by Dunbar and Henryson, saying that the "tenderness of the Nativity poems is not that of Henryson, nor the vigour of the Flesh and Spirit debate [GGB, pp.26-28] that of Dunbar". The true explanation of the mediaeval aspect of certain of the GGB is to be sought, rather, in the language from which the ballatis were translated: "German in the sixteenth century possessed the qualities of literary unselfconsciousness and lack of artifice, which had been so advantageously exploited in the English thirteenth-century lyric". Several of these

101 See above, p.348; GGB, 213-219, 165-167.
102 Woolf, English Religious Lyric, pp.357-358.
German poems were themselves, as we have noted, versions, adaptations, expansions or translations of pre-Reformation poems. When the ancestry of certain of the 'godlie ballatis' is thus elucidated, it becomes easier to see this collection in its true relationship to the poetry of the Middle Ages.

One must now look a little more closely at the various sections of the GGB, and in doing so I shall pass over here the paraphrases and versifications of Scripture, etc., which precede the "spirituall sangis". I have already suggested that the titles of the items in the GGB must sound rather strange to any reader who comes to them from the Bannatyne MS. A poem described as "ane Sang of our corruiptit nature" leads one to reconsider the range of the critical term, 'lyric'. If we apply the term to this last piece, we are presumably thinking of a possible musical setting - since the poem is 'lyrical' in no other sense. More important than this, however, is the fact that the GGB introduces kinds of verse not previously used for religious poetry in mediaeval Scotland. One such is the "Sang of the Flesche and the Spirit", which is a dialogue in verse. Then again, we find two verse paraphrases of Biblical Parables (the Prodigal Son, and Dives and Lazarus). Although the mediaeval Scottish lyrics depend ultimately upon the Scriptures, we do not find among them any such paraphrases. The presence of these two

103 GGB, pp. 24-25.
104 GGB, pp. 25-28.
105 GGB, pp. 34-42.
Parables in the GGB can therefore be explained by reference to the Protestant emphasis on the vernacular text of the Scriptures. As the author of one of the "spirituall sangis" prays:

Lord, lat thy hand help in all land,
That thy elect convertit be,
Thy word to leir, quhilk now dar sweir
That thy word is bot heresie.
Thay geve thy word ane fals record
Quhilk never hard the veritie,
Nor never it red bot blindlingis led,
With doctouris of idolatrie. (41-48)

Such an extract shows how the verse of the GGB seems to come to life whenever it handles points of religious controversy.

In this section of the GGB, which consists almost entirely of translations from the German, there is a considerable variety among the different items. Contrasting with the simple stanzas of Luther's Nativity poem, we have the same author's poem on the Crucifixion, which is a much more serious work. This piece, Be blyith all Christin men and sing, starts from the poet's sense of his own sin and unworthiness. So intense is this feeling that God decides to relieve it by sending down His Son to atone for man:

God had greit pietie on my wo,
And above mesure schew me grace:  
Quhen I was yit his cruell fo
Yit he wald cure my cairfull case.
His lufe to me he did convert,
From the maist deipest of his hart,
Quhilk coste him deir to mak my peace. (22-28)

106 GGB, p.56.
107 GGB, pp.46-49.
The poem shows an effective coupling of cries of penitence with an account of the Crucifixion, from which it would seem that the poet feels himself to be responsible for the death of Christ. This makes a good way of striking the conscience of the reader, who, if he should identify with the poet here, will be led to ponder the causal connection between his own sin, and the sacrifice of Christ.

In the following section of the book - the "ballatis of the Scripture" - the link between poetry and song is even clearer. The refrain of the final poem here - *Let us rejoyis and sing* - is merely "La Lay La", and this, as Mitchell says, indicates that it is "probably modelled on some old secular 'ballate'".108 Another lyric opens with the question: "Quha suld my mellowdie amend?" - to which the answer comes at the end of the stanza: "Bot God, my lufe, in hevin sa hie".109 In this section of the GGB we find two "carrells" (*We suld beleve in God abufe and The grace of God appeiris now*): one "contrair Idolatrie", and the other "of the Epistill on Yule Evin".110 Although these two poems are not equipped with regular burdens, we may assume that they, like all mediaeval carols, were designed to be sung. The inclusion of these carols is another significant point of contrast between the GGB and the Bannatyne MS (where there are no Christmas carols). The compilers of the GGB were not too fastidious, and did not scruple to include religious poems in the popular idiom.

109 GGB, pp.82-83.
110 GGB, pp.71-73.
Such carols also remind us that the GGB belongs to the pre-Presbyterian phase of the Scottish Reformation: later in the sixteenth century and in the seventeenth, the Protestant Church - as we have already seen - severely condemned the singing of such pieces. The two carols are written in the same measure as another poem - We suld into remembrance - which ends with a clear reference to singing: "Bot thank and love that Lord abone, /With sangis sweitlie set" (19-20). And one assumes that the other poems with four-line stanzas, and which are found beside the carols, would also be sung. Several other lyrics which bear refrains - for example, Allace that same sweit face, Of mercy yit he passis all and Gif ye haif rissin from deide agane - may also have been based upon secular songs.

One feature of the GGB which must have given these poems a tremendous popular appeal at the time is the vigour with which they broadcast the doctrines of the Reformation, and attack the previous beliefs.

In burgh and land, eist, west, north, south,
We gloir for to speik of Christ:
And his evangell in our mouth. (1-3)

- so begins one of the poems in this section, on rather a triumphal note. The possession of the Scriptures in the vernacular was one of the great boasts of the Reformers: one of the most memorable moments in Lindsay's Satyre of

111 See above, p.133.
112 GGB, pp.68-69.
113 GGB, pp.63-64, 66-68, 79-82.
114 GGB, pp.70-71.
the Thrie Estaitis occurs when Dame Verity is found to be reading the New Testament in English, and is denounced as a heretic and threatened with the stake:

Out, walloway, this is the New Test'ment,  
In Englisch toung, and printit in England:  
Herisie, herisie, fire, fire incontinent.\(^{115}\)

It should be noted that one Murdoch Nisbet, in the reign of James V, translated the New Testament into Scots, and that the Prologue to this translation is a close rendering of the Preface to Luther's translation, of 1522.\(^{116}\) But since this Scots version remained only in manuscript, Dame Verity probably had a copy of Tyndale's translation, which was first printed at Cologne in 1525 and from then on was smuggled into Scotland.\(^{117}\) According to the present godlie ballat, however, the vernacular Testament would not seem to have effected any striking moral reformation in Scotland, and the poet says that God may even take His word back again, and give it to those who will benefit more from it. The poem, of mercy yit he passis all, makes it quite clear that the only intercessor for man is Christ Himself:

To pray to Peter, James or Johne,  
Our saulis to saif, power haif thay none;  
For that belangis to Christ allone:  
He deit thairfoir, he deit thairfoir. (13-16)\(^{118}\)

The same lyric goes on to impugn the efficacy of good deeds, and, typically, gives chapter and verse to support the

\(^{115}\) Works of Lindsay, ed. Hamer, II, 129.  
\(^{117}\) Works of Lindsay, ed. Hamer, IV, 188.  
\(^{118}\) GGB, pp. 66-68.
argument:

The theif was saift be faith trewlie,
And nocht for deidis of cheritie -
As wrytis Luc, twentie and thre:
To die thairfoir, to die thairfoir.

Fyre without heit can not be,
Faith will haif warkis of suretie,
Als fast as may convenientlie
Be done, but moir. (33-40)

The "carreill contrair Idolatrie" levels its sights at religious sculpture:

Quha dois adhorne idolatrie
Is contrair the haly writ:
For stock and stane is mammontrie,
Qhilk men may carle or quhite. (9-12) 119

The word in line eleven of this example would seem to derive from a suggestive conflation of 'Hammon' and 'Mahomet'. In these examples the theological invective does not detract from the poetic effect: rather, almost without fail, it serves to animate such works.

We must also note the appearance in this section of the GGB of two lyrics which seem to aim at quite a higher level of literary artistry. These are the poems, Rycht sore opprest I am with panis smart and Till Christ, quhome I am haldin for to lufe. 120 These are poems which are worthy of the Bannatyne MS, and - to take Rycht sore opprest first - the whole movement of the verse recalls the high-style mediaeval lyrics:

119 GGB, pp.71-72.
O God of gloir, quhais mycht is infinite,
Grant me thy grace, quhom sin haldis in thrall,
To fecht aganis my flesche, quhilk hes the wite
Of all my wo, and my appeirand fall. (15-18)

After such stately lines - in which the regular use of the caesura in three lines gives an impression of balance and decorous control - the following stanza comes with rather a shock:

Remember, Lord, my greit fragillitie,
Remember, Lord, thy Sonnis passioun,
For I am borne with all iniquitie,
And can not help my awin salvatioun.
Thairfoir is my justificatioun
Be Christ, quhilk cled him with my nature,
To saif from schame all sinfull creature. (22-28)

Although most of these lines harmonise with the four previously quoted, we sense that in lines 26-27 the rhythm has collapsed. There is also a resort to the facility of polysyllabic rhyme words, which is less than happy. Clearly, something has gone wrong, and the whole aesthetic effect has been cheapened, with the irruption of terms of Protestant doctrine.

The explanation of this lurch into bad taste is that the versifier has not been uniformly successful in his spiritualisation of the secular original which lies behind this poem. This original, which Mitchell suspected but could not prove,\(^{121}\) is to be found in BM Additional MS 36484 (David Melvill's Bassus Part Book), dated 1604:

\(^{121}\) GGB, p.254.
Richt soir opprest am I with paines smart
Both night and day makand my wofull moan
To Venus quein, that ladie hes my heart
Put in so gret distres with wo begone.
Bot gif that she send me remeid anone
I list no langer my lyf till induir
Bot to the death bound cairfull creatour.

Tho' I dar nocht do daylie observance
To hir that is the flour of womanheide,
Solace is caus of all this haill mischance
And chaingit all my game in wo and dreide.
Bot gif that Ladie send me no remeide
I list no langer my lyf till induir
Bot to the death bound cairfull creatour.

O plant of love with plesours infinit
The lustiest that ever was or sall,
Thair is no tongue can tell or pen can write
The bewties of that fre in speciall.
What sould I moir bot on my confort call
To hir that hes my heart, my heart in cuir
Bot to the death bound, cairfull creatour. 122

This poem corresponds to the first three of the five stanzas
given in the GGB. The original is a courtly love poem which
both in inspiration and expression belongs with the "ballatis
of luve" - and, in particular, the "songis of luve" - of
the fourth section of the Bannatyne MS. 123 The poet of the
later version implores God, where his counterpart had com-
plained to Venus, and the pains of the sinful conscience are
made the equivalent of the pangs of unrequited love. This
is partly achieved via an adroit exploitation of the word

123 The Bannatyne MS, III, 240-358.
"remeid" - a technical term in courtly love poetry, often implying reciprocation of affection - whereby in the first stanza of the GGB version the word comes to mean 'relief from penitential anguish', and in the second relates to the salvific atonement of Christ. The later poet has kept much of the 'feel' of the original, and nearly all the rhymes. Nevertheless there is in his poem no expression of love for God to substitute for the first poet's love of his earthly mistress: consequently there is a perceptible lack of tenderness. For the most part this is kept in check by the poet's adherence to the original, but when the GGB poet launches out on his own, and rehearses in the language of Protestant theology the fundamentals of his belief, the resulting verse is considerably weakened.

Rycht sore opprest makes an excellent illustration of the way in which a Scottish courtly love poem can be parodied to provide a Protestant religious lyric. The process of change is, of course, quite traditional: this was the technique of the friars in making their contrafacta. It is more than likely that the original tune was retained, as Elliott and Shire have written:

[French art song was not peculiar to Queen Mary's private circle. ... It survived the rigours of the

\[124\] Sometimes 'remeid' can mean 'antidote to love', as it does in Bannatyne's headings - "Ballatis of remedy of luve"; "Remeidis of Luve" - in the fourth section of his MS. This sense of the word descends from the Remedia Amoris of Ovid: P. Ovidi Nasonis, Amores [etc], ed. E.J. Kenney (Oxford, 1961), pp.205-237.

\[125\] See above, pp.52,106-109.
Reformation - indeed it was probably invigorated by the rising vernacular spirit of the reformers. They adapted the words of many of these courtly songs and printed them in the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* ...; the new content of these sacred parodies was to promulgate the reformed doctrine. Obviously they were counting on a currency for the known songs wider than court and castle.\textsuperscript{126}

A poem like *Rycht sore opprest* stands at two removes from the religious lyrics of the Bannatyne MS, since it is a Protestant rewriting of a secular love-lyric which in stylistic level is the counterpart of the Bannatyne religious poems. But while the differences are manifest, the literary affinities are also no less clear, and *Rycht sore opprest* remains one of the more felicitous compositions in the *GGB*.

These remarks could also be applied to the poem, *Till Christ, quhome I am haldin for to lufe*, but this lyric is quite free of the contaminating effects of the terminology of dogma.\textsuperscript{127} To my mind, *Till Christ* is the most attractive and successful item in the whole collection, and deserves to be given in its entirety.

\begin{quote}
*Till Christ, quhome I am haldin for to lufe, I gif my thirlit hart in governance. How suld I lufe, and fra his treuth remufe, Full wo war me, that drerie disseverance. Is na remeid, saif onlie esperance: For weill, for wo, for boist, or yit for schoir, Quhair I am set, I sall lufe ever moir.*
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{126} *Music of Scotland*, p.148.

\textsuperscript{127} *GGB*, pp.59-61.
And sen I moste depart, on neid I sall
Be till him truw, with hart, and that I hecht,
And sen that I becummin am his thrall,
With body him serve, with mind and all my micht:
He is the rute of my remembrance rycht,
The verray crop, quhome of I confort tak;
Quhy suld I not do service for his saik?

Quhome suld I serve bot him, that did me save?
Quhome suld I dout bot him, that dantis deide?
Quhome suld I lufe but him, attour the laif?
Of all my wo he is the haill remeId;
How suld I fle, and can not find na feid?
Quhome suld I lufe but him, that hes my hart?
How suld we twin that na man can depart?

This umbeset I am on evrie syde,
And quhat to do I can not weill devise:
My flesche biddis fle, my spreit biddis me byde;
Quhen cair cumis, than confort on me cryis,
Hope says get up, than langour on me lyis,
My panis biddis my wofull hart repent,
Bot never mair thairto will I consent.

Depart him fra, my hart will never consent,
It biddis me byde, and I sall never fle:
For I be takin, slaine, or yit schent,
For sic ane King it is na schame to die.
Gif thair be grace in to this eird for me
It is committit, from the heven abufe,
Till Christ, quhome I am haldin for to lufe.

Somewhat untypically of the GGB, this lyric makes a remarkably intense declaration of love for Christ. After so many gloomy poems of penitence, it comes as something of a relief to find a lyric in the GGB in which the poet is drawn to Christ through a positive devotion of love, rather than through a negative fear of perdition. Here the poet
declares himself to be Christ's "thrall" (10), and there is no service which he will not undertake for his Saviour. The lyric becomes most movingly eloquent when the poet, in the third stanza, meditates on the nature of the relationship that binds him to Christ:

_Quhome suld I lufe but him, that hes my hart?_

The rhetorical devices of the mediaeval, high-style lyrics are much in evidence in such a stanza. Here the series of balanced questions is an excellent way of communicating the poet's attitude of wondering indecision, as he tries to define his obligation to Christ. The poet, in fact, as we learn from the following stanza, is torn between the antinomies of flesh and spirit, care and comfort, hope and langour, pain and joy (22-28). At the end of the lyric, the poet opts for Christ, even though this should lead to his death, for it is only through serving Christ that he can benefit from God's grace:

_For sic ane King it is na schame to die._
_Gif thair be grace in to this eird for me,_
_It is committit, from the heven abufe,_
_Till Christ, quhome I am haldin for to lufe._

(32-35)

In the poet's ending is his beginning, and we are thus carried back to the opening line of the lyric. The meditation begins and ends with Christ, and the repetition of the first line at the end is a token of the ultimate resolution of the poet's dilemma. Anthony Ross has suggested that the poet's expression of love for Christ reveals a mystical turn of mind:128 this is one of the very few lyrics in the GGB

128 In conversation, July 1976.
which could be so commended. Altogether, this must be pronounced a most satisfactory, and finely written, lyric. Like Rycht sore opprest it is composed in rhyme royal. Both lyrics are accomplished poems, but Till Christ, which does not make points of religious controversy, is the superior of the two. This is indubitably one lyric which one could have wished to encounter in the Bannatyne MS.

I have not been able to discover the love-lyric which lies behind this poem, but a comparison between lines of Till Christ and some from Bannatyne's "ballattis of luve" leaves little room for doubt that such a model existed (especially after the example of Rycht sore opprest).

1. Quhome suld I serve bot him, that did me save? (GGB, 15)
   Quhome suld I serve but hir, that fair and fre?
   (Bann MS, III, 281)

2. Of all my wo he is the haill remeid; (GGB, 18)
   Off all my wo quhilk is bayth crop and rute.
   (Bann MS, III, 281)

3. Depart him fra, my hart will never consent,
   It biddis me byde, and I sail never fle:
   For be I takin, slaine, or yit schent,
   For sic ane King it is na schame to die. (GGB, 29-32)
   Thocht I suld de for trew lufe of that wicht
   I sail hir luf onlie withowttin mo
   That for to fle my hairt it hes nocht micht
   Bot with that wicht to byd and brist in wo. (Bann MS, III)

Further examples could be given. We notice in Till Christ the term "remeid" (5, 18), which can be paralleled not only in the lines of Rycht sore opprest but also in such lines as:

Seikand remeid quhair nane that I can fynd
Of hir my freind and eik my fremmit fo. 129

129 The Bannatyne MS, III, 347. See above, pp.435-436.
which also follow Till Christ in the use of paradox. Then again, at the start of the second stanza of Till Christ we have the lover taking his departure, which is a common motif in love poetry, and can be seen in a lyric by Alexander Scott:

Depairte, depairte, depairte, allace I most depairte,
Frome her that hes my hart, with haunt full soir,
Aghanis my will in deid, and can find no remedie;
I wait the panis of deid can do no moir.\(^{130}\)

(This poem is a lament for the Master of Erskine, lover of Mary of Guise, who was killed at Pinkie in 1547.\(^{131}\) The melody of the part-song for these words is printed by Mrs Shire, who points out that the text must have been earlier than the tune.)\(^{132}\)

Further proof of the kinship between Till Christ and Middle Scots love poetry is supererogatory. But of course, the discovery of the secular model for this admirable poem would in no way invalidate or diminish the power of this lyric as a poem of love for Christ. The original and the adaptation - as Rosemond Tuve points out, making the same point in relation to George Herbert's poem, 'A Parodie' - would have to be judged independently.\(^{133}\)

After the poem on "The Conceptioun of Christ" we find a rubric in the GGB announcing "The Psalmes of David, with uther new plesand Ballatis".\(^{134}\) I do not propose to discuss the versions of the Psalms contained in this final section.

\(^{130}\) The Bannatyne MS, III, 344.
\(^{131}\) MacQueen, Ballattis of Luve, p.xxxviii, 89-90.
\(^{132}\) Song, Dance and Poetry, pp.58-59.
\(^{133}\) Essays by Rosemond Tuve, ed. Roche, pp.207-249.
\(^{134}\) GGB, p.85.
of the GGB, however, and shall only examine the "new plesand Ballatis". This most notorious section of the GGB is a mixture of pieces of different origins. A few have come from pre-Reformation religious poetry; a few are direct translations from the German; a few are 'revised' versions of the two previous kinds; and a large number are spiritualised versions of English or Scottish secular ballatis. In these respects the GGB follows exactly the pattern which Reese has outlined, for the development of music in the Lutheran Church. It was not the case that mediaeval, Catholic hymnody came to an abrupt end. Rather, some pieces continued in the worship of the Protestants (although in translation), others were rewritten in accordance with the new dogmas. The practice of spiritualising secular tunes also continued, though there were new compositions as well.\textsuperscript{135} In some of the pieces in the third section of the GGB the tone is purely devotional; in others it is propagandist; and in others it is satirical. It is in this section of the GGB that we find the poems most likely, perhaps, to be taken up by the populace at large - such as the carters, ploughmen and spinstresses designated by Coverdale.\textsuperscript{136} I cannot hope, in the space available, to study all these poems as they doubtless deserve, and shall mention merely works of special interest, or which are representative of general trends.

The GGB contains a version of the Magnificat, which has, in fact, been taken from Coverdale (or vice versa). The Reformers could not very well omit this Marian text altogether.

\textsuperscript{135} Gustave Reese, \textit{Music in the Renaissance}, pp.674-675.
\textsuperscript{136} See above, p.4124.
since it comes from the Scriptures which they upheld so zealously. But the starkness of the present version of the Magnificat emerges at once from a comparison with Lydgate's version, in the Bannatyne MS.\textsuperscript{137} Whereas in the latter we had read:

\begin{quote}
My spreit also, with thocht and hairt efeir,
Rejosit hes with fully haboundance
In God, that is my soverane haill enteir
And all my joy and all my sufficance,
My haill desyre, and my full sustenence.
Within my thocht he is so deip engrave,
That bot in him, withowt variance,
In all this warld I can no glaidnes haive. (9-16)
\end{quote}

In the GGB we find only: "My spreit rejoysis gretumlie,/In God my saviour, and in his word" (2-3). The one style of rendering is the complete opposite of the other, and the bare GGB/Coverdale version perhaps constitutes the ideal vindication of the Monk of Bury. Similar observations could be made about the GGB version of the popular Latin hymn, \textit{Christe qui lux es et dies}.\textsuperscript{138} This too is in a plain style, and there is no trace of the Latin phrases which survive in the Bannatyne version (except for the title).

Poems borrowed from foreign, Protestant sources include: yet another by Coverdale, \textit{Christ is the onlie sone of God}; the burial poem, \textit{Our brother lat us put in grave}, translated from the German of Michael Weisse; and the abrupt address to the priests, to reform their lives - \textit{Preistis, Christ}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{137} GGB, pp.143-144; Remains of Myles Coverdale, ed. Pearson, pp.565-566; The Bannatyne MS, II, 60-63.
\textsuperscript{138} GGB, pp.144-145. See also above, pp.321-323.
\end{flushright}
beleve - which comes, according to Mitchell, from a Huguenot song (by Matthieu Malingre). 139

The kind of poem, however, which is most characteristic of this part of the GGB consists of adaptations of previous works, usually secular. Thus the song which in Robert Edwards' song-book runs:

For love of one I mak my mone
Rycht secretlie,
To Venus quine, that ladie shein,
For remidie. (etc.) 140

emerges as:

For lufe of one I mak my mone
Rycht secreitlie,
To Christ Jesu that Lord maist trew,
For his mercy. 141

Yet the new versions can also be based on existing hymns, and thus we find a new adaptation of Christ qui lux es et dies in 0 Christ, quhilk art the lycht of day. 142 In the recasting, the imagery of the Latin hymn is applied to the situation of Reformation Scotland: "This nycht I call idolatrie, The clude ouerspred, Hypocresie" (9-10). The origin of one poem is even more complicated: My lufe murnis for me, for me seems to be a Scottish (Protestant) version of an English Marian poem, which was adapted by one John Gwynneth from an older secular poem, and published in 1530

139 GGB, pp.145-146; Remains of Myles Coverdale, ed. Pearson, pp.553-554; GGB, pp.163-165, 279-281; 195-198, 290-292. See also above, p.46.

140 Shire, Song, Dance and Poetry, p.42.

141 GGB, pp.131-132.

142 GGB, pp.173-174.
by Wynkyn de Worde. The first stanza of the secular song occurs on an endpaper of the CUL MS KK.1.5. — dating, perhaps, from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. It was evidently a most popular song, and there is a three-part setting of it by William Cornish (d.1523) in a manuscript belonging to Henry VIII: BM Additional 31922. This preserves the secular words, which are printed by John Stevens. It is noticeable that the GGB text omits Gwynneth's final line — "For Marys sake to the me take" — and elsewhere drops the reference to Mary in the lines:

Who is my love but God above
That born was of Mary.

and substitutes:

Quha is my lufe, bot God abufe,
Quhilk all this world hes wrocht.

Thus the poems spiritualised in the GGB were not only secular: they also included pieces which had already been spiritualised by Catholic poets.

We are fortunate in that — apparently by an oversight — the original, secular text of one of the "new plesand Ballatis" was printed at the very end of the collection. This is the poem on Fortune, and Mitchell speculates that this poem might have given offence on moral grounds. However this may be, the lines:

143 GGB, pp.140-141, 271.
144 Lancelot of the Laik, ed. Margaret M. Gray, STS (Edinburgh and London, 1912), pp.vii-x.
146 GGB, p.222.
147 GGB, pp.lxxv-lxxvi.
For I may say, that few men may,
Seing of paine I am drest,
I haif obtenit all my pay,
The lute of hir that I lufe best. (5-8)

have been neatly metamorphosed into the following:

Thairfoir I may rycht bauldlie say,
Geve Christ, the quhilk hes me redrest,
Be on my syde, quhilk hes done pay
My ransoun, quha can me molest? 148

The comparison of these two poems from the same text gives
a perfect illustration of the process of sacred parody at
work. (It is possible that this poem on Fortune could be
a youthful work by one of the Wedderburns, since in the
Bannatyne MS there are one or two love poems attributed
to one "Weddirburne"). 149

More sensational adaptations of secular poems are
such works as: Johne, cum kis me now; With huntis up, with
huntis up; The wind blawis cauld, furius and bauld; Hay
now the day dallis; The Paip, that pagane full of pryde. 150

The tunes of these pieces would probably assist enormously
in the propagation of these 'godlie ballatis'. Such

148 GGB, pp.171-172.
149 The Bannatyne MS, III, 327-334; IV, 28-30, 76-79.
150 GGB, pp.158-161, 174-175, 189-192, 192-195, 204-207
respectively. Some of the songs used as models for
the GGB are mentioned in the Complaynt of Scotlarde
(1549), where they are sung - in true pastoral
fashion - by a chorus of shepherds and shepherdesses:
The Complaynt of Scotlarde, ed. Murray, pp.64-65.
For the music of some of the pieces in the GGB see:
William Chappell, Popular Music of the Olden Time, 2
193-195. For a general discussion of the words and
music of the GGB: Shire, Song, Dance and Poetry, pp.
25-33.
spiritualisations of secular poems are often witty in their adapting of the words of the original to a religious sense. In *With huntis up*, for example, a hunter goes out to chase a fox to its rocky lair:

The hunter is Christ, that huntis in haist,
The hundis ar Peter and Paul,
The Paip is the fox, Rome is the rox,
That rubbis us on the gall.  

(13-16)

Such an adroit piece of applied allegory is rather attractive. At other times, when the purpose is more broadly satirical, the ballat may well be humorous (as in *The Paip*, _that pagane_):

The bishop wald nocht wed ane wyfe,
The abbot not persew ane;
Thinkand it was ane lustie lyfe,
Ilk day to haif ane new ane.  

(37-40)

This piece is profoundly irreverent, and often coarse, but the overwhelming force of the humour here must be conceded. Poems such as these would certainly enliven any collection of penitential lyrics.

The dangers inherent in this poetic practice can be seen when a refrain is retained from an original secular lyric, even though it may not be appropriate in its new setting. _The Lord sayis I will schaw_ has a refrain - "Be war I hait the not" - which obviously comes from a love-lyric. Yet this tail is awkwardly pinned on to the rest of the poem, with an unpleasantly minatory effect:

Quhill I my self did chose the deide,
To saif the from the pot:

---

151 GGB, pp.148-151.
I lufe the weill, serve me in droide:
Be war I hait the not. *(21-24)*

On the other hand, the same process, when applied somewhat more skilfully, can result in such a tender lyric of love for Christ as *All my hart ay, this is my sang*:

Quha hes my hart bot hevinnis king?
Quhilk causis me for joy to sing,
Quhome that I lufe attour all thing:
Christ hes my hart ay. *(5-8)*

This poem - like *Till Christ, quhome I am haldin for to lufe* - is another outstanding exception in the *GGB*, and well deserves the praise given to it by Professor Smout.*

Despite the humour of their satire, most of the poems in this section of the *GGB* are serious in purpose. Few opportunities are lost for attacking points of Catholic doctrine:

Of the fals fyre of purgatorie,
In nocht left in ane sponk:
Thairfoir, sayis Gedde, wayis me,
Gone is preist, freir and monk. *(1-4)*

But infinitely more effective as a document of the time of the Reformation is the poem, *Tell me now, and in quhat wyse.* We encounter here the spectacle of persecuted Protestants:

At midnycht myrk thay will us tak,
And in to presoun will us fling.
Thair mon we ly, quhill we forsaik
The name of God, quhilk is our king. *(5-8)*

---

152 *GGB*, pp.139-140.
155 *GGB*, pp.141-142.
In this poem the author exploits not humour but a sense of national outrage.

Such poems, however, carry one far from the Middle Scots religious lyrics proper, and our purpose here is, as far as possible, to consider the GGB along with and in the light of the pre-Reformation lyrics. As has been noted, the GGB has some points of contact with mediaeval poetry. It includes translations and reworkings of mediaeval lyrics, sometimes made directly, but more often through German intermediaries. On the other hand, the roots of many of the "new plesand Ballatis" lie in the secular poetry of earlier ages. Often the contact is with a popular kind of verse - such as the carols - which is not represented in the Bannatyne MS.

The reliance on popular sources and the desire to make the widest possible appeal are ultimately responsible for a certain general plainness of style in the poems in the GGB, for the avoidance of rhetoric, for the use of uncomplicated stanza forms. In helping to increase the appeal of the GGB the importance of the melodies - French, German, English and Scottish - cannot be too highly stressed. The spiritualisation of secular poems has often produced many fine hymns, and, in the case of the GGB, the success of the book was doubtless largely due to the familiarity of the original models. The satire, humour, and the occasional crudities used in the GGB are manifestly part of the overall purpose of the compilers - to reach out to a wide audience, and to supplant all the wanton 'trolly lollies' of the past.

The GGB, I believe, can legitimately and usefully be
considered along with other Middle Scots verse. Courtly poems like *Rycht sore opprest* and *Till Christ* obviously relate to the "ballattis of luve" collected by Bannatyne in the 1560's. In other spiritualisations the Wedderburns turned to secular ballads which must have been known to Bannatyne but whose existence he chose to overlook. About certain kinds of Middle Scots lyric verse (e.g., carols), and the tunes to go with them, we can perhaps learn more from the GGB than from the Bannatyne MS itself, paradoxical though this may at first sight appear. These two collections, which are almost exactly contemporary, can, however, both be criticised as anthologies: the GGB for subordinating mediaeval verse to the doctrines of the Reformers; the Bannatyne MS for concentrating - in its religious lyrics, at least - too exclusively on those in a high or aureate style. Outward differences are the inevitable result of differences in aims: there was bound to be a great gap between a retrospective anthology of the best religious lyric poetry of the past, and a collection of more recent popular versifications in the new religious idiom of Lutheran Reform.

The Second Half of the Sixteenth Century: Conclusion.

Hitherto in this chapter I have discussed the religious poetry of the Reformation age in the light of earlier Middle Scots lyrics. But more remains to be said about the effects of the Reformation on poets other than Norvell and the Wedderburns. This in turn - it is hoped - will enable one
to appreciate the *Meroure of an Christiane* and the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* in a larger context of poetry dealing with and influenced by the Reformation.

By and large the development in religious lyric poetry from around the middle of the sixteenth century onwards is in two directions: (a) towards moralistic and penitential poetry; and (b) towards religious and political commentary. In this double process most of the topics and themes of mediaeval religious lyrics disappear altogether, and those which survive are twisted into confessions of the ubiquitous attitudes of guilt and sinfulness. This has already been remarked, in the previous chapter on penitential lyrics. As a result there are no Annunciation, Nativity, Passion or Resurrection lyrics from the best poets of the mid-century - John Fethy, Alexander Scott, Sir Richard Maitland and the young Montgomerie. In some respects an age of gold had given way to an age of lead. To fill the gap caused by the loss of such poetic potentialities we find instead doleful songs of the sinner - which might be set to art music by such a poet/musician as Fethy\(^\text{156}\) - and many specimens of the new craze in religious poetry - vernacular renderings of the Psalms. Alexander Scott was writing for the new trend when he composed the two translations of Psalms which appear in the Bannatyne MS. In transcribing them Bannatyne was himself responding to the new fashion, which would attain its apogee in the versions of the Castalians, especially Montgomerie, Fowler, and King James.

\(^{156}\) See above, pp.361-370.
As a result, it becomes increasingly difficult to decide whether a given poem is religious or moral. (To a lesser extent this problem also exists with pre-Reformation lyrics, but for practical purposes the decision is simplified by Bannatyne's arrangement of his poems into separate groups of "ballatis of theoligie" and "ballatis full of wisdome and moralitie"). In the case of the Gude and Godlie Ballatis, and especially in the second half of the third section thereof, religious lyrics have well-nigh degenerated into poems on religious themes - which is not at all the same thing. Yet this aspect of the GGB is the one which is truly consonant with the verse of the period. The Paip, that pagane full of pryde is notorious for its attack on the delinquencies of the pre-Reformation Church:

The Sisteris gray, befoir this day,
Did crune within thair cloister;
Thay feit ane freir thair keyis to beir,
The Feind ressaue the foster;
Syne in the mirk, sa weill culd wirk
And kinctill thame wantounlie:

May trix, tryme go trix,
[Under the grene wod tree] (33-40)

Who can doubt that such a piece of high-spirited invective, obviously written to fit a popular tune, would have been an instant success? Such a stanza may be set beside another, from one of the broadside ballads which circulated at the


158 The Bannatyne MS, II, 108.

time:

Let na Idolater your handis eschaip,
Or ocht that dois Idolatrie mantene;
Leif nathing that belangis to the Paip;
Unruit out as it had never bene.
Anis of thay Locustis mak this cuntrie clene;
Your foulishe pietie did thame spair befoir;
Thairfoir ye fand thame prickis unto your ene,
And, gif ye spair thame, yit saill find thame moir.160

The poem from which this is an extract - "Ane Exhoratioun to my Lord Regent and to the Rest of the Lordis accomplissis" - was printed by Lekprevik in 1567, the year of the GGB, and is addressed to Sir James Stewart, Earl of Moray, who was made Regent in August of that year.161 Although the GGB stanza is, by virtue of its lusty satire, probably more agreeable to the modern reader, the two poems share an attitude of stern disapprobation, and possibly of hatred. With such pieces we are carried away from the lyric proper, towards the art - fascinating in its own way - of doctrinal propaganda.

It is interesting, however, to note that in this polemical age there were yet certain poets who were prepared to stand above party and condemn abuses wherever they might occur. One such was William Lauder, born c.1520 in Lothian, incorporated at St Salvator's College at St Andrews in 1537 and a determinant in 1539. Lauder may have been a priest, and was certainly a playwright. In February 1549 £11 5s was paid to him for a play possibly in celebration of the

161 DNB: 'James Stewart, Earl of Moray'.
marriage of Lady Barbara Hamilton, the daughter of the Regent Arran. In 1554 he provided a "litill farsche and play" for the arrival in Edinburgh of Mary of Guise, and in 1558 he was paid £10 for a play celebrating the marriage of Mary to the Dauphin. At some date Lauder went over to the Reformers, and later became Minister of Forgandenny in Perthshire. He died in 1572.¹⁶² Lauder could write, in his Godlie Tractate or Mirrour (printed in ?1570):

The Romane Kirk, and all of that degre,
    Qwhilk dois menteane perverst Idolatrie,
 Sic as the Messe, (qwhilk is plane derogatioun
    To Christis glorie and his most blissed Passioun,
With all the rabill of the Sophists and Clerks
That doith ascryve Salvatioun to their werks. (etc.)

yet in the course of the same work he reviews the sins of the Protestants and says:

And yit ye ar nothing of this eschamit!
Bot ye will all, Protestantis still be nemmit.
Your gredynes! it stinkis and fylis the air!
I ug your Murthour and Hirschip to declair!¹⁶³

In his impartial indignation, Lauder would call down a plague on both houses, since both factions have failed in devotion and charity. He is led to bewail the contemporary situation, in his Lamentatioun of the Pure of 1568, in elegiac

¹⁶² For the details on Lauder in this paragraph I am indebted to the following works: William Lauder, Ane Compendious and Breve Tractate concernyng the Office and Dewtie of Kingis, ed. Fitzedward Hall, EETS (London, 1864) - introduction by David Laing, pp.vi-x; The Minor Poems of William Lauder, ed. F.J. Furnivall, EETS (London, 1870) - introduction by David Laing, pp.v, xxix.

verse which clearly descends from a centuries-old tradition of mediaeval poetry:

This warld is war nor ever it was!
Full of myscheful, and all malure;
Fals and fragell as the glas!
How lang, Lorde, sail this warld indure?\textsuperscript{164}

This is indeed the keynote of religious verse in the first decade after the Reformation. We encounter this feeling in \textit{The Lamentatioun of Lady Scotland} of 1572, which may be by the satirical balladist, Robert Sempill:

And ye, my Kirk, my Faithfull Mother deir,
That purgit art of Channoun, Monk, and Freir,
Of Papist Priest, Papist and Papistrie,
Bot not, allace, clene of Hypocrasie.\textsuperscript{165}

and again (more cynically) in the anonymous \textit{Lewd Ballet}, also of 1571:

The preist, I grant, his concubine wald hyde in hoill and boire,
And quhylis quhen he tyrit of ane wald gett in othir in stoire;
The Ministre, far todlyar, his hure in houshold chereis,
Bott, quhen he listis, he schaks hir of be divorce or hir wirreis.\textsuperscript{166}

(This last word means 'does to death', and refers to a notorious incident in September 1570, when John Kello, Minister of Spot, murdered his wife.\textsuperscript{167}) Though expressed with considerably more artistry, these attitudes are also

\textsuperscript{166} \textit{Satirical Poems}, ed. Cranstoun, I, 201-203.
present in Alexander Scott's "New Yeir gift to the Quene Mary, quhen scho come first hame 1562": Welcum, illustrat ladye, and our quene. After the optimistic opening of this poem, with its salutation of the new sovereign:

Welcum,oure plesand princes, maist of pryce:
God gif the grace aganis this guld new yeir. (7-8)

Scott passes in review the immoral deeds of the old Church, and asks that Mary should put things right. He is emphatic that the Reformation has done little to make people change their ways:

For sum ar sene at sermonis seme sa halye,
Singand Sanct Davidis psalter on thair bukis,
And ar bot biblistis fairsing full thair bellie,
Bakbytand nychtbouris noyand thame in nuikis.

(121-124)

and in the process the poor folk are famished (137). The implication is that Christian charity should take precedence over niceties of doctrine. It is greatly to be regretted that Scott has left no religious lyrics, beyond the versifications of two Psalms. We have only the Reformation to thank for that:

With mes nor matynes no waysis will I mell:
To juge thame justlie passis my ingyne. (97-98)

We cannot doubt that, had he lived twenty years earlier, he would have composed some religious lyrics. His appeal to Queen Mary is - as has been pointed out - reminiscent of the Middle Scots "ballatis of Our Ladye":

169 The Bannatyne MS, II, 238.
Fresch fulgent flurist fragrant flour formois, 
Lantern to lufe, of ladeis lamp and lot,
Cherie maist chaist, cheif charbucle and chois ...

(217-219)\textsuperscript{170}

and one might hazard for this poem a description of 'Marjan lyric manque'. An examination of Scott's oeuvre shows that he continues the Middle Scots tradition of love lyrics: the absence of religious lyrics is therefore to be explained not in terms of any lack of awareness on Scott's part of the poetry of past years, but rather in terms of the exigencies of one particular religious and political phenomenon - the Reformation.

Another poet who expresses the mood of the apparently rather disillusioned decades of the 1560's and 70's is Sir Richard Maitland (1496-1586). In poems such as 0
gratious God, almychtie and eterne (1570) and Eternale God, tak away thy scurge he succinctly diagnoses the disease of the age:

Now is protestanis rissin us amang,
Sayand thai will mak Reformatioun;
Bot yit as now ma vycis never rang
As pryd, invy, fals dissimulatioun ...

After detailing the evils of his contemporaries, Sir Richard reverts to a less specific feeling of penitence at the end of 0 gratious God:

Bot thocht of papistis and protestanis sum
Hes bayth gane wrang and Godis law transgresst,
Keip us, gud lord, that never mair we cum
To sic errour bot grace to do the best.\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{170} The Bannatyne MS, II, 242. See above, p.314.

\textsuperscript{171} The Maitland Folio MS, I, 40-42, 32-34; The Maitland Quarto MS, pp.36-38, 23-25.
Maitland is truly the spokesman of, and for, his age: he is the voice of high culture and civilisation chiding a people which has too often surrendered to demagogues.\textsuperscript{172} It is no wonder that in satirising the present he should seem rather nostalgic in his remembrance of things past:

\begin{verbatim}
Quhair is the blythnes that hes bein,
Bayth in burgh and landwart sein,
Amang lordis and ladyis schein:
Daunsing, singing, game and play?
Bot now I wait nocht quhat thai mein:
All mirrines is worne away.
...
I saw no gysaris all this yeir,
Bot kirkmen cled lyk men of weir,
That never cummis in the queir:
Lyk ruffyanis is thair array.
To preiche and teiche that will nocht leir,
The kirk gudis thai waist away. (1-6, 13-18)\textsuperscript{173}
\end{verbatim}

To a poet filled with such brooding thoughts perhaps the best thing to be done was to compile anthologies of the lyrics of a golden age now lost.

When we compare the verse of the \textit{Gude and Godlie Ballatis} with that of Lauder, Scott (in his moral poetry) and Maitland, we are struck by a great difference of mood. The \textit{GGB} patently belong to a period of enthusiastic innovation, and their criticisms of the Catholic Church are vigorous. The religious verse of twenty to thirty years after, however, is redolent of disenchantment. It is of


\textsuperscript{173} The Maitland Folio MS, I, 37-40; The Maitland Quarto MS, pp.15-19.
course true that there are many mediaeval lyrics which are in the tradition of contempt for the world, yet such poems do not enjoy a monopoly: there is still room for joyous Nativity and Resurrection ballatis. By contrast, the poems of the GGB usher in a kind of poetry, later to be enormously developed to the virtual exclusion of all traditional subjects of religious lyrics. In this new poetry religion merges with politics and morality, and the tone begins to darken. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that for our purposes the 60's and 70's should be marked by a dearth of true religious lyrics.

In one of Sempill's broadside ballads - *My Lord Methvenis Tragedie* (1572) - we find the lines:

Quhat dois it proffeit Poetrie prophane,
Sen trow Preicheours speikis it to yow plane?\textsuperscript{174}

The question, though it is itself a rhetorical one, has importance in indicating another perceptible development in the religious poetry of the second half of the century: that is, the distrust of rhetorical colours and flourishes, the art which could be taken for artifice. I have already remarked, in this context, on the generally plain level of style in the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis*.\textsuperscript{175} This certainly also applies to Lauder, but not to Scott and Maitland, whose works - as I have suggested above - evince signs of contact with some of the devices of the Grands Rhétoriqueurs.\textsuperscript{176}

\textsuperscript{174} Satirical Poems, ed. Cranstoun, I, 211.
\textsuperscript{175} See above, pp.141-142.
\textsuperscript{176} See above, pp.141-142.
Of the Sempill ballads, with their blunt messages and comments, a generally plain style is only to be expected. This diffidence of rhetoric has also affected the verse of Alexander Hume (1556/7-1609), at the end of the century.

Hume's ideas on the morality of poetry are clearly set out in the introductory epistle, directed "To the Scottish youth", prefixed to his Hymnes, or Sacred Songs (1599):

such as ather have the art or vaine poetike, of force they must shew themselves cunning followers of the dissolute ethnike poets, both in phrase and substance, or else they shall be had in no reputation. Alas for pitie! Is this the right use of a Christians talent to incense the burning lustes of licentious persons by such evill examples and allurements? 177

After this, the critic will perhaps not hope for much. Yet Hume still contrives, through his own art, to remain interesting and absorbing, even through such lengthy moral effusions as "Of Gods Benefites Bestowed upon Man" and "To His Sorrowfull Saull, Consolation". 178 To gain an immediate impression of Hume's verse, however, we may contrast two quotations, from poems dating from the beginning and the end of the sixteenth century. The first is from an anonymous Nativity lyric:

Abone the radius hevin etheriall,
The court of sterris, the cours of sone and mone,
The potent prince of joy imperiall,
The he surmonting empiriour abone

Is cummyn fra his mychtie faderis trone
In erd with ane inestimable licht,
And is of angellis, with a sueit intone,
Borne of the most chest virgin Mary bright.

(9-16) 179

The second comes from near the end of Hume's poem, "Of God's Omnipotencie":

O Poets, paganes impudent,
Quhy worship ye the planets seaven?
The glore of God be you is spent,
On idels and the hoste of heaven,
Ye pride your pens mens eares to pleis,
With fables and fictitious leis.

Your knowledge is bot ignorance,
Your cunning curiositie:
I finde your facund eloquence
Repleete with fekles fantasie:
Ye never knew the lively rod,
Nor gospell of the sun of God.  (115-126) 180

It is almost possible to take Hume's words as a comment upon the style and content of the Middle Scots religious lyrics, and the juxtaposition of these two extracts illustrates the wide difference between the old and the new kinds of religious poetry. By comparison with the mediaeval lyric Hume's verse seems painfully austere, and the area in which his poetic imagination is allowed to work is narrowly circumscribed. This may be appreciated all the more when one recalls that Hume, in his youth, had been no stranger to the Court, and had delighted in the "fantaseis" of secular literature, before, disgusted with

179 The Bannatyne MS, II, 64.
the world of the Great, he retired to the country parsonage of Logie, near Stirling.\textsuperscript{181} (It is likely that in these stanzas he has in mind the florid poetic style of James VI and the Castalians, which made a liberal use of pagan mythology.) Hume's beliefs are also made clear in his Epistle:

Why shuld thou not then (aspiring youth) rather bestowe thy gude gifts to the right use, to wit, to the glory of God, and to the well of thy brethren? which thow sall do when by thy poesie or prose thow declares the mercie, the justice, the power, the providence, the wisedome, the holines, the gudenes, or wondrous works of thy God unto the world: whereof thow may have so large a field in the scriptures, that al thy pithie words, thy figures of rhetoricke, thy subtile argumentes, thy skill in physicke, metaphysicke, mathematicke, or morall philosophie, shal not be sufficient to expres the dignitie thereof.\textsuperscript{182}

This attitude, typical of an age which concentrated on penitential lyrics and on versifications of the Psalms, could certainly generate some great poetry. Hume's poem, "Of the Day Estivall", is a beautiful celebration of the glory of the created world, which manifests that of its Creator.\textsuperscript{183} As an idealised picture of nature, "Of the Day Estivall" may be seen in the light of two earlier Scottish works: Bannatyne's love-lyric, Be glaid, all ye that luvaris bene; and the sixth chapter of the Complaynt

\textsuperscript{181} Poems of Hume, ed. Lawson, pp.xx-xxiii.
\textsuperscript{182} Poems of Hume, ed. Lawson, p.7.
\textsuperscript{183} Poems of Hume, ed. Lawson, pp.25-33.
The "Day Estivall" is obviously inspired by the Book of Psalms:

Thy glorie when the day foorth flies,  
Mair vively dois appeare,  
Nor at midday unto our eyes,  
The shining sun is cleare. (5-8)

though some critics have emphasised the Scottishness of the landscape described in the poem. Unfortunately, the joyful "Day Estivall" is a great exception in the lyric poetry of the late sixteenth century, much of which seems to be gloom-laden. This sombre religious verse can, of course, be quite successful in its own terms: yet it may seem deplorable that the richness and resource of the mediaeval religious lyrics - of which the lines just quoted above are a fair example - have been sacrificed on the narrow altar of calvinistic justification.

Apart from poems of penitence, religious lyrics do not figure conspicuously in the works of the Castalians. These poets, though they avoid the occasional crudities of the Gude and Godlie Ballatis, maintain the scriptural emphasis which is announced so strongly there, and in the translations of Norvell. At the same time, innovations in lyric form begin to supersede the eight-line ballat stanza which is the most common one for the mediaeval Scottish religious lyrics. One of these innovations is the religious sonnet. The 1578 edition of the Gude and Godlie Ballatis was introduced by a sonnet by one William Stewart, who in 1565 and

184 The Bannatyne MS, III, 301-302; MacQueen, Ballatis of Luve, pp.121-122; The Complaynt of Scotlande, ed. Murray, pp.37-68.
1566/7 was Ross Herald, and "translator of sic werkes in the Kirk as is necessar for edifying of the people".\(^{186}\)

The merit of the GGB, according to Stewart, is this:

For here thou has, for everie accident
That may occurre a doctrine pertinent. (13-14)

However, the earliest religious lyrics in sonnet form are those of Montgomerie - such as that on the Trinity:

Supreme essence, beginning, unbegun; and another on the works of God: High architectur, vondrous-vautit-rounds - and the sonnet of King James entitled, "Ad hoc creaturae destinatae sunt, ut in eis glorificetur Creator".\(^{187}\)

In the early seventeenth century, Sir William Mure of Rowallan will use the manner of the ode, with all its freedom in the length of lines, for a penitential lyric: Help, help 0 God! sueit saviour aryse.\(^{188}\)

In such poems one may detect, to some extent, a rekindling of the lyric flame, which had been well-nigh extinguished by the doctrinal conflicts of the Reformation. Yet when religious verse turns to sonnets and odes it is no longer very helpful to consider it in the light of the mediaeval poems, and by that time the tradition of Middle Scots religious lyrics is unequivocally at an end.

---

186 Knox, Works, ed. Laing, VI, 334; GGB, no page number, but printed before the 'Prologue'.


Norvell’s Passion Lyric: 0 Jesu Christ, my lord so sweit

O Jesu Christ, my lord so sweit,
That for me, vile sinner indigne,
Thou suffred, from the head to feit:
Thy bodie, for till scorge and ding;
Thy face ouerspried, with foull spitting,
In to derisione, with great skorne;
Syne on thy head did thrust and thring
An kene and cruell pricking thorne.

To save me, sinner, full of vice,
Thou was, the obligatione,
Thou made the contract, and the price,
That thou should suffre passione.
To save me frome dampanione
That was prepared for Adames seid,
Frome hell, unto salvatione,
Thou boght me, with thy pretious deid.

I know, Jesus, thy patience
Hath borne my great fragilitie:
My sinnes, eik, and my offence,
Thou bare them to the death with the.
Since thou hast borne suche love to me,
And suffred hast such paines fell,
To slay my death and miserie,
That spared not to die thy sell.

Lord, I the pray, with heart and minde,
Lay not to me my sinfulnes,
Sith thou hast bene to me so kinde,
And tholid hes so great distrosse.
The vinagre, and bitternes,
The scourges, skornes, and the strife,
Mot fill me with the great sweetnesse
Of peace, and everlasting lyfe.

Thy holie death surmount, and slaye
The dolent dead now of my saull.
Thy pretious blood mot wesche awaye
My uncleinnes and vices all.
The suffletos suffred in the haull,
The bandes that band thy handes and feit,
Mot breck now and perpetuall
That bandes of sinne that hurtes my spreit.
The nailes, and the crown of thorne,
The spitting, the strokes and the speir,
The noddes, the shamefull death and skorne,
The wicked wordes that thou did heir,
The heavie croce that thou did beir,
The tormentes of thy death crewell
Not draw my soule to the full neir,
And save me frome the paines of hell.

Lord, thy glorificatione
Not clenge my soule and my bodie,
And, in the resurrectione,
Reforme my great iniquitie,
Sen I am figurat to the,
That aye shall regne perpetuum,
An levand God, in persones thre,
In world of worldes for to cum.

Appendix. Texts containing Middle Scots religious lyrics.

The following is a list of the texts - manuscripts and prints - which contain the religious lyrics discussed in this thesis. They are arranged in a chronological order based on the information given by their editors, or by the compilers of the relevant catalogues of MSS. After giving details of the modern edition, and location, of these texts, I subjoin some references which contain further information relating to the respective texts.

1. Irlandia. 1490.
NLS Adv. MS 18. 2. 8.
Contains text of Hoccleve's Moder of God.

2. Gray MS. c.1490.
See under Makculloch MS.
NLS Adv. MS 34. 7. 3.

Unpublished.
Bodleian MS Arch. Selden B. 24.
Summary Catalogue, ed. Madan and Craster, No. 3354.

4. Makculloch MS. c.1500.
Pieces from the Makculloch and the Gray MSS, together with the Chepman and Myllar Prints, ed. George Stevenson, STS (Edinburgh and London, 1918).
EUL MS La. III. 149.

5. Chepman and Myllar. 1508.
NLS. Aldis: Nos. 3-14.
Pieces from the Makculloch and the Gray MSS, together with the Chepman and Myllar Prints, ed. George Stevenson, STS (Edinburgh and London, 1918).
6. Asloans MS. 1513-42.

7. Arundel MS. c.1540.

8. Harleian MS. c.1550.


    (continued)

13. Bannatyne Draft MS. See under Bannatyne MS.

    Magdalene College, Cambridge: Pepysian Library.
    Some parts of this composite MS are older than the date given above.

15. Forrest MS. 1571-81.
    Unpublished.
    BM Harleian MS 1703.

    Magdalene College, Cambridge: Pepysian Library.

17. Laing MS. c.1582.
    EUL MS La. III. 447.

    EUL MSS La. III, 483; Dk. 5. 14; Dk. 5. 15; BM Add. MS 33933; Trinity College, Dublin, MS F. 5. 13.
    Helena Mennie Shire, Song, Dance and Poetry of the Court of Scotland under King James VI (Cambridge, 1969), pp.23-25, 266.

    EUL MS De. 3. 70.
Unpublished.
CUL MS Moore LL. v. 10.
The Maitland Folio MS, ed. W.A. Craigie,
STS, 2 vols. (Edinburgh and London,
1919-27), II, 7-10.
The Reidpeth MS is a partial copy from the Maitland Folio.
Bibliography.

Aberdeen Breviary. See under Breviarium Aberdonense.


The Arundel Manuscript. See under Bennett, J.A.W. (ed.).

The Asloan Manuscript. See under Craigie, W.A. (ed.).


Ballatis of Luve. See under MacQueen, John (ed.).

The Bannatyne Manuscript. See under Ritchie, W. Tod (ed.).

Bards and Makars. See under Aitken, A.J. et al. (eds.).


Block, K.S. (ed.). Ludus Coventriae or The Playe Called Corpus Christi. EETS. London, 1922.


Boece, Hector. The Chronicles of Scotland. - see under Bellenden, John.


Bonaventura, Saint(?). See under Powell, Lawrence F. (ed.).


——— (ed.). See under Index of Middle English Verse.


Buchanan, George. See under Neilson, George (ed.).
Buchanan, George. See under Millar, D.A. (ed.).

The Buik of Alexander. See under Ritchie, R.L. Graeme (ed.).

Bukofzer, Manfred F. "Popular and Secular Music in England (to c.1470)". In Hughes, Ars Nova and the Renaissance, pp. 107-133.

"English Church Music of the Fifteenth Century". In Hughes, Ars Nova and the Renaissance, pp. 164-213.


"John Ireland and 'The Mercoure of Wyssdome'". Innes Review. VI (1955), 77-98.


Catholic Tractates of the Sixteenth Century. See under Law, Thomas Graves (ed.).


Chatillon, Jean. "La devotio moderna". In Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, III, 714-715.


The Chepman and Myllar Prints. See under Stevenson, George (ed.).

See under Beattie, William (ed.).


The Complaynt of Scotlande. See under Murray, James A.H. (ed.).


Cutler, John L. (ed.). See under Supplement to the Index of Middle English Verse.


Devotional Pieces in Verse and Prose. See under Bennett, J.A.W. (ed.).


__________
Schipper. Vienna, 1894.

__________

__________


__________
"Robertus Richardinus and S.T.C. 21021". TEBS, III (1948-55), 83-84.

__________
"John Major: After 400 Years". Innes Review, I (1950), 131-139.

__________

__________

__________


Early Scottish Libraries. See under Durkan, John and Anthony Ross.


__________ "Manuscripts and Prints of Scots Poetry in the Sixteenth Century". In Aitken, Bards and Makars, pp. 156-171.


The *Gray Manuscript.* See under Stevenson, George (ed.).


The *Gude and Godlie Ballatis.* See under Laing, David (ed.), *A Compendious Book of Psalms and Spiritual Songs.*

The *Gude and Godlie Ballatis.* See under Mitchell, A.F. (ed.).


Hailes, Lord. See under Dalrymple, Sir David.


Handbook of British Chronology. See under Powicke and Fryde (eds.).
Harley Lyrics. See under Brook, G.L. (ed.).


Hill, Richard. *Richard Hill's MS.* - see under Dyboski, Roman (ed.).


Holyrood Ordinale. *See under Eeles, Francis C.* (ed.).


Mr. Hoyle's Games. London, 1743.


______________________________


Hymni Latini Medii Aevi. See under Mone, F.J. (ed.).


______________________________


______________________________


______________________________


James IV. See under Smith, George Gregory (ed.).

James V. See under James IV.


------ See under Lauder, William.


------ *Ane Compendious and Breve Tractate concernyng the Office and Dewtie of Kyngis*. Ed. Fitzedward Hall. EETS. London, 1864. Introduction by David Laing.


Legends of the Saints. See under Metcalfe, W.M. (ed.).


Lindesay, Robert. See under Pitscottie.

Lindsay, T.M. "George Buchanan". In Neilson, George Buchanan, pp. 1-32.
Lindsay, W.M. "Buchanan as a Latin Scholar". In Millar, George Buchanan, pp. 204-211.

Lismore, Book of Dean of. See under Watson, W.J. (ed.).


Livy. See under Bellenden, John.

Love, Nicholas (trans.). The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ. See under Powell, Lawrence (ed.). Also see under Zeeman, Elizabeth.

Ludus Coventriae. See under Block, K.S. (ed.).


Lyall, R.J. "Dunbar and the Franciscans". Medium Aevum, XLVI (1977), 253-258.


------------- "Robert Henryson in His Poems". In Aitken, Bards and Makars, pp. 27-40.


The Rosary in Scotland. In Ross, Scottish Blackfriars, pp. 39-44.


**The Maitland Folio Manuscript.** See under Craige, W.A. (ed.).

**The Maitland Quarto Manuscript.** See under Craige, W.A. (ed.).


**The Makculloch Manuscript.** See under Stevenson, George (ed.).


-------------------------


-------------------------


-------------------------

**Les Oeuvres de Jean Marot.** Paris, 1723.


Mary. See under the Little Office of the BVM.


**Meditationes vitae Christi.** - see under Powell, Lawrence F. (ed.).


"The Original Version of Lindsay's 'Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis'". SSL, VI (1968), 67-75.

"The Records of Scots Medieval Plays: Interpretations and Misinterpretations". In Aitken, Bards and Makars, pp. 136-142.


Missal. See under Sarum.


"Gavin Douglas and William Drummond as Translators". In Aitken, Bards and Makars, pp. 194-200.


New Testament in Scots. See under Law, Thomas Graves (ed.).

Nichols, Pierrepont H. "William Dunbar as a Scottish Lydgatean". PMLA, XLVI (1931), 214-224.

"Lydgate's Influence on the aureate terms of the Scottish Chaucerians". PMLA, XLVII (1932), 516-522.


The Oxford Book of Carols. See under Dearmer, Percy, R. Vaughan Williams and Martin Shaw (eds.).

David (ed.). Christian Verse. See under Cecil, John and Tom Scott (eds.).


The Oxford History of English Literature. See under Wilson, F.P. and Bonamy Dobrée (eds.).


Proctor, Robert (ed.). *An Index to the Early Printed Books in the British Museum [etc.]*. London, 1898.


Rait, Robert S. *Life in the Medieval University*. Cambridge, 1912.


See under Index of Middle English Verse.

See under Supplement to the Index of Middle English Verse.


See under Durkan, John.


Sarum Breviary. See under Breviarium.


Sarum Ordinale. See under Frere, W.H.

Satirical Poems. See under Cranstoun, James (ed.).


Scottish National Dictionary. See under Dictionary.


and Kenneth Elliott (eds.). See under Music of Scotland.


Sidney, Sir Philip. An Apologie for Poetrie. See under Smith, George Gregory (ed.).


Souchal. See under Gothic Painting.


The St Andrews Psalter. See under Hutchison, Hilda S.P.


Stevenson, George (ed.). *Pieces from the Makculloch and the Gray MSS, together with the Chepman and Myllar Prints*. Edinburgh and London, 1918.


Summary Catalogue. See under Madan, Falconer.


Swart, J. "On re-reading William Dunbar". In Rowland, Chaucer and Middle English Studies, pp. 201-209.


*Thesaurus Hymnologicus*. See under Daniel, H.A. (ed.).


*The Vernon Manuscript*. See under Horstmann, C. and F.J. Furnivall (eds.).


*The Wakefield Pageants in the Towneley Cycle*. See under Cawley, A.C. (ed.).


Wedderburn. See under (a) Mitchell, A.F. (ed.); (b) Millar, A.H. (ed.).


Wilson, F.P. and Bonamy Dobrée (eds.). *The Oxford History of English Literature*. Oxford, 1945-.


Wode, Thomas. See under Hutchison, Hilda S.P.


